VARIATIONS ON BROKEN LINES

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Abstract

This thesis paper parallels the exhibition of my work *Variations On Broken Lines*, a multimedia installation that comprised video work, moving images, objects, and projection, and presented in Gales Gallery at York University in Toronto, Ontario. The purpose of this study is to explore how various artistic practices and modes of expression are informed by notions of liminality—a concept developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and later Victor Turner that describes a space or phase of in-betweenness and transition—as well as simultaneity, and the construction of identity. Through the articulation of gestures, I think about the possible connections between gesture, body, and the emergence of the body as an archival site. I investigate the aesthetics of liminality in gestures and multiple modes of inscription. I consider creative methods of practice as a means to return to the liminal, transformative, lived temporality of gestures through the reconstruction of performance documentation. Within the scholarly discourse on performance art, great attention has been devoted to performance's relationship with its document. At the center of these discussions lie questions about the documentation's ability to preserve and convey the embodied and time-based media experience of performance. Throughout this paper, I unfold theoretical grounding, modes of expression, and the methodologies utilized in my artistic practice. I weave between ideas and insights, theory and research, inspirations, personal reflections. I have analyzed a variety of sources—in anthropology, ethnography, dance, and visual art—to offer theoretical frameworks within the context of my artistic practice and identity; I explore tensions between performative practices and visual media; and I examine how notions of liminality and the in-between are experienced from both the perspective of identity and the creative process, with an understanding that these perspectives will inevitably overlap.

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This paper is dedicated to **my mother, Shoshana Waaknin Massas**.

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Introduction

This thesis paper parallels the exhibition of my work *Variations On Broken Lines*, a multimedia installation that comprised video work, moving images, objects, and projection, and was presented in Gales Gallery at York University in Toronto, Ontario. My practice and research that informed this installation addresses the in-between states of gestures, expressed across dance and visual art forms. The purpose of this study is to explore how various artistic practices and modes of expression are informed by notions of liminality—a concept developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and later Victor Turner that describes a space or phase of in-betweenness and transition—as well as simultaneity, and the construction of identity.

My work emphasizes process, mark-making gestures, and documentation, and I experiment with various conceptual, choreographic methods that combine dance, movement, and painting which are mediated through the camera. Through the articulation of gestures, I think about the possible connections between gesture and the body, and the emergence of the body as an archival site through which the very essence of gesture passes. I suggest gestures can migrate from their traditional surface (on canvas or paper for example), and I seek to explore their inscription's marginality, (im)materiality, and (in)visibility. Furthermore, with this practice, I investigate aesthetics of liminality in gestures and multiple modes of inscription. I consider creative modes of practice as a means to return to the liminal, transformative, lived temporality of gestures through the reconstruction of performance documentation. These subjects and methods have developed from personal, historical, and cultural contexts, and are contextualized within an exploration of liminal experiences.

In many ways, my interest in these research subjects began many years ago, which prompted my decision to pursue graduate studies. A decade ago, I began to experiment with incorporating dance and bodily movement into my painting practice. The dance performances I developed happened within the solitude of my studio, and solely for the lens of a camera. On one hand, as a painter that thinks within the concept of object making, in dancing solely for the purpose of documenting my movement I felt that I was left with no tangible artwork other than a series of

digital recordings. On the other hand, I began to recognize that these studio performances evoked new expressions that excited me in a way I could not articulate at the time because these performances were ephemeral. Although I recorded and documented them, the documents, in some ways, communicated with the live moment of the performance; yet, they were also just a trace, an impression.

This challenge prompted some questions for me, I wondered: what are the visual qualities of the artworks I created? What are the material, spatial, and temporal characters of my artwork? Is the performance an event that is non-reproducible, ephemeral? Is it an autonomous work of art, or a form of bodily knowledge, or both? These contemplations led me to begin research into methods of recording and constructing from performance documentation.

Within scholarly discourse on performance art, great attention has been devoted to performance's relationship with its document—scholars such as Amelia Jones, Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, and André Lepecki are notable. At the center of these discussions lie questions about the documentation's ability to preserve and convey the embodied and time-based media experience of performance. These questions have prompted various contemplations in other disciplines concerned with the body, materiality, time, space, and place, which I explore in this thesis. Specifically, I consider multiple modes of visual translation to examine the migration of gestures through forms, and among bodies, as they are reflected in and changed by various media apparatuses. In my practice, I incorporate durational and task-based methods, improvisation, and experiments, combining a range of media that is lens-based and object-based—notably painting, photography, dance, objects, and video.

This paper is divided into three main sections titled: Theory, Expression, and Methodology. In these three sections I unfold my theoretical grounding, modes of expression, and the methodologies utilized in my artistic practice and throughout the process of constructing my multimedia installation at Gales Gallery. Although I have focused my discussion into these three main sections, throughout the paper I weave between ideas and insights, theory and research,

inspirations, personal reflections, and details about my practice, process, and installation. In this way, this paper's structure reflects my journey with art making, time, space and place, and my exploration and experience of liminality—which has led to what I have come to understand as my liminal self. Furthermore, I have analyzed a variety of sources—in anthropology, ethnography, dance, and visual art—to offer theoretical frameworks within the context of my artistic practice and identity; I explore tensions between performative practices and visual media; and I examine how notions of liminality and the in-between are experienced from both the perspective of identity and the creative process, with an understanding that these perspectives will inevitably overlap.

I discuss Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's theories regarding rites of passage and liminality, beginning with the classic tripartite structure of rites of passage, which was first introduced by van Gennep in 1909, and later elaborated on by Turner in the 1960s. Following these classical methods, I then discuss more contemporary theories that reject the original, archetypal structure, and suggest an alternative model with which to think about rites of passage. In the context of the materiality of gestural inscriptions, I then look at ways in which visual art and dance gestures have been theorized as dichotomous, with dance being assumed to have an ephemeral quality. I interrogate this concept by considering a variety of practices by female artists who were primarily associated with the historical art movement of the 1960's known as Judson Dance Theater (which comprised a group of artists who challenged conventions and redefined dance) and 1970s conceptualism. I also consider how dance writes on and through the body, how dance has been translated on-screen, and the ways in which these recordings of the dance can function as forms of inscription.

Simultaneity, mobility, transition, ambiguity, and multiplicity: in my research and practice, I have been encountering myself through these concepts, as a liminal subject. Researching and creating this work has been a personal journey—to and from Israel, Morocco, and Canada—that has provoked a rethinking and reevaluating of my identity and feelings of disconnection, or as

Richard Schechner describes as being "at the doorstep."[1] The structure of my installation *Variations On Broken Lines* was inspired by "The *Aleph*" (1945), a short story by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges—named after a point in space that allows for an experience of all space simultaneously. Following Borges, and other sources that address the symbol *Aleph* through notions of simultaneity, I have conceptualized the symbol as a choreographic device. Through my personal journey, I encountered the historical archival material of the Jewish-Austrian interdisciplinary artist Gertrud Kraus which became a great source of inspiration: her biography, her experience of living between cultures, as well as her interdisciplinary practice. Finally, I elucidate the personal-cultural meaning of my moving image work *Möbius*, informed in part by my crossing of geographic borders during the research process.

Across all my work there is an attempt to explore the visual translations of forms and gestures across media. I use various choreographic methods specifically for the camera, and I have been examining movement and the different temporalities of forms and gestures as they cross the boundaries of media, to explore an aesthetic of liminality and in-betweenness. My interest in choreography is tied to my interest in residue(s), repetition, blurred gestures, traces, erasure, shadows, and temporary marks across multiple surfaces.

[1] Hemisphere Institute. "Interview with Richard Schechner: What is Performance Studies." https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/hidvl/hidvl-int-wips/item/1338-wips-rschechner. Accessed 28 Mar 2020.

A Note on the Work

The multimedia installation *Variations On Broken Lines* at Gales Gallery consisted of video work, projection, moving image sculpture, and objects. A constellation of rectangle wooden panels and mirrors are leaning on the gallery wall, and act as a backdrop for projection. The Video and moving image work are projected through a holographic paper, hanging from the ceiling at the center of the gallery. The projection appears and penetrates simultaneously through the holographic paper and the wooden backdrops. The holographic surface renderers fragments of projection that briefly travels and dissolves on the gallery walls. On the other corner of the gallery, is a moving image sculpture titled *Möbius,* seen through a monitor and reflected in a mirror.

THEORY

Rites of Passage and Liminal Space

The term *rites de passage*, or rites of passage, was first introduced by the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909. According to van Gennep, rites of passage comprise a type of transition expressing the dichotomy that exists between "stable" and "transitory" structures or states in someone's life. A transition is characterized by three phases: first, isolation or separation, then liminality and marginality, and finally incorporation or reaggregation.[2]

Van Gennep suggests the middle phase, the liminal state, is a period in time and space that an individual typically experiences in forms of ritual. It is a period in which change is happening, an experience of emergence. Through a ritual, the subject experiences marginality as well as adaptation, moving and transitioning forward, and being "incorporated" into a new, imminent situation. Notably, van Gennep classifies liminality as an "in-between" state, a state of meditation, and an individual state of being. Even though liminality is such an important part of our social reality and our personal development within it, the elusive, transitory, and hidden nature makes it challenging to fully grasp.

Van Gennep's theory was elaborated on by the anthropologist Victor Turner in the 1960s.[3] Turner described the in-between states of initiation during rites of passage, integrating the concept of liminality into general and broader theories of rituals, which he took up in performance studies. These studies argue that liminality and marginality are conditions that frequently generate and underpin myths, rituals, symbols, philosophical systems, and works of art. Turner realized that liminal rites are moments of creativity because in liminal space we experience openness to the unknown. The uncertainty that evokes vulnerability provides room for something genuinely new

[2] Van Gennep, Arnold, A. *The rites of passage*. Trans. by M.B. Vizedom & G.L. Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1960).
[3] Turner, Victor. "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology." *Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies,* Vol. 60, No. 3 (1974).

to happen, and we begin to perceive and act in a new way. Liminal experiences comprise periods or times of surviving difficulties and coming through them renewed.

Further, a liminal space is an inner state that provokes us to think and act in new ways; it is a space where we are situated in-between experiences, having left one experience but not yet entered the next—and having no a clear vision of what is yet to come. Usually, we enter liminal space when our way of being is disrupted, changed, or challenged. The experience of being in liminality is characterized by a feeling of uncertainty, and of lack of control. Events such as losing a job or a loved one, going through a life-threatening situation or a shocking experience, the birth of a child, the loss of a child, crossing borders, illness, war, and other forms of trauma are examples of experiences that could create a space of liminality for someone. The possible life events that could be considered liminal are too many to note.

As human beings, we try to figure out and find meaning to make sense of our liminal experience. In this process, we often invoke ritual means to understand our chaotic experience as part of a larger order or meaning, sometimes just to comfort ourselves with the notion that beneath it there is some underlying purpose. When we find ourselves within chaos, uncertainty, in-between a before and after, the act of ritualizing may assist us to reconnect the experience of our own reality into a larger whole.

While there is a lot that resonates from van Gennep's and Turner's theories (of rites of passage and liminality), these earlier, structural views have been challenged and revised by scholars of ritual such as Christine Downing, Caroline Walker Bynum, Ronald Grimes, Paul B. Rscoe, and Paul Stenner. These scholars seek to question and elucidate the pervasiveness of the classical model, suggesting that it is insufficient to encompass the structure of all rites, especially those experienced within our modern societies and rituals that are not considered initiations. Moreover, the classical initiation pattern of van Gennep does not always incorporate the emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions resonant in life-passage events.[4]

[4] Roscoe, Paul B. "Initiations in cross-cultural perspective." in *Gender Rituals: Female initiations in Melanesia*, New York: Routledge (1995): 223.

From feminist perspectives, female rites tend to have different structures and content, and often women's private and individual rituals are overlooked (Ibid.). Caroline Walker Bynum elaborates on the differences, revealing distinct features common to women's rituals. When women recount their own lives, the themes are less about the climax, conversion, reintegration, and triumph of a particular situation or event; it is more about "the liminality of reversal and elevation than continuity."[5] Concerning time and space, Christine Downing suggests that women's rites often emphasize a sense of place rather than time, and women's rituals tend to be more circular than linear.[6]

Ritual helps us not only to negotiate the fraught passage from a random act to a meaningful event but, in the process, it also enables us to reconnect our emotional, social, and spiritual lives in ways that are vital to the individual and collective, as Ronald L. Grimes suggests.[7] This perspective encourages individuals to practice rites of passage that would address existential crises in their own lives and enable them to discover personal meaning (Ibid.). In this way, liminality in creative practice can be a positive experience, offering opportunities for engagement as well as subversion of normative ways of being and making—it can allow for the trying-out of unusual, atypical, and non-formal artistic activities. The rite of passage, by its very nature, is filled with questions and doubts, ambiguity and contradictions. It does not easily reveal answers. The contradictory nature of liminality—its simultaneously obscuring and revelatory function—is reflected in multiple other expressions outside specific rites. Whatever its form, liminality is integral to the state and concept of creativity.

Turner makes a distinction between a liminal phase and a sub-genre of liminality that he later defines as "liminoid." Liminality refers to all "betwixt and between" social situations, whereas, in revisiting this early concept and appropriating it, the liminoid offers a broader means to understand liminal situations.

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[5] Bynum, Caroline Walker. –"Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of liminality" in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion, Chicago Centre for the Scientific study of Religion* (1984): 105.

[6] Downing, Christine,. *Journey through Menopause: A Personal Rite of Passage*, New York: Crossroad (1991): 63.

[7] Grimes, Ronald L. *Deeply into the Bone.* University of California Press (2000): 108.

Unlike liminal events, experiences of the liminoid are conditional and do not result in a change of status, but merely serve as transitional moments in time. The liminal is part of society, an aspect of social or religious rites, while the liminoid is a break from society, time, and event that is a part of a play. In short, a liminal experience refers to a transitional state, a threshold space that is usually small or of short duration, and a liminoid experience is similar to a liminal one, except that participation in the experience tends to be optional. Attending a theatre play, festive dinner, social gatherings, and playing music are liminoid experiences. According to Turner, artistic rituals, subjective by nature, can be defined as "liminoid," rites of passage that occur across modern society, in social critiques, manifestos, books, plays, dance, paintings, films, and other performing arts.[8] And while artistic practices can be considered liminoid in general, I consider my work within the frame of liminality in particular because the experience of in-betweenness, transitionary and transitional phases, resonates with the exploration of my identity and creative processes.

In *Liminality and Experience: A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Psychosocial*, Paul Stenner talks about the process of ritual as a type of technology, and how, at their core, various art forms can also be considered effective liminal technologies—sharing important features with ritual.[9] Building from this, Paul Stenner and Tania Zittoun distinguish between "spontaneous" and "devised" liminal experiences.[10] The "spontaneous" liminal experience is that which falls on us, forcing us to deal with a change we might not ask to experience, whereas "devised" liminal experience is something that happens which we do to ourselves in a virtual space\time, abstracted from daily practical reality and mediated by cultural resources and forms such as rituals, poetry, music, movies, and other art forms. This process gives particular importance to the imagination, when we experience the process of temporality, moving away from the flow of here-and-now experiences, to explore "distal past, future, or alternative experiences" (Ibid.). As

[8] Turner, Victor. "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology." *Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies* (1974): 54.
[9] Stenner, P. *Liminality and experience. A transdisciplinary approach to the psychosocial*. London (2017).
[10] Stenner, Paul and Zittoun, Tania. "On taking a leap of faith: Art, imagination and liminal experiences." *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* (2020).

such, creating a sphere of experience that is “suspended” from the ordinary real-time events of practical reality means that imaginative experiences share the threefold pattern van Gennep identified with rites of passage.

