Interview Dialogue / June-July 2013

Notes on Artistic Autonomy

Paulo C. Chagas

I am currently working on the subject of artistic autonomy and autopoiesis (for the book I am writing). I read an interesting book *Emergence and Embodiment* by Bruce Clarke and Mark Hansen. Maybe you read it already.

I have been working on this subject for a long time and wrote a couple of articles about it. Basically I am concerned about the boundaries of art as a system and the individual artistic forms as autonomous systems. This becomes an issue when artists use technology and different media for creating meaning, as it happens in your current work (for the DAP-Lab).

Artistic autonomy presupposes an operational closure. For instance, anybody can work with sound but there is a boundary that distinguishes music from other forms that use sound and are not recognized as music. This boundary is the operational closure that separates the systems from its environment. The environment is more complex than the system; the system has to make selections that reduce complexity in order to create meaning and maintain its structure. Meaning is always the consequence of reducing complexity. For example, music has to reduce the complexity of the acoustic environment by selecting (creating) sounds that become musically meaningful.

The connections between image, sound, space, movement, etc., which characterize contemporary art based on the use of technology, increases environmental complexity. How to deal with that? What is the reference to create forms that are meaningful? Is there an interdisciplinary system of art that articulates different media in order to create form?

There are many possible answers. I tend to think that our perception selects a primary sensorial medium and creates a hierarchy for decoding meaning. For example: by watching a move we privilege visual perception, by listening to music we concentrate on the sound, by watching a dance work we focus on the body, and so on.

I wrote quite a lot about polyphony and developed the concept of "intermedia" as an extension of polyphonic thinking to the context of multimedia shaped by technology. But I believe that it is still very problematic to envisage an intermedia structure that grants the same importance to all the individual artistic forms, so that they function as independent forms and at the same time articulate a meaningful unity.

For instance, by watching your video in YouTube while writing this email, I see many different layers such as dance, video, music, acting, etc. They are all very complex and integrated into a unifying structure. The sound layer, for instance, is very detailed shaped

and differentiated. But can we call it "musical composition"? What is the specific quality that makes possible to call it "musical composition" in such a context?

Should the sound layer be perceived as an autonomous form in order to be called music?

As you see, there are many questions upon which I am currently reflecting. I see [in the documentation of your work] that the music was created by a composer. So, it is really intended to be music, not only "noise" as you wrote.

Monday, June 24, 2013 5:31 PM (Paulo C. Chagas)

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[This first post was a response to a telephone conversation followed by first letter exchange]

dear Paulo

it was good to talk to you, thank you.

I am reading on the protests in Brazil now. Following the protests in Turkey. I have also read the articles (obituaries) on Oscar Niemeyer and his architecture which I admired,

As to work, I mentioned our "sounding wearables". Yes, we have become more and more interested in how the performers can generate sound that is picked up by microphone (worn on the body; monitoring the space) and processed live. We work with young sound artists and one engineer, we lack a composer. This is why I would have liked to interface with you in the summer, to draw on your strengths.

You have written authoritatively on polyphony.

We are interested in what we call the choreosonic or choreophonic. and if you glance at the opening of *for the time being (Victory over the Sun)* you see the opening prolog, and the dancer stage left wearing Michèle Danjoux's latest creation/construction, the TatlinRado Headdress. It has a sensor connected to a small metallic spiral, the spiral wiggles and vibrates, and the sound is picked up by an arduinio system that amplifies this metallic sound and sends it to the amplified speaker on her black box worn in front of her body. This way, she becomes a radio transmitter. These are some of our ideas, and also that sound emanates from a localized body, but also circuits around and can become included in the dispersion system, or on the other hand remain "attached" to and from a specific body performer. I want to work with multiple speakers on a given stage or installation environment.

For an excerpt from the first staged version of our new dance opera, see:
http:youtu.be/WeAIYCnsDe4

You might also look at our manifesto, in the TCH blog (New York), on audible choreography: http://www.tcgcircle.org/2013/05/the-sound-of-costumes-audible-

choreography/

I am sure you find it at least somewhat interesting, even though I admit it is noise, what we mostly generate, not music, but after Cage this difference is not as vital?

