Bucar, M. (2015). Aesthetic negativity and choreographic practice. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

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Original citation: Bucar, M. (2015). Aesthetic negativity and choreographic practice. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

Permanent City Research Online URL: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/15320/

AESTHETIC NEGATIVITY AND CHOREOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Trinity Laban Conservatoire
of Music and Dance for the PhD in Dance [Creative Practice]

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JANUARY 2015

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For friends and family.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

At the core of this doctoral submission is a portfolio of three of my recent choreographic works (all created between 2011-2014), complemented by a text, which attempts to formulate a theoretical approach for explicating the works, through the lens of Theodor Adorno's theory of the inherent negativity of modernist artworks.

Such an approach places Adorno's ideas at the very centre of the analytical view presented here, albeit via the semiotic (re)articulation of these same ideas in recent work by Christoph Menke. This, in turn, draws on earlier work done within aesthetic semiotics by Viktor Shklovsky, through which it is hoped that insight, clarification, and historical contextualisation will be forthcoming, whilst also casting an eye on the contemporary situation within arts making. The thesis is therefore a theoretical analysis of aesthetically negative philosophical thought within choreographic practice, but simultaneously it is an attempt to point to new knowledge; namely an enhancement of Menke's semiotic reading of Adorno, extended from the field of literature from which it originates, and brought into the field of dance, movement, and choreography.

In addition to this, a vital second aspect of my approach will be a consideration of the *extra-semiotic* aspects of dance, read through a phenomenological understanding of kinaesthesia, and how our understanding of movement and choreography is rooted in basic aspects of our perceptive capabilities.

Prior to the introduction, the beginning of this thesis, there is a presentation of factual information regarding the production aspects of the performances in a brief Foreword. The structure of the thesis is then as follows. The Introduction offers a short historic overview of Adorno's theory of 'aesthetic negativity', and this is followed by three Chapters, titled: (1) Object and Subject, (2) Recombination, and (3) Projection. These three notions are not only essential to my work as methodological tools, but they also provide important references, connections and bilateral correspondences to similar concepts within Adorno's aesthetic theory, thereby clarifying the relationship between theory and practice in my work.

Chapter Four aims to re-inspect the works comprising *The Urban Series* in a similar fashion, while also placing their specific context within external, everyday and urban environments under critical examination.

FOREWORD

Central to this dissertation and portfolio are three of my recent artistic works; namely three choreographies which were realised between 2011 and 2014, and which were entitled: (1) *Point-less* (2012), (2) *The Urban Series* (2010-2014), and (3) *Room&Road – Remake* (2014).

The works are presented in the form of video documentation attached to the written thesis. A closer explanation of the nature of this video documentation and its specifics is given separately in Section 6.

Before commencing with the introduction to this thesis, I would like to provide some factual information on the productions themselves: where, how, and with whom they were produced, created, and performed, thereby outlining the main context(s) in which I work as a choreographer.

The works spanning my choreographic career began in the middle of the 1990s. The last three productions on which the submitted portfolio is based (dating from the end of 2010-2011 to 2014) were mainly produced by the DUM Association for Artists, which is based in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and in co-production with various local and international partners. The works were supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Cultural Department of the City of Ljubljana, and were created together with co-producers. They have been performed both in Slovenia and at international venues, such as: The Old Power Station (SMEEL) in Ljubljana, Ljubljana's Museum of Modern Art, Fabbrica Europa in Florence, Italy, the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance and Music in London, Im_flieger in Vienna, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, Croatia, the Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture in Ljubljana, and several others.

1. *Point-less*

    This performance was premiered during March 2012 at The Old Power Station (SMEEL), a space for contemporary art performance in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and subsequently performed throughout 2012. The dancers and co-creators of the movement material were Maja Kalafatič, Kaja Lorenzi and Bojana Mišić. The set and light designer was visual artist Vadim Fishkin,; music and sound throughout the process was taken from daily radio programs, but also by using the sounds of radios 'tuning'

through different frequencies, looking for specific programmes. This use of sound was completely intentional and formed part of the ideational body for the choreographic work itself. 'Real time' radio music, news, commentaries, talks, or this sound of 'tuning' through a frequency band was also used similarly during the performance itself, and was produced and performed by two sound and media artists: Marko Trstenjak and Brane Zorman

2. *The Urban Series* – a series of three independent works situated in an urban environment
   – *Green Light* was first performed on a traffic-light regulated street crossing in Ljubljana between June and November of 2010.
   – *Parking Packing* was first performed between October and November of 2012 in several car parks in Ljubljana.
   – *The Unnoticed* was first created and performed between June and November in 2013 in some of the streets and squares of Ljubljana.

Between 2011 and 2014 *The Urban Series* toured both nationally at Slovenian festivals, and internationally at festivals including: Rotterdam and Shiedam in the Netherlands; Gradisca, Florence, and Milan in Italy; Villach, Linz, and Vienna in Austria; in Rijeka and Zagreb in Croatia. The dancers and performers were: Maja Kalafatić, Nataša Kos Križmančič, Kaja Lorenzi, Duško Teropšič, Manca Krnel, Nina Fajdiga, Martina Ruhsam, Ivan Mijačević, Ales Zorec, Marina Giovaninni, Aja Zupanec, Evin Hadžialjević, Nina Pertot Weis, Daniela Cruz. Many more performers were included locally, including individuals from Florence or Rotterdam on the occasions when *Green Light* and *The Unnoticed* had been commissioned for an extended period of time in those cities.

The Urban Series has the special nature of being placed in the everyday urban environment of the streets, parks, and squares of a city, each time occurring in an entirely unannounced way. This means that the audience for the work is not formally invited– as is usually the case – to come and watch the performance. In the first place the works in the series address an ordinary pedestrian in the city; someone who is going about their usual daily business. However, to make it also possible for an interested spectator to see the work, the concept allows for information to be provided via the usual promotional methods: e-mails, radio and newspaper announcements, the general appearance of the performance in a city in a certain period of time (a month or a week),

and also by some kind of precise announcement of exact times and location (through websites) of when and where the work will be active. See the following example:

http://www.dum-club.si/mateja/unnoticed/unnoticed

3. *Room&Road – Remake* (2014)

This work was recreated and reconceived from an earlier version dating from 2005 in Ljubljana, and is an extended recreation which premiered at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and subsequently at Trinity Laban's Laurie Grove Theatre in London, in September 2014.

The dancers and co-creators of movement were Rebecca Murgi and Jonathan Pranlas Descours; design of the visual disposition of the set and lighting was done by Vadim Fishkin; music was provided by Random Logic and Borut Savski. Between its first appearance and its newest version in 2014, *Room&Road* has been co-produced and shown in Moscow, Russia, Berlin, Germany, Vienna, Austria, Milan and Florence, Italy, and London, UK.

0 INTRODUCTION

My intention is to articulate a precise philosophical and theoretical view of my artistic work and its processes through the lens of Theodor Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity. Such an approach aims to offer insights, clarifications, examples and a contextualisation of my current work – both historically and with regard to our contemporary situation.

Specifically, I will combine ideas from Adorno with the semiotic (re)articulation of them which has recently been provided by Christoph Menke's work, which in turn draws on earlier work done in aesthetic semiotics by Viktor Shklovsky. Much of this work originates in the field of literature and the literary novel, where Menke's semiotic articulations of Adorno's negative aesthetics are elaborated. An attempt to extend Menke's views in the field of choreography also means an attempt to bring, with this analytical approach, new knowledge into the field of dance.

In addition to providing an account of my choreographic practice in terms of semiotics, a second aspect of my approach will also consider the *extra*-semiotic aspects which relate more to a phenomenological understanding of kinaesthesia, and to how our understanding of movement and choreography is rooted in the basic aspects of our perceptive capabilities. The importance of Edmund Husserl's thinking on kinaesthesia will be emphasised, and I will also discuss asemiotic and asignifying phenomena in movement, performance, and dance spectating.

Having provided all the factual information on the productions and the realisations of performances on which the submitted portfolio is based in the Foreword, I will now move on to introduce the manner in which the theoretical aspects of the written component have been approached.

I based this component squarely on my own recent artistic practices; the three performances created between 2011 and 2014. However these works simultaneously draw on over twenty years of my prior work as choreographer, during which time the procedure of doing intensive research while creating has been always as essential to me as realising the performance itself. In my view, artistic creation is in itself always and necessarily also a form of research, both on a practical level and a theoretical, ideational, or perhaps even a 'philosophical' one.

In this written commentary I have been drawn into research regarding what I see as the implicit philosophical and theoretical aspects of my choreographic work, including its starting point, or the initial ideas regarding the formation of the methodology used in the creative process, which results in the final outcome for the works' realisation and performances. With this view in mind, the approach taken throughout is one which places theory and practice in a specific bilateral correspondence with the other. For example, the terms 'subject' and 'object' are not only philosophical terms and concepts used by Adorno, but also simultaneously double as names for specific artistic methodologies used in my work, and, in that sense, they are also implicit in my process in terms of key aspects of its material (see the end of section 0.2). The titles of the first three chapters (1.Subject-Object Relations, 2. Recombination, and 3. Projection) have been placed so that they signify in a dual sense, both as the methodological tools used in the process of creating a performance, and also as notions which provide important references, clarifications, and connections to similar concepts within Adorno's aesthetic theory. The result is therefore an attempt to elucidate the relationship between theory and practice in my work.

There are two main reasons why I decided to include Adorno's philosophical work and theory of negative aesthetics, which we can provisionally define as follows: 'aesthetic negativity is the enactment of determinate refusal of predication on the part of artworks' (Durao, 2008, 1). Firstly, Adorno's work is intensely engaged in elaborating particular dialectical relations between object and subject. The notions of object and subject, both as physically existing entities, and as ideas with certain choreographic affordances, have been the starting point in all of my creative work. Secondly, I am drawn to the potential with which the concept of aesthetic negativity elaborates negation: negation as a principle, tool, or operative force, from its historical beginnings until now, which enables us to see, in art practices, the ways in which numerous objects, materials, or ideas gain *new life.*

The theory of aesthetic negativity is primarily a modernist philosophical project, as Adorno was interested in how modernist artworks both critique and reflect their particular socio-cultural situation. Engaging with the German philosophical tradition and the works of Marx and Freud, Adorno's negative aesthetic theory also builds on the larger heritage of the history of aesthetic thought that recognised the negation, refusal, or suspension of abstract and rational thinking which took place through aesthetic experience: a derailing of the 'automatic' significations of our everyday existence.

But before continuing on this trajectory I would first like to make some more remarks on the following: (1) the precise way this written commentary intends to approach the relation between the theoretical and practical parts of the submission, and (2) a short rationale for the chosen theoretical positions, or 'lenses', for the written thesis.

1. Firstly let me describe the interrelationship, or bilateral correspondence, between the theoretical and practical expositions – and between the theory and practice in the written commentary – which are approached via the specific concerns of Subject-Object, Recombination, and Projection (the three main notions in my work, which are clarified in chapters one, two, and three, respectively) as: a methodology practised in my work and, simultaneously, as an analytical lens which is essential not only as a methodological tool, but also as a notion which makes a reference to Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity possible. This dual role is depicted in a diagram (see: Fig. 1, p. 29) which shows how the interpenetrating logic between Subject-Object, Recombination and Projection in my own work operates and how it will be used in this thesis to enlighten and articulate a possible way in which the necessary Adornian negation – or negative operation in the choreographic process – can take place. Simultaneously, I will also try to show how these, and other similar notions, operating separately or together, can be found or understood as 'negators' of other more 'habitual' modes of presentation in the choreographic tradition.

2. I should state that both Adorno and Menke's aesthetically negative approaches describe something of the methodologies and concepts which have *always* been operating in my work at some level. Adorno's approach in particular is deeply dialectical in spirit, and therein lies some of the most vital questions one faces when setting out to choreograph something: the questions of the dual *relations* between various aspects of the material, as exists for example between a work's form and content. Researching this aspect in my artistic practice, I devoted a great deal of attention to different forms (for example, forms of movement and forms as objects), and especially to geometric forms, which came to play a major role in my works, something I intend to emphasise throughout this thesis.

   The 'dialectical' aspects implicit in my work can be explained/introduced in relation to the following key notion in Adorno's thinking: there is no subject without an object and no matter how deep we go in the subject there is always an object (Adorno, 1978, 498f). In my work, this notion defines relations between object and subject and operates as

both as a concept that describes *what you see* in a work, but also *how it is made* – it describes both the specific bilateral relation between a theoretical description of reception *and* the working methodology itself. Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity and Menke's subsequent semiotic elaborations of it are what enable this bilateral correspondence between theory and practice that I use in what follows. It is a kind of bilateralism where the terms behave so as to inform reception on one hand, and methodology on the other. It can also be considered an approach which aims to open a 'new space', both between these terms, and also to enable and produce new knowledge at each end of this correspondence. This refers idiomatically to the theoretical research of course, but could also enhance – via suitable and extended studio work – the methods themselves, and perhaps thereby further influence changes regarding how these concepts could be (re)defined *philosophically*.

In order to give brief examples of how these terms describe both the work's content and its methodology, I will use the performance *Room&Road* (2014): in the spirit of Adorno's aforementioned statement that 'no matter how deep we go into the subject there is always an object', the methodology asks us to first define and set up a rectangular box/room as the **'object'** and a dancer as the **'subject'** (chapter one) at the very starting point of the process. Second, it asks to constantly **'recombine'** (chapter two) their attributes, or exchange their statuses, which means for example that the room should no longer be static or passive, as we usually perceive it, but be moving and 'alive', just as the dancer is. Third, in order to make all this possible, the methodology employs **'projection'** (chapter three).

In this theoretical analysis I have therefore chosen these particular philosophical lenses to clarify the 'anatomy' operating behind an aphorism that I would like to claim for my own work, namely: 'what one sees is also how it is done'. Or, to put it another way, what is seen in the final performance can be, through its relation to Adorno and Menke's ideas and concepts, clarified as corresponding to how it is done.

However, there is another fundamental question in choreography: the question of movement as a phenomenon in itself, seen as prior to the semiotic articulation of its content or 'meaning'. As mentioned above, it was in this sense of movement that I also chose to utilise some insights from Edmund Husserl's philosophy, drawing on those aspects of his thinking in which he examines the perceptual constitution of objects via kinaesthesia, and the subsequent constitution of our sense of space. The reason for incorporating this second perspective is that I also find it extremely important for the

movement in my choreography to stand 'on its own' in some sense, as a kinetic phenomenon in itself, just as it can also exist on the level of its meaning-related content.

In this introduction, I will first provide a historical outline of the concept of aesthetic negativity (section 0.1). Based on this, I will make a sketch of the historical contextualisation of my work via this concept (section 0.2). The introduction will also outline the four main chapters of the text, which deal with the methodological aspects of my work and its idiomatic procedures. Each of the first three chapters will attempt to explain my work via what we can define as one of its three constituting 'fields'; approaches that can be perceived and discussed as interlocking methodologies – as has already been mentioned above, and consisting of subject-object, recombination, and projection.

