

107

PAJ

A JOURNAL OF PERFORMANCE AND ART



PERFORMANCE  
DRAWING

\$13.00



PROJECT MUSE®

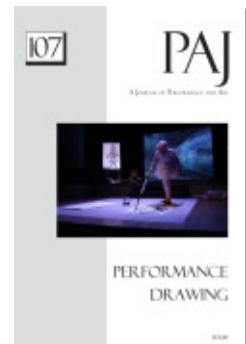
---

Live Transmission / Performative Drawing

Morgan O'Hara

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 2-5 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545516>

# LIVE TRANSMISSION / PERFORMATIVE DRAWING

Morgan O'Hara

In 1989, I began the practice of the Japanese martial art, aikido. In the martial arts, one trains using both sides of the body, and slowly, through practice, asymmetries and imbalances sort themselves into better balance. Consequently, the left and right hemispheres of the brain also become better coordinated. After a while, it felt awkward and off-center for me to be drawing with only my right hand, so I took up another pencil and since then have been drawing with both hands. Gradually over time I have become almost ambidextrous through this practice, and I often draw with up to twenty pencils simultaneously, moving each pencil independently. The number of pencils I use is determined by the subject of the inquiry.

Live Transmission of the principle of vitality is the theoretical base for my work. I record energy transmissions seen through movement. This work overlaps two centuries. The focus on attention *in se* became more and more apparent as the work progressed. Contemplation through calm observation, the dialectic between observer-participant, participant-observer, control versus relaxed participation, all coalesce to form the conceptual base for Live Transmission. The Live Transmission process is a merging and stepping forward in the traditions of life drawing, portraiture, landscape, and calligraphy.

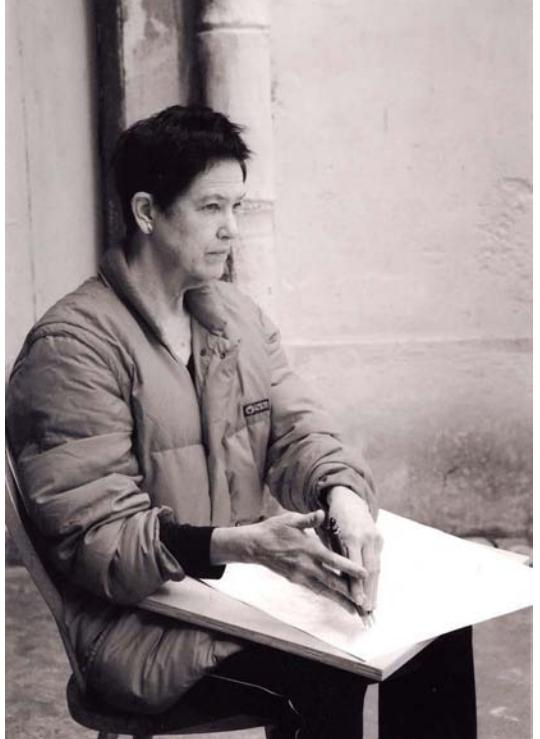
Faithful, non-judgmental, non-interpretive, tracking is my *modus operandi*. Aesthetics of form and composition occur through the process. The work serves as witness, testimony, and validation, honoring activity as well as human life. Through this work, art has taken on the role of communicator beyond the specificity of language. I work to transmit the trajectory of the movement of whatever I am drawing, without interjection or interpretation, concentrating on truthfulness and integrity of line.

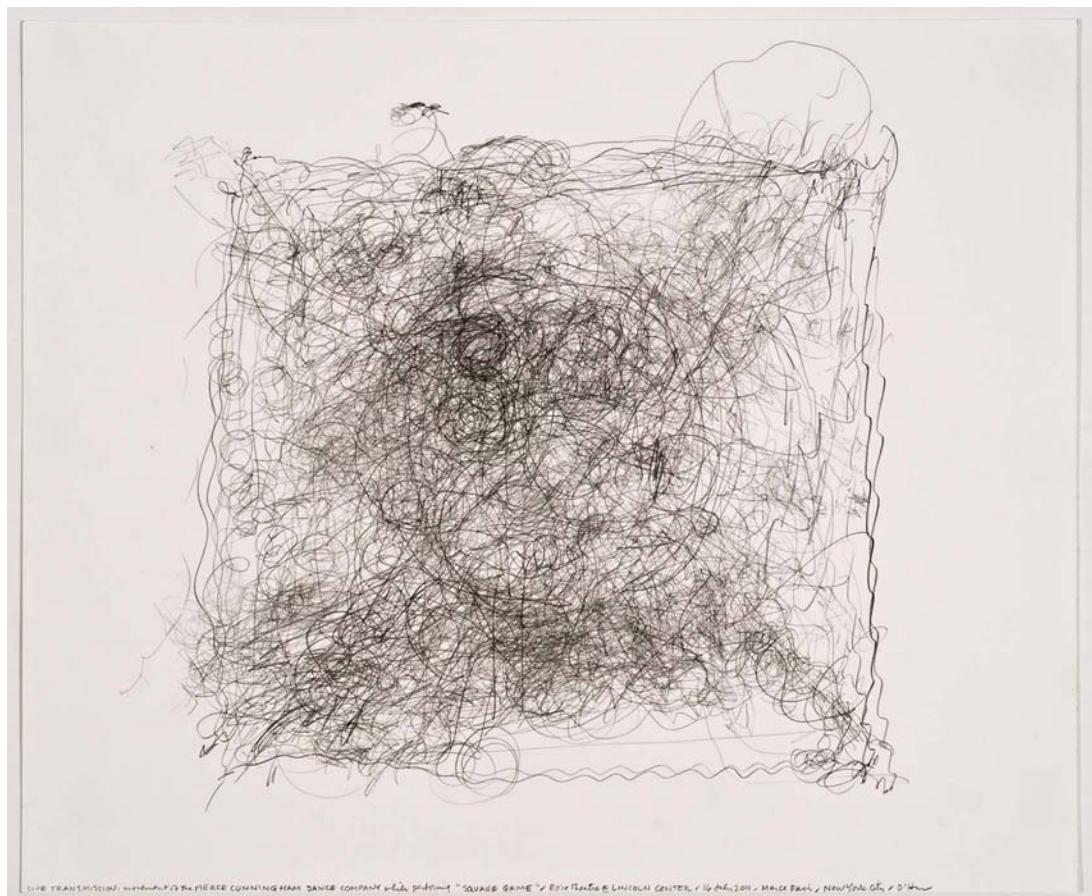
This work is the opposite of automatic writing. Relaxed mental concentration and precise attention to the subject is basic. Rather than becoming "lost" in the process, I attempt to be totally present in order to transmit as closely as possible whatever action I am following.

Top: Macau Morning. This photo was taken in the early morning while I was drawing the movement of a man sweeping the courtyard of the Old Ladies House Artist Residency in Macau in 2001. Photo: Frank Lei.

Middle: ART/LIFE Performance with Thai dancer Pichet Klunchun. *Asiatopia* is an international performance art festival in Thailand begun in 1998. This performance took place at the Bangkok Arts Center in December 2012. Pichet Klunchum is a traditionally trained Thai dance master. His company *Lifework* performs his contemporary choreography. Pichet reacted to and initiated movement in relation to the two words "live" and "work" attached to the bicycle and my position in space while I drew his hand movements. Photo: Sinead O'Donnell.

Bottom: Movement of a Chilean Percussionist. While working at the international performance art festival *Deformes* in Chile in 2008, I tracked the hand movement of Chilean percussionist Esteban Robledo performing on the roof of the Mapuche Collective in downtown Santiago. The line drawing done with pencil on paper was later projected on a wall in the MeetFactory in Prague. The spaces between the lines were painted with flat black acrylic paint on the white wall by thirty volunteers over the course of ten days. Exhibition 16-20,000 HZ, 2013, 16' x 40'. Photo: Ondrej Bouska.





LIVE TRANSMISSION: MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY WHILE PERFORMING "SQUARE DANCE" AT ELLIOTT FISCHER & LINCOLN CENTER, JULY 16, 2011, MERCE FAIR, NEW YORK CITY, © D'HEUR

This page: *Square Dance* performed by Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the *Merce Fair* at Lincoln Center on July 16, 2011. Following page: *For the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (opening sequence) by Tanztheater Pina Bausch was performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York on November 21, 2004. Both drawings were done with graphite on Bristol paper and measure 14" x 17".

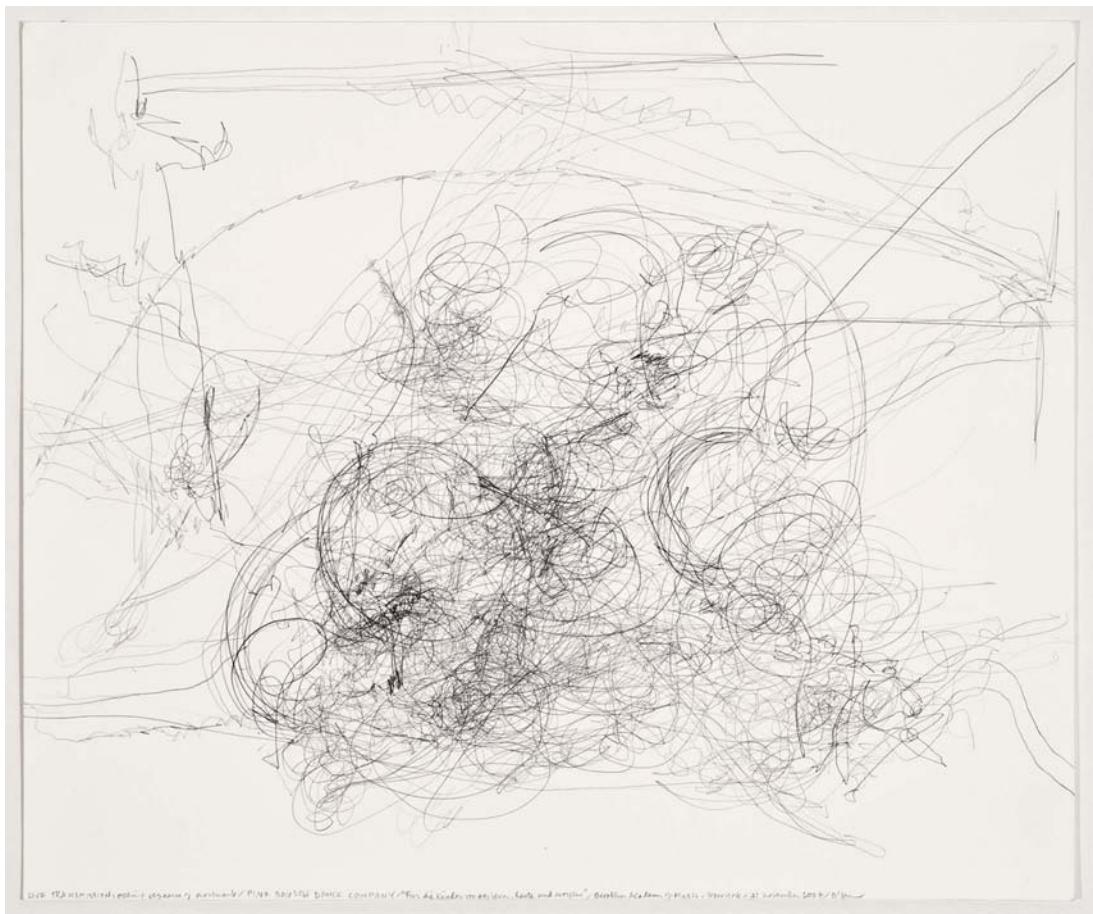


FIG. 17. MORGAN O'HARA, "COMPOSITION FOR A DUET IN SPACES, TIME, AND MOTION," BERKLIEN, GERMANY, 2003. © O'HARA

MORGAN O'HARA's childhood took place in post-war Japan. Her practice researches the vital movement of living beings through Live Transmission, a drawing process she invented in 1982. O'Hara met John Cage as a twenty-year-old art student in Los Angeles, and his thinking, writings, and music have strongly influenced her practice. Her drawings are done as duets in international performance art festivals and commissioned as site-specific wall drawings. They are in the permanent collections of museums and art institutions in Europe, Asia, and the U.S. O'Hara teaches master classes in drawing and the psychology of creativity. She lives in New York and works internationally.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Voyage of the Transfer

Tony Orrico

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 6-9 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545517>

# VOYAGE OF THE TRANSFER

**Tony Orrico**

While investigating subtleties within movement efficiency as a dancer, my attention strongly favored the depth of awareness I was experiencing onstage. In fact, any extent of virtuosity became too strong of a distraction from what I was interested in exploring.

I began to consider consciousness as a medium. I had danced for nearly a decade, and I asked myself: What are the other applications for a ready body and mind? What might they imply? Blurring the lines between my ongoing disciplines, I began appropriating my own somatic work, my *symmetry practice* (circa 2005) as methodology to enter my visual work. Previously, as a mover, I used these visualization exercises to help me alert proprioceptors and balance the hemispheric tension of my body. In 2008, I stopped painting with a dominant hand and employed bilateral drawing as a means to measure dual frictions against a surface. In my termed *state of readiness*, I started to investigate the sustained application of a present body to a plane, object, or course.

I am fascinated with how physical impulses manifest into visible forms. My work often displays infinities of reflective and rotational symmetry with attention to what is lost/gained through representations and how imagery in motion may replicate, mutate, or disintegrate. Centralizing on themes of cyclic motion and the generation and regeneration of material, my work draws on the tension between what is fleeting and what is captured.

Without the use of technology, I have been attempting interface with the invisible. Sight is one sense that we use to negotiate and communicate shared space, and it constantly reminds us of what materials are tangible or what constructs are in place. We interpret and represent visible structures through point, line, shape, fill, etc. We can create substance from substance by tapping into universal matter and reorganizing it to make our concepts visible. I appreciate ways action turns solid and how the image or residue of something experiential may fail to translate. The exchange of images feels much more distant than we realize. It is less of a handshake and more of a note sent by carrier pigeon. The image received has the voyage of the transfer impressed upon it.



