"Does Screendance need to look like dance?"

This is an edited version of a paper, which was first presented at the American Dance Festival, 'Screendance State of the Art 2', Duke University, North Carolina in 2008, and re-presented at the conference 'Exploring the Screen as a Site for Choreography', University of Bristol, Department of Drama, Theatre, Film & Television, April 2009, in response to debates at the Bristol event. Drawing on a wider field of visual art, film, dance and theatre studies the paper proposes a new knowledge map for screendance aiming to articulate the complexities of choreographic sensibilities and identifying a set of Screendance strategies.

Introduction

In the early 80's screendance artist Amy Greenfield published an artist statement in a catalogue for the *Filmdance Festival* at the Public Theatre in New York City. In this statement Greenfield argued that Screendance did not need to resemble what we know as dance and that work ought to be made not for film but as film. She suggested that such work

> "*may not 'look like' a dance, but (…) has the kinaesthetic impact and meanings of dance.*"[1]

Some twenty years earlier film-maker and theorist Maya Deren had raised the same question in an essay entitled *Cinema as an Art Form*.[2] Reflecting on the often unsuccessful translation of stage-based dance to film Deren had called for an artform, which was conceived as cinematic art in the first place:

> "*There is a potential filmic dance form, in which the choreography and movements would be designed, precisely, for the mobility and other attributes of the camera but this, too, requires an independence from theatrical dance conceptions.*"[3]

Almost thirty years after Greenfield and fifty years after Deren much of Screendance remains attached to familiar forms of live dance and screenings and independent programming in Screendance festivals often fail to challenge this legacy. Whilst there should be room for all kinds of programming this suggests a lack of diversity in approaches to curating Screendance, as well as a lack of clear differentiation in the practice itself. Pascale Moyse, curator of MOVES, a film festival in Manchester, has developed a curatorial concept, which aims to include a wider film and video practice by referencing the broader notion of 'movement' instead of 'dance' in the title of the festival. Such initiatives expand the field, address a different kind of audience and losen the ties

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[1] Amy Greenfield, Artist Statement, Filmdance Festival Catalogue, New York City: Public Theatre (1983): 26.
[2] Maya Deren, 'Cinema as an Art Form', Introduction to the Art of the Movies, Lewis Jacobs Ed, New York: Noonday (1960):
[3] Deren 258.

with dance-based traditions. To support such developments a wider review of the notion of 'dance as film' is due.

Historical Legacy

The attachment to familiar forms of live dance within Screendance is due to a complex historical trajectory, which saw, on one hand, a critical stance toward the mediation of dance through technology, and, on the other, a legacy of primarily Hollywood cinema, when dance was indeed made for film and recognisably so.

The legacy continues in a process frequently used in the making of screendance, by which the dancing is a process anterior to the film-making with a dance already made before the technology intervenes. In this kind of process the technology is left to catch up with the dance content. Subsequently, those critical of technology have argued that technical mediation can distort the dance and lose what the dance could on its own provide.

Sherril Dodds explores this uneasy relationship between dance and technology in her book *Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art* (2001). She quotes, for example, Fred Astaire, who did not want "special effects or arty perspectives", so that "the dance is seen as closely as possible without being distorted through the filmic apparatus."[4] Astaire's concern was representative of a wider resistance to the translation of dance to film. Dodds also quotes the critic Sacks (1994), who said that "Dance and film are inherently incompatible, film is realistic, dance unrealistic."[5] For a more recent example of this critical discontent Dodds quotes from an article entitled 'Exploitation or Symbiosis? On the Contradictions between Dance and Video' in *Ballett International* from 1991, that "occasionally the choreographer (may be) raped by technology."[6]

The understanding of Screendance as composed of two different parts, the dancing and the film-making, has also dominated many of the British TV productions of the 80's and 90's. The construct, which Dodds describes as the 'televisual mediation of dance' highlights precisely this division of processes into two parts whereby the body provides the dance while the technology does something else like mediation, representation or framing.[7]

Critical views and resistances to a different, experimental filmic dance form are of course only one half of the (his)story of Screendance and at the other end of the spectrum we find screen-based works with no evidence of a duality between dance and technology. Early examples are the film works of Dada artists such as René Clair's *Entre'Acte* from 1924, a hilarious and radical surrealist choreography for the screen. Ann Cooper Albright argues in a paper from 2006 that Loie Fuller's *Le Lys de la Vie* from 1921 should also be mentioned here and may in fact have been an inspiration for René Clair.[8] Many other

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[4] Sherril Dodds, <u>Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art</u> (London and New York, Palgrave 2001) 6.
[5] Dodds, 16
[6] Dodds, 19
[7] Dodds, 27
[8] Ann Cooper Albright, "Resurrecting the Future", Proceedings <u>Screendance State of the Art</u>, ADF, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (2006): 27.

