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Re-Cyclings. Shifting Time, Changing Genre in the Moving Museum

Susanne Foellmer

Abstract:

This essay examines changes in dispositives of visual and performance arts, taking as an example a museum presentation of Trisha Brown’s project *Floor of the Forest*. The ontology of both the work of art and the dance exhibited in the museum, where presence and absence interact, is explored against criteria of temporality and theatricality. The position of the recipient is a focus of particular attention, undergoing transformations between the status of visitor [beholder] and audience [spectator] and as such actively involved in bringing forth art as such. Furthermore it is proposed, in particular in this example, that the interrelationships between recipients and actors or art objects can generate haunting choreographies which emphasize the indeterminate nature and progressive disintegration of artistic genres and attempt to intertwine divergent modes of presence in visual and performance arts.

Keywords:

temporality – theatricality – presence – ontology of dance – visual arts – beholder/spectator

Entering one of the exhibition rooms at the Kunstsammlung in Düsseldorf, I encounter a rectangular structure which at first sight resembles an oversized clotheshorse. The object consists of four vertical and four horizontal metal poles connected by ropes from which hang various items of clothing such as

t-shirts or trousers. A sign on the wall opposite informs me that I am looking at Trisha Brown's *Floor of the Forest* (1970). Another sign draws my attention to the fact that a thirty-minute performance takes place once a day in the object. A third sign tells me that I am not permitted to touch the artwork. I realize that, by a few minutes, I have just missed the performance for the day of my visit which has apparently taken place, and so I find myself alone in the room with the left-over object. However, a fourth sign describes what happens during the performance, and the task to be completed by the performers: the aim is to slip, in as relaxed and effortless a manner as is possible, into and back out of the appropriate items of clothing — something which is actually not so easily done I imagine as I examine the object now devoid of human beings. The items of clothing are in fact not put on downwards, but always horizontally, preventing the anatomical movements to which we are accustomed when slipping our clothes on or off (see Photo 1).

Photo 1. Trisha Brown: Floor of the Forest (1970/2007).

Photo: Isabel Winarsch/documenta 12.

This situation which confronts me in the exhibition *Move. Choreographing You* (2010) is marked by a confusion of the parameters that normally characterize the different dispositive modes of aesthetic experience. Once I have entered the display space of Brown's *Floor of the Forest*, glancing at the signs, I am immediately disappointed that I have missed the performance by a hair's breadth, attributing to it the status of main component of the work. However, when I then study the display boards more carefully and in particular the description of what happens when the object is 'performed', an image of the movement that might have happened between these ropes and articles of clothing — had I been there in person ten minutes earlier — forms in my imagination almost instantaneously. The dance itself — if one assumes that the past happenings can be so labelled — is over, absent, and initially seems once more to confirm its ontological constitution as that of a fleeting art form.

If one considers the conditions for the emergence of this work in greater detail, however, the object and its performance are themselves to be ranked among what are known as *Equipment Pieces* by Trisha Brown (Banes 1987, 80). The artist herself describes the situation in this way:

Two people dressed and undressed their way through the structure . . . it was done as naturally as it could be done. A normally vertical activity performed horizontally and reshaped by the vertical pull of gravity. It was strenuous. Great strain and effort to support the body weight while negotiating buttons and zippers. We rested at times, and when we rested hanging down, an article of clothing became a hammock. The audience ducked

down to see the performers suspended or climbing below the frame, or stretched upward to see the activity above.¹ (quoted in Hargreaves 2010, 65)

The performance apparently not only activates the metal structure that is now uniquely displayed in the museum space as evidence of Brown's work. It also mobilizes visitors to the exhibition who in this way become spectators and move around the 'performative object' for half an hour.

However, in this essay, I want to concentrate on the question as to what happens when we are left alone with the object — an artistic arrangement, displayed like an installation in a gallery or in this case a museum of art, which, at first glance, might be consigned to the category of visual art, as suggested, not least, by the prohibition on touching on the sign. I shall therefore discuss the various consequences resulting from the situation I described at the beginning, and focus on the following aspects: on the question of the genre and artistic dispositives that evoke a situation of indetermination and furthermore in particular on the modalities of temporality of the object under consideration, seesawing back and forth between the fleeting presence of the performance (which is in the past) and the presence of the leftover installation itself. Finally, the question of materiality will come under scrutiny, which *Floor of the Forest* visits on the one hand in its ever-oscillating modes as a 'simple' prop for a performance on the one hand, and as choreographic vestige on the other.

Artistic Dispositives in the Dancing Museum

I propose that the presentation of *Floor of the Forest* in the context of the *Move. Choreographing You* exhibition evokes a continuous change in the general artistic setting, thereby calling into question the particular conditions for the display of art. This concerns in particular the conventional characteristics associated with the artistic dispositives which are at the centre of Brown's project: those of the theater and the museum. The theater, or rather the events on a theater stage, are usually characterized by the separation of stage (actors) and audience — a condition that is already partially removed in *Floor of the Forest*, if Trisha Brown's 1970s description of the events is followed. One other essential aspect consists in the time actors and audience spend together in the sense of co-presence, as Erika Fischer-Lichte points out:

The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators enables and constitutes performance. For a performance to occur, actors and spectators must assemble to interact in a specific place for a certain period of time. (2008, 32)

In a conventional theater situation, therefore, as a rule we generally encounter a shared experience of one here and now and one clear-cut beginning and end — Brown's project establishes just such a situation once a day.

On the other hand, in a museum or gallery there are normally no compelling directions or instructions as to sequence or the particular moment of the visitor's personal time a work of art is to be looked at (although often recommendations or 'guides' in this respect are given at the beginning of an exhibition). Also left to the visitor is the length of time spent observing a display, generally presenting 'immobile' artworks.