June 20, 2013, at 6:33 PM (Johannes Birringer)

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dear Paulo

thank you for your very kind and fascinating response to my letter, and I wish to ponder what you say (and cc for Michèle Danjoux, who is vitally involved in shaping our dance 'opera' and she was in a couple of the scenes, as you may remember, I filmed for our joint ciné-concert *Corpo, Carne e Espirito* back in Brasil in 2008 so you already know her..) And I would mention (since you notice, probably from glancing at the credits for the film except from *for the time being*, that we credit Sandy Finlayson as sound artist, not composer, for music, live sound synthesis) that the issue of the role of composer is an uncertain one for us.

But let me just make two observations in response to what you write; you are very clear and it is helpful to read you here (sorry, the book by Hansen and Clarke I had not seen yet; I have a couple of other books by Mark Hansen and always find his writing very insightful, I need to look for this newer book).

First, I just wish to make sure I understand how you see the artform, as an autonomous system, vis à vis (boundaried off) the larger environment. You say the (larger) environment is more complex than the art work (as system), yes? And the boundaries are necessary to make us "hear" or see or observe the sensorial medium, for example, music as differentiated from noise or other soundings, not-music. So I read system in relationship to environment (which might also be a system), now when you speak of intermedia or polyphonic art, you say:

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The connection between image, sound, space, movement, etc that characterize contemporary art based on the use of technology increases environmental complexity.
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does this now mean you suggest the intermedia form heightens the autonomous system's complexity? or increases the (boundaried off) environment? I would think the former, yes, not the latter?

The intermedia work approaches the environment in which it might be embedded by

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approximating the environment's complexity itself?

I would think that this is very true,

Now, second, if you remember our work for *Corpo* [http://interaktionslabor.de/lab08/index.htm], it seems that in your work (as it was your work) there was a clear "specific quality that makes possible [to] call it musical composition in such a context" – it was a musical composition performed by a string quartet and a percussionist with three vocalists, on a concert stage (in a theatre festival context and inside an auditorium) and the addition of the filmic triptych, yes, added complexity and made it an audio-visual concert or ciné-concert, perhaps through the image movement added a strong visual and motorsensory kinetic dimensions (and implicitly, thinking now of how Deleuze in his books on Cinema 1 and 2 distinguishes between movement image and time image), the projection added a dimension that could or might have extended into the narrative or painterly (Bacon) diegetic realms, and you had given "subject headers" to the individual scenes, and followed these and responded to them.

Now, interestingly, I would surely see *Corpo* as a musical work. With *for the time being (Victory over the Sun)* (thank you for watching it and commenting), the "compositional" process is different, and Michèle's work on the design in motion is central (her sounding garments design and her work on the sounding characters). My work follows or combines, as I search for themes/subtexts and the "scenic" emergences.... and we work with the dancers on these emergences and embodiments of wearing the garments and the accoutrements (TatlinTower Headdress, Microphone dress, Speakerdress, etc) figuring out in rehearsal what sounds they make and can make or cannot make to be amplified and processed, we have visual structures, Gestalten, and kinetic/choreographic ideas that we pursue, so that a theatrical form can be established, and we asked Sandy Finlayson to help us, to give us a sonic textual field (he did compose one "song" but mostly did live processing, via his AKG414 microphone that picks up everything on stage (we have additional contact mics and sensors in operation and an independent instrument, the Theremuino, built for us by an artist), and to hold it together meaningfully as his sound sensibilities go, and they go well for us......(unfortunately he moved to Bristol and is so busy we cannot work with him consistently at the moment)...

So, what happens in our staging is a kind of concatenation of "expanded instruments" (dancer and costume) at play in our system, and to some extent we get what we get from the costumes, say, the TatlinTower that I explained to you makes little metallic noises, not music as I would have assumed even the original composer for *Victory over the Sun* (1913) saw his music as music (it was scored, some of the score survived, one of our members, Caroline Wilkins, recorded it on piano, so we know it but do not use it)....

