



Exhibiting choreography: a conversation with Siobhan Davies and Mathieu Copeland (2011)

(automated transcript)

SPEAKERS

Siobhan Davies, Mathieu Copeland 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.

(2011 audio file begins)

Siobhan Davies 00:45

Hello, everybody. It's fantastic to have quite so many faces in front of us can everybody see in here? Okay. This is a Crossing Borders talk just in case nobody knew that it was which is set up by Independent Dance, which are such a vital, extraordinary part of this building. That it really gives me it gives me a thrill that they asked me to talk about Crossing Borders each year. And it's a great opportunity for me to speak with somebody whom I realise I'm going to learn a great deal from which I've done every year and this year. It's Mathieu Copeland and his What did he say? His proper title, his clear title is curator. And I love that because he could say that with great clarity. And this last year or two, I have used that word curator with modesty, I hope, some clarity but it's a way of trying to coax my choreographic practice into areas that I feel fresh in. Not always knowledgeable, but open to the possibility because I feel a choreographic practice should, why why wouldn't it be rich enough to move into all these extraordinary areas. So mature, I loved the idea that when he was talking about his work, he was talking about introducing into gallery spaces or polyphony of activity. And that rang very strongly with me. But, again, we shouldn't our roles are, are not to edit to somebody else's material. In other words, what we bring into the gallery is what we bring into the gallery do not edit ourselves through somebody else's practice. So I love this idea of the multi voice. But he also said that sometimes he brings everything into the gallery, and sometimes nothing. So I'm looking forward to that. I thought I'd start the evening by each one of us briefly saying something that was urgent to us at the moment, something that would explain our activity to you now. And then we'd set out to explore each other a little bit more, open it up to you as much as possible. I know some subjects that I pretty sure I'm going to be alert to is the ever the ever present one of time. And why that fascinates us and how we use it and how we break it down. But also lovely words that we both

use evidence memory reprise echo. And so these are the tributaries we will be following. But first, I'd love to ask Mathieu to open it up.

Mathieu Copeland 03:59

Great. Thank you. Well, thank you so much for these words and for inviting me. And then I guess first okay to do without my shoes on.

Siobhan Davies 04:08

It's liberating.

Mathieu Copeland 04:10

She's scared to talk with my hands. And I will bet on move. And I'd be. So now you'd be looking here, I'm sure. So anyway, thank you. Thank you. What I'd like to start with is, as we started the discussion and thinking about what we could talk about, I was interested in how we could judge not confusion yet, but at least draw equivalence between choreographing and, and curating. And so in that regard, I think what I'd like to him to open up and present is a show that I've done quite a few years wouldn't know quite a few years ago, 2007 called A Choreographed Exhibition and from their draw upon what is urgent to me, which is a book that I'm finishing at the moment, which is called Choreographing an Exhibition. So I think what is quite interesting to me is that as I was working on that show A Choreographed Exhibition and I was extremely keen on, on not knowing what would happen but on setting up the boundaries of how to start with. And so therefore, as I often do in the work in my work as a curator, is to believe in the title and believing that the title should, well often carries forward, or the programme of the show to be. And so when I, when I started working on A Choreographed Exhibition, I was very, very much interested in in how I could envisage the the notion of what is an exhibition, what it is to make an exhibition, through the prism of choreography, and then, and especially from my understanding of the aim of this of the actual term choreography, which of course, is the writing of movement, but I don't know why for some reason, I always say, for the writing and movement in time, and so, therefore, articulating the fact that there is the writing of something, and that is to write the score of an exhibition, the writing of movements, so therefore, considering arts as movement, movement, as arts, how to locate arts within the movement of women within the arts, and in time, time being the, the constancy between all the shows that I do, and, and I guess, all the shows that are, as I was telling you, one of the, I think, which is rather exciting all across the country, rather displeasing, whenever you are invited to do a show, either in a museum or in contemporary art centre, or any kind of a setting, the first thing that you are given his time, is the amount of time you can work with. And I guess, you know, aside from working with that, it came to me have had to use that time as, as material of the show to be of the exhibition to become. And so I was very much interested in how I think, an empty stage and exhibition based on your movement, nothing else, but not so much as you know, a series of performances that would happen in the space of the gallery, or the museum, but very much in in the time of an exhibition, and hence, the use of the term exhibition within the title itself. The exhibition was face simple as to how it was happening in space, there was only three dances in the empty space. It first happened at the Kunsthalle St Gallen in Switzerland, and then took it to another contemporary art centre in just outside of Paris, called La Ferme du Buisson. And what it was very interesting

to this very radically different spaces, was to just keep them there, completely empty, nothing else, and just have three dancers in this space and to invite about eight artists to each work with these dances in order to both realise a piece of that I'd say, but also to choreograph through the length of a day, and therefore the length of two month, the becoming of the exhibition itself.

Siobhan Davies 07:33

Can I just ask you one quick thing? You haven't come from a movement practice?

Mathieu Copeland 07:38

No, no, no.

Siobhan Davies 07:39

So this is a visual art learning?

Mathieu Copeland 07:43

I think so. Well, of course, I'm gonna always been fascinated by theatre and dance but that's clearly not my background, nor my and neither is performance, my interest at all? I'm reluctant to it rather, rather. But no, I think we're just

Siobhan Davies 07:55

one other question is you asked eight artists to come? From what nature from what?

Mathieu Copeland 08:01

Background yourself?

Siobhan Davies 08:02

No, I'm just. Visual artists or choreographic artists or

Mathieu Copeland 08:05

One thing that was really keen on is not only working with people who had worked with movement themselves, because, you know, I was just going to ask a question that had asked themselves, I was going to be interested in me discovering a new ground and inviting some other people to discover new ground with me. And then we'll talk about a few works that made that show be that just before I'll answer your first question about the background that makes you I think, in so many ways, that background comes back into the show itself, because what interests me and fascinates me, but for a really long time is the materiality of the artwork, the majority of the work of art, and I think in within the movement, and within the that's, that was my question, that was hack, how could we occupy the time of an exhibition with, with commission movement through three dances? And yet only focus on these? How could? Where would be the art? What is the art, of course, art is not the dancers themselves. Art is not the artist nor the curator, it is not the space. And yet art is happening constantly throughout the opening eyes of the gallery. And she had these two months with the show. So it was extremely keen in exploring that. And I think that came back to many different echoes, interests. And one of them, as I've said, is the spoken word. And actually that show choreographic exhibition came after a spoken

word exhibition that I'd done in a few years before and that which was based on a very similar setting that in an empty gallery, as a public, you would enter and ask to hear the works. And that would be just I would have invited about 18 or 18 to 20 artists to each make a piece that was only spoken. And I was extremely keen in saying that, well, if I do consider the spoken word, as an art form, and of course I do, and that is a very long tradition to that. Stemming from Yoko Ono, Ian Wilson, I was extremely interested in how we could shift that question from the spoken word to the movement itself. And that's how an essay came for me to invite many different artists but also choreographers or musicians or writers to think of how we could, we could. Yeah, we could we could, together with the dancers create a work would create an exhibition that would be based upon the the movement itself that would.

Siobhan Davies 10:10

Can you give an example of what one of them did?