For this reason, *Floor of the Forest in the Move. Choreographing You* exhibition continuously shifts between these dispositives, flitting between its ontological constitution as an installation in a museum setting and transformation into a performance once a day. Those constant changes in assignment to artistic categories are indeed themselves inherent in the original performance. In 1970 the project was not shown in a gallery or a theater, but at a rummage sale at 80 Wooster Street in New York City thereby already truly blurring the conditions for a conventional theatrical framework: the project is transferred to a different context, i.e. that for the site-specific theater and thereby transcends common boundaries and divisions between actors and audience, as is clearly stated in the quotation from Brown.²

Meanwhile many of the protagonists of contemporary dance (in Europe) have been concerning themselves increasingly with challenging both the ontological and productive conditions of their artform, partially extending their artistic characteristics. At this point, I will make only cursory reference to Boris Charmatz' renaming of the Centre Chorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne as a "Musée de la danse" as a critical antidote: a dancing museum. As such it is a consistent extension of the idea of dance as a fleeting artform as it is of the museum as a place of static observation: The museum "takes place" (Charmatz, n.d.), reformulating the idea of that place as a temporal container of 'eternity', transcending history. To a greater degree, in various projects and formats of different duration, the temporality of the museum is narrowed and in turn that of a (conventional) dance performance lengthened and extended.³

The phenomenon of seesawing and the crossing borders between artistic genres in the sense of transition in aesthetic dispositives that shift the frame of dis/play of visual art and performance arts should therefore be examined in greater detail below with respect to the attribute of temporality.

Temporal acts

When 'simply' beholding the object in the absence of the performers yet with the information regarding what happens here once a day supplied by the notice on the wall in their minds, visitors to the display (in this case I) discover almost instantly what might have happened (in the performance). Pondering and tracing in thought the possible movements in the network of ropes and items of clothing, the event which has happened but has not been personally witnessed is actualized in the (display) now time of beholders who again may (only) (co)-experience the presence of the leftover object. Although the performers are absent, the object remains present — as the reason for their movements, so to speak — now in turn stimulating speculation in the minds of visitors arrived too late. That present absence is virtual: The past

presence of the moving performers now remains purely in the imagination of exhibition visitors and takes place in the room and in an encounter with a leftover object.

This absence of the ‘actual’ event is now to be comprehended less through Gerald Siegmund’s formulation of absence, as ever-occurring withdrawal of the body in dance or as superimposition of the anatomical body with imaginary “phantasmatic models”. Siegmund makes reference, among other things, to the structure of desire formulated by Freud, genuinely motivated by the mode of the withdrawal which, in Siegmund’s reading, brings about the experience of the dance happening (i.e. body movement) in the desiring gaze (2006, 44–5). The exhibited *Floor of the Forest* however is more concerned with a retrograde and thereby initially unrepeatable phenomenon: The dance itself can no longer be actualized, as the embodied ‘objects’ of movement are irrevocably ‘over’.⁴ So one might say that, according to Siegmund, the dance as such no longer happens. However, there are indicators, ‘trigger points’, which transfer the dance not seen as such onto another plane: that of the imagination. Traces of the occurrence do remain: In the materialized object which was the reason for the movements and in the description on the sign on the wall which activates the imaginative capacity finding expression on two levels: first — in musing over what might have happened — the of re-enactment as a playful mental activity (*Gedankenspiel*), which can be derived initially from the descriptions and the possibilities offered by the object’s architecture. Secondly, however, cultural reminiscences enter into the reflections. These might be possible knowledge about performances by Trisha Brown as well as reading, photographs, video recordings or knowledge about her improvisation processes initiated among other things through so-called ‘tasks’ (Banes 1987, 87), as the sign on the wall ultimately indicates.

If knowledge about cultural associations appears somewhat vague and must generally remain within the realms of speculation, this gives more direct access to the first moves in the imagined choreography: stimulus by the left-over “choreographic object”, to use William Forsythe’s term. Choreographic objects serve to represent physical thinking, according to Forsythe (2008, 6), who thereby separates the concept of choreography from its exclusive relationship with (embodied) dance. Rather, he asks whether “it [is] possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principles, a choreographic object, without the body” (2008, 5). The object, understood in such a way, consequently serves as an “alternative site for the understanding of potential instigation and organization of action to reside” (2008, 7). Unlike Brown’s left-over structure, Forsythe’s choreographic objects, often installed in the context of exhibitions, direct visitors specifically to movements of their own, physically undertaken, for example in *The Fact of Matter* (2009), an installation consisting of many ‘gymnastic’ rings suspended on ropes, through which it was possible to advance, swinging above the floor. With the *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced*⁵ online tool and subsequently with the project *Motion Bank*⁶, Forsythe also develops a model of possible transformations and cross-genre ‘translations’ from genuinely danced and so embodied movement patterns into other dispositives such as, for instance, that of the architecture. In contrast to the exhibited *Floor of the Forest*, however, in this translation project of Forsythe’s, movement phrases previously featured by the dancers are the starting point for further transmissions on

the basis of the dissection of the choreography into various data-based categories, such as vectors of movement in the room or cues which serve the initiation of a phrase and which can then be transferred into other fields of organizational practice. By contrast with this, in the case of the displayed object *Floor of the Forest*, the somewhat ‘heretical’ question could be raised as to whether the performance which has happened here is necessary at all in this case, in particular if one has just missed it. Wouldn’t it be sufficient simply to read the directions described in the text on the sign on the wall and imagine what might have happened? Or, to put it in an ontological dimension, what determines the meaning of the specific past of *Floor of the Forest*? Must there have been a representational past which is actualized the moment the installation structure in the museum is viewed? And what imaginary choreographies appear in the imagination of each individual person visiting? That of the described performance that has taken place? That made feasible by the working possibilities of the installation structure? And to what extent is the missed performance transferred into the imaginings of visitors? To pursue these questions further, a change in perspective is needed: From that of the artwork/art project to that of the visitor/holder/spectator/audience.

