



Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line with Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer & Mariella Greil

(automated transcript)

SPEAKERS

Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer & Mariella Greil

(Introduction: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021 over spare guitar chords)

Welcome to Independent Dance. This talk is part of our digital library, which houses an extensive collection of material to read, watch and listen to, drawn from ID's programme over the past decades. This talk is part of the Crossing Borders series, which ran between 2008 and 2018 and featured dance artists in conversation with people from other fields, including philosophers, scientists, geographers, and architects. The entire library is free to access at independentdance.co.uk/library.

(2017 audio file begins)

Emma Cocker

First of all, welcome. We just want to say just a few words, before we begin, just to kind of set the scene a bit if you like, our Crossing Borders talk tonight is presented in conjunction with a workshop that we did on Sunday. And it's a real delight to see some of those participants here. So, thank you so much for coming back again. And I suppose what we were imagining is both the workshop and the talk itself, are really conceived as a way of sharing some of the research that has been developed through a three-year project we've been working on called choreographic figures, deviations from the line. But it's also a way of kind of cutting the route through if you like the publication, that has arisen from this particular project, which you can see if you just turn around, sort of illuminated through this camera at the back there. So perhaps later, feel free to have a browse through. So, in a way, whilst the workshop aimed to share the journey of our research, through playing together, really, through a kind of embodied encounter with the process of our research itself. Tonight, what we want to try and do is elaborate that a little bit more through, I suppose, a performative presentation. So, our intent really is to try and give a flavour of our research. Some of its theoretical orientations, some of its contextual field. But more than that, I think to try and show what we might mean by choreo-graphic, you may have noticed that well, maybe not actually, maybe it's worth spelling out. The way that we use choreograph, choreo-graphic is split with a hyphen. And we do this intentionally, in the sense of choreo, more than one and graphic, form of inscription. And this notion of more than one system of inscription is something that we want to play around with tonight. So, we want to play with competing attention, different pushes and pulls between the visual and the verbal, between what is said and what is shown. So, really, I guess the invitation is to allow yourself to drift a bit with that allow yourself to be carried by both your attention and also your distraction. And what we hope is that following our presentation, you're all able to stay around for a period of discussion where we can perhaps unpack it a little bit further. So, we just wanted to kind of frame it in that way before we begin. So yeah, thank you again for coming tonight.

Mariella Greil

Elude. How do we attend to the thing that isn't visible? What other realms are there to find? Resonance reverberation tremulous vibration, it is sometimes hard to see the relatively imperceptible this quivering edge when something is happening. Magnifying the minor, starting to look nearer or closer. What we move, when we move, there is tone and velocity and rhythm, like changes of state.

Nikolaus Gansterer

Choreographic figures, deviations from the line is an artistic research project involving writer artist Emma Cocker, dancer choreographer, Mariella Greil and me artist and performer Nikolaus Gansterer. Alongside invited interlocutors like Alex Arteaga, Christine de Smedt and Lilia Mestre. The project stages in intersubjective encounter between the lines of choreography, drawing and writing or exploring those forms of knowing, thinking, feeling produced through collaborative, artistic exchange in the moments of slippage and deviation. As different practices enter into dialogue, overlap and collide.

Emma Cocker

We practice a shift from the realm of demarcated disciplinary gestures towards the transdisciplinary or more precise the undisciplinary, an indeterminate realm of shifting forces, intensities and affects. In one sense, the unfolding of our collaborative research has been experienced akin to a ritual process perhaps even a rite of passage, through which we have attempted to temporarily leave behind or relinquish the given structural domain of our respective practices in search of another realm, trembling with unexpected, perhaps even unruly potentiality.

Mariella Greil

Through life exploration, we attend to the process of artistic sense making from within or inside that effective realm or energies, emergencies and intensities operating before between and below, the more readable gesture of artistic practice, or shared research inquiry explores the unfolding process of decision making, and dynamic movements of sense making within collaborative artistic research seeking modes of performativity. And notation for making tangible this often hidden or undisclosed aspect of the creative process and for asserting the epistemological significance they are in.

Emma Cocker

So, while artistic research can be applied as a method for exploring something other than, we activate it in self reflexive relation to itself. Choreo-graphic figures is an artistic research inquiry. Practiced as the means to address its own processional unfolding. Following Sarat Maharaj, our inquiry involves an attempt to think through art as an investigative vehicle or probe alongside the passage through an introspective experience, during which art practice takes stock of its own processes and procedures. We explore the points of resonance disparities and interferences emerging within our practice through circulation and translation, the excesses of meaning, moments of intransigence, translate-ability, and untranslate-ability.

Nikolaus Gansterer

Dieter Mersch advocates the need to differentiate an artistic or rather an aesthetic mode of thought beyond the vocabulary of linguistic dispersibility and scientific methodology, where the authority of an aesthetic epistemology is made explicit. He asks what thought in other media might mean where thought is understood as a practice as acting with materials in materials or through materials.

Mariella Greil

Choreo-graphic figures focuses on the qualitative processional aesthetic, epistemological and ethical empathetic dynamics within creation, those micro processes of unfolding decision making, thinking in action, dynamic movements of sense making, the durational taking place of something happening live. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's book, thinking in the act, or Thought In The Act refers to the imminent movement of thought, as it is activated only in and through practice. We activate thinking and action practiced in its imminent intensification, Mind Body engaged in an embodied process of live thinking, active in its pre and during-ness.

