

A Path for the Documentation of Teaching Practice

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— *Past Trace and Quiet*, Aikawa Ke, 31-12-2016

A path for the documentation of teaching practice is a guideline for reflection upon the actions we do as teachers. As such, it is just an inspiration, a reminder of matters to be taken into consideration when dealing with documentation. This path is a transformation of a former protocol I made within the research project Pre-choreographic Alphabet based on the artistic work of choreographers Emio Greco and Pieter C.Scholten. The previous protocol addressed a methodology to document and transmit artistic processes. This new path was developed to serve the needs of dance teachers and it collects a set of steps to guide documenting one's own practice. *The path has been designed into six parts:*

**Recognition, Myself in Action, Reflexion/Collection, Misunderstandings,
Script/Document, Dissemination**



— 70's mirror reflection, Nicholas Erwin, 09-11-2013

When documenting something, it is very important to provide a context to the documentation. Questions like: *What do you teach?*, *How do you think you teach it?*, *Why do you teach it?*, or *Why do you want to document your practice?* can help us be aware of what it is that we do when we are teaching. This knowledge provides important insight on the personal perspective of the teacher while contextualizing their personal need towards documentation.

This phase of the path deals with the identification of aims, objectives, and personal motivations for teaching. It sets an assumption on what you think you know of yourself as a teacher and on what it is that you do. At the same time, it places that assumption open and ready to be contrasted and challenged when moving forward through the path.

SUGGESTION

Make a list of the things that come to your mind when thinking the following questions. *What do you teach?* *How do you think you teach it?* *Why do you teach it?* *Why do you want to document?* Try to dig back in time, looking for those who inspired you and gave you their own knowledge. Besides, think on the need of the documentation and its purpose. Make notes on these thoughts.¹



— Birmingham East Mediterranean Archive

The content of a class – in which the exchange with another person awakens the machinery of choice making – transmission, and subversion into the unknown, provides essential information for the documentation of one's own teaching practice. Looking at how things are done is an interesting exercise in doing and in depth looking towards our own teaching.

This phase is a proposal for a *voyeur* like documentation focused on the action of your practice. *What do you do when teaching others? How do you transmit your knowledge? Which terminology do you use?* It is a first phase of mirroring, a possible self-witnessing of your own acts within your class. The content of this part will allow you later to make decisions upon what you want to or not want to document.

SUGGESTION

Film or record yourself. This material is for your own personal purpose, your own understanding of your practice. The recording will be mainly for your own use to help you reflect upon your own acts and format of your documentation. Normally, you will have to film again if you wish to make film documentation. Yet, this step will help you better define the next phase. (In this volume there are substantial guidelines on how to record with both devices: camera and audio recorder. The manuals for video documentation by Andrea Keis and Martin Streit are great resources for this exercise.²⁾ Afterwards, look at the film and see what calls your attention, what inspires you, which words you recognize and resonate with you? Define the exercises, tasks, proposals you make, and think what you want to share with others in a document.



— Documents, Travis Estell, 09-01-2011

Gathering is a common action when documenting, all sorts of traces are there. So now, it is a matter of choice making to be able to select them. For this it is essential to know the purpose of the documentation. *Why are you doing it? What for? For whom?* For this, it is important to think about: *What constitutes your class? Which documents you have already created? How is it to do your own class? What is the purpose of your documentation? For whom?*

This phase is a space for self-analysis, where attention can be paid to earlier acts, and where memory and traces can greatly inform the process. Looking at what we think we know, being surprised with new findings upon our practice, and visiting documents we have already generated in the past are inspiring proposals to understand one's own acts and create new.³

SUGGESTION

Gather the documents you may have from the event you wish to document. Accompany them with the reflections you made upon the recordings of your own class. Make a collage of words, exercises, principles, and ideas. See if there are connections, structures that appear.⁴



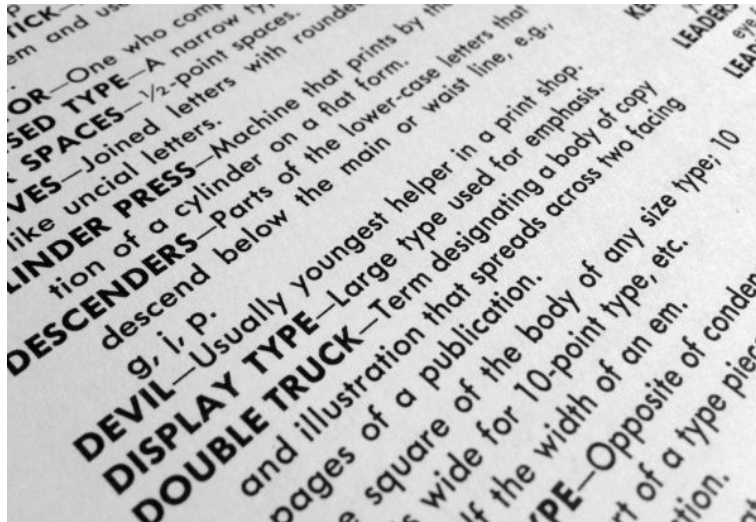
— ½ Girl, C-head, 25-05-2014

In all communicative processes there is misunderstanding: what we say is not always what we mean, what we mean is not always understood. Teaching is transmission being extremely open to different interpretations. Asking someone else to explain your ideas is a perfect test to see what has been understood. When documenting oral transmission processes, paying attention to the terminology used by the person is essential, since it reveals a great amount of knowledge. At the same time, tone, kinetic information, set up from the class, and type of exercises are other areas where one could focus for the documentation.