Because notions of in-betweenness cannot entirely be explained literally, they are instead experienced actually, physically, and metaphorically. In-betweenness can comprise an on-going act of dwelling beyond borders, in places physical, metaphysical, or virtual; they can be experienced as a sense, rather than a formal definition, constituted by movement and mediation.

Gestural Inscription and Self-Erasure

There were multiple kinds of gestures in my installation from different materials and temporalities, crossing space and questioning boundaries. There were: painted gestures on objects or mediated through monitors in moving images; animated drawings; temporary chalk lines; and bodily gestures. All of these existed simultaneously, across and between surfaces, monitors, and projections.

Gesture, in the domain of dance, can mean something quite different from what it means in the domain of the visual arts. In the context of traditional painting, gestures are immediately inscribed on a surface, settling on canvas, paper, or any other substrate. The journey of this type of gesture is short and stable, often immediate where the inscription remains seen. It is general and useful in this context to contend that all painted, sculpted, or photographed gestures are necessarily static. Some may suggest that there is or was movement, but this movement is frozen in place. Furthermore, the visibility of these gestures feels fixed and permanent—in some way inscribed. For instance, in pentimento, a term to describe change made by the artist during the process of painting, the mark of the previously painted gesture may not be entirely visible, but it is objectively still there even if you cannot see it.

On the other hand, through dance the movement of the body is expressed outwardly from the body into the air, without substrate (or at least without a traditional substrate) and attendant inscription. Writer and curator Andre Lepecki describes dance as an "art of self-erasure" and suggests that the actual execution of movement becomes a historical artifact simultaneously with its present moment.[11] With a dance performed into thin air, the moment of the dance performance is the moment of its disappearance. Similarly, American art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty argues that dance is a fleeting art form that begins to fade seconds after it has formed.[12] Yet American feminist scholar Peggy Phelan describes that the actual, live moment of dance performance itself is instantaneous, the concept of immediacy establishing its existence.[13]

The transient nature of dance performance makes it impossible to capture the art form entirely. However, we can make an effort to capture the dance in various ways: we can film the dance, photograph the dance, describe the dance in words, or depict it through drawing or written text. Yet all these attempts do not capture the dance in its full presentation because these are representations. In other words, recordings and documentation present the trajectory of where the dance had been, its past. As Phelan explains, "It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as different" (Ibid., 146). Similarly, Lambert-Beatty explains that images of dance never capture the energy, dynamism, or power of a live performance, as they are "pale representations at best, of an inherently ephemeral art."[14] Further, Lambert-Beatty explains that the vanishing element is an essential requirement of theatrical dance, suggesting that it be ephemeral, "that it glints in and out of visibility, that it sparkle" (Ibid., 61).

If we are to understand dance as inscription, the material is so light that it produces only images of trace forms, a ghostly trajectory. Phelan explains that "performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the

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[11] Lepecki, A.. *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press (2004): 125.
[12] Lambert-Beatty, Carrie. *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (2008).
[13] Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London: New York, Routledge (1993):146.
[14] Lambert-Beatty, Carrie. *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (2008):132.

circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance."[15] I agree with Phelan that once the live moment is gone, it cannot be recorded.

Throughout the early years of my artistic practice, I worked only within the realms of traditional painting and drawing. I sought to develop ideas of movement, transition, and motion through painted gestures, lines and curves, on multiple surfaces. I was trained as a visual artist, and I sought to explore the dynamic of forms and gestures. This interest has led me to investigate choreography and dance in relation to time, space, body, and materials.

Despite my attempt to capture and portray gestural movement, I found painting to be a static medium by nature. According to curator and scholar of photography William Ewing, art in two dimensions reduces the expression of movement, it "imprisons" and "flattens" the endless attempt to express motion in time and space.[16] This realization brought me to a place where I had to re-evaluate and question the materiality of my work. I began to avoid painting; or more specifically, the way I had learned and trained. I had the desire to continue painting in ways that are non-traditional; I wanted to experiment with questioning how I could "relocate" the painting to different and multiple places, both physical and virtual. I gradually eliminated the "permanent" supporting surface of painting, and then I began to paint temporary murals and life-size drawings on my studio wall. They were not a "complete" painting in the traditional sense; but rather, they were the beginnings of paintings, rituals of painting and erasing, re-painting, performing, recording, and erasing.

Back then, I was influenced by reading art historian Yve-Alain Bois's *Painting: The Task of Mourning*. I wondered: What is the relationship between painting and its "support"? Are questions about media specificity and painting still relevant? What is the painting itself? Is the painting the task of painting itself? Is painting the bodily gesture that performs the action? If we

[15] Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London: New York, Routledge (1993).
[16] Ewing, William A. *The Fugitive Gesture: Masterpieces of Dance Photography*. Thames and Hudson (1987): 27.

imagine that painting has no physical boundaries, what is the painting then? How can a painter face the deadness of painting?

I started to think about the process of forgetting, of unlearning, to go back to degree zero in which painting became a task detached from any thoughts about finished, tangible products. I began to instill the transient nature of dance into my paintings, transforming their tangible qualities to temporary qualities by applying and erasing them from my studio wall. It was then that I began to discover the movement that was possible in painting, through the deconstruction of classical methods and attention to the materiality of painting.

The historical art movement of the 1960s and 1970s in New York City has a significant place in the development of these contemplations: particularly, the Fluxus activities of the Judson Dance Theater, and artists such as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Joan Jonas, Simone Forti, Carolee Schneemann, Meredith Monk, and many others. With this movement, artists from different disciplines were actively engaged with resisting any boundaries of media, decontextualizing dance by using visual art and concentrating on movement. This included experimenting with repetition, painting, sculptures, space, video, and sound, which helped viewers to apprehend dance, to hold a picture of the movement in the mind's eye, and to negotiate between a physical epistemology and a visual one. The challenges that female artists reflected upon concerned the body, space, environment, notions of ephemerality, and the documentation of their art. They sought to develop a kind of language that challenged the materiality of gestures, the surfaces for inscription, and performative ritual acts.

In doing so, these artists, and those inspired by them, rethink the surface for inscription. This is notable with Trisha Brown's gestural chalk lines on paper, and Joan Jonas's recording of herself drawing and erasing on a chalkboard. Such works have inspired me to ask: How are gestures removed from the traditional, or presumably "natural," surface of inscription? And what are the possible effects when they are intentionally temporary—juxtaposed with space and bodily gestures, and then appearing in moving images or photographs? In these and similar works I find

that there is the constant activity of moving forms and gestures, traveling across surfaces, seeking to be liberated from being grounded, performing absence and residues.

For me, moving marks and gestures from their traditional landing places has particular resonance with my journey, or path, of migration and cultural displacement. I see the inscriptions of gestures in my work as transient, elusive, and in constant movement. They are in the liminal state of rites of passage, in which gestures are separated from mediumistic, fixed identity; becoming, but not fully here or there. Gestures are inscribed and re-inscribed through the lens of the camera; they coincide with space, become a place, merge with body, are transcribed digitally, and appear in animation or photography.

In "Inscribing Dance," André Lepecki asks: What is constituted in "the space between dance and inscription?" This question resonates with me. Lepecki suggests a view of "dance as the fleeting trace of an always irretrievable, never fully translatable motion: neither into notation, nor into writing."[17] However, Lepecki also suggests that choreographic methods of generating, constructing, and repeating movement materials function as modes of inscription that enable the recovery of otherwise "irretrievable" acts.[18] Building from this idea, Lepecki suggests a continuum of temporality, which allows dances to last beyond the vanishing point (Ibid.). Still, since dance is "art in self-erasure" as Lepecki suggests (Ibid., 125), any desire to inscribe it, either through a predetermined script or recording, faces the challenge of capturing the movement entirely. Through the process of migrating forms and gestures through different surfaces and media, I am interested in the aesthetics of absence and emergence as a result of their performative journey.

In the third phase of rites of passage there is a process of integration—a translation of forms as a result of the movement across time, space, and materials. I embrace this in my work; for example, in my moving-image work *Möbius*, I begin by determining an open score that was based on a suggestion with instructions that I gave to myself. In performing and recording my

[17] Lepecki, A. "Inscribing Dance." In *Of the Presence of the Body; Essays on Dance and Performance Theory,* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press (2004): 27.
[18] Lepecki, A*, Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement.* New York: Routledge (2006).

movement in the gallery space, I used the camera to capture still images in a predetermined duration. Since the camera is set to capture images in slow-motion, the gestures are anamorphic; they are not exact renderings and do not appear the way they looked in real time and space. This manipulation is intentional: to capture motion and to re-materialize the body. The final stage of making the work was the video-editing process, which involved re-choreographing the blurred, still images of performance, and playing with several modes of duration, sequence, and transition, subverting the sequence linearity with reiterations of speed and flow. The final moving-image work seen through the monitor on the floor in the Gales Gallery was a result of the incorporation of all these stages.

Reinscription: Accumulation and the Female Body

When a female artist performs and appears either on stage or is mediated through technology and photographs, her body becomes the object of the gaze. Because of this, feminist performance artists seek to disrupt the female body's cultural objectification, to melt away from the gaze through technological mediations and other techniques such as dissolving, blurring, creating traces, and through the presentation of absence—and, these are all techniques of confronting the tensions between self-representations and the patriarchal gaze.

In my performative practice and work, I use my body as both research and material. It is a place of knowledge, subject or object, device, an instrument, and a site for remembering and unlearning processes. As either subject or object, it depends on the ideas that I develop in each work. I have no wish to conclude or define the experience of other female artists regarding the incorporation of their bodies in their work. In my experience, it is characterized by an ambiguous state that is often difficult to settle, and comes from concerns about being objectified—and reflecting further, I wonder: How can I be free from my own critical gaze?

For many artists, using the body in performance becomes a way to both claim control over the body and to question issues of gender.-A rite of passage is by its very nature filled with questions as well as doubts, ambiguity and contradictions. With the shift to postmodernism, contemporary

rites have become more ludic. The categories that were distinguished by van Gennep are now uncertain or absent. My own creative process deals with ideas of transitions and transformation, and as such I see it as liminal.

The Performative Document

My interest in the process of restaging performance documentation materials comes from my own experience. I have been utilizing the camera to record performance and performative actions over seven years in my studio. During this timeframe I could not articulate what they were, but I knew that they were generated by truth; by a subject experience that cannot immediately be translated literally. These performances incited an experience of liminality that happened in time and place, which I recorded as digital sequential still images (figure 1.1, 1.2).

I have been continuously revisiting this early performance documentation, stored in digital folders. The further I progressed in my research and practice, the more I have returned to these recorded events to contemplate their presentations and self-representations. And, the more I strengthened my video editing skills, the more I re-considered restaging, reworking or reconstructing the documents into artwork. These conscious actions of looking backward are both an archival return to, and a renewing of rites—it is a personal return that is distinct from returning to the historical archive of other artists.

I have found particular and powerful manifestations of this return to self in the artistic practice of other female artists as well. Meredith Monk, for instance, returned to the movement materials from her work *Education of the Girlchild* (1972) multiple times over the course of nearly forty years (Figure 2). This allowed Monk to reevaluate her relationship to the authorship of selfhood, going backward in order to re-envision subjectivity. Another inspired return is that of the choreographer Simone Forti. In early 2020, Forti restaged her own works from the 1960s in a mini-retrospective exhibition, *Al Di Là:* An Evening of sound works. By returning to her performances, she is not only honoring her own history but doing so in a manner to where she is now in the present moment. Forti did not attempt, or have the intention, to replicate her early

works; her return was to explore them from a contemporary perspective. In the creative process of bridging the distance between her own past and present, Forti established the groundwork for an inherently ephemeral art form and considered the process-based, improvisational aspects of her work.

In "Dancing Archives of Experiences: Surfacing Histories, Staging Subjectivities", Alison Bory positions the "body as archive," and explores the ways in which contemporary dance choreography mines the physical archive to stage subjectivity. She examines the "choreographic returns" of three contemporary artists, including Meredith Monk, and suggests that it is a "kinesthetic, emotional, intellectual and psychic archival return, continually producing space for crafting, staging, and enacting of subjectivity."[19]

Similarly, Joan Jonas describes and identifies her gestures as "translations" and a "migration among forms."[20] She creates correspondences among different aspects of her later, large-scale installations by "transferring" content from one form or surface to another, inscribing and re-inscribing the past into the present. I see this as an ongoing process of reinscription. In the context of an archival return, I am more interested, however, in Jonas's performances from the 1970s in which she began to incorporate film, dance, and drawing from her studio practice, among other strategies, in an exploration of ritual, narrative, and identity. These early works show the process of finding her artistic language in between materials and media. For instance, in the work *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972) Jonas's drawing is mediated by a monitor: she watches the outcome of what she is drawing, not on the paper itself but on screen, and the viewer is simultaneously watching her performance of the drawing (on a monitor in the gallery). There is no traditional representation of the picture in terms of paper, only a video that shows her performative action in a loop. In *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972), Jonas desynchronizes the monitor's transmission and reception signal, fabricating a glitch. The resulting images travel in vertical spasms, resting at the bottom of the screen and bouncing back towards the top. This

[19] Bory, Alison. Dancing Archives of Experience: Surfacing Histories, Staging Subjectivities." In *Performance Matters* 1.1-2 (2015): 43.
[20] Williams, Robin Kathleen. "A Mode of Translation: Joan Jonas's Performance Installations". Stedelijk Studies, Vol. 3 (2015).

results in a dislocation of the filmed body. These, and other videos such as *Wind* (1968) and *Street Scene with Chalk* (1976/2008/2010), ritualize the gesture (figure 2.1).

Like Monk, Jonas restages old materials in installations several decades later. The methodology of returning to early materials provides a space for rethinking and reevaluating materials and representation. In several of her latest reconstructions, Jonas incorporates different parts of her work into an integrated visual experience of drawing, video work, and objects. Some of her early experimental films remain as documentation materials; only after several decades was she able to translate these films using digital media. In *Reanimation* (2013), Jonas is in dialogue with her early work from 1967. The installation features footage of Jonas creating an abstract drawing using ink and ice (a gesture that she carries out live during the performance). In the installation, a projector's light is refracted through a set of hanging crystals, spilling throughout the gallery.

Maya Deren's films *A Study in Choreography for the Camera* (1945), *At Land* (1944), and *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946) inspired me to think about how I can make a place out of space (figure 2.3). Encountering Deren's films encouraged me to think about how to construct materials and space in order to render a sense of simultaneity in the installation. Deren's works portray different experiences of place in relation to the moving body, transforming modern dance into cinema through specific techniques that reveal the structural essence of dance in a way that is possible only on screen.[21] Deren uses the continuity of dance motion through the discontinued space of the film frame. According to Deren, "The movement of the dancer creates a geography that never was. With a turn of the foot, he makes neighbors of distant places."[22]

Taking inspiration from Deren, in my video projection there are several repetitive dance phrases where bodies appear as moving light, juxtaposed with animated drawing gestures. The drawing

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[21] Greenfield, Amy. "The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren and Harris." In *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video.* Mitoma, Judith, Zimmer, E., and Stieber, DA (Eds.). Routledge (2002): 43.

[22] Gartenberb Media. "Maya Deren: Dance Films - Gartenberg Media Enterprises." *Gartenberg Media Enterprises Website*.
https://www.gartenbergmedia.com/dvd-distribution-and-sales/experimental-narratives-avant-garde-shorts/maya-deren-dance-films. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.

gestures act as a raw, abstracted landscape; and they dissolve and transition differently from the moving body in space. My performative actions for the camera happened within the solitude of my studio. I positioned the camera and defined elements in the frame, such as painted marks, objects, angles, and other elements in time and space. In this way I was seeing and being seen simultaneously. Aside from aesthetic compositions, palette, arrangements of forms, and elements in the frame, there is my body, communicating nonverbally.

