On Reenactment:
Concepts,
Methodologies,
Tools

edited by
Cristina Baldacci
Susanne Franco

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On Reenactment: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools

Cristina Baldacci and Susanne Franco (dir.)

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ABSTRACTS

This book brings together dance and visual arts scholars to investigate the key methodological and theoretical issues concerning reenactment. Along with becoming an effective and widespread contemporary artistic strategy, reenactment is taking shape as a new anti-positivist approach to the history of dance and art, undermining the notion of linear time and suggesting new temporal encounters between past, present, and future. As such, reenactment has contributed to a move towards different forms of historical thinking and understanding that embrace cultural studies – especially intertwining gender, postcolonial, and environmental issues – in the redefinition of knowledge, historical discourses, and memory. This approach also involves questioning canons and genealogies by destabilising authorship and challenging both institutional and direct forms of transmission.

The structure of the book playfully recalls that of a theatrical performance, with both an *overture* and *prelude*, to provide space for a series of theoretical and practice-based insights – the *solos* – and conversations – the *duets* – by artists, critics, curators, and theorists who have dealt with reenactment. The main purpose of this book is to demonstrate how reenactment as a strategy of appropriation, circulation, translation, and transmission can contribute to understanding history both in its perpetual becoming and as a process of reinvention, renarration, and resignification from an interdisciplinary perspective.

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*A special thank you to Acatia Finbow
for her precious contribution*

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OUVERTURE

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Represencing Performance, Dance, and Visual Art
Cristina Baldacci, Susanne Franco

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This book brings together scholars and curators from the visual arts and dance studies to investigate the methodological and theoretical issues related to the act of reenacting impermanent or unfinished artworks, pivotal or unrealized exhibitions, choreographies and gestures, and inaccessible, noninclusive or forgotten archives, which are to be put into question in the present. In addition to having become an effective and widespread contemporary artistic strategy, reenactment is taking shape as a new anti-positivist approach to the history of dance and art, which undermines the notion of linear time, suggesting new temporal encounters between past, present and future.

As such, reenactment has contributed to a move towards different forms of historical thinking and understanding that embrace cultural studies – especially intertwining gender, postcolonial, and environmental issues – in the redefinition of knowledge, historical discourses and memory. Acting in the present, reenactment brings to the fore the multiple temporalities involved in the relationship with the past and introduces immersive (personal and/or collective) experiences of previous "events" as a counter-practice which unsettles predetermined representations of

history. By reactivating and representing the past in the present, history becomes meaningful again.

The essays (*solos*) and conversations (*duets*) collected in this book are the outcome of the two-day online conference held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (19-20 November 2020), which was organised in the frame of the international research project Mnemedance – "Memory in Motion. Re-Membering Dance History". Starting from the idea that memory is always active in dance and that dance is *not* a form of ephemeral and non-reproducible knowledge, Mnemedance investigates the (dancing) body as a tool for remembering and archiving experiences, cultures and movements, and as a strategy for preserving and transforming meaning. This approach to dance and its histories also involves questioning canons and genealogies by destabilising authorship and challenging both institutional and direct forms of transmission. Reenactment is a central practice in this respect, as it engages artists and scholars in reconsidering how dance can have a central role in reevaluating invisible legacies, marginal repertoires, and, more generally, the kinaesthetic dimensions of cultural heritage. For these reasons, it has also contributed to making dance studies an inspiring reference for adjacent areas of the arts and humanities.

The structure of the book, which playfully recalls that of a theatrical performance, is designed to provide space for a series of theoretical and practice-based insights – the *solos* – and conversations – the *duets* – by artists, scholars, critics and curators, who have dealt in various manners with reenactment in the performing and visual arts. The *duets* are preceded by a *prelude* in which Stefano Mudu presents each conversation and traces the theoretical framework of the different perspectives examined, together with the issues they raise for future research work. In *Under the Sign of Reenactment*, he also questions the notion of reenactment by suggesting a terminological shift from "reenactment" to "enactment" studies. The suppression (and consequent interchangeability) of the prefix "re-" gives rise to a whole set of new meanings.

The *solos* open with an essay in which Gabriella Giannachi explores the use of reenactments and the role of the audience as a strategy for preservation, taking as a

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case-study Dan Graham's seminal work *Audience/Performer/ Mirror* (1977). She carries out her analysis by referencing the work's reenactments that took place in 2020 in the context of UNFOLD, a research project and collaborative, international research network of the platform for media art LIMA, based in Amsterdam. In *UNFOLD: Dan Graham's 'Audience/Performer/Mirror' Reenacted*, Giannachi explains how, by looking at a work through its reenactments, it is possible to both identify different qualities in the "original" and make the work future-proof, to preserve it for posterity. Her study also shows the extent to which performances and artworks can build meaning over time thanks to their ontological and epistemological qualities and relational capacities.

The second *solo* by Timmy De Laet expresses the need for dance scholars to take advantage of reenactment as a quintessentially collaborative mode of bringing history into practice. In *(Re)Making Dance History Together: Working Towards a Collaborative Historiography of Dance*, De Laet considers which forms of collaborative research can be successfully adopted within dance studies and how they can be applied to dance historiography. This is a crucial point, since dance historiography is currently undergoing a shift towards transnational or global approaches. This development puts pressure on the traditional assumption that historical research is a largely solitary endeavour. As De Laet suggests, choreographic reenactment shows how collaboration can be used as a methodological principle that might expand not only the scope of dance history but also its impact and forms of output.

With Susanne Foellmer's contribution, the attention moves again to a specific case-study. In *Watching Dances from the Past: Considering Performance Analysis in the Realm of Reenactments*, Foellmer focuses on *New*, a dance piece by the Berlin-based collective Lupita Pulpo, which consists exclusively of multilayered references to contemporary dance deriving from the performance memories of its three interpreters. The dense web of references in the reenacted piece complicates the relationship with the audience members, who do not always have the knowledge necessary to immediately recognize and make sense of the layers of gestures that the performers' bodies reevoke. Raising both

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methodological and interpretative questions and discussing the limits of an analysis based on semiotics and phenomenology, Foellmer proposes a different approach in which performance methodology takes a cue from reenactment and its questioning of diachronic historical relations.

Likewise, Aurore Després takes as a starting point for her argument a dance piece, namely *Sacre#2* (2014), which constitutes the reenactment by Dominique Brun of Vaslav Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). In her essay *Five Conceptual Actions for a Sensible Archaeology of the Gesture in Dominique Brun's 'Sacre #2'*, Després explores Julie Salgues's interpretation of *The Chosen One* and questions to what extent the dichotomy between reconstruction and reinvention can be productive. From her point of view, gestures generated in the present make the past and the future swirl together to such an extent that they end up reconstituting and renewing themselves. Consequently, she emphasises the primacy of gestures over memory images and archival documentation, and posits reinvention as a collective, situated and multitemporal action.

With her essay *The Matter of Reenactment: A Materialist Inquiry into Cambodia's Contemporary Monumental Practices*, Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier also proposes a methodological shift in reenactment studies. Through exploring a set of performances, artworks, movies and projects she questions the open-ended dimension of the act of reenacting, the apparatuses through which reenactment appears, the transcorporeal practices it engages and the relations it produces, focusing on Cambodia, a country that for decades has been shaped by war, genocide, and social injustice. By asking herself if one can speak of a "Cambodian reenactment", she aims to contribute to laying the foundations for a "new materialist" approach to reenactment outside the (Western) theoretical frameworks of representation and mediation. Benzaquen-Gautier's non-canonical, non-normative, even non-human rereading of "Cambodia's Arts of Memory", through the lens of New Materialism, explicitly brings to the fore the political aspect of reenactment.

Benzaquen-Gautier's analysis confirms that every reenactment intended as a revisiting process, that is, every repetition seen as an improvement of the past *in* the present

for the future, is beyond doubt a political gesture, never a neutral one, whether it is the reactivation of an archive or the restaging of an artwork, an exhibition or a choreography. Three example images – a small and non-exhaustive selection – from the conference resonate with this.

The first image is a still from Rabih Mroué's short video *Old House* (2006), which is evoked by Matteo Lucchetti in his conversation with Gabi Ngcobo. The image shows a bombed house in Lebanon that seems to be falling apart. Yet, instead of crashing to the ground, it keeps getting back on its feet, over and over again, reconstructing/reenacting itself. This is a metaphor for the complex and often traumatic relationship between remembering and forgetting, between the tension of looking both backward and forward in time. Mroué uses it to reflect on how memory works. People, facts, and gestures that one remembers are de facto the result of an elaboration, of a translation, that implies a constant "working-through" process – or rather a reinvention of what one has actually forgotten.

The second example also belongs to the moving image. In his film *Sandlines. The Story of History* (2018-2020), Francis Alÿs uses reenactment as a way to reinterpret the past by conceiving parallel histories that rehabilitate "the absent ones", namely, those that have been left out of History. The film's protagonists are a group of children of a mountain village in Iraq, who reenact a century of history of their country. In so doing, they revisit their past to understand their present, inducing the viewer to reflect on the relationship between History and storytelling. As the film starts, one of the children tells the viewer: "Once upon a time, history existed as a series of stories that people would pass on from generation to generation. The stories would often contradict one another but there was always some truth in each story. There was no inside and no outside, no beginning and no ending, until the day oil came out of the Land". At the very moment when power meets history, Alÿs brings to light a fundamental question: which history or truth, and especially for whom, has to be told? When referring to a story, or to a work of art, an exhibition, a gesture or a dance movement which is being reenacted, the intricate and often misleading notions of an origin and of an "original" have to be carefully considered.

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The third and final image is Marzia Migliora's *Stilleven* (2015), which was chosen as the conference cover image. It is an installation view of the mise-en-scène that Migliora presented in the Italian pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale as a reenactment of a photograph she took almost twenty years before. In showing an expanse of corn cobs, with the artist's body curled up at the centre reflected in the mirrored surface of a wardrobe, the work refers to the visual memory of the Italian rural world; that is, Migliora's familiar background and cultural heritage. As such, it is a remediation that addresses the practice of reenactment as reembodiment, where the human body becomes the key medium in reactivating the past and representing the present.

Artistic reenactment as a strategy of appropriation, circulation, translation, and transmission contributes to understanding history both in its perpetual becoming and as a process of reinvention, renarration and resignification from an interdisciplinary perspective. *On Reenactment: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools* is intended to be a contribution in this direction.

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SOLOS

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UNFOLD: Dan Graham's *Audience/Performer/Mirror* Reenacted

Gabriella Giannachi

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This chapter explores the use of reenactments, and the role of the audience, as a strategy for preservation. Some of the reenactments discussed are historical, and LIMA especially commissioned others through an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project, "Documenting Digital Art" (2019-22), developed in collaboration with the curators and media studies scholars Annet Dekker, Katrina Sluis and Francesca Franco, in partnership with Gaby Wijers, Director of LIMA, Amsterdam.

The aim of the overall workshop within which the reenactments took place on 14-15 January 2020 intended to build on the findings from the one-year project "UNFOLD: Mediation by Re-Interpretation" organised in 2016 by Wijers and Lara Garcia at LIMA.[1] UNFOLD reflected on

the affinities and differences between terms such as reme-
diation, reenactment, reinterpretation, reappropriation,
homage, emulation, and arrangement in the context of the
conservation of media arts. At the 2016 "UNFOLD work-
shop", I suggested that these practices constitute funda-
mental preservation strategies, by which I did not so much
mean the preservation of something that occurred in the
past but a claim to the identification of its living quality in
the present. By identifying its living quality, I maintained
that the work would be able to survive historically through
different periods in time.

I further developed this argument in *Histories of Perfor-
mance Documentation*.[2] Here, I suggested that reenactments
are crucial for preservation as they generate new iterations
of a specific work. Subsequently, Wijers and I became
increasingly interested in establishing the role of the audi-
ence in these reenactments. At the LIMA workshop in 2020,
the first public event of the "Documenting Digital Art"
project, a number of artists and researchers were hence
asked to offer a reenactment of Graham's work based on
the historical documentation of it by asking themselves the
following questions elaborated by Wijers: what is the core
and production method of a work? Which techniques are
used in which context? How do we translate this artistic
legacy, practice and knowledge to the next generation?
How do we reflect and learn from different interdiscipli-
nary practises? And how do we engage with audiences in
this context?

Before analyzing the specific case study for this chapter,
its historical reenactments and the reenactments carried
out during the workshop at LIMA, it is worth refreshing
our memory about how reenactments tend to operate
by unpacking the distinctive features of both artistic and
historical reenactments. It is worth starting by noting how
reenactments have attracted the attention of scholars in
a range of disciplines spanning performance studies, art

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Nicastro and Arianna Sforzini (Cultural Enquiry, 21, Berlin: ICI Berlin Press):
193-203.

2. Gabriella Giannachi and Jonah Westerman, eds., *Histories of Performance Do-
cumentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017): 116.

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history, history, new media, archaeology, and preservation studies.

As art historian Amelia Jones suggested,[3] historical reenactments have become increasingly popular after 1946, when the historian and archaeologist Robin George Collingwood published *The Idea of History,* which argued that history constitutes a form of reenactment.[4] Historical reenactments are known to often entail a "distortion in scale".[5] It was, for example, the case in Peter Watkins's *Diary of an Unknown Soldier* (1959), where First World War trenches were "filmed in a cast member's backyard after a two-and-a-half meter plot had been dug up and hosed down with water". In *Forgotten Faces* (1956), also by Watkins, the Hungarian Revolution was filmed "in a cul-de-sac in Canterbury".[6] Historical reenactments also often play with canonical conventions regarding the relationship between performers and the audience. Art historian Sven Lütticken notes that they tend to eliminate "the safe distance between performers and audience to create ambiguous, mixed states".[7] Moreover, as the curator and new media theorist Inke Arns showed, historical reenactments often do not constitute exact reproductions of the past, but rather privilege an engagement with the "present".[8]

These considerations position reenactment, as the curator in photography and contemporary art Anke Bangma suggests, as a "framing concept"[9] through which to look at the immediacy of a work. Finally, early 20th century historical pageants, like Louis Napoleon Parker's pageants, offered a given community "an image of itself ",[10] generating

3. Amelia Jones, "'The Artist is Present': Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence", *The Drama Review,* 55, no. 1 (2011): 16-45.

4. Robin George Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

5. Anke Bangma, Stephen Rushton, and Florian Wüst, *Experience, Memory, Re-Enactment* (Rotterdam: Piet Zwart Institute, 2005): 6.

6. Ibid., 7.

7. Sven Lütticken, Jennifer Allen, and Peggy Phelan, eds., *Life, Once More: Forms of Re-enactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2005): 27.

8. Inke Arns and Gabriele Horn, *History Will Repeat Itself* (Dortmund: Hartware Medien Kunstverein and Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2008): 2.

9. Bangma, et al., 14.

10. Lütticken, et al., 33.

"an immersive" and, possibly, reflective "experience".[11] This aims not so much, as performance studies theorist Peggy Phelan suggested, to produce a "slavish reproduction", but rather constitutes an attempt to "create a difference",[12] setting up the conditions for a "re-presencing" of a work. This is where re-presenting and re-presencing coincide. Hence, the production of a sense of immediacy, and the act of re-presenting/re-presencing, which are at the heart of the operation of the performing arts, constitute also a crucial component as to the significance of reenactments and their consequent reinterpretations for preservation.

At the heart of the function that the reenactment plays for preservation is the complex relationship between the reenacted past and the live presence of an audience. As suggested by the art critic Jennifer Allen, reenactments utilise "the body as a medium for reproducing the past",[13] only that body and the one that is reenacted tend not to be the same. This focuses the reenactment on difference rather than copy. By establishing this difference, reenactments must redefine what is meant by "origin".[14] Allen points out that reenactment is both "a reproduction of the past and a reproduction of itself", thus it "emerges as yet another original with its claims to authenticity that are inextricably linked to its reproduction".[15] Therefore, through the reenactment, the past is not so much restaged, as recreated anew. This is a crucial factor as to why reenactments, but also reinterpretations, constitute an interesting strategy for preservation. In showing how reenactments were not about "recalling" the past, rather about restructuring the past in the present in the context of our presence, the artist and writer Steve Rushton suggested that reenactments tend to create a subjective "version" of the past.[16] This creation of a new potential version of the past is what the reenactment,

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11. Ibid., 40.

12. Ibid., 5.

13. Antonio Caronia, Janez Janša, Domenico Quaranta, eds., *RE:akt! Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-porting* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2014): 18.

14. Paul Clarke in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013).

15. Lütticken, et al., 195.

16. Bangma, et al., 6.

and the reinterpretation offered through it, makes it possible to preserve.

The mechanism at the heart of this transformation of the past into the present is an act of repetition. But it is also what is not repeated, or, rather, what falls outside of the repetition, that is crucial in the context of preservation. Inke Arns and contemporary art historian Gabriele Horn explain the popularity of the prefix "re-" by pointing out that "experiencing the world, whether past or present, is increasingly less direct".[17] As Arns notes, reenactments, as well as reinterpretations, are therefore not so much revisitations of the past as "*questionings of the present*",[18] in which it is indeed the present that is perceived to be at stake. For Arns, this questioning is achieved by utilising documents produced in the past to understand what they may mean in the present. While the past is given, the present is redefined in the process. As Arns suggests, this generates a "paradoxical approach", "erasing distance to the images and at the same time distancing itself from the images".[19] In fact, the prefix "re-", which means "again", also means "back", implying both a return to a previous condition and the repetition of an action. I have already mentioned that reenactments and reinterpretations produce spatial-temporal distortions, but here we see how they often expose, as Arns notes, an "uncanny" paradox by bringing back something that "is actually known but has been repressed, from whence it returns".[20] As suggested by the curator and dance scholar André Lepecki, reenactments thus "unlock, release, and actualize a work's many (virtual) com- and incompossiblities".[21] This is why reinterpretations were described, in the context of digital preservation, as "the most radical preservation strategy",[22] for they open up a work to liveness, to the present.

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17. Arns and Horn, 7.

18. Ibid., 43.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 63.

21. André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal,* 42, no. 2 (2010): 31.

22. Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones, eds., *The Variable Media Approach, Performance Through Change* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2003): 128.

What is interesting about reenactments is an element of distortion, of difference. This difference can be used to challenge what, over time, may have become a safe relationship between performers (or a work) and the audience. By bringing the past into the present, to the audience's presence, the reenactment reactivates the work and creates a new environment for it. In this sense, the reenactment not only re-presents but also re-presences the work, and the past, or origin, remains unreachable, while the bearing of witness to the past is impossible. Therefore, what is at stake is the question of the present and our presence within that. In this sense, reenactment is all about the present only that the present, of course, is, as Mark Franko reminds us, "historically defective".[23]

I now move on to a discussion of the case study that was selected for the 2020 LIMA workshop and explore the role of the audience in the context of preservation. The work was Dan Graham's seminal performance *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975). This was selected because the piece was audience-centred and participatory, almost ante-litteram, in its use of video and focus on what has been described as "real time informational 'feedback'".[24] The work was most probably a development of his earlier *Performer/Audience/Sequence* (1974),where, facing the audience, Graham described himself before describing them.

The piece, which toured Europe extensively in 1977, is divided into four stages lasting five minutes each.[25] The video of the work shows Graham facing an audience. Behind him is a mirror. In the first stage, Graham describes his own behaviour uninterruptedly and very quickly as a form of "self-reflection", recounting both things the audience can see and not see. In the second stage, he describes the audience's behaviour. In the third stage, he turns around to face the mirror, describing his own behaviour, as reflected in the

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23. Mark Franko, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 3.

24. Anonym, "Performer/Audience/Mirror Dan Graham" <http://www.vdb.org/titles/performer-audience-mirror> [accessed 7 September 2020].

25. Anne Rorimer, "Dan Graham: an Introduction", in *Dan Graham: Buildings and Signs*, ed. Dan Graham and Anne Rorimer (Chicago and Oxford: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1981): 9.

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mirror. The cameraman can be seen reflected in the mirror. In the final stage, Graham again describes the audience by looking at them in the mirror. When the work was shown at De Appel in 1977, the title was *Audience/Performer/Mirror*, indicating a new emphasis on the reversal of the relationship between the performer and the audience in relation to the original title.

Existing scholarship identified a number of features in this work. The piece is described as architectural, not only in that it uses a mirror to create a self-reflexive space but also in that it uses video, which Graham suggested functions semiotically as a mirror.[26] As pointed out by the art historian Anne Rorimer, the audience is not only witnessing an event, they are implicated within it.[27] In this sense, the piece is participatory. Graham himself located his work in the context of the "premise of 1960s modernist art", which, he suggested, aimed "to present the present as immediacy – as pure phenomenological consciousness without the contamination of historical or other a priori meaning".[28] It suffices to remember John Cage's work, *4'33"* (1952), for example, to think about the role of presence in this context. Graham's video time-delay installations and some of his performances in fact used what he described as a "'Modernist' notion of phenomenological immediacy", which for him foregrounded "an awareness of the presence of the viewer's own perceptual process", while also casting doubt about this process "by showing the impossibility of locating a pure present tense".[29] *Audience/Performer/Mirror* spectacularises this intent and turns the awareness of the presence of the viewer into the actual work. Because of this process, the viewer is literally prompted to perceive herself or himself also in relation to other viewers, and so becomes the agent and environment that is both the object and subject of the work. For Graham, here the audience sees her or himself "objectively" while being "subjectively"

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26. Anonym.
27. Graham and Rorimer, 10.
28. Alexander Alberro, ed., *Two Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press 1999): 144.
29. Ibid.

perceived by the performer.[30] However, there is a delay, he suggests, in that "the audience sees itself reflected by the mirror instantaneously, while the performer's comments are slightly delayed and follow a continuous flow of time (since they are verbal)". This slight delay is crucial. Thus, he continues: "The slightly delayed verbal description by the performer overlaps/undercuts the present (fully present) mirror view an audience member has of himself or herself and of the collective audience".[31] This operation, as Chrissi Iles indicates, not only involves "the audience in the performance directly", it literally adds "the role of object to the observer",[32] who then is, as in the title, performing, spectating, and, being mirrored, acting as the object of the performance.

The mirror occupies a very central position in Graham's original piece. For Graham, mirrors constitute:

> metaphors for the Western concept of the "self",[33] referring to Jacques Lacan's theorisation of the mirror phase during which the child first discovers her or his "self". While for Graham the image in the mirror is perceived "as a static instant", the world seen on video, by contrast, is in "temporal flux".[34]

It is worth noting that as the cinematographer appears behind the audience in the mirror, the viewer knows that they are being recorded, that their live action immediately becomes a historical document. In *Essay on Video, Architecture and Television*, Graham stated that "video is a present-time medium" in that "its image can be simultaneous with its perception by/of its audience (it can be the image of its audience perceiving)"; in this sense "the space time it presents, is continuous, unbroken, and congruent to that of the real time which is the shared time of its perceivers

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30. Lori Zippay, *Electronic Art Intermix: Video* (New York: Electronic Art Intermix, 1991).

31. Marianne Brouver, ed., *Dan Graham Works 1965-2000* (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2001): 58.

32. Bennett Simpson and Chrissi Iles, eds., *Dan Graham: Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2009): 69.

33. Dan Graham, in *Dan Graham: Writings on Video and Video Works 1970-1978*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Zurich: Lars Muller Publishers, 2012 [1979]): 67.

34. Ibid.

and their individual and collective real environments".[35] For Graham, in fact, "through the use of video-tape feedback, the performer and the audience, the perceiver and his process of perception, are linked, or co-identified".[36] Hence, Graham continues, by

> linking perception of exterior behaviour and its interior, mental perception, an observer's "self", like a topological moebious strip, can be apparently without "inside" or "outside". […] Instead of self-perception being a series of fixed "perspectives" for a detached ego, observing past actions with the intent of locating "objective truth" about its essence, video feedback encloses the perceiver in what appears to be (only) what is subjectively present.[37]

These reflections about his work suggest that it would be legitimate to interpret *Performer/Audience/Mirror* as an immanent reenactment of itself. Graham described his own actions as follows:

> I face the audience. I begin continuously describing myself – my external features – although looking in the direction of the audience. I do this for eight minutes. Now I observe and phenomenologically describe the audience's external appearance for eight minutes. I cease this and begin again to describe the audience's responses… The pattern of alternating self-description/description of the audience continues until I decide to end the piece.[38]

A number of crucial findings are worth noting: this version of the piece, divided into three equally long parts, uses the terms "observe" and "phenomenologically describe". This pairing of observation and description through phenomenology, the study of structures of consciousness as they surface from a first-person narrative to a second-person reenactment, is the motor of the piece. Here, as Thierry de Duve suggests, the performer and the audience are, in fact, "coupled into a loop by the experimental apparatus [*dispositif*], such that each of them is both subject and observer,

35. Ibid., 62.
36. Ibid., 69.
37. Ibid.
38. Brouver, 49. See also Bennett Simpson and Chrissi Iles, eds., *Dan Graham: Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2009).

together or alternately, in an uncontrollable oscillation".[39] This is key to the definition of presence in a performative context. Graham noted:

> When I am looking at the audience and describing myself, I am looking at them to help me see myself as I might be reflected in their responses […] by the second stage of my self-description I (my idea or projection of "myself") am becoming more influenced or "contaminated" by my impressions of the reactions of the audience.[40]

At the end of the performance, "the audience's projected definition of me helps to define themselves as a group and my projected definition of the audience tends to define my sense of myself".[41] These dynamics turn the work into an ecology defining the present as presence, in which the audience is also the environment of the work, and are rendered even more complex in the mirror version of the work when

> members of the audience (because they can see and be seen on the mirror by other members of the audience) attempt to influence (through eye contact, gestures etc) the behaviour of other audience members, which thereby influences the performer's description (of the audience's behaviour).[42]

In this sense, *Performer/Audience/Mirror* is a piece about power, control, and even manipulation, capturing the violence implicit in the act of turning immanent perception into utterance, the other into the self. Thus, *Performer/Audience/Mirror* is always already a reenactment. The videographer can only be seen remediating whilst being mediated in the mirror, and this makes him as crucial as the mirror.

The workshop held at LIMA showed Graham's iconic work through the De Appel documentation, alongside several reinterpretations: Adad Hannah's *Performer Audience Remake* (2008); Ian Forsyth & Jane Pollard's *Audience Performer Fuck Off* (2009); Judith Hopf's *What Do You Look Like/A Crypto Demonic Mystery* (2006), and some documents pertaining to the 1977 version of the work at De Appel. During the evening, there were also a number of performances,

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39. Brouver, *Dan Graham Works 1965-2000*, 49.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 177.

including Keren Cytter's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (2012); Jan Robert Leegte's *Audience/Performer/Mirror* (2019), Miron Galić's *Mirror* (2020) and Emile Zile's *Performer/Audience/Lens* (2018), plus artist talks, a panel discussion – with the new media theorist and curator Annet Dekker and the social philosopher, director and visual art historian Willem van Weelden, and myself, chaired by the curator Suzanne Sanders – and a number of reinterpretations. These were offered by van Weelden's students at the Rietveld Academie, who had reenacted the work in Weelden's course Unstable Media, and were then asked by LIMA to focus on the role or reinterpretation and remediation in this context. These reenactments and reinterpretations offered some fascinating insight into Graham's original work and what it may mean to us today.

Adad Hannah's *Performer Audience Remake* (2008) freezes specific moments of Graham's original performance into twelve "tableaux vivants".[43] Hannah uses a mirror, a video camera (the videographer can again be seen in the mirror), and maintains even the length of the original work. Unlike Graham's original work, his piece, though, is silent, in colour and higher resolution than the original shown next to his own at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. Commenting on his work, Hannah noted that *Performer Audience Remake* allowed him to "further explore the phenomenological aspects" of his own work,[44] in that the real-time feedback was what inspired him to create what he called a "remake".[45] For Hannah, the changes in the reenactment led to "a more true representation of the original even though this is patently untrue".[46] Rex Butler suggested that Hannah's reenactment evidences how the performer becomes his own (the first) spectator, "sending back incessant updates on their state of mind in a series

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43. Adad Hannah, "Extending the Instantaneous: Pose, Performance, Duration, and the Construction of the Photographic Image from Muybridge to the Present Day", a Thesis is the Humanities Programme Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec (2013): 146 <https://core.ac.uk/reader/211516520> [accessed 10 September 2020].

44. Ibid., 144.

45. Ibid., 145.

46. Ibid., 146.

of Twitter-like reports".[47] Hannah's work openly positions itself as a remake, and its focus is on the act of remediation. Hence by slowing down images reworked from Graham's documentation, the performance places emphasis on the always-already archival quality of both Graham's original and his own remake.

Ian Forsyth & Jane Pollard's *Audience Performer Fuck Off* (2009) consists of the documentation of a live performance in which the performer Iain Lee, a comedian and broadcaster who rose to fame as the co-presenter of "The 11 O'clock Show" on Channel 4, reenacts Graham's original work at Site Gallery Sheffield. Forsyth and Pollard's piece used the same structure as Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, but it adopted a stand-up comedy genre to highlight the tension the piece creates between the performer and the audience. Using a microphone, Lee candidly confronts the audience about not looking forward to being in the room, and therefore focusing his performance on generating often-antagonistic live feedback targeted at specific audience members. At the same time, a videographer can again be seen in the mirror documenting the work. By commenting directly on people's appearance (clothes, haircuts, glasses, or demeanour), Lee, who gets physically very close to his "victims", provokes the audience to defend itself by responding to him directly. The revised title, *Audience Performer Fuck Off*, suggests that stand up here operates as the medium. The reflectivity of the mirror is absent, as is the phenomenological approach of the original and of Hannah's remake. However, the discourse on power, control, and manipulation is more prominent as the stand-up genre's banter is used to engage and bounce off the audience.

Judith Hopf's *What Do You Look Like/A Crypto Demonic Mystery* (2006) is the title of a group of sculptures, developed by the artist between 2006 and 2007, which is shown alongside a restaging of Graham's piece. The press release states that the title "follows the assumption that nobody is capable of discovering what one looks like". This, in turn, is said to create "an inner innocence" towards physical "appearance"

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47. Rex Butler, "Modernism more popular than populism", *Broadsheet*, 43, no. 4 (2014): 19-28.

that is used to define a relationship with an object on view.[48] In this work, the emphasis seems to be neither on phenomenology nor power, control and manipulation; rather, the artist questions language's ability to capture how we relate to the world in the first place.

In contrast with the Keren Cytter's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (2010) was performed at the Van Abbemuseum in 2010 and at the Tanks in 2012.It featured two actors (male and female) offering a subtle feminist critique of the original work. Here, the male actor is seen "closely" replicating Graham's performance, while the female actor "relays a dream-like story of sex change – bringing gender and identity politics to the foreground".[49] While Cytter's work has the same title as Graham's 1975 version of the work, her reenactment illustrates how gender has played a role in creating the original work and in our reading of it.

Whereas Graham's *Audience/Performer/Mirror,* as well as the other reinterpretations cited above, were shown in video format, Jan Robert Leegte's *Mirror* (2020) sees a single performer interpreted by Miron Galić, Leegte's former student at the Royal Academy of Fine Art at The Hague. When the performance starts, Galić is positioned on the floor in front of his computer and a microphone. Behind him, a screen shows a close up of his face. Two pointers can be seen on the screen. One is mobile, and the second remains static. The performer operates one of the pointers, forcing it to circle around his semi-open mouth slowly. Subsequently, he operates the pointer to circle his left and then right eye. After completing these actions, the performer sits among the audience facing, along with the rest of the audience, the empty stage and screen showing only the pointers. The pointer operated by Galić then slowly moves around the screen until it joins and rests on the second static pointer.

Leegte's piece – a remediation and a reinterpretation, more than a reenactment of the original – rewrites the rela-

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48. Galerie Andreas Huber, "Press release Judith Hopf" (March 10 – April 21, 2007). <https://media.contemporaryartlibrary.org/store/doc/1007/docfile/original-4805715a085ee2991aa8c108eb8d33f3.pdf> [accessed 10 September 2020].
49. Keren Cytter, press release *Performance/Audience /Mirror* (2012) <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/performance-year-zero/keren-cytter-performer-audience-mirror> [accessed 12 September 2020].

tionship between the performer and the audience by using the pointer, which is the indicator showing the current position for interaction on a monitor. This decision raises the question of what has become of the performer in the reenacted work. Here, the performer uses the pointer to draw attention to his mouth and eyes, our means to describe and observe the world. Only his eyes, though, seem to see the pointer, and his mouth, an empty orifice, does not produce any words. The self-referential quality of Graham's original performance, the fact that it was always already a reenactment of itself, is taken to an extreme. There is no performer and no audience in Leegte's title, only a mirror, which captures the relationship between the two screens (of the computer and the projector), as much as between the pointers and their implicit agents (the performer and the audience), with the machine left by itself to ultimately "perform" the work.

Interestingly, in the discussion after the piece, Leegte indicated that when LIMA asked him to do a remediation of Graham's work, he thought about one of his earlier works, *Mouse Pointer* (2003), which has a seemingly static pointer that mocks the movements of the user-operated pointer, and decided to make a version of this work with the camera backing, using a flipped live webcam feed so it would work as a mirror. He then remembered that his former student Miron Galić had created a work, *Cursor* (2016), which was a tracing of his face and thought to re-enact that within his own reenactment of the Dan Graham piece. Thus, *Mirror,* as a reenactment within a reenactment of a piece that in itself is all about reenactment, literally operates as a mirror, but this time, reflecting one artwork within another, through a performer who does no longer see or speak and therefore can only join the audience to witness the performative turn of the technological apparatus.

In Emile Zile's *Performer/Audience/Lens* (2018), Zile stands directly in front of the audience. Behind him is a video camera that records his live performance and projects it on the screen behind him so that the audience sees him from both angles. In the first part, Zile describes his own movements, such as the inflation of an invisible mattress, and the audience's reaction to them simultaneously. Unlike Graham though, he describes not only these movements but also

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his biological functioning, the release of endomorphism, sweating, etc., thus turning the observational lens towards the "inside" of the body, and the "outside". Zile clearly acknowledges the public, "I am the performer and you are the audience", suggesting that there are in fact "many lenses amongst us"; referring herewith to his and the audience's mobile devices, the ongoing notifications from his phone, such as Uber asking him for a 5-star rating, which are the underwater cables that visualise the journey of the internet. About halfway through the performance, the light changes and becomes darker. The distances described are no longer just those between the audience in the room and the performer. At this point, Zile turns his back on the audience and starts to talk to them through the screen. He types on his phone, live streaming to Instagram, thus creating two audiences, one in the room and one on the phone in his hand. The audience in the room is live. The audience on the phone, he says, is also live but not interactive, though it could weave. Zile then concludes the performance by imagining himself looking at the footage of the performance in the future with his children in a nursing home.

Zile's re-interpretation of Graham's work remediates between three different audiences, existing at three different points in time and space: the audience in the room, witnessing the event live; the audience online, witnessing the mediated event live, and the hypothetical future audience, who may one day witness the event as historical documentation. In so doing he draws attention to the fact that today's live feed is, already now, tomorrow's history. In his discussion with Suzanne Sanders, which followed the performance, Zile suggested that the title of his work could well have been *Performer/Audience/Network* or *Performer/Audience/Camera* rather than *Performer Audience/Lens*, largely as a reflection of the similarities between the historical period in which Graham produced the original work and our times. Zile suggested that the additional principal layer offered by his reinterpretation consisted of the additional layer of audiences provided by the online distribution of images through social media and, possibly also, by the simultaneous understanding of a performance as a live event and a document. Crucially here, the mirror is a lens that operates, as well as a camera and network. Because of this, the relation

between the performer and the audience becomes multiple and the present assumes a rhizomatic structure. While this work, as in Graham's case, remains about presence, *our* presence here, and invariably *our* present, is fundamentally at stake.

The "UNFOLD workshop" concluded with several reinterpretations offered by van Weelden's students at the Rietveld Academie, which focussed on remediating Graham's original work. As in Zile's piece, the students used social media to reflect or mirror the audience, limiting the performer's role to an online content interpreter and, herewith, reflecting (i.e. flipping) the dynamics at stake in Graham's original work. Here, the audience describes and documents itself, while the performer becomes the sole spectator of this act.

The workshop at LIMA offered both the opportunity to think about the role of reenactments and reinterpretation in the context of preservation and to provide valuable insight into the lasting "attraction" and "power" of Graham's work. This, LIMA had suggested, may be located somewhere else for each of the artists involved in the workshop, and each new work might therefore highlight, and so help to preserve, a different aspect or iteration of the "original". Thus, the academy students, who had been asked to reflect on *Audience/Performer/Mirror* (the De Appel version) – what it may stand for today, which part of the work is still relevant, what needs to be "updated" – identified a reversal in roles in that the "original" audience is now the performer, meaning, perhaps, that the "original" performer can now only be the documenter.

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(Re)Making Dance History Together: Working Towards a Collaborative Historiography of Dance

Timmy De Laet

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Introduction: Reconsidering Reenactment

Ever since its steadily increasing prominence in the fields of dance, performance art, and the visual arts from the late 1990s onward, artistic reenactment has either been hailed or denounced (albeit less frequently) for its potential to spur alternative modes of historiography that, seasoned with the creativity of artists, are often characterised as "affective",[1] "embodied",[2] or "performative".[3] By attaching these labels to the various ways in which artists have been engaging with history through their practice, scholarly discourse has attempted to follow closely in the footsteps of reenactment as it made its way into the arts. Specifically with regard to

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1. Louis van den Hengel, "Archives of Affect: Performance, Reenactment, and the Becoming of Memory", in *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, ed. László Munteán, Liedeke Plate, and Anneke Smelik (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2017): 125-142.

2. Dipti Desai and Jessica Hamlin, "Artists in the Realm of Historical Methods: The Sound, Smell, and Taste of History", in *History as Art, Art as History*, ed. Dipti Desai, Jessica Hamlin, and Rachel Mattson (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2009): 47-66.

3. Katherine Johnson, "Performing Pasts for Present Purposes: Reenactment as Embodied, Performative History", in *History, Memory, Performance*, ed. David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and Kathryn Prince (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 36-52.

dance, choreographic forms of reenactment gave rise to reinvigorated views on the complex relationships between dance and the archive, dancers and historians, movement and memory, choreography and ephemerality – pushing forward some of the most fundamental issues that not only constitute dance studies as a field of academic inquiry but also (and most importantly) underlie its future directions.

