



Choreographic Objects with Sarah Whatley

(automated transcript from otter.ai)

SPEAKERS

Sarah Whatley, Gill Clarke and Audience

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 2019 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.

This is a field recording of variable quality with a live audience at Siobhan Davies Studios.

(2009 audio file begins)

Gill Clarke 00:45

Welcome to Crossing Borders, to talk about choreographic objects. I have an apology, first of all, from Scott DeLahunta, who is really sorry that he couldn't be here today. But we do have Professor Sarah Whatley, who you met as artist in the videos that Rosemary Lee was showing last week. So we've had a nice, relay thread going through. Sarah is researcher and lead the project that developed the Siobhan Davies archive. And Ross Varney has valiantly offered to be here, who is also researching on that project, but to help us through looking at these different projects online, just so we get a glimpse of them as we go along. We're trying to be without microphones. So if you're at the back, and you can't hear, it's an incentive to come forward. If you're at the front and can't hear, do do, let us know. I'm going to let Sarah set the scene and start us off. And then we'll see a few online projects. And then it feels most especially this evening. We're interested in different perspectives on what what happens to these projects. Now, how are they useful to us as a discipline, and it's a great opportunity to have people even if you're an MA student, that you yourself are to different place in in your work as an artist, and that we also have educators here, and independent professional artists. So it feels really valuable to have that exchange. So welcome.

Sarah Whatley

Thank you, Gill. And yes, thank you, thank you for this opportunity, it feels having worked very closely with Sue on the development of the archive for two and a half, three years or so. It feels very nice to come back. Now the projects, I wouldn't say completed because it feels as if it's ongoing and living. But nonetheless, the archive was there to be able to come and talk about where we go next with the archive and the range of the other choreographic resources that we've been working on. So it feels as if that this year 2009 has been a very interesting and exciting year, because we've seen a number of these digital choreographic objects emerge and add to our small but significant collection of resources available to us as dancers, artists, researchers, teachers, educators, or indeed general lovers of dance. So a number of them have emerged, and we're going to show you some of them during this presentation. But I'm going to start by talking about a project that I was part of and at Gill was part of and Ross was part of, which was an AHRC project and network project that brought together the research teams. And in the last event the artists who were busy making these objects, it was an

AHRC funded network project. And it brought together interdisciplinary teams, each of us who were involved in making those choreographic objects and the four objects being the Siobhan Davies Archive, William Forsythe's work with a higher state university making synchronous objects, Emio Greco and Pieter Scholten from the Netherlands, working on the Capturing Intention project. And finally, Wayne McGregor random dance his project working on the online choreographic agent project. Three of those have launched already. The archive, the Capturing Intention which actually launched a couple of years ago in terms of its book, which some of you may be familiar with, but continues to develop its online presence. Synchronous Objects launched earlier this year. And the choreographic agent Wayne McGregor's work will be launching early next year. So the teams that were busy making those objects came together over three weekends. Importantly, with a group of social scientists a project that was led by James Leach, who's based at Aberdeen University, he's a social scientist, anthropologist, who came to, and brought the frame if you like, for those discussions, and they were enormously valuable for us who are busy making those things to have time away from the hard work the labour sitting in front of our computers and worrying about the technology and all the other stuff that goes into making these objects to come together for a safe weekend. And each occasion to think about what we were making, why we were making them. And importantly, having James's frame to think about what we've we were creating in terms of them being knowledge objects, and what was it that we were creating in terms of adding to the production of knowledge and how dance itself produces knowledge, and what knowledge is embedded within those objects. And it gave us the chance to think about that transaction, what is it that's being exchanged between the object itself, and the receiver or user of the object. So it gave us a chance to think about this object slightly differently and time away. And importantly, and to quote Geoffrey Crossick's, recent speech, recent talk, looking at the value of those intense personal interactions that happen when people come together. And importantly for us is coming from a dance place, the opportunity to work with another discipline experts from another discipline, and how they brought a different way of understanding and making sense of what we were doing. And that fed us in our work, and also, I think, fed those social scientists in terms of thinking differently about their practices as well.

Sarah Whatley

So those four objects, gave us that chance to think about what we were documenting what we were describing how we were transmitting what we were transmitting, what was that knowledge, what we we were disseminating, what we were leaving out what we were leaving out? That's right. And I think with all those sorts of events, we came to the first one with a very clear sense of the structure of the weekend. And within half an hour, we abandoned it, because we recognise that actually having that chance to share and exchange ideas meant that we could safely abandon structures. And as Gill says, Think, importantly, we started to play with that thinking around what those objects were not as much as what they were. And importantly, all of them are about offering an opportunity to see the knowledge which is embedded within the process of dance making in different ways. And it's the knowledge which is normally not available to us. So it's a knowledge which those of us involved in making dance are very familiar with, although it's particular to our own process. But it's not something we have access to very readily at all. So that felt as if it was the the important focus of what we were doing and why those objects felt very important to us. We had to it felt like a retreat, a retreat from the labour of the making to spend that time. The third event was was much more managed. It was the the event at Sadler's Wells, some of you may have been there. It was an important moment because not only did it wrap around Forsythe's work at Sadler's Wells in performance. But it also brought together the choreographers for the first time into that workshop setting. So for us as researchers who worked very closely with our own choreographer, but nonetheless had not brought them into that space of dialogue before. It was a moment where we had a platform with all four, well, three actually, sadly, because Wayne couldn't be there, but three of the choreographers and all of us busy, those of us who've been busy making work. And I think that was a useful moment for the choreographers, as well as us as researchers to think perhaps a little differently about what we were doing. So in there was this important for us it was really important to look at the value of contemporary dance and repositioning contemporary dance and the value of contemporary dance and exposing the choreographic thinking that goes into dance making.

