



Composition and Choreography – Critical Reflections on Perception, Body and Temporality

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For that which comes.

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Abstract

My research is a practice-based inquiry focused on studio-based composition as visual processes highlighting seeing while considering time as boredom in the context of expanded choreography. Seeing is discussed in terms of contemplation in order to ponder on seeing as a way of thinking. Boredom is looked at as mood: a mood that is fundamental for the composition practice I inquired into. The research was carried out by means of three artistic works: *Colour, Colour* (2013), *///* (2015), *see/time/composing* (2016). The research aim was to gain new insight on composition practice that values visuality from the perspective of a choreographer/director. The primary methodological tool was the making of the three artistic parts; experimentation and exploration were valued. Philosopher Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology was a key supporting framework for the research. Heidegger (1889-1976) was a student of Edmund Husserl and worked in a fundamental manner on the question of Being. In addition, scholars from various fields such as cultural studies, media science, philosophy, and performance studies are also considered as important to the research. Most of them, but not all, developed their thinking in close connection with Heidegger's work or were informed by phenomenology at large. The main finding of the research can be summarized in the following manner: Through the rigorous questioning of conventional composition as a means to organize dancers' movement, the inquiry proposes a divergent, non-proceduralist composition practice in which the perceptual act of seeing is performed as a solitary composition practice. In the doer/composer, it produces a sense of location and embodied placement in the world by particularly drawing attention to one's breathing when practicing aesthetic and contemplative seeing.

Tiivistelmä

Taiteellinen tutkimukseni keskittyy koreografiaan ja studio-lähtöiseen kompositioon visuaalisina prosesseina, jotka korostavat näkemistä samalla, kun tarkastelevat aikaa pitkästyksenä laajennetun koreografian kontekstissa. Taiteellinen tutkimukseni keskittyy koreografiaan ja studio-lähtöiseen kompositioon visuaalisina prosesseina, jotka korostavat näkemistä samalla, kun tarkastelevat aikaa pitkästyksenä laajennetun koreografian kontekstissa. Näkemistä käsitellään kontemplaationa ja ajattelemisen tapana. Pitkästyminen ymmärretään perustavanlaatuisena mielialana tutkimassani kompositiopraktiikassa. Tutkimus toteutettiin kolmen taiteellisen osan keinoin. Taiteelliset osat olivat *Colour, Colour* (2013), *///* (2015) ja *see/time/composing* (2016). Tutkimuksen tavoite oli saada uutta tietoa kompositiopraktiikasta, joka arvostaa visuaalisuutta koreografian/ohjaajan näkökulmasta. Ensisijainen metodologinen työkalu oli kolmen taiteellisen osan tekeminen; kokeilua ja etsintää pidettiin arvossa. Filosofi Martin Heideggerin fundamentaaliontologia oli tutkimuksen keskeinen tukikehys. Heidegger (1889-1976) oli Edmund Husserlin oppilas ja työskenteli keskeisesti olemista koskevan kysymyksen parissa. Eri alojen tutkijat, kulttuurintutkimuksen, media-tutkimuksen, filosofian ja esitystutkimuksen edustajat ovat hekin tärkeitä tutkimukselle. Useimmat heistä, joskaan eivät kaikki, kehittivät ajatteluaan läheisessä yhteydessä Heideggerin työhön tai fenomenologiaan yleisemmin. Tutkimuksen tärkein löydös voidaan tiivistää seuraavasti: tarkastelemalla perusteellisesti konventionaalista kompositiota keinona järjestää tanssijoiden liikettä tutkimus ehdottaa siitä eroavaa ei-menettelyllistä (engl. *non-proceduralist*) käytäntöä, jossa näkemisen hahmottamisteko (engl. *the perceptual act of seeing*) esitetään yksin tehtävänä kompositiopraktiikkana. Tekijässä se tuottaa maailmaan paikantumisen ja ruumiillistuneen sijainnin tunnon kiinnittämällä erityistä huomiota omaan hengitykseen, kun harjoitellaan esteettistä ja mietiskelevää näkemistä.

Pitkästyminen ymmärretään mielialana, joka on perustavanlaatuinen tutkimassani kompositiopraktiikassa. Tutkimus toteutettiin kolmen taiteellisen osan

keinoin. Taiteelliset osat olivat *Colour, Colour* (2013), *///* (2015) ja *see/time/composing* (2016). Tutkimuksen tavoite oli saada uutta tietoa kompositiopraktiikasta, joka arvostaa visuaalisuutta koreografin/ohjaajan näkökulmasta. Ensimmäinen metodologinen työkalu oli kolmen taiteellisen osan tekeminen; kokeilua ja etsintää pidettiin arvossa. Filosofi Martin Heideggerin fundamentaaliontologia oli tutkimuksen keskeinen tukikehys. Heidegger (1889-1976) oli Edmund Husserlin oppilas ja työskenteli keskeisesti olemista koskevan kysymyksen parissa. Eri alojen tutkijat, kulttuurintutkimuksen, mediatutkimuksen, filosofian ja esitystutkimuksen edustajat ovat hekin tärkeitä tutkimukselle. Useimmat heistä, joskaan eivät kaikki, kehittivät ajatteluaan läheisessä yhteydessä Heideggerin työhön tai fenomenologiaan yleisemmin. Tutkimuksen tärkein löydös voidaan tiivistää seuraavasti: tarkastelemalla perusteellisesti konventionaalista kompositiota keinona järjestää tanssijoiden liikettä tutkimus ehdottaa siitä eroavaa ei-menetelyllistä (engl. *non-proceduralist*) käytäntöä, jossa näkemisen hahmottamisteko (engl. *the perceptual act of seeing*) esitetään yksin tehtävänä kompositiopraktiikkana. Tekijässä se tuottaa maailmaan paikantumisen ja ruumiillistuneen sijainnin tunnon kiinnittämällä erityistä huomiota omaan hengitykseen, kun harjoitellaan esteettistä ja mietiskelevää näkemistä.

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Since this research stemmed from my life as a freelance choreographer, there are two more performers who were working with me before I started the doctorate and who both taught me much about seeing, time and composition: Evamaria Bakardijev and Jacob Peter Kovner. Thank you!

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Introduction

The following text is a piece of reflective writing and reflective thinking within ongoing artistic practice: a piece of writing that constitutes one part of my doctoral research which stands alongside three artistic works I created between 2013 and 2016. The three works together with this text are the outcome of the doctoral project I undertook at the Performing Arts Research Centre (TUTKE) of the Theatre Academy (Teak) of the University of the Arts Helsinki (Uniarts, Helsinki) in affiliation with the choreography program 2011/2012 - 2017/2018. Due to the practice-based, practice-led and arts-based nature of the inquiry, this text has different expectations and aims than a thesis or a dissertation in the humanities or science would. Its main objective is to create a field, to lay out relevant topics of the inquiry. The text gives value to experiences gained in the artistic endeavour.

The parcels that the field consists of deal with matters of visuality, mainly termed as *seeing*, and the experience of time in the context of a composition practice that takes place in the larger framework of an expanded notion of choreography. The research question is twofold: one mirrors my concern for making itself and its methodology when I ask: “What do I do when I do what I do?”; the other mirrors my concern for contextualizing practice when I ask: “What could composition as visual/perceptual practice become?” and ultimately displays my vision of composition. The research explores existing discourses of an expanded notion and field of choreography and adds thoughts on composition practice that highlight visuality and stillness from the perspective of a choreographer/director.

There are no simple answers or definitions to any of the addressed matters. In that sense, the text draws lines of tension, foremost because the nature of the project is in three artistic parts. These are life events that, in their “aliveness”, inherently carry paradoxes with them. This means: these are problems that are not discernible linguistically, but instead are lived problems.

There are two lines of tension that I would like to make explicit.

The first line of tension that I would like to address is my choice to almost completely ignore the audience side of the research. There are few voices added after the description of each work in chapter IV, but there are generally not many thoughts on how my research is viewed or received. This is due to the practice: the practice of composing as I propose it is anchored in the perceptual process of seeing; for the framework of this research, it is solitary practice. It does not require a witness. The second line of tension that I would like to point out is potentially existent for a reader with a dance background who understands dance as kinaesthetic movement. You might be puzzled that I pay so much attention to seeing in stillness. The reason why I focus on seeing in stillness is linked to the practice of being a choreographer/director that I entered into the doctoral endeavour with. It is an identity as a choreographer that I have been building up slowly, beginning as an undergraduate: the woman that sits and sees – even if such a position is against the *zeitgeist*. I hereby refer to how artist, professor and director of Dansehallerne in Copenhagen Efa Lilja writes: “Stillness offers rest and awards our thoughts some space, but today we cannot be contented with this. We must work to expose alternatives expressions (...), to find enhanced living in movement.”¹ I agree: Stillness does offer rest and gives thoughts space to be articulated. But, also: stillness is nothing fixed but moving.

Chapter I looks at the context of expanded choreography from the perspective of a choreographer/director performing a visual composition practice. The chapter critically discusses contemporary discourses of expanded choreographic practice (mainly Marten Spångberg and Jenn Joy). It also includes a negotiation with dance and performance history in New York in the 1960s. Chapter II focuses on the two main concepts that were relevant for the research: seeing and time. Seeing is discussed as a performative doing and is elaborated further in terms of aesthetic and contemplative seeing. The section on time opens with a widening of the view on time: displaying heterochronic and chronological time. It ends with thoughts on a particular aspect of time, boredom. Chapter III proposes a non-proceduralist composition practice. The chapter discusses composition as a visual-spatial practice. Visual thinking is tackled as method and outcome of composition practice. Chapter IV is a critical reflection on the making of the three artistic parts with a focus on the methods and conflicts that appeared during the three artistic research pieces. Also, there are two reviews of the first artistic

1 Efa Lilja, „Conditions of Listening,“ in *Koreografi*, ed. Solveig Styve Holte, Ann-Christin Berg Kongsness, Runa Borch Skolseg (Oslo: Colophon, 2016), 7.

part and e-mail responses I received after presenting the second and third artistic part. Chapter V contains documentation material including visuals of the first and third artistic part as well as the two papers that were presented in the second. This chapter brings in the practical parts through their documentation.

The text plays with the academic tradition of footnotes. They are extremely long sometimes, so that reading this text demands that the reader embrace corners and huts, places that lie outside of the official route of the main page. The choice to keep footnotes long in places, almost too long for a traditional reading experience, is twofold: a) they contribute to a way of creating understanding – or what is often called knowledge – that allows a less linear approach to reading, hence seeing, and discerning sense or possibly meaning; b) they call for a reader to move his/her mind in bodily stillness. This text is at its best when the reader enjoys taking the initiative of thinking.

After chapter I, II and III, there are addendums, titled “Appendix”. They are a kind of post scriptum that traces thoughts in the chapter or adds aspects of the issues discussed.

Chapter I

Context is an atmosphere.

“[...] the number of particles that compose the world is immense but finite, and, as such, only capable of a finite (though also immense) number of permutations. In an infinite stretch of time, the number of possible constellations must be run through, and the universe has to repeat itself. Once again your skeleton will grow; once again the identical page will reach your same hands; once again you will follow the course of all the hours of your life until that of your incredible death. Since everything is bound to return, nothing is unique, not even these lines, stolen from a writer (Borges) who in turn has pilfered the ideas from someone else (Nietzsche) who in the autumn of 1883 declared: This slow spider dragging itself forwards, the light of the moon and the same moonlight, and you and I whispering at the gateway, whispering the eternal things, haven’t we already coincided in the past?”²

Context or: what I grew into and what I grew out of

This chapter deals with the context of my research. It consists of three parts. NOW (1), THEN (2) and TO EMERGE, POSSIBLY (3). Whenever I write “art” in this chapter, the term does not exclusively describe the visual arts, but it includes theatre, performance and dance.

2 Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2005).

Preliminary thinking

I don't believe that there is anything outside of context.

Or: I wonder how much value is given to context in art academies these days.³

Or: I wonder whether the concept of context is somehow obsolete in this era of late capitalism. Every text is constantly incorporated, commodified, taken in and pushed out again.⁴ There is no outside and ultimately no text around IT.

I struggle with Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of "relational aesthetics", a way of understanding art producing foremost "a/ moments of sociability, b/ objects producing sociability"⁵. Between 2008 and 2017 I experienced a highlighting of sociability in Berlin's experimental contemporary dance and choreography scene. I appreciate putting togetherness, community and social matters more in the foreground in dance, but: a) I sense there has been a kind of commodification of sociability and social matters; and b) I experienced a certain not openly addressed uniformity of the social and sociability there. Or: what happens if you don't belong to the club of the cool guys?

However, I am wary of how important Bourriaud's work was in the 1990s to push the non-representational art project forward. So, I refer to Bourriaud via dance scholar Pirkko Husemann, who refers in *Choreographie als kritische Praxis* (English: *Choreography as Critical Practice*) to Bourriaud:

"Bourriaud geht jedoch davon aus, dass der Kontext der Kunst heute eigentlich gar keinen Kon-Text (d.h. das Aussen eines Textes im Verhältnis zum Text selbst) mehr bildet, sondern als dessen integraler Bestandteil zu betrachten ist."⁶

3 See Kaila Jan, "Artistic Research Formalized into Doctoral Programs," in *Art as a Thinking Process: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, ed. Mara Ambrozic and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013). "Operating in the world of contemporary art demands that practitioners engage themselves in a process of constant contextualization, which is sometimes even too much." Or: See <http://khio.no/events/106>, Jyrki Siukonen, with the same first promotion of doctoral research at the Fine Arts Academy Helsinki as Jan Kaila. "In this lecture I will look at the inherent silence against the history of the modernist artist and ask if (and how) her practice could be defended today as the art education is laying more emphasis on politics of making and theoretical acuity than to making itself. Is there a way to argue for the physicality of art-making and defend a position that will not partake in the verbose sphere of contemporary artistic practices?"

4 Side question: What should we do with all these emptied contexts – contexts that were produced and then are no longer needed?

5 http://www.kimcohen.com/seth_texts/artmusictheorytexts/Bourriaud%20Relational%20Aesthetics.pdf, last accessed July 10th 2017, 33.

6 Pirkko Husemann, *Choreografie als kritische Praxis* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009). Husemann quotes Bourriaud directly on page 18: "Unlike an object that is closed in on itself by the intervention of a style and a signature, present-day art shows that form only exists in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise."

[Engl.: Bourriaud assumes that the context of art is now no longer a context (meaning the outside of a text in relation to the text itself); it is to be considered as an integral part.]

Artwork-as-situation

In the framework of my practice-based and practice-led doctoral project, context is, as Pirkko Husemann points out in relation to Bourriaud, an “integral part” of the three artistic works of my doctorate. In other words: the three artistic works of my doctorate are as much container of texts as texts themselves; text as texture: woven structure. In all three parts, it is the frame of the attendee that co-directs the context of artwork-as-situation. “[...] artwork-as-situation begs fundamental questions about where the work begins and ends and in what kind of space and time it occurs.”⁷

For the framework of this research report, context is not there to explicate the three artistic parts. But when I lay out thoughts under the heading of context, I invite you, the reader, into the following image: imagine a visual arts studio as a messy studio. I think of the photographs of Francis Bacon’s studio in Margarita Cappock’s documentation.⁸ Different types of material piled on top of one another; an ocean of colours, textures, newspaper articles and references; no real hierarchy in the material.

Let’s add what Jenn Joy writes in her book *The Choreographic*⁹ on page 30 about Paul Virilio’s concept of *A Landscape of Events*: “A landscape has no fixed meaning, no privileged vantage point. It is orienting only by the itinerary of the passerby.”

So, under the title of context, there is an image opening to a landscape in the form of a painter’s visual arts studio. It could be Bacon’s, but it could be any

7 Meredith Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 73.

8 Margarita Cappock, *Francis Bacon; Spuren im Atelier des Künstlers* (Munich: Knesebeck, 2005). Originally published as *Francis Bacon’s Studio* (London: Merrell Publishers, 2005).

9 Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014).

painter's who cultivates a relationship of old-fashioned craft with their medium.¹⁰ I propose a painter's studio rather than a dance studio not in order to perpetuate the solipsistic idea of artist genius, but in order to propose at the very beginning of this written report that disciplinary boundaries can be transgressed: a choreographer in a painter studio barely visibly moving stands for a questioning of disciplinary boundaries.

So, we, you, the reader, and I, writer/reader, walk through this studio landscape. Reading as walking, writing as walking.

This brings me back to Jenn Joy again, who proposes to read her book *The Choreographic* in a similar way. "Imagining the multiple terrains over which we travel as so many literal, philosophic, and aesthetic grounds, my choreographic attention to landscape seeks not to tether the works to the sand or cement – the grounds – but instead to activate a mobile utopic thinking that participates in the uncertain writing of walking, making, witnessing, thinking, cruising around and around again. These encounters demand an experiential writing; (...)."¹¹ For my text-landscape-studio, let's leave our shoes outside and go barefoot. No sneakers. Onto a landscape where different details and chunks will be found, encountered and moved, while keeping in mind that there is nothing outside of context: what is put on display here has been sent through a selection process and is only one piece of the pie.

10 See Conference, *Dirty Practice: the Role of the Artist's Studio* (Wolverhampton School of Art, UK, 23.09.16). Conference Theme: The conference sets out to critically explore the current artistic framework where manual skills and studio-based practices are increasingly denigrated in favour of conceptual or socially engaged art practices. This is partly mirrored in the educational structures (and spaces) found in the new HEI environment, where fine art departments are increasingly relocated into non-purpose-built, inadequate office-type spaces without workshop support. It is also reflected in the way the artist studio has often been, in a simplifying fashion, linked to a specific art movement and specific type of art work, where the studio ultimately has become a target of the institutional critique or a 'pathology of the modern'. These institutional and economic structures effectively mitigate against 'dirty' studio-based practices and disciplines such as painting or sculpture. The studio, rather than being the cherished site of individualism and individual expression, is potentially a liminal space where the demands of the individual and formal face the social and political scrutiny of the community and public realm. The symposium aims to bring together diverse views from art practitioners, theorists, curators and educators to ask to what extent Fine Art departments, and the artist's studio in general, face unprecedented economic and conceptual challenges. We wish to query from a pedagogic and art theoretical perspective ways to maintain and instil the traditional values of studio practice, circumvent the restrictions of economic and spatial organisation and provide a sustainable model of practice.

11 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 31.

Appendix 1:

I have quoted several voices who have a critical perspective on too much contextualisation in current art education (Kaila, Siukonen) and also share a call for a symposium on that subject. I do so in order to stimulate debate and reflection on how much contextualisation is really of assistance in developing what Siukonen calls the “physicality of art making”. It is a physicality that might not look good, may have no sex appeal, but might move artists to more existential matters or produce a type of making that is not focused on sustaining the high-speed rotation of festival circuits and high-gloss venues. What I am trying to get at is that focusing again on the “physicality of art making” would hopefully reopen space for an art practice that is most concerned with doing. For me, the “physicality of art making” also includes the physicality of thought, the mind’s muscle. So, I don’t want to condemn context or contextualisation as such. Thinking, reflecting and developing a critical eye and mind are essential when looking at one’s work. They are driving forces to remain engaged with one’s doing. Also, contextualisation can help in moments of reaching, for example, one-way streets: when you feel aesthetically or conceptually alone, it can be a blessing to open a book and see the work of others who are like-minded. Context can give you a sense of location, which in particular parts of one’s trajectory are aspects of an artistic practice that need to be clear and firm.

Context makes borders visible. But these borders are permeable ones - similar to the notion of atmosphere that I introduced in the opening point of this chapter. Meaning: in astronomy, atmosphere describes layers of gases around a planet. This layering is dependent on the planet: it is the gravity of the planet that holds the atmosphere in place. In that sense, the idea of a border is less clear-cut; it is a border that is dependent on the planet and body that is at stake.

1. NOW

Approaching extended choreography

When I tell someone who is from the field of experimental contemporary dance that I am exclusively a choreographer/director, I often get strange reactions: being a choreographer/director and not performing bodily in the moment when the audience comes in seems rather old-fashioned. The role is suspected of being that of an abusive, dominant tyrant who does everything to force his or her signature on the bodies of others, meaning: the dancers. When I continue talking with this imagined person from the field of experimental contemporary dance and choreography, and I say that I am not interested in dance so much but rather in a

sort of minimal type of choreography, people tend to turn their backs. Stillness, not-doing, negation and negativity – this is so 1990s.

When I tell someone that is not from the field of experimental dance and choreography that I am a choreographer, most of the time people say: “Oh nice, you do dance.” I then always have to explain that this is not really the case, that I do stuff that does not look like dance, because there is barely any movement in my work, but that I primarily don’t do dance because I am not interested in defending and defining what I do as dance. Most of the time the confusion grows when people learn that I have a dance education and am trained to dance. Then the confusion is huge; it starts by saying that I don’t look like a dancer and ending with: “you are a choreographer who is actually a dancer but you don’t do dance? What do you do then?”

I am aware that I am simplifying here, but the reactions are approximately like that. In any case, I have the feeling that there still seems to be the need to spread the word about how choreography and dance are two distinct capacities, and how the body in stillness can still be of interest. But first things first.

Marten Spångberg: choreography as expanded practice

Choreography as expanded practice (Spångberg) promotes letting go of the simple equation that choreography equals dance making. Choreography as expanded practice aims at divorcing dance from choreography and choreography from dance, or at least to problematize the usual way of thinking about relationship between choreography and dance: that choreography sorts out the mess of dance movements and dance can only be ‘read’ with the help of choreography. In other words: *Choreography as expanded practice* contests a modernist understanding of dance à la Humphrey, namely: modern dance that carries with it a belief that there is a “causality between choreography and dance”.¹² How this causality is constructed and that this construction can be undone and rebuilt differently was already much discussed in 2006 in André Lepecki’s “Exhausting Dance”¹³ and more recently by choreographer Marten Spångberg, for example, at the conference “Choreography as expanded practice” in 2012 at Mercat de les Flors,

12 <https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/author/spangberg1000/>, last accessed August 5th, 2017, 5.

13 André Lepecki, *Exhausting dance* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Fundació Antoni Tàpies and MACBA, Barcelona, or through publications such as “Spångbergianism” (2011).¹⁴

In Spångberg’s talk at the MDT, Stockholm, in 2015, he differentiates between dance that is happening in the realm of the potential, meaning: that which is not imaginable, and choreography taking place in the realm of the possible, meaning: choreography that happens in a realm where things are already always imagined. Spångberg is an advocate of the potential and speculation, or in Deleuzian terms, of the virtual, and he promotes potentiality as something in opposition to the possible, something beyond imagination and identity – and language. I will not address whether or not language is or is not a part of imagination here. What is of interest to me is Spångberg’s work on a politics of non-identity, which would ultimately question performance – performance as a place where identity is at the forefront of discussion and display. However, I believe that there is no way out of identity, even after Judith Butler in the 1990s reflected on the performativity of gender. And so there is also no way out of imagination or the possible or performance, as Spångberg claims in his earlier quote.

Jenn Joy: The Choreographic

In her publication “The Choreographic”¹⁵, Jenn Joy takes a different stance than Spångberg on how an extended notion of choreography can be thought or done. Joy considers a corporal dimension of the choreographic: “Rather than attempt another dance history or read dance only in terms of the visual, I am interested in extracting a concept of the choreographic out of this larger discursive field that has come to be called choreography and to linger in its corporal paradoxes and vibrations.”¹⁶ For Joy, engagement with the body is welcomed in the realm of the choreographic, whereas Spångberg attributes an almost bodiless status to choreography. That is because, for Spångberg, “choreography is a structuring that needs to apply itself to an expression to gain tangibility”.¹⁷ I contest this claim and will lay out to you, the reader, how choreographic practice as a seeing practice is experienced bodily in the following chapters.

14 There are also several practice-based PhDs on this topic. See Antje Hildebrand and Mette Ingvartsen.

15 Joy, *The Choreographic*.

16 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 20.

17 <https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/author/spangberg1000/>, last accessed August 5th 2017.

The choreographic, as Joy unfolds it, is not trying to produce one single meaning, but values ambiguity and the enigmatic. “At moments, the choreographic risks illegibility, in the same way that Roland Barthes speaks of the ‘filmic’ as a specific mode of film that alludes to a disguise or instability of meaning.”¹⁸ The questioning and destabilizing of fixed categories and meaning is possible due to the fact that Joy thinks that “perhaps choreography invites a rethinking of orientation in relationship to space, to language, to composition, to articulation and to ethics.”¹⁹ Joy is proposing a space for reflection; choreography becomes an invitation for orienting, for the enjoyment of being with relationships between different directions such as space, language, composition or... or... or...²⁰

Later, Joy quotes Spångberg, who – in contrast to how he appears as a writer and choreographer, where he inhabits, in my eyes, rather a kinship to large-scale art productions²¹ – talks about “choreographic utterance”, which points to “a shift from statement-making practice where ‘signifying’ is everything towards...a ‘simple enunciative’ practice in today’s choreographic landscape.”²²

Choreography as expanded practice and the choreographic in relation to the three artistic works of my doctorate

Looking at the three artistic means of inquiry – the three artistic works I developed in this research – I place the first artistic part in the frame of statement-making practice. This is because my first artistic part was still very informed by my freelance choreographic activity, in which I was used and trained to produce confidently choreographed stage works within a big production framework (co-production, residencies, etc.). An extended notion of choreography was at stake only in the sense that I cultivated a hint of the two different capacities of choreography and dance: I was heavily engaged in the doing of choreography as a director/choreographer, and through this very practice I was engaged in research on how choreography and choreographing takes place / is embodied differently to how dance and dancing emerges / is embodied. The second and

18 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 20.

