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Enacting embodiment and Blue Muffins

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Abstract

In this article, a dance of my imagining draws upon topics of embodiment, imperfection and lack of art, political art, implicatedness, boredom and being stupid. Questions of abstraction and records of thought hinge on discussions of disembodied movement, technology and performance. Key choreographic works include Blue Muffins; Bill T. Jones, GHOSTCATCHING; Troika Ranch, and Interactive Installations. Key sources include Susan Kozel's Closer (2007); Antonio Damasio's Self Comes to Mind (2012); and Francisco Varela's, The Embodied Mind (1991). The article explains movement and stillness as bodily enactments that can be arrested and recorded in arts technologies. Such records become part of why we care to make art, and how we make it matter.

Last night I fell asleep choreographing a new dance in my mind. Well I say it came into my mind, but my whole body was involved in the subliminal imagining, as I rolled around, lifted up, churned inside, and pictured dancers I know who might enter into the whole of it. I call the dance 'Blue Muffins'.

Will I ever make it? Will anyone perform it? Maybe it will be for digital media, but with its beginnings first in real time – the actual time of first occurrence – with real people moving time-space. Perhaps we will make a video of our dancing and create a collage that would be impossible in real time, enjoying digitally overlapping embodiments once removed from first occurrence, maybe twice, or still more? Maybe a digital occurrence will overlay a first occurrence performance.

For me, the dance of my imagining springs out of nowhere, seemingly from artlessness, and, given its title, might remain there. As I turn around the possibilities, however, I believe 'Blue Muffins' might materialize, and not too badly. The dance will, of course depend on my ingenuity and the willingness of the dancers to trend into Blue Muffins. The budding project raises several questions for me, somewhat related to Heidegger's statement that 'a moment of history that lacks art' can be more genuinely creative than times of abundance, since art is often sustained by 'dominant goal-setting' (1999: 355–56). He implies that art arises not out of surplus but in the face of absence – and that originality, which he often likened to *ursprung*/'original leap', like 'Blue Muffins' (quickly losing their springiness), draws upon a dearth of productivity to set forth treasure in some perceivable form or act. Heidegger speaks of drawing up from the 'closed' ground of consciousness, and 'setting forth in the open' as the process of invention in his article, 'The origin of the work of art' (1971: 74–76). However imperfect and silly my idea, it has potential. For one thing, it does not suggest perfection. More, does it court creative romp through enactments of embodiment – and recycling of these, perhaps, through technological means.

The word 'embodiment' is popular in intellectual writing lately, as though one had to do something to be embodied! Are we not embodied in being born? But I get it! There is more to embodiment than just being here. Embodiment also promises an activity if we are to do it well and not just hang out with it. In dancing we move consciously. Maybe we move in any old way we wish, but more often dancers move with care: delicately, in loops and falls, in tight little balls of fire, in blue dough, or maybe in complex cascades that relate to others in complicated pathways. Dancing can happen quite simply, or be a performance with finish and aplomb. It has so many manifestations, which is one of the reasons I like to dance and to write about it.

Dance, I believe, is fundamental to doing embodiment well, an enactment of energies and forms in a process of actions that fill gaps in time that might otherwise be lacks or absences. When we dance, we can fulfill ourselves, what we might be, what we are, and what we are becoming. Our becoming is not lost or wasted in dancing; indeed, in all creative endeavours we save and record time. If I ever make 'Blue Muffins', the time of its making and performance, will be special, and not lost. Its embodied knowledge will be recorded in memory. I will remember it, as will the dancers, and maybe the audience if there is one.

Will 'Blue Muffins' be an aesthetic or a political dance? Might it be both at once if it is effective in its embodied enactments? As art, dance is political because it calls us to originality. It proffers

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origins in its workings, the very matter that Heidegger explained. Art wants to fill a lack, and shake up the status quo. Art is non-competitive and non-partisan in its politics. Its arguments are self-contained and *immanent*, or one could also say *heuristic* as discovered in the experience of artists and witnesses. Of course artists have commitments and these show up in what they make, but hopefully not in a slip towards propaganda. Art is not created as a commodity nor aimed towards influence; it cultivates affections of the heart, engaging unique embodied practices that keep us curious and alert. Artists challenge our interpretive capacities. Noting else serves to interrupt and shift perception as art does. If my dance does nothing more than make people think about their assumptions, it will be political. If it baffles them into laughter or smiles, it will be political. If its aesthetic character makes them sense lazuli blueness, it will be unexpectedly political, maybe dimly dark. If it makes them hesitate before saying the thing they usually say, it will be pragmatically political and psychologically useful. We embody aesthetics, sociality and politics at the same time – incorporating affective life and revealing belief. We move our persuasions into being, just as surely as we sometimes falter and fail.