Gill Clarke 09:57

Can I say there was one thing that felt really important to me, saying that the choreographers were only present at the last gathering was, which I think informs what these objects became is that those people leading the projects that we searchers were coming from a place of their own, that was a place of practice. Often artistic practice, creative practice. So they were also creative contributors to that process of developing the archive.

Sarah Whatley

And all of the projects were artists led or artists in association with artists. So it wasn't about the researcher working in isolation from and as Gill says, each of us had a practice that we were bringing into that experience of making. The other thing to say is that because there are other objects, you know, these are just four of them. But it feels as if this year has been particularly interesting in that way. And there are the Liz Lerman site, you might be familiar with the tool box that she's been working on. So again, an artist led process, and there are others that we might reference later on. But having made these and they're out there now, and they're living, and they're evolving, and they're changing. And as people come and meet those objects, we're starting to get some feedback, or they're part of our discussion is how do we get that feedback? And how do we really know what people are doing them? And, and being aware that we probably need to do more to think about how we start to encourage engagement with them. So what is what do we do next with it? What's the next phase? Having got them out there? How do we start to find ways of meeting users, visitors? Whether they're artists, practitioners, students, teachers, researchers, general audiences for dance. So that's where we've got to next and one of the concerns that each of us, I think, have had in different ways. And each of us have got to a different stage in the process is thinking about the pedagogical possibilities. How do they become really useful teaching and learning tools? How do they start to become tools that can feed into curriculum, curricula? And how do they start to shape curricula design curricula design? And that's sometimes a challenging process. Because it's one of those any of us involved in education know that these things take a long time to develop and the design of courses aren't, it's not something you can suddenly change. So how do you start to feed that in? And importantly, how do you start to let the dance resources the choreographic resources, these these objects become triggers? For practitioners, tutors, researchers, students in other discipline areas, so they start to feed other curricular areas. And that's been something that we've been really interested in starting to explore.

Sarah Whatley

So we thought we might show you these objects and give you a glimpse into them. Now, some of you probably are very familiar with them. Maybe some of you have seen none of them, not sure. But we're gonna we're gonna give you a little bit of a taste of them, of course, because spend all night looking at one of them. They're very rich resources. So we encourage you please, if you're not familiar with them to spend some time with them, because we're aware that it's only when you have a deep engagement with them that you start to kind of work out what the possibilities are and what the potential is for these objects. So shall we start shall we have a look at the Inside Movement Knowledge now the Capturing Intention project, which is what I mentioned, the Emilio Greco, Pieter Shelton project that's been in development for a little while now. And this site has grown out of that work. It builds on the outcomes of the Capturing Intention project, which has a book, it has a documentary film, it has a DVD ROM and an installation. And this website is at the moment an internal that the Capturing Intention website is publicly available. This at the moment is a closed site, but just to show you the kinds of objects and the kinds of documents that are available and will become publicly available, which documents a lot of the debate that's going around around choreographic object development, learning resource development, and how different researchers have started to engage with those objects and started to critique them. And one of these items on here that is particularly interesting, I think is the one that references the synchronous objects project, which we'll come to next. But it's a very nice example of how the synchronous objects project, which is the William Forsythe project has actively engaged disciplines beyond dance, to start to look at how those objects can start to stimulate project work in other disciplines. So in simple terms, they've worked directly with an architecture department, an architecture tutor, who's used some of the objects on synchronous objects to start to think about architecture, and the students have come up with various models based on their observation interpretation of the choreographic objects work. So that's one of the the, the objects that you see on this particular site, but it gives you an idea about how other disciplines can meet these objects and start to use them as a catalyst for thinking differently, perhaps about their practice. So there's some really lovely, lovely documentation on here, which you can find and have a little play with.

Gill Clarke 16:24

So this part is available already, or this part will go live?

Sarah Whatley

Is it go live soon? Yeah, it will go live. So the Capturing Intention website is publicly available, but it's currently being built. So it's gradually coming on in stages. If we go and we see this, again, coming up in in the synchronous objects, if we go to

synchronous objects now, this has been out since April. And each one of these objects is quite different. So whereas the Capturing Intention project is multi layered, and it's principally around how do you start to document artists intention, is that possible? And there are notation schools, there's installation, there's DVDs, there's lots of different ways in which that process of how do we start to document intention can be explored synchronous objects is a very detailed analytic process around one particular work, the one work being one flat thing reproduced. So there's this huge body of material, which is developed through this very close reading of one work. And what you have here are lots and lots of tools, which are interactive. So as a user, you can come and you can play with these tools, you can see the work in its entirety, and start to see how different disciplines within and beyond dance have started to think about an interpretation through an analytic perspective on the work. And just to give you one example, there's there's a tool if we go to the will objects, and we go to the counterpoint tool, and one of the principal organising features of the work is its counterpoint. Counterpoint seems to be its dominant, organisational, thematic idea. So there is this rather lovely counterpoint tool, which gives you an insight into that notion of counterpoint and how you can play choreographically if you like, but on screen. To get inside a little bit, that process of thinking about counterpoint. Now, Ross is pretty skilled at driving this and you need to play a bit with it to get used to what you can do with it, but it's available for everybody, everybody can go to this and there are lots of tools on here that you can play with can you go back to the fuel objects so these have involved different experts discipline practitioners for a wide range of different areas. So for example, the the choreography or maybe the data farm, which you picked up briefly earlier, the data farm which is an object created through through the programming of the dance, so it's another it's it's been used the dance, the information about the dance has been harvested, and then it's been used generatively to create a different kind of object as a way, another way into the dance. And in a sense, the idea behind this whole project has been how do you help readers see more in the dance because Forsythe and Norah Zuniga Shaw has been working on this talk about the density, the the spatial complexity of the work. And if you're familiar with one flat thing reproduce, it's enormously dense work. It's very, very complex. And so how do you help a reader, an audience, a viewer come into the work. So this isn't meant to replace the work at all. But it's another way into maybe seeing more in the work. So it's explores one working great tap.