In parallel to this, I will provide examples from my performances and those of others, wherein I will attempt to clarify how they relate, in their specific ways and procedures, to the ideas from the aesthetics of negation, refusal, and suspension afforded by modernist artworks.

0.1   <u>A History of Negative Aesthetics</u>

Throughout history, philosophical inquiry into art became organised around the negation, refusal or/and suspension of conceptual and abstract knowledge as developed and directed by Enlightenment philosophy, which advocated the comprehensive elucidation of the nature of abstract *reason*. Negation, refusal and suspension of such an attitude exposed itself as an initial possibility, a tool even, or operation, by which another kind of consideration (apprehension), or perception of objects is made possible – namely an aesthetic one. For example, in the earliest work in which the term 'aesthetics' is mentioned, Alexander Baumgarten (ca. 1750) defines the term and derives its function from the word *aesthesis*, which meant 'a reconsideration of the perceptive and sensate dimensions of thinking and cognition, of the cognitive dimensions of perception' (Kaiser, 2011, 14) Here, Baumgarten is suggesting a kind of continuation between sensation and perception (as 'lower' faculties) and higher reasoning, with the former serving for both abstract and logical conceptualisation. However, Baumgarten also stresses how this process *loses* something of the immediacy of perception, and that as such, perception should be considered a modality of thinking in its own right: 'What is lost in conceptual distinctness is gained in terms of sensate effect, and [Baumgarten] argued for a specific clarity of sensate cognition as an analogous mode of cognition, an autonomous mode of thinking' (20). As the founding figure of aesthetics, Baumgarten therefore begins to suggest what is at stake in the

emergence of aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy. In the rational thought of the 18th century, the joint problems of immediate sensuous experience or what became apparent as aesthetic pleasure didn't succeed in being integrated successfully. The increasing dominance of models of cognition derived from the natural sciences seemed to exclude some of the vital content of experience and perception. Baumgarten therefore opened the question of experiencing and contemplating the effects art produces (effects which are experienced as aesthetic pleasure), and this meant contemplating and comprehending them independently from understanding them theoretically. In this way Baumgarten stressed the importance of experiencing (sensing and perceiving-contemplating) things as a different process from recognising, knowing, or judging them. He thought that in this way aesthetics could offer another kind of knowledge, a side of knowledge that was ignored by rational and scientific methodology.

However, Baumgarten's positing of a sensate form of cognition is quickly undermined by Immanuel Kant, who denies it proper epistemological status. Instead, aesthetic contemplation involves the same powers of knowledge as theoretical determination. However, there is one important difference that arises: in aesthetic contemplation it is precisely theoretical determination which becomes suspended, or, in other words, it is conceptual knowledge (as well as that which can be a result or a product of certain teleological accounts of things around us) which, in aesthetic perception, should be resisted or suspended. The aesthetic object, be it a work of art or a beautiful natural phenomenon, escapes determination as *this* or *that*, and there is an ensuing shift, which goes beyond the merely subjective, to an attempt at comprehension of the object solely in terms of its appearing particularity, in which we are 'attentive to the full sensuous presence of an object, while forgoing cognitive or practical results' (Seel, 2005, 3).

Kant thus 'secures' the way for the aesthetic field to follow its own developments in terms of a negative relation to all rational knowledge and conceptual thought, exploring sensuous perception and contemplation as a different process – an aesthetic one. When confronted with beauty, for example, Kant speaks of purposefulness without purpose, which is again suggestive of experiencing something *independent* from its (everyday) purpose. Stepping back or suspending the immediate purposes that things and actions acquire through their histories in the rational organisation of life releases the object (or action) from its rational purpose. An object is experienced anew with a kind of contextual independence, and this is where Kant tells us that beauty is found. In the beautiful (and the sublime), a radical or determinate refusal of the power of reason is enacted.

The word *contemplation* here is crucial; it informs us that the processes of reduction, retreat, refusal, or negation are nothing other than our experience itself, in a certain modality. We are confronted with experiencing the effects of negation, suspension, refusal, etc. (and not with their results). According to Christoph Menke, it was already Baumgarten who presupposed what is and what will be at the heart of aesthetic contemplation, something which later culminated in thinkers like Adorno and Paul de Man: 'The enacted contemplation of an artwork is also a [self] reflection on the processes of experiencing itself: Aesthetic experience is that specific mode of comprehension, in which what comprehension, in general, is experienced' (Menke, 2008, 64).

To continue this trajectory of what aesthetic experience came to signify in different philosophical approaches after Kant, we should continue with Arthur Schopenhauer. In his philosophy, experiencing aesthetically means something slightly different. With Schopenhauer, we get a kind of 'higher contemplation' in aesthetic experience, a search for the glimpses that would, through art, reveal the universal Idea(s) of the world. Schopenhauer's aesthetics go much further than suspending or resisting. For him, in contrast to Kant, 'the sublime emphasises our dependency on the world – our being this 'vanishing point' in it when confronted with overwhelming, sublime scenes' (Samuel, 2008). Making oneself as a kind of 'vanishing point' could no doubt also count as the strongest kind of aesthetic 'negation'. For Schopenhauer, art also assumes the highest theoretical and ethical importance in the sense that the 'subjective' particularities in an artwork only serve as a vehicle for higher experience, or for contemplation towards a higher realisation. In a way, Schopenhauer also brings the sensuous nature of aesthetic experience back together with the theoretical (and ethical) potentials of our mind.

In contrast to Schopenhauer and his rhetoric of higher contemplation, Friedrich Nietzsche suggests an account of aesthetic experience as a kind of losing oneself completely into the 'real of the world'. In this account Nietzsche additionally refuses the cognitive orientation of the mind, in a way rendering aesthetic experience back to a negation of the rational understanding of the world. So, for Nietzsche 'art reveals the chaos at the heart of nature itself, and the aesthetic pleasure it unleashes is a glimpse of the inherent uncontrollability of the real, and provides a path to new possibilities of self-abnegation and ego dissolution' (Clark, 2015, 54). Nietzsche's important relation to Adorno arrives with his claim that what becomes challenged, suspended, and disrupted in artistic processes is always historically situated: we see the creation of 'historically contingent processes of artistic construction that presuppose a prior nexus of meaning to be dissolved' (ibid). Nietzsche's grounding for determinate negation, disruption, or suspension corresponds to what Husserl later refers to as equally historically specific 'horizons of meaning' and 'life-worlds.' And this idea – that art presupposes historically constructed cultural

horizons of meaning only to transgress them – is radicalised by both Martin Heidegger and Theodor Adorno, the latter being arguably the 'greatest thinker of aesthetic negativity''(Durao, 2008, 20).

With Adorno, we reach a theory of works of art that apprehends them as completely autonomous, and in a negative relationship to all that is not-art: 'What art actually is, is contradiction, rejection, negation – its essence is its aesthetic negativity' (Menke, 1999, 3). The artwork in modernity drops like a kind of device into the atrophying conditions of the socially conditioned present, an appearing of unreality into the what is known and is acknowledged to be real: 'In each genuine artwork, something appears that does not exist' (Adorno, 2005, 10). This appearance goes beyond the mere sensory, and calls (like Kant) for an interpretation that, whilst utilising the apparatus of the conceptual, cannot ever be said to provide a sense of finishing there; an interpretation that attempts to 'use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual, without making it their equal' (Adorno, 2005, 10).

Menke also sees in Adorno a mechanism by which we may conceptualise aesthetic difference (and hence aesthetic autonomy). The 'automatic' processes which are at work in recognition or repetition should be confronted or contrasted – within aesthetic experiencing – with the *processural* negation of these same processes, and this must be done via an account of what in the work of art specifically occasions such a *processural* negation. The aesthetic is differentiated from the nonaesthetic via this processurality, which contains a logic of its own that undermines conventional attempts at iterative understanding. Although aesthetic experience must start with these processes of identification, or initial decisions as to an artwork 'meaning', true negativity equates with the way that it is: 'an experience of the negation (the failure, the subversion) of (the nevertheless unavoidable effort at) understanding' (Menke, 1999, 24). Aesthetic experience negates the 'automatic repetition' that is the hallmark of nonaesthetic experience. In his reconstruction, Menke provides a very precise account of aesthetic negativity using semiotic terminology. This (semiotic) account is otherwise entirely absent in Adorno's writing.

By means of systems of codified contiguity, 'automatic understanding' is presented specifically as the nonprocessural and unproblematic binding of the two Saussurian sides of the representative sign (the signifier and signified). In everyday or nonaesthetic experience, it is the immediate binding of the material (sounds, gestures, marks on a surface, etc.) and the immaterial (the conceptual-propositional content or meaning). On the other hand, an aesthetic experience is an endless 'vacillation' between the two poles of a sign. When we experience

modernist artworks, our attempts at understanding them are confronted with an initial asignifying materiality that must be given a reading in order to make sense, via the selection in the material of meaning-related aesthetic signifiers. In Menke's terms: For the question concerning aesthetic signifiers, the primordial fact is that signifiers are produced by an operation 'of selection on a given material, in view of the meaning to be represented' (35). Menke points to the idea that the problem with artworks lies with the fact that no definitive rules or conventions can be established in terms of the appropriate selection of signifiers in the material, so:

> In the realm of art, the signifier oscillates between the two poles, which in automatic understanding are firmly linked: those of material and meaning. Since the signifier cannot be definitively identified, but is lost in endless hesitation, aesthetic experience breaks the bridge joining the two sides of semiotic representation. (36)

Aesthetic experience, and hence aesthetic autonomy, is then the 'processural enactment' or an actualisation of this shifting between the two poles of meaning. Menke claims that this is a self-subversion or sequential deferral of the subject's attempts at signifier formation, and that this aesthetic deferral manifests itself in three different ways. First, effectuated signifiers that are already automatically selected 'counter-effectuate' themselves, leading to a potentiation of material as yet unselected, so established meanings are enriched with other possible ones. Second, there is a disruption for contexts that usually provide criteria for settling nonaesthetic disruptions of meaning, or, in other words, the very framework surrounding meaning is shaken to its very foundations. Third, aesthetic experience 'frames', or quotes nonaesthetic contextual assumptions from the outside – a new context is created or added – with the result that these contextual assumptions become ambiguous, and signifiers acquire 'an unsublatable indeterminacy' (60).

I would now like to emphasize this very clear definition which will be fundamental to the approach taken later.[1]

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[1] Regarding all that has been said so far, I would also like to point out the existence of several other theories and thinkers that cover related material. Aesthetics have been a discipline involved in intensively exploring socio-cultural and other questions through literature, art and culture. For example: Ulrich Gumbrecht (2004) highlights the 'production' and experience of 'presence' through art, critiquing the role of 'interpretation' as the dominant activity in arts and humanities research. In a similar vein, Karl Heinz Bohrer (2001) proposes a type of 'experience' of the present without any concern for the past or future, or

Perhaps it would be appropriate at this juncture to categorize what I hope to add in this thesis in terms of *new knowledge*, or in terms of new types of approach. Succinctly, this will be an account of how Christpher Menke's semiotic rearticulating of inherent negation (which Adorno postulates as inherent to in modernistic art works) can be extended to the field of movement, dance, and performance. In this sense my thesis involves an attempt to extend Menke's theory of aesthetic negativity into a new art form, in this case choreography, rather than just limiting it to the literary, and the literary novel. My intention will also be to show how Menke's extension of Adorno's theory is something that additionally seems rooted in my own practice as a choreographer. I will also examine how these ideas can be interrogated through numerous other choreographic practices – both historical and contemporary – and in doing so, I aim to find a way to build both a historical and contemporary contextualisation for my work.

However, in order to avoid undue theoretical abstraction at this point, I will now make a transition from the historical trajectory in philosophy of theories of aesthetic negativity to the history of modern art and, in particular, to modern dance. This will be done in order to further elaborate certain historical influences, which were significant for the development of dance, choreography and performance during the modernist period, and which constitute a period I naturally identify with in my work.

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to be more specific, an experience in which the present moment is never fully available to us.

Gernot Bohme (1993) links the 'atmospheres' of situations, including artistic situations, to the idea of 'aura' and suggests that the introduction of atmosphere as a concept in aesthetics would account for the peculiar intermediary status of them between the 'subject and object' (see: Bohme, 1993). Andrew Bowie (2007) additionally explores a type of 'negative metaphysics' summarized in the the term 'metaphysics 2', which bears the sense of all the previous terms that stand for what resists conceptualisation in the manner in which we conceptualise.

Finally, Martin Seel, promotes a theory of 'aesthetics of appearance' (2005). He claims that the attentiveness to 'what is appearing' (in art, and elsewhere) is simultaneously a particular type of attentiveness to ourselves. This is also the case when works of art imagine the past or future or probable/improbable presences (see: Seel, 2005).

0.2 Aesthetic Negativity and Contemporary Dance: Methodology of three notions

Menke's definition puts aesthetic negativity right at the centre of what modernist art is supposed to be doing: art, in its essence, it is supposed to be processurally embodying aesthetic negativity, and it does this in historically specific ways. In order for negation to function, there must be something (prior to it) to negate: a socio-cultural milieu in which to operate. Since I intend to continue in this direction to examine my own work, it will be necessary to outline the particular aesthetic-modernist contexts in which I can place it, and the ways in which these contexts underline this processural deferral of prior understandings. As a first such historical reference, I will take the practices of Bauhaus, and more precisely the work of Oscar Schlemmer. I will also examine the so-called 'New Dance', which emerged in America in the 1950's and 1960's (see Section 1.1).

Initially I should point out the importance of Bauhaus practices as an influence, which was passed on, largely through Black Mountain College, to the 'New Dance' movement in America, a late-modernist development in dance in which artists declared themselves to be 'postmodern' or 'neo-Duchampian' choreographers, as Susan Sontag later called them (Sontag, 2002). Here, we are referring mainly to San Francisco artists, but also to New York Greenwich Village dance circles, particularly those which emerged from the Judson Dance Theatre, or out of Robert Dunn's workshop on musical composition in 1962 (Banes, 2003, 31-32). It is almost unavoidable to look for further historical contexts of my work within this generation of choreographers, who individually and collectively gathered ideas about the emancipation of dance from its historical forbearers and embarked on a research project based on the principles and potentials inherent to movement, and its forms and materials. At the same time, they reiterated a critical negation of certain activities, which were believed at the time to be constitutively necessary to theatre, dance, and their cultural transmissions. From this generation I will single out Yvonne Rainer, to whom I especially relate, particularly *vis-à-vis* her determined attempt to maximise the conditions in which the body can be perceived as an object. These late-modern movement practices strove to isolate methodologies that incorporated negation extensively; and in their own ways they can be said to have been aesthetically negative.

In this light, I would also like to introduce some of the methodology I continually utilise in my own work, which will later be elaborated in the light of Menke's thesis relating to the 'processural indeterminacy' of aesthetic signification. Each of these approaches can be seen as

particular strategies to effect/afford this indeterminacy. They can be thought of as interpenetrating 'fields' which present possibilities for action, signification, and movement generation, and together represent what Adorno would call a 'constellation' (defined as an interlocking field of heterogeneous but interrelated concepts). These are: *subject-object relations*, *recombination*, and *projection* (which form the titles of chapters one to three). Let us first define these terms carefully, before going on to consider each in more detail in the remainder of this text.