And we lack, I'd say we profoundly lack, a composer of your artistic expertise to work with us, to give us ideas, but we were satisfied to work with a sound artist and we studied the history of sound art for some while, and then borrowed the term "kinaesonic" from a singer in the UK who works with sensor gloves (Julie Wilson-Bokowiec, who has

published on her work: Bokowiec-Wilson/Bokowiec, "Kinaesonics: The Intertwining Relationship of Body and Sound," and Bokowiec-Wilson/Bokowiec, "Sense & Sensation: the act of mediation and its effects").

But now we also like to think of our work as choreosonic, and I need to see who might have worked with such definitions, I found a reference to Alwin Nikolais's work on choreosonics, and a Dutch colleague, STAN WIJNANS, also has published on choreosonics since 2006 (Stan Wijnans, "'TranSonic' Perception in Interactive ChoreoSonic Performance Practice **",** *Body, Space & Technology,* 2011: http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol1002/stanwijnans/home.html).

And you have written so eloquently about polyphony (Paulo C. Chagas: "Polyphony and Embodiment: a critical approach to the theory of autopoiesis," TRANS 9, 2005: http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/a179/polyphony-and-embodiment-a-critical-approach-to-the-theory-of-autopoiesis; see also: http://interaktionslabor.de/lab08/corpo.htm) that I would like to go back and reread. I trust Michèle and I would intend to use the notion of the choreophonic as we keep developing our sound wearables (we have just published an essay on "Sounding Wearables" in the current issue of Leonardo, 46, No. 3, 2013: http://interaktionslabor.de/lab13/LEONARDO_SOUND WEARABLES.pdf) , so these ideas now need further development, along some of the small lines of thought I tried to evoke in the essay on audible choreography.

But your questions or your theory are illuminating in this respect, as I realize, reading you, that in the DAP-Lab we have a loose "composition" structure, we work more in terms of assemblage, we create the conditions for sound and movement to happen, and then process the sound in real tome, perhaps not always successfully, and the sound material might not always be interesting or workable enough, so this then opens other questions, but I wanted to add that I feel we delegate things to each other in the process, so the role of composer is not defined, the role of choreographer loses distinctiveness as all of us, especially Michèle, the dancers, myself, but it could even be an instigation by our electronics engineer or the lighting artist, we might suggest to an actor, can you do this here? What would you do there? The actor tries it and something begins to happen, and we edit it and keep it and modify it; we also think within the assemblage of such kinds of sound and noise and motion, a self-sustaining thing (instrument, automated, mechanical) or microcosm, say the scratching needle at the end of the shellac record from 1919 – we want to use an the old gramophone that will be added to the new version of our dance opera – could become a part of the sounding world and thus be integratable into the system.

So much for now.

June 23, 2013, at 9:55 PM (Johannes Birringer)

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Dear Johannes,

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The intermedia form increases artistic autonomy. It reduces the complexity of the environment. For example, if you think on data-compression (audio and video), it reduces the audio and video quality in order to accelerate connectivity and strafe reproduction. Digital technology develops common tools for integrating audio and visual composition (software, plug-ins, max, etc).

Corpo is a very traditional form that emerges from the combination of live performance and image projection. It has an "analogical" approach of audiovisual composition.

for the time being develops a more integrative approach by articulating different combinations of sound, image, movement, etc. I see it in the tradition of "collage" art informed by the precision of the digital tools.

If you think for example on how Pina Bausch uses music: she does work with music at all, it is an accessory in the same way as an object placed on stage, an *object trouvé*. The medium dance (or dance theater) takes the lead.

Also in *for the time being* the medium dance takes also a leading role, as ultimately you see it as a choreography informed by the connections to other media. Honestly, I don't know any kind of performance art that achieves such an integration of different media, so that you cannot tell which one is on the foreground. Usually there is primary or dominant medium that constitutes the basis of all your events.

Sound design or sound art can be very effective in an intermedia work as it is the case in *for the time being*.