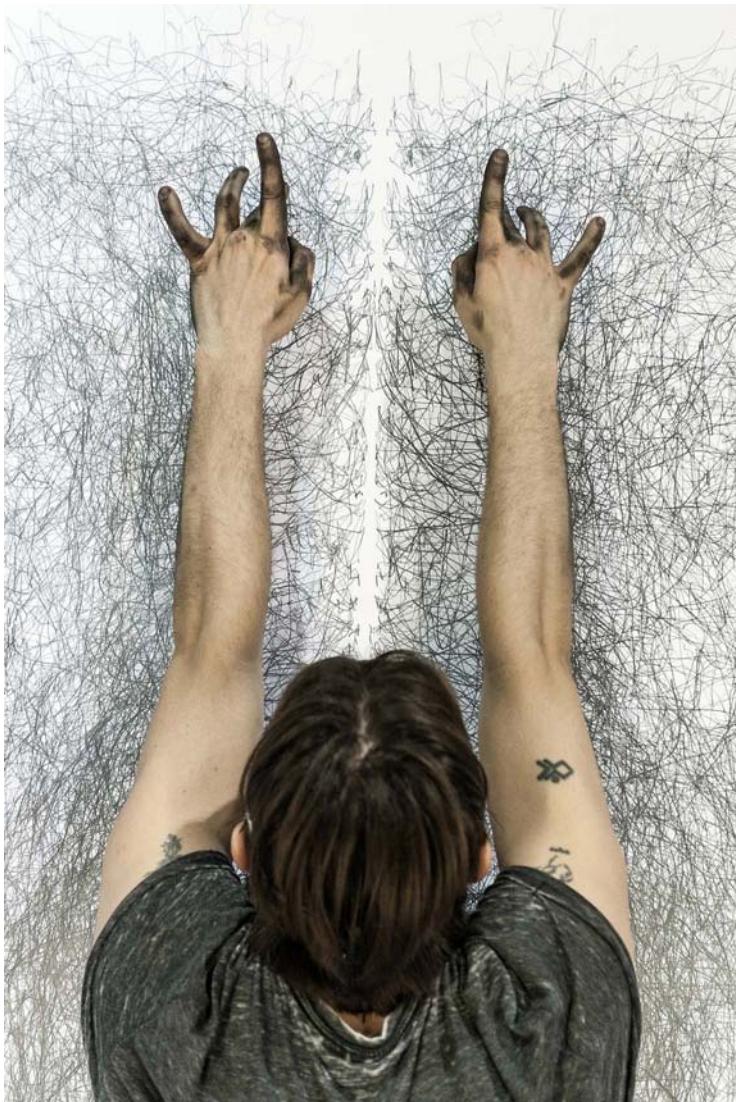
Tony Orrico, */Vessel for Governing and Conception/*. Photo: Juan Carlo. Courtesy the artist and MARSO.

My *Penwald Drawings* are a series of bilateral drawings in which I explore the use of my body as a tool of measurement to inscribe geometries through movement and course. My gestures derive from the limitation of (or spontaneous navigation within) the sphere of my outstretched arms. Line density becomes record of the mental and physical sustain as I commit my focus to a greater concept of balance throughout extended durations of drawing. The master of each drawing is a conceptual score of which I only produce eight live-iterations or impressions, on paper.

While my *Penwald Drawings* avail paper, graphite, and body to discover vast terrains through limitation, CARBON further synthesizes these mediums by freeing the imagination and confounding surfaces. I am continuing to explore space that is absent of emotion, rationale, memory, reaction, projection, judgment or inhibition. I am attempting to navigate through the body's receptors and simulate a sense of suspension to shift my relationship to the physical realm, especially gravity. This interest derives from reconciliations of the beauty and great tension I find coexisting within powers of creativity and temporality, transformative potential and the mundane.



Top: Tony Orrico, *Penwald: 8* (2012). 12' x 12' on knees. MUNAL, Mexico City.  
Photo: Berna J. Klein Ríos. Bottom: Tony Orrico, *Penwald:12 : prone to stand* (2012).  
University of Buffalo Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Photo: Bill E. Meyers.



Tony Orrico, *Penwald: 4: unison symmetry standing* (2013). Studio impression 1. Photo: Megan Bearder.

---

TONY ORRICO has performed and exhibited his work on several continents. His visual work is in collections at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC, Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, as well as in prominent private collections. He has recently been presented at the New Museum and *Poptech 2011: The World Rebalancing*. He is a former member of Trisha Brown Dance Company and Shen Wei Dance Arts. He collaborated with choreographer John Jasperse on the visual design for *Canyon*, which was presented at BAM's Next Wave Festival. Orrico was also one of the artists selected to re-perform the work of Marina Abramovic during her retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He is based between Chicago, IL and Stevens Point, WI.



PROJECT MUSE®

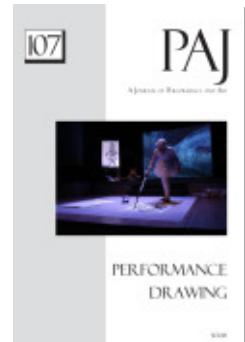
---

## Lifelines

Anne Bean

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 26-29 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545522>

# LIFELINES

## Anne Bean

My work is an ongoing drawing from life.

A life drawing

A drawing life

A layering

A delayering

A reaching

A breaching

A netting

An unnetting

A merging

An emerging

An imagining

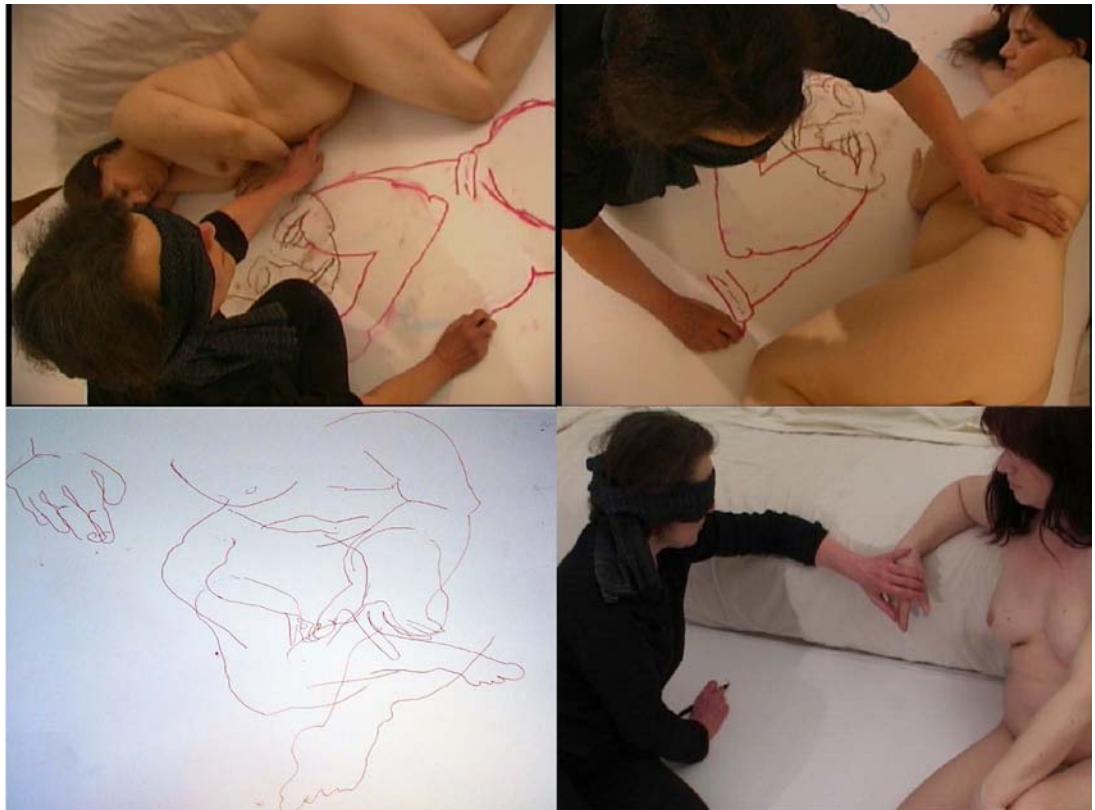
An Imaging

A wording

An unwording

*Now and Then*, 1970/1997. Charcoal drawings on paper. Photo: Courtesy the artist.





Above: *Drawing Life*, 1970 /1999. Colored pastels and ink pen on paper. Next page: *No Matter*, 1971, 1976/1997. Charcoal drawings on paper. Photos: Courtesy the artist.

These three works were initially created in the seventies. I then used these *Shadow Deeds* to make filmed performances (reformations), finally resulting in thirty different video installations, for *Autobituary*, a work commissioned by Matts Gallery, London, and shown in 2006.



---

ANNE BEAN has been working in installation and performance for over forty years. In 2007, she was awarded a Franklin Furnace International Fellowship in New York where she worked with several artists to produce *Drawn Conversations*. In 2009 she received a British Council Creative Collaborations and Visiting Arts award to bring together and create work with women from Iraq, Croatia, Israel, and Northern Ireland, resulting in an ongoing project *PAVES*. More recently the Tate Gallery Research department and Live Art Development Agency granted her a Legacy: Thinker in Residence Award, which resulted in a major work, *TAPS*, in which she invited over eighty sound and visual artists, all of whom have been engaged in improvisatory experimental practice, to contribute to a collaborative piece. This award also has inspired *A Transpective*, an ongoing work about one's own legacy to oneself, which was shown in Venice 2013.



PROJECT MUSE®

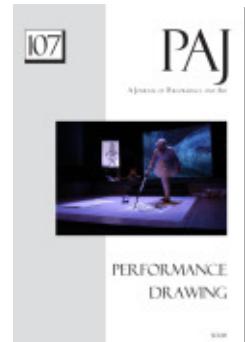
---

## Drawing as a Veinous System

Carolee Schneemann

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 30-34 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545523>

# DRAWING AS A VEINOUS SYSTEM

**Carolee Schneemann**

**D**rawings are the physical embrace for images in space, the extension of my musculature onto the page. The drawings are the visual embodiment of gestures, momentum, the illusive motions that carry the parameters for shaping actions.

The initial version of *Water Light/Water Needle* was conceived for a gallery or storefront window; the scale of rigging ropes was easily accomplished on a little cardboard mockup; cut up cardboard figures were stained with color. I sewed little thread loops around their hands so that they could be moved manually up and down the string ropes. This very simple iteration was never formally presented.

All my performances and installation works begin with drawings. *Water Light/Water Needle* was conceived as an aerial network of 3/4" manila ropes to be layered over the canal at San Marco during a Venice Biennale. The drawings had to describe an open rigging of interdependent layers of ropes. The space between the ropes corresponded to the transparencies, the interpenetrations of sky and water bisected by the canals of Venice. The drawings inspired a physical paradox of "effortless" movement on ropes, which was actually exhausting and painful. Effortless as drawings, but demanding physical rehearsals to build muscle memory, calluses on our hands, as well as improvisatory coordinations between our actions. We rehearsed intensive stretching, reaching, climbing, dropping between ropes, hanging suspended. The drawings anticipated physical interactions between performers as they reached to each other on the ropes, collided, swung, overlapped, embraced. As they shifted levels from lower ropes to higher ropes; dropping from higher ropes to lower lines.

The drawings also had to envision steel supports anchored to a supporting pillar or bridge; steel pulleys and fittings that would stabilize the 3/4" manila ropes. The drawings had to design the hardware of rigging translated from my dreams into an actual physical function.

To sustain the delicacy and rigor of these movements I painted with watercolor brushes in diluted inks and with pen and ink. I often drew with my eyes closed to

concentrate on the sensations of anti-gravitational motion. It's impossible to state whether the idea of the movement became the drawings, or if it was the drawings that initiated the movements. Among the drawings there are some that consist only of dense splotches, and these represent some enigmatic energy cluster.

It's so much about a *weight*: how you support your weight, the indescribable drift as you shift your position on the ropes . . . there is a certain invisible, watery, gravitational vacancy as you pull yourself up or lower yourself. There is a moment of muscular consolidation and abandon. The shift. The grasp. Gripping. Between your hands and your feet—step out into space, locate the rope, hanging between ropes. Teaching the potential movement on the ropes becomes another modality so that once the structures are built I have to translate the envisioned physical experience from the drawings, from my own musculature, to the participants.

Another environment for *Water Light/Water Needle* was proposed to L'Opera de Lyon. The son of the director of the theatre was enthusiastic about this potential presentation. Of course, the rigging was daunting where another set of drawings visualized the network of extended ropes with performers moving hand-over-hand on them from the stage to the balconies of the opera house. These drawing lines had to conceptually bisect a large open space with uncertain structural supports.

The work was realized at St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery in March 1966. The performers were Mark Gabor, Tony Holder, Meredith Month, Yvette Nachmias, Phoebe Neville, Tom O'Donnell, Dorothea Rockburne, Joe Schlichter, Larry Siegel, and myself. The rigging was accomplished by William Meyer and Bernard Kirschenbaum. There was no requirement for insurance, even though the audience was seated precariously beneath and around the rope actions.

The references to Venice continued with an organist at St. Mark's performing Bach and Vivaldi, which echoed into the performance space. The name of the church, St. Mark's, had an extended connection to the central plaza in Venice. I was desperate to move the entire rigging and performance to an outdoor space, which required trees at proportionate distances for rigging and hopefully had an accessible body of water. This vision was facilitated by a volunteer, Ferdy Buonanno; incredibly his father was a psychiatrist from Venice purchasing the abandoned Havemeyer Estate in Mahwah, New Jersey! The distinguished and extensive collection of impressionist works at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, were donated by the Havemeyers; their daughter, Mary, had been in Paris with her best friend Mary Cassatt, who encouraged the collection of these paintings.

(The ropes had to be 3/4" manila; thinner ropes cut into hands and feet; 1" rope is too wide. Nylon rope is too slippery.)



*Pour Lyon.* Preparatory drawing for *Water Light/Water Needle*.  
June 1965. Mixed media drawing. 18" x 12".



Above and next page: WL/WN. Preparatory drawings for *Water Light/Water Needle*. Above: January 1966. Ink and watercolor on paper (mounted on board). 12.5" x 20". Next page: February 1966. Ink and watercolor on paper. 12.5" x 20".



---

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN is a painter who extended visual principles into live action and installations. Recent exhibitions of her work include a retrospective at the Musée Rochechouart in France; an exhibition at the WRO Biennial in Wroclaw; and an installation in MoMA's *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*. Schneemann is the subject of several publications, including *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle* as well as *Imaging Her Erotics—Essays, Interviews, Projects, and More Than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Work and Selected Writing*. A new feature film, *Breaking the Frame*, has been made on her life and work.