Mathieu Copeland 10:13

Of course, yeah, well, I mean, there's maybe the suit to all the words, of course was were fascinating to me. One of them was I invited Karl Holmqvist is a wonderful Swedish artist based in Berlin, and kind of been working on the spoken word, coming back to the show just that I had done before, and kind of been working on the spoken word for every single thing ever since the beginning of his career. And what was fascinating with him is that he considered just him talking as creating a creating the space kind of a platform to platform for events to be, and that was extremely interested in how we could envisage throughout the position of three dances, what I ended up calling the choreographed polyphony. So for instance, Karl decided to work a piece that the dancers, of course, sees themselves, which was to write each day a an accumulative song, it would have given them just to two or three bases from his work from. And then throughout these two months of the show, they actually came up with more material themselves. So therefore, and also there is something which is quite exciting to me, that's every time you would come to the show and listen to that piece. And whenever you would happen, you would not be confronted with some material that had happened before. So there is a live element to it in as much as it's very much alive, it keeps on evolving.

Siobhan Davies 11:27

So it's accumulated action or accumulated voices?

Mathieu Copeland 11:31

Voices in space. So therefore, as you do that, you do walk around. So the

Siobhan Davies 11:35

Sorry, I'm trying to get a picture of this. So he would ask the dance artists performers to be at different points in the space and from those different points

Mathieu Copeland 11:46

Move around a very free way. What was controlled was modern, the actual protocol of how to write this, okay, and this choreographed polyphony, the polyphony of voices in his face. And that's what we had set up quite precisely

Siobhan Davies 11:58

And each day it would accumulate, so day one, it would be just A length, and then A plus B length.

Mathieu Copeland 12:05

Yeah, and he kept on evoking throughout the whole for two months. Yeah. And, and that, but and then on the other hand, for instance, we can think about it, the only piece that I would say I did ask for in that show is a piece by Michael Parsons, who maybe you know, from, from his culture, orchestra, and kinesiology, and what it was very excited with, as we started working together and discussing about this show, he had told me about that the piece that he had written for the scratch orchestra, which was the, the, the walking piece, and I was fascinated by that. Just an even though when he did that scratch orchestra being an orchestra for non professionals. for amateurs, I'd say he was very keen upon saying, and doing as well, fine musical orchestra, what he calls a piece of usual music. And that was very interested in how you would, I would invite him to rewrite that piece, and which the basis of an action that most of us do on a constant basis with just that of walking, but for the space of the gallery, and for three dances only. And what was fascinating to me, and that was also, and that brings me back to one of the premises of the show itself, which was the fact that pretty much every situation here, I wanted everything to be on the same level, that there would not be a stage where the action will take place. Even though if there was different rooms, where you will not be one room allocated to one piece, one another room allocated to another piece, you will just be everything committed permuted from one space to the other in a very free and open way. And so I was very keen, and I was delighted when, for instance, with that piece of Michael Parsons out of how through the movement of walking is which is ever so one would assume it was a simple, the dancers told me that it was the hardest thing that they had to do just didn't require much more concentration than anything else. And nonetheless, what was exciting to me, as a district teacher of my own show, I'd say is that you would pretty much your own movement on the same level as the movement of the dancers. So therefore, there was a very interesting kind of blurring happening. And that comes back also to the title. And another kind of leakage that happened was that if I think about a choreographed exhibition, what happens here, you and your decision, not only the crew graph of the piece in time and the choreography of the movement of the densities themselves, but also that of the spectators, and how they will evolve in space?

Siobhan Davies 14:16

What was the walking event that the performance had to do? Yes, what was their requirement? What was their task?

Mathieu Copeland 14:24

Well the task was rather simple, Michael had done a series of them, I guess, about a 50 or 100 Little scores, scores that would actually give the dances the number of pace they had to work,

the kind of the rhythm and the and what you happen either he would either hit a wall or what you happen once they've done the the actual pace required, the the movement that they had to do and see if was rather simple, but it was also rather controlled. It was both free and as much as the dancers could choose randomly which ones to do. But also he was rather controlling as much as you know, all the requirements of the walking was very precise that and also it's something that I have to love is the position of the spectators. Because as we would often do is, you know, one would go to the woods and just wait for everything to happen in front of you. But with all this movement happening from one space to another from the, from the echoes, of course that one would see within what happens within wherever you are, there is always this interaction, which is implicit and not wanting, but not wanting not just wanted neither. But at least if not, I'm not.

Siobhan Davies 15:23

So it's the it's the sort of liminal moment between an audience standing and possibly walking. And then understanding that there is an event within that space, same space within that same time, but it's more controlled, because it has rhythm and pace and number attached to it.

Mathieu Copeland 15:42

Yeah, that would, that would be indeed, that would be one of them. One of the understanding that I did put forth that we did put forward as we brought about, that we wrote the the actual score to them for the show to be, but also another piece, which would be interesting to mention, would be that of them invited the choreographer, Jennifer Lacey, to, to, to, to, to contribute to the piece as well, I was quite excited about how she often worked with the outside of the boundaries outside of the, of the of the prefix stem environment of the what for her would have been this Yeah, to the stage. And so I wanted to know what would happen if you do come from both our views? I might be coming from the receipt, it was the the museum environment, and have you coming to try to break these boundaries and break these, any kind of a rule that would be given. And in fact, I was delighted when the of her answer when I invited her and say that she was very, she she accepted my invitation. I was delighted by that. And then she said, Well, Mathieu I want to fuck up your programme. And that's it. That was perfect. That was exactly what I was looking for. I had no preconceived idea of what would happen. Quite the contrary, I was open to any, any openness. And when, of course, it was open to any any development. And what Jennifer decided to do was, as I've said, it was really much interested in how this show will not become a succession of performances, let's say, one 110, you would have that piece at 120. That piece, then annihilated the saw the piece, but rather had it would be a kind of elite link between all the works. So even though the one of the ways to do that was to invite all of the artists to come in the space, and rehearse with the dancers and work with them on on, let's say, on the principle on the protocol of the show. And another piece, and that came through Jennifer, which was the desire to do them, the transitions between all of the words, and, and so therefore, you would have this kind of natural blending between one tissue yada, and then has the word recurring throughout the day, some of them, some of them was just very fixed term, it would it would be a constant shift in feelings and energy. And you would understand that this is not the same piece anymore. But nonetheless, there is this notion of, of continuity and unity.

Siobhan Davies 17:43

So what did she introduce an action or many actions? Yeah. Oh, yeah, her actions were the transitions between one events, what kind of action.

Mathieu Copeland 17:53

And that was wonderful, because Jennifer being a trained dancer as well, one of the things that she knew was that dancers need to have a rest. So one of the transition would be to go and have a little thing to eat or going to use the bathroom or just going to grab a cigarette outside. And then but within these elements within these activities, there had to be also wrote some, some, some some some some moments you have, for instance, if you have a cigarette, then there has to be a discussion nonetheless, going on. If you have to go to the bathroom, you keep on the discussion that. So it was really interesting as you work on that, but also he was very young. It was yeah, what I would call the unifying factor, which unified together and entirely these two.

Siobhan Davies 18:31

So it's all happened in one space. And I think I might have not, did you rehearse the work before? Or am I hearing that the work started on day one, and was made in front of the audience? As it as the information accrued? So for the dancers amongst us? I can I don't know about you, but I'm hearing Oh, my God, I had eight artists to work with. All on one day? No.

