

Body of Knowledge

The dancing body as Archive and
as Perceptual Source

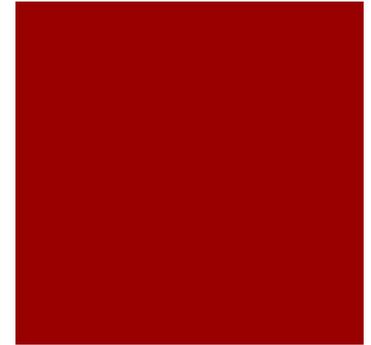
Building Bridges, NCPA, November 20, 2017

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The Corporeal Turn

(following from Sheets-Johnstone, 2009)

- **The Body is our medium for having a world:**
“Phenomenology of the body schema is already a phenomenology of perception” (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1945).
- **Techniques of the body embody social methods into one’s own understanding:**
“Physical possibilities are biogenico-sociological phenomena.” (Marcel Mauss, 1934)
- **Our physical capacities signify our situation:**
“Every human (biogenico-sociological) existence is defined by its situation.” (Marion Young, 1980)
- **The body is a natural source of symbols:**
“The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society.” (Mary Douglas, 1970)



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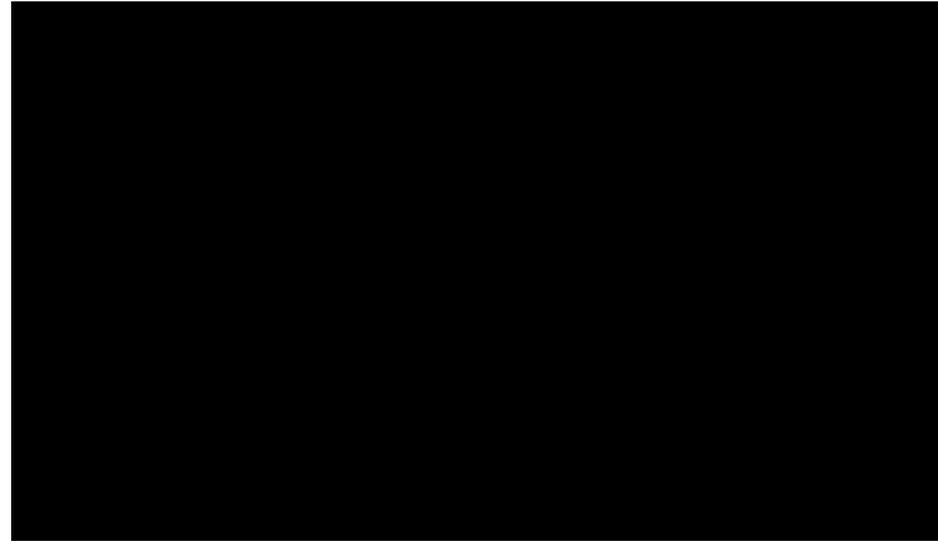
Dancing is:

- Cultural Phenomenon
 - Personal Experience
 - Aesthetic Labor
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- Dancing is exemplary to the activity of leading a thought.



The aesthetic labor of dancing

- Movement and its quality are the aim of the dance.
- Artistic choice making
- Dance movements are self-referential, and therefore, reflective.
- Contemplating physical activity, somatic feelings, and their mutual effect.
- Practicing attunement between imaginary vision, current situation, and embodied archive of knowledge.
- Artistic perceptual experience is the labor of doing and undergoing (John Dewey).



Doing: following a score:



- Perceptual challenge: Movement should be situated.
- By following a score, dancers are capable to mark the rules of the game that their movements are able to track.
- Imagination must integrate actual feelings.
- Knowing how to work imaginary lines with physical precision is technical knowledge, which is personally (and sensually) applied.

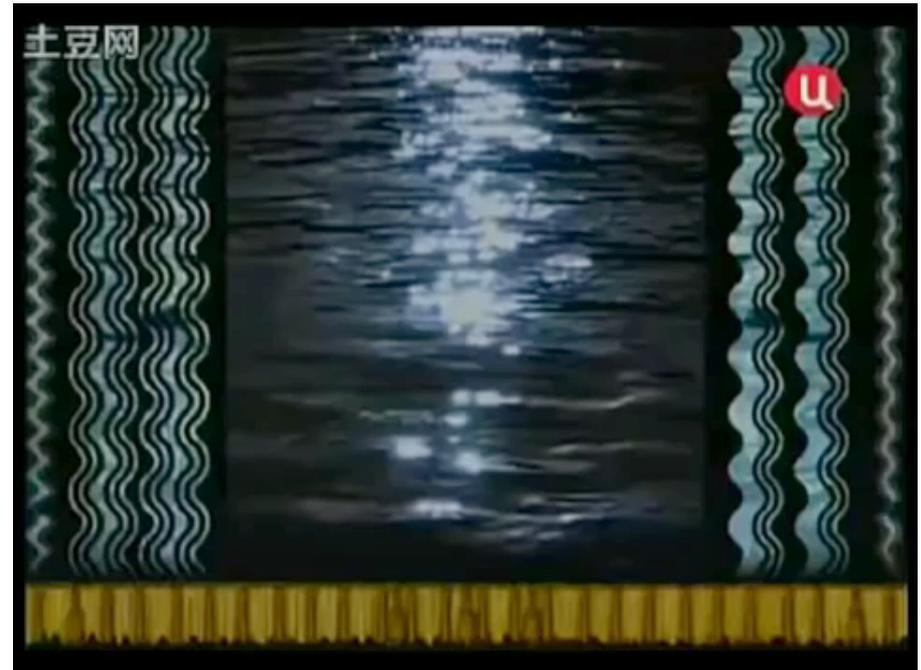


Embodied Archive of Techniques:

**Technique is a knowing how
to immediately face the
variable and the exceptional:**

“Technique is neither identical
with form nor yet wholly
independent of it. It is,
properly, the skill with which
the elements constituting form
are managed. Otherwise it is
show-off or a virtuosity
separated from expression.”
(Dewey, 1934, p, 141)

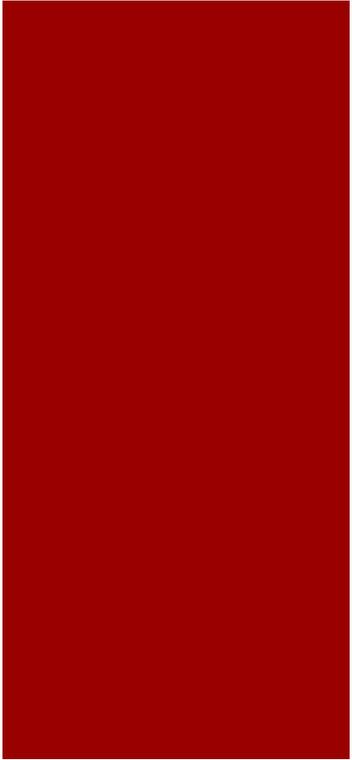
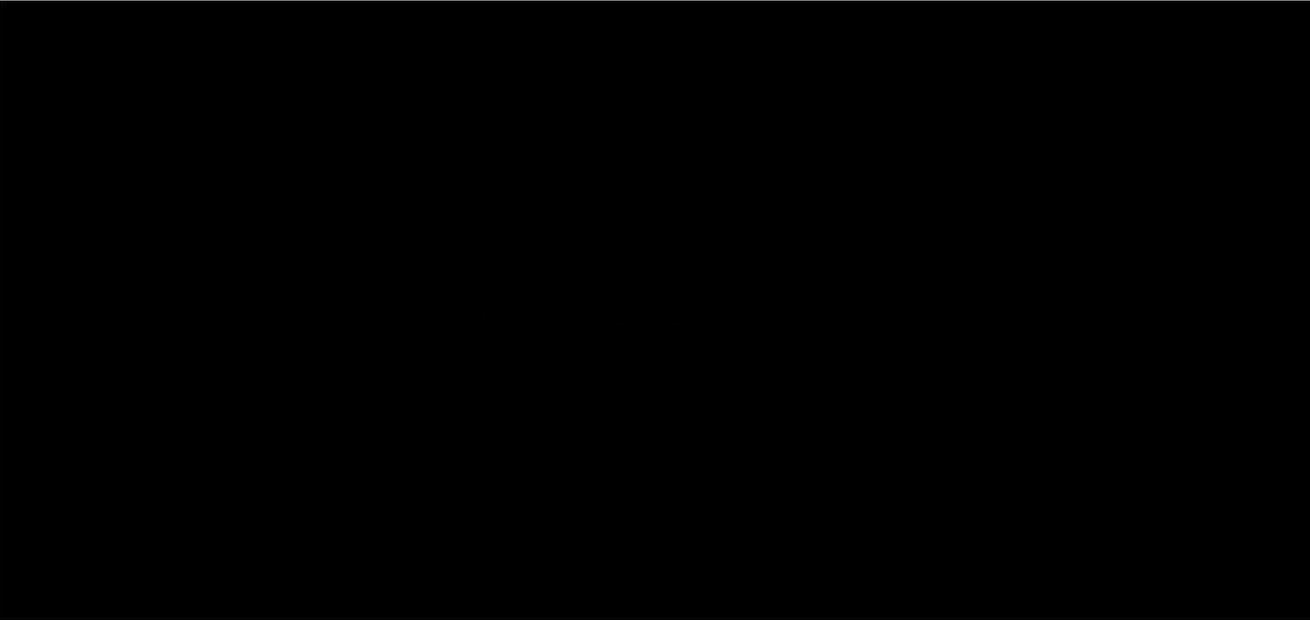
**Following the tradition is not
enough- but rather revealing
it's effects personally
throughout experience.**



Undergoing movement: Attentiveness.

- Somatic attention enables a precision of choice making.
- Attention is a physical activity of being somatically aware to new information (rather than a mere cognitive act).
- In order to know how a movement is possible, dancers develop awareness to their senses.
- Undergoing the quality of movement, dancers activate, and adjust their technical knowledge – and therefore own it.





Thank you!

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