1. The *subject-object relation* is perhaps the most substantial element in my work, because as a pairing and/or coupling it can bring both physical and non-physical material into play. We can refer to a dancing subject in relation with a certain physical object, for example, but also to the relation between a dancing subject and an objectival idea or affordance. Without an object there is no subject, and vice versa; and this remains invariant whether their relation is illusionary or real. Adorno (1978, 498-511) writes that without an object the subject is empty. When we ask for example the question 'what am I doing', we are reflecting upon our own subjectivity as if we were objects for ourselves (the subjects) to study. In Adorno's thinking 'your subject' would always correlate with an object.

2. *Recombination* is the second important idea, as through a specific recombination an equally specific negation or refusal is determined. Recombination demands that materials and their attributes are necessarily recombined in sometimes formal and at other times imaginative ways. For example, there can be a choreographic stipulation that a dancer's body engages in a recombination of his/her movement qualities with that of surrounding structure, such as that of the floor. In this way the dancer denies/refuses what is or would be attributed to him/her as a person with subjective agency, and appropriates or mimetically re-enacts the 'flatness' of a surface, for example.

3. *Projection* functions to enact recombination, and on more than one level: both on the 'inner', ideational level and the outer, 'physical' one. It operates both on the level of ideas and on the level of physical structures and technologies used in the works. There is no hierarchy between this term and the previous two; they are interwoven and 'operate on/transform' each other. They materialise or propose an interpenetrating constellation in which the determinate enactment of negation happens, for example between the recombination principle of materials and their attributes, and of what has been initially brought into play by the object and subject and the meanings entangled in their inner relations (see: fig. 1, p. 29).

In chapter Three, I will also make a closer examination of my recent works: *Point-less* (2011) and *Room&Road – Remake* (2014). In that chapter these two works will serve as case studies and in the same time as clarifying them in the light of Adono's and Menke's optics I hope to enlighten their distinct uniqueness – as a choreographic-artistic works that bring new knowledge as a performance itself can – that is in its artistic dimension which also includes certain specific knowledge in the ways they are technologically realized. In Chapter Four this will be followed by the introduction of the third choreography from my latest work period, called the *Urban Series* (2010-2014). The *Urban Series* is a series of works placed in an external urban environment, and has been developing over a period lasting some five years. In this series, and as an additional argument for choreographic-aesthetic inquiry, the external urban space will also be examined in terms of its potential for providing another context for choreography. I will also more closely introduce in Chapter Four each of the three works that currently make up the *Urban Series*: *Green Light* (2011), *Parking Packing* (2012), and *The Unnoticed* (2013).

Having given brief initial descriptions of these ideas, let us now move on to consider each in the light of specific examples in my work, a task that will occupy the next three sections of this text.

1 SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONS

Previously, in the introduction, I pointed out that my primary aim in this thesis was to contribute some new knowledge to the field of choreography, in terms of an extension of Menke's semiotic articulation of aethetic negativity to the field of choreography. I will articulate this via certain historical and contemporary choreographic practices, and include the corpus of my own works from the last four to five years: The principle of negation, the concepts of 'Subject' and the 'Object' residing in Adorno's philosophy, and Menke's semiotic elaboration of the role of aesthetic negativity all seem in precise ways to have become rooted in my work, whether consciously or not. I will use this realization as a point of departure for an integration of Menke's theory within the field of choreography, and vice versa. This will be accomplished via a consideration of selected examples from modernist and contemporary dance, which will be incorporated into a comparative analysis with my own work.

In the first part of this chapter, I will further develop my inquiry into the nature of subject-object relations in an Adornian vein, namely in terms of both their inner cohabitation and distance, which in Adorno's thought takes a central position in his critical enquiry into the constitution of subjectivity. I will outline an approach for taking both 'object' and 'subject' as central in the creation of my choreography. I will also attempt to contextualise subject-object relations within choreography more generally, especially within a modernist context, and will include references to both Bauhaus practice(s) and to the 'New Dance'. I will look at a particular work of my own – *Discipline as a Condition of Freedom* – as a primary source, a work which falls historically squarely into the context of 'New Dance', or more specifically perhaps into the context of the cultural 'happenings' prevalent within performance practice in the 1960's. Looking back at my earliest work, what has always surfaced as the main question is a kind of 'non-negotiable demand' to dig within the material itself and as soon as possible to try to switch qualities and statuses between the elements of this material (i.e. to 'subjectively' animate the 'object' and 'objectively' inform the 'subject') – in order to find a certain different life of/for these same materials. In the course of my practice, the very first step towards choreography was to find and define a certain privileged object: an extra body or a physical thing placed next to the dancer's body, with the intention of forming relations between this object and the dancer's own subjectivity, and its faculties of reason and imagination.[2] Then, by this certain non-negotiable

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[2] It is worth mentioning that a certain affinity with this strategy can also be noticed in the work of William

demand (or by pure imagination perhaps), the exchange between the object and the subject is proposed to take place: an inter-exchange of statuses between dancer and object is proposed, the dancer should 'become' the object (and vice versa).

I therefore organise my work through these subject-object relations, which we can now spell out in more detail. For example, we can interpret the word 'subject' here in the most direct way, as that which is represented by the dancer him/herself (we may call this, in Husserlian fashion, the 'body-as-felt'). Equally there is another formal geometrical body, placed in the dialogue with the dancer, which represents the 'object' (the 'body-as-perceived').[3] Here, the subject-object relation is taken in the 'true' Adornian sense which presupposes that: there is no subject without an object and no matter how deep we go in the subject there is always an object (Adorno, 1978, 498f).

Adorno's dialectical thought within the discourse of art is thus simultaneously formulated within a discourse of being: 'it is as if artworks were re-enacting the process through which the subject comes painfully into being' (Adorno, 1984, 164), which relates closely to subjective materiality or to the 'states which materials acquire for being', and also is indicative of the reason why I place an object and a subject and their intrication[4] at the centre of my work. Namely, what makes something meaningful and how it becomes meaningful is all tied into this subject-object relation, or as Adorno explains: 'if the subject does have an objective core, the object's subjective qualities are so much more an element of objectivity' (Adorno 1978, 502). Herein also lies the reason why the concept of aesthetic negativity, including most of its modern elaborations, offers itself as a clarification of the performative 'strategies' ubiquitous within modernist art production. Namely: via determinately negating the 'automatic' understandings of subjectivity and the predetermination of meanings and knowing, a new consideration towards the 'materiality of things' is reopened. Determinately refusing any kind of codified or particularly determined meaning, function or purpose of both objective things, and subjective notions, emotions, movements or gestures returns our attention back to *substance*, to what it is that things are made from (to what they could be meant for).

Forsythe, a topic to which I will return in the coming pages.

[3] Husserl refers to this 'two-foldedness' of the subject's relation to its own body as the difference between Aussen- and Innen-Leiblichkeit (see: Zahavi, 2003, 101f).

[4] To use a term from psychoanalysis.

To return, after this small detour, to subject-object relations as the starting point in my work, we can perhaps assume a kind of metaphor: that in each subject and also in each object there is an inherent particular combination (cohabitation) of object and subject (a bit like 20% wool and 80% cotton), which allows us to project or to suggest a recombination of these 'percentages', in terms of a kind of 'montage' which can suggest a de- and a re-montage of its own parts. A negative aesthetics then reduces to finding a way to separate the knowing of the object and the being of the object: the two are separated via a negation or refusal of the knowing. We can, through various aesthetic methodologies, *refuse* the predetermination of the object, as something definitively known to us; it might be fair to say that we render it unknown, alienated or estranged. When the object is thus separated from our knowledge of it, it becomes simply pure material with new potentialities. And in this separation, in the space that keeps the knowing of the object separated from its being, in that in-between space, a new type of subjective being can be experienced. Subjectivity is not really just the subject, it is an object as well, and in this way the subject is then a part of the 'larger' world.

To clarify my basic motivation for this duality of object and the subject in another way, I can say that in the very, very, first moment of starting a work or even in the moments before that, I would not think explicitly of a dancer moving in a particular way or as a human body to be choreographed, but would imagine a full mixture, possibly even a mixture that favours objects, structures, technologies, or things *next* to a human body, which are already entangled in some kind of joint motion, interrelating in a way that can *become* a choreography or a work related to the notion of the choreographic. This is more akin to a dynamic visual- or installation-art way of thinking, where *what* is choreographed is far from being solely the mere body of a dancer. The notion of the choreographic involves and also spreads to all possible local objects, materials, forms and notions, and the dynamics specific to them; and through all of that emerges the potentiality for 'choreography'.[5]

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[5] William Forsythe formulated a similar strategy involving what he calls 'choreographic objects'. See: Forsythe, 2011, Ch. 7.

1.1   Historical Interlude

Historically, as was mentioned earlier, I find the artistic corpus of the Bauhaus artists – such as Oskar Schlemmer, Joost Schmidt, Frederick Kielser etc. – especially intriguing.[6] I am interested particularly in the Bauhaus concept of *stylistically reduced forms*. A Bauhaus tendency was to reduce architectural, visual, typographical and other forms to a question of the abstract spaces that form them: through this a certain 'architectural' subjectivization became possible. Looking back similarly at dance history, recent studies[7] stress a similar reduction of style. In order for dance to mediate the identification with the working classes or via the recognition of the working class itself as a multiple subject, artistic procedures tended not to focus solely on dance *narratives*, but rather on the *abstract* form of dance as a 'universal' medium. What I find especially appealing in this Bauhaus aesthetic is the idea of the reconstituted potentiality of space. This was also obviously a crucial element in modernist choreography and dance, when one considers Oscar Schlemmer's artistic tendencies. With his knowledge of architecture and insights into the activities of crafts that deal with materials, the notion of space took on a new functional role. It became an object constructed of its own material (emptiness – nothingness – air) that was available for the further embedding of movement. The 'inner' space inside bodies became similarly reconfigured – not as flesh and tissue, but as empty, a negation of its normative function (see fig. 2 & 3, which show sketches for *Triadic Ballet* (1922), by Oscar Schlemmer (p. 23)).

In this sense, Schlemmer introduced a 'thought of volume' as a potentiality for movement generation. His costumes, that were a figural exaggeration in terms of their geometric or functional volumes, introduced the idea of body parts in a spatial transposition of their motoric potentiality. The truly exaggerated geometric volumes, of a leg, a torso or/and an arm, made apparent their inner space, their unusual inner volume, and this inner volume was set against the volume of the space around them. But at the same time, this exaggerated spatial transposition of motoric potentiality, made all the more visible through costumes, gave the dancers the characteristic of an object: an engineered construction of the 'autonomous' body that historically corresponded to a different understanding of kinetics.

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[6] For a good historical survey of the Bauhaus artists, see: Siebembrodt & Schobe, 2009.

[7] See: Wood, 2003; Banes, 2003; Lepecki, 2006.
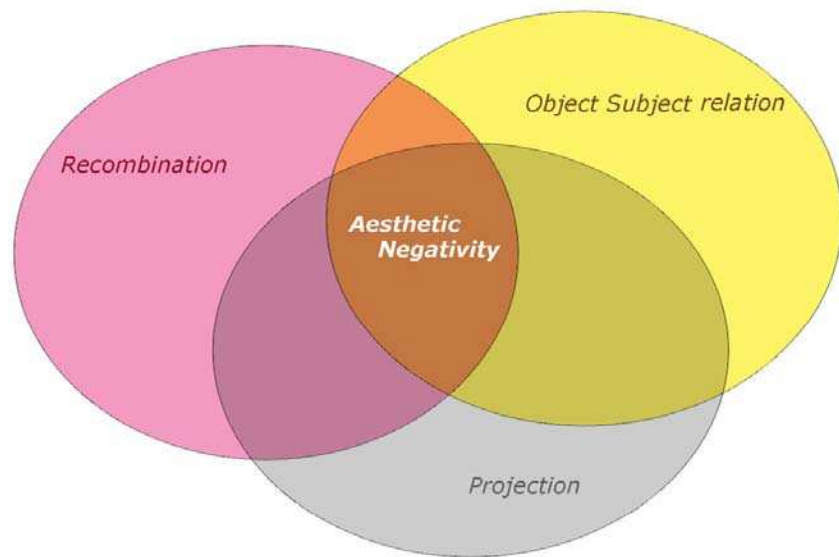
Fig. 1

The interpenetrating logic between: Object and Subject Recombination and Projection
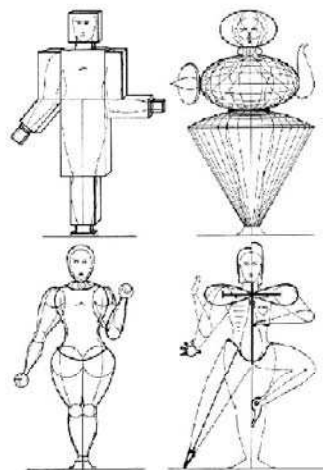
Fig. 2 (Schlemmer, c. 1927)

Fig. 3 (Schlemmer, c. 1924)

Triadic Ballet by Oscar Schlemmer, 1926

Let me make a short detour to clarify this a little more. The mechanical or machinic understanding of the human body as a kind of dynamic mechanism or motor prevalent in 18th century Enlightenment discourses manifested itself in the various inventions of the 'automata' of bourgeois entertainment, such as the machine that played chess, moved around, made a cup of tea etc. (Kunst, 1999, 83-118).

The 19th century saw a shift in the understanding of the human body. It became clear that there are movements and processes inside the human body and mind, like the introduction in psychoanalysis of the unconscious, and the introduction of the new knowledge like entropy, through which it became clear that there were important aspects to human subjectivity that are actually temporally irreversible, that fundamental processes are unidirectional and thus cannot be equated with the analogy of a smooth 'clock-like' mechanism. The human body came to be seen as a kind of uncontrollable kinetic force that resisted a fully causative overview. As a consequence, the artistic movements of the avant-gardes, such as the Italian futurists, the Bauhaus artists, and the Russian constructivists (especially their theatre directors) felt the need to construct an alternative and adequate motoric construct of this new idea of the kinetic body (ibid, 130-81).

In this regard, Oscar Schlemmer opened a kind of new chapter for choreography in the 20th century. This new kinetic construct, that we see being formed in his sketches for the *Triadic Ballet*, is nothing less than a reconfiguration of the motoric potentiality of the body. The figures give the impression that their 'subjective' part has been 'extracted' out of the body; there is this hollow space inside them and yet, we can also say, that what the figures *do* – including the motion of the colours on the surface of 'object-like' bodies – points to the idea that the 'aborted' subjectivity has returned somehow, these new parameters have been re-subjectified. As Rose Lee Goldberg states:

> Space as the unifying element in architecture was what Schlemmer considered to be the common denominator of the mixed interests of the Bauhaus ... and what characterized the 1920s discussions on space was the notion of *Raumempfindung* or the 'felt volume', and it was to this sensation of space that Schlemmer attributed the origins of each of his dance productions (Goldberg, 1988, 104).

