

Abstracts for Moves International Screen Choreography Conference 12 and 13th June 2007, at Manchester Metropolitan University

1. Alan Beattie

Expanded cinema as a model for experimental choreography?

Cinema as a tool of thought

Many choreographers have raided cinema as a source of ideas and imagery, from the use of flashback and stop-frame techniques by Martha Graham in the 1940s to the imitation of film genres (eg noir) by Adventures in Motion Pictures in recent years. More broadly cinema can be seen as central to the 'movement movements' associated with the rise of modernism across the arts, with characteristic emphasis on vision in motion, speed, mechanization, and the compression of space and time. In this paper, I argue that 'expanded cinema' is one of the most potent 'tools of thought' to emerge in this context – both 40 years ago when it first crystallised as a countercultural practice, and today when it serves as a model for innovative work in cyberspace technologies and virtual reality environments.

Stir until the plot thickens

Focusing on some of the experimental choreographies that occurred 40 years ago (typically in underground venues), in particular 'the expanding discotheque' (London 1967-73), and drawing on Youngblood's 1970 overview of expanded cinema, I will attempt a genealogy of the diverse practices and theories that fed these developments. I will suggest that this storm of creative plundering of kinetic forms and formats led to a rare moment when boundaries of knowledge were radically dismantled – when there was no comprehensive or unifying theory that might interfere...

Liquid infoscapes

Reviewing the recent rise of 'the mobility paradigm' in social theory, I will argue that academic institutions are now catching up with the countercultural legacy of expanded cinema, and that it is useful to scrutinise some of the new agendas for cultural research and innovation to see whether they fulfil its radical promise as a tool of thought. Examples include Virtual Learning Environments eg Open University project 'MENO' (Multimedia, Education, Narrative Organisation); Interactive Virtual Reality software for urban design; 'Liquid Architecture'; and similar e-scapes and telematic devices.

2. Pauline Brooks

Melding live and screen performance: so is it dance?

This paper will discuss the dance performance project *Interface*. It is a dance performance that involves live dancers and digitised projections sharing a performance on stage with dancers on film. The purpose of the project is to advance knowledge and understanding of dance performance and technology and perceptions of intermedial bodies in space, seeking to discover if audience members perceive the work as dance.

The work explores the interface of live and digitised dance using a software programme called Kandle. Applying the graphics animation mode of the software, the outlines of dancers' bodies are altered. The work includes sections of performance by live dancers, digitised graphically animated dancers and dancers on screen. In other sections they cross boundaries and live and screened dancers dance together. *Interface* challenges the perception of the dancer's body moving in traditional and virtual ways. The choreographer/researcher believes that by melding live dance with new media and technology, *Interface* creates a 'marriage of actual and virtual choreography' (Hutera, D. *Dance Umbrella News*, Spring 2000).

The work was performed to an audience in order to ascertain their perceptions of each section: asking them 'so is it dance?' This presentation will show clips of the sections of the work and discuss the choreographer's intentions/perceptions and the results of the audience discussion and questionnaire – sharing their debate as to if this new 'hybrid form of movement' can be called *dance*.

3. Simon Fildes

"Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind that contemplates it" David Hume – A Treatise on Human Nature.

This paper outlines the use of repeated shots in the editing of video dance or screen dance works. It presents and analyses 3 different approaches using examples: repetition as musical structural device, repetition as contrived narrative device, repetition as transformative structural montage. It puts forward the theory that while they all mirror in many respects contemporary approaches to choreographic composition and structure, only the latter attempts to explore a sense of the transcendental and the spiritual in repetition found across music, literature and the performing and visual arts.

4. Anne Margrete Fiskvik

Norwegian dance film: "Veslefrikk" (1953)

This paper discusses one of the first dance film produced in Norway: "Veslefrikk" from 1953, choreographed by the Norwegian choreographer Gerd Kjølås. This dance film it is unique in its genre and a significant part of Norwegian dance heritage.¹ It is one of the very few visual sources on screen of Norwegian theatre dance before the 60's.