In his now famous essay, in 1967 Michael Fried accused minimalist art of the ‘offence’ of theatricality. Moving out of the frame of modern art, which is characterized in particular by its timelessness in the sense of transcendence of time, the eternal, minimalist art provokes temporality of performance according to Fried, thereby generating “an effect of *presence*” (1995, 120, emphasis in the original). Here he quotes Clement Greenberg’s reflections in his essay on the “Recentness of Sculpture”, where the author states that the presence evoked by works from “minimalists” like Anne Truitt or Donald Judd and Robert Morris is not the one inherent in the works of modern art any more, but is rather conceived of the fact that they bear the “look of non-art” (in Fried, 1995, 120–3). With this paradigmatic shift in the aesthetic notion of the presence of the art work, Fried uses the term “objecthood” when analyzing minimalist art, as, again with Greenberg, “[m]inimal works are readable as art” as they “resemble” it when regarding, e.g., size or shape (or, one could add, their positioning in an art institution) (1995, 124–5). Furthermore Fried draws a line of distinction between modern art and minimalist art signifying the latter as being “theatrical,” thus fostering the idea that theater is in that respect antagonistic to (visual) art (1995, 125).⁷ This means fundamentally that visitors to the display are propelled out of their otherwise customary contemplation and attitude of distance and consequently transformed into spectators. Hence the decisive point in Fried’s line of argument is that the artwork produces presence by creating a relationship between object and beholder and therefore generates a “[s]ituation” (1995, 125). The concept of the situation is determined by aversion from the idea of the autonomy of the artwork (i.e. from up-to-date, social or comparable relationships through which it could be experienced and interpreted alone), by, among other things, involving the entire environment, the space in which it is displayed (1995, 127). Theatricality could in this context be reformulated as co-presence that does not happen between subjects but between observer and artwork, if, here again, we follow Fischer-Lichte’s terminology.

Here, in particular, two crucial aspects come to the fore, as Fried himself stated: Firstly spatiality as relationality in which the observer is truly integrated into the art situation as a perceiving subject, thereby establishing first and foremost a performative constellation through which the artwork is generated. Only in the encounter with the artwork (the minimalist art) does it therefore emerge as such at all and take on its existence as art (1995, 134). If one now pursues this theory, it can further be hypostasized that not only does the artwork lose its autonomous status — which lends it its timeless entitlement to existence regardless of whether it is looked at or not — and is transformed into a mere “object”, as Fried laments (1995, 126–7). What is more, beholders are transformed into an audience [spectators], sharing as they do the presence of the artwork or generating it for the first time by their own presence (in the exhibition room, for instance), so to speak (1995, 126). In particular in this respect, according to Fried, the dividing line can be drawn between modern art and art since the 1960s. Consequently, the second aspect focusses on the temporality of art: “[Art] *has* no duration” argues Fried (1995, 145, emphasis in the original) and so minimalist art displaces in part visual art’s own dispositives as they become theatrical (1995, 126).

However, such modes of displacement of genre characteristics can be translated to any form of visual art if presented in the context of a display thus for an audience, whether it is a painting in a museum from a remote epoch in the past or a work from the field of contemporary art.⁸ The decisive paradigm shift indicated by Fried’s essay therefore lies not so much in the formative conditions of visual art but rather on its dispositive constitution: the change from the autonomy of the artwork to the modes of aesthetic experience which place the beholder, thereby becoming spectator, at the centre of interest.

In her book *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, philosopher Juliane Rebentisch argues accordingly that theatricality should be comprehended as a prominent paradigm of all (visual) art (2012, 21). In her reading of Fried’s essay, the ‘problem’ of minimalist art is rooted in the fact that it is there “for an audience” and so loses its autonomous status (2012, 40, 70). She highlights that art and its discourses since the 1960s more intensively reject the idea of the concept of the work and opt for a receptive and thereby relational perspective in which the “aesthetic experience” is closely associated with the “subject” (2012, 11). Art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann in turn finds her statements on contemporary art on its relational character, expanding the field of art(istic) experience: Performative practices are always already engaged in the visual arts. In her analysis of the works of Daniel Buren she shows that visitors to the contemporary museum or exhibition space are no longer simply just ‘there’, receiving the objects exhibited, more or less undirected, but are confronted with choreographic arrangements: Although set up by the artist himself, these however need the (now) audience [spectator] as an essential part of the generation of the artwork as such, which occurs first and foremost through their aesthetic experience (2007, 14, 83).⁹

Referring back to dance, such an interrelational connection between artwork and beholder is certainly normally to be seen as performative¹⁰ and set in the context of interpersonal witnesses of (stage) experience and audience which, as has already been indicated, can also occur between object and

audience. Referring to the issue of preserving the fleeting artform of dance for posterity, Siegmund again addresses the possibility of subsequent narrative of a past occurrence. Essential here too is the temporal dimension of this occurrence, chopped up in a discontinuum, as event and witness account of it are already temporally separate from one another. The testimony normally falls outside the time of the artwork or the staged happening. It occurs later, in another historic and cultural situation (2013, 47).¹¹ In *Floor of the Forest* again, giving testimony fails entirely if you have the bad luck to have missed the daily performance at the exhibition. Therefore, a performative gap opens up which generates uncertainty of meanings which constantly shift from the artistic dispositives of visual art to those of the theater and back. Just such a shift also happens on the temporal plane: between the past of the theatrical presentation (the performance) and the presence of the now left-over displayed object — which is initially created first and foremost as such through the theatricality of the artistic situation, upon which Fried reflects. So I suggest that in Brown's installation arrangement, a *dual constitution of temporality of the artwork* can be experienced: That of the past event which is implanted in the imaginings of the exhibition visitor (on reading the signs) and that of the present artwork existing there which involves beholders in the past event in a time-paradox change 'here and now', in that the tasks mentioned on the wall are virtually carried out. Siegmund states that art in principle focusses the addressing of the observer, and so generates attention:

[O]ur getting involved in art produces memories or . . . our getting involved produces the aesthetic object, which therefore cannot be identical with the material substrate the work consists of, nor solely with the associations it triggers in the recipients. (2013, 49)¹²

I would like to argue, following on from von Hantelmann's statements on performativity in aesthetic contexts and those of Siegmund, that Brown's installation object creates some performative confusions, in that it flits between artistic dispositives. In the process, it generates *performative specters, haunting choreographies*: in rejection of meanings, causing uncertainty about what context the object was to be placed in and, moreover, in the displacement of the past performative happening in the imagination of the exhibition visitors. The hermeneutical uncertainties that arise also persist in the ambivalence of the material of the artwork itself. Does it exist in the 'dance' which is now over and its movement patterns? Or does it exist in the material present of the steel poles, ropes and fabrics comprising the object left behind? I would like to reflect on these questions in the final part of my contemplations. Of immediate interest however is the nature of the spectral constellation which appears in the encounter with *Floor of the Forest* in the exhibition room and thereby in the imaginings of its beholders.

