

# Moving Drawing Writing: Re-visiting 'Drawing as a Tool for Poetic and Polyphonic Dance Documentation'

Anouk Llaurens



— Drawing of Birte Heinecke.

# Moving

## THE POOR WARM UP BY LISA NELSON

*Start sitting on the floor with your eyes closed. Bring your attention to the bones of your pelvis. Roll on the floor to visit its various parts. There is no sliding, no skipping, only rolling. The pelvis is the center of your attention. The rest of the body organizes itself to support this specific inquiry. If you notice that you always follow the same pathway, redirect your trajectory to visit unusual places.*

*Continue the same practice around your rib cage, shoulder girdle and your head – it is almost a sphere; there is infinity of pathways. You can alternate exploring with your eyes closed or open. When they are open: what do you see, what is touching your retina? Can you stay connected to your tactile and kinesthetic sensations while seeing colours, matters, objects and people engaged in the same practice around you?*

*When you have finished with the head bring your attention to the bones of your hand, feet, legs and arms. As you are rising toward verticality pay attention to the space in between you and others, limits of the studio, and watch the composition of the room. You can travel if you feel like it. Take a moment to complete your experience. Find an ending. Acknowledge the end and the global composition of the room.*

I borrowed the poor warm up from Lisa Nelson. I remember her saying that she uses it before performing, when she finds herself in poor conditions: having short time and small space to prepare. This warm up opens the body from the core, spine, perception and attention at once: all what one needs as an improviser. I demonstrate the score, as I have seen Lisa doing it, before inviting people to practice themselves. I want to transmit certain specificity. Then, I guide participants with words and sentences. I usually do the practice as well and let words emerge from my own experience. Here, in the Reflex Outreach session, I don't. I am talking while walking around the room. I listen to what is present with all my senses, paying attention to what I touch, hear, see, feel, think, and imagine. I leave enough silence between sentences to open space for people to pay attention to their own experience and learn from it. Some of these sentences are kind of *mantras* that I often repeat in my classes. I have borrowed them from teachers that moved me: Lisa Nelson, Deborah Hay, Fernand Schirren, and Pauline Oliveros. I also mix them with my own words:

*your sensations are your guide  
follow your interest  
what do you need now?  
tasting your sensations  
no need to bother about time  
listen to yourself  
are you always following the same pathways?  
what can you do to make a change?  
extremities organise themselves to support your investigation  
the body is a society  
if you eyes were closed, open them; and if open, close them  
acknowledge the difference  
you are touched by the light, by the air and by other people's gaze*

*what is touching your retina – colours, actions, reflections, people?*  
*rib cage is touching the floor and is touched by the floor*  
*you don't need to move all the time*  
*follow your appetite for movement and stillness*  
*notice if you are in automatic pilot*  
*pause*  
*to refresh*  
*to forget*  
*wait for a desire to emerge*  
*tasting your sensations*  
*tasting your thoughts*  
*tasting your emotions*  
*how are you?*  
*bored?*  
*curious?*  
*can you integrate what other people are doing around you in your experience?*  
*what do you need now?*  
*conclude this experience with what you need now*  
*you are with yourself*  
*with the room*  
*with others*  
*with the whole situation*  
*find an end*  
*acknowledge the end.*

## Drawing

I put A4 drawing sheets of drawing paper and black ball pens in the center of the room. I invite participants to revisit their movement experience through a specific drawing score I borrow and adapt from Julien Bruneau, a choreographer and visual artist I collaborate with, since 2010:

“The first step required by this approach is to get rid of the idea that drawing is about creating an image. In the event, drawing is leaving traces: traces of gestures, traces of feelings, traces of choices, and thoughts.”

Drawing happens with eyes closed. Blindness opens space to the awkwardness, the mistake, the irrational. The practice echoes the *poorness* of Lisa Nelson's warm up. It *only* uses black ball pen as tracing device. As the needle of a seismograph the pen is an extension of the person – transmitting her internal life and state of attention to the paper while she is revisiting her dance. No brush and ink, no colour, no tools for helping the trace to look more than it is... The A4 sheet is a limited space that frames and concentrates the experience.