At this point in time, and nearly twenty years after reenactment first became recognisable as an artistic "genre" in its own right, we are in a position to start looking back on a practice that in itself revolves around the act of looking back. In this contribution, I wish to mimic this act by throwing a retrospective glance at – and perhaps offer a somewhat speculative prospect of – *collaboration* in and beyond choreographic reenactment. I more specifically want to look at collaboration as a particular aspect of choreographic reenactment that somehow went unnoticed in the midst of the predominant focus on the role of the body in reenacting dance, but one with important implications for standard modes of doing dance historiography. Certainly, it was by squarely inserting the body – both as a literal medium and as a discursive figure of thought – into the key operations of the historical profession such as archiving, documenting, and writing history that reenactment in dance has endeavoured to widen the scope and the tools of traditional historiography in arguably unprecedented ways. However, various other implications of choreographic reenactment are equally incisive for dance historiography, though they are often much harder to discern. In that sense, it is hardly surprising that what we can describe as the "deep impact" of choreographic reenactment is coming to the surface only now, after an incubation period of nearly two decades.

Despite my intention to go beyond the emphasis on embodiment and corporeality in the discourse on choreographic reenactment, the chief principle of collaboration I want to focus on is nonetheless central to the idea of "body-to-body transmission" that, as has been variously argued, buttresses most forms of reenactment in dance.[4] Precisely

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4. For more on body-to-body transmission in reenactment, see Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London

because traditional media for documenting live performances (such as videos, photographs, writings, or notations) are hardly sufficient to reconstruct dances from the past, the embodied knowledges of dancers who had a direct link with the source material are a necessary supplement for dance reenactors endeavouring to recreate a specific work. But in order to probe the actual significance of this "body-to-body transmission", I want to reformulate this crucial process in terms of collaboration. This notion is less tailored to the body and might have a broader resonance, which is of paramount importance if we are to fathom the so-called "deep impact" of choreographic reenactment on dance historiography.

Choreographic Collaborations
In his editorial introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, Mark Franko is one of the first to hint at the importance of collaboration for choreographic reenactment. He notes that one of the primary characteristics that may differentiate reenactment from traditional forms of dance reconstruction is that "the dancer frequently works through the memory of a custodian of the work".[5] Importantly, collaborating with custodians indicates how choreographic reenactment does away with the prerequisite of distance as a primordial condition for historiography in particular and research in general. Examples of how different forms of collaboration are an essential drive behind choreographic reenactment are not difficult to find: for *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* (2009), Fabián Barba went to train with Susanne Linke, Irene Sieben, and Katharine Sehnert; Martin Nachbar similarly worked with Waltraud Luley to learn Dore Hoyer's expressionist dancing style for his piece *Urheben Aufheben* (2008). However, collaboration takes other forms too: one could refer to Anne Collod, who deliberately went to consult Anna Halprin in order to create her so-called "replay" of Halprin's notorious 1965 piece *Parades and Changes* (2008), or to Olga de Soto's reliance on

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and New York: Routledge, 2011) and Lesley Main, ed., *Transmission in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
5. Mark Franko, "Editorial Introduction", in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. Mark Franko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 10.

what in essence is oral history for pieces such as *Histoire(s)* (2004) and *Debords: Reflections on the Green Table* (2012). We can consider all these works as forms of collaboration as well.

According to sociologist Rudi Laermans, "within the world of contemporary dance, the preference for shifting artistic collaborations of the more equal and diverse kind has become quite outspoken after its initial re-emergence during the second half of the 1990s".[6] If Laermans's observation holds true, it should come as no surprise that dancers endeavouring to reenact dances from the past go searching for the input of direct witnesses to help them realise their aims. Choreographic reenactment aligns with a larger trend in contemporary dance and the arts, increasingly bending towards collaboration as a preferred working mode, particularly in projects that take artistic research as one of their driving principles. Following this trend, there is a burgeoning body of literature grappling with both the potentials and pitfalls of artistic research through collaboration[7]. In some cases, this interest also leads to critical assessments of how collaboration can play into the predicaments of our current neoliberal regime in which creativity, flexibility, or self-realisation become marketable values.[8]

Against this background, the central role of collaboration in choreographic reenactment is neither new nor exceptional. The more interesting and urgent question – the one I also want to raise in this contribution – is why it comes

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6. Rudi Laermans, "'Being in Common': Theorizing Artistic Collaboration", *Performance Research* 17, no. 6 (2012): 94. For a more expansive discussion, see Rudi Laermans, "The Social Choreographies of Collaboration", in *Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015): 337-392.

7. For more on the role of collaboration in artistic research, see Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold, eds., *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2008); Martin Blain and Helen Julia Minors, eds., *Artistic Research in Performance through Collaboration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

8. See, for instance, Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier, eds., *Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premises, Workings and Failures* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit, eds., *A History of Collective Creation* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Karen Savage and Dominic Symonds, *Economies of Collaboration in Performance: More than the Sum of the Parts* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

that, even when choreographic reenactment is steadily being recognised as a form of historiography potentially expanding existing methodologies within dance history, collaborative modes of working have not found their way (yet) to dance historiography in its scholarly instances? Put otherwise: what can dance historians learn from dancers engaging with reenactment besides the fact that the body too acts as a living archive incorporating its own embodied documentation? Could it not be that reenactment impels us to deal seriously with collaboration as a partial yet primordial strategy to cope with some of the challenges that continue to haunt dance history? These challenges are well-known, as they include the difficulty in accounting for embodied knowledges, the limited legibility of archival materials, the epistemological valorisation of memories held by different actants within the field of dance (and beyond), the need to decolonise dance history by looking at global crosscurrents, or the mere fact that there is only so much a dance historian can do by her/himself.[9] Several recent trends in dance historiography speak directly to some of these issues and open up new avenues that, as I will argue, can be deepened and intensified by pursuing an interdisciplinary dialogue with recent theorisations of what is known as global history, on the one hand, and with the practice of choreographic reenactment, on the other hand.

The Changing Scope of Dance Histories
In her chapter for *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, Susan Manning lucidly articulates some of the most crucial issues dance history faces as we move forward into the twenty-first century. She traces how a so-called "nation-state model" (which structures dance history along relatively clear yet imaginary boundaries) has been shifting toward what she calls a "transnational model". This model broadens the purview of dance history by paying closer attention to the circulation of dance and dancers in more

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9. For more on the challenges presented by the archivization of dance, see Arike Oke, "Keeping Time in Dance Archives: Moving Towards the Phenomenological Archive Space", *Archives and Records* 38, no. 2 (2017): 197-211; Sarah Gutsche-Miller, "The Limitations of the Archive: Lost Ballet Histories and the Case of Madame Mariquita", *Dance Research* 38, no. 2 (2020): 296-310.

extensive networks of exchange and mutual influences.[10] While Manning is sympathetic to this shift, she remains wary of privileging the newer transnational model over the presumably older nation-state model, emphasising that both approaches are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In her view, even the more recent work on transnational dance histories is already showing its limitations, as she claims:

> there remains much work to be done before we achieve a fully rounded account of modern dance in transnational circulation. At present, we have a wide array of new studies but few accounts that attempt to synthesize, compare and map the transnational historiography.[11]

According to Manning, dance history needs to develop a more integrative approach that combines macro- and micro-perspectives. This move is necessary to arrive at historical studies that cover a larger scale and at the same time account for local particularities against the background of broader crosscurrents within the dance scene as well as the cultural, social, and political climate in which dance is always necessarily grounded.

The importance of Manning's remarks comes into relief when juxtaposed with one of the observations voiced by Janet Adshead-Lansdale and June Layson in their 1994 book *Dance History: An Introduction*. Writing about "general histories of dance" that typically stretch over large timespans, they note that "it is perhaps significant that few recent dance scholars have attempted such ambitious projects, knowing from modern historical methods and social anthropological research how problematic enterprises of this kind are".[12] The prototypical example of such long-term history is, of course, Curt Sachs's notorious *Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes*

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10. Susan Manning, "Dance History", in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, ed. Sherril Dodds (London: Bloomsbury, 2019): 303-326. A similar shift can be observed in the transition from "international relations" to "world politics" that took place in political science from the 1990s onward. See, for instance, Michael N. Barnett and Kathryn Sikkink, "From International Relations to Global Society", in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 62-83.

11. Manning, "Dance History", 321.

12. Janet Adshead-Lansdale and June Layson, eds., *Dance History: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994): 33-34.

(first published in 1933, and translated in English in 1965 as *World History of Dance*). Sachs's study exemplifies some of the fundamental flaws that so-called "world histories" of this kind commonly suffer from, most notably the tendency to forge the history of dance into a teleological narrative that progresses from allegedly primitive forms of dance in foreign lands to so-called more "developed" choreographic genres as they emerged in mainly the Western world.[13]

Due to the universalist underpinnings of the world history paradigm exemplified by Sachs, the response of dance history has primarily been to choose a more limited timespan and to focus on single oeuvres or a selected range of case studies.[14] The result, however, is that there are currently hardly any qualitative textbooks for teaching dance history at either undergraduate or graduate levels. The choice for richness in detail comes with a loss: when the emphasis on specific historical events takes precedence over the insight into larger periodical frameworks (however relative they may be), it becomes increasingly difficult to grasp the significance of these events within their particular contexts. In this respect, the emergence of what Manning terms the transnational model may initiate a promising new direction in dance historiography. This is especially the case when the recent interest in enlarging the scope of dance historical inquiry does not signal a return to the older types of world histories but rather aligns itself with what is known as "global history". While the notion of "global history" is subject to various understandings, generally speaking, it constitutes a methodological lens through which historians develop a perspective on the past that absolves historiography from the universalist ethnocentrism that impregnates

13. For a still insightful account of the influence of Sachs's *World History of Dance* on dance history, see Suzanne Youngerman, "Curt Sachs and his Heritage: A Critical Review of World History of the Dance with a Survey of Recent Studies that Perpetuate his Ideas", *CORD News* 6, no. 2 (1974): 6-19.

14. There are, however, a few exceptions of historical studies that do seem to move more in the direction of the world history paradigm, although it should be acknowledged they are rarely published by university presses while they also limit their scope to Western dance. See, for instance, Trenton Hamilton, ed., *The History of Western Dance* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing and Rosen Publishing, 2016); Laura Cappelle, ed., *Nouvelle histoire de la danse en Occident: De la préhistoire à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2020); Dorion Weickmann, *Tanz: Die Muttersprache des Menschen* (Munich: Herbig, 2012).

the genre of world history while retaining some of its atten-
tion to larger scales and more extended periods of time.[15]
To the extent that dance history might be moving in the
direction of so-called "global history", it is instructive to
have a brief look at how this branch of research is taking
shape in historiography at large.

Convergences with Global History
Because global history is still often confounded with the
older genre of world histories, historians have been at pains
to differentiate both approaches, often by articulating the
main methodological underpinnings of global history as
the "newer" type of historiography. Following Sebastian
Conrad, these underpinnings can be summarised in the
seven following principles:

1. Global historians are not concerned with macro-
   perspectives alone;
2. Global histories experiment with alternative notions of
   space;
3. Global histories are inherently relational;
4. Global history forms part of the larger "spatial turn";
5. Global history emphasizes the synchronicity of historical
   events;
6. Global histories are self-reflective on the issue of Euro-
   centrism;
7. Global histories explicitly recognise the positionality of
   thinking about the global past.[16]

It obviously falls beyond the scope of this contribution to
discuss in detail each of the principles outlined by Conrad.
Most pertinent are the strong resonances one can identi-
fy between these tenets of global history and some of the
most prominent issues currently debated within dance
history and, more generally, dance studies. For example, the
emphasis on not only time (claim 5) but also space (claims 2

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15. For a useful disambiguation of the terms "universal history", "world hi-
story", "transnational history", and "global history", see Jürgen Osterhammel,
"Global History", *Debating New Approaches to History*, ed. Marek Tamm and Peter
Burke (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019): 27-28.

16. These seven principles are based on Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?*
(Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016): 65-67.

and 4) and positionality (claim 7) reflects how these topics have gained renewed attention inside dance history too, particularly in the wake of choreographic reenactment.[17] Similarly, the need for a decolonising turn within historiography (claim 6) and for combining macro-perspectives with micro-level analyses (claim 1) are at the forefront of dance studies as well.[18] Yet the perhaps most critical aspect concerns the relationality (claim 3) that according to Conrad is an inherent part of the perspective of global history, which is why I want to delve briefly into this particular dimension.

Whether we call it transnational or global history, the primary hallmark of this emerging field is the interest in what is variously described as "connections", "networks", "entanglements", "links", "exchanges", "flows", or "circulations". These terms indicate how the focus shifts towards the dynamics of more extensive historical processes that cross regional or national boundaries, temporal or historical periods, and spatial or geographical demarcations. One of the primary reasons explaining why global history has been growing popular amongst historians from the 1990s onward is, of course, that Marshall McLuhan's 1967 dictum that "we now live in a 'global village'" has become, probably more than ever, a palpable reality.[19] Postwar capitalism,

17. Elsewhere, I have argued that reenactment – or, more broadly, the interest of contemporary choreographers in reinventing the dance archive through performance – essentially proposes a topographic understanding of choreography that, despite the concern with history and time, might be more usefully framed in terms of space. See Timmy De Laet, "The Anarchive of Contemporary Dance: Toward a Topographic Understanding of Choreography", in *The Routledge Companion to Dance Studies*, ed. Helen Thomas and Stacey Prickett (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2020): 177-190.

18. See, for instance, Anurima Banerji and Royona Mitra, eds., *Conversations across the Field of Dance Studies: Decolonizing Dance Discourses*, vol. XL (2020); Ananya Chatterjea, "Of Corporeal Rewritings, Translations, and the Politics of Difference in Dancing", in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, ed. Rebekah J. Kowal, Gerald Siegmund, and Randy Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 283-302; Ramsay Burt, "The Specter of Interdisciplinarity", *Dance Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (2009): 3-22; Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein, *Methoden der Tanzwissenschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015, second edition): 13.

19. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, [1967] 2001): 63. It should be noted that McLuhan actually mentions the term "global village" a few times in his earlier book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet Books, 1964).

transnational migration, digital technologies, social media, world politics and diplomacy led historians to a growing awareness of how various networks and patterns of circulation are driving forces behind history. These factors put under pressure some of the most cardinal premises of twentieth-century historiography. In her contribution to a 2019 special issue on "Historicizing the Global" of the *Journal of Global History*, Katja Naumann similarly observes that "the last decades have seen crucial conceptual shifts", which she explains as follows:

> Realities of connections, flows, and entanglements are in the centre, while metaphysical presuppositions are challenged. Scholars try to break with overly universalist and orientalist views by confronting them with primary source-based and decentred reconstructions of the unity of the world, which bring out differences, convergences, and diversity.[20]

Nonetheless, even while avowing that there is certain "newness" to the renewed interest in relational understandings of historiography that underpin global history, Naumann contends that such a development has a longer history itself that is not always readily recognised. In her account, this history harks back to critical innovations in the historical profession long before the twentieth century and which, through "continuing conceptual revisions" of the "global", laid the ground for the interest in transnational world histories as they appeared from the 1960s throughout the 1980s onward.[21] What remains conspicuously missing from her otherwise highly informed genealogy, however, is the tradition within historiography spawning from the notion of *longue durée*. This concept was first introduced by the French historian Fernand Braudel in the late 1950s and

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20. Katja Naumann, "Long-term and Decentred Trajectories of Doing History from a Global Perspective: Institutionalization, Postcolonial Critique, and Empiricist Approaches, Before and After the 1970s", *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 3 (2019): 336. For a similar historicization of the category of the "global" but from a more elaborate de- and post-colonial perspective, see Sujit Sivasundaram, "Making the Globe: A Cultural History of Science in the Bay of Bengal", *Cultural History* 9, no. 2 (October 2020): 217-240. Sivasundaram's article appeared in a special issue on "Global Cultural History". I thank Hanna Järvinen for drawing my attention to this issue and to Sivasundaram's contribution.

21. Naumann, "Long-term and Decentred Trajectories", 339.

has been attracting renewed attention in recent years from historians and theorists of history alike.

A case in point is a 2015 issue of *Annales* that collects a range of critical interventions under the title of "Debating the *Longue Durée*". The starting point for that debate is a text written by the American historians David Armitage and Jo Guldi, in which they argue for a return to Braudel's *longue durée* as a necessary counterpoint to the predominance of so-called microhistories that might be valuable for their focus on local or individual specificities of historical events, but which fail to chart more extensive historical processes across various geographical regions as well as different periods of time. In their view, recent technological developments allow for the analysis of "big data", adding not only a renewed urgency to history as *longue durée* but also forging arguably unprecedented possibilities to expand the scope of historiography.[22] As such, Armitage and Guldi echo a call they voiced previously in their 2014 *The History Manifesto*. Here they state that digital tools can help "to promote longue-durée synthesis that includes perspectives other than that of the nation-state" but they also note that this potential "rest[s] upon the ongoing creation and maintenance of inclusive archives".[23]

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Inclusive yet Dispersive Archives
The idea of creating and maintaining "inclusive archives" is a crucial addition that, even though Armitage and Guldi do not make it entirely concrete, counters a trenchant critique that in recent years has been directed at the development of the "new" genre of global history. As historian Matthias Middell observes, "since the mid-2010s", critics

22. David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "The Return of the *Longue Durée*: An Anglo-American Perspective", *Annales HSS* 70, no. 2 (April-June 2015): 219-247. The article by Armitage and Guldi opens a special issue on "Debating the *Long Durée*", which is of course an appropriate topic for *Annales* since this is the journal that served as an important outlet for Fernand Braudel's theorization of the "long durée" and which eventually led to the so-called "Annales School". It is interesting to note that the editorial introduction of the special issue explicitly disagrees with the position taken by Armitage and Guldi. For more on the reasons behind this disagreement, see Les Annales, "Debating the *Long Durée*", *Annales HSS* 70, no. 2 (April-June 2015): 215-217.
23. David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 113.

of global history have warned against "an inherent ideological globalism and a problematic narrowing towards an Anglo-Saxon model of globalisation".[24] Despite the justified wariness that global history risks mimicking or even reinforcing deep structures of hegemonic imperialism, it does seem to generate an outspoken emphasis on inclusivity amongst its adherents. In this vein, historian Dominique Sachsenmeier suggests that global history holds the promise (although it often remains unfulfilled potential) to "be characterized by a diversity of standpoints, each of which would be rooted in a widely independent scholarly tradition and, by implication, provide alternative viewpoints to Western narratives".[25] The political awareness following from the scope of global histories will probably sound like a welcome proposition for many scholars and artists engaging with dance history. To the extent that global history aims to strike a balance between microhistories of individuals and global tendencies, it feeds into ongoing debates on decolonisation within and outside the field of dance studies. The underlying current that appears to connect scholarship on dance with the emerging strand of global history may be the growing awareness that not only dance but also society at large need to work against the oppressive dominance of the West, which continues to creep into critical thought as well as cultural practices like dance.

At the same time, the very notion of "inclusive archives" takes on a different dimension in the context of dance as it touches upon the fundamental problem that every attempt at archiving dance inevitably brings to light. We have grown accustomed to the fact that, as an art of movement, dance resists any easy entrance into the archive as we traditionally know it, often reinforcing the well-known lament of dance's presumably inescapable ephemerality. Yet, it is exactly this longstanding emphasis on dance's evanescence that has overshadowed some of the more structural reasons behind the heuristically poor conditions with which dance historical

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24. Matthias Middell, "From Universal History to Transregional Perspectives: The Challenge of the Cultural and Spatial Turn to World and Global History in the 1970s and Today", *Cultural History* 9, no. 2 (October 2020): 241.
25. Dominique Sachsenmeier, *Global Perspectives on Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 12.

research still confronts us today. The limited timespan of dance stems arguably not so much from dance's alleged transient nature but rather from the fact that dance is a deeply *dispersive* art form. The work of dance tends to spread among various actants, including not only choreographers, dancers, or teachers, but also spectators, scholars, or critics. Moreover, unexpected encounters, inadvertent or wilful exposure to outer influences, and changing institutional contexts all impregnate the dance works that eventually appear on stage. However, precisely because these seemingly random yet formative circumstances take place *off* stage, they tend to remain out of sight and, from a historical point of view, hardly traceable.

By describing dance as a deeply dispersive art form, I am, of course, reminiscent of how Michel Foucault affords a considerable if not essential place to the principle of dispersion within his theorisation of the archive and his view on what he calls archaeology. As we can already read in the opening pages of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault's archaeological project opposes itself to the "total description" as practised in traditional historiography and constitutes instead what he terms "a general history" that "would deploy the space of a dispersion".[26] In other words, Foucault distances his archaeology from the unifying narratives construed by historians who work to streamline the capricious courses of past events by focusing on causal relationships, homogenising analogies, and periodisation. As an alternative, archaeology embraces the somewhat unorthodox principles of indeterminacy, contingency, and dispersion. Equally important is that the notion of dispersion allows Foucault to conceive the archive as an overarching system that comprises both so-called "discursive" and "non-discursive" practices. Archaeology "tries to determine how the rules of formation that govern it [...] may be linked to non-discursive systems", Foucault writes.[27] Put otherwise, insofar as Foucault conceptualises the archive as the regulatory system determining what can and cannot be said, the archaeological approach would

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26. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, [1969] 2002): 11.
27. Ibid., 174-180.

need to take into account how discursive regulations *and* non-discursive practices relate to one another since the impact of the former manifests itself in the reality of the latter, and vice versa.

Through Foucault, we can get a better sense of the profoundly dispersive nature of dance and the many challenges this presents for dance historical research. These challenges are hard to tackle through isolated or individual efforts only, particularly when we truly want to account for dance's dispersion amongst various non-discursive circumstances that in their turn are contingent on discursive regulatory frameworks. Moreover, these difficulties are exacerbated when the scope of history enlarges toward global histories. Consequently, it can be argued that *collaborative* research formats are required to start tracing the myriad networks and pathways that specific dance works as well as individual dancers, choreographers, or companies have followed throughout different periods of time and across multiple regions. Digital humanities obviously provide – as Armitage and Guldi suggest too – important auxiliary tools and methods for this kind of laborious research, allowing us to enlarge the scale of historical studies in an arguably unprecedented manner. However, despite the at times euphoric embracing of digital technologies, it is important to remember that merely mapping the cross-connections between historical events or the networks through which people, works, influences, or expertise circulate is hardly satisfactory when it comes to generating genuine historical knowledge of the topic under scrutiny. As Sebastian Conrad firmly states, "a focus on connections alone is not enough to make good global history".[28] This means that qualitative research remains necessary even when digital tools may facilitate the collection, processing, and visualisation of historical data. The question, then, is what forms collaborative research can take within dance studies and, more to my interest here, how it can be applied to dance historiography.

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28. Conrad, *What is Global History?*, 68.

Collaborative Research in Dance

A few examples from dance studies (as well as from the adjacent fields of theatre and performance studies) suggest that scholars are increasingly exploring collaborative research methods, despite all the challenges collaboration in academia may bring. One of the probably most symptomatic indications of the growing interest in collaborative approaches is the recent joint issue of *Global Performance Studies* and the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, titled "Collaborative Research in Theatre and Performance Studies". Explaining the rationale behind their choice for this theme, the editors raise a basic but shrewd question: "Considering the high level of collaboration necessary to produce theatre and performance, why is so much of the scholarship on the subject written by single authors?".[29] Interestingly, the editors turned the theme of the joint issue into a formal principle as they would only accept contributions "authored by three or more collaborators" in order to "explicitly open space for collaborative scholarship and to encourage the joint production of academic work".[30] Obviously, the collaborative authorship pursued here is far removed from the common practice in the exact sciences to mention members of research teams as authors of journal articles even when they did not contribute to the writing of the piece. Instead, the stated invitation is for scholars to engage in the intricacies of genuine collaborative work as well as to learn from the collaborative nature of the practices under scrutiny.[31] It is the *process* of collaboration that stands central in this joint issue rather than simply assuming that the contributions are the *product* of collaborative work.

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29. Kevin Brown, Felipe Cervera, Kyoko Iwaki, Eero Laine, and Kristof van Baarle, "Antemortem: Collaborative Research in Theatre and Performance Studies", *GPS: Global Performance Studies* 4, no. 3 (2021), https://gps.psi-web.org/issue-4-2/gps-4-2-1/ [accessed 30 December 2021].

30. Call for Papers, "Collaborative Research in Theatre and Performance Studies", https://gps.psi-web.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/GPS_4_2_CFP.pdf [accessed 30 December 2021].

31. A recent and insightful book that explores the process of collaborative writing and critically inquires the institutional politics surrounding co-authorship is William Duffy, *Beyond Conversation: Collaboration and the Production of Writing* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2021). Duffy's book is yet another example testifying to the growing interest in collaborative scholarship.

Another example of collaborative research closer to dance studies is Harmony Bench and Kate Elswit's project "Dunham's Data: Katherine Dunham and Digital Methods for Dance Historical Inquiry" (2018-2021). Characteristic of "Dunham's Data" is that it draws on digital humanities to trace the networks and circulations through which Dunham's practices moved, leading to a form of transnational dance history as discussed by Susan Manning. In an interim report published in *Dance Research* in November 2020, Bench and Elswit importantly show how their dance historical research aims to go beyond merely establishing relations between different sets of archival and documentary data, using these findings instead for qualitative scholarly analysis. They point out how they deliberately pursue what they call a "polyvocality" in their research by seeking a "dialogue with those who hold deep knowledge of Dunham's history, practices, and legacy".[32] To this end, they are conducting oral history interviews with former company members while also planning to produce a publication with commissioned essays by experts. It can be said that "Dunham's Data" intends to find productive synergies between new collaborative research methods and more conventional forms of analysis and output, which might mitigate any concerns that collaboration necessarily implies overthrowing established modes of researching and writing that – despite their limitations – have proven their value in generating historical insight. Most crucially, Bench and Elswit undertake collaborative research in a broader sense than generally conceived, insofar as it not only involves the joint work of researchers but also actively aims at including the informational input of historical agents.

Other examples of collaborative research in dance that deserve mention here could include, for instance, the work theorist Erin Brannigan has been doing with dance artists Lizzie Thomson and Matthew Day. Labelling their joint endeavours as a form of "co-habitation", they claim they "are not working towards concrete outcomes with shared authorship" and are instead "*co-habiting* a field of research

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32. Harmony Bench and Kate Elswit, "Dance History and Digital Humanities Meet at the Archives: An Interim Project Report on Dunham's Data", *Dance Research* 38, no. 2 (2020): 293.

interests".[33] A similar conception of collaboration underlies the research set-up developed by choreographer Wayne McGregor and dance scholar Scott deLahunta, initially as a part of a project called "Choreography and Cognition" (2003-2004), but later expanded into various other projects and collaborations. The "collaborative framework" initiated in this context entailed that "the choreographer, the dancers and the scientists were very much equal partners, with everyone included in one form of dialogue or another, and all parties came away with material that they found useful for their own practice".[34] Coming from a different angle is the collaborative project "Dancing with Parkinson's" (2019-–2021), led by professor of dialogic communication Louise Jane Phillips at the Roskilde University in Denmark. This project aims to investigate the therapeutic use of dance for people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease through a series of workshops that build on a collaborative research design to gain insight into the experiences and knowledge of both patients and their spouses (or family). Specific to "Dancing with Parkinson's" is also the critical engagement with so-called "participatory health research" by tracing the tensions that might arise in the co-production of knowledge through the actual involvement of patients in conducting research.[35]

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Even though the above outline is necessarily brief and far from exhaustive, it does indicate that collaborative research methods are not only increasingly forging themselves into the field of dance studies but can also take many different

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33. Erin Brannigan, Matthew Day, and Lizzie Thomson, "Research as Co-Habitation: Experimental Composition across Theory and Practice", *Performing Process: Sharing Dance and Choreographic Practice*, ed. Hetty Blades and Emma Meehan (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2018): 83.

34. Philip Barnard and Scott deLahunta, "Mapping the Audit Traces of Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Bridging and Blending Between Choreography and Cognitive Science", *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 42, no. 4 (2017): 361. The outputs of the "Choreography and Cognition" research project can be consulted online: https://www.choreocog.net [accessed 31 December 2021].

35. For the project website, see: https://ruc.dk/en/forskningsprojekt/dancing-parkinsons [accessed 3 January 2022]. For a more in-depth discussion of the "participatory health research" pursued within this project, see Louise Phillips, Lisbeth Frølunde, and Maria Bee Christensen-Strynø, "Confronting the Complexities of 'Co-Production' in Participatory Health Research: A Critical, Reflexive Approach to Power Dynamics in a Collaborative Project on Parkinson's Dance", *Qualitative Health Research* 31, no. 7 (June 2021): 1290-1305.

forms.[36] However, it is striking that the number of collaborative projects in dance history is relatively small. Collaboration seems to be a more common mode of working in interdisciplinary research that not only engages the exact sciences but also involves the active participation of living choreographers and dancers. Historiographical research on dance, on the other hand, is still more often a solitary endeavour complying with the habituated idea that the historian's work consists of individual archival research, even when complemented by oral history. Perhaps it is at this juncture that choreographic reenactment can serve as an inspiring practice to implement collaboration in dance historiographical research more broadly.

Learning from Reenactment
If we are, as suggested earlier, on the cusp of a shift towards transnational or global dance histories, standard approaches to doing historiographical research clearly reach their limits. Whether or not this shift effectively heralds a new chapter in the history of the histories of dance remains to be seen, but there is hardly any doubt that important new developments are reshaping the field. Whereas the possibilities offered by digital technologies may enhance these new directions, I would argue that choreographic reenactment too might furnish some crucial methodological clues that have the potential to enlarge the standard set of research approaches for dance historians. Most crucially, to the extent that collaboration often plays a constitutive role in choreographic reenactment, we need to ask if and how collaboration could also turn into a methodological principle for academic dance histo-

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36. For a brief exploration of the different forms collaboration can assume in dance research, see Sherrie Barr, "Collaborative Practices in Dance Research: Unpacking the Process", *Research in Dance Education* 16, no. 1 (2015): 51-66. Barr, however, does not refer to collaborative historiographical dance research. For a more personal account of collaborative fieldwork in dance ethnography, see Judy Van Zile, "Moving into Someone Else's Research Project: Issues in Collaborative Research", *Perspectives in Motion: Engaging the Visual in Dance and Music*, ed. Kendra Stepputat and Brian Diettrich (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021): 90-105. For still a few other examples of collaborative research in dance, see Rachel Fensham, "Research Methods and Problems", *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, ed. Sherril Dodds (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019): 45-55.

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riography. It should be clear by now that collaboration in this respect does not mean so much how researchers work together in a team and on a single project, but rather how the research itself would be opened up to other agents as well as to the interaction between different types of media (including text, sound, objects, image, movement, voice, and embodied knowledges). From this point of view, choreographic reenactment suggests several important avenues that could enrich dance historical research. Based merely on the few examples I mentioned earlier, it is possible already to give some indication of the directions in which this might go: the fact that Olga de Soto decided to conduct oral history interviews with audience members who had seen the premiere of Kurt Jooss's *The Green Table* instead of performers demonstrates the historical value of the memories that spectators (and not only dancers) hold of the piece itself, as well as of the larger historical context in which they initially saw it. The manner in which both Fabián Barba and Martin Nachbar collaborated closely with former students of Mary Wigman and Dore Hoyer, respectively, stresses the importance of attending to the role of dance pedagogues in transmitting embodied knowledge that otherwise often remains tacit. Or, knowing that Anne Collod could rely on the relatively extensive scores Anna Halprin created for *Parades and Changes*, but still decided to consult with Halprin testifies to the need to combine material documents and corporeal expertise in order to reactivate historical knowledges.

The methods proposed by choreographic reenactment are in themselves not new, and it definitely would be wrong to claim that reenactment has the pretension to reinvent the historical profession altogether. However, it may be clear that the collaborative orientation that typifies choreographic reenactment provides potentially stimulating pathways for imagining what we might call a genuinely "collaborative dance historiography". Elsewhere, I have similarly argued for an expansion of our standard dance historical methods, advocating not only the more structural inclusion of oral history resources in libraries and archival institutions but also the idea of archival participation in order to enlarge both the input of historical information as well as the output

in terms of archival research and community outreach.[37] In this sense, too, participatory formats can become part of a larger collaborative dance historiography that would deepen and intensify some of the currents that are already on their way in dance historical research. To achieve this, dance studies can seek productive crossovers with other fields that have been showing increasing attention to collaborative conceptions of research, such as history, ethnography, literary history, and interdisciplinary human sciences.[38]

Ultimately, the proposition for a collaborative dance historiography is one partial answer to a fairly basic yet utterly complex question: if reenactment is rightly recognised for producing historical knowledge, we must seriously ask what we can learn from it and where this knowledge goes. Confronting these questions is necessary to ensure that the epistemological value of dance in general and reenactment in particular does not remain confined to either the temporary space of the stage or the limited legibility of historical documents. Instead, following the deeply dispersive nature of dance, research into its histories can only benefit from being similarly dispersed (in a positive sense) amongst various forms of input and output, which can only be achieved through collaborative endeavours.

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37. Timmy De Laet, "Expanding Dance Archives: Access, Legibility, and Archival Participation", *Dance Research* 38, no. 2 (2020): 206-229.

38. Insightful discussions of how collaborative research can take shape in these fields, include (for historiography) Lucy Robinson, "Collaboration In, Collaboration Out: The Eighties in the Age of Digital Reproduction", *Cultural and Social History* 13, no. 3 (2016): 403-42; Barry M. Goldenberg, "Rethinking Historical Practice and Community Engagement: Researching Together with 'Youth Historians'", *Rethinking History* 23, no. 1 (2019): 52-77; (for ethnography) Joanne Rappaport, "Beyond Participant Observation: Collaborative Ethnography as Theoretical Innovation", *Collaborative Anthropologies* 1 (2008): 1-31; (for literary history) Mario J. Valdés, "Collaborative Historiography: A Comparative Literary History of Latin-America", *Neohelicon* 24, no. 2 (1997): 85-93; (for interdisciplinary human sciences) Andy Blunden, ed., *Collaborative Projects: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).

**Watching Dances from the Past:
Considering Performance Analysis in the Realm of
Reenactments**
Susanne Foellmer
translated by Michael Thomas Taylor

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Uferstudios Berlin 2011: The dance collective Lupita Pulpo is showing their current piece, *New*.[1] The situation looks a bit like a rehearsal room at the beginning of a new production: Ayara Hernández Holz, Felix Marchand, and Irina Müller enter the stage and immediately pause, somewhat perplexed, it seems. We witness moments of reflection, of walking around, then finally the suggestion: "Or we could enter from here" – followed by the statement: "This has been done." It quickly becomes apparent that this question-and-answer format will dominate the piece. Every suggestion of a scenic idea or a pattern of movement is immediately countered with the statement that this has happened before. Nothing is new, it seems, in the aesthetic discourse of dance over the last several decades, nothing that could be shown or assert itself as something newly created – or this at least is what we are led to believe by the

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1. This is a slightly reworked version of a chapter that appeared under the title "Aufführungsanalyse in Zeiten der Wiederholung (Performance Analysis in the Age of Repetition)", in Benjamin Wihstutz and Benjamin Hoesch, eds., *Neue Methoden der Theaterwissenschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020): 87-105. Thanks to the editors for the permission to translate and to publish via open-access.

repertoire that the three performers appear to remember. Moments of recognition concurrently arise in the audience, too, depending of course, on their own visual experience. We can hear laughter or other forms of approval whenever an apparently significant pattern of movement is shown, recognized, and thus identified as not "original". When this game of recognition is played by the audience, it becomes a review of each spectator's own catalogue of what they recognize or think they at least ought to recognize.

Performance formats such as reenactments, reconstructions, re-performances and other repetitions of past dance and performance events have become a familiar art form on the theatre stage.[2] And as I will argue here, this development has complicated methods for performance analysis. Of course, the perception, reception, and ultimately analysis of what is seen on stage cannot, as a rule, be about merely apprehending the theatrical event itself. Rather, this understanding must be framed by seeing how the performance is embedded and contextualized – for instance, in terms of specific prevailing discourses of theatre.[3] My view, however, is that performances such as those of Lupita Pulpo – whose representations essentially consist exclusively of references made as allusions, and which thus constellate a kind of intertextual theatre – succinctly demonstrate the limits of a performance analysis merely based, for instance, on semiotic or phenomenological approaches. In this case, an analysis cannot proceed without certain background knowledge in order to make "sense" of what is seen – even if the one carrying out this analysis realizes that they lack this knowledge. In this case, questions arise as to how to fill this gap.

I am not talking here about the fact that the intention, concept, and the discursive and cultural frameworks of a performance must be fully revealed in order to "complete" an analysis. In pieces like *New*, we find a broad system of references to dance from the last several decades that itself constitutes the basic concept of the performance. And here,

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2. In dance, for example, these are supported by programmes such as Tanzfonds Erbe, which are committed to increasing the visibility of dance in the twentieth century. See https://tanzfonds.de/home/ [accessed 12 May 2022].

3. Christopher B. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft* [1995] (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2014): 45.

issues come up that almost automatically go beyond the usual receptive capacity of an audience.[4] In this sense, *New* is not even necessarily new. It's not just performing artists who work with quotations and intermedial references that can be discovered – or not – by analysis if they are not explicitly marked by the work.[5] In its radical exclusions, however, *New* undercuts the foundations of performance analysis, almost demanding that we expand the frame. And in this respect *New* is not a special case, either. Rather, its inter-wovenness with what is outside of the performance shows that particular recent performance formats, such as reen-actments, require even more complex, that is, combined approaches to analysis. How else should one contextualize a stage event that explicitly constructs its foundation on past events, if not also through a historiographical analysis?

In her seminal theoretical approach towards reenactment and its impact on the ontology of performance, Rebecca Schneider places the entanglement of times encountered in reenactments at the core of her investigations: the "*then* and *now* punctuate each other [in the] syncopated time of reenactment".[6] Focusing on the temporality of dance high-lighted in reenactment, Mark Franko stresses that reen-actments "engender an awareness that dance occupies a unique time and space between past and present".[7] Hence,

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4. However, Mark Franko addresses the issue of how the "audience receives historic material" in the reworkings of Baroque dances he undertook in the 1980s, using "quotation" and "citation" as a method as well. For the spectators, this is then "work to be done", also in the Freudian sense of "working through". See further in this volume: Mark Franco and Lucia Ruprecht, "Duet: Witnessing Versus Belatedness: Representation, Reconstruction, and Reenactment", 125-136.

5. See Frédéric Döhl and Renate Wöhrer and here especially Joy Kalu and Benjamin Wihstutz, who point to *Gob Squad's Kitchen* (*You've Never Had It So Good*) (2007) as an example of referential procedures in which the performers themselves have not even seen the quoted Warhol film. Frédéric Döhl and Re-nate Wöhrer, eds., *Zitieren, Approprüeren, Sampeln: Referentielle Verfahren in den Gegenwartskünsten* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014); Joy Kalu and Benjamin Wihstutz, "Memory Plays: Zum Reenactment von Filmen bei Gob Squad und der Wooster Group", in *Zitieren, Approprüeren, Sampeln*, ed. Döhl and Wöhrer: 95-112.

6. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment* (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2011): 2 (original emphasis).

7. Mark Franko, "Introduction: The Power of Recall in a Post-Ephemeral Era", in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reeenactment*, ed. Mark Franko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 1-15.

Lucia Ruprecht points to the crucial question of how to approach "pastness" in the "non-positivistic genre of reenactment" given that, with Freud, there is "no primacy of presence", no original, but an always already "belatedness" that becomes evident in choreography as the very "object that animates", as Franko again accentuates.[8] Given that the crossing-over of past and present is one of the crucial points in reenactments, I wonder how methods in performance analysis would have to adapt to this.

In the following, I would like to take *New* as an example to outline the methodological possibilities and limitations of performance analysis based on seminal models, to then address questions of historiographical entanglement using the example of the reenactment *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* by Fabián Barba (2009). Both examples will also allow me to critically ask about the necessity of prior or contextual knowledge for a performance. My main point of reference lies in German theatre studies, following the methods usually taught in the respective undergraduate programs at universities in Germany.

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"This Has Been Done"
Nearly halfway through the performance of *New*, dancer Felix Marchand performs a few poses with the help of his T-shirt. Irina Müller is watching him. The following dialogue unfolds, part of the scheme of offer-and-rejection that spans the entire piece. Marchand pulls his shirt over his head and asks: "What about this?" To which Müller replies: "Done". "Or this?" – he stretches out his arms with his shirt over his head, exposing his naked upper body. Müller: "Done". Finally, Marchand bends forward, as his T-shirt continues to cover his head and upper arms, and lands in a pose similar to the downward-facing dog in yoga, that is, with his hands and feet on the ground, hips pointing up and backward, and legs stretched out: "Or?" Müller: "Done". A murmur of recognition runs through the audience: some of its members have identified Marchand's pose as a movement still of the piece *Self Unfinished* by dancer Xavier Le Roy (1998). The work has become iconic in the

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8.   Franko and Ruprecht, "Duet", 125-136.

memory of contemporary dance,[9] which is why it is apparently familiar to many in the audience.

With reference to Erika Fischer-Lichte's model of semiotic performance analysis, we can examine the scene I have described within the framework of a complex sign system. Fischer-Lichte's analysis is influenced by linguistics in her understanding of performances as theatrical texts, yet she develops an expanded model of text that includes space, sound, and the body together with its various gestural, mimic, and proxemic signs.[10] Her attention mainly lies on spoken theatre with a focus on actors. When she first suggested this model, it represented a valuable approach to broadening the analysis of theatre beyond its limitation on the dramatic text, in order to grasp the medial complexity of performances. Fischer-Lichte later supplemented this scheme with a consideration of phenomenological aspects of the performance that transcend a highly immanent linguistic model, such as the way the analyser themself is constructed as the interpreter of the text, or the environment and atmosphere, as elements that elude a clear semiotic taxonomy.[11]

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Here, however, I would like to return to a focus on semiotics in order to pose my earlier question in a more precise form: to what extent is a nexus of linguistic and embodied signs productive for analysing the scene I described above? A split between linguistic expression and embodiment is immediately apparent (if we disregard the somewhat disparaging facial expressions that Irina Müller makes when she encounters what she has already seen). We are dealing here with dance, and this immediately manifests a category reversal: embodied signs (in this case the various poses offered by the dancer) come to the foreground, but the posing of the question "What about this?" reinforces their status as an offering that is then rejected. In this case, spoken signs accompany movement and not vice versa.

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9.   See Susanne Foellmer, *Am Rand der Körper: Inventuren des Unabgeschlossenen im zeitgenössischen Tanz* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009): 12.

10.   Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theater* [1983] (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992): 18-63.

11.   Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* [2004] (London: Routledge, 2008).

This may simply be a frequent idiosyncrasy of stage dance, though contemporary productions are not the first to regularly integrate verbal texts into the performance. But what interests me here is the question of what exactly happens in this scheme of an offering made via the body with a question and rejection, and if this could be analysed using the method of semiotics. It becomes clear in the spoken dialogue that both what is shown and what is said refer to something outside the performance. Yet this, in turn, is no outside functioning in the sense of a system of references of interrelated theatrical signs, which sometimes also transcends simple objects – for example, a table that can denote something beyond its function as a table.[12] In *New*, what we see is rather a focus on the deictic function of the theatrical sign itself, in the sense emphasized by Fischer-Lichte,[13] and especially the function of gesture: the respective sequences of movement are "present" essentially only in order to refer to an outside consisting of cultural patterns – in this case, those of contemporary dance. The specific arrangement of the scene renders the mere description of what I see on stage obsolete as long as I do not follow the "finger-pointing" that the dancers are constantly giving me.

That said: do I need to know what the performers refer to? Would it not be enough to know that something is being indicated to me, even if it is something I might not be aware of? The fact that a game is being played here with the cultural canon of recent contemporary dance "history" is evident at the latest when we integrate the phenomenological level into the analysis of the performance. Specifically, this becomes clear when including the level of the audience situation and the atmosphere of recognition that is evoked here, which in turn can be identified by paralinguistic signs: murmuring, panting, laughing and the like (and which, incidentally, also replace the verbal signs, because in the theatre, it is generally expected that spectators themselves do not speak).

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12. Fischer-Lichte chooses this example to illustrate the constructed nature of theatrical signs: seen thus, a table representing an elevation, a hollow, or something similar. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theaterwissenschaft* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2010): 85.
13. Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theater*, 39-58.

It would matter here, of course, where exactly the focus of the analysis should lie and whether the contextual knowledge of the implied citations should be a part of it. All the same, we cannot avoid the fact that we are left with a somewhat unsatisfactory situation when a performance is explicitly constructed as a theatre of references whose indexes escape our own individual knowledge. I am making this point so clearly because attending this performance was part of one of my seminars, and I found that my own visual experience, unsurprisingly, did not match that of the students, which caused some frustration:[14] some of them were able to enjoy the piece as such, but others felt exposed or ambushed by a performance that provoked "knowing laughter" on the part of other spectators, which disturbed their own experience or made them feel excluded.[15] Hence, in this case, the strategy to analyze the piece merely in terms of its deictic function appears to be insufficient. What is to be done?

Con-Texts

Two years later, in 2013, Lupita Pulpo is given a grant from the Berlin Senate to return to the piece. *New* is being shown again, and once again in the Uferstudios. This time, however, the collective provides a veritable package of information: a booklet describing the course of the performance, with short descriptions of the scenes and movement sequences, the tasks, and the movement instructions on which the respective sections were based, along with the works that are referenced. In addition, on one of the evenings, a scenic reading of this "script" takes place. The booklet almost seems like an aid for performance analysis since it carefully arranges sections of movements, tasks, and references chronologically in a table[16] – a kind of friendly service offered by the collective that can

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14. Upper-level seminar *re.act.feminism*, BA theatre studies, advanced modules "Theory and Aesthetics" and "Historiography", Freie Universität Berlin, summer semester 2013.

15. Maria Katharina Schmidt, *Getanzte Zitate: Vom choreografierten Déjà-vu* (Berlin: Aisthesis, 2020): 145-156.

16. See Ayara Hernández Holz and Felix Marchand, *New: Booklet zur Aufführung* (Berlin: published by the authors, 2013): n.p.

be used as an additional source of information and as a memory aid.

Writing about methods of theatre studies, Christopher Balme pleads for us to interweave three levels in analysing an *Inszenierung*,[17] to use the German word, or a "play in performance", as he puts it in English[18] – a concept that can be extended here to an analysis of *New*. He, too, bases his interpretative model on a notion of text, but he distinguishes between the "theatrical text" – for example, the text of a drama or the choreography a performance is based on; the "staging" or "mise-en-scène", which designates the conception of the piece, "a particular artistic arrangement and interpretation of the text"; and finally the "performance", which is "what spectators actually see on any given night".[19] Balme thus criticizes the oft-postulated singularity of a performance; instead, he locates the performance within an intertextual network of these three levels.[20]

So, what would be the texts in this work by Lupita Pulpo? Balme's concept of performance analysis is located within a rather narrow system of dramatic text/choreography – mise-en-scène – performance, even though he considers background knowledge indispensable, such as

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17. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, 80-88.

18. "[A] play in performance is made up of three discrete levels that in the act of perception are difficult to distinguish: the text, the staging of the text and the performance". Balme uses the term "Inszenierung" to mark a clear distinction from Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of "Aufführungsanalyse", claiming that there is more to the analysis than the performance as such. Christopher B. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 132.

19. Ibid., 127.

20. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, 89. In this sense, for instance, Balme emphasizes repertory theatre: the possibility of showing a performance multiple times makes the theatrical event appear to be something essentially "constant", inasmuch as the pieces can basically be seen repeatedly over a longer period of time (sometimes even over several years). He ignores, however, the far more precarious situation faced by independent theatres, or the so-called Freie Szene in Germany, where a work most commonly can only be performed three or four times before it then often disappears into oblivion. Here, we need to take into account a certain transitoriness of the production bound to the opportunities it has to be performed in (in addition, more "permanent" extensions, for example in the form of theatre reviews, are often lacking. The question would also be how to situate singular happenings in performance art in this respect – apart from their subsequent dissemination via media or discourse).

knowledge of the field of contemporary choreography.[21] But what is to be done if a spectator is only at the beginning of their studies and simply lacks this knowledge? How can *New*'s "theatrical text" be comprehended, given that it consists of a multilayered tissue of recent dance art, which, moreover, originated from the performance memories of its three participating performers? It is apparent that, at this level, Balme's textual concept needs to be expanded. The category "theatrical text" or choreography cannot (still) be thought of in such a linear way, especially in contemporary dance, and in the context of production formats that favour the collective production of a piece: creation is practised here as a joint process, contrary to the model of a "prescribed" choreographic text that the dancers would simply perform in rehearsal.

The text on which *New* is based is thus a combination of a network of quotations, the remembering bodies of the performers, and, last but not least, a quotation that itself in a sense encompasses the entire work – because even the conceptual idea of the piece *New* is not new; it is an intermedial reference to the video work by the Polish performance group Azorro entitled *Everything Has Been Done* (2003). In this piece, the three performers formulate the impossibility of creating anything new in the visual arts, and with the recurring phrase "This has been done" they lay the foundation for Lupita Pulpo's citational adaptation of the concept.[22] This level of meta-quotation creates yet another complication that arises from the referential characteristic of the piece *New*: How can one distinguish between the theatrical text and the text of the staging in the analysis of this work? What would be the concept of the piece, and what would be its foundational text? What exists before the rehearsals, or what emerges as they take place? And what would be the concept, what would be the performance, if – we have here yet another layer of complexity – the performance is presented in the format of a rehearsal? And then, there is also the fact that, with its 2013 booklet, the

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21. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, 114. Interestingly, Balme makes these claims in relation to dance theatre; for spoken theatre, he mentions no such need for contextualization.

22. Hernández Holz and Marchand, *New: Booklet*, n.p.

collective presents nothing less than a script of the perfor-
mance. But is this the theatrical text? The booklet is preced-
ed, of course, by another "text", which it references, the one
of the previous performances in 2011. Hence, is the booklet
rather a text at the level of the staging, a kind of staged text
provided "after the fact", and therefore as a document?

There is no simple answer to these questions. Rather,
such enquiries make clear that even heuristic textual
distinctions like those made by Balme in a framework of
intertextuality do not work (any longer) for productions
like *New*. Balme, in turn, points out the necessity of study-
ing sources, that is, of having a knowledge of the theatrical
text. Combined with this, he suggests to use one's own notes
and video recordings of a performance, together with the
programme, reviews, and such, as aids for the analysis of a
performance.[23] In this sense, the booklet is an unquestion-
ably useful source. But what would that mean concretely?
Even if I can see exactly which dance event the performers
are alluding to in each citation, what sense does it make
to look up the respective references and possibly even
research photos or videos of the performances if I don't
know the "original"? Would this make the analysis more
complete, or render the performance of the mis-en-scène
more transparent? Or is the fundamental point here rather
that *New* is a work that only paraphrases what it cites?

Two anecdotes support this hypothesis. In my seminar,
a student told me that although she mostly did not under-
stand the references to which the work was alluding,
one situation at least was familiar to her: a reference to
a performance by Jérôme Bel (*Véronique Doisneau*, 2004),
which she had seen in a video in another seminar. Hence
the citation does not even need to have been "seen with
one's own eyes"; but can enter cultural memory through
various medial systems of reference. This, in turn, speaks
for Balme's postulate that we do not limit ourselves to the
performance as the sole model of reference for analysis, but
rather that we include its medial extensions (such as video).
Balme is aiming here for a more precise analysis of dance
performances – something that he thinks can be made

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23. See Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, 90-91.

possible, for instance, by videos.[24] In my view, however, including these various materials has even more far-reaching consequences, since this does not only situate performances like *New* in a discursive web of comparisons in the context of current trends – through reviews, for instance, in the way a piece is approached or situated in a context by its creators in programme notes or booklets, or in the way that performers create their own "downstream" products, such as videos (be they a long shot, artistically shaped via cuts, or a fragment).

Balme's model is a hermeneutic one: he understands theatre in the sense of a "communication system".[25] This includes knowledge of theatrical conventions and "sociocultural" frameworks, in addition to a consideration of how audiences affectively react[26] – this is what I was pointing to above in noting how some spectators reacted upon recognizing the quotes in *New*. This knowledge then plays a part in a detailed analysis of the various levels of text described above. Yet my question is what there might be to understand in the case of *New*, and this leads me to my second anecdote, because some of the references I thought I recognized later proved to be "wrong". At one point in the performance I thought I had identified a sequence from a piece by Eszter Salamon (*Giszelle*, 2001), but Lupita Pulpo was actually referring to a production by the group Forced Entertainment (*Bloody Mess*, 2004).[27] While the performance is taking place, however, what matters is not whether I recognize the "right" thing but rather the fact that I believed in having recognized something. Without the booklet and its somewhat delayed revelation of these intended references, I could have continued to believe that my assumption was "correct". And yet what the booklet reveals after the fact is not that any one reading of these references is "correct" at all, or that the artists' intentions could definitively answer this question, but rather that as long as the mechanism of quotation is operating in the piece, it makes no difference what the reference actually is. In this regard, I think it is

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24. Ibid., 91.
25. Ibid., 121.
26. Ibid., 139-140.
27. Hernández Holz and Marchand, *New: Booklet*, n.p.

clear that here we are not dealing with any kind of detailed or even highly informed "deciphering" of the performance or even its text. Rather, Lupita Pulpo's concept and thus the text of the staging consisting of this practice of referencing shift into the foreground, which, however, overlaps with the theatrical text as I have already shown.

This is the assumption that Patrice Pavis's semiotics of theatre reception critically opens up. His approach focuses on the level of the spectators arguing that the reception of a performance can be "directed" or "guided" in several ways. One is "generic", meaning reference is made to the "[the audience's] knowledge about the genre's structural laws"; another is "ideological", implying that the frame of reference includes the "referential universe of the audience".[28] "Directing an audience's reception" in this way, Pavis writes, is a "textual mechanism that is based on a certain reading strategy".[29] Pavis, too, is committed to a textual model in which the idea of directing or guiding the recipients appears to be quite strict.[30] Yet however rigorous this concept might appear, it can produce insight in relation to the discourses of genre and the reading strategies that spectators always already bring to their experience of a performance. As I see it, in this context *New* exemplifies the possibility of the audience both becoming familiar with and failing to grasp certain generic characteristics and horizons of experience. Even if I am not capable of determining what is being referred to, one thing becomes clear in the performance: the process of referring is at once performed and exposed, that is, made visible and opened up to critique. And this shifts our attention to postmodern strategies that decentre interpretation away from the idea of an original toward a combination of intertextual references.[31] What is worth noting in this context is that Lupita Pulpo essentially allows for indeterminacy – in case I do not recognize what is

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28. Patrice Pavis, *Semiotik der Theaterrezeption* (Tübingen: Narr, 1988): 43.

29. Ibid., 31-32.

30. Pavis nevertheless pleads for a hermeneutic openness: in contrast to Ingarden's textual model, he understands the "site[s] of indeterminacy" more in the sense of "site[s] of questioning in the encounter between the text and its present reader, as site[s] of ambiguity and polysemy". Pavis, *Semiotik der Theaterrezeption*, 29.

31. Boris Groys, *On the New* [1992] (London/New York: Verso, 2014): 43-44.

being shown – while also making it impossible: the booklet ultimately gives me at least the theoretical opportunity to "be in the know" about everything, even if only nominally.

Such questions about the relationships structuring knowledge are especially pertinent when it comes to reenactments and their systems of reference. Moreover, they evoke aspects of historiography that I believe overlap with procedures of performance analysis.

Repetitions/Retrievals
Dance Congress, Kampnagel Hamburg, November 2009: a focused group of dance experts has come together to see the premiere of *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*, a solo work by dancer and choreographer Fabián Barba, who trained in Ecuador and Belgium (P.A.R.T.S.). The piece is based on the reenactment of one of the dance evenings given by Mary Wigman, who, as one of the co-founders of expressive dance, was known especially in the 1920s for presenting programmes with short solo works. Hence the evening is a double reenactment. On the one hand, Barba has researched the individual solos in detail to "repeat" them, that is, to interpret them by dancing them again; and on the other hand, the entire one-hour piece repeats the performance format from Wigman's time. On the seats in the audience, there are programme leaflets whose layout (for example, their font), resembles the flyers of Wigman's time used to announce performances.[32] The pieces presented are solos interrupted by short intervals, accompanied by music, in which Barba dresses for the next dance off stage and hidden from the eyes of the audience. Moreover, the individual dance numbers, such as *Pastorale*, *Sommerlicher Tanz*, or *Raumgestalt*, are themselves meticulous reproductions of Wigman's dance repertoire: the qualities and forms of her movement, together with the costumes she chose and their particular materiality. Even the hair styling seems to resemble that of Wigman in her dance evenings.

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32. Here, my knowledge refers to archival research that I undertook in 1998 as part of my diploma thesis on Valeska Gert and partly on Mary Wigman, at the Berlin Akademie der Künste, where I came across numerous such programme notes for dance evenings from 1918 onward.

The performance was followed by debates that can roughly be summarized as a discussion about authenticity and fidelity to the original; controversy unfolded along the fault line of enthusiastic support or strict rejection. The disagreements revolved essentially around the question of to what extent the performance we saw on stage was in fact a "reconstruction" of the features constituting Wigman's dance aesthetic and therefore working as a historiographical source; or whether here we had encountered a failed attempted at imitation.[33] In my remarks in this essay, which focus on current questions of performance analysis, I cannot address the opportunities and difficulties or the ontological challenges afforded by reconstructions and other repetitions in dance.[34] Instead, I would like to sketch the analyt-

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33. For an assessment of the performance at the London festival *Dance Umbrella* (8 October 2012) that exemplifies positive reactions, see the review of Lise Smith. Ulrich Völker provided a critical view of the performance, in the context of the 2009 Dance Congress. Writing about the performance in the New York Museum of Modern Art (February 2013), Brian Seibert criticizes a lack of "authentic" proximity to Wigman: "While Mr. Barba's performance was true to the subjugation of ego of which Wigman wrote, it lacked the intensity and charisma that so impressed those who wrote about her". Lise Smith, "Review: Dance Umbrella, Fabian Barba/Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion" (2012) http://london-dance.com/articles/reviews/dance-umbrella-barba-burrows-fargion/ [accessed 17 Februrary 2021]. Ulrich Völker, "Rückblicke: Jérôme Bels 'Lutz Förster' und Fabian Barbas 'A Mary Wigman Dance Evening' im Rahmen des Tanzkongresses auf Kampnagel" (2009) http://www.tanznetz.de/blog/16095/ruckblicke [accessed 17 February 2021]. Brian Seibert, "Kicking Yourself for Missing That Wigman Tour Back in '30? Fabián Barba in Mary Wigman Works at MoMa", *The New York Times* (4 February 2013).
Elsewhere, I examined the problem of references to past dance events in reconstructions and reenactments, and retraced the scholarly debate about a concept of the original that has become problematic, especially in dance: Susanne Foellmer, "Re-enactment und andere Wieder-Holungen in Tanz und Performance", in *Zitieren, Approprüeren, Sampeln*, ed. Döhl and Wöhrer: 69-92. While Claudia Jeschke conceives of reconstructions of past dance events as a reflective endeavor, Nicole Haitzinger describes reconstructions as detailed attempts to get as close to a bygone event as possible. In contrast to this, reenactments would reflect the critical distance to its subject. Claudia Jeschke, "'Updating the Updates': Zum Problem der 'Identität' in der Geschichts-Vermittlung vom Tanz(en)", in *Original und Revival: Geschichts-Schreibung im Tanz*, ed. Christina Thurner and Julia Wehren (Zurich: Chronos, 2010): 69-79; Nicole Haitzinger, "Re-enacting Pavlova. Re-enacting Wiesenthal. Zu Erinnerungskultur(en) und künstlerischen 'Selbst'-Inszenierungen", in *Original und Revival*, ed. Thurner and Wehren: 181-192.
34. On Barba's re-enactment of Wigman, see Timmy De Laet. In his view, Barba's attempts to come closer to Wigman through formal and physical imitation had the precise effect of increasing the historical distance between them. He argues that Barba's use of a dance style that almost appears to be anachroni-

ical prospects of a reenactment such as that performed by Barba and point out some overlaps between performance analysis and theatre historiography.

If we now subject *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* to a performance analysis, it quickly becomes clear that this cannot be done without the context of the historical event to which the performance refers. Even if I as the interpreter, or even just as a theatregoer, have no knowledge of Wigman and her performance practices, it becomes apparent that there is a reference here to something that lies beyond the performance. This is suggested not least by the programme booklet for the evening. The "now" of the performance is thus always traversed by a predecessor. However, in the case of reenactments, must we always consult historical sources to analyse a performance? And if so: how would contextualisation be possible if my investigations are based on the performance itself?

The attempt to embed *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* in its historical web of references immediately opens up an entire collection of questions. First of all, we must consider the purpose that is to be served by the use of historiographical sources about and produced by Mary Wigman. Would the intention be to get information about what was referenced, in order to be able to historically contextualize what Barba's adaptation is about? Should the focus be on types and ways of reenactments today, for which Barba would serve as a prominent one of several examples?[35] Or

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stic – as though it were something from another time but presented to a contemporary audience – generates oscillating figures between Mary Wigman's "historical image" and Barba's own contemporary body. Timmy De Laet, "Giving Sense to the Past: Historical D(ist)ance and the Chiasmatic Interlacing of Affect and Knowledge", in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reeenactment*, ed. Franko: 33-56. For an examination of the discourse in (German) dance studies about theories and methods of reconstruction and reenactment, see also Thurner and Wehren and, here, especially Giersdorf on the relationship between practical dance reconstruction and academic historiography. Jens Giersdorf, "Unpopulärer Tanz als Krise universeller Geschichtsschreibung oder Wie Yutian und ich lang anhaltenden Spass mit unseriöser Historiografie hatten", in *Original und Revival*, eds. Thurner and Wehren: 91-100. On reenactment in theatre contexts, see Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto, eds., *Theater als Zeitmaschine: Zur performativen Praxis des Reenactments* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012).

35. If, for example, the focus was on analyzing performed reenactments dealing with Mary Wigman, Barba's project could be compared with the reconstruction of Wigman's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1957; Theater Osnabrück 2013) or with

is the aim to carry out a comparative analysis, situated in the interplay between Wigman and Barba? This approach in particular opens up a field marked by multiple problems. On the one hand, we have the question of the original, which in recent discourses, especially in dance studies, is a category that has garnered critique. What exactly would the "original Mary Wigman" be? Claudia Jeschke offers a sceptical perspective towards such talk of an "original" – not only because reenactments are "versions" of a past event, but because this event itself is always already conceived as something that occurred multiple times, that exists in "multiple identities".[36] With regard to the "initial" event, then, we need to ask what exactly constitutes it. Is it the premiere of one of Wigman's solos? Or a particularly "successful" performance? And of these versions, which is the one that ends up being accessible, and in what format? Or would the original in this case already be a copy, namely in the form of (the few) film clips that can be found in archives, or as photographic references? These are essentially the materials that ought to be used for a comparison, since they are among the materials with which Barba worked.[37] But what would result from such a comparison, if it neither can nor should aim to determine how "faithful" a work was to the "original"? Instead of taking this tack, what we would need to examine would be the genealogies of these performances and the underlying histories that Fabián Barba's (biographical) performances and histories themselves must consider.[38] Such a "discursive archaeology" is exactly what

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Christoph Winkler's approach to Mary Wigman (*Abendliche Tänze* 2013). These, however, cannot proceed without additional contextual material, which in this case, once again taking recourse to Balme, would have to include in particular the various staging texts in the sense of the respective artistic concepts and approaches to reperformance.

36. Claudia Jeschke, "'Updating the Updates'", 78. André Lepecki generally positions reenactments in the mode of "potentialities". Hence, there is no such problem as to "failing to grasp" a (questionable) original. André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances", *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2010): 28-48.

37. Fabián Barba, "Reconstruction in Progress: Working Notes, Wigman reconstruction, May 2009", in *Are 100 Objects Enough to Represent the Dance? Zur Archivierbarkeit von Tanz*, ed. Janine Schulze (Munich: epodium, 2010): 116-121.

38. For example, Barba traces his motivation in turning to Mary Wigman to his own dance experience: the fact that the teaching of contemporary dance

Jan Lazardzig, Victora Tkaczyk, and Matthias Warstat, for instance, propose in their overview of theatre historiography.[39] Such an approach would need to consider not least media differences between performance, on the one hand, and media products such as photography, film, or even dance criticism, on the other hand. If we follow Balme, however, all three formats must be included if performance analysis is to be understood as an analysis of staging. We would then have to focus on an extensive study of sources in order to better understand Barba's historiographical methods and emphases, in the sense that I mentioned above – we would have a kind of extended theatrical text.

But is the study of these historical materials, assuming they are readily available at all, an extended kind of performance analysis? Or should it rather be understood as work of historiography that superimposes itself over the analysis of what has just been performed?

If we take, for instance, a comparative approach between Wigman's and Barba's dances, my view is that investigations of reenactments should be situated in a conglomeration of approaches from performance analysis and historiography. The two methods are by no means mutually exclusive: they can in fact create fruitful connections. The introduction to methods in theatre historiography provided by Lazardzig, Tkaczyk, and Warstat, for example, shows that these methods include performance analyses – but in the sense elucidated by Balme, as an analysis that considers a staging by examining its contexts, conventions, and respective specific features as sources to be studied, since the event itself is no longer available for analysis.[40] Such an approach is capable of providing valuable insight, in particular, for critically engaging with the reconstruction of past theatrical events and the underlying aporia of retrieving a past event in the context of reenactment – for example, with

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in Ecuador is still committed to a tradition of expressive modern dance. Yet Barba only noticed this when he subsequently became familiar with completely different notions of what is deemed to be contemporary, at the Brussels school P.A.R.T.S. Fabián Barba, "Reconstructing a Mary Wigman Dance Evening", in *Are 100 Objects Enough to Represent the Dance?*, ed. Schulze: 100-115.

39. Jan Lazardzig, Viktoria Tkacyzk, and Matthias Warstat, *Theaterhistoriografie: Eine Einführung* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2012): 104-107.

40. Lazardzig, et al.,*Theaterhistoriografie*, 87-123.

regard to examinations of "historical events"[41] that would consequently attempt to make arguments on the basis of individual cases, such as Mary Wigman. However, these findings would be about both Wigman's past and Fabián Barba's present.

Reenactments can thus be understood as a network of references that links performance analysis and historiography. This network highlights in particular the "transfer processes"[42] between these two moments in time, on the one hand, and the evening's forms of expression, on the other – just as a focus on these processes relies on the analytical back and forth between past and recent events that also rejects any "unreflected chronology" of historiographic work.[43] However, the very stance reenactments are taking lies in the complication of the past and present moment(s) as Schneider and Franko pinpoint. Thus, apart from comparative examinations, we would have to further address the historiographic approach that Barba undertakes himself, dancing and choreographing in the interstice of "then and now" and working on the possible impossibility of retrieving what has been done before by way of "affective[ly] […] channelling" the persona Mary Wigman.[44] Hence, do we need a performance analysis that would work on a "meta-level"?[45] And how would this look like?

Pose(s) of Referencing

Projects like those by Lupita Pulpo and Fabián Barba are not only to be seen in a network of references that essentially continues through every performance. Rather, *New* and reenactments such as *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*

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41. Ibid., 91.

42. Lazardzig, Tkacyzk, and Warstat refer here to Stephen Greenblatt's method of New Historicism. See Lazardzig, et al., *Theaterhistoriografie*, 110.

43. Balme, *Einführung in die Theaterwissenschaft*, 44. Balme accordingly pleads for a "methodological pluralism" in historiography. Based on the "overlapping temporalities" in dance, Franko argues that the notion of "historical time as chronological time becomes destabilized". Franko, "Introduction: The Power of Recall", 2.

44. Mark Franko positions Barba's reenactment in the register of the affective, describing it as a "time machine". See Franko and Ruprecht, "Duet", 125-136.

45. I would like to thank Christina Thurner for this idea.

emphasize performances as veritable zones of reference. Moreover, apart from the possible methodologies of investigating referential performances such as the ones discussed here, the performers are actually taking methodological approaches themselves, that is, in the mode of historiography.[46] I would like to restate this argument by concluding with the figure of the pose as a methodological modality.

Schneider places the pose in the centre of reenactments' temporal encounters, as a mode of "cross-temporality".[47] She explores the complicated relationship to an alleged original by way of the "reenactive poses" in Cindy Sherman's works, emphasizing the pose, with Derrida, as an "'interval' that puts the still 'in play'", navigating in the "cracks of time [...] between theatre, film, painting, and photography".[48] However, Gabriele Brandstetter situates such shifts between still and motion notably within the realm of dance and outlines the pose as a "transition zone ... between image and corporality, between *picture* and *performance*" located in the interplay between movement and stillness.[49] In this sense, poses have always been constituted between media, for example, between "image and text", and have thus always represented a "medium of translation".[50] In *New*, such poses are explicitly acted out and played through – for example, the pose held by Felix Marchand as he bends forward in a movement pattern immediately reminiscent of Xavier Le Roy's *Self Unfinished* (assuming one has seen the piece). Lupita Pulpo's play with references is explicitly based on such distinctive poses, which are a kind of movement pictograms of the repertoire from the recent history of contemporary dance. What is remarkable here is that

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46. In this sense, De Laet suggests "[a]lternative forms of historiography [...] able to combine thinking and feeling", and emphasizes "affect" as a motivator of "historiciz[ing] [...] choreography". De Laet, "Giving Sense to the Past", 51-52.

47. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 2.

48. Ibid., 156.

49. Gabriele Brandstetter, "Pose – Posa – Posing: Zwischen Bild und Bewegung", in *Hold It! Zur Pose zwischen Bild und Performance*, ed. Bettina Brandl-Risi, Gabriele Brandstetter and Stefanie Diekmann (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2012): 41-51 (46; original emphasis).

50. Bettina Brandl-Risi, Gabriele Brandstetter, and Stefanie Diekmann, "Posing Problems: Eine Einleitung", in *Hold It!*, ed. Brandl-Risi, Brandstetter, and Diekmann, 7-21.

those poses do not even need to be meticulously repro-
duced. Just hinting at them is enough to produce a déjà-vu
effect: as Bettina Brandl-Risi, Gabriele Brandstetter, and
Stefanie Diekmann write, the pose "produces an image and
a figure that only vaguely reminds one of a model being
imitated".[51] Yet I am suggesting here that the pose itself is
already enough for us to recognize what is being alluded
to, or rather: in *New*, the very fact of posing is essentially
enough for us to identify what is being represented as part
of a complex programme of citation, even if I have not
myself seen what is being referenced, or even if I misrecog-
nize it, that is, read it "incorrectly". In their poses, Lupita
Pulpo presents us with a striking example of this dynamic:
distinctive moments of cultural patterns expressed in recent
years in the aesthetic of stage dance, which they take both
from their own and shared memory.

This process happens in *New* in the signalling connec-
tion of embodied pictograms and linguistic phrases, while *A
Mary Wigman Dance Evening* essentially represents a deictic
pose in total. Brandstetter emphasizes the cut-out nature
of the pose, using the example of Jérôme Bel's *Véronique
Doisneau*: here, the dancer stands for the "whole body" of
the ballet.[52] Following this idea, I am suggesting that the
pose-like nature of individual scenes can be transferred to
the "whole body" of a specific piece, both in the example
of Bel and in Barba's work. Through a combined approach
that interweaves performance analysis and historiography,
we can understand Barba's reenactment as a pose of trans-
fer – precisely in his meticulous retracing of Wigman's
aesthetic, which, as I already noted, tries to capture every
detail down to the very tips of Wigman's hair. In this way,
Barba performs a pose of the process of approximation:
The *Mary Wigman Dance Evening* is then to be understood
less as a (possibly failed) attempt to "repeat" or "retrieve"
Wigman and rather as an example of how reenactments are

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51. Brandl-Risi, et al., *Hold It!*, 14. On the déjà-vu as a quotation-like experience
in contemporary dance, see also Schmidt, *Getanzte Zitate*. Schneider discusses
such referential poses and the blurring of original and copy following Homi
Bhabha's idea of the "'[a]lmost but not quite'" in order to delineate the temporal
and medial differences in the works of Cindy Sherman and Yasumasa Morimu-
ra. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 159-160.
52. Brandstetter "Pose – Posa – Posing", 43.

acting as poses of transfer that question diachronic historical relations and emphasize historiographical methods – once again, and distinctly in the context of current discourses. Reenactments emphatically demand a permanent interplay between now and before – not in order to enable comparison, but rather to elucidate the procedures of transferring and referring themselves, just as they emphasize the procedures of memory in *New*.[53]

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53. Martin Nachbar's piece *Urheben Aufheben* (2008) could also be understood as such a pose. In his reconstruction of Dore Hoyer's *Affectos Humanos* (1962), Nachbar particularly emphasizes the difficulties of bringing out the past that is held in archives and the physical transfer of movement.

Five Conceptual Actions for a Sensitive Archaeology of the Gesture in Dominique Brun's Sacre#2
Aurore Després
translated by Ariadne Mikou

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This chapter aims to formulate five conceptual actions that I have implemented during my research[1] by proposing a "sensitive archaeology of gestures" in the solo *The Chosen One* danced by Julie Salgues in Dominique Brun's *Sacre#2* (2014), a re-construction of Vaslav Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). I aim to assert an epistemic position with respect to the *relation to time* for each of these conceptual actions. More specifically, my approach considers the gesture and its temporality not only as an *object* and as a *concept*, but also as a *method*.

Action n. 1: Thinking about Reconstruction and Invention at the Same Time
The first action focuses on the importance for methodologies of reenactment to consider reconstruction and invention simultaneously. In the vast field of strategies based on re-doing, Isabelle Launay suggests considering the "projects seeking the old in the new that they recon-

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1. Aurore Després, "Archéologie sensible des gestes. Palimpseste de la danse de l'élue dans le *Sacre du Printemps* au XXIᵉ siècle" (unpublished "Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches", Université Côte d'Azur, 2019).

struct" as *re-construction*s and the "projects turned towards the present, seeking the new in the old that they activate" as *reinventions*.[2] Mark Franko considers reenactment in the contemporary post-ephemeral era as a critical, if not polemical, approach in that it reveals active and creative historicity in the present, troubling the past as well as the present, in contrast to re-construction, which, like a "museum performance", seeks to go back to the past as a frozen time.[3] By looking at *Sacre#2* by Dominique Brun, I explore to what extent the dichotomy between re-construction and re-invention leads to misunderstanding and confusion. This "historical re-construction", conceived in a properly excessive manner as a re-invention both by its creative methodology and by its performance devices, is blurring this opposition. Brun affirms:

> The challenge consists in renewing the modernity of the *Rite*, working to break free from the phantasm of authenticity and cracking down on the discourse of reconstruction in dance. It will not be a question of finding again the dance of 1913, rather of inventing another dance, one that is nevertheless *stowed* in the historical moment of the emergence of Nijinsky's dance.[4]

In contrast to the Joffrey Ballet version of 1987,[5] Brun's approach lines up with contemporary historical epistemology as an action on the past operated by the "critical interpretation" of the documents relating to *Rite* in the present.[6] This approach suggests a new methodology or *episteme* which uses archives and documents relating to the stage

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2.   Isabelle Launay, *Poétiques et politiques des répertoires. Les danses d'après, 1* (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse, 2017): 22-23. See also Isabelle Launay, *Cultures de l'oubli et citation, Les danses d'après, II* (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse, 2018).

3.   Mark Franko, "Introduction: the power of recall in a post-ephemeral era" in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment,* ed. Mark Franko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 1-14.

4.   Dominique Brun, Sophie Jacotot, Juan Ignacio Vallejos, *Rapport DZIGA autour du Sacre du printemps de Vaslav Nijinski. Rapport de recherche pour l'aide à la recherche et au patrimoine en danse 2010* (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse, 2012).

5.   Millicent Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace. Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre du Printemps* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1996).

6.   Patrizia Veroli, "Il Sacre du printemps di Nižinskij, oggi" in *Cento Primavere. Ferocità e feracità del Sacre du Printemps,* ed. Nicoletta Betta and Marida Rizzuti (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'orso, 2014): 39-62.

in a field where nearly three hundred re-readings gener-
ally abound as choreographic re-constructions.[7] Based on
what have been called "archive constraints", the writing of
Sacre#2 is literally *in-formed* by archives and, at the same
time, the very concern of Brun is how to *per-form* them so
as to *trans-form* them in the present time.

Broadly speaking, can we conceive of a way of being in
time as a contradictory epistemic position that, on the one
hand encompassess the present, the ephemeral, the non-re-
petitive and the invention of the gesture and, on the other
hand, a way of not disappearing, repetitiveness, circulation
and propagation in space and time? How can we hold these
apparent opposites together through our method? Isn't
the gesture itself constantly *reconstituted by reinventing itself*?
Thus, this "sensitive archaeology of gestures" developed
during the ten minutes of *The Chosen One*'s solo in *Sacre#2*
formulates a radical epistemic position, according to the
following second conceptual action.