The Specters of Trisha Brown

In his remarks on *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida makes a plea for a perspective of "hauntology" (1994, 10, emphasis in the original). Here, a revisiting of Marxist theories which, according to Derrida,

remain with us even in our current political perceptions (1994, xix), is combined with the more fundamental criticism of an ontology of being, which he reads against the grain in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1994, 10). That "logic of haunting" enables thought of the furthest, the outermost, i.e. death, the "not to be", as an incomprehensibility of being in the sense of not-being (1994, 10).

A specter here, according to Derrida, is a "non-object", a "non-present present" (1994, 5), without physical presence to start with. It escapes knowledge and cannot be relegated: "[this thing] comes to defy semantics as much as ontology" (1994, 5), as "the spectral . . . which is neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, is *never present as such*" (1994, xvii, emphasis in the original) In *Hamlet* the ghost is "something, between something and someone", a "thing", which yet is no such thing (1994, 5) — yet nevertheless is *something*, because it beholds us¹³ (1994, 5). In addition to ontological uncertainty, there is ultimately also the temporal dimension of the spectral. Marx's specters, for instance, would point to the non-contemporaneity of the present, which is never one with itself but is always pervaded by specters of the past which, moreover, would refer to a future. The present reveals itself in this perspective as "*non-contemporaneity with itself*", but the question of where from and where to still arises (1994, xviii, emphasis in the original). Included in this is the figure of the specter as "a *revenant*" (1994, 11, emphasis in the original): Therefore *something* must have been *before* the specter — a thing, a person — something that recurs but which has to be awaited, and which is deprived of availability and control over desired times of apparition (1994, 11). Derrida develops those reflections, among other things, using the first sentence from Marx and Engels' Communist *Manifesto*, containing the famous words: "A specter is haunting Europe — the specter of communism" (1994, 2). *Something* therefore is presaged which has not yet made an appearance but apparently has already been there/or will be.

This something however is not just something that cannot be grasped, a spectral apparition, Markus Mittmansgruber further reflects. He holds with Derrida that there is a difference between spirits and specters. If the former are subject to a quasi-Cartesian separation of spirit and body/matter, which is also pursued by spiritualist perspectives, specters are always also infused with physical weight — or rather still and repeatedly:

For dead bodies are, when they return as 'specters', weight, are weighed, whether by other ghosts or the living on whose breast they crouch like a nightmare or creep in Touch, *touche* takes place if the 'specters' *manifest themselves physically*. (2012, 71, emphasis in the original)

If then, concerning the display of Trisha Brown's *Floor of the Forest*, we speak of haunting choreographies, we should briefly reformulate how the 'specters of Trisha Brown' are evoked. The 'images of movements' almost immediately arising in the minds of visitors have reference to a dual starting point: initially the existing clues in the form of the installation structure with ropes and clothing and the signs on the wall which precisely describe the task to be fulfilled. Add to this, as already

mentioned — dependent on previous experiences and contextual knowledge of the exhibition visitors — discourse on Trisha Brown, her artistic positioning, any texts that have been read, familiar photographs, documentaries or performances already seen in the past which provide information on aesthetics, principles of composition and the choreographer's patterns of movement.

On an ontological level of dance, there also occurs a notable change if what is termed by Derrida as the 'non-thing' re-emerges in the imaginings of the visitors, for the question is exactly what might the un-thing, the specter in *Floor of the Forest* be? Are we referring now to the missed performance which is in the irrevocable past? But what then exactly are the components of the work of Trisha Brown? Her choreographic task-based work implies just such instructions as are now posted carefully up on the wall to be read. Are they themselves not part of the choreography even if there is no performance? How is the written task positioned between presence and absence of the movements carried out? My hypothesis is that the (museum) display of the left-over object from *Floor of the Forest* deliberately takes into account the spectral. My second hypothesis is that this in turn evades access by the choreographer herself and happens in the course of curator decisions (here those of Stephanie Rosenthal and André Lepecki). It is a second-order choreography which now emerges in the periods without performance, consisting of the object and the information on the instruction notices. It is these that give rise to those specters that appear in the minds of visitors, who become spectators of an unseen spectacle which they themselves generate by force of their own imaginings.

These specters do not have to be awaited, as Derrida emphasizes. They appear immediately, arising the moment the metal structure is orbited and the notices read, embody themselves to some extent in mental, to some extent in arms or legs, involuntarily entwining in physical re-enactments of what has gone before: The spectator as such is himself drawn into becoming an actor – a *spect-actor* in a spectral configuration.

Mittmansgruber also speaks of the body becoming "spectralized" in photographs the moment the shutter is pressed. With Roland Barthes' discourse on the "punctum" (point) in photography, through which Barthes identifies the peculiar "*has-been!*" in the photo (1982, 117, emphasis in the original), here for instance the bodies of dead people returned in a spectral manner (Mittmansgruber 2012, 68) — a moment snapped, as it were, in just a fraction of a second, and captured in the image. Such capturing, through the "punctum", is a reminder of the past of the body, retrieving it, occurring, I think, in just that curator-generated timeframe of encounter with object and wall notice at the place of exhibition. Even in the moment of reading the task and contemplation of the structure, the specters of the performers appear: not present in the room or a particular medium, but only in the imagination of the *spect-actors*. Movement that does not show itself. Bodies that do not present themselves. Diffused in the supplements of past performance, as object in the room and notice on the wall.