Phelan talks about "staging disappearance" how this becomes a signature expression of women's subjectivity, being "unable to see oneself reflected in a corresponding image of the same", and that this process of self-identity is a leap into a narrative that employs seeing as a way of knowing.[23] Mimetic correspondence has a psychic appeal because one seeks a self-image within the representational frame. Thus, I feel that there is no need to describe the real moment of performance; any attempt sounds unsatisfyingly ambiguous, with the live performance happening at the threshold of action and image.

Finally, in my video work, I was inspired to employ strategies developed by the choreographers Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer as a way of recalling body knowledge, to generate movement vocabulary. Both artists explored repetition in different ways and used repetition strategies to generate new ways of making and seeing. In *Satie for Two* (1963) Rainer used music by Erik Satie and John Cage in her repetitive movement phrases. *Accumulation* (1970) by Brown works on simple accumulative strategies; it is about five minutes long, during which Brown starts with one movement, repeats it several times, then goes to another movement, and so on (figure 3). Such methods make the invisible force of movement visible through repetition. In my installation, the projection was not fixed on the surface of the wooden panels, but rather crossed the borders, the edges of the panels, and extended onto the gallery walls. The broken image of the gesture, between the panels, the edges of the panels, and the wall, was suggestive of my experience of liminality. Simultaneously, there was a deliberate fluidity within the overall

[23] Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: the politics of performance*. London: New York, Routledge (1993):

structure of the installation, a constant movement of forms and gestures that mirrored the fluidity of identity.

The Body as Archive: Inner Gestures

In "The Inscription of Gesture: Inward Migrations in Dance," anthropologist and dance ethnographer Sally Ann Ness explores inward inscriptions of gesture. Ness suggests that gesture as inscription would assert that the gesturing of dancing is a kind of *linguistic* mark-making. Moreover, gesture, as inscription, would characterize the gestures of dancing literally as a kind of writing, and as a "scripting," that moved *in*ward, into the body. Ness demonstrates how repeated gestural routines can actually leave lasting imprints on the body. She makes the case that such things as bone deformations should be read as inscriptions; and further, that these are evidence of *thought* as well as movement and discipline. In this way, the body becomes a kind of monument, a support that archives the gestures it has performed. Such inward marks are "testimonials to a methodological and reasoned way of being in the world."[24] Gestural routines, in this sense, can be seen as writings on the body insofar as they simultaneously signify and embody a particular manner of being in the world. Concerning the inward inscription of dance gesture, Ness introduces the movement term "contraction" which refers to a dance technique developed by the American choreographer Martha Graham.[25] In this technique, the movement entails a hollowing out of the abdominal cavity and a curving of the spine in the thoracic and sacral areas. The contractions of the abdominal muscles are generally coordinated with an exhalation of the breath. Graham dancers practice hundreds of repetitions of this "contraction" movement daily. After years of embodying this movement, the dancer's skeletal-musculature gradually comes to bear its "mark" (Ibid.). The gesture has been inscribed not upon but *into* the body. Gesture as inscription, in other words, can now be seen to refer in a literal manner to a process of

[24] Ness, Sally Ann. "The Inscription of Gesture: Inward Migrations in Dance." In *Migrations of Gesture.* Nolan, Carrie, and Ness, Sally Ann (Eds.). University of Minnesota Press (2008): xviii.

[25] Ness, Sally Ann. "The Inscription of Gesture: Inward Migrations in Dance." In *Migrations of Gesture.* Nolan, Carrie, and Ness, Sally Ann (Eds.). University of Minnesota Press (2008): 13.

embodiment paralleling that of linguistic inscription. A danced gesture is embodied habitually and "inscribed" into a dancer's body.

Conceptualizing the "body as archive" or "the body as a document" has become one of the central premises in ongoing debates around documentation, reconstruction, and knowledge-production in the field of performance studies and practice-based research. Conceiving of the body as a document adds a new layer to existing cultural-historical studies on memory and archive, with the body as a vehicle of knowledge. The notion of the body as a document brings the question of body knowledge to the forefront of an investigation that is exploring choreography as a medium of knowledge.

When we search within our own history, for both remembered, lived experiences and unknown parts, this process can grant some peace, closure even. But it can also be painful, as traumatic experiences can rise to the surface. Dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright describes the body as a malleable space in which identities can be shaped, and dance as an active agent in this process. Dance techniques not only condition the dancers' bodies, they also, literally, "inscribe a physical ideology" into the dancers' physiques.[26] As Albright suggests, behind every aesthetic orientation and style of bodily movement "dwells a view about the world that is transmitted" (Ibid.). Each movement is also an improvisatory act, and so by extension, all experiences within the body are a reminder that we can exist in some way beyond our quickly changing world. With performative practices, we can explore what it means to be a body in the world, as gestures shape and are shaped by socio-historical imperatives—for instance, experiences of displacement such as mine.

*Dance On-***s***creen*

In "Mediated Bodies: From Photography to Cine-Dance," artist and performance and media scholar Douglas Rosenberg offers a trajectory of media specificity in relation to dance on-screen

[26] Albright, A.C. "Tracing the past: Writing history through the body." In *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* (1998): 32.

by tracing its evolution and associated material inscription.[27] Rosenberg demonstrates that dance for the camera is an inclusive concept that refers to any and all dances created specifically for the camera: whether in the medium of still images, film or video. The concept refers to the art of creating choreography for the camera, to be viewed as a fully formed, autonomous work of art.[28] The relationship between the practice of dance and the technologies of representation is "complex and interdependent," writes Rosenberg (Ibid.). As movement migrates to other media, such as video, moving images, and screens, live dance collides with its mediated other, resulting in reinscription. This complex and intricate duet takes place as the body is in motion and "inscribes itself within the confines and the edges of the camera's frame" (Ibid.).

In my early childhood years, I was captivated by dance films that I watched in black-and-white and in colour, and which I engaged further with newspapers and library books. The live performances I saw were mostly folk and Moroccan dance that were held at the communal events in my village, such as henna ceremonies and traditional Moroccan ceremonies. I was sixteen years old when German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch performed *Carnations* live at the Caesarean ruins in Israel—incidentally, Bausch was also interested in rites; one of her most famous works is *The Rite of Spring*. Viewing the performance on TV was a powerful experience for me. Just witnessing *Carnations* on TV was unforgettable—it was a striking performance about the horrors of the past that spoke to me profoundly. The piece, mediated through a broadcast image, showed me that sometimes words are inadequate to express concepts of closure, the past meeting the present, and the feelings of peace, acceptance, and trauma.

Even now when I look at dances through frames, whether through video work, cinema, archives, computer screens, smartphones, or photographs, I find myself ecstatically drawn to how bodies

[27] Oxford Scholarship Online. Abstract For "Mediated Bodies: From Photography to Cine-Dance." In *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199772612.001.0001/acprof-9780199772612-chapter-002. Accessed 28 Mar. 2020.
[28] Rosenberg, Douglas. "Mediated Bodies: From Photography to Cine-Dance." In *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. Oxford University Press (2012): 276-277.

and frames merge to create another kind of composition. The body transfers from viscerality to flatness. The quality of production is less important to me, whether it is an amateur attempt through social media, homemade films, or is highly crafted. Driven by this attraction, my installation attempts to capture such chance effects as passing light, fleeting marks, and clashes between forms and colours. Through frames, dance can be liberated from the stage, from gravity. Duration and movement can be varied by the position of the camera and its manipulation and appropriation of space.

The introduction of new technologies at the turn of the century had a polarizing effect on the dance profession. Creating dance for the camera became a natural extension of the artist's skill, from the late-19th century onwards. English-American photographer Edward Muybridge's photographic studies of bodies in motion (in the mid-late 1800s), often made for the sole purpose of migrating those images to an archive, are now contextualized as art in discussions of the history of photography, and can be seen in parallel with the contemporaneous attempts of the Cubists to capture various states of movement. Muybridge chose to use both dancers and non-dancers in his motion studies. He was not particularly concerned with choreography, but was more interested in the ability of the camera to articulate differences between frames of movement. This phenomenon, the visualization of the passage of time via the objectification of movement, occurred during a period when few had experienced in three-dimensions what Muybridge's pictures were able to extrapolate in two.

It was in these moments of overlap that the practices of painting, dancing, and camera began to blend into a practice of mediation. It is in these moments of the overlapping of movement, body, screen, and painted gestures that I find a dynamic-relationship between the depiction of body in motion and the method of recording and inscribing my performative actions. In other words, as Rosenberg explains when describing screendance, they are not coded as dance film, dance photography or painting, nor are they narrative or simply documentary; rather, "they exist instead in the spaces in between, as liminal artifacts of collisions between disparate mediums that result in real hybrids of form and content" (Ibid.).

Expression

My Liminal Self

I am constantly experiencing my being in a state of marginality and liminality. When Turner discusses people in marginal positions (or experiences of the liminal), he defines them as people who live "on an edge" due to disparities in culture, childhood experience, religion, and race, which differ from the societies they live in.

I carry with me three different cultures: Arabic, Israeli, and Canadian. I am the second generation of Moroccan Sephardic Jews. My family was deported from Morocco in the late 1950s, and after wandering through several countries they were eventually deported by sea to Israel. I was born in an immigrant village in the Negev desert of Israel. In my late adulthood I became an immigrant to Canada. I have been questioning my sense of belonging since early childhood, trying to find my place between the Israeli and Arabic cultures at home. I experienced the tensions of being a child who grew up in Hebrew culture, while at the same time carrying the culture of my Moroccan family that was very different from the culture I was born into.

When I was twelve years old I was sent to a boarding school and stayed there for five years, returning to visit my family every few weeks. This experience of displacement began forming what I have come to understand as my liminal self. Although I proudly made Canada my home, I don't feel I fully belong; I am partly disconnected. Furthermore, I am not fully reconciled with any of the places that I am connected to, and yet, each of them is part of me. I feel as if I am constantly standing at these crossroads because these three cultures and places, which are mixed within me, are moving in opposite directions. This feeling of in-betweenness is acute. It is an emotional, on-going dwelling.

The experience of diasporic identity not only embraces living in/between two or more cultures simultaneously, but it is also linked to a feeling of a lost homeland from previous generations,

which in turn can lead to a sense of displaced identity.[29] Yet, at the same time, the notion of diaspora also contains the intricate and fluid patterns of movements and the intellectual and cultural connections to places.

During my research and practice I began a new personal journey. I traveled back to my homeland, Israel, after years away. Following my trip to Israel, I traveled to Morocco, my ancestral land, to search for the roots of my family and their homes prior to their deportation in the early 1960s. This experience of crossing borders affected me tremendously. When I arrived in my childhood town in the Negev desert of Israel, I realized that the place of my childhood, as I remembered it, no longer exists. Everything that was kept alive in my memory had disappeared from the place, except within the house of my family where things were in place as if time had stopped. For several days, I was desperate to find familiar things or memories of this place that keeps haunting me. Within this feeling of loss, I found comfort in elements of nature; despite the changes, I could recognize the trees, hills, and the desert horizon.

The first generation of Morroccan immigrants has already passed away. And as I face the disappearance of this place too, I am discovering a new place through the memories of my mother. We have had many conversations about her childhood home, her memories as a child growing in Morocco, her childhood stories, and her migration journey. After several months of research, I traveled to Morocco for the first time. It was an uncanny feeling: I arrived at a place I had never been to before, yet, I knew this place. It felt and looked like the lost place of my childhood in Israel, the people, the language, the markets, the elements of everyday life that were part of my childhood and part of the North African culture I grew up with. In Morocco, I traveled to the Sahara desert and the Atlas Mountains and found the villages of my parents, their abandoned homes. This place is part of me in the most profound way, and my experience travelling there was an experience of discovering a place that no longer exists while simultaneously finding a place reminiscent of my childhood through the people and culture.

[29] Cho, Lily, "The Turn to Diaspora." In *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*. (2018). https://utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/topia.17.11. Accessed 29 Mar. 2020.

When I returned home to Canada I had mixed emotions, an ambiguous feeling of lost places, and awakened memories.

This journey has provoked a rethinking and reevaluating of my identity, and it has had an impact on my sense of self. Every moment is filtered through numerous lenses, or perspectives. Turner describes the subject as incorporeal, dissolved or "invisible" during the liminal stage. The subject, while neither located in the departed stage nor in the arrived-at one, is still reliant on the presence of both stages. This transitional-being or "liminal persona" is characterized by a series of contradictions, as having departed but not yet arrived, no longer classified and not yet classified, "neither one thing nor another; or maybe both; or neither here nor there; or maybe even… nowhere."[30]

The Aleph*: Simultaneity, Space, and Place*

In *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between,* Danish anthropologist Bjørn Thomassen builds from van Gennep and Turner's discussions of liminality. Specifically, Thomassen argues, that in a broader perspective, liminality refers to any "betwixt and between" situation or object, any in-between place or moment, a state of suspense, or a moment of freedom between two structured world-views.[31] Because liminality can be perceived both as a mental and physical condition of existing in-between; the concept can be used to understand how the effects of liminal experiences are connected to place and space.

In *Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge*, British geographer Gillian Rose proposes the metaphor of what she describes as paradoxical space, explaining how women experience confinement in space while perceived as being located in several social spaces simultaneously.[32] Rose defines paradoxical space as a phenomenon in which someone is

[30] Turner, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual***.** Cornell University Press (1967): 97.
[31] Thomassen, Bjørn. *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between*. Routledge. (2014): 92.
[32] Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press (1993).

positioned within a clash of two or more cultures or belief systems in order to consider the ways women, in particular, enter these liminal spaces. She argues that women find themselves as both outsiders and insiders of paradoxical space (Ibid.). In other words, paradoxical space can describe a state of being in which the borders of past and present identities are constantly shifting back and forth, changing, replacing and relocating, constructing and reconstructing memories, the body, time, and place. These aspects of liminality, of shifting space and place, are essential in understanding the physical structure of my installation and the Gales Gallery itself, as well as to address how liminality, space, and place are connected. In general, place can be defined as a localized and differentiated part of a larger surrounding that is space.

The structure of my installation was inspired by "*El Aleph*," a short story by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. Borges writes about his experience with *El Aleph*, a point in space that allows you to experience all of the space at the same time.[33] Borges's imaginative interpretation of time and space suggests a non-linear sense of temporality, a point in space where all other points coexist, and the idea that time can be conceived of as the simultaneity of all possible outcomes of any given action. *Aleph*, which is written as א, is not only the first letter of the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets, but it also has a sacred meaning in the Kabbalah, a Sephardic, mystic language and thought system that has been practiced in my family. All these ideas are connected to the same spatial structure of simultaneity in a special way, and all portray the feeling of experiencing multiple spaces simultaneously (figure 4).

Over the years, the Aleph symbol became my own personal talisman; it is inscribed on the wall and the floor of my studio, and it appears and disappears within the monitor (figure 4.1). Following *El Aleph's* notions of simultaneity, I have conceptually reimagined the symbol as a choreographic device that can generate a fluid, imaginary experience of space to be "interwoven with all the other modes of experience," as French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty might suggest.[34] Furthermore, extending from Merleau-Ponty's discussion of

[33] Borges, Jorge Luis. "El Aleph." *Sur* (1945).
[34] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Phenomenology of Perception. Translated by Colin Smith. New Jersey: The Humanities Press (1962): 287.

perception, the description of human space could be developed indefinitely, and space could be considered a process involving non-physical and physical, pre-reflective and reflective, as well as subjective and intersubjective dimensions (Ibid.).