Mathieu Copeland 19:03

No, what we did was, I mean, I could not rehearse that show, because to rehearse or show whatever implied. I understand so that it was very excited by because it means there has to be an openness to which I'll come back afterwards. But what was the way we actually pragmatically work was to invite all the artists to come by but us faces whenever we're in the two times we need to show and for them to work with differences for a week beforehand. So therefore, there was a sense of the sense of the precision of the peace and a sense of what how the piece could go in space. And then to do a few tries, but really, very much opening up to the time itself. And one experience that I had to which I was extremely fascinated was I always dreamt of doing a show which would require from life is on page and then becoming some it's on page some some direction and becoming something else. That was something I was always keen on doing but it's quite hard just to set up and that happened with that show in away because there was this visually clear for me when he happened in St Gallen, which is up in the mountains of Switzerland, about 2 hours away from Zurich. And it was I couldn't be there the whole time, unfortunately, even though I tried to do that with most of the machines, so I couldn't be there the whole time. So I was everyday opening and a bit more. And then I decided to come back to the last day to do a talk with the dancers. Because, for me, the dancers became the only memory of that show, I had only witnessed a part. Most of the spectators that only witnessed the part as well, I don't think that there was a hardcore fan, we stayed for the whole two months. So I did come back when he had that time. And what I was fascinated by is that even though I could recognise the piece that we had in front of me, it was not exactly the way it was not at all. Somehow it was not the show. And even though he was disorganised. And I love the fact that the dance is just took it upon themselves, took up upon themselves and within themselves, all of

the different pieces. And maybe there's just because we did not anticipate some pragmatic thoughts. For instance, one of the piece by another choreographer called Jonah Bokaer, based in New York implied of dancers somehow revealing the space to be to themselves in the spectator for a while by touching the walls. But it happened by doing that for for quite a number of time, throughout the whole length, the length they had to themselves, so they had to invent a way to covering the finger in order not to hurt themselves. And just it's gonna come from a little moment, too much different drastic differences. And, and for me, that was beautiful. That was the moment of them of openness and, and the choreography taking life.

Siobhan Davies 21:28

And it's the it's the pleasure of us involved in dance activity and action and movement in the moment. And elements for the dance artists I work with is what is repetition. And if one, if one takes the idea of repetition as an exactitude, then the exactitude itself becomes a discipline. And, and some sometimes widens a perception of a single action absolutely repeated, or is repetition where the repetition gives you knowledge. So the next repetition is the repetition with that knowledge. And so then 10 repetitions down, the knowledge has led and led so the repetition is, in fact moved on because of the accumulated knowledge attached to it. There's Where's Fiona? There's an activity that's happening at the Barge House, with the Four Commissions, which is the work that that Siobhan Davies, who she Siobhan Davies Dance is doing right now. And this gets confusing sometimes. And, and there's a work by Gill Clarke and Lucy Skaer. I'm going to now drift into the Four Commissions and come back to you because you haven't mentioned your book yet, which I wanted to get to. And the Four Commissions started, as my request that for dance artists that I know well, who I think work with great precision with great imagination with great curiosity. So what environment can I give them in which they extend that there would be a presumption on my part of I said, Oh, do extend your knowledge, because who am I, on the other hand, I might be able to create a situation in which they would naturally accrue another basket of understanding which then opens up their learning to, to more possibility. So I thought, Well, okay, how can I do that? And the art form that seems to have the rigour, the space and the time to cause grit to us. Seems those that come from the visual arts at the moment, I'm not saying that the other arts don't. But at the moment, there's a certain grittiness to this dialogue that gives us weather to work in so I thought, Well, I'll try and partner each dance artist with a visual artist. And I will get to the Lucy Skaer, Gill Clarke story in a minute. And if I ask them to work together, that strange word collaboration comes up, and I go, Oh, shit, that word. It's too easy on the tongue. You know, we all go collaboration. It's what does it mean? In our country where maybe where where it just goes on? So is it friendship? Is agreement? Is it publicity? Is it a point on your arts council grant? Collaboration very good. And I'm going, I'm not going to cut the idea. The whole point? No, there are many points why you want to make work. But one of them has to be that you want to learn something else, in order to widen the periphery of your activity in order to achieve something. So if I could ask the two artists, not to immediately go into the idea of making a work, but that they should reveal to each other that which mattered to them at this moment, that which mattered to them? Probably because it had happened before. And that they needed to bring this thing that had happened to them before and made an impact on them. And could they bring that now into the presence? And could they bring that into the present enough and what I call demolecule it, in other words,

don't present it as the finished thing, but allow it to come as a series of questions and as a series of dismantled possibilities. And if they could lay out these dismantled possibilities to the other artists, then the other artists would be able to walk amongst them, and pick out things that intrigued them, and ask a question about them, and laugh at them and work with them. And, and so these were the conversations that I hoped would start time, important, give them time, don't turn around and say, Guess what, on November the fourth, luckily, we had no idea it was November the fourth, you're gonna have to make it work, we would say and this is where I thought my curator ship as choreographer could come in. Could I? Could I curate, but actually, I think that's a bit presumptuous as well, the idea of process? Because then I go, okay, who's boss? And I, I didn't want to, I didn't want to be that. But could I kind of lay out this idea of dismantling? Could I lay out the idea of being both comfortable and provocative to your partner? And could I lay out the idea that don't think of the finished work until the work begins to emerge. And in its emerging, it will tell you what to do more. So I was talking about Fiona and Gill A while ago, wasn't it. So one of the things that happens in this is that the audience is allowed, is encouraged to be there for five hours not not to stay for five hours, but then come and go at any point in a five hour period. Now a dance artist could or visual artists might be able to do something in which every second of those five hours is something new, but this is challenging, exhausting and probably unnecessary. So then ideas of repetition come in. Because inevitably, if you make something it will turn up again, in this five hour period, then this contemplation of repetition starts to become interesting is the repetition exact is the repetition that grows all the time. And there's an amazing moment in Gill and Lucy Skaers, activity, which is a film. I'll talk about the film in a minute, but it's, it's Fiona or Kirsty or Helka. Bringing sound into existence by their body, turning a Revox. You've got a horrible feeling none of you, under a certain age, no array boxes, but it's the way in which when we went on tour, our sound system was a Revox and the sound was on a tape and you had to sort of switch it on and a physical thing went through her head in order to make the sound. And so the dance artists are moving exactly by repetition. And they are circling the Revox tape to tape so that the tape passes through the head so that the sound happens and it is their bodily action that brings this sound into the space. And there is something in our digital comprehension which seems to really engage the audience that this is a physical manifestation of how the body produces sound even though it's remission. Ain't that the, it takes the 20 minutes. And then they undo the Revox, they take the tape, they have to move the tape on, they have to change and fiddle things rely on the tape. And then they started. Again, it's a long repetition. And at no moment, can it be exactly the same, because the timing of it has to be so exact, in order to make the right sound come up. But of course, human fallibility comes into play, and the sounds alter all the time. And the sounds alter, in conjunction with a film that's happening in the film is going through a proper film projector. So that again, a film, a tape is moving through in front of a light bulb, on a constant loop. The constant loop is projecting the film, but the film is a double exposure. So the there is one film laid on top of another. So the the repetition is there, but the repetition in conjunction with the sound is always has a chance element. Now I'm not quite sure if this is where, where they were on about. But by the time this work manifests itself, physically in the gallery, to some extent, that's part of our intrigue. What is human fallibility? What is repetition? And what are the images and sounds that are brought into play? I don't know that we had no idea that this kind of work was going to be produced at the beginning. And that was the that was the thrill of it. We don't have enough time

to talk about the other three works like oops, I need you to go and see them. But there are elements in which this undoing of artists in order to do themselves up again, as a side by side dialogue in which listening was as important as talking, which made unpredictable work from two artists, while each of them kept their own distinction. And for me, that was immensely valuable. And it was immensely valuable for me to see dance thinking and activity, present in a visual space, with the clarity of the visual space, possibility, possibly with the contemplation that a visual space brings, that the audience brings to that or even the expectation of the performer or the expectation of emptiness in void when there is nobody watching, but that you continue. And what does that do to you as? Again, in that it, I suppose, in the sense of bringing the repetition alive constantly. Anyhow, um, now, is there some you I'd like you to talk about your last project? Because you wanted to, which is your book?