19 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 1.

20 My research takes place within an engagement with the relationship to the notion of composition and the doing of seeing in conjunction with composition, bringing forth a mode of relating to one and another, worlding, in contact with time.

21 I think of big productions of his, such as „Natten“ (2016) or „Gerhard Richter, une pièce pour le théâtre“ (2017), which are huge-scale productions with several co-producers, etc.

22 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 23.

the third artistic parts were more of a “choreographic utterance”. Their visible outcomes were more porous in their textures and exhibited more of a fragility about how choreography emerges. Choreography as a context of or lineage from my research was tested through the second and third artistic work while the first artistic part was a rather a solidification of what I already knew about choreography. In that sense, it did not actually expand the field of choreography.

Thus, the choreographic, as a movement “between corporeal and cerebral conjecture to tell the stories of these many encounters between dance, sculpture, light, space, and perception through the series of utters, steps, trembles, and spasms”²³ was present throughout all three artistic parts.

My research describes this very movement, or one could even say that my research project inhabits, lives through and emerges from this very movement of the choreographic: from the collaborative engagement with dancers as a director and dedication to building a stage piece where the body in stillness was of heightened concern in the first artistic work; a more cerebral endeavour in writing, hitting my head against philosophy and hitting my head against an empty stage situation in the second artistic work; and finally arriving in a durational structure in listening, remaining, things and human bodies, which led to a scent and temperature of choreographic space/time in the form of a workshop as a third artistic work. The choreographic was inhabited by movement, not as a part of a romantic dispositive of art with its longing for the always-never-finished, but as a movement that dares to settle down, allowing for rest in a type of compositional practice that “works against linguistic signification and virtuosic representation”.²⁴

2. THEN

Let’s shift focus. Let’s travel forward into the past. Remaining barefoot, without sneakers. New York. 1960. Let’s start out by walking to the Judson Dance Theatre. I invite you, the reader, into this part of dance history, because it is a part of dance history that is the closest to me as an artist and ultimately to my research: I was taught composition by a former Judith Dunn student, Susan Rethorst. More on that towards the end of this chapter.

Judson Dance Theatre took place between 1962–1964 at the Judson Memorial Church in Manhattan, New York City. By using these dates, I am referring to

23 Joy, *The Choreographic*.

24 Joy, *The Choreographic*.

Pirkko Husemann, who demarcates the beginning and end of the Judson Church Theatre with A Concert of Dance # 1 on July 6th 1962 and A Concert of Dance # 16 on April 29th 1964.²⁵

The concerts took place at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, New York City. The basis of the Judson Dance Theatre was the composition workshop by Robert Dunn, a student of John Cage and Merce Cunningham's assistant at that time. The workshop took place four times between 1960 and 1962 in the Cunningham Studios.

Robert Dunn's composition workshop

Having studied "composition as process"²⁶ with John Cage, Dunn put more emphasis on the process than the product. He gave much freedom to the students to explore their own individual interests in choreography and dance. "With luck, a class can come to the point of "teaching itself"²⁷. Dunn's method of teaching composition was very free: students choreographed a dance, performed it and then everyone talked about it. In 2004, Simone Forti recollects in the post-performance talk of the presentation of her canonical work "An Evening of Dance Constructions" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles that students were asked to go home and create a three-minute dance that took no longer than three minutes to make.²⁸ By assigning such tasks, Dunn opened the process of composition beyond the dance studio and ultimately introduced an expanded notion of choreography; he positioned composition beyond the idea of composition as dance design that shaped dance movements in the dance studio.

In Dunn's composition workshop, talking about the dance after the presentation was as important as the performance and presentation itself. Sally Banes quotes Judith Dunn's description of Robert Dunn's workshop: "In other words, evaluation, in terms of 'good and bad', 'accepted-rejected', were eliminated from discussion and analysis replaced them. (What did you see, what did you do, what took place, how did you go about constructing and ordering. What are

25 Pirkko Husemann, *Ceci est dela danse* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2002).

26 See <https://pg2009.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/composition-as-process-by-john-cage.pdf>, last accessed August 5th 2017.

27 Soili Hämäläinen, „Evaluation - nurturing or stifling a choreographic learning process?“ in eds. Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wildshut, *Contemporary Choreography, A Critical Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009), 106 – 121; 110.

28 See DVD: *Simone Forti, An evening of dance constructions*. DVD. (CAMBRIDGE, Artpix Notebooks, 2009), 1:20:58.

the materials, where did you find or how did you form them, etc.)”.²⁹ Evaluation of the dances was done through discussion after each student’s presentation. Multiple viewpoints and interpretations were valued in these discussions. The function of discussion for Dunn: “[...] should be used to train the eye and the mind to what has been there to be seen, rather than separate the sheep from the goats, whether movement, methods or choreographers. (Dunn 1972:16)”³⁰

Art historian Meredith Morse gives insight into the workshop’s content. Dunn introduced students to chance and indeterminacy, two key notions that John Cage brought into music composition. Within chance operations, a piece does not drastically change once it is made. Chance operation is a method to make a work. Indeterminacy is different. An indeterminate piece can change each time it is revived. Dunn slightly adapted Cage’s ideas for his workshop’s dance students insofar as he referred to a notion of improvisation in order to better explain what an indeterminate dance is. “An indeterminate dance is something which may change each time. It’s not necessarily improvisation, but there is a certain amount of improvisatory choice as to how the dancer will perform.”³¹

The use of the concept of improvisation must be seen as an adaptation for the dancers who knew improvisation from the dance world, such as through the work of Anna Halprin. Her workshop in her studio in California had many of the same students in attendance who were also in Dunn’s class. John Cage himself was ambivalent about improvisation. He dismissed improvisation because it is generally descriptive of the performer and not descriptive of what happens.^{32,33}

29 Sally Banes. *Democracy’s body; The Judson Dance Theater 1962 - 1964* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 16.

30 Hämäläinen, Evaluation - nurturing or stifling a choreographic learning process?, 106 – 121; 110.

31 Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after*, 43.

32 See Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1987).

33 See https://slought.org/media/files/how_to_get_started.pdf, last accessed August 5th 2017. “I would still criticize improvisation as I used to criticize it, but now I think we can imagine an improvisation which is different from just doing what you want. And much more like improvisation as Anthony Davis seems to think it or do it, that is to say he thinks of improvisation as giving the improvisers a problem to solve, and that’s how I find it acceptable, too. That is, you can give people freedom in a situation that they see as a problem, then the solutions can be invigorating. But if improvisation is not seen as a problem, then you just get repetition of mannerisms, or you get more of what you already know that you like.”

Zooming out: 1960s in the USA – the ontological shift of art

Robert Dunn's workshop and ultimately Judson Dance Theatre was part of a larger shift in the arts. A change in the ontology of art took place around that same time. Philosophy professor Noel Carroll argues that it was mainly the 1964 work by Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box*, that shifted the entire conception of art and that put a halt on a modernist conception of art à la Greenberg: "According to modernist theory, as enacted by painters and recounted by critics, the role of art was to define its own essential nature."³⁴

Greenberg had turned against the mimetic idea that painting or art in general should represent the world by introducing the idea that paintings are real things. "[...] [paintings] were a distinct sort of real thing, painted things with their own essential perceptual characteristics, such as flatness. Put bluntly, paintings were still thought to be different from other sorts of real things in perceptually discernible ways."³⁵ Warhol's *Brillo Box* radically challenges this assumption. He proposes an artwork that does not look like art. All of a sudden, a work of art could look like anything, since one cannot immediately perceive the difference between Warhol's *Brillo Box* and an ordinary Brillo box. The ontology of art had radically shifted. Who could then tell what a work of art is? Art's foundation was shaken up – and with it, the reception of art.

Philosophy lecturer at DOCH Stockholm, writer and PhD candidate at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University London, Josefine Wikström made reference to this heritage of an extremely heterogeneous art world since the 1960s in her 2015 talk at the HZT Berlin. Similar to Noel Carroll, she refers to the 1960s, but argues that the ontological shift of art took place because of the practice of art and letting go of the specificity of the medium. "If art had once been mediated by defined medium, mainly painting and sculpture, dance and theatre and so on and which were reproduced with specific disciplinary skills, this what Peter Osborne told as 'craft base ontology of mediums' was radically questioned and transformed (...)"³⁶ Wikström refers to Yoko Ono's instruction paintings, such as *Painting for the wind*, as a contribution to conceptual art and where the reader of the instructions becomes

34 Noel Carroll, "The Philosophy of Art History, Dance and the 1960s," in *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s*, ed. Sally Banes (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 87.

35 Carroll, "The Philosophy of Art History, Dance and the 1960s," 88.

36 Josefine Wikström and Constanze Schellow, *Critique Light – Identity Games. SoDA double-lecture*, 27.5.2015, <https://vimeo.com/133342195>, 17:20, last accessed August 16th 2017.

the performer. “The work as such is therefore not tied to its materiality as an object but resides as a practice between the object and the subject reading, thinking and/or performing it.”³⁷ There was much space given to the receiver of the work. One could read it, imagine it, do it with a chosen material or simply forget it. There was an ambiguity to the work that came with the expansion of the medium. The work was at once a text, a material object (the paper) and an invitation to an action.³⁸

Yoko Ono was not only known for her art work at that time, but she also had a loft and studio that she often invited other artists to, such as those of the Judson Dance Theatre, to share work. Yoko Ono organized a series of performance evenings in her loft space at 112 Chambers Street in Manhattan between December 1960 and December 1961. The evenings brought together performances from the field of experimental music and other performance practices.

Yoko Ono’s loft – Judson Church Theatre

Performance, as Wikström muses in her talk, is THE outcome of letting go of media specificity in the 1960s. Ono’s series can be regarded as a precursor to what later happened at the Judson Church Memorial. There were several differences between Ono’s place and the Judson Church Memorial. At Ono’s place, artists shared Ono’s own interest in “a pared-down approach, and an emphasis on the single ‘event’”.³⁹ At Judson Church, there were all sorts of different aesthetics on display. Also, people joined collaborative processes by performing in each other’s work, whereas at Ono’s loft, it was one artist at a time presenting his/her work. Artists from music such as Toshi Ichiyanagi or Terry Jennings were presenting their work in Ono’s loft. But there were also many poets such as Georg Brecht who presented score-based poetry. At Judson Church Memorial, Cage’s work on composition was adapted to dance and theatre, but its base was still dance and theatre. In my eyes, there was less of a transgression from dance artists to other media. For sure, Robert Morris or Simone Forti were examples of people who both came from painting / visual arts and who then started to do live performances. More about Simone Forti later. But the dance artists remained in their medium, expanding the boundaries of dance and choreography from within.

37 Josefine Wikström and Constanze Schellow, *Critique Light – Identity Games*. SoDA double-lecture.

38 See also works by Georg Brecht.

39 Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after*, 85.

This might have been because the Judson Dance Theatre was the result of Robert Dunn's composition workshop, which was mainly attended by dancers. Later, when the workshop evolved into the Judson Theatre Dance, the direction of exploration all tended towards dance and choreography. The performance series at Yoko Ono's loft seems different in my eyes: there was less of a group dynamic; there was a sort of common artistic ground or direction to push "the Cagean Knot"⁴⁰ further.

Media specificity and media expansion was a topic discussed in practice in the 1960s. And the reason I expose you, the reader, to the problematisation of media specificity of the 1960s is that during the three artistic works of my doctorate, I went through a process of transformation where the notion of choreography expanded – and as a result, my relationship to my media, choreography and composition has changed. When I started the doctorate, I had a rather craft-based understanding of choreography that stemmed from the previous MA course I had attended. There, the focus on the somatic brought me into a circuit of thought encircling the human body and its movement. Choreography was then still the organisation of human bodies in space and time. What was new back then was that the bodies I choreographed were somatically informed. During the years of my doctorate, I have been letting go of this conception of choreography and have returned, after having started my career during my MA studies, to what I as artist have forgotten a bit during the years. Mainly, I asked the good old question, "What do I do when I do what I do?" This question allowed me to cultivate a more critical relationship to my practice, and ultimately to my medium. Not in the sense that I started doing video works,⁴¹ but in the sense that it opened up a space where the gap is not minded: a place that asks for an ecology of practices⁴² that values writing, thinking, doing this and doing that as artistic practice.

Zooming in on a single artist's work: Simone Forti

Some artists in the 1960s presented at Judson Church Memorial as well as at Yoko Ono's loft. For example, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris

40 Morse, Simone Forti in the 1960s and after, 63.

41 See practice-based PhD research by Antje Hildebrand that came from craft-based choreography; during her research on expanded choreography, she developed a video work. Title of PhD: Expanding the Object: Post-conceptual dance and contemporary performance practices, published at University of Wolverhampton, 2014; to see her video work „The End of Choreography“ (2013) see <https://vimeo.com/80257439>, last accessed: September 4th 2017.

42 See Isabelle Sprengler, "An ecology of practices,"; *cultural studies review* 11, no. 1. (2005).

did both. Simone Forti is particularly interesting for my research because she moved from a painting background into live performance, and thus contributed to crossing disciplinary boundaries. Yvonne Rainer, in her later work, also crossed disciplines when starting to work with film. The reason why I prefer to talk about Simone Forti is because she remained in the realm of live events, rather than migrating to a lens-based medium. Forti recollects the atmosphere of disciplinary permeability in the 1960s in the following manner: “I thought of myself as a dancer because movement was my medium, but I didn’t so much think of myself as being in...in... a...what do you call that?...legacy of dance. It was more that I was an artist among artists in different media.”⁴³

Simone Forti left art college with her former husband Robert Morris in 1956 and went to live in San Francisco, where she was introduced to the work of choreographer and dancer Anna Halprin. She attended Anna Halprin’s workshops until moving to New York in 1960. Forti describes the shift from painting to dance in the following words: “I was making these abstract expressionist paintings and he [Robert Morris] was doing abstract expressionist paintings and then I found Anna Halprin who was in a way doing abstract expressionist movement which was great ‘cause you didn’t need to buy paint; you wouldn’t end up with these huge kind of student work canvases, that were six feet by five feet, that you had to somehow deal with.”⁴⁴

Forti and Morris left California in 1960 for New York. But Forti did not recognise her artistic interests in the New York dance classes of Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham - both techniques that she tried but that she abandoned soon after. When asked about her time in New York just after her arrival, Simone Forti recollects: “We [Robert Morris and Simone Forti] had a small loft and I would sit in one place and put a milk carton there and a role of toilet paper there and then I would sit over here and then I moved the milk carton. I think it’s ‘cause my father was a chess player. And then I moved the toilet paper here and then I’d sit over here. So, I had that practice.”⁴⁵ Simone Forti asked the question: “what do I do when I do what I do?” and answered it by saying that she moves the bottle here and then her body there. She ends up defining this very doing as her practice. She was a child of her time: the way Cage valued the artistic process rather than the outcome is inherent in the question: “What do I do when

43 Simone Forti, *An evening of Dance Constructions*, DVD, 1:14:24.

44 Simone Forti, *An evening of Dance Constructions*, DVD, 1:17:43.

45 Simone Forti, *An evening of Dance Constructions*, DVD, 1:19:13.

I do what I do?” For Cage, it was his interest in Zen meditation and his reading of Coomaraswamy that contributed to valuing the dynamic process of artistic endeavours and influenced a whole generation of artists in the 1960s – such as Simone Forti.

La Monte Young – Simone Forti

The musician and composer La Monte Young had a huge influence on Simone Forti’s work; she met him during her time with Anna Halprin. Young’s work was maybe even more radical than John Cage’s, since Young redefined sound beyond the audible. Cage still worked with different sounds and dispersed sounds, and he valued multiplicity and simultaneity. In contrast, Young worked on single sounds that were sustained over long periods of time. Henry Flint describes Young’s work as “viscerally compelling, with fatigue and saturation”,⁴⁶ leading to an “altered state”.⁴⁷ In Young’s canonical lecture *Lecture 1960*,⁴⁸ Young expresses his desire to ‘get into the sound’. “Each sound was its own world and this world was only similar to our world in that we experienced it through our own bodies, that is, in our own terms.”⁴⁹ With Young, there was a shift to the listener’s body and attention.

Accompaniment of La Monte’s 2 Sounds and La Monte’s 2 sounds

Simone Forti’s work *Accompaniment of La Monte’s 2 Sounds and La Monte’s 2 sounds* has to be read in this light. The piece was shown for the first time in the framework of *Five dance constructions and other things* by Simone Morris in Yoko Ono’s loft in May 1961, and since then, it has been presented on several occasions, such as at the Museum for Contemporary Art Los Angeles in 2004 and at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg in 2015.

Materially, *Accompaniment of La Monte’s 2 Sounds and La Monte’s 2 sounds* consists of a rope hanging from the ceiling in a way that it creates a loop one can climb into, the way kids would construct a simple swing. You are invited to climb into the loop, and, delicately, place your feet in a way that the body can keep its balance while holding the rope further up with your hands. Then an assistant comes, winds up the rope and then lets go of it so that you are standing in the

46 Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after*, 67.

47 Ibid.

48 La Monte Young, “Lecture 1960,” *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter, 1965: 73–83.

49 Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after*, 66.

loop while the rope unwinds. During all this time, Young's *Sound 2* is played. The rope is unwound before the music is over. Until the music ends, you remain floating in the loop with your feet in the loop. You balance the centre of your body. You listen to Young's sound.

The situation in the rope is precarious. It is not easy to keep balance, squeeze your feet onto the rope and hold the rope with both hands so as not to fall off. The work is what the title says: an accompaniment. It is a proposal for a variation on the relation between music accompaniment and dancing.⁵⁰ Here, the body in stillness is accompanying the music. The stillness is, however, never fixed, because the rope keeps moving slightly because it hangs from the ceiling. Also, it keeps moving because of the weight of the body that stands on the hanging rope.

Forti's stillness seems, in my eyes, not to be the same stillness that, for example, Jerome Bel uses in his canonical work *The show must go on* (2001)⁵¹. Here, performers stand on stage and don't move much; they primarily face the audience while listening to 18 songs that define their actions on stage. With a side look towards *Accompaniment of La Monte's 2 Sounds and La Monte's 2 sounds*, Bel's performance could be seen as a reference to how music or sound is accompanied in a similar or different manner in the body. But this is not the topic here. I would prefer to briefly sketch the idea of the body in stillness in both works.

Performers have a certain cool attitude towards the audience in Bel's work. They are very aware of their image and what they project. I would say the same for the way stillness is staged in the other canonical work of so-called conceptual dance: Xavier Le Roy's work *Self-Unfinished* (1998), in which the images of the body are carefully choreographed, and the body seems quite in control of the situation.

In my view, the stillness and its adjunct image that is produced in *Accompaniment of La Monte's 2 Sounds and La Monte's 2 sounds* comes out of a precarious situation and is anything other than cool or chic. In Forti's work, the image of the human body vibrates the precariousness of a body looking for balance in minimal shifts, yet, at the verge of perception, moving. Stillness is not a fixed pose here, but rather a breathing, slightly moving situation where the

50 See Morse, *Simone Forti in the 1960s and after*.

51 I am aware that Forti's work has not been much pondered on through the very aspect of stillness. I allow myself to look at Forti's work through the prism of stillness in order to propose new ways of looking at her work. I bring in Bel's *The Show must go on* in order to a) draw on a piece that much has been written about and contribute to this discussion and b) in order to situate my research to a certain degree in the lineage of conceptual dance.

body keeps pushing against something (the rope) and tries to accommodate the rope while listening to Young's sound. So, the attention of the observer of the performance is neither fully on the body nor entirely directed to what is around the body and/or what is audible. In *Accompaniment of La Monte's 2 Sounds and La Monte's 2 sounds*, the body is in the service of what is audible and not audible. This creates an ambiguity that is, in my eyes, not at stake in *The show must go on*, or in *Self-Unfinished*.

The body that is at stake in Simone Forti's *Accompaniment of La Monte's 2 Sounds and La Monte's 2 sounds* is also not frontally staged as in works such as *The Show must go own* or *Self-Unfinished*; instead, observers of the performance sit around it. Putting the body on display in its three dimensions allows the body to appear in its vulnerability. There is no back to hide; instead, there is an openness within the produced image of a body in stillness moved by the rope hanging from the ceiling, looping under the feet of its temporary inhabitant.

Brief look into stillness and listening in the three artistic parts of my doctorate

The stillness in the first artistic work within my doctorate, entitled *Colour, Colour* is a stillness that breathes. Breathing is referred to as a metaphor here for minimal bodily movement, but also in concrete physical terms: the performers and I did much of Middendorf Atemarbeit⁵² during the rehearsal process. It gives the performers a sense of vivacity even when standing or sitting still. Also, my task as a director was to ask them again and again to undo any cool image production when standing still. There is a tremendous tendency to simply pose, instead of using the stillness as a moment to come forth, of poesis. However, in *Colour, Colour*, the body was still frontally oriented. It seemed back then that frontal orientation was the best way to confront the question of representation. I might have still unconsciously been influenced by precisely such works as *The show must go on* or *Self-Unfinished* – as well as their popularity on the choreography art market. But also, now, reflecting back on my choice on frontality, I think of another work that was influential for my research project: the performance by visual artist Juliette Blightmann *If I had two heads Christina of Denmark* (2011), where the observer is asked to sit in front of a projection of the painting by

52 Ilse Middendorf started her research on breathing in the 1920s in Germany. She developed a somatic body work called *Erfahrbarer Atem*, Engl. *Perceptual Breathing*, where the main task is to cultivate a relation to one's breath that neither interferes in its 'natural' flow, nor is carried away by it unconsciously. See Ilse Middendorf, *Der Erfahrbare Atem* (Paderborn: Junfermannverlag, 2007).

Hohlbein of Christina of Denmark for three hours. In silence. Only at the very end is there clapping and a pop song. When attending the piece at *Based in Berlin* (2011), a festival for emerging visual and performance artists to which a piece of mine was also invited, I was strongly affected, in a more or less deeper manner than when having seen *The show must go on* or *Self-Unfinished*. I think it was the exposition of the means of projection – a slide projector visible for the observer – together with the questioning of performance of the live body – by letting the projection of a painting perform – that somewhat stimulated my thinking on seeing, expectations in live performance and duration. However, in *Colour, Colour*, I was still working with live performers. So Blightmann's work offered something like reading a good book can: it affected me in emotional/conceptual terms and gave me some strength to do what I wanted to do in *Colour, Colour* within the realm of my work-horizon at the time.

In the second part of my doctorate, ///, listening and silence were emphasized. I said so by focusing on the moment of an empty stage, which was already an element in *Colour, Colour* but which I decided to expand on in ///. In ///, the audience was asked to sustain the state of not seeing anything while sitting on their chairs and listening to how Lisa, my collaborator, and I read texts to them that we had written about seeing, time and collaboration. The proposal was stripped away from any extra theatrical element. The performance was the very sitting and seeing of nothing while listening. Listening was staged in a sort of classical way; as in school, you sit and listen. One might think that this was a traditional move and old-fashioned. I still think that it was interesting. Similar to how Juliette Blightmann proposes nothing else than the image, in /// there was nothing else but the empty space and the reading of our texts. I think it was a very stripped-down proposal; it was as though I hit a conceptual bottom line.

see/time/composing, my third artistic part, was perhaps closest to the spatial arrangement that Simone Forti placed the participants in for *Accompaniment of La Monte's 2 Sounds and La Monte's 2 sounds*. Workshop members were more free to inhabit space than in the two previous artistic works; they chose different spaces in the room. The only pre-organised placement of bodies in *see/time/composing* was a circle when we did a Middendorf exercise. Listening was now mainly listening in an interior sense: one listened to one's dialogue with the objects and the possible moving of the objects that we used during the workshop to engage in a composition. Now, the image was no longer staged as something to be seen from a so-called outside perspective. But everyone was a doer, a seer. The image was worked through temporalization by means of seeing.

Appendix 2:

Robert Dunn's workshop pedagogy and content in relation to Susan Rethorst composition pedagogy, early 2000, Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance (SEAD), promotion 2004-2008.