PROJECT MUSE®

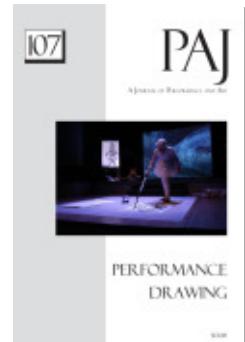
---

## Drawing My Way In

Joan Jonas, Bonnie Marranca, Claire MacDonald

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 35-57 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545524>

# DRAWING MY WAY IN

## Joan Jonas in conversation with Bonnie Marranca and Claire MacDonald

**T**rained as a sculptor, Joan Jonas has been a pioneering force in video and performance for more than four decades. Early on she explored the use of live camera during performance and incorporated drawing as part of the process, and for the last two decades she has made installations featuring video, objects, photographs, and drawings. In recent years, the artist's work has been shown at WACK! Art and Feminist Revolution, the fifty-third Venice Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art, and dOCUMENTA. Since 2005, Jonas has worked with the innovative musician and composer Jason Moran to develop pieces with live music, namely *The Shape*, *the Scent*, *the Feel of Things* at DIA: Beacon, and *Reanimation*, seen during the recent *Performa 13*. A retrospective of her work will open at Milan's HangarBicocca in September, accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue, edited by Joan Simon, entitled *In the Shadow a Shadow*. This interview was conducted by PAJ editor, Bonnie Marranca, and PAJ Contributing Editor and UK writer, Claire MacDonald, in New York City, September 7, 2010, and for *Reanimation*, December 20, 2013.

MARRANCA: What seems ongoing from many of the earliest pieces, over four decades, is the practice of drawing in performance, and on so many surfaces. Drawing while holding a blackboard in front of you, sometimes not even looking, drawing projected before the audience, drawing on sand, drawing on your face. Can we begin by speaking about the place of drawing in your work?

JONAS: I am a visual artist. Drawing was important to me before I stepped into performance. I was interested in how to draw and what to draw. When I started doing performance I saw that it could be a place for drawing in a new way. I became interested in what it was to draw in front of an audience and to draw while I was being witnessed. I also make drawings in my studio that are autonomous, but I felt like what I was exploring was how to make a drawing in relation to the particular performance that I was working on, which meant how to make it in relation to the technology or to the subject or the space.

MACDONALD: Visual artists have always been educated through drawing. I want to ask you about your own education. When did drawing start? How important was it as a way of thinking?

JONAS: It started when I was a child. It was very important. Recently, I've been looking at all these drawings from the fourth grade.

MACDONALD: Did you keep them?

JONAS: Oh yes. I am doing something in Norway, and I just found this notebook with a cartoon-like narrative about the Vikings, made in the fourth grade. I'm thinking about using it in Norway. I went to a progressive school in the kindergarten and first grade—the Walt Whitman School on East 78th Street. They said, "What do you want to do today?" and I said, "I just want to paint." I enjoyed that. Children draw naturally.

MACDONALD: Was drawing absolutely essential to that education, as it was for Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf education? Was it drawing from observation?

JONAS: No, it wasn't from observation. Later I went to a school called Brearley, a girl's school. They had art classes there. Art was very important to me early, and I went back to it later.

MARRANCA: But then you ended up at the university studying sculpture.

JONAS: Yes, I studied sculpture, art history, and literature. After that when I went to The Museum School in Boston I focused on drawing. In a way, you have to learn how you are going to draw.

MACDONALD: What does it mean to learn to draw?

JONAS: For me, specifically, I studied with an artist named Harold Tovish. His way of teaching how to draw was to meticulously follow the outer contour of the figure. Not to make a typical art school rendering. At The Museum School we were working from the model. It was about the line and how to depict what one saw. I draw a lot because it's a matter of practice and repetition and development on a flat surface or in space.

MACDONALD: One of the things that interests me about the history of drawing is how central it is to certain performance practices, and, yet, how certain other people have never drawn. Choreographers have used notation but never really drawn. Is that a different way of thinking than what you're describing, where you've learned to work through the line as an approach?

JONAS: I was looking at the world close at hand and asking how I could represent this experience. Later on, because I was interested in ritual, when I began to do performance I read about other cultures and rituals and observed how drawing functioned as ritual. I experienced drawing in performance as a ritual. I thought of what I did in performance as a kind of present-day ritual. It was important that anyone in a particular culture could learn that ritual and make that drawing. I thought about drawing from that point of view. I am very interested also in art by the mentally

unstable. The work of Wölfl and the art in the Prinzhorn collection has interested me a lot. Wölfl wasn't in the Prinzhorn Collection, but his work is an example of that kind of work. Elaborate cosmologies. Obsessional. Also, I started using blackboards because I was interested in the way we begin, as children. I always thought drawing should be part of a practice for children, like reading and writing.

MACDONALD: What did you draw with at first? Chalk?

JONAS: Yes, pencil, chalk, and paint.

MACDONALD: These are very simple questions, but they interest me because of Deanna Petherbridge's book on the history of drawing. What is it that people learn to draw with? Is the pen still drawing? Is the brush still drawing?

JONAS: Oh yes, definitely. It's about the line. I see it all as drawing with different instruments. I don't call anything I do "painting." I make drawings with paint.

MACDONALD: Do you think there has been, within your generation, specific approaches to drawing that one could put in a historical context? Did drawing go through some big change?

JONAS: There is always transformation and change. When I was beginning, in the fifties, many of the artists I knew made drawings that were more or less diagrams and very abstract.

MACDONALD: Diagrams were such an integral part of art in the 1950s. That has been an important part of your work, as well. The grid, the diagram, the cone.

JONAS: I was making sculpture and my friends were all artists, especially sculptors, and I followed that kind of work closely. Like Sol LeWitt. I also explored the use of the grid in the drawings of a New Guinea tribe. In their *Book of the Dead*, they used a grid to make a looping drawing in the sand. I used it in *Organic Honey*. It was the perfect performative drawing that one can make in a performance.

MARRANCA: I know in your books some things are referred to as "drawings," some are "performance drawings," now you are saying "performative drawing." Is there a distinction between these terms?

JONAS: Performance and performative refer in different ways to an action. For instance, there are the dog heads I draw that are portraits of my dogs. They are elaborate. I don't make them the same way in performances. I cannot spend time perfecting something, and erasing, the way I do sometimes in my studio work. I am interested in an act and how it becomes a gesture, or in its relationship to the medium. Then it becomes performative. But I do call the drawings made in performance "performance drawings."

MACDONALD: Are they always the same when they are repeated in these cultures?

JONAS: Yes. You learn to do it.

MARRANCA: When you prepare to do a performance will you make many drawings ahead of time and have a sense of what you want to do in the performance? Do you duplicate some of those? Are drawings in the performance more intuitive? It's difficult to see, as a viewer, what is spontaneous and what is prepared.

JONAS: In the ones in the *Reading Dante* piece, for instance, there are lots of things that look like scribbles, where I am trying to draw the outlines of shadows that are moving in the video projection. In a way, that is spontaneous, but it is always the same exercise. I am always trying to do the same drawing. They are related but scribbly looking. I practice beforehand. I always prepare. I never make a drawing in my performance that I haven't made before. Also in *Reading Dante* I draw over black and white footage of an improvisation at night in the downtown Wall Street district that was shot in 1976. In that case, I was drawing and erasing on a chalkboard the image of which was superimposed over the video footage. I was making a drawing that directly relates to the images that it overlays.

MARRANCA: You don't make a drawing in the performance you've never made before it, as a form of practice? It's like a pianist who practices a piece for hours every day and then goes to a concert and plays.

JONAS: Yes. I practice drawing on different levels.

MARRANCA: You started talking about learning from drawing. Do you learn from each piece? Is there a certain kind of problem that you solve through drawing? If so, what did you learn from *Dante* that you didn't know in *Lines in the Sand*?

JONAS: It's not that I learn something. I experience something new. I can make another drawing in a new way. Like drawing over a moving film image—I am interested in that. I can do that again with another image, another film, with black and white, but also with color.

MACDONALD: We haven't talked very much about repetition. Is that how preparation becomes something else? You prepare, you practice, you repeat. You practice, you prepare, you repeat again. What you are actually materializing is never the same.

JONAS: That's why it's similar to ritual in which something is known and not known. As far as repetition, people are always asking—What does that mean? I enjoy making the same drawing over and over again, and having it change. In the thirty-minute sequence of drawing on the blackboard in *Mirage*, you see me drawing stars over and over again. I was fascinated with the hopscotch number system and got involved with connecting the numbers in different ways.

MACDONALD: Going back to the history of drawing and how we learn to draw, a received idea about drawing is its originality. Its likeness to something. You are really talking about a different trajectory.

JONAS: I can't draw like a classical artist. For example, Botticelli or Ingres, whose drawings I love. No way. Even if I draw from life as part of my practice. It takes a huge amount of skill and practice. I am continuously exploring new situations and ways of drawing in relation to video and the space of performance that result in images that surprise me in the way they relate to the text or the content of the project.

MARRANCA: Is the image just another surface for narration? There is so much going on, even in the way the text is published for *Lines in the Sand*. There are three tracks: the sound, the action, and the text. I've always wondered whether the drawing is almost a form of dramatic action. I know that is not exactly the right word—"performance" action? Is it a gesture towards a performance act? Does it move the narrative forward? I don't mean a linear narrative. But how is drawing related to the rhythm and movement of a performance work?

JONAS: More and more I have been able to work on my movements. In the beginning, it was more like one thing after another and I walked from one gesture to the next. Now the pieces flow in a different way. The drawing becomes part of the general movement. I've always made little dances, working with props, music, space, and content as inspiration.

First of all, there is the idea of scale. I can make large drawings on a board or even larger ones on the floor. The audience can see that. I can also make small drawings for the camera that can be seen in the video projections. Drawing for me is a visual language. In *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* I made large drawings with paint of a snake, which is my way of relating to the text. I can't translate into words the meaning of my drawings. I take motifs from the content of the text. In *Lines in the Sand* I draw a pyramid because of the Egyptian reference. With chalk I drew the pyramid and the sphinx over and over again.

MARRANCA: When you made the drawing in the sand, then you moved into dance. Into movement.

JONAS: Yes, drawing involves the body moving in different ways in space. I made a video for *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* on the beach in Canada, recording the lines I made with a stick in the sand as I ran. I wove curves while referring to snake-like patterns.

MARRANCA: Drawing becomes a kind of performance as a form of speech. Is drawing a form of automatic writing then, or is it more intuitive?

JONAS: In *Mirage*, there is a series of images that are like signs. I made one drawing and followed it with another, like frames in a film. For the series of blackboard drawings that became an animated video in the *Dante* installation at the Yvon Lambert gallery, I was drawing a pagoda-like structure over and over again, as well as depictions of Dante's universe altering them, and continuously changing them into something else by drawing and erasing. I didn't do exactly that in *Mirage* in the blackboard drawings. There it was a series of images, one after the other.

MARRANCA: Why is there so much drawing in *Reading Dante*?

JONAS: I've just become so obsessed with drawing.

MARRANCA: Why, do you think?

JONAS: Because I am getting older. I like the idea that I can do something that doesn't have to be an elaborate performance. I made a lot of drawing in *Reading Dante*, just on the side. Images that came out of his ideas, like planets, spirals, and animals. I became interested in the structure of his universe—a spiral-like, cone-shaped form that extended down into the earth as well as into the sky. Now, I'm drawing more and more.

MARRANCA: Your work seems to be moving more into the realm of something that is commonly talked about now, between theatre and art. Of all the performance artists I can think of, your work seems the most theatrical in a sense of the costumes and masks and the interest in text. What I want to ask you is, is it possible to speak of your work in terms of performance technique? It's not something that one usually talks about with a visual artist but rather with a theatre artist.

JONAS: I couldn't describe a technique except to say that I think very much of how I move, that it be economical in the way that I perform a task and then move from one thing to another. The result is that you use your body, arm, or hand in relation to drawing. My performance technique started out in the 1960s with a task-oriented approach influenced by the Happenings. Then it developed and became more elaborate in relation to props and objects, media and space. Props and objects added another dimension to the language. From the very beginning, I've been interested in a layering of all the elements of a performance—text, objects, media, sound, and movement. This all has to be constructed with the idea of having a unified concept and experience. It is in a sense the way the brain works. I conceive in terms of the visual image, continuously constructing and moving from one to the next.

My idea of layering came when I began to work with different spaces of perception. For instance, by using a large mirror in a performance as a prop carried by the performer one could see the real image of the performer simultaneously with reflections in the mirror moving in space. At the same time I was doing my outdoor works in the landscape I was working with perception of movement and forms in the distance and at different intervals from the audience. Then in my video performance, in which the audience saw simultaneously the live performance with a detail of that live performance projected, I began to think of juxtaposing different images and time sequences. These examples were obvious layerings in space.

MACDONALD: I think of choreography and marking the stage.

JONAS: I think of figures moving in space, definitely. I just did one of my early mirror pieces from 1970 in the Guggenheim in June. I really found it interesting. I didn't have any score, I just had a few photographs. I took all the images from



*Reading Dante II*, Performing Garage, 2009.



*The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, DIA: Beacon, 2007. Photo: Danny Bauer.

that performance and I made up other movements. I had seventeen students from Hunter College. It really interested me to choreograph this piece again. The way I choreographed it now was rather different from the way I choreographed it the first time. I was very interested in having this complex flow of mirrors and reflections and bodies. I look at films a lot and I see the way people move in films. Before I started doing performances myself I looked at Giacometti, sculptures of figures moving through a space in a city, or else paintings in which figures are standing in a certain space, like Piero della Francesca. I was also inspired by the films of Busby Berkeley, although this might not be evident.

MACDONALD: How did you work with the seventeen students this time? Did you draw a score?

JONAS: What I did was set up improvisations and had them move through them, beginning, for instance, with two pairs here, two pairs there, and two pairs in another place, then having everybody exchange positions while moving the mirrors in different ways. It was always the same, but always a little different. Then I drew pictures and diagrams of all the different set-ups, like a score. I also used many configurations from the original performance.

MACDONALD: Do you think the gesture of young people now is different? Is the body making shapes differently in an intuitive way?

JONAS: I think that because I'm different, this was different.

MARRANCA: That's fascinating—the idea of having people move around and drawing pictures of that. I'm thinking of Robert Wilson's visual book. He'll draw the whole production first, scene by scene, and the actors will begin to work in silence. Do you think your particular procedure is unique, in terms of a visual artist working with improvisation in a more actorly way? That's why I asked about performance technique. You never hear people from visual arts talk about techniques or methodologies. Everything is conceived of as an act, a task, or movement.

JONAS: I think it comes from all those different things because I'm a visual artist who performs. I'm very aware of how I'm moving and where I am in the picture. I have to be in shape when I do a performance. I have to exercise. My body has to feel a certain way. I've always been involved in swimming, walking, and running.

I was always influenced by the structure of film. It has been important for me to look at the way filmmakers frame a scene and have people move through a space. The way I actually work is, I make up a movement, and then I sometimes show it to someone else. I don't have a picture of it beforehand. With these mirror pieces, as in other works, I develop a movement and show it to the performers and have them imitate me. They would do it slightly differently.

MACDONALD: That's why I ask about working with the gesture of young people now and working with your own gesture and movement. It's interesting how the

body is informed and then how the informed body passes that on. It is a dance practice, what you're describing. To create a phrase and make it on somebody directly.

