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## Linear Convolutions

In *Pipeline* (2005), Liv Strand thrusts us inside a pneumatic dispatch system where a vertiginous and labyrinthine journey ensues. The sonic and visual assault that follows is amplified by the claustrophobic sensation of the capsule as it winds inexorably along the pipeline. Sharps turns have to be negotiated, the video image reflects the briskness of the movements with momentary losses of information in certain pixels. Therefore, the movement is not continuous (it shares the stop and go tension of Courtemanche's robots, which occupied the same room). The video is, however, the sole piece in the exhibition where action is conjugated by speed—it takes the phrase *action packed* literally. The camera is in the capsule, and this point of view effects a propulsive force on the viewer. Our view is thrust through a path that appears to go on forever. The video also performs a remarkable shift of scale, the desolate expanse of the tundra with its shearing winds and cold blue ice is literally encapsulated in the claustral space of the pipeline. It sounds a Nordic note, one of interminable voyages, unbearable conditions, immense solitude.<sup>10</sup> Given that we are witnessing the inner workings of a messaging system activated by air pressure, it invites comparisons with our own physiological system for producing utterances. In this case the pipeline is more akin to an intestinal convolution than an alveolar branching. For the occasion, our own perspective is the message being sent. In this sense, the piece performs a reflexivity similar to Ellwood's incitation to sigh. With Ellwood the tempo was anchored on the breath, here it is on the heartbeat, it is a pulsation. The mesmerizing motion operates on the somatic of the viewer and, as a consequence, the message is pre-verbal. The content is ensconced in the very act of movement. The imperative is to move, to avoid a clog at all costs, to reach the destination so that the message of a "secret psychic impulse which is Speech anterior to words" can be received.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The piece contains no sound other than the one produced by the device itself. The Nordic note is my extrapolation, though it is informed significantly by my first encounter with the piece in the context of the exhibit *The Idea of North*, curated by Rhonda Corvase in 2005-2006.

<sup>11</sup> Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theater" in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Helen Weaver (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 220. Admittedly, the shift in context is drastic here, though there is something perversely pleasing in adjoining tropical Bali with a frozen landscape.

## Still Dancing

Olivia Boudreau visits the gallery every day to frame herself by accretion in *Salle C* (2007), a performance embedded in a live video installation loop. The performance stages her continuous presence through every hour of the exhibition, where she becomes the persistent viewer of her own projection. She thereby fixes herself in a perpetual present, one where *Now* is one hundred

and fifty hours long. It is an endurance piece where gaze and attention are brought to a standstill. The self-reflexive dimension amplifies the *tableau vivant*, thus the performance becomes a questioning, or as Acconci would advance, a spilling:

I.am.not.interested.in.performance.but.in.the.conditions.for.presence.perhaps.  
because.I.do.not.know.how.to.trust.concentration.or.perhaps.because.I.am.more.  
interested.in.spill.off.stage.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kate Linker, *Vito Acconci* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), p. 60.

The emphasis Acconci added by the ubiquitous aggrammatical periods reverberates with Boudreau's arrested pose, as if she had punctuated the space and neglected to start the next paragraph. The movement here is potential, not kinetic. Or at least, it's minute kinetic, it's vibratory, it's on hold. Dance scholar André Lepecki has identified this as a choreographic mode where "stillness is a vibratile body engaged in a *microscopy of perception* which stages a critique of modernity's fabrication of embodiment, subjectivity and the sensorial."<sup>13</sup> The *spill.off.stage* suggested by Acconci earlier poetically hints at that critique. Likewise, Boudreau is not prescriptive. Lepecki, riffing on a formulation articulated by Jacques Rivière, outlines the radicalism of a choreography in which the body is allowed to "incline itself towards dance, [it is] potential dancing,... but it is not quite dancing."<sup>14</sup> Alain Badiou pushes the envelope even further by conceptualizing dance as one where "movement has its essence *in what does not take place*, in what has been held back within movement itself."<sup>15</sup> Badiou culminates by stating, "dance is not an art form because it is the sign for the possibility of art as it is inscribed in the body."<sup>16</sup> Boudreau's idleness (in symbiosis with the robots and the mixers) is amplified by a muteness. The performance consists of Boudreau, nothing more (much to the chagrin of misguided visitors who presume that a live presence is necessarily engaged in a relational artwork which fosters dialogue). It only takes a moment, however, adopting the shift suggested by Lepecki's *microscopy of perception*, to realize that a formidable amount of activity is taking place. The space of potential is satiated with microkinetics; it does not move space, it takes space. It is an occupying force. We should note as well that, as with Piper, there is a recording component. In *Salle C*, however, there is no playback, only documentation: a long and narrow cabinet affixed to the wall

<sup>13</sup> André Lepecki, "Still: On the Vibratile Microscopy of Dance" in *ReMembering the Body*, eds. Gabriele Brandstetter and Hortensia Völkens (Ostfilden: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 362. Emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>15</sup> Alain Badiou, "La danse comme métaphore de la pensée" in *Petit manuel d'Inesthétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), p. 95. Trans. by the author.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109. Trans. by the author.

houses the one hundred and fifty videotapes corresponding to every hour of the performance. The design of the cabinet enables it to function as a timeline, it linearly plots the three contiguous categories: what has been recorded, what is recording now, and what has yet to be recorded. The tape boxes from the past have been identified, the present one is empty, and the upcoming ones are blank. The cabinet evokes a corridor, a passage of time where, simply put and simply staged, what is documented is thought as it occurred in a body inhabiting a space.

### Sonomix

Five cocktail shakers, all slightly differently shaped, sit idle on a table until the visitor decides to pick one up, tilt it and thereby activate a sound and light show which emanates from its innards. As the versions of Marla Hlady's *Mixer* (2005-7) sound and light out of the profusion of pores dotting their stainless steel form, *start* might give the impression of veering towards *startle*. The *startle*, however, remains playful and subtle. The experience is an intimate one, the hands assess the shape and weight of the object, they hold and manipulate it, they control its location and dislocation. Activation is contingent on participation, on ignoring the preciousness of the art object and handling it as an instrument. The immediate tactility and ease of manipulability permits the viewer, now also player, to perform a mix. Or, in keeping with the instrumentation at hand, perform a cocktail. The ingredients in the mix are sound snippets from various locales; they are referential, sited. As such, the player's shakes perform a movement of place in space, a recontextualization by way of a playable (and playful) object.

The mini light beams emerging from the shakers (veritable mini discotheques) are the visual analogues to sound waves, radiating outwards, fading with distance, but still tracing a path. Accompanying *Mixer* is a series of sonic drawings. They also propose a tracing, but rendered in a different medium. Hlady's impressionistic drawings depict, in a detailed and delicate manner, the swirls of the invisible convolutions sounds perform as they are emitted and proceed to diffuse. These are diffusion maps that do not concern themselves with the physics of the event, but its metaphysics. Their accuracy lies in their power of evocation. With the drawings in the series, *Proposition for tracing a sound* (2006), the ephemerality of the sonic dimension is faithfully maintained