Gill Clarke

And, and also, I guess, again, as you said before being a trigger to the creativity of other people in other areas in a way that is could also be an artwork in a different medium. Yeah.

Sarah Whatley

And then if we go just to the archive, maybe the show live is archive, which is quite different, because whereas you've got synchronous object, which is about this exploration, this in depth exploration of, of one work, this is a vast body of work, and it's about helping a viewer see any one work within its broader context. And to get that sense of how an artist's work takes shape over time. We've taken Sue's works as the principal organising feature of the archive. But within there, there are some rather nice tools that we already think from the feedback we've had are particularly useful and interesting. And particularly the rehearsal scratch tapes, which provide a glimpse into a process that has never been in the public domain before in this way.

Sarah Whatley

So what you have a chance to see how ideas form, how ideas start to take shape from a very simple idea and how it builds through the development of the work into the final work. And that process of bringing those rehearsal scratches, which of course, are part of the dancers, private process, in many, many cases, into this public space. is not an easy one in some ways. And Gill, you were saying earlier about your feeling of a dancer.

Gill Clarke

It feels quite quite vulnerable for a dancer, who doesn't know that this is ever going to be in the public domain. To have it put out there. But at the same time, and it feels really important to me that just to expedite the process, it wasn't every single dancer went through all of that material and picked for themselves. But they entrusted one of the dancers to take on that role. And that was a very big responsibility. I think for Deborah Saxon to choose the things that she thought would be very informative, but wasn't in any way, somehow exposing the dancer. On another level, I feel really excited as a dancer. Not specifically in relation to this project. But but that glimpses into moments in the process of being made more widely

available, it feels it's one way of, of helping many more people understand how work is actually made and how movement material is generated. And what might be a process of editing or composing with that raw material feels really important.

Sarah Whatley

And it would be interesting to hear from any of you about if you've used any of this in your practice and how you might use it. And I know from talking to colleagues in Coventry, who've been themselves in that making space and have come across blocks and have gone to some of this scratch material not to reconstruct it or not to necessarily try to embody what the dancer is doing, but to use it as a way of thinking through sometimes that difficult, naughty process of getting stuck and wanting to untangle and get through and move on. So in terms of just having access to another dancers thinking moving process has been enough to stimulate.

Gill Clarke

Yeah, there's something else in that process even in the finished work. I think it's it's very easy, I would imagine we, we all assume in a way the work that we see in the theatre is the work. But when you see several different performances and visual you have that opportunity to you realise that actually it's a shifting thing that's always in the process and so to have several views on the work as well, feels important, not that many people might take the time to do that. But to put that out there.

Sarah Whatley

And what we found so far with the archive is that the feedback we have received has, has been exciting in terms of knowing that those who come to of course are interested in in Sue's work and the company's work and maybe in British contemporary dance generally, but But what it's done for them has given them a sense of the breadth and the range and the sense of the impact of dance because of its because it's collected here and there's such a wealth of material here and it's rare to be able to get to so much in such an easy process, you know, simple clicks of buttons and you get there what we haven't done yet.

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

And what do you feel about that as a dancer?

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Audience

It would feel very differently to me now entering a making process in the knowledge that some of that material might be used. That would then be a different thing again, and maybe then one would have a feeling as one went on about oh, I'm happy for this to be seen. I'm not so happy for this to be seen one would be censoring already maybe.

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

Right, but but they make that choice.

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

Exactly. They would have made the choice. Yeah. No, exactly.

Sarah Whatley

But you're right, but it's not something we're familiar with. Is it in our practice really, in putting this like it?

Gill Clarke

Would it would feel I would just have an awareness of a different motivation. So at the moment, these were done really as aid memoirs for dancers so you could put something on screen for you to remember it so you could then move on and your memory bank you know, you your capacity within creased, so it would be different the thought I think

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

Not that I'm how I worked in rehearsal, how I thought about the moment of the video. No, I don't think it would affect how one works

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But there's that tiny moment that makes this product. So it's that thing of its people talk about if you show a work, work in progress, actually an art an audience can't quite see it as that they can try and imagine this is a moment and the work will continue to be made. But at the moment, I can only experience it is what it is not as something that's moving and shifting. And so it's almost only a sense that my perception might change in that moment. Or I might be more aware of making a note if I felt like oh, I flunked that or it wasn't what I meant to say or under I would have thought of visual artists in a sense. They, they they might either see absolutely everything which we wouldn't be doing. So it's more like almost, it's a bit more formal than the sketchbook isn't it? It's like sort of stages.

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

Yep. I thought there was something so interesting in how Deborah made that selection from this huge body of, of material. Because in a way, it would be wonderful if it was all there. But that that would then be unmanageable. unmanageable for you. Yeah, yes, yeah, definitely yes.