Music has something very authoritarian and imposing. Why? Because it combines sound and abstract thinking; sound takes possession of the body and musical thinking takes possession of the mind. There is no room for anything else.

For instance, you can have a very elaborated music in a movie (and the music can give the pace for the whole movie as the symphonic music by John Williams in the Spielberg's movies), but the music has to be a servant of the visual composition, it can never be in the foreground otherwise it will impact the visual perception.

Opera is maybe the most accomplished form of intermedia of the analog era; it confirms my argument that music imposes itself and takes the lead.

Anyway, this line of thinking comes form Schopenhauer (will = music; representation = image) and continues with Deleuze, etc.

Playing an instrument involves a training that is almost like a drill. If somebody plays a little bit piano it is not interesting. One has to demonstrate sophisticated skills to make it convincing. The instrument has to be an extension of the self (for example a jazz pianist). That is why I am skeptical to talk about "instrument" as a overall category without this embodiment.

I think *for the time being* is very successful in articulating meaning using different media. But, as I said, the body is the center of attention.

Wednesday, June 26, 2013 6:16 AM (Paulo C. Chagas)

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Dear Paulo

thank you for your excellent response, I was waiting a bit, as I wanted to see whether Michèle can join in.

So I need to wrap my head around your thesis and this notion that you relate or compare the artistic form (as system) or a work to environment. (What is this environment?)

Do we have a specific aesthetic environment-system, say for example institutions/cultural contexts/ such as the museum or concert stage? the "art world environment" and its classifications?

You say that the intermedia form increases artistic autonomy (reducing the complexity of the environment), are you implying that Art is an environment, and the specific forms, such as music or a music composition, are systems (of autonomy)? Is this based on an ontological or an aesthetic assumption of something that can be autonomous, and how is it autonomous?

(You wrote initially: "Basically I am concerned about the boundaries of art as a system and the individual artistic forms as autonomous systems.")

What do we then mean by increased complexity (for the perception of the work, the kinaesthetic perceptions, or the aural reception? visual reception?)? Yes, your examples are very interesting to me, and agree, Pina Bausch uses the music she strings as a kind of soundtrack, the dance is the foreground, the music is like a "found object," this is interesting, and of course it is different from, say, the way Cunningham worked with Cage. This year, everyone looks back to *Rite of Spring* and Stravinsky, and the Stravinsky music is actually incredibly powerful and makes Pina Bausch's version almost become subservient to the music. Most other choreographers fail. Nijinsky: I wonder what it looked like back in 1913 when it was first performed in Paris (incidentally, in the same year as *Victory over the Sun* in St Petersburg)

But are we still able to speak of "autonomy" in cases such as opera? – you are right – it is the most accomplished intermedial form, and Brecht loathed it (*Gesamtkunstwerk* driven by music-drama) and wanted to "interrupt" it in his Epic Theatre.

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Michèle and I are often wondering about the nature of the "choreographic" in the DAP-Lab's work; it was helpful to read your careful responses to the piece we showed you, which was in fact inspired not only by Russian constructivism but also by our previous reflections on the Bauhaus (Schlemmer), and how Schlemmer designs his Figurines in such a way that the "body" is slightly removed from its core position in space-movement creation, and the Gestalt or sculptured designs move to the foreground.

The design effecting the kinds of movement that are possible and thus become visible – this is of great interest to us. Our perception may be drawn more to the geometries and spatial dispositions (Schlemmer's use of sound I am not so sure about, he sometimes uses percussion, or circus like music, they also worked with the Bauhauskapelle which played brass music), therefore one might need to investigate how non-conventional Gestalt and abstraction relates to music or sound. Michèle's wearables, her constructed costumes, are fore-grounded, but with them also the fact that they are sounding: so we hope the audience is "listening" to the designs, if one may say so (i.e. how design-in-motion can be sound-in-motion).