Emma Cocker

So, we ask, what forms of knowledge emerge in the gaps and in the spaces in between, in those interstitial experiences, so central to artistic process, yet that also relates to our experience of being in the world to be human and to the fragile environments within which we coexist. Our conviction is that cultivating sensitivity to the barely perceptible micro movements within the process of artistic sense making has wider structural, even political implications at the level of the macro, encouraging the de, re and transfiguring of our ways of being in the world, inviting new forms of relationality sociality, even solidarity.

Mariella Greil

We addressed the temporal even temporalising dynamics of when-ness, the environmental, spatial, relational dynamics of where-ness and the qualitative processional dynamics of how-ness within artistic research etymologically, how-ness can refer to the manner or way in which something is done by what means or method in what state or condition, to what extent

or degree, how indicates activity, the unfolding of a process, articulated through words and adverb. Process, an act of going forward. How do you do that? The question how is often coupled with the answer, like so.

Emma Cocke

In some disciplines, the principle of how is instilled through training, the perfection of a notionally correct way of doing things, whilst in other contexts, how emerges through self-discovery, and is necessarily idiosyncratic. How can be proper and improper, diligent or deviant, acts of revelation the showing of the how. At one level a how to approach attempts to demystify a given process render it as a succession of instructions or stages to lay it factually bare. Yet there are things that cannot be so easily explained, that refuse to be reduced to a map or guide. Beyond the know what of the encyclopaedia considered the experiential, those embodied forms of tacit knowledge or even know-how resistance to being shown or said that can be only performed or practiced. Indeed, how do we account for those processes in which not knowing uncertainty, trial or error, feeling one's way contingency perform a significant role as Henk Borgdorff states, the erratic nature of creative discovery, of which unsystematic drifting serendipity chance inspirations includes form an integral part is such that a methodological justification is not so easy to codify, it involves doing unpredictable things, and implies intuition and some measure of randomness. Research is more like an exploration than it is following a firm path. So, there is more than one way to get from A to B, different modalities of being and doing open up different ways of perceiving oneself and one surrounds.

Mariella Greil

For Daniel Stern, dynamic forms of vitality concern the how, the manner and the style not the what or the why, we strive to explore the qualitative how-ness of force or vitality rather than the what-ness of form. Here following Erin Manning the how of the work is its commanding form, this how is emergent each time a new, how attends to the qualitative difference to nuance, etymologically meaning a slight difference, shade of colour, originally used in reference to the different colours of the clouds, mist or vapour like the weather, how can change from one moment to the next. It's always in the process of becoming, never being we cultivate attention towards the how of the now, now, now, now

Emma Cocker

How-ness also describes an inquiry into the state or condition of a person, an objects or thing for Spinoza ethics involves attendance to the how-ness of experience, tuning into the vectoral passage from one affective state to another. How invites an epistemological as well as ethical approach encourages an inquiry-oriented attitude to self and world, a questioning stance. How opens up new fields of performative exploration.

Nikolaus Gansterer

How do you perceive?

Mariella Greil

How long does it take to cultivate an adequate response?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How do you inhabit the space?

Mariella Greil

How do you maintain the nature of the inquiry?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How do you deconstruct it?

Mariella Greil

How do we collaborate?

Nikolaus Ganstere

How might that be shared?

Mariella Greil

How do you position yourself as an artist?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How do you become synchronised through a shared movement?

Mariella Greil

How could that look?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How might that translate?

Mariella Greil

How much do you know what the others do? How is it different? How can one format become another?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How do you make a full stop move?

Mariella Greil

How do we talk about it?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How much percentage of the body is water?

Mariella Greil

How do we attend to the thing that isn't visible?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How can the body resist? How could you approach that? How did you interact with it?

Mariella Greil

How do I move beyond the realm of description?

Nikolaus Gansterer

How might the conversations get generated?

Mariella Greil (15 minutes)

Yet, how can we articulate this how-ness of practice? We ask, how can we develop systems of performativity and notation for identifying, marking and communicating the barely perceptible micro movements at the cusp of awareness? How can we communicate the instability and mutability of the flows and forces, especially within collaborative exploration without fixing that which is inherently dynamic, and contingent as a literal sign? Indeed, what is at stake in the attempt to do so?

Emma Cocker

From sign to signal,

Nikolaus Gansterer

From signal to syndrome

Emma Cocker

From symbol to assignment

Nikolaus Gansterer

From assignment to sign again

Emma Cocker

From signing in to signing off

Nikolaus Gansterer

From signing off to sign base

Emma Cocker

From sign base to sign less

Nikolaus Gansterer

From sign base to sign less from sign less to assigning

Emma Cocker

From assigning to consigning

Nikolaus Gansterer

From consigning to resigning

Emma Cocker

From resigning to signifying

Nikolaus Gansterer

From signifying to sign

Emma Cocker

From sign to signal

Nikolaus Gansterer

From sign to signal, from signal to signature

Emma Cocker

From signature to signification

Nikolaus Gansterer

From signification to design

Emma Cocker

From this sign to system

Nikolaus Gansterer

From design to this sign, from system to signification.

Emma Cocker

So how can we become more attuned to the how-ness, the qualitative processional dynamics within our shared exploration? How do we focus attention towards those effective forces and intensities, operating before, between and beneath the more readable gestures of artistic practice? How can we mark when something is happening?