film-makers could be listed here, such as Lotte Reininger, Len Lye, Oscar Fischinger, Maya Deren, Shirley Clarke, Stan Brakhage, Hilary Harris, Amy Greenfield, Margaret Tait, Jayne Parker and Zbig Rybczynski, to name a few from across different decades and continents. Interested in the artistic potential of the moving-image technology the magazin *Ballet International/ tanz aktuel* ran an interview with the Italian critic Elsa Vaccarino in 1979, who strongly endorsed Screendance as an experimental and pioneering artform. Whilst considering the opinions of both enemies and friends of the technological mediation of dance she argued that: "Dance is the ideal go-between for electronic and real bodies," and that "Dance has stimulated their makers to seek new solutions and creations in the technical/expressive modalities of video."[9] Her comments emphasized the possibilities inherent in this hybrid practice to develop new approaches across different artforms.

The video work that was screened at the Bristol symposium this year, which included works by Becky Edmunds, Lucy Cash, Bert Gottschalk, Jamin Winans, Jeff Chiba Sterns and Christopher Steel, combined live and mediated elements in a way that 'the dance' or rather the choreography was created through the interplay of all of the processes. The works suggest that the historical conflict between dance and film, video or other forms of mediation are becoming less of an issue. Artists combine live bodies and technical bodies, live and mediated processes and real and digital space in ever more complex configurations.

A wealth of new possibilities are emerging with the new mobile platforms and the internet, which more or less sidestep the traditional production processes of TV and Cinema from script writing to funding constraints and dependencies on producers, commissioners and programmers. The internet also enables audiences to self-organise and to become a different kind of viewer: Harmony Bench argues in a paper from 2006 that new, internet-specific practices such as *Hyperdance* and *Hyperchoreography* turn the traditional passive audience into participants, whereby the user interaction is an essential feature of the work.[10] Much of the online interactivity is still limited to a multiple choice paradigm but the new practices are addressing important issues and will impact on how we understand Screendance and 'dance as film' in the future.

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[9] Elsa Vaccarino, "Dance and Video", <u>Ballet international</u> 60/ <u>tanz aktuel</u> (1997) 8-9.
[10] Harmony Bench, "Hyperdance: Dance Onscreen, Dance Online, or, What difference does the medium make?", Proceedings <u>Screendance State of the Art</u>, ADF, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (2006): 89.

Screendance Expanded[11]

New terms such as *Hyperdance* and *Hyperchoreography* testify to the fact that the language we use is key in the development of concepts and experiences and in challenging conventions. With the proliferation of practices and platforms there is a pertinent need to expand the vocabulary of Screendance. A lack of means to distinguish between different kinds of Screendance strands, for example, is a linguistic as well as a conceptual issue and the hybridity at the heart of the art form as well as its many roots and different expressions over time make this an obvious necessity.

The OSVD Screendance Symposium in Findhorn in November 2007 debated possible versions of a knowledge map of screendance to expand in particular on the genres of the art form.[12] This knowledge map, it was proposed, would allow for and invite new references and help to articulate different practices within the field of Screendance.

Building on the discussions in Findhorn I am proposing a new map for Screendance, which draws on the visual arts and its histories as well as on choreographic languages, to explore already existing differences within Screendance. The form of the map as presented in this paper has been further developed through debates at the American Dance Festival, North Carolina, in the summer of 2008 and at the symposium in Bristol in April this year.

I begin with a critical debate on the notion of genres to explore what the term may or may not offer to a critical debate. I will also reflect more generally on the process of categorisation and theorisation of practice, to lay a critical framework for a subsequent exploration and critique of the notion of genres.

Classification, Genres and Strategies

The discussion draws on an essay by Tobin Nellhaus, which was published in *Staging Philosophy* (2006), a selection of interdisciplinary essays, which reference both philosophy and theatre to develop new theories about theatre[13]. Nellhaus is concerned with theorising the basic dynamics that lead to the formation of different forms of a performance practice, and we can find much common ground between theatre practices and the art of screendance.

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[11] The heading of 'Screendance Expanded' refers to a seminal essay from the late seventies on sculpture by art critic Rosalind Krauss, entitled 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. (Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press 1985) 31-42.) This essay marked a moment in time when sculpture was expanding rapidly to embrace new and radical propositions. We have recently used 'Screendance Expanded' as the title of the one-day symposium on Screendance in Brighton in December 08, organised in partnership between the University of Brighton and South East Dance. The title was to highlight the necessity of Screendance to break with its relative isolation as art practice and to take part in a wider field of cultural practices and critical enquiries.