Now, you are right about playing a few notes on a piano, it is not interesting. The virtuosity and intent (of composition) make for me the artistic form; so the notion of the instrument is problematic, I agree, and we have not used it much if at all, but Michèle and I got interested in looking at sound artists and some of their instrument designs (especially as we move from analog to digital and in-between, say, with Laurie Anderson and her modified violin, or Steina Vasulka and her violin interfaced with video); I remember working with Curtis Bahn and Dan Trueman at OSU in 2001-02, both had double bass and violin modified with sensors and interface system and also they built their own spherical speakers. This kind of instrument-building (of the speaker system) interests us. Michèle thought that perhaps our use of wearable design is a form or expanded instrument...

Then I mentioned to Michèle that a German friend, Heide Lazarus, had done her research on Mary Wigman, and in the 1920s Wigman established her school of Ausdruckstanz in Dresden and taught professional dance. Wigman writes a treatise in 1925 titled "Komposition," in which she speaks about her concept of the "body as instrument" as a fundamental principle of modern stage performance, and it was maybe in this sense of the dancer-body-wearable that we were thinking of that integration as an instrument.

Then I mentioned to Michèle, and mention it here to you, that I believe we need to think this through even more as we use visual media and film. During a recent workshop in Zagreb, I was given a short essay to read by Marko Kostanić, titled "The Choreographic Unconscious," which was written on the occasion of a dance concert by BADco.: *Semi-Interpretations Or how to explain contemporary dance to an undead hare,* Composition and modulation by Nikolina Pristaš; Notes and blackboxing by Goran Sergej Pristaš, Zagreb 2010).

And here the author encourages us to think of the historical contexts and subtexts of that earl modern era (1920s onward), which is also the era of the evolution of early film and

film kinetics, and in labor terms (something we started to look at in the Interaktionslabor since 2011 – labor/work theory, by Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, etc) the film technology and cinematic apparatus are shaped at the same time as Fordism evolves and thus the instrumentalization of the body, so here the term of the *instrument* gains a whole other, political sense, that I think we have always neglected a bit.

Let me quote (this is in a draft of an essay I am working on regarding live film Theatre: http://people.brunel.ac.uk/dap/Fräulein Julie_review.pdf).

> The role of the sound makers/musicians [in live theatre or dance] is, of course, of particular interest in this constellation, if we recall that the early cinematic technology created a "silent" genre, initially, which heavily influenced the kind of acting that was integrated into the film apparatus. As Marko Kostanić argues in a short but brilliant essay on the "Choreographic Unconscious," early motion pictures 'irreversibly influenced theatrical gesturality and acting. Cinematic thinking first appeared at that time, meaning that films no longer functioned as a technologically facilitated way of documenting the theatrical dispositif. Apart from the theatre as an accessible method of representation, one of the reasons for the "time-lag" in the evolution of cinematic thinking was the original fascination with the invention of the medium. The discovery of motion pictures resulted in an inevitable desire to show as much liveliness, movement, and intensity as possible. […] That is the register in which the cinematic acting of the time evolved, which used a burlesque, accelerated, and caricatured variant of almost incessant theatrical gesturality in order to become equivalent in persuasiveness to the ultimate sort of newly-discovered persuasiveness – a faithful reproduction of reality. But then, primarily owing to Griffith and partly also to Kuleshov's experiment, there was a break. Using the potentials of montage and close-up made it possible to enter the hitherto inaccessible space of theatrical relations and made the previous type of gesturality and its corresponding persuasiveness obsolete. This led to a sort of repression of the actor's body and, accordingly, to the narrative relevance of immobility, neutrality, and the focussed body. The crucial thing was that it was no longer the movement that was choreographed on film; it was the gaze, which automatically created cinematic psychology and suspense.' (J. Birringer, "The Theatre and its Double: Filmc Illusions of Theatrical Constructivism")

Kostanić goes on to discuss "suspense," and I am not sure whether this continues to be a word play on suspension, that the modern dance and later postmodern dance always grappled with what it could not say about its own instrumentalization or the effort to hide gravity and effort (in ballet); maybe it got shown off in Judson dance and its emphasis on mundane and everyday movement, and then later, during the last 20 years, we have this odd "conceptual dance" in Europe where there is very little dance. Or no dance. For a moment, instrumentalization of bodies stops. But the body cannot stand still.