Mariella Greil

Central to our research process has been the development of various practices for deepening, widening and sharpening our aesthetic inquiry, each with a different function or emphasis. A) practices of attention for sensory heightening for cultivating perceptual awareness, increased alertness, vigilance, and receptivity and practices of notation for noticing and marking the event of something happening. C) practices of conversation, a language based relational and participatory practice, aside of shared voicing, happening allowed within a collective situation. We) practices of witnessing different tactics for being with for blurring the division between participant/observer for inviting another's perspective.

Emma Cocker

So, in terms of notation, the unfolding live experience of our experimentation can be notated and annotated, and mediated through various idiosyncratic systems of marking and inscription. Ideo meaning proper to one, one's own private, personal or peculiar. One can mark for oneself, where the individual determines exactly what is notated, and how this form of notating

does not always need to be readable or recognisable by others. However, beyond developing various singular modalities of notation, our research process has involved the evolution of an agreed and shareable system of signs used for noticing and marking the event of something happening.

Nikolaus Gansterer

We have developed a process of sounding for example, clicking for making the event of something happening at the level of vitality or emergence, where we each make an audible sound like a vocal click to acknowledge the experience of a qualitative shift in awareness or forbearance. On occasion, this process of notated life exploration was recorded on video, the function of video being indexical to simply capture the clicks in the context of their production by watching the video documentation back, recollecting and reflecting on the experience of notation, we were able to identify, qualify or even name the shifts in awareness, vitality, or affordance. Marked by each click.

Mariella Greil

Our practices of notation function in close proximity to practices of attention. Increased attention augments one's capacity to notice, notation can further enhance one's capacity to notice. However, notation involves more than noticing. It's the practice of post noticing and marking. Notation involves the production of marks or symbols, the generation of signs relating to a sign-less experience. In one sense notation is activated. Whenever a sign or mark is used to stand for, to represent. It is a mode perhaps more than a practice since it is never truly autonomous, there must be a ground of other activity for it to mark. Notation designates an experience other than itself. In these terms, notation can be conceived to have an explicit relation to translation, where the process of marking is one of capturing the core components of one experience through another medium, using a system of signs.

Nikolaus Gansterer

Received modes of performativity and notation for exploring two core interrelated concepts within our inquiry, the experience of theory and emergence of figures.

Emma Cocker

We use the term figuring to describe those small yet transformative energies and experiential shifts within the artistic process that are often hard to discern, but which ultimately shaped the evolving activity. Figuring refers to the perception of effective intensities, felt as a field of forces, minor revelations or epiphanies, shivering, full of presence, those risings that give way to emergence.

Mariella Greil

We conceive the event of figuring as a qualitative shift, the sounds or awareness that something is happening, perceptible at the level of intensity, experienced as if a change of taste colour or perhaps even of textural density. Figuring makes its appearance in the amplification or adding of intensity, sliding, sinking, simmering, a change in tack or pace lingering, longing, an appeal to do something, to stop, interrupt, to begin again. We experience the sensation of transition in state as analogous to the subtle turn in the direction of the wind or tide, when the shimmering fly past of a murmur of starlings. Figuring can be felt as a channel to search or opening, the breathing edges of a life coming into existence. This opening wave might be considered in relation to Heidegger's concept of poiesis: a bringing forth, a threshold occasion, a moment of excesses, when something moves away from its standing as one thing to become another, like the blooming of a blossom, the coming out of the butterfly from a cocoon, the plummeting of the waterfalls, when the snow begins to melt.

Nikolaus Gansterer

For Sarat Maharaj this amorphous spring process state or obscure swell throws up new experiential and epistemic intensities, objects and dimensions that overshoot the given, it brings into being unforeseeable possibilities that we cannot have anticipated or known or scripted beforehand.

Emma Cocker

Alternatively, Daniel Stern conceives the felt moments of coming into being of a new state of things as a kairotic or micro-kairotic now moment, where the present moment leans towards the next action. For Stern, this shift is brought about by the unpredictable arising of an emergent property that was being prepared for unseen, in the moving along process. He describes how this auspicious upsurge can crash upon us like a wave or appear almost without notice and then slip away like a sea swell.

Mariella Greil

So too, we describe figuring like air flows or oceanic currents, upwelling of wind downwelling of water, arising of liquids building up a fluid, gathering strength, cartography of surges and swellings deepening the dynamic of how things emerge, coalesce converge, close to the threshold, to be on the verge of movement tipping point that the limit of definition tilted, inhabiting the cusp. Those moments of decision where everything hangs in the balance.

Nikolaus Gansterer

Figure, we use this term to describe the point at which fingerings dynamic vitality coalesces into communicate-able content. Figure, understood as a multi-modal, multi-dimensional, durational intensity, the form entanglement of bodily kinesthetic, visual, spatial, and verbal linguistic sensibilities.

Emma Cocker

Our inquiry is concerned with the points of passage from vitality to content, performed through a delicate dance of attention that strives to give formulation to the experience of vitality itself. Daniel Stern, differentiates between a dynamic vitality strand, experienced as pure intensity and a content modality strand, the uncoding and unfolding of contents, the what that emerges. Likewise, we can see the relation between the events of figuring as dynamic vitality, and the emergence of figures as contents modality or totality gesture, sensitivity to be experienced in figuring give rise to the emergency triggers, whilst the attempt to activate figures create conditions for figuring. Additionally, the performing of figures invariably affects and modifies the conditions of aesthetic exploration itself, producing new shifts of affordance giving rise to new experiences of figuring.