[12] For a record of proceedings see; Opensource {videodance} (Findhorn: Goat Media Ltd, 2007)

[13] Tobin Nellhaus, "Critical Realism and Performance Strategies", Staging Philosophy, Ed. David Krasner and David Z. Saltz. (Michigan MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006) 57-85.

Nellhaus writes from a perspective of *Critical Realism*, a branch of philosophy which was originally developed in the 1930's and which recognises that a reality exists independent of ourselves.

Critical Realism differentiates itself on one hand from *Positivism*, which makes reality dependent on our experience and perception of it, and on the other hand from *Postmodernism*, which discusses the social and cultural fabric mainly in terms of language, making language the determining factor.[14] *Critical Realism* instead understands society as a totality made up of at least three main strata, which can be represented by a pyramid composed of basic structures, agents and discourse. Critical Realism proposes a multitude of causal relations between things as the elements of each layer act on those in the other layers.[15]

In addition the strata model allows for the notion of emergence. Emergence means that one term may arise out of another and act on the first but is irreducible to it.[16] The concept of emergence is useful to describe in general terms the relation of theory to practice; theories are emergent properties of practices, they may arise from a practice and act on it, but are not reducible to it. We can also invert this statement, that is practices are emergent properties of theories, arise from theories and act on these, but are not reducible to them. With the notion of emergence we can avoid a hierarchical order in the relation of theory to practice.[17] The notion of emergence establishes a fluid ground and allows classifications to be formed and reformed in an ongoing dialogue between theories and practices.

Without going any further into the complexities of *Critical Realism* I will focus in the following on Nellhaus' debate on genres, which rests on the model of strata and their interactions.

Many art forms have well established genres, they have a certain usefulness and are often built on likeness, classifying work through a number of factors such as content, formal aspects and the materials used, by the traditions they draw on or by production and viewing context. A discussion of genres for screendance is central to Dodd's *Dance on Screen* mentioned above. In this book Dodds identifies several genres, namely *Hollywood dance film*, *television advertising*, *music videos* and *video dance*, while the latter is sited within the television industry as a hybrid betweeen postmodern stage-based dance and television, and does not cross over into the visual art world and the gallery space.

The genres identified by Dodds are predominantly formal groupings, indicating production context and relevant forms of dissemination. Indirectly they also identify materials used such as video or film. They are characteristic of a discourse on Screendance, which has tended to focus on modes of production and distribution and which thereby testifies to the dominance of the industry on the field altogether.

More recent propositions of genres for Screendance include '*Narrative dance film*' by Allen Kaeja, as well as the above mentioned *Hyperchoreography,* used by McPherson

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[14] Nellhaus 57-58, 61.
[15] Nellhaus 59-60.
[16] Nellhaus 60.
[17] Nellhaus 64.

and Fildes, and *Hyperdance* as proposed by Harmony Bench.[18] These terms suggest a shift in the discourse in that they attempt to address for example historical roots alongside the medium. This shift in the discourse seems to be symptomatic of new developments and of a wider sense of a need for a reinvigoration of the artform. It also invites a systematic review of the process of naming like the one undertaken by Nellhaus with regards to theatre practices.

Nellhaus questions the usefulness of genres in general and within a critical debate on performance practices in particular.[19] He argues: "Genre (…) is basically a formal or stylistic notion. It functions on the discursive level alone (…) and may not be effective for understanding (say) the nature of comedy as such."[20]

While Nellhaus doubts the analytical capacity of such terms one could argue that genres are always also analytical tools in that they divide a large body of, for example, painting into landscape, portraiture and history painting, which are not just formal descriptions of similarities and differences. The list of genres for Screendance as proposed by Dodds allowed for an important historical analysis of the development of Screendance and revealed the crucial impact of different media, production contexts and industries over the last few decades. In the wake of this analysis we can ask as to what other sets of categories could lead to the identification of other aspects of Screendance practices, for example their "underlying conceptual level", as Nellhaus puts it.[21] His concern is to come up with a system of classification that recognises and empowers artists or agents, and the exercise of agency. He therefore proposes the notion of 'strategy' to be able to analyse and name the dynamics at the heart of a practice. Describing artists as agents, he writes:

> "*Agents devise (plans) to achieve certain goals, solve certain problems, and answer certain questions about what it is to be an agent. (…) Agents form strategies to cross the divide between intention and present condition, to struggle with and change realities. (…) Strategies involve an overarching goal, a plan for achieving it, and intermediate steps requiring particular measures.*"[22]

Nellhaus argues that performance strategies are founded in "sociohistorical relations, resources, dynamics, and processes (…). They are concerned with "connections with structures, agents and discourse - the whole of social ontology."[23]

Based on the model of the world that *Critical Realism* provides, Nellhaus wants creative strategies to reflect on the entire complexity of the multiple strata in order to empower the artist and maker. Such named strategies could reflect on various dynamics that take place in the making of work, indicating perhaps an underlying struggle, an artistic vision and a methodology.