My research interest grew out of a composition environment similar to what Sally Banes or Soili Hämäläinen or Judith Dunn described as Robert Dunn's composition workshop. It is maybe just an aside, but it is an important one to clarify the influences and the context from which my interest for the research topic of composition as a process grew. I was introduced to composition by the US-American choreographer Susan Rethorst; she was based in Amsterdam from the 1990s until the early 2000s, teaching at the BA dance and MA of choreography at the SNDO Amsterdam. She also taught at the SEAD, where I did my undergraduate studies. She, on the other hand, was taught composition by Judith Dunn, wife of Robert Dunn, when studying at Bennington College, USA in the 1970s.

In Rethorst's class, as Robert Dunn had done, we were asked to make dances, present them and talk about them. The general vocabulary was "dance making", not choreographing. What type of dance this was was up to the maker: some students choreographed objects, read a text or did a movement-based score with human dancers. In contrast to Dunn, conceptual concerns and preparation were of less importance. We were very much making in the very moment of studio time. Also, we were not introduced to different methods such as chance operation or indeterminacy. What was important was to give each student a sense that what s/he does is right if it feels right to him/her. Susan Rethorst's methodology of teaching choreography or composition stands in line with Robert Dunn's: there were no pre-set criteria to make or talk about the dance. Rethorst: "I'm not going to ask you why this, that, the other, or how do you feel. It will be for you to decide what to do next, what to keep, what to jettison and not on the basis of how it has met in your head, but on its very own felt reality. And what you decide is right. You are right when it comes to your dances. When it feels right to you, it is."⁵³

I am wary of how in current contemporary research-oriented structures of dance and choreography education this very open approach to teaching composition can seem odd or even irrelevant. One might ask: But where is the question that is pursued? What are you after? For Susan Rethorst, the question, the

53 Susan Rethorst. *A choreographic Mind* (Helsinki: Theatre Academy Helsinki, Kinesis 2, 2012).

concern or the topic appears on the way, while making. Her class, like Robert Dunn's class, valued individuation and multiplicity in method and outcome. It is not only that Rethorst argued for composition criteria of "feeling right", but again similar to Robert Dunn, she also paid much attention to the singular view of each person witnessing a dance. After each presentation, we were asked to comment and reflect on what we had seen.

My research was much informed by the last element of the composition class by Susan Rethorst: sit-see-talk. Her composition was not only about making dances, but also about viewing dance and cultivating a critical eye. Practicing a critical eye when watching dances is asking: how do I see what I see? Why do I see what I see? This is one of the stones along the path that led me to taking on the role of the choreographer/director that I inhabited when starting this doctorate. Paying attention to the visual, to viewing and seeing dance was in itself a sufficiently complex task. Although there is a sort of common knowledge about how our brain mirrors movements we see, I still believe that exploration and practice in how to see a live event of choreography is relevant. Because: seeing is complex doing. More on that in chapter II.

In any case, Jeroen Fabius has some of the same thoughts: "As staged Western theatre dance, dance, the art of moving the body, is made to be seen. The contradiction here lies in the fact that dance is created through the experiences of moving bodies while primarily accessed visually by the spectators."⁵⁴ Instead of minding this contradiction and implementing physical introductions to dance performances or doing so-called participatory dance works in which the audience also becomes physically moving performers, my research proposes a pondering on seeing as a way to access choreography-based composition.

3. TO EMERGE, EVENTUALLY.

When a regular theatre or museum visitor hears the notion of "criticality" in relation to art, s/he most probably thinks of art critics – those who come to see a show and write a terrible or, less often, a great review that the theatre or museum visitor can read in the newspaper the morning after the show. In this case, a critical stance has something to do with the judgement of an expert, of a journalist, who writes about an art object that s/he did not make.

54 Jeroen Fabius, "Seeing the body move," in *Contemporary Choreography, A Critical Reader*, eds. Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wildshut (London: Routledge, 2009), 334.

In contemporary art, performance, theatre and dance, this critical stance is no longer the only job description for art critics. Indeed, there are fewer and fewer jobs for art critics anyway.⁵⁵

Cultivating a critical stance within contemporary art places criticality “as a form of objectification and self-knowledge”⁵⁶ in the the artist’s mind and his/her artistic endeavour.

In her aforementioned talk at the HZT, Josefine Wikström made reference to Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. As Wikström stated, “to be a human subject for Kant and thus to have a human experience is to put something outside of oneself and yet relate self-critically to that object, to that experience. Critique for Kant is the investigation into the condition that makes this possible [i.e., putting something outside of oneself and yet relating to it critically].”⁵⁷

To bring the practice of composition closer to criticality thus entails building a human subject through objectification and self-knowledge. In these times, when discourse in performing arts and visual arts related to performance is spinning more and more away from the human subject and flying into the arms of post-humanism, talking about composition in terms of criticality is a means to re-engage with concerns about the human subject in a way that allows for not a mega-subject but a porous one. Such types of composition are critical because they are in a way anachronistic and not in the vein of the *zeitgeist*.

The critical type of composition I hint at thus asks less, “What is composition?” but more, “Why do I even understand that which appears in front of me, that which I see and perceive, as composition?” It investigates a condition: *condicere*, speak with.⁵⁸ But also, condition means situation.⁵⁹ The kind of critical composition sketched out here looks for, looks after and cares about a situation and a time where and when speaking with or pondering on nothing⁶⁰ is possible while aiming for the construction of a human subject that sits, and in places, lies and stands, in the very concrete – that is, material – world.

55 See Jeroen Peeters, *Through the Back; Situating Vision between Moving Bodies* (Helsinki: Teak, Kinesis 5, 2014).

56 Josefine Wikström and Constanze Schellow. *Critique Light – Identity Games*.

57 Josefine Wikström and Constanze Schellow. *Critique Light – Identity Games*.

58 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=condition>, last accessed September 4th 2017.

59 Ibid.

60 See Ouit Alanko-Kahiluoto, “How to avoid doing things with words?” in *Illuminating Darkness*, ed. Päivi Mehtonen (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2007).

Something like critical composition happens in the realm of the possible. Looking back at the beginning of this chapter, let us recall how Spångberg advocated possibility as something that is already in the world, that which we can imagine. Within a critical type of composition, one does not necessarily produce something new, but rather looks for new relations between what is given (space, time, objects, humans and relations themselves). Building relations between things always implies that one knows the material that the relations are made of. You need at least a hint of the things, and so they are already recognized in the hints and thus, to a certain degree, already known. The realm of the possible carries re-imagination with it, re-figuring. To put it differently: maybe nothing drastic will change, but changes appear on a more subtle level.

Appendix 3:

Artists with a critical stance ask, “Why do we understand this as art?” They are investigating the possibilities of what makes art art. The ontological shift in the understanding of art in the 1960s was due to this investigation into the possibility of art. Simone Forti, Yoko Ono and La Monte Young, together with many other artists of their time, redefined art. John Cage and Robert Dunn, and La Monte Young, did this with a particular focus on musical composition. Choreography as expanded practice stands in the vein of the critical art of the 1960s because expanded choreography asks about the condition or the possibility of choreography.

However, the heritage of the 1960s is huge, and it often seems that nothing as drastic in dance and performance has happened since then. I think of the Judson Church Theatre artist and initiator of contact improvisation Steve Paxton in a video from 2004⁶¹, in which he asks the interviewer, “Do you wanna see me dance?” And when the interviewer responds with “yes”, Paxton says, “Ok, I am dancing now.” All this is happening while Paxton is sitting still and calmly on a chair. You cannot see the dance. It is a matter of a mind set; it is a matter of perception. Dance as perceptual doing – this is one of the outcomes of the developments in dance in the 1960s. And how can one push further than that?

Nowadays, many artists look for the emergence of the possibility for dance by leaving the theatre venue and moving into the visual arts space⁶², or by in-

61 Becky Edmunds, *Have You Started Dancing Yet? 2004*, published 20.12.2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFt2PjcH7BI>, last accessed September 4th 2017.

62 See Kirsten Maar, “Exhibiting Choreography” in *Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance* (PLACE: publisher, date), 93-111; or: Joy, *The Choreographic*, 20.

roducing theory and discursive frameworks to dance. Jenn Joy calls these later works “conceptual choreography”.⁶³ The term makes me think of the debate on ‘conceptual dance’ in the 1990s. ‘Conceptual dance’, a term rejected by most choreographers whose works were summarised under this heading,⁶⁴ valued self-reflection, self-criticality. It picked up on the critical art endeavour of the 1960s, in particular with what happened at the Judson Dance Theatre⁶⁵ without going into introspection but rather cultivating the idea of bodily co-presence with an audience.⁶⁶ In his book *Exhausting Dance*,⁶⁷ performance theorist André Lepecki discussed the phenomena and brought it ultimately to another level of discourse. Conceptual dance of the 1990s was much supported by dance and performance scholars in the sense that they agreed with the artists whose works were labelled as such that the term was a misnomer. Lepecki, Husemann and Cvejić wrote and analysed the works of Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel among others – and through their scholarly writing, they justified stillness, hiccup movements, negativity in scholarly dance and performance circles. Maybe the huge support of theoreticians, together with the high visibility of the ‘conceptual dance’ artists in theatre venues, made it possible to institutionalise the critical potential of ‘conceptual dance’. I say so, thinking of artists such as Simone Forti in the 1960s, who was not connected to theorists or the institution of academia. In any case, Josefine Wikström mentions in her talk that critical art has been institutionalized since around 1990, when ‘conceptual dance’ emerged.⁶⁸

U-turn:

I won’t go further here. Leave this paragraph with this quote of Wikström. Because: my research is not about institutional critique and composition or the precise trajectory from critic to criticism to criticality. Also, my research is not about building a new concept even if CRITICAL COMPOSITION, written in

63 Joy, *The Choreographic*, 15.

64 See Bojana Cvejić, *To end with judgement by means of clarification*. <http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/englisch/2006/texte/cvejic03.html>, last accessed August 17th 2017; or: the conference “Parallel Voices Not Conceptual: Investigating the Thinking behind the Most Influential Movement in Dance of the Past Ten Years”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkdI-87T2z0>, last accessed: August 17th 2017.

65 See Ramsay Burt, *Judson Church Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006), chapter 8.

66 See Husemann, *Ceci est de la danse*, 24.

67 Lepecki, *Exhausting dance*.

68 See Josefine Wikström and Constanze Schellow. *Critique Light – Identity Games*.

capital letters, could work as a new term. Not only because of its alliteration. My aim was to open a door, to have a look and leave the door open. Not necessarily to be continued, but to enable a smell to come through this door; a smell of “what if we would think about composition from the vantage point of something called ‘criticality?’ in order to have a first glance at how composition as a non-proceduralist art practice could take place.” More on non-proceduralist composition practices in chapter III.

Chapter II

Concepts are attunements.

Seeing and time or: concepts in the twilight of my practice

This chapter is divided into two parts.

Part I, titled *Seeing With*, ponders the act of seeing in relation to performativity, contemplation and the human body in stillness.

Part II, titled *Now Points*, conveys thoughts on heterochronic and chronological time and my interest in time in its dimension of boredom.

Seeing and time are the two main concepts and adjunct experiential realms that I have been concerned with in making the three artistic works of my research. Engaging with matters of seeing and time helped me to better understand what my inquiry on composition was all about. In this chapter, seeing and time are put on display through different references from the arena of theory: cultural studies, art history and phenomenology. The aim is to display thoughts on seeing and time that were nurturing my research, so that you, the reader, have some more clouds to hang onto when viewing the three artistic research pieces on composition that my inquiry resulted in. What I am getting at here is that this chapter should give an insight into what I mean when referring to time and seeing in the framework of my inquiry.

The interest in seeing and time emerged from my artistic practice: I identified my composition practice as a director/choreographer as a practice of seeing⁶⁹ and have always been much intrigued by composition as tool to research time.

69 I am aware that perception is a multi-modal activity, and if I choose to focus on seeing, it is a deliberate choice. This stems from my artistic trajectory and how I grew into choreography during my undergraduate studies. I was easily mentally tired when I moved too much in dance class. Composition classes always felt like an oasis. I was good at sitting and observing; I had an eye for details. From this situation, I created a practice as a director as the one who sees. It was a sort of counterpoint to all the attention on the physical and somatic body moving; it reclaimed visual experience in stillness as a way to dance.

Preliminary thinking

Art historian and critic James Elkins, when asked, “Can art reflect on itself only with the help of theory?” answered, “To the first question: Strictly speaking, it isn’t possible to have a discourse that isn’t borrowed, in some measure, but more loosely speaking, there are already “languages” in the arts that are quite different from “languages” in other fields.”⁷⁰

Full stop one.

I have always loved reading and its adjunct action, writing. And it is for this sake, for love’s sake, that I approach the concepts seeing and time during “sit n´read n´write” hours. However, there is a gap. I usually leave the books at home when I go into the studio. I don’t mind the gap. I understand it as being productive.

Full stop two.

In order to think about and do something with concepts, one does not necessarily need theory, and that is because – as an artist/researcher – one does not need to produce theory, but rather reflection. Neither does one need to produce knowledge, but rather insight.⁷¹ That might entail philosophy, but not necessarily. However, reflection or insight includes thinking, pondering and contemplating.

This chapter contributes to an environment in which contemplation and a *vita contemplativa*⁷² performed by artists are not considered reactionary, because contemplation stands in opposition to the general striving for a *vita activa*: contemplating as a means to stay within oneself, to create a practice of duration and to inhibit the first reaction à la Alexander technique⁷³ in order to create a place or a location that ultimately fosters a community of artists or artists/researchers in which different positions (and differences at large) are produced and respected.

70 James Elkins, „Seven questions on Arts as Research,“ *Texte zur Kunst*, 82 (2011), 86 – 91.

71 See Elkins, „Seven questions on Arts as Research“, 90: „Why not use the word ‚understanding‘ instead of ‚knowledge‘?“.

72 I refer to the term „*vita contemplativa*“ not from its original source, Hannah Arendt, but rather via cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han, who speaks about the *vita contemplativa* in relation to time. „Die *vita contemplativa* ist eine Praxis der Dauer. Sie stiftet eine andere Zeit, indem sie die Zeit der Arbeit unterbricht.“ Han, *Der Duft der Zeit* (BIELEFELD: transcript, 2009), 14. [Engl. „The *vita contemplativa* is a practice of duration. It creates another time that interrupts the time of work.“]

73 See Hillari King, <http://www.hilaryking.net/glossary/inhibition.html>, last accessed August 17th 2017. I bring in Alexander technique because I have been studying it during my master’s program in choreography with Elisabeth Molle at the Inter-University Centre of Dance Berlin. Next to Middel-dorf breathing work, Alexander technique is a body work that has influenced my artistic work and artistic research.

I Seeing With

*Something in the way she moves.*⁷⁴

(James Taylor, 1986)

At the beginning of Christa Wolf's *City of Angels, or, the overcoat of Dr. Freud*⁷⁵ – a piece of autobiographic writing billed as novel in which Wolf reports on a long artistic residency at the Getty Center in Los Angeles 1992/1993 – she describes how she goes into a gallery space with some other residency fellows to view a piece of contemporary artwork. The piece is an installation consisting of a room within a room. Its walls are gently illuminated. Its floor, at the side of the space, is laid out with pillows and benches where the attendee is invited to lie down in order to direct his/her attention up to a hole in the ceiling. Through this hole, one sees the dark sky of Los Angeles at night.

“A student was waiting for us, a girl with Japanese features who led us down convoluted passageways, partly constructed out of fencing, to the object of our long drive, the famous installation: a square room made of hastily put up walls of the lightest possible material, with big grey blocks piled up on two opposite sides to create surfaces to sit or lie down on, which the viewers were to do in order to direct their gazes up at the dull red, indirectly lit walls, up to the ceiling, where a twenty-square-foot rectangular hole was cut, for the sky that was the actual event of this installation—you were supposed to crane your head and look at the deep black night sky until you saw something. With this piece, the artist was trying to teach his audience how to see, Francesco explained.”⁷⁶

The proposal (as simple as it may seem) evokes multiple reactions in the attendees. Most of them start giggling and laugh about it. To some, the work seems naïve; to some, the work seems pretentious: who does this artist think s/he is? Teaching seeing? Something so basic that everyone can do it!

Christa Wolf recalls her reaction with the following words:

74 James Taylor, *Something in the way she moves*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoevtZiVR4k>, last accessed August 17th 2017.

75 Christa Wolf, *City of Angels, or, the overcoat of Dr. Freud*, trans. Damion Searls (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).

76 Wolf, *City of Angels, or, the overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 28 – 29.

“Meanings gradually dissolved. The dark rectangle of sky sucked me in, it reminded me of the square Lion Gate of Mycenae, behind which darkness lay in wait for the vanquished, the final darkness my night-dark rectangle of sky gave me only a weak foretaste of, but it carried me off, the senses vanished, the senses vanish, I thought, they go inside me, why not, deeper, still deeper, the final darkness, wished for, yes, wished for sometimes, to free me of the compulsion to have to say everything. Never to go down into that well again, no one can ask that of me, but then who says I have to go in the direction others ask me to go in – richten, a beautiful word, I love these words with equivocal meanings: sich richten, to go in the direction, or to conform; in the passive, to be condemned or judged; das ist richtig, that’s right. Gerechtigkeit, Righteousness, thou word of thunder. Deeper. Still deeper. Sucked into the vortex, spit out. Silence. The silence is greatest in the eye of the hurricane. Now to let go. Groundlessness, a fathomless fall.”⁷⁷

Christa Wolf describes her journey of seeing into the hole and being confronted with the movement of her seeing. She notes how she projects and projects onto what she actually sees until she can let go of imagination and projection and give in, give up meaning-making, and fall into the abyss of the black hole. Then she encounters a sense of death drive and also freedom – freedom to not constantly say it all. Silence enters her mind.

Seeing, as Christa Wolf describes it, brings up existential issues here. One could say that, though the proposal of the artist – proposing gazing into a black hole – seems naïve, it contains some bigger questions than just a hole if the attendee is up for it. Minimal artworks need attendees who bring along an understanding of being less a consumer than a participant of the art work.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Wolf, *City of Angels, or, the overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 28 – 29..

⁷⁸ At the base of minimal art is the high concern of time: Judd’s „one thing after another“. The temporality that minimal artists sought was a functional time. That stood in opposition to what art critic Michael Fried called the „high-modernist abstraction of pure presentness“, which he describes in „Art and Objecthood“. Minimal Artwork questions finitude, questions the limit of the artwork by introducing functional time. The temporalisation, which Fried feared so much, allows ONE space of art work and an attendee. This in return asks for an attendee who is active in acknowledging his/her own location. See Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, <http://atc.berkeley.edu/201/readings/FriedObjcthd.pdf>, last accessed July 11th 2017; Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia; On time in the art of the 1960s* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004).

Seeing as performative material: seeing does something

To begin by distancing myself from the above-mentioned artwork: I have never been interested in teaching seeing to anyone. Not even in the third and last artistic production within the doctorate, when I proposed a workshop that could easily be categorised as a pedagogic proposal.

In the first (and partially also in the second) artistic part of my research, seeing is treated as performative material. In the following, I refer to J.L. Austins' classical speech act theory. Austin (1911 – 1960) gave a lecture series at Harvard University in 1955 with the title *How to do things with words?*⁷⁹, which was posthumously published in 1962. He thereby develops the idea of performative utterances that have no truth value. Performative utterances produce the action that is uttered. Example: "I promise to do this and that" is a performative utterance because it produces the promise by saying that I promise.

Seeing, as performative material, has also no truth value. You can't see right or falsely. In my view, seeing is a sort of language.⁸⁰ A mute and silent one, but still a way to perform that is, to reference to J.L Austin's classical speech act theory: "(...) language in its performative dimension is *doing* rather than reporting something (...) the performative function of language is to create something new and independent of any referent outside this linguistic event."⁸¹

This needs some translation work here: Austin refers to linguistic events instead of an event based on perceptual processes, such as seeing. Of interest in Austin's theory in relation to my inquiry is that, on the basis of Austin's ideas, seeing can be understood as performative: seeing does something. It begins with the threat: "If looks could kill!"

The research of writer and philosopher Alva Noë (born 1964) reflects on seeing in a similar manner, highlighting its performative nature when elaborating in his book "Strange Tools"⁸² on the history of a science of vision and the status of pictures in it. Noë's work proceeds generally around cognitive science and

79 Austin, John Langshaw, *How to Do Things with Words*, http://pubman.mpg.de/pubman/item/escidoc:2271128:3/component/escidoc:2271430/austin_1962_how-to-do-things-with-words.pdf, last accessed July 11th 2017.

80 I am aware that I use "language" in a metaphorical sense. For an affirmative use of metaphor in scholarship and the arts, see: Gesa Ziemer, *Verletzbare Orte. Entwürfe einer praktischen Ästhetik* (Zürich, Berlin: Diaphanes, 2008).

81 Outi Alanko-Kahiluoto, „How to avoid doing things with words?“ In *Illuminating Darkness Approaches to Obscurity and Nothingness in Literature*, ed. Päivi Mehtonen (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Literature, 2007), 143 – 168.

82 Alva Noë, *Strange Tools* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015).

philosophy of mind in the tradition of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana. He also has a strong research interest in phenomenology and how to value and rethink phenomenology critically⁸³.

Noë is critical of reducing seeing to an optical process. Coming from an en-active approach to perception, with a particular interest in vision, Noë states, “Seeing is nothing that happens in us. It is something we do.”⁸⁴ So, seeing is here, with the words of Alva Noë, also described as something I do, something I perform. It is in this sense always already physical and hence temporal and spatial: „Seeing if this approach is right, is a temporally extended, dynamic exchange with the world around us, one that is guided by principles of timing, thoughtfulness, movement, spontaneity, function and pleasure [...]”. This also implies that seeing is limited by what I hold onto as knowledge, my history, the way I am conditioned to be in this world and how I bring myself into this world.

Also, seeing not only does something but it is also similar to language à la Austin, a self-referential doing, meaning that it does not describe anything that is outside of its doing or that has existed before the very doing of seeing. In the framework of my research, the question of what this doing is about is addressed with an answer that articulates an interest in avoiding aboutness. In this sense, it is close to the minimalist artists that Fried disliked, with their neither/nor.⁸⁵ The seeing I researched in the three artistic works of my doctorate is a kind of seeing that is a seeing-with rather than a-seeing-of, which ultimately produces a more embodied sense of the seer than when addressing seeing in mere optical terms. Meaning: when I see *with* something, I get a sense of my physical and mental location. I hint then at a non-objectification process of what I am seeing, which in turn also loops back on how I perceive myself: not as an object, but a subject.

From aesthetic seeing to relational visibility

The seeing I am after in my inquiry is not an every-day kind of seeing, but rather an aesthetic contemplative seeing. Alva Noë ponders on aesthetic seeing in the following manner: “We can contrast aesthetic, contemplative seeing with what we might call seeing in the wild. (...) Most seeing, most of the time, is precisely not

83 See Alva Noë, *The critique of pure phenomenology*, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/549de813e4b0bc51a119f20f/t/55faaf77e4b06660c65e14fa/1442492279666/the-critique-of-pure-phenomenology.pdf>, last accessed April 25th 2018.

84 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 151.

85 See Pamela M. Lee, „Presentness Is Grace,” in *Chronophobia; On time in the art of the 1960s* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004), 36 – 83.

contemplative; not, in any sense, aesthetic. It does not rest on deliberate acts of looking and inspection. We drive, we tie our shoes, we prepare dinner and then we eat it. Wild seeing is spontaneous and engaged; it is direct and involved. Wild seeing is acting in concert with the stuff around us. Aesthetic seeing, in contrast, is something more like the entertainment of thoughts about what one is looking at.”⁸⁶ I understand Noë’s pondering of seeing as “the entertainment of thoughts about what one is looking at” with a backdrop of understanding thinking as perceiving⁸⁷. The idea of “Seeing with”, which is one research outcome, takes place at the threshold of perception when it accompanies that which is seen by a visual sense while also being aware of the bodily dimension, for example of breath.

There is a certain ethics of “Seeing with” in which that which is not me is not attacked nor needs to be incorporated into the same. The encounter happens similarly to the way touch operates. In the following I bring in media theorist and curator Laura U. Marks (born 1963). Her research on the reception of the moving image and embodied spectatorship draws largely on Vivian Sobchack’s work on the phenomenology of film and Sobchack’s *The address of the eye: a Phenomenology of Film Experience*⁸⁸. I borrow from Marks what she calls “haptic visuality” in order to shed light on what the notion of touch in relation to “Seeing with” could offer:

“Haptic visuality sees the world as though it were touching it; close, unknowable, appearing to exist on the surface of the image. [...] I found that haptic visuality invites a kind of identification in which there is a mutual dissolving of viewer and viewed, subject and object; where looking is not about power but about yielding.”⁸⁹

“Seeing with” operates within the realm of a slow kind of touch which proposes a soft approach between subject and object and ultimately emergence. “Seeing with” is part of what cultural theorist Christoph Brunner⁹⁰ calls “Slow Practice”:

86 Noë, *Strange Tools*, 51 – 52.

87 See Heidegger, Martin. *What is called thinking?*, trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

88 Sobchack, Vivian. *The address of the eye: a phenomenology of Film Experience*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

89 See Laura U. Marks, „Haptic Visuality: Touching with the Eyes,“ framework, the finnish art review, ed. Marketta Seppälä, (2/2004), 80.