My installation consisted of tall, rectangle wood panels leaning on the wall, casually, with uneven gaps between them. These panels resembled doors, which is a recurring motif in my work. I use the panels as a choreographic device in my studio performances to generate movement and transition. They are also surfaces for temporary paintings and drawings, staged as a backdrop to be juxtaposed with my recorded performances. They are a kind of life-size palimpsest, or *pentimento*, holding reinscribed, archived gestures over time. In the installation, the video was projected onto these panels, occasionally bleeding off of the frames and onto the wall. Between the projector and the panels, a large transparency paper hung from the ceiling with only one clip at its top centre, allowing it the freedom to move, rotate and turn randomly (figure 5). The transparency paper is so light that even walking around the gallery space could cause it to move. The video projection passed through this transparency paper and onto the panels; every time the paper moved, it rendered fragments from the video onto the walls. These temporary fragments appeared briefly, and dissolved as the transparency paper continued to move.

The video and moving-image projection in the installation showed continuous dance phrases that consisted of sequential repetition and reiterations of bodily movement, painted gestures, geometrical forms, and lines that constantly interacted with objects and space (figure 5.1). The projection continually changed and transformed. Some parts of the video project the dancing body in monochromatic tones, suspended in non-defined space. In other parts of the video, bodies are situated in an imaginary landscape, with geometrical forms and lines continually transitioning from one place to another. In the installation, these transitions were able to appear within the video work itself, and also through the scale of the projection as it continually changed and, as a result, illuminated different parts of the space and objects.

The process of constructing and re-choreographing the video projection has always evolved in relation to the panels that are leaning on the gallery wall. As the video work changed and transformed in the dark space, it illuminated traces of painted gestures and marks inscribed on the surface of the panels, in-between them, and onto the walls as the transparency paper moved and rotated randomly (figure 5.2) . This emergence of the virtual and the physical gestures in space produced new visual representations of movement and different temporalities.

On the panels, between multiple layers of white paint, there were traces of numerous, temporary wall paintings and drawings that I painted for my studio performances. These are traces of beginnings and endings of different paintings; erasures upon erasures, geometrical forms, and other inscriptions of marks and gestures superimposed over time (figure 5.3). Although they are beginnings and endings of previous paintings, brought together in this way I see these as layers of gestures, applied to the panels over time and thus having no beginning or end; they have never been arranged for the completion of permanent, settled work. They all come from a different story, archived on the same surface with no chronological order. From time to time, and from erasure to erasure, some of the painted marks randomly join other marks, and their autonomous selves appear only as traces or residues. Thus, the surface of the panels in my installation was playful, reminiscent of children's painting.

Archival Returns

The idea of an archival return refers to the performative gesture of looking backward. The act of retrospective looking is inherently performative and part of the liminal, of being in-between. We seek to find a way to adapt to the changes brought about by transitioning from one place or situation to another, looking backward and forward from the middle state of the present. I have been negotiating various notions of archival returns throughout my research and practice, not just with digital or traditional performance documents, but also with what we might call the memory and body archives.

In the process of constructing the materials for the video work in my installation, I have returned to my performative digital documentation and recorded movement material from my early studio performances. This process helped me to re-evaluate and reconstruct some ideas that I was working on a decade ago.

Throughout my research and in the process of creating the works for my Master's exhibition, I encountered historical archival material of Jewish-Austrian interdisciplinary artist Gertrud Kraus, which became a great source of inspiration. Encountering her archive has encouraged me throughout my own personal and research journey. My use of textile props, expressionism, gestural vocabulary, choreographic drawings, repetition and improvisation were all developed in response to Kraus's work (figure 6).

Born in Vienna in 1901, Kraus directed a dance company and school both in Vienna and in Palestine after she fled the Nazis in 1935. Kraus worked with various media, such as dance, music, and visual art, and thought of art and dance interactively: as imaginative acts, poetic experiences, and an active correspondence among the senses. During her life, Kraus produced elaborate sketchbooks in which she continued, ecstatically, to "dance on paper." The piles of notebooks she left in her studio held countless sketches, the majority being abstract and showing a lively use of space, line, and shape. These present evidence, in her unique hand, of her fascination with abstraction and variation.

Kraus's multifaceted approach to art, and her journey as a diasporic subject, inspired me. Further, it was encountering her minimal archive that gave me the courage to investigate and explore my identity and artistic methods in the context of in-betweenness and liminality. Kraus's diasporic identity, her interdisciplinary, expressive, and improvisational approaches, resonated with my own approach.

Extant documents and artifacts, and their availability as sources, are prerequisite and especially crucial for the historical analysis of performative work.[35] The challenge of analyzing Kraus's performances is that her archive is limited. During my research in Tel-Aviv I visited the Bet-Ariela Archive where I discovered that, other than extensive text, testimonials, a small number of photographs, sketches, and drawings, there was no recording of any of her performances.

Ruth Eshel attributes the lack of preservation of Kraus's work to the rejection of expressionist aesthetics in Palestine at the time[36]. One particular dance work of Kraus's that was inspiring is *Lament* from the late 1930s, of which there are only two photographs. Interestingly, Kraus's *Lament* can be juxtaposed with *Lamentation* by American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham, created at the same time on the other side of the world. The recording of Graham's *Lamentation* allowed for a reviewing of the work and subsequent revivals and reconstructions by later generations (figure 6.1). Conversely, the shortage of Kraus's original film record, from the 1920s through to the 1950s, has resulted in a corresponding lack. Consequently, few encounter or recognize her exceptional work. This absence of recording makes Kraus's drawings, paintings, interviews, and sketches that much more valuable. This has inspired me to consider her drawings, words, and some of her photographs as sources of inspiration.

As a choreographer, Kraus created in the spirit of expressionism. She studied with Gertrud Bodenwieser, a Viennese pioneer of Ausdruckstanz (expressionist dance), and she worked with Rudolf von Laban, an Austro-Hungarian dance artist and theorist, as his assistant in mounting the 1929 annual trade unions' parade in Vienna. Additionally, Kraus saw herself as a practitioner working within Laban's creative frame and expressionist movement. These influences are also exemplified in her adaptation of improvisational technique, commonly employed within the Ausdruckstanzian form. Her works were characterized as strange, and this uncanny quality

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[35] Jones, Amelia, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation." *Art Journal* Vol. 56, No. 4 (1997): 11-9.

[36] Eshel, ruth, *Dance Spread Its Wings:* Israeli Concert Dance 1920-2000, 2016. I am grateful to Dr Ruth Eshel who became a primary resource for my archival research on the historical development of Israeli Dance. I cherish our meeting and exchanged conversations that shed a light on many historical dance works that have inspired me over the years, and in this paper.

became a mark of her personal style in Europe.[37] The European critics of the 1920s and 1930s referred mainly to the visual-design component of Kraus's work, connecting it to the chiaroscuro effect seen in early expressionist films. The tension she experienced from being neither here nor there, between "the experimental and the experiential elements," was embodied within the foundations of her dance compositions.

Although Kraus's artistic themes had universal meaning, they had the expression of the local Palestinian landscape, a particularly evocative facet as this came from a newcomer from Europe [38]. The local scenery, so different from the one Kraus had left behind, clearly made a strong impression on her. There is a melancholic tone to her dance, possibly related to the challenges she faced in the wake of her immigration from Europe to Palestine, an ambivalent experience for her on both personal and cultural levels. Expressionist dance, for Kraus (and others), was a way of liberating fluctuating feelings, sensitivities, and emotions, in the context of unique textures, props, and forms (figure 6.2). Kraus's drawings are fundamentally choreographic in nature; moving gestural lines are repeated with rhythm, and repetition of the same gestures in different colours suggests reiteration, personified, and a minimal landscape juxtaposed with figures, as well as a consistent effort to illuminate the multiplicity of gestures (figure 6.3, 6.4) .

The experience of encountering Kraus's archive[39] inspired me to conceptually translate some of her choreographed drawings and photographs into new representations within my video work. I began to explore Kraus's marks, lines, and forms as a way to contemplate my own, in the video work projected onto the panels in my installation. Inspired by her drawings, I reconstructed some of her recurring lines and gestural expressions that I considered as an effort to generate movement and transition through drawing. In the projection, the gestural lines and forms received a new scale and became animated (figure 6.5). Others of Kraus's techniques that

[37] Yellin, Liora Malka . "Gertrud Kraus's Imaginative Acts at the Intersection of Dance and the Visual Arts." *Dance Chronicle* Vol. 40 No. 3 (2017):311-312.
[38] Manor, Giora, The life and Dance of Gertrud Krauss, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, Israel, 1978.
[39] I thank to the choreographer Zvi Gotheiner for his valuable insights, and for sharing with me many rare drawings and documents that became a major source of inspiration throughout the construction of the work in this project.

resonated with me came into expression in the form of translucent marks; repetitive curved lines contrasted with downward lines, as gestures of bending towards the earth and fluidity.

In response to Kraus's use of textile props and costumes as choreographic devices, I incorporated movement materials that I recorded in the photography studio. I created textile objects resembling the ones in Kraus's photographs, and the movements with the textile props were performed in collaboration with two dancers who responded to Kraus's photos. I then choreographed the movements into a sequence in the projection video work.

Kraus was able to create an unusual space in which the kinesthetic and the visual "dwelled intimately together" (Ibid., 311). Referring to her sketches, Kraus states: "These drawings bring me into the action of dancing, and it doesn't matter if one dance is on paper, what matters is that the drawing and dance phrases have a structure."[40] Kraus's quote resonates with Jonas's perception of gesture and surface: Jonas explains: "I didn't see a major difference between a poem, a sculpture, a film, or a dance. A gesture has for me the same weight as a drawing."[41]

[40] Brin, Ingber. "Interviews with Gertrud Kraus." A draft for "The Gamin Speaks." *In the Israeli Dance Archive* Beit Ariela Library. File No. 121.18.1.3. p4

[41] Morgan, Susan. "Joan Jonas: *I Want to Live in the Country (And Other Romances)(One Work)."* Afterall Books (2006).

Möbius: On Being Imperceptible

On the other side of the Gales galley, a moving image-image sculpture comprises a black object, monitor, and a mirror. The monitor showed a moving-image work titled *Möbius*, with a duration of eighteen minutes in a loop.

In *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz discusses the metaphor of the Möbius strip (a flattened strip of paper that is twisted into the shape of a figure eight and joined so that there is no end or beginning), indicating that bodies are constituted through cultural and linguistic forces that move from the outside in and from the inside out.[42] Grosz conceives of subjectivity as a modality that shifts continuously from interiority to exteriority, like the surface of a Möbius strip. Grosz uses the metaphor of the Möbius strip to argue that the body is a historical and cultural product that is produced by the interaction of physical and psychical, or exterior and interior inscriptions. She elaborates that what is "inscribed" on the inside surface of the body are pleasures, sensations, and experiences; and what is inscribed on the outside are more to do with requirement, social imperative, custom, and corporeal habits" (Ibid., 117).

If we imagine the body with the Möbius strip metaphor, it doesn't matter from which point or in what direction that movement begins. A movement that begins in a certain position can continue to move in a different direction without being fully aware of the different sections of the figure eight shape. Movement, then, is in continuation, without an arrival at any critical point or the will to force a chosen direction or pause. While Grosz's metaphor inspired me, my moving image work *Möbius* was further informed by my experience of crossing borders during my research process. Reflecting on my travels to Israel and Morocco, I have been exploring the edges and boundaries of space and the body, where the inner and outer exist in an ambivalent, liminal relationship that leads me to possibilities for rethinking embodied subjectivity.

The work evolved through durational iterations and repetition. I repeated the performance for the camera, several times and in the same location—the space of the Gales Gallery. The first

[42] Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1994).

performance was made before my trip to Israel, and then I reenacted the performance upon my return. The other two iterations I performed before and after traveling to Morocco (figure 7.1). I recorded all the iterations, which included four sequential photo stills of the same ceremonial act, space, and place, at different times. I began the process by constructing a textile object, a large-scale stretchy blue fabric that is stitched on both edges to create a loop, and is reversible. As a choreographic device and body extension, the blue stretchy textile was constructed in a way that allowed my body to be fully covered and immersed within it. A physical image of the body is absent throughout the performance; it was dematerialized and deconstructed into an abstraction of blue gestures moving in space (figure 7.2).

I also drew upon Portuguese philosopher José Gil's description of the Möbius structure as reflective of the body in movement, "ceaselessly making and unmaking itself, absorbing and dissolving the interior without stopping, making it climb to a single-sided surface."[43] According to Gil, the "Möbius strip-like body" is a performing "body-without-organs," and thus a freeing of the most substantial kinesthetic intensities (Ibid.). Another source of inspiration for me is the manipulation of textiles to generate a movement vocabulary used in expressionist dance, which also parallels the integration of textile costumes in the work of Kraus and Graham. In their dance work, such textile props are part of the choreographic process and gestural vocabulary.

My movement was not based on any particular instructions or score; it was a self-directed intention that responded to the sense of disorientation with respect to place that I have been experiencing—the liminality, in-betweenness, and cultural displacement I am continuing to explore. I began the performance by applying a large scale, gestural chalk drawing along the empty white walls of the gallery space. In the second part of the performance, I wore the blue textile, covering my body, and I began to move in space. I became invisible for the camera; on the screen my body lacks visibility and obscures the ability to be located in the gallery space. Because this performative action was recorded with a camera I was able to capture a pre-ordered sequence of still photographs, in the duration of three seconds.

[43] Gil, José, and Lepecki, André. "Paradoxical Body." In TDR: The Drama Review.Vol 50, No. 4 (2006): 34.

I used various photography techniques such as long exposure and motion blur to capture particular qualities of movement. Later, when choreographing the digital photographs into a moving image work, I could view the juxtaposition of my blue gestures that my body produced, which merged by chance with fragments of chalk line. This created new translations of gestures as a result of the blurriness, the chalk line, and space (figure 7.3).

Just as the symbol *Aleph* became a choreographic device in my performative practice and in the construction of the exhibition space, so did the color blue, made apparent by the textile prop used in *Möbius*. The blue color in *Möbius* responds to my subjective experience of embodiment, the semiotics of color, and the conceptual translation of the literature I engaged in. It is commonly understood that colors have a fundamental role in the work of a painter. Every painter passes through the journey of creating a universe of interpretations around colors. Working in-between performance and visual arts led me to encounter and consider colors differently. I have been studying theories and semiotics of colors through works such as Wassily Kandinsky's book *Concerning the Spirituality in Art*, which became a great source of inspiration for me.

Kandinsky writes: "The power of profound meaning is found in blue, and first in its physical movements, of retreat from the spectator, of turning in upon its own centre. The inclination of blue to depth is so strong that its inner appeal is stronger when its shade is deeper."[44] The word "blue" sounds exactly the same in Arabic and Hebrew. Likewise, the word "paintbrush" in Hebrew is pronounced the same as "blue" (כחול-מכחול); as if blue were something integral to the painter, part of her body, or the painter herself is blue. Blue is the colour of the Berber people, an Indigenous North African group that my family was part of. Basically everything in the Berber house is blue (majorelle blue in particular): the door, the windows, the pots, external walls, and clothing for instance. This colour was something that I returned to when visiting my childhood home and then traveling to Morocco.

[44] Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910): 181, New York : Dover Publications, 1977.

Methodology

Improvisation

> Improvise: *verb* compose as you go.
> From the Latin root *improvisus*, meaning "unforeseen."