*Action n. 2: Radically Placing the Present of the Gesture at the
Origin*

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At the beginning of any methodology linked to reenact-
ment, the "archaeological" question seems to be significant:
where do we situate the starting point of the approach or its
"origin"? Where do we place the *arkhe*, the beginning or the
commandment of things? In the past? In the present? Or, as
Walter Benjamin put it, in a "whirlpool in the river of becom-
ing"?[8] Whatever the answers provided by the artistic forms
and processes themselves, I believe that our methodologies
should address and take a stand on these epistemic questions
themselves. For this reason, Benjamin's concept of history,[9]

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7. It is worth noting that the Paris Opera Ballet, in "agreement with the Vaslav
and Romola Nijinsky Foundation", has decided to re-stage *Le Sacre du Printemps*
based on the choreography of *Sacre#2* by Dominique Brun with costumes and
set design by Nicolas Roerich, and not the version by Hodson & Archer for Jof-
frey Ballet. This version was presented at the Palais Garnier from 29 November
2021 to 2 January 2022.

8. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne
(London: Verso, 1998): 45.

9. Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, ed.
Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cam-
bridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Henri Bergson's theory of memory,[10] Friedrich Nietzsche's thoughts on oblivion[11] and Michel Foucault's archeology of discourses[12] seem inescapable. Nevertheless, it seems that we should still tune our methodologies to the specificities of our "objects": namely gestures, movements, actions, acts and performances. The question is how to conceive the gesture as a real concept, highlighting its temporality.

When Benjamin invokes the "origin", "knowledge of the past" or the "dialectical image" by describing a thick and *swirling temporality*, the gesture and its temporality are evoked without being directly conceptualised. Opposing the established view on the role of the historian as advocated by Leopold von Ranke, Benjamin states:

> Following Ranke, the task of the historian is "to describe the past as it was". It is an entirely chimerical definition. The knowledge of the past would rather resemble the act by which a man at a moment of a sudden danger offers himself a memory that saves him.[13]

In addition to situating the past as a construction of the present, this quotation establishes knowledge of the past in the event of a gesture. However, it should be noted that it seems to be less a gesture as such that "saves" this man, than the "memory" that comes to him. And here we come to the crucial pragmatic and epistemic series of questions: What does save this man? A "souvenir"? An "act"? And what do we place at the origin of knowledge? A gesture? Or an *image-souvenir*?

This is a double epistemological problem that any historical or archaeological approach to gestures must confront. On the one hand, the ephemeral nature of the gesture makes it the epistemological obstacle par excellence, the one that science has bypassed since its birth in metaphysics. On the other hand, there is the tenacious idea that

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10. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

12. Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London/New York: Routledge, 2002).

13. Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français* "Sur le concept d'histoire" (Paris : NRF, Gallimard, 1991): 342.

memory, duration and knowledge of the past would only be a matter of souvenirs, images, reminiscences or thoughts swirling in time, and not gestures – since they cannot last. In the common or scientific understanding of memory, the gesture, faced with the primacy of the image, seems completely absent. Hence, difficulty arises when dancers, choreographers and dance theorists try to conceptualise the "memory of the body and gestures", the "body-time",[14] the "gestural archives" or the "body-archive".[15] As Marina Nordera and Susanne Franco observe: "in dance, memory is always active".[16] It is, therefore, first and foremost from "the act" or "gesture" that the swirling temporality springs forth, and for this reason, I suggest three assumptions. First, gesture is a fleeting phenomenon generated in the present by making the past and the future swirl together. Through this lens, gesture would come next to replace Benjamin's "dialectical image", where "the image is that wherein what has been *comes together in a flash* with the *now to form a constellation*".[17] Finally, one would consider gesture at the very place of the "origin" and as the "authority", so that it appears as this "whirlpool in the river of becoming".[18] In doing so, one would consider the present as the "unknowable", even though one may like to get as close as possible. Thus, "starting from gesture" is the bedrock of our approach.

However, to start from the gesture and its present means to start from the gestural experience itself. Our archaeology of the solo of *The Chosen One* has the methodical, even systematic specificity, of engaging with the words of the dancer Julie Salgues regarding her gestures. That means, first of all, understanding the gestures through her words and what she shares about her experiences, her perceptions, her knowl-

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14. Aurore Després, "Refaire. *Showing re-doing*. Logique des corps-temps dans la danse-performance", in *Gestes en éclats. Art, danse et performance,* ed. Aurore Després (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2016): 367-390.

15. André Lepecki, "The body as archive: will to re-enact and the afterlifes of dance", *Dance Research Journal*, 42, no. 2 (2010): 28-48.

16. Marina Nordera and Susanne Franco, *Ricordanze: Memoria in movimento e coreografie della storia* (Milan, UTET Università, 2010): 17-35.

17. Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press / Boston: Belknap Press, 1999): 462.

18. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 45.

edge and her discoveries. This starting point operates within many epistemological reversals: it poses the primacy of practices, experiences, interpretations rather than artistic works, forms or compositions; it highlights the primacy of gestures rather than images, documents or archives themselves; it suggests the primacy of a whirlwind of current events constantly re-launched in the present rather than a fixed and linear original past and it reveals the primacy of details rather than a general idea in space and time. This series of reversals contrasts with the traditional assumption that the past, the works, forms, compositions, generalisations, and chronologies are at the "beginning" and are the "authority" of the epistemology of Western arts and sciences. These intricate epistemological reversals have not ceased to torment my process. It is then a matter of entering the whirlwinds of time as in the Heraclite river, even at the risk of swallowing water.

Action n. 3: Starting from the "Carrier of the Gesture" and Opening Whirling Gestospheres

This approach opens up a whole range of questions about the sensitive experience of a single gesture: not exactly "where does your gesture come from?" as if we were digging into the past, but rather, from a pragmatic and ecological perspective of bodies and gestures:[19] "How is it done and what carries it?", "what is it carried by?". By returning to the etymology of the word gesture (based on the act of "carrying")[20], I started asking Salgues questions about each of the gestures in the solo *The Chosen One*: what do you rely on to feed your gesture, what are your "supports", that is all cultural, artistic, archival material which inspire and underpin your interpretation of the solo? What relations does

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19. James J. Gibson and Ann D. Pick, *An Ecological Approach to Perceptual Learning and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986 [1979]).

20. Etymology of "gesture": "early 15th century, "manner of carrying the body", from Medieval Latin gestura "bearing, behaviour, mode of action", from Latin gestus "gesture, carriage, posture". Restricted sense of "a movement of the body or a part of it, intended to express a thought or feeling" is from 1550; figurative sense of "action undertaken in good will to express feeling" is from 1916, QUWORD 趣词 Word Origins Dictionary, https://www.quword.com/etym/s/gesture [accessed 21 April 2022].

the act of carrying the gesture realise? In this way, I aimed to activate her quasi-spontaneous "short-term memory" as defined by Deleuze and Guattari: one that functions by ruptures, gaps, discontinuities and multiplicities like a "nervous, temporal and collective rhizome", one that "includes forgetting as a process"[21] to activate an "archaeology of surfaces".[22] A "short-term memory" that, as with the impulse of an action, lets things come to the surface to be picked at random. From February 2017 to January 2019, while *Sacre#2* was on tour, I conducted 20 days of interviews with Salgues, sometimes together with the graphic artist Mary Chebbah. We set up sound recordings (the *Audio Diary*) that the dancer completed at the end of each performance; we also collected rehearsal notes. I then decided to make visible (by writing in grey) in my text[23] all Sangues' words.[24] In doing so, we have created a sort of "archaeological record" for each sequence and each gesture and, in this way, a bundle of "supports" appeared for each gesture. First there are the "supports" relating to the archives of *The Rite of Spring* and re-filtered by the dancer – such as the 12 drawings by Valentine Hugo from which the solo is almost exclusively composed (*fig.1*). Then there are the "supports" linked to Salgues' long career as a performer with Brun since 2004. Finally there is a multiplicity of other "supports" linked to the dancer's own approach, her career as a performer with other choreographers, her personal history and memory: this is the documentation of the *intimate score* of the performer, something the choreographer may be completely unaware of.

Here I would only mention a few examples of words, images, gestures, objects that support Salgues when she performs the solo in its kinaesthetic accuracy:

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21. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London/New York: Continuum, 2004 [1987]): 17.

22. Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

23. Aurore Després, "Archéologie sensible des gestes".

24. In this chapter, Julie's words will be entered in single quotation marks without repeating the associated reference: Julie Salgues, *Interviews with Aurore Després 2017-2019*, Paris.

- the fragility "of a little thing in the centre of the stage" like in Nijinski's *Petrouchka*;[25]
- the immobility of the "already dead" in Jean Genet's *Tightrope Walker*;[26]
- the 'backstage wall' into which she says she 'disappears';
- the joy of 'practicing death' choreographer Deborah Hay speaks of;[27]
- this "movement that doesn't leave"[28] by Jacques Rivière (1913);
- a fire chakra called Manipura worked on with choreographer Myriam Gourfink;
- the 'constraint' of the twisting "serpentine" of the Faune in her body worked on with Brun (2017);
- the "articulate body logic"[29] by Guillemette Bolens;
- a "young tree caught in the wind"[30] annotated by Hugo;
- the power to grasp the "violence" of the Amazons who surround her like those of the "forces of separation"[31] cherished by Valère Novarina;
- an 'improvisation' in the manner of the choreographer

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25. Julie Salgues refers exactly to that in this quote: "Yet in *Petrouchka* was the germ of the idea that first persuaded and finally conquered him [Nijinsky]. Stravinsky and Benois bid the spectators look into the half-human puppet's piteous little soul. He is more interesting, more touching for what he is than for what he does. […] He touched his audience by what it felt about him rather than by what it merely saw him do. Why not, then, go forward to a ballet that should depend much more upon this static suggestion, a ballet that should not be full of dynamic emphasis, a ballet almost – to put an extreme case – without movement?" in H. T. Parker, *Motion Arrested: Dance Reviews of H.T. Parker* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982):127.

26. The text *The Tightrope Walker* by Jean Genet is a major reference for Julie Sangues' dance, based mainly on this quote: "Make sure of dying before appearing, and that a dead man dances on the thread". Jean Genet, "The Tightrope Walker" in *Fragments of the Artwork*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

27. Deborah Hay writes: "When I am in the corpse pose I realize how much I hold onto life", in Deborah Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan Press, 2000): 3.

28. Jacques Rivière, "Le Sacre du printemps", *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, n° 59 (1 November 1913).

29. Guillemette Bolens, *La Logique du Corps articulaire. Les articulations du corps humain dans la littérature occidentale* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000).

30. Valentine Hugo, "Notes de Valentine Gross-Hugo sur ses carnets de dessin", in Brun (2012):100.

31. Valère Novarina, *Une langue inconnue* (Paris: Éditions Zoé, 2012): 19.

Nathalie Collantès with whom Salgues has worked extensively;
– Tolstoy's *Resurrection*;[32]
– the 'smile' of *Madeleine in the desert* by Eugène Delacroix which caught Salgues' attention during a visit to the Louvre Museum;
– or "the dance of an insect, a hind fascinated by a Boa, a factory explosion",[33] words by Jean Cocteau, coming to Salgues' mind as a major "support" for her whole dance.

In what I call the "gestosphere"[34] of Salgues in the solo of *The Chosen One*, all of her "supports" have been brought together. The idea of the gestosphere is inspired by Bergson's inverted "memory cone" in that it connects the present "movement" at its tip, to the *flare* of virtual "memory"[35] at its base. From the "supports" for the most vivid gestures (below) to the most floating supports (top), heterogeneous entities of various kinds are woven together. In establishing a relation between the gestures and their "supports", it was surprising to note that the *lively supports* that constantly come to Salgues for this solo are not Hugo's 12 drawings as one might expect (*fig. 1*), but rather the "lines of force" that Salgues draws like a sort of diagram for each of them (*fig. 2*).

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32. Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, trans. Louise Maude (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1900).

33. Jean Cocteau, *Le coq et l'Arlequin. Notes autour de la musique* (Paris: Édition de la Sirène, 1918).

34. "Gestopshère du solo de l'Élue. Julie Salgues, 2017-2018 in *Sacre#2* (2014) de D. Brun" in Aurore Després, "Archéologie sensible des gestes", 123.

35. "The image of the inverted cone occurs twice in the third chapter of *Matter and Memory*". The image of the cone is constructed with a plane and an inverted cone whose summit is inserted into the plane. The plane, "plane P", as Bergson calls it, is the "plane of my actual representation of the universe". The cone "SAB", of course, is supposed to symbolize memory, specifically, the true memory or regressive memory. At the cone's base, "AB", we have unconscious memories, the oldest surviving memories, which come forward spontaneously, for example, in dreams. As we descend, we have an indefinite number of different regions of the past ordered by their distance or nearness to the present. The second cone image represents these different regions with horizontal lines trisecting the cone. At the summit of the cone, "S", we have the image of my body which is concentrated into a point, into the present perception. The summit is inserted into the plane and thus the image of my body "participates in the plane" of my actual representation of the universe". Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [1986] (Princeton: Princeton Unviersity Press, 1988): 152-162.
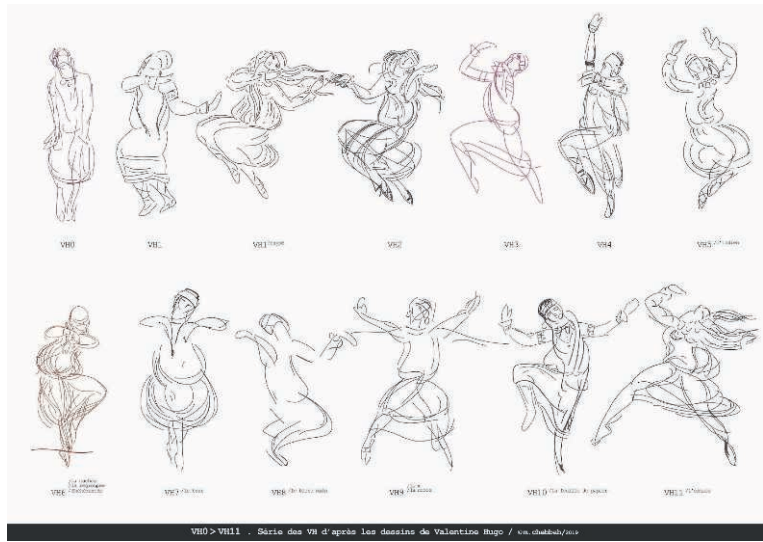
Fig. 1. Mary Chebbah (2019), *VH series from the drawings of Valentine Hugo (VH0>VH11)*
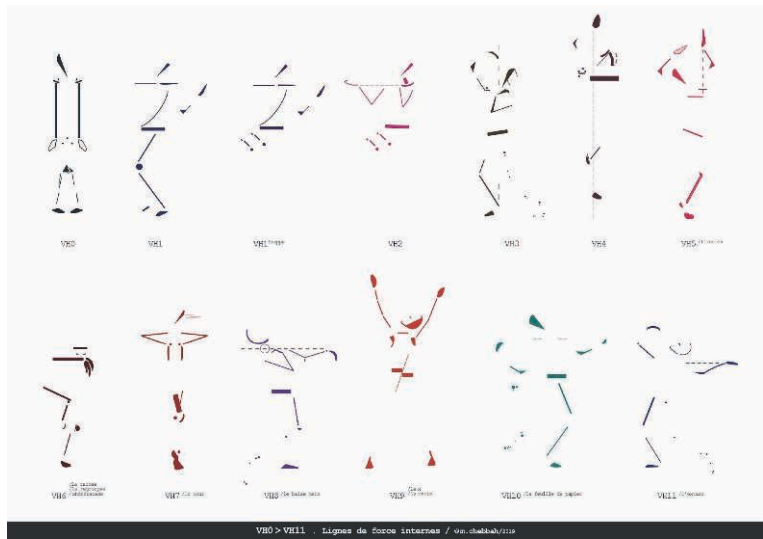
Fig. 2. Mary Chebbah (2017), *Lines of internal forces (VH0>VH11)*

In fact, Salgues has translated, converted, absorbed and condensed into kinaesthetic precision these 12 drawings, like all the other "supports", in her gestures.

Salgues says about them:

> I don't see these postures as silhouettes at all. Valentine Hugo's 12 drawings are made of many contours, and for me, these lines, and strokes represent the relationship to space and forces. These "lines of force" are like a kind of densification of the essential constraints determined in each drawing.

For each of the postures, we then decided to superimpose in a single image Hugo's drawings, with their rather outdated swirls, with the negatives of Julie's photos in the studio, which appear like x-rays, and the directional lines of dynamics that Salgues drew (*fig. 3* for the so-called VH1 posture). These are somewhat flat, photographic palimpsests, which seemed strange to us. Can the palimpsest of a gesture – as we will discuss next – come from such stratified, successive, coherent or chronological layers? To make a gesture, must we not condense, as Salgues suggests, all that *in-forms* it into a swirl?
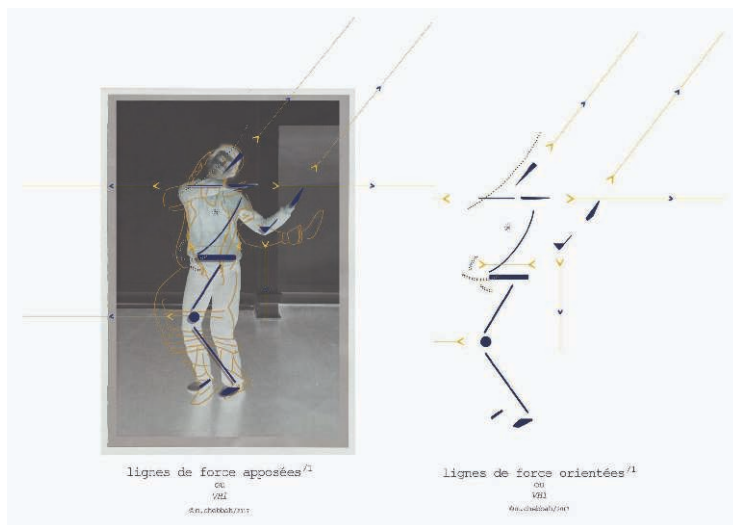
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Fig. 3. Mary Chebbah (2017), *Lines of superimposed vectors (left) and Lines of directional vectors (right) (VH1)*

Action n. 4: Conceiving the Duration of Gestures in Large Hypergestural Regions

We should now formulate what appears to be a necessary condition for our methodologies linked to reenactment: taking into account the materiality and duration of gestures, despite their factual evanescence. If we believe that gestures last in some ways, how then can we establish their duration? Or is it enough to just "describe" this "form of archive", as Susanne Franco suggests?[36] What would be the form of the gestural archive in its own specific modality of existence? The notions of "memory of the body" and "body-archives" seem to be too closely linked to an individual "body" in the present, rather than to the "vast and complex mass" (collective, intergestural, supra-individual) described by Maurice Halbwachs[37] as memory and by Michel Foucault as discourse.

Between temporal and material issues, should we consider using the filmic metaphor, as Richard Schechner invites us to, thus creating some kind of "strips of behavior"[38] that the performer would restore? Or to use the theatrical or architectural metaphor of the habit or the habitat, such as the costume, which the performer would enter? Or the concept of "embodiment" as the incarnation of images or thoughts in a body? As Schechner insists, we should instigate forms of gestural archives that "are independent of the causal systems (social, psychological, technological) that brought them into existence: they have a life of their own". They are the sorts of gestures that "exist separately from the performers who 'do' these behaviors", so that these behaviours can then be "stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed".[39]

In this sense, the assertion by Deleuze about Foucault's "diagrammatic thinking" could be the starting point for a method based on the idea that "the history of forms, the

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36. Susanne Franco, "Retracer une subjectivité dansante, repenser une histoire incorporée", *Recherches en danse* no.7 (2019), http://journals.openedition.org/danse/2591 [accessed 21 April 2022].

37. Maurice Halbwacks, *On Collective Memory,* trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

38. Richard Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior", *Studies in Visual Communication* 7, no.3 (1981): 2-45. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/svc/vol7/iss3/2 [accessed 21 April 2022].

39. Ibid.

archive, is doubled by an evolution of forces, the diagram".[40] According to Deleuze and Guattari, a diagram is made of "a semiotically unformed matter in relation to physically unformed matter" and it is composed of "particles-signs that are no longer formalised but instead constitute unformed traits capable of combining with one another".[41] Furthermore, if the mathematician and philosopher Gilles Châtelet writes that "the virtual demands gesture",[42] we can also reciprocally affirm that the gesture demands the virtual.

If the gesture should be understood in its actual and real dimension of given materiality, topology and ecology in the spatial and rhythmic dynamic of a body living in an environment (as suggested by Laban)[43], then every gesture contains in itself some dimensions of space-time-matter composed of invisible, unformed, virtual and complex gestural particles that I call "gestural beings". Therefore, my work advocates for a certain modality of the existence of multiple and heterogeneous entities that would live in a floating state in the present, as traces of gestures and as potential, tacit or latent germs for other gestures. By contracting and actualising themselves in a "simplex"[44] way in the present, in a sort of instantaneous yet durational, singular yet collective precipitate, a complex gesture would always be an event, a trace of gestures and a germ for other gestures. By transposing the notions of intertextuality or hypertextuality, these *gestures-as-particles, gestures-as-dust* or *gestures-as-foam* draw vast, invisible, hypergestural spheres: the "gestospheres". The gestural "mass" or "archive form" is thus an actual-virtual, topical-heterotopical, chronic-anachronic, whirling, multiple, chaotic and mutational ensemble. In other words, gestures do circulate and prop-

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40. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London/New York: Continuum, 2006 [1988]): 37.

41. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 161.

42. Gilles Châtelet, *Figuring Space, Philosophic, Mathematics, and Physics*, trans. Robert Shore and Muriel Zagha, preface Jean-Toussant Dessanti (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

43. Rudolf Laban, *Choreutics*, ed. Lisa Ullman (London: Dance Books, 2011 [1966]).

44. Alain Berthoz, *Simplexity. Simplifying Principles for a Complex World*, trans. Giselle Weiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, Odile Jacob book, 2012).

agate constantly in turbulent chains of interpretations and reinterpretations.[45]

The "gestosphere" of *Sacre#2*, developed from documents and interviews with Brun, shows thousands of swirling documents. Rather than closed lists (alphabetical or chronological), each "cloud" of documents (close or far in space and time) contains thousands of gestural particles (spatial, temporal, rhythmic, tonic, pneumatic) that can be related to others in the making of gestures. For example, the "gravity posture" – a bent, compact, pigeon-toed posture titled *Sacre's Body* by Brun that presides over all the gestures of *Sacre#2* – is constructed in the forest of signs of various gestural particles resulting from:

– the value given to the mention by Marie Rambert, Nijinsky's assistant, of the existence of a "basic position"[46] in *The Rite of Spring*;
– the failure of all the testimonies and all the criticisms to invoke a "primitive" posture in various metaphors, linked to the "prehistoric", the "animal", the "old man", the "puppet";[47]
– three photographs by Charles Gerschel (1913), drawings and paintings by Valentine Hugo, Emmanuel Barcet, Nicolas Roerich between 1905 and 1913, that show these folded bodies, pressed and packed like sardines;
– the selection by Brun of paintings that Nijinsky could have seen at the Louvre such as *Les Haleurs de la Volga* by

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45. For a case study about the "hypergestural dance" of the dancer and choreographer François Chaignaud see : Aurore Després, "Penser le voyage des gestes. François Chaignaud ou l'aventure d'une corporéité hypergestuelle", *Revue Skén&graphie*, no. 6, Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté (2019), https://doi.org/10.4000/skenegraphie.2953 [accessed 7 May 2022].

46. Marie Rambert, "Music score of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (Igor Stravinsky), with choreographic notes" (London: Rambert Dance Company, 1967) in Brun (2012): 88.

47. Thus, in a characterised "primitivism", the critics recount the "dances of savages, Caribbeans, Canaques" (Adolphe Boschot, *L'Écho de Paris*, 30 May 1913), the "types of moujiks" (Paul Souday, *L'Éclair*, 31 May 1913), the "caged beasts" (Maurice Touchard, *La nouvelle Revue*, 1 July 1913), the "prehistoric automatons...with instinctive reflexes" (Gustave De Pawlowski, *Comoedia*, 31 May 1913), whose movements resemble the "brutal games of children urged by small needs" (Gaston Carraud, *La Liberté*, 31 May 1913) or the "ape-like trembling of rickety, small, old people" (Maurice Touchard, *La nouvelle Revue*).

Ilya Répine (1873) or *Pauvre Pêcheur* by Puvis de Chavanne (1881);

– the choice of excerpts from the film *A Sixth Part of the World* (1921) by Dziga Vertov that presents scenes of daily work in the vast peasant Russia of the 1920s, such as the "kisses to the earth" that were reenacted for The Old Sage of *Sacre#2* or, more astonishingly, a woman washing and wringing a cloth with her feet, copied for The Old Witch's gestures (*fig. 4*);

– and, most importantly, the practice of Irene Dowd's "constructive rest position"[48] to, as Brun explains, "import things without too much force, from below". As for *The Afternoon of a Faun*, "we had to invent a body that is not ours" and "to push ourselves to experience a form of otherness of the body".[49]
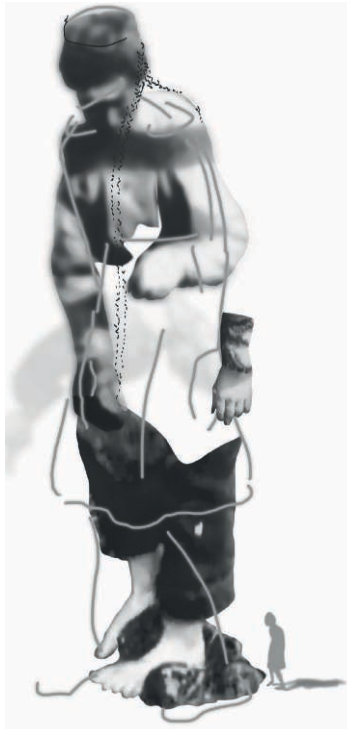
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Fig. 4. Mary Chebbah (2019),
Body sacral-matrix or body at work

48. Irene Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly. Articles on Functional Anatomy* (New York: I. Dowd & Contact Editions, 2010 [1981]).
49. Dominique Brun, 2006, "Le trait et le retrait" (*Quant à la danse*, n° 3, 2006): 37.

More broadly, let us emphasise the importance, in *Sacre#2*'s gestophere of the 1991 translation in Labanotation of Nijinsky's self-written score of *The Afternoon of a Faun* (1912) by Ann Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jenschke.[50] Labanotator herself, Brun has been doing a "reading"[51] of this piece since 2007 and she considers this document essential for understanding Nijinsky's compositional modes. Thus, *The Afternoon of a Faun* infiltrates all the inventive reconstructions of *The Rite of Spring*, according to Brun. We should also note Brun's bedside book *La Danse Grecque antique d'après les monuments figurés d'Euripide à Debussy* (1896) by Maurice Emmanuel; the theatrical and choral play *Le Sacre du Printemps* that Sébastien Voirol wrote in 1913 in homage to its authors, which was discovered by Brun's team. We also found that the atmosphere portrayed in *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf inspired *SF-Sacre Fac-similé* (2011), the first draft in the creation process of *Sacre #197* (2013), variation around *The Chosen One* by Brun. Other parts of *Sacre#2*'s gestophere include Robert Craft's writings on the relationship between dance and music in *The Rite of Spring*. Last but not least major "supports" of *Sacre#2*, according to Brun, are the performers.

However, let us consider how this gestosphere's diagram, which contains numerous elements, suggests gestural micro-particles, as well as their rhizomatic relationships, and yet says nothing about them. For this reason, the last action considered here consists of unfolding specific gestural palimpsests and making sense of them.

Action n. 5: Unfolding-Condensing Gestural Palimpsests
Recently, the notion of "palimpsest" has been sporadically used in the scholarship on reenactment. From my perspective, I consider to what extent the gesture emerges from what the archaeologist Geoff Bailey calls a "true palimpsest":

50. Ann Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jeschke, *Nijinsky's Faune Restored: A Study of Vaslav Nijinsky's 1915 Dance Score and his Dance Notation System* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1991).

51. Dominique Brun, *Le Faune un film, ou la fabrique de l'archive*. DVD (Paris: Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique, 2007).

True palimpsests are palimpsests in the strict sense of the term in which all traces of earlier activity have been removed except from the most recent. […] The definition of a true palimpsest, then, is a sequence of depositional episodes in which successive layers of activity are superimposed on preceding ones in such a way as to remove all or most of the evidence of the preceding activity.[52]

The gesture conceived as a true palimpsest, as a process of erasing and forgetting even how it was generated, is less chronological than anachronistic, less successive than simultaneous. Its main feature is to appear unlayered, in a state that we could see as whirling. Just as in Baudelaire's "palimpsest", which "carries, superimposed one on the other, a Greek tragedy, a monastic legend and a chivalric tale", any palimpsest of gesture is like "a fantastic, grotesque chaos, a collision between heterogeneous elements".[53]

Unfolding a gestural palimpsest, then, necessitates starting from the disappearance of the traces observed in the actual gesture to reveal their appearance in a virtual time. It also means releasing the gestures in duration and loosening the mesh of the gestural textures to reveal the spacing in the weave; to make visible the threads that link the gestural particles and their contiguity (of forms, rhythms, tonicity), or their gaps. In doing so, unfolding a palimpsest from a gesture, a sequence, or the entire piece amounts to properly making a gesture from which the one who makes or repeats it (dancer, choreographer, researcher or graphic artist) cannot escape. Thus, everyone makes sense of the palimpsest by reconstructing the gestures in the present.

Following the principles of my method ("starting from the gesture" and "unfolding its palimpsest"), in the ten minutes of the dance of *The Chosen One*, I developed seven palimpsests of the seven sequences defined by Salgues as "regimes of gestures". To work on the *spacings* as well as the gaps between them, I have unfolded *each of them* in three stages. The first one concerns the lively and floating supports that the dancer assembles in a very precise way

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52. Geoff Bailey, "Time Perspectives, Palimpsests and the Archaeology of Time", *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology 26*, no. 2 (2007): 203.

53. Charles Baudelaire, "Le Palimpseste" in *Les Paradis artificiels*, *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1869): 329.

("Supports"). The second examines the bundle of archives, documents, testimonies and press reviews of the 1913's *The Rite of Spring* or other documents used by the choreographer in her writing gesture ("Archival halo"). The third considers my thinking as a scholar in the present, which echoes, resonates, bounces, jumps in hypergestuality and conceives the aesthetic, political, ethical and ecological urgency of *The Chosen One* that is caught up in the spectacle of a human sacrifice for "spring" in the contemporary era ("Conversations, Reflections or Fragments in hypergestural regions"). I combine a kinaesthetic, sensitive and poetic micro-analysis with a philosophical and anthropological macro-analysis of the gestures in each palimpsest.

Throughout these seven palimpsests, the most unsettling thing I noted was that the dance of Julie Salgues as *The Chosen One* had crucially supported my epistemological journey. Surrounded and sustained by the members of her community, Salgues as *The Chosen One* is at the centre of the stage, facing the audience who knows that she will be "sacrificed" and die. The dice are thrown but everything seems to be "at stake" again: How to dance here and now the last gestures, to make them the first of another time that was also called "spring"? How can we accept that this time should stop, in order to continue? How to hold together the passing and the actuality of time? How to break out from winter's order and authority as we escape from the past? How to invent a movement from the archives as well as from still images? How could this woman, surrounded by ancestors and petrified by "archive-constraints", perform them in the last minutes? Will she be able to invent another archaeological and atmospheric regime as another form of life by using a single gesture?

In addition to the *atmospheric* question,[54] other *archaeological* questions about time, the archive, the still image and death intertwine here. Salgues as *The Chosen One* is "the

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54. Aurore Després, "Le printemps à la portée des gestes. Danser le solo de l'élue dans *Le Sacre du printemps* au XXIᵉ siècle' in "Staging Atmospheres: Theatre and the Atmospheric Turn - Volume 1 / Atmosphères en scène : le théâtre à l'ère du tournant atmosphérique - Volume 1", *Revue Ambiances* , <http://journals.openedition.org/ambiances/3576> [accessed 21 April 2022].

one" who, in *Sacre#2*, brings the following choreographic actions to their paroxysm:

– freezing in a "position" and in the immobility cherished by Nijinsky, to return to the "still images" in order to experience their sensitive duration. In the "position of *The Chosen One*", Salgues enters the depths of time until she is "already dead" and "disappears" ("Palimpsest #0. The Stillness-The Disappearance")

– juxtaposing positions, pressing them together like in a bad flip-book ("Palimpsest #1. Composite 1"), moving them, making them running and rotating ("Palimpsest #2. Substances 1"), and, in these infernal machineries, perhaps inventing another energy or other flows ("Palimpsest #4. Substances 2")

– shaking a position until the figure "spits out" (as Brun defines it) ("Palimpsest #5. Composite 2")

– distorting the forms in the "violence" of a woman who allows herself to transform them ("Palimpsest #3. The Improvisation-The distortion")

– and, above all, blowing up the images. The 35 breath-taking jumps of the final sequence ("Palimpsest #6. Jumps") end with this last gesture: a "smile" by Salgues as *The Chosen One* that would be the first of another time, the "first time" here named "printemps (springtime)".

In this "precipitate of life" that Salgues as *The Chosen One* invokes as "her pleasure to dance before she dies", we are at the heart of an archaeological regime that gives primacy to the gesture (vibrant, varying, mutant) in an infinite present, at the very birth of the gesture, as well as in a "whirlpool of the river of becoming".[55] To all previous questions, Brun and Salgues answer precisely with the primacy of the gesture and the importance of its birth in the present itself.

Each of the five actions corresponded to those of the choreographic and performance process carried to their excesses by Salgues as *The Chosen One* in *Sacre#2*. In this coming together of our reenactment methodologies, Salgues, Brun and I have not stopped swirling and feasting together in an attempt to invent another time, in view of a

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55. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 45.

multi-layered urgency that resonates with our era. Before publishing these palimpsests in their full meanings and contents, we hope that the presentation and explication of our tools and methodologies of this "sensitive archaeology of gestures" in the current book will support their fuller, more fruitful, understanding.

Fig. 5. Mary Chebbah (2018), *Distortion of composite 1 or landslide*

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The Matter of Reenactment: A Materialist Inquiry into Cambodia's Contemporary Monumental Practices
Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier

Before June 20, 1977, I was just a soldier who received orders from superiors. But from then until now, I have been a leader that has ensured Cambodia's national process forever without taking breaks.[1]

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This statement by Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen is featured at the Win-Win Monument, a vast memorial complex built on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and inaugurated in December 2018 for the twentieth anniversary of the final dismantling of the Khmer Rouge movement (*fig. 1*). The date 20 June 1977 refers to Hun Sen's defection from the Khmer Rouge (he was then a regimental commander) to Vietnam. Back in Cambodia with the Vietnamese forces that entered the country in December 1978 to overthrow the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen quickly rose to prominence in the new political and state apparatus, first as Foreign Minister, and then since 1985 as Prime Minister.

The Win-Win Monument is a 33 metre high triangular monolith (*lingam,* a symbol of generative power, would

1. May Titthara, "Officials reminisce over Hun Sen's win-win policy", *Khmer Times*, no. 28 (December 2018), https://www.khmertimeskh.com/563912/officials-reminisce-over-hun-sens-win-win-policy/ [accessed 21 April 2022].
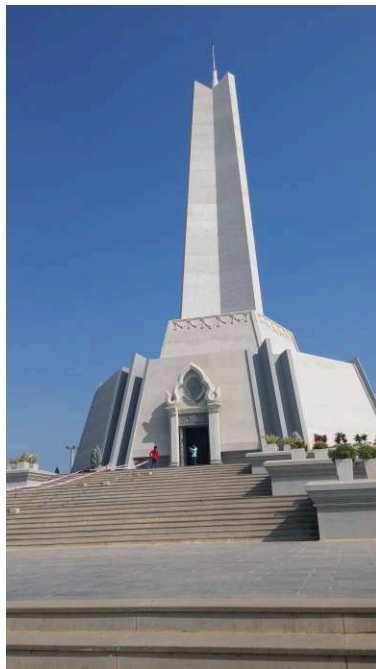
Fig. 1. View of the monolith of the
Win-Win Monument
©Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier (2020)

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certainly be a more appropriate term) posed on a pentago-
nal basis adorned with a 117 metre long wall of bas-reliefs
which recount half a century of Cambodia's history through
Hun Sen's personal story. It includes a museum and a small
park that displays military vehicles and planes from the
period of the conflict between the Cambodian government
and the Khmer Rouge. The whole structure commemo-
rates Hun Sen's struggles and victories, and Cambodia's
parallel struggles and victories.

The transformative dimension of Hun Sen's experience
simultaneously encapsulates and shapes the experience of
Cambodia. The country has long been subjected to exter-
nal forces (the French colonial power, the United States
during the 1970-1975 civil war, and the China-leaning
Khmer Rouge "superiors"), but has now broken its shack-
les, and fought its way to independence and sovereignty.
This chapter takes this entwined celebration of leadership
and nation-building as a starting point for exploring the
relationship between materiality, agency, and reenactment
in Cambodia. More specifically, it considers the way this
relationship unfolds in the context of monumentality and

memorialisation. I build on Karen Barad's notion of "post-human performativity" to unpack this relationship. I investigate the connection between two artefacts, the Win-Win Monument and a documentary movie about Hun Sen, through the idea of "materialist-discursive practices" and their "mutual entailment".[2]

Drawing on Barad's "iterative enactment", I suggest that reenactment, at least in the specific context of Cambodia's "official" history, might be decoupled from its epistemological function and open the way for another modality of knowing the past, a "knowing-in-being" that materialises through a range of practices.[3] Studies of Cambodia's monuments often focus on the Angkor Wat temple complex, and to date, contemporary forms are still under-explored. A materialist inquiry into one of the most recent monuments to be erected might help understand how the country, engaged in a new phase of development (well-supported by China), weaves anew traditions and ruptures.

Historical Background   aA

The Democratic Kampuchea regime collapsed in January 1979. The Khmer Rouge (officially the Communist Party of Kampuchea) had seized power in April 1975 after a five-year civil war against the Khmer Republic of Marshal Lon Nol. As a result of their short and extremely violent reign, more than 1.7 million Cambodians lost their lives through forced labour, killings, starvation, exhaustion, and disease. The tense relationship between Democratic Kampuchea and former ally Vietnam over territorial and ideological issues escalated into full-scale war throughout 1978, leading to Hanoi's military intervention in December and the fall of the Pol Pot regime a few weeks later. The Vietnamese forces brought with them the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (FUNSK), a movement founded in December 1978 with Cambodian veteran communists from Hanoi and defectors

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2. Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28, no. 3 (2003): 822.

3. Ibid., 822-829.

from the Khmer Rouge.[4] The FUNSK was to become the nucleus of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the socialist regime established shortly after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge. The latter went back to the jungle, from where they launched attacks against the new Cambodian government. The ousted movement received the support of China and the United States, both eager to counter the Soviet advance through Southeast Asia.