Mariella Greil

The figure is not the system of containment or control, the means through which to fix the volatile vitality of figuring within a stable delineated form. Indeed, for Gabriele Brandstetter the figure as model of representation as a unity, the unity of Gestalt, a unity of the subject in the sense of identity has become obsolete. Brandstetter claims that the figure is no longer the contour of the body, but rather discourteous movement in the sphere around surrounding Umraum the body that can be denominated as figuration. As Pia Müller-Tamm asserts for Brandstetter every figure simultaneously space and itself space holding the open unity of the figure transfers its potential to its surroundings and structures, the floating phenomena of the in between it activates the dynamics, mutualities and exchange relations between figure things and surround space.

Emma Cocker

So, within our investigation so far, we've been able to articulate the qualities and constitutive conditions for various named figures out of a list of infinitely more, such as the figure of grounding,

Mariella Greil

The figure of mimicking, figure of momentum building and negotiation,

Emma Cocker

The figure of guarding,

Nikolaus Gansterer

The figure of identifying and ordering

Mariella Greil

The figure of documentation

Nikolaus Gansterer

The figure of bonding and binding

Emma Cocker

The figure of pausing, recording and rotation,

Nikolaus Gansterer

The figure of moving, the figure of contamination

Emma Cocker

The figure of preparing, including what will be

Mariella Greil

The figure of putting under pressure. The figure of reset and resistance. The figure of revelation, reverberation of separation sequences

Emma Cocker

The figure of maturing, mediation, translation, triangulation

Mariella Greil

The figure of starting slow

Nikolaus Gansterer

The figure of ending

Emma Cocker

The figure of unravelling, of vibration and of waiting and of warming up. The figure of wilderness

Mariella Greil

The figure of stopping, the figure of synchronising. The figure of taking care and touching

Nikolaus Gansterer

The figure of fading in and fading out.

Mariella Greil (30 minutes)

Our inquiry has involved developing practices for attending to and marking the event of figuring. The identification, qualification and naming of various figures, in turn, are identified figures have been grouped according to three different qualitative categories. The elemental figures diagram key moments within the arc of creative exploration, or endeavour, addressing the opening up and exposition of process. The figures we present within this, this grouping are indicative not exhaustive referring to just three moments within the arc of practice, the process of beginning we call it clearing and emptying out. Of generating energy in the midst of, we call it spiralling momentum, and for drawing towards resolution, we call it temporary closing.

Emma Cocker

The empathetic figures involve the diagramming of relations, drawing attention to the ethics of collaboration, the sensitivities and sensibilities of being with. The three figures we present within this series, vibrating affinity, wavering convergence and consonance and dissonance articulate a shift from the experienced intensity of being with one. So the many or rather from the experience of the one that is already the many, to the multitude.

Mariella Greil

The transformative figures each involve an explicit shift, change or even transformation in property, quality or state of being connected through the prefix trance, indicating moving across or through the act of going beyond the three figures presented, ventilating meaning, becoming material, translation of flux, each involve the dissolving or destabilising of fixed meanings by collapsing the lines of distinction between activity, passivity, animate, in animate, subject, object, self world.

Emma Cocker

So, we've attempted to articulate the properties or the qualities of specific figures, rather than necessarily defining the form that they should take. So here we articulate the figure of ventilating meaning. Before they can become material, words must first be rendered matter, emptied of signification, evacuated of semantic sense, collapsed to sound sonorous babble of emancipation, dispersal, disintegration, release of language from itself rhythmic and relational among beyond informational exchange. Beyond representation beyond the symbolic ventilation of the sign, displays the agency of words to escape the regime of this means this names can be forgotten syntax lost thrown to the winds, not only words, but letting go the meaning of things, that language seems to be the most stable of things so how to prevent it from becoming further solidified. Less towards density, it's an enlivening through aeration. Practice of resuscitation revitalise to the bringing of air, resuscitate,

bring back to life, invigorate, creating airholes, punctuation through the intervention of breath. Activate the intermediary zone between voice and exhalation, hyperventilation, not the proliferation of meaning towards meaningless but a practice of sensuous standings. To ventilate, to set in motion not towards action but affect. Aeration, conceived as quality, not the production of air, lightness, levity, still not yet mutual coproduction rather than effective, doing of things with words. Turning over, rotation, inversion, permutation, repetition, whisks up, prompts, agitation, and empties out, to expose to wind separates as with the wheat from chaff, to wind, adventure at the limits of language, uplifting, slips taking a flight and fall. Beyond the self-expressive of the speaking I, towards a practice of collective voicing, movements and words beyond the dialogic beyond conversation, passage, rely, circulation, appropriation, reappropriation, reciting, citing again and again, an act of summoning, to call or rouse to action towards meaning as the creation of the common.

Mariella Greil

Whilst figure is the term that we use to refer to a local instance of figuring in collating as content modality, we propose the concept of the choreo-graphic figure, choreo: more than one, graphic: form of inscribing. The choreo-graphic figure is a dynamic assemblage, a system of organisation or even organism, for bringing into relation, as well as for giving rise to unexpected interaction or constellations of both known and not yet known figures. Central to our project has been the development of an experimental score, through which we practice calling for and attending to the conditions of specific named figures.