The exhaustion of dance may lie in the fact that it cannot accelerate anymore, it also

(with Bausch's heaviest work of the 80s) has probed the psychic limits (violence) and it has also probed stasis, the rejection of movement for spectators (Konzepttanz); butoh dance fascinates Michèle and me as it comes from another side (Japan and the East) and another cultural trajectory of rejection. Butoh's metamorphic slowing down process and internalization, also invisibilization of movement kinetics implies that the movement goes inside the skin, inner muscles, organs. This ought to be silent again, or barely audible. Saburo Teshigawara, for example, does not use music, if I remember a performance I saw in Wuppertal, but when he slowly walks across glass and breaks it, you hear glass breaking.

This I like.

Friday, June 28, 2013 9:30 AM (Johannes Birringer)

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Hi Johannes,

Here some answers to your question.

The distinction system/environment comes from cybernetics and second-order cybernetics (includes the observer in the observation) and was applied to society and art by Luhmann (*Art as Social System*). It is an operational distinction that is not related to any material and physical reality.

The important thing about system theory is that it operates through operational closure. The system creates a self-referential boundary within which it produces and reproduces its elements. For example, a cell is a system; it has a membrane that separates it from the environment. There is no direct connection between the system and the environment, the system communicates with the environment through structural coupling. The system reacts to the environment through perturbations. And so on.

The system operates fully autonomous inside its boundaries. What distinguishes a social system from living systems—in Luhmann terms—is communication. The society produces and reproduces communications and that is all. Luhmann defines different sub-systems of the society such as the economic system, the legal system, the education system, the art system, etc.

The environment represents always a surplus of possibilities and the system reduces this complexity by means of selections in order to articulate meaning. For example, there are infinite sounds in the acoustic environment, but music selects some sound to create meaning; there are infinite images, but visual arts selects some images to create meaning.

The distinction system/environment can be also defined in terms of the distinction

form/medium. The medium is a loose coupling of possibilities; the form is a tight coupling of possibilities of a medium. In the evolution of art there is a recursive process through which a medium becomes a form that becomes a medium that becomes a form and so on. For example, music creates the medium of tonality or the medium of sonata for shaping new forms that generate other media.

There is nothing ontological in this way of thinking. Everything can be articulated in terms of system/environment or form/medium. Also the body.

I have been writing about this stuff since at least 10 years, but I don't think people understand what I write. I have been reflecting on the relationship between different kind of media—sound, image, body, space, etc.—and how they couple and decouple in order to generate forms that turn into new medium and new forms.

Recently, I start the think about the issue of artistic autonomy both in terms of how art defines itself and how the different artist fields define themselves. The connection and integration of different media through the use of common technology, particularly the computer, creates a lot of possibilities but also a lot of confusion. For example, there is a strong tendency in electronic music and sound art to experiment and improvise. There is a lot of artists working with technology individually or in small groups in an improvisation environment and trying to "fix" some forms.

In some way, this surplus of improvisation represents the need to embodying the performance. You have to try with your body and create some patterns that become more stable. This is the typical dynamic of dance. Dancers have to improvise and embody what they do. Western music developed composition, the music is set in the score and the score is an inscription that represents a step beyond embodiment. The issue [or improvisation] becomes more compelling when people work with technology and don't relate to a "score" for creating the music. And here is where I am for the moment. There is a lot more to say on that.

Let me know what do you think.

Wednesday, July 03, 2013 5:44 AM (Paulo C. Chagas)

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Dear Paulo

thank you for your most thoughtful response, and for explaining again your strong interest in system theory (I remember of course how much you like Luhmann; I have never read much of his work, though I bought the book on *Art as a Social System* but found it dry and formalist and gave up - so I must be among the few friends of yours who have not read Luhmann). I think I can see your position a little clearer now.