Mathieu Copeland 32:58

Yes, your work. Because if that was also to what you've said, because one of the things which is interesting to me, as you, as you mentioned, in some I find as you do the commissioning, it's open ended, and whatever may happen to happen. And that was a quote by a curator, called Michelle [unintelligible] ever so important to me, as I was beginning my practice, which is that of an exhibition doesn't end when begins, and how we can engage with time. And that was extremely interesting, of course, how we can think about doing that. So that that was interesting to me. And then, and then I would just wanted to think about the, the repetition, as you mentioned, and how repetition could have an echo in another word, which would be continuity. And then that is for me interesting is because as you've said, you don't stop when there's no public we know them. And that was extremely important to me for that for the for the choreographic exhibition as well, because that was not about, as I've said it in setting of a performance quite to the contrary, it is continue to hear from off the show itself or whatever happens of time. And so therefore, rigidum wants to make any moment of break times. And that was one of the things I had to work with, with dancers writer right away, which was how, even though there would be no one, it would be important for the school to keep on unveiling itself.

Siobhan Davies 34:15

So when just to clarify when the visitor audience came in, there was there were what I call people at work. Oh, yeah. Tiny. And the people were at work with doing one activity or several activities. And if a member of the audience came in, did they? Okay, this is this is a fascinating thing. When a member of the audience came in, with what confidence could they come into that space?

Mathieu Copeland 34:47

Easily, I think we're quite easily because one of the rules that I set up for, for that structure that we worked upon, was the fact that I didn't want any props, for instance, that would be nothing but two tenses. And also I didn't want them to be gesturing. In any dramatic way, so there wouldn't be any, any light and dramatic lightning. So it was just there, the gallery reverted to zero, just completely on them, just as a backup, get the gallery and what when he can be and just inhabit the space and work without space. And so therefore, so because of the different setups, for instance and consolidate some gelling you had about, I don't know, I think about

three, four spaces. And then in the film, you saw you had about seven of them. So you had you there was also that element about, Well, is it empty is not empty. So is there an activity taking place is that activity that is taking place just to break records into country? So unlike these questions, I like to say that you would not know what to expect that they will not be at some table. So it's only what you what you will be what you will be confronted with, even though if you do engage with them, the little bit of of text written for that show and Hani that away, you would get a feeling of what happens to you. But for me, that was not the importance. I wanted to get as far away as I could, from a practice [unintelligible] Tino Sehgal when he actually announces the name of the piece of the other piece, and and he's kind of very theatrical kind of an understanding of what he's that piece that was not interested in that. I wanted to share that seamless continue the continuity that you need, by continuing to thread these that this length of time given. So that was important to me, also, just to make sure that it would be just just a one off a one on one on what you need to have been being released and happening.

Siobhan Davies 36:23

But my curiosity there is bear with me for a moment because it's it's a it's a, it's a question we got asked. So for instance, we were involved in, I made a work that was seen at the Victoria Miro Gallery. And it was the first time in which I had, we had all embraced the idea that the audience, the visitor could come in at any time and leave at any time. So to some extent they were the editors, their role is whenever they come in the piece begins whenever they leave the peace ends. And in order to deal with that we were we were curious that there could be no preparation to any one minute. So that any minute that would turn up, there could be no preparation of the audience that this is about to happen, or expectation about something going to happen because they might not be there. So therefore every minute counted. And therefore was it possible to make something in which every minute counted. So with you, what were your Where were your tell me about tell me something, it tells me something about the audience came in. And, and and somebody was in the middle of something that might be lasting two hours, yeah. Or in the middle of something that might be lasting? Or they might come to the ending? Or they might be coming to the beginning. And where are they conscious of that?

Mathieu Copeland 37:59

Yeah, of course. Yeah. And again, what was important to me is within the title I wanted to programme to be clear. So within A Choreographic Exhibition, I imagined you would want to get a feeling of the time and the time immediately involved in that, of course, we in the same time, you could have made a radically different show, but it seemed to me the expansion with other clear, and of course, one other thing that always work like to work with a stem, you know, the people who actually I have to spend the whole time in the in the space of the gallery. So you wouldn't have for instance, the, the person behind the desk kind of being able to come with the audience and talk with them or, but didn't, it didn't matter, you could just come straight and just just be that was one thing that we realised was them, that people tend to actually stay really long time there for about three hours at least. And that was something that was unexpected, because that was something I've played upon the time of inhibition, but are on to the reverse, because for instance, when you think of most of these very large scale, so like any biennial or most of the very, very big exhibition, when you have, you have for instance, worth of films,

something like 50 to 100 hours of films, you know, by different artists in different rooms. So you know, you won't be as a spectator able to experience the whole show, so to say, unless you come back for that amount of time required see each and every of the work. So that it is also very interesting to me, because you are you an editing in any situation in any case. So also and that comes to ask him is that therefore reason to actually put these kind of words in a show when we know it's not the perfect place to see them change it to be at least and say, well, they just log on to the air, and you can see them at home very comfortable space. I know the quality wouldn't be the same as when we can create a space. But there's always these games in time. And there's always this game of having what what one can do and and what one can have. And also I think it's it's not it's not being disrespectful to the view and in sending up a project, a project, a protocol that will enable them not to an myself the same and that will mean not to be able to experience the full length of the show. I think what you the country there's a really beautiful and generous can also a very beautiful openness to this in as much as there is If you take it out in reverse, it means that whatever you will see, it's a unique unique element for you, which so therefore it's precious in one way. You've precious means anything, of course. But I like that I like thinking about, well, yes, it can be grasped, but it can be experienced.

Siobhan Davies 40:15

Yes, no. And, and I love and I do think there's a generosity attached, because the audience is the is equal in the dialogue. They can, ideally they can, they can come and go, the, they're on the same ground, they're in the same weather, they're in the same air, they're in the same cold. And they, and they can mostly circle, the work. And all of those things. The thing about the minute that enthralled me was, was the space and the strength of the audience's ability to arrive and disappear. Altered how we made. So it altered how we made in a very, in a very, extremely positive sense, because I was given this this challenge of the audience strength rather than the audience staying in their, their place in the dark. I'm not going to go any further, though. You have something else to say? Because we still haven't gotten to your book yet?