Emma Cocker

We can see the score is a modular or permutational or even rhizomatic system for organising our process of live explorations through the bringing into relation the different fields of practice, the generation of embodied diagrammatics. As Erin Manning suggests, the diagram does not preexist shaping, the diagram that may have seemed to be an individual form, now reveals itself to be an emergent multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari states, a map has multiple entryways as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back to the same.

Mariella Greil

Or as Simon O'Sullivan elaborates the rhizome as a map is to do with experimentation, it does not trace something that came before again, no representation. Rather, it activates, creates the time it maps, setting out the coordination points for where else in progress, for subjectivities to come. He asserts that this involves the creative mapping of our connections and potentialities, a mapping that pays attention to regions of intensity, the distribution of affects, and to trajectories of future becomings as well as to those already delineated continents, of representation and signification. We use our score to test how the various practices might impact upon the process of artistic exploration as a means for sharpening, focusing or redirecting attention towards the event of figuring and emergence of figures. Our score is one means, a vehicle and apparatus for bringing into relation the various practices and figures outlined in the book, a device for foregrounding artistic compositional decision-making processes as a life event.

Emma Cocker

So choreographic figures deviations from the line as a research project, seeks to enrich and expand vocabulary for reflecting on artistic process itself. Going beyond an account of how to, a description of practical ways of doing things with an operative, how so emphasis on techniques in order to address the how-ness, the micro level of vitality dynamics and affects within the process of process itself. We ask how might specific focus on the micro dynamics of artistic endeavour provide new insights in relation to artistic research through emphasis on the qualitative nature of vitality force and intensity within the creative process, rather than on its operational procedures and resulting products.

Mariella Greil

We conceive this attending to the specificity of artistic researching as an intrinsic part of a wider ethical, aesthetic project, where the modalities of being and behaving practice within the context of artistic exploration might in turn give rise to new ways of practicing the self, the production of critical self-reflexive subject capable of understanding its own and merging within the wider ecology, co-constituting new realities made possible through this realisation.

Emma Cocker

Indeed, as Henk Borghoff states, artistic research is therefore, not just embedded in artistic and academic contexts. And it focuses not just on what is enacted in creative process and embodied in art products, but it also engages with who we are, and where we stand. So, I guess we wanted to try and share something about research process really and again, as I said at the start, we've done it in two ways in the last few days, through a workshop with some of you guys that are here. And

also through something that's more of a presentation, all the different ways into the material in a way. So, besides from that we're interested in openness and thoughts, questions, observations.

Audience

I'm curious to learn how you read together, as a practice or process. How is it reading? Yeah, what kind of form of reading happened between you over time? And did that change?

Emma Cocker

Well, one of one of the things that we're trying to do is think about reading as an attention practice. So, as we've within a discipline, book assessment, and merchandising it within the book, we've compiled a set of different kinds of attention practices, most of which are rooted in some kind of somatic practice. And there are a set of practices specifically to do with reading and specifically to do with reading in a way that attempts to dislodge the sense of reading for information. So, for example, reading in a way that picks out certain words based on attraction or for reasons in the way that might connect with somebody, so it's to do with the vibration of reading as you sit in silence. It's also beyond that most of the material that we work with in the lab has been generated from conversation transcripts. So, a significant part of the project is recording our discussions and then transcribing them and folding back into the lab, it's effectively scripts so we were often reading in a more performative sense.

Mariella Greil

And then of course the reading that is there in the more presentational reading of it where we can have a different attention to reading it, more performative elements in it more academic reading then looking for something else within it.

Emma Cocker

When we meet together it's a really strong practice. Yeah, and kind of coming together not just with reference to text but actually reading texts out loud I think is the practice is trying to stay strong kind of vitality level. I'm quite curious, I know it's putting people on the spot today, for those of you that came to the workshop, I'd be really curious about this kind of navigation that happens between actually being effectively what was like our lab and sort of doing it. To then meeting it again through a different form?

Audience

I think it's really, it was really different somehow it's difficult to articulate, I think that's why we're quiet but there's a difference between how composed, and I guess how many of the click moments were here? What happens when you're actually in the midst of it. So, it was good to see both aspects.

Emma Cocker

I mean, one dilemma, I suppose for any artistic research project is that in the process of distilling, which is effectively what we're doing in both the book and in the presentation, things get selected, and things get left out, in my mind, in that process, a different sort of story emerges, which I think is kind of interesting. And I suppose whilst we've attempted to keep some of the messiness of what it means to collaborate in the in the studio environment, which we experienced. Think what we hope is that the book will function as a score, which is what we're trying to do within the workshop. But rather than it being a kind of a completed conclusive summary of what we've done, I think the intent really is to try and open up was a score structure where you can reactivate materials again in a messy kind of way. So yeah, there's something about a question of what a book is essentially. And I suppose particularly what are the case in terms of artistic research that less of a kind of an archive of documentation or findings I suppose really, in a way it sort of opens out again, with the view to be tested and tested that out.

Audience (45 minutes)

Think it in the workshop, it definitely brought out the sense of being able to play with no specific end goal, and we were just allowed to explore without feeling the pressure of creating something, if you don't know. I mean, I saw it from that side, I think that comes across more when you get to be able to do it rather than it seeming like just a lot of rules. Being able to just explore and like have all the boundaries taken away from you and this idea of having to create something that someone's going to see and watch and judge, you don't have to do that.