90 Christoph Brunner is not following a phenomenological project but is an expert in „French Theory“. However, I refer to Brunner since his concept of slow practices supports well the experience I make as artist when composing/seeing, hence when „Seeing with“ is at stake in the context of my artistic practice. Brunner’s birth date was not published in any source available.

“The focusing of Slow Practices on processes of emergence and becoming conditions a particular perspective on subject and objects. Subjects and objects emerge in the first place from the relation that constitutes them; hence they are not predefined.”⁹¹

Contemplative seeing

Contemplative seeing partakes in tactile visibility, and hence “Seeing with”, in so far as it discusses and problematizes the relationship between seer and seen; proposing an alternative to the predominant aspect of proximity where being in contact is most understood as a proximity of closeness. Cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han (born 1959) focuses really on contemplative seeing rather than as Noë does, by combining reflection on aesthetic and contemplative seeing. With Han, Noë’s concern for the question of what art is is replaced with an interest in politics, always carried by Han’s confrontation with Heidegger⁹². For Han, contemplative seeing “[...] renounces to abolish distance, incorporation. [...]. The long, contemplative gaze practices keeping distance to things, without losing the proximity. Its spatial formula is “proximity of distance”. [...] The contemplative gaze spares things. It allows them to remain in their own space or own shininess. It is a practice of kindness.”⁹³

When engaging with “Seeing with”, a mind of contemplation and inspection is at stake and seeing is moved away from the merely optical. “Seeing with” allows that which is not me to remain where it is, as it is, and in return allows me to be where I am. It is, as Han points out, in reference to Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*, a “gewaltlose Betrachtung”⁹⁴ – a nonviolent contemplation. Or: as I would rather translate it, in the framework of my research, it is nonviolent seeing.

91 Christop Brunner, „Slow Practices – 11 Theses,“ in *Practices of Experimentation Research and Teaching in the Arts Today*, ed. Department of Art & Media, compiled by Christoph Brunner and Giaco Schiesser (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2012).

92 See Byung-Chul Han *Heideggers Herz. Zum Begriff der Stimmung bei Martin Heidegger*. (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1999).

93 Byung-Chul Han, *Duft der Zeit* (Bielefeld: transcript. 2009), 79 – 80. No English translation available; my translation.

94 Han, *Duft der Zeit*, 80.

The sense of distance in my practice

Contemplative seeing creates space by allowing distance. It is, as I pointed out before, a practice of kindness.⁹⁵ Meaning: “Seeing with” invites distance not in order to build fences, but to give space to that which is not me.

Taking the role of director-choreographer and deciding not to perform in the moment when the attendee comes into the venue is easily considered to be a case of being a control freak: the one who does not let go of power, stays in control by looking from afar, without self-exposure or being vulnerable. So much for the prejudices.

I always struggled with this rather narrow view of the triangle distance-director-seeing. In order to do the work, in order to choreograph something like *Colour*, *Colour*, distance saves me and gives me space. But also, distance is nothing fixed. Distance is a movement. You come closer; you go further away. Distance and the sense of seeing are important tools for my way of choreographing, since they allow me to keep perspective. Otherwise I would fall into the work and not come out of it anymore. In order to accompany a work, I need a clear sense of my place and location. For the framework of this research, this location is the physical and somatic human body of the person who is seeing.

The place from where I see: a body in stillness.

Sitting is the physical, somatic, mental place from which the “Seeing with” that I researched in the three artistic parts of my doctorate was best explored. Meaning: when sitting, my interest in a slowed down, non-kinaesthetic approach to choreographing was allowed to unfold in the best way. Throughout the three artistic parts of my doctorate, there were fewer and fewer kinaesthetic movements, but in the last artistic part, *see/time/composing*, it became apparent that a body at rest, with its centre of gravity on the floor, is the place from which the kind of seeing that is of greatest interest to me takes place.⁹⁶

During my research, I spoke about phenomenological seeing. It is a notion that Heidegger developed in the *Zollikorn Seminars* that the paper I wrote for the second artistic part addresses and from which another notion, the one of bodily seeing, emerged (see the full-length paper in Chapter V: “documentation

95 Han, *Duft der Zeit*, 79.

96 The moment I started growing into dancing during my undergraduate studies, I grew out if already. I could barely handle the daily level. Mentally. Too much movement for me. I have always been in search of rest.

material”). Phenomenological seeing is still relevant to my research insofar as it is a basic claim for seeing differently: Phenomenological seeing is rooted in an understanding that in order to see things anew, one needs to let go of habits of seeing.

The body that I engaged with during my research was a somatic body, informed by a phenomenological conception of *Leib*. *Leib* as the lived body. We trained the body somatically, mainly by using Ilse Middendorf’s practice of *perceptual breathing*,⁹⁷ breathing work that I have been practicing since 2003 with different practitioners. *Perceptual breathing* is neither about letting a breath in on an unconscious level, nor is it about controlling or steering breathing as it is done in yoga, for example. *Perceptual breathing* is about accompanying one’s own breathing rhythm without interfering with it. This not only produces awareness of one’s breath, but also of the entire body, which ultimately leads to an integration of different experiences stored in different parts of the body. Ilse Middendorf’s mantra was: let the breathing come, let the breathing go and wait until it comes back on its own.

Appendix:

1. Faith Wilding: Waiting, 1971

I think of the photograph of Faith Wilding sitting in a chair in her performance presented at *Womanhouse*⁹⁸ in 1971, entitled *Waiting*, where she sits on a chair, leans her torso back and forth and loops words to describe different ways that women wait. “Waiting to get married, waiting for the baby...” It is less the movement of her body or words she utters that causes this image to come to mind when I think of this resting body, as I outlined above. And it is also not because Wilding has a particular look: she does not even leave her eyes, so seeing is not discussed here really. It is something in the way she sits – and in writing this – the James Taylor song that serves as an umbrella quote to this part on seeing comes to my mind immediately: *Something in the way she moves...*

97 Ilse Middendorf was born in 1911 and died in 2009. She was a breath therapist and developed „Perceptual Breathing“ within her research on breathing. „I let my breathing come, I let my breathing go and wait until it comes back by itself.“ Middendorf studied breath with breath therapist Emil Aurelius-Baeuerle. In 1965, she founded the Middendorf Ateminstitut in Berlin. In 1971, she was given a position at the University of the Arts Berlin to teach breath and bodywork to actors.

98 *Womanhouse* (January 30 – February 28, 1972), organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, co-founders of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) Feminist Art Program.

In Wilding, I recognize – when considering “Seeing with” – a mixture of passivity and resistance. Her shoulders are hanging; her hands are at rest in her lap. There is a certain kind of fatigue in her body, but there is also (and this may be because I know what she is saying and I know the words she utters) a certain kind of resistance. Fatigue and resistance – fertile ground for “Seeing with”, looking out into the world, being in the world.

2. Detour: Lisa Nelson – an example from the field of dance that experiments with seeing

Lisa Nelson, born 1949, and, like Susan Rethorst, whom I introduced in chapter I, studied dance at Bennington College in Vermont. In contrast to Rethorst, she was active in the period after the official phase of the Judson Church and, together with artists such as Steve Paxton, continued working on improvisation as performance practice and in particular on contact improvisation. Her work on dance improvisation is what Nelson is most known for. However, if I mention her in the framework of the written component of my doctoral project, it is less for her work on improvisation. Nelson’s thinking is in places interesting to me because she also, in addition to dancing, developed a video-making practice. Nelson expanded the medium of dance and after a hiatus from dance to create videos for several years returned back to dance. I am mainly interested in her writing, as in this passage from Nelson’s essay “Before your eyes”⁹⁹, in which she describes her exploration of seeing: “I observed my eyes’ activity while eating, laughing, thinking, walking through familiar fields, down foreign city streets, dancing, and watching anything.” During my research, I conducted similar experiments, though less in moving than in moments when my body was still.

3. Epistemological concerns

I sit and see and open up my perception to what I choose to focus on visually – a cup on a book in the midst of the mess on my desk. The choice emerges when I experience a certain ‘quale’ of something, when I get interested in something for no real reason. “The sensible quality, far from being coextensive with perception, is the peculiar product of an attitude of curiosity or observation. It appears when,

99 Lisa Nelson, *Before your eyes*, http://www.kultuur.ut.ee/sites/default/files/vka/before_your_eyes.pdf, last accessed August 5th 2017.

instead of yielding up the whole gaze to the world, I turn towards this gaze itself, and when I ask myself *what* precisely it is *that I see*. “¹⁰⁰

Cut.

Jump:

“Wie bereits mehrfach betont, gehört zu den wichtigsten Grundannahmen der leiblich-phänomenologischen Wahrnehmungstheorie, dass nicht alles zu jeder Zeit sichtbar oder wahrnehmbar ist. Die Welt besteht aus einer unübersehbaren Fülle von Farben, Formen und Sinneseindrücken, die alle gleichermaßen um die perzeptive Aufmerksamkeit des Subjekts werben, aber niemals zugleich wahrgenommen werden können. In *Das indirekte Sprechen* zeigt Merleau-Ponty diese Rivalität der möglichen Ansichten am Beispiel von Mond und Geldstück auf: Beide sind gleichermaßen Elemente des Präsenzfeldes, können aber de facto nicht zur gleichen Zeit fixiert werden – der Blick richtet sich entweder nur auf das kleine Objekt in der Hand oder auf den großen Himmelskörper in der Ferne.” ¹⁰¹

English: “As already pointed out above, one of the most important basics of the *Leib*/phenomenological theory of perception is that not everything can be visible and perceivable. The world consists of an innumerable exuberance of colours, forms and sensations that all equally seek the attention of the subject but can never be perceived all at once. In “Indirect Speech”, Merleau-Ponty shows the rivalry of possible views in the example of the moon and a coin: both are elements of a field of presence, but they cannot be both fixated at the same time – the gaze only directs itself onto the small object in the hand or onto the huge celestial body afar.” ¹⁰²

The seeing I scrutinized in the three artistic works of my research fully embrace that one can never see everything at the same time. The field of presence is there all the time. Things coexist in this field of presence. But my research is not about presence. My research is interested in the movement of the gaze, seeing and how it is condemned to occur in succession. As much as it wants to grab it all, take it all in at once, my seeing operates chronologically. It gives each thing time and attention. If I want to see more, I need to move. If I want to see another thing on my desk, I need to move my head. There are certainly many other things in my field of view: Around my cup – there is the entire mess.

100 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London/New York: Routledge, 1985), 263.

101 Sophia Prinz, *Die Praxis des Sehens* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 201.

102 The text is only available in German. I made the English translation.

But the intent is to remain with the cup and not slide into the mess, the surroundings: paying attention to the cup in the midst of this stuff. Seeing it and letting it be, as it is. No need to change it; instead, practicing just remaining with it.

II News

You - just scream with boredom

*You - are not evicting time*¹⁰³

(David Bowie, 1973)

Now:

It might, on first view, not be surprising to pay particular attention to time when you are an artist of dance and choreography: consider Merce Cunningham's quite open – and one might say abstract – position on dance as “dancing in space and time”.¹⁰⁴ One does not need to adhere to Cunningham's definition of dance. However, dance is, like music or theatre, a time-based art. The status time has within choreography depends on how a choreographic artist defines his/her way of approaching choreography.

Usually, at least in experimental contemporary dance, choreography and visual art, the wish exists to break away from an Aristotelian conception of art. Aristotle established the sense of a unity of time, in which works were not allowed to last longer than the frame of a day¹⁰⁵ – this has been much discussed in the arts of the 60s¹⁰⁶ and is still discussed in the body of works by e.g. Marten Spångberg, Tino Seghal, etc., or in the artist/researcher Ingri Fiksdal's work “nighttripper” (2013). Or: video artist Gordon Douglas, who quotes Jean-Luc Godard: “Every story has a beginning, middle and an end. But it is not necessarily in this order.”¹⁰⁷

103 David Bowie, *Time*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQSZR3NSqm8>, last accessed August 28th 2017.

104 See Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Merce Cunningham: Dancing in space and time* (Boston: Da capo Press, 1998).

105 See Aristotle, *Poetics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961).

106 See Pamela M. Lee, „The Bad Infinity / The Long Durée,” in *Chronophobia; On time in the art of the 1960s* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004), 218 – 258.

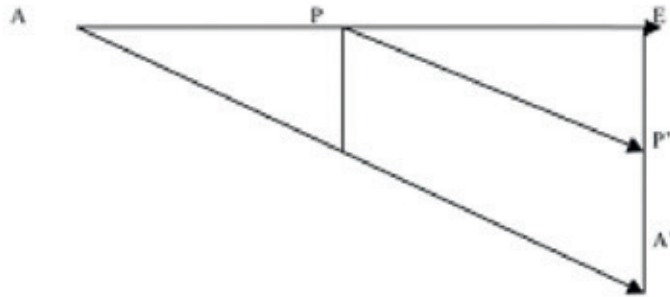
107 Douglas Gordon, *The only way out is the only way in*, artist interview at ACCA 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nvbdkgi203M>, last accessed August 25th 2017.

Time is relevant to my understanding of choreography because I use composition, conceived as an un-disciplinary tool, as a main artistic tool with the following approach: composing, the act of organising stuff (be it physical movement, thought movement, objects or...) happens in time, but there is also a link between seeing and time/boredom. I explain this later. In the following, I will detail thought trajectories describing how I grappled with the issues, and time, by means of different references.

Now:

Succession

Let's start directly. Husserl (1859 – 1938) made a famous diagram of now-points:



As one can see in the diagram, there are always new now points. A, P and E represent actual now points, occurring in the present tense. When they sink down in pastness they are not forgotten, but they transform into A', P' and E'. Husserl, as opposed to Heidegger, believed that time consciousness is a linear process. Heidegger starts off with Husserl's linear time conception, but also changes it drastically by approaching time foremost from the question of being and develops something he calls "ecstatic time".¹⁰⁸ Husserl develops phenomenology and can be considered as its founder. He has a vast body of work covering thinking on e.g. phenomenological reduction (epoché), intentionality or the phenomenology of space and movement. In the following, I want to lay out to you, reader, why I, as artist, decided to include Husserl's diagram to this commentary:

108 See Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973). § 69.

I first saw this diagram in art historian and curator Daniel Birnbaum's book *Chronology*¹⁰⁹ several years ago, around 2009. Birnbaum (born 1963) researched during his PhD von Husserl's idea of otherness, and he is also an expert in Heideggerian thinking. I chose to take in the above-mentioned diagram because it illustrates the seemingly impossible task of creating a visual representation of something as based in experience as time consciousness. Through the diagram one can see how memory is created: that which you experience in a now-point changes into another kind of point, experience, in the next moment. From A to A'. There is a sense of layering of past moments, which makes linear time anything but something narrow. Since I have encountered many moments of chronological time when composing "just one thing at a time" (Judd), the layering of transformed now-points is of interest since it demonstrates the complexity of linearity.

Now:

Fractured subject

I am thinking of the theatre piece *Murx den Europäer, murx ihn murx ihn ab* (1993) by Christoph Marthaler. I still remember how slowly, very slowly, one number after the next fell from the clock's dial. Marthaler critically engaged with chronological time and succession while problematizing linear time consciousness when taking the dial apart in front of the eyes of the audience.

But also, seemingly in opposition, I think of Daniel Birnbaum's book *Chronology*.¹¹⁰ On page 46 he writes: "Phenomenology is, at its most fundamental level, chronology." Birnbaum is, in *Chronology*, an advocate of succession. He brings it in close connection to a subject that is never identical with itself. Birnbaum puts down in words what he means by a fractured subject in reference to Stan Douglas' installation work *The Sandman*: "According to an inevitable inner chronology, I appear to myself as always already past."¹¹¹ This type of fractured subject is at stake in Stan Douglas' short video *I'm not Gary*:¹¹² two men pass each other. One recognizes the other and says, "Hi Gary". By the way he talks to the one called Gary, one understands that there cannot be a misunderstanding about the man being Gary. But the other one says "I'm not Gary".

109 Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2005).

110 Birnbaum, *Chronology*.

111 Birnbaum, *Chronology*, 46.

112 Watch: Stan Douglas, *I'm not Gary*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfxoAm2V6hM>, last accessed August 28th 2017.

Birnbaum comments on this work by asking, “If the self remains unnameable, then how can we be certain when we name others?”¹¹³

There is a line of tension, a kind of opposition, between a fractured subject and the subject in Middendorf breathing work whose aim it is to integrate the various aspects of the self as I laid out earlier. In Middendorf’s technique, the idea is promoted that a subject becomes ONE through breath. Time appears then not as chronological but rather as heterochronic: a multiplicity of times.

In my research, I used Middendorf breathing work to create this sense of unity and integration, in order to cut it into pieces again afterwards and develop a more fragmentary sense of time. That was necessary in order to be able to compose; that is, with a reference to the etymology of composition, Lat. *com-ponere*, to “put things together”. This is only possible if things are taken apart beforehand.

Wrestling between chronological and heterochronic time

Much of the research process was organised by chronological time, for example, the time of everyday work in the studio or at the table, writing. You don’t get out of chronology.

You don’t need to get out of chronology, but you should gain an understanding of how it operates. It does not necessarily produce the mega-subjects with a clear linear pre-described path, but it can foster a subject that is carried by constant doubt and a search for something to hold onto.

The fractured subject and time awareness that Birnbaum described in relation to Stan Douglas’ work makes me think of Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre” that Marcel Proust used for “A la recherche du temps perdu”.¹¹⁴ Here, also, a troubled and fractured subject is described.

Thus, the very same reference serves cultural theorist Han as an occasion to talk about a kind of heterochronic understanding of time when pondering on the smell of the madeleine cookie¹¹⁵ that produces a felt, sensed time which evades succession. And to put one thought about time on top of it all: for Christoph Brunner, a heterochronic understanding of time is the basis for slow practices.

113 Birnbaum, *Chronology*, 21.

114 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

115 See Han, *Duft der Zeit*, 47.

In his essay *Slow Practices – 11 theses*,¹¹⁶ he writes under the heading *Slow Practices Are Heterochronic* on page 61:

“The multi-layered temporalities or their processes are significant for Slow Practices. (...) Linear time is interrupted and multiplied by other forms of temporality, some more actual, some more virtual.”

It seems, in my eyes, that the old battle between succession à la Husserl and time “as a net of intentionalities”¹¹⁷ keeps creating its waves. In current debates in the artistic research on time,¹¹⁸ heterochronic time is usually preferred to succession. However, in the framework of my research, succession, as much as I appreciate the voices of critique for this linear understanding of time (Husserl or Kant)¹¹⁹, has definitely been playing a role when making work.

Maybe if I did not think in terms of making work, and refused the notion of work altogether, then I might never end up with succession since, as Brunner points out, again on page 61, “‘Slow’ refers to an ‘Other’ of temporality. (...) The Other of temporality means a renunciation of the ‘work’ as the primary goal of all practices, for example in artistic-academic contexts.”¹²⁰

Now:

(the real one): boredom

The movie: *Pierrot Le Fou*. 1965. Director: Jean-Luc Godard. The scene: hot summer day. A beach. A young woman, actress Anna Karina, in an orange summer dress, walks along the beach. Bare feet. She keeps saying: “Qu’est ce que j’peux faire? J’sais pas quoi faire.” (What can I do? I don’t know what to do.)

116 Christop Brunner, „Slow Practices – 11 Theses“.

117 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

118 See Journal of the Platform for Artistic Research (Sweden: Parse, no 4, 2016).

119 See Simon Critchley, „Times,“ in *Parse* 4 (2016), <http://parsejournal.com/article/times/> last accessed January 20th, 2017. „This concept of time finds its degree zero, a quintessential modern expression, in Kant. It is expressed early on in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the transcendental aesthetic. In this view, time only has one dimension, which is succession: one moment succeeds another. Time is uniform: it is now (i.e. the present), no-longer-now (i.e. the past) and not-yet-now (i.e. the future), and it flows in one direction, from past to future. Time is a uniform succession of nows that are unlimited, indeed infinite; there will always be more nows. Time is constant, as it is measured by the now, now now now, and – very importantly – time is irreversible; you can’t retrieve the past. The now that is gone is gone for good, but there will always be another now, anytime now.“

120 Brunner, „Slow Practices – 11 Theses“.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*¹²¹, a lecture series Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) gave in the winter semester 1929/1930 at the university of Freiburg, Heidegger addresses the topic of boredom in depth, distinguishing among three different kinds of boredom: ‘being bored by something’, ‘being bored with something’, and ‘it is boring for one / profound boredom’. Heidegger, a former student of Husserl, developed his work in continuation of Husserl’s thinking, and also in connection to Wilhelm Dilthey and Søren Kierkegaard. He has contributed to continental philosophy by proposing a radical stance on the question of Being, which for Heidegger is “implicit in everything human beings say or do.”¹²² In that sense, Being for Heidegger takes place on an immanent level. Dasein, being there, is anchored in the concrete physical and hence historical world: Dasein is being-in-the-world. Dasein is characterized e.g. through its spatiality¹²³, Dasein as state-of-mind¹²⁴, care and temporality¹²⁵.

Heidegger thinks about boredom in relation to how time and Dasein operate. I will now briefly sketch the three different types of boredom; in the first two, I will focus on the dimension of time, and in sketching out the third type of boredom, I will add the parameter of Dasein and vision.

Being bored by

Being bored by something is rather simple. There is a clearly identifiable object: I am bored by a book I read. I am bored by a conversation I partake in. Or: I wait at the bus station and the bus does not come. I check my watch again and again. I am bored. I don’t want to wait. I want to kill the time until the bus finally arrives. I have the feeling that I don’t have time and am restless. Here, I am “held in limbo by time as it drags”.¹²⁶

121 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

122 Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time*, (London: Routledge, 1996).

123 See See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 138.

124 Ibid. 172.

125 Ibid. Chapter VI, V, VI.

126 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 120.

Being bored with

Being bored with is a bit more complicated. An example: you attend a dinner party, and the party bores you. I decided to go to the party, and actually do have time. Heidegger describes this situation with the following words: “We *have* time. It is not pressing, and for this reason it cannot go too slowly either, i.e. it cannot hold us in limbo as the dragging of time.”¹²⁷ We have time for the evening, but we are bored with the evening. “We do not at all take time specifically in order to be bored, on the contrary. In this having time for [...] there lies the possibility that the time that we take for things will be filled; and precisely here there arises this being bored.”¹²⁸ In being bored, time endures. Nothing seems to happen. There is a ‘Standing now’. The flow of time is disrupted. The very moment is extended. We remain with a feeling of emptiness. “This standing ‘now’ stands during the evening, it is this ‘during’ itself. What is boring as such is accordingly diffused in its strange ungraspability throughout the whole enduring of the evening.”¹²⁹

It is boring for one: Profound boredom

The third type of boredom, profound boredom, is no longer attached to any specific situation or object. It is rather an attunement, a mood. “The fact is that boring for one can occur out of the blue, and precisely whenever we do not accept it at all.”¹³⁰ There is no time passing anymore; neither a halt, nor a being taken in limbo by time. According to Heidegger, “It is boring for one”¹³¹: “Name, standing, gender, vocation, role, age, fate as mine and yours disappear.”¹³² There is an indifference towards things and people. Everything is both liked and disliked.

Towards the end of the chapter on ‘profound boredom’, Heidegger ponders on the relation of boredom, time and Dasein: “Time is that which, in this boredom, strikes Dasein, into time’s entrancement.”¹³³

Further on, Heidegger expands his thinking to vision and seeing.

127 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 120.

128 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 121.

129 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 128.

130 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 135.

131 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 132.

132 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 135.

133 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 148.

“This *resolute self-disclosure* of Dasein to itself, however, namely in each case to be in the midst of being what it is given to be in its determinateness – this resolute self-disclosure is the *moment of vision*. [Augenblick].”¹³⁴

In relation to my artistic research, the passage affects my thinking: time in the context of profound boredom and seeing are interconnected because Dasein and time are interconnected and, with a look at the quote above, the “resolute self-disclosure” of Dasein is demonstrated in vision, in the *Augenblick*.

Vista:

Seeing and time were discussed in all three artistic parts in relation to composition. In the first part, *Colour, Colour*, I composed a stage piece in which seeing was performative material, and time was dealt with in the heterochronic time of the body of the performers, while chronological time was dealt with in accumulative composition practice on my behalf as a director. The second part, ///, was a predominantly verbally organized discourse pondering time and seeing in the form of written papers; it explored the notion of phenomenological seeing and bodily seeing but also emancipated me from the practice as a composer-director by engaging in a more eye-to-eye relationship with the performer, Lisa Densem.