Mathieu Copeland 41:27

Oh, yeah. I think what is interesting also is them is thinking about the boot camp very early on in thinking about that show. And one of the things I was adamant about not doing was to make a catalogue, for an exception, such as this one, because for me, I was I was not interested whatsoever, thinking about an exhibition based on movements to be summarised by a steel of a movement. And so therefore, the options was either film within a few minutes only to one point of view as well. Or trying to imagine a different understanding of what what what would be the, the memory of an exhibition, what would be the memory of that piece. And so that's why I set it up the the discussion that I mentioned earlier with the dances for them being the memory of the of it, but also try to extrapolate from the premises of such an exhibition, what was the key? What are the keys to both make it and, and understand it? And then by doing so, it seems to me that what are the keys to understanding what it is to make an exhibition? And so therefore, it seems to me that it was more interesting now, after the churn happened, and within most of the work that I've been doing, trying to envisage what what could be what should be a catalogue in different ways, and thinking about okay, well, let's think about what what happens, for instance, and not so much about this one wish to be made right now. But another series of words that I've

done, called an exhibition to hear read, where the catalogue becomes both the score for an exhibition to be and the memory of what had happened.

Siobhan Davies 42:54

Okay, because you are fast speaker. So I'm going to try and, yeah, it's wonderful. It's absolutely great. I'm just going woah. So tell me, tell me, tell me this about the catalogue was the memory of what had been a score of what was to come what is to come. Go into some detail.

Mathieu Copeland 43:13

A series of shows I started about a year ago, a year and a half ago. And then, and so the call and exhibition to hear read, and most of them when they happen, they they're in an empty space, and I invite, they need anywhere from five to 10, to more artists, which make a piece, which is a written piece, that written, written piece, and then the protocol is for someone to read it to someone else. And it doesn't need to be a specific reader can be anyone, to anyone. And then and I did. So I've got three volumes so far. And the last one was actually done here in London at the David Robertson Foundation. And what interested me in in meeting that series of book was thinking about, well, first of all, you have, you have the book, which becomes them to be read, titled sense, again, as the title is that it's an exhibition to hear read, and with so therefore, you come up with a notion that you do have to do so in order for the show to be but then thinking about in a different way that Google could be, you could also argue that this is the catalogue of what had happened. And what had happened, you know, being able to be renamed, renamed essentially chan that that piece has been read again, a solid is kind of trying to break down the the exhibition for not to be standing in one place and not to be done professionally, neither that he could have been, you know, different modulation, different articulation as well. So the first one was very much thinking about what inviting artists to write more would become a kind of a script to project mentally, as he listened to what had been done by pieces from artists, including Charlotte Moth, Falke Pisano, Benoît Maire, or Keren Cytter to name a few. Then the second volume I asked myself, well, let's try to break down that notion of just the unity of the voice and do polyphony. And so, therefore, coming back to the choreographed polyphony, we mentioned earlier on and doing it for three voices so therefore, you need three books and three people to just read it following the rules. And you had a artists as varied as the wonderful musician Tom Johnson to the American poet, Kenneth Goldsmith or the French poet, Franck Leibovici. And then the third volume that I did here, I asked myself what happened whenever you read in a space, that a nation of trying to project into that reading that is happening, an idea of a performance taking place. So what would be how would be that we could think about that. And still using the same protocol, as all of the other asked him as much as the exhibition kind of requires, and think and think with artists, including David Medalla or again Karl Holmqvist Brother, Robert Barry or Bethan Huws an idea that when we read there is that notion that may happen or may not happen? Again, this is not kind of a thing to answer. This is more of subtext to that I, I projected upon that very short, that I'm still

Siobhan Davies 45:49

I'm still needing clarity. So you sourced. Okay, sorry, no, you should have I mean, not just need clarity, you sourced words, written texts, oh, no, I invited artists invited, invited us to meet them.

So if I'm thinking of those texts, and I'm seeing them or I'm hearing them, to some extent, I'm hearing the evidence of their thoughts that lead into the making of this video. So, so, I am hearing the past come into the present because of the they are being read, they are read in the present in the reading in the present, they are an idea that somebody can use to take into the future is that well, there would

Mathieu Copeland 46:38

Because because any how, he started instruction of an action to take place is very much text to be read out loud. And then in that regard, you have the, within the book, you do have the score of the whole show. Because you know, I mean, you take for instance, the first one took about, I think six hours to read altogether, and six hours happened to be the opening hours of the, of the place where the show was happening in Geneva. And that was extremely interesting to me how we could modulate through the through the spoken word again, being read out loud in space. So therefore, you may have movements in as you read. So we come back to the notion of a choreographed polyphony here, you know, spoken word articulated in space. And also you come back to the notion of the time of the end of the actual institution itself that is, of those open doors close. And and in the meantime, it will you fill it with nothing that is voice. So that could be one, one way of thinking. And then the future becoming an alien, you know, the future becoming the person that's which is one of the one of the words I've been read, then anyway, they still exists. And within the form of the book, the book becomes the memory as in any catalogue, as you would usually have from a show. And also, if you decide you if you just read them out again, they're just being activated.

Siobhan Davies 47:52

So in a way, the catalogue stills the thought to match a normal stills, we have a catalogue for our show, and I'm going missed opportunity. Because the catalogue to some extent, still the the moment it brings it, it brings, I suppose it brings it to the eye, privately. Whereas the public, you're moving freely through the public space. And the thoughts are spinning, which is the best, and then the catalogue brings it into some form of concentration. And are you saying that possibly that form of concentration is too much of a fixed form. Whereas I am hearing from you this idea of unfixed form, which I'm sure all of us as dance artists, are extremely conscious of all the time is an unfixed form that by following a pattern or tradition, do we fix it in writing,

Mathieu Copeland 48:51

I would argue that it isn't fixed even in writing, because it would depend on who reads it. And I mean, I'm going to use another example. Let's make things concrete more complex. But just to bring them back to back to the experience that I had was when I was working on this book, and what exhibition, it travelled from New York to practice your new castle at the voltage. And what was exciting to me was that, for instance, if you've come here from Newcastle, you have a different way of speaking, of course, you have, you know, Gordie, and the American slang. And nonetheless, it was wonderful because it was the same work being read. And that was exactly the same thing from the book is whenever you ever reach them makes it theirs. Because the quality of the voice will be unique to the pace of reading would be unique, everything would be unique in so many ways. And yet nonetheless, there will always have this integrity of the works,

because it works with fixing, writing, you know, with the and with the complicity of the artist and, and the book of requirements themselves. So

Siobhan Davies 49:44

You use the word score, so you're not using the written text idea of score. You're also thinking that there are I mean, I'm trying to work out to use the word score. So there are other scores rather than texts, visual scores, task scores.

Mathieu Copeland 49:59

Could they could be one that could be, I mean, within that series of work, I try to stay within the boundaries of the, of the region. But I'm one anti structure which you'd say to actually move away from that and try to see what would be to make it an actual physical school, articulating within words and then and letters. So that's also a possibility. Of course, as we know, the history of scores is so vast and beautiful. And as you've been exploring in dance and music and in all different understanding of them, of these in theatre writing as well. And that is very interesting how, how we can play with them and use them.

Siobhan Davies 50:35

And then against score as a fixed form I suppose, to some extent is it in musical

Mathieu Copeland 50:41

Well, is it really fixed it's open to interpretation I guess? That's one of the wonderful things for instance, when when things we come back to more general understanding of curating [unintelligible] who used to be that was the amazing curator who in so many regards, set up the boundaries, a bunch of them set up the means for independent curator to be as, as from the mid 60s, used to talk about the way that you approach making these an exhibition, writing exhibition. And I thought it was extremely interesting how you can move away from, you know, setting up the score and make leaving late writing of the score for a show to be an is understanding was very much in the literary world. And I tried to understand how we could actually envisage an idea that would encompass the the notion of choreographing an exhibition, which somehow comes back to the same understanding and point of view of the same object but nonetheless opens up different possibilities on his side. And this is one of the things you argue in play with.