In my view, Schlemmer's 'felt volume' represents the first attempt to make space itself *present as an object*. To be able to really 'play' with space in this objectival form gives us a wonderful

example of what an Adornian 'refusal' or 'negation' can be. Namely, space as not that kind of immeasurable nothing in which objects are situated, but space that is simply presented in the form of its own object. This idea is made clear in Schlemmer's (essay) lecture-demonstration *Dance in Space (Delineation of Space with Figure)*,[8] where wire lines are constructed in all 'four' dimensions, resulting in a conceptualisation of space as an interlaced object. In my view, what is really important is this particular treatment of 'non'-objects, like space or gravity, which are (re)presented *as* objects. (I will speak more about this later on.) This is also an essential point in my work. In this way, we can relate to, and experience these 'non'-objects (that make up the materiality of our lives) in a new way through their objective universality. But to continue this historical perspective, let us now consider the representatives of the 'New Dance' in America.

In particular, I consider myself to have a close affinity with the work of Yvonne Rainer, especially in terms of similar methodologies: her motivation to use the body as an object for example, 'to be picked up and carried around *as if* an object' (Golberg,1988, 143) represents a continuation of the idea that objects and bodies can be performatively interchangeable. Her desire to present the body in such way that it functions almost like a kind of sculpture, and to therefore stimulate its materiality, is important to me. But mostly, my interest lies in Rainer's attempt to *maximize* the performative conditions in which the body can be perceived as an object[9]. The subject-object quality of a body – the focal point in my choreographic work – has, in this sense, also a certain relation to the minimalist art of 1960's and 1970's New York. This is in addition to the visual artists that influenced choreographers from the NYU dance scene (Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, etc. whose relation to certain of my works I will elaborate in Chapter Three), along with those who introduced the so-called 'happenings' (like Allen

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[8] Ibid. In 1927 Schlemmer and his students gave a lecture-demonstration titled 'Dance in Space' demonstrating Schlemmer's theory of how his notion of 'felt volume' or the 'sensation of the space' evolves from the relationship between the 'geometry of the plane' and the 'stereometry of the space'.

[9] The conclusion of studying the 'body as an object' in Yvonne Rainer's work has made me realize that there are quite different outcomes in my own work. Rumsey Burt writes that Yvonne Rainer's denunciations of 'treating the body as object' has been in one way a demonstration of a desire to 'reclaim embodied agency from dualistic ways of thinking that posit a mind/body split' (Burt, 2006, 15–16). I would definitely like to emphasize this aspect as well as the orientation that Rainer formulated in the following words: 'If my rage at the impoverishment of ideas, narcissism, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing can be considered puritan moralizing, it is also true that I love the body – its actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality' (Rainer, 1974, 69) also cited in Burt (2006, 16).

Kaprow) to the art-world of the time. Influences here include the idea that 'happenings' were works that not only opened up questions of *where* performance could, be placed, but also questions about the *choices* that were therefore initiated. The site-specificity of the space or a location in which an event occurred became part of its effect. The following quote by André Lepecki illuminates much in this context:

> In her essay on minimalism in dance, written in 1966, [Yvonne] Rainer proposed that the dancer should: 'be moved by some thing, rather than by oneself'. Forti placed an oscillating plank in the middle of the gallery and had Morris and Rainer climb on it and try to find their balance. In Forti's *Slant Board* (1961), 'the inclined plane' also 'structured the actions. Recent choreography has similarly turned its attention towards objects and things as the main activators and protagonists of dancers. It is as if organic and the inorganic have re-found a possibility for intimate partnering. In this partnering, things reveal their subjectivity, while humans reveal their thingness, to the point where it become hard to say who moves whom, who choreographs whom, and whom is choreographed by whom. (Lepecki, 2010, 157).

1.2   Objects in My Work: '*Discipline as a Condition of Freedom*'

The perspectives of aesthetic negativity (as elaborated in the introduction) rest on earlier notions of aesthetic theory, such as the negative approach or the necessary refusal of determined knowledge (as specified by Kant) and, in Adorno's case, the determinate refusal of identitarian thinking. From the literary and semiotic field, and its beginnings a century ago, we receive one of the first theoretical approaches that aim to gain insight into the (ultimately modernist) 'techniques' or operations that force the 'estrangement' of 'automatic' meaning. Victor Shklovsky proposed this estrangement or 'defamiliarization of meanings' as an idiomatic procedure in literary art, which suggested that the word and its meaning depart from each other, or that the two form a kind of alienation from each other. One of the insights of such early literary theory was that art and poetry constitute 'thinking in images', which suggests that meaning becomes embodied imaginatively in another entity, be it in a word, in an object, like a stone, or in a movement, (it matters little): 'An image is not a permanent referent for those mutable complexities of life which are revealed through it; its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object. It creates a 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it' (Shklovsky, 1988, 24).

With this insight comes a natural way to analyze one of my early works, which was produced in the Slovene National Opera/Ballet Ljubljana, and was entitled *Discipline as a Condition of Freedom* (1996). This work chose to take the interior of a traditional theatre, with its classical interior design (stage, boxes, galleries, orchestra pit, and so on), as the 'Object' of the work. I would venture to say that the performance thought through and utilized this classical theatre architecture as a place or a site in a similar manner to the aforementioned performances in the late 1950s and 60s, which dealt with notions of site and site-specificity. What was at stake in the case of this performance was transforming the interior shell of the classical design, with all its attendant layers of meaning, into a large performative object in its own right, amplifying its architecture to the level of a set. The procedure for amplifying the spatial characteristics of an existing space in order for it to be recognized and seen (or re-seen as such) is something that I continued to use in my later performances, such as *Koncept of the Koncept* (2004), *Brothers Karamazov,volumes 1 and 2* (2007, 2008), *Point-less* (2010) and *Room&Road – Remake* (2014).

Site-specificity principles, implemented into theatre buildings, galleries and other spaces usually used for presenting culturally 'iconic' productions (that is to say spaces that are usually not considered as sites), represents to me an analogous procedure to that of Shklovsky's literary transformations. To clarify: as words suffer diachronic shifts in their significations, additional epithets, such as poetic adjectives, take on the role of recovering the 'lost' meanings and thus act as a kind of 'resurrection' of the lost word. What the epithets do is amplify or reactualize the same meaning which is etymologically present in the word, but which has become blurred and lost as a result of diachronic sliding. Consider, for example, the term 'a golden sun'. In some Slavic languages the word 'sun' here etymologically implied the characteristic of a golden colour, and now the adjective resurrects this lost meaning of it. What I do in my pieces is somehow amplify the meaning of a 'theatrical theatron' or a 'configured space', by using the possibility of manipulating the 'adjectiveness' of it in all kinds of possible ways.

In *Discipline as a Condition of Freedom*, the theatrical horizon of the stage, covered with around a thousand light bulbs geometrically distributed on the set, was, in a circular way, connected with the roundness of the auditorium, boxes and galleries. This amplification happened via a two-fold inner circle in the theatre, shared between the dancers on the stage and the public seated in the auditorium, boxes and galleries. Flashlights were fixed on the structure that supports the boxes and galleries and thus unified this space with the inner theatre site, along with the stage lighting. The result was a situation in which the object being looked at (the performance) and the subject watching it (the spectator) involve themselves in a reciprocal

theatrical game. Above the orchestra pit, in the position which is usually occupied by an orchestra conductor, a 'ballerina-automaton' was repetitively executing serial turns and 'conducting' the lighting changes and projections, creating a tension between the stage and the auditorium, and creating a drama involving how the 'seeing' and the 'seen' were taking part: an intersubjective theatrical situation. The 'ballerina-automaton' was made of a turntable with lots of analogue contacts, through which the lighting exchange managed to produce a situation in which the inter-dependence of the performance and the public was cast in the main role of 'her as conductor' (see: fig. 4-6, *Discipline as a Condition of Freedom*, 1996, p. 35).
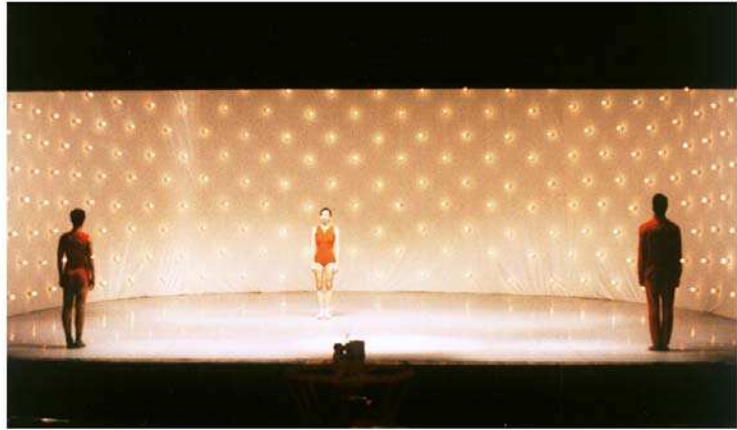
Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Discipline as a Condition of Freedom, 1996
Photo: Bojan Brecelj

By questioning the cultural position and function of an institution such as the Slovene National Opera and its Ballet, and reflecting on its suppressed and un-problematized relation to modernity and contemporaneity, the choreography explored the questions of 'freedom' and 'discipline'. With regards to the movement material, the anatomical principles of the canonic *'point'* technique, usually inscribed into a dancer's body to an almost obsessive extent, was used (one could claim the more perfect the dancer's execution of the choreography, the more objectified it becomes in the dancer's and spectator's perception; and that opens for both of them the question of 'freedom'). The idea was, amongst all this, to make all this unwieldy 'machinery' 'resonate the true 'sublime love' that can only emerge against the background of an external contractual, symbolic exchange institutionally mediated. It is discipline that produces the excess – love as freedom'.[10]

Discipline as a Condition of Freedom 'objectified' its fundamental choreographic elements in order for them to regain their (lost) visibility and, at the same time, introduced these more contemporaneous topics of 'discipline' and 'freedom'. At the same time, I would like to stress some other aspects of what was initiated by the work: a sense of distance produced by objectification in relation to (1) the materiality (organic) of the spatial endowments, (2) choreographic approaches to dance that (re)compose abstracted ballet vocabulary and syntax (3) the mental/perceptual space that opens and represents a situation that can be connected with the characteristics of installation art. The latter is something that has been one of my focal points ever since.

The following performances and examples will deal with objectification on a smaller scale than via the complete ideational transformation of a theatre space. In opposition to the totality of *Discipline*, which due to the scale of the production somehow had a tendency to unify the objectiveness of the performance almost to the extent of becoming something that Wagner famously called *Gesamtkunstwerk* or Walter Gropius 'a total theatre' (for me both concepts instantly generate associations with an object) I would think of the situations for my next performances more as involving 'parallel' bodies, an extra body/thing of a geometrical or formal nature placed next to a dancer's body. This was done to project, research, and evoke their inter-exchangeability.

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[10] The title of the performance was also the title of a book by the Slovenian psychoanalyst Renata Salecl, who also wrote the programme materials (Salecl 1991).

2 RECOMBINATION

In this chapter, the aesthetic strategy of recombination will be viewed as a tool or method to achieve a certain type of aesthetic 'effect'. This effect will be twofold; firstly in a semiotic sense and secondly in a phenomenological sense, a sense arrived at via Husserl's precise clarifications of spatial-kinaesthetic awareness and his related notions of intersubjective exchange. Regarding the semiotic sense, I will first present recombination as a kind of negator. In the following sections, I will continue with some other clarifications on recombination, explaining its procedures in the making of movement material, which will be seen to relate to aspects of the theory of *mimesis* as it can be found in Adorno. The chapter is divided as follows into sections: recombination as a 'negator' of automatic understanding; the recombination of bodies and the subsequent generation of movement material; movement(s) between two 'bodies'; recombination and mimesis; recombination with 'not-yet' objects.

2.1   Recombination as a 'Negator'

To explain precisely the way in which recombination becomes a 'negator' of prior 'automatic' meaning – as it relates to semiotics (the stable binding of signifier and signified) – it is instructive to borrow some examples from literary art, only insofar as these examples can be generalized to other domains, such as the domain of choreography. What in literature we call the rules of grammar are certain types of precise codifications derived from intersubjectively understood language. Infraction of these rules of grammar would then mean a certain disobedience to these codified rules; the ignoring, denying, or refusing of them. In the same sense, performative materials, objects, gestures, and movements can, in a similar sense, become infracted from their logical, codified qualities, their codified status or purpose (the gesture, movement, object, colour, etc. would 'infract' some of its own recognized, codified, or solidified meanings)[11]. Infraction is an example of what counts as recombination:

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[11] Regarding this point it would perhaps be useful to introduce the following observation by Roger Copeland, which gives us an insight into Cunningham's use of the body (or of the separate parts of the body): 'Cunningham probably comes as close as anyone ever will to embodying this principle of self-contradiction in movement. There's something positively Dostoyevskian to Cunningham's seemingly perverse refusal to "go with the flow." It's as if he had translated into movement the false starts and self-interruptions of Dostoyevsky's narrator in *Notes From Underground*. Perhaps, paradoxically, one result of

'The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged' (Shklovsky, 1988, 20).

We can say that the 'automatic' understanding of a word, sentence, movement, or gesture is always subordinated to some law: some condition of negation or suspension is required in order not to get tied into this direct codification, something that would release instead its other potentialities. This is what Christoph Menke terms 'infraction'. Let me use an example from one of Adorno's first analyses on literature, namely the *Notes on Kafka* (Adorno, 1981a, 243-71), where Menke's positing of a kind of negative logic goes like this: 'Each sentence is literal and each signifies. The two moments are not merged, as the symbol would have it, but yawn apart and out of the abyss between them blinds the glaring ray of fascination' (Menke, 1999, 17).[12] Here, the literal quality in a sentence doesn't match the meaning of the same sentence. In Menke's understanding, the term literal means aesthetic understanding pitted against symbolic understanding, which applies, no doubt, to the literary field as well any other field of art, including movement, choreography, performance, and dance:

[The literal] is thus a predicate that describes the aesthetically experienced status of the text in opposition to that status it gains in the process of symbolic interpretation. Experience and preservation of literalness become in this way criteria of negatively conceived aesthetic experience. To perceive texts aesthetically is to remain true to their letters (ibid).

In Kafka's literature, for example, the text seems to rest on moments when the distance between a word and its automatic signification evaporates and the word becomes a [literal] *thing*. And there is always a certain *recombination* in this procedure, as in the celebrated example, whereby Gregor Samsa 'becomes' a beetle. And the same works of course for movement, gesture and its space: when 'recombining' a dancer's body or movement with the floor's surface, for example, an 'incomprehensible' movement of the body appears. The body denies and

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this refusal to follow the flow is a greater sense of personal freedom (an idea that Dostoyevsky's narrator would immediately recognize and endorse)' (Copeland, 2004, 97)

[12] The sentence in question is from 'Notes on Kafka', where Adorno takes Kafka's story *The Householders Concern* (written before 1919) as an example of a negative ideation.

contradicts its usual form and function. The interesting part in the above though is: 'the word that is becoming the thing' – what we see here is (in a pure form) the demand for an exchange between materials, which activates the process of negation between two materials or two entities. We need to persist with this determinately estranged-exchanged embodiment and continue practicing it in order to establish 'the literacy of the word', or in this case, the literacy of movement, choreography, or performance. Let us take some examples of this, both from my own work, and also from a few other contemporary choreographers.