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[18] Allen Kaeja, "Moving Memories", Proceedings Screendance: State of the Art, American Dance Festival, Duke University, Durham, NC, (July 6-9, 2006): 46-48, as well as Bench (July 6-9, 2006): 89-94.
[19] In the essay Nellhaus argues this with reference to naturalism and comedy in theatre.
[20] Nellhaus 80-81.
[21] Nellhaus 79.
[22] Nellhaus 78.
[23] Nellhaus 80.

This approach appears useful in the context of Screendance as it would place the work and its maker firmly into a social and historical context. The naming of such strategies might ease the path to the identification of issues in the work presented, or facilitate a more engaged screendance practice addressing issues of social experience, class, race, gender or politics of space and addressing theories of the body, of mobility and such like.[24]

Strategies can also be read as paradigms of probability in order to shift the emphasis away from a description of actual appearances and to focus instead on key ingredients and their probable functioning. In an exploration of creative processes this invites new sets of questions, for example: What are the key ingredients used in a particular practice? What are the underlying principles of this or that approach? The focus would shift from a predominantly visual or themed description of a practice as in the case of history painting or landscape painting, toward the naming of underlying concerns and artistic intentions.[25]

I will turn toward some examples of classification in other art forms, which seem to correspond to a naming of strategies and which indicate such artistic intentions and methodologies.

In the 1950s the notion of *Auteur Cinema* was promoted by the French film-maker Francois Truffaut in order to encourage film-makers to realise very personal and creative visions in their work. Truffaut was taking a stand against the dominant commercial cinema industry, which favoured conventional film-making for the entertainment industry. The title of auteur cinema reflects the idea that directors should be making films in the way that writers use their pen and not be bound by industry conventions and market forces.

Auteur cinema became a very influential concept and was also taken up in Germany in the early 60s by another group of directors including Alexander Kluge. In the Oberhausen Manifesto from 1962 they presented a public and collective statement, hoping, much like their French counterpart, to strengthen German cinema against the dominant European film industries and Hollywood.

The term *Auteur Cinema* provides a useful example of the kind of artistic strategy that Nellhaus advocates. The term signals a particular methodology, which has its roots in a wider struggle against dominant cinematic conventions of the film industry and calls for artistic freedom and diversity. It aims to support artistic agency and does not in any way propose a style or formal conventions.

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[24] It could be interesting to review familiar dance genres and techniques with a view to re-reading the existing names as strategies. If we think of them as strategies they may already imply a wider set of questions and conditions instead of referring mainly to a technique and a performance style. 'Modern dance' as strategy can for example imply an artistic vision and a methodology that is not only opposed to the conventions of classical dance and narrative-driven ballet but also asserts another kind of subjecthood. 'Contact Improvisation', 'Hip Hop' and 'Jazz dance' as strategies can all be read as methodologies that challenge social and institutional conventions and coercive systems and remind the practitioners of the roots and motivations of their respective practices. However a discussion on dance forms is not the focus of this paper.
[25] Performance artists Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion for example use these kinds of questions in their own performance practice and in their teaching.

In the visual arts there has been a related debate on the question of authorship, again spurred by literature such as the seminal essay from Roland Barthes from 1967 entitled *The Death of the Author*.[26]

While *Auteur Cinema* promoted the idea of authorship and the director as the 'origin' of the work, Barthes' essay argued in the opposite direction, critiquing the idea of the author as origin, proposing that it was language and the text that formed the author in the process of writing and that the reader was the one who made meaning. Visual artists used Barthes' essay to critique a modernist art market in the late 60s and 70's, which was based on the celebration and promotion of the artist genius. It was the artist's name that sold the work, rather than the work itself.

In search of other models of practice visual artists turned to anthropology and its tradition of field studies, whereby the individual researcher goes out into a specific cultural context and gathers and records information. Traditionally anthropology privileges a fairly neutral observer and his/ her gathering and recording of information is considered to be 'the work'. Classical anthropology has been very suspicious of personal opinions and impressions, promoting instead the notion of objectivity and non-interference. In this work the observing anthropologist is not the author of the work but an intermediary and documentor.