It was only in the very last part, the third artistic part, *see/time/composing*, that I could get a clearer picture of what I was seeking in my research. It was in the format of workshop that I could come closer to an insight into the kind of composition that I was interested in. Composing as seeing – that is something I kept repeating. And in the above-mentioned quote, I sense that I found some correspondence in theory to what I actually do in my artistic practice when composing and doing composition as seeing.

I compose in a state of boredom as attunement when I sit on my couch, look around and feel I am composing. This way of composing is expressed in vision, in seeing. Composition is then, once again in reference to Heidegger’s words, “a situation of an action that opens in itself and keeps itself open”¹³⁵.

134 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 149.

135 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 149. “[...] The moment of vision is nothing other than the look for resolute disclosedness [Blick der Entschlossenheit] in which the full situation of an action opens itself and keeps itself open.”

Chapter III

*We are talking loud, but we are saying something.
We might use big words, address big themes,
but we are not generating hype or a spectacle.*

Mika Hannula, introduction to the art exhibition *Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Something – Four perspectives of Artistic Research*¹³⁶

This kind of composition

Preliminary thinking

In the previous chapter, chapter II, I considered seeing and time, aiming to give these concepts a more clear contour so that you, reader, could have a sense of what they mean within my inquiry. My concern for seeing emerged and constantly grew in the course of my doctorate. Time, as a topic, has been there since the beginning.

In addition to time and seeing, there has been another important notion: composition. Composition/seeing/time are a conceptual triangle that guided the making, consideration and research of the three artistic research pieces. However, I touched on composition in a slightly different manner because composing was more obviously related to my practice as the artist I was when starting the doctorate. Meaning: I entered the inquiry with the aim of talking about composition and expressing my knowledge as a director/choreographer embodying a choreographic composition practice. Or, to borrow Kirsi Monni's words: I wanted to do "[...] research into the premise of the composing mind in question."¹³⁷

136 Mika Hannula, „Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Something – Four Perspectives of Artistic Research,” in *Art Monitor*, no.4 (Gothenburg: European League of Institutes of the Arts, 2008).

137 Kirsi Monni and Vicoria Pérez Royo, “Composition: Relatedness and collective learning environments,” in *Practicing Composition: Making Practice Texts, Dialogues and Documents 2011–2013*, ed. Kirsi Monni and Ric Allsopp (Helsinki: University of the Arts Theater Academy, 2015), 92.

Composition was, in some way, at the base of it all. Because: the entire project took off from my compositional practice as a freelance choreographer. In places, my research distanced itself from the topic of composing and focused more on time and seeing. But I always came back to composition as a topic and dilemma: I felt uncomfortable with the term and I got a sense that my understanding of my practice, and my identity as an artist shifted over the course of the doctorate – composition sometimes felt obsolete as a topic of inquiry. However, I always came back to it in order to practice enduring with the dilemma and inhabiting the problem.

Chapter III aims at giving a voice to my thoughts on composition, which have been puzzling me in the three artistic parts. They are contained in two sections. Section one is titled *In advocacy of non-proceduralist composition practice* as a kind of manifesto for composition. Section two is titled *Towards Composition*, and it explores composition in relation to its space as a space of Dasein and how this space offers an opportunity for visual thinking.

1. In advocacy of a non-proceduralist composition practice

There has been quite a bit of writing done on choreography as an art form and artistic practice. You can find some of these references in chapter I.

Choreography is not composition. Choreography is an art field like painting, sculpture or music. Composition is a practice that can be discussed in a selected field of art or of science or, or, or...¹³⁸ Pérez-Royo views composition as follows: “[...] as a practice, as an educational technology and as a component of artistic research it is, above all, a structure, a dispositive that organises relations and shapes subjectivities.”¹³⁹ Composition, if one does not look carefully, oh-too-easily carries with it the modernist smell of proceduralism – which often leads to avoiding the term altogether in experimental contemporary choreography. This ultimately leads to avoiding debates on the notion. And, in the very end, it avoids shedding new light or creating knowledge about composition and traces of its potential. Composition with the smell of modernist movement-based composition brings in proceduralism, which in the arts in general brings back ideas of aesthetics as judgement and turns away from aesthesis as perception.

138 See Monni and Royo, “Composition: Relatedness and collective learning environments,” 92. Kirsii Monni: “But in general language the term is understood extremely broadly, signifying all kinds of composing arrangements from material objects to situational relations, and is used in all fields of activity from computer science, mathematics and linguistics to law and history.

139 Monni and Royo, “Composition: Relatedness and collective learning environments,” 90.

Proceduralism, as Victoria Prérey-Royo states in conversation with Kirsi Monni, “would narrow the understanding of composition to the application of ready-made procedures without any deep questioning of their pertinence in relation to the research processes in which they are used, even before the student has identified an interesting research question or an attractive problem to inhabit.”¹⁴⁰

Another way to avoid the topic of composition is to remove it from curricula in dance and art education. Again, Pérez-Royo: “In recent years I have seen a tendency for many of the modules used to be called Composition to change their names to new terms, such as Research Methodologies or Introduction to problems of research.”¹⁴¹

What kind of notion and practice of research have been established for what reasons since the so-called Bologna Process in the last few years – this is not the topic here. But I reference it in these sentences as a light gust of wind.

Back on track:

My research contributes to a non-proceduralist way of composing. In the following, I will briefly sketch how, in terms of practice, each artistic part of my research composition was practiced outside of proceduralism. Just to be clear: this is not about finding the right word. This is about believing that what I do is relevant even if it is called composition, and that it can be reanimated in a way so that it will once again be acceptable to talk and do choreography in experimental contemporary choreographic contexts in terms of composition.

My research process, meaning the three artistic productions of my research, show that composition does not necessarily end in proceduralism, but that doing composition is particular to each new situation that arises, and is thus constantly renewed and rethought.

2. *Towards composition*

At the end of chapter II, I articulated the first thoughts on composition on an ontological level. I wrote there out of a reflection on boredom as a key moment of my composition practice, about composition in relation to situations, acts and the open. All three notions hint at a processual approach to composition: taking place in a moment or situation, the almost ephemeral character of composition is highlighted. It takes place as an act, a doing. The continuity and movement of composition practice is emphasized; last but not least, there is a call for pro-

140 Monni and Royo, “Composition: Relatedness and collective learning environments,” 91.

141 Ibid.

cessuality when emphasizing how this situation and doing are again and again open to themselves.

Another angle on processuality within the scope of my inquiry on composition can be deduced by exploring another set of concepts: existence (as Dieter Mersch views it), showing, seeing.

Composition as a spatial practice

Dieter Mersch, professor of aesthetics at the University of the Arts Zürich, writes about existence as “die schlichte Erfahrung von Ex – sistenz im Wortsinn eines ‘Aus-sich-Haltenden’ oder ‘Aus-sich-Hervortretenden.’”¹⁴² Mersch’s words could be roughly translated: “The simple experience of ex – istence in the meaning of the word: a ‘carrying-out-of-itself” or ‘stepping-out-of-itself.”

Existence is then nothing intimate or so subjective that it cannot be communicated; it does not linger shyly around a threshold between feeling, interior drama and melancholy. Existence is tangible and hence sharable by means of vision and perception because existence comes to us as an experience of showing, coming out, stepping forth. It is not merely happening “within one self”; it externalises. It SHOWS up and manifests itself in the realm of the visual and hence the aesthetic, rather than in the discursive or referential.

Let’s do a turn to composition here. Composition as I research it is part of the visual, hence the aesthetic field: it is indebted to seeing and the gaze or vision. Seeing is a tool for composing in the framework of this inquiry on compositional practice in the arena of choreography as expanded practice. At the end of chapter II, we saw that within a Heideggerian framework, seeing in connection with boredom is related to existence. For Heidegger, existence, Dasein, is spatial¹⁴³, researching composition in relation to existence as something that steps out, shows itself and then entails that composition is a spatial practice rather than a practice of notation or writing.

A composition practice and adjunct space as I research it, filled with matters of visibility and existence, aims to elude representation and aboutness (see chapter I). It is ultimately not about composing a space of copy-images of the so-called real, but the composition practice I am seeking takes place in a space that composes composition in accordance with the contextual and hence historical framework that I have tried to lay out in chapter I. In other words: the

142 Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002), 10.

143 See Heidegger, *Being and Time*.145 – 148.

space of a composition is not a space of representation, but rather a) a space of exchange between world and subject; and b) a space of manifestations, emergence and appearing.¹⁴⁴

Keeping seeing roaming

Composition space as I research and practice it is a space in which an “exercise of gaze”¹⁴⁵ takes place. Similar to painting, composition becomes a site, a world. The French phenomenologist Éliane Escoubas, referring to Heidegger, outlines the world as site: a world made by the artist and that an artist is affected by. Here she puts forth the fundamental circularity in Heidegger’s thinking.

In the composition space of my inquiry, where one characteristic of composition is its worlding, nurtured by the constant circular movement between world and earth and world¹⁴⁶ and subject, which keeps the composing act open again and again, the “exercise of gaze” is put in high regard since it describes, in the words of Escoubas, “the gaze in movement, putting it to work, its *energia*.”¹⁴⁷ It is this *energia*, this being-at-work of the gaze that keeps the circularity and hence the processuality going in the composition practice that I am exploring. The emphasis on processuality makes the aboutness recede in the representational terms of a composition.

So far, so good. I am, however, interested in what this space or spatiality produces other than itself and matters of Dasein, meaning: how it fosters visual thinking.

Composing as visual thinking

I use the good old tool of this inquiry’s driving question to gain more insights: what do I do when I do what I do? When I compose by means of seeing, I think. I experience seeing as thinking. This is not to say that it is only through seeing that

144 ee Éliane Escoubas, „Painting,“ in *Handbook of phenomenological aesthetics* eds. Hans Rainer Sepp et al. (Springer: Dordrecht, 2010), 249 – 254.

145 Ibid., 249.

146 Worlding describes how a world becomes a world. The notion is linked to the circularity between world (historical) and earth (ahistorical). Escoubas refers to Martin Heidegger’s „Origins of the Work of Art,“ published in 1950, but relying on a series of lectures Heidegger gave in the 1930s in Frankfurt am Main and Zurich. Escoubas: „The confrontation between world (historical) and earth (ahistorical) is the naming of tension immanent of art, as the struggle of unconcealment and concealment is immanent to truth itself.“ „Painting,“ in *Handbook of phenomenological aesthetics*, eds. Hans Rainer Sepp et al. (Springer: Dordrecht, 2010), 251.

147 Ibid.

knowledge is created or that seeing is some sort of supreme sense. Blindness can also create knowledge. And for sure there is also tacit knowing fostered by what Noë described in Chapter II as “seeing into the wild”. However, for the framework of this research, I focus on the particular aspect of aesthetic contemplative seeing that produces visual thinking.

In my doctorate, I was already critically engaged with the notion of thinking: in my second artistic part, mainly drawing on Heidegger’s “What is called thinking?”¹⁴⁸. You can find the paper in chapter IV of this written report. Now, I would like to ponder on the topic of thinking in a different manner and begin with the notion of visual epistemology as a means to describe what I do when I compose through the “exercise of the gaze”.¹⁴⁹ I refer mainly to Dieter Mersch and not to Heidegger because Mersch’s thoughts on thinking happen in the midst of the field of my research, visibility, whereas Heidegger pushes rather fundamental ontological considerations on thinking.

In any case, the question of how to visually know is crucial since it addresses the question of how to make a decision or how to make a choice, which is what ultimately makes one do something, move the thing, create a site and ultimately: compose a compositional space.

Let’s first look at what visual thinking is not: knowing something visually questions the traditional notion of knowledge in which consciousness is directed towards something that also results in structures of something as something. Knowing visually does not occur in language and is, in this sense, critical of the dominant understanding of post-structuralism that everything one does or thinks happens in language. For the framework of this research, it is also critical in the predominant wave of writing projects in the field of choreography as expanded practice. I am thinking here of the research project by Mette Edwartsen that she is currently undertaking in the framework of the Norwegian Artistic Research Program or in the collaborative project entitled *Notes*, initiated by Ivana Müller in the context of the Heritage Depot Project at the Freiburg City Theatre. Composition, as I research it, proposes an alternative to current discourses and practices of an expanded notion of writing and reading.

Placing visual epistemology in the foreground is, on the one hand, a way to promote the idea of present tense: seeing happens in the present tense. In each

148 Martin Heidegger, *What is called thinking?*, trans. J.Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

149 See Escoubas, „Painting“, 253: „(...) the gaze in ex-cercise and ec-stasis, can make the „thing-in-itself“ emerge in the gaze, the „phenomenon“, the appearing of that which appears.“

glimpse of an eye, one sees anew. In moving the eyelid by opening and closing it, new information arrives to me, new impressions are retained by me. Seeing happens in the here and now. Composing when seeing thus proposes a practice of the present tense. This is almost similar to the traditional contrasting art form, improvisation, which is also an art form of the here and now. In order to compose, you need to be in the here and now, let words and wordings outside of the house. You can still write later. There is enough time. Don't mind the gap. Linguistic structures do not need to be welcome everywhere. I am aware that I am writing contrary to the *Zeitgeist*, but in order to research a compositional practice, linger around and expose matters of existence and seeing, one needs to make choices on a different basis; one needs to move / think on another basis than words.¹⁵⁰

Thinking is based on differentiation. I need to be able to differentiate when I think. This entails giving negativity an important role. For Heidegger, negativity "describes the 'energy' of thought, i.e., that which first triggers thought into becoming and the reflexivity of the concept".¹⁵¹ Thinking visually makes these differentiations not in terms of logos,¹⁵² but through "non-traditional logic and non-oppositional differentiations, that is contrasts, paradoxes and the like".¹⁵³ Visual thinking articulates in the action of showing, of putting on a display. However, the crucial question is: if negativity is at the base of thought, how can one show this negativity, this nothingness?

There is nothing like pure thinking; as there is nothing as pure negativity in the realm of the visual. Only death is pure negativity, but we cannot show death. We can only experience death. Thus, in the realm of composition as a practice of visibility, I am interested in the act of showing, hence aesthetic display. In this

150 Advocates of the linguistic turn would now certainly say: Hey, hold on. You yourself are writing now, using words to keep track of the experience. See, there is nothing outside of language. I would then respond: Right, sure. It is a paradox. I am aware of it. But also, I am not practicing composition right now. I am writing. In order to write, I need words. I am aware that I am making a tough claim. Mersch also says that showing and saying are intertwined. But I am making this claim in a specific context, in order to stimulate. Not in order to create a hype or spectacle. This is covered by an experience of mine. An experience stemming from my composition practice where words, as much as I love them, don't play a major role.

151 Dieter Mersch, *Aspects of Visual Epistemology: On the „Logic“ of the Iconic*. <http://www.dieter-mersch.de/Texte/PDF-s/>, last accessed March 24th 2017, 167.

152 Mersch, *Aspects of Visual Epistemology: On the „Logic“ of the Iconic*, 169. "As an interim result we can thus note: "iconic" or "visual thinking" is not thinking as long as a specific notion of thinking, which already includes the logos (...)"

153 Ibid.

very context, showing nothing remains a sort of unreachable thing to do even if it is informing the display.

Multiple ways of showing

Dieter Mersch proposes, in reference to Wittgenstein's language games, a "plurality of showings games".¹⁵⁴ There are multiple ways of showing what Heidegger terms a letting be seen¹⁵⁵. Mersch distinguishes among three different types of showing¹⁵⁶: *ostentatious* showing, as when the eye of the viewer is directed in a way that the main action is concealed; *deictic* showing, which is closely bound to a reference and context; and *intransitive* showing, which does not allow for a direct object.

I have been engaged in combining and testing all these types of showings in the three artistic pieces of my research. It is difficult to pin down precisely when each type of showing occurred in the framework of my inquiry on composition, but ostentatious and deictic showing were definitely at stake in the first part of my doctorate, in *Colour, Colour*. An example of a deictic showing is when one of the performers, Sofia Simola, performs the only movement on stage at the beginning of the piece, the movement of her head which follows the slow walk of another performer, Gabriela Aldana Kekoni. Sofia shows us, the viewers, Gabriela's walk by means of her head and hence a gaze that causes movement. Ostentatious showing was used in many micro-situations in order to facilitate transitions: directing the viewer's gaze to a small detail while, on another spot on stage, the next event, which is actually the more important situation, is getting ready to emerge visually. So, in the first part of the inquiry, seeing and showing composed the compositional space. In the third artistic part, seeing was not only a tool for creating the compositional space. Here the compositional space, and hence the composition, created the seeing and showing of the seeing itself: showing was intransitively at stake. In other words: showing as a letting be seen was no longer bound to an object or reference outside of seeing or showing. Ultimately, composing lost its intentionality and hence abandoned Husserl's phenomenological stance: "intentionality, according to Edmund Husserl the most common form of *cogito*, which primarily indicates the directionality of the consciousness towards something, coincides with the predication, the proposition of something

154 Ibid., 172.

155 Lambert Wiesing, *Sehen lassen. Die Praxis des Zeigens* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 19.

156 Mersch, *Aspects of Visual Epistemology: On the „Logic“ of the Iconic*, 29.

“as” something”.¹⁵⁷ Composition then proposes another logic of cognition – one that embraces the non-intentionality of the senses: sensing is not truly directed towards anything. Sensing is embedded in affect. It hits, caresses, touches and affects the body by means of sensing and feeling.

Sensing and feeling are non-traditional ways of knowing; they take place outside of the logos. It is the sensuous that guides the choices and hence my thinking, my visual thinking, of composition that addresses matters of existence, time as boredom and seeing and showing, which I explored by means of three artistic pieces.

The sensing I refer to here is minimally articulated. Meaning: the sensing articulates itself less in the kinetics of a larger amplitude of bodily movement than would be the case in a more traditional understanding of dance. I am thinking of BMC, for example, or other somatic practices that are used in dance training to get the dancer moving and the choreographer choreographing bodily movement. The sensing I am referring to is related to an almost static or micro-movement-producing somatic practice such as Ilse Middendorf's, which I described in chapters I and II. In other words, due to the sensuous, the composition I am inquiring into also remains indebted to the minimal.

157 Mersch, *Aspects of Visual Epistemology: On the „Logic“ of the Iconic*, 161.

Chapter IV

Descriptions, conflicts, methods

Prologue

This chapter reflects on the three artistic parts of my practice-based doctoral research project. The aim is to write from the experience and memory of having made the three artistic works. This fourth chapter opens perspectives on the three artistic productions in order to lean out the window a bit without completely falling out. Meaning: this is not going to be a confession, even if this chapter is clearly written from the first person singular perspective – i.e. my perspective as the initiator of this research project. This is not a confession, and yet, in places, my writing voice might sound confessional because of the nature of the articulations given here: they are memories, which are always fragmentary and subjectively coloured. However, the writing retains its aim by keeping the window open so that my considerations are not allowed to fall like a slimy ball of first person discharge.

What is put on display does not follow the logic of analysis à la in-the-first-half-of-the-piece-the-performers-did-this-and-the-conceptual-side-behind-this-action-was-that. There is no behind, and so there is nothing to reveal. I will be making an effort to objectify this piece of research just to the degree that language demands of me as writer/thinker.

I will think out loud, focus on detail and then swing to a bird's-eye perspective. One might say: now she is stepping up as an artist; now she is raising her artistic voice. Maybe. Possibly. But maybe not. Since, after all: what does it mean to call oneself an artist?

NOW,

The pieces are already over.

They are no longer relevant in terms of whether they looked good or were well done. They are not relevant as artwork. The question is not whether these works belonged to good or bad art or whether I as an artist did a good or bad job. They

are experiments that together with the written commentary create a field where composition in relation to visuality was tested, that is proposed as experiences.

During my inquiry, I questioned what art is so much that now, pondering on the works, they seem to have lost their drive in being proclaimed as art. This is ultimately a discussion about the loss of my drive to amplify my doing as art. But I would also not like to move on directly and say: now these works were research, or artistic research or research expositions. I am still looking for something else. More on this at the very end of the chapter.

In any case, these works allowed me to write chapters I, II and III, and also to write now. The works got me going. They got me going to a place called pondering, contemplation and reflection. Reflecting – not necessarily **about** them, but about the things I am interested in such as concepts and contexts, art, my position towards these concepts and contexts. In relation to concepts and context, it is important for me to let you, reader, know that in none of the works did I first think of the concept and then implement it. Concepts are always at stake and ultimately influence doing, failures included. A bit more on this further down.

While preparing this last chapter, I realized that it was challenging for me to write in such close proximity to the works. Theory and abstraction as well as distance to the making helps me get going in reflection. When very close to the actual works, my voice almost gets inaudible. I don't become shy or timid the way I might standing in front of a huge monument that I feel small in comparison. But, by getting closer to the works, I have a feeling of getting closer to my inner landscape of self, breath and living. So, I get exposed to myself, recognize myself, which is great, but I need to slow down then in order to be able to handle the situation, the recognition.

The writing I am exposing here is precarious. It is carried by an insecurity about writing without footnotes, without a back-up other than my perception. Writing this chapter is therefore less mediated and more immediate, and in that sense immersive. It cuts through space and opens it at times almost violently.

Also, the following writing produces hard facts on the where and who of each piece as well as soft considerations on the methodology of each work. In places, the tone of writing is clearly intended to brush the poetic or essayistic.

The following sections on the works are fragments, since no writing on the pieces can ever encompass all aspects of a live act. I am wary of the tendency to romanticize here. But being a romantic helps to push through sometimes, to not shut down, but rather keep the whole house, windows and doors open.

I said it before, and I will say it again:

In no place in this chapter will I speak about how the concepts of seeing, time or existence were implemented in the actual works. Also, there is no discussion about how these works made these concepts appear. That is because my research and my artistic mind do not operate like this. I did not carry out the inquiry with the question of how concepts and making interrelate. I kept being guided by a doing, rigorously asking, “what do I do when I do what I do?” which is not a naïve question if you really commit to it and take it on. In any case, I don’t mind the gap between concepts and doing. The gap is the difference – this is productive because it hopefully produces more gaps and different differences. Or in case you, reader, are really after the link: the gap, the difference, is the connection.

I won’t write much about audience reception in this chapter. I will include some voices after each artistic part is discussed. Since there were no reviews for the artistic part two and three, I will add an e-mail response I received from one of the attendees of the performative lecture and workshop.

My interest in gaps, distance and holes to create openings has sometimes been a conflict for people engaged in my processes (e.g. performers in the making of a work, or the audience in the moment of reception of the final outcome of a process). Meaning: minding the gap has been a great way to get me going, to stimulate my thinking, but it may not be the best way to include people in a process. So, if I write in the following lines, paragraphs and sections again and again that I did not mind the gap, I would like you, reader, to know that not minding the gap is a kind of artistic strategy that keeps me moving and doing.

Colour, Colour (2013)

Choreography: Jana Unmüßig Dance: Hanna Ahti, Gabriela Aldana-Kekoni, Eeva Muilu, Sofia Simola Lighting/technical director: Heikki Paasonen Costume design: Janne Renvall Dramaturgic support: Shoji Kato Producer: Alexandra Wellensiek Production: Zodiak - Center for New Dance, Kampnagel (Hamburg), Jana Unmüßig

The quartet *Colour, Colour* was created between January and March 2013. It was co-produced by Zodiak – Center for new dance Helsinki and Kampnagel Hamburg. It was funded by the Hamburger Kulturbehörde. The production was supported by a residency at HIAP, Helsinki International Artist Program. The piece was later presented at Impulstanz 8tension 2013. The premiere at Zodiak – Centre for New dance was March 20th, 2013; the Hamburg premiere took place April 3rd, 2013.

Colour, Colour was a sort of conventional choreographic production in the field of experimental contemporary choreography with international players, and it was moderately well-funded with good, privileged working conditions with a comparatively high visibility in the field. Meaning: the piece was presented more than once. It had a short life but some after-life: more presentations in Hamburg and Vienna after the first shows in Helsinki.

The entire making of the work happened in Helsinki. I lived in a studio/apartment space within the HIAP residency at the cable factory Helsinki for three months. The production was part of the now predominant artistic residency culture, in which you hop on and hop off projects at a high speed in different countries.

We worked from Monday to Friday, pretty much each day from 9:00 – 15:00 in a dance studio of the Zodiak – Center for New Dance. “We” were the performers (in alphabetical order): Hanna Ahti, Gabriela Aldana-Kekoni, Eeva Muilu, Sofia Simola and myself.