In the 1980s, the People's Republic of Kampuchea – renamed the State of Cambodia in 1989 after Vietnam's withdrawal from the country – fought against several other resistance factions inside Cambodia and at the Thai border. Besides the Khmer Rouge, the main opponents were the FUNCINPEC, formed by former head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and the KPNLF, formed by anti-communist politician Son Sann.[5] The negotiations initiated by the French government between the three factions and Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led to the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991. All parties agreed to establish the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and to the holding of free and fair elections in 1993.

However, the Khmer Rouge pulled out of the agreement before the elections and resumed the fight against the Cambodian authorities. The conflict continued throughout the 1990s amid an increasingly volatile political environment. Following the elections, Cambodia had become a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty system, but Hun Sen contested the results of the votes. He obtained from

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4. Justus M. van der Kroef, "Cambodia: From 'Democratic Kampuchea' to 'People's Republic'", *Asian Survey*, 19, no. 8 (1979), 731-750.

5. Norodom Sihanouk formed the FUNCINPEC (French acronym for National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia) in 1981. A major player in Cambodian politics, Sihanouk was put on the throne by the French colonial power in 1941. He was Cambodia's first head of state in the post-independence era (Sangkum, 1955-1970). Ousted by a coup in March 1970, he allied with the Khmer Rouge guerrilla on China and Vietnam's advice, and together they formed the FUNK (French acronym for National United Front of Kampuchea). After the Khmer Rouge took over in April 1975, Sihanouk remained a symbolic presence, under house arrest in Phnom Penh. From 1979 onwards, his relations with the Khmer Rouge movement oscillated between denunciation and (reluctant) alliance, such as the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) formed in 1982 under the United States and China's pressure. Son Sann formed the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) in 1978 and he too joined the CGDK in 1982.

restored King Sihanouk the sharing of all power positions with the winning party, the FUNCINPEC led by Sihanouk's son, Prince Ranariddh. It was in this context that the "win-win" policy unfolded.[6]

In his competition with Ranarriddh to attract Khmer Rouge commanders with their seasoned troops and military equipment, Hun Sen devised a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, he promised the defectors that they would keep their property and their military ranks once they transferred to the Cambodian Royal Armed Forces, and that he would protect their safety.[7] On the other hand, he outlawed membership of the Khmer Rouge and declared the movement a criminal organisation. Playing masterly with the movement's internal struggles, Hun Sen applied what he called the "DIFID strategy" (Divide, Isolate, Finish, Integrate, and Develop) with excellent results.[8] Once he got rid of Ranariddh, in July 1997, in a coup that gave him full power, he managed to do away with the last resisting Khmer Rouge factions. The movement was declared "defunct" in December 1998. That same year, Hun Sen and the CPP gained majority control in the elections. They have won every election since then. From the mid-2010s onwards, the Prime Minister has intensified the dismantling of opposition parties, and Cambodia's fragile democracy is currently taking a turn towards autocracy.

Defection: Iterations and Histories That Do (not) Repeat Themselves

The Win-Win Monument, thus, commemorates a political strategy that brought "unification" and "harmonisation" to Cambodia, as claimed by some of the panels displayed there. Narratively speaking, it creates resonances between past and present. The old stories of defection are woven into the specific political context of the late 2010s: the clampdown of

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6. It was a "win-win" because it was "winning without bloodshed and with no losers". Nem Sowath, *Civil War Termination and the Source of Total Peace in Cambodia: Win-Win Policy of Samdech Techo Hun Sen in International Context* (Cambodia: Reahoo, 2012):127.

7. These are the three points: ensure survival, protect assets, and maintain position.

8. The first important defection was Ieng Sary's (former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Democratic Kampuchea), with some 3,000 soldiers in August 1996.

the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).[9] According to political scientist Sorpong Peou, defection is a "pattern of power consolidation" in the CPP.[10] This is exactly what the Win-Win Monument aims to materialise. Through bas-reliefs and panels, the memorial redefines, and even glorifies defection as a responsible and pragmatic political attitude.[11] It is construed as a selfless act of bravery and leadership, a foundational act of nation-building.

The CPP does not innovate but recycles a familiar trope in Khmer politics.[12] If this redefinition works, it is because defection as a means of co-opting enemies has a long-standing history in Cambodia. It includes the rallying of Khmer Rouge soldiers to Lon Nol's Republic during the civil war in ceremonies widely advertised in newsreels and newspapers, and the People's Republic of Kampuchea's blanket amnesty of mid- and low-ranks Khmer Rouge in the early 1980s to recruit reliable (read: ideologically compatible) military and administrative staff.

These echoes from one historical period to another find their counterpart in the visual iterations of the Win-Win Monument itself. Two life-size sculptures situated on the plaza that leads to the triangular monolith embody the transformative dimension of defection, from enemy to friend, from outsider to member of the Cambodian community.

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9. The communal elections in June 2017 had given the CNRP control over a third of all communes. The CPP's response was swift. In September 2017, the CNRP president Kem Sokha was put under arrest. Two months later, the Supreme Court dissolved the party on the (alleged) charge of fomenting a US-backed revolution (another recurrent narrative in Cambodia). Kem Sokha was released from house arrest in November 2019. His trial for "treason" started in January 2020 but was suspended for several months officially because of the Covid-19 situation. It restarted a few months ago, but Hun Sen hinted that it could last until 2024.

10. "Cambodia's Hegemonic Party System: How and Why the CPP Became Dominant?", *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 4, no. 1 (2019): 54-57.

11. That was indeed the message of Hun Sen to CNRP members: "If you want to save your jobs … change your allegiance to the CPP". In Andrew Nachemson, "As PM recycles policy, who wins?", *The Phnom Penh Post* (9 November 2017), https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-post-depth-politics/pm-recycles-policy-who-wins [accessed 21 April 2022]. The Prime Minister even called it a "second win-win policy". In Sun Narin, "Local officials grapple with 'win-win' redux as Hun Sen tells them 'Defect or lose jobs'", *VOA* (3 November 2017), https://www.voacambodia.com/a/local-officials-grapple-with-win-win-redux-as-hun-sen-tells-them-defect-or-lose-jobs/4098613.html [accessed 21 April 2022].

12. Nachemson, "As PM recycles policy".

Fig. 2. Sculpture "Isolation" representing a Khmer Rouge soldier before surrendering to the Cambodian government
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The first statue represents a Khmer Rouge soldier who has not defected yet (*fig. 2*). He sits on the ground, holds his knees, and looks downwards. His rifle lies at his side and his cap at his feet. The sculpture, called "Isolation", describes "the spirit of Khmer Rouge forces before integration process [sic]", the feelings of "despair", "loss of purpose", and "sadness" (panel) the troops had at the time. In contrast, the second statue, entitled "Integration", represents a former Khmer Rouge soldier standing and donning the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces uniform. We can see the man's "joy and satisfaction" in joining the governmental side (panel). The change of uniforms, a solid symbolic gesture, features in several reliefs, which replicate the photographs of the reintegration ceremonies in 1999 at Anlong Veng, the last Khmer Rouge bastion to fall.

The two statues – possibly of the same man before and after defection – point to the regenerative aspect of defection, as the soldier's downcast individual body finally stands proud and erect once it has been reintegrated into the national body politic.

Unsurprisingly, there are dissenting views on the monument and what it symbolises. These views were expressed at the time of the inauguration. While journalist Sebastian Strangio, for example, saw the win-win policy as an achieve-

ment (although one used as a "totalising political claim" for legitimacy), political analyst Lao Mong Hay argued that it was a "molehill turned into a mountain.[13] Political opponents, such as the CNRP's acting president-in-exile Sam Rainsy, claimed that Hun Sen's departure to Vietnam in 1977 had been an act of treason, not of the Khmer Rouge, of course, but of the country, which he handed over to Hanoi. Not long after the inauguration, Facebook users dubbed the monument the "Yuon Win Monument" (Yuon means Vietnam). Some pointed out the architectural and iconographic similarities between the Win-Win Monument and the Cambodia-Vietnam Friendship Monument built in 1979-1980 in Phnom Penh.[14]

The controversy over the Win-Win memorial complex and how it is to be interpreted not only played out against the old debate on Vietnam's intervention as "liberation" or "invasion". It also resonated with the current and ongoing debate on Chinese presence in Cambodia (through Belt and Road Initiative investments), the Cambodian political elites selling the country out of personal financial interests, and the loss of national sovereignty and identity to China. In this troubled context, the reach of the Win-Win Monument would not be broad enough to impose the official view on as many people as possible. Villagers living in northern and western Cambodia's countryside hardly come to visit the monument. Therefore, the government had to resort to other channels to carry out its redemptive narrative of defection and associated meanings.

One of these was the documentary movie *Marching Towards National Salvation* (2017), produced by the Council of Ministers' Press and Quick Reaction Unit, and broadcast on state and national television networks and social media (Facebook) in January 2018.[15] Although the film is obviously

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13. George Wright, "Hun Sen 'win win' legacy debated on Khmer Rouge fall anniversary", *AlJazeera* (28 December 2018), https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/28/hun-sen-win-win-legacy-debated-on-khmer-rouge-fall-anniversary [accessed 21 April 2022].

14. Niem Chheng, "Win Win Monument: PM's 'treason' or symbol of unity?", *The Phnom Penh Post*, 3 (January 2019), https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/win-win-monument-pms-treason-or-symbol-unity [accessed 21 April 2022].

15. There are two versions of the movie, one in Khmer and one in English. See Khuon Narim "State produced film tells story of 'salvation march'", *Khmer Times*

a completely different material-discursive apparatus than the Win-Win Monument, it also uses an iterative structure. It tells the story of Hun Sen's march to Vietnam and his return to liberate Cambodia.[16] The movie combines interviews with the protagonists (including the Prime Minister), archive footage, drawings, animations, and reenactments.

The reenacted scenes are generally accompanied by a piece of suspenseful music and a voice-over comment that makes them even more emotive. They show Hun Sen marching through the jungle towards Vietnam, leaving his weapons before crossing the border, being offered a meal of rice (his first in one year) by farmers, being treated for malaria at a top hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, talking with doctors and nurses, speaking and shaking hands with Vietnamese officers.

Although the movie emphasises the positive role of Vietnam, praised for its kindness and humanity and presented as a model for Cambodia,[17] it is not its main objective.

Marching Towards National Salvation seeks to humanise the Prime Minister. The idea of the "benevolent strongman" the movie promotes is clearly modelled after Sihanouk, a leader prone to emotional outbursts and impassioned tirades.[18] During the interview, Hun Sen "regularly dabs his face with a handkerchief to dry his tears when recalling the death of his child during the Khmer Rouge days, missing his wife, and looking back at his homeland, while escaping through the jungle".[19]

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(3 January 2018), https://www.khmertimeskh.com/99613/state-produced-film-tells-story-salvation-march/ [accessed 21 April 2022].

16. With his companions Nuch Thorng, Nhek Huon, Sou Kimsreang, and Va Por Ean.

17. The movie aired on Vietnamese National Defence Channel, Ho Chi Minh City's television HTV, and Vietnam's television VTV4 and VTV1. Vietnamese academic Vu Duong Ninh declared that it was "significantly objective" and had "true historical value". In "Marching Towards National Salvation: A Valuable and Factual Documentary," *People's Army Newspaper* (10 January 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= oj3dAlpf7ls [accessed 21 April 2022].

18. Forum Future think tank director Ou Virak, quoted in George Wright "Cambodian Strongman Displays Iron Fist and Vulnerability", *UCA News* (19 January 2018), https://www.ucanews.com/news/cambodian-strongman-displays-iron-fist-and-vulnerability/81260 [accessed 21 April 2022].

19. Wright, "Cambodia Strongman".

Fig. 3. Bas-relief showing Hun Sen reflecting about the risks for himself, his companions and his family if he defects to Vietnam
©Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier (2020)

The reenacted scenes support Hun Sen's affective recounting. They open up a more intimate dimension, in which the viewer is made part of the Prime Minister's emotional state, when the latter recalls being beset by doubts and fears (but still driven by his mission). For example, he sits alone at night and looks at the sky, wondering whether the Vietnamese will trust him, kill him, or hand him over to the Khmer Rouge. These moments of anxiety and hesitation feature in the bas-reliefs at the Win-Win Monument too, in the form of "bubbles" that come out of Hun Sen's head and describe these different options (*fig. 3*). In many ways, the movie is the mobile version of the Win-Win Monument, an easily distributed monumentalisation of Hun Sen's vision. In this case, iteration is conceived of as a form of political pedagogy. Expressed through different materialities, it creates a closed loop (visually and narratively) that makes it difficult for Cambodians to escape the official interpretation of the past.

In 2021, a new narrative layer was added to this story with the reframing of Hun Sen's defection as "resistance journey". Posting on his Facebook account for the 44th anniversary of his march to Vietnam, the Prime Minister asked what would have happened to Cambodia if he had not led the resistance? He referred again to the "hundreds of thou-

sands of tears" he had shed when leaving the country. Yet, he wrote, he had no choice and "these tears have brought about happiness and prosperity until today". To mark the event, the Cambodian and Vietnamese Defence Ministers presided over a groundbreaking ceremony for a Cambodian-Vietnamese Friendship building commemorating the beginning of Hun Sen's journey in Tonloung village in the Memot district, eastern Cambodia.[20]

Is this the start of a Via Dolorosa that will see, each year, a new station being erected? Indeed, in May 2020, the government announced the creation of a country-wide construction programme of Win-Win memorials replicating on a smaller scale the original monument.[21] The not-so-subtle symbol of Defense Minister Tea Banh planting 77 trees (for 1977) points to a further aspect of this PR operation. The environmentally-friendly gesture, at odds with the government's *laissez-faire* attitude, (to say the least) when it comes to illegal logging and deforestation, points to the addition of a new element to Hun Sen's already larger-than-life political persona: the ecologically enlightened leader in line with the sustainability discourse that has gained currency in official Cambodian circles.

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Monumental Reenactment and Reenacting Monumentality
The Win-Win Monument will teach the younger generations Cambodia's "true history", the head of the construction committee New Sowath declared.[22] Yet, "true history" as it is represented in the bas-reliefs tends to look like a mythical version of the past.

The film *Marching Towards National Salvation* offers an entry point into the workings of the monument. Observers commented that the movie was an "episode of historical mythmaking whose purpose [was] less to provide an objec-

20. Voun Dara, "PM Marks 44th Anniversary of "Resistance Journey", *The Phnom Penh Post* (20 June 2021), https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/pm-marks-44th-anniversary-resistance-journey [accessed 21 April 2022].
21. "Cambodia to Erect a Series of Win-Win Monuments in the Country", *Cambodianess* (5 May 2020), https://cambodianess.com/article/cambodia-to-erect-a-series-of-win-win-monuments-in-the-country [accessed 21 April 2022].
22. Mech Dara, "Win Win Monument, an 'heirloom' for generations", *Phnom Penh Post* (31 December 2019), https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/win-win-monument-heirloom-generations, [accessed 21 April 2022].

tive narrative of history than to burnish Hun Sen's personal story and justify the CPP's continued rule of Cambodia".[23] As discussed in the previous section, the film tried to create among viewers an emotional bond with the Prime Minister. Moreover, it pushed defection into an entirely new realm.

For Hun Sen, leaving Cambodia had not been only a difficult decision to make and to stick to, it had also been an otherworldly one. In the interview, the Prime Minister described his experience as a "miraculous story". He was asleep and "heard screams on the top of a big banyan tree, saying that I had to leave immediately. Then the fire was burning around me, like a burning rocket. Later, I recalled that dream as an omen".

The idea that spirits played a role in the transformation of a young military officer into a selfless leader, perhaps even chose him as Cambodia's saviour, cannot but resonate strongly in a Buddhist country. This "miraculous story" is used to reshape people's perception of Hun Sen's position. Power is not something he grabbed thanks to a combination of talent and manoeuvres and keeps holding through autocratic practices, but something that was bestowed on him. In this respect, the Win-Win Monument should not be understood only as the reenactment, in a monumental form, of Hun Sen's struggles and triumphs. It gives even more weight to this mythical dimension of Hun Sen's life by reenacting in itself a type of monumentality that has long been at the core of history-telling in Cambodia.

The construction of the Win-Win Monument began in February 2016 on an eight-hectare section of land in the Chroy Changvar district on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, an industrial and commercial neighbourhood in development.[24] The construction required 29,000 square meters of marble, 15,000 square meters of concrete, and 3,000 tons of steel. The structure is situated across from the Morodok Techo Stadium which will host the 2023 Southeast Asian

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23. Erin Handley and Niem Chheng, "Analysis: in new propaganda documentary, Hun Sen attempts to 'rewrite history'", *The Phnom Penh Post* (5 January 2018), https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/analysis-new-propaganda-documentary-hun-sen-attempts-rewrite-history [accessed 21 April 2022].

24. An understatement for the ruthless urban planning carried out (with Chinese investments) in the area.

Games. The Win-Win Monument is thus part of an urban complex aimed at showcasing Cambodia as an ultra-modern country that plays an important regional role.[25]

This prestige project (USD12 million) is best understood within the broader context of monumentality and memorialisation of Cambodia's recent past. There is a limited number of memorials and monuments. The better known are the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, established in 1979 in the facilities of the Khmer Rouge S.21 prison in Phnom Penh, and the Choeung Ek Genocidal Centre ("Killing Fields") located fifteen kilometres south of the capital city.[26] Local memorials, often hosted in pagodas, have been erected since the 1980s, and more recently in the frame of the symbolic reparations assigned by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

Transitional justice in Cambodia has given rise to a new generation of projects that usually involve an educational aspect. The Anlong Veng Peace Centre, which promotes reconciliation through pedagogy and community projects, is a good example. It is the result of the collaboration between the ECCC and the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam). The latter was founded in the mid-1990s as a field office for Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Project. Today, it is a prominent archive and research institution that works closely with the ECCC. The DC-Cam itself, initially hosted in small offices in Phnom Penh, has sought to expand into a gigantic complex combining archives, museum, and research centre to be located outside the city – the Sleuk Rith Institute (SRI). In the past years, the project, supposed to be built by the famous Zaha Hadid Architects bureau, has been put on hold for financial reasons. The promotional images of the SRI show a syncretic structure inspired by both Khmer

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25. Khuon Narim, "Win Win Monument, a symbol of peace", *Khmer Times* (31 December 2018), https://www.khmertimeskh.com/564355/win-win-monument-a-symbol-of-peace-prime-minister/ [accessed 21 April 2022]; Mech Dara, "Win Win Monument cost 12.5 million to build", *The Phnom Penh Post* (31 December 2018); Andrew Nachemson, "Hun Sen's Monument to himself", *The Diplomat* (31 December 2018).

26. The two structures are linked. The S.21 staff used Choeung Ek – an orchard and a former Chinese cemetery – as a killing site and a place to dispose of the bodies of the prisoners. About 9,000 corpses were exhumed in 1979-1980. The remains are kept onsite in a stupa memorial – a Buddhist structure that contains relics.

architectural and iconographic traditions and international memorial institutions such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.[27]

This type of syncretism is not new in Cambodia. It was the signature mark of the Sangkum or post-independence era (1955-1970), as Norodom Sihanouk (then head of state) engaged in a vast modernisation programme for the country with the help of the regime's architect Vann Molyvann. Vann Molyvann had studied with Le Corbusier in the 1940s and worked in France until the mid-1950s. He introduced the idea of New Khmer Architecture, a combination of international modernity and Khmer tradition. The Win-Win Monument, thus, can be seen as a response to Sihanouk, in the past and the present, defining a new pole in Cambodian politics. Materially, it replicates the country's dual power structure, with the (weak) monarchy on one side, and the (strong) premiership on the other.[28]

If Phnom Penh has its Independence Monument, a landmark that has organised the circulation within the city, the Win-Win Monument aims to create a new architectural and political axis. In this sense, the choice of a "thriving" district outside Phnom Penh, in which to locate the memorial complex, is not simply a practical matter. The Win-Win Monument is a "manifesto" that symbolises the emergence of the "new" Cambodia envisioned by Hun Sen. It reaffirms a national agency that is no longer defined by past deeds (the struggle for independence) but by the determination to look forward and regionally.[29] The commissioning of local architects and artists rather than a prestigious international team adds further emphasis to the vernacularisation of Cambodian historical narratives, possibly in response to the vision of the ECCC. This in turn, might well indicate the Prime Minister's emancipation from the notions of "good governance" and "democratisation" that came with international justice.

The materiality of the Win-Win Monument is thus highly political. The structure is heavy on symbolism. The trian-

27. See: http://www.cambodiasri.org [accessed 12 July 2021].
28. When Sihanouk (1922-2012) abdicated in 2004 for health reasons, his son Norodom Sihamoni became king. So far, he has shown none of his father's taste and skills for political maneuvers and power struggles.
29. Towards Singapore for example.

gular monolith stands for the three guarantees the Khmer Rouge defectors received from Hun Sen (safety, job, and property). The pentagonal basis represents the five aspects of the DIFID policy. External references (to Asian social realism, for example) come to mind when observing the Win-Win Monument. Yet, there are references to Angkor Wat that dominate the memorial complex: it is made from the same stone used to construct the temples. In order to underline the connection even further, the four entrances that give access to the bunker-level where the Win-Win Museum is located are guarded by lions and *nagas* – half-cobra and half-human semi-divine beings.[30] The first bas-reliefs of the wall represent apsara (royal dancers) and Buddha. In the same way that Khmer merchants were glorified in Angkor Wat frescoes, the back section of the Win-Win Monument displays a series of carvings that celebrate various ministries, depicted through a combination of *nagas* and symbols. On one side of the plaza stand miniature replicas of temples such as the Bayon and Banteay Srey.[31] Like Angkor Wat, the Win-Win Monument creates "ambulatories" of history. Presented as a *galleria progressiva*, Hun Sen's life unfolds as a "sacred text" whose reading people are asked to perform; the carvings are not just a nice background for selfie opportunities, they attract the touch of the visitors who walk around the pentagonal structure. People stand in front of the bas-reliefs and panels; they stroke them and talk about them (*fig. 4*). What the Win-Win Monument proposes to Cambodians is a sensory, embodied version of "civic" education that appears less as a critical pedagogy than a ritualisation of history-telling in familiar forms.

Although the Win-Win Monument is part of an architectural vision meant to reflect a future-oriented Cambodia, it does not constitute a rupture with old monumental forms. The Angkor Wat influences permeating it have a double function. They anchor Hun Sen's re-drawing of the political power map and vision of the "new" country into national "history" and continuity. Moreover, they situate the

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30. Unfortunately, the Museum was closed when I visited the Win-Win Monument in February 2020.

31. As I could see, the replicas are used as a backdrop for the wedding pictures of newly married couples who cannot afford to travel to the actual temples.

Fig. 4. Family looking at a bas-relief
©Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier (2020)

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events of the past forty years (defections, civil wars, regime changes) within a narrative sequence of glory, hardship, suffering, and rebirth that has long been the pattern of modern Cambodian historiography (Edwards 2006).[32]

The Win-Win Monument offers a tangible "image-book" filled with archetypical and realistic depictions. Hun Sen, for example, is often represented as bigger than his counterparts. At the same time, the rendering of weapons, helicopters, and tanks is realistic. It is tempting to look at this syncretic mix of political propaganda and mythological storytelling through the lens of the posthuman, not with a view to arguing in any way that Hun Sen is not "human" but in order to stress the specific Khmer framing of political power through the divine. The last revered "God-King" was Sihanouk, and with him disappeared this extraordinary ability to embody both the secular, interventionist leader and the sacred, untouchable, anointed King. Hun Sen is careful not to tread this path. Yet, he designs his own path, imposing the "premiership" as a site of power as important as kingship (if not more so).

32. Southeast historian Penny Edwards explains that this narrative was articulated in part by the French colonial power around the "discovery" of Angkor Wat and quickly adopted by Cambodian intellectuals. See "Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945" (2006). See Penny Edwards, "Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945" (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

The Win-Win Monument is part of this strategy, and in this context, the idea of the *lingam* is certainly the best possible description of the Prime Minister's attempt to create a new political dynasty through monumentality.

Conclusion

The chapter shows that a focus on materiality might help rethink the role reenactment plays in historical transmission in Cambodia. By choosing the Win-Win Monument, a recent and to date under-explored artefact, it sought to clarify how politics is made to "matter" in a changing context, as the country enters a new phase of development, with less support from the West and more involvement from China. The chapter looked at the memorial complex as a material-discursive apparatus, supplemented by a second one, a documentary movie about Hun Sen's life centring on the key moment of his defection from the Khmer Rouge. In both cases, it was shown that iteration played a major relational role in producing storytelling for past and present times.

There is a section of the Win-Win Monument that contains almost no bas-reliefs. One finds only empty spots that have not been sculpted at all, spots from which carvings have been removed, and spots where parts have been erased or covered with white paint. Are these spots to be corrected, replaced, or filled? Was this void programmed from the start as blank pages where Hun Sen's life and exploits are still to be written? Possibly. Yet, it points, inadvertently so, to something different – the black spots of the story recounted by the wall, the undesirable or the repressed aspects of the myth the Prime Minister wants to see engraved for posterity. It is there that the materiality of the Win-Win Monument escapes the control of its creators, unachieved and yet more complete in its holes, erasures, and crossing-outs than the sketchy story Hun Sen would like Cambodians to learn.

PRELUDE

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Under the Sign of Reenactment
Stefano Mudu

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Reenactment is a hypernym: it refers to a field with vast and ever-changing boundaries. Thanks to its interdisciplinary application, the very meaning escapes univocal analysis models, definitive standardisation, or even linear genealogies. For example, in the artistic field, anyone would find it difficult to trace the history of its use or, indeed, would struggle to navigate through the complex network of practical and theoretical references that it has produced.

The term reenactment has always indicated an act of deliberate repetition of the past. In manifesting itself as an example of formal repetition, it questions the most varied interpretations: philosophical, political, cultural or affective. According to a first contemporary genealogical hypothesis, the concept was introduced in the historiographical field from the end of the 1940s[1] and, at least for the following thirty years, mainly described episodes of historical or folk-

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1. A seminal thought in this sense is the one formulated by the British philosopher and archaeologist Robin George Collingwood. In his famous book *The Idea of History* (1946), he defined reenactment as a methodological tool to decode history. Robin G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

loric reenactment that aimed to reconstruct past events such as battles, parades or tournaments. A second and parallel history of the term[2] traces its origins to many artistic contributions that, during the sixties, and in light of an intermedial discourse, methodically reproduced happenings and live events conceived by the Fluxus movement, or by the exponents of the so-called American Minimalism.

In both cases, these historic and performative events demonstrated how the development of events hid the possibility of fruitful temporal vitality and how the present could be interrupted by a voluntary invocation of the past. Also, they showed how the relationship with the past, when undertaken with awareness, made it possible to remember the actual event, modify it, and critically analyse its value. This last perspective has found its allies in the most authoritative voices of modernity and has demonstrated both the reliability of Nietzsche's "eternal return of the same" (*die Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*),[3] and the possibility of Benjamin's "renewal of existence" (*die Erneuerung des Daseins*).[4]

On the practical side, these reenactments have frequently been conceived as almost faithful reconstructions of their originals. Still, each execution has highlighted an inevitable distance (formal or conceptual) with the past to which they referred. The historical reenactments followed the historical traces in a meticulous and detailed way but, as the countless international examples[5] still demonstrate

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2. For any further studies see the introduction by Sven Lütticken in *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2015): 5-8.

3. This theory has never been addressed by Nietzsche in a linear and systematic way. The meaning of the concept was treated in an aphorismatic way first within *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*) and then in the famous *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883-1885 (*Also sprach Zarathustra*), in the paragraph "On the Vision and the Riddle", from which the quote in the text is taken. See Adrain Del Caro and Robert Pippin, eds., *Friedrich Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 123-27.

4. The concept was introduced by Benjamin within his famous essay *Unpacking My Library* (*Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus*). The author refers to the power of the collector and his possibility to renew the existence of objects by managing their position and conservation. See Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting", in *Walter Benjamin. Illuminations: Essays and Reflection*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1988): 61.

5. There are plenty of videos documenting these events online. A quick survey on the most famous streaming video service, YouTube, and dozens of them will appear: from the reenactment for the 200th year since the Battle of Waterloo

today, they turned out to be theatrical objects often with inconsistencies. On the contrary, the performative reenactments started from photographic and documentary material derived from the live moment but, depending on the context in which they were performed or the artist who proposed them, they regularly produced new narrative solutions.

More generally, to frame it in the words of Gilles Deleuze, both types of reenactment – the historical and the performative – showed that repetition produced a series of unavoidable differences from the original.[6] Furthermore, as Rebecca Schneider argued, the repetitions showed an evident inadequacy in covering the temporal distance with the recovered object.[7] From the very beginning, thus, these reconstructions demonstrated the impossibility of obtaining an authentic version of an event that has passed. Each time a gesture, an object, a work of art was reproduced or reproposed, it stood out as a different entity. Nevertheless, these first explorations are valuable because they offered a performative approach to historical events.

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Starting from the eighties, many postmodern choreographers proposed alternative approaches to past works. Even if their practice was not called reenactment at that time – a term that gradually gained popularity in dance quite recently – this attitude became almost strategic in the relationship of choreography with preexisting dance works. In fact, this new generation of practitioners – both choreographers and dancers – began to intentionally insist on adapting pre-existing scripts or scores without necessarily

(1815) to the annual reenactments for the Battle of Gettysburg (1863), one of the most critical clashes that took place during the American Civil War. Most importantly, many contemporary artists have used this method of historical reenactment in some of their works. Think of the famous project by British artist Jeremy Deller, *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) – in which a group of reenactors interpreted the riots between the miners and the Labor government of 1984 – and how contemporary art has drawn from the folkloric aesthetics. Emblematic is also *The Modern Procession* (2004), the work of Mexican artist Francis Alÿs, in which a lay procession carried some pieces of the Museum of Modern Art from one location to another in New York City.

6. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2004).

7. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-Enactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011): 6.

"restoring" them. Using their body as a tool to embody memory, they proposed new and ever-changing versions of past experiences. After all, dance has often conceived movements and gestures as if they were information destined to migrate between bodies. Dance's "visual, emotional, kinaesthetic"[8] features have been preserved thanks to the dancers as living archives[9] or relays,[10] who have retained memory and transmitted forms, knowledge and experiences. But once the study of the past gained the value of the creative method of reenactment, this process distanced itself from the accurate demands of historical reconstruction and subjected the archival and even embodied documents to continuous variations to determine the autonomy of reenactment from the original source.

Even musicians have always needed to pass on their compositions, and this was achieved thanks to scores and notations. It is no coincidence that starting with postmodernism, also music granted a wide range of interpretations to its performers or audiences. By creating the so-called "open works", composers and musicians, in general, have given listeners and attendees the chance to finish their compositions by interpreting or re-arranging them. This practice has pushed reconstruction limits and proposed each time different approaches to the source material.

In other words, dance and music were the first disciplines exploring the infinite creative possibilities derived from a critical analysis of the historical heritage and, with an eye to the future, they "danced and played the present" adapting the forms of the past to one's expressive needs. Rather than simply reconstructing their references, choreographers and composers, dancers and musicians, have

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8. Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera, *Ricordanze. Memoria in movimento e coreografie della storia* (Turin: UTET, 2010): 5-13.

9. See André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances", in *Dance Research Journal* vol. 42, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 28-48; https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0149767700001029 [accessed 18 March 2022].

10. In *The Shape of Time*, the American philosopher and anthropologist George Kubler defines "relays" those agents who are both "receivers" and "senders" of a message and deform their content during the phases of transmission. See George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1970): 21.

reactivated them by allowing their survival with a certain degree of critical, formal and conceptual autonomy.

Then, this freedom of interpretation has been reinforced by performance art and cinematography. In an equally daring exercise of temporal manipulation[11] that we can easily ascribe once again to postmodernism, both disciplines have chosen their references from the past, assembling them in the present to create works of art made of multiple sources.[12] These disciplines, thus, challenged the cyclic temporal dimension always linked to the idea of repetition and started to create objects crossed by as many temporalities as the sources. In a short time, performance art and cinematography led to the definition of reenactment of any object of visual culture presented as a symptom of previous iconographies or built at the crossroads of several citations.

At least regarding their disciplinary heterogeneity, the "duets" gathered in this book seem to derive from the freedom of this latter approach and, in enhancing it, underline how it has reached the maximum degree of experimentation and brought reenactment to new frontiers.

In the last ten years, artists and curators, dancers and choreographers, scholars and research centres have randomly adopted the term reenactment on a theoretical and practical level. They have plumbed their past, opened their archives and reconstructed their narratives starting from traces and documents. By proposing formal and content configurations that were consciously less faithful to the sources, they built new objects at the intersection of multiple temporalities. Without too many distinctions, the term reenactment has increasingly taken distance from the logic of pure historical repeatability – from the perspectives of a linear narrative that at most had to deal with the return of a single moment in the past. It instead started to qualify also those artistic products or creative processes whose

11. Cf. Cristina Baldacci, "Reenactment: Errant Images in Contemporary Art", in *Re-: An Errant Glossary*, ed. Christoph F. E. Holzhey and Arnd Wedemeyer (Berlin: ICI Berlin, 2019): 57-67.
12. See Cristina Baldacci and Marco Bertozzi, eds., *Montages: Assembling as a Form and Symptom in Contemporary Arts* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis International, 2018).

formal, spatial, and conceptual characteristics derive from the juxtaposition of materials extrapolated from different times and contexts.

The concept of reenactment has become a mirror of the space-time entropy reached by contemporaneity; that chaotic coexistence of "heterogeneous clusters" that scholars Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund say are "generated along different historical trajectories".[13] To put it in other words, the ever-growing umbrella of reenactment deals today with multiple and overlapped temporalities that question the traditional model of history as a linear and progressive succession of events.

Indeed, all the examples presented in the following pages – from the exhibition project discussed by Cecilia Alemani and Cristina Baldacci to the dance-related examples referred to by Mark Franko and Lucia Ruprecht – can be defined as both multidimensional and multitemporal "objects": they are made in turn from materials (images, things, scripts or scores) that derive from historical moments widely spread in different times and spaces.

Nobody denies that the motivations behind such an expanded look at the past are not specific to each discipline: dance reconstruction is still strongly linked to mnestic operations; anthropology and historiography appeal to different degrees of identity recognition; art today seems to coincide with the need for a general aesthetic and media fluidity. But what seems helpful to consider is that, despite the different political, cultural or affective perspectives, under the sign of reenactment, today complex realities find a shelter that contains an aggregation of objects linked by common and traceable approaches to the same sources. More and more museums and international collections include dance and performance in their contemporary art programs. The visual artist often uses movements, gestures and other resources from the world of performance or music. It is equally true that dance, cinema, and music are also influenced by visual arts and shape their approaches to the past by giving a certain degree of dynamism through complex

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13. See Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, eds., *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity and Contemporary Art* (London: Sternberg Press, 2016).

bodily processes or embodiments. It seems, therefore, that the reactivation of the materials no longer shows (or perhaps has never foreseen) a real disciplinary distinction: the various narrators of the story – be they curators, artists or theorists – all draw from the same archive of previous documents and, less and less philologically, rearrange them at an intermedial level according to their own narrative needs. Perhaps the most urgent problem concerning contemporary reenactment operations is "compositional". By highlighting the different ways of combining the source materials, reenactment provides an orientation method capable of dealing with all products of the past as equally necessary in constructing a new mise-en-scène.

According to one of the most promising philosophical systems of recent years, the so-called "Object-Oriented Ontology" (OOO),[14] it is helpful to think of the world as an aggregation of "things". Regardless of being fixed or moving materials, physical elements or human, inhuman or imaginary entities, all aggregate in compound configurations giving life to progressively larger objects. According to Graham Harman, the initiator and most outstanding exponent of the theory, every manifestation of reality – artistic, social or political – is connected to the materials that make it. People, things, and thoughts unite, giving life to new, more complex objects that keep the memory of the characteristics from which they derive but are also distinguished by the emergence of unique and peculiar qualities. The OOO derives from the theory of cellular evolution proposed in the 1960s by the biologist Lynn Margulis, who claimed that objects behave like agglomerations of more or less composed cells and unite with others grafting and hybridising their genetic code. Margulis' so-called "symbiogenesis" would explain not only that the unions between simple cells serve to develop new and more effective survival activities but also that each newly obtained cell-object

14. Abbreviated with the acronym OOO and pronounced "Triple O", it is a school of philosophy founded in 1997 by the American thinker Graham Harman. There are plenty of colleagues that use its epistemological structure (Levi Bryant, Ian Bogost, Tristan Garcia, and Timothy Morton), and the disciplines that have been adopting its philosophical procedures are different: Architecture, art, and dance among them. See Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018).

always possesses different characteristics from those of the fragments that compose it.[15]

With the necessary simplifications, this compositional perspective lends itself to describing not only the rules that govern each phase of generic reenactment but how each of them increases the entropy of the artistic landscape. Following the transformation processes outlined by OOO, every fragment of artistic entity – image, gesture, document, photograph, script, score, and so on – becomes necessary and potentially (re)orderable in a new configuration. Like an archival material, it carries the formal and conceptual experience of its act of creation and, together with other elements, gives life to layered compositions. But not only that. Each object is also the repository of a precise temporal experience: it encapsulates the time in which it was created and the eventual stratification that preceded it. Therefore, the encounter with other similar materials contributes to the construction of an agglomeration made of the temporalities of all the objects it gathers within it.

Compared to the words Cox and Lund use to refer to contemporaneity, reenactment is a perfect accelerator of entropy and, in each phase of recomposition, adds a new level of space-time complexity to the reference system.

From an "object-oriented" perspective and using the aphoristic terms of the Spanish philosopher Tristan Garcia, our time "is perhaps the time of an epidemic of things":[16] a kind of "contamination of the present" created from the juxtaposition, the montage, the reactivation of objects with a previous composition; it is itself stratified. In our times, the artistic product appears both as an object-compound isolated in space-time and a chaotically and constantly shifting material in a broader context.

The sense of this compositional filter and the value of this space-time expansion certainly do not escape from curatorial practices. The exhibition itself is a collection

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15. An idea that changed completely not only the scientific field in which it came up, but also the cultural panorama in which it migrated. Here it became a metaphor useful to deal with themes such cooperative living, interspecies relationships and also traditional schemes of artistic evolution.

16. See Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014): 1.

of materials that renegotiate their autonomy when rearranged into a new configuration. It emerges as an entity conceptually, formally, and temporally stratified thanks to the reactivation of the fragments it is composed of. In turn, it becomes a reproducible agglomeration of objects – think of the famous exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* restaged by Germano Celant almost fifty years after the original by Harald Szeeman.[17] This is precisely the point of the dialogue between Cecilia Alemani and Cristina Baldacci. Starting from the analysis of the exhibition *The Disquieted Muses*, conceived for the Venice Biennale in 2020, they discuss the possibility of creating the exhibition as a helpful device to revive archival references and materials in a new way and according to open narratives. Their approach seems to suggest the possibility of gathering and sharing objects according to a choreographic method or, vice versa, of re-reading the exhibition as a multitemporal and multispatial score: a new score for the history of art consisting only of the reactivation of previous elements.