I Would Have Been a Palm Tree (2010); *O kvadrat* (2002)

To begin with, the enactment of the determinate refusal in the case of this work refers to certain codified 'ideals' relating to the stage itself, and the representations of space it has afforded within contemporary dance. Where, for example, in the work of Merce Cunningham, the 'centre' of the space is defined as wherever the dancer is moving now,[13] in this piece the notion of 'centre' is entirely collapsed to one point only. This spatial operation of negation or refusal of absolutely all space but the central point (and whatever can be reached from there) coincides with the moment we saw previously when 'a word becomes the thing' (the dancer becomes, in this case a palm tree, an arbitrary object (see: fig. 7 & 8, *I would've Been a Palm Tree*, 2010, p. 40).

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[13] Merce Cunningham has explained in an interview the process that brought about his views on spatiality in the following way: 'I used to be told that you see the centre of space as the most important: that it was the centre of interest. But in many modern paintings this was not the case and the sense of space was different. So I decided to open up the space to consider it equal, and any place, occupied or not, just as important as any other. In such a context you don't have to refer to a precise point in space. And when I happened to read that sentence of Albert Einstein's: 'There are no fixed points in space', I thought, indeed, if there are no fixed points, then every point is equally interesting and equally changing' (See: Cunnigham & Lesschaeve, 2010, 17-18).

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

I Would've Been a Palm Tree, 2010

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

O Quadrate, 2002

The demand for an inter-exchange between/within what counts as a 'body' continues in my work in order to separate, to tear apart the objective and subjective and to 'exchange the objective/subjective core of the dancers with the other object/subject'.[14] The refusal of the self, a kind of ego-abnegation, has to occur in the realization of this demand. This demand either pulls together or separates movement and form. Neither can predominate decisively over the other in the exchange and recombination processes, so that, as a consequence, two objects or/and two subjects are captured constantly, becoming fused, confused and interrelated to one another: 'Without being reducible to one side or the other, it is the relation itself that is a process of becoming (Adorno, 2004, 235).

The 'literalness' in choreography could then be defined as a result of how these relations between form and movement are *structured*: how structuring between absolutely *all* elements of performance is currently coming into being, and, subsequently, what this structured movement *does*, how it is shared experientially by spectators. Or to clarify this from another angle: 'Experience and preservation of literalness become in this way criteria of negatively conceived aesthetic experience. To perceive texts aesthetically is to remain true to their letters' (Menke, 1999, 17).[15] And let us say that the same is true for movement and choreography.

As another example, let us take the performance *O kvadrat*. An object in the shape of a white square (2.5m x 2.5m) was constructed from several kilometres of elastic, woven around it as its surface. The construction formed an 'object' that confined the dancer to a certain defined space, what we might call 'her space'. Then, via movements of the body and muscles combined with the almost endless possibility of the quadratic elasticity of the lines, we can construct opportunities for reshaping the geometry and elasticity of the space itself. A subsequent

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[14] In a chapter of *Toward a Theory of the Artwork*,, Adorno states that the artwork is a process essentially in relation to its whole and parts. The demand to create an exchange between two objects/subjects is enacted precisely in order to separate what seem to be the parts of the whole (both subjective and objective). Adorno does not consider them solely to be 'parts of the whole' but centers of energy that strain towards the whole on the basis of the necessity inherent to them. When switching, the centres of energy 'get caught' in the process of straining towards a different wholeness, i.e. not their own, and thus the process is activated (Adorno, 2004, 235).

[15] The sentence in question is from *Notes on Kafka* where Adorno takes Kafka's story *The Householders Concern* as an example of a negative ideation.

'interchanging' then took place: the square, its form, and its elastic lines 'became' the muscles of the dancer and the dancer's body the 'muscles' of the space – of the space itself! Adjacent to the primary dancer's space, entangled in its elastic coordinates, is another woman moving; her choreography was, however (as she was a bodybuilder, like 'Miss Universe 2002'), a choreography of the muscles confined solely within her own body-space: for example, there was a section where the biceps were 'in duet' with the quadriceps, and there was a 'waltzing' with the abdominals. Each confined to their own space, the dancer in her white square and the bodybuilder 'in' her own body, a certain parallel existence of two spaces or existences was realized, enhancing the entire situation as a kind of interchanging and re-experiencing of space. With humble reference to Malevich's white square, this work was also reminiscent of Schlemmer's method of the materialization or objectification of space and its mapping onto the concrete body (and vice versa) (see fig. 9 & 10, *O Quadrate, 2002*, p. 40).

Among the most remarkable contemporary choreographers are the group Peeping Tom.[16] From the point of view of the 'word becoming a thing' or perhaps of a recombination involved in that process, the work they produce is perhaps a perfect example of an aesthetic experience furnished with both a semiotic and a phenomenological understanding: The body of a dancer 'is' or 'becomes' an object such as a sofa, and as literally as possible. The extreme movement, skill and capacity of the dancers realize this demand, and then the body becomes an open window, swinging in a window frame. In the next second, the body *is* a chair, and then next a body *sitting on* the chair. The very clear mixture of these two alternative viewpoints succeeds in presenting an extreme and rarely seen juxtaposition, reached via an interchange of, we might say, the raw materiality of a chair and of a body using this chair.

At this point it is perhaps necessary to refer back to the definition by Menke given in the Introduction, which provides the fundamental approach for clarifying the aesthetically negative aspects of my work (section 0.1) as they could be seen from a semiotic or semantic point of view. In this definition Menke claims that aesthetic autonomy is achieved via 'processural enactment' of this vacillation or oscillation of a signifier between two poles – that of meaning and that of material. As a result of this vacillation that constantly recombines the object and the subject in different ways, a firm link between the signifiers and the signified may not be for

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[16] Gabriela Carizzo founded the Brussels based collective *Peeping Tom* in 2000 together with Franck Chartier. Particularly, I would like to highlight here their later works titled *32, Rue Vandenbranden* (2009), and *A Louer* (2012).

med. Recombination 'launches' the two signifiers to be in a constant vacillation above and between 'their materials'. Menke (1999, 54-60) explains this 'state' as a 'self-subversion or sequential deferral of the subject's attempts at signifier formation'. The works we have referred to above may offer examples of the three different ways in which this deferral manifests itself:

a) The first relates to material entering a state of 'potentiality', which may be summarised as follows: both the dancer and the object can simultaneously be perceived as both 'lived body' and as 'object';

b) Menke envisages the second manifestation of deferral 'as a disruption of the contexts that usually provide criteria for settling non-aesthetic disruptions of meaning'. In our case the recombination processes disrupt this initial relation, or how a dancer and an object relate to each other. In the case of the dancer and the palm tree for example, we might say that the relation disappears as 'one becomes the other' and vice versa: the initial context is deconstructed (see fig. 7 & 8);

c) The third manifestation of deferral, Menke claims, is experienced as a 'quotation' of non-aesthetic contextual assumptions, which result in the contextual assumptions becoming ambiguous. In our case, we can reinterpret this as a situation whereby three dancers, with their bodies, limbs, thoughts, what we can call their 'lived materials', recombine themselves as one new body; or 'as' gravity itself. We may say that the context they initially belong to (either 'as' gravity or as a body) becomes ambiguous in the sense that neither alternative can be seen as definitive. The situation is perceived as a state between two or more potential viewpoints, in which a context is constructed.

2.2   Recombination in the Body Itself

In the earlier part of this chapter, I spoke of recombination as a negator and as a producer of aesthetic deferral or defamiliarization. In this section, I will take a closer look at the method of the recombination of the body with or within itself. Let us reprise once more the objective side in choreographing. There is no doubt that, in the first place, the dancer has to regard her/his own body *as an object* whenever he/she sets out to do anything choreographic. So, if there is one object already involved (that is, the body of the dancer), there is often a way of proceeding via the addition of another external viewpoint or external object.[17] The objectivity of the body,

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[17] As I have already mentioned earlier, this approach can be seen to be similar to the work of William Forsythe as he himself explained in his essay *Choreographing objects* (Forsythe, 2011, ch. 7). The essay

which is the dancer's own starting point, is thus surely the simplest argument for taking another object with which to form relations or indeed confrontations. The confrontation of the dancer with her own body seen 'as object', coupled with a resulting confrontation with another external object, is therefore the main vehicle in my movement research. Looking back once again to Schlemmer, we can take his idea that objects exist, and are there for the creation of movement, to lay down both a route and an obstacle to redirect the impulses that the body could otherwise follow.

Let us first look at 'recombining' the dancer's body for the purposes of the movement generation by using the image of one's own body as object. This can be effectuated either through a process of recombination between the functional parts of several dancers/bodies or within one body itself. We want to take apart the normal 'body schema' which a mover/dancer uses habitually (interconnections between the torso, arms, head legs feet etc.). Instead, each functional part of the body (an arm, leg, head, etc.) can be treated as an entity in itself, or as a particular 'whole', representing the entirety of the dancer's movement (e.g. 'the leg becomes me', or 'the arm become the head').[18] The purpose here would be to find new ways to

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deals with a similar engagement with working and studying the relation between objects and the body.

[18] Roger Copland discusses Cunningham's principle of the 'centre', according to which every dancer, wherever he or she is in a space or in a group 'works towards being highly isolated' – each being a soloist at the same time as the other - and this principle goes a step further in the sense that 'every part of the body was treated in its entirety - as a soloist as well.' The leg, arm, head or torso often move in opposition or are re-combined by chance with each other (Copland & Cunningham, 2004, 120).

The body parts in my work don't tend to move towards emancipation in the same sense as they do in Cunningham's methods; they lean more towards dismantling, or undoing the body, either through proposing that 'the leg, for example, takes on the role of the head' or 'the arm switches places with the foot', or, in a raw, anatomical sense, the arm can also 'behave as the entire body'. The 'usual' coordination of the body is done for more than just isolation and emancipation, and is perhaps genuinely looking for disintegration – dismantling of the body in order to reconfigure or re-coordinate itself into estranged and sometimes complicated movements. However, the aim of enacting such a procedure of dismantling the body is there for the same reason: Shklovsky thought that it was necessary to remove the automatism of perception, to increase the difficulty and length of perception (Shklovsky, 1988, 20). Similarly Copeland states that: 'in Cunningham's work the interval between stimulus and response has been acknowledged and intensified, not ignored or diminished' in order to reduce or refuse the' automatic' responses. Copeland also notes that in Brecht's theory (and in Cunningham's practice) the ultimate consequence of this separation of elements is to increase the spectator's perceptive freedom (See:

recombine ourselves, as is the case in the piece *Telborg* (1999), where one body was constantly made out of the conjunction of three separate bodies. The effect here was to produce a set of recombined or re-coordinated movement principles, which serve in general to overcome the usual hierarchy of the body as we know it and as we often use it, in dance, in improvisation and in life.

In relation to this, we can form a comparison with contemporary choreographer Xavier Le Roi. The particular choreographic approach to the body that he uses has been described as 'anagrammatic, because of the way the dancer plays with its parts, displacing them as in an anagram' (Righi, 2010, 9). Righi explains that 'The definition is suitable, since Le Roy himself says that he has been committed for a long time to work on fragmentation, deconstruction and reconstruction in order to explore the constraints derived from his own body' (ibid). As an example of negation as a postulate for aesthetic negativity, another rather successful piece comes to mind: a solo dance titled *The Invalid* (2009).[19] The solo was conceived in the following way: the dancer began with a very regular and rather simple combination of movements that evolved on stage. After presenting the sequence once or twice he paused, took strong black scotch tape and fixed the lower part of his right arm to the upper part. He immobilized it, not quite as in a sling formation, but in such a way that after immobilising it he could only continue to use the arm from the elbow up. He then repeated-remade the same movement sequence, altering it in a way such that the new reduced body (arm) would permit him to complete it. The choreography then started to transform, and became immediately more interesting. After going through the sequence a couple of times with this 'shortened' arm, he paused and fixed his left arm with the tape in the same fashion, and then continued to perform the movement sequence with both arms strapped up. Almost needless to say, the choreography became even more intriguing at this point, due to the increased restriction. He then proceeded to tape up his legs (by fixing the lower leg to the thigh), first the right and then the left, and each time he performed the adapted movement sequence again. At the conclusion of the piece the sequence was performed with only the knees and elbows 'free'. The greater the restriction, the more highly charged and enigmatic the sequence became. The special quality of the performance perhaps stemmed from this increasing process of restraint slowly taking place in front of our eyes.

Copeland & Cunningham, 2004, 119-120).

[19] A solo piece entitled *The Invalid* (2008-9) was created by the Slovenian group *Via Negativa* together with performer Primož Bizjak.

2.3   Recombination between Two Bodies

At this point, and before directly elaborating on the recombination *between* two bodies, I will introduce certain aspects of Husserl's philosophy, which is oriented toward by now familiar questions of the body as subject/object and its kinaesthetic function. Husserl emphasizes how our very perception is constituted by our movements, through the correlation of our kinaesthetic and tactile senses with our vision. With Husserl, we investigate movement from a phenomenological point of view – via the kinaesthetic – which additionally involves understanding the ways in which our consciousness is constituted. We experience the other through our own kinaesthetic experience of ourselves:

> 'My body is given to me both visually and tactually in terms of body as object – as a volitional interiority, a body as lived. And it is precisely this dual experience Husserl claims it makes this intersubjective empathy possible. One reason why I am able to recognize and non-inferentially experience other is that the experience of my own body has this remarkable play between ipseity and alterity characterizing double sensation' (Zahavi, 2003, 104)

Or, in other words, the appearance of another's movement is 'mapped' onto our own motor capacities, and this makes intersubjective empathy possible.[20] In Husserl's terminology, this has

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[20] In her essay *Movement's Contagion: the Kinaesthetic Impact in Performance* Susan Leigh Foster (2008) provides a rather excellent account of 'kinaesthesia's path' historically, from Tomas Brown's observation (in 1820) that our muscular system is an 'organ of sense' to the more contemporary findings in J. J. Gibson's *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979) in which he defines perception as a highly complex and active project of extracting information from the environment and the 'perceiving of other and self'. This is characterized as an ongoing duet between the perceiver and his surroundings in which both are equally active. Gibson assumes that the relationship of the eye, and the muscles that govern it with the vestibular system connected to the eye, can always give us a precise account of our surroundings. Foster also remarks that Gibson's findings also point in the direction of the so-called 'mirror neurons' (work done by Berthoz, Gallese and others, in the early 90's). The mirror-neuron theory depends on the discovery that special neurons in our cortex 'fire when performing a movement and fire in the exact same way when observing the movement being performed'. We can also notice here that the 'mapping' of an external movement onto our motor system is enabled via a neurological basis that is rooted in our kinaesthetic ability, which plays a central role in orienting and organizing all of our senses (See: Foster, 2008, 46-59).

been termed 'pairing' [*paarung*], an analogue of what in dance scholarship tends to be referred to as 'kinaesthetic empathy'.[21] And the centrality of kinaesthesia to dance is made clear by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone: 'Kinaesthesia is in turn a sensory modality basic to the art of choreography and the art of dancing. An important fact attaches to this truth. Kinaesthetic experience is not a matter of sensations, but a matter precisely of dynamics' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 395).