Emma Cocker

For me, it became more reflective because we were focusing on making while we were doing the workshop, so now it became actually reflecting and looking back at how what it meant to actually think about these same concepts but also being active in terms of our body engagement. I also have a question, so the word choreo, also relates to space and if I'm wrong, eventually hangs on some part of the body. So, I wonder if you also have these in mind?

Mariella Greil

Well I think that space was throughout the three years, a big issue. But also I mean, as I said, there were so many layers, you could group, so many different figures, we decided for the empathetic ones and the elemental ones and transformative ones. And I think this just reflects like a very personal interest also, for other people, it could have been like completely different that they would find with this methodology. But I think that this, more-than-one-ness became somehow an issue, between us also, I think in the book, there is more than one voice because we've worked with this conversation as material method is actually quite entangled. It's also kind of an opening up of authorship in a way happening. And so I think that's why we emphasise it.

Emma Cocker

One of the essays in the book, actually, as part of the book, we invite what we call witnesses, that were people that wanted to join with us in the process, and then kind of be with us in the process and write a response from that. And we invited 16 of these individuals to come spend time with us. One of the texts in the book is by German philosopher Dieter Mersch, we also refer to the presentation. And he writes this amazing text where he really unpacks, the etymology of choreo and I think I shouldn't, clearly I need to read it again. But something to do with the chorus and chorus referring to both the the performative act of the chorus, but also the sight at which it's staged I think, so there's something about this. Yeah, and maybe there's something of that in the way that we were thinking about what we call the method lab for our work, which was sort of described as both the spatial parameters for something to happen, which predominantly was a sort of closed studio space within this particular iteration of the project, but also what happens. So, it wasn't just it was both describing the spatial situation, but also the nature of the actions unfolding there. So, I think, although we weren't consciously thinking about that, think of something in there.

Audience

I found the scores quite fascinating. But also the construction of the scores, quite apart from the construction of the scores. One thing I found riveting about the performance was the moment when Nicholas started shaking, whatever those things are sticks? Pieces of spaghetti? In front of the projector, because for me, it broke up the syntax of what was projected on the wall. And so you could try to pick out meaning, it couldn't really be done, or at least I couldn't do it. But there was a form of fragmentation, that was quite beautiful. What are those things by the way?

Nikolaus Gansterer

Bamboo, I think.

Emma Cocker

The figure that I suppose is being suggested to us in this action, the spoken component, was also one of the figures that we tested on Sunday. So, we kind of remade, we kind of made a score with the group of people that we're working with and try to introduce the qualities of three of these figures. So, ventilating meaning very much what you describe really this explosion of syntax and fragmentation and disposal of the informational sense that's contained in language. And we also tested that we will probably come in material, which also is interested in material but in a different way, it sort of takes it towards density rather than aeration. And then we also tested empathetic figure and with the group worked with a couple of attention practices and conversation practice and see how you could call for these different things as a way of compositional device. And this all unfolded in an exploration of about an hour at the end of the day.

Audience

Could you talk a bit more about the materials that you are working with as well because it seems there's this big dynamic in what we're doing relationship between action and matter and object. I'd love to hear more about not just the bamboo but the kinds of objects and materials that you're working with, what kind of investigation you were pursuing. Because they all feel quite stubborn in a certain way and there is this very strong attempt to, to unlock them and animate them, make them do other things than the things which we know, they do. I wonder if you could say more about the objects and materials?

Nikolaus Gansterer

Basically, I brought us we'll say a selection of different objects I've worked in my studio. So, from wire and this kind of more linear materials, which we could use as extending drawing or whatever, into space. Tapes to some of the materials we brought also here. But then also, like different forms of paper, which has the capacity to be a space to notate things but also to build structures. So, some sticks. And also, I think, in a way that the lenses, the light, and the protectors, for sure, they also very much informed the space. Also using a similar setup to what we used here, but then having a camera on top of the ceiling. To have this kind of shift in perspective within the space, so you could see from top and working with that. Sometimes, yeah, turning down the lights, and so on. A lot of shadow play, I would also say, which changes the materials as well and how they appear.

Emma Cocker

Yeah, I think some materials really are either stubborn or aggressive in a way. So, I guess the the project began as an attempt to kind of find a meeting place between writing and drawing and choreography. And actually, it took quite a long time before, writing felt really difficult or language felt really difficult to bring into the space because as soon as it's there, it dominates in a way or it starts to capture things that are happening. So, I think for the first part of the project, although there was a desire to bring, let's say, languages, materials, and space, we were working a lot with punctuation. And in fact, one of the how questions that Nikolaus was reading earlier was this question of, how do you make a full stop move? So, it's a material, but also a conceptual question in a way. So, there's a lot of things which are just trying to physically shimmer, shimmer, full stop. And then, and then gradually, that as the materials come in different forms, also, through this conversation as materials being referred to. So, this idea of, I mean, we've been talking a bit about this this morning, as well, this folding back of what arguably, are the documents of the practice back into the live space of working with them again. And I think this is something I've been thinking a lot about, in terms of movment and scores.

Mariella Greil

Also through the recording of our conversations and the transcription of it, then to again, use that as a material that is performed again. So, there was a kind of circulation of what those words mean, and how they relate to each other again.