I will look at the film from an historical and political perspective. The filming of "Veslefrikk" was a very important event for the Norwegian dance community since it documented and made visible the very existence of a Norwegian dance community that worked within a marginal field of contemporary dance. The film was also broadcast on television, and thus modern/contemporary dance was made available to a larger audience for an audience outside of Oslo.

The paper looks into the politics that lay behind the filming of Kjølås' choreography. I argue that the filming of the work was part of the states politics in the early 1950's, when the government was trying to exhibit and "propaganda" a unified and "Norwegian" Norway. Gerd Kjølås choreographic style was termed "fri dance" (contemporary dance). In the early 1950's, elements from Norwegian traditional folkdance was blended into the contemporary dance, creating a special form of "fri dans". The integration of folkdance material was deliberate, both artistically, politically and culturally. Integrating folkdance movements into a dance performance made the work accessible for the general public and showed something thought of as truly "Norwegian".

The paper based on research on largely unpublished material at *The Norwegian National Library* and *The Norwegian Theatre Dance Museum*. The theoretical framework is built on theories on multiple modernities and on literature on dance film/videodance (Sherill Dodds and Claudia Rosiny among others). A short extract from the videoverion of the film will be used with permission from "Norsk Film".

¹ I place the film as a representative of mainstream cinema (à la the dance films of Fred Astaire), even though "Veslefrikk" also integrates filmatic means/devices available at the time.

5. Steve Hawley

Surfing on the Short Waves; Dance and camera.

In 1985, Michael Morris, then artistic director of the ICA, put together a dancer, composer, alternative comedian, and video artist, to create a week long performance in the ICA theatre. Given the technological requirements of the video part, the video artist grew to three artists, myself, Steve Littman, and Peter Anderson.

The dancer was the American Tim Buckley, and the composer "Blue" Gene Tyranny, who were already at the ICA presenting a choreographed piece, designed by Derek Jarman.

But our piece was to be prepared at short notice, and to be improvised. The dance was to be worked out over a week's rehearsal, with video camera, and be presented shortly afterwards. This was seriously scary. But the opportunities were interesting.

Conventional contemporary dance video, if that is not an oxymoron, would emphasise often a fixed camera, with a wide field of view. The dancers had to be seen in space, in relation to space. The camera was anonymous. I was interested in the camera, and the unseen cameraman, becoming a full partner in the choreography. And also different ways of introducing the camera as another dancer.

Tim had his own dance troupe in New York, and often took the part of the leader, and teacher. He developed a concept for the piece of teaching, and the slips and politics of failure, as the pupil(s) were unable to keep up, or did so too well. He was partnered with Phil, a rather fat alternative comedian, whose act included a sequence where he picked up a washing up bowl full of water, using only his stomach.

The result was a video, which was presented on stage, and a week long series of performances, using a stage with live video projection and mixing and many video monitors, plus myself, dancing on stage with a camera.

The presentation will be of extracts from the video and an exploration of alternative ways of the camera becoming a partner in the dance process.

6. Beth Johnson

Dancing with Death: Choreographed Violence in Art Film

Through a detailed analysis of *George Bataille's 'Story of the Eye'* (2004), this paper questions the relationship between sado-masochistic performance, the limits of sexual pleasure and the vision of violence on-screen, looking specifically at the use and abuse of the 'joy-stick' or remote control as a queer object of technological domination. This paper argues that the violent sexual scenes in *Story of the Eye* denote a filmic/performative assault upon the camera which is choreographed in order to occlude the power and pleasure of

the spectator, thus, deforming the model of hard-core pornography in which its origins can be seen.

The paper questions the mode of repetition as a model of affect – a mode which serves not only to reaffirm the status of these films as extreme but further, as planned compositions of difference that utilise Eisenstein's 'cinematist' to blacken the eyes of the viewer and forcibly fragment the visions of bourgeois mania they re-produce. Crucially, this paper suggests that the real-sex scenes in *Story of Eye*, via their physical honesty, can be understood as mode of performance. They constitute an assault upon the camera demonstrable when the main actor in the film 'cums' onto the camera lens, occluding the vision of the viewer.