In Derrida's analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thinking on speech and writing he quotes Rousseau as follows: "Languages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplement to speech." (1997, 144). To interpret this, Derrida has recourse to his concept of the supplement. This means that writing

is on the one hand an addition to speech, and in this sense a “surplus” (1997, 144) because it is added to spoken discourse: “It cumulates and accumulates presence” (1997, 144). On the other hand, writing is a replacement for speech, and therefore constituted by a lack: “It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of* . . .” (1997, 145, emphasis in the original). It takes on a function of representation “of the immediate presence of thought” (1997, 144), which can only be established in the work by the lack of presence (1997, 145).

In the case of Trisha Brown’s display of *Floor of the Forest* it would initially be easy to speak, in particular regarding the installation object, of a supplementary vestige left over from the ‘actual’ performance, particularly if one considers that the project, as already mentioned, was once shown as a site-specific performance. It would then be a fragmentary replacement and both object and wall notice text would then be remnants in which the dance as such has been suspended in both senses of the word: as a remaining framework for a specific pattern of movements — a three-dimensionally-materialized score, so to speak — and literally as a task-centered script on the wall. As already stated, the tasks however genuinely belong to the choreographic concept of Brown’s project. As instructions for movements, they not only indicate past things, but point to future displays and performances¹⁴.

The supplement, Derrida considers, expanding on Rousseau, is an “addition” (1997, 144), consequently something that has been added subsequently which moreover takes on a substitute function just as a script ‘stands in’ to represent speech (1997, 145). What however would be the thing added in the exhibited *Floor of the Forest*, if both object and written-down task were already parts of the *choreographic* itself? I opt here for designating those components as remainders of the choreographic process which are initiators for Brown’s specters and to which simultaneously the potential for future continued writings of (notional) movements are suited. What however is actually added is the newly constellated setting, which shifts the work into a different artistic dispositive: The display in the gallery or in the museum itself is to be understood as a supplement to the Brown work shown here, considered, according to Derrida’s thinking, as a (different) place of re-presentation. However, in the imaginings of each *spectator*, the idea of a one-dimensional representative definition is immediately undermined and this would be, according to Derrida’s thinking, the incomprehensible, the slipping away of signification, condensed in the figure of the specter which haunts each individual exhibition visitor who has missed the performance. In the imagination of each retrospective ‘spectator’, an idea of representation as a mode of interpretive power is subverted, supplementarily replaced by each one’s own ‘way of reading’ and at the same time provided with an addition, a surplus of further possible virtual choreographic continuations.

To some extent a “play of . . . traces” (1981, 27) occurs, of which Derrida speaks when he speaks out against the dominance of signification and refers to the edges of understanding which he circumscribes using the term “*différance*” (1982, 3, emphasis in the original):

It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called “present” element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, . . . this trace being related to no less what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not . . . (1982, 13, emphasis in the original)

A trace on the one hand is always to be understood as being subsequent. The occurrence could never catch itself up (1982, 18). On the other hand not only is there an inherent unilinear chronology in the backward direction in that an event can only ever be read on the basis of its traces i.e. always by what has already taken place. Rather, the trace appertains to a dual movement moment, that of “retentions and protentions” (1982, 13, my emphasis) thereby also referring to that which is yet to come, to possible other actualizations as might be evoked by imaginations in the display of *Floor of the Forest*. Plays of traces of potential movement constellations, “simulacr[a] of a presence”, as Derrida would say, “that dislocate [themselves], displace [themselves], refer [themselves, they] properly ha[ve] no site” (1982, 24), unless it is in the imagination of the observers, the ‘Scene’¹⁵ of the imagination.

Re-cycling

Those thought and imagined movements therefore generate new configurations of the happening that has passed, which now manifests itself most of the time via the initially inanimate object which is reactivated and actualized by the acting beholders [spect-actors]. I would like to call such transformations *re-cycling*, a mode of change which is not least marked by the continuing change of the aesthetic dispositives: now movement prop, now work of art. What is more: Taking up Forsythe’s idea of the choreographic object once more, the installation structure develops in two ways: first object and task serve as ‘template’ and movement instruction for the performers. Then later, to some extent, it enters into a recycling phase as an exhibited object: Left alone with the thing as such and the descriptions on the wall in the sole presence of observers who — we should remind ourselves — are prohibited from touching the artwork, the object transforms itself from carrier of previously embodied movements to a ‘trigger mechanism’ for imaginary, haunting choreographies in the mind of any *spect-actor*: “Remembering the Bod[ies]” (Brandstetter 2000, 18).

Looking back to the arguments formulated by Rebentisch and von Hantelmann on the relationality of the artistic experience, it might also be possible, after the initial brief encounter with Brown’s exhibited object, to assume firstly that this were nothing more or less than a typical example of contemporary art, embedded in aesthetic processes tending to spur visitors to action and to transform them consequently into spectators or actors¹⁶. But there is a small yet crucial difference¹⁶, to reiterate: the fact that once a day a performance takes place in the object, executed by professional dancers. In the knowledge that the performance has happened but has been missed, the thought of them momentarily allows the memory of what one might have seen to spectrally appear. Moreover, the knowledge of the daily performance

marks the interface at which *Floor of the Forest* creeps into its dispositive uncertainty and generates a kind of ‘on-off mode’ in which it re-circulates between visual art and theater. This point of flitting across to one or other side in turn is in particular founded in the temporality of the work exhibited here, about which Fried complains: *Floor of the Forest* ‘takes place’ precisely in that temporal gap between the absent performance and the present (objective) artwork, bearing haunting traces of past movements within itself, which beholders, then (acting) spectators try to trace and reconstruct.

Gabriele Brandstetter puts forward the proposition that each perception of a dance performance fluctuates between loss and memory of movement in time and space. This begins even during the performance itself and continues when the occurrence is over. Choreography in this case therefore serves not just as a template or pattern of movements carried out, but in particular also as a ‘post script’ of movement sequences and patterns,¹⁷ which each spectator endeavours to remember and recompile — “[r]eMember[]”, as Brandstetter says (2000, 18). Consequently the specific ‘choreographic time’ of Brown’s installation lies in the memory of something which presumably only a fraction of the exhibition visitors (in this case then the spectators) saw and which I therefore encapsulate under the term ‘haunting choreography’, which moreover also creates specters of bygone spectators. In the process, Brown’s work not only enters into the changing, self-recycling loops of visual art and theater, but also into those which allow the beholders to oscillate between positions as visitors, audience/spectators and spect/actors. The reconstructive recompilation of what has gone then also conceals, as has already been expressed, potential for ‘new and re-writing’ of the vanished movements in the object.