I had worked with Sofia several times before, but never with the three others, and I could clearly sense that there was a difference in contact, in contacting each other. Working with people over a longer period of time like I had done with Sofia creates confidence and trust. It took me some time to build this up with Hanna, Eeva and Gabriela. And I’d say that I did not really succeed in somehow bonding with them. I write this with a comparison in mind: the group feeling in previous productions. Maybe I was too overwhelmed by living in Finland for three months, working there, having issues on my own, which all then left maybe too little space for embracing the relationships with Eeva, Gabriela and Hanna as I used to do in previous productions. *Colour, Colour* was part of a freelance artist life and career that was built around going from residency to production without much pause in order to keep the ball going, in order to keep the visibility optimal – and maybe this is one of the fundamental reasons why I could not fully engage with the three new performers. I was tired of hopping around. Maybe I entered the project already exhausted, and then had to regain energy during the very making of the piece. Making work then becomes a kind of last safe haven, where if you are able to close out production pressures, you can maintain a social practice and experience intimate encounters. But maybe this in turn created too-high expectations of creating relationships with the three “unknown” performers. Maybe. But maybe none of these reasons count and the project just was coloured by some other professional hues in which people come together, work and then go home without further contact.

The cast the cast the cast: politics.

One of Zodiak's conditions for the co-production was that I had to work with Finnish or at least Finland-based performers. It was a slightly odd beginning to the project. I was accustomed to choosing the performers I wanted to work with. Now, it felt a bit like a commission and I could not help but not feel entirely free to shape the production the way I wanted it. I tried to make the best of the situation and told myself that I wanted not only Finnish dancers (which primarily means that they are trained at Teak) but that I also wanted to have diversity in terms of nationality and educational dance backgrounds. It was clear from the start that it should be an exclusively female cast. I was in need of creating a space with women for women. There was no particular feminist agenda, but the choice was based on a personal curiosity and wish to make a piece only with women.

In any case: the cast – THE CAST THE CAST THE CAST – is KEY. The cast is canvas, colour, brush and inspiration at once. But also making a cast is dirty business. The cast keeps perpetuating the gate-keeper politics of who is allowed to work; who is in and who is out of the theatre.

The people I worked with and a side thought on artistic research

So, as I wrote earlier:

I knew Sofia from before, and I had already indicated in the application for Zodiak that she would be one of the piece's performers. Fortunately, she was based in Helsinki. Sofia and I had graduated from the same dance school, Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance. Also, she had performed in my first major production "Ast im Auge" in 2011, and: Sofia *knew* without my having to say much. Also, I had the feeling that I also *knew* somehow without her saying what she was thinking. We were on the same wavelength when it came to making work; we shared a similar sensitivity. This is obviously my perspective on things. Sofia might speak differently about our encounter.

I met Gabriela and Eeva through some kind of hearing, listing, auditioning, hanging out in the studio and introducing them to my ideas *in vivo*. Gabriela was one of the rare non-Finns in the Finnish dance scene at that time. She is originally from Chile and has been living in Finland for a long time. I knew I wanted to have her before I really met her. It was a political choice. I had this – perhaps silly – need to represent some kind of minority of non-Finnish performers, based in Finland. But also, Gabriela had worked with Deborah Hay, and I could sense in our studio time that we shared some ideas (and not only notions, but also

ways of being that were important to me back then (e.g. presence) – she knew how to embody them).

Eeva was interesting for the production because she was a choreographer from my generation who had an international success with a piece of hers, entitled *In Human Disguise*, a collaboration with Milja Sarkola, which premiered in 2009 at Zodiak –Centre for New Dance Helsinki. I had never worked with a choreographer who had been in a similar place in her career. I was scared and excited about the exchange and the possible power conflicts. In the end, it was indeed Eeva who was at the center of a conflict that came up about the process being too propelled by my perception (see chapter III).

However, at the beginning, the cast consisted of Sofia, Gabriela, Eeva and Riikka Theresa Innanen.

Let's slow down now: the project started with a kind of crisis. Riikka Theresa came into the process a few days later than the others. She was just coming back from a residency in Africa around the time the project started. We worked once in the studio in the framework of a rehearsal and then Riikka contracted stomach problems, flu and fever. She had to go to the hospital. I did not know how long she would be there and was stressed by our schedule, time line and deadline for the work. In any case, I told Riikka that I couldn't wait until the doctors knew what she had and was able to leave the hospital. Now, the thing is that in Finland, hence Helsinki, things operate very differently than in Germany, hence Berlin: Riikka asked me to pay her anyway for the working period, even if she would be out of the project. She said that this is how it goes in Finland and I could contact the union. I had never heard of a union for dancers and choreographers. I had never understood myself as an employer. In the end, we somehow figured it out. It was tough work, emotionally and in terms of the production.

I lay this out to you, reader, in order to demonstrate that artistic research entails work on setting up the conditions required to actually *do* the work. Artistic research is not a protected species that is different to "normal" production modes, stress or work. More on this in a few paragraphs.

So, Riikka was out and Hanna came in. I had seen Hanna in a piece by Ervi Siren, which was rather movement based. I was curious to see Hanna in a work as minimalist as mine. Also, Hanna had just recently come back from a long stay and life abroad (Paris). She was, in my eyes, still a bit foreign to the Zodiak community. Taking her in seemed to support my idea of not just having an all-Finnish-cast that had graduated from Teak. Also, there was Janne Renvall, who did the costumes and Heikki Paasonen, who did the lighting. The collaboration

with Heikki was productive, and we continued collaborating after *Colour Colour*. The collaboration with Janne was difficult. Janne was a very experienced and professional fashion designer, but he had never worked with a contemporary choreographer, so there was truly no shared vocabulary to talk about what I was developing with the performers in terms of stage action. But also, I was pretty anxious about the whole costume question due to my experiences with costumes in previous productions. I held on to the control which ultimately made the exchange and working together difficult and sometimes impossible. In the end, I changed quite a lot of the costumes at the last minute and combined Janne's delicate clothes of silk, leather and cotton with stuff from the second-hand store that clearly counteracted his proposal.

Short side thought:

Research as I understand and did it does not occur in an ivory tower, emptied of any social encounters and misunderstandings, emptied of any down-to-earth production environment. I do not advocate making a clear-cut distinction between artistic research and normal art work. I believe that artistic research can happen and maybe should happen within both. In the field, in the spotlight. It does not happen there exclusively, but it *also* happens there. Thus production conditions and their organisation are a part of an artistic research piece such as *Colour, Colour*. When making the work, I had been unhappy about the time and energy that it was costing to create the conditions for the actual work. I constantly thought that no research could happen like this. I was haunted by the question: "How does this piece differ from any other theatre piece? Why is this research?" I was trying to be a good student.

I have more confidence nowadays and would respond: research is not a fragile child that one needs to protect from the evil art market. Research and hence artistic research is strong enough to be placed in its midst, even if research through the arts might not attract big audiences, more specifically, if it creates new formats that are not recognisable or if it creates signatures and non-signatures that regular theatre-goers are unfamiliar with. Even then AR should be in the midst. If there is the constant claim for a clear-cut distinction and questions such as "How does your project differ from any other project?" then there is the risk of creating a kind of pure artistic research. I am for diversity in artistic research.

The studio time

When it came to the actual studio work, I could sense that there was a new kind of pressure – the pressure of doing research instead of a "normal" piece.

But also, as I mentioned earlier and am now mentioning again: I did not know three of the people I was supposed to work with before starting the project. In previous projects, I had worked with friends or performers who became friends, or friends that were no longer friends after a production because the production pressure was too high and the friendship did not last. But in any case, the friendships were negotiated.

I felt pretty lonely while making *Colour, Colour*. And I write this without self-pity. Loneliness can be great, productive and creative. And I guess, to a certain degree, we could not have otherwise been able to make this piece. But: back then, when making *Colour, Colour*, I was still choreographing in order to have social practice: to create a small community.

I found it difficult to find a kind of group spirit. I remember – in order to counteract this feeling, at one rehearsal I was chatting with them about everything and nothing for over half of the rehearsal time and only got back to the seemingly real work then. I still remember that I asked the performers what they had had for breakfast. (And I still remember that Eeva said that she often has a smoothie, which impressed me for some strange reason.) In any case: I tried to give them a sense of non-productivity, of “working is about hanging out together”. I hoped this would break the ice and we could swim through the sea together, naked and laughing.

Relations were built through time but in the end, there was still a certain accuracy in exchange, a certain professional distance. The performers came and went punctually. There was no resonance after the fact. I did not meet any of them after the performance, except for a bit with Sofia.

So, let’s go on and remain productive by asking: If these were the conditions – in terms of the production, emotionally – what were we doing when we did what we did?

We did runs. Runs: we were doing something – a movement, an action or its opposite: stillness – then repeating it and talking about the difference between the first and the second time doing it. We did this for three months. We found stuff in tasks and via somatic bodywork – the somatic bodywork I described in chapter II. The tasks were, for example, called “standing”. Standing in front of each other. Meaning: we stood one by one while the other four were watching. Being seen while seeing heightened the sense of experiencing the self, space and time. Standing was framed in time slots: 10 minutes standing for example. The task seemed to be the one that best combined all my artistic interests: stillness, time as boredom and duration, seeing and visibility, and composition as a way of

being. When you stand around, you quickly face boredom – depending on the person's mindset, one can experience all three kinds of boredom that I introduced in chapter II. No matter which type of boredom, one often gets embarrassed when simply standing and experiencing different types of boredom while others are watching. My guess is that the embarrassment comes up because when bored, we expose a way of structuring our minds that is not meant to be publically viewed.

However, this embarrassment is interesting. It reveals how I am conditioned to present myself – as a busy-bee – and how I feel lost when I don't do this. Then the picture I am a part of changes; I start to relate differently to what is around me even if it is a rather clear-cut, clean studio space. The air around me changes. This is where composition starts. Composition starts when perception changes; when perception changes from an everyday kind of awareness to feeling a bit off track. In any case: we trusted the things we found to be valid enough to be. And repeated them. Repetition was not used as in scientific research, in which one repeats the experiment to verify results. We did them again and again in order to accumulate more experience. In order to talk about the experience you need for different impressions, sensations and affects.

As a director, I was pushy. I remember how Hanna was once doing something. I think it was a simple walk, and I asked her to do it again because I felt I she was not totally present. At one point, she started crying a bit. Then I felt she was open. I am critical of how I directed back then, for *Colour; Colour*. It was the way I had been directing for some time previously. It was invasive, but also immersive. I also remember an almost real fight between Gabriela and me in one rehearsal where I commented on how she did something in a psychological sense, and Gabriela said – I am paraphrasing – that she does not allow to let herself be analysed in this way. I also remember how Eeva once seemed tired and, when doing a run, she suddenly started crying. I said that maybe it would be better for her to go home and rest. She got angry. She felt patronized. She felt rejected, even though I just thought that she should rest and take it easy.

I never came in and said: today we are going to work on seeing. I never came in and said: today we are going to work on composition practice and time in relation to seeing. Methodology was driven by trusting the doing. No theory guided me, or guided us. Theory was theory. It remained in my apartment-studio at HIAP. I did not mind the gap.

Appendix:

Selection of Reviews

Published on <http://www.skenet.fi/artikkeli/13/03/colour-colour>

Berlin choreographer explores minimalism as a counterweight to the hectic nature of our times.

In the choreographer Jana Unmüßig's new work, the stage is a big black square in the open space of the Kesselhalle of the Kabelfabrik, an old cable factory. Jana Unmüßig's dancers **Hanna Ahti, Gabriela Aldana-Kekoni, Eeva Muilu and Sofia Simola** step into it, one after another.

It's as though the dancers were empty canvases on which the choreographer can create her work. Unmüßig succeeds with this in her research work in Finland.

The Finnish dancers are able to empty themselves of their essence. Just like 1960's minimalism, Jana Unmüßig leads the artists who perform for her to a state of minimum individuality. In some moments, one even thinks of Butoh, also once fashionable here.

The performance raises many questions. What remains of a movement when its direction, power and flow are taken from it? Unmüßig has the goal of omitting all of the movement qualities defined by **Rudolf Laban** and places her dances in an empty space at a certain time.

Two chairs stand at the edge of the stage. A dancer sits on one during the entire duration of the performance. The chairs are a part of the performance, and the person sitting on them is a part of the events. But what happens when nothing happens?

Every object in the Kesselhalle is loaded with meaning as soon as the senses are less annoyed by other things. One searches for indications from the dancers: what do they want to say to the audience? One dancer holds out her hand and makes it round. For a moment, I see a Tai chi lack of materiality within her as she seems to be carrying the globe in her hands.

The performance is almost over when the trio of dancers is completed in a quartet. The performers start to move a bit in the space and the tension among them rises immediately. It's as though the story is just beginning when the 40 minutes that the choreographer assigned to the piece are over.

Sara Nyberg – 21.03.2013

Meditation in Time and Space

Published: <http://www.liikekieli.com/archives/5782>

My attention is first directed to the colors. I'm not a friend of soft pastels, but **Jana Unmüßig's** *Colour, Colour* primarily gave me an experience of color.

In the beautiful Kesselhalle of the Kabelfabrik, on its naked stage, four dancers reside in badly fitting costumes that are reminiscent of the garments from East German clothing ads. But let's not focus on the way they fit when the pastel tones of the dresses are simultaneously gleaming bright and are covering up grey wistfulness. The colors raise the minimalism of Unmüßig's work to a completely new level.

It's calm on stage; it's calm in the audience. There is no music, the dancers are moving slowly, if at all. Suddenly a movement is slightly faster; then it stops. The dancer ends up standing next to another one. A couple is created; it separates again. Unmüßig has explained that she explores space and time in her works. Without reading the program, I realize that I am thinking about Kant's categories and about how I have the impression that the choreographer is trying to visualize the German philosopher's theory of categories.

Colour, Colour is a piece that challenges the audience. You have to be able to deal with silence, immobility and a dearth of action. You can enjoy the piece if you simply accept its foundation. I thought about how a small movement can be called dance. When does an unsteady movement from daily life transform into something of grace? Does a hand movement suffice, a paralyzed leg? If you evaluate this according to Unmüßig's work, it does. *Colour, Colour* is a meditative performance, and that is why I am actually satisfied that there was no music that would have given the interpretation a line of orientation. In this way, everyone can fill the work with their own text and music in the way that he or she experienced it.

Above all, Sofia Simola's presence and talent to take up contact with the audience is impressive. I noticed that I primarily followed Simola's gaze; it often moved more than the events on stage did. Next, I would like to see how Sofia Simola dances!

22.03 2013, Liisa Vihmanen

/// (2015)

Artistic direction: Jana Unmüßig Performance: Lisa Densem and Jana Unmüßig
Production: Theatre Academy Helsinki, Jana Unmüßig With support from the
Inter-univeristy Centre of Dance Berlin and Institute of Artistic Research Berlin.

/// took place at Uferstudios Berlin on February 7th, 2015. The project began quite differently than the first one did. I did not want to have such a big production apparatus and decided to simply apply for a production grant from Teak in order to cover basic production costs, meaning: a fee for a performer. The idea of working on a small scale had two main motivations: a) I was at that time fully convinced that research can only really take place when the settings are not a huge production. Back then, I believed that real research can only happen in small-scale experimental settings; b) I had just become a mother and was generally overwhelmed by my new role and had no clue how to combine being an artist and a mother.

I had invited the dancer and performer Lisa Densem to participate in this second artistic part. I knew Lisa already. We had previously worked together in different constellations: she had performed in my works; I had been an external eye to a work of hers that she had developed during her MA at the HZT Berlin. This time, there was a clear sense of connection, commitment and trust to the person I was working with. This feeling stemmed from the differently structured experiences Lisa and I had shared beforehand. Lisa and I had seen several faces of the other person: professional faces, private faces. Besides that, there was also a level of shared experiences that I needed in order to work with someone. It was also the fact that Lisa could look back on a long trajectory of dance and art projects that made me invite her. Born in the early 70s, she had gone through a very different kind of dance and art training than I had. Her way of looking at choreography felt enriching in the sense that she put different perspectives on trends and fashions.

We spent most of the working time at my place in Berlin-Friedenau at a table in my living room. This meeting place was, again, quite different to *Colour, Colour*, where we always met in a dance studio. Also, our meetings were less regular than those with the performers of *Colour, Colour*. This was due to Lisa's and my family situation, each with a child.

We had lengthy conversations about seeing, time, dance and choreography. The conversations took off easily in all directions, but we allowed this to happen. The tone of conversation followed a certain non-focused methodology, where abundance and letting things go out of control (of the subject at stake) were em-

braced. After some time, we started writing on the basis of these conversations. We wrote separately, each at her home, and only read the final papers to each other once they were done. You can find the texts enclosed in chapter V with the other documentation material.

In addition to the papers, we also developed a short live performative act that Lisa danced at the presentation at tje Uferstudios Berlin, in February 2015. At the presentation, we read the papers out loud and Lisa performed the movement material. We decided that we would sit at the very edge of the room. I liked this idea very much. It suited my interest in being there and not really being there. It seemed a way to talk about the ambivalence I felt about being physically present in the moment of a stage performance.

I got a lot of criticism for the presentation from one of my examiners who did not pass the artistic part. I had to hand in a revision of the work and present it again at TUTKE some months later in April 2015. The research council of TUTKE then passed it. To give some more background info on how such procedures go: when a student's examination piece is not approved by one of two examiners, s/he has the possibility to first write a defence against the examiner's report. This defence is then discussed in the Research Council of the Performing Arts Research Centre. That's what I did: I wrote a defence, the research Council read my defence and also viewed the video documentation of the Berlin presentation. Then, I was asked by the Research Council to present ///live in Helsinki so that the Research Council members could see the proposal live. This is what I then did in April 2015, in the framework of the so-called TUTKE-days, an event that takes places at the end of each academic year when doctoral candidates and professors can present works and ideas.

This failing and then approving of the work influences and challenges how I am able to reflect on it. Failing is painful and filled with shame. At first. But then it also grounded me in some strange way: failing creates awareness of expectations and demands from a so-called outside, but also from myself. Meaning: one expectation and demand is that I am not allowed to fail an artistic part, which, I can say this now, is complete nonsense. One should be allowed to fail, even on the level of doctoral research. It does not mean that the research is worthless. It just means that one needs to sit down and think a bit; give in a bit, let pondering take place. Which is exactly what research is about: letting go of controls and pondering a bit. In that sense, one could even say that failing is very welcome in research. Also, it made clear to me that there is not ONE idea of artistic research. I know this might sound dull and outdated, but it seems, at least to me, that it is

something that one cannot repeat often enough: there is no ONE international standard, since all programs depend on the politics of artistic research in the respective institution where the research is carried out. They follow a particular model of research history; this is dependent on the country in question.

Problems, Conflicts, Crises

In any case, I still don't really know what to think about ///. I think that the entire process of /// remained too discursive for me. It did not trigger bigger emotions and therefore did not trigger knowledge. There was no big crisis in the work, no big clash with Lisa. I am aware of how cliché this sounds – how much this sounds like the artist who only gets creative if there are problems, conflicts, crises, etc. But maybe it is also not romantic at all; maybe it does not need to be categorised, judged immediately... but problems, conflicts and crises are just some more methodological ingredients for making, for my making, and the thing is, often they go along with being hurtful or ethically incorrect. But maybe problems, conflicts and crises are just really good tools if they are included and stated as being relevant because: only then do we as artists develop tools to use them productively, to not hurt each other in a place where relationships can no longer recover. I write this while being aware of how much I need harmony to work, but by doing these works, *Colour, Colour, ///*, *see/time/composing* allowed me to think about problems, conflicts and crises in their production. And I still think that being aware of something is not a guarantee for change, but a potential starting point for it.

However, in ///, I felt Lisa and I were both quite polite when conversing, and I accommodated this politeness. For sure, Lisa and I sometimes had arguments. When one of us got insecure in the conversation, we started to get defensive. But, again, we never cried or shouted as in situations in *Colour, Colour*, in which such reactions were at stake.

Maybe I needed an emotionally calmer process after *Colour, Colour* in which conflicts were more openly addressed – but in which energy is also expended. Maybe I enjoyed this politeness. Maybe it was a way to create a foundation that I was – just one more time – in need of after *Colour, Colour*. There I experienced the process as a rather solitary endeavour. So, politeness can be a tool as well. Methods are always newly created, in dialogue with the actual situation one is in. Methods are situational.

Talking and listening

/// was definitely an attempt at getting away from visuality in terms of methodology. In *Colour, Colour*, seeing was not only a practice or performative material but also a method: doing runs entailed watching them. Seeing the seemingly same thing again and again was a way to construct the piece further. Now in ///, things were set up differently. Now, we were talking. There was nothing to really see. Seeing was not a way of discovering something new. Seeing, here with Lisa at the table, meant that I saw talking here. But even then, I did not really see her because my attention was on her words and wording. I enjoyed hearing her talk and hearing my own voice as well as listening to what Lisa had to say, listening to what I needed to say. In ///, there was more space to it, more space of imagination than when seeing is the predominant way of working. The discursive, the talking and writing, rather than choreographing in the studio by means of perception and sensing, gave me security. It felt like a safe haven. When you write a paper, you can prepare things in advance, and then you read/perform it to an audience from the actual paper. This feels safe. I needed this sense of safety.

Short critique on the performative situation of ///

With a side look on the performative material, I think there was a similar need to not spend too much energy in terms of the emotional implication of the work, but rather to remain a bit detached. I had asked Lisa to take a part of *Colour, Colour* and do it while actively seeing things. We had talked so much about seeing in relation to moving and not-moving that this task seemed the right one for the moment. Now, looking at the proposal, I find it slightly lame. I think it would have been better to develop movement and stillness-material out of the conversations, rather than “just” taking something from *Colour, Colour*. In the end, there was little space for the unknown at the actual Uferstudios presentation. The mere fact of being there, showing up, raising my voice, doing something and being heard – these seemed big enough tasks at that time, in the concrete situation of February 2015. So, what I am saying here is that if the doing is the method, and if I trust this doing, all one needs to do is to look closely and name what this doing is motivated by, no matter how obvious or simple it seems.

In ///, a more classical idea of choreography, and hence composition, was negotiated. Choreography was about reading. Introducing a reading of the paper as reading out loud puts the minds and attention of the audience into a mode of “reading” and listening. Attendees were then in a reading mode when Lisa entered to do the dance/performative part, looking at movement from the

perspective of decoding signs. Putting the emphasis on reading as a mode or distributing and receiving bodily movement is, in my eyes, a kind of classical way of talking and doing choreography. It is just the flip side, the alter-ego of writing, which is what “choreo-graphy” is about etymologically. Looking back now, I wonder whether I should have found another way of sharing the text in order to avoid the traditional idea of choreography as writing mentioned above. I remain conflicted on this question since I still consider a simple reading as an interesting proposal in the context of performance art, where reading from paper is oh-so-quickly doomed as non-creative, non-innovative and old-fashioned academic.

In the guise of a seemingly new face, my performative lecture was a rather classical and less innovative way of choreographing. I still find *Colour, Colour* far more confusing and therefore interesting. *Colour, Colour* was a piece in which choreography was not written; it was not improvised either, but the steps were not entirely fixed. The layering of doing-it-again-and-again created the movement and stillness in space. However, the doing and not-doing was above all felt. I would interrupt the performer and ask her to do it again if she came in with a mindset à la “This is what I have to do. The choreographic law, the writing, says it.” I often said “Don’t fix”. *Colour, Colour* was about a constant rediscovery, a constant sensing. This is how the choreography emerged. In ///, things were not really sensed, at least not on my behalf. When reading the paper, I just did it. It is, however, not just about DOING IT, à la Nike. I am aware that I cannot speak on behalf of Lisa and how she experienced the doing of the performative material. I can just say that, as a director, I was far less pushy about her not just doing it, but sensing it. I now have more of a feeling that I might have asked her to actually “just do it”. /// was there in order to make me understand what methodology for my research is not about. It is not about just doing it. It is about sensing and feeling.

Appendix:

Responses after the presentations:

E-mail response from Britta Wirthmüller; 9.2.2015:

“Dear Jana,

I just wanted to write to you about your presentation:

I found it to be very interesting and an exciting and productive view onto your work. Your essay and Lisa’s text accompanied each other well. What was important to me was – and is – that Lisa also wrote about what happens when she does not succeed in seeing as a performer. This made it even clearer to me, what seeing actually is or could be.

By the way, for me, the decision to read the texts from the side and let us look into the “empty” space was absolutely logical. It has a lot to do with what you write. And it is a setting that gives the text plenty of space. I often have a problem at lectures: I only look at the speaker’s body language and their “performance” for the first 20 minutes and don’t pay attention to the text. That doesn’t happen to everyone, but that’s the way it is for me. I believe, if it had been an audio recording, I would have also spent the first minutes thinking about why we are listening to this as a recording, who is speaking and – depending on the recording quality – how the quality is, etc. So I found your (or the group’s) decision very clear; it worked for me. I would have told you, but my voice on that evening was bad because of a cold and Rodrigo had already communicated that in his commentary.

One thing I noticed: in your essay, I had the impression that there is a lot of resistance to either describing “seeing” as a method or examining your artistic work in the context of a PhD. I assume there are reasons for this that I don’t know about. It didn’t make your essay less interesting or productive, but it did irritate me for a moment, probably because the resistance was not comprehensible to me as a listener.