Referring to *Story of the Eye* and other recent examples of extreme art film such as *Romance* (1999) and *Baise-Moi* (2000), this paper articulates visions that operate as curious objects of disruption and subversion via their planned physicality; films that position sexual penetration as an illustrative assault upon 'artificial' performance. Through an analysis of movement and performance in scenes of violent sex, this paper questions the effects 'coming' on the camera and the destruction of the 'scene' has, proposing that this act not only draws attention to the act of viewing but further, that the occlusion draws attention to the *camera* itself and the means of viewing the 'obscene'.

7. Claudia Kappenberg

A reading of the film Entre' Acte, by Rene Clair (1924), in the context of Choreography for the Camera.

In the spirit of DADA Clair uses a choreographic language for this film to suspend meaning and to challenge cinematic, theatrical and narrative conventions. The film constitutes a fascinating instance of dance on screen as radical cultural intervention, which, I would argue, should be included in contemporary discourses on Dance on Screen.

As interval between two acts the film also resonates with the ideas of the contemporary French philosopher Catherine Clement and her concept of Syncope. In this concept she explores moments of suspension or delay that disrupt rhythm and rational productive economies, arguing that art might perhaps be a vestige for such instances within Western socio-economic frameworks. This film is perhaps a kind of syncope to the acts of the play.

My reading would bring Entre' Acte into the field of Dance on Screen, while situating Choreography on Screen within a fine art and cinematic context.

8. Elinor Pearson

Ballets of the Night: 'Choreocinema' and Maya Deren's The Very Eye of the Night.

The Very Eye of the Night, Maya Deren's final completed film, was made between 1952 and 1955 in collaboration with choreographer Anthony Tudor and dancers from New York's Metropolitan Opera Association. A seminal

example of what New York Times dance critic John Martin referred to as Deren's "choreocinema", this dance of celestial navigation utilises optical processing, superimposition and negative imagery in the creation of an astral ballet. The symbolically charged visual space, representative of the night sky, reminds us of the filmmaker's literal and metaphorical association of magic with vision. The performers are configured as constellations, appearing unbound by gravity and in negotiation with the very weight of their movements.

In this paper, I will unpack the ways in which Maya Deren's final 'choreography for camera' visually elucidates, both aesthetically and conceptually, the fundamental principles of her "choreo - cinematographic" conceit. Through a close reading of this film dance, I will illustrate the dynamic possibilities for the dancing body instantiated by Deren's concern that filmic practice opens up a whole new set of relationships between dancer and space.

Through the limitations and pragmatic applications of filmic apparatus and production techniques, the dancing body attains certain kinds of visibility. In *The Very Eye of the Night*, the means by which the dancing bodies have been documented is immersed in the dance itself: the dancers attain visibility through the use of negative imagery which in turn visually transforms the body. In addition to expounding the concepts and methods of Deren's "choreo-cinematographic" practice brought forth in *The Very Eye of the Night*, I will explore this film dance through its aesthetic attention to visual transformation and perceptual allegory. Resonant of early animation or a motile collage, the dancers of Deren's final, illuminating choreographic meditation are composed entirely for visibility. Throughout this presentation I will attend to the notion that, in the case of "choreo-cinema", the dance is in the eye.

9. Alison Peirse

"What Are We Gonna Find When She Wakes Up? The Girl or the Weapon?": Choreographing Female Violence in Cult Film and Television'