In *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, American composer John Cage writes, "what is good is an improvisation free of thoughts about what is good.[45]" To feel liberated from any thoughts about "what is good" means to be free from any expectation of a concrete result, rational result, or any action that is meant to result in a tangible, fixed artwork. To embrace improvisation means to embrace the unknown and open a door for the unexpected to appear—as the opening epigraph suggests.

Throughout the 1960s, artists working within theatre, dance, and visual arts explored a multitude of improvisational methods to warm up the body; to develop its responsiveness to sudden emotional and other physiological impulses, to extend its physical range of movement, and to forge new interactions with space and objects. Artists working with experimental methods throughout the 1960s, such as the members of the Judson Dance Theatre, relied on improvisational techniques to plan or frame their events.

[45] Middletown, Conn. : Wesleyan University Press, 1961.

Choreographer and scholar Susan Leigh Foster highlights the idea of "corporeal spontaneity" in improvisational experiments.[46] She states: "The body functions as a powerful catalyst for potential change, imbued with authenticity, articulateness, uniquely capable of accessing primal energy. The body held the key to discovering new and original modes of action" (Ibid., 53). Similarly, within my performative practice, I use improvisation to generate movement invention, self-discovery, and spontaneity. I also utilize improvisational methods in a collaborative and experimental practice, where interventions, and the possible mark-making that emerges from the synthesis process between media, produce unexpected expressions and all sorts of visual translations that are essential to my work. Therefore, the recording and documentation of improvisational practices are important. Often, the documentation would be useful primarily for reflection and gaining knowledge and it also opens up the possibility to incorporate the recordings as materials in my artwork. Improvisation also means that the outcome of the improvised action can never be repeated, which is an important aspect in understanding one of the various roles that performance documentation can have.

As I made progress with video editing and using digital media software in my practice, I was able to retrieve gestures from these improvisational performances, even from just a fragment of movement. For instance, for the video projection, I re-choreographed a few segments of movement and recorded materials from improvisational collaborative practices held at York University during my studies in the Master of Fine Arts program (figure 8). Overall, I found that improvisation can be a playful act of dwelling in the unknown, in spiritual places. Improvisation provides a space that allows me to be detached from any preconceived order of things, and enables me to transform my space into an imaginary place within which to act, dance, and explore the body, identity, and subjectivity.

Recognizing the significance of improvisation, I am curious about how I can use the concept of liminality to think further about the experience with or through such a practice? How might the suspension of structures and orders of making and creating allow new feelings and sensations to

[46] Foster, Susan Leigh. *Dances that describe themselves:The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*. Wesleyan University Press (2002): 44.

rise above the surface? And, can we understand the experience of the "unforeseen" during improvisation from the perspective of liminality and ritual?

Reflecting on these questions I am reminded of Turner. Similar to the liminal space of ritual described by Turner, I have come to realize that improvisation provides a performative space in which existing or predetermined structures are challenged and suspended. Turner's concept of ritual and the liminal space can help understand how improvisation *as* a liminal space invokes transformation. When we are free from familiar and known structures of making and creating, both improvising and rituals provide a space for reconfiguration, change, and transformation.

Choreographed Marks

I have been using loosely predetermined instructions—what might be called a score—as a guide, to generate and develop a movement. In my practice, scores can be verbal propositions, usually relating to physical, bodily movement, objects, and space. The instructions and scores are informed by the theme of each particular work. The scores are usually open, simple, and can be based on mechanical or everyday movement—including movement that can be generated by thoughts, feelings, or attention to different parts of the body. The movement that is generated is always in relation either to real or imaginative space, objects, angles, light, colors, the camera, visual compositions, and other elements in time and space.

These choreographed notations are not rigid, nor do they have any restricted pattern. I am interested in creating an open space with a chance to enter in, so that there is always an exciting relationship between the constructed and the incidental. The subject matter of the scores is movement, and the movement does not always have a specific, clear message to communicate. Choreographic notations serve to define the movement of the body, as prescribed, written movement for dance work—acting as a loose structure and entry point. Recording a dance through the camera provided me with insight on movement. But notations maintained a connection to the temporality, dynamism, embodiment, and materiality of the movement

ultimately depicted. Yet, such qualities end up elusive, appearing and disappearing through the mediation among the media, bodies or different iterations.

Furthermore, my choreographic process involves: viewing the recording then beginning by selecting frames and still images from the sequential-chronological order; I then choose certain gestures, and re-choreograph the images into a new dance (figure 8.1). This process involves improvisation, in which I move images within the sequence, play with duration, speed, flow, blur, repetition, looping, multiplicity, reiteration, and doubleness—I make choreographic decisions as I work on the computer. This particular choreographic process cannot be made by others, as it involves specific, subjective observation and improvisation during the editing process.

I am continually returning back to my early performance documentation. It is the nature of my practice; I shift back and forth in time to re-evaluate and negotiate the documents. There are some experimental performances that, at the time, I was not able to articulate what they were. They felt a bit ambiguous, and yet meaningful in their own right. My photography skills were minimal at the time of these earlier performances; but still, the documents communicated a particular lived experience (figure 8.2). Despite my limited skills in photography, I utilize the camera to record the events. It was important to me that even though I was not sure what they were, I had faith that I would gain a better understanding of them. After several years, I almost gave up. I thought that the documentation of five years of my practice would probably remain digital documents stored on my computer. It took me nearly a decade to understand these performances and to develop my artistic language and methods in a way that I could construct artwork with my performance documentation.

When I revisit my performance archive I always gain new ways of looking, discovering sequences of photographs and gestures that powerfully communicated ideas that I was not able to put in words at that time, and that I did not know how to construct into artwork. Because the quality of these earlier performance recordings was poor, I was not able to use them as

movement material in my work. I considered re-enacting these performances; however, all my attempts to do so resulted in something different, not quite the same as the original event. This led me to realize that some of these performances could not be repeated, they were authentic expressions and any attempt to replicate would result in something different.

Even though I could not use these old materials in the way I had hoped, they comprised documentation, a body of knowledge. There is no singular relationship between documentation and representation, and I argue that it is impossible to determine if bodily gestures are entirely ephemeral. Although I recognize that the live moment of a gesture is a one-time event that is not reproducible, as Phelan argues, in artistic practices such as mine (in which the dance gesture is recorded with the intent to be reconstructed into artwork) I would like to extend that the so-called "real" performance can also exist in the reconstruction of the documentation—it is not solely present in the live event. Whether the gestures appear in documentation or in movement materials for reconstruction, the inscription of movement and gestures through documentation becomes a form, or body of knowledge that can be transmitted across time and physicalities.

These contemplations bring us to an understanding of dance as an elusive presence, "the fleeting trace of an always irretrievable", never fully translatable motion—not into notation, recording, reenactment, nor into writing. What challenges the vision of movement, gesture, and inscription is presence: "presence unfolding as a mode of being whose temporality escapes control, presence as hunted by invisibility, presence as sentencing to the absence."[47]

I have come to personify my forms and gestures over time; particularly when I began to work between media; when both painted and body gestures were migrating through mediation and different apparatuses. I approach my own forms and gestures as performative, and this may, at times, become a way of mirroring notions liminality. I observe these forms and gestures as complete, autonomous bodies and selves. I know that, at once, they cannot be fully translated, and yet they tell, or have the potential to tell, a story. I see the gesture not just as physical, but

[47] Lepecki, A. *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press (2004): 128.

intellectual and emotional as well; and through this understanding, I explore both cultural and personal knowledge as they come into expression in ritualized physical acts, various kinds of choreographies.

Residue

I am attempting to think of residue as the result of an additive process, a constant activity of movement across time, space, surface, and gestures. When things remain behind, when we think they have long been forgotten, that is when they appear. It is not always a visible residue; it could be the absence of something that is marking the presence of whatever is asking to return. For me, residue brings out the aesthetic qualities of time; residue activates time-travel, engaging a liminal place where past and present meet. It is the presence of the absence. The residue is a reminder of the non-present in the very presencing of the present.[48]

I first started to think about these material residues when I began to incorporate my studio backdrops with projection and moving images, such as the backdrop panels in my installation (figure 9). I have noticed that the painted marks that I applied on the backdrops during my performance recordings have returned and appeared in the moving images. With *Möbius*, I was interested in experimenting with the residual body, trace, and echo of place. I performed and recorded the movement materials for *Möbius* at the gallery during my research, and the decisions I made in constructing the work in the installation, such as the position of the monitor, scale, and proximity, responded to the spatial qualities of the gallery. When I arrived at my mother's village in the Atlas Mountains, I could not locate her house and I had doubts that it still existed after five decades. Because I regularly used my cellular phone to stay connected with my mother throughout my travels, we walked together around the village, trying to find traces of familiar things while she, through the cell phone screen following my walk. The place has changed, but somehow she could navigate through pathways, olive orchards, hills, a cemetery, and ruins. She recognized the residues of what she once knew.

[48] Newman. M. *The trace of trauma: blindness, testimony and the gaze in Blanchot and Derrida*. London and New York: Routledge (1996): 166.

In movement and performance practice, residues appear in multiple forms—of bodily knowledge, pre-reflective experience, perception, and physicality to name a few—and all of these residues, traces, and imprints are accessible in the form of sensations.

Repetition

I have been working with methodologies of repetition throughout my practice, for different purposes. Repetition in my work is both technique and subject. It is a compulsion that refers to the way I repeat forms and gestures. The subject and what is repeated are determined by different signifiers. Within drawing and painting practice, I work with repetition in a different way, repeating the same form, lines, and gestures to create variations of an idea or source. In my performative practice for the camera, I repeat the same gesture or movement in a ritualized act, to generate sensations and representations, to accumulate movement materials, and to make the dance visible (figure 10.1).

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, I was influenced by the innovations in movement by the members of the Judson Dance Theatre, such as the performance duet by Trisha Brown and Yvonne Reiner called *Satie for Two* (1961). Both Brown and Reiner sought to explore repetition in different ways and to make work that questioned visibility and materiality, but they also used repetition as a method to generate new ways of thinking and making. Rainer puts it plainly when she says: "*Dance is hard to see.*[49]" Here, Rainer is talking about the discreteness of a movement in dancing, and the attempt to show the transient gesture that disappears in its act (figure 11). It is an alternative way of ordering material, and making the material easier to see. In the process of digital choreography for the screen, the use of repeating forms and gestures in multiple durations is a method to generate kinesthetic sensation. Indeed, I develop my movement vocabulary through dynamic and rhythm repetitions, through a ritualistic, repetitive movement. Physical and visual narratives are revealed through methods of repetition, varying from one iteration to

[49] Lambert-Beatty, Carrie. 2008. *Being watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

another, while new information, differences, gestures and expressions arise in-between whatever is repeated.

Methods of repetition are also significant elements in the artistic practices of Joan Jonas and Gertrud Kraus. In a sequence repeating one single movement, form or gesture, there can be a distinct range of variation that appears. Each repetition is unique, a little different from one to the other. We can imagine repetition as a device of experimentation for new gestural expressions and representations, as a playful reinvention that could be activated in creative practices that are conscious of their own history and attentive to the materiality of process.

According to French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, repetition of the work of art is like a "singularity without concept."[50] In other words, every repetition consists of a difference without a concept (Ibid.). Repetition, which we might have thought to be a matter of sameness, turns out to be a matter of difference, of the obscure (Ibid., 12). This is both the literal and the spiritual sense of repetition. Repetition's power comes from the way it energizes the space in-between whatever is repeated. As Deleuze says, "The theatre of repetition is opposed to the theatre of representation. In the theatre of repetition, we experience pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organised bodies, with masks before faces (Ibid., 12).

Returning back to Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander's views on archival return and the experience of returning through performance re-enactment, my obsession with returning to my performance archive is another method of repetition that has led me to wonder: What is it that I am drawn to return to? There are many reasons for the purpose of revisiting instances of movement: the desire to see again, to reconstruct embodied knowledge or unfinished ideas that I want to work through, to actively engage with the document through memory. It is also a continuous return for something that I could not experience the first time that I viewed the photographs, and that only appears through time and through repetition and archival returns.

[50] Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press [1968] (1994).

Still, I support Phelan's statement about the performance being unrepeatable. I know that the live moment will never return, that I cannot repeat the performance, and that it will never feel the same as it was; nevertheless, I engage my returns to remember.

There are questions that inspire my methodology of repetition. I ask: How did I feel? How did the light enter the space? What were my thoughts and concerns? What were my contemplations? What was my state of being? What was my perception about the world around me? These are not comfortable or nostalgic returns, unlike that of returning to familiar places, and these are not necessarily difficult returns, like returning to a traumatic experience; rather, these are a bit of each. These are simultaneously familiar and difficult returns, causing discomfort at the same time as pleasure, as well as a bit of nostalgia—because the past will never return. This is a liminal experience of always being in-between, and what is constituted in-between is difference; a difference that I am seeking to explore.

Afterword

Rites of Passage in the Abyss of Contemporary Liminality

The pandemic started a month before I completed the writing of this paper. As I was about to summarize and conclude the last part, we entered the social distancing period. As a result, the thesis submission, dissertation and installation were canceled. The sudden burst of chaos affected me immensely, and specifically concerning my research and graduation. Instead of writing my final note (there are no concrete conclusions, but perhaps a compelling note), I have returned to question and re-examine many aspects of this research, from a pandemic perspective.

In this thesis, I unfolded my theoretical grounding, modes of expression, and the methodologies utilized in my artistic practice and throughout the process of constructing the multimedia installation at Gales Gallery. Although I have focused my discussion in these three main sections (theory, expression, and methodology), throughout the paper I have weaved between ideas and insights, theory and research, inspirations, personal reflections, creative practices, process, and installation. In this way, the paper's structure is intended to reflect my journey in between art-making, time, body, space, and place, and experiences of liminality, which has led to what I have come to understand as my liminal self.

To offer theoretical frameworks within the context of liminality, artistic practice, and identity, I analyzed a variety of sources—in anthropology, ethnography, dance, and visual art. These frameworks enabled me to examine how notions of liminality and the in-between are experienced from both the perspective of identity and the creative process. To ground the discussion about how liminality comes into an expression with my artistic practice and methodologies, I offered other contemporary theories and explored the aesthetic experience of liminality that is associated with the various artistic methods.

Although, I didn't directly address issues of media specificity in this thesis, I did, however, negotiate between the materiality of gestures and my experience of transitioning—from working within traditional methods of painting to working with time-based media and installation as an integrated art form. I also expressed my concerns about the tangibility of my artwork. Now, situated within a pandemic perspective, I would ask: How can issues of media specificity be addressed from this point in time? The structural borders of nearly any media have been challenged and disrupted. Still, we continue to perform and express while navigating with the present conditions, with its ambiguity, to experience new modes of being and creating.

In the second section of the thesis, I described how notions of simultaneity, space, and place are explored in the context of liminality. I considered Gillian Rose's metaphor of paradoxical space, in the context of my personal experience of crossing borders and living between cultures. I also explored notions of simultaneity, space, and place in the performative process in my video work *Möbius*, and I explained that the structure and choreographic setting of the installation were informed by these ideas and inspired by notions surrounding the symbol *Aleph*.
The classical model of van Gennep's, and even Turner's concept of liminality are outdated considering the historical period; in many ways, van Gennep developed his work on liminality in the context of tribal societies. Still, these were the first main sources that prompted me to further investigate and explore liminality through practices of creativity, and my liminal self and gestures. Although I have been developing and expanding on contemporary notions of liminality and rites of passage across disciplines-, this current liminal pandemic event wasn't even a considerable event to include in this research.