It is a compositional model not too far from the one to which the specific examples that Mark Franko and Lucia Ruprecht dealt with seem to allude. For them, reenactment is a tool to operate a re-description of the past through choreography as an annotation system that can allow the repetition of a plot and its connection with "all the archival resources one can assemble".[18] Therefore, dance also reorganises its objects with and through movement from a compositional point of view. Once the reactivation process is over, it remains as a choreography that, in Franko's words, "is such an object itself".[19]

More generally, at the basis of any object – its internal organisation or the relationships it establishes with

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17. Curated in 2013 by Germano Celant in the Venetian spaces of the Prada Foundation, the exhibition is a classic example of reenactment studies in the curatorial field. Having been a restaging of the famous project by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle in Bern (1969), the Venetian show was perceived as a problematic object both aesthetically and conceptually speaking. For further reading see Nicola Foster, "Restaging Origin, Restaging Difference: Restaging Harald Szeemann's Work", in *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2019): 233-258.

18. See further in this volume: Mark Franko and Lucia Ruprecht, "Duet: Witnessing Versus Belatedness: Representation, Reconstruction, and Reenactment", 125-136.

19. Ibid., 132.

others – there seems to be a score that has an ambivalent temporal positioning: "It encodes material that is directed towards the past, but it waits to be activated in the future".[20] As Francesca Franco's words also suggest, the concept of the score is, for example, the basis of Daniel Temkin's projects and, indeed, what unifies every work of Generative Art. In this context, every image presents itself as the visual translation of an algorithm, the systematic transposition of a set of information that the machine re-elaborates according to its functions and not always flawlessly. The act of putting in form follows a precise code but, always – even when nothing seems to change – it translates into an object different from the score it refers to and settles in a form that is itself the promise for new and equally different executions.

Gerald Siegmund and Susanne Traub assign a political value to this difference, or rather, to the formal and conceptual gap between a dance work and its source. According to what emerges from their conversation, the past materials survive only if they prove to be functional to the present in which they are reshaped. Precisely by virtue of their adaptive capacity (what the OOO defined as "symbiotic"), new characteristics emerge, not belonging to the materials they are made of. This seems to be why, as Siegmund and Traub argue, many artists have criticised institutions by proposing choreographic objects from the past that are adaptable to the racial, ethical or gender urgencies of their contemporaneity.

This is undoubtedly why the CHR, the Center of Historical Reenactments in Johannesburg, becomes the centre of the conversation between its co-founder Gabi Ngcobo and the curator Matteo Lucchetti. Their reflection emphasises the possibility of reactivating objects from the past and reorganising their composition to invoke narratives highlighting their adaptability to the present. This is the case of *The Old House* (2006) by Rabih Mroué, for which the artist uses a film from the nineties that depicts a ruined house being destroyed by the bombings of the Lebanese civil war, but, thanks to video manipulation, it never really collapses.

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20. Franck Leibovici, "On Scores", in *Choreographing Exhibitions* ed. Mathieu Copeland and Julie Pellegrin (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2013): 46.

Or, more generally, it is the case of all those projects that have the valuable quality of knowing how to reactivate the past to criticise it or avoid a slavish and dangerous return, almost as if they were de-enactments of previous objects, which get deconstructed for the mnestic purposes.

The question of the prefix is crucial. As emerged from the discussion between Sven Lütticken and Susanne Franco, such a complex and charged landscape seems to require the emergence of new orientation tools: nomenclatures capable of taking over whenever a compositional action invokes an equally specific narrative structure. The two scholars propose the terms pre-enactment and post-archive to describe the artistic objects (for instance, scores or choreographies) that anticipate and prefigure the actual performance or even something that has not happened yet in history but is already achieved through dance. At the same time, they argue that it is possible to use the pure concept of "enactment" to allude to the staging alone. They do not seem to exclude the possibility of replacing, adding, or mixing as many prefixes as the perspectives the concept of reenactment allows *over* time, thanks to the manipulation *of* time.

Speaking of the hypernym and its versatility, the purpose of the term reenactment is to recalibrate the weights and dynamics that constantly gravitate within it. What changes on a practical level, in the compositional area of any discipline deserves a revision on a theoretical level and, perhaps, opens up to ever new perspectives. Indeed, the compositional structure of the reenactment is in continuous dialogue with the present. Its destiny, and the destiny of its objects of study, will have to be constantly documented, represented, and perhaps evaluated.

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DUETS

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The Archives of La Biennale di Venezia as the Seventh Muse: Revisiting (Art) History

Cecilia Alemani, Cristina Baldacci

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Cristina Baldacci (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) invites Cecilia Alemani (Director and Chief Curator of High Line Art, New York, and Artistic Director of the 59th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia) to converse about *The Disquieted Muses: When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History*. This collectively curated exhibition was organized in Autumn 2020 (29 August–08 December) to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Venice Biennale (1895). As a major event based on the archival material provided by the Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts (ASAC), the exhibition looked at the history of La Biennale di Venezia focusing on the points of crisis that have been transforming its political views together with its curatorial visions. Alemani and Baldacci highlight the strong relationship of the Venice Biennale with an interdisciplinary spectrum of arts, as well as with the city of Venice and its residents. They further address *The Disquieted Muses*' goal to revisit and reenact in the present both the history of the institution and its past exhibition formats as a specific curatorial practice.

CRISTINA BALDACCI: I would like to start by asking you about the premises that made *The Disquieted Muses* possi-

ble, as this is the first major exhibition that was organized using primarily documents from the Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts (ASAC).[1] Other small archival exhibitions were installed in recent years at Ca' Giustinian, the Venice Biennale headquarter, to celebrate and inquire about the institution's history, but none resulted in such a vast project.[2] One of the reasons for organizing an exhibition like *The Disquieted Muses* may lie in the increasing attention that the Venice Biennale has given to its archives while gradually becoming aware of their importance. Another reason is probably to be found in the particular historical moment we are living in. The many restrictions due to the pandemic might have encouraged the decision to make an exhibition based mainly on archival material. Is that right?

CECILIA ALEMANI: Yes, the Venice Biennale already organized other exhibitions out of its archives or inspired by them. Indeed, I was also working on a smaller exhibition of the same kind, when president Roberto Cicutto was nominated as Paolo Baratta's successor at the beginning of 2020. He immediately made it very clear that one of his visions for the Venice Biennale was to highlight its multi-disciplinary nature and "DNA". To most of the visitors who come to the Art Exhibition, it is still quite unknown that the Venice Biennale actually produces five more festivals and exhibitions dedicated to Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music, and Theatre, and that the archives – as I like to call them – are the seventh muse among them.

As the artistic directors of the other sectors and I were already working on an exhibition in collaboration with the ASAC, the postponement of the Architecture Biennale in 2021 became for us an opportunity to move the exhibition

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1. See Cecilia Alemani, Hashim Sarkis, Alberto Barbera, Marie Chouinard, Ivan Fedele, and Antonio Latella, eds., The *Disquieted Muses: When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 2020).
2. See e.g. *Amarcord*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni alongside the Art Exhibition 2013 (1 June–24 November), and the two exhibitions, *dAPERTutto* (5 May 2015 - 9 June 2016) and *Plateau of Humankind* (16 June 2016 - 7 July 2017), which reconstructed the pivotal editions of the two Biennale directed by Harald Szeemann respectively in 1999 and 2001. In the first case, see also the accompanying publication *Amarcord: Fragments of Memory from the Historical Archives of La Biennale* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 2013).

from a smaller location to a much more prominent one, the Central Pavilion at the Giardini. But this also meant that we had to change the curatorial approach and expand the exhibition to encompass a much larger vision of the history of the Venice Biennale. I think it is important to clarify that *The Disquieted Muses* does not attempt to retrace a full history of the Venice Biennale. There will probably be other occasions to do that, but here we wanted to focus on a selected number of events and historical moments in which the history of the Venice Biennale clashed with the "Big History". We wanted to look at those moments of both transformation – caused by internal and external crises – and the introduction of new art languages that the Venice Biennale has been absorbing throughout its history. We chose *The Disquieted Muses* as a title because we sought to highlight the polyphony of voices that we were bringing to the table: art, architecture, cinema, music, theatre, and dance. While these are the different sides of the same institution, the ASAC is undoubtedly the brain of the exhibition.

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CB: I like the idea of the ASAC as the "brain" of the exhibition very much. This metaphor brings me to my next question. Enquiring an archive, thus the history, by first selecting and appropriating its materials and then by reenacting and restaging them through a specific montage or display are political gestures. As political gestures, they are never neutral – whether an archivist/researcher or a curator/artist who performs them.

When I visited the exhibition, the political aspect of *The Disquieted Muses* was very clear to me. Right from the start, after an initial focus on the foundation act of the Venice Biennale (1895), the attention turned to the fascist years and the relationship between dictatorship and the arts. Fascism, whose signs are still visible in many of the Venice Biennale's pavilions, despite the renovations they went through after World War II, is certainly a problematic memory, one on which light should continuously be shed on.[3]

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3. An emblematic example, but certainly not the only one, given that fascism does not concern only Germany and Italy, was Hans Haacke's 1993 intervention in the German pavilion (*GERMANIA*). Since the post-war period, many of the projects hosted by the German pavilion have critically addressed the Nazi-fascist

Was such an emphasis on fascism a specific curatorial choice rather than just historical documentation? By creating a visual narrative climax, did you intend to prepare the visitor for the following part of the exhibition? Was the opposition between two political regimes and historical periods, namely fascism and communism, the Cold War and the riots of 1968, intentional? Clearly, as a cultural institution, the Venice Biennale experienced these tensions first-hand.

CA: We decided to open the exhibition starting from the late 1920s for several reasons. First of all, because, as I mentioned before, the exhibition focuses on moments of general crisis. We acknowledged that the Venice Biennale was founded at the end of the nineteenth century, but we thought that the fascist years were among those of deepest transformations – both internally, in terms of the commission and presentation of the artworks, and externally, as the world was at that time rapidly changing. That, of course – as you said – set the tone for a political reading of the history of the Venice Biennale. In addition to that, I would also like to say that it was important for us to start from those years because it was at that time that, alongside the Art Exhibition, the other sectors came to life. The first editions of the Venice Biennale were entirely dedicated to visual art. It was only in the 1930s that the film, music, and theatre festivals were born. Since *The Disquieted Muses* had to give an overall glimpse, we wanted to make sure that we could start from a period of internal renovation.

We need to bear in mind that 1928 was also the year in which the ASAC was founded. Even if documents about the history of the Venice Biennale can be found before that

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memory. The architectural space of the pavilion, which echoes this memory despite the numerous restorations, is still being questioned. Just think of the interventions by Christoph Schlingensief, Anne Imhof, Natascha Sadr Haghighian or Maria Eichhorn's project for the next Biennale (see: https://www.deutscher-pavillon.org/en/exhibition/ [accessed 07 January 2022]). The 1993 edition of the Venice Biennale, directed by Achille Bonito Oliva, was a fundamental one, which started the renewal process that led to the Biennale as it is today. See Clarissa Ricci, *Towards a Contemporary Venice Biennale: Reassessing the Impact of the 1993 Exhibition*, 1, no. 1 (2020): 78-98: https://www.oboejournal.com/index.php/oboe/article/view/5 [accessed 07 January 2022].

date, it was for us as curators a key year to begin with. What is really striking is to think about the role of the Venice Biennale within the structure and the texture of the city. The Biennale has never been just an exhibition space with no connection to Venice. On the contrary, it has also been managed by the city of Venice. This was most evident in the 1930s, when, under fascism, the administration of the institution changed dramatically. The Venice Biennale became officially an entity of the Italian government, which meant a fascist institution. With *The Disquieted Muses*, we wanted to make clear that the Venice Biennale became, for all intents and purposes, a tool for the fascist regime, namely a tool for propaganda, for the power of art to be used to exert an influence on a broader public.

CB: Even the display conceived by the Italian design duo Formafantasma (Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin) seems to stress the political aspect of the exhibition. I think of it almost as a stage machinery, namely an apparatus that, while embodying the archival documents, reframes and recontextualizes them in the present. I was particularly struck by Formafantasma's use of sound, which contributes to turning the exhibition into an immersive environment, where viewers can experience the past in a constant relationship with their own present. Can one say, then, that *The Disquieted Muses* becomes a kind of *Denkraum* or a "space of thinking" – to use an expression that goes back to Aby Warburg?

CA: I think one can definitely say that. It is indeed a space of contamination of different idioms and disciplines. As we are talking about archives, Warburg is, of course, the perfect reference – I just returned from Berlin, where the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is on view at Haus der Kulturen der Welt.[4] Going back to the installation of *The Disquieted Muses*, we were excited to work with Formafantasma, who helped us assemble the incredible amount of materials we selected from the ASAC: something like thousand of documents and

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4. See Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne: The Original*, ed. Roberto Ohrt and Axel Heil, in cooperation with the Warburg Institute and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2020).

other items, including artworks. What Formafantasma did was quite fascinating. They created a modular system that allowed certain flexibility, considering the exhibition was put together rather quickly. We were able to make tweaks to the exhibition but still evoke different atmospheres in different rooms.

When you start your visit in the Sala Chini,[5] there is this sort of monumental installation with a survey of the Venice Film Festival from the 1930s. Then, you enter the large exhibition space of the main hall, which to me has been turned into a labyrinth of history. You are supposed to get lost in this structure. When you move to the mezzanine upstairs, you can actually see from above the completely different atmospheres that Formafantasma were able to evoke. We wanted to stress the cacophony of history, and music – which is very present in the first main room – helped us do that. It became almost like a soundtrack of the exhibition. When you enter the following room, the one dedicated to 1968, the sound of the installation is intended to highlight the presence of people, the quality of the protests and revolutions that were happening at that crucial time in the history of the second half of the twentieth century.

We also tried to create an exhibition that was not just telling the history of the Venice Biennale but the history of the institution throughout its display. One has to bear in mind that art history in general is created by amazing artworks and artists, but also by different exhibition formats, modalities of presentation, and institutions behind the scenes.

CB: Speaking of exhibition formats, do you think that such a complex and multi-layered exhibition as *The Disquieted Muses* can be well understood both by specialists or professionals and by a wider audience? Exhibitions based on archival materials require not only a lot of attention from the spectator but also the ability to create connections,

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5. The Sala Chini was restored on the occasion of the 2013 Art Exhibition. It is the vestibule of the Central Pavilion at the Giardini. The room is dominated by a dome decorated in 1909 by Galileo Chini (1873-1956) for that year's Venice Biennale. To find out more about Chini: https://www.galileochini.it/?page_id=993&lang=en [accessed 07 January 2022].

which implies good general knowledge. What audience did you have in mind when you were planning the exhibition?

CA: First of all, we had Venice in mind, therefore, a local audience. That does not necessarily mean only professionals or experts in the history of the Venice Biennale, but mostly Venetian citizens. I definitely think that an archival exhibition can be interesting for a wider audience. Of course, it is an exhibition that requires time to think about history. Our hope was that the local audience too could use this quiet time, with almost no tourists around, to go to the exhibition. Maybe on a regular basis, not just rushing through it once – because it is indeed overwhelming – and rediscovering a part of the city's history.

CB: A large section of the exhibition focuses on the 1970s, namely on those years (1974-1978) when the president of the Venice Biennale was Carlo Ripa di Meana. It was a very special moment in which – at the climax of the story – the "Biennial of dissent" took place as a sign of both institutional transformation and socio-political change in the midst of the Cold War.[6] What did the archival materials let reemerge of those years?

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CA: At that time, the Venice Biennale had left its own venues at the Giardini to infiltrate into the city of Venice, extending its community in the urban space. This is the reason why we wanted to include a lot of material about the editions led by Carlo Ripa di Meana. Hopefully, some of the local visitors still remember those years in which the large Chilean murals were installed in the city squares and streets;[7] where many public events concomitantly took

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6. See Lucrezia Lante della Rovere, Andrea Ripa di Meana Cardella, Lorenzo Capellini, eds., *Carlo Ripa di Meana. Le mie Biennali 1974-1978* (Milan: Skira, 2018); Vittoria Martini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1968-1978: La rivoluzione incompiuta*, PhD dissertation (Venice: Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, 2011); and, by the same author, "How La Biennale as a Brand was Born: Venice as the Archetype of a Biennial City", in *OBOE-Journal On Biennials and Other Exhibitions*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2020): 99-107: https://www.oboejournal.com/index.php/oboe/article/view/14 [accessed 07 January 2022].

7. After Pinochet's *coup d'état* and the neo-fascist attacks in Piazza della Loggia in Brescia, and on the Italicus train between May and August that year, the

place: concerts, performances, and theatre pieces among others. There was also that beautiful performance in Piazza San Marco with thousands of people carrying over their heads a huge man made of a very light fabric that James Lee Byars conceived as the apparition of *The Holy Ghost* during the Theatre Festival in 1975.

CB: In his four-year term as president of the Venice Biennale, Ripa di Meana pursued a policy of cultural decentralization that transformed the urban public space into the Biennale's field of action. You rightly mentioned the legendary Byars' participatory performance in Piazza San Marco, which in 1975 had become an open stage space with the Living Theatre. It can be said that in those years the city of Venice became itself a medium. In composite projects like *The Disquieted Muses*, the exhibition becomes likewise a medium. In this regard, I would like to ask you, first of all, what message do you think the exhibition delivers to the general public? Secondly, what kind of image did you want to suggest for the Venice Biennale in 2020, both as an international art exhibition and as a cultural institution?

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CA: The spirit and genesis of the exhibition came with the hope and enthusiasm of recognizing that the arts continue also in times of crisis. As evidenced by *The Disquieted Muses*, the Venice Biennale was always present during the two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century, and during the social transformations of the sixties and seventies. For us, it was fundamental to put things in a historical perspective. We are living through a major crisis right now and it is hard to have a distanced view of where we are as a society, especially as a cultural society. Our goal was to show that art can still be a beacon of hope and also a place where institutions support the production of art. The Venice Biennale is not an isolated institution that lives in a bubble. It is an institution that registers history as a seismograph. Sometimes the results can be devastating, other times they are completely unreal. If you think about what

Biennale's Governing Council decided to dedicate the 1974 edition of the exhibition to Chile and, in general, to anti-fascism.

the Venice Biennale presented during the fascist years, it was not the reality of what was happening in the creative spheres. Everything was completely censored. But what is important to understand is that the Venice Biennale is not a sturdy, monolithic institution. On the contrary, it is a flexible institution, one that allows for different entry points and different outcomes. One perceives this especially when viewing it from a historical perspective.

CB: Archival exhibitions are usually based on the reenactment of objects, documents, images, and attitudes, which lead to reinterpretations of the past *in* and *for* the present. As an exhibition format, it has become very successful in recent years.[8] In the case of *The Disquieted Muses*, one could also speak of a "meta-exhibition", which not only narrates the history of the Venice Biennale but also of exhibition display as a form of knowledge. What, in your experience, are the pros and cons of such an exhibition format?

CA: Having the luxury of time would be important for every curator that faces the gigantic task of putting together an international exhibition like the Venice Biennale. I was lucky to have the time to dive into the ASAC – although I took a glimpse only at a fraction of it – and to collaborate with the talented people who work there. They carry so many layers of history in their mind, which go way beyond the simple document that is actually kept in the boxes!

In an ideal world, it would be incredible if an archival sensibility was possible in every exhibition. If one thinks about the succession of the many biennials around the world, the linearity and the sense of being part of a lineage of exhibitions are sometimes lost. Working on *The Disquieted Muses* was crucial to recognize how, eventually, one will look in the future at the Venice Biennale that I am directing – as well as at the ones that have been concurrently directed by

8. Archival exhibitions seem particularly suitable for our present moment, when to organize and visit large-scale international exhibitions has proved to be difficult, when/if not impossible, for the many limitations and restrictions caused by the pandemic. As a consequence, we are probably also getting more and more aware that large-scale international exhibitions are no longer sustainable in terms of mass tourism and carbon footprint.

my colleagues. If one looks through the lens of its archives at the different editions of the Venice Biennale, not just as single episodes but in the larger context of the institution itself, it becomes clear that the exhibition's content is what happens in the city of Venice, in Italy, and around the world. If I think of international visitors coming to Venice and seeing *The Disquieted Muses*, my hope is that they will be able to better understand the forthcoming editions of the Biennale Arte, those that will be organized in the next ten years, from a glocal perspective.

CB: That is right. Usually, people think about archives as institutions full of dust and not at all as lively places where history and memory can be reactivated. The archive is indeed – as thought by Michel Foucault – a "dispositive"; that is, an apparatus of knowledge production, a medium to reinterpret and give new meaning to the past. Therefore, I would like to ask you about the role of the Venice Biennale as a dispositive for the present. What function, in your opinion, should the Venice Biennale play in this moment of (partial) suspension of its usual exhibition activities due to the pandemic? Do you think the Venice Biennale still has a strong socio-political and cultural impact in these "interesting times"?[9]

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CA: The role of the Venice Biennale, both as a recurrent exhibition and an institution, is a core topic of *The Disquieted Muses*. The exhibition shows that, despite all difficulties, the Biennale has been committed to bringing culture back to Venice. As you know, it was one of the very few newly conceived exhibitions that were actually open during the pandemic, while museums were still closed and other shows were postponed.

The Disquieted Muses also clearly shows that the Venice Biennale is not an exhibition divided into compartments and festivals. We wanted to celebrate its choral mission, namely what makes it so unique in the world. No other

9. The reference here is to Ralph Rugoff's Biennale and its allusive title to the extremely complex historical moment we are living in. See Ralph Rugoff, ed., *May You Live in Interesting Times* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 2019).

institutions like the Venice Biennale promote six different disciplines all at once!

CB: Yes, indeed. To conclude, I would like to stress once more this aspect: taking a fresh look at the Venice Biennale's history – through the ASAC – is fundamental because it helps *re*-present the history of art and art exhibitions. The gesture of restoring visibility to something no longer present and reactivating it in the present is a political act of restitution and historical recontextualization, which keeps shedding light on our understanding of the past, as much as of our contemporaneity.[10]

CA: I agree. As this conference wants to point out, reenactment is not a synonym for *déja vu* as something that already happened, and even less for a copy of something that was already done in the past. Reenactment is a synonym for renewal.

What was exciting to me is that an exhibition like *The Disquieted Muses* could be done so many other times with a completely different entry point and length. We decided to adopt the lens of the crisis because we wanted to respond to what was happening right now. However, you can do so many exhibitions that, in a way, follow the history of the archive and the Venice Biennale within another framework. I look forward to seeing many more archival exhibitions with materials from the ASAC made by other curators, and I expect there will be many more to come. I would like to make a final comment about the importance of archives and what we leave behind. Another reason why *The Disquieted Muses* display ends in 1999 and does not extend to the present times is that archives take a completely different shape and form with the advent of the digital world. It is striking to think how one could do an exhibition on the last twenty years of the Venice Biennale history, when basically there are not many archival materials left – no telegrams or

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10. See Cristina Baldacci, "Re-Presenting Art History: An Unfinished Process", in *Over and Over and Over Again: Reenactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory*, ed. Cristina Baldacci, Clio Nicastro, and Arianna Sforzini (Berlin: ICI Berlin Press, 2022): 173-182; https://press.ici-berlin.org/doi/10.37050/ci-21/baldacci_re-presenting-art-history.html [accessed 07 January 2022].

letters, only emails and phone calls. One can see a complete change happening in the archive itself. But, anyway, this is an interesting challenge that could be the subject of the next exhibition.

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Witnessing Versus Belatedness: Representation, Reconstruction, and Reenactment
Mark Franko, Lucia Ruprecht

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Mark Franko (Temple University, Philadelphia) and Lucia Ruprecht (Freie Universität Berlin) speak about the genesis of *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (2017) which was edited by Mark Franko and weave its connection with *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Memory* (forthcoming) that is currently being edited by Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera. Their discussion raises key issues in witnessing versus belatedness and what each term affords in relation to representation, reconstruction and reenactment of past dance events.

LUCIA RUPRECHT: What we are meant to do today is actually a conversation about *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* that you edited and for which I wrote the afterword.[1] I am so interested to hear more on how this handbook came about and what was important in its process for you.

MARK FRANKO: The reason I felt motivated to do such a handbook goes back to the 1980s when I was a dancer and

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1. Lucia Ruprecht, "Afterword: Notes after the Fact," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, ed. Mark Franko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 607-19.

an active choreographer working on some issues around historical dance. In particular, I was concerned with how to create the history effect in choreography. This question of historical sensibility – the problem of an unreconstructed audience – took as its object in my earliest work the Renaissance and the Baroque. But it had to do with issues that from today's perspective are fundamentally connected to reenactment. I was working choreographically with the quotation of historical movement in a contemporary context. I say contemporary context in the sense that I was not attempting to simulate an unfamiliarity on the part of the dancer with their own technique. I was playing both with the way in which an audience receives historical materials through contemporary bodies and the way an audience can transit from a familiar to an unfamiliar apprehension of movement. The sensation of unfamiiarity would be what I call the history effect. This of course presented its own set of questions as it had to do with whether or not an audience assumes that what it is seeing is a reconstruction or not. Underneath this experiment was a question about historical experience itself in the reception of movement between distinctly unfamiliar material and recognizable references to pastness. And between these two the dancer's contemporary body and contemporary movement acts as mediator. To support this process, I made use of the idea of the image choreographically. By mobilising visual intertexts, I sought to displace reconstruction as the interpretation of notation. Rendering movement as an image of itself captured by a tremulous coming to stillness acts as a very provocative counterpoint in my practice.

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Later, when I first saw *Urheben Aufheben* (2008), the work of Martin Nachbar, and *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* (2009) by Fabián Barba, I recognized something analogous happening in their evocations of earlier artists. There was an analogous question of mimesis: what can be represented and what cannot? How can someone who is obviously not the historical protagonist—someone of a different age, a different gender, a different training – actually embody the absent artist's work? I really appreciated what they both brought in different ways to these questions, which is why, in the *Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, I was careful to call reenactment a dramaturgical mode. This was the next

step in what I had been doing in the 1980s even though it was now being done in a different way.

So, this was the first inspiration for the *Handbook*.

LR: This is really significant because for you everything started already in the 1980s, emerging out of a beautiful interaction between theory and practice that is still very much at the heart of our current thinking about reenactment.

MF: Yes, and dance critics accused me at that time of confusing theory and practice.

LR: For my part, I came to the field of reenactment rather late, around the time when you asked me to write the afterword for *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*. At that point, I had embarked on thinking about reenactment and historiography, and I had begun to develop my own project in the field. The afterword was a great opportunity to pull together the strands of this thinking. From the very beginning, I had a sense of "being late" and, when I sat down to write the afterword, this feeling became productive as I started to think about the parallels between the genre of reenactment and the genre of the afterword. "Being late" with regard to an original performance or the main body of a text became the crucible point which led me to organize the afterword around concepts of deferral, distortion, omission, and misunderstanding that are part of the idea of belatedness. When I tackled the task of writing an adequate afterword for a thirty-chapter book, I thought I could not deny the impossibility of the task itself.

MF: I loved the job you did on that afterword, and I think it took it into a theoretical space that was very powerful; you did in the afterword something I tried to do in the introduction. Which again stressed the presence of theory and dance as knowledge and the interaction taking place in reenactment between dance and the theory of history. Or, we could perhaps better say, dance and dance scholarship in relation to a theory of history.

So that dance itself takes position – and of course, this is controversial and can afford a lot of discussions – but

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dance itself plays the role of its own "history-maker" and, in so doing, changes history or supplements conventional history.

The other thing that relates to the belatedness that you brought in so appropriately in the afterword is the fact that many of the dramaturgical strategies – I think of Nachbar in particular – are very much about stressing that belatedness and not a knowing in person. In an interesting way, I think it contradicts very intentionally and provocatively the idea of memory as a form of embodied knowledge. It is still embodied but not embodied in the same way because it is not about contemporaneous living with and through the original. That is to say, in other words, that memory is something that has been theorized as living memory, as something that is transmitted from the living original doer to the secondary doer. But here there is an effort to deny that sense of livingness in memory. Belatedness makes an organic living connection impossible. And with that connection goes away the pretension to authenticity that drove many historical reconstructions of the era. Similarly, recently with reenactment the authentic presence of the creator (for instance, Dore Hoyer or Mary Wigman) upon which their own work was predicated was being confronted as impossible: yet the work was performed. So, we saw the absent work of choreography – what Anna Pakes has called "the disappearing work of dance"[2] – as something emerging effectively from distance rather than closeness. To see something from a distance is to see it "historically." This was a variant of the authenticity debate directed at aesthetic modernism whereas mine was directed at empirical trust in the early-modern document to materialize an absent body.

LR: I agree with what you just said. Maybe we can return to this later in our conversation to follow up on your points about challenging embodied memory. Going back both to Martin Nachbar – who did an incredibly influential reenactment of Dore Hoyer's cycle of dances (*Affectos Humanos*, 1962) that is now a theoretical reference in the field – and

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2.   Anna Pakes, *Choreography Invisible: The Disappearing Work of Dance* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2020).

to what you proposed about the gap between remembrance as something lived and memory as something that happens at a historical distance. While preparing for our duet, I thought about what Rebecca Schneider called the "inadequacies of the copy," and "what inadequacy gets right about our faulty steps backward".[3] Again, this is something I tried to approach in the afterword for *The Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, and I think that Derrida's concept of "restance" (in English *remainder*) is very useful here. "Restance" arises from the fact that there is always something that falls through the gaps in the grid of any synthesis. If we think of a reenactment as such a synthesis, there will always be elements of the historical performance that are no longer present in its belated recreation. Hence, authenticity in reenactment must always remain contested. But at the same time, traces of the past might resound precisely in the gaps, in the "restance" of things which are not retrieved, which are irretrievable. Something resonates there, so maybe this is one way in which we can approach the past in the non-positivistic genre of reenactment.

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But anyway, what is interesting here, is the way in which we deal with the "inadequacy" or with the impossibility of approaching pastness.

MF: Yes, I think this is exactly right and also highlights what is unique about dance reenactment. Because in this mode, precisely what cannot be present becomes so through its very absence. This is almost an invocation through negativity or denial. Because I am *not* that, *that* will appear.

Staying with Nachbar and going back to the earlier 1980s, what you said also brings me back to the situation of Renaissance reconstructions – which were done mostly by musicologists that were very smart in the way that they analyzed the relationship of music to steps within the notated score. My critique was always that the process that created them was lifeless: it had no theatrical reality.

I will not go into all of them now but, speaking with one of those reconstructors who said that the reason why he

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3.   Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 6.

did not want to "perform" the choreography in the present was precisely because he did not want to get in the way of the choreography itself. In other words, he believed that he could show the choreography simply by not performing it; or maybe he thought that he could enact it by behaving properly with the measures, rhythmic expressions and distribution of movement but that he would not do anything more because otherwise he would have gotten in the way of the choreography. While I understood the point, I immediately thought that actually it did not work. This was the obverse of what reenactment would come to be. By affirming the object in and of itself reconstruction secured its effective absence.

If we go back to more contemporary reenactments, it seems to me that precisely by withdrawing from the source – in the case of Nachbar the source is Dore Hoyer – what emerges is the choreography. Choreography is being conveyed by the performer and also distanced from the performer. Paradoxically, this engenders a very powerful sensation of presence.

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LR: I remember a performance I saw last summer in Berlin at the Akademie der Künste during a festival on dance history. Instead of proposing a reenactment, they showed an interesting example of a historical reconstruction, and I struggled with a feeling I had while watching it.

It was a 2017 reconstruction of Mary Wigman's *Dance of the Dead* by the dance company at the Theatre Osnabrück in Germany under the direction of choreographer Henrietta Horn. With the help of former Wigman pupils, Horn and her company restaged a few major works of Wigman in recent years, among them the reconstruction of her 1957 *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

When I saw *Dance of the Dead* on stage, I immediately thought of a 1926 photograph of one of these dances that seemed to be almost exactly recreated in the performance. While this was fascinating, it also left me irritated because I felt that I was presented with something like a historical fetish, a glamorous spectacle that denied the absence of the past, covering this absence up, as it were. So, while I was excited to experience a performance that looked like it could have been in the 1920s, I was also disappointed

by what seemed to be a form of unreflected disavowal of irretrievability. This led me to think about how to know, describe, and understand the feelings we have as spectators when we are in front of reconstructions or reenactments.

MF: Precisely: I love your formulation "denies the absence of that reconstruction, denies the absence of the past performance".

LR: It is indeed almost fetishistic, but not knowingly so.

MF: In attempting to reproduce the past, there is convoluted communication between the stage and the spectator. What is denied is the denial of its absence. Paradoxically, the acceptance of its absence conjures its presence; the assertion of its absence, the insistence on its absence, is what enables something to presentify itself.

I think this is the fascinating crux of reenactment, at least this is what attracted me: this mutation.

There is a certain work that has to be done on the part of the spectator that reconstruction for its part disavows. It disavows the work or what I call work – maybe it is more of a Freudian "working through", or what Sigmund Freud actually named "reconstruction" and allows the essential affect to emerge.

So, the point is precisely that emergence of affectivity. Reenactments made me think about issues of spatiality in relation to things like documents. What assures the historical real is some form of document – all the archival resources one can assemble – whereas the document itself as something that occupies space, like clothing or jewels that belonged to the original doer and gain a true documentary value, become aspects of the true real once they occupy space with us in our present. This is different from the fetishization of the image as the moment of totalizing meaning.

I remember hearing a very inspiring talk by Martin Puchner on theatrical reenactment. He touched on several interesting points. One of them is that the stage is always elevated but reenactments take place normally on the ground because the ground can be a documented site of historical action (as in a specific geographical location and the earth lying about in that location), whereas the

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elevation of the stage is an ideal – so that the return to the ground is typical of reenactment which needs to replicate certain conditions exactly. He also gave examples of performances for which earth from specific locations was transported across the world so as to be able to be used as the ground – or the Brechtian idea that one should not create costumes but instead use lived-in clothing as costumes.

This notion of the livingness that is supposedly part of embodied memory, but in reality is to be found in the spatial surroundings, starts to invade objects rather than people then; it is an animation of the object, and the choreography is such an object itself that also becomes animated before us. It is an event score that takes on a life in attendance of emergence – the metaphor of the mid-wife that suggests itself – without actually embodying that emergence directly. Something here happens on the part of the audience that I think we do not understand very well yet. But in these cases, perhaps we can say that distance – the situation of non-embodiment – is the very condition of embodiment. There is something here that works against more conventional notions of embodiment familiar to dancers and dance scholars.

LR: This last point calls up issues of spectrality rather than liveness in reenactment: something – you suggested affectivity – emerges that can only do so in the interplay between the "psyche" of the audience and what it encounters on stage, in a process that happens at once inside and outside. You also brought up the issue of Freudian "working-through," which I wrote about in the afterword in relation to another piece by Martin Nachbar, where he danced with his father and engaged with inherited bodily traits. In light of this issue, what might be interesting now is to think about Susanne Franco's *Mnemedance* project – which is our "umbrella" here – with regard to Freud's essay about "remembering, repeating and working-through".

"Working-through" – in terms of both a spectatorial and a choreographic attitude – is intimately tied to memory and to memory processes. How then can we link *The Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* with *The Handbook on Dance and Memory* that Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera are editing in the framework of the *Mnemedance* project?

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I reread some contributions of the handbook and I noticed that concepts of reenactment are theorized very well but concepts of memory remain vague. It would be good to gain a better understanding of memory in/as dance by rethinking it and using the work that dance scholarship has done on reenactment. Coming from reenactment, we might want to begin to address memory through all those highly articulated theorizations of belatedness; and, why not, perhaps also through Freud. There is no primacy of presence in Freud, on the contrary, in his view we live belatedly, so that the present is always intensely structured and defined by the past.

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud holds that "in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish".[4] If we think about it from the perspective of reenactment, this tenet itself gains new leverage. Freud already posed the question of how to represent all the temporal layers of that which has (not) perished. There is a famous passage in *Civilization* about the impossible model of Rome with all its archaeological layers coexisting at once. It echoes our reflections on reenactment and its forms of multitemporal representation: what you call in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* "hetero-temporality" or "inter-temporality". But to be more specific, one of the central questions of reenactment is of course how to think "gesture" in time. You address all this succinctly in your introduction to the handbook when you write: "The reenactment of dance is always already enmeshed in overlapping temporalities, thanks to which the notion of historical time as chronicle time becomes destabilized by an uncertain historicity hinging on gesture".[5]

MF: Well, you think about Freud in relation to this matter, which is a great choice. I am a little bit more inclined to go

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4. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works* (1930 [1929]), in *Civilization and its Discontents: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI (1927-1931), ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961): 68.
5. Mark Franko, "Introduction: The Power of Recall in a Post-Ephemeral Era," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 2.

toward Walter Benjamin within the idea of the fragment, quotation, citation, and so on.

But memory is a very vast topic and there is also a danger in this being a very vast topic. I am sure the editors will find a way to bring it into relation to dance in a way that will not limit the reflections of the writers but will yet still focus on them. Moving out from reenactment toward questioning memory itself seems like a very logical process. And you are right that it is now time to think about memory more directly in relation to dance production.

Of course, memory seems absolutely embedded in the very "presential" phenomenon of dance. Even going back to the Italian Renaissance, when the early treatise writers like Domenico da Piacenza collected all of the different terms that were essential to dancing under the term "memoria". Memory was the key term. It is curious that it has always been the master category. So, there is something about memory that is functionally embedded in dance, at least historically speaking. Of course, there is also the very broad notion of "cultural memory" – and I am thinking of Connerton's book *How Societies Remember* in which he did not deal with corporeal processes at all.[6]

Within the dance field there is a tendency to think about living an embodied memory as the only way in which memory is effectively sustained, and reenactment is telling us actually something different.

See, for example, Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire*.[7] There is something more archival or textual about how dance can work with and through memory or some form of memory. Just the awareness that there is something called the past could be thought of as memory.

LR: I agree. And I should add of course that memory has been a topic in dance studies before the emergence of the term reenactment. In this sense, we are coming back to memory again and again, now through concepts of reenactment. So, maybe, what is important is to think how to

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6. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
7. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

grasp that extremely broad category called memory with the help of reenactment theory.