In the art world re-conceiving the artist as observer and gatherer of information was a radical step away from the notion of the artist as originator and genius and allowed for the development of a completely different kind of visual art practice.[27]

Apart from the 'artist as anthropologist' visual artists developed a second form of practice, which directly addresses questions of authorship. The term that has come to identify this anti-authorial practice is *Appropriation Art*. As the term suggests artists explicitly take, borrow and steal work from other artists and cultural agents and appropriate already existing work in order to present it as their own. Flourishing in the 70's its ramifications can still be felt and Tate Britain staged its 2006 *Triennial* around this term.[28]

Appropriation Art is an example of an artistic strategy, that is strongly motivated by a struggle for creative agency, in this case trying to subvert the hero politics at the heart of art institutions, critiquing commercial pressures on artists to be productive, as well as questioning the whole idea of 'making' in art with its link to traditional notions of craftmanship. *Appropriation Art* answered to an artistic need to challenge a wider context as well as one's own position and to re-invent one's practice.

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[26] Roland Bathes, "The Death of the Author", Image-Music-Text London: Fontana (1977)
[27] Anthropology also benefited from the encounter with art, becoming more interested in questions of subjectivity and personal motivation. Nowadays anthropology allows for a more engaged and personalised role of the anthropologist. For further reference see the conference "Fieldworks: Dialogues between art and anthropology", London: Tate Modern, (September 2003) 6 April 2009. <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/fieldworks.htm>
[28] For the exhibition see <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/triennial/>
For a related debate see: Symposium "Tate Trienniel", Tate Britain. 5 May 2006. <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/eventseducation/symposia/tatetriennial2006symposium4947.htm> or a critique of the exhibition by Laura Cumming, "Second Hand Pose." Observer. 5 March 2006: 22. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2006/mar/05/art.tatebritain>

Exploring terms such as *Auteur Cinema*, 'the Artist as Anthropologist' and *Appropriation Art* it appears that Nellhaus' notion of strategy has some mileage in that these strategies contain useful information on critical approaches to particular historical conditions. In the following I will look more closely at Screendance to explore its own potential strategies.

A knowledge map for 'dance as film'

I come back to my starting point, to Amy Greenfield's statement from 1983, which argues that work ought to be made not for film but as film, and that such work

> "may not 'look like' a dance, but (…) has the kinaesthetic impact
> and meanings of dance."[29]

In order to explore the possibilities suggested by 'kinaesthetic impact and meanings of dance' I want to lay out a possible map which draws on all the aspects of this hybrid practice and on choreographic forms of mapping to do so. I propose a variation of the Laban Effort Graph for Screendance, using a similar visual graph as Laban did for the mapping of movement qualities in the live body, but replacing the vocabulary with a different set of terms.

Laban's categories of time, space and weight are adapted to indicate the uses of screen time, screen space and bodies on screen. Within these categories the graph distinguishes between:

A) the body as tool versus body as site

B) edited time versus real time/ duration, and
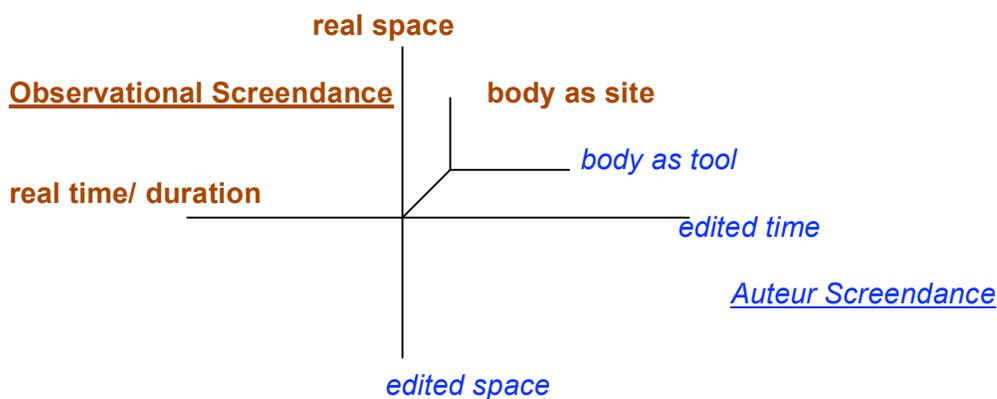
C) edited/ imagined/ constructed space versus real space.

This terminology is borrowed from the visual arts. The graph looks like this;

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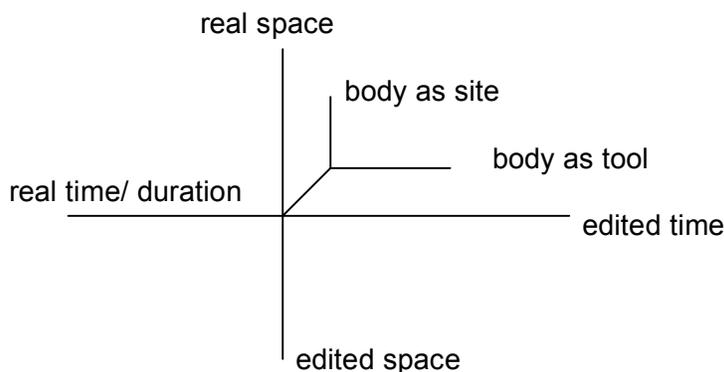
[29] Greenfield 26.