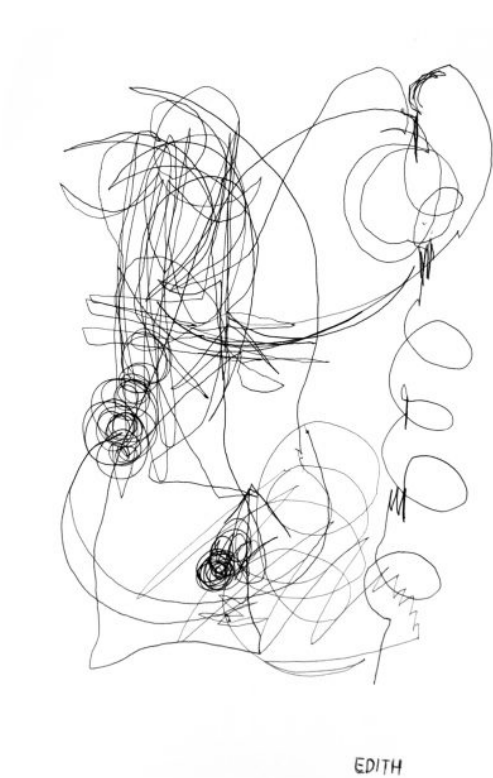
These limitations remind me of the rhythm classes I had with Fernand Schirren, when I was a dance student at the *Centre National de Danse Contemporaine* in Angers. We were practicing rhythm with wooden stick on wooden board that could not resonate like the skin of a drum. We had to live the rhythm intensely in our body, in our centre to make the board speak. Our internal rhythm was transmitted to the hands, the sticks, to the instrument, and finally the spectator's center in order to invite him to dance. Fernand Schirren did not draw but he wrote a book, by hand, to transmit his teaching to next

generations. His teaching was oral, and through reading his hand written words one could hear his voice.

Participants look for a place to start the drawing practice: on the floor in the studio, standing beside a table, or outside in the courtyard. It is really a hot that day. They draw for 15 minutes. I continue walking around, witnessing the presence of people engaged in the process of revisiting their experience. The activity charges their body and the space around them. As Fernand Schirren once said, “dancers are not dancing in space, they are space”.



— Edith.



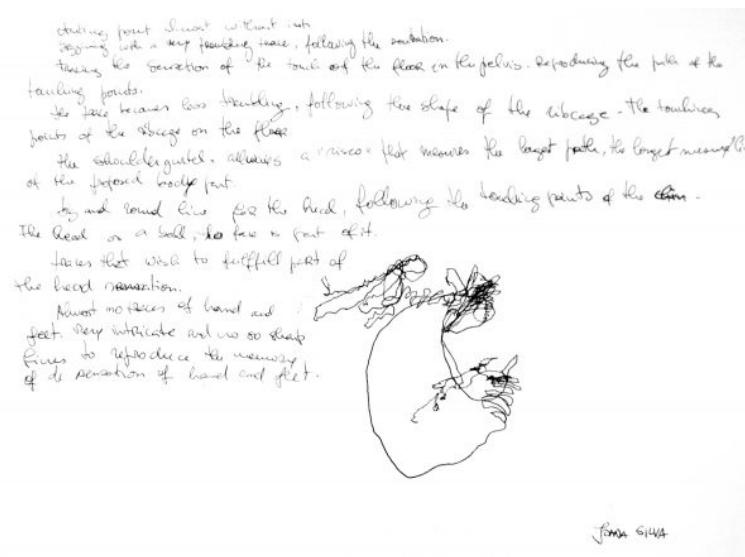
— Drawing of Edith.



— Drawing of Sabina Holzer.

## Writing

I propose to look at the drawing and to read it first on its material level: where are the traces on the pages? What are their form, quality, and depth? Then, I invite participants to write about what they see and how it informs them about their experience of the dance. I also ask them to observe how their memory was re-composing events when they revisited their experience through drawing: was it chronological, continuous, fragmented, in disorder?



— Drawing of Joana Silva.

## REFLEX OUTREACH SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Andrea Keiz  
 Sabina Holzer  
 Barbara Meneses  
 Edith  
 Hazal Kaya  
 Birte Heinecke  
 Benno Voorham  
 Sybrig Dokter  
 Claudia Kappenberg  
 Bertha Bermudez  
 Joana Silva  
 Suvi Tuominen

## OBSERVERS

Nita Little  
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## PHOTOGRAPHER

Martin Streit

I have been using the drawing and writing practice in other workshops and contexts. If you are willing to follow up, you can find related articles on idocde.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTES

1. This article is a re-visited version of the IDOC: 'Drawing as a tool for poetic and polyphonic dance documentation' ([idocde.net/idocs/1612](http://idocde.net/idocs/1612)), created out of the Reflex Outreach session that has taken place during the 4th IDOCDE Symposium, at ImPulzTanz-Vienna, International Dance Festival, in July 2016. Other examples are: Candombo summer lab 2014 – day 4 ([idocde.net/idocs/1020](http://idocde.net/idocs/1020)); Spectrum of the senses II: A Tuning Scores and BMC based workshop with Anouk Llaurens and Eva Maes ([idocde.net/idocs/722](http://idocde.net/idocs/722)); Short report about The two side of touch + drawing feedback environment ([idocde.net/idocs/379](http://idocde.net/idocs/379)) [01.02.2017].