Serenity (2005, Joss Whedon) is a science fiction film explicitly concerned with the female body, and in particular, a young psychic woman named River. River is unstable and mentally damaged but also possesses extreme physical strength and the ability to inflict grievous bodily harm or death upon her frequent (male/monstrous) attackers. Through a close examination of River's fight scenes, it is argued that the balletic qualities of River's combat skills combine notions of dance with spectacular choreographed violence; while also visually referencing Kung Fu films including *Enter the Dragon* (1973, Robert Clouse), and Hong Kong action films of the 1980s and 1990s such as *The Killer* (1989, John Woo) and *Hardboiled* (1992, John Woo). Relating female violence-as-choreography to the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the markedly derivative *Kill Bill I and II* (2003-2004, Quentin Tarantino), the choreography of spectacular female violence is then analysed in relation to the broader narrative and thematic structures of the visual texts in question. Is the violent female performance contained by narrative structure

or, do such artificial and hyperreal performances rupture narrative flow? In terms of gender, what can be said about the fact that the stylistic rendition of violence draws upon the markedly masculine genres of Kung Fu and Action Films, and is then reappropriated by the bodies of diminutive white Western females? Does locating such absolute physical power upon the female body open up readings of postfeminism? By articulating questions around the choreography of female violence in cult film and television, this paper argues that an analysis of movement and performance in such fight scenes provides an interesting point of conflict in contemporary debates around the screening of gender, violence and the body.

10. Kate Sicchio

The Stage and the Screen: Choreographing the Balance

This presentation focuses on types of video projection used in live dance performance settings, as well compositional considerations, and how to create a relationship between dancer and projection.

Four types of video projection are commonly found throughout dance performances:

Environment – Essentially creating scenery for the performers (example: Reine Rein, Troika Ranch) Performer is stronger than the video or forefront

Character – Video is a character in the piece (example: Telematic Dreaming, Kozel and Serman) Video is primary focus or interacting with performer and sharing focus

Cinema – Video is only thing onstage or performers have stopped to watch it with audience. Video is stronger than performer

Lighting – Projection is used as a lighting source (example: InNoSense, Frieder Weiss with Emily Franadez). Performer is stronger but dependant on video to be seen on stage

These types of projections are also used in combination with each other (environment with character, etc)

Many people just fill the back of the stage with one large rectangular projection. This is just video scenery and has been done time and time again. By simply altering size, shape, position, numbers of videos, or finding other alternatives to the white rectangle, new and exciting possibilities can make dramatic improvements on performances.

Other considerations are what is happening in the video and if it distracting to what is happening onstage. Ways around this are simple, often repetitive videos or choreographing/designing the piece to include acknowledgment of projections, live feed video, or interactive video.

Considering the type of video you are putting on stage, how you are composing the projection, and how this relates to the performers, is the key to using the screen in a live dance performance environment.

11. Marion Tränkle

Tactile Dependencies, or: How a flat image gets a body

This paper explores means of communication between the digital body and the physical body on stage, by way of introduction to my most recent project:

ANI_MATE is a choreography for one performer and one kinetic machine. The machine, a huge and slightly old-fashioned apparatus, served as projection surface for imagery. By means of its mechanics, it could not only display but as well physically distort and morph this imagery. This was made possible by force manipulation of the surface the images were projected on. The visual material contained images of my own body. It was me as well, being physically present on stage operating the machine to punctuate, morph and transform myself, so to speak. The conceptual drive to decide for such a setting was to expose the tactile mutual dependencies amongst the digital me, and the physical me.

This setting asked for inventions of how to approach choreography and visual narration as well as how to design such a physical device. In terms of exposing tactile relationships the machine made use of a pneumatic system that was driven by a sophisticated digital control system. That opened up the possibility for on stage operation and interaction.

Furthermore, I intent to zoom in on a detail of how the audience perceived the visual illusion of a body morphing: Since the only actual matter that changed was the screen's surface, the impact of the illusion depended on the viewpoint of the perceiver. Viewed from the front, the image appeared to be undamaged, a viewpoint from the side reveal a total distortion. This detail became the main choreographic device in thinking audience involvement. During the performance, the audience was free to move around all sides of the machine. The described change in appearance gave them a handle on decision making of how to move and relate themselves physically to the situation.

12. Chirstinn Whyte

An inquiry into the identification of discernible choreographic sensibility in the creation of screen based dance work, informed by a range of critical discourse from the field.

