

Dance and Drawing since 1962 (Genf, 31 May – 1 Jun 12)

University of Geneva, May 31–Jun 1, 2012

Deadline: Feb 24, 2012

Laurence Schmidlin

"I love thinking on my feet. Dance and Drawing since 1962"

International colloquium

University of Geneva, Switzerland

Geneva, May 31st-June 1st, 2012

Dance and drawing are intimately linked to the gesture that performs them. The dancing body creates a figure in space and leaves an impact on a site, while the action of the artist sets a point into motion and captures an ephemeral event, later reproduced in graphic or visual form.

Throughout the 20th century, the performing arts and the visual arts converged in many instances. As artists investigated the embodied and energetic value of form, dancers and choreographers experimented with the interface between sign and action, between annotation and improvisation, between a spatial sense of self and an architectural configuration of movement. The hybridization of dance and drawing quickened from mid-century onwards, as performance art introduced innovative practices and as borders between disciplines were worn thin, causing inter-medial forms to emerge.

The body of the artist, whether a dancer or a visual artist, is thus shared by these practices and has become the instrument of their simultaneous realization. Drawing has indeed collided with dance in opening up to three-dimensional space, integrating surfaces (floor, ceiling, walls) as well as volumes into its process. It is this encounter that is the focus of this colloquium: it aims to evaluate and discuss the specific interaction of the two media and the ways in which their practices have become diversified since 1962, namely since events coinciding with the first public performance of the Judson Dance Group in New York.

To obtain or to intentionally create a drawing is not always, however, the aim of a dance. Drawing has traditionally been considered as what survives on a surface, while the movement giving rise to it has been ignored – as if dance, within the framework of process art, was but a means among others, and not a purpose. Yet what happens if we reverse this thought? If we value what precedes the drawing? If dancing is not subordinated to drawing, but that the latter, as a trace, contains the memory of the former? Beyond the metaphor, how have dancers and visual artists applied physical movement and drawing in alternative ways, inverting these as improvisational tools or notational supports? What happens when drawing uses everything but paper. In turn,

what remains when the tangible body has disappeared? What distinguishes dancers who draw and visual artists who dance? And is this distinction not fading ever more today? Is there a drawing without a gesture and a movement without a body? And what can be said about mechanical ballets: are drawing machines dancers, complete with a set of more or less programmed gestures? May the notion of "choreography" ultimately serve as a model, useful if partial, to theorize the correlation between dance and drawing?

Such questions are crucial towards an integrated understanding of the arts of the 20th and 21st centuries. The transversality of dance and drawing releases new correspondences, as many studies and exhibitions are currently demonstrating. Researchers, art historians and dance historians are invited to propose a contribution that explores the connections of dance and drawing, understood as broadly as possible, as well as the reception of one by the other, from 1962 to today. Exchanges between diverse positions in Art history and in Dance history are encouraged, as well as non-Western perspectives.

The colloquium is organized by the Department of Art History and Musicology of the Université de Genève (Switzerland) and will be held May 31st-June 1st, 2012, in French and in English. Abstracts for 20-minute papers (maximum 400 words) in either language must be received by February 24th, 2012, along with a complete curriculum vitae. Notices of acceptance will be sent out by March 19th, 2012. Please address abstract and CV in PDF format and by email to the organizers, Sarah Burkhalter (sarah.burkhalter[at]unige.ch) and Laurence Schmidlin (laurence.schmidlin[at]gmail.com).

"The body solves problems before the mind knows you had one. I love thinking on my feet, wind in my face, the edge, uncanny timing, and the ineffable."

Trisha BROWN, « How to Make a Modern Dance When the Sky's the Limit », in Hendel TEICHER (ed.), exhib. cat. Trisha Brown : Dance and Art in Dialogue, 1961-2001, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 290.

Reference:

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