In this graph different kinds of mobility can be differentiated in terms of movement that is given to the body as 'language' versus movement that is perhaps 'of the body' or 'found'. Found language, an attribute of the body as site, would be perhaps the preferred language for the anthropologist-artist-choreographer. It could embrace those works that deal with movements of the everyday and pedestrian situations. The body as tool could be the preferred instrument for author-led, body based and explicitly choreographed screendance.

These two approaches of the anthropological, observational choreographer and the author-led screendance could also divide the rest of the graph between themselves; 'Observational Screendance' could sit well with real time/ duration and with real space, while 'Auteur Screendance' might favour a stronger editorial approach with edited time and space.

real space

Observational Screendance   **body as site**

                                                            body as tool

real time/ duration
                                                   edited time

                                        Auteur Screendance

                              edited space

This is the state of the graph as presented at the American Dance Festival in North Carolina in the summer of 2008. It constituted a first draft for a map, which incorporates video art as well as traditional cinema whilst mapping potential uses of the body and choreographic practices over the whole field. Perhaps the most useful aspect of this map is that it does away with the existing associations of Screendance with either cinema in 'Cinedance' or video art in 'Videodance', terms which seem too broad, descriptive and vague to identify particular artistic agencies.

However, the above mapping is too basic to account for the complexities of existing choreographic strategies. In the discussions and screening at the Bristol symposium it became evident that the graph needed to be developed to account for wider and more complex choreographic processes, which do in fact use, match and mismatch any of the application of space, time and the body.

To account for work of, say, Becky Edmunds, I needed to lose the association of an observational approach with the upper left part of the graph to accommodate a practice, which has a clear personal signature, building its cinematic choreography through a personal composition of fragments that are however derived from real time, real space and pedestrian movements. The observational process could be described as fieldwork, to borrow from anthropology, but is also marked by an improvisational practice which continues through into postproduction. The overall feel of the work, such as *El Fuego* (2007) or the work in progress that Edmunds showed at the Bristol Symposium, is not so

much documentary as distinctly personal like a series of intimate moments and encounters. As hybrids between the observed and the constructed Edmund's work could therefore be described as *Real-time Choreography*.[30]

The work of Lucy Cash performs another kind of complexity. The intention of her work appears contemplative, at times reminiscent of portraiture and anthropological as in *Requiem for the Redheads* (2007). The work does however not collect a given reality but is built with small and precisely staged fragments. Cash then uses repetition to build continuity and to create meaning over the course of the work as for example in *Sight Reading* (2007). In this process real time and space are surrendered in favour of a screen-based chonology, a methodology which Amy Greenfield described with regards to her own work in these terms:

> *"(…) I learned that composing time, not in the way that dance steps are accomplished live, but in terms of constructing new connections, new rhythms, new motions through the exact, rhythmic editing of length of film, was at the heart of filmdance choreography. Both space and time were released from chronology, and another chronology could be made."[31]*

Amy Greenfield's piece *Element* (1973) and much of her other work is a mix of intense physicality and mobility on one hand and assertion of place on the other. Its use of repetition of movement over short and long film sequences reinforce a sense of process and duration as the key plan of the work. While much of the filmed material comes out of close encounters between the camera and her as performer, the performance or 'the dance' is built over the course of the production and on screen.

Picking up on Greenfield's choice of words this emphasis on the choreographic approach to filmmaking could be called *Release Film*. The properties of real time, real space and real bodies are suspended in favour of a constructed screen world. One could argue that aspects of this process are likely to figure in much of Screendance if not film-making in general, but the particular and deliberate emphasis on this process in the work of, for example, Greenfield or Cash may warrant a specific term.