At the beginning of our conversation, you mentioned Fabián Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*, which many of us will have seen. Thinking about it once more, there is one image in my head right now that brings back what you said about a Brechtian use of costume; even though the costume is not an original one in this case. It also brings back your discussion of "dis-tanz" in your chapter *Epilogue to an Epilogue* as part of *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*. German for "distance", "Distanz" includes "Tanz" (*dance*), suggesting a distance that is constitutive of dance as an art of reperformance. The kind of reconstruction that is at stake in Barba's (and Nachbar's) work "is not a representation of the past", you argue, "but its reinstitution as interval, its reproduction as simultaneously distance and proximity".[8] In the performance of Barba's *Mary Wigman Evening* that I watched, the zip of one of the dresses that they wore was partly undone: this material gap was like the interval, indicating a rupture between present and past, while actually embodying this past. It was very powerful to witness this.

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MF: Absolutely, we have not spoken too much about Fabián Barba's work here today, but it presents a number of other possibilities because its affective nature is so powerful. It is less a question of choreography than of the spectral presence of movement itself in its affective configuration. What emerges there for me is an affective turn in choreography.

I initially had not seen it live but when I got to see it – as I was working with them on another piece – , even the way their face slides off the stage at you in the first number – *Seraphic Song* – makes it seem that they are channelling something there. The production of intense affect was part of early Modernism and Barba not only evokes that, they make it powerful and unavoidable.

In other words, I connected to those things because my early training with Paul Sanasardo was partly Wigmani-

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8.   Mark Franko, "Epilogue to an Epilogue: Historicizing the Re- in Danced Re-enactment," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 501.

an, through his early training in Chicago, with Beatrice Strongstoff, and in Washington, DC with Erika Thimey. But I wonder whether the audience really realizes what is coming at them from the past, what is being channelled and sent out toward us? What is the meaning of this resurgence of affect in contemporary dance?

It might sound a bit crazy but, when we were on tour in Argentina, ghosts actually appeared on the stage and a person sitting next to me saw them as well. So, there is something incantatory going on thanks to his very precise research and performance. It presents another paradigm – no longer that of distance exactly – that we have not dealt with today.

LR: This is a perfect closing statement! But it is also an opening up, so perhaps there is no better way to end.

MF: Hopefully something spectral will emerge from this opening up.

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Reenacting Human-Algorithm Relations: Computational Art Between Today and Yesterday
Francesca Franco, Daniel Temkin

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Francesca Franco (Media Art Curator and Historian, UK) and Daniel Temkin (Artist and Writer, New York) discuss their concomitant research. Franco's interest in the history of early Computational Art and its pioneers (Ernest Edmonds, Manfred Mohr, Vera Molnár, Roman Verostko) blends with Temkin's practice of visualising the mathematical patterns of computers to enhance our understanding of the role and impact of Computational Art in contemporary art practice. Franco's exhibition of *Algorithmic Signs* that reenacted early works of Generative Art together with the pioneers of this artform and Temkin's evolution of the often interactive *Dither Studies* through a ten-year process of what can also be considered as a series of reenactments shed light on a little known part of the digital world and its history.

FRANCESCA FRANCO: I have been passionate about the history of early Computational Art since my post-graduate studies, and I have been able to expand my knowledge and passion for this subject through a series of research projects that I have carried on over the years.

It all began ten years ago, when I joined the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to research their digital

Fig. 1. Ernest Edmonds, *Growth and Form* (2017). Generative interactive installation, part of the exhibition *Algorithmic Signs*, installation view, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice (2017)

art collection, which had just been acquired at that time. Today, it is one of the largest computer collections in the UK. I realized that not much research had been done on the pioneers of Computational Art – in particular from an art historical point of view. So, I decided to concentrate my work in studying their art and in giving visibility to these artists.

One of the results of my research was the publication of *Generative Systems Art*,[1] the first monograph about a pioneer of Algorithmic Art, Ernest Edmonds. I was particularly interested in understanding the intersections between the recent developments in Computational Art and past traditions, such as Constructivism and Systems Art. So, what I wanted to accomplish with this book – and in my career on a more general scale – was to integrate Computational Art into traditional art historiography. From this point on, I expanded my area of research and considered an international group of pioneers of Computer Art known as "The Algorists". In 2017, I curated an exhibition on the history of this movement entitled *Algorithmic Signs* at the Fondazione

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1. Francesca Franco, *Generative Systems Art: The Work of Ernest Edmonds* (New York: Rutledge, 2017).

Bevilacqua La Masa in St. Mark's square. It was the first exhibition after the 1970 Biennale to bring early Computational Art and some of its most prominent pioneers back to Venice, my hometown.[2]

The idea with *Algorithmic Signs* was to explore the history of early Generative Art and its contribution to contemporary art from the 1960s to the present. To do so, I invited five artists – Ernest Edmonds, Manfred Mohr, Vera Molnár, Frieder Nake, and Roman Verostko – to show over sixty of their artworks and four site-specific installations (*fig. 1*). The first work we installed was a sequence of fifteen elements of painted steel that Manfred Mohr made in 1993. These elements are usually arranged as a text, as parts of an alphabet, but when Manfred saw the space he decided to arrange the pieces in a matrix, and he was very pleased about that. Vera Molnár's site-specific installation was inspired by her variations of Mont Sainte Victoire; Roman Verostko's *Lifting the Veil* echoed Saint Mark's Apocalypse and was specially created for the exhibition; Ernest Edmonds' *Shaping Space* filled a separate room as an immersive, interactive artwork.

Edmonds' work was particularly interesting as it took an unpredictable turn and generated some "happy accidents". It is an interactive generative installation that takes data from a camera which, on the occasion of the exhibition, was directed into the space in front of the viewer. While a generative software connected to the movements of the participants in the room was elaborating some data, two back-projected Perspex screens gathered those stimuli and transformed them into different patterns of colours. So, *Shaping Space* developed and changed over time, giving this kind of sense of a rarefied experience of floating into a saturated coloured field. But, because of the shape of the room where the work was installed, we got some unexpected reflections on the walls passing underneath the Perspex sheets. Although these reflections were not part of the original artwork, the artist, who participated in the installation

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2. *Algorithmic Signs* introduced this dynamic and almost unexplored field of contemporary art to a new and wider audience. Francesca Franco recorded hours of interviews with the artists that, together with other documentation material, were collected in her book *The Algorithmic Dimension: Five Artists in Conversation* (New York: Springer-Nature, 2017).

process, was happy with the results and decided to keep this unexpected solution.

The documentation of Digital Art is another big interest of mine. Edmond's *Shaping Space* gave me the idea to document all the phases and all the incarnations that it had assumed across the years: from 2012, when it was first shown at Site Gallery in Sheffield, up to 2017, when we exhibited it in Venice.[3]

This takes me to my current research. At the moment, I am researching aspects of documenting Digital Art thanks to a grant from the AHRC–Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK. I am working with the University of Exeter and other partners, such as LIMA in Amsterdam, the Photographers Gallery in London, and the Venice Biennale, to look for novel ways to document aspects of Generative and Digital Art.

This is how I got in touch with you, Daniel. Your work opened the door for me to a much younger generation of artists influenced by early Computer Art. We met three years ago when I came to New York to visit your studio, where you showed me all of your work influenced by early pioneers of Computer Art. On this occasion, we started to discuss the idea of creating a new work inspired by Vera Molnár. This is an example of early work by her, in which she uses computational methods to place colours in a specific grid. I think this is the starting point of our collaboration.

DANIEL TEMKIN: Yes, one thing that I love about this piece is that Molnár did it when she did not have access to a computer. So, she had to simulate the function of a computer system, and she gave us her notes on how she calculated this. Although the notes here are a little bit hard to follow, we can understand that the picture is very systematic in terms of how many layers each of the colours she uses is defined by the pixels around it to come up with this particular pattern. What is interesting to me is that her process is not really about technology – it is not about screens or resolution or anything similar – it is rather about the human

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3. The conversation between Franco and the artist set the basis for an article included in the volume *Museums and Digital Culture: New Perspectives and Research*, ed. Tula Giannini and Jonathan P. Bowen (New York: Springer-Nature, 2019).
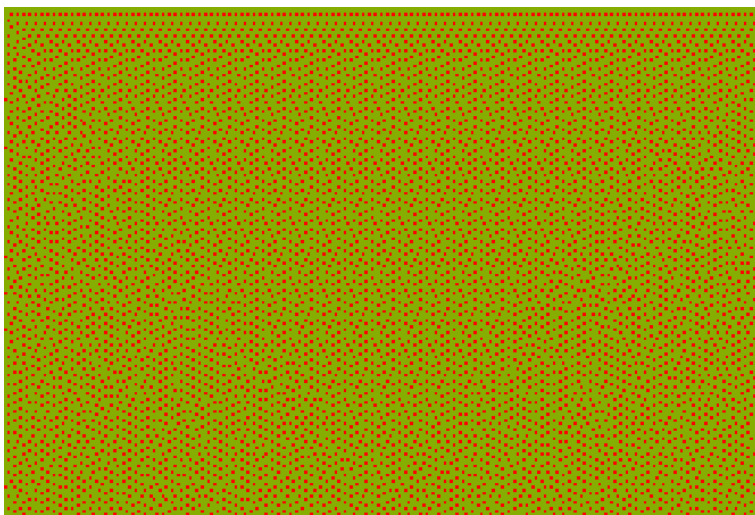
Fig. 2. Daniel Temkin, *Dither Studies* (2011)
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and the algorithm. In other words, it is not really as much Digital Art, it is more about Computational Art.

I think that something interesting happens when human beings carry out these algorithmic processes. These very simple rules can lead to very complex results, which is also what makes early algorithmic work so fascinating. I have been thinking about it when I started the *Dither Studies* project that I have been working on and off since 2011.[4] It really began when I generated an image very similar to the one we are showing here (*fig. 2*), which is one of the early versions of *Dither Studies* made by accident in Photoshop. I had a series of images and I was trying to match the colours between them. I took an image of one solid colour, and I brought it into a small palette and whilst I expected it to just be rounded off to the closest colour that was in the palette, I got this very complicated pattern instead. That really piqued my interest and pushed me to ask myself why Photoshop had generated this very complicated pattern out of seemingly nothing. It turned out that what I was doing

4. See the artist's website: https://danieltemkin.com/DitherStudies/About/ [accessed 23 January, 2022].

Fig. 3. Michelangelo, closest colour in palette

Fig. 4. Michelangelo, dithered

was "dithering": a technology developed in the 1970s that has not really changed very much since then. It is used to take a greyscale or coloured image to a small palette of colours or to reproduce it with larger pixels. If we were going to represent the other two pictures presented here (*figg. 3-4*) on a screen that had only black and white pixels, and the pixels were rather large, we would turn all the darker pixels into black and the brighter ones into white. Dithering gives a way to bring back some of the details. This technology was developed for early computer screens, and it really has not changed very much since then.

What I do with *Dither Studies* is basically the same thing as the last example but, instead of giving the software a photographic image, which is what the technology is designed for, I give it a solid colour in order to make visible what is usually hidden within the image. The dithering patterns become the only content of that image, and it recalls some Fluxus works. Think about Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1965): the dust and scratches that sit on the film leader become the content of the movie. There are some differences in what we call "dithering algorithms", which are basically just coefficient sets. What is happening in the pictures is that I started with a shade of green – somewhere between yellow and blue – I rounded it off, and eventually, when it rounded one direction, the software distributed the error to the pixels around it. Only a few different coefficient sets are used – the Floyd-Steinberg's one is used for Photoshop, and Atkinson's was designed to work better with mid-range
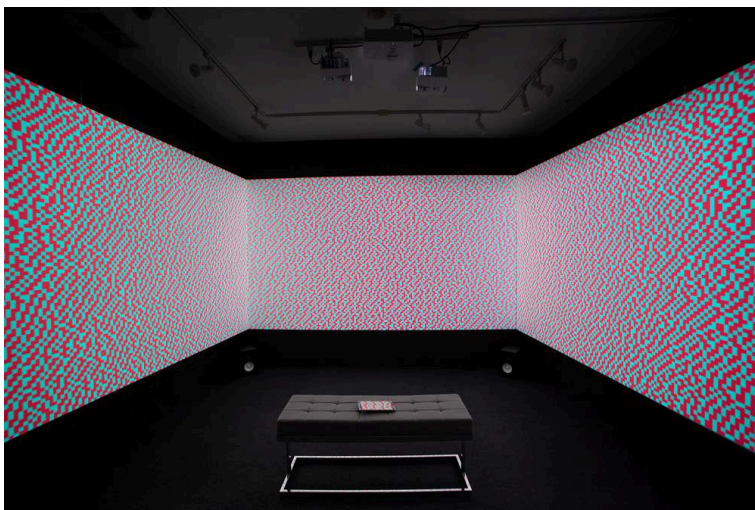
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Fig. 5. Daniel Temkin, *Dither Studies*, installation view, part of the exhibition *TRANSFER. Download*, Thoma Foundation, Art House Santa Fe (2018)

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greys in a black and white image. But even if they are all very simple maths, it is interesting to notice that by using them we are ending up with these patterns that feel kind of irrational. As I have shown, this process changed in several different ways during the last years – a video, a gradient, an installation at Carroll Fletcher Gallery. It is a very simple pattern that you can adapt to a variety of different methods. Ultimately, I decided to hand render these and, going back to the way that the early algorithms worked, I tried to remove the computer from the equation and carried out the instructions by myself.

Another version of *Dither Studies* is the interactive one on my website.[5] There you can choose the two colours you want to work with, and, with a drop-down that shows the different coefficient sets, you can drag the slider and turn the image to the colour you prefer. But I wanted to bring this installation into the physical space letting people interact with it. I also wanted them to understand the feeling of having control over the setup of the dither, to see the complexity of the results from it, and eventually to be able

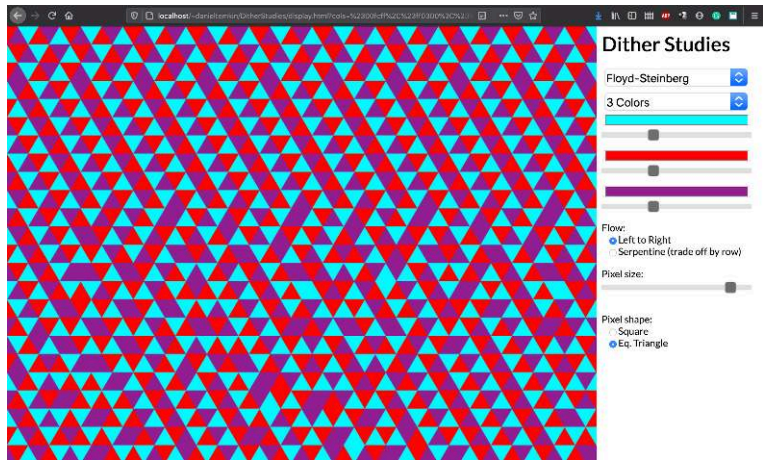5. See https://danieltemkin.com/DitherStudies [accessed 23 January, 2022].

Fig. 6. Daniel Temkin, *Dither Studies* (2020)
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to document and revisit it. The installation view of *Dither Studies* in the following picture (*fig. 5*) gives an idea of how the space functions in the interactive version. There is a kiosk where people can control the settings for the *Dither Studies*, and two walls have the actual dither on it, while the other two have a very simple visual explanation of what is happening and how these cells have been calculated. The aim is to give the audience something they can grasp and manipulate to understand how it is affecting the overall pattern.

I also wanted to get away from the square pixel as a technological default. We work with squares because our screens have an orthogonal array of pixels, or we work with hexagons because, when we print, printer dots are arranged hexagonally, and there are hexagonal dithers that are designed for printing. The starting place for this new set of *Dither Studies* (*fig. 6*) is the equilateral triangle, the simplest shape that is not widely used in our display technology. Going back to Molnár's piece, it is not about the development of display technology, rather about the relationship between these mathematical patterns and our understanding of them – so that even a little bit of logical complexity can feel irrational to us, because human beings are irrational and have such a strange relationship with logic.

You can use more than two colours and deal with vectors instead of numbers: they describe a kind of three-dimensional space in which you can work to define the relationship of the colours. Finally, without totally getting away from the square pixel, you can do some experiments by creating patterns that are intriguing or finding what coefficient set works best with other shapes. So far, I showed the ones that were developed for the square pixel or for hexagonal patterns, both of which work well with the equilateral triangle.

FF: I think this is particularly exciting when we think about audience interaction as something that would give an active audience the opportunity to not just play with colours but also try to understand what the algorithm behind it is. What is really fascinating about this project is that, even though everything starts from simple algorithms, it generates a number of variations that are almost infinite. Not only can the audience play with the interface, but it can have the opportunity to print the results or screenshot the codes and patterns. The process is quite interesting and stimulating at the same time.

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DT: Yes, it gives an idea of what I have done so far, but this is a very early stage of the project. In terms of work that is left to do, there is obviously to determine what other shapes are going to work well with this, figure out these coefficient sets that work well with these shapes, and then check the way to make the process of interaction very clear. The remaining work might be a little animation of how each pixel is being calculated and how that is being carried over to the pixels around it, or there might be other kinds of visualization tools that will have yet to be developed for this. But it is a different kind of challenge than the sort of purely generative one of building the work itself. What is important on this level is to make the process very clear to an audience that might not be super mathematically inclined but who should be able to understand this and be empowered to use it.

FF: We are in this unique time in history where we can start seeing the history of Computer Art growing – it has been

over fifty years now – and at the same time, we are still able to talk to its pioneers. I find your work a great way to link two different generations together.

DT: Yes, it is exciting to collaborate with an art historian who understands that algorithms can bring a new perspective to the art and become readable to an audience who may know art but still are a little bit uncomfortable with the digital world.

FF: I think we raised some questions on the role of Generative Art today and the impact that pioneer artists of the field have had on contemporary art practice. This is one of the main challenges we set, and I hope we have achieved it.

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Has Reenactment Reached an End?
Gerald Siegmund, Susanne Traub

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In this conversation, Gerald Siegmund (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen) and Susanne Traub (Deputy Head of Division Contact for Dance & Performance, Goethe Institut München) reflect on the importance of reenactment, as both a field of dance scholarship and an artistic form of contemporary dance, in the German-speaking countries. Discussing reenactment as an institutional critique as well as a manufactured response to the available funding schemes in Germany, they trace the changes in the field during the last twenty-five years wondering whether reenactment as a concept and a practice has reached an end.

GERALD SIEGMUND: I would like to begin with a short reflection on the importance of reenactment for dance practice and research in German-speaking countries. I hold that the reemergence of dance studies as an academic discipline during the 1990s, which culminated in the establishment of several professorships for dance studies at universities, went hand in hand with the emergence of reenactment as an artistic statement. At the time, dance artists actively researched the parameters that define the protocols of their profession, including their history and the

effect that history has on their dancing bodies. On the side of the academy, Gabriele Brandstetter's book *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (1995)[1] provided a model for thinking about the intersection of history and contemporary practices by considering dancing gestures and postures as tropes or figures that inevitably remember earlier configurations. This "Tanz-Lektüre" (physical or corporal reading) is done by audiences, scholars and artists alike, turning the body and its expressions into a cultural phenomenon, in which the past persists in an endless stream of refigurations. Scholars and artists met in their respective practices, which in turn fed on each other. This co-emergence, I think, helped to consolidate reenactment or remembering as legitimate forms of contemporary dance. At the same time, it changed the ways in which dance scholars dealt with dance history, which could now also be studied on the stage *in actu* rather than exclusively in archives. History became performative. If you want to study dance history, go to the theatre!

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SUSANNE TRAUB: I agree, at this point in time history   **aA**
became performative. The performative encounter with dance history and documents guides my specific interest in forms of reenactment. This is especially true for my curatorial and dramaturgical practice. In general, my reflections circle around the convergence of artistic and scholarly forms of research and experimentation, which inevitably leads to a convergence of practices of reenactment and remembrance. It also brings together contemporary experiences and the writing of history as the history of the present. If I consider performance to be an active doing *of* and *with* artistic and academic and political categories, then this attitude allows me to position myself towards history in a critical manner, while at the same time detaching myself from history. To approach history and heritage in such a way is, in my view, an activist way of gaining knowledge. Furthermore, I have a solid interest in ideological criticism. This is why the forms

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1. Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fisher Verlag, 1995; 2. edition Freiburg: Rombach Wissenschaft, 2013; eng. transl. *Poetics of Dance*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

of reenactment that interest me describe both a research project and an attitude. To remember and to make present and critically reflect history become the same. For me, embodiment as such is both extremely fascinating and political. I think that my special – but not exclusive – interest in dance has to do with my fascination with embodiment as a political act. I like to break out of established procedures and look for a way of engagement with things, that is, to quote Hannah Arendt, "a thinking without handrails". In this complex context, it became exciting for me to look at the difference between being in the time of the performance or in the time of reflection on the past. I guess these are all different states of embodiment. More often than not, I like to focus on the one hand on minute differences between acts of presenting/performing and on the other, on references to historical contexts that I bring to the performance from the outside while I watch and experience it.

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I change my position by trying to think from the inside and the outside of the performance. Obviously, both activities are performative and at work simultaneously. Redoing, reenacting and rethinking are interdependent with each other. In analyzing reenacted movement material, alternative actions and attitudes arise, so I tend to evaluate them differently from traditional movement material. The relation between reenacting and reconstructing remains fascinating to me. The entanglement of doing and thinking, movements of dance and movements of thought inspire me. In this context, it is equally important to note that which has been omitted or not shown in a performance. Whether this act of forgetting was conscious or unconscious does not matter. What is important is to constantly check routines, protocols and the canon in order to avoid forgetting for political reasons. Remembering becomes a political act as soon as it implies asking questions about the present and the future. Therefore, it always seems interesting to me to create a dynamic relationship between different time frames. Indeed, remembering in a German context can never be innocent again.

GS: Yes, definitely. The strong interest that the generation of dance artists from the late 1990s had in reenactments and reconstructions was heavily motivated by questions of

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politics and access to history, and by what was forgotten and for which reasons. My point was that as soon as you start conceptualizing history not only as written documentation or visual representation but also as an embodied memory and physical practice, the whole field of scholarship shifts from universities to dance studios. Dancers acquire a certain kind of scholarly knowledge about history from various sources and documents that their practices can access according to their aesthetic, political or social agendas. Documented history can be researched as a dance practice, to then be reenacted or reconstructed as a performance. The result of that knowledge is obviously different from the knowledge scholars would acquire when working in an archive. What is interesting to me is that you do not conceptualize history traditionally – diving in the archive and dealing with documents of various sorts – but actually you reactivate it in the dance studio, struggling with it as a contemporary artist. Suddenly as a scholar you find yourself on the floor level with dancers and choreographers. For me as a scholar, encountering this "equality of intelligences", as Jacques Rancière calls it, between artists and myself as a young scholar was a very satisfying experience that still informs my scholarly work on, for instance, artists like Jérôme Bel or Xavier Le Roy. We talk about the same thing, but in a different way. Nobody knows more or less. The ways we talk about performance are different but equal.

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ST: Yes, you are definitely right. Do you remember the project *Moving Thoughts–Tanzen ist Denken* (2000) in Leipzig?[2] You were also part of the conference, or to use a better term, these three days of "happenings". We explored options of how to undo the barriers between practicing dance in a studio or reenacting dance, between inventing dance for the stage or researching it while studying dance at university. Of course, contemporary experience (of dance?) is always layered: each performance has its executors, audience, and spaces, all developing their own kind of experience. But what is interesting to me is that, despite the individual, personal

2. Janine Schulze, *Moving Thoughts–Tanzen ist Denken* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8 Verlag, 2003).

ways of interacting with the performance itself, we are all in a position to share movement in common: feelings, experiences, thoughts, as well as worldviews.

While discussing reenactment today, this also needs to be brought to attention. This needs to be remembered. I wonder if this is the case today and if we still share the same ground, the same common feelings or interests. Since the time of the conference, reenactment as an artistic practice and as a theoretical approach has spread considerably, not only in the field of the visual arts but also in theatre. For me, there is a difference between reenactment as a practice in dance and as a practice in German theatre. So, I would like to know more about your position on reenactment outside the field of dance. I have in mind Anta Helena Recke, a very intelligent emerging theatre director who reenacted an existing mise-en-scène from Anna-Sophie Mahler's play Mittelreich (2015) at Kammerspiele in Munich. She did a faithful reenactment of the production, the only difference being that she cast exclusively Black people. Whilst I liked the production, it challenged my perception, leading me to ask myself whether I was included in her intention and whether the experience was meant to be shared with me or not. At that moment, it became clear to me that there is a difference between reconstruction and reenactment. By replacing the entirely white cast with black performers, she showed me that reenactments imply the appropriation of movements and their codes, an appropriation of techniques that changes our perception of the whole piece, which leads to new challenges.

GS: I think the performance you are referring to addresses a much larger question that is also part of dance reenactments, namely the question of "Institutional Critique". In fact, I consider Recke's performance to be an attempt to reflect on the fact that German theatre institutions still employ mainly white actors or actresses. What happens, she asks, if we turn the situation around and only cast *BIPOC* (black, indigenous and people of colour) performers ? So I see the performance as a conceptual statement rather than aiming at a common experience. Quite the opposite. She wants you to feel excluded just as *BIPOC viewers* may feel excluded from a performance with an all-white cast.

ST: Absolutely. We all share the common feeling of being excluded.

GS: But to come back to the question of reenactments as Institutional Critique. From the very beginning, reenactment practices have coincided with a kind of Institutional Critique that raised urgent questions about what counts as contemporary dance, the institutional choices about programming contemporary dance and the expectations of audiences about what they have learned contemporary dance can be. Forms of reenactment quite clearly contradict notions of the originality of movement, the invention of a movement vocabulary and the necessity of some kind of dance technique. All these notions were nourished by modern and contemporary dance until the 1990s. Thus, questions about who is allowed to perform as a dancer on stage – only trained bodies, only pieces of work that display virtuosic movement styles – were put on the table. So, somehow reenactment and Institutional Critique are related. Maybe there is also a link to *Mittelreich* and your argument about exclusion. Just as you as a white European woman feel excluded from the theatre a lot of people at the time thought they were excluded from dance performances and that they were not experiencing dance at all because they could not relate what they saw to their experiences and knowledge of dance.

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ST: Yes, definitely. If this is the case, then we should have another look at the concept of reenactment and the various techniques the dancers bring to the game. For me, with every technique there is always a kind of ideology involved in regard to the body. While I am doing or redoing a piece or a choreography, what actually happens is that my whole body – my mind, my flesh, my blood – is not separated from the gesture: dancing is thinking, and vice versa. This means that as a dancer and as a member of the audience, I will always have to deal with technique. Either I accept the ideology that comes with technique, or I conflict with it.

GS: What you just said raises another important issue concerning reenactments. Reenactments require that you, as an artist and as a member of the audience, position

yourself as a situated subject in a contemporary context. Why are you doing this today? Reenactments deal with the present and not primarily with the past. Reenactments address both the artist and the audience in a different way from a traditional dance or theatre performance, which aims at a universal subject or, rather, a form of universal subjectivity in which we all may come together. With reenactments, there seems to be a need to make the conditions under which the performance takes place explicit instead of assuming that everybody experiences it the same way.

ST: I think so, too. And now, I will dig a little deeper into history. While studying dance history, I was very impressed by the importance that dance on stage acquired during the period of Romantic ballet. The aims of ballet coincided with the necessity of inventing a form of art that could step out of the rigid rules of society in which nobody felt comfortable. At the time of Romantic ballet, every stage represented the chance to show an immaterial world built on a new technique, which would be able to narrate stories and describe a new reality. This radical sensibility is something that I still find interesting, even if I do not find any pleasure in seeing those skinny girls dancing, or if – out of a feminist perspective – I have plenty of reasons not to share the same values that gave birth to that form of art.

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GS: Would you go so far as to say that this phenomenon of technique – which also allows a certain redoing, repetition and reenactment – is the foundation for dance to become an autonomous art form as in Romantic ballet? Or that this kind of traditional technique is still going on in more contemporary forms of reenactment?

ST: Technique allows for autonomy, and this is why it is still working in contemporary forms of dance. I think that whilst technique is always a way to objectify, reiteration through technique is also a way of reflecting on objectification. Each new performer is involved in a dialogue between objectification and subjectification. So, I definitely agree with you on that; probably, this is something we can also transfer to other disciplines.

GS: This line of argument may also relate to *Ausdruckstanz* (Dance of Expression), the German Modern Dance because somehow, these artists tried to avoid the technical solution of reenacting or repeating and went for the subjective point of view.

ST: Yes, you are right, but I think there is another problem involved in *Ausdruckstanz*. There is the question of technique, and then there is the question of whether we can create something expressive. As a dancer, I can actually objectify myself entirely and do something that someone can look at. *Ausdruckstanz* or expression is always there: every performer expresses himself or herself while dancing. I find it interesting that *Ausdruckstanz,* on the one hand, fought against classical technique and opposed the ideology of ballet. These artists wanted to show something else, but on the other hand, they reached a point where the idea of expression itself became an ideology.

So, my point is that even when you intend not to have a technique, you actually either have one or are constructing a new one. Even improvisation, deduction and reconstruction are modes of expression with a strong technique. *Ausdruckstanz* – or expressive dance in general – has also had a technique, which is interesting to reflect on because this aspect was not considered at the beginning of its history.

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GS: I have always found it interesting how dancers of a younger generation deal with the political issues of *Ausdruckstanz*. Its tradition is from a specific cultural, ethical, and even geographical background and a kind of friction always comes up when somebody from a different cultural context approaches dances from 1930s Germany. The migration from body to body opens up new perspectives at the execution and fruition levels. Again, this is a very specific physical approach to history as opposed to an elaborate postcolonial theory of how bodies merge and transform. It is a very hands-on thing which I like very much.

ST: I like it too. I have another concern about the notion of expression: could you reenact an "expression"? Can an emotional expression be part of a reenactment, or can you only ever reenact specific shapes, forms or images? Two

years ago, I saw a performance that impressed me deeply. The piece was called *Pink Money* by choreographer Antje Schupp. I would characterize the piece as pure expression. The dancers addressed their personal experiences of discrimination and oppression, which I kept thinking about after the performance. Probably because they were so horrific, and I never had to go through what they went through. I have never experienced this very strong form of embodiment, which simply blew me away, through a reenactment.

GS: Would you say that, given the experience that you just shared, along with the phenomenon of reenactment that has been critically accompanying us for the past twenty five years, there has not been a real expression of our contemporary needs? Should we look for something else? Something more political?

ST: I would definitely say that we always need political ideas, otherwise things move into boring repetition. Today, in my opinion, there is a conflict between this political need in dance and cultural politics. In Germany, the establishment of *Tanzfonds Erbe* – a fund you can apply for if your art production relies on dance history or heritage – produces a certain imbalance. I have no objection to the fund because I think it is necessary to fuel a certain kind of artistic production. But having said that, I also wish for a fund for projects that are not necessarily in accordance with history and can bring some new political issues to the table.

GS: To explain: *Tanzfonds Erbe* was a program that the Kulturstiftung des Bundes – the cultural foundation of Germany – initiated at the outcome of *Tanzplan Deutschland*, which ran from 2005 to 2010. Tanzplan aimed to enhance activities around dance in local communities and cities. By bringing the various players of a town or region to work together and start new initiatives for bringing dance forward, *Tanzplan* wanted to change the structural conditions for dance in specific areas. In my opinion, as a former jury member that decided on the proposals, it succeeded in doing precisely that. Interestingly enough, Hortensia Völkers, now artistic director of Kulturstiftung des Bundes,

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has, in her previous incarnation as a dance curator, curated a dance festival in 2000 for *Wiener Festwochen* and *ImPulsTanz Vienna* that consisted entirely of various types of reenactments. The publication that accompanied the project was called *ReMembering the Body*.[3]

Tanzfonds Erbe, which ran from 2012 to 2019, was aimed at funding individual artistic projects that explicitly dealt with historical positions in dance without, however, stipulating any results. Artists were free to work in whatever form or format they chose. But you are, of course, right when you say that there has been a political decision to institutionalize reenactments and explore what history still means to them and how it speaks to them for their own artistic practice today. As you say, the program has been criticized precisely for the fact that it fuels an artificial need for dealing with history rather than actually looking at more pressing contemporary issues or artistic formats that have nothing to do with historical positions in dance. However, the interesting point about the institutionalization of reenactments is that dance now is in a much stronger position as cultural heritage in Germany than before all these initiatives.

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ST: Yes, you have just added something else to the discussion: you brought in the idea of acknowledgement. I mean, if we do not acknowledge each other's rights or if we do not understand that we need to reflect on the way in which we represent black people or women for example, the institution, the aim of which is to acknowledge, to validate, to discuss, turns into a form of disacknowledgement. When I worked as a dramaturg for the theatre – at Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, for instance – I always tried to bring more recent artistic positions to the program, as I am convinced that dance, as a moving art form, is also a tool that can move thoughts. Take the queen of German dance, Pina Bausch: she brought dance into the museum space not just in search of something different – like museums do nowadays – but because she wanted to go beyond pure

3.   Gabriele Brandstetter, Hortensia Völckers, eds., *ReMembering the Body* (Hamburg: Hatje Cantz Publications, 2000).

technique and experiment by applying a new dramaturgical method.

GS: Yes! Considering the time, I think we should move on to a kind of conclusion. I am sure there would be a lot more to say about dancing in the museums and the way dance is institutionalized by theatre or museums and gallery spaces – which would lead the discussion to a reflection on the intersection between visual and performing arts. I am sure that visual arts started showing dance within their programs because they wanted to enter into a different relationship with their audiences. They feel the need for physical urgency to go beyond the dead artefacts they hang on the museum walls. I am unsure whether this is what dance artists look for when they enter the museum space. I would like to suggest a different argument. I consider the reenactment craze to be a phenomenon of the digital revolution. As sociologist Dirk Baecker claims, when societies change their main or leading medium, the first result is data overkill. From oral cultures to the printing press, the transition from the book to the computer results in a surplus of information that nobody in their right mind can process. To delimit it and separate the valuable from the useless, societies must develop ways to channel the flow. If everything is potentially available for everybody all the time, pieces of information lose their value and validity.

What still counts in a changing society has to be determined by selection processes. As for the arts, and dance in particular, the impulse to reenact may be understood as precisely such a process. Artists turn to the past to find out what pieces of information are still valid for their work today. What can we save? What can we forget? However, other distribution channels and spaces for experiencing are probing to find out what is valid. Maybe dance works better in the open space of a museum or in relation to other artworks; it communicates perhaps more in a different environment than the theatre. Playing around with frames, therefore, aims to reassure dance of its potential to communicate and mean something. Thus, reenactments speak of the contemporary artists' desire to find their place amidst the debris of our information society. It could be an

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interesting way to look at dance in the museum. But maybe this can be a question for a different "duet".

ST: Yeah, this is right, and let me say that maybe – in another "duet" – we could talk about how museum directors or curators use the term reenactment.

GS: Definitely. Thank you very much, Susanne.

ST: Thank you for choosing me as your conversation partner on the occasion of this conference.

GS: We will keep this conversation going anyway next time we meet.

ST: Yes, we will do it!

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Postcolonial Swings of Memory: The Center for Historical Reenactments as a Starting Point
Gabi Ngcobo, Matteo Lucchetti

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Gabi Ngcobo (Johannesburg based Artist, Educator and Curatorial Director at the Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria) and Matteo Lucchetti (Curator, Visible Project, Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto and Fondazione Zegna) started their collaboration ten years ago in the frame of the Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR), a collaborative artistic platform founded in Johannesburg, South Africa. In their conversation, they unpack the short-term history of CHR through key moments and artistic projects that attempted to crack the popular historical narratives. Speaking about the disclosure of silent and invisible parts of history through art-making, they excavate the past from a decolonial perspective valuing the swinging of reenactment between remembering and forgetting.

MATTEO LUCCHETTI: Gabi, we have known each other for quite some time, at least since 2012. When I first met you, we were at the Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR).

GABI NGCOBO: This is right, but we met even before, in Italy.

ML: Right, very briefly. You were already active with the CHR at the time and you took part in the first-ever program of *Visible*, which was a publication in 2010.[1]

GN: I co-founded the CHR – what I call a collaborative platform – in 2010 together with Sohrab Mohebbi. Myself, Kemang Wa Lehulere and Donna Kukama became the core of the group but collaborated with different people for different projects. We used to work in a big warehouse where I also lived, that you visited in Downtown Johannesburg. Back then, concepts were much more important than the physical space; our scope was to look beyond those walls in our responses to the demands of that moment through an exploration of the historical legacies and their resonance and impact on contemporary art. In a sense, we were interested in questions that had existed before – that were important in a particular time frame – but we also wanted to revisit those questions in order to see what dimension they could activate or produce.

We also positioned our questions alongside the history of the Johannesburg Biennale, which took place only two times, in 1995 and 1997, before becoming a phantom limb. The last edition was curated by Okwui Enwezor and is considered as one of the most important exhibitions of the 1990s. Thinking about the questions that were brought up by that Biennale – especially the one curated by Okwui – and looking at what it left behind, I was happy to discover that there is a particular generation of artists all over the world that keeps a strong memory of that event. That is why I like to call the Biennale itself a "phantom pain" or a "phantom limb", because even if the event really shook the artistic scene in South Africa then, it left behind a lot of source material, including an extensive catalogue whose content remains relevant to the original questions. One of the questions that stood out for us was about the kind of people who were meant to receive the message of the Biennale: who was the Biennale for? Whilst this question was very important at that time, and it is still relevant

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1. Angelika Burtscher and Judith Wielander, eds., *Visible* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

to pose, the answer today is very different. For instance, the social landscape of the city at that time was very different in terms of "audience" composition.

ML: It is interesting that we started this by reenacting the first time we met. At that time, I was curating an exhibition at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella entitled *Practicing Memory: In a Time of an All-Encompassing Present* (2010). One of the videos that I showed on that occasion was by the Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué. *Old House* (2006) was a one-minute and fifteen seconds intense video showing a house in Beirut collapsing and resurrecting in the aftermath of the 1990 civil war. After the war, the general amnesty law pardoned all crimes and the act of forgetting became an imposed one, therefore making the one of remembering a political choice. A voiceover by the artist would retell the same story swinging from the option of remembering and forgetting it. Therefore, in his video, the idea of reenacting means also avoiding or refusing to go back to the very beginning where things started, but allowing the past to change our perception of the present.

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Maybe this is something you have also elaborated on in some of the projects with the CHR. I remember you were telling me about one of the initial projects you did, and it was related to the very famous boxing match of Muhammad Ali in Zaire. Do you want to tell me something about it?

GN: I actually co-curated this project with Sohrab in New York City when we were still studying at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. Sohrab came to me and said: "Let's do a boxing match". While I was a bit confused at the beginning, we started to research and look very closely at the 1974 boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which at that time was called Zaire. During the many matches fought by Ali – even the famous one *Rumble in the Jungle* – he employed some techniques to defeat his opponent, like the *rope-and-dope*.