Particularly in relation to the latter aspect, there is a similar constellation in Trisha Brown’s *Roof Piece* (1971/73). Performed at a location on the roofs of seven times three residential blocks in the area between 53 Wooster Street and 381 Lafayette Street in New York City, the task was to transfer certain movement patterns from one dancer to another over the distance of the roofs as precisely as possible (c.f. Banes 1987, 85–6). Following a ‘Chinese whispers’ concept, the audience was on the street, but not able to follow the relayed choreographic phrases completely, and still less able to testify as to whether the transfers were carried out as accurately as the planning of the performance announced. Certainly, *Roof Piece* was not about whether the movements had been transmitted ‘correctly’ or ‘incorrectly’,¹⁸ rather, at the center of the piece was the phenomenon of the “erosion of movement” as Babette Mangolte, who originally documented the project (n.d.; see Photo 2) recalls.

Photo 2. Trisha Brown: Roof Piece (1971/73). Photo: Babette Mangolte.

In the context of the idea of haunting choreography here is a situation that is quite the reverse of the experience of *Floor of the Forest* displayed in the museum: Here a performance actually takes place for the entire duration of the project, although no one from the audience is able to see it completely.¹⁹

Mangolte specifically refers to the fragmentation of perception, as often merely a short glimpse is caught, now and then from a distance, of individual red-costumed dancers (n.d.). If one now switches from the perspective of the audience to that of the actors, it can be concluded furthermore that the audience itself remains in spectral presence, as it cannot be perceived by the dancers up on the roof at all. Nevertheless a certain co-presence can be assumed, and, insofar as they exist, therefore the criteria of a theatrical situation are in principle met, characterized by the coming together of audience and actors at a certain place for a certain limited period of time. Admittedly this co-presence may be understood to be spectral, as both dancers and audience are repeatedly partially separated from one another. It is a continuously disrupting presence, a *co-absence* which generates haunting choreographies as the audience can only suppose and speculate about whether the announced choreographic concept is being carried out in situ. On the other hand the actors on the roof too could only display their movements to one another as essentially nobody could guarantee that anyone would be ‘down there’ trying to watch them.²⁰ Co-presence and the associated witness therefore basically becomes a question of belief: a belief in specters. Subsequent to the performance in the 1970s, Brown and Mangolte reconstructed the project as an installation which was shown in 2003 in the context of the exhibition *Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance* at Tate Liverpool in the UK — consisting of photos, descriptions and takes filmed from three different camera perspectives (Mangolte, n.d.). Here again visitors to the exhibition were confronted with an installation which presented material from a past event. By contrast with the *Floor of the Forest* display, this reconstruction clearly focussed on the documentary character, and hardly any of the visitors to the display will have had the opportunity to have experienced the project live in New York. Rather, Mangolte also points out, “the dance piece could be seen only in retrospect through recording and replay” (n.d.), to a certain degree recycled in its supplementary media with which the audience now engages. A ‘gain’ in view, over-view, which however was not originally intended as such, and which now binds the specters: we can no longer and no longer have to speculate on the possible movements and their successful or failed transfer.

Moreover, the presence of the performance which has happened is transferred into the theatricality of a gallery installation and as a consequence generates two new levels of presence: on the one hand that of the exhibited artwork, as Fried formulates it for minimalist art; on the other hand that of the suspended, now subsequently maintained presence in the media used, starting from a past performance which itself dealt with the fragmentation and suspension of (co-)presence and which is subsequently reconstructed and recycled now in the materialized time of the exhibited installation.

We should briefly consider these interplays between the past of the performance and the presence of the display from the perspective of the materiality of Trisha Brown’s exhibited installation *Floor of the Forest*.

Im/materiality and theatricality

As already reflected upon with reference to Derrida, the *Floor of the Forest* display moves in its spectral presence and absence firstly in the insubstantiality of the sketched movements summoned up by the imagination of the spect-actors, each individually reconstructed and expanded upon. Beholders will catch themselves performing movements (that is what happened to me at least), inclining their heads and involuntarily tracing the turns and contortions of the stipulated movement directions through the horizontally hung textiles. The body of the spect-actor, one might say, abandoning the Derridaesque concept of the insubstantial specter, thereby becomes a substantial pivotal point, as a likewise embodying and imagining generator of movement material between absent performance and present leftover object together with notices. How, however, is the metal structure and its arrangement alone in the room to be regarded, presented in a display as a three-dimensional score-like remnant? What is its status?

If one has missed the performance, which was obviously intended to be part of the *Floor of the Forest* display, the question arises as to what kind of aesthetic object we are confronted with here, which I have hitherto provisionally referred to as “structure”, “(installation) object” or “exhibited (displayed) installation”. Is it a ‘normal’ installation consisting of a material mix, here metal, ropes and textiles — and in that case do the wall notices supplying the key information belong to it? Does this installation create a “situation” as Fried argues in his analysis of minimalist art? Or are we faced here with a choreographic framework, a spatialized score indicating the movements to be performed? A leftover prop in a past performance which materializes the traces of the movements that have taken place in it? If we address the choreographic aspect of the displayed object, which only partially ‘belongs’ to the sphere of visual art, and consider it as an oversized score, it is worth casting a glance towards contemporary artists who have transcended the aesthetic boundaries of their own genre. In the works of Tino Sehgal — previously a dancer and choreographer, now a visual artist — no non-moving material is involved as such, i.e. nothing which could outlast time, as an object in a museum. In the work *This is Propaganda* (2002) for instance, a museum curator sings at recurrent intervals the phrase “This is propaganda, you know, you know”, repeats it again and then gives the name of the artist (Sehgal) and title and year of production of the work. As a result the body comes to the fore as a kind of temporary medium of (visual) art as von Hantelmann states (2007, 146): “Into the place of a substantial/material object steps a situation between two people, one of them embodying an artwork, the other watching him doing so” (2007, 149). Accordingly, Sehgal’s works consist of situational, often choreographic, actions which indeed leave no objective trace behind, even if the accompanying discourses identify him to be an artist belonging to the compass of aesthetic dispositives customarily linked to the locations in which his works are presented, i.e. those for visual art.²¹