Siobhan Davies 51:39

Choreography, the writing of the chorus, is it initially somebody I should look at his choreography, the writing of the chorus? Why don't in Greek,

Mathieu Copeland 51:51

Striking of movement.

Siobhan Davies 51:53

But it's choreo chorus or movement? Oh, I wish I knew that before. How incredible? No wonder we want to go into galleries of white writing in this space. Hmm. I should know that should open this up a little bit, too. They're all month they're all munching back there as to whether it's So it is

the writing of space. choreo is choreo to dance in Greek. Oh, okay. Wow, I love the idea that it's writing, right, the writing of space as well. I just think that's terrific.

Audience 52:39

It sounds the same day. But there are two meanings horos with omicra. It means dance, but Horos with omega, it means space. But in choreography means it's about dance, writing dance.

Siobhan Davies 52:59

So then, as a choreographer, I, there's a lovely Sylvia Plath, quote, in which she turns around and talks about how you see the other arts live in the other art, so that you can for me, I went and worked with some poets last year with. And I asked, I'm saying I'm trying to look at what I think of is choreography in how you write words. And they looked at me a little blankly for a bit. And then I said, well, so you you have this phrase, you have, how do you know what how are you making? How do you start? So obviously, everybody is different, but a resonant repetition of what they came across is what you quite often have two opposing ideas, you have the thing you want to say, but maybe the rhythm you want to say it in, and that the rhythm doesn't necessarily go with the thing that you want to say. And by using the grit of the rhythm against the thing that you want to say, the the, the activity comes out, the words come out, they don't come out, literally they don't come up blandly oh, the red sun or whatever it is, or you can tell I'm not a poet, but because of the rhythm and because of then an idea of oppositional images. And then the oppositional images, the thing they want to say, and the rhythm that is the necessary rhythm that they wish to work in, out of that structure well, is that not to some extent, choreography, oppositional image, the rhythm that you might want to use the thing that you might want to say the activity that you dismantle. So there are all sorts of good conversations about how you can cross reference and then a delicious thing so I'm completely off on a tangent here, but that you would make quite sure that the vowels and the consonants were in the right place in order to allow the line to have a particular kind of energy to it. So I mean, the reason I'm sort of dwelling on these mine, these the minute of one word against another, to some extent I see as our curatorship. Is this idea of juxtaposition of one event against another, or one artist against another or one set of timings against another

Mathieu Copeland 55:32

I wouldn't agree against though?

Siobhan Davies 55:33

No, I see what you're getting there. I'm the side-by-side-ness.

Mathieu Copeland 55:38

I mean, if you think about it classically as well, then what you would have when you put two engines together painting, to the sculpture wing, and then, but I mean, no, but thinking about it in a more interesting way to me was, I had the discussion lately with John Giorno, and he was trying to bring back the same notions that we have, we've been discussing to make an analogy we did with with these ideas to cut up. And then they developed by focusing in bars. And to me, that was extremely interesting, of course, then, when you have the writing in time, and you have

to organise things, and there is ways for them to be organised in a very random way, that's kind of good beyond creating them, as third mind would say, between what happens in disparate data as he reads it, create generating that meaning that was in there before, or trying to be extremely organised and precise. So that is always quite interesting how you do, how you do work with that'll keep on playing with a similar technology, the one of the different ways of understanding what curating is, but the one of the original would be carrying of that carrying up to that things, caring, caring looking after that thing. And I really loved that, because that was what it was, at first, you know, you do have a collection back in the 18th century or the ninth century, when you have the occasional this big museum. And the curator will be the one preserving looking after what, what has been acquired. And so we tried to break that down. And yet nonetheless, there is a kind of openness,

Siobhan Davies 56:58

The caring of things. So we got onto choreography, then we got onto the carrying of things there must be maybe another question hasn't been a question yet.

Audience 57:09

I was interested in the not having a catalogue of the exhibition with the three dancers. And that I was curious, and very interested in what you're saying about why. But a little bit of me was kind of sad that the wasn't the kind of dances such an evanescent, disappearing, famous, and and it's often quite invisible unless you go during the no, it's a sort of I just felt slightly sad that there wasn't some kind of interesting, ongoing thing which could come across and then go, oh, wish I'd been there.

Mathieu Copeland 57:50

No, I understand that I appreciate I mean, it was during the discussion lately with ancillary services security at the serpentine here. And for him, he was sending me how for him, there is not a sheriff is not a catalogue, and trying to dismiss anything that would have happened because, of course, an exhibition pretty much like a live event, just even though it's slightly longer, of course, will be two months rather than just a night or just an evening disappears after a while as well. So what it is to preserve the memory of one thing, but then I guess there's you have to find the right, the right time, the right forms to fix it form. And it feels to me that a category of kind of upselling, which is meant to document something in movement has to have the right one. So as I've said the film would have been much more, much more appropriate than a cat had itself and then also another way to envisage a cada would be just how we can dispense memory and how we can exchange memory. So I think during a discussion like that, for me, it also is what you envisage that exhibition by just describing it or talking about, we're trying to mention back all these words that all these all these events that went time through the voice as well. And it's kind of transmission. I mean, this brings me also to another, still thinking about the catalogue a discussion that I had with them. The artist Fia Backström was had a beautiful piece the ICA, about a year and a half ago, two years and and she was saying that for her, the ideal catalogue was just would be actually somebody writing about what to happen rather than images of what happened or rather than so it kind of layered interpretation that gives you more not more depth, a different depth to what is expected normally. So that's why I think

it's a very interesting area to play with them and think about what it could be what can it be how can take different forms. You mentioned a show that I did this summer at the at the John Mason Foundation, which was extremely interesting to me, because I thought well, what if we used catalogue that had happened in a different way. And we actually set up a catalogue from 1964 of a show that I had been at the ICA here in London by curated by Roland Penrose and then which was called to study for an exhibition of violence and contemporary arts. And that catalogue was only to check his of the work that were in that show, and actually was very interesting because he was not real works neither he was more reproduction of works in a tradition that had been started by Hamilton an, and all these wonderful artists in the mid 50s, with a catalogue like Man Machine & Motion, but just to stay fixed with this one, it was extremely interesting to me how, what would it be, therefore, to make again, that show, just because I have the compute check is I just need to Google all the names. And with a bit of luck, I'll find them all. And then we just, there we go. We can. And I like thinking about it and thinking, Okay, well, what do you think you can say you can like have another show? And just say, well, this is a score for any another exhibition to be. And that's when I said, Well, interestingly enough, the closest word that I could use to qualify this action would be the notion of reprise, to reprise that what had happened in order to make it a new and somehow the sickos off course, the, the notion of to to reprise a piece that had been done, what is the memory of a piece that had been choreographed once, and then written or kept in one form or another, and then re staged again? How can we work on that, then that's the kind of soul so that's another use of the catalogue. And let's say, well, and then my question was, well, do I need to make it an audition? I just don't want to catalogue the one before it the catalogue with the new one? And then so that looks questions. I'm I know that just an hourly game, but none of them asked again, that I do love and play with. So again, there's a different way to make you think about.