This phase is where the collective practice starts. Findings upon own practice can be shared with others and where their definition and concretization starts to take shape. Give space to silence, non-action and iteration at any moment in this process. During this process it can be interesting to take some time to look at examples and documents from other teachers that have gone through similar processes. The collection of Contredanse DVD-ROM publications on Steve Paxton, Anna Halprin and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen is a beautiful example.⁵

SUGGESTION

Select something from the previous collection to test in the studio, in a teaching situation. Force your explanations, ask what has been understood, use the class as a lab to dig further into your own needs and principles to further understand what you do.



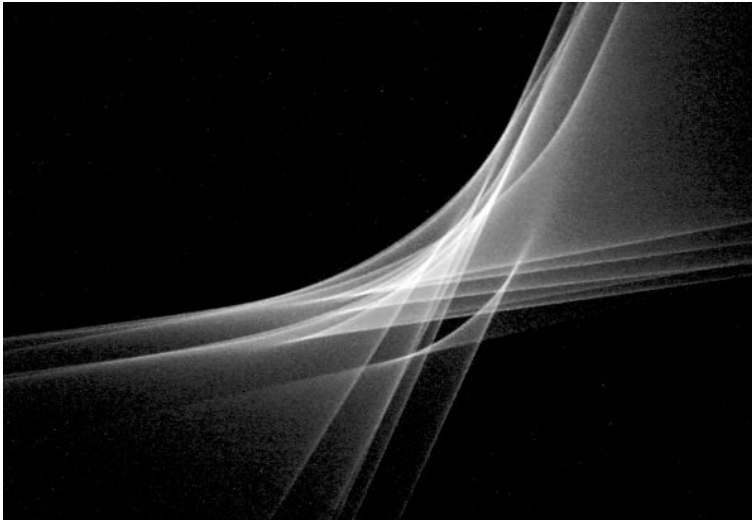
— *Devil*, "Type Specimens for Layout, Printing, Lettering" by William Longyear (Watson-Guption Publications, Inc., 1940), Stephen Coles, 22-09-2013

Somewhere along the process of documentation, you will begin to feel confident that some of the traces you have collected are important to your own process. At this time you may start to collect and select them in relation to your ideas and interests. This is an important moment to share with others and to see if the relevant documents you have created resonate with them. At the same time, it is important to start thinking about the following questions, *What is the document for? For whom? Which type of media shall be used?*

This phase focuses on the transformation of the moving body, class structures and teaching proposals into documents. Content and intentions may be taken over by concrete principles of work, transformed into images, notations,⁶ texts, drawings etc... to later find their way to reach others, if desired.

SUGGESTION

Creating a glossary of personal terminology allows one not only to reflect deeply within the process of teaching, but also enhances the teaching, since there are existing documents that inform upon the teacher's practice. How to create a glossary and collect personal terminology is suggested within the previous link.



— Wave, Jon Callow, 30-04-2011

When documenting, to ask yourself the following questions is essential: *Why you do it? How? What for? With whom? For whom?* Answering these questions will co-design the ensuing proposal. At the same time, this phase can be ignored and can be replaced by the performance of the created documents or any other idea you may have.

Since the past 20 years, interesting examples of dance digitalization have been exposed as documents that reveal important content concerning dance knowledge. There are still relevant issues in this regards, since digital formats can not only perfectly host the dynamism and the multimodal and fragmented nature of dance, but also transform embodied experience into cognitive information – distancing the body from its own acts. Ensuing the path of translating your teaching practice into a digital document can become an inventive, refreshing and critical pursue.

SUGGESTION

Define the type of media you want to use, look back to your process, think again for whom is the document and enjoy creating an idoc⁷ or any document you wish to create.

I like
to think of this path as a circle,
a continuous guide
that has no end
and it is constantly
evolving and
gaining knowledge
with those
using it.

I
hope
reading these
lines you have gained
interesting
suggestions
and
inspiration
to go on with
your
documentation,
reflexion
and
the beautiful practice
of dance.

NOTES

1. For more inspiration see: My Personal Teaching Map by Friederike Lampert and Tracing the Invisible: Writing as a Trace by Sabina Holzer.
2. For studying these manuals see: Manual for Video Documentation, Andrea Keiz. Video Tech, Martin Streit.
3. Defne Erdur's article Hunting, Gathering, Cultivating sets an example for this in this volume, where as Kerstin Kussmaul's Fascia as a Metaphor and Narrator invites us to think differently on what constitutes a document and how our own body can become one.
4. For this, there are beautiful proposals of poetic writing, drawing, and scores that you could use here: Moving Drawing Writing by Anouk Llaurence and On Scores by Sabina Holzer & Defne Erdur.
5. Anouk Llaurence's interview Stewardship exposes these projects in detail here in this volume.
6. For more content on the issue of notation you can see my article Dance Notation. Moreover, Ulla Mäkinen's Capacity of Language – An Interview with Frey Faust, can be reached within this volume.
7. For creating idocs visit idocde.net