In any case, I wanted to thank you again for this insight – which is, in fact, the second insight into your work (after mentoring with Juan...).

Sincerely,

Britta

E-Mail response from Rodrigo Garcia Alves, 15.3.2016:

During the lecture performance part of the PhD research by Jana Unmüßig some subtle questions started to pop up to me while I looked into the empty studio space at Uferstudios Berlin. I listened to her and dancer Lisa Densem speak on the side of the space, out of the main sight of the audience and a whole set of movements was drawing itself in front of me, somewhere between my imagination and the hearing of their voices.

What was most intriguing was to visually perceive one way of working just by listening. And how this simple strategy gave me a clear picture on how the choreographer/researcher invests on a daily research about movement composition and ways of seeing.

By sharing the space with Lisa which has been involved in her works, Jana let her position of choreographer be informed by an extended routine of labour and exchange. This routine being sometimes silent, empty but also full of impressions and true embodied experiences.

Lisa Densem did a practical demonstration of their method and it seemed to me that the set of movements was already there, waiting for her as a vehicle in order to achieve us, the active audience, visually.

I cannot exactly quote any of their words because I was myself thinking together and in real time about my own system of work and collaboration. And as I vaguely remember, and already assuming the freedom of reinventing their lecture performance, I was there fully experiencing the space and a working method like the hunter when merging into the nature to grab its prey.

Rodrigo Garcia Alves
MA Solo Dance Authorship
University of Arts Berlin

see/time/composing (2016)

The workshop took place June 12th 2016 at the Exhibition Laboratory of the Fine Arts Academy of the University of the Arts, Helsinki. The space was a white cube that is used for multidisciplinary projects. In terms of production means, the format of the workshop was the easiest and lightest: I didn't have to pay any performers. It was only towards the end of my doctoral project that I had a grant that allowed me to be independent of outside funding. This third artistic part was supported by Kone Foundation.

It interests me to say that there is a slow and yet clear detachment of the theatre space visible throughout the three artistic research pieces: *Colour*; *Colour* took place in a black box theatre; *///* took place in a hybrid space: a studio space that is used for performances and rehearsals – I think the hybridity fit the combined format or lecture and performance; *See/time/composing* took place in a white cube. When presenting the third artistic part, I thought much about the current trend of dance and choreography being presented in galleries, museums, etc. I considered the third artistic part as being a part of this trend. Now, looking back, I see things a bit differently: I think I went into the white cube in order to emancipate myself from my initial practice in the dance context, mostly presented in black box theatres. But the aim of this project was not to step away from a theatre/dance stage to a visual arts space. Or, in other words: emancipation is great for the moment, but afterwards one asks: what is the next step? How do I push expansion further? More on a possible fourth part of my research at the very end of this chapter.

The workshop was open to a maximum of 15 people, but in the end, there were only seven people, examiners included. There was a stomach flu going around at that time in Helsinki and so many people had to cancel.

In terms of methodology, I set up two spaces. Space one consisted of a video documentation of the first and second artistic part, with a visual that hinted at the third artistic part. Participants had to first go through this space of documentation in order to then arrive at the actual workshop space. By proposing the documentation space, I had hoped to give people insight into what had happened so far. This should allow one to get a first idea of the context of the workshop: the two previous works. The workshop was divided into five parts: we first did some exercises of Middendorff's breath work; then I introduced the object of the game; then the game is played one on one; then there is an intermission when I ask what if what each participant is doing is already composition; then a discussion part

is divided into two sections: 1) exchange between two workshop participants; section 2) an exchange with the entire group.

Middendorf breathing work

I decided to do Middendorf breathing work because a) it had been part of the first two artistic works, and I wanted to lay it out to the workshop participants in terms of immediate experience, and b) it seemed important to first ground people in the here-and-now before asking them to explore mere visual experience and concerns of composition based on vision. The breath work was meant to serve as a kind of anchor when sitting and seeing something and possibly wondering what the heck they were doing there. Then they could check in with their breath and realize that one very concrete thing they were doing was sitting and breathing. The awareness of one's breath was meant to connect the visual experience to a bodily level. One easily forgets the body when sinking into seeing: the production of images and visuals is a fast and seductive way to fade away from a physical level of existence. I had hoped that by proposing breathing in the manner that Middendorf treats it – not wilfully directed, not left down in the unconscious – I could give the workshop participants a visual experience of what the body is a part of in its most existential manner. Also, breath à la Middendorf is a work in patience, in letting the breath come and in letting the breath go. One practices a non-demanding attitude towards oneself. Such an approach also helps when engaged in the kind of seeing I am after, alternating between letting the seen come closer, grasping it, and releasing the seen again, freeing it from the eye.

The task: the altered object game

Sitting and watching things. This was the task: take things out of your handbag or pocket and watch them, see them. I had abstracted this from the way I was introduced to composition by Susan Rethorst, who had considered the game as a game with objects in which you move the things in pairs. After having graduated from SEAD, I continued playing it alone and rediscovered the pleasure of stillness. In stillness, objects offer orientation. So, we had five things each and sat with them. The things that each workshop participant used came from their private pockets. The fact that the things were from a private context also opened up an exploration of self-reflection and self-encounters for each workshop participant: I see the thing I took out of my bag: a tissue I used to clean my daughter's nose with at the playground. I don't only engage in observing my own doing in the very moment – contemplative, aesthetic seeing – but I also engage

in tracing back in time to how I gave her this tissue, and how I will clean her nose with it in the future.

There was a tiny conflict on how to share my presence as a workshop facilitator and at the same time workshop participant. But I needed to do it while the others were doing it. I had learned from /// that I wanted to have the same task, at least in places, as the people I had invited to materially assist and witness my questions. Sharing the task, being one of many – that feels good. That feels right.

When something feels right – that is enough of a criterion for me. Some people in the field of more conceptually driven dance would fight about this with me. But if you, reader, want to know how my doing operates: it operates according to the criteria of what feels right. Many people think that art is about pushing boundaries. Probably it is for many. For me, since I rather struggle with keeping boundaries, it is about establishing and keeping boundaries. As in this workshop: I sit on my chosen spot in space, have five things and look at them. An ordinary gesture. Not in order to celebrate the everyday in art, but in order to get a sense of location, of boundaries. Setting boundaries, limits – these are helpful methods for the kind of composition I am after.

Then,

Another spot:

My position

I sit and see the things I have chosen, five at hand, and get nervous. I get nervous that workshop participants are getting bored and whether this second artistic part will fail like the one before. In the conversation: I am nervous. The conflict in this artistic part is within me. I am facing my insecurity, as a speaker and doer. However, being nervous is good. Facing insecurity as a speaker and doer is good. It brings stuff up; it keeps the window open.

In *Colour, Colour*, I was not on stage at the moment of presentation. In ///, I had tried and failed. Now in *see/time/composing*, I did it again, in the guise of a workshop facilitator. I could handle this position, even if my hands and eyes were trembling. By taking care and taking responsibility for the situation and the people in it, by facilitating the workshop, it seemed to give me enough to do in order not to get lost in speculation, but rather to remain grounded.

In terms of methodology, this last part was mainly guided by an interest in keeping the participant's attention and curiosity on the subject of seeing and composition. However, in the final discussion, one participant said that she could not make the link between seeing and composition. Meaning: there was a gap for

her when she was invited to move from the altered object game to the question “What if this is already composition?” For her, the connection between composition and seeing was not that obvious. I gave this workshop again in June 2017, in the framework of the research pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Then I wanted to propose the transition from seeing to pondering on composition in a different manner in order to respond to the gap between game object and the question of composition and ultimately to continue developing the method of delivering the workshop. I introduced a possible link between seeing and composing and named already at the beginning of the task that seeing in the frame of my research does not produce another visual but rather a way of being.

Appendix:

E-mail response from workshop participant Sofia Simola; 02.07.2016:

“Hei,
was very nice to participate.

It turned out to be very nice, the moment with those objects especially. It stays in my mind as something that can open space between thoughts. I found some humor in it too. (...)”

Epilogue and end

After all, in all of these three parts, I think I was searching for who I am as an artist. I think, for me, for my project, for my inquiry, for my work, for my life, this is what is behind, on top of and next to the question: What do I do when I do what I do? There is a constant insecurity of whether or not what I do is really worth being called art, which ultimately brings back the question of whether I can really call myself an artist and whether or not I even need to call myself an artist. I pose myself this question seriously. This question is what this research is about in more concrete and yet more hidden terms.

I said it earlier, and I say it again: the pieces are not relevant as such. The material work is not relevant as such. It is interchangeable. That is partially because one of my findings of this research could also be termed in the following way: I researched visuality in the context of a compositional practice in the field of expanded choreography that produced a visual but immaterial output, which is a way of being propelled around Dasein, temporality and perception.

Reset:

I take it back: the pieces were relevant in so far as I would not otherwise have been able to write these words. The experience of making these artistic expositions to use them in talking about artistic work in artistic research circles was important; these experiences allowed me to think about, reflect on, ponder about and produce verbal and non-verbal reflections.

However, all three artistic parts possibly taught me this: I am looking for a place. From the director/choreographer in *Colour, Colour*, to a reader/writer/performer in ///, to a workshop facilitator in *see/time/composing*. And then I end up with the matter of artistic identity. But I won't start again.

Seeing, time, existence, Dasein – concepts that I can sense – help me. Writing about them is easy. I like the gap. I need the gap. It saves me from not falling into the abyss of the never-ending search for identity.

CUT CUT CUT

Writing from the perspective of practice is writing from practice and its tone and rhythm. My practice is messy, even if it appears to be minimal and clean. My practice, as I experience it, is messy, dirty and confused.

That is a kind of confession.

To come.

Or not.

CUT.

END.

U-Turn.

Recap.

The first artistic output of this inquiry was a choreography, clearly identifiable as placed in the field of contemporary dance. The second artistic part was then a performative lecture. The third artistic output: a workshop.

Then,

Now,

there is the question,

What's next?

What is a potential fourth part; how does this artificially constructed line of three works continue? Does it continue?

It always does. The question is just: how does it continue its visibility. In other words: How will I construct the idea, the myth of artistic work, the game of amplification? Artists amplify. They have great tools to amplify the simplest things into something that seems other and different and which gives me, the receiver, an impression of seeing and perceiving anew – further?

Realistically spoken,
and this has already started,
there is

a collaboration with visual artist Tina Jonsbu, currently a research fellow at the Norwegian Artistic Research Program. Tina and I met at the summer academy for artistic research (SAAR) in Tromsø, Norway in August 2016. We share a common interest in small gestures, Agnes Martin, “women doing difficult minimal work” and threads. We started to experiment at SAAR by laying out and unrolling threads, guided by a curiosity of how space could become a performance, how we could both handle being seen while doing a sort of simple action like unravelling thread. We then met two more times, once in Berlin, once in Oslo, also discussing matters of time and timing in this first experiment, and we are now looking for more concrete ways to continue our exchange, meaning: we are starting to set up production conditions, e.g. looking for funding, etc. I understand this project as a continuation of processes I’ve been engaged in during the doctorate since it operates in the framework of an expanded understanding of choreography. Also, in this project one can see how I have changed in terms of ways of working: I don’t want sign off on the work alone, which is what I always did before the doctoral inquiry. On that subject: Tina and I are both lonesome long-distance runners. We never allowed another artist to get really close or to share responsibility for a work. Maybe, maybe it is because we just like each other that the flow of thoughts, energy and empathy keeps carrying us. I can see how this project is a kind of logical continuation of my research: through the inquiry, I now know better where I stand, what I do when I do what I do. It may still not be possible to articulate everything verbally, but, again, I don’t mind the gap; I am able to engage with another artist in a serious and committed way. I have a clear sense of where I am coming from and what my position is. This threat of possibility would continue in the vein of an identity search. Progressive identity for sure: no single but shared authorship.

BUT
U-TURN

It could also all be different.

It could be that it is not about identity, that the point of all this inquiry is not to be more aware of my position and ultimately my profile that emerges on the horizon as my market value. After this inquiry, I can not only work as a choreographer, but I can also carry out research, apply for research money, etc. What if it is not about transforming from a choreographer identity to an artist/researcher identity?

It could be that, if it is not about identity, that I will return to some sort of tree-mode in a next project.

Let me explain what I mean by “tree-mode”: when I lie on the floor with other people, our feet all touching in the centre and our arms put to the side so that they can almost touch – when I am asked what image I am creating, I won’t say that I see a spoke wheel, meaning I won’t take bird’s-eye perspective, but I will say that I am creating a tree with my body. I have a sense of embodiment, that is: I don’t see myself from a bird’s perspective, but I still am, exist.

In other words, what I am trying to get at here is that if I don’t continue the route of identity, but rather focus on what my body does, I might not need to do further projects, no matter whether you call them art or research or artistic research. Or: if I make them, I will be clear that they are a way to make a living. In other words, when I ask the question what do I do when I do what I do, it keeps me going and does not require a clear profile or identity politics. And I say so while thinking that this implies not writing and creating discourse about how we as artists should all not work on our identities. The thing I am after is that the change is happening somewhere else. The change is not happening in terms of whether I do or do not sign off my work alone, or whether or not I am a “normal” choreographer or a choreographer of expanded practice. The real change, for me, within my project, is not respecting these identity labels; the real change happens in terms of my understanding that I don’t need to externalize my doing as art in order to be an artist. The way this understanding materializes is, in my eyes, secondary.

Forms,

Visibilities

Come and go. Material changes.

Call it art, call it not art,

Call it art, call it life,

All there is,

Is a doing, a movement of breath, emerging, disappearing, leaving a sense of awareness, palpable when sitting on a sofa, looking close, looking far, sensing the end of the head and the end of the feet, while the doing does, living.

Chapter V

Documentation material

First artistic part

Title: *Colour, Colour*

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/64713735>, Password: zguezsz



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Second artistic part

Title: ///

Video documentation: www.vimeo.com/127423246, Password: jana1

Video documentation (discussion): www.vimeo.com/127423292, Password: jana2

Paper presented in ///, written by Jana Unmüßig:

Title of the paper:

On Going Beginning, On Going End

1. Defining the ground and mapping the field

In today's contemporary dance world, dancers-performers are mainly doing the double bill: choreographing their own work and performing in other people's work. I never wanted to do this. I just wanted to do one thing. Choreographing, but not performing bodily in the moment when the audience attends the performance physically.

Out of a need to explain what I do when I do what I do to others emerged a need to actually know what I do when I do what I do. This is what I look at in my doctoral research project, carried out at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Topic of my research: Bodily seeing performed both by choreographer-director and performer- dancer in choreographic studio-based composition practice: Composing time through bodily seeing. Towards a still but not fixed, silent but not mute, conceptually driven but yet felt choreography.

In this paper I focus on bodily seeing as artistic practice of choreographer – director; the topic of silence in my research and possible methodology of arts-based research.

In the frame of my research, composing is conceived as a body-based perceptual practice that is not a set of tools for creating nice lines, but rather a way of thinking through bodily movement. In order to better understand what composing is about, I look into this bodily movement, which is for the frame of this research project the doing of seeing with a particular note on the connection of seeing and body. That note starts by an understanding that seeing is a bodily movement. Seeing as I scrutinize it starts off with the eyes and spreads through the body. Seeing as I test it in my research is not stuck in the eye, but it touches with the eye that which is seen in a way that awareness of the whole body is created. I

see a folder on my shelf and my attention travels into my left foot. The seeing I talk about travels throughout the body, even if the body does not visibly move in big kinaesthetic amplitude. Also, a body standing and seeing is moving. To say that a body seeing in standing is not moving is questioning whether the wind moves or whether there is movement when one opens the drawer in the kitchen. The seeing I scrutinize takes that which is seen as a phenomenon, as something that is appearing and therefore as a constant becoming. It is driven by intuition, emotion and not-naming that which is seen. It includes blindness, silence and in places muteness. It is a way of thinking in body-based art. John Rachman, in *Art as a thinking Process: New Reflections*:

“Indeed, vital to the process of thinking in art, and in its forms of research, is something raw and wild, given by things one cannot quite identify or see or say, creating a kind of blindness or muteness combined with a sense of an inchoate necessity that causes or forces one to think – or rethink – often opening up in the process new unanticipated relations with others.”¹⁵⁸

The notion of ‘choreography’ refers in my research historically to the contemporary type of choreography ‘choreography as expanded practice’, meaning choreography independent of dance.

“Working in a multiplicity of formats, he [Spångberg] speaks of ‘choreography as expanded practice’, a mode of analysis and production that can be applied to any field of expression. To Spångberg, choreography is a knowledge, rather than a set of directional tools with which to create dances. He defines choreography as ‘a structural capacity or discourse’ and sees dance moves as just one element.”¹⁵⁹

158 John Rajchman, „Art as a Thinking Process: New Reflections“ in *Art as a Thinking Process Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, eds. Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Presse, 2013), 196.

159 Esther Levy-Fenner, *International choreographer Mårten Spångberg to judge new Australian choreographic award*. Retrieved from <http://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/performing-arts/international-choreographer-mårten-spångberg-to-judge-new-australian-choreographic-award-244114> on June 11th 2014.

It is a kind of choreography that values thinking, reflecting, discourse, conceptualising, but that also values the felt, lived body with its mess of life and death. It is a kind of choreography that is embedded in somatic body work and is carried by a belief that the lived, felt body is not a site where different traces, imprints, texts bundle, but that the lived body is in the first place an experience, that through its physical materiality is bound to a place and is so always already contextualized.

2. What if this is research?

The methodology of my inquiry is one of moving between hesitation and doubt. Methodological tool number one is the way, the process, the question on methodology itself. HOW TO?

Rachman: "What then is thinking in art? ... In the first place, it is not a matter of method or of methodology. For in the process of thinking in art, in its research, and in the ways it is learned, there is nothing like a 'science of method.'" ¹⁶⁰

I practice seeing in a studio-based choreographic art context and in doing so, I open my self and body to the potentiality of that which is given in front of me. I do that by coming into the studio. I sit, stand or lie, rest for a moment and take off into the doing of seeing by seeing. "Funnily", there is no thing in the studio to really see other than the physical architectural "givenness" of the studio. Maybe there are some pillows or a curtain hiding a mirror. But in general I come to a somewhat empty space and practice seeing. What does that mean? What do I do when I see nothing?

I think. I think through seeing, producing silent still thoughts, almost imperceptible, small moments of attention.

Reset:

I come into the studio, breathe through, let go of the stress of my life outside the studio, take my shoes off and don't move. I sit and lie and see. See the ceiling, see the walls, see the lights, see the floor, see parts of my body. Mostly I get tired and fall asleep in one moment and go home after having napped. That is an example of one of many days that might be called "unproductive". Thus, there is much to research that goes unnoticed. There are things we know and there are things

¹⁶⁰ Rajchman, „Art as a Thinking Process: New Reflections“, 196.

we don't know. Let's not mind the gap. In the frame of my doctoral research project, there is nevertheless the question: How to capture the creative process in order to report back to supervisors, examiners, community? How to document, if, As Christopher Bannerman and Cahal Mac Laughlin unfold in „Collaborative Ethics in practice-as-research“, “attempts to capture or to re-present the creative process are arguably always limited to the creation of another symbolic document that only partially conveys the original, in large part as the edges of creative process are blurred by the frequently significant contributions that arise at times when the artist is “not working”.¹⁶¹

Documentation of that which slips away from the official route of research can be implemented by framing the blind spot under the heading “What if this is research?” This hypothetical question allows me to define that which I do as research and also at the same time expand the notion of research. If we define that which we don't know, that which slips away, as research, we talk about knowing rather than knowledge because in knowing we stay in motion, and acknowledge how findings, “knowings”, are always only temporary, crystalising for a given moment out of the almost ephemeral, fleeting nature of what it means “to know”.

My methodology is driven by rigorous, serious dark play, trusting that I won't miss the exit sign when it is time to change the route. Until then I keep doing what I do, seeing the floor, seeing the ceiling, seeing parts of my body, and parts of other bodies.

Bracket open:

When choreographing a group work, there are other bodies around mine, populating the studio. Thus, this text does not deal with THEM, this text does deal with me. It deals with my own mess and aims to tackle my research concern seeing in the frame of studio-based choreographic practice from the perspective of how I experience seeing that I identify as my artistic practice and that I also conceive as a way of thinking. Thinking through bodily experiential doing, through the perceptual practice of seeing.

Closing bracket.

My work and research feel like this: it feels like a bouncy ball – you throw it on the ground, and yet it bounces back again and again. No way to fix it, no way to direct it and tame it under rules of gravity. Feelings are part of research

161 Christopher Bannerman and Cahal McLaughlin, “Collaborative Ethics” in *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, eds. Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini (New Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 68.

because that which I look at and the means through which I do the inquiry are the one of art. Angela Vettese in “How do we teach art?”:

“Regardless of what it may be, art is a slippery entity that aims to upend anyone who tries to pigeonhole it into a taxonomy or inflexible category, a sector in which there is no room for a pacifying episteme. In asserting that art may be a thinking process, we are also questioning the meaning and widening the means of the world [sic] ‘thinking’.”¹⁶²

3. Numerous thoughts ordered one after the other

Silence

One condition through which thinking through my artistic practice is made possible in the frame of my project is silence. I think in silence. That is, silence is the condition for thinking and silent are the thoughts I produce. Not because I go along with a classical scholarly “Book-oriented-mute-table-work-in-silence”, where silence is part of the reception of the whole supreme kind of knowledge that produces pure thought. For me, silence is a situation, where judgement is suspended and which allows me to unfold thinking. If I say I think through seeing, I call for a way of thinking that is not verbally but bodily-oriented, always connected to my artistic doing, the doing of seeing in choreographic studio practice, a bodily movement, bodily experience.

Also, I conceive of silence as a way of resistance. Resisting the overly loud environment I find myself in: the freelance choreography market. Visual artist Judith Blightman, whose work “If I had two heads, Kristina of Denmark, 1538” is part of the contextual framework of my research, says that when talking about an artist-run space that she and her peers opened up in the 1990s in London that “especially in London after Britart in the 1990s where everything was so spectacular, in your face that there was no room for thinking.”¹⁶³ Blightman and her colleagues were not especially against Britart, but they had a need to open space for other ways of thinking than those that were predominant at that time.

I have no visual arts training and am only partially familiar with visual art history. But I can translate what Blightman describes into my field of expertise. Doing so, I not only acquire reflection on my artistic context – understanding

162 Angela Vettese, „How Do We Teach Art?“ in: *Art as a Thinking Process Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, eds. Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 14

163 Interview via Skype with Juliette Blightman, 7.11.2014.

similarities and differences – but also, the act of translation fosters a sense of artist community that goes beyond artistic discipline. I interview Blightman regularly in the frame of my research, and establish an exchange that is carried by a concern for context and concept, and not informed by discipline-bound craft and its history.

So,

Context

Sure,

Visual arts are not choreography, and the cultural, political situation in 1990 in the UK is different than the beginning of the 21st century in Germany. However, one can note down that in opposition to how Blightman describes Britart in London gallery and museum circles, in experimental contemporary dance and choreography, there emerged – precisely in the 1990s, foremost in France – a quite discursive way of making dance, also labelled ‘conceptual dance’, ‘no dance’, ‘minimal dance’. Representatives of this type of work are for example Xavier Le Roy or Jérôme Bel. Thus, for some years now there has been much more theatricalized dance and choreography programmed in venues. I am aware that is a sort of too reductive statement, as also there are many other kinds of choreography going on and being programmed: there is much work on the relationship between music and dance / music and movement; there is social choreography or choreography that initially displays a practice. What I want to say here is that by referring to choreography that is set up by means of theatre, I choose the most oppositional type of choreography to what my research and work is after: setting up ways of doing choreography that are not put in place by means of perception and bodily vision.

Picking up to some extent on what was done in the 1990s, – minimal, conceptually driven work – my research and work also differs from, for example, that of Le Roy. For example, I use much non-verbal communication when developing a piece, anchoring the process rather in somatic body work and engaging with perceptual, durational, non-verbal exercises. I research in silence and produce silent, visual, body-based, time-based pieces.

Let's shift back to silence

Thinking is often associated with talking, as we are used to believing that thinking happens in the head and is then thrown out through the biggest hole in the face, the mouth.

Thus, for my arts-based research, thinking happens through bodily, all body parts affecting, doing of seeing. That is, it happens without words and without their articulation through talking: “Das eigentliche Sagen ist vom Schweigen zu schweigen. [The actual talking is to be silent about silence]”.¹⁶⁴

With a side look to Heidegger, one says something when being silent. Following this quote, Heidegger questions how far talking – and I'd say thinking – needs talking.