Siobhan Davies 1:01:12

How you took if a painting was mentioned, in the catalogue

Mathieu Copeland 1:01:16

Well it was actually the checklist of the work. So event what it was the collection.

Siobhan Davies 1:01:20

So then in your new catalogue, what did you put in it? Let's take what is

Mathieu Copeland 1:01:24

I accumulated all the images? I thought, Well, I'm not going to have the checklist. I'm just gonna have the images. Okay. And then you can compare both of them, then within the comparison within the compensation you will have, you know, what it was an explanation of what it is.

Siobhan Davies 1:01:37

And did anybody we make a reprise of the work that had been checked

Mathieu Copeland 1:01:43

It's online it just need to be downloaded and printed out? And then you have, you know, and what am I what am I about? So it's just it's, it can be anyone can just do it with any other catalogue as well. It's not, it's just an openness, an open concept, and, and then they just email us and then we pretty well added on to the rep me website. I loved which was a great job within that reprise I'm passing it on, and a reprise of an echo. Yeah. So I like that I like this is openness.

Siobhan Davies 1:02:10

So in in our we, I shouldn't be asking another question. You ask a question. There must be one, yes.

Audience 1:02:18

Thank you. The idea of flow, and flow. Moreover, for the spectator, you're talking about that, because especially in hearing the sense of the spaces, I'm trying to visualise myself, how just one or is it inhibited? Is it? Is it evidence such as in architecture, you want to be able to flow through the building, you don't even want to be conscious of that. That is really quite clear in that flow. You don't you want the building to just direct your the way in which you move about, and especially even thinking about what you just did at the barge house. I think the flow was absolutely beautiful. And that we had an idea and the way the juxtaposition between the different pieces, had a real consensus about it. And just talking a little bit about that in the decision making in that

Mathieu Copeland 1:03:11

Me or Sue? Okay. Well, I think we you say what is rather interesting estimation of the position of the spectator as well, in regards to the architecture and the and the evidence of space. So I'd say you from there

Siobhan Davies 1:03:26

You go. I have to think

Mathieu Copeland 1:03:30

Sure yeah. Well, I guess the position of the spectator is rather exciting. As I've said earlier on, when we come to choreograph exhibition, how they can be a blurring between the position for oneself in regard to the position of what is expected and how a story will be constructed in narrative will happen from what one one confronts itself with, but also I am, as you were describing that notion, in relation with architecture, I was thinking of the invisible cinema, Peter Kubelka, and how you would define the structure where people would lose themselves in order to have an experience of the film. And that is somehow what we're not trying to do in adventures in way I would like to have the invisible cinema does it introduce beauty would be the space itself other than me, focusing on myself and losing myself there for that? Nice got nothing to do with what you've said on this trip when he made me think

Siobhan Davies 1:04:19

It's the word flow that I'm I'm flow makes me think of water or of this because space that one's moving and carried by from one object to the other. And I think I might be thinking of how much can you change the quality of the air or the dynamic in a room by the action or the event or the object that is in there, and how much are the audience able and how much evidence do we give them to be ready to change as they enter? into the proximity of something or if they're against the wall or out in the centre or in relationship to our work. So if one is able to give them the confidence to have those shifts, then as a good thing.

Audience 1:05:14

Yeah, as spectator as choreographer slash curator, I think, I love to give the freedom to the spectator of that, but you're absolutely correct. So that it's, it's guided, but let yet it's not guided. And, and, and again, the density of the air of the space allows one to see and shift differently. And I, once again, I comment you on what happened to the bar, just because I think, the facilitate that, and I was really aware of it.

Siobhan Davies 1:05:16

Yeah, because that can sound that can sound a bit Oh, do stop it artists talking about the quality of the air, steady on girl. But but there is something, you know, I know that many of you that don't want to artists and dancers, there is something that you shift in the quality of the air, when you move you, you know, the resistance of it, you know, if you're near the wall, or if you're far, you know, if you're suddenly aware of the ceiling or the floor. So there is there is knowledge that we have about it. And when we talk about it, it can sound a bit all I felt the air and you want to go, but how do we, we know the atmosphere of a room, we know the heat of the room, we know when the window opens. So there are things that we have that are that are objects in our capability to use, which is the use of the space and the quality of the energy in that room. And we all know when energy goes down. And we all know when it rises. So this isn't empty. And I can remember, a shift in my own learning when I was we again, we're sort of movement people do a lot you get so involved with the complexity that is held under the skin, absolutely everything under the skin. And that there are these lovely drives of knowledge that move in your material with every material that you use, that you forget the impact that this makes on the person next door or in the room that you are inhabiting, or that if there are three of you at work, or one of you at work, or 10 of you at work, and how to incorporate that in our learning at a much earlier stage, I think

Mathieu Copeland 1:05:46

I think when it comes to the floor, so there's something interesting to think about, which is, for instance, we've had two very interesting example like here, at the Serpentine have tried to orchestrate the flow, and therefore the movement of the spectators in within the space. And that was by the showcasing of [unintelligible]at the moment. And it's very interesting how you actually have guided him in this space, by what I would argue would be a very mechanistic, mechanised, you using abuse of the of the architecture itself, and of the moment of the works. And that can be very, very interesting, I think, and how you can move away from that mechanisation. I don't know if you'd seen the show by flipper, nobody was very much a film would gone here, then it would happen then another field would come on, that's a bit of a you've

had to fall into. So where's the show, which is on demand completely plays again, this notion of one event would happen in one would happen. But it seems that it's not as simple to grasp this, the choreography and the movement and how to orchestrate again the writing in time, the writing of the movement of the spectator in the time of the gallery. But that is a very mechanised mechanised way of doing so. And lately I had a discussion with with the French artist Pierre Rigg, who had a beautiful show and had been working on for years and mechanised the exhibition trying to really say, one piece will be there, then maybe a break and another event is going to happen. And late and lately it's been moving away from trying to work their way for more to church or more, I'd say a natural understanding of this of the space of the exhibition itself. And what he'd been doing lately, it was really just as simple as that I was just having some ants and spiders in the show, and that's not enough. And then they would make the space be the space. And therefore they would be that, you know, the spiders would just become all the sudden the body the corners and make us would say sculpture, and that would be it. But his prerogative was not any more trying to lay down what would happen but let the space be and leave. And that was a very interesting move, I think from thinking about the flow of the flow of the word flow the word, inviting a movement from the spectators and hear the flow of the word being natural being just being the result of a living organism.

Siobhan Davies 1:09:42

So how we make something or how we don't make something noticeable, whether or not you want it to be in the background or the foreground,

Mathieu Copeland 1:09:51

Sure, but then everything becomes everything comes back to the foreground, through reading, for instance by relation even if you think there was nothing yet there was plenty. And I think it's just it It used to be argued and kept, we kept on talking about nothing and the void. And for me, the void is never gonna it's never nothing. And if it isn't nothing, it's carried characterised nothing. So it's never it's never emptiness. And if it is, and how we nearly have something, either the architecture of the space or a feeling or just relationships from one person to another, and how in a way a void will be filled, and filling a void is never a good excuse to make a show. We're trying to understand the void is one.