To extend from van Gennep and Turner's theories, I elaborated on Paul Stenner's and Tania Zittoun's discussion of liminal experiences. To reiterate, Paul Stenner talks about the process of ritual as a type of technology, and how, at their core, various art forms can also be considered effective liminal technologies—sharing essential features with ritual. Stenner and Zittoun distinguish between "spontaneous" and "devised" liminal experiences. The "spontaneous" liminal experience being that which falls on us, forcing us to deal with a change we might not

ask to experience, such as the world being shut down due to a pandemic and/or someone close to you being in danger. These are events that disrupt the structured, flow patterns of our life, and the experience of that disruption can be considered a liminal, spontaneous experience.

Throughout the research and writing, I was less interested in elaborating on spontaneous experiences of liminality, except when I described my childhood experience and events that brought me to define myself as a liminal subject. I was more interested in deepening my understanding of how Stenner's and Zittoun's devised liminality can be a model in which I support my ideas of liminality, explored in artistic methods of practice. Following Stenner and Zittoun, "devised" liminal experiences are those experiences that we do to ourselves, consciously and creatively producing the liminal affectivity by engaging in creative practices, or what Stenner defines as "liminal affective technologies." It is something that happens to us in a virtual space\time, abstracted from daily practical reality and mediated by cultural resources and artistic forms that I presented in this thesis, such as rituals, painting, dance, and other art forms**.** I have come to associate methods of practice by female choreographers, and myself, as devised liminality. So, to open up the possibility to move out of the ordinary structures of daily life—or in case of the creative process, the structures of media—it is necessary to temporarily suspend the rigid structures, norms, and expectations that set limits.

Another interest of mine was the potential to create art from archival materials. Thus, I investigated the relationship between the live moment of performance and its document. I came to the understanding that documentation can serve multiple roles, beyond being solely representational of the live event. Moreover, there is not a singular relationship between performance and its documentation, the inscription of movement and gestures through documentation becomes a form, or body of knowledge, and artwork itself. And now that the world has shifted in light of the pandemic, further questions have emerged for me on this topic. I am left asking: What is the live movement from this point in time? What might we consider the moment of ritual? How have our meanings to do with space and place radically shifted?

In this current pandemic we are experiencing an immense loss of the real, and nearly every lived experience has become mediated through the virtual world. While performance may only have one, live iteration, documentation extends the life of that performance, allowing the work to live simultaneously in the memory of the past, present and the future. Thus, I am curious about how we will begin to conceive of time and space, of past, present, and future, as our lived experiences are mediated through the virtual. With respect to the artists and scholars I have discussed, I wonder what are their contemporary positions concerning the repeatability of the present moment of performance? How will scholars such as Peggy Phelan think about "live" performances and ephemerality in the context of virtual mediation? If performances are being performed virtually, whose time/space will be considered "present" or marking the "present" moment—the performer's, the viewer's, the producer's? In other words, what and where might the "live" moment be? How can and will artistic practices deal with these radical shifts? What can we learn, and what is the potential of this current event to give birth to new liminal expressions?

I am attempting to reflect on our current event as a liminal experience that can make relevant and renew models that were considered outdated—though, with different relevance in our present time. Thinking from van Gennep's classic example of initiation (which describes experiences such as the rite of passage from youth to adulthood, and the corresponding separation from the social in order to experience reintegration after the rite), I am noticing a parallel with our current situation. The experience of social distancing, where the majority of us have been forced to physically social distance ourselves from the world, to stay in our homes and isolate ourselves for weeks, is similar to the separation from the social in initiation rites of passage. The relevance of this theory comes to the fore and is renewed in this pandemic context; in other words, a historical return to classic models such as van Gennep's has become relevant.

I want to mention that while writing this last section of my thesis, I knew that the installation would not be physically accessible for visitors due to the pandemic. Instead, the installation was mediated through the virtual. What does this mean? How can the remote viewer possibly sense

the simultaneity and multiple temporalities of movement and gestures through a virtual setting? My contemplations about methods of reconstructing performance documentation and the mediation of performance through technology have been shifted to contemplations about how to mediate the physical experience of the installation through the virtual. I am hoping that, somehow, this unexpected setting will communicate the outcome and ideas that I present in this research paper. The pandemic intensified my understanding of how the integration of technology and liveness can create a unique sense of time and space where things beyond the ordinary are possible. And it has led to questions about what is ordinary, and what is possible.

As I mentioned above, our current pandemic can be experienced as a collective rite of passage as our global society is all passing through uncertain times. Metaphors of the rite of passage and liminality can invoke new experiences when applied to our current pandemic. It brings the discussion of rites of passage and liminality from the past into our present. This period of social distancing is a new example of liminality. As a global rite of passage, the liminality is saturated with uncertainty, ambiguity, and fear, and the future is yet known to us. We are realizing that the normal that we knew, will never be the same; our attention is pointed to different risks and cautions with the awareness that we might die as a result of infection, and that we might fall into the danger of other events that occur in between, bursting in multiple places at the same times, like a field of butterfly effects all generated by this global rite of passage.

Yet, simultaneously, this context provides a space for rethinking social, cultural, personal, and artistic structures. It makes us humble, and we begin to think outside everything that we know to communicate in different ways. Despite the challenges, the global liminal experience brings us together, brings us inward, as well as outwardly toward others, backward in time (with the loss of the old normal), through time, and forward to the unknown future. And so, I wonder: How could qualities of movement and transition within liminal experience be understood in our present present?

When we entered into the pandemic, and began social distancing, I expected that this pause would probably end in a couple of weeks, but it has turned out to be over a half year at this point. We were caught in transition, a global community suspended in an unknown present and uncertainty.

Paul Stenner defines such experiences as permanent liminality, or what he calls a liminal hotspot, which describes the possibility of getting stuck in transition. It is an event during which people feel they are caught suspended in the circumstances of a transition that has become permanent. These liminal experiences, of uncertainty and ambiguity, are characterized by dynamics of paradox (if we understand the qualities of movement and transition in a liminal state), and polarization, but they also enhance the potential for pattern shifting. Although the present exists, it is *missing a clear future,* and our old past is called into question. And so, whilst dealing with this *liminal present*, we are simultaneously in the process of *imagining and articulating a new past and a new future*, for a present that is yet to come.

Images



Figure 1, Archive return - *The ceremony*, 2014, sequence of performance still



Figure 1.1 *Chalk Line Feeling*, 2014, sequence of performance still



Figure 2, Meredith Monk, *Education of the Girlchild*

Left: performed at Common Ground in 1972, shot by Ping Chong

Right: performed at The Center for the Creative Arts at Austin Peay State University, 2010

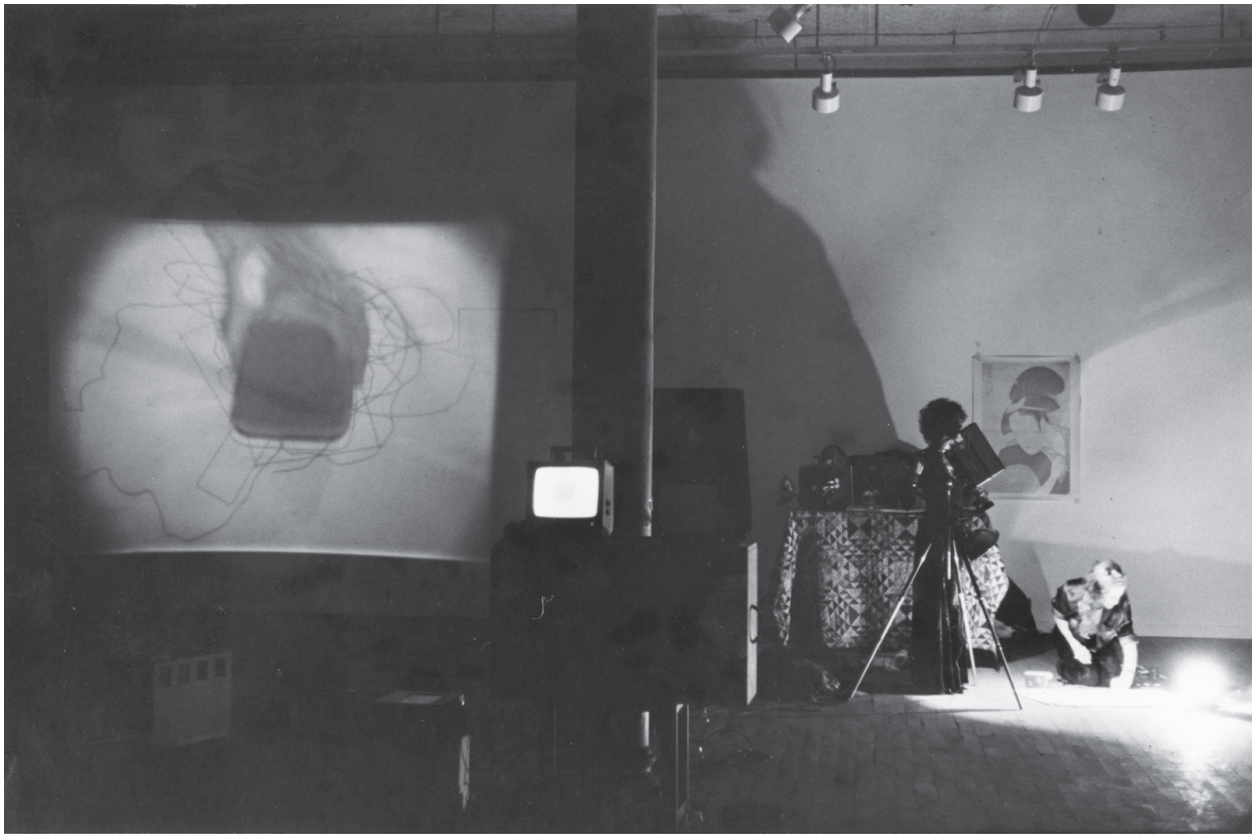

Figure 2.1 Joan Jonas, Installation still from *Organic Honey Visual Telepathy*, 1972 Loguidice Gallery



Figure 2.3, Maya Deren, *Ritual in Transfigured Time*, sequence from film, 1946



Figure 3, Trisha Brown, Accumulation.

Left: Trisha Brown, Group Primary Accumulation, 1973

Middle: Trisha Brown, Solo Accumulation, 1971.

Left: Trisha Brown, Accumulation, 2009



Figure 4, Primary Aleph, Studio, 2015



Figure 4.1, *The Space Between*, 2014, sequence performance still



Figure 5, *Variations on Broken lines*, Video projection, and transparency film Paper, 2020

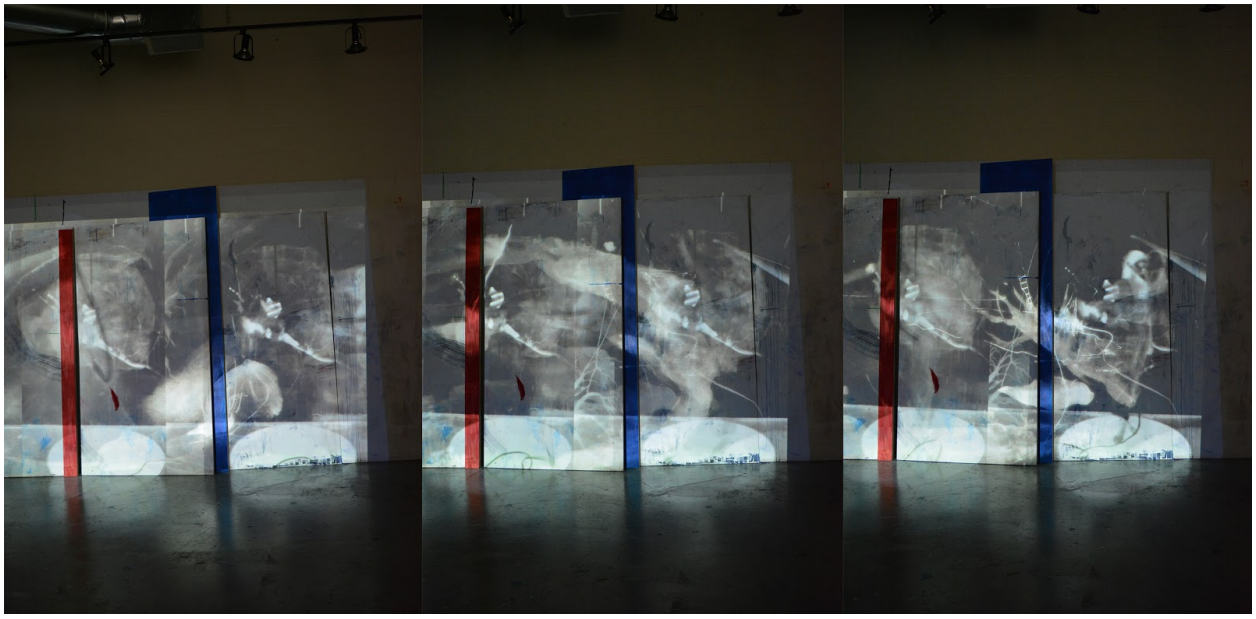

Figure 5.1, *Variations on Broken Lines*, Sequence, projection, 2020

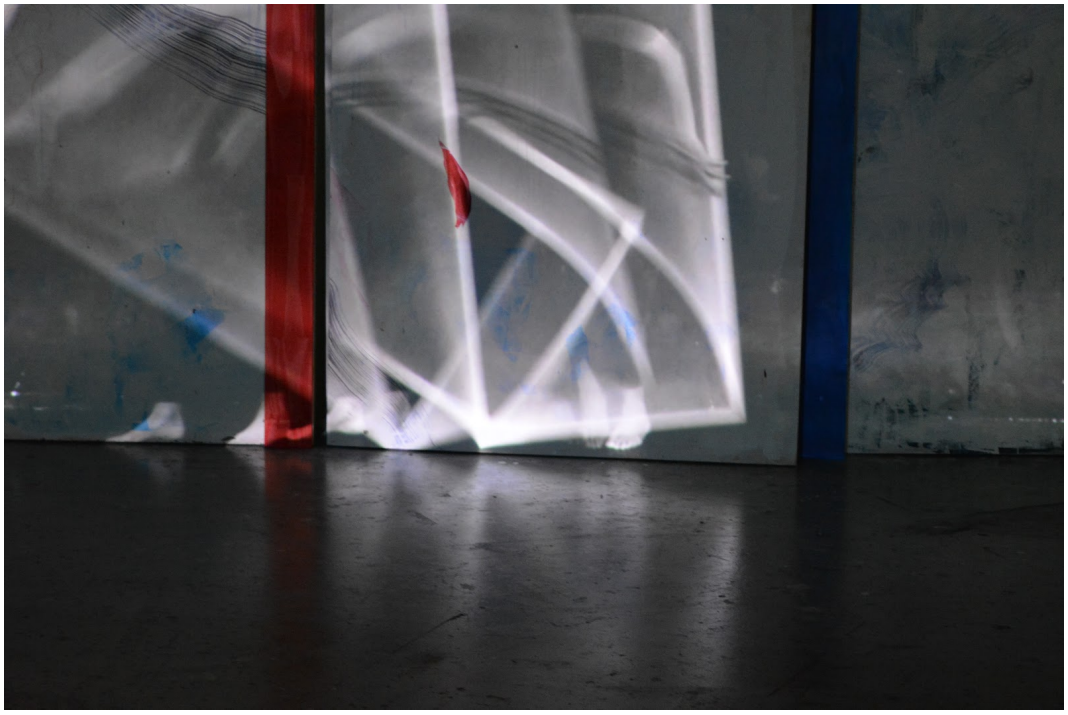

Figure 5.2, *Variations on Broken Lines* (detail)