Audience 30:34

[Unintelligible]

Sarah Whatley

Every day. And also remember that this, we have to remember that this is historical, in a sense, even if it's only yesterday, but it isn't something which is collecting as it's making, although as we move on with the archive, there is the collecting going on into the future. But nonetheless, it was looking back at what already existed. But I think it underscores the importance of having that interface with the artists, you know, so it isn't something which somebody from outside of that practice comes in and makes those decisions. So it's something which is a collaborative, shared process. And Deborah's role was so important in that, but at the same time, making sure there's enough in there for there to be many ways of entering the work so that it doesn't become one story. So it is curatorial, and it is editorial, and it is selected, but it's selected by ensuring breadth and not one, one route through. But having said that, of course, one of our questions for us in building the archive is how do you help people find their way through? And we've often had that said to us is, is it's all there? You know, there's all that stuff, but what do I do with it? How do we get through it? And how do I make sense of what I'm getting through? And there are some tools we've given like the scrapbook tool, which is an opportunity to see how others have made sense of their journey through the archive, and inviting you to make your own scrapbooks. What we haven't got, is the opportunity for that sharing of that scrapbooks, as a community of all of you using the archive, although

you can share with a nominated other that you can send it to somebody. And we've also got kitchen, which is very prototype and but it's something which again, is a part of the site where it gives you that access into how the choreographic work takes shape, what is that process of making, and how those strands those ingredients come together and get cooked into the making of the work. So it's another way in so we're trying to give lots of different opportunities to see and meet the work. And just a little story I was telling Gill earlier that one at one of our ambitions is to excite others beyond dance about the archive. And to encourage others to think that the archives have somewhere to feel stimulated about dance, but also about perhaps their own discipline. And, and we've recently been talking to computer science colleagues at Coventry. And after a couple of meetings, somebody who, who I've been talking to who's been quite excited about the archive, came in and said, you know, a couple of meetings ago, I came into the building where I work and there was some screen dance playing. And he said, I didn't know what I was looking at. I didn't know I stood there for a while I didn't know if it was good or bad did I like it? I don't know. So but now the archive because I understand this is my territory, you know, I can see how I can meet the dance through the archives. So there's a way of bringing somebody from outside of dance into dance because we're speaking something around his language. So that felt like a really nice moment. And that will trigger other possibilities.

Gill Clarke

Feels to me there's something really important for dance with all of these objects as well. It's about enabling people to spend time with something. And, and I think we suffer in terms of the understanding of our audience by the fact that they usually only see something once whereas we've been living with it for six months since we made it and for somebody to be able to take their own time and meander and come back and return. It feels there's something about even say look at the Forsythe project which is dealing with real intricate complexity in the structure of one particular work that that perhaps by spending time with that as an audience member you're then more tuned up to be able to see and read that complexity when you next go and see something line so it feels it so it's a real aid to us as an art form these tools to, to help an audience be become readers to become more literate.

Sarah Whatley

And just to mention about the Inside Movement Knowledge website, they're already quite advanced the group working around Capturing Intention and the learning tools that are emerging from that project. And they're already developing a number of teaching and learning tools. The of course book has been developed as a prototype. And it feels as if then there are there are some models emerging. But we need many more. So that as we start to see the possibilities of these digital online choreographic objects, we also start to see what else is possible so that the more we have, the more then although these are models, they're not the only possibility. And the more we have, the more we can do with them.

Gill Clarke

And we were talking earlier about these particular objects are digital but if one thinks about choreographers artists who are choosing to, to place their thinking in a medium other than performance or choreography, we were thinking about artists who would make books for example, are written books. Like Deborah Hay like Miranda Tufnell, or the impact of Yvonne Rainers statement manifesto, and Rosie's book, and Rosie's book, as well. So, so, choreographers are beginning to expand the range of media through which they're wanting to spread those ideas. I had something I wanted to jump in on because I have to say every time I hear it, it it something about jars for me little bit is this term choreographic object. So I wanted you to give me the background on that a little bit and then propose an alternative.

Sarah Whatley

Yeah, it is an interesting one. And it's only recently that that I think I'm more comfortable with it as as as a term as an notion, because when it when I first was confronted with this idea, and it predates the project with James, I have to say, the Choreographic Objects network, it came to me through our e-learning team at Coventry, and we were building some learning objects, and I had to in dance and I had to say, but the object doesn't mean anything to me, how can we possibly talk about an object dance isn't an object, it can't be an object, it's something constantly in flux in process. If you make it into an object, it's something fixed and it doesn't, it just doesn't work. And after a little while of getting upset about it, and frustrated, I started to see well, first of all, it has its origins, perhaps in computer computing, software, programming language, in terms of this being about data collection, so I have to acknowledge that it has a discipline, it grows out of the discipline. But also then, within the context of the choreographic objects project, thinking that these are, these are things

that these things are themselves only things because of the exchange between the thing itself and those who come to it. And it's in that exchange and interaction, that the thing starts to have life and meaning. So in a sense, it isn't a fixed thing. And it's something which which which evolves because of the user engagement. And James talks beautifully, and I can't possibly speak for James, that speaks beautifully about this idea of that the object being a knowledge object, and it's something which is transacted and the value we place on how we transact our transactions between us with these things that we give and receive. So it has a broader

Gill Clarke

I think that's really useful to know. I think in my mind, I'd like to see these objects which are often all so much in movement, more as verbs than objects. And it feels as such as said there, there's so much to me about an opportunity to reveal process and to reveal that that dance is in process and is not ever fixed in a way and and I was interested in our network meetings because it, it felt to me that in a way each of the choreographers was really trying in every which way they could to make sure that this medium didn't tie their thing down. That it was very clearly there to try and be a tool that would help other people generate their ideas, rather than be only fixing their own choreography. I think that was clear within it, each of them projects. Which raises perhaps another issue for me, I was thinking back to, I don't many of you might know, what was your CD ROM, or DVD ROM, the improvisational technologies, Bill Forsythe's earlier project, which for anybody who doesn't know, has some lovely footage, which has some graphic lines, overlaying it so that if you see a dancer move, you could see that their movement came, for example, from the space that came from underneath the table, for example. And I felt very excited about how this might open up possibilities for students, particularly perhaps younger students, who might think of dancing as just putting steps together, and that this might break open a barrier for them. At the same time in terms of Forsythe's and work, I thought, oh, but his work is so much more than this. And does it in a way, is there a danger that it reduces it a little bit. But then in discussion, we were thinking, I think Sue for you, this was really important in a way. If you only give one reading or one interpretation of a piece of work, then somehow that comes across as that's it or that's the truth. So, but the more and more layers and voices that you're able to add in there. That's what we're lacking, in a way. So the problem perhaps isn't that something is fixed, but just that we need to now move on on this journey and get more and more.