In *This is Propaganda*, another important aspect comes into play: the initial uncertainty as to whether this is art or not. When I encountered this work in the context of the exhibition *Body Pressure. Sculpture Since the 1960s* at the Hamburger Bahnhof (Berlin, 2013), my first impression was that someone was

apparently not adhering to the rules of customary museum visiting which enable ‘silent contemplation’ of the artworks. It was a while before I identified the source of the song and some time after that before I realized that this was ‘actually’ a work of art. Interestingly, it is precisely this kind of confusion in trying to encapsulate the event experienced in the museum that does not allow the work of Sehgal to be brought under the concept of theatricality as formulated by Fried. The (artistic) situation in minimalist art so described by him, which involves everything that surrounds the artwork, is not recognized initially as such. Rather, the song, initially heard and not clearly ascribable, draws attention to the museum situation as such, with its conventions of conduct and other conventional modes of exhibiting art.

If one now makes a connection with Brown’s displayed *Floor of the Forest*, this setting may be viewed in a similar manner, as the installation is not clearly ascribable to a single artistic dispositive. By contrast with Sehgal’s work, however, which is based on choreographic actions situated in the market mechanisms and general rules of visual art, thereby challenging perceptions of substantial materiality as the starting point for an aesthetic object (von Hantelmann 2007, 170), Brown’s work remains in the twilight and cannot be clearly ‘sorted’ into one or other register.

Nevertheless: Brown’s work is exhibited in the museum and can obviously be experienced for some time as a materialized, immovable aesthetic object which can also initiate choreographed actions. As *Floor of the Forest* however flits daily between aesthetic paradigms, the question might be whether it can be termed an installation at all as expounded by Rebentisch. According to her, the dissolving of artistic (genre) boundaries is a particular characteristic of the installation (2012, 13), as normally consisting of mixed media drawing on painting, photography, theater or music (2012, 155–8).

If one were heuristically to take away the choreographic proportion, could Brown’s exhibited object then be subsumed under the category of an installation? But then what would the plurality of media consist of? Do the wall notices which name the object and announce that here once a day a performance is part of it, belong to the media making up the installation as such, or do they merely indicate the artwork? But in that case what is it they are indicating? That the rectangular structure with its ropes and clothes has been a prop in a movement performance that you have, unfortunately, missed? And is the sign that explains the task merely an indicative description or does it not itself belong, as already expounded, in the process of aesthetic experience with its virtual, absent choreographies?

At this point another important aspect of installation aesthetics comes into play: the switch from the spatiality of a (sculptural) artwork into time-based art or vice versa, as Rebentisch points out, in emphasizing one of the most important aspects of installation art, i.e. the “spatialization of time-based arts” (2012, 145). With this sudden change in direction, she opposes Lessing’s theory of the “pregnant moment”, which occurs when a visual artwork is observed²² (2012, 142). She challenges the possibility of the contemporaneity of all artistic elements that evoke an aesthetic experience in the mode of sudden recognition, and opts rather for a succession of perception fundamentally inherent to all visual art: It is simply not possible to see everything at once (2012, 144) — a situation again reminiscent of the *Roof Piece* by Trisha Brown. This leads one again to conclude that the perception and so the aesthetic

experience is always determined by movement: that of the eye and/or the body which, for instance, moves back and forth before a painting, circulates around a sculpture or perambulates the elements of an installation.

Consequently, I think, *Floor of the Forest* could be viewed as an installation in two ways: Firstly Brown's work requires the physical movement of the exhibition visitor walking around the object, stepping up to the wall on which the notice boards are fixed, then turning back to the object and so forth. Still more important however appears to me that the exhibited object materializes the time of the happening which has previously taken place in the rectangular structure. By indicating the tasks being indicated on the wall notice, *Floor of the Forest* generates a temporalization of the observed object initiating, as has already been described, in the individual imagination of each viewer, a virtual memory of the movements that have taken place. The metal structure functions, in combination with the task set down in text, as a multi-media, materialized written and spatial score which can be deciphered and read as such without complication.²³ In turn, it is just this temporalizing moment that fundamentally leads back to Lessing's classification of visual art, at least as Rebentisch understands it: The pregnant moment therefore occurs not suddenly at first glance but is "the past, present, and future of what is represented . . . [and] pregnant because it contains a representational *potential* that can be brought to life only by the play of the imagination" (2012, 142, emphasis in the original). If one takes this perspective, Brown's displayed work would be identifiable as an installation as it plays with the imagination of the movements of the past performance, which adds to the plurality of media, moreover that of the now virtual choreography.

Moreover, the fact that the performance which takes place once a day transforms the object into a choreographic prop which offers space for a dance performance, indicates the dual nature of Brown's work as a theatrical work in Fried's sense of the term. Reading Fried against the grain, Rebentisch concentrates on his complaint regarding the objectuality and "literalness" of minimalist art, created on the basis of its "stage presence" (2012, 50). She by contrast makes it clear that it is specifically just that theatrical presence as such that subverts Fried's reduction of minimalist art to its purported objectuality. The phenomenon of "stage presence" is always determined by its theatrical double and can consequently be read in two ways: "as thing *and* as sign" (2012, 50–2, emphasis in the original). Therefore minimalist art can be experienced not only in that literal material manner to which Fried restricts it, but it indicates rather an "inexhaustibil[ity]" embedded in the "*experience* of the object" (2012, 54, emphasis in the original).

Accordingly, the exhibited *Floor of the Forest* literally moves between dual markers denoting the theatricality of art: by displacing the material conditions once a day and moreover stimulating the imagination of the beholder/spectator to design endless repertoires of past performances and performances of the work yet to come.