Dancers who practice improvisational methods elicit faltering beauty and the uncertain politics of vanishing moments. At best, they extend themselves to meet nascent circumstances with trust and courage. Wishing circumstances to be different would seem a hindering complaint. Our body of doing and decision is part of the shifting earth and living world. We hesitate and breathe, and in breathing anew, we feel better. Each new day offers potential for inspired renewal. I have this opportunity re-embody if I take it. The act of dancing, in particular, brings favourable chances. When we dance, we develop our capacities for enacting embodiment; this is the material, political ground bass of dance. In dancing with others, we have still more opportunities to experience periods of heightened performance and interpersonal synchrony, enhancing a sense of *togetherness*.

The position of Husserlian phenomenology is that we are not alone, rather we are embedded in the world we see around us, as also people and happenings in the world that may escape our immediate attention. Husserl questioned the empirical view that the world is experienced as objectively already present, prior to any reflection upon it. He called the unquestioned bias that the world pre-exists and is separate from you and me *the natural attitude* (1900–1901/1970; also Fink 1995: 166). What seems natural may be a habit of thought, an inherited belief, or an ingrained movement. It is the job of phenomenology to question habits that cover something we would benefit from noticing. What seems separate, as objectively other, may not be so very far away or different. What Husserl called ‘the flowing live present’ (Fink 1995: xiv) includes the human and human history as part of ‘the life world’. Existentialism took phenomenology in the direction of psychology, at the same time amplifying Husserl’s conceptions. Merleau-Ponty’s view of the unity of world and body is presented in ‘The World as Perceived’, Part II of *The Phenomenology of Perception*, which begins this way:

Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system.
(1962: 235)

We are in every moment enacting embodiment, that of self-becoming, of relational-becoming, and of our belonging to the world's body, which we overlook at our peril. Does it really matter that we grasp relational becoming? Why does it matter that we understand ourselves as implicated in a wider world? I believe it matters in every possible way. It influences how we treat each other, rippling through the continuum of human and more-than-human nature and also the earth as ecological home. Kimerer LaMothe's recent book (2015) develops a similar view of relational becoming in dance from several vantages. My belief that the world's body is not separate from our own is part of the politics of my dancing. The manner of our relational becoming shapes the matter and meaning of our dances; we dance to generate who we can become, indeed to realize more abundant embodiment and world-friendly connectivity.

Then why is the path towards abundance fraught with obstacles, seemingly not of our own choosing? I have observed that when everything is humming along easily, I get bored and trouble the still waters, needing something to do or to create that peaks my attention and carries me past *ennui*. I could be wrong, but I think that most people want a challenge, although I did see a comedian last night whose humour centred on his being dumb and liking it, also on hating exercise or anything remotely physical. I do not think that being stupid and doing nothing, however, motivate most people. Psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his studies of happiness and self-actualization describes a state of 'flow', in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter (1990). His research shows that being in flow, makes people happy. We sometimes speak of such states as 'being in the zone', or 'in the groove'. Daunting to consider that we invite possible happiness in the manner of our daily performances and embodied practices.

Advances in technology pose special questions for considering embodiment, flow and enactment. Contexts for dance bring these into sharp relief. Uses of technology in dance performances are not antithetical to flowing states of consciousness. Indeed, they have the potential to enhance tactile flow of activities, locations and togetherness.

This morning I took photographs with my iPhone and recorded video footage of performances in Snow Canyon in Utah, close to where I live. Robert and I left for the canyon at dawn when the shadows would be long in our dances amidst the petrified sandstone dunes. We felt our way first into the smooth and creviced stones; then finding the dance in bare feet, we paused in between takes to improvise fanciful costumes and exchange cameras. Later we went over all the recorded images at our outdoor breakfast under the burnt-rose mountain of Kayenta. From the explorations, we thought we might have a least five projects to peak our curiosity (an overflow of muffins).