Sarah Whatley

Absolutely. And, again, if we can think about how we we bring others into that exploration, further development, so others who have expertise in other areas, what we start to do is to think about how those objects themselves can be enhanced, or can be redesigned, even. And I'm not suggesting for a minute that we go back and we redesign the things themselves, but they start to become generative. So they start to offer up new ways in which users can start to think about how they stimulate new versions. And that's something which I think coming into that teaching and learning frame is something is how do we how do we enable how do we start to think about interinstitutional collaboration in order for these objects can not only have meaning within our dance experiences, but also within other discipline domains. And if it's the case that we can excite others because of these objects, and then we could start to think differently about what we're making. And of course, there is now you know, the push towards Open Source and Creative Commons, and so on. So that offers up new possibilities, although there's also that, I think, productive if inevitable and productive and natural tension between the the institution, as in the educational institution and the demands that we have placed on us working in institutional educational institutions, and the artists and how those two meet because our trajectories can be quite different. So how do we find a meeting place where it's productive for us both and use that tension in a positive way?

Gill Clarke

It would be useful to hear from both students and educators thoughts about ways in which you've already made use of these or potential that you've seen. You speak nice and loud.

Audience

Today, I said I was going to use the synchronous objects. Systems of course for making and I was really interested in how this is a tool both maps outwards, but there's also deep excavation content and how actually, as [unintelligible] students, people tend to make work, not always, but there's linearity [unintelligible] so I was already in this context of mapping sort of web page, maybe thinking about what's actually is beyond, how can we sort of meetings, lose yourself and navigate your own way through an archive [unintelligible] the work. And if I am sort of trying to bridge between movement, and something

that's a book and then thinking about the body dance work and talking to me anyway it feels like it's gonna change the event there's so many layers of information that sometimes use too quick for me to register, so I'm using the Sue Davies archive quite a lot, in order to look at an embedded content to work through our sources nearer [unintelligible] Yeah exactly. There is this process of accumulation and effect. I can see how invisible that that can be on a second or third day using it to draw an overlay. So really pointing layers that are hidden, whilst in the same way [unintelligible]?

Gill Clarke 46:28

Fantastic. Something about really opening up time singing?

Sarah Whatley

And how do the students, can ask how the students find that experience?

Audience

They kind of didn't know that it existed I think? You know I showed it to them on their computers and I was using the counterpoint [unintelligible] the finish work but also the source of the best, perhaps visible or better processes or variables, which, in the end, make that work? And actually, they do go on this journey, and they're not always visible, something really manipulating people very differently. And as some people know who thinks that outcomes are happening so that's really interesting, you know, [unintelligible] sort of doing it, so. I think he's interested in in that and that [unintelligible] connection, I don't know if this is what you do as soon as they [unintelligible].

Sarah Whatley

Can I ask if anybody's used any of these or indeed other online sources in a studio, you know, in terms of working it practically with them, or whether or not they're tools that you use? In a kind of reading private study moment, you know, I'm interested to know where they how they enter

Gill Clarke

Whether they are a library resource of whether they're practical.

Sarah Whatley

Oh, if you see them possibly being so you know, what the barriers might be, or the problems might be the limitations might be of that.

Audience

This would be the question that I've been introduced to [unintelligible] definitely interest in the especially the, because quality of the rehearsal process. And you mentioned earlier that that then switches to the product. So I'd be interested [unintelligible] want the audience to be for that because is I was watching, I would see it as a process, and something that I can really learn from rather than [unintelligible] it to the project and the product at the end. So I will take it for what it was. Just that one other thing that we were discussing, a couple weeks ago, but if you think of Wayne McGregor and Forsythe, it's complicated does raise the question, where are these fantasies for other choreographers as only other choreographers and people raise immersive dance that can be done? And perhaps this is something else that can let other people physically understand a lot more of the dancing there. Yeah.

Sarah Whatley

Well, that certainly was the the ambition of the synchronous objects, acknowledging that complexity and because Forsythe is very familiar with working on digital tools. So it's not something which, you know, he was coming to for the first time, but nonetheless, it was very much about how to help the viewer into the work by seeing it through lots of different perspectives. And I think soon, I mean, you've always wanted the archive to be there for everybody. So it hasn't, you know, it isn't meant for just a specialist audience or users.

Audience

[unintelligible] So, anytime we have any more time, what would what would come forward out of it that would is [unintelligible] to reach our disciplines who might say, I recognise my discipline in this discipline, therefore, can I speak about it.

Gill Clarke

Want to say a bit about that?