Thinking in silence, imagination takes place. Imagination is reflection as it calls for projection, for projects, for the future. And is not any thinking after that which is about to come? As an arts-based researcher, conceiving of my artistic practice as a way of thinking, I try to produce the next step of my doing, produce the next work, push into the future, form and ultimately through this form control the future. What if thinking could have another purpose than to do the next step? What if we question in the words of Paolo Garbolino in *What the Scientist's Eye Tells the Artist's Brain* that “We are used to believing that knowledge is the product of a thinking process, that thinking is in the head, and that art is a practice that produces artefacts and that has to do with the hand and the eye.”¹⁶⁵

And yet we'd have kept moving on, producing research-based work and arts-based research and used the eye as eye and hand as hand, but practiced sensing the foot scratching the leg when using the eye and using the hand while putting all attention into its very edge, the finger tips? What could thinking and thinking through arts practice imply then?

It could mean that we continue digging the hole and asking again and again: What do we do what we do when we do? Then we would study our doing in a good sense, that is, without a master discourse, but as a singular, individual journey. Thinking and learning go hand in hand. They are the grounds for research. No research without learning:

¹⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, 104.

¹⁶⁵ Paolo Garbolino, „What the Scientist's Eye Tells the Artist's Brain,” in *Art as a Thinking Process Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, eds. Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vettese (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 74.

“In das, was Denken heißt, gelangen wir, wenn wir selbst denken. Damit ein solcher Versuch glückt, müssen wir bereit sein, das Denken zu lernen. (...) Der Mensch lernt, insofern, er sein Tun und Lassen zu dem in Entsprechung bringt, was ihm jeweils an Wesenhaftem zugesprochen wird. [In that which means thinking we get into when we think ourselves. In order to succeed in such attempt, we must be ready to learn thinking. (...) Man learns, if he brings his doing and not – doing in relation to that which is attributed to his essence]”.¹⁶⁶

So, thinking implies learning to think. How does one learn to think? Again: this is not about a master discourse that needs to be acquired. This, in respect to Heidegger’s quote, refers to learning as a doing that is in correspondence with that which is attributed to one’s essence.

The notion ‘essence’ is definitely suspect if one departs from a post-structuralist way of conceiving the world. But let’s take it for this moment softly and grasp it for now as simply something that each of us would identify with or is particular to oneself.

I think the quote of Heidegger is relevant for debates on artistic research and its methodology as it brings thinking in connection with learning, which ultimately could lead to discussion on art education in higher education, such as doctoral programs in arts academies. Furthermore, this quote makes clear that one can never learn all and so can never think all, but only that which is in connection to one’s doing, the artistic practice.

Back on track:

The artistic practice, my doing – what do I do when I do what I do?

I come into the studio, take my shoes off, put some training pants on and see the lamp, see the ceiling, see the dance carpet on the ground, see the music box in the corner. I keep things at a distance. I see them.

I see the ceiling, the dance floor, the walls of the studio, and I ask myself ‘How can I see what I know so that I don’t know?’ I search for rendering that which seems familiar unfamiliar in order to rediscover, recreate what is given to me. No need to make up new stuff but see that which is already there anew and believing that that is creating something I don’t know yet, also called the ‘new’. I do a kind of ‘check in with what is there’, some sort of inventory, so that

166 Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, 1.

ultimately that which is there reflects back on me. Doing so I get a sense of my self and of the place from which I position my self to the world.

“Things we perceive make sense only when perceived from a certain point of view.”¹⁶⁷

So, seeing is neither only a means to see that which is in front of me anew nor only a means to revisit the body through imagination such as I described before – activating my eye seeing my senses are activated in my left arm, finger, breast – but also watching body parts get reconnected, which ultimately leads to a sense of location of my body and my self. From that place, as Merleau-Ponty alludes to above, I can make sense of what surrounds me.

Reset:

Having gone through a whole internal journey, I became aware of how my body and my subjectivity is not fixed but constantly changing, building up, breaking down. Embodiment is a movement, also including disembodiment. The bodily experience of sensing the body again and again differently when seeing melts the idea that my self is stable and gives me as seer an understanding that my self and body are constantly appearing, changing, becoming.

Looking at the world phenomenologically influences how I, as seer, see what I see. I don't grasp it as thing, but as a phenomenon, something that is embedded in the doing of showing itself. Suspending dualist language, but remaining in the phenomenological, I stay in the realm of experience, and foremost bodily experience; when seeing, I can practice seeing what is around me through 'phenomenological seeing', which Heidegger says is to “radically suspend all relativities /that are essentially theoretical presuppositions.”¹⁶⁸

And one more time Heidegger:

“ ‘Seeing’ does not intend just perceiving with the bodily eyes, but neither does it mean pure non-sensory awareness of something present-at-hand in its presence-at-hand. In giving an existential signification to ‘sight’, we have merely drawn upon the peculiar feature of seeing, that

167 Merleau – Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 527.

168 Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Winter Semester 1919/1920, trans. Scott M. Campbell (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 40.

it lets entities which are accessible to it be encountered unconcealedly in themselves.”¹⁶⁹

But for Heidegger, seeing has an existential signification. How to get access to this type of existential vision?

The organ which produces seeing is strangely inaccessible to me. My mouth can touch itself when both lips press onto one another, my hands can hold one another, but my eyes can't touch one another. The way I read the above-mentioned quote is that this is precisely why seeing has the potential to be a doing that opens to existence, being-in-the-world. As I can't feel my eyes, they are in total service to that which they are doing, seeing.

FULL STOP

I am unable to explain in words why precisely I attach to seeing the potential to engage with matters of existence. But I know how I feel when I see something that makes me shiver or moves me. That does not need to be photos of horror or war or other spectacular events. Also, the reaction I have to seeing things with what I'd call for now an 'existential draft' is not always very violent, but rather gentle, easy.

It can be that when coming into the studio, taking off my shoes, putting on some training pants, sitting down and seeing parts of my naked ankle resting on the floor, the shimmering 100% polyester fabric of my training pants softly wrapped around the leg, touching the floor, I see that which is given in front of me in a way that hits me. Gently, no big deal, but yet, something unnameable happening, all of the sudden a clearing where I understand, I am here.

What remains to say?

It remains to say that though I do experience seeing as “a sense of distance”¹⁷⁰, of distancing, I ask, however, can we be close in seeing. How can the one seeing be close to that which is seen?

I refer to media theorist and artist Laura U. Marks, who, though she grounds her research not in phenomenology but in Deleuzian-thinking, scrutinizes the concept of 'haptic visibility' – a concept that conceives seeing as touch:

169 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 187.

170 Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay, ed. Medar Bosse (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 83.

“Haptic visuality sees the world as though it were touching it; close, unknowable, appearing to exist on the surface of the image. (...) I found that haptic visuality invites a kind of identification in which there is a mutual dissolving of viewer and viewed, subject and object; where looking is not about power but about yielding.”¹⁷¹

The dissolution of power relationships between seer and seen emerges when touch is involved. Touch implies the “doubleness” of things: I touch you touching me. That does not call for a ‘hippie-touchy-feely-all-wrapped-in-cotton-approach’ to one and another but hints at the ethics of relationships and how they can foster a way of seeing that because it respects boundaries, identifies differences and creates a collaborative, that is, a teamwork moment between me seeing and the one seen.

Also, and this is how I finally want to conclude this essay, there is the question of how, in all the process of locating, of arriving in a place of noticing ‘I am here’, change appears.

What makes me move? Why change from sitting to standing, from standing to walking? My bladder calling for release? My getting so bored that I need to shift the centre of my body in order to get new visual and kinaesthetic input? My getting back pain because I was sitting so long and then finally am forced to move? What if duration and physiological needs are not the real motor? What makes one move? Maybe that which is seen – a thing or a person – the desire to connect, letting go of lonesome distance running, cutting the silence and entering into the loud, wild noise of togetherness, of relationship, with the ongoing myth of attraction and struggle how to be with that which is not me.

171 U. Marks, *Haptic Visuality: Touching with the Eyes*, 80.

Paper presented in ///, written by Lisa Densem:

Title of the paper:

Thoughts on Performing Seeing Lisa Densem

When I think about seeing and Jana's work, the first thing that strikes me is how complicated my experience of it is, even if the doing of it might appear simple or straightforward. There is first of all the practice of seeing itself which for me is complex enough – and then there is the experience of practicing it in a studio or stage context – being-seen-practicing-seeing, and this is something else again, a practice not just about seeing but also about dealing with the situation of being watched.

When I practice seeing, what I experience changes from day to day; the aspect of seeing I focus on, or the ability to direct my attention, depending on the state of my mind or my susceptibility to certain thoughts, or experiences or emotions.

The practice of seeing is for me something similar to a meditation, possessing the same kind of simplicity of task and complexity in the doing.

On one day, I can look carefully at something, and it can be that very slowly my mind starts to shift to a place where the room I am in and my surroundings become very alive. I can almost imagine the things and objects in the room arousing themselves to speak to me, and everywhere I look is full of small previously unnoticed details. For example, the way a piece of material is folded or the way chairs lean into one another, or the way something hangs, starts to have a sudden force of meaning that can hit me physically. I look at all the shadows and folds and surfaces of a crumpled curtain and something about it affects my nervous system, like a sudden fright. I have the feeling of butterflies in my stomach, a rush of recognition, like 'oh this is the world' and something else hard to describe, a feeling of beauty and sadness together which might be the word melancholy but feels like something else, something more tender and less romantic because there's something violent in it, or at least insistent.

On another day, the experience can take a different path. I can observe my hand, for example, and notice things like the lines on my palm, or the shininess of my skin in the light, or the way my fingers move just a little bit. I can notice the shape of my hand against the background, or the way the light makes shadows on my fingers, or the different distances around my hand, the distance to the floor, or from my hand to my face or from my hand to the walls. I can play with my vision, what I see in front of me, what I see in the periphery, changing the focus of my eyes, seeing both close and far at the same time. Then, even though I start with my eyes, my attention drifts away from seeing and begins to notice

the details of other things, of hearing and sensation as if the seeing is like an entrance point to a particular sort of concentration. I feel the whole force of my body, the felt sense of where it is in space, and all the space around, including the space that I share with others and the audience. I feel my heart beating and my breath, the clothes on my skin and the blinking of my eyes. I notice the silence and all the small noises in the room, the sound of the heating and the irregular soft swish of cars passing outside. I see myself seeing, and I notice the fact of what I am doing, my standing and the gesture of seeing my hand. Sometimes there is a sort of zooming in and out and I see myself from outside, from above, from far away, I feel myself like a figure in a landscape and feel the physical fact and attitude of my gesture. I stand looking at my hand and the room and I feel the multiplicities of that gesture, how it appears, and how it resonates, awakening my imagination. Then I feel a clarity and a quiet necessity to move, to make another gesture or to bring a certain rhythm of doing into the room, and it's as if what I do is not for myself, but for something outside of myself, for the movement, a dialogue with movement, speaking together. Another of Jana's collaborators, Sofia Simola, who also wrote some observations on her experiences inside Jana's work describes something very similar. She writes:

...there is something that entertains me, something that I enjoy about the movements. And there is pleasure in that sensation, an immediate feeling of belonging and participation. As if the movement was there/here in the world – made exactly for the purpose of me enjoying it. The thing plays with me. We go together.

There are some days however when the practice of seeing does not register beyond the surface of my mind, when what I see does not affect me or touch me, when the way of seeing remains quite ordinary and when, even if I can bring back a sense of how I have seen before, it remains a memory that I cannot bring into my experience today. Sometimes the seeing does nothing except leave a negative after-image imprinted on my mind. The practice can also be like that for me, producing disconnection and repetitions of oneself and leading to self-judgment, something that I will look at in more detail later in my writing.

In my experiences of performing, in particular in Jana's work, but also in other works where there is a demand for a certain performativity, and where what one does is not as important as how one does it, there is a demand for a shift in one's perception of the world and of oneself. This shift can happen in many ways, but a choreographer's specificity of choice creates an atmosphere particular to them and their work – the way she or he chooses to work towards

a changed perceptual state affecting the doing of their work, on what and how one does things inside it.

With Jana, the practice of seeing creates work that focuses my attention on time and silence and small details. For me it creates also a certain rhythm of doing; periods of waiting broken by sudden shifts; surprising changes of energy that peter out into matter of fact or pedestrian modes of doing. This rhythm comes out of noticing what is around you, not doing something until what has been done has had time to register in your mind, but also, conversely, through doing something before you have a chance to notice it, catching yourself unaware. The work for me also creates certain atmospheres, images or landscapes, and in the performances the silence, the sensitivity to rhythm, the atmospheres, images and landscapes that are generated in my mind during the studio rehearsals, or that come into my mind in the moment of performance, become as important to me as the act of seeing. They help me when my connection to seeing falters, when I lose my sense of what it is, when during performances, my mind needs other ways to be activated in order to do the work. But at the same time, I have to be careful not to fall purely into the atmosphere or my imagination because there something is also lost. It's as if I have to somehow continuously oscillate between seeing, and experiencing what the seeing produces in order to keep my grasp on the sense of what I am doing, in order to keep something alive as I find my way from one movement to the other, from one rhythm to another.

The work Jana creates depends very heavily on how we the performers inhabit it. The movement is so minimal that it needs to be done in just the right way. In a sense our thoughts, attention and imagination are also the choreography and when you perform in her work you feel the pressure of this responsibility. Even though the work is set, the work demands a similar attention to doing in the precise moment as something improvised. For example, in the beginning of the small section which I just performed, the movements themselves are very simple: I just need to walk into the space, stop for a moment and then lift my arms. But exactly when I walk, the pace and how of walking, where I stop, how long I stop for and the moment and way of lifting the arms are all choices I need to make which affect the way the movement is perceived. These choices create the way of doing and are as much a part of the choreography as the movement itself.

I use the word 'choice' but the work requires 'choice' not in the normal sense of the word. If I am able to completely give myself up to my attention, I don't make a choice, but rather go or do when it is the right moment and with the right quality and this moment of rightness is dependent on so many factors

that it cannot come out of a conscious choice, out of a normal state of mind. If it becomes a matter of making a decision and reflecting on that decision, I feel lost. But I don't also mean that I make an unconscious choice, that I give myself up to automatic responses. It is rather something else, something more like choice made from hyper-consciousness, an acute awareness of everything that is around, an awareness that can somehow take in and reflect on all the variables of a situation instantaneously. My mind no longer chatters and judges and there is a distancing from the attributions of meaning that I normally give to the world - a distancing which allows closeness to something else, to life, to now, to a sudden sense of 'oh this is the world', that I spoke of earlier to something which affects and moves me.

Recently reading a book by the food writer Michael Pollan, I was struck by the following paragraph about the state of mind of a hunter and the parallels between that experience and the experience of this kind of performing:

When one is hunting, the air has another, more exquisite feel as it glides over the skin or enters the lungs, the rocks acquire a more expressive physiognomy, and the vegetation becomes loaded with meaning. But all this is due to the fact that the hunter, while he advances or waits crouching, feels tied through the earth to the animal he pursues, whether the animal is in view, hidden, or absent. The tourist in nature achieves no such immersion or connection; all he sees is a landscape, which is something made by history (and rather recently at that). His gaze conditioned by art and expectation, the tourist remains a spectator to a scene, unable to get outside himself or history, since the landscape he beholds is as much the product of his civilization as of nature. The tourist sees broadly the great spaces, but his gaze glides, it seizes nothing, it does not perceive the role of each ingredient in the dynamic architecture of the countryside. Only the hunter, imitating the perpetual alertness of the wild animal, for whom everything is danger, sees everything and sees each thing functioning as facility or difficulty, as risk or protection.

When I do this work, I know the pleasure I can have when I negotiate the choreography in this hyper-conscious state of perception, but I also know the discomfort I feel when I lose my connection to this, when the fine subtle thread of doing is lost. Then I continue on with my everyday mind, a tourist unable to get outside myself or history, inadvertently loading movements with too much meaning, representing movements as I remember doing them, unable to find the right tone, quality, precision or timing, unable to look anyone in the eye. And I feel it physically, especially in the back of my neck and spine, in my connection of head to torso and in the way my whole body cannot feel the floor. Then there is

a disappointment and judgment of oneself that can be hard to overcome. I want to shout, 'this is not how it should be, this is not the work'. I am caught up in the paradox that if I cannot practice the seeing in the way I want, in the way that produces a state of 'non-judgmentality' then I become very judgmental and cannot escape the binaries of good/bad, praise/criticism, right/wrong. When the hunter loses his or her connection to the animal he or she is pursuing, the shot misses and there is no food. When I lose connection to what I am doing, what I lose is meaning, the creation of meaning and this meaning shared with an audience. For me, then, it is very clear that the work (at least with an audience) is not just a practice of seeing but a practice also of training the mind to remain focused on the doing of seeing, and to accept and work with the judgments that arise when the practice does not lead to meaning and to an experience that we are desiring.

Over the last months Jana and I have had many conversations and we have often returned to the questions that this experience brings up, questions about her work and the tensions that can arise in it due to what it demands from performers.

In the past, there has been some emotion and intense discussion inside the working process, particularly in the making of 'Colour, Colour'. The work requires that we be present in the world, it requires a level of engagement and shift in self which can confront us with who and what we are, and this can bring up fears, resistances and insecurities. At the same time, the heightened perception of the world that it can generate has an addictive quality, which can bind the performer to the experience. There is an intensity in the exploration which is not always sustainable.

Sofia Simola, who I mentioned earlier, describes her own problems with the practice in this way:

The landscape I was looking at started to fall apart as I spent time looking at it and perceiving. It became a blur that I could not make sense of. Paying attention to detail after detail and the shifting of my own attention made me not able to perceive a whole, to make up a coherent world from the information available. I could not follow a person talking, I was distracted by movement, colour, my own proprioception, the thought of my God – we are here! A sentence spoken to me did not make any sense for I lost half of the words listening to vowels and syllables. Or I would look at the hair of an eye brow and get distracted by the movement of it while the owner of the eye brow talked to me.

My perception started to fall apart. I could not follow a process through... I found no security in any place or action but experienced an immense amount of fear and anxiety.

How do we deal with these problems? Is it possible to experience this heightened perception, to be present in the world and to witness being present in a way that doesn't confront us existentially (or at least beyond reasonable limits, whatever those might be)? But actually, how could it be any other way since if it was so easy, the experience would not be valued?

In practicing this kind of work, do we then run into ethics? 'Is it, for instance, unethical to ask performers to change their minds?' If choreography demands a shift in perception, a creative act, and if this shift ultimately requires a shift in self, and which, despite the concrete parameters of the practice, unwittingly leads us into areas of psychology, is this asking too much? On the other hand, people crave to have their perspectives changed, to engage creatively and to be challenged to go beyond themselves. Are the real questions around boundaries, communication and trust?

Is it better to make choreography which is not dependent on the performer actively shifting their state of mind, where the choreography does not require a shift in order to be read? Or can we just accept that doing the work without having the experience, representing the experience and feeling 'wrong' is enough? I say this knowing that with it comes the paradoxical thought that if we can *really* do *this* we no longer represent or feel 'wrong'.

The problems really arise I think when we do not separate the practice-of-the-practice from the practice-and-what-it-does-or-can-do. On the one hand, there is practicing seeing and on the other there is the altered perception and the effect that has on a performer and on those who watch that performer. Is it the practice of the work with the intent of creating a heightened experience, the demand to *really* see phenomenologically, to question and ponder seeing, and doing in relation to seeing, to have that experience as a goal which creates the problems? On the first day that Jana and I met, she told me that she felt the seeing work was something that could only really be done without an audience. What I think she was inferring was that an audience automatically brings the goal of the seeing practice into the equation and that she doesn't want the practice of seeing to become a means to an end (a methodology with a goal to create heightened experience, or presence) but rather she just wants to do it. I personally don't want to accept the solution of no audience. I love to watch the work and I love to do it when it works (and I could try to love it even if it doesn't work, to embrace 'doing it anyway', but this, as I keep repeating, *is* the challenge). I also think, apart from this, that there are valuable things to be learned and understood through this kind of research.

This work brings up so many questions for me, as it is clear in this text. And there are so many more which I haven't brought up because of the added complexity it would bring and which I would feel unable to address in this short space of time. I leave these questions in the air and want to finish with a short sentence from the Japanese writer Takashi Hiraide.

Observation is at its core an expression of love which doesn't get caught up in sentiment.

Third artistic part

Title: see/time/composing

Video Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/186378129>, Password:ap3



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Conclusion

Comma.

The field closes itself onto itself. While walking through it, there were narrows that alluded to conclusions. Conclusions: some nameable, some not yet nameable. What can be said clearly is the following: this research produced a solitary practice of composition that is no longer a movement practice but a seeing practice. It can – but does not need to be – exclusively practiced in the context of a dance studio or even in a dance context at large. It can be practiced in any situation in which the doer/composer has the capacity and conditions to engage in aesthetic, contemplative seeing. One of the conditions for engaging with the practice is a heightened sense of time or temporality, or best: a state of boredom.

Comma.

The method of doing, of trusting that artistic practice is a valid-enough tool to come to some conclusion about composition, was a generative strategy. Meaning: I could integrate various aspects and interests of my artistic practice (such as my role as director, a minimal movement and thought vocabulary I had developed through performance making, the topic of seeing and time that were of importance since I had started making in the first place), In addition to that, I was able to create a critical, questioning mindset towards my practice and choreography in general, which bit by bit resulted in letting go of assumptions about my role as a director and expectations towards choreographing.

Comma.

Since having entered dance, I have always been in art educational set ups, going straight from undergraduate studies to a MA program and then only one year of freelance life before entering my doctorate studies. I am an art academy junky. I need this apparently “other space” next to freelancing life. Apparently because research at the art academy is not the promised land, but a land to inhabit – hang in there.

Comma.

This research did change me and my approach to work. I hope that it will be able to touch some people who are interested in similar topics: visuality, perception, choreography, minimalism and time.

Comma.

On composition, I want to summarize:

I grew into composition and choreography in an already very expanded environment: Susan Rethorst's composition class. It gave me enough air to breathe and develop my practice. Through the doctorate, and many other life-changing events during the doctorate, space has widened and broadened even further. I still love minimal gestures in choreography that are not carried by something chic or discursive. I am aware of how subjectively coloured expressions like "chic" are. I explained that more concretely in Chapter I, the section on Jérôme Bel and Xavier Le Roy. So, I still opt for art works that are somewhat minimal and are carried by something breathing, alive. What life is – that must be answered by each person individually. Life, for me, is idiosyncratic. Art, for me, is too.

Comma.

Comma.

I have been talking about boredom, and, yes, it might be that I not only romanticise but also glorify boredom; some activist artists might find that irresponsible. If I write about boredom and claim it as a relevant moment, what I am trying to get at is to give space to boredom as an artist's state of mind. I am aware that many other artists have worked on boredom. I think of Erwin Wurm's "Instructions for idleness" (2001), where definitely there has to be a state of boredom involved in order to claim laziness as a theme that is valid enough to be displayed through a series of photographs in which the artist stages idle situations. Or I think of how boredom is used to find valid movement material in dance ("Don't move until you have really a reason" – that was one of the mantras during my undergraduate studies in many improvisation classes).

Articulating the need for boredom in the context of an art practice like mine is a sort of deconstructive gesture towards the myth of the artist as always being able to generate. It questions an art practice that is defined merely through the visibility of final outcomes. By bringing boredom into play, I hope to hint at an alternative. Yes, I know this is a tricky word, alternative. But let's stay calm for a second. In the frame of my practice, boredom is linked to the good-old "I prefer not to".

Boredom also stems from a very sort of personal point of experience, a deep feeling when it comes to composing. It is probably linked to a general questioning

of what I am doing in this world and why. I need this place; it is a part of me. It is an equal partner to the other side of choreographing as I discussed it this project: the relational aspect of encountering other otherness in artistic collaborators.

Comma.

The experiments and thoughts on seeing were for me the most fruitful of all things within this research. It brought not only material from so-called everyday life to performance, but also performance to the living moment, to everyday life. This ultimately created a sense of playfulness in life, and melted strict distinctions between life and art, which in return made the whole art-making-thing so much lighter – it led me to question the hype and spectacle around it.

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Seeing as an active endeavour for the choreographer

Jana Unmüßig's doctoral research examines studio-based choreographic composition practice that focuses on seeing and visibility from the perspective of the choreographer-director in the context of an expanding notion of dance. Unmüßig highlights the action of seeing, while also considering time as boredom. Seeing is discussed in terms of contemplation and as a way of thinking. Boredom is looked at as a mood; a mood that is fundamental for the composition practice that Unmüßig enquires into, but that can also act as a creative force.

Jana Unmüßig picks up on the notion of "The Choreographic", developed by artist and performance scholar **Jenn Joy**, and to it, adds practice-based reflection on the choreographic from the perspective of the choreographer-director. Unmüßig's research also contributes to phenomenological considerations on seeing and time from the perspective of the choreographic artist.

Jana Unmüßig is a German choreographer who, in addition to the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, has studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and the Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance (SEAD), as well as the inter-university centre of dance Berlin (HZT). Unmüßig has done choreographic work since 2007 and has presented works in various international platforms.



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