Let us now consider techniques of recombination between two bodies. In contemporary dance practice, contact improvisation is known to have developed a kind of 'technique of duets'; a 'pure' physical-perceptual-conscious study of two bodies and how they relate and interact with each other. When two dancers are engaged in contact improvisation, it means there is kind of 'flow' between them, through the transmission of information from one to the other. There is an 'understanding' of the information given by the other, an 'interpreting' of their physicality, dynamics and intention, which in turn generates the next movement. In duets of *objects* and dancers, one dancer is a constant choreographic determinant for the other, or an object is a constant choreographic determinant for the dancer, and vice versa. Contact improvisation is therefore a metaphor for the whole topic of inter-exchangeability between two performative subjects/objects. Its procedure describes, looking from the point of view of aesthetic negativity, possibilities of movement that appear through the partial negation of that which is 'one's own', and from both viewpoints: 'What Adorno calls the *Vorrang des Objekts*, its primacy in relation to subject, this does not mean that the subject is dispensable. On the contrary, it is only a strong subjectivity that is able to free from pre-formed, already-given representations in the confrontation of the 'non-I'. Listening is more difficult, it requires more force, than saying', (Durao, 2008, 15). And, in a phenomenological sense, much of the work that uses recombination for the formation of new movement material utilises the precise idea of the 'two-foldedness' of tactile-kinaesthetic experience that Sheets-Johnstone elaborates throughout her work on the phenomenology of movement.[22] In contemporary dance, this also means practicing a kind of 'contact improvisation', whether with objects or with other dancers, in order to

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[21] See: Foster, 2008; Parviainen, 1998.

[22] Sheets-Johnstone explains the two-part 'processing' of movement in the following way: 'the imaginative space of dance that is concerned merely with the mental image - or picture of the body or the body in movement is one 'resource'- while the other resource is 'the role of the body schema' through which we apprehend the 'moving spatial presence' of our bodies in relation to itself and to others' (Sheets-Jonstone, 1979, 112). See also (Sheets-Jonstone, 1979, chs IX & X).

construct new movement, sometimes even exclusively working on movements' innate, intrinsic capacities.

One such contemporary art practice, which is apposite here, is the work of the 'tandem' comprising Marie Cool and Fabio Balducci. Their performances often form part of art exhibitions in galleries as well as at performing festivals 'Marie Cool as someone having a background in dance, usually performs the works, which are choreographed in a specific relation to geometric object she uses in her performance. She develops a way of moving with objects that allows the form, rhythm and the dynamics of the object in question to 'flow' in dependence with her own dance and movement. For example, in the work *Untitled* (2004) She manipulates a two metre-long string which initially rests on a table behind which she is seated. Using movements of her hand she makes the string 'mime' the kinetics of this same hand, as well as that of the table on which the string is initially placed. The 'choreography' that the string 'performs' mimes the kinesis of the hand, or of the table's surface, as well as manifesting its own kinetic potential as a length of string. This enigmatic choreography is thus shaped by the kinetic and dynamic qualities of the materials it incorporates. Regarding the work of Cool and Balducci, Emma Cocker writes:

'Knowing what something is not is not the same as knowing what something is', giving a lucid interpretation to what is at stake in Adorno's negative aesthetic theory: 'Rejection of one possible set of meanings might then operate in the space before other meanings have begun to fully form, in the nascent state before something can be wholly or coherently declared' (Cocker 2008, 18).

This statement, and the choreography it describes, serves as a useful bridge to the topic that will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.4   Recombination and Mimesis

In this section, I will consider movement formation via recombination in the light of Adorno's ideas of *mimesis*. When considering what happens in my work via the process of recombination, when the movements are created via an exchange of numerous inter-exchangeable qualities, that is when one object or subject (to use the already known terms) is appropriating from the other, we could call this an aspect of mimesis – or the capability we have, according to Adorno, for imitation or for reproducing 'the curve of motion of the

represented' (Adorno, 1984a, 177). But let us first return to a few more insights on how movement negatively produces itself via recombination. Recombination within the dancer's body, or in dialogue with other formal objects, progresses through visualization, on the one hand, through imagining (via verbal instructions and images) and, on the other, through a direct contact of two bodies; through a direct inter-experience (sometimes called manipulation) of the object and the dancer. Therefore, a verbal suggestion, when added, 'doubles' the concrete encounter, in order to find rather complex and therefore perhaps also quite peculiar possibilities for new movement. The mimetic procedure here – the one Adorno sees as the capacity for imitation of the other – operates on two levels: on the level of direct tactile sensation and on the level of mental imagery. The first is there in order to gain what is instinctive (the very primal experience of the material and form of the object), and the second (which tends to dominate) is the one via which imagination, intentions and ideas already became involved.

The imaginative suggestions and tasks for exchanging can be anything as long as they offer/propose a certain concreteness that can be depicted: for example, taking one part of the body and keeping it inside the given object, concretely or imaginatively, or moving over the floor while keeping one foot buried always somewhere deep inside the floor, etc. Suggestion, being either very formal and/or extremely strange, at the same time aims to catch/appropriate the quality of *corporality* in movement. Or to say it in other words a kind of quality that is gained when something becomes embodied, as, for example, fluidity can be embodied instead of suggested. The aim is for a kind of corporality that comes from the object. And on the other hand, movements created for the objects aim at non-corporality in order to subjectify the object. The mimetic procedure that is obviously at work here offers this two-level effect: first, there is a direct-tactile sensation or experience of the object, responding to it via the instinctive spatial quality inherent or intrinsic to our movement, and then its combinations with the mental-visual imagery of recombining; of experiencing oneself via other objects or bodies in our surroundings. In this way, we hope to gain complexities for new movement, and perhaps some extra inner differentiations between the conceptual and the non-conceptual: In Adorno's thought this particular ability of mimesis becomes associated with the 'non-conceptual', in order to 'represent' the idea of a certain kind of non instrumental engagement with the things, beings and phenomena surrounding us. In this attempt to correspond to certain kind of coupling or reciprocation it becomes something dialectically opposed to the faculty of reason.

In the 'duets' generated in this double way, the verbal suggestions that effect images should be very concrete, but should also aim to be transgressive: like the injunction to 'keep your space

only inside the other dancer's space- always in the 'inner space' of the other dancer'. Such a proposal was, for example, suggested in the performance *Telborg* (1999), where one body took on the 'role' of gravity and absorbed three bodies into one: out of the three bodies present, the dancers were 'making' one new body. Thus, it becomes possible to work with gravity, through dismantling and recombining three dancers (their bodies) into one, quite differently from the usual mechanisms. The work becomes concrete in a different, objective way and the movement generated automatically loses its relationship with the normative aspects of gravity.

In these types of procedure, negation happens almost 'by default' and the dancers become completely 'free' in dealing with this otherwise totally restricting condition. As there is a strong need for an inner 'projection' of such a 'reality', the movement becomes highly intense and both highly formed and deformed at the same time. One can also not rely on such an intention or aim to be resolved; therefore movement is almost like a permanent state of emergency, almost a pure vacillation between two forms, spaces composing, decomposing, (de)materializing – a state of emergency that 'is', perhaps, a version of 'performative' gravity.[23] So, the quality of concreteness inherent in such ways and suggestions leaves a trace – the transformed movement has a touch of concreteness of the 'imagined'. It is the keeping of the trace of concreteness that originates from objects, materials, or their space which is important, and both the dancer's movements and the objects transpose the qualitative and dynamic forces between each other, while instinctively denying their own. 'In the process of mimetic (re)enactment, we reach behind the already formed figures of meaning back to the dynamics, force, and energy of their formation' (Menke, 1991, 97-98).

Jonathan Owen Clark also suggests an extension to the idea of mimetic re-enactment and/or 'kinaesthetic empathy' between bodies that are 'paired': 'in dance and in place of the usual twofoldedness of the kinaesthetic feeling and perception of our own body, we become aware of a certain three-foldedness. The introduction of another body (or bodies) into our perceptual field triangulates the relationship we have with our own bodies' (Clark, 2013, 26-27). In this way, as Clark explains, we can see the triangulation 'responsible' for the phenomenological effects of perceiving dance: dance seems to be a kind of extension and simultaneously a kind of heightening of the kinesthetic relationship we have to ourselves: Namely there is a much greater determination involved in perceiving the body of another visually, than in the way we are able to perceive our own bodies or ourselves. For example, we can never see our own backs, which

become 'visible' to us only through seeing-perceiving somebody else's back. And there is another phenomenological effect, which also can result from such triangularity. According to Clark it is 'by perceiving the body of another, we become aware, and no more so in the case of dance, of the potential extension of the repertoire of kinetic "I cans"' (ibid, 27) which seems to be a particularly intriguing effect dance and movement has on its spectators.

Some of the best known moments in the work of Pina Bausch can help clarify how often the objectivity or object-ness of the human body can 'speak' in this way. Her work is a particularly effective or striking example of how this triangulation or three-fold experience of perceiving or encountering one body through another manifests itself .One of many exquisite moments in her works which can be seen as involving such extreme alienations from the body as a subject and its manifestation as an 'object-is'. For example, there is a memorable scene in the piece *Vollmond*, *(*2006) where the female performer throws herself through the arms of her male partner in the manner of a basketball being thrown through or into a basket. She falls head first, and only in the very last instant before crashing to the floor do the arms through which she throws herself catch her. In another example, a similar fragment is captured; in the short film *The Fall Dance* (2013). Here again the female dancer falls to the floor in the same manner as a vase would fall over the edge of the table if disturbed slightly. This effect is always breathtaking, and the dancers body here can be seen as nothing more clearly than 'as' an object, one that is in the hands of a manipulator.

2.5   Recombination With 'Not Yet' Objects

Let us continue a while longer with recombination issues, and more precisely, with a conception of objects in terms of what are called *affordances*. Affordances, as defined by James Gibson,[24] clarify for our purposes, the term *choreographic objects* as those objects that create new possibilities for action, thinking and movement. In our case, these objects are intended to

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[24] For Gibson (1997) affordances are relationships - they are relational - they are a part of nature and the surroundings. In a more philosophical text, Gibson explains that an affordance is cutting 'across the dichotomy of the subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, and yet neither' (Gibson, 1979, 129). On the same page he continues: 'an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like.' (129). Gibson also claims that affordances are not always something that can be seen and that phenomenal contents probably always, or at least partially, consist of affordances.

extend to 'non-physical' objects like gravity (see the last section). To take this 'something' within the constellation of performance as an 'object' and engage with it as a main dialogue is to become aware of it. I believe that it is important to emphasize it this way; as both *an* object and a dialogue *with* an object. In the work of William Forsythe, similar affordances are often used: sometimes these are physical objects, or at other times, simple geometric paradigms – a line, a curve, or a spiral, for example. In my own works, even if I try to use a notion as an affordance (as in the case, like Forsythe, in using geometric shapes such as the ellipse), I would always, as a rule, 'realize' it as a real, concrete object. In this way, I try to look at a larger picture, where 'gravity', for example, becomes a variable quantity. In some other 'space', the value of gravity could change and be something different from what we normally experience; we could even contemplate its absence. To project gravity from that point of view allows us to deal with it as with a particular partner, that is, to create a particular object that is 'gravity' in a particular partnering situation. This also applies to space (as is often used in my work), which is not necessarily reflected as a particular physical space of the stage, but can be 'any space whatever'. From here the task is placed back into a sense of playing and interplaying, inter-exchanging with materials, object, forces, etc., where unidentified or misidentified matters and notions, feelings, states have to search for something that Adorno names 'the lines or curves of expression' (Adorno, 1984a, 177).

In summary, the whole story of recombination could be concluded like this: what is going on between our invented or non-invented objects and dancers is a purposeful enactment of negation in each of them, with the precise intention to render them aesthetically, but not symbolically, literal. What is captured via recombination, via movement, will always be meaning-bearing (even if via an initial refusal of 'automatic' meaning) and experienced in both the semiotic and in the phenomenological sense. As much as a dancer's movement will mimetically enact with the object and vice versa, the spectator will also mimetically enact both these same actions. In Husserl's terms, the result is a performance space in which we 'intersubjectively experience through kinaesthetic empathy, both each other's space, and the things, forms and forces that we intrinsically share'.[25]

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[25] Maxine Sheets-Johnstone provides an insight into the study of how movement has become understood as the 'originating ground for the sense–making' in phenomenological terms, and as the originating ground for transcendental subjectivity: 'We originally constitute space and time in our kinaesthetic consciousness of movement' (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 138-140). When we perceive and comprehend the other (body or object) we cannot do this in any other way other than to draw on our own prior body experiences. And this becomes a 'sharing of the spatio-temporal experience between ourselves and our

3 THE PRINCIPLE OF PROJECTION

I will now present the procedures of recombination that were outlined in the last chapter in a different light. Here I will speak of recombination *as* projection and vice versa, and how it offers something to an account of the 'literacy' of the work, or its relation to aesthetic negativity. This chapter should therefore be seen as a kind of subsection of the one on recombination, but it counts as a main chapter in its own right, because the three interpenetrating fields of my work (subject-object relations, recombination and projection) present themselves as the ultimate structuring elements in all my choreographies. Recombination should, in any case, always work both ways. We can imagine that it is not only the dancer who 'depicts' the form of another material, or whose movement is informed by another object, but also that objects themselves such as walls, boxes, spirals, elastics, rubber can be, in some sense to be described, s*ubjectified*. How does this work? This will be the subject of this chapter.

3.1   Projection as Recombination and Recombination as Projection – of Objects and Subjects Made Out of Light

'Aesthetic experience can only be defined as the result of that event or happening which takes up these initially non-aesthetic qualities and negatively transforms them. The enactment or carrying out of this event is what we term aesthetic experience. It succeeds in forming processurally that quality of difference that cannot be ascribed to its individual contents taken in isolation' (Menke, 1999, 14).

Let us first speak of a very literal use of the word 'projection'. Over the last ten years, the idea of inter-exchange and the idea of recombination became more interesting from the perspective of being able to use forms of light projection, since the projection technology became widely accessible for practitioners. The ideas of recombining an object with a subject got a technological extension, as projection enables one to create and choreograph objects *solely*

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surroundings'. Adorno's concept of mimesis can also be understood as a similar kind of 'shared experience': think of our ability to imitate, or re-enact another object, movement or form, for example.This 'knowledge' becomes intrinsic to our perception and action (See: Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, ch. 3).

made out of light. Projection therefore adds, on the one hand, another material (light), and with that it multiplies the possibilities of 'exchange' onto the level of light – in both metaphorical sense and in a physical one, since the physicality of light serves as a condition for all spectating, for expression becoming apparent to the eye.