JONAS: I hardly ever work with dancers. These are all young art students. So they're a little bit like me. Untrained. But they have a kind of grace. However, there are always some dancers.

MARRANCA: How long do you rehearse with the performers?

JONAS: I rehearsed with them for the mirror piece for a month, a few times a week.

MACDONALD: We talked about the diagrammatic drawing, and the line, and also choreography as drawing. Another abstract idea in drawing, which comes up in American art in the 1950s and 1960s, is the idea of the scrawl and scribble. Roland Barthes wrote about it in an essay on Cy Twombly. He talked about gauche writing. I see that in your work, as well.

JONAS: That came up when I choreographed movement sequences for the Robert Ashley piece *Celestial Excursions*, while I was drawing to his music. I liked the idea, in that situation, to just scribble. I became interested in scribble drawings. I could just scribble in time to his music. It inspired me to do that. I do it again in the *Dante* piece, but in relation to an image.

MARRANCA: In the Ashley work, did you develop those scribbles in rehearsals?

JONAS: They can't be the same. I didn't even develop them, I just started making them. The scribble builds up. It starts out with a few lines and then as the page is covered it gets darker. That can be done in relation to the music.

MARRANCA: I wonder if the blank sheet of paper or the blackboard is another variant of the mirror.

JONAS: Maybe. I never thought of it that way, but it is a surface that I project on.

MACDONALD: It's also, even with a scribble, about the poetics of the blank page. In the symbolist poets, such as H.D. and William Carlos Williams, there is always a very visual relationship to the page, isn't there?

JONAS: I like paper. I like to go to the paper stores.

MACDONALD: Is the page a sculptural object as well?

JONAS: I think of paper as having sculptural qualities, especially the big, stiff pieces I sometimes use. They don't collapse. I can draw on them and hold them. Then they can be a surface. I've used them that way. Also, when they became part of a feedback in the video projection the image becomes cubist. Paper itself I find very beautiful. It's hard to put something on a piece of paper. It interests me to struggle

with that. When I am in a performance, although I know the image I will draw I don't worry about it.

MARRANCA: I bought a beautiful leather-bound book of handmade paper in Venice about twenty-five years ago and I could never decide what to start on the first page—what was good enough. I've never used it.

JONAS: I know. That's the problem.

MACDONALD: You have a blank sheet of paper, and then you have to begin. In a sense you've got no option once you're tied into it. You have to do it. There's no other way out.

JONAS: You have to. It is a gesture. It's not about making a precious object. I don't like, in performance, the romantic idea of watching an artist draw. That I try to dispel.

MACDONALD: Is all art post-Cage, then? In the sense that the idea of art becomes totally anti-romantic. That it's about the doing of the work.

JONAS: For me, no. It has something to do with Minimalism and the aesthetics of the dancers in the sixties—anti-romantic. I don't think it's just Cage.

MACDONALD: Is it anti-expressive then, as well?

JONAS: I'm not against that. I'm just talking about the idea of the image of the artist at work. The way I crumple paper and throw paper down, that's what I'm talking about—the careless treatment of the drawing. But some of my drawings do end up saved and framed and exhibited. Many of them have been thrown out. I edit them afterwards. In a way, it's too bad. But some are on very cheap paper. Once I included these in an installation and they looked like big pieces of wrinkled lead.

MARRANCA: How do you choose your papers and utensils for different performances? Some things are small pieces of chalk, some are long sticks with chalk on the end. Where do these choices come from?

JONAS: I choose what is practical. The big, black pieces of paper are photographic backdrop paper. It's the biggest paper I can get, but it's not particularly good paper. It's heavy enough and it works in that situation. I've been drawing with sticks for a while because I can make a bigger drawing and I can extend my body with a stick. The sticks are extensions of my body in performance. I can't remember when I started drawing with sticks, but it's a way to lengthen my arm and make a drawing. You can make a drawing on a wall with a stick. Matisse used a stick. It's not an original idea. I choose the stuff that's going to work best. Chalk works well. It's soft. I choose it for its properties. On the paper, magic marker works. I also draw with brush and ink and paint in performances.

MACDONALD: Do you do drawings outside of performance?

JONAS: I do, all the time. I recently made ink drawings in Japan. I drew images of double lunar rabbits. I used a brush with red and white paint in *The Juniper Tree*. I made paintings on silk in the performance and then used them to decorate the set. I was thinking of calligraphy. For the Japanese calligraphy is a performance.

MACDONALD: This takes us to the relationship between drawing and writing. It is writing as drawing.

MARRANCA: Then we need to make the leap between drawing and the creation of the narration, which we touched on earlier. That's very curious and interesting, in terms of the rhythm of a piece, propelling the action some place or stopping it. The drawing and erasing brings you to a liminal state. Is it the drawing that is leading the performance? The idea of the image and the text is fascinating in your work. What part does drawing play in it in terms of the start through the finish of the piece, and how it moves through time and space?

JONAS: The drawings punctuate the piece, in a way. They occur at different moments in it. In *Organic Honey*, the image of the dog, for instance, had a certain reference to the content and it gave you an idea of the animal, although there wasn't a narrative text in that piece. I did make a drawing in the performance, but it was a very simple outline of a dog. Then I had a drawing of my dog made in the studio hanging in the performance like an icon.

In pieces where I start working with stories, for example *The Juniper Tree*, I wanted to produce more drawings. I concentrated on the idea to develop different approaches to drawing in my work. With *The Juniper Tree* it involved painting. There was a boy and a girl in that story, so I chose opposite colors, red and white, the colors of the story—blood and snow, the materials of this fairy tale. I analyze the text and then I find images and motifs to pull out and represent graphically. Once I made a drawing while listening to a William Carlos Williams poem, which starts out “it was a big mirror.” It is a description of a man painting on a mirror. I made the same drawing that he is describing in the text for the video *Big Mirror*.

MACDONALD: Do you think *Organic Honey*, which doesn't have any narrative text, still has literary references?

JONAS: For me it does. Underneath it. In all my early work, for me—but I don't expect other people to know—there is a subtext, which is my reference to myth. Not only to particular stories but also to the idea of myth and how it relates to literature and painting. In painting, there's always a story. I'm talking about the history of painting. From the very early times, paintings have had stories behind them. That interested me. Silent objects that have a story.

*Organic Honey* was really about what it means to be female. I was exploring the idea of whether there is such a thing as female imagery. That was being discussed then in the late sixties and early seventies. For instance, the moon as female.

For the character, Organic Honey, I was exploring an erotic persona through costume, gesture, and mask. I had gone to see Jack Smith, who had greatly affected me. He was so different from everything else that was going on at the time. He was much more baroque and that interested me a lot. It gave me inspiration. I wanted to break away from what was going on then in dance. There was an anti-literary stance. People didn't want to deal with literature, but from the very beginning literature was important to me.

MACDONALD: I'd love to talk about that. What kind of literature? I know that poetry is very important.

JONAS: I loved *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and how Joyce used myth in that. I am interested in how myth can be used.

MACDONALD: I was going to refer to that in *Organic Honey*. There's a moment where you step over to the other side of the mirror and the person that emerges, the other person, is someone created out of a fiction.

JONAS: Then I was interested in Cocteau's films, in which the characters went through a mirror to the other side.

MARRANCA: It is very interesting that for a shy person, as I know you've described yourself, myth is a way of not dealing with autobiography.

JONAS: Definitely. I never wanted to deal with autobiography.

MARRANCA: Yet drawing is a very private act that you've given public exposure. You've found masks to create some sort of distance. Drawing in a performance is also a type of distance.

JONAS: A lot of people said to me, in the early days, that when they looked at my performances they felt they were looking into a private world. I didn't consciously make that decision, but I was obviously able to express myself in performance in a way that was impossible for me to do verbally or in any other way. I didn't want to be autobiographical, but I was able to express things that had to do with my inner spirit. I liked strange writers. Djuna Barnes. She wrote *Nightwood*. And the French writers, like Marguerite Duras and Nathalie Sarraute.

MACDONALD: I am also wondering about a strange book that was popular in England. It was *Marianne Dreams*, by Catherine Storr, about a girl who has three images: an empty landscape, a house, and a face looking at a window. She draws her way into the world.

JONAS: You'll have to write that down. It sounds great.

MACDONALD: Surrealism is one of your interests, isn't it?



*Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, 1972. Photo: Roberta Nieman.



*Lines in the Sand*, dOCUMENTA (11), 2002. Photo: Werner Maschmann.

JONAS: I also felt a little bit like I was schizophrenic, but that was because of a book from an English psychologist.

MARRANCA: R.D. Laing?

JONAS: No. I don't recall his name. People were thinking about psychology in a different way then and experimenting with the ideas.

MACDONALD: I think the interest here is not about literature as a narrative but literature as a world into which you step.

JONAS: Right. And you mentioned the big landscape. There was a French feminist—Monique Wittig—who wrote a novel about women warriors. For me, that was perfect—the idea of a big, flat, empty landscape. And the Antonioni films that came out before I started making performances.

MARRANCA: You haven't mentioned Maya Deren. She must have been important.

JONAS: I know it's hard to believe but I didn't see her films until 1976. The ones I first saw were the ones she shot in Haiti. I didn't see her other dance films until later.

MACDONALD: And Borges was published in the 1960s. He provided an informing context, in many ways.

JONAS: Absolutely.

MARRANCA: You mentioned Jack Smith earlier. One can see, especially in *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* and *Reading Dante*, a poetic, visionary cinema of people out in nature, in costumes, dancing—an illusion is created and a sense of freedom.

JONAS: Don't forget that Anthology Film Archives was here and I went several times a week. There was not just Jack Smith. Major effects on me were the early Russian, French, and German films. Vigo and Dovzhenko. As far as filmmaking goes, there was the whole world of Anthology, overlapping the art world.

MARRANCA: It's very interesting, for your generation, how much knowledge of different art forms that you have. I'm sorry to say that a lot of that is gone today because everything is now so focused on the contemporary. It has always seemed to me that your generation used art as a language. That makes the work so much richer.

JONAS: I studied art history in college.

MARRANCA: You also read books, you saw films, you knew dance, you traveled. It is more and more difficult for people to have the money to travel. A lot of people have no concept of a library now and don't buy books. Research has shifted to the realm of the social rather than to the humanities and art and history.

MACDONALD: There were huge social and artistic changes when I was a student around the enormous amount of publishing and translating in the 1960s and 1970s. I went to school in Leeds when I was seventeen and I saw all of those films locally—Antonioni, Pasolini, Fellini, and the Russian and German films. When I see your work, it makes me think of literary and film associations.

MARRANCA: You can go to your work and engage in the history of imagery, like Warburg, the figure at the center of *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, who was involved with the history of images.

JONAS: That's the way I approached Warburg, through his writing about the Hopi Snake Dance, and his experience in the Southwest. Partly because in the sixties I saw the Hopi Snake Dance, and it was a profound experience.

MACDONALD: What about Borges? Was he a lasting influence?

JONAS: I was greatly influenced in the sixties by his references to the mirror. I quoted him. I was very affected by his writing as everybody was. I've gone back to him over and over again. But I could never make a piece out of one of his stories, because he's too particular about a place and time. I love *The Garden of Forking Paths* as a title, even. It relates to the Internet, actually. The infinite library is very contemporary.

MARRANCA: I'm wondering if you're making a case for your work as a "failed" attempt at drawing to approach writing—an existential, philosophical position, as it were.

JONAS: Maybe, because I always think I can't write. Writing for me is very difficult.

MARRANCA: So you keep drawing and drawing and drawing, in the hope that you will approach writing.

JONAS: Yes.

MARRANCA: If you go from the early works of *Organic Honey* and through the middle works, it now seems that there is more drawing. Can you point to works where you got to a different level in drawing or thinking about drawing? What were these transformational moments?

JONAS: They happened in the outdoor works in the late sixties and early seventies when I made large drawings in the landscape and on the ground, while at the same time I began to work with video and made drawings for the camera, the monitor, and the space.

*Organic Honey* was the first piece when I used imagery in that way and where I thought of it as visual language. The idea of telling a story with images. The idea of this endless drawing from New Guinea. I return to earlier ideas. Later on I made many drawings based on Celtic patterns that had a relationship to the Irish epic

*Sweeney Astray*. There are threads. It's hard to answer your question, actually. In all of my work, I develop ideas for drawing, like in *Volcano Saga*, where I made drawings taking images from slides that were projected on the wall one after another in order to construct another image on the page. I drew the same images over and over, but the drawing was always different. I was responding to slides flashing by.

I never did that again. In the last few pieces—*Lines in the Sand*, *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, and *Reading Dante*—the scale of the drawing is larger in general, and the pieces are larger. They're more epic, *Sweeney Astray*. There was a whole period where I was copying Irish and Celtic patterns. I didn't show them in my work because it was almost corny, but I enjoyed it. I also tried to copy some of the illuminated manuscripts. Before that, when I started working with narrative—*The Juniper Tree* and *Upside Down and Backwards*—I worked with painting big and bold. I made paintings as backdrops for *Upside Down and Backwards*. I haven't thought to describe them in this way, but definitely my style changed in different periods. For instance, I made dog drawings in the early *Organic Honey*, very rough and black and white. Later on I made colored dog drawings in my studio because I became obsessed with my dog. I was reading about the Celts—there is an obsession with people's heads. I think there is some relationship but I don't know what. The idea that you draw somebody's portrait over and over again was interesting to me.

MARRANCA: How did the changes in drawing impact the performances as you moved through the decades?

JONAS: In the early work when I was using video I was very interested in drawing without looking at the paper, drawing for the camera, while looking at the monitors. It's indirect drawing. It still interests me. It made me draw in a different way. That affected the idea of drawing in performance. You're not really looking because there are so many things going on. You're just moving your hands. Gradually I learned how to move my hands. Letting them move, by themselves, in a way.

MACDONALD: As if they need to have agency. Do you think the body knows?

JONAS: Yes. It's in my body. When I make a piece now it is not the same as at the beginning, when I was on the brink of something. Now I have that experience, which I can use.

MACDONALD: Does the body feel freer, in a sense?

JONAS: Yes. Definitely. When I started out I had no experience in performances. I was very stiff. Everything had to be just right. Now I am much more free.

MACDONALD: When I look at the history of dance, it is what the great dancers have always known. Whatever tradition you come from, it is the knowledge that is there in the body.

JONAS: The body including the brain. You build up a repertory in your body, in your mind. I don't like to repeat myself. Some people like that. Although one does, you can't help it. I'm very interested in inventing something else.

MACDONALD: As you speak, I'm thinking about the film *Paul Swan* that Andy Warhol made about a dancer just getting dressed and moving. You keep seeing the particular gesture of his training, his generation, his way of moving his hands.