Figure 5.3 *Variation 18*

Top: Studio shot with painted backdrops

Bottom: Performance still



Figure 6, Fire, Gertrud Kraus, early 1940s, Gelatin silver print, Collection of the Presler Private Museum, Tel Aviv photography By Alfons Himmelreich

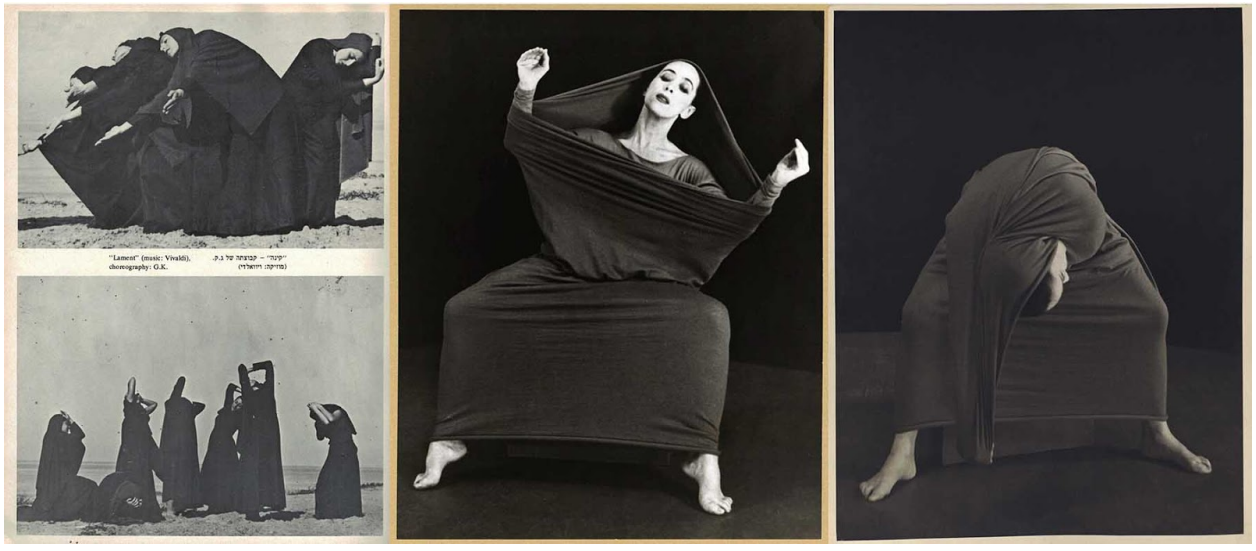

Figure 6.1

Left: Gertrud Kraus *Lament* (1931) Palestine

Right: Martha Graham, *Lamentation* (1930) New York City



Figure 6.2, Gertrud Kraus, 1927, Photos: Benda and others, from the picture Archive of the Austrian National Library

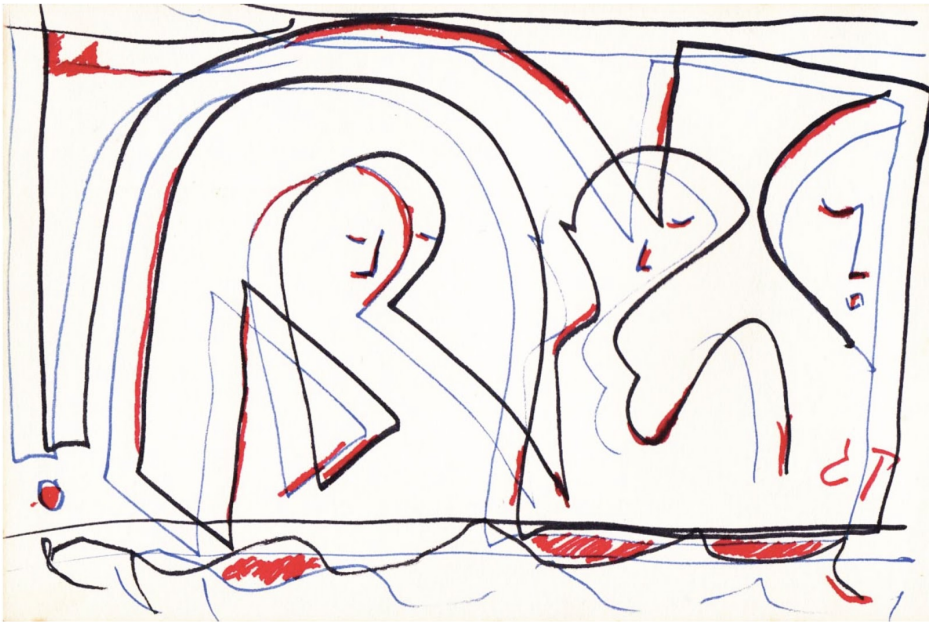

Figure 6.3 Gertrud Kraus, drawing from her sketchbook at Beit Gertrud Kraus Archive. Courtesy of the Beit Gertrud Kraus Archive, Ein Hod Artists' Village.



Figure 6.4 Gertrud Kraus, drawing from her sketchbook at Beit Gertrud Kraus Archive. Courtesy of the Beit Gertrud Kraus Archive, Ein Hod Artists' Village.

