

Talk at the Art, Materiality and Representation conference of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) on 1-3 June 2018 at the British Museum, London.

Panel "Bodies of Archives/Archival bodies"

The dancing body as living archive

This paper will consider the notion of *living archive* applied to the body. What do we understand when we talk about the body as archive? An archive of *what* exactly? And how can we understand the process of archiving related to the body?

In this paper, I will show how the dancing body tells stories of encounters: when a soloist dances on stage, (s)he is dancing with the shadows of all the other bodies (s)he met, danced with and touched. All these bodies left traces on his/her dancing skills. The dancing body embodies all past stories shared with others. Therefore, I will argue that the body is a *living* archive, still in movement, continually in transformation into new forms of being. Rather than archive as static repository, I will argue that the body is an archive in motion that provides knowledge (Gehm, Husemann and Von Wilcke 2007).

As an anthropologist and dancer, my body carries the souvenir of dancing and ethnographic experiences. My body is shaped by past performances, dancing skills and encounters with dance pedagogues who taught me. With the example of my own dance apprenticeship and the support of dance studies which developed the concept of archive (Taylor 2003), I will explain what I precisely understand with the body as living archive. Photos, videos and bodily exercises will be used as illustrations.

Finally, I will compare the dancing experience with the ethnographic practice. The body of the anthropologist also carries past experiences involving encounters. In which sense could we consider the body of the anthropologist as a kind of living archive? Maybe even more than the ethnographic account, the *body* of the anthropologist is the trace of embodied fieldwork.