JONAS: Another image comes to me—Matt Mulligan. His visual work is very geometric, but what interests me about him is that he becomes hypnotized for his performances. This can be very hard to watch. It seems undefined. One thing he does is that he stands with his back to you and he is writing something on the wall that you can't see. I like that gesture. It is complete privacy.

MACDONALD: There is a long tradition of artists and writers working like that—automatic writing. Learning to write must have an important effect on drawing. The education we've talked about, at Waldorf and at Walt Whitman, tend to bring drawing in well before writing.

JONAS: I didn't learn to read or write until second grade. But then my family sent me to a different school because all I did was paint. I had to be tutored over the summer. I was in Germany last summer, and we did a performance of *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things Scent* in Stuttgart. A lot of people I know from the city were there, and I found that almost everybody went to the Rudolf Steiner school.

MACDONALD: They all had that observational and drawing-based education. And movement.

MARRANCA: Speaking of Steiner, were you aware of his blackboard drawings before Joseph Beuys's? They seem closest to yours.

JONAS: I didn't know much about Rudolf Steiner, actually.

MARRANCA: Steiner's are more cosmic, in the manner that yours are, in comparison to Beuys.

JONAS: Beuys was a teacher. He was demonstrating.

MACDONALD: It is very interesting that artists have turned to drawing again, as if it had been tremendously overlooked.

JONAS: Drawing is a basic practice.

MARRANCA: Your most recent work, *Reanimation*, was seen in New York at Performa this fall and earlier at dOCUMENTA. It uses several selections from the novel *Under the Glacier* by the Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness. What connected you to the book?

JONAS: In the eighties I did a big project based on an Icelandic saga. I spent a lot of time in Iceland at that time and I began reading all the sagas. Then I read contemporary literature and I found Halldór Laxness. Many of my friends have read *Independent People*, his most well-known novel. I became intrigued with *Under the Glacier*.

MARRANCA: It's such a strange novel. Susan Sontag had high praise for it, which she referred to as science fiction, philosophy, dream novel, allegory. One of the things that struck me, in terms of using this as a starting point, is that there seems to be more drawing in *Reanimation* than in anything you've ever done. Is that true?

JONAS: I'm not sure, but there is a lot of drawing in it and it's because I have become increasingly more involved with drawing, as my performance becomes a little less.

MARRANCA: It seems almost now like a theatre of drawing.

JONAS: I guess it is, yes. In a way, I rely on it to say things. I speak through the drawings.

MARRANCA: What function does the drawing have in *Reanimation* that the video or the text can't accomplish?

JONAS: I make drawings that represent many of the things that Laxness is talking about. I refer to, say, the bumblebee, but I don't make a drawing of a bee. I use Rorschach tests to make drawings of insects. I pour ink on paper referring to snow and oil and I draw fish referring to fish in a visual language. So it really highlights certain things.

MACDONALD: I remember that the last time we spoke you said the way you like to use literature is to draw out particular images and motifs and then replace them in a different form.

JONAS: There are subtexts. When I began to work on it a few years ago the first thing that came into my mind from *Under the Glacier* is that glaciers are melting now. Of course that's not in his text, because he wrote it in the sixties. But you can't do something about glaciers without making that part of the issue. When I use a text from the past I bring it into the present and refer to present situations. All through the performance is a reference to the idea of melting and that's why I used all the water images. Some imagery was from an old piece made in 1973 in a swimming pool. The subtext for the bee, for instance, was a newspaper article that I cut out that said "Two busy bees . . ." so it referred to the situation of the bee now. When you talk about the miraculous action of the bee taking pollen from the flower, everybody understands that's in jeopardy.

The way Laxness talks about nature is in a very poetic, beautiful, and touching way. Nature is being threatened. Everything we know is threatened now. The planet, the globe. So that was my subtext for this piece. Then the bird. I drew the bird in rela-



*Reanimation*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kaskade Theater. Photo: Rosa Maria Råhling.



*Reanimation*, Performa 13 biennial, 2013. Photo: © Paula Court. Courtesy Performa.

tion to a certain text about how strong and very fragile a bird can be in a face of the storm and, as in many other parts of this piece, I was inspired by Jason Moran's music. He plays live during the entire performance. That drawing was in relation to the text but also in relation to his music. That was my favorite.

MARRANCA: Sometimes the music is very beautiful and elegant, and at other times there's a lot of dissonance. At one point there were images of ice and also the sound of these lower keys on the piano that gave the feeling of icicles. There was a kind of synesthesia between the image and the music. One of the things that struck me in the piece is that there is a very strong attention to process. It actually seems a literal sense of *story telling* through many different kinds of media—drawing, image, text, and music.

JONAS: This piece became unified in its way because of a particular interaction with the music. Jason and I work together very well and have performed this piece in dOCUMENTA and then in Sweden right before Performa. It became more energized and coherent.

MACDONALD: It's a really interesting approach isn't it? Partly old fashioned, in the sense that it's almost like silent film accompaniment.

JONAS: I guess so. Yes.

MARRANCA: I was fascinated by all the drawing in the video and on the projections. Is that a form of re-writing? You are always drawing your way into the images. There is so much outlining of images of the animal faces, of the landscape, and the topography. Do you feel that this work is taking you to another place or is it refining what you already knew?

JONAS: In a way it has taken me to another place. I'm not sure what it is though or how to talk about it. I worked with the music in a different way. It wasn't at all accompanying me. It was part of my body and my space. Partly because Jason is a jazz musician, he has the same way of interacting with what's going on.

MARRANCA: How do you prepare for the strenuous performance that you do, being active the entire piece?

JONAS: It's actually not hard, physically. But as you know I'm getting older. For the performance in New York and in Sweden I went to yoga classes, and in London, where I was at the time. I watch what I eat and don't drink too much. I have to feel physically fit. But physically, for me this piece is not overwhelming at all. There are moments, like during some little dances, when it's difficult because of how old I am, but even the part with the instruments—one of my favorite sequences—where it looks like I am working hard, I'm totally enjoying it so it gives me energy.

MACDONALD: I had the feeling in a strange way that it was Laxness who had come to you. He has this one phrase about time, which seemed to me to be very

important and something very much out of your sensibility. A character in the novel refers to time as the one thing we can agree is supernatural. It's the beginning and the end of the world.

JONAS: That phrase about time I find endlessly mysterious. But also time in relation to what's going on, say, with the glaciers. There are so many different levels. I like it because I couldn't figure it out. He makes statements like that. Like what he says about the bee getting the pollen. It's such a beautiful little story. It has to do with people's relation to an idea of what is God, you know, and how do you talk about that. That's not a word I ever use, "God," but I do think that nature is composed of things that seem miraculous to us, and that are, actually. As they are threatened we see how miraculous they are. Anyway, the world is changing very fast and so we have a different concept of time.

MACDONALD: It is very interesting thinking about time and age, isn't it? You are saying that these are things you have thought about for a very long time. Times have changed and yet those tools still work for you.

JONAS: They do, yes. One thing about this piece is I'm very happy that I found a new energy in my work so I'm interested in going on performing. I always think, "Maybe I'll stop, this is ridiculous." But this particular piece gave me another look at that.

MARRANCA: You have the ability to capture the spirit of childlike wonder and a real playfulness with little toys and objects and tools. I don't know how you feel about this, but it seems that there is among the different kinds of work that we see today work that deals with the world of imagination, and then there is work that just duplicates the crises of the social world. One could do many different kinds of works dealing with ecology or climate change. But your work has always remained so much in the world of the imagination and the spirit. What does that consist of for you?

JONAS: From the very beginning I thought of children's play as being an important part of my process. The idea of play is, of course, how I begin, as a child does. I just watched *Fanny and Alexander*, the Bergman film. What I noticed about it was that he shows the children looking at magic lanterns and being told stories and looking at puppets and being afraid and trying to understand the world. He juxtaposes this with the terrible bishop who marries their mother and who doesn't allow them any toys or anything. It's very cruel, and you see that a child without those things really cannot grow. Fantasy and imagination are so important in one's life. It's what I know best, in a certain sense. I could go and make a very down-to-earth documentary but this other world of the magic of film or what you can do in myth and poetry, interests me to continue. I think it's very important that this be in your life.

MARRANCA: Childhood attractions and real interests can remain with people for an entire lifetime. How can artists retain that sense of childlike surprise?

JONAS: It's very important to constantly be unsure of what you're going to do next, and to be open and not fall into habits. It is very hard not to.

MARRANCA: One of the things that seem to be a through-line in the work is about getting into the center of the earth. In some ways, I see you drawing yourself into this landscape as a means to try to get inside the world, into the image.

JONAS: From the very beginning space has been one of the most important elements in the work. The treatment of space, whether it be landscape space or the space of the media—the TV or the camera. When I started working with video I thought of crawling into the monitor. I imagined the monitor was a box that I could crawl into. Drawing is about defining space, so different drawings are appropriate for different kinds of space, like the space of the TV, or the space of the performance area, or the landscape, or the space of the projected image. Drawing it does draw you in.

MARRANCA: Without getting too interpretive, you said earlier you couldn't really address the question of time exactly, but that it was attractive, that it draws you in, and that you don't know what it's about or know how to think about it. I have the feeling that you are trying to grasp the mystery of existence. It's that mythic and imaginative impulse of trying to get out of reality and into the landscape. Is there anything to that?

JONAS: Well yes I'm sure. But I would just say briefly that one thing that has come with age is wanting to really think about spiritual matters and concentrate more on things of the spirit. In a way, that's very down to earth. Laxness has a sense of humor so you don't have to be sentimental about it. I don't understand the universe. When you hear about space and where the end of space is, that's something I don't think anybody really knows what it means.

MACDONALD: It's very metaphorical, isn't it? In a sense "getting down to earth" in this work is getting down to some real surprises. What's under the earth and the volcanic mysteries of under the earth? The ground is never quite the ground. About the spiritual—that's another thing. Iceland is an interesting country in relationship to mystery and the spirit.

MARRANCA: What do we mean when we talk about spiritual things? We have such a limited vocabulary that it is really difficult to know what anyone means. The subject could turn toward religion but aren't we also just talking about the mind?

JONAS: I'm not talking about religion when I say "spirit" or "spiritual." I'm talking about the whole body. It's not just the mind. It's one's whole existence. For me it has to do with nature and one's feeling about awe-inspiring nature.

MACDONALD: That is probably the great question of our time. What does time have to do with our relationship to where we are now?

JONAS: Some of the images of Laxness I didn't figure out how to deal with. Like what he says about time.

MARRANCA: Is drawing a way of thinking through the novel?

JONAS: I think drawing is a way of finding for myself. With the drawing on top of the Icelandic slides in the performance, I draw over one slide and then it changes and I continue the drawing over another. It didn't produce great drawings, I have to say. But it's an interesting tracing of one's memories in trying to make something coherent out of them.

MACDONALD: You said before that the drawing has begun to be the performance. Has that got somewhere to go for you, or is that more a statement of practicality?

JONAS: I don't know where it will go. But that is something I know well and I'm interested in continuing to do. Right now each time I do a performance I exhaust my possibilities. So I have to invent another way of doing it. I'm going to continue to make drawings but in relation to something else. I have to start in a different place now. I don't know where it will lead. I'm going to continue doing performance for a while.

MARRANCA: One can go on making new discoveries, if there is always that energy to return to.

JONAS: I hope so.

MACDONALD: The idea of drawing that we talked about—as a practice of the entire body into which you can step—is another metaphor. There's something very hopeful in that.

JONAS: Well, yes, there should be. I think that that's what art can give us. It gives us pleasure, hope, function. Inspiration. It is necessary for life. It's sort of what life is. It should be a constant challenge.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Spatial Profiling: (After Margaret Dragu's *Eine Kleine  
Nacht Radio*)

Francisco-Fernando Granados

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107), pp. 58-61 (Article)



Published by The MIT Press

- ➔ For additional information about this article  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545525>

# SPATIAL PROFILING

(After Margaret Dragu's  
*Eine Kleine Nacht Radio*)

**Francisco-Fernando Granados**

face touches wall  
repeatedly outline profile using mark-making tool  
move through space  
abstract pattern results

**A**s an action, drawing is predicated on the double-edged task of observation and translation. The body is contoured in the negative space between.

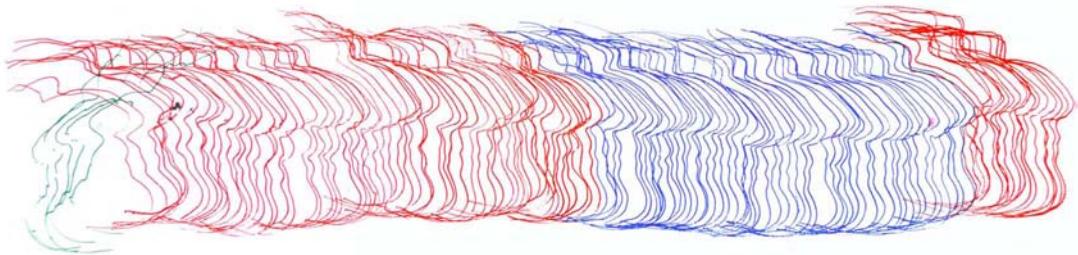
When bodies make their mark at the point of contact between the figure and the ground, aesthetics becomes a moment: the rhythm of living flesh, in movement and stillness, in time and space; as the moment fades, the traces become an index: visible and invisible lines, shapes and imprints created through touch. The variables of this equation depend on the conditions that frame the action, and on the multidimensional coordinates of embodiment of the people who perform it. Along the history of any given gesture, certain formal aspects persist, but both the content and the context of the action resonate differently each time, alluding, eluding, reifying, contesting or revising its previous iterations. The meaning or meaninglessness of the action depends on its responsiveness to the site and on the moment in which it occurs. It is thus that the body can mobilize its agency, and the visual traces can become the vestige of the artist's energy in motion.

(Inspired by a conversation with Margaret Dragu on a park bench in Vancouver, October 15, 2010.)



Above and following pages: Views of portrait, close-up, trace from *spatial profiling* . . . Performed for Mayworks, Festival of Working People and the Arts, Toronto, 2013. Three-hour performance and site specific drawing, dimensions variable. Marker on wall. Photo: Manolo Lugo.





---

FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS is a Guatemalan-born, Toronto-based artist, writer, and educator working in performance, video, drawing, cultural criticism, teaching, and curatorial practice. He has performed *spatial profiling* . . . in Toronto, Vancouver, and Helsinki.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Performance Art and Drawing

Clifford Owens

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. 74-77 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545529>

# PERFORMANCE ART AND DRAWING

**Clifford Owens**

Performance art is an image.

A good drawing (usually representational or anatomically accurate) looks like a good drawing, a display of academic artesian dexterity. Certainly, this presumption about the value and virtue of drawing is a misnomer; there are, in fact, as many forms and formalisms of drawing as there are practices of drawing. On the one hand, some drawings rely on deft hand-eye coordination; on the other hand, more abstract formalisms of drawing rely on an acute awareness of the body and emotional gestalt.