Rope-and-dope consists in drawing non-injuring offensive punches until an opponent fatigues himself, and then the contender can execute devastating offensive movements

and thereby win. This technique has been used to describe many competitive situations, as for instance, the Obama campaign against McCain. Thinking about the theme of the fighting strategy and trying to bring it into the curatorial field, we invited two artists not to necessarily perform the boxing match, but to pick up on certain things that were taking place in the match. Consequently, the idea of the CHR came after having done this project.

Since the actual boxing match was eight rounds, we had the idea to stage the performance with different artists in different cities ending up in Kinshasa, but we managed to do only two of the performances, one in New York (2010) and the other in Johannesburg (2012), ironically at the event in which we declared CHR over.

ML: When you were mentioning the Johannesburg Biennale, you referred to it as a "phantom limb". This is a very interesting image that has been also used by Kader Attia. He made a video called *Reflecting Memory* (2016), where he visualized something that we often tend to ignore. Working with people who were missing a limb, he put a mirror perpendicular to their bodies in order to let the existing limb mirror itself as if the missing one was actually present. The idea was to visualize something invisible even if it still has an effect on a person's life – after all, people who have a missing limb keep on perceiving it. It was a very powerful image for considering how much things from the past still affect and influence the present, almost like ghosts. Therefore, what is important is to reenact them not in their original form but in a way that releases their ghost status in order to make them less influential in the present life. Kader uses this image as a metaphor to talk about the colonial approach to life and to propose a way to decolonize it. To use Mignolo's term,[2] "coloniality" is present even if we do not feel it and it exercises a powerful influence in the choices of people, institutions, artists, curators, and every social actor of our society. I was wondering if the concept of the "phantom limb"

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2. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

became something that you addressed, maybe through the programs at the CHR.

GN: It is interesting to reflect on things that haunt. The CHR was a collaborative artistic platform rather than a proper institution because within its programs we performed different situations. Two years after its beginning, we decided and programmed a performative end which we entitled *We Are Absolutely Ending This.* We invited collaborators and people not to look at the end of things as a moment of crisis but as an opportunity to open up new perspectives and situations.

When the event ended, we went through a two-year-long phase in which we saw the platform as a mechanism for "haunting". We continued working with institutions, performing, and rethinking our collaborative role.

After those two years of haunting, we recognised a moment in which the ghost of CHR was ready to be exorcised. When I think about it again – as I am talking about it now – I feel like it keeps haunting me in some ways, but I suppose this "haunting" is also important and at the same time beautiful because it became a working method and an inspiration for other projects. We all considered CHR as a rehearsal and an operational model that I still borrow from. Thinking about history allows me to understand the present and the future.

ML: Talking about rehearsals and history, during my visit in South Africa, for instance, I spoke with Ntone Edjabe, who, as the founder of *The Chimurenga Chronicle* journal, kept the focus on the idea of "what if" in rethinking history.[3] It is something that I found interestingly happening also in the practice of Dread Scott. His *Slave Rebellion Reenactment* (SRR) was staged in 2019 and, after preparing it for six years, it involved more than three hundred impersonators who reenacted (theatrically) the biggest slave revolution in the history of the US, which has happened in 1811.

The rebellion was actually an interesting event, firstly because it is very little known and secondly because it was the first rebellion to abolish slavery. Through this lens, it has

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3. See www.chimurengachronic.co.za [accessed 11 January 2022].

a very political value. When Dread speaks about the piece, he says that he wanted to generate a "cognitive dissonance" in the viewers: even a very little-known piece of history – this "what if " – could be visualized, could become possible, and eventually could go haunting back again. It is as if ghosts had agency. This can also be said for the "Chimurenga chronicles": they visualize in a newspaper something that has never happened – but could have happened if things went differently.

This "cognitive dissonance" is very valid in the context of the slavery period in the US, but it also fits the South African situation. Due to the colonial history of Europe and all the ghosts that are present while walking around Europe, this dynamic still influences every life choice. I think that our work is extremely important as mediators of such dynamics – it makes this "haunting" palpable. As a curator of the 10th Berlin Biennale, you also worked along this line, if I am not mistaken.

GN: How did you understand it? [laughing].

ML: The venue of the Akademie der Künste really spoke to me in that sense by letting certain ghosts have agency in appropriating spaces, ideas and discourses.

GN: It was quite interesting to enter a space such as the Akademie der Künste. Being one of the oldest institutions in Europe, it has its own long history. The physical building dates from the 1950s, but its collections are about two hundred years old. The Akademie's archive includes documents about architecture, theatre, music, film and visual arts. It is so dense that even for its staff it is impossible to understand everything contained in the archive. Interestingly, when we started to look for certain information connected with the Haitian Revolution, which is an often disregarded moment in the histories of slavery, we did not find any documents that correspond to that time in the Akademie's archive. It is, indeed, a past that has remained silent for a long time.

Nevertheless, artists like Firelei Báez or Tessa Mars worked with that memory and approached it from a feminist perspective bringing in an unknown layer of how women

were part of this revolution. Furthermore, it was also interesting to raise all these questions within a German institution, especially because we were thinking of all the silences and gaps hidden by the grand narrative. Influenced by Susan Buck-Morss' essay *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*,[4] our approach and interest were to find a way to get into those cracks and point towards them. Sometimes, events that seemed really small came up with their important meaning for many people. As it is for *The Chimurenga Chronicle*, our concern at the CHR was to find the right way to treat each other as Africans. As Okwui himself experienced working in South Africa, questions around Xenophobia or Afrophobia, were already present in 1997. For instance, Julia Kristeva's essay *By What Right Are You a Foreigner?*,[5] which can be found in the catalogue of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, deals with issues that are still important to examine. As South Africans, we tend to look at our national experience in isolation, but we should now be aware that these problems have surfaced in other so-called postcolonial worlds that have dealt (or not) with them.

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ML: This makes me think of a project by Congolese artist Sammy Baloji for whom I recently curated two solo shows in Scandinavia. Every time Sammy is asked, in a colloquial context, an opinion about the reopening of the Africa Museum in Tervuren, in Belgium, he replies something along the lines of: "It is your problem, not mine". Africa Museum is in fact a Belgian and European problem, like every ethnographic museum across the continent. This one was born as the personal African collection of Leopold II, who never travelled to Congo but he used it as his own personal property. In this scenario, Baloji is rather extremely interested in speaking about the little known pre-colonial time. Just to give an example: all his research during the last years has been focused on the Kingdom of Congo both

4. Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).
5. Julia Kristeva, "By What Right Are You a Foreigner?", in *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, catalogue of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Johannesburg: Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council/Den Haag: Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 1997): 39-42.

in a transnational perspective and in relation to European powers during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. More specifically, he discovered that the first black bishop was ordered in 1511 by Pope Leo X and the Medici Family as a gift, because the son of the king of Congo was one of the first African persons converted to Christianity. He also discovered that all the gifts sent by the Kingdom to the Church in Rome were exhibited in the ethnographic museums of the nineteenth century as colonial material instead of being perceived as an exchange between wealthy people of equal power and right. The artist is much more interested in letting a completely unknown narrative to emerge, and in prompting us, as art historians, to rethink and revalue – or reroot – our knowledge.

This is another example of reenacting a past that is beyond what we are always busy discussing, and it coincides with an incredible strategy in terms of creating that "cognitive dissonance" that Dread speaks about.

I do not want to stray away too much from the topic of reenactment, but I am still very interested in xenoglossia – this almost mystical practice of speaking languages not acquired by natural means. We definitely go back to the ghosts that inhabit us.

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GN: Yes, it was fascinating also for us. It was not the main project of CHR, but in the end, we understood its importance. As you say, xenoglossia is that phenomenon for which a person speaks or writes in a language that they have never practiced before. It is a kind of ontology in itself. On the one hand, it was interesting to reflect on the histories of languages that we speak. South Africa has a long and complicated language policy history. We have eleven official languages, and the first biggest student protest in 1976 was against Afrikaans – a version of Dutch that was first written in Arabic, because of the inspiration from Indonesian and Malaysian people captured and enslaved in the Cape Colony. On the other hand, it was interesting to reflect on xenophobia or afrophobia, which, to some degree, emerged out of a linguistic misunderstanding. The word afrophobia has been used to describe discrimination faced by people from other parts of Africa and underlines that foreignness means something different when one has a dark skin. As a

consequence, a derogatory term was and is still used against people of a darker tone who sound differently. Xenophobia is also something peculiar to us – in testing out this peculiarity, during the *Na Ki Randza* project, we created t-shirts with a text borrowed from a series of posters created by the Danish collective Superflex. It claims: *Foreigners, please don't leave us alone with the Danes*. We adapted the slogan to the South African context and changed it to: *Foreigners, don't leave us alone with the tourists*. Most of those t-shirts we distributed to people travelling from Johannesburg to Lusaka. We do not know what questions they activated when they reached Zambia, but I am certain that they had different repercussions specific to that context.

ML: Superflex's slogan recalled the idea of the migrant as somebody who breaks down the problematic, univocal, national identity, whilst, in your case, it is more like an invitation to unite a group of people across differences within the same context.

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GN: Indeed, it is great to remember these moments with you!

ML: Indeed. Let me share one last thought. The image by Marzia Migliora that was chosen for the flyer of the conference on reenactment in which our conversation takes place is very dear to me. It portrays the artist herself lying down in a bed made of corn which is inside a family closet. For the artist, the installation was a reenactment of an image of her family's farm, where she lived when she was very young. Thus, an intimate memory became an installation that allowed her to reflect also on the industrialization of agriculture, which completely changed the destiny of her family. In other words, an intimate memory becomes a doorway to a larger reflection, and this is interesting because, when we think about reenactment, we tend to use greater narratives instead of relating to intimate experiences – e.g. traumas. What is incredible about reenactment is that it can trigger empathy, and this is what I experienced myself in the CHR, as both an institutional space and a domestic one, where people could get together to share their intimate experi-

ences. As a curator and artist, you were also very careful in weaving together all these aspects.

GN: Yes, and it happened in many beautiful ways because people who would come would actually be also the actors and the instigators of the artistic experiences. In the end, it was an exchange of taking energy and giving it back.

ML: In this regard, I really like that swinging gesture that the video by Rabih Mroué, which I initially mentioned, shows. We should be able to stay in between the act of remembering and forgetting without giving a dominant position to any of the two actions. While remembering can sometimes create myths we might not want, the risk of forgetting is that we would be completely unaware of the context we are operating within. Alongside a metaphorical space to inhabit, reenactment becomes the act of swinging between remembering and forgetting.

GN: I am thinking about Donna Kukama's *The Swing (after After Fragonard)* now!

ML: I am glad we connected on this because that performance was really a striking moment for me. Well, do you want to say something about it?

GN: Yes, *The Swing* is a video by Donna Kukama that was recorded from a performance that happened under a highway bridge in Downtown Johannesburg in 2009. The video, which is shot from above, shows Donna swinging in slow motion, accompanied by very eerie sounds. While she swings dressed in a little white dress, she drops ten Rands banknotes onto the street below her, where people congregate fighting to catch the notes, until her body suddenly disappears from the frame because the swing is broken (but we don't see this as part of the edited video).

Even if neither the audience nor the viewer knows it, the fact that she broke her leg falling during the performance was quite interesting as grounds to attempt to revisit the moment. We went back to the place where the performance was staged not to recreate the performance itself but to talk with the people who witnessed it. We created another video

that gathered all that evidence to bring the performance back to life. Donna's *Swing* was a reenactment in two parts because she borrowed the title from an installation by Yinka Shonibare, who, in turn, worked after the famous Fragonard's painting of the same title. It is a reenactment within art history which gives a feminist point of view.

ML: I really like it, and I think that Donna's work enacts and embeds a lot of the ideas we discussed today.

GN: It was great to remember together.

ML: It was great to reenact our now ten years of friendship.

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Time Seems Pliable: Historical Strategies of Narration, Preservation, and Transmission
Susanne Franco, Sven Lütticken

Sven Lütticken (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Universiteit Leiden) and Susanne Franco (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) discuss three key publications on the topic of re-enactment: *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (ed. by Sven Lütticken, 2005); *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field* (ed. by Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 2020); and *Over and Over and Over Again: Reenactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory* (ed. by Cristina Baldacci, Clio Nicastro, and Arianna Sforzini, 2022). The conversation unravels the evolution of reenactment as a theorized term and the emergence of preenactment reflecting on the notion of prefixes (pre-, re-, no prefix). Lütticken and Franco also focus on the role of reenactment as a methodology and as an interdisciplinary "branded" field of study, and on the nuances between narration, preservation, transmission, repetition, and invention in relation to the past.

SUSANNE FRANCO: I suggest to discuss a series of recent publications on reenactment, and my first question to you concerns *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contem-*

porary Art,[1] the book you edited for the eponymous exhi-
bition you curated in 2005 at Witte de With Center for
Contemporary Art in Rotterdam.[2] Both the exhibition and
the book combined documented reenactments of perfor-
mances with artistic reflections on historical reenactments
outside the sphere of art. The aim of the publication – which
contains essays by critics and theorists, as well as scripts
and other writings by artists – was to incorporate textual
and visual elements that go beyond mere illustration. You
suggest in your essay that at that time, in contemporary art,
the term reenactment was often used to refer to the repeti-
tion of seminal performances from the sixties and seventies,
which were being canonized or were just undergoing canon-
ization. The moment when the term reenactment migrat-
ed to the sphere of contemporary artistic production and
contributed to raising questions about how to preserve or
actualize impermanent artworks, you had dated to around
the year 2000. It was less evident how historical performa-
tive works could be preserved and re-presented for contem-
porary audiences. When and why did you start to be inter-
ested in reenactment? And how have the concept and its
practical outputs changed since you first theorised it?

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SVEN LÜTTICKEN: I think that for me, it was a matter of
two strands of inquiry coming together in reenactment. On
the one hand, I have a long-standing and ongoing interest
in historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit* in German). This led me to
take an interest in forms of historical reenactment outside
of any established artistic context or sphere. I am referring
to the various forms of historical reenactment, such as live
reenactments, war reenactments, and also recorded reen-
actments basically from Hollywood films or other feature
movies. On the other hand, I was also interested in perfor-
mance, the historicity of performance art and its documen-
tation and re-presentation. To me, these two lines of inquiry
met up in a number of works by contemporary artists, such
as Rod Dickinson, Jeremy Deller, Andrea Fraser, Omer

1. Sven Lütticken, ed., *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*
(Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2005).
2. See https://www.fkawdw.nl/en/our_program/exhibitions/life_once_more [ac-
cessed 6 September 2022].

Fast, and Eran Schaerf. Both the exhibition and the publication produced by the Witte de With – that, as a result of a decolonizing process, has been renamed Kunstinstituut Melly – were about the overlap between these two areas of interest. My curiosity in reenactment was also piqued in the late 1990s when I conducted a still unpublished (and probably lost) interview with Marina Abramovič. At that time, she was becoming very much focused on restaging her historical performances and pieces by other artists such as Chris Burden. She was adamant that each piece was like a musical score, like a musical composition that one can just play again, and again, and again, and that all performances are potentially equivalent. I thought that this point was to some extent questionable because these historical performances were mediated in the form of erratic black and white records, such as photographs, films, video recordings, and it was hard to deny their impact. I was intrigued by the tension between iterability and that certain historical performances gain an aura thanks to the documentation.

SF: My second question concerns the collected volume *Over and Over and Over Again: Reenactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory*, recently edited by Cristina Baldacci, Clio Nicastro, and Arianna Sforzini.[3] The book originates from a two-day international conference held at ICI Berlin in 2017. Since you were one of the first to theorize reenactment, the conference organizers and editors invited you to write the introduction of the book. Here you suggest that, when speaking about reenactment, we should also consider a concomitant term and practice that has come to the fore in recent years: the preenactment. We refer to a rehearsal for a future that may or may not be actualized by this term. By substituting the "re-" with the "pre-", a new range of temporalities (therefore also of possibilities) linked to the action of enacting opens up. Could you elaborate further on the use of these prefixes and the conceptual shift they produce?

SL: My interest in reenactment is ongoing, but at the same time, it is always focused on practices in which the term

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3. Cristina Baldacci, Clio Nicastro, Arianna Sforzini, eds., *Over and Over and Over Again: Reenactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory* (Berlin: ICI Berlin Press, 2022).

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is explicitly or prominently used. Thinking of my recent works, for instance, I have dealt with forms of reconstruction and reenactment in Forensic Architecture's *Reconstruction of the Murder of Halit Yozgat*, commissioned by Unraveling the NSU Complex, a Germany-wide alliance of anti-racism activists. This investigation concerns the murder of the twenty-one years old Halit Yozgat in 2006 in Kassel, the ninth of a series of ten racist murders committed in Germany between 2000 and 2007 by a neo-Nazi group known as the National Socialist Underground (NSU). The inquiry became possible only at the end of 2015, when hundreds of documents from the local police – reports, witness depositions, photographs, computer and phone logs – were leaked. The most important document was a video of a police reenactment performed by Andreas Temme, a government agent. He was present in the internet café where Yozgat was murdered and claimed not to have noticed anything. In Forensic Architecture's three-channel video *77sqm_9:26min*, Temme's testimony was shown to be highly untrustworthy, raising a series of disturbing questions regarding the involvement of German state agencies with radical right-wing groups.

For the video, Forensic Architecture physically reenacted the murder of Halit Yozgat in a reconstruction of the internet café at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt by using a three-dimensional digital model. One can also regard the result as a preenactment, because Forensic Architecture's video and written report constitute a "counter event": in the context of the tribunal, they represent a fundamental reckoning that is impossible in the present, as it is blocked by state agencies and the judiciary.

I have also used the term preenactment to discuss the practice of Milo Rau and his project, *The Congo Tribunal* (2017). Rau himself employs the term preenactment, referring to an early use by Céline Kaiser, who was in turn informed by psychotherapy. Using the affordances and institutions of art, Rau stages tribunals as preenactments of future justice or justice to come. Rau calls it "the foreshadowing of a future in which this symbolic would be normal, so to speak" [*das Vorleuchten einer Zukunft, in der dieses Symbolische gewissermassen normal wäre*], acting as a prefiguration of a potential future. Rau speculates that this imaginary

prefiguration can gain a degree of performative efficacy through the power of publicity.

SF: I arrived at a similar point with my research work on the repertoire of ethnic dances presented as a daily program at the Bomas of Kenya, a cultural centre located just outside Nairobi that is part of the network of National Museums of Kenya. The centre, which is described as the "official custodian of Kenya's tangible and intangible heritage", offers a series of reenactments of the so-called "ethnic" or "cultural" dances. The program consists of a repertoire of dances of many (but not all) ethnic groups based in Kenya that are selected to re-present the harmonious coexistence of different cultural traditions under the auspices of the nation. The aim is to minimise the profound divisions that continue to trouble Kenya more than fifty years after its independence in 1963. Additionally, the Bomas adapted these dances to the auditorium space according to the expectations of the tourists, and, last but not least, the needs of the schools that organise frequent visits with students of different classes and ages. In other words, although ethnic affiliation resulting from the "entanglement" between a colonial past and the present is still the key criterion that determines citizen's opportunities in the real life, the Bomas continues to promote an ideal of national unity expressed by the official motto *Harambee* (also the name of this dance company), which in Swahili means "all pulling together". Kenya has not been able yet to produce a shared historical narrative because historiography still represents something potentially subversive, if used to question the legitimacy of the past and present leaderships. With this series of reenactments, the Bomas uses dance to promote a state-stipulated narrative of an idealised national unity and make performances meaningful for the younger generations and the outsiders (tourists). The video recordings of these reenacted dances are now part of the Bomas' archive that stores something that never happened in the real world. In *Reenacting Heritage at Bomas of Kenya: Dancing the Postcolony*,[4] I suggest seeing

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4. Susanne Franco, "Reenacting Heritage at Bomas of Kenya: Dancing the Postcolony". *Dance Research Journal*, 47, no. 2 (August 2015): 5-21; https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767715000170 [accessed 18 March 2022].

it as a "post-archive" that results from an entirely proleptic strategy. In other words, it offers a representation of an idealised past and a dreamed future of the postcolonial state, one that still strives to be a nation. Here, dance reenactment is a tool for representing what has yet to happen.

SL: Right, they are invented traditions.

SF: Exactly, and in this case, as for the ones you just discussed, using the prefix "post-" or "pre-" it is something that completely changes the temporal perception of the work itself. Here, something that never existed is staged, transmitted, and preserved in its invented form. What is important to stress is that by following the traces of reenactment, we can cast new light on the historical strategies of narration, preservation, and transmission.[5]

SL: You are right, and what these cases have in common is the production of a simulacrum that is created through what is ostensibly a repetition, a reiteration of a historical model. This sort of invention of traditions was part of the project of the nineteenth-century Romantic cultural nationalism, and we still live with its consequences. Andrea Fraser's notion of "enactment" – without any prefix – could prove useful when it comes to intervening in the transmission and ongoing instrumentalization of invented traditions. Drawing on psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, she considers enactments "structures of relationships that are being produced and reproduced in all forms of activity". We are constantly enacting forms of investment – like psychological or economic – and perpetuating hierarchies and structures through our interrelationships. Perhaps what we need is not so much reenactment studies as enactment studies.

SF: My third question concerns the growth of Reenactment Studies, which are gaining more and more disciplinary recognition. The recent publication of *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies*, edited by Vanessa Agnew,

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5. Andrea Fraser, "Performance or Enactment", in *Performing the Sentence,* ed. Carola Dertnig and Felicitas Thun-Hoheinstein (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014): 127.

Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann,[6] seems to pre-figure a new disciplinary field, although its institutionalisation is still at an early stage. This handbook provides the first overview of significant concepts within reenactment studies, and it is organised in a series of key entries written by leading scholars from Europe, North America, and Australia. Reenactment has undoubtedly attracted the attention of scholars in a range of disciplines, such as art history, history, musicology, anthropology, archaeology, new media, performing arts, museology, heritage, and memory studies. Students, scholars and artists are increasingly interested in exploring these concepts and acquiring new tools to engage with reenactment. How do you consider this shift from a form of inter- and trans-disciplinary research into a new quasi-discipline? Should reenactment be also a subject of its own tailored "studies" or would it be more fruitful to see it as a constantly changing methodology?

SL: One might say that there are these competing imperatives in contemporary academia: on the one hand, we are all supposed to be inter- and trans-disciplinary; and on the other hand, there is also an actual financial, economic, political demand for specific areas of expertise. Reenactment could function as a sort of transdisciplinary and transversal configuration that people enter and approach from different angles, but there is a clear incentive for many to claim it as theirs, in order to sursive in neoliberal academia. Reenactment is supposedly one of my areas of expertise as a scholar. Still, I think that there is a fundamental contradiction here, a conflict between "expert knowledge" and the possessiveness that comes with it, and the need for speculative and collaborative intellectual labour. This is a structural conflict that we all keep enacting and reenacting. I am sceptical about branding reenactment as a new field of studies. Of course, it makes sense to pool resources and it is handy to have compendiums, but we need to reflect on the mechanisms that kick into gear when a transdisciplinary area of investigation becomes a quasi-discipline. Without getting

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6.   Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb and Juliane Tomann, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

too involved in all this carving out of fiefdoms and micro-fields, what interests me are the methodological implications of reenactment for scholars, theorists, and various kinds of practitioners. During the first lockdown in 2020, I worked on a text about the notion of "prolepsis", which you have already invoked, and which in linguistic terms is a kind of anticipation of a future event. I analysed many practices from the sixties and seventies, including some works by Alexander Kluge, Straub-Huillet, and Peter Weiss. In *The Aesthetics of Resistance*[7] by Peter Weiss, for instance, there are all these proleptic moments when the narrator reflects on the fact that their story is going to end badly or they are going to be abandoned by the Soviet Union. Weiss opens the novel's first volume with a scene where the protagonist – the narrator – and some of his comrades visit the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. While discussing the famous frieze sculpted in high relief on the Altar that represents the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods, they interpret it as an allegory of a racialized class struggle. They see history as a permanent Pergamon or an ongoing battle that oppressors from ancient to modern and capitalistic times keep reiterating.

While I was wrapping up this text, it turned out that a German vegan chef (Attila Hildmann), who has become a kind of neofascist, an antisemitic conspiracy theorist, was using his Telegram account to spread the idea that Pergamon Altar is the throne of Satan, and that Angela Merkel and the congregation of international elite figures were organizing nocturnal rituals, on the museum altar – rituals which of course involve children being sacrificed and eaten. This guy has about one hundred thousand followers on telegram who read these insane thoughts, and some of them appear to have vandalised artworks in the museum.

This example feels like an uncanny historical return to me: while I was reflecting on Peter Weiss's use of Pergamon Altar as a symbol of historical continuities, the same object

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7. Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume I: A Novel*. trans. Joachim Neugroschel. With a foreword by Fredric Jameson and a glossary by Robert Cohen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); *The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume II: A Novel*. trans. Joel Scott. Afterword to the New Berlin Edition by Jürgen Schutte (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

was used as a projection screen for an insane ideology. In response to all of this, I keep returning to the idea of organising gatherings in the Pergamon Museum as a reenactment of the meeting narrated by Peter Weiss; critically (re)enacting Weiss's story in the present. Since the conversation in Weiss's novel is obviously clandestine, a contemporary performative intervention would not need permission from the museum and could pass unnoticed; contemporary audio equipment for museum tours provides some interesting possibilities in this respect. However, organising something like this would still require some support and infrastructure in Berlin, which I do not feel I have.

SF: I did not know these facts, which are frightening though they are also fascinating examples of how history can be experienced, relived and narrated. I also think that in this phase of development of the reenactment theories it is crucial to gain new methodological approaches precisely by discussing those applied and verified in disciplines other than the one we are directly engaged in. The development of a theoretical arsenal suitable to better understand reenactment (and preenactment, of course) cannot be unrelated to the sense of time we are experiencing personally and collectively at this historical juncture. My impression is that in the last two years, we have been stuck (and almost hunted) in an expanded present, and we started feeling the pre-pandemic past as the "normal era" that is now further away than ever. At the same time, we are almost mythologizing the future that seems an unreachable, if not unimaginable dimension. In other words, this pandemic has profoundly affected how we perceive time and reflect upon it. This situation is not only determined by the fact that we alternate between a highly expanded and an overcompressed sensation of time in our private, professional and social lives. On the contrary, it is shaped by our interconnection at a global level, which is unprecedented in history. The massive use of technological devices also affects how we will remember this historical moment and these sensations (and these uses) of time. In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and*

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Reenactment,[8] Mark Franko suggests that in the post-ephemeral era, reenactments unsettle what we have assumed to be a linear and progressive organisation of time and the implicit notions of periodicity and centre versus periphery. Reenactment further advocates for an engagement with a rather critical and philosophical reflection on temporality (and for dance also on spatiality) concerning the past. For these reasons, I would not be surprised if the current tendency of dance reenactments to "presentify" the past (to present the past by bringing it into the present), through a series of dramaturgical and choreographic strategies, will reveal even more neglected aspects of our relationship with time in the post-pandemic era. This might be one of the topics we will discuss in the near future.

SL: Yes, definitely. On an anecdotal level: I just saw a 2020 work by Boudry and Lorenz, *(No) Time*, in an exhibition at BAK in Utrecht. The video shows dancers in a space defined by sliding doors and Venetian blinds – complemented by real Venetian blinds in the exhibition space, going up and down. The dancers respond to each other's moves and gestures in a variety of dance styles. Time seems pliable, with movements going into slow motion at some points. The piece comes out of Boudry and Lorenz's interest in notions such as temporal drag, queer time and anti-chrononormativity. You can read this in the artists' statements and think: fine, sure, okay, but their work makes the theoretical patter come alive. Experiencing this piece after so many months of sensory deprivation felt like a release from Zoom hell and platform time into movements and intervals that are bewilderingly and wonderfully out of joint.

SF: It was really nice meeting you and discussing these topics. I hope we can meet again and in person soon.

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8. Mark Franko, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 5.

Notes on the Contributors

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CECILIA ALEMANI is an Italian curator based in New York, who has developed expertise in commissioning and producing ambitious artworks for public spaces. Since 2011, she has been the director and chief curator of High Line Art, the public art program presented by the High Line in New York. In 2022, she served as artistic director of the 59th International Art Exhibition–La Biennale di Venezia. In 2018, she was artistic director of the inaugural edition of Art Basel Cities: Buenos Aires. In 2017, she curated the Italian Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition–La Biennale di Venezia. From 2012 to 2017, she curated Frieze Projects, the nonprofit platform of the Frieze Art Fair in New York. Prior to these roles, Alemani worked as a guest curator for Performa 11 (New York, 2011); co-founded the independent festival No Soul For Sale (New York, 2009; London, 2010); served as curatorial director of the year-long X Initiative (New York, 2009-2010); acted as curator of Special Projects for the fair Artissima in Turin. As an independent curator, since the mid-2000s, she has organized numerous exhibitions in museums, nonprofit spaces, and galleries.

CRISTINA BALDACCI is an associate professor in History of Contemporary Art at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where she is also affiliated with THE NEW INSTITUTE Centre for Environmental Humanities (NICHE). Her research interests focus on archiving and collecting as art practices; re-enactment and other "re-" strategies in contemporary arts and theory; rethinking art history, art archives, and artistic processes in relation to the Anthropocene and the Environmental Crisis. She is co-editor-in-chief (with M. De Rosa, S. Franco) of the peer-reviewed book series "The Future Contemporary: Inquiries into Visual, Performing, and Media Arts" (Edizioni Ca' Foscari). Among her publications are: the monograph *Archivi impossibili. Un'ossessione dell'arte contemporanea* (2016); the article "Re-Enacting Ecosystems: Jakob Kudsk Steensen's Environmental Storytelling in Virtual and Augmented Reality", *Piano B. Arti e Culture Visive, 6.1* (2021): 67-86; the co-edited volumes *Double Trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary: Art Fairs and Shows* (with C. Ricci, A. Vettese, 2020), *Over and Over and Over Again: Reenactment Strategies in Contemporary Arts and Theory* (with C. Nicastro, A. Sforzini, 2022). She is also co-editing (with E. Guaraldo) the double issue of the journal *Holotipus* on the topic of "Archiving the Anthropocene: New Taxonomies Between Art and Science" (2022-2023).

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TIMMY DE LAET is an assistant professor of Theatre and Dance Studies at the University of Antwerp and a lecturer at the BA and MA Dance of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (Belgium). He is the co-founder and coordinator of "CoDa | Cultures of Dance – Research Network for Dance Studies". He is the Associate Editor of *EJTP*, the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance*, and serves on the editorial boards of the Flemish performing art journals *FORUM* and *Documenta*. He has worked as a dramaturge with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui for the productions *3S* (2020) and *Vlaemsch* (2022). His writings have been published in journals as *Dance Research*, *Tanz*, *Muséologies*, and *Performance Research*, as well as in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (2017), and *The Routledge Companion to Dance Studies* (2020). He co-edited (with L. Van den Dries) *The Great European Stage Directors, Vol. 8: Pina Bausch, Romeo Castellucci, Jan Fabre* (2018); (with M. Sugiera and K. Vanhaesebrouck) *Language and Performance: Moving Across Discourses and Practices in a Globalized World* (2021); and (with A. Van Assche) *Choreographic (Re) Collections: Archiving Dance in Flanders* (2021).

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SUSANNE FOELLMER is an associate professor in Dance at Coventry University/Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE). Her main research areas embrace aesthetic theory and corporeality in contemporary dance and performance art in the Weimar Era, relationships between dance and "other" media, temporality, historicity and politicality of dance. Her recent publications include: *The Archival Turn in Dance/Studies: Reflections on (Corporeal) Archives and Documents* in *Dance Fields: Staking a Claim for Dance Studies in the 21st Century* (2020), the co-edited volume (with M. K. Schmidt, C. Schmitz) *Performing Arts in Transition: Moving Between Media* (2019), and (with R. Gough) *On Leftover*s, in "Performance Research" (2017). Her forthcoming book *On Remnants and Vestiges: Negotiating Persistence and Ephemerality in the Performing Arts* is based on the research project "On Remnants and Vestiges. Strategies of Remaining in the Performing Arts" (funded by the German Research Foundation/DFG).

FRANCESCA FRANCO is a venetian-born art historian based in the UK. She is senior research fellow at the University of Exeter and visiting lecturer at Danube University Krems. The central themes of her research are the history of art and technology and the pioneers of computer art. She is principal investigator on the AHRC-funded project "Documenting Digital Art: Re-Thinking Histories and Practices of Documentation in the Museum and Beyond" (http://documentingdigitalart.exeter.ac.uk/). In 2017, she was curator-in-residence at the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa in Venice, where she curated *Algorithmic Signs*, an exhibition that explored the history of generative art. She has published extensively on the history of early computer art and its pioneers. In addition to English and Italian her texts have been translated into various languages, including Russian, Chinese and Romanian. Franco is the author of *Generative Systems Art* (2018) and *The Algorithmic Dimension* (2020).

SUSANNE FRANCO is an associate professor in Dance, Theater, and Performance Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and research associate at Centre transdisciplinaire d'épistémologie de la littérature et des arts vivants (CTEL),

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MARK FRANKO is a Laura H. Carnell professor in Dance at Temple University. He has published eight books, including *Choreographing Discourses: A Mark Franko Reader* (2018) and *The Fascist Turn in the Dance of Serge Lifar: French Interwar Ballet and the German Occupation* (2020). Franko is editor of the *Handbook of Dance and Reenactment* (2017) and founding editor of the Oxford Studies in Dance Theory book series. He is recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Scholarly Research in Dance Award of the Congress in Research in Dance. Also an artist, his choreography has been produced at Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, Berlin Werkstatt Festival, Getty Center, Montpellier Opera, Toulon Art Museum, Haggerty Art Museum (Milwaukee), Akademie der Künste (Berlin), Mozarteum (Salzburg), STUK festival (Leuven), Centro Cultural San Martín (Buenos Aires), and in New York City and San Francisco venues. Franko is recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial fellowship and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship.

GABRIELLA GIANNACHI is full professor in Performance and New Media at the University of Exeter. Her research has been funded by AHRC, EU, Innovate UK and RCUK, and she has worked in partnership with Tate, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, The Natural History Museum, The Science Museum, The Photographers' Gallery and LiMA. She has published a number of books including: *Virtual Theatres* (2004); *The Politics of New Media Theatre* (2007); *Archive Everything* (2016 and, in Italian translation, 2021), and *Technologies of the Self-Portrait* (2022 and, in Italian translation, 2023) She co-authored (with N. Kaye) *Performing Presence: Between the Live and the Simulated* (2011), and (with S. Benford) *Performing Mixed Reality* (2011). She co-edited (with M. Shanks, N. Kaye) *Archaeologies of Presence* (2012); (with J. Westerman) *Histories of Performance Documentation* (2017); (with S. Franco) *Moving Spaces: Enacting Dance, Performance and the Digital in the Museum* (2021); (with A. Dekker) *Documentation as Art: Expanded Digital Practices* (2022).

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STEFANO MUDU holds a PhD in Visual Culture from Iuav University of Venice. His thesis, entitled *Re-/Over-/Hyper-Enactment*, analyzes reenactment strategies in a novel compositional and terminological perspective. As well as having written several essays on the subject, Mudu regularly writes for publications in the field, such as *Flash Art*. He is the author of the monograph *Spazi Critici. I luoghi della scrittura contemporanea* (2018) and has edited the volume *Altrove. New Fiction* (2020). He worked in the curatorial team of the 59th International Art Exhibition–La Biennale di Venezia, assisting the artistic director Cecilia Alemani during the research for the main exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*.

GABI NGCOBO is an artist, curator and educator living in Johannesburg, South Africa, and currently curatorial director at the Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria (Javett-UP). Since the early 2000s she has been engaged in collaborative artistic, curatorial and educational projects in South Africa, with an international scope. Recent curatorial projects include *All in a Day's Eye: The Politics of Innocence in the Javett Family Collection* (2019-2020) and *Handle With Care* (2021-2022), both at the Javett Art Centre–University of Pretoria, and *Mating Birds Vol. 2* at the KZNSA Gallery in Durban (2019). She curated the 10th Berlin Biennale *We Don't Need Another Hero* (2018) and

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LUCIA RUPRECHT is professor in Dance Studies at Free University of Berlin. She has published widely on dance, literature, and film. She is the author of *Gestural Imaginaries: Dance and Cultural Theory in the Early Twentieth Century* (2019) and *Dances of the Self in Heinrich von Kleist, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Heinrich Heine* (2006, special citation of the de la Torre Bueno Prize). She has edited *Towards an Ethics of Gesture* (special section of "Performance Philosophy", 2017) and co-edited (with S. Manning) *New German Dance Studies* (2012), (with M. Minden) *Cultural Pleasure* (special issue of *German Life & Letters* 62/3, 2009), and (with A. Webber, C. Duttlinger) *Performance and Performativity in German Cultural Studies* (2003). She is preparing (with M. Diagne, E. Wittrock) *Queering Dance Modernism: Sexuality and Race on Stage* (special issue of *Dance Research Journal* 54/2, 2022), and (with B. Brandl-Risi) *Handbuch Literatur & Performance* (2023).

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DANIEL TEMKIN is an artist and writer. He makes photography, programming languages, net art and paintings examining the clash between systemic logic and human irrationality. Recent works include *Dither Studies*, *Internet Directory*, *Folders*, and *Glitchometry*. He writes about code art and programming languages as an art form for publications like *Hyperallergic* and in many academic journals, including *Leonardo* and *World Picture Journal*. His blog on the subject, *esoteric.codes*, brings together work by artists, writers and hacker/hobbyists who challenge conventional notions of computing, connecting work that resonate conceptually but emerge across very different disciplines and communities. He was the 2014 recipient of the *artswriters.org* grant and developer in residence at the New Museum's New Inc incubator.

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SUSANNE TRAUB is a dramaturge, curator, author and deputy head of Division Contact for Dance and Performance at the Goethe Institute in Munich since 2012. From 1988 to 1993, she studied theatre studies, philosophy and musicology in Munich. She has worked as a freelance and employed dramaturge for theatres and festivals, as well as many performance projects. She regularly taught at various colleges and universities (among others in Arnhem, Bochum, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Munich, Salzburg, Stockholm) and was entrusted with the research project "Dance with Politics and Politics with Dance" (Saxon State Ministry at the Leipzig Dance Archive) until mid-2001. She curated the interdisciplinary series of events "Desired Body" (1999) and "Moving Thoughts" (2000) in Leipzig, and the exhibition *Open the Curtain-Kunst und Tanz im Wechselspiel/Interplay Between Art and Dance* (2003) at the Kunsthalle Kiel. Since 2014, she has been curating the "Performing Architecture" programme for the Goethe Institute at the Venice Biennale of Architecture.

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