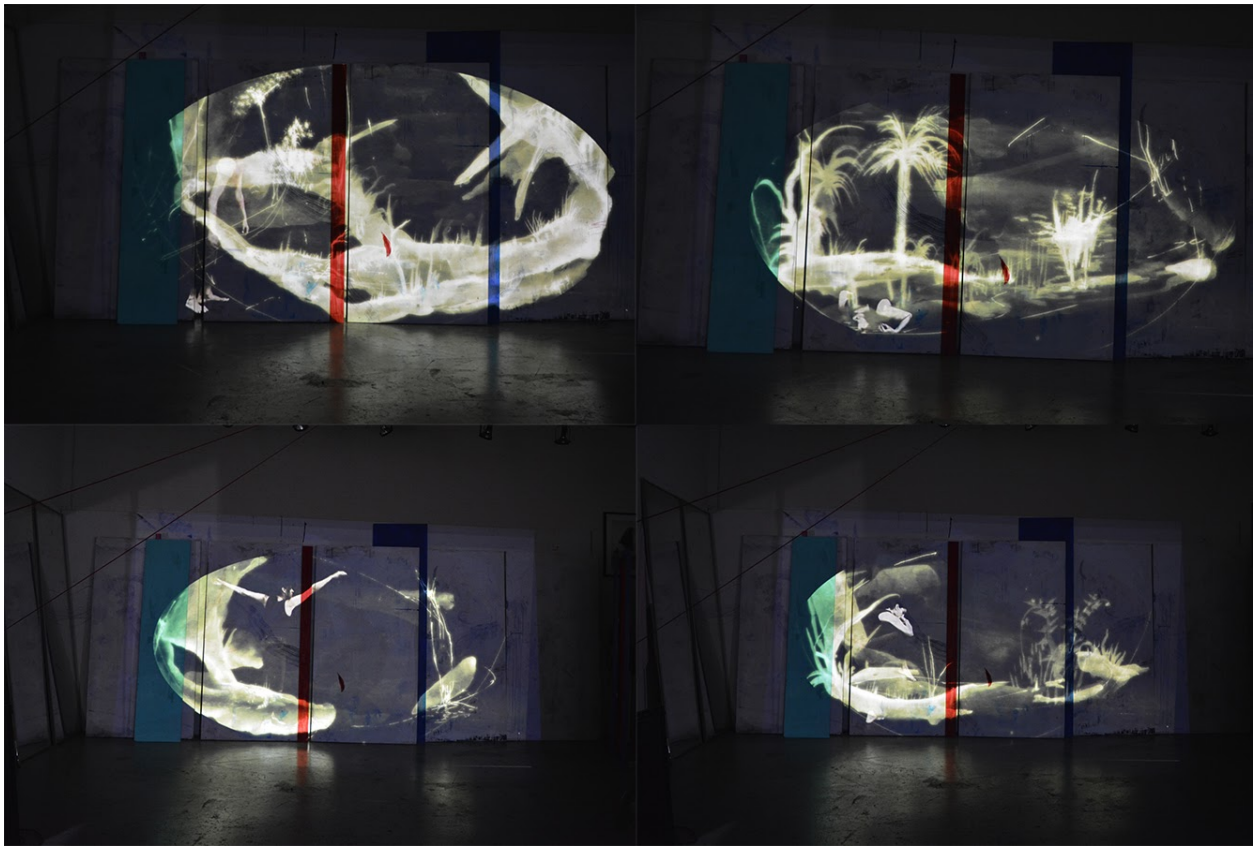

Figure 6.5, *Variations of Broken Lines*, 2020

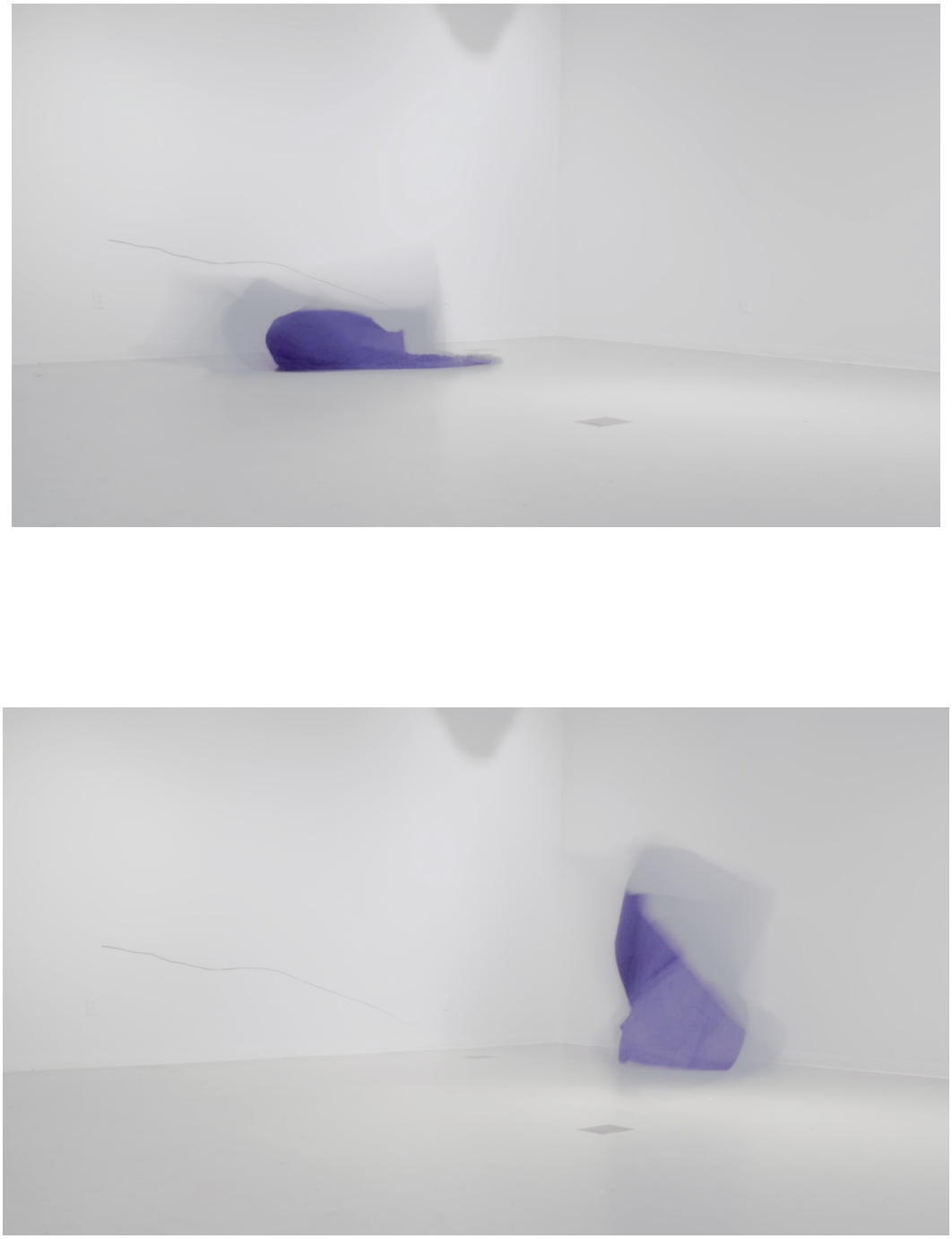

Figure 7.1, *Mobius*, 2019, Performance still

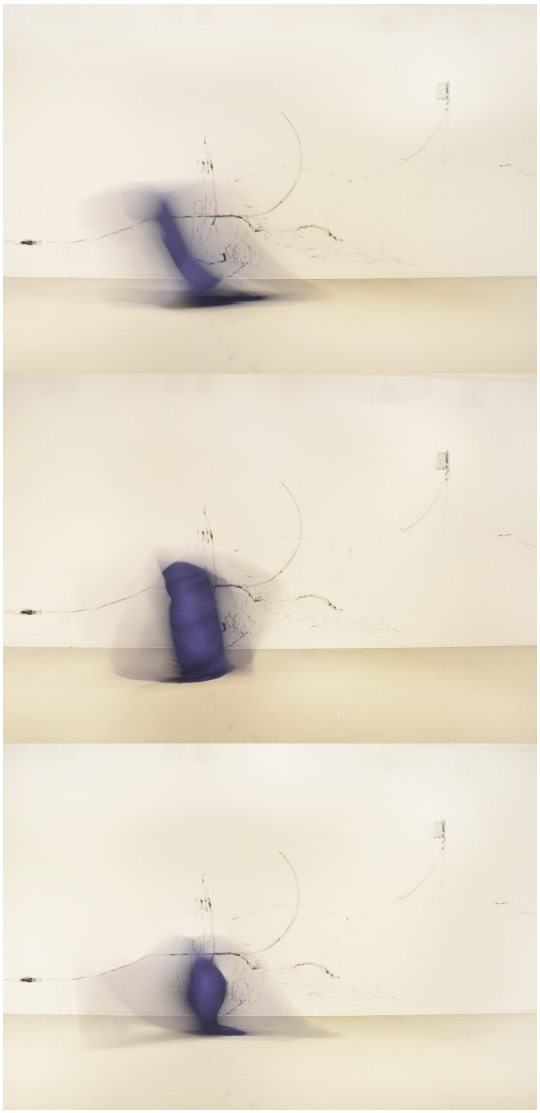

Figure 7.2, *Mobius*, 2019, sequence of Performance still

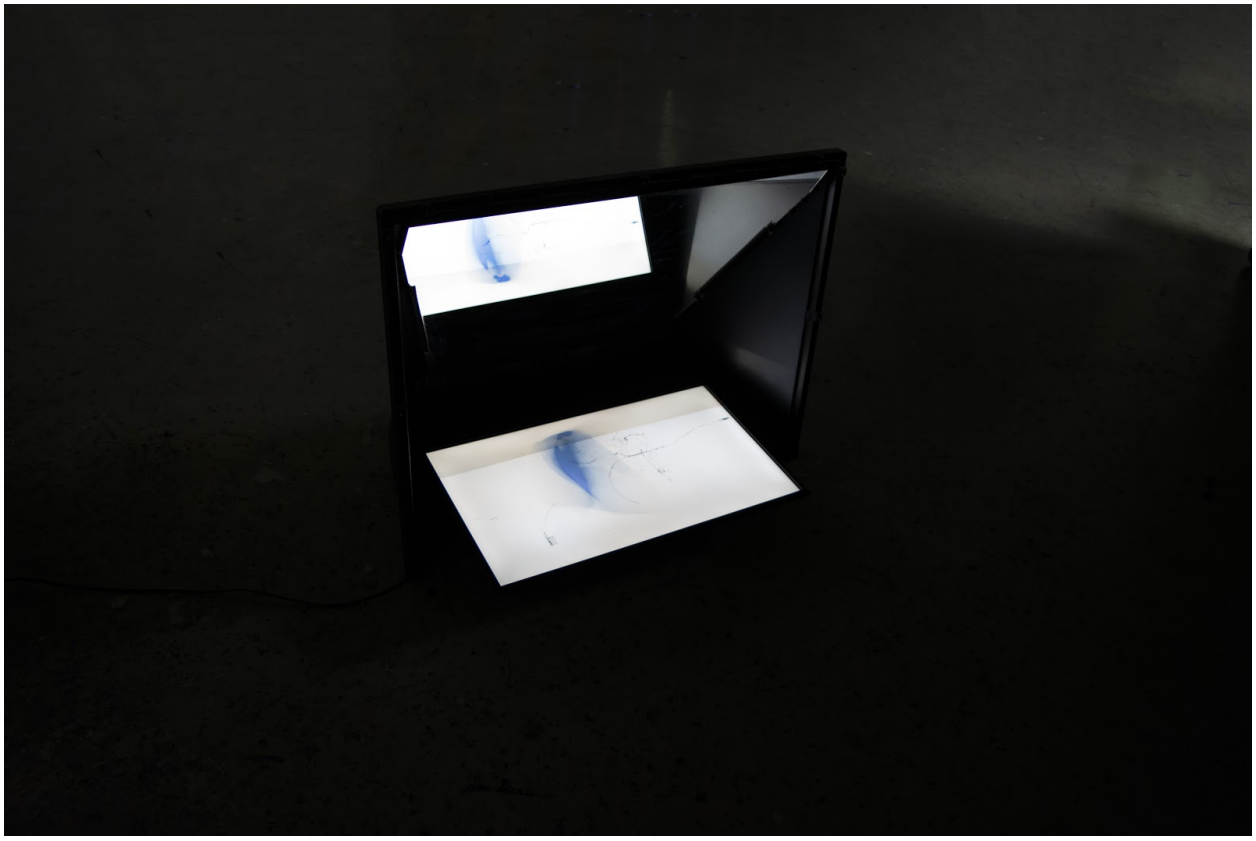

Figure 7.3, *Mobius*, moving image, duration 18min, loop



Figure 8, *Variation on Broken Lines*, Dancers: Cinzia Cavalier, Mahsa Alikhani, Sebastian Oreamuno & Maria Kravchenko

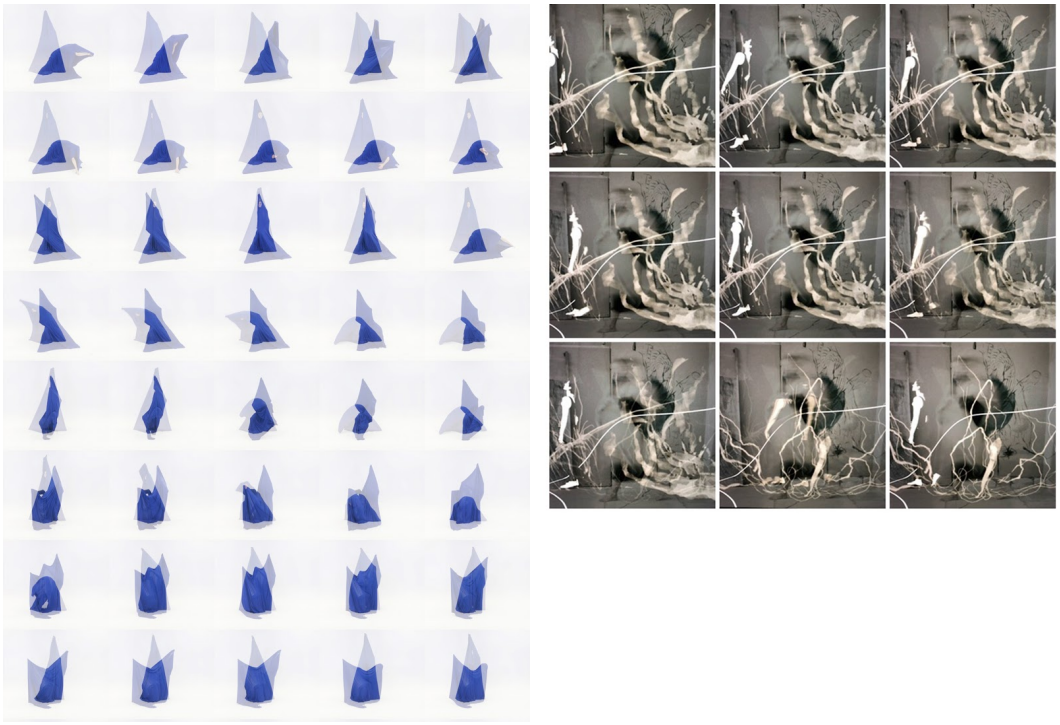

Figure 8.1

Left: *Mobius,* reconstructing dance phrase, 2019

Right: Variation #6, sequence from video projection



Figure 8.2, Solfeggio, 2013, performance documentation

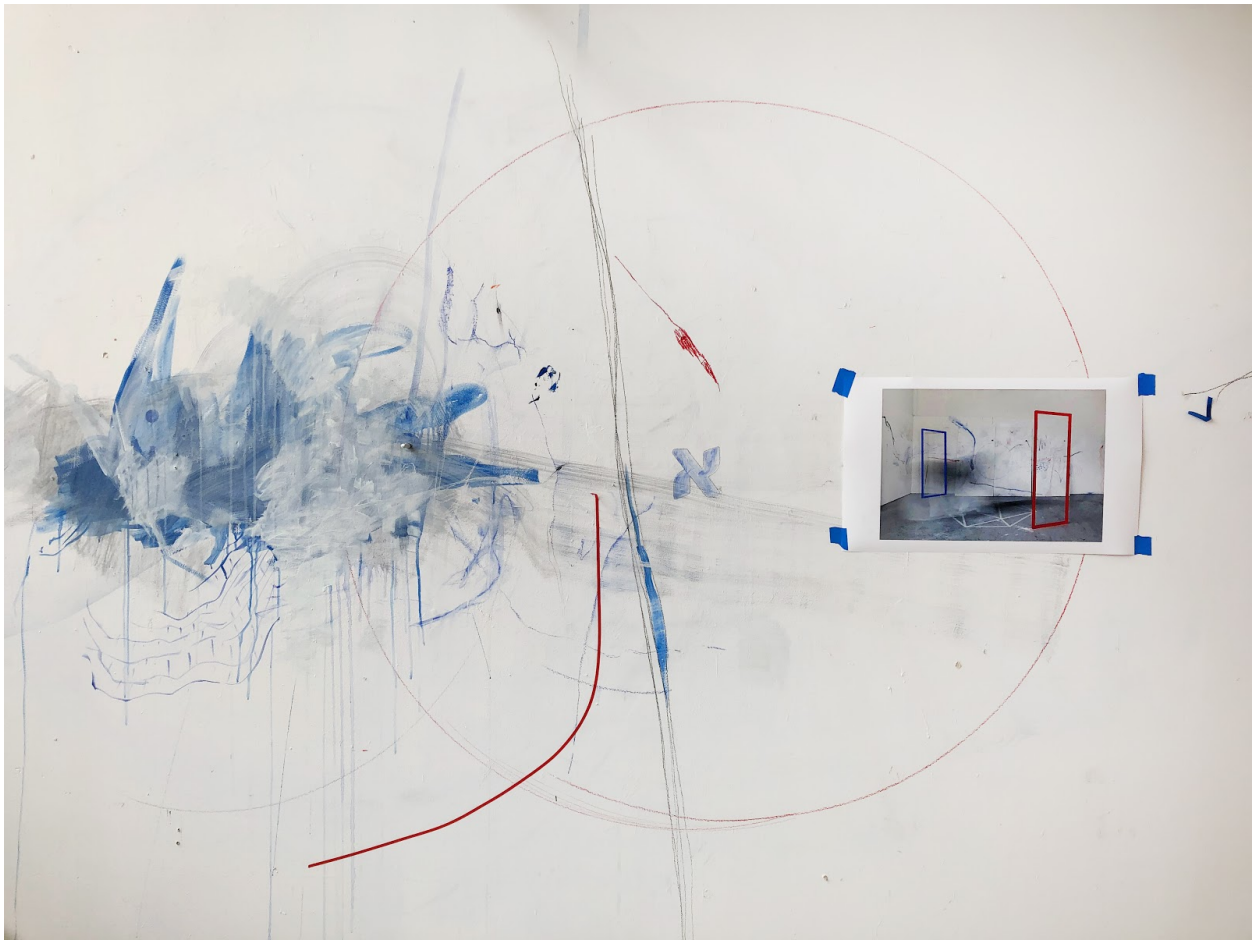

Figure 9, Residue, wall painting and performance still photograph, 2019

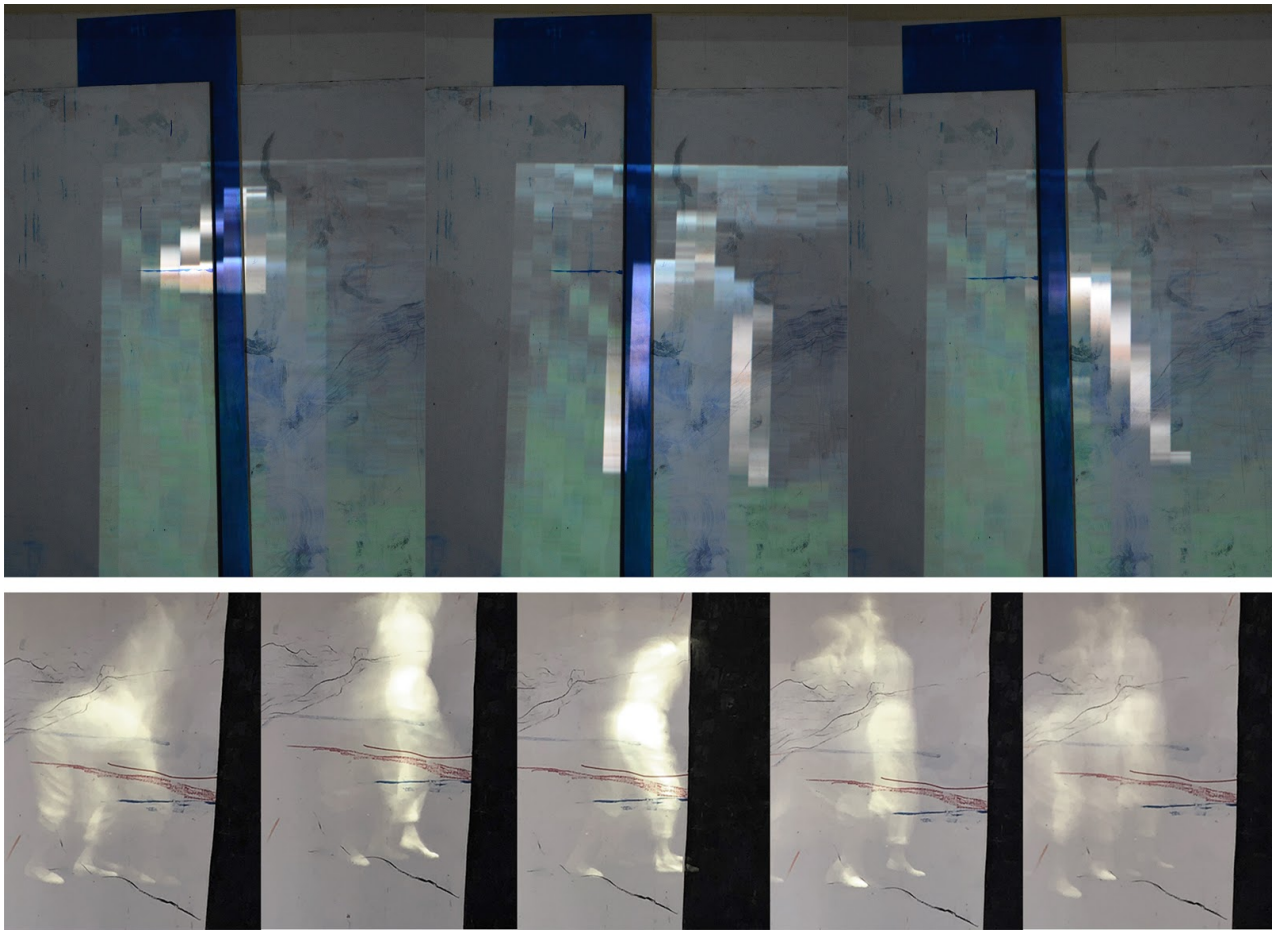

Figure 10.1 Top: *Variations On Broken Lines*, Sequence from video projection.

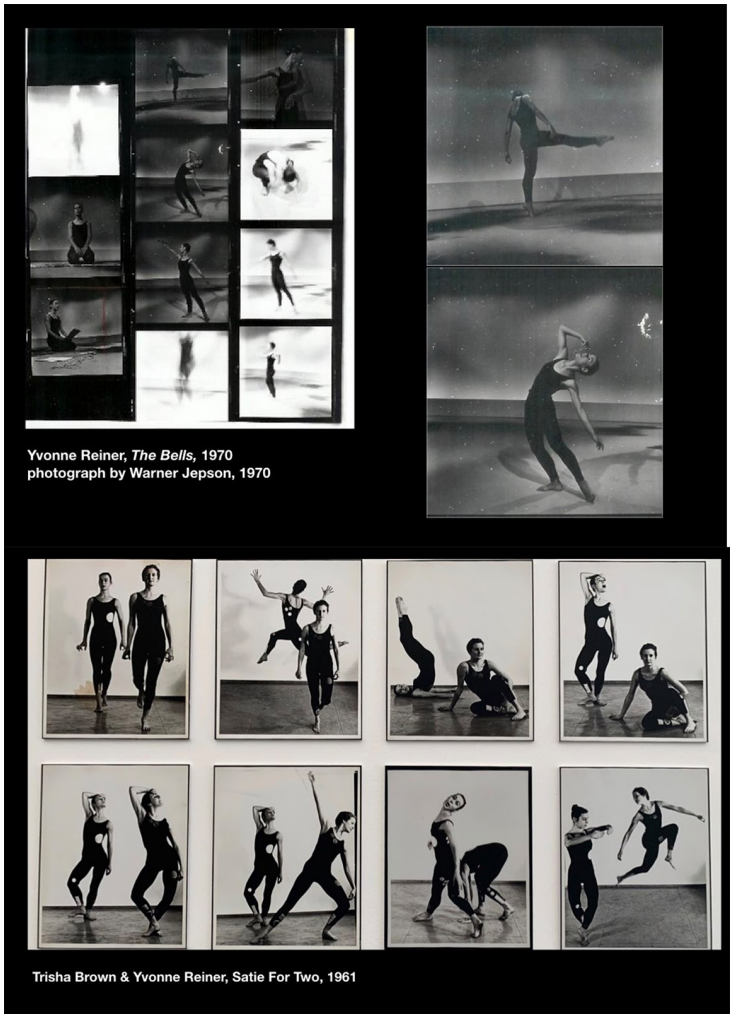

Figure 11

Top: Yvonne Reiner, The Bell, 1970, Photographed by Warner Jepson

Bottom: Trisha Brown & Yvonne Reiner, Satie For Two, 1961