### *Studio Visit: Drawings with Joan Jonas*

*Studio Visit: Drawings with Joan Jonas* is the outcome of a project that considered, as its conceptual point of departure, the function of a studio visit. Borrowing from Daniel Buren's insightful essay "The Function of the Studio," in which, in part, he considers the space (the studio) in which a work of art is created and the space in which a work of art is exhibited and received by a viewer (the museum), I was interested in the function of the studio visit. Namely, its peculiar social dynamic between an artist and a viewer within the privatized space of creation that is, in large measure, predicated on a particular social contract informed by a certain professional, interpersonal decorum. In this 2005 project, "Studio Visits," I invited intergenerational artists and a historian and curator of performance art to engage with me in an active studio visit, which is contrary to the professional decorum of passive, "disinterested contemplation" during a studio visit. I was interested in the ways in which a studio visitor could have an authentic, unmediated "art experience." In other words, I was interested in the ways in which a studio visitor could be both in and of a work of art in the unfolding of its creation, more so than a critic after its completion.

My body, with charcoal and graphite attached to it, was the medium through which Jonas enacted the drawings on six, 20 x 30-inch pieces of paper affixed to a monotonous, modernist grid ground. Jonas dragged, turned, twisted, and contorted my limp body over the pieces of paper, using repetitive gestures to form concentric circles and dense, harsh lines. It was done in my studio.



Above: *Studio Visit: Joan Jonas* (2005). Archival pigment print, ed. 1/5, 2AP. 24" x 30". Below: *Studio Visit: Drawings with Joan Jonas* (2005). Installation view. Six charcoal and graphite drawings on paper. Courtesy the artist.



### *Vaseline and Coffee Drawings*

Flesh, breath, Vaseline, and coffee are the means and mediums through which I produce images in my ongoing body of performance-based drawings. These drawings are performed, or enacted, in both the presence of a public audience and in the private, perhaps more self-reflective, space of my studio.

In 2010, I created a ten-foot-long Vaseline and coffee drawing at the Museum of Modern Art, with an invitation from Pope L. to participate in his live performance program "Flux This." To produce the image, I instructed people in the audience to cover my nude body with Vaseline. Then, using parts of my body (limbs, joints, cock, fingers, and face), I transferred the Vaseline to the paper as an abstract composition. Finally, I dusted the paper with ground coffee to adhere to the Vaseline and to reveal the underlying image. The process of producing the Vaseline and coffee drawings is sensual, metaphorically invoking the pleasure of masturbation with the promise of discharge.

Similar in process, but unique in content and context, my studio-performance-based Vaseline and coffee drawings involve my mouth and my tongue; spewing, spitting, and licking Vaseline onto the paper.

Perhaps my Vaseline and coffee drawings relate, in some sense or another, to the history of so-called "body art," from Yves Klein to Ana Mendieta to David Hammons. Frankly, I don't care for the term "body art," because it presumes that other forms of art are disembodied and, therefore, must be disassociated from their maker. Of course, the body is always part and parcel of the making and meaning of a work of art. In the creation of all works of art, the artist must, necessarily, be present to produce an image, a text, or a piece of music. The artist's head is connected to the artist's body.

The body is the image.



*Vaseline and Coffee  
Drawing* (2010). Vaseline  
and coffee on paper. 10'.  
Courtesy the artist.

---

CLIFFORD OWENS is a trans-disciplinary artist. His solo exhibitions include *Anthology: Clifford Owens* at the Museum of Modern Art PS1 and *Perspectives 173: Clifford Owens* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. He has also been featured in group exhibitions such as *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; *Deliverance* at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; *Greater New York 2005* at the Museum of Modern Art PS1; and *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Owens was born in Baltimore, and he lives and works in New York City.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Work on Paper

Bonnie Marranca

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 36, Number 2, May 2014  
(PAJ 107) , pp. vi-1 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/545515>

# PERFORMANCE DRAWINGS

## WORK ON PAPER

**Bonnie Marranca**

How does the drawing come into being? Does the drawing generate the movement for a performance or does the imagined performance generate the movement of the hand? The subject of drawing in relation to performance has been largely overlooked as an area of exploration in both theatre and visual studies, and neither has it been central to performance history or research. Due to the expanded numbers of visual artists, directors, performers, and choreographers now working in the fields of performance art, dance, and experimental theatre drawing has also increasingly become an element in the artistic process of many of them. If drawings were analyzed as part of performance-making, their study would make an important contribution to the enhancement of performance knowledge.

"In a drawing you take physical energy out of your body and put it onto a page," is the way Kiki Smith describes the process. Enacting this transference in a notebook or in a studio is one approach, but drawing during performance commits the performer to embodiment in an entirely different context. Still, in both mediums the body is central, just as it is in the act of performance. It is possible to draw oneself into the performance or for the performer to be in, and to become, the drawing as the live act unfolds. The study of performance and drawing begins by exploring how this energy moves from act to gesture, from the body of the artist to the body of the performer. Questions of time and performance space raise a new set of questions in such instances.

A viewer who looks at a drawing focuses on the artist, but a viewer at a live event focuses on the performance. Looking at a drawing is trying to look into the mind of the artist. Where does the drawing begin and where does it end? What is it one sees in the intersection of performance and drawing, which is by nature process-oriented, experimental? Drawing is private, performance a public act. Drawing is a kind of performance imaginary. It can take the form of map-making, or notebook sketches and scribbles, or a collage of texts and images, or a notation, a diagram, a performance score. Drawings can be trance-like or ritualistic, even chaotic. Sometimes the mark making is a drawing on the body or a drawing of oneself into the performance. Is the body a pencil? Is the skin a piece of paper? Is a person a drawing?

The privacy of the drawing obscures the surety of whether the idea for the performance generates the sketch or the sketching on paper generates performance ideas. For the artist, moving from paper to the physicality of the performing body is to animate a line through time and space. Very little is known about the artistic process that develops a drawing from a work on paper to a completed performance. How is line related to motion? Is there a new meaning of portraiture in the drawn line?

The mystery of the action from thought to hand to paper, settling into the ephemerality of performance, is what lends majesty to the condition of presence. And in this ecstatic state both performer and viewer experience a privacy that is paradoxically only fulfilled in public space. Here, mind takes bodily form.

# PAJ

119



dance and drawing  
richard iii in trump era  
split britches text  
archiving performance  
american theatre politics



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Thinking/Drawing/Dancing

Bonnie Marranca

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 25-27 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693164>

# DANCE AND DRAWING

dedicated to the memory of Trisha Brown



Trisha Brown, Detail from: Eleven Incidents, 2008. Charcoal on paper.

11 parts: 6 x 10.125 inches (15.2 x 25.7 cm), each.

© Estate of Trisha Brown, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

# Thinking/Drawing/Dancing

Bonnie Marranca

**W**hat is a drawing but a line of thought? Drawing is like writing. It is a form committed to writing and the hand in an era when handwriting is disappearing. Inchoate, intuitive, vulnerable, bodily gesture. Drawing is mysterious, inward. It is both noun and verb, idea and image. Work on paper that now competes with a screen. Lines on a page generate conditions of being, as if everything we know is reflected in another form of light and time and movement in space. Where does the line, the thought, go after running past the edge of the paper?

In the last ten years, I've been especially interested in the relationship of performance and drawing as I realized how many artists who work in various forms of live performance include drawings in their working process. In 2008, *PAJ* published the first of its performance drawings portfolios. Some years later, in *PAJ 107* (2014), most of the issue featured drawings of more than a dozen artists, representing performance and visual arts. Several artists contributed drawings to our 100th issue, in 2012. Interspersed through the years in the journal are numerous individual portfolios. As early as 2002, *PAJ* featured a large selection of video and drawing. The attention in this issue turns now to dance, focusing on ten artists in the generations after Trisha Brown, whose marvelous legacy serves as a touchstone for drawing and the dance.

Dancers have a special relationship to drawing since the concepts and ideas that are visualized on paper (or perhaps on a tablet) transform themselves from thinking to making. In this way, drawing serves as the basis for an actual event, however long it takes to complete, or it can simply create the event in real time. A drawing envisions actions that are necessarily embodied in a performance. It is made *on* the body of the dancer, whereas theatre is made *of* the actor's body, which is to say the difference between existence and representation. A drawing is a study for the dance or even a critique of dance forms or an idea or a visualization of the architecture of a place, in relation to bodies and objects. The flow of a hand drawing is naturally related to dance. By its very nature, the drawing

is experimental—a dream, a concept, a vision, a blueprint, a poem. Movement is its essence. The dance creates a world in a space.

In the texts that the dancers provide here, their drawings are described variously as:

archive  
chart  
storyboard  
mark-making  
mapping  
index  
gesture  
diary

The drawings represent the secrets of artists. More often than not, they are private, and not meant to be seen, like writers' notebooks. Perhaps at times the dancers see them and use them as an aid for the eventual performance. They take the shape of random pieces of paper, pages torn from notebooks, diaries, sketchbooks. Sometimes the drawing is an activity in a live performance, drawing over the body or drawing with it, drawing on the floor, drawing on surfaces. At other times, it is made after a performance. More often, drawings are part of a continual process from the start of an idea for the dance, through all the stages of thinking about it, rehearsing, and performing.

Drawings are usually made with ink, crayon, chalk, pencil, magic-marker, water color, or with the performing body. How they are drawn shows deep affinities to visual art, to calligraphy, to architectural drawing. Notes and texts by themselves or texts and images may become part of the drawings. It is impossible to predict how a drawing will evolve to a finished work. Everything that unfolds is part of an ongoing process of thought and action. Work in progress.

Which is why I like to think of drawing for the dance as essayistic. Looking at a drawing one can see its maker in the process of thinking, making formal judgments, imagining a world of new relations. From what part of the mind does it come forth? Is its pathway the simple movement through what we know as imagination?



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Drawing Clarification

Walter Dundervill

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 34-37 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693166>

# Drawing Clarification

Walter Dundervill

I use drawing as a way of mapping the spatial structures of a dance and visualizing initial images and ideas. I draw figures in motion. I sketch costumes, props, and sets. I create diagrams of stage configurations and have even utilized drawing as an action in my performances. Fundamentally, however, drawing serves as a site for experimentation and process. It is where I grapple in purely visual form with the underlying concepts of my work. I devise intricate systems to create drawings of overlapping forms and lines, attempting to follow my own arbitrary rules as strictly as possible. This results in densely layered transparencies similar to the overlaying of image, sound, and identity in my performance work. The act of drawing provides momentary liberation from the need to justify, analyze, or explain the messy contradictions that often arise during the creative process. Drawing is focused and clarifying. It helps me bridge the gap between image and language and between form and social content.

## COLOR PARADE

*Color Parade*, 2014, an eight-hour performance installation presented by R.O.V.E. in a storefront window of the Roger Smith Hotel, NYC. I papered the walls of the window display with layers of contact paper. Over the course of the performance, I made drawings on the walls in duct tape and felt pen, including portraits of the performers in their costumes. The dancers and I gradually peeled away layers of contact paper creating new forms and surfaces for further drawing and manipulation of the materials until the entire installation was dismantled into a pile of debris.



Dancer: Ben Asriel. Photo: Walter Dundervill.  
Courtesy the artist.



Portrait of dancer Jennifer Kjos, contact paper, felt pen. Photo: Walter Dundervill. Courtesy the artist.

## ARENA

These drawings are part of an ongoing practice related to how I construct performances, particularly my interest in the layering of information, form, and imagery. I translated the system of these pen drawings into drawings of fabric and ribbon that I execute during ARENA. In ARENA, the performers interact with the ribbon drawing, disrupting its geometry and creating new forms and color arrangements.



*Untitled Line Drawing 2*, felt pen on paper, 2016. Photo: Walter Dundervill. Courtesy the artist.



*Ribbon Drawing*, 2014. Photo: Walter Dundervill. Courtesy the artist.



Performance at MoMA PS1, 2016. Photo: Maria Baranova.

---

**WALTER DUNDERVILL** is a choreographer, dancer, and visual artist based in New York City. He creates performance environments fusing dance, visual art, costume, and sound design. His work has been presented at Dance Theater Workshop, New York Live Arts, MoMA PS1, The New Museum, Danspace Project, Participant Inc., JACK, and at the Solo in Azione Festival in Milan, Italy. A recipient of Bessie Awards as a performer and designer, Dundervill has performed for various artists, including DD Dorvillier/Future Human Dance Corps, Keely Garfield, RoseAnne Spradlin, Bruce Nauman, Lovett/Codagnone, Luther Price, and David Wojnarowicz.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Self-Portraiture/Self-Prompt

Gwen Welliver

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 38–41 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693167>

# Self-Portraiture/Self-Prompt

Gwen Welliver

These drawings explore the expressive potential of line and figure in the mutable spaces that separate abstraction from representation. Beneath form and surface—skin, if you like—they probe the grotesque physicality inherent in embodied movement.

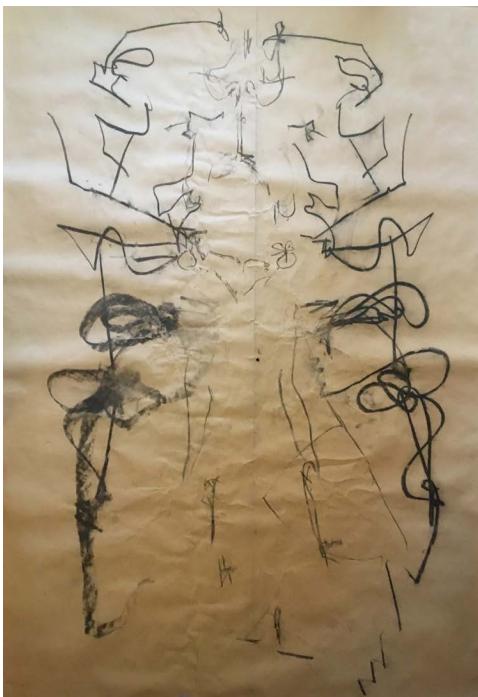
My intent in drawing is not to make a work on paper, it's to move. Each time I place the charcoal on the page, I try to empty my body and just begin. As it becomes more involved in the drawing, the edges of my face, the time embedded in my skin, the rhythmic drop of weight against the floor, and the emotional tenor of the day—and much more—become marks on the page. The drawings aren't figurative, they are representational. But the boundaries between the two are fluid, not fixed, and less articulate than we often imagine.

Lines can represent specific detail about how something works, some essence of an action—what the subject is attending to while moving—without addressing the outward appearance of the subject. This is how I understand these drawings and my dances.

