

Choreographic Strategies for Visual Arts Perception of Space

Abstract

In this paper I present a work in progress based on 9 chronophotographs that depict dancers in various choreographic movements captured in 1998 at I. Metsis dance studio in Athens. These nine works depict fragments from an elementary ballet class where female dancers follow the instructions of their teacher. Each of these students provide different artistic acts. This archive consists of the following attributes: perception of space, kinaesthetic elements in choreographic vocabulary and the definition I wish to study further: a *floating periphery*.

Defining *floating periphery* in choreographic notation is my current research focus. However, having such an immersive thinking box such as the “*floating peripheries* concept” run by researcher M. Loukola and Prof. L. Ikonen and their research team made my process develop through our meetings in August 2018 in Crete and January 2019 in Rovaniemi. Its effect and methodology are what I wish to explain in the following pages. The question in my work is how to connect institutional research with what timely happens (connect ideas and act in life with artistic conscience). My focus is to create an expanded vocabulary from freeze-frame to a choreographic chart. This aims to support contemporary art expressing ideas that form the in-between space where we constantly create a language of words, sounds, movements, expressions, gestures, images, acts and breathing, as a continuous work-in-progress in space shared.

Keywords: floating periphery, kinaesthetic elements, artistic act, archive’s attributes, choreographic notation.

1. History

Having such a great love for dancing as a kid, I developed an interest in kinaesthetic elements in both painting and music composition in my studies. In a ballet class of one of the most prominent teachers of past the century and my generation I. Metsis, I spent time when I didn’t exercise- instead of waiting for my turn, to take pictures capturing 8 frames each in one picture from other dancers workout. This is how I studied photography in my kitchen and photography lab re-working on this old material. 18 years later I printed these chronophotographs as heliogravures and then I re-worked the whole material in digital colour analysis. The work seemed to have met its fulfilment with a publication of 9 pictures accompanied by 9 texts in 2016¹ and my third solo exhibition in Athens in 2017² where I presented this work printed in large scale using the lambda printing technique .

While being in Crete working with floating peripheries in the summer of 2018, we selected material for our presentation in Rovaniemi. There the discussion was about aleatoric music and visual scores³, prompted me to return to this old material and approach it from a different perspective. That being to discover a choreography for each picture I have, and if not a choreography, then a

¹ E. Lemi, *The Tough and the Cute Dancer*, 2016. Cube Art Editions

² E. Lemi, *The Artist as a Writer*, In: *Writing as Space*, E. Lemi, E. Midgette, J. Seymour. (eds), Brill Publications, 2019

³ E. Lemi, *Chain of Thought: from the visual in Composition to Experiential Art*, In: *Creating a Visual World*, E. Xeni (ed.). Interdisciplinary press, Oxford, UK, 2015, pp. 51-64.

choreographic chart⁴. The process started in the Rovaniemi conference, as a workshop where participants of the conference contributed. I divided the audience into nine groups, and gave each of the group one chronophotography of the series of dancers I had printed in 1998. I explained to them part of the concept and asked them to name each of the nine frames they had, giving a title connected with the depicted movement, having in mind to give a hint connected with the movement. In this way I would process in the future creating a choreography that started from my picture and a title that has been given by a collective team who embodies the term “*floating periphery*”.

The process has been successful. Defining success, I mean this workshop made my work progress.

2 Methodology in Performance

In the beginning of March 2019 I will present the results of this process at N. Kessanlis Exhibition Hall at the School of Fine Arts in Athens, following the process below:

I hired an actress (and not a dancer) to act myself in a retrospective of my work in a performance based on J.F. Borges story “El impostor Inverosímil Tom Castro” from the “Historia universal de la Infamia⁵” collection of novels.

The text accompany the performance gives a thorough view on the process we created using the conference material:

Someone returns. Roger Titchborne in J. L. Borge’s “Universal History of Inflamy” returned as Tom Castro to claim his identity. Authorities consider him dead, besides the mother and various debtors, who welcome the hypocrite happily back, despite the fact he bears no resemblance to him.

In 1969, Vitto Acconci⁶ surpassed the threshold between artist and the viewers with his twelve photographs, bringing his viewers into the “I” position.

In a similar way as Tom Castro did, Rosa in her physical presence interprets Esthir so we can have a look at her lab working on the term: “floating peripheries”, a definition she needs to submit on Thursday 7 March 2019.

Esthir is present, I ego-centred my space marked with a timetable with references of life lived in Athens and another 8 cities. Within this nest I capture the choreographic pattern of 9 dance pictures in order to connect the “floating peripheries” term within what is happening in the venue.

This will start under the laughters of Roza and Esthir, and will end answering the question:

What rules do we set for our own body in order to give meaning to our lives and actions?

What do we want to communicate with viewers?

-Sustainability and consciousness of the moment. Sharing an “I” becomes “here”.

⁴ L.A Blom and L. T Chaplin, *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, University of Pittsburg Press 1982.

⁵ J. F. Borges, *A Universal History of Inflamy*, Dutton, 1972.

⁶ C. Doherty et al. (eds). *Situation* (Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art). The MIT Press, 2009.

Still, this material may be functional for the audience- the way to build our connection between me and a performer that needs to have only one direction and this is: to represent myself while you do not imitate any of my characteristics may be a catastrophe. Still, these nine pictures and titles have created our common ground for me and the actress.

3. A process for floating periphery exercises

Dancing elements contribute in cultivating skills in balance, while sharing common space as equal both individual and shared; this is one of the attributes we admire in dance performance as elegance. An analysis of these nine acts follows, and their connection to what we call “common space” comparing with “individual space”, both abandoned, flourished, expanded-floating and shared:

A “Fisherman” (Image 1) , a “Melting Landscape” (Image 2), a “Passenger” (Image 3), “Holding a Movement in an Aquarium” (Image 4), “Floating Smudges” (Image 5), “Rehearsing a Fading Dance” (Image 6), “R on Progress” (Image 7), “Stretching out/ leaping/ tendue/ failed out” (Image 8) and “I was handed this”(Image 9), consist the thread that combines the actress and myself into a common thread in creating a game full of activities.

The actress interprets through trial and error various movements selected by the 250 improvisation exercises of the book “The Intimate Act of Choreography” during the exhibition time. Through these 250 cards, she decides which one fits better to each of the 9 depictions we have, starting with “the Fisherman” that seems to be the easiest and more comfort process to a new world of interpreting someones presence with the indication of bearing no resemblance. The process is being captured by a go-pro camera in a form of a time-lapse (published by the e-book of floating peripheries proceedings).

4. Choreographic Notation: A study in floating periphery definition

In a following stage, I will collect the results and go back to the lab in order to work on gesture and gestural analysis between music notation and choreographic practice. At the same time, I will try to construct a chart of choreographic notation that will depict the results in case we want to repeat the functional parts of the exhibited improvisation. At some point this process provides a continuum and brings from the activity of the individual working in a lab (1998-2016), or exhibiting photography in a gallery (2017), the collaboration and kinaesthetic re-boot action that captures and triggers new movements and feeds the holistic approach of contemporary art as a system with old fashion but functional exercises, good fun and collaboration, and the most important, re-balances the system between self-reference and fairplay in common space.

Conclusion

Floating periphery is a contemporary term that can provide for art methodologies which trigger a holistic view of a constant recharging system of activities. These activities in my approach and artistic presentation concern collaborations and isolation time while using creative material in various art-forms as notation and representation form in reference with old material. This process enlightens communication skills between the collaborators and mostly triggers the element of surprise that is human and in quest for creative communication in space shared.

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