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Figure 1: Robert Bingham in Blue Muffins, a work in process. Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh, 2015.



Figure 2: Lesly Chamberlain and Roman Morris in Magic Egg Butoh, a metamorphic Place-Dance by Sondra Fraleigh. Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh, 2015.

The outdoor theatre and possibilities of the camera seemed endless to us, as the day stretched into breath and colour.

Questions about dance and technology, especially possible dehumanization of dance through technology, have been asked at least since Alwin Nikolais' multimedia works of the mid-twentieth century in which he employed an armada of slide projectors. I studied with Nikolais in the early 1960s and felt a great deal of flow in working with props and movement abstractions overlaid with imagistic projections of light and colour. I also enjoyed flowing kinaesthetic moments in witnessing his highly visual multimedia extravaganzas. And he would not be the first to explore methods for shifting perceptions of movement through imagistic manipulations of light and costume. Loie Fuller (1862–1928), a contemporary of Isadora Duncan, extended choreography with light, colour, movement, and prop-extensions of silky fabric.

Electronic music with its own technological means has grown alongside technologies in dance. There is a long history of electronic music in dance performance. Many choreographers rounding the turn into the twenty-first century have borrowed inspiration from Edgard Varese's colliding sound masses in *Poem Electronic* (1958), Karlheinz Stockhausen's orbiting sounds in *Kontakte* (1960), as also the burning embers and naturally occurring statistical distribution of Iannis Xenakis's early work *ConcretPH* (1958). Now with the growth of computer technology, today's electronic music demonstrates many more divergent practices and opportunities for music and dance collaborations. Gordon Mumma, one of Cunningham's collaborators, chronicles developments in cybersonic arts and twentieth-century-music in a recent book about cofounding the Cooperative Studio for Electronic Music (2015).

To trouble myself further with questions of abstraction and technology, I want to know if movement can be disembodied? I first posed this question in an article called 'Soma strokes and second chances', an exhibition essay for 'Digital Incarnate: The Body, Identity and Interactive Media' (Fraleigh 2010b). Now I see other facets of the question. If movement can be disembodied, it would need to be a discrete thing in itself. Can movement be clearly separated from its entanglements with local material embodiments as also the wider world? Movement exists in waves of many kinds, from sound waves to ocean waves. Sound itself has many sources, as musicians will attest, and ocean waves exhibit through water. Dance is often defined as movement, but it is more. As made of movement, stillness, and affect, dance is enacted through human embodiment, and the latter, ongoing and never quite complete, is a process of becoming that entails the whole person.

As a close relative of *enactment*, *performance* is also more than movement. Both terms suggest the arts, but are not limited to them. The fullest account of *enactment of embodiment* is found in Francisco Varela's studies of cognition, which he relates to phenomenology (and tangentially to Buddhist groundlessness). His focus is an *enactive cognitive science*, not movement as such, but sensorimotor pathways to embodied mind. In completing a cognitive loop, he accounts for doing as knowing,

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and knowing as doing. Along with Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, he produced a study of embodiment of mind (1991), explaining that human beings enact and bring forth their own domains of knowledge, that the nervous system generates meaningful patterns, and that cognition is not a form of thinking separate from embodiment; rather, it is a form of embodied action. Their work demonstrates how cognitive structures emerge from recurrent sensorimotor patterns of perception and action. Their studies in biology, psychology, and philosophy reveal that what we commonly call 'the world' is not an external fact represented internally by the brain, but arises in relational mode of consciousness. Earlier, we considered the foundational work of Husserl in this regard. Shortly, we turn to Damasio on the same topic. Focusing on dance enaction, Edward Warburton in his article on dance, cognitive enactment and phenomenology, shows how cognitive theories of enaction are relevant to contexts of dancer action and performance (2011).

Considered in light of enactment, perhaps it is impossible to separate human movement from its living source and sensory interconnections? This is the question I want to answer, or at least test. We know the body as presented in dance on film is removed from its living, organic state. In film, the body exists digitally or on celluloid and not as flesh, but the body can also exist as flesh and on film at once, as in the multigenre, multimedia works of *Laterna Magica* in Prague. I first saw this key group in the development of modern Czech theatre in 1965, seven years after its inception when then Czechoslovakia was under communist rule and I was studying dance with Mary Wigman in a divided Berlin in Germany. As a young American lost in translation, I stumbled upon this fascinating theatre. Travel, more than anything, has taught me about my unquestioned assumptions. In Europe that year, I saw how much I shared with others, and at the same time, how limited my experience was. I wondered how *Laterna Magica* might have changed when I saw them again in 2005, some 40 years later. The major difference was clearly in technology. The early use of mime and gestural dance, creatively staged mostly in silence, had evolved to panoramic screen, electronic music scores, and mythical stories enveloped in filmic dance, which would be impossible to perform in real time on a traditional proscenium stage. In those 40 years, technology had become an underlying constant in my world, and travels my political teacher.