A different, contemporary form of the release of real time and real space is *Hyperdance* as mentioned above, where material is taken from real space and time but manipulated digitally, and, in some cases, offered to the viewer in fragments for their own online composition. This sort of work often entails a detailed exploration of the digital medium and pushes technological possibilities to draw compositional structures from the medium itself. The collaborative works of Screendance artists Chirstinn Whyte and Jake Messenger explore different facets of the digital dedium. Their works *Trace* (2005), *Splice* (2005), *Vector Path* (2008) and *Binary Form* (2009) engage actively with a process of technologization and could be included in the category of *Hyperdance*. Artists Katrina McPherson and Simon Fildes also use this way of working as a means to
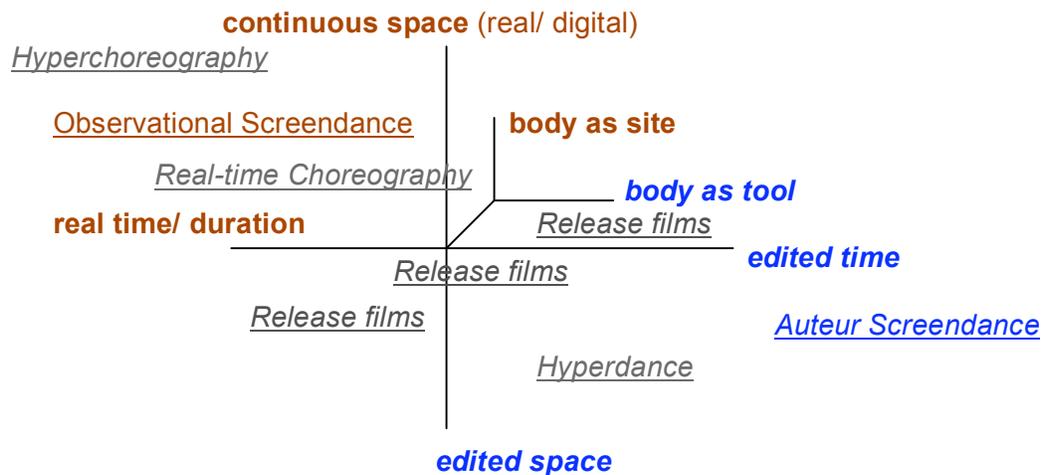
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[30] The expression 'personal signature' is easily used and more difficult to explain. For an interesting discussion of signatures as 'corporeal writing' see Ann Cooper Albright's essay on Loie Fuller mentioned above. While Cooper Albright applies the notion of 'corporeal writing' to concrete outlines and relative immediate traces of bodies we could also consider extending this concept to include/ incorporate movements of a physically manipulated camera or particular editing styles. See: Cooper Albright 28.
[31] Greenfield 26.

continue to question the position of the author, exploring digital technologies to create work that is interactive, non-narrative and non-representational.[32]

Interestingly it not easy to see where on the Screendance Effort Graph such and such strategy should be placed. Considering that Hyperdance is technology-based, should it therefore automatically sit within the edited time and space? This does not reflect the fact that a project may be based on rules and use the digital space like a real space, allowing processes to unfold their own dynamic. It suggests that the 'real space' in the graph should rather be called 'continuous space' allowing it to be either real or digital, much like the notion of duration, which can be applied to both real time and digital processes. In addition the named Screendance strategies tend to be some kind of composite methodology and can therefore shift around the field depending on the emphasis on this or that aspect of a particular production.

Composite terms like *Real-time Choreography* or *Release Film* serve to indicate the complexities of each approach and it is this complexity which I am eager to articulate. The free mapping of choreographic practices across the whole of the graph allows for an articulation of particular, individual and shared strategies. It gives a glimpse of choreographic sensibilities as a whole and their contributions to screen-based work. The map points to artistic intentions and methodologies without defining too closely the audio-visual-kinaesthetic outcome.

continuous space (real/ digital)

Hyperchoreography

Observational Screendance   **body as site**

      Real-time Choreography

                                    body as tool

real time/ duration   *Release films*

              Release films   **edited time**

    Release films   *Auteur Screendance*

           Hyperdance

edited space

Reflections on specific and common choreographic strategies in Screendance need to be continued. However, the map constitutes a basic outline, which can be populated, refined and amended as discussions ensue and other kinds of work are made.

We can see how artists appropriate methodologies and integrate processes from all sorts of art practices and media. Using Amy Greenfield's statement of the 'kinaesthetic impact and meanings of dance' as a starting point, we can differentiate different strategies and the particular creative intentions that drive it. The basic question is:

Which kinaesthetic impact is useful for what plan?

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[32] Simon Fildes and Katrina McPherson, <http://www.left-luggage.co.uk>

Weigt and the assertion of gravity as in the work of the Judson Dance Group or in films such as Amy Greenfield's 'Element', emphasize the present. In these works the demonstration of physical weight can be read as a strategy against idealism, pretence and pressures of conformity. On the other hand readings are rarely simple and seldom singular. Greenfield writes about *Element*:

> "*I found that one movement, when filmed with a close-up moving camera, could communicate opposite states of being. 'Element' is about annihilation and birth, simultaneously.*"[33]

This in turn is due to a combination of kinaesthetic aspects; In *Element* a sense of weight is combined with repetition and persistence over time, as well as with a very 'actively participating' camera and an intensive dialogue between camera and the performing body.