Nikolaus Gansterer

This is just to show because those who have been in the workshop have seen it, but I think then, like the transcriptions were then used to search along key words. And then to print them out on these, like, rolls and then they became kind of material again, to be used, but then I think so it's different understandings of materiality, as you ask now, with language with movement, material, be it physical, wood, wire, and just like everyday materials.

Emma Cocker

It's actually making me think where the memories are material because actually that's probably the most stubborn thing that we're working with that. A big part of it is how do you let go of the way of doing something, especially when something works? You know, a big question for the project was, how not to establish what effectively might be thought of as a repertoire for articulating certain figures. And instead to each time try and find them again through a different form and that's really hard. I think that even unwittingly, the kind of memory material creeps back in. So, yeah maybe that feels as though that might have been quite stubborn.

Audience

I'm really curious to know, I mean, you said you wanted to start out with choreography, language or writing and drawing, and then develop this whole universe. I'm wondering sort of what was the end that you saw? When you set those three things in relation to each other? How do you see yourself in relation to those sort of hypotheses now? And what might be the next? What might be the sort of follow up for this? How might all of this hugeness you've amassed, develop further?

Mariella Greil (1 hour)

I think we are in a process of figuring them out?

Nikolaus Gansterer

Personally, I did not see an end. So, from the beginning, I think that was also the interesting thing to allow things to happen.

Audience

Why did you want to do that? Like, what was the sort of purpose of that exploration for you?

Emma Cocker

I mean, in a way, it's kind of curiosity. I mean most artistic projects are like that, in a way, by wanting to work with people. It's as simple as that. In a way, I hope there's no funders in the room, how do you spend time with people who's practice you're interested in, and how might you put that under pressure. I didn't know Mariella, before this project at all, actually, but I've worked with Nikolaus before. But it felt as if there was an interest in an expanded practice, whatever that might mean, for each of our practices. So already, that was the kind of conditions, if you like, of stepping out of our way of working to explore the edges when we meet with other practices. And in a way, I think, with artistic research, you begin with a set of questions, but really, you don't know how it's almost like the questions evolve, basically, along the way. And I think one of the significant moments in the research was a shift from thinking about the forms of writing, choreography and drawing to becoming much more interested in this kind of sense of intensity or force. And I think that was supported by lots of different forms, you know, some of them quite anecdotal, you know, watching, being in the space as a writer who's interested in movement but certainly hasn't got a practice based on that. And watching Mariella doing her warm up exercises, and kind of being curious about, well, you know, what's happening, though, why are we doing that? And what would that be like if it was, you know, in my practice, and I think specifically in terms of some of those attention practices it just feels as if there's a lot to learn from other disciplines, in terms of in terms of service precarity practices that are probably taken as a given in choreography? How do you prepare, how do you warm up? How do you cultivate certain kinds of receptivity towards the other? How do you engage with peripheral and close attention? You know, in a way, they're probably varying in disciplines, but without the kind of practices that would consciously support them if that makes sense?

Audience

Do you know what you'll now do with this toolkit, expanded toolkit that you've developed? Or what do you hope others might do?

Mariella Greil

Yeah, there are a few blind spots in the whole project. And I think we're most interested to unpack them and try to

Nikolaus Gansterer

Basically, for me, it's like a very open system. So, now knowing a bit, this sort of say, own structure we have developed and tested without also with others, like the workshop also and realising that it is also communicable and people can work with it. Basically, you could enter with this idea, I don't know in a construction site to see what kind of figures would be there and they would be completely different. So, we see rather as a model for something or a way of working the. It's not holy, you know. We have developed it now let's move on, I think otherwise you get stuck to your own that's the danger I would say.

Emma Cocker

I mean, I think our plan is to test it specifically with other groups of people, not in a dissimilar fashion to what we did on Sunday. But in the back of the book, there's a score, proposition, and it sort of outlines different possibilities, you know, you can shift. So, you know what if it was a public space, or plaza, what would it be like if it was on water? So, it's kind of like, what if you just change the parameters of it? I think our own research focus, might shift to looking at some of the things that haven't been explored yet, like the mediation document. Dealing with the massive, massive archive of stuff that's been accumulated over the project, you know, hours of video hours of recorded conversation, hundreds of drawings.

Nikolaus Gansterer

I'm not sure if that was mentioned, did you talk about Victor? No, because we worked with the cameraman, as you have seen so that, like, somebody who was very close was able actually to work with us in the space. So, it was not intended from the beginning but then after a while, we realised how important it is to capture it and to see and to reflect. So then, Victor came, it was like a cat, in this space moving with us, and capturing those moments. Yeah. Which we talked about.

Emma Cocker

And this is a really tough task I think because, you know, I think, to begin with his attention was perhaps drawn to the most visually interesting thing that's happening in space. But that's not to say, that's the thing that's got the most vitality. You know, and I think that kind of shifting of the prism through which you view a sense of unfolding activities was something that we were learning, but it also involved him learning that as well, because, you know, lots of things are happening in this space. Where does your attention go? And how do you keep alert to the whole of the space, but at the same time, notice that really small thing happening in the corner, which might be really where something's happening?

Mariella Greil

Exceptionally open, and he would join our warm ups? I've never found a cameraman who has that kind of open mind it was quite something, yeah.

Audience

I'd be really interested to hear some thoughts on the fact that you, as a group are bilingual, and both of you who do not work with language, have one shared mother tongue that isn't English. And you, as someone working with language and words, comes with English? Was translation ever an issue?