Siobhan Davies 1:10:28

No, that's that's a well ever sentence. Okay, so then, have you amongst you went to the Barbican in the spring or summer and saw movement work at the Barbican, or have tried to plug my own work? See any of this work? And how did you feel as spectators? Any thoughts on that? Or how do you feel as visitors in an art gallery with a different expectation in the art gallery

Audience 1:11:07

I as a as a as a visitor to a gallery. I think it's a complex relationship if your encounter time, and it's not necessarily if it's downs, and my chair was mentioning earlier, it's also the same thing when you encounter video theorem. I think very often, with video and film, I'm looking for some guidance of how this work should be encountered. If there is on end of that, because with video

work, it's very different. Some work is created. Now you can enter it at any time others, you are encouraged to watch it

Siobhan Davies 1:11:55

take time.

Audience 1:11:57

Don't tell you how far through you are for instance. And I think similarly, with life work, although because of the human body doing it in the human body, as he said, needing rest and needing to other things as well. Those tend to be much more time taken away and clear guidance. I do mentally switch into another into another mode of perception when I watch time to work. Because if I work through static work, I am so much in control of my own time. Yes. And I can look at it as long as I want to also know I can go away and come back to it. And it's the there so I can go away and come back with a question that had arisen since I've looked at it last. That's very difficult to do with a timed work. And unless you go back to that specific moment. And I am sometimes torn in the gallery thinking how much longer Should I look at this live work? Do I miss something? If I go now? Do I miss something if I don't look longer at the static? And just watching audiences? I think people look at performance work actually longer per work. And they're looking started? Because it is time vary. So you need to spend some time with it.

Siobhan Davies 1:13:40

But is it also that it's person based? And that it's hard? Is it hard? Is it psychologically harder? Or to leave a person than it is to leave? An object? I'm not sure that it's I'm asking you?

Audience 1:13:59

I think that very much depends on the work. I think that really will depend on the work.

Siobhan Davies 1:14:09

But they're good question. I mean, in a way by talking you, you were bringing to the surface the things that are good to think about. And I suppose as a as a movement artists they give me they give me more grist to think about what is happening with this moving human, hopefully generous activity in time with a person who is either coming or leaving in terms of the audience. Sorry, we're just about to say something else and I brought it in.

Audience 1:14:52

There's a said if Is it difficult to leave a person? I think that really does depend on the work. I remember one work and I can't exactly know what happened that Tino Seghal work at the ICA, where as you enter the space that went into a corner and didn't look at you and looked away from you, and I'm not quite sure what what else was in there. And that was deliberately a kind of confrontation experience, because as you entered, they avoided you. And when you were out, you knew there was an activity in Yes, that was the absolute that was the other take out forgotten, if you spoke to them, they stayed. So then then the coming and the leaving was actually was very difficult because you knew they would do something else if you left. So it wasn't a performance, they just walked out and they either stopped or carried on. But it actually

changed their behaviour. And it changed how they would react. And that I thought was a very, very powerful way of negotiating what an audience work relationship.

Siobhan Davies 1:16:04

There was a few hands that went up. Yeah, go.

Audience 1:16:09

I really found it was interesting, that it's sort of a growth of allowing yourself to let go. And that letting go in a way I was thinking about the Barbican of where am I going to situate myself to see this piece because there are various different ways of which you could see it. And I think it was really interesting to say, Okay, I'm going to choose to be here, and I'll see this, and I'm not going to perhaps see that person or this. But I'm going to have a really, I'm going to have a really interesting experience same was Tinos work, if I decide to speak to them, they're not going to turn away from the meltdown. So I'm going to have a different experience in that responsibility of that choice. Or maybe I don't, and I see the other. But I find that exciting, it takes a lot of courage to let go so that you aren't in a proscenium stage when in normal, normal say, performative, you know, you're going to see from A to B. But in this case scenario, you've got a variety of variables that could happen. And a lot of it is your choice. And I think that's so exciting. And the more that we get used to doing it, the more we know how to do it, and the more comfortable we are doing it more excited, we are about doing it. And perhaps we come back many, many times to do it in different ways.

Siobhan Davies 1:17:28

I think it's all I mean, going back to that noticing idea, it's about possibly capturing something quicker, because maybe over a long length of time, you know that you can use it to some extent you ease the senses out, and you can take time, whereas in something that is more immediate than the capture of it, or the the as it sharply passes you, are you? Where does it go? And what memory does it lay down? And what evidence does it rest? In? You mean, all of those things to me are very intriguing. In movement, there it is in the present? What brought it into being and what part of it remains in the dancers memory of who have the main evidence and memory of it or in the audience's capturing of it? And then, and then how much that changes from the moment you receive it to the next day when you're remembering it. And you're going I wonder what I remember, is it true? Or is it not true? Okay, when nearly reaching a moment of great glee and home, is there another? Is there another something you want to bring in? Yes.

Audience 1:18:46

It's just a tiny thing, really. But, I mean, it occurs to me that I think audiences are quite fluent at responding to work like that. I mean, I think they're making all kinds of choices in their daily lives. And we, you know, we're all very aware of how, you know, we channels, we channel switch, and we move from one activity to the other. And, and, and I don't think it's quite the, I mean, I think, you know, in some, in some audiences, the challenge is to actually get them to sit there and watch to actually, you know, pay attention to something in front of them. They are more interactive, their, their life is more interactive. They're used to getting up and making decisions about those kinds of things. And it were, I think we are coming to a time where you

might not concentrate, and I don't think they necessarily feel that that's their role. You know, we've had to be educated into that, sitting there in this kind of context and listening to people. And I don't think that's true of everybody, of all audiences, and that we are very adept at adapting to very different kinds of circumstances.

Siobhan Davies 1:19:57

I think, I mean, I think what I'm doing what I'm gleaning from this, I so like the idea of curator shippers caring for the things. And so to some extent and caring for the things, if we care for the theme that we're putting in front of an audience, how much concentration can we create? So, all in all, it's about what are the circumstance? What are the best circumstances that we can create for the things that we are caring about or that matter to us as makers or as organisers?

Mathieu Copeland 1:20:34

Well, I think one thing to remember is that which never generalise the audience. Yeah. And the other thing is that we never made anything further in [unintelligible]. And one of the great excitements is more to think about, okay, well, let's, let's try to think that anyhow, if you think about curating an exhibition, any exhibitions completed factories, if you think about a classical show with, with paintings, just a gathering of objects in the same space during a predefined time. So since you we've said it's kind of facticity of the, of the environment and the content that we create, creating, let's just try to push it forward and say, Okay, well, let's create, let's let's let's, let's acknowledge that we play with the, with the experience of that environment and how we can push that further and play with it and play with it in in all different settings whether we're playing implies but but never would think about trying to amuse anyone or disabuse anyone night I just, when we occupied time, that's something we have to accept that there's different different times, there's a timeout strict a strict says we need to give this another time and others particularly willing to give, there's a time that the piece is requiring to be experienced or viewed or understood or, and, and all that just varies I think one of the words that I've always liked, he's a hero of ours and Lawrence Weiner. We used to always say well, if you understand the work, it belongs to you. And then and then nothing more well if you remember the work is yours. So in the previous seven standing within the longevity of the work is completely exploded in time.

Siobhan Davies 1:22:04

That's a good sentence to end on. Thank you very, very much Mathieu that was that was lively and sparky and I feel full and I hope you do in part as well. And thank you very, very much for coming. Thank you.

(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