Other movement properties such as *weightlessnes* and *high mobility* or *hypermobility* are often achieved through a combination of moving cameras, moving bodies and multiple editing processes, and appear to reject all forms of materiality and its boundaries, seeking instead an unconditional space of no origin and the suggestion of total possibility.

Hypermobility

I am particularly fascinated by the almost unconditional celebration of continuous mobility in contemporary Screendance. At a previous conference in Findhorn I proposed a line of thought, which reframes this hypermobility as a form of 'exhaustion', drawing on the work of Teresa Brennan in *Exhausting Modernity*[34], Peter Sloterdijk's notion of 'kinetic excess' in *Eurotaoismus*,[35] and Andre Lepecki's seminal book *Exhausting Dance*.[36]

This exploration left me however somewhat off balance, as I had little to counteract my critique of mobility, which was largely presented as a collusion with modernity.[37] With the Screendance Effort Graph I have, in my view, a much wider and more complex framework, from which to discuss a whole range of processes in Screendance, be it mobilisation, construction, observation or resistance.

I would nevertheless like to come back to the debate on hypermobility and develop it a little further as it is relevant for the overall reading of the Screendance Effort Graph. To do so I would like to bring in one more term, which Nellhaus uses for the analysis of

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[33] Greenfield 26.

[34] Teresa Brennan, Exhausting Modernity (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

[35] Peter Sloterdijk, Eurotaoismus (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1996).

[36] Andre Lepecki, Exhausting Dance (New York and London: Routledge 2006).

[37] In his discussion of contemporary dance Lepecki argues that the artform colludes with what he describes as a capitalist, modernist agenda. Since dance has come to identify itself with movement it has sold out to a modernism, which priviledges mobility at all costs. (Lepecki, 2006)

performance practices: he works with 'image schemas',**[38]** a term that signifies unspoken notions of truth which inform a particular cultural field.

In his critique of, for example, Medieval performance strategies, Nellhaus argues that they are primarily built upon the two image schemas 'Truth is writing' and 'Truth is repetition', the first based on the importance of manuscripts and handwriting in medieval times, the second on oral traditions.[39] It is likely that most art forms function on the basis of such unspoken image schemas or truth conventions. The main image schema which determines contemporary screendance appears to be 'Truth is Movement', or 'Truth is Mobility'.

As Lepecki writes in *Exhausting Dance*, the alignment of dance with the idea of continuous movement was part of a wider proliferation of mobility as the ideal of modernity.[40] The publications by Brennan, Sloterdijk and Lepecki are effectively a discussion of this particular image schema, each coming from a different angle; Psychoanalysis for Brennan, Philosophy for Sloterdijk and Postmodernism for Lepecki. With its combination of moving bodies and moving images Screendance as art practice is therefore particularly symptomatic of the 20th century if not doubly complicit in the cultural privileging of mobility.

As indicated in the Screendance Effort Graph, choreographic possibilities are infinitely complex and artists can combine production elements in many different ways. Which leads me to think that the endless possibilities of choreographic strategies across the Screendance Effort Graph itself is also a reflection of the current cultural landscape. Screendance practices appear to posess a particular flexibility and freedom when it comes to media and methods. As if each and every element becomes choreographic material in the 'hands' of the Screendance maker, be it the light, framing, camera angles and points of view, bodies, objects or the editing process.

Maya Deren noted that the invention of the filmic aparatus with its construction of space and time coincided with the formulation of the theory of relativity. She argued that "the formal as well as philosophical concepts of (the film-makers) age are implicit in the actual structure of his instrument and the techniques of his medium." She saw it as the main task of the artist-film-maker, not just to record but to "create a total experience (…) out of the very nature of the instrument as to be inseparable from its means."[41] While Screendance is complicit with the ideology of modernity, it is also singularly equiped to address its structures, dynamics and discourses.

To what extend the terms and strategies proposed are useful remains to be seen. Laban deliberately chose to develop a visual Kinetography instead of a complex terminology as he didn't trust words to be able to describe the complexity of movement and phrasing. The terms for Screendance strategies could perhaps also be represented visually. Meanwhile I hope that this graph functions as a useful draft for mapping 'dance as film', evidencing some of the engaging complexities of this art form.

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[38] Nellhaus 68.

[39] Nellhaus 68.

[40] Lepecki 3-5.

[41] Maya Deren, "Cinematography, The Creative Use of Reality," <u>Daedalus</u> 89, no1. (Winter 1960): 167

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