The creation of a new model of evaluative criteria has afforded the opportunity to move beyond the professionally-demarcated nature of the choreographer/director dualism. Issues relating to the identification of the totality of screen based choreographic input are investigated, in which no single artist working within a choreographer/director partnership can be

viewed as retaining sole authorship of a work in choreographic terms. Instead, the work requires to be regarded as the outcome of a variety of choreographic processes, some of which relate directly to traditional notion of movement material creation. Others must be regarded as relating to an enhanced and conceptually-oriented range of practices more usually associated with the non dance-specific professional roles of the director, editor and visual artist.

13. Kirk Woolford

Moving an Audience: Biological Motion and Will.0.w1sp

Neuroscience and the varied fields of consciousness and cognitive studies have given us a great deal of insight into visual perception. One current debate revolves around the question of whether human beings have not only a specific form of motion vision, but whether perceiving in this manner causes the observer to move his or her body in response to what is seen. This paper presents an overview of debates surrounding the observation of biological motion and outlines how the dance installation, Will.0.w1sp, articulates these ideas.

With the publication of “Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye”[1], Rudolf Arnheim created an inseparable bond between visual Art and Psychology. However, both Psychology and Art have traveled great distances between the mid-60s and early 21st century. Neuroscience and the varied fields of consciousness and cognitive studies have given us a great deal more insight into visual perception. One current debate about visual perception revolves around the question of whether human beings have not only a specific form of motion vision, but whether perceiving in this manner causes the observer to move his or her body in response to what is seen. Will.0.w1sp attempts explore this motion vision and use it to animate its audience.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION PANELS

1. Monica Elkelv and Gabriela Daris

Filmmaker Monica Elkelv and choreographer Gabriela Daris in conversation about the film Kaos.

This is a *joint paper* concerning the collaboration between filmmaker Monica Elkelv and choreographer Gabriella Daris during the creating process of the film Kaos.

This panel discussion will include still images and film extract of both rehearsals and final work, examining the process we went through in finding possible choreographic ways for the screen.

We will discuss the mutable experience we had, passing through the thresholds of Time and Space.

1.) From Images to Movements: How Gabriela tried to physicalize images that have been given by Monica's storyboard, via movements.

2.) Studio VS Live Environment: how the quality of movements changed because of the Live Time and Space: - SPACE: Natural environment, ground slopes, no flat surfaces (like studios), unstable bodies like ghosts, embodying the corpus into the natural spirit of mutability. – TIME: season (Winter), outdoor, low temperature, body in tension, spontaneity and strong energy. How the new habitat, enforced a new quality of movement sot emerge, than time during the studio rehearsal, the Real Time as the moment during the actual film shooting which makes performer react different and with more strength.

3.) Body metamorphosis: How the natural environment gave us a new corporeal approach while trying to identify with this new habitat, resulting to the discovery of our animal within our human body. This body transformation using the animal behaviour resulted into a new narrative, which deformed the body, finally into a dehumanized figure.

4.) Editing as a co- choreography: The filmmaker may become the second choreographer by digesting the choreography and filtering it. This is achieved by changing the speed and reversing the frames, by creating another imaginary space through a multidimensional perspective, resulting into an impossible dance. Here we see the limits of the dancer's body in contrast to the unlimited experimentations the filmmaker can have by using this body as a material, as an object – product for making his own dream-like, imaginary, ideal dance. Thus, the filmmaker has the authority of creating freely any kind of impossible movements, through speeding , repetition and reversion which otherwise would exhaust the real body. The filmmaker becomes thus, the co-choreographer. We will examine the reconstruction of the original choreography by the filmmaker through edition, looking at the process of collaboration.

2. Johannes Birringer

New developments in dance technology and live performance/screen dance. Johannes current writing (Brazilian Dança em Foco Videodance festival) is concerned with cutting edge developments in the relationship between choreography and the interactive image (in live real time interactional performances). Johannes will show film excerpts on new interactive projects he is working with, and also address Trisha Brown's "how long does the subject linger on the edge of the volume" (created with software artists Marc Downie and Paul Kaiser),i.e. address the whole issue of AI and the "thinking image" in interactive dance and screen projections.