

## Questions of Meaning and Movement (# 2)

A symposium about the **Notation Research Project** of dance company Emio Greco | PC and its implications for current debates on the relationship between meaning, movement, notation, perception and experience. To be followed by the launch of two new publications: *Anatomy Live. Performance and the Operating Theatre* (Amsterdam University Press) and *Installing the Body* (Parallax).

18 April 2008, 13-18h, Centraal Museum (Nicolaaskerkhof 10, Utrecht )

Participation is free, but registration is required (meaningandmovement@gmail.com)

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### The EG | PC Notation Research Project

Photo: Thomas Lenden

In 2004, the dance company Emio Greco | PC set out to develop an adequate notation system that would be (as researcher and ex-dancer of the company Bertha Bermudez wrote) “capable of capturing the indispensable elements involved in a dance performance” in particular an EG | PC performance. Bermudez's quest brought her to the study of various existing systems of movement notation and dance documentation in order to investigate what exactly these systems notate or document and how. What according to these systems are the indispensable elements of dance performance? How can these be notated and documented in an accurate way? What does accurate notation involve?

Apart from the question -- which elements of dance performance are considered indispensable? -- the project also raises the issue of what it means to capture these elements. What do we do in our attempts at capturing dance? At this point, Bermudez's difficulty with capturing the indispensable elements involved in dance performance touches upon Brian Massumi's observations that the transitory character of a body in movement is at odds with attempts at pinpointing elements of movement in their location in time and space.

*The point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zero-point of stasis. When positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second. After all is signified and sited, there is the nagging problem of how to add movement back into the picture. (Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. 2002: 3)*

Massumi's critique concerns cultural theory of the past decades, but the implications of his critique are more substantial. His discussion engages with assumptions about the relationship between meaning and movement that are integral to ways of thinking and knowing, and in which defining the meaning of something begins with subtracting movement from the picture. Seen this way, Bermudez's difficulties with finding a notation system that can adequately capture dance might be paradigmatic for a more general cultural condition. On the other hand, it seems that at this point the experience of dance and dancers may have important things to say to cultural theory,

inviting a reconsideration of the relationship between meaning and movement starting from the primacy of movement over positionality, as well as the intricate relationship between movement and perception

In 2006, Bermudez and her collaborator Scott deLahunta presented part of this research-in-progress at the conference *The Anatomical Theatre Revisited* (Amsterdam, 5-8 April). This presentation (titled *Questions of Meaning and Movement*) marked the beginning of the second phase in their research, which resulted in the development of the interactive installation *Double Skin/Double Mind*, a project on which they collaborated with an international group of researchers and media artists (supported by Marijke Hoogenboom's research group Art Practice and Development at the Amsterdam School of the Arts). Now, two years later, their project enters again a new phase in which the collaboration is extended to include the Netherlands Media Institute and the Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University.

*Questions of Meaning and Movement #2* marks the beginning of this new phase, as well as the appearance of two publications: the book *Anatomy Live. Performance and the Operating Theatre* (with the proceedings of the Anatomical Theatre Revisited conference, edited by Maaïke Bleeker) and *Parallax #46: Installing the Body* (edited by Eliza Steinbock and Maaïke Bleeker).

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## Program:

13.00-13.30 Doors Open (coffee and tea available)

13.30-13.45 Welcome and Introduction (Maaïke Bleeker)

13.45-14.15 "Introduction to Capturing Intention: An Interdisciplinary Research Project around Dance Notation, Documentation and Re-creation" (Bertha Bermudez, Researcher with Emio Greco | PC)

For two years, the disciplines of dance notation, cinematography, new media design, cognition and motion capture shared a common item to look at in the workshop *Double Skin/Double Mind* developed by Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten. In this introduction I will try to make available the richness of these encounters as well as their outcomes.

14.15-14.45 "Meaning, Movement, and Corporeal Literacy" (Maaïke Bleeker, Professor of Theatre Studies at Utrecht University)

In his article "Corporeal or Gestureo-Haptic Writing", Brian Rotman argues for the potential of motion capture as an alternative to alphabetic writing. Rotman explains the impact of the invention of the alphabet first and foremost, based on the possibility to note down the expression of the body through speech. He follows this with an attempt at thinking beyond the limitations of the alphabet, writing that motion capture is an effort to capture the expression of the body in a way alphabetic writing is unable to do. In my response, I argue that if we want to fully understand the impact of the alphabet (and imagine ways to go beyond) we should look at the implications of reading and literacy instead.

14.45-15.00 Questions/Discussion

15.00-15.30 Coffee/Tea Break

15.30-16.10 "Bodies, Self-related Meanings and Processes of Psychological Change" (Phil Barnard, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit in Cambridge, UK)

This talk will briefly introduce a model of the architecture of the human mind and discuss how sensory information including that derived from our bodies contributes to how we model our "selves." It will then outline some of the problems of analysing and treating eating disorders with specific reference to Anorexia Nervosa and raise some questions for research about how metaphors and movement might offer the prospect of new treatment strategies for this difficult to treat condition.

16.10-16.40 "Doing *Double Skin/Double Mind*" (Panel discussion chaired by Scott deLahunta, Research Fellow with the Art Theory and Research and Art Practice and Development Research Group, Amsterdam School for the Arts.)

Three to four guests who have had the opportunity to visit the DS/DM Interactive Installation during the week will be invited to report back on their different experiences with the aim to open up questions and issues for further research.

16.45-18.00 Drinks and Book Launch

From 17.00-20.30, participants may visit the installation *Double Skin/Double Mind* in the chapel of Centraal Museum.

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**Questions of Meaning and Movement (#2)** is organized by the Leerstoelgroep Theaterwetenschap (Utrecht University) in collaboration with Emio Greco | PC , and is made possible by the generous support of Marijke Hoogenboom's Research Group Art Practice and Development (Amsterdam School of the Arts) and Springdance.