I am beginning to understand movement as a correlational attribute, part of our entire human becoming, and merely one of the ways we describe happenings in the world and ourselves. If movement is part of sound and vision, part of all sensory perception, and a constant in technologies that help shape perception, can it actually be singular, separable and primary? When I turn my head, my eyes move, as do the potentials of my hearing. Phenomenology through Merleau-Ponty (and others) has held that movement, expression, cognition and body are part of each other, and cannot be separated (1964: 66–67). Human movement is grounded in perception and sensation, or we could also say, 'embodied responsiveness'. It inevitably encompasses modes of memory and consciousness as physical and mental at once. Embodied movement does not contain consciousness;

it is consciousness in action. Movement is not merely something we do; more, it is what we are, both volitionally and involuntarily. When I play the piano, I generally do not think of every single note, but rather employ consciousness in a particular way so that my fingers find the keys through attention, memory and practice. What I hear feeds back to me in loops of awareness that sustain the flow. Sound and movement function together with my hands, indeed the whole of me in the music I embody.

But I do get it! We speak about movement and often understand it as a singular phenomenon. Movement is a sign for life – amoebas move as they ooze. Change is another word for movement; we notice qualitative, particular manners of change – smoothness and bumpiness, for instance. Movement does require a home, however. It needs some kind of body – a body of water, a human hand, or a thrown rock – before it ‘materializes’, that is, before it comes to our attention as an occurrence. *Human movement is concrete through its embodied enactment.* Perceptually, however, it might separate in the abstract: in an image, for instance. Movement cannot be subtracted from embodiment as a singular phenomenon, but it can shift its status from that of immediate enactment to manifestations that are once or more removed from the original source. In such cases, one can have fun with abstraction. I’m talking about ‘Blue Muffins’ in the digital world. The dance could be taken from the original enactment of the dancers and poured through digital media of several kinds, which would render it, shall we say, ‘re-embodied’ in terms of its original source. But the source, I argue, would remain as part of ‘Blue Muffins’. However removed from the original version of the dance, traces of the dancers would remain in the final film or whatever iteration ensued from the source performance. The dancers could in fact see themselves once, or twice, or more times removed. I think the process might in itself prove curiously poignant for the dancers who could see themselves outside of their immediate experience of movement in a semblance of the dance or in digital particles of it. And it could offer the audience a vision of re-embodiments. (On this point, I should be careful, or I’ll talk myself into a muffin project.)

Is not one of the functions of the arts to give us ways of seeing ourselves, or of experiencing ourselves once removed? The stage exists for this purpose. It puts life at a distance, while drawing it towards us in more concentration. Advances in technology have extended this function of abstraction still further – extracting movement semblance from its original owner and rendering it ‘other’ in images and traces. Perhaps it goes without saying but is worth noticing that otherness, even the otherness of our own embodiment, can be an occasion for delight and learning. Otherness, sometimes neighbourly or even threatening modulates consciousness. We can become other to ourselves, where we and our own other each are inversions of the other, not alien, but in proximity and with the ability to turn inside out as well as return. The basic point is phenomenological – a matter of awareness. The Other I’m speaking of is not a fixed entity, but a morphing presence whereby artists get to test their own presence in a game-like fashion. If the game, or dance, proffers excellence,

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Figure 3: Other Stories (2007). Photographed by Devon Cody. Dancer Inka Juslin.

it would require expertise from both sides, that of the original enactment, and also that of the technological rendition. I envision an artistic venture of well-matched others (the original enactment and the digital version) bringing out the best in each other.