Drawings of this kind propel an ongoing line of inquiry about the activity of the imagination; in part, how imagination can sometimes or suddenly experience the body as a formal container (or vice versa). "Wait, what was that; what did I just become?" Starting with formal movement experiments—something as simple as "line, fold, rotate"—my collaborators and I give ourselves permission to consider that formal container as a frame of reference inside of which there are encounters with the unreal, the untamed, the imagined. The movement material this practice generates is not seen and edited purely for its appearance or narrative. Instead, its rigor of attention to do the complex operations at play are prioritized, and proprioceptive imagination determines the narrative.



Stuart Singer and Julia Burrer in *Beasts and Plots*, New York Live Arts performance center, 2013.  
Photo: Courtesy Ian Douglas.



Stuart Singer, drawing made during a performance of Gwen Welliver's *Beasts and Plots*, charcoal on paper, 70" x 107", 2013. Courtesy the artist.



*Spine* from *Portraits 1-3*, sand on paper, 70" x 107", 2009. Courtesy the artist.



*Self-Portrait 2300: Falling Face*, charcoal on paper, 18" x 24", 2013. Courtesy the artist.



*Self-Portrait for TB*, charcoal on paper, 18" x 24", 2017. Photo: Courtesy Meagan Helman.

---

**GWEN WELLIVER** is a dancer and choreographer who works across formats, from performance installation to opera. As a New York Dance and Performance Bessie awardee for sustained achievement in dancing with Doug Varone and Dancers, and as a former rehearsal director for the Trisha Brown Dance Company, Welliver's work as a dancer, choreographer, and director has been presented in theatres that include La MaMa, City Center, New York Live Arts, Palais Garnier, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Theatre, Lincoln Center Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, and Singapore Festival of Arts. She is on the faculty of the School of Dance at Florida State University.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Drawing the Language of Dance

Jan Rae

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 42-45 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693168>

# Drawing the Language of Dance

Jan Rae

Can the connection between two dancers be visualized by the trajectory of the movement of their bodies? Can the emotional response to music be transcribed by using gestural mark-making? What is the nature of tango? These are the driving questions that inform my drawing practice.

My work focuses on how to make sensory, gestural, and kinesthetic images through referencing audio stimuli and using experimental drawing techniques, performance, and new media. The key elements are movement, musicality, and connection. The work also seeks to explore the *nature of connection*. As a modern society we are distracted by computers, social media, and smart phones; protracted personal connection in daily life has been diminished. We communicate and connect through the technology that has removed us one step from direct contact with each other. In our busy and distracted lives, the opportunity for creative collaboration, extended focus, and even deep conversation is being eroded.

The practice of drawing involves deep and extended focus. Drawing requires one's whole attention and uses the energy of the whole body. One line requires energy from the feet and uses the whole body to the point of connection with the drawing surface. It is an immediate and analog action. In this way drawing can involve movement, gesture, and an elevated sense of perception. Drawing can also require an external stimulus. For my purpose, I use music and dance as the driving force behind my mark-making. Drawing can become performative when viewed as an action.

My performance drawings respond directly to music and use the whole body as a drawing tool. My work is also collaborative and experimental, and the drawing projects involve one-on-one sessions with musicians, dancers, or cinematographers. Communication and connection are the essence of the work. In my current series of tango performance drawings, I collaborate with various tango partners

and dance to different tango music. The marks made on the prepared surface are only the result of the dance. The dance has not been modified, hence every session will produce its own and unique drawing.

Dance is pure creativity. Each step can be deconstructed into many parts, and each movement offers freedom into the unknown by insisting on spontaneous or considered choices. It can be seen as a moving meditation. In dance, aspects of time, form, direction, and space are further enhanced by the connection with music.

It is the timelines—the stretching, overlapping and bending of visual and aural rhythms—that are so intriguing. It is part of the human condition to express ourselves through dance and movement, and there is a spiritual aspect to the connection between body movement and music, especially when we share the experience with another person. I find this a fascinating concept and, as a visual metaphor for life and relationships, an endless source of inspiration for my artwork.



*Preparing the Floor*, marble dust and water. Performed by Jan Rae. *Draw to Perform 4*, Fabrica Contemporary Gallery, Brighton, UK, 2017. Photo: Courtesy Nigel Davies.



Top: *Drawing the Language of Dance*, line of dance erasure with marble dust. Performed by Jan Rae.  
*Draw to Perform 4*, Fabrica Contemporary Gallery, Brighton, UK, 2017.

Middle: *Drawing the Language of Dance*, performance drawing. Performed by Jan Rae and Nigel Davies.  
*Draw to Perform 4*, Fabrica Contemporary Gallery, Brighton, UK, 2017.

Bottom: *Drawing the Language of Dance*, floor drawing with marble dust. *Draw to Perform 4*,  
Fabrica Contemporary Gallery, Brighton, UK, 2017.

All photos: Courtesy Manja Williams.



*One Tanda*, performance drawing with marble dust and water. Performed by Jan Rae and Crismen Tache. Black Box, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2016. Photo: Courtesy Jan Rae.

---

JAN RAE is a visual artist, tango dancer, performer, and teacher who represented Australia in the 2007 World Tango Championships in Buenos Aires. Her drawings and paintings have been exhibited in galleries and exhibitions in Australia, the UK, New York, and Argentina. Her current body of work, *Drawing the Language of Dance*, seeks to combine the two creative aspects of her life—dance and visual art. She lives in Byron Bay, Australia



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Movement Engineer

Jon Kinzel

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 66-71 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693173>

# Movement Engineer

Jon Kinzel

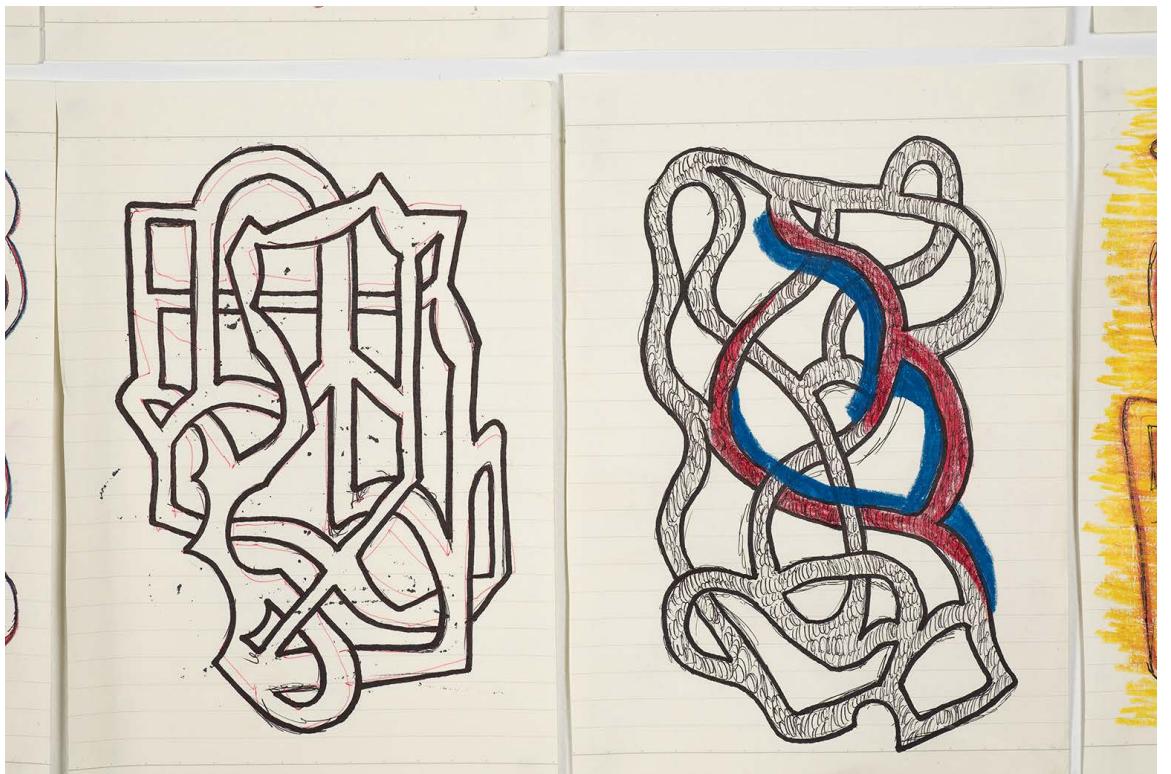
Drawing has informed many of my intimate and large-scale installations at venues such as The Invisible Dog, The Kitchen, The Chocolate Factory, Dance Theater Workshop, Dixon Place, Performance Space 122, La MaMa, Menagerie de Verre, Danspace Project, and The Knitting Factory. This has involved constructing and dismantling murals, text, and floating partitions during performance—connecting dance and object-making within the temporal realm. I have maintained a fluid interdisciplinary practice for decades.

The realities of showing my work in the 1990s in performance spaces throughout downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn required adaptability. Theatres, galleries, lofts, and clubs as performance venues were varied and usually carved out of existing architecture. The task of acclimating to different spatial proportions, audience positions, and sonic environments became a necessary and ultimately enjoyable part of my creative process. The effect this had on the many solos I created during this period was to treat each piece as a temporary installation. I used iconography and spatial demarcations—graphic, three-dimensional mark-making and line-drawing executed during performance—to situate myself and the audience within a mutable physical and pictorial terrain. Together, we experienced a given venue in transformation. I incorporated this way of working into two evening-length solos, *Tape Solos* (1995) and *Who Has A Bill?* (1998), made in collaboration with visual artist Bob Ajar. I continued to return to this framework in later years in a duet, *Quirk-Ease* (2007), and an ensemble piece, *Responsible Ballet and What We Need Is a Bench to Put Books On* (2010). All of these dances demonstrate my tactile, gestural, and sculptural way of manipulating materials.

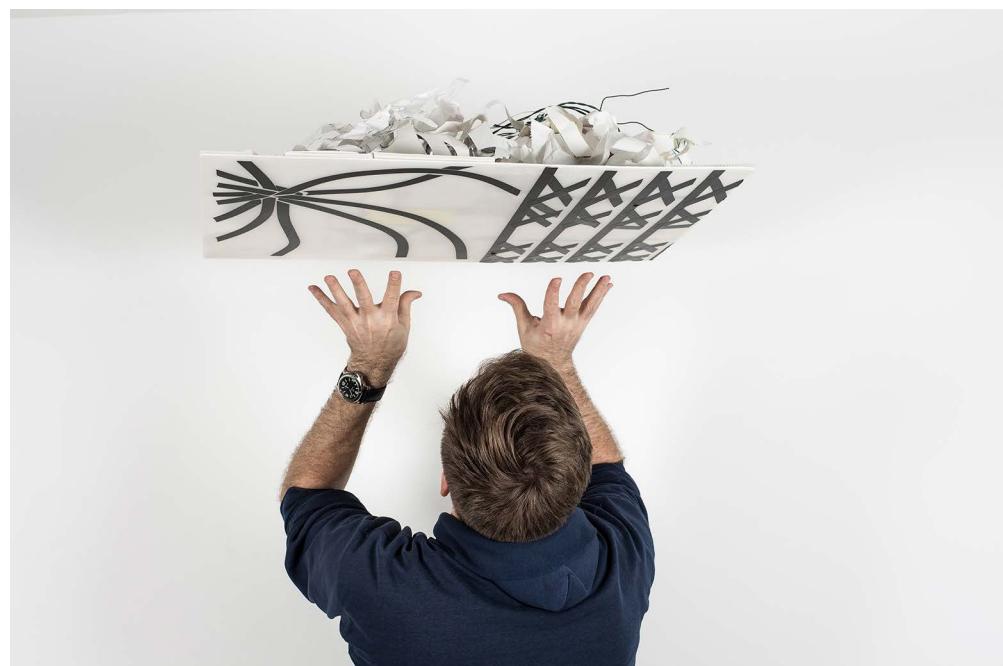
My desire to work with my hands has kept me turning to an almost obsessive habit of sketching in journals. More specifically, when I am on the subway, I have given myself the task of using the time in-between subway stations (42nd to 59th Streets, 145th to 125th Streets) to make line drawings. I begin to draw as the subway doors close and finish when they reopen at the next stop. Importantly, I want the drawings to appear *complete*. This involves noting the distances

between each station, and executing graphic marks in an accelerated manner. I've produced hundreds of drawings while commuting. Each of them possesses tube, maze, filigree, ribbon, or belt-like characteristics, depending on how one perceives them.

To accomplish the idea of making a complete drawing within a short span of time, I devised and adhered to a set of constraints: weave curved and straight lines, compose with an awareness of the paper's edge, initiate and finalize only while in transit, and utilize an element of time that I am not in control of. Although the drawings sometimes look like symbolic representations of my commute—complex pathways associated with urban railways and tunnels—that is not my intention. Rather, as an evolving exercise, the ability to re-draw visual forms that are roughly similar allows me to work in inexhaustible sequences with no arrival point, without finality. As a series, these subway drawings, for me, reflect the transitional nature of being an aging dancer whose body is an instrument in flux.



Untitled drawings that stem from my process of working while in transit. Photos: Courtesy Erica Freudenstein.



Double-sided object I made to perform with in a memorial for Trisha Brown held at Danspace Project in 2017. Photos: Courtesy Eric Freudenstein.



At Night (2017), collaborative duet by Jon Kinzel and Jodi Melnick. The deliberate use of multiple contours in my drawings informs how bodies can map irregular shaped boulders/a sea wall. The straightness of a shin, pliable palms, and supple curves of a spine—human forms—can resist or give in to stone, an impenetrable yet faceted surface. Photo: Courtesy Alex John Beck.



At Night (2017) is a duet Jodi Melnick and I made for Beach Sessions Dance Series, Rockaway Beach, Queens. Enlarging my “subway drawings” inspired me to create a trailing paper headdress for At Night. Photo: Courtesy Arnaud Falchier.

---

JON KINZEL has presented his work, including numerous commissions and solo shows, at a variety of national and international venues. He has contributed to publications such as SCHIZM Magazine and the Movement Research *Performance Journal*, and he has received fellowships and support from several foundations and residency programs. He has worked with many choreographers, composers, musicians, designers, and visual artists, and currently he teaches at Lincoln Center Education, New York University, and Movement Research in New York City.



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Atlas of the Gesture

Virgilio Sieni

PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art, Volume 40, Number 2, May 2018  
(PAJ 119), pp. 72-77 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



➡ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693174>

# Atlas of the Gesture

Virgilio Sieni

The drawings made parallel to a performance and accompanying its creation—just like a project articulated in different sites and cities—represent a “mystery chart,” if not an actual labyrinth that is welcoming, and lets us wander around to search for revelations. Through the drawings, we can suspend any preconceived notions while looking for possible fissures that can instill the artistic process with meaning. This “chart” consists of annotations that include drawings, imprints, notes, images, and maps representing movements and objects, sites and light, photographs and memories. They articulate time and space while creating chromatic scales in relation to the quality of energy in places and actions. It is a sort of physical diary of a journey in which gestures, like movements, objects, spaces, and light, can be observed from different points of view. The drawings are in dialogue with the choreography, uncovering a continuum of details and perspectives.