Mariella Greil

I mean, yeah, language, I think language is also a storage point for culture. So that's all activated. So there are quite a few, there were quite a few productive and generative rubs, to say.

Emma Cocker

I mean, actually, we also have sputniks involved in the project, some interlocutors who were, two of them were Portuguese,

Nikolaus Gansterer

Portugese, Belgian and Spanish.

Emma Cocker

So, it was really, you know, I mean, when we were sort of trying to put the book together, we were critically thinking about that, because the problem, of course, is that this English just becomes some sort of lingua franca of the project and if you work with language, this can be troubling in various questions that arise through that. And there's ways of working with language. I mean, different models emerge, for example, I'm interested in this conversation material we would use it in the context if you like, but it's vitality dynamic was quite different than this one, and what we're getting some ways of working, and opportunities, but also points of tension. One of the things I don't like how this sounds, it sounds really rude. One of the things is that's nice about not being bilingual, is that collaboration is a very intense process. And if you're working together for very intense periods in the lab, there actually is a real advantage of not being able to understand everything that's being said. You know, like, yeah, in this sort of introvert moment, there's a way of actually getting the private space, when you just can't understand the conversations. And that probably sounds a bit ignorant. But I took advantage of that at times to find effectively like quiet within a very busy working environment. And whether that's true also of the languages of different practices, if you can't, if you can't read somebody else's practice. There's problems with that. But there's also spaciousness in a way that you don't have all of that kind of interpretive noise that you're trying to work out what something is about. And that kind of can remain quite, it can be open to interpretation of will be understood to what you already think you know about, if that makes sense.

Mariella Greil

There's also one practice, in the conversation practices that is called wild talk. And it was written because we found out that actually, this is all about interlocking and kind of cutting into somebody else's sentence, and I really struggled with this one. And what we found through like, trying to understand why like, there is a structure in German that you always have to wait until the end of the sentence because the verb is at the end. So, it feels so kind of you don't even know what the person is in the process of saying and to cut in before you arrive at the like the core with the verb of the sentence, it just was very difficult, and then yeah, I think that really looking closely at those language issues was quite interesting. And I think that that was also why I refer to culture, I think, this also says a lot about the environment where the language was growing from.

Audience

You said something about authorship, this complex idea of authoring and whether the practice or process yourself became a kind of author, where does that word sit?

Mariella Greil

And if you look at the book, you will find those essays that are authored by our witnesses. And then those types that don't have an author attached to it are actually coming from, were created through this method of conversation, transcription and then working through the transcription tool with the text. So, it is really hard to untangle, impossible to untangle. And sometimes I get the feedback that people say, hey, I can hear your voice or I can see Nikolaus's voice. So, I think if people

are really knowing our practice pretty well, then they might be able to do a bit of detective work there but generally the intention was to find a language for the project. So, the project can speak for itself.

Nikolaus Gansterer

Was that more related to working together in the lab? Or more towards the publication? The authorship question?

Audience

It was kind of a wide question I just have a sense that you're dealing with authorship in a really complex and interesting way and it seems to be dispersed or

Nikolaus Gansterer

I mean for example, through this core structure we have developed, that is quite a safe, democratic or horizontal way of composing live, this situation because in anybody in the group could call for one figure or for one practice of attention or switching to a mode of conversation feed wild talk or structure through key words, or dialogic. So there is was actually a lot of parameters, every one of us could activate, and then that really changed the situation and through that we all were at all levels kind of writing the thing, the situation, if that makes sense,

Emma Cocker (1 hour 15 minutes)

I think the issue of authorship super interesting in terms of a collaborative structure like this, because in a way, I think there are two quite radically opposite ways of approaching it. One would be that you declare your mode of working right from the offset or you declare, or you set the ground the parameters of how you propose to author. And the other is that you just get on with it, and then deal with it as it arises. I think actually, we were using both strategy, all along. I know texturally at the start of the project, I think I said that I was interested in this idea that the vocabulary of the project with pass through the machine, effectively will pass through the recording device. And in order for those references that we wanted to make or in order for, it would need to go through that kind of conduit in the sense of it is witness to a conversation that's happened, rather than being certain people who will be sort of scribes or authors of particular aspects of the book or the project itself. But we had reached an agreement between the three of us but then of course, we're working with others who are not part of that initial contract. So, in a way each time you meet with another collaborator or another person in space, as far as those questions come up, it was an unspoken question that came in on Sunday when we were working with a new group of people. So yeah, it's something I'm interested in.

Audience

And the editing? How does editing happen? Was that another role?

Nikolaus Gansterer

You mean of the video material for example? Or editing the publication? The publication, well I think we started quite early, also with a designer to involve her to develop also an idea of what shape it could get. So that content and shape would inform each other. So, I think it took more than a year actually, to come to that decision.

Mariella Greil

Yeah she was coming at certain points, and observing the process. So, then she started to think about it and making propositions. We had really nice processes, very close collaboration with a business model for the layout, and the actual editing work I mean, I know that we did that but also Jeanette Pacher was very involved in this process, she was also one of the witnesses. And we were kind of really like, this was one of the things that was very meaningful to us that we wanted to have been in contact with everybody who was contributing to the book. So like, it was always a physical meeting point, somewhere a physical meeting point with the material or a set of questions. So, that it felt really meaningful to have this voice in the book also.

(Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021)

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