

# ***Looking Again to See* (May 2014)**

## **Presentations from (AMCh) Response by Anik Fournier**

The thought in movement and the movement in thought

Deleuze has convincingly argued the close relationship between thought and movement. In his two books on cinema, he develops a taxonomy of moving- images, classifying them for the manner in which they re-inscribe existing forms of thought and representation and/or for their capacity to inscribe new thoughts largely by triggering new sensations and affects in the body. The AMCh presentations I attended provided further reflection on these arguments, moving beyond the register of representation (moving images) to the actual (the live body in movement). Most strikingly, for Deleuze all disciplines have their respective ways of thinking: philosophy thinks in the form of concepts whereas art thinks through percepts and affects. What then is the form of thought of the body in movement? Julien Bruneau's *Some crosscuts of some of our improbable bodies* provides a rich terrain to being such a discussion.

In this work, the relationship between movement and thought is seen to play itself out not immediately between the image (dancer) and its perceiver (the audience) but in a first instance, within the performed actions of the dancer. These actions consist of alternating moments of movement in space and of spoken reflections about a series of drawings on a table. The manner in which the dancers performed the choreography, in silence with visible alertness to each move and posture, gave the impression that they were exploring these movements for

the first time, or in some way, anew. The gestures, rhythmic motions and occasional pauses (or poses) seemed to awaken the body to a form of attentiveness, a manner of questioning: “how does my body feel this movement, inscribe it, make it its own?”.

This reflective stance migrated, to borrow Bruneau’s own term, to the moments of interpretation of the drawings. Here too, the dancers took on an inquisitive attitude toward each composition, performing aloud very close readings of the traces on each page, again, as if they were seeing them with a fresh pair of eyes: “what do I see here, what kind of movement is inscribed and how can I make sense of it for myself?”

Co-present on the drawings and collages were different traces of movements (nervous, harsh, rigid, messy and carefree lines that sometimes morphed into scribbled thoughts, the jotting down of an idea, or the incorporation of a printed citation). The drawings are in this way literally traces of different forms of movement and of thought processes.

In a second instance, the intimate setting of the presentation, in which the audience intermittently finds itself sitting across a table from the dancers as they interpret the drawings, invites the spectator to take part in their reflection on movement, which simultaneously opened up the alternate question regarding the movement of thought.

Indeed, the audience does in fact (or perhaps I was one of the few for which this was the case?) experience the choreography for the first time. In my efforts to interpret the gestures, movements and postures unfolding before me, certain moments gradually became familiar; they were repetitions of elements that had come before. This form of prehension dovetailed the reading of the drawings. Here too certain ideas

invoked by the interpretations of the images caused me to revisit mental images of the dancers in space. In other instances, I found myself ascribing new meanings (for instance from notions of structure and grass, to that of a clasp and a screw) to the drawings themselves.

The choreographer referred to the interpretations of the piece by the two dancers as their respective “landscapes”. What is striking in this mental image is how a painting or a photograph of a landscape invites its observer to visually travel through the depicted space (and usually toward the horizon line). Indeed, in Bruneau’s piece the dancers too invite us to visually accompany them as their bodies move through space and their eyes move across and untangle the drawn lines of the drawings. In a traditional landscape, however, the visual reading of the image will largely depend on a fixed perspective that organizes the spatial logic of the image. What is so contrasting in Bruneau’s work is that there is no one perspective onto the piece. Both the object of perception (the dancers and images) and the perspective around which the work is organized (their respective interpretations of movements and images) are constantly shifting.

In this way, performed in this piece is a reflection on how the body perceives, embodies and even creates movements, and under what conditions such movements become grasped by the body and in thought. In the same instance, it reflects a thought process; how ideas (of movement) travel, performing how a concept has the capacity to gain depth and change direction along the way.

(...)

Bergson ontology claims that there is no beginning or end to movement, only registers of intensity. Many aspects of the four

presentations that I experienced in the Veem theaters made manifest this idea for me in contrasting ways. An increase in the activity of physical movement did in some occasions equate with an intensity of affect. The final scene in Hegenscheidt's presentation, in which the *mise-en-abîme* of the repetition, both in the sense of reiteration and rehearsal, of the painful scene from which the piece takes its title, registered as a traumatic event that refuses to be absorbed. Its intensity therefore did not lose but rather gained in poignancy.

The visual and audio cacophony at the end of Levi's piece also swelled with density and affect. Yet much of the frenzy and repetitious movements in *Footnoting* felt wearing for both the bodies in and in front of the performance. Intriguingly, despite their relative stillness the moments of pause serving as intervals between the turmoil, is where the energy between the dancers gradually increased and came back into focus. The build-up eventually would reach a threshold that seemed to push one of them to jump back in, and set the play once again in motion.

Most powerfully, sitting quietly across the table from the dancers in Bruneau's piece, the intensity of the movement of thought was literally made palpable. The fingers of the dancers often skimmed the surface of the page, retracing the inscribed lines. Vivid imagery seemed to morph from the surface of the page to the picturing actions the audible word triggered in my mind. Occasionally, one hand also seemed to be listening to the other, carrying out a thought-sequence in eloquent gestures.

Perhaps it is due to the fact that these four presentations stem from two years of research and experimentation that they provide much reflection on the complicated ways in which thought and movement, spoken and bodily idioms, affect and intensity, and various media are enfolded and inflect each

other. While my own reflection on each piece could further develop these trajectories (and will continue to do so beyond the writings on these pages), I enjoyed where they have brought me this far and look forward to seeing the next iterations in their respective directions.