## MOVEMENT AND FIGURE

Drawings often annotate movements that multiply gestures, one on top of the other (*Flight into Egypt /Adobes, Gospel*), in order to create a sense of proliferation. I often note in the same place two slightly different movements by superimposing them and including in the sketch the temporal dimensions of the movements occurring at the same time. This process of syncopation is also realized with the annotation of objects. Drawings occur before, during, and after the creative process, providing a starting point that often affects other future creations. The annotation of gestures and objects produces a rhythmical sequence of events.

## LITTLE MODULES

The modules I use to give a sense of time are simple little squares or rectangles containing drawings, like cinema frames. For instance, in the drawing referring to the *Gospel* Project, where Jacopo Pontormo’s *The Deposition from the Cross* (1528) works as the trace for a show performed by a blind dancer (Project *Gospel, Deposition in the Dark*). The visualization very often occurs in the shape of a

floor plan and, as in musical scores, one can visualize the space and location of movement with the objects. However, this floor plan is regularly transgressed by perspectival inserts, notes on light, and fragments from other drawings. All of these create a blast of the moment by having the drawing duplicate the body's ability to regenerate itself and proliferate through the joints system. The drawing corresponds to one of the body's joints: when moving, a joint inevitably affects the whole body, along with the spatial and cultural context by which it is contained and activated. A little module is a "world," a sort of cosmos taking shape from the foundational elements of its choreography and ideas, in order to open up to something else or, rather, to let us comprehend more.

## PAGE

The page, like a musical score, gathers modules, written annotation, photographs, reference images, and scattered drawings. In one figure, myriads of image references come together, one related to the other (*I fall*). As in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* by Aby Warburg, various meanings can be transferred and transmitted inside the same image; thus, a color may produce a gesture, which, in turn, echoes in other movements, lights, or architectures. In these figures, we can sense everything pointing to the qualities of the movement. It is a complete asymmetry searching for intimate strategies of solution. The page gathers but never circumscribes the aura of ideas. We could say that it reveals in its entirety a continuous possibility of fissures, messengers, and intruders, which secretly, yet consciously, nourishes the artistic path. The page empties when a work is full of changes of position, when its diverse forces establish a physical dialogue that creates fragilities opening up to the sense of silence, to a molecular and emotional listening to the qualities of gesture. Drawing becomes an act of subtraction, suspending gestures by making them inoperative, with the aim of receiving any influences that may be suggested.

## MAPS

Drawings and figures present themselves as maps that we must first create and, later, observe not to follow a pre-established path but, rather, to mysteriously discover an artwork's "breath." Paradoxically, when observing a finished drawing or figure, we find ourselves beginning a subtle tactile dialogue with the choreography that appears to give it new origins and meanings. Site maps often show the distribution of different actions in space, as if in an orthogonal projection that includes each single action wherever it occurs, and lets the joint structure of the choreographic project emerge.

Through drawings and the emerging topographical dimensions of a site, I try to let emerge a symbolically operating human body, as though I connect the spine

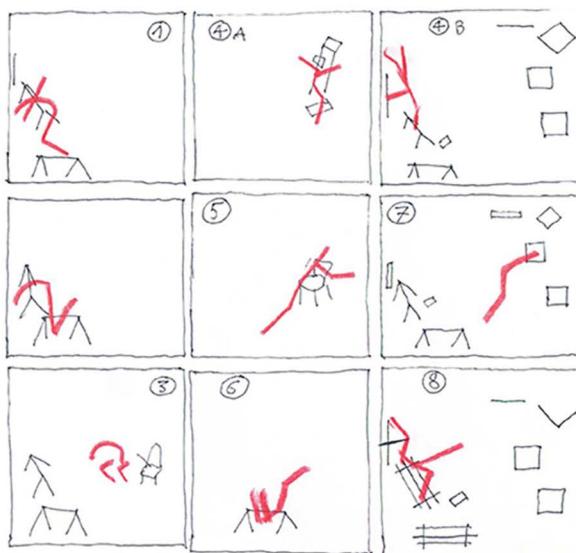
of Canabi re Street in Marseille with the action sequence in the abdominal area and in the spaces that result in the opening of the arms (*The Art of Gesture in the Mediterranean*). Drawing becomes a way to take a journey, using as a starting point maps intrinsically related to the poetry of sites and, later, to explore details of the action and the initial inspiration. This is the case in the figures devoted to the relationships between gesture and nature in a project that I realized in the Boboli Gardens in Florence (*The New City*).



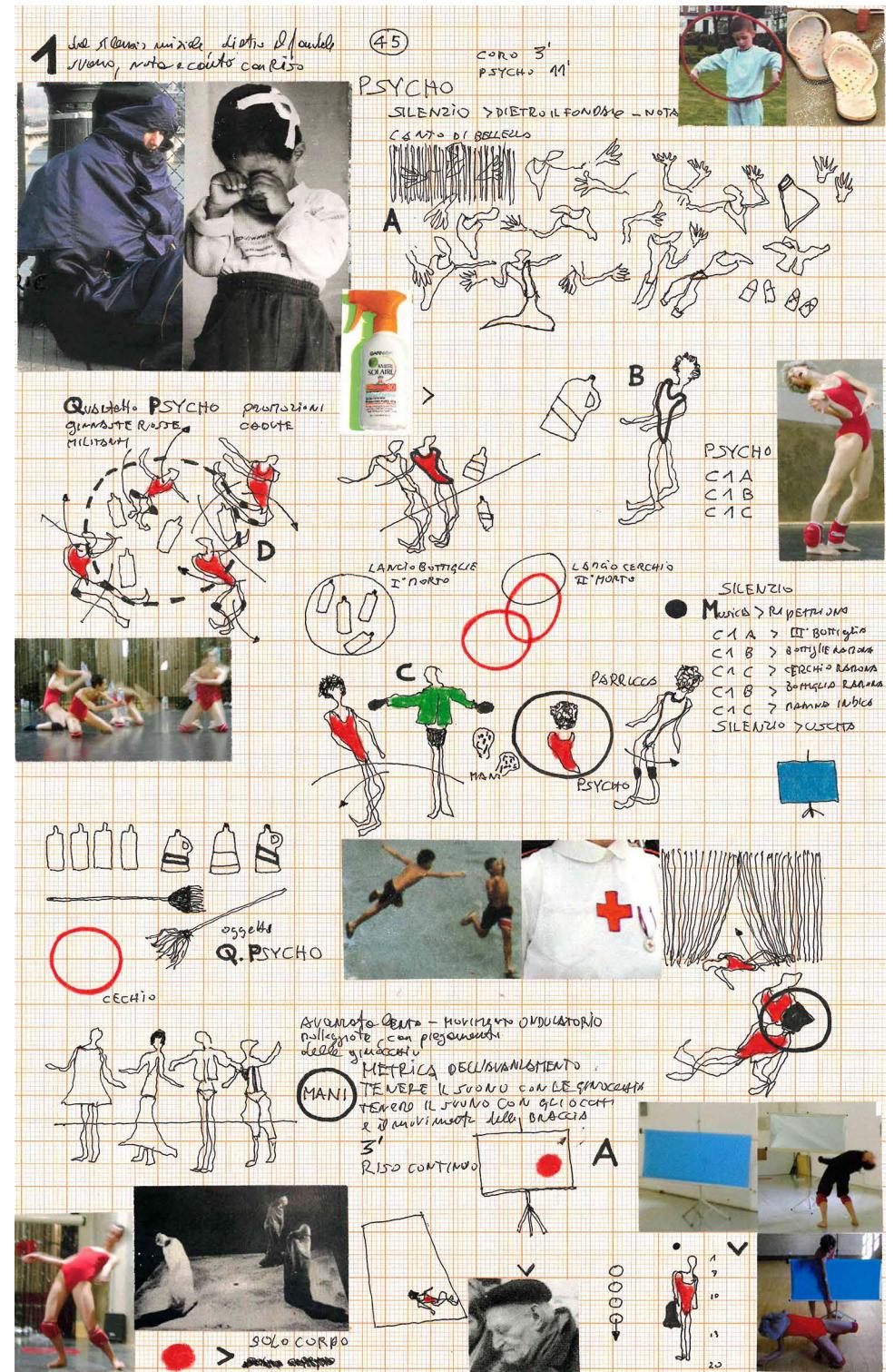
DEPOSIZIONE ALBUJO

Debutto a Venezia  
Tese cinquecentesche, Navata IV  
Corderie dell'Arsenale  
Terzo ciclo 17-18 luglio 2014

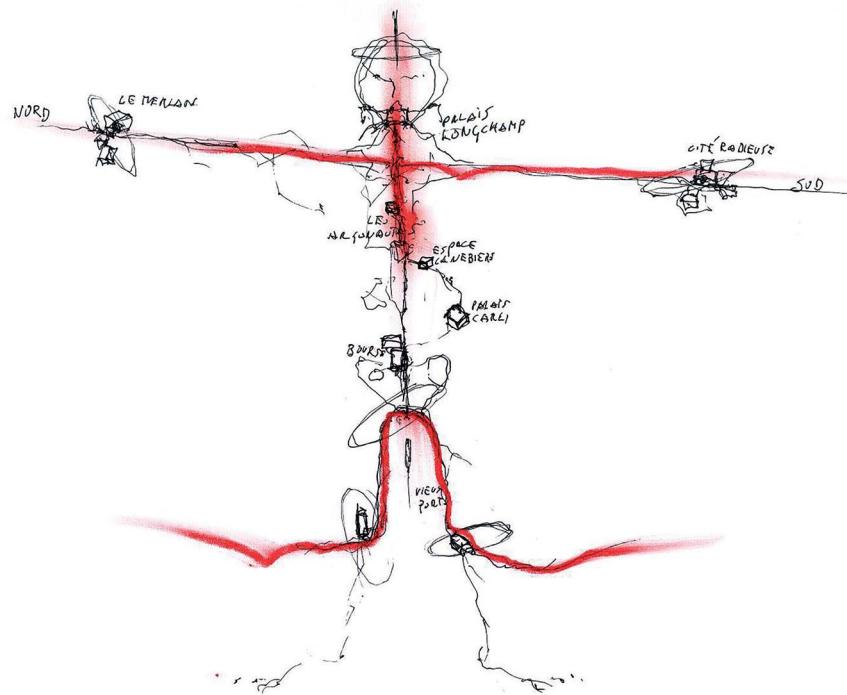
GIUSEPPE CAVUNIELLO, DAZZATORE  
NON VEDENTE, SI DEPOVE  
DA SUE, A TENDONI CON I SOGGETTI  
DISLOCATI APPORTAMENTO NELLO  
SPAZIO. UN TERRITORIO DEL GESTO  
SEGNA IL TERRITORIO DI UN LATO DA  
PUNTI PIACERI DOVE GIUSEPPE ATTRA  
VELLO LE M FIGURE DELLA DEPOSIZIONE



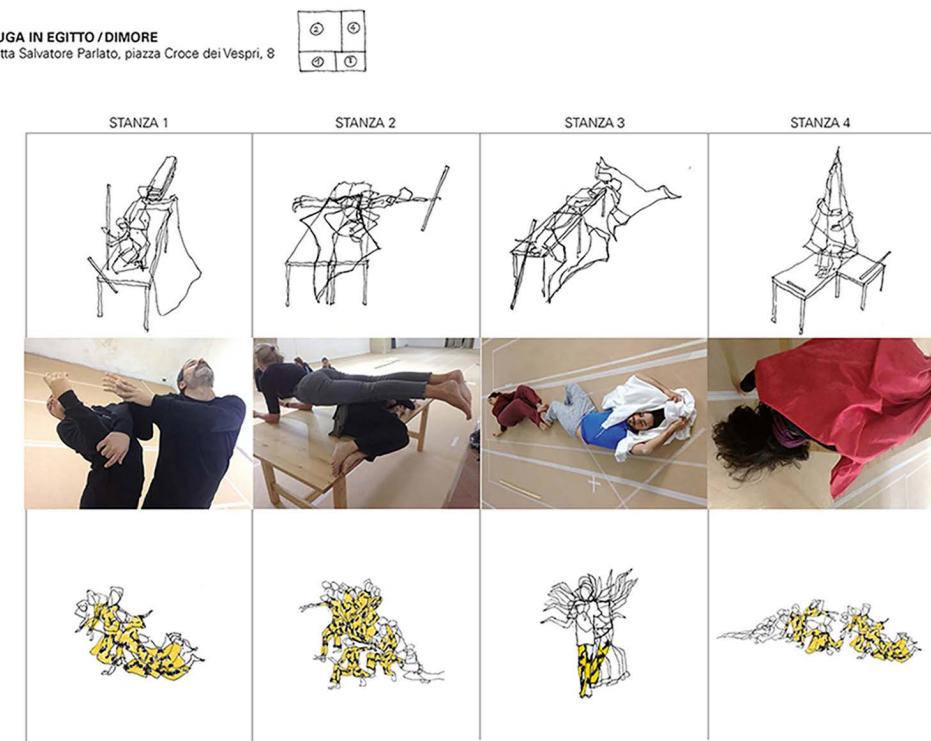
*The Deposition from the Cross* (1528) works as the trace for a show performed by a blind dancer (*Gospel, Deposition in the Dark*, Venice Biennale, 2014).



*I fall, Cremona, 2004.*



The Art of Gesture in the Mediterranean, Marseille, 2013.



FUGA IN EGITTO /DIMORE  
Ditta Salvatore Parlato, piazza Croce dei Vespri, 8

STANZA 1

STANZA 2

STANZA 3

STANZA 4

The New City, Florence, 2018–2020.

VIRGILIO SIENI founded the Compagnia Parco Butterfly in 1983, and in 1992 the Compagnia Virgilio Sieni. In 2013, he was director of the Venice Biennial–Dance Section. He represented Italy in Marseille, European Cultural Capital in 2013, with the project *Art of the Gesture in the Mediterranean*, which involved one hundred and sixty dancers from various countries; and, in the following year in Brussels during the Italian Semester of the Presidency of the European Union, with the project *Vita Nova*. Sieni created the *Atlas of the Gesture* for the Prada Foundation, in Milan, in 2015, the same year he began his collaboration with Centre Casa Paganini–Infomus of Genoa’s University DIBRIS (IT, Bio-Engineering, Robotics and System’s Engineering Department). He teaches at the Architecture Academy, in Mendrisio, Italy.