Conclusion

Trisha Brown's museum display of *Floor of the Forest* can, I think, serve as a key example in discussion on artistic genres and their aesthetic dispositives and the transcending of borders between them, particularly when 'dance objects' are presented in the context of displays. As has been set out, the project exemplifies and emphasizes the uncertainty applicable ever more frequently to contemporary art in the light of strictly segregated classifications and embroils modes of aesthetic experience in a whirlpool of movements compromising categories and ensuring constant transformations which also affect the recipient subject. Switching between being beholder, spectator or (virtual) performer [spect-actor] and re-activator of the work, we are steeped in haunting choreographies which we ourselves conjure up re-circulating between theatrical and exhibition times as well as between different aesthetic manifestations which become blurred at the edges. An inextricable mesh of relationships is formed or, to end with Nicolas Bourriaud's idea of extended temporality in the visual arts:

[I]t is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through . . . It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion. . . . [A]n art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the 'encounter' between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning. (Bourriaud 2002,15)

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Notes

1. Sally Banes stresses that “[t]he mechanics of the everyday action are emphasized, almost dissected” (1987, 81).

2. Susan Rosenberg stresses the fact that in the beginning Brown’s work was rather shown in art galleries, embedded in the dissolution of artistic conventions in the visual arts from the 1950s on (e.g. Jackson Pollock and Robert Rauschenberg. 2012, 30). Only later Brown has been shifting her work from the museum to the theater stage (2012, 44).

3. For example the performative exhibition format *La Permanence*, Rennes, 2014.

4. At least for me, as I missed the performance and no longer had the opportunity to revisit the display on another day.

5. C.f. <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/> (accessed June 21, 2014).

6. C.f. <http://motionbank.org/en> (accessed June 21, 2014).

7. As I will point out later in this text, Juliane Rebentisch criticizes Fried’s concept of theatrical presence, as especially “stage presence” is always already consisting in a double mode of being object and “sign” (2012, 52). Following that idea one could say that this double conception of presence is already inherent in Greenberg’s thoughts when stating that the presence in minimalist art is just induced by its migration at “the borderline between art and non-art” (in Fried, 1995, 124).

8. To this extent art historian Gottfried Boehm focuses on the means of perception and reception in the encounter with artworks and arguments with reference to painting: “Pictures are processes, representations which do not presume to repeat what exists but to make it visible, to bring forth an increase in being (Gadamer)” (1994, 33).

9. Sandra Umathum analyzes the projects of Erwin Wurm and Tino Sehgal among others, who create performance situations and thereby deliberately enmesh performers and audience in short-lived encounters. According to her theory, they constellate in particular “intersubjective relationships” in the dispositive of visual art (2011, 14).

10. Von Hantelmann makes it clear that the term performativity frequently used recently is not to be confused with the term performance. With a view to the theories of John L. Austin and Judith Butler, performativity is to be understood as a specific mode of bringing forth meaning in this case

situated in the settings of visual art dispositives (such as in a museum or gallery). In this context too agency is not bound to an acting subject alone, but rather is formed in relationships between art, institution and visitors (2007, 14).

11. Consequently Siegmund questions the strength of bearing witness as a “totalizing gesture” (2013, 47; translation according to the publisher of the volume, 375).

12. Translation according to the publisher of the volume, 377.

13. With this something Derrida in principle tends to displace his view of presence which only ever exists as such in suspension, i.e. as a trace, as a displaced, always already past presence (1982, 24).

14. On the question as to what the components of choreographic originals might be in the context of reconstruction (notation, concept or performance?), c.f. also Siegmund 2010, 24–6 and Maar 2014, 142.

15. Here, going even further, the question of the scene in Derrida’s range of concepts could be discussed as well as its constitution in the field of the visible and in some circumstances also the substantially perceptible, which however cannot be achieved in the context of this essay.

16. In the years 1997/98, Erwin Wurm, for example, produced the so-called *One Minute Sculptures*. The concept aims at the actual participation of exhibition visitors who are invited to follow the artist’s instructions, i.e. to carry out a short action or take up a self-selected pose, in which props could be used. Each action should then be documented photographically and then sent, enclosing 100 US dollars, to the artist. Wurm, according to the information at the exhibition, would then sign the photograph and send it back to the sender (c.f. Weibel 2002, 9). Aside from the question regarding the authorship of an artwork which arises here but which for reasons of space could not be pursued further, this action in the context of visual art is a good example for the changing status of exhibition visitors in which a transfer of position occurs: from the (as it were uninvolved) observer of an artwork to spectator (following the appropriate action) or into a performer and, so, producer of the art itself. Moreover, Wurm plays on the status of the presence of an artwork which in this case is generated explicitly through the participation, indeed the creative action of the actual observers initially intending to be purely visitors but who are now temporarily transformed into spectating performers, *spect-actors*, that is, in the setting of the exhibition.

17. C.f. on the concept of choreography as hybrid between notation and staging (of the dance on stage) Claudia Jeschke 2003, 264–5.

18. Rosenberg suggests that the transmission of movement could be regarded as an “imperfect translation of perception into physical response.” With Derrida she identifies a “gap” between the “initial choreographic mark from its subsequent iterations“ (2012, 36). It would be worth discussing critically whether such an assumption is (again) putting movement merely in the position of following choreography as a fixed prescript.

19. This of course in no way implies that in a conventional theater stage situation everything could always be seen.

20. Another interesting consideration would also be that of the ‘involuntary’ audience, pedestrians who catch sight of actors on a roof without in advance being informed of any artistic intention.

21. Reflecting on the discourses on the “dematerialization” of art, as formulated by Lucy Lippard in 1968, Sandra Umathum asserts that Sehgal’s work does not concentrate completely on the immaterial i.e. fugitive. Rather his works would fit well into the normal setting and marketing of the visual arts as they could be purchased as artworks (consisting in communication of the appropriate choreographic action to the future owner) and consequently could be collected and further exhibited in appropriate institutions (2011, 119–21).

22. Lessing develops this view in *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766).

23. It would be interesting here to consider further the extent to which the primacy of the everyday occurrence of movement, as postulated in the dance scene of the 1960s, can be translated into the reading of those scores which therefore no longer need any specialist (musical or dance) knowledge but could be easily made accessible to a ‘lay’ audience.