Susan Kozel provides a good example of this pursuit in her book, *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology* (2007), documenting her interactive performances with other dancers and collaborators. Her work explores the politics of bodies as reflected through technology in what she calls 'a poetics of responsivity'. Interactive work asks the audience to meet it, she holds, and not sit in a passive mode. Kozel's very full study in *Closer* (2007), and her performance works, emphasize that technology and embodiment are not opposed, but rather function through 'in-betweenness', the space in between bodies, locations, collaborators, computer-generated images and audiences. Moreover, these spaces are lived poetically. (In Japanese aesthetics, particularly in butoh, the space between is known as 'ma', as I write about extensively in an earlier work, 2010). Phenomenologically, Kozel speaks in a first-person experiential voice about moving across nebulous regions between locations 'where our images traveled and were transformed' (2007: 113). Wearable computers and cameras often facilitate the art of in-betweens in Kozel's performances. Her performances and writing achieve a coherent philosophy of the relationship of dance and technology honed over many years.

Technology could not be 'Other' as alien in such a view. Artists and their technologies are products of human interrelatedness and world implications. Otherness, in this view is near, even when seemingly far in the distance, or worn on the body. We see up close how technology permeates our lives, when we watch 3 year olds handle iPhones to their delight. The daughter of my niece likes to get the phone to play music for her, and to babble messages out towards imaginary others. Holding to the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, I understand that creative arts technologists are implicated in an interactive world that is already in them.

Theatre has traditionally provided a 'seeing place', or stage, for societal interaction and testing of identity. Theatre provides the syncretic space between so called 'real life' and fiction, even when based on non-fiction. Dance and visual art reflect human experience, directly through embodied enactment and preverbally, even as language assists movement conceptually in the thinking body. In all of the arts, we get a peek at ourselves as standing outside of our bodies. Dance is perhaps the most problematic in this respect, because it does not or cannot exist outside of the body. Or can it do so in some sense, as we have been asking? Is not one of the deep purposes of dance to help us step outside of our bodies? When we *see* and are *seen* in dance, we understand the aesthetically motivated, psycho-physical thinking of the body. It separates in remembered images: visual and felt, kinaesthetically lived as sharp or shadowed, heard, or maybe descriptively interpreted. As a witness, I love to see complicated dance, hard to do movement, virtuoso; and I gravitate to the somatically simple as well. The connective interval in expansive witnessing offers me grounds for optimism; I understand the complexities and beauty of myself in the dance of others. As to be seen and known in dance magnifies

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Figure 4: Other Stories (2007). Photographed by Devon Cody. Dancer Susan Kozel.



Figure 5: Whispers (2004). Photographed by Elisa Gonzalez. Co-directed by Thecla Schiphorst, Susan Kozel, and Sang Mah.

my awareness of self in relation to others, I see myself as others do, maybe not exactly, but nearly. Allowing space between provides a perceptual opportunity for *responsive otherness*.

Through speech and social interactions, as also in the arts, we send our bodies away, and they return in our perceptions. We share embodiment interactively and specifically. Technology affords particular discoveries in terms of abstraction and perception. If motion can be abstracted from the body through technological means, it is nevertheless through our living bodies in real time that we will eventually perceive its primal sources and abstracted forms. If we can abstract motion from the body, there is nevertheless someone, a person, who will observe the recorded images, and people have preferences and peculiarities that make them tick. I believe that what exists in perception is a matter of individual consciousness, and I'm not talking about 'the tree in the forest'. I simply want to say, as is the basis of phenomenology, that perception and consciousness matter as the very means of enacting embodiments, and that enacting is more than movement. At the very least, it involves moving as thinking, feeling and knowing. I relate this level of knowing to performance – the ability to act (to perform) and to a reflective self-knowing that Antonio Damasio's *Self Comes to Mind* describes as arising in somatic stages (2012: 24), each stage more conscious of self and other, and consciously related to the living world.

There is something basic behind the question of abstraction, something suggested in the very attempt to extract motion from its source material. All of the arts require bodily enactment in the first instance. They all require performances of some kind. Making is about bringing something into being; Blue Muffins might become a dance or something to eat, but we will never know unless I do something about it. Creativity involves movement, albeit in bodily immanent differing modes and clothed in variables of belief. As part of space and time, movement in the abstract is modification and change. As human, movement is communicative; it is realized in expression and enacted through intention and purpose, unless accidentally. Enactments entail performed interactions – personal and communal – at least enactments in the arts, which are risked and shared in public arenas.