I just want to remark on your ending:

The crucial term you use now is that of inscription. This we should perhaps explore further, as I am not sure that definitions of art, at this point in the game, will lead us into a clearing. "New media art" has had a hard time to defend and place itself, even if, for many, it of course needs no defense. It may only need to assert itself vis à vis canons, place holder institutions, educational systems (art schools), museums, and producers? Performance art is so accepted now that some museums thrive on showing live art and retrospectives on live art (in the museum!), so there is an ongoing art historical discourse being written, which incorporates performance (say, Fluxus, happening, body art, sound art) into visual art.

Dance is now also being exhibited in museums. We saw a show in London at Southbank Center called "Move: Choreographing You" [for a review published, see: http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/PAJJ_a_00054]; then this year Michèle and I saw an exhibit at the Barbican entitled "Dancing around the Bride: Cage, Cunningham, Johns, Rauschenberg and Duchamp." When we walked into the exhibition, Cage's prepared pianos were playing, and then dancers stepped out to dance (Cunningham choreographies from the 70s or 80s), the old Rauschenberg and Johns stage sets standing in the corner and hanging above.

The dancers were trained in Cunningham technique, and the pieces we saw were "put" on them: they had to learn them and so the work was recreated, precisely reconstructed. Many dance forms are coded, or rely on specific technique systems; the choreographies build on these systems.

Some dance forms are not coded (improvisation, butoh, free style, contemporary, conceptual etc)

Some dance forms are used by choreographers to create movement choreography to the music. (And of course Nijinsky worked to/with the Stravinsky score for *Sacre de Printemps*). Some cultural dance-coded forms are unimaginable without the music and percussion (in India, Japan)

Now integration with technology raises new concerns, and I agree with much of what you say, but also think that not all sonic art or sound art practices I see in music schools are completely based on improvisation, and here I need to investigate further.

The integrations I have seen, and liked, work well and are subliminal; I frequently go and see one of our composers, Peter Wiegold, perform on Thursday nights with his ensemble, Notes Inégales, in a London club he has booked to allow him to play on these nights (with his combo but also always inviting guest musicians): http://www.clubinegales.com/live/

His combo includes guitar, double bass, clarinet/trumpet, piano, percussion/drums, and

on occasion a violinist. Peter plays electric piano/synthesizer and conducts the band on his keyboards fronting them / looking at them. They play a kind of fusion jazz /contemporary which seems rehearsed, structured, there are scores, there are also moments when they riff off each other and have extended moments of improvisation. It all looks seamless and easy, and they are very fine, highly expert musicians. A recent concert (on the Kafka project that I also engaged with) also featured a recitalist (Will Self the writer). He spoke the Kafka text while they played *(Kafka's Wound*, now released as CD).

Our DAP-Lab group does not work with scores; and I know other sound artists don't – they improvise as you have said. They may indeed be trying to fix some forms that work in a live, generative processing environment, and how do we think of these forms?

Needing to embody the performance with technology: utilizing the body-instrument (Wigman) to become also a sounding instrument – now if that were possible, or if we imagine working in a sensortized environment or with music instruments that are linked to computers, thus if the group works with one or multiple interface structures, we gain a complex *hybrid system*, but the relationships between mediums and forms may not be clearly known, structured or articulated (comprehended: I do not think our dancers know enough about music composition, at least I am not sure, nor do they read score except Caroline Wilkins; strangely we never have discussed this in the ensemble).

What would inscription beyond embodiment now mean, sonically and choreographically?

In DAP-Lab there is a small problem, namely that the musical ideas are not inscribed into the choreographic process, as it would happen if we followed a score. The choreographic ideas are to some extent very much affected (and tethered to) by Michèle designs for the wearables and the characters, and the way we encourage the dancers to find their own form of expression/articulation with the garment, costume, accoutrements. We perform on a theatre stage, not the concert or club stage (for example, Notes Inégales). When Peter showed a film at his club, during intermission, no one was paying attention as they were talking to each other about the music.

So when DAP-Lab performs, attention is focused towards the bodies in movement in space. However, since I know the focus is on Michèle's costumes and what/how dancers wear then, when we began to use the choreosonic concept we hoped that the audience would listen to the dance (and the sounding): we are aware that we reduce movement, we do not kinetically maximize, we minimize. And we shift attention to small gestures, sometime stillness of motion, micro-movement.

