FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

In choreography, the way to preserve art and at the same time, assign intellectual property, are the tangible forms that this "choreo-graphics" may take. This raises the question: how can we register movement across time? Authors that have been concerned with visual representations often become quite brief when analyzing this issue: such is the case of Edward Tufte, who in his book "Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative", devotes the very last chapter to what he calls "visual confections: juxtapositions from the ocean of the Streams of Story". In this chapter, Tufte uses the kind of sequences obtained by Muybridge and Marey as examples and calls these visual confections - assemblies of many visual events. He then proposes a visual model for these visual confections. We are still quite far, though, from the kind of essence capture required in choreography. On the other hand, it is true that software such as Poser or Life Forms convey a tangible way of registering movement across time, but they present obvious limitations when it comes to combining the orchestration of movements with the overall emotional tone of the whole dance or, more specifically, with a certain facial expression at a particular time.

Dance notation, as tangible forms that choreography may take, becomes a trope, changing the movement's meaning by re-presenting it. They reduce the phenomena of movement to components and then textually express them. Among dance notation systems, some of the most widely used are the Labanotation, the Benesh and the Eshkol-Wachmann methods. Laban Movement Analysis produces a vocabulary, both qualitative and quantitative, for describing movement. Benesh notation is based on the visual results of movement as seen by an observer outside the event-space, while Eshkol-Wachmann methods rely on a mathematical description. Regardless of the method, notation provides for an anatomy of dance, a procedure for the dissection of movement. We hope to investigate the relationship between narrative and dance by using bodies in space as an opportunity for exploring both the meaning of the event-space and the movement. Bodies inscribe spatial and temporal patterns, which can map out a narrative space. Daly proposes three questions to draw attention to the semiotic issues concerning the relationship between movement and meaning: 1) Does movement have its own meaning? and if so, 2) How does movement mean? and 3) Where is the locus of meaning? We do not deny the social and political significance of movement, but want to look beyond a communication of power for other meanings inscribed within/by movement. For this project we hope to make use of a touch-sensitive floor, which will be used to trigger events that become part of its space and the movement contained within. Rather than using the floor to instigate discrete sounds/images, movement on the floor will trigger something more akin to a chain or loop of events. Sounds may increase/decrease in intensity in order to invoke a sense of distance. Moving towards a projected image may trigger another image and then a sound. In this space a narrative can be navigated and rearranged based on the participant's movement through that space. We have two possibilities for acquiring the floor, but at this point in the project it is not guaranteed. There is at least one small video projector available for our use, and we feel confident that at least two more will be available.

The larger problems that we anticipate are:
- The uncertainty of the floor's availability.
- Our current understanding of how the floor works is mostly speculative. Allowing for triggered events to occur slowly and accumulate may not be possible without complex programming, or may be beyond the capabilities of the floor.
- What is this narrative being played out with the floor? We are still uncertain if it will ultimately be a vehicle for a pre-written narrative, or a tool for piecing a new one together.
- The equipment used requires a space indoors, and of a certain size. As space is often a limiting factor, it is best that the installation not be site-specific. However, equipment unavailability does not have to limit us, and we expect a little creative accumulation.

As we mentioned before, our knowledge of the touch sensitive floor is speculative at this time. Nevertheless, we believe that the spectrum of possibilities using this device is wider than the applications that have been made with it in performance. We believe that if we focus on the bi-dimensionality of the material, it's clear that its matric nature allows a series of combinations, whether these are light, image projections, sounds or even props carefully staged at certain locations. Most often, it has been used as a plane where the dancers' steps trigger discrete sounds and, less often, these sounds can hint at a narrative, sometimes based on common sounds. In our project we intend the events to be initiated by the act of stepping on the plane: the movement would then activate projections of images as well as sounds, or combinations of both and these might be distance-"aware" (in other words, the movement of the explorer towards a certain spot would cause image distortion or audio fade in).

On the other hand, if we had one more year, we would like to go deeper into dance notation systems, and particularly in the analysis of how well interfaces such as the one of Poser and Life Forms articulate with other more traditional ways of recording choreography, such as the Laban, the Benesh or the Eshkol-Wachmann systems. There have been dance notation systems since the fifteenth century [Guest, Ann Hutchinson, 1989a] and these systems reflect ways of representing the movement through space and time which are necessarily bound to their socio-historical contexts. It goes without saying that the recent technological innovations and their adoption in stage, which are far from being close processes, must have had repercussions in the re-presentations that are increasingly appearing in computer-based dance notation systems. It seems to us that Poser has a much more cinematic environment, where importance is emphasized by the use of light, cameras and even the visual interface of the parameter dials, which materialize the studio space and the manipulation of the tools generally available in such environments. On the other hand, Life Forms gives the dancer a much clearer relationship with the stage, and by blurring its physiognomy, it decreases the importance of the "character," as opposed to that of the dancer.

Technique forces the body to carry out tasks, perform ceremonies, and emit signs (Foucault, Discipline & Punish), and the meaning of these gestures is ultimately mediated by the observer (the audience). We see the touch sensitive floor as a plane that can be

stepped on by non-professionals in dance, by anyone who wants to expose oneself to the tremendous capabilities of a system where each pair of coordinates (plus other "dimensions" such as the absence/presence of a prop at that exact location) can orchestrate a navigable map: the chunks of data that are on this map should make sense to the explorer as an enticing narrative.

We expect to contribute to a small extent to answering what is, for us, one of the most interesting questions Ann Daly poses: "Does the movement have meaning?" Daly is addressing the issue of dance notation systems. We would like to take this question from a different perspective and try to assign a meaning to the movement executed by an individual on a touch sensitive floor, where this movement is not random: it corresponds to a line of narrative, and to a desire to unveil this narrative.

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