In my work, projection is used as both the only source of lighting *and* visual structure (the set) at the same time. From the technical point of view as well as from the proposed conceptual approach (that is, technically and conceptually), projection is meant as an enhancement (or 'doubling') of the functions of the actual stage or performance space. Namely, the space/stage's passive walls and floor are technically – via projection – enabled to become active, instead of remaining inert and passive. The use of the new technologies brought about by computer-controlled projection enabled projection to be used in the sense of 'transforming' the object/subject's state or condition.

Projection has both a spatial and temporal function and sense. In the spatial sense, projection functions as a way to create both (seemingly) doubled depth and (seemingly) doubled movement as it projects, for example, new layers of light on top of actual surfaces (in terms of the perception of the audience and of the dancer, whose movements can counterpoint, and play with this virtual movement of the projected-animated stage). Temporally, the projection can work through re-projecting the floor back on itself, making it double, and through projecting in addition the walls back on themselves, or through shadows that are 'out-of-joint' with normal temporal expectations, as in the performance *I Would Have Been a Palm Tree (2010)* and *Sorry Out of Ideas (2009),* where the dancer and her real shadow are in duets, trios, and quartets with multiplied shadows projected in an out-of-joint way, or separated from each other – in the manner of the phrase 'the shadow is there, but without the body'. The temporal function (the dialogue between shadows projected/out-of-joint ones with a real ones) here also refers to reflection and its central function in the artistic process in general (see fig. 8, *I Would Have Been a Palm Tree*).

In many of my works, this work with light projections continues and, in each of them, the so-called projected virtual copy of the real space (that shapes and moves itself via the performance) is taking on a particular role/idiom (in the same way as it becomes a concept in *A Concept of the Concept*). It is becoming, for example: an 'inner space/body and an 'outer one' in *Room&Road* – Remake (2014); an 'ideological space/body' in *Brothers Karamazov/Made in*

China (2008); a 'geographical space/body' in the same performance; an 'abstract space/body' in *Point-less* (2012); an 'imaginary one' in *I Would Have Been a Palm Tree* (2010) etc.

3.2   *Room&Road – Remake*

Room&Road is a performance that also 'elaborates itself' almost entirely through the idea of recombining subject and object, via projection, and therefore most directly represents the 'triple' principle I outlined at the outset involving 'subject/object, recombination and projection' (discussed in Section Three of the Introduction). As such, this again enables me to see my work in the light of Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity. In order to give further details, I should first take a step back to an earlier work, *The Concept of the Concept* (2004-2005) which was an early experiment that laid the foundation for the more contemporary piece *Room&Road – Remake,* as well as for many of my other works. *The Concept of the Concept* introduced this idea and utilized the mechanism of projection as a virtual stage or space projected onto a real one. In this way, the 'subjectivised' stage was 'named' Koncept and the woman dancer – the partner – was named Koncepta. In some languages, this means the two names of a couple, like 'Hansel und Gretel', for example, and at the same time, it means (as in the English title) 'A Concept of the Concept'. It is clear what a concept is, but the idea of the nature of a concept *of* the concept is less clear. When looking for sense in a performance, it is precisely the moment or the place where the constellation of sense crosses the one of senselessness or nonsense that is a very important one to me, from the perspective of letting meaning(s), signification(s) emancipate themselves. Or, in the Kantian sense of 'purposiveness without purpose'[26] which can, by its contradiction, be a situation with immense inner intensity. The background of *Concept of the Concept* and then of *Room&Road – Remake* (which is a dialogue of two 'subjectified' spaces, a room and a road, with two dancers) is also the question of how to find connections between things, between 'materials' and between existences, between a person and her/his studio for example, and to present 'what is another glance at their cohabitation or their mutual life'[27] (see fig. 11, *Koncept Koncepta (Concept of The Concept)*, 2004, and fig. 12 & 13, *Room&Road – Remake*, 2014, p. 57).

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[26] Kant suggests there is a 'purposiveness without purpose' in the aesthetic way of presenting objects. See: Hughes , 2010, section 10.

[27] Mutual life refers to the idea of this work in which the studio 'became' a living, personalised being – a 'partner' that responded to the dancer moving within it.

Perhaps it is instructive to relate at this point to some of the works of Bruce Nauman, like, for example, the piece *Mapping the Studio* (2001). The studio is normally rather a humdrum environment in which much occurs that passes unnoticed by the artist. Nauman succeeds in highlighting some often unnoticed qualities of the studio itself. Often in his work, the studio itself, the room, is the space of thoughts: he equates the enquiring mind with the room it is in. For example, Nauman has composed a work in which two amplifiers are situated in a room: whenever someone enters the room the words 'Get Out of Mind, Get Out of This Room' (also the title of the work) are enunciated from the amplifiers. Of Nauman's similar work, *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1968-1969), André Lepecki writes: 'The choreographic happens in the space that is precisely defined as solipsistic, choreographical and philosophical: in the space belonging to the motion of thoughts' (Lepecki, 2006, 30).

Something extremely close to what is realised in *Room&Road – Remake* and to the earlier project *Concept of the Concept,* and also obviously a very valuable historical reference-point, is the celebrated work by Robert Morris entitled *The Site* (1964).[28] This was a twenty-minute piece in which a man (Morris), dressed in white t-shirt and jeans and wearing work gloves, manipulated eight-foot by four-foot sheets of white painted plywood through an increasingly virtuosic sequence of movements.'[29]. What Morris articulated in carrying and replacing the white boards was altogether reminiscent of what we were trying to achieve in manipulating and 'moving' the white walls of the space by means of real-time[30] computer-controlled projection in our work. Charles Harrison observed this quality in Morris's *The Site* as 'a phenomenologically informed focus' upon the conditions of encounters with artworks: that is to say, the embodied perception of physical objects and events in time and space'[31]

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[28] For more, see Burt, 2006, 63-64.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Real-time computer controlled projection is a frequent element of my work. A specially coded program enables an operator to manipulate and 'create' each movement of the 'room' or of the 'road' simultaneously in real time: by pressing certain keys on the keyboard he/she can make the wall tilt, the floor disappear, reappear, jump, turn or twist etc. This all happens in real time – alongside the dancers, the keyboard operator becomes an active performer.

[31] For more, see Burt, 2006, 82.

Fig. 11

Koncept Koncepta (Concept of The Concept), 2004

Fig. 12   *Fig. 13*

ROOM & ROAD - remake, 2014

The function of spatial projections in my work again refers to and reflects the materials, their possible conditions and their possible 'life'. It wants to push towards a certain *dialectics,* which is going on in the movement while it is travelling between its extremes (let's say between dead and alive, or between passive and active): 'The dialectic advances by way of extremes, driving thoughts with the utmost consequentiality to the point where they turn back on themselves, instead of qualifying them' as Adorno (2005, 86) has commented.

3.3   *Point-less*

Taking the word projection in a wider sense, it means to imagine, to ideationally project, to 'throw light on'. As an imagined or projected totality, the word projection, drawn out of the function of the merely technical, plays again a key role in this section. The work entitled *Point-less* (2012) places large points (as objects) in space, in order to refer to their function in both our mental and physical spaces. A concrete space of points (forming an ellipse) is created and the relations between points and the space (between 'life and its points') are worked out through movement, very much in the sense of Paul Valery's poetic definition of space: 'A space is not a set of points – it would be childish if it were. It is a unit in itself just the same as a point is one! Space is rather a generalized point and a thing reciprocal to a point. Space is an imaginary body just the same as the time is an imaginary movement' (Valery, 2006, 1). See also figs 14 & 15, *Point-Less*, 2012, (p. 60.)

Some objects in nature are already 'elliptical': one thinks of the trajectories of celestial objects like planets, for example. Each ellipse has two inner 'focuses' which are constantly kept in a precise relation to each other: this gives the ellipse an exceptional dynamic, tension and strength. Ellipses, made both from the movement material of the dancers, and 'objects' made from rubber or projected light, all give the impression of points, holes, islands, etc. as well as an inescapable 'bureaucratic' suggestion of a point, hole, abyss, zero, infinity, finality etc. They keep (re)presenting themselves both as 'something', and then as nothing. Within the ellipse there is also a movement between the 'all' of their inner opaque thickness (and the richness of dancers movement) and ideas of nothingness, emptiness, a hole or zero, grasping for the sheer 'literalness', on the one hand, and for the aesthetic spirit, on the other:

> Aesthetic spirit is thus a concept aimed at the indivisible connection between the aesthetic attributes of an object and the ideas represented in them. In this way, it represents another basic condition of aesthetic autonomy, since aesthetic letter and

spirit, due to their internal interconnectedness, cannot be reduced to their non-aesthetically and separately identified elements (Menke, 1999, 20).

In this work, a structure emerges when the movements of dancers, one after another, 'depict' the form and inner movement of another object, the ellipse, de-montaging their own movement and montaging the elliptic parameters and its qualities. In this sense, the ellipse 'choreographs' the movement of the body and then, by manipulation and by projection, the ellipse is also choreographed back onto the dancer: 'it' can walk or jump like the dancer does, it can sway or turn as the dancer, it can show its negative image. The process continues via a number of imaginative variations of this inter-exchangeability, experiencing or practicing, combining, let us say, a certain empathy, in Husserl's sense, as *an act of judging my bodily self-given-ness,* while appropriating another's. Whilst this performance makes 'objects' into 'subjects' ('subjectifying' the ellipses via their projection), it does this in a manner that the projected ellipses (from time to time) take on all of the space, including the space of the audience, and in this way the paring of (all) the bodies and all ellipses is a kind of enhancement of the sense of kinaesthetic connection with self:
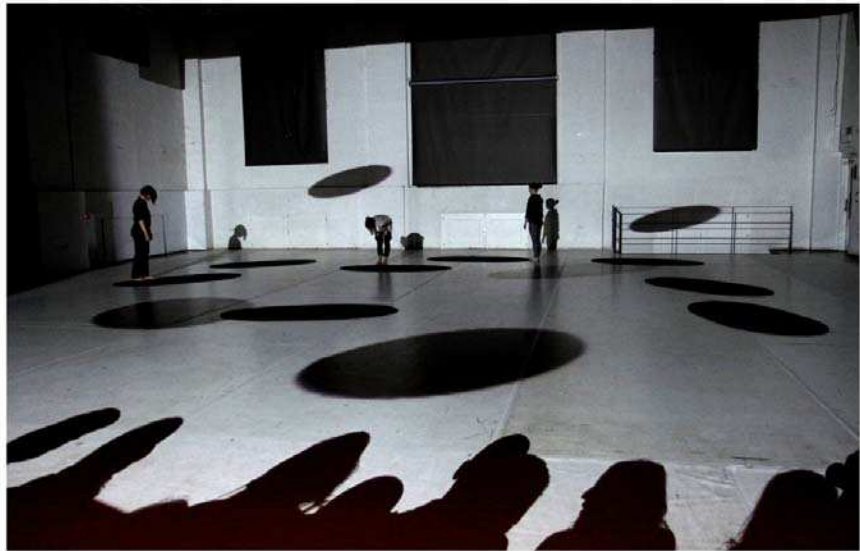
Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Point-less , 2012
photo: Sunčan Stone (Fig. 14), Miha Fras (Fig. 15)

'It is more like Husserl's concept of 'pairing' [Paarung]: according to Husserl, in perceiving and coming to understand the other, I draw on my own bodily experience, but through my encounter with the other, this same experience is also modified. The intersubjective encounter is neither a simple projection, nor is it merely a question of a kind of subjective introjection. In the case at hand, what I bring to my perception of dancers 'movements are prior kinaesthetic and tactile experiences and visual expectations; through pairing or (re)enactment, these aspects of my prior experience are changed or transformed in new ways' (Clark, 2013, 12).

Another way to experience the ellipse in dialogue with both its own and the dancers' dynamics, could also be via its dependence on the curve (as the delineation of its outer form). The notion of curve is also used by both Adorno and Husserl at certain moments in their writing, where they speak about horizons of meaning of a certain curved line in the 'far reach of vicinity of our minds'.[32] The life-world (both organic and inorganic) can be thought of as the horizon of all our experiences, in the sense of being that background against which all things appear as themselves and meaningful. In my work, ellipses are therefore objects, ideas and forms, shrinking, turning, tilting, sliding and stretching (having also this inherent possibility to stretch in its axis almost infinitely, when they become a line, and when they shrink, the distance between the two focuses to zero and they become circles and disappear as ellipses). When stretching out, and enlarging, an ellipse perhaps fulfils this presupposition of wider (or narrower) horizons, while at the same time, just keeps practicing a constant re-visioning of itself.

It perhaps makes sense to take another look at ellipses and the dancers' involvement with them, in the sense of Husserl's investigations of kinaesthetic experience, space and the embodiment of subjectivity. Husserl points out what is exactly unique in the dual subject-object status of our bodies and its triangulation to another: 'of my body that permits me to recognize another body

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[32] In the Introduction to this text I mentioned Nietzsche's important relation to Adorno. With this relation came also the claim that what becomes challenged, suspended, and disrupted in artistic processes is always historically situated: we see the creation of 'historically contingent processes of artistic construction that presuppose a prior nexus of meaning to be dissolved' (Clark, 2015, 54). The term 'historically situated' here can in a way also be thought of as a historical 'horizon' or a curve, which can then correspond to what Husserl later refers to as equally historically specific 'horizons of meaning' and 'life-worlds' (see Husserl, 1959, 62).

as a foreign embodied subjectivity.[33] As we have already mentioned, Husserl argues that kinaesthetic consciousness is itself space-constituting. When experiencing our own movement (kinaesthetically), the fact that we can actually never perceive ourselves in our entirety when moving in space binds us to experience ourselves through that 'no-point' or 'blind-spot' (from which we can never see ourselves), which both 'moves us' and 'moves with us':

> 'To be sure we can't walk around our hand or around our own Body and we cannot approach and recede from ourselves at will. For all that, however, what we can do is sufficient to carry out the same sort of apprehension, on the basis of the given presentational material, and thus sufficient to see the Body as a corporeal thing. Admittedly, we do this in a peculiar way, always, and necessarily losing ourselves in the margin of the visual field and are never able to pursue ourselves beyond this margin' (Husserl, 1997, 83).[34]

From another point of view, Husserl's thoughts on the motility and the constitution of subjective space via experiencing ourselves (partly) 'as objects' corresponds to what is realised in my choreographies via projection. Namely, via projecting the surrounding space and the objects, which gives the dancers a space to move in, we not only make the dancers' movement dependent on that object-space, but this also creates a space that is dancing/moving around the dancer, or with her. It is an attempt at a certain kind of constitutive dynamics, or to make visible certain kinetic phenomena. In the case of an ellipse, it might be the 'no-point', and in case of a room and a road, for example, it is perhaps what Husserl refers to in terms of the primacy of certain types of movement, like approaching and/or receding, to/in spatial consciousness:

> Husserl claims that certain types of motion, like receding from and approaching the object, are necessary for the constitution of spatiality, and that the correlations of these movements, or 'kinaesthetic series' with the series of visual appearance that accompany them are what is necessary to make possible 'a new dimension', that makes a thing out of a picture, space out of the oculomotor field (Clark, 2013, 14).