We had four dancers in the first version of *for the time being*, we might have 8 in the new version. I want to double the stage presences and allow for layerings.

(this is why I started to listen to Stockhausen's *Octophonie*). Now we need to find a way to create a musically or sonically meaningful form for the content of the wearables, the CHORIC development of our opera. Once you work chorically, you need to structure the

movement and sound carefully and deliberately, so no more improvisation, their movements would have to relate to a method of inscription.

Now i need to ask, are there new possibilities for such inscriptions?

July 7, 2013, 07: 03 (Johannes Birringer)

* * *

Hi Johannes,

Luhmann is very difficult to read. He is an extremely intelligent man but also remarkable humble (very different from most of the contemporary philosophers, which tend to be very arrogant). He has a lot to say. I believe he will recognized later as a great thinker of the 20th century.

There is a new book in English by Luhmann, *Introduction to Systems Theory*, which is easier to read. It is a transcription of his lectures, as he talks to the audience.

I took the notions of incorporation and inscription from Hayles' book *How We Became Posthuman* (Hayles 1999, 192-221).

She distinguishes between inscribing practices and incorporating practices.

She writes: "Because incorporating practices are always performative and instantiated, they necessarily contain improvisational elements that are context-specific. Incorporation emerges form the collaboration between the body and embodiment, between abstract model and the specific contexts in which the model is instantiated. In contrast to inscription, which can be transported from context to context once it has been performed, incorporation can never be cut entirely free from its context" (Hayles 1999, 200).

For example, the *interaktionslabor* is born as an incorporating practice in the context of the mine environment, specially the first one in 2003.

Music emerges as an incorporating practice when people sing melodies; the first medium of musical inscription is the body (memory, orality); then comes music notation, which allows the development of polyphony. In the beginning of music notation there was no score, only individual parts. Score came much later with instrumental music. Then comes electroacoustic music based on sound reproduction; the tape is a medium of inscription. The pieces of electronic music use sounds inscribed on tape; then comes the computer, which is at the same time an inscribing and incorporating practice.

Music notation is an inscribing practice that is significant for Western classical music. Popular music, jazz, etc. are incorporating practices and so is improvisation.

In the US people love to improvise, is part of the American culture (jazz).

I am not interested in improvisation. I use improvisation sometimes in my composition; for example, I recently composed a piece for piano and electronics (*Figures of the Body* 2011) where the electronic part consists on a collection of sequences that are played randomly and the pianist has to read scores that are made available randomly. But even in this case there is a score underlying the composition.

As a composer, I am interested in inscribing practices. I want to have pieces performed in different contexts.

But now my music is less and less performed, because I moved to a place where there are no musicians, no public, nothing. In the last years I composed a lot of pieces that haven't been performed at all, for instance *Temporal Properties of the World*, an extensive piece that I wrote for a film project with Lynn Lukkas, which has not been completed.

I am composing music for the sake of composition, if the music has some value it will be performed sometime; it has no value, it will disappear with my death. I think you should not worry too much about inscription. Your work emerges from this collaborative, incorporating environment, and it reflects these qualities in its artistic form. Your work integrates different media into a multimedia unity; you are always trying different things.

Maybe I am completely wrong about your work …

One last thing: I disagree completely with Hayles about the notion of posthuman (You also use posthuman in your texts). There is no posthuman. Digital technology doesn't change your minds and body, transforming us into post-humans. It affects us no more and no less than any other technology that we have been using in the past including writing, paper, etc.

I agree with Andy Clark: "We human have always been adept at dovetailing our minds and skills to the shape of our current tools and aids. […] Mind-expanding technologies come in a surprising variety of forms. They include the best of our old technologies: pen, paper, the pocket watch, the artist's sketchpad, and the old-time mathematician slide rule" (Clark 2003, 7).

Wednesday, July 10, 2013 6:13 AM (Paulo C. Chagas)

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