Sarah Whatley

Yeah, well, what were when you know that there are ongoing, sorry, it's uncooked I mean, they're, they're ongoing discussions about what that might be. But we're hoping to bring together and invite experts in other areas to come to spend some time playing with and engaging with the archive, to tell us more about what they see in the archive and how that has, how that has resonance for them thinking around their own disciplines, and how the archive can be a generator of ideas. So we're hoping to develop that out. So that's about sort of, you know, the next phase, now we've got the thing, what do we do next with it? And how do we start to build more user engagement? And also around interactivity, you know, how do we start to think about other tools that can enhance that way in which, how do we know what people are doing with it? Because we're intrigued to know, and we get some feedback? You know, I get emails occasionally from people saying, I've just used it, it's fantastic, you know, but, but but it would be so exciting to really know what people are doing with the archive? And what the questions are that come out of the archive? And how can we help answer them? How can we steer people to the answers within the archive or possible answers or range of answers? So so there is there is that level in a way that we've, we've sort of let it go, it's the sort of you know, we've given birth, and simultaneously the child has grown up and left home, you know, and we want to kind of know what's going on with it, we want to keep in touch with it. So we're looking all the time at how, how we might develop more interactivity, and thread more people into it in a in an organised way.

Gill Clarke

It feels one of those. Oh, go on.

Audience

I just wanted to ask, do you know, which disciplines to plant and logonation to computer scientists?

Sarah Whatley

Yeah,

Audience

to have a wide open up level? Do you have specific disciplines?

Sarah Whatley

No, I don't think we do. We've got people that we think we would like to come in. Not necessarily named people, but discipline experts, but it's not in the moment limited in that way. We're interested in social scientists, anthropologists, philosophers, perhaps cognitive scientists, maybe architects, computer scientists. So I don't think we're thinking limited at all at the moment. In fact, the opposite we want, you know, we want others to say actually, can I come and join? Join? So so in a way, it's absolutely

Gill Clarke

Did you have some suggestions to make?

Audience

know, just because synchronous objects, of course, they certainly have worked with architects and geographers as well. So I just wondered if you had any that you had in mind?

Sarah Whatley

No way, not to be limited at this point.

Audience

There's no work being done in the neuroscience with human perception and transmission of effect. And so I think when we talk to someone, the other side of the complaint was that they never have enough access to dance announces, that's the click of a button. Because, you know, it's, it's a question of time and resources and so on. And I think, collaboration with them, not just be interesting for them, but also valuable for the makers to see what they come up with, in terms of, you know, assumption and and what they're making and what is, what is the core of it and, you know, kind of a much deeper level of analysis we could learn a lot.

Gill Clarke

Do you want to speak very briefly to Wayne's project. Yeah,

Sarah Whatley

Although there's an expert in the room. Do come in if I'm getting this wrong, but sadly, you know, we haven't shown any of ways but because it's not yet available online, although it will be it will be soon. But Wayne has been doing a lot of work around working directly with what we want. Yeah, Phil, that's right a neuroscientist. And he's been working with programmers and David Kirsh and others who who've worked with him looking at his process. And so he's been doing quite a lot of that work. And he's already building a community of experts around so that's the next phase of his development is to build a community of experts who are coming into and then starting to engage with him on that process. And the choreographic agent that's in process is going to be a tool which will be available for anybody to use, I believe, is that right? So it will be online as a tool. So although it will be it's grown out of Wayne's work, so the process has been developed through an analysis, a close analysis of that work, the tool that emerges will be available for anybody to use online online. As a way of thinking about the choreographic method, the choreographic process.

Gill Clarke

You want to add anything?

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Gill Clarke

So the audience would generate when they were there.

Sarah Whatley

Which is partly what the Capturing Intention installation work is. If anybody's seen that the installation is about the, the, the viewer, the user, the dancer coming into the installation, and working, it's a motion capture technology, where it's based on sensors and working in response to the image, which is projected. So.

Gill Clarke

Something interesting about that, I think, is it's almost seems to me, it's about attempting to help tune or transition an audience from the everyday world into the space of the performance. So part of what you are absorbed in copying, if you like is, is to do with a breathing pattern. So it's almost trying to help your state trend position into a point of receptivity for the performance. I was going to say something about the neuroscience link, perhaps it feels to me a little bit frustrating that at present, it seems a lot of that research is is both to do with vision, when it feels like we are engaged with all of the other senses so much. And as a lot been working with ballet dancers. And when questioned about that, they sometimes reply that not only have they been the people that seemed available, but that because they're dealing with a more known and fixed language, it's easier because they need certain fixed variables and certain changeable variables. And so there's something perhaps about how these objects could allow them to work with material that is there for them and can be there for them again, and so I'd be excited if that happened if they turned their interest more to contemporary work.

Sarah Whatley

And I think what you're saying is a really interesting point because in a way that meeting of the neuroscience with the dance in a way we're doing it on that and I have a slight and it's a little bit the same because I've worked with a biomechanical engineer and it's a little bit the same his work is wonderful but but we work very often with ballet as a vocabulary because of its fixedness. And because it's measurable, and because you can then develop reliable data from it. And always we're trying, we're gently moving away from that, but it but it but it's the place where I think as you say Gill that these objects perhaps can encourage a meeting place, which is closer to where we are. Then the neuroscientist.

Audience 1:00:30

Quite things are repeated. And Victor on to the last asked the person I talked to why? He said, Because if I asked him to do a quote, he just

Audience

didn't need to know anymore. Yeah, I think that's this is something a bit more than just just the mechanics. So

Gill Clarke

I'm really interested. Oh, just a question. Yeah.

Audience

I think that's really good next time is to know the questions to ask. So the questions they were asking. And now we're getting exposed to contemporary, that's inspiring new questions.

Sarah Whatley

Yeah, yeah.

Audience

But also struggling with that. The people that I talked to, said that very little of that kind of work has actually been done in neuroscience. This is really fresh territory, the second group and deception in neuroscience anyway. So to add a level of variability that completely the tool is, will be too scary.

Audience

Yep. So I'm going to need this book, right here tonight to actually like the title of the project,

Gill Clarke

Could you be really loud?