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[33] For a deeper insight on the role of 'experiencing the other' in Husserl's thought, or the 'role' of empathy for understanding the intersubjective relation of object/subject, see Zahavi, 2003, 112-114.

[34] In this section Husserl deals with what is the main question of my choreography: 'The self movement and being moved by the body – my own or some other body or thing and the limits of the kinaesthetic constitution of the corporeal body.'

Point-less is a work in which the very force that choreographs us is the force of intersubjectivity (in an extension of Husserl's sense). It achieves this via the experimentation with the ellipse as both 'object' and 'subject'.

3.4   Back to the Object and its Geometric and Formal Qualities

In this brief section, I would like to again discuss the object and keep, once again, a focus on the subject-object relation. The use of objects in my artistic process – and no less in choreographic practice – is constant. However, there is a difference which I would like to point out, between the use of, let us say, objects used in our everyday life and placed in artworks as simple 'props', and another class of objects which have a clear, formal, abstract, geometrical character and are not related to our everyday objects, but are rather forms integrated in our ideational life and knowledge.

In Chapter Two, section 2.3, I gave as an example of choreographing objects in the work of the duo Cool and Balducci. The objects they use in their work, which is often taken as pushing the boundaries of choreography, are sometimes those of a geometrical and formal nature, and instil a certain lack or may we say 'negation' of possible hierarchies between the body and the chosen object. Florence Ostende describes their work in the following way:

> The deliberate lack of hierarchy between the body and their chosen material reached its paroxysm in one of their signature works from 2004 (*Untitled*), which was finalized after three years of research and rehearsal. In this work, Cool sets on fire the end of a thin white thread that she holds in her fingers. She gradually kneels down in sync with the flame's rapid ascension, as if her body is relinquishing its initial impulse to control the fire. The action ends when the thread is consumed (Ostende, 2013).

In a related vein, André Lepecki describes works by some well-known choreographers that also utilize everyday objects. Objects in everyday use can function in specifically different ways, and perhaps we should make a distinction between the objects that function primarily through normative use and those that function as above through their universal, geometrical/formal, and even imaginary attributes. Lepecki aims to expose things and the thingness of everyday objects, like sculptures and props, by extracting the particular 'thingness' of the everyday experience of the object – its intentionality, character or even charm:

Recent examples of a sculpting mode of choreography can be found in the works of Meg Stuart. Since the 1990s, she has created dances that are less interested in orchestrating displacements of bodies than in chiselling on those bodies an intense image aimed directly at the viewer's nervous system. Disfigure Study (1991) [...] displays almost impossible positions for a human body, elegant distortions reminiscent of Francis Bacon's figures. Raimund Hoghe's Bolero Variations (2007) takes choreographic language into a delicate plasticity where symmetry, colour, line, and a quiet formalism compose a dancing that is as scored as it is sculptured, or Croatian artist Vlatka Horvat's office chairs transported to different locations (corridors, a pond, a terrace) and rearranged in different patterns for eight consecutive hours in *This Here and That There* (2007) investigate how the mere disposition of things in the world already choreographs our most minute daily behaviours (Lepecki, 2010, 157-158).

In a way this paragraph concerns the use of 'objectness' or sculpturing in some rather well known works, where through a particular use of normative and utilitarian kind of objects, like chairs for example, a certain seeking for both particular and universal elements is present. The 'other' kind of objects, such as those with a purely geometrical character can also function in a double way: they are both props, but are also 'useful' for other purposes. Their particular usefulness derives from their ability to evoke rules, perhaps, or certain laws of (human) nature that are included, or incorporated into culture as universalities.[35]

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[35] In my own work I very often encounter the following scenario: when a certain geometric or formal rule is applied in the instructions for movement research and processes of improvisation, a dancer can end up with a sort of 'surfacing' of an 'innumerable number of foreign and unexpected movements' for which we can only perhaps presuppose their relation to the rules which evoked them or 'organized their surfacing'. No matter how rich, eccentric, captivating or imaginary they might appear there is little or no direct recognition that we can easily identify these movements with.

Fig. 16

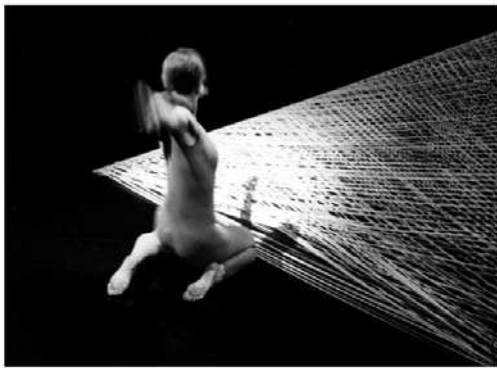Pleasure in Displeasure, 1998

Fig. 17

Telborg, 1999

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Media-Medici, 2001

It is possible to imagine that the use of objects of such a geometrical nature into the art process may represent a capacity for generating a certain 'questioning' into notions like 'formal, mathematical, geometrical'– even down to their origins. Isn't it actually quite possible to say that somewhere in its 'obscured' depths the human mind is constantly 'building or rebuilding' 'geometries' and other akin notions in order to organize itself – its own ways of comprehending, thinking and acting.[36]

The use of such geometrical and formal objects does in this way present a specific contrast to the use of more normative kind of objects of particular and utilitarian use. I think it is possible to observe the growing presence of the latter, which we are witnessing in the postmodern era, Probably we can say that this is because our time has been particularly concentrated on notions such as individuality, identity, specificity, or particularity, which enhance a certain formation of each of us as a singular, special, unique human being. Using such objects in artworks we can often witness the attitude that manifests itself; when for example a dancer or actor becomes engaged with an object like a 'boiling teapot', or a 'bedside lamp' or 'my or your cigarette smoke cloud', as the one of very particular, and often psychological relations between 'me and my lamp' or 'me and my cloud of smoke'.

At this point I would just like to bring to attention this possible distinction, that perhaps has some significance in our present time, and which is more intensely than ever dedicated to those very individual and personal issues and seems to be leaving behind the questions and notions concerned with more general and common aspects by which we, as human beings, are quite inseparable from one another. I shall speak a bit more about this in the following – fourth

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[36] When questioning the 'geometrical' it is perhaps also interesting to look briefly at Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's (2011,163-178) short enquiry into Husserl's abiding interest in geometry and mathematics. According to her, Husserl's interest was 'connected or conceptually linked to a methodology that provides access to origins' (ibid, 160). Husserl suggests that 'Instead of taking geometry as a compilation of readymade truth [...] every new proposition can be by itself cashed in for self-evidence' (Husserl, 1970, 363). And according to Sheets- Johnstone (2011, 160) 'the point that Husserl makes with that is that geometry has a history that is developed from an ongoing meaning into an internally coherent system of thought and that its origin and historical progression can be systematically recovered' (for more on this, see: Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 163-178).

chapter in sections 4.2 and 4.3. Chapter Four will also try to elaborate an insight into choreography which is placed in urban space, and which can also be seen as a more 'utilitarian' kind of space, in comparison with say a theatre or a gallery space. Namely the external urban space and its context are always already determined into its particular everyday function.

Fig. 20

Parking Packing, 2012

Fig. 21

Green Light , 2010
photo: Nada Žgank

4 BODIES AS URBAN 'NOBODIES'

In this fourth and last chapter I will speak about the direction taken in my recent work, and in doing so revisit some issues from the first three chapters. The main argument is that in these works, the object of choreographic-aesthetic inquiry has become the urban space itself – the city. Firstly, I will look into how these issues relate to the topic given in the title *Bodies as Urban 'Nobodies'*. I will subsequently introduce the three works that up to now represent the work in question – the *Urban Series* – these are: *Green Light* (2010), *Parking Packing* (2012), and *The Unnoticed* (2013).

These works have all been created over the last four years. By looking more closely at each of them I will also elaborate on their main inherent principle: the principle of the *minimal choreographic frame*, which is the specific minimal formal organisation that each of the urban works has. This term has been borrowed from Jonathan Owen Clark (2013); his explanation pertinently uses pedestrian movement as an example of movement material that somehow 'intends' to become choreography:

> The key is that the difference between the perception of dance *as art* and ordinary pedestrian movement is that it is *aesthetically framed*. By this I mean that a dance spectator tends to pre-reflexively assume that the movement is both a) potentially repeatable within another aesthetic context, and b) exhibits at least some type of minimal formal organization (Clark, 2013, 68).

As an example of this concept of 'minimal formal organisation' I would like initially to mention a work from the choreographer Edward Gabia entitled *My Presence Prove of Time* (2005). Gabia decided that in this performance he would move in such a way so that the spectators would only see the back of his body, and never its sides or front. His body therefore did not take on any other 'angle' while moving around the stage, but was levelled frontally, with his back to the audience at all times. The movement was all formulated according to this formal organisation (which could be no doubt called minimal, as it assumes just one rather radical but very clear formal condition, according to which all the movement becomes organised). Consequently, the form of movement that appears through this decision frames the performance aesthetically into a specific rethinking of the way in which, in a theatre box, performances are

normatively viewed frontally. The concept of minimal choreographic frame can therefore allow works to be analysed according to their aesthetic dimensions.

Starting from this point of departure, as I did earlier, I will adopt a semiotic approach to the task of elucidating choreographic frames, and, in addition, revisit some of the argumentative tropes from Chapter Three. I will also highlight the aspects of intersubjective or kinaesthetic empathy through which a phenomenological understanding of these works can also be presented. I will also look at these pieces in terms of the broader social and perhaps even the political connotations of my work in general.

In my work, as we have seen, space itself is frequently asked to take on the role of an object, or of an object-body, with which dancers enter into dialogues. For example, space as: a suspended box, an endless spiral, another dancer's body, a square or triangle of elastic net; an animated room, a road, or the stage itself; a movable floor, an area with one fixed point in the centre, or one with many points (or elliptic holes). In my most recent works, this kind of body or object is the city, or the urban space itself. The works *Green Light* (2010), *Parking Packing* (2012), and *The Unnoticed* (2013) share this preoccupation. The moment urban space is thought of as a body, it also simultaneously evokes the thoughts of an anonymous 'nobody', or a 'no-one in particular'.

The heavily urbanised spaces of today maintain a kind of 'spirit' of anonymity. In a way, people have become more like object-particles, moving in common trajectories prescribed by larger urban rhythms. The moment we step behind a door or a window, once we have exited the public environment, the subjective and objective seem to merge together again. We struggle with the notion of ourselves as anonymized objects-in-motion, and therefore we strive to negate this thought. When we transport ourselves through an urban space, we become objects more than subjects. That is already the negative-aesthetic moment of the urban spirit: refusing to recognise each other, we prefer these created objectivities. In this regard, urban spaces are 'half aesthetic' in a manner of speaking, or perhaps we can say that they are halfway through the process of 'aesthetisation'. This means that urban environments, together with their rhythm and motion, become partly aestheticised via our adopted and almost automatic reduction of our subjectivities: whenever we exit the safety of indoor spaces and enter into urban space, we determinately negate, refuse or alienate our subjectivity to some extent. Also, the architecture of the city is, of course, an aesthetic by its own right; together with the city both offer a reflection which, if only 'slightly elaborated', can result in the emergence of an entirely new aesthetic. The

Urban Series plays on this idea of an already negated subjectivity and on the subsequent emergence of the objective – or the 'object in us'.

Returning again to the work of the Russian Formalists and Viktor Shklovsky, it would seem that Russian Formalism was not so concerned with questions of pure form – as its name might suggest – but rather with a special characteristic of literature, namely its capacity to engender a certain quality of 'strangeness' that subsequently becomes an intrinsic quality of literary texts. Formalism therefore focused on the capacity of texts to generate their own 'defamiliarisation' (*ostranenie*); an alienation in relation to something that would otherwise be considered habitual or normal. The work of the Formalists was to demarcate this capacity in texts in a specific way, and introduce it as a new literary entity. In both the introduction and throughout Chapter Three I attempted to show, via Christoph Menke's elaborations on the historical Formalist movement and Adorno's concept of the immanent aesthetic negativity within the semiotic field, an account of the semiotic nature of the aesthetic experience of movement and choreography. We can explain or gain an insight into urban choreography in the same way as the works in Chapter Three; as a process in which the recombination of object and subject, as well as projection (here we can speak more of a projection(s) by which a city is as already made alive and an active 'object' by its own complicated technological nature), are involved in an interdependent way, in order to create or find an intrinsic nature to movement and develop it into urban choreography.

If it holds that poetic language has a seemingly intrinsic nature, the same could be said for movement: the seemingly intrinsic nature of certain forms of movement or choreography is responsible for the aesthetic dimension that is opened up in the choreography or movement itself.

Here, the term 'intrinsic nature' is meant, or can be clarified, as a specific inner organisation that determines a function (and a specifically aesthetic function). Another way to clarify this intrinsic nature is by saying that it could also be understood to 'contain a special component, which imputes an overall character to the communication' (Cobley & Jansz, 2010, 131). The concern in my urban choreography is to find and incorporate such 'special components' in order for a specific kind of communication to become possible. In other words, the concern is to find a specific way through which the choreographic process is set, and through which choreography, movement, and its form emerge.

We all make the same movements in the city – more or less. We all walk and occasionally run; we sit on benches or walls, we orient, wait, stare, stand, rest, and hurry. Everyone does these things in almost the same way as everyone else. And yet, the word 'almost' proves there is still a fraction of individuality in the way each individual does these otherwise same movements, motions, actions, etc. These fractions of individuality or subjectivity are what we wish to reduce-negate, rendering the gestures and movements aesthetically negative – by 'making' everyone involved do the movements in 'specifically the same way'.

We look for a way, or an overarching principle, by which subjective matters, details and 'personal' differences would be denied and, as a result, movement, gesture, motion, or action would gain a certain (aestheticised) sameness. To make the same movement is often, in dance and otherwise, considered to be making a copy. If one would want to be the same as another person in movement, one would normally think that it is a matter of copying that movement. The main concern in making or generating sameness in our work is to find a way – to create sameness – via choreographic organisation. Therefore, even the sameness that might appear to be a copy is never actually a copy of a movement; it undergoes a process set by choreographic organisation or by a principle, which results in what may only seem to be a kind of copy.

In the beginning of this chapter I used Jonathan Owen Clark's explanation of the function of minimal formal organisation when, for example, we want to speak about the difference of perceiving dance/movement/gesture either as art, or an ordinary pedestrian movement (Clark, 2013, 68). When an aestheticised pedestrian movement is perceived as such, what happens is that the spectator 'prereflexibly resumes' or understands a type of minimal formal organisation 'which opens up an irreducible ontological gap between the experience and perception of something as art and typical non