Interactive media art through advanced technology renders embodied immanence (or 'withinness') more apparent in unique ways, allowing momentary bypass of narrative content, sometimes emotional or expressive in performance. But as we move in towards somatic origins, we might also notice in terms of narrative, that digital iteration may distill and intensify the body's organic threads. This is the power of abstraction. When we remove the muscle of movement in digital tracings, we have the paradoxical opportunity to experience it with more distance while zeroing in on it at the same time. This is what abstraction is about.

To abstract is to draw forth, at least this is a root meaning. Performance is not so much about expression as it is the wellspring of expression, its *ursprung*, if you will. Creativity in performance draws upon preverbal bodily sources, the somatic background of expression. By the time the words or movements are realized in performance, the deep sources are smiling quietly. Do they get any

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credit? Do they not provide us momentary links to what Damasio calls ‘a pulse of core self’ (2012: 24)? I would like to point, at least, in this direction. The neuroscience of Damasio explains the somatosensory system and its relationship to movement and emotion as basic to the emergence of thought and eventually to the autobiographical or historical sense of personhood. Damasio states that consciousness, ‘the part of mind concerned with apparent sense of self and knowing’, begins with the use of body signals when organisms acquire the ability to tell stories without words. Knowledge of what the organism is living through emerges (Damasio 1999: 30–31). We could say that dances are stories without words, even though they do not always tell stories. If a dance is simply about moving, or being, or morphing, as many dances are, the mode of ‘aboutness’ is the wordless story.

Part of Damasio’s project in neuroscience is concerned with embodied creativity – to show how, as he says, ‘the ability to transform and combine images of actions and scenarios is the wellspring of creativity’ (1999: 24). In making dances, as in all of the arts, the *subliminal soma* which is the preverbal basis for affectivity, specifically the ability to feel and be moved, can be coaxed to awareness through attention – triggering feelings, images, and ideas in consciousness. Damasio develops a view of the somatic basis and totality of the minded body, explaining how the deep layers of the soma, the proto self and core self, underlie life, quietly and automatically (1999: 170–74). I have observed wordless stories coming to the surface of consciousness through direction of intention in meditation, somatic movement facilitation, and in dancing – in both the doing and witnessing, especially through the improvisations where we let go of any conscious effort to control or remember the movement. Letting go of excess effort can be beneficial, as hopefully in ‘Blue Muffins’ and perhaps a blue muffin video attempt.

Technology enables distinct ways into the subliminal soma, as we see this surfacing in the computer-generated strokes of such works as Bill T. Jones’ *GHOSTCATCHING*, distilling emotional traces of capture and breaking free. His work is made possible through advances in ‘motion capture’, a technology that tracks motion through sensors attached to a body. The resulting record captures forms of motion, without preserving the body, at least the material physical body. Such captured phrases then become the basis for virtual composition, as they are edited, rechoreographed, and staged for a digital performance in the 3D space of the computer. As a result, we witness a virtual dance that can recall its organic source. I think of these forms as ‘soma strokes’ somewhat like painters’ marks that nevertheless bear the imprint of their origin. The human body is implied, implicate in the explicate order.

Another question that interests me is how collaborative interactive installations such as those of Troika Ranch engage contemporary society. What is their particular relevance in our world today? On first glance, one might say that their very interactivity speaks to our times, as cultural borders disappear in part and the globe becomes more interactive through technology. Troika Ranch

combines traditional aspects of live performance, interactive installations and digital film with advanced technologies. The hybrid triad dance/theatre/media in cooperative interaction is Troika. Ranch is a homey sprawling word that seems to designate a place of meeting and working together. Dawn Stoppiello and Mark Coniglio with their team of collaborators have developed much of the technology they employ in their art, allowing works such as *Loop Diver* (2009) to answer questions about the influence of technology on contemporary life. More particular to physical and emotional experience their relentless examination of the moving body in a digital age enquires into fundamental shifts of embodiment in relation to technology. The repetition of short phases of movement in *Loop Diver* using atomic loop structures shows perfection of computer renditions against the imperfection of human performance in the moment. Human movement is full of flaws in contrast, but to my mind more interesting in 'noise'. Mechanical perfection gets boring after a while, but not in juxtaposition with live dance.