Audience

So I work with young people, particularly between the ages of 16 and 19. These are people that are not bad students from a place of love and really difficult backgrounds. And they are very nuanced. And I often work with people who come to us studying jazz ballet tap something for, and some of them have never done dance into this sector since college. So I can see what's going on, we spend some time with them, how visually is to inspire them. And we produce certain ideas created by the people in this room for young people to to create our own quality of life and culture. What is it really simple? Is it just a matter of recording everything that you do in a studio? And being that what are the processes that we will start to think about? That goes through? Why am I saying php? How can you simplify this?

Gill Clarke

To be able to make something that ends up being a digital object? Do you mean?

Sarah Whatley

Well, my first reaction to that, and I'm sure Ross might have something to say is that probably those young people are much more savvy with a lot of these tools. And certainly I am. So they're probably already able to work a lot with the kind of technology which will enable them to use to develop their own tools and their own resources and their own objects in a sense. And as he was speaking, I was thinking yes, something else we need to acknowledge is that, of course, these

projects have emerged out of I think, in all cases, you know, some pretty high level resources. And in a way, that's why they are kind of benchmarks, but that doesn't mean to say that everything that's made as a programmer object needs to aspire to be such a resource, heavy object, and in a way, now these are out there, we hope they will inspire exactly the kinds of the young people you're talking about, to think about. Okay, that's that stimulates me to think about what what I can make and what I can contribute. I don't think it's about the story recording everything they do, but it's about starting to think, how do I document how do I trace what I'm making and finding meaning in that tracing and documenting that has meaning for me as a maker and meaning meaning for me as somebody who wants to communicate and transmit that and exchange and share that with somebody so. So hopefully these will, will excite and stimulate thoughts around their own opportunities. And of course, we've got, you know, social networking sites and all those things which which are actually the platforms that they readily work with anyway, probably. So it's not as if they're not probably already working in that place.

Gill Clarke

And something really useful about those decisions about what would you want to include? And what what are the traces that you would want to keep and what feels irrelevant by the time you've got to the end product.

Audience

Maybe it's not creating this kind of choreographic object but [unintelligible] exists for work, and then to say, students are free to do [unintelligible] So what if this wasn't what I wanted to say space? What if people's drawing that trace when each person is here? So we call it kind of the drawing or two, this is actually a graph showing how often this sort of space is used? Or how do you know, so can transplant transpose anything, suddenly perhaps only in my [unintelligible] think about what they're doing, when that then become a result.

Sarah Whatley

And how interesting it would be if those resources they generate then can become shared, and they become part of that community, of users and generators of choreographic objects so that there's a sense that they're being part of that development. That's the next stage. But what you're talking about both of you, I think, is is is is sort of where we want to be going and thinking like, how do you actually start to make real things happen there because of these, and how, what are those teaching and learning opportunities, and what and maybe they turn into course, handbooks, or course materials, for different levels, for different ages, for different experience levels, and so on. And in a way, I would encourage you all to do that, you know, and I think we all need those and, you know, be inspired in a way to start thinking about what those those resources might be because of these online resources.

Gill Clarke

I'd be interested to hear from you as artists, also, what you feel the impact of these works now being out, there might be you spoke about the heavy resources, it feels like, these were very young, ambitious projects. And it feels like they do put a marker up there for us as an art form. Does that feel intimidating? Or does it feel? You mentioned some students saying that they actually felt empowered in terms of having an art form that had a more visible kind of sense of tradition? And

Audience

[Unintelligible] dance styles answer what you're talking about, even as a cultural social background. And so mostly people know about also it's keeping current at times and mostly people don't know, the mainstream audience knows about reality shows and more cultural [unintelligible]. So finding where you what's the niche that opening this up, is maybe it's crossing the boundaries of that, because it's social networking. Again, it's kind of like a very formalised personal law. That's not only helpful for for new way, but it's also it's helpful, you know, what's going on in your head at that moment in time. Again, it is also historical. So it means those things are happening on all these social networking sites as well. You can go back and see whether that say two weeks later, and we do issues to the working with students as well. It is a way of finding about what your strong points are. And my process right now I realised that's somebody's advice to keep a video log. But then really know how to actually what to do with the research or is it the case I needs to go back and look at it and find out why movement was done. So then I decided well, now I need to bring more cameras into the studio. Because I look at it from different angles not just once I felt okay, I learned from edit on the video as well. Now why am I not looking at it from a different angle? Why does he get and now I'm coming from multiple angles at the same time. And again, this is like also taking the baby steps and doing like the video camera. And that was and then I thought. Well now I need to think about

let's start with our writing, writing about anything, looking at taking the writing process and getting a [unintelligible] suggestion. But the work with students is starting with one thing and building upon, because if you try to teach them all these things, it's going to look like overwhelming. And going back, several [unintelligible] to your question about high art. Sometimes [unintelligible] feels as Jack Dean said, it's not about the movies we made, it is really about concepts. And it's not about [unintelligible] and this is what brings the concept to life in contemporary heads as well. It's more looking at the concept and where it started with the idea. You can secure we are we are reviewed by a final project that really is intended to be an interesting project. [Unintelligible] and that's usually not allowed, allows you to have seen the dance. But it is seen in visual art. Online mental, the New Museum in New York wasn't about a project that was [unintelligible] concept to this gallery exhibition. So I think it is it is raising the bar and keeping current with other art forms.

Gill Clarke

It does feel something about helping us be taken seriously. And I wonder, we've talked about kind of supporting our audience, and we've talked about the dance field in terms of education. I feel all this an almost other internal dance kind of role, which is held helping us within dance to embrace that dance can be all of these different things. And that it can be these artists are thinking through movement in in different ways. So it feels we almost need some contexts in which those people that make decisions within dance about what is shown what is supported, what is considered dance and what isn't. It feels like there's a kind of job to be done there, too.

Sarah Whatley

I think I think that's a really interesting point. Having had a discussion with Arts Council, early summer, about how Arts Council views, archive development, you know, what does that mean for arts artists arts practice, and the funding of the arts and dance in particular? And what does it mean, and it was an interesting conversation, which was unresolved, I think, is the best way of putting it. And it's sort of, you know, to be continued, because it's not yet kind of worked out. Where something like a digital archive, for example, how that sits within a funding structure, and a sort of audience development structure. And all of those other ways in which the arts counsellor needs to get value from its investment.

Gill Clarke

It's very much part of both of those, yeah. Another means of dissemination of thought and work.

Sarah Whatley

And potentially, as, as was raised in that conversation, an opportunity for commercial exploitation, which is another dimension, which is kind of really interesting is, you know, where, where might these go in a very different way?

Gill Clarke

And also, we haven't talked so much about it. But isn't it interesting that this maybe it's not surprising at all, but at this moment in time, these different artists, so all having an interest in a desire to make these things

Sarah Whatley

But very timely also, because of the value placed on knowledge transfer, or knowledge exchange, the creative industries in a general sense and then how we can make sure that dance is part of that. The cultural heritage that you know that that that way of valuing the arts that dance comes into that frame of how We value the arts as part of our cultural heritage. So in a way, it's very timely, because it's ticking a lot of those. Those boxes and in some ways.

Gill Clarke 1:15:09

Karen.

Audience

I'm very hesitant with that, it just strikes me that they know that. There's something like [unintelligible] in a way to change the nature of dance itself. That it's a very formed away thinking about dance because I think one of the strongest things coming out of that is the way information is being organised the way ideas [unintelligible] it being organised the way structures function. And, you know, the whole notion of interactivity, I think, that in and of itself and more profound [unintelligible], then the actual dance knowledge because I have seen it, that there's dance knowledge gets most

profoundly projected through the physical being is where we inhabit that space that or that place that dance, is is most true to nature, when you inhabit that space, it should be is actually going to seriously change the nature of what we now perceive as [unintelligible].

Gill Clarke

Or to turn around Chris' point a little bit is our culture making us think differently about those aspects of structure and

Audience

the two things are working in tandem.

Gill Clarke

Little bit louder.

Audience

How should my. What am I being?

Audience

I just realised it had the potential, I don't think anyway it is about the way in which an image and all these things that [unintelligible]. I think most of the information out there is genuine.

Audience

And all I mean is since they're in the centre, it's just been laid out on the page. But it's very easy to make not genuine out there [unintelligible]. [Unintelligible] information would be altered because we don't have the collection, rather than this which is information that was part of the building [unintelligible].

Gill Clarke

I'd love to give an anecdote from when we were in the meetings together. And people were showing scratchings of their processing, building these objects really. And I was so aware of my kinesthetic response. So for example, the impact of the music that somebody had put alongside something enabled me to read it kinesthetically or not, and some of the arcs of lines that that connect and move the dancers in Forsythe's piece, they worked a long time on making those feel like they extended out of the movement and connected to the other in terms of what their speed was that they had the sense of gravity by their acceleration and deceleration. And when they were just very abstract graphic marks, it didn't do anything. For me, it didn't. It wasn't meaning full in terms of the information that it contained it with with really clear.

Sarah Whatley

And similarly with the agent, which in a way is the most abstracted perhaps of the objects and yet still there was that deep sense of kinesthetic engagement with that. That set of markers in a space you know, it's still embodied something of that, that

Audience

[Unintelligible]

Sarah Whatley

But nonetheless the process is entirely authentic so how much does that still read through however many times abstracted away from the body moving so we wait to see perhaps.

Gill Clarke

Did you have a?

Audience

I think we shouldn't need to get this and there must be other things that must be reasons why I mean of course there are ideas that we recreate what already exists and what's genuine it's already in existence. So last week we had it's not

replacing replacing dance [unintelligible] it's something else what is that something else? But that's also what you were sort of saying about it being about genuine things but it's also I get the impression about being a tool to create other things which is kind of what Karen was saying about this changing our approach to dance. [Unintelligible].

Audience

I'm really interested in what you're saying about [unintelligible]. I think what I was thinking of was more was was more that the, the audience performer relationship with the audience. And it's about structures about the way they communicate or thinking and that kind of thing. I think that's more what I was kind of thinking about. I mean, because [unintelligible] but yeah, it's another way of packaging.

Sarah Whatley

And another question that I'm interested in is how can we back to perhaps what you started by saying is how it changes the art form is that how it changes the choreographers practice because of the making of the object. So how does that influence the next making process for each of the choreographers. We shall see.

Gill Clarke

Did you want to say anything to that?

Audience

Having experience it and we just started to make another piece and then that question you ask yourself on the other hand there is the type of person in the room, who's asking questions in my mind [unintelligible]

Gill Clarke 1:25:43

I think that's a nice note to end on. We mustn't pretend to be intelligent. I wanted to thank Ross and Sarah very, very much for being with us today. And we thought we might just in case anybody hasn't got all of these web links we would we'll put them up on our website as well. And do get back through us if you've got any further thoughts it feels like ongoing debate. Next week, Sue Davis is in conversation with Ruth Little a dramaturg and writer. She's going to be talking about wonderful complex systems and how that might relate to live performance. So thank you there are drinks downstairs.

Outro: Renée Bellamy speaking in 2021

This has been a talk from Independent Dance's Digital Library. Find more from the archives at independentdance.co.uk/library