The work I encountered in writing for 'Digital Incarnate' (Fraleigh 2010b) shows that digitized art rooted in live dance and performance can have its own integrity as a form and achieve independent value. Electronic media can excavate and extend the live performance of dance, as Merce Cunningham proved more than a decade ago with *Biped*, made in collaboration with two digital artists: Marc Downie and Paul Kaiser. The innovative approach of Downie and Kaiser frequently combines non-photorealistic 3D rendering, the incorporation of body movement by motion-capture and other means, and the autonomy of artworks assisted by artificial intelligence. Since *Biped*, developments in technology have crossed disciplinary boundaries of art and performance, responding to an expanding range of materials in visual drawings, film, motion capture, photography, music, and architecture's invention of interactive science museums.

This brings me back to my question, but from the perspective of values, the 'why' of it all. Why try to capture movement or remove it from its bodily source in the arts? On one level, it gives us the ability to capture and observe consciousness in action, especially enactments of embodiment in making and doing. Such observations of consciousness have the potential value of extending perception in the larger field of human awareness. It is significant that through awareness, we can learn to direct and focus our thoughts. Electronic, digitized works can make us more consciously aware of our creative image-making abilities. Technology need not divide us from organic life; it can reveal it imagistically and creatively.

Images (patterns, forms, gestalts) are basic materials in the arts, be they revealed in forms of movement, sound images, visual, digitally distilled or the thought images of writing. They give us pause to see ourselves from outside (spatially) and glancing back (in time). All art is abstract in this sense. Performances stop time and space, making it stand out and saving it at the same time. Books save forms of thought in writing, dances preserve gestalts of the thinking body. When works dive inward to show the will to do and make in action, they capture something of the

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Figure 6: Sondra Fraleigh in Visiting Butch Cassidy's Cabin. Place-Performance collaboration with Robert Bingham. Video and computer generated music by Sondra Fraleigh. Youtube: <https://youtu.be/lkpnErW5eQ8>

somatic background of imagery in a glance and feeling. We commonly assume that what we call 'the outside world' is the basis of images, but in Damasio's refusal to separate body and mind, he teaches that 'a vast proportion of the images the ever arise in the brain are shaped by signals from the body-proper' (2003: 214). The brain-body maps images that are experienced in the body-proper, while the body-proper informs brain maps.

Because digital technologies can stop minute slices of movement, they have a chance to draw up somatic backgrounds of embodiment. Advances in technology give us myriad interesting reasons to go to all the trouble of dancing, and of making video installations, and computer-generated interactive art. Engaging such troubles, we have a chance to glimpse our experiential entwinement in the world, signalling from deeply embodied sources. Technology need not divide us from the organic and natural world, it can remind us of our belonging and promise individuation at the same time. My 'digital twin' (a term coined by Kozel) might not be me in the flesh, but it certainly is not anyone else. It reminds me of myself dancing in a slice of time. It talks to me of where I was and now am. In the image, I grasp moments of who I am – immanently and interactively.

Humans are curious. We like to make marks whereby we identify our world and imagine ourselves anew, engaging each other in the processes and the results. We call these marks art. As specifically marking the tenor of contemporary life, technology helps us extend these marks, extending our possible-selves and possible-world in the process. We create histories and politics in such marks, inscribing belief. Damasio shows that records of events and things we once perceived include the original motor adjustments we made, how we moved and also our emotional reactions, which are themselves responsive movements. Mind and memory are made of motor adjustments and emotional responses. 'You simply cannot escape the affectation of your organism, motor and emotional most of all, that is part and parcel of having a mind' (Damasio 1999: 148).

Technology can render human and other embodiments in abstracted forms, removing traces, forms and indicating feelings of movement, but it does rely on original occurrences – bodily enactments. And if the world is in us through our implicatedness as phenomenology teaches, then technology is not an alien-other sci-fi character, but increasingly part of the evolving world that is part of us. We have choices, however, and can use technology for good or for ill. Sometimes, we need to stop everything in order to see and hear more clearly. This is a necessary caesura in the ongoing flow. Meditation can do this, stillness in dance can, and so can photography. Photography is a basic technology that has selected and captured movement since the mid-nineteenth century, but it does require an embodied subject – a dancer, or a melting mountaintop. Movement and stillness are bodily enactments that can be arrested and recorded in arts technologies. They become part of why we care to make art, and how we make it matter. The marriage of art and technology is of great value when we use it to extend human capacities for caring, which is after all the goal of being aware and awake to the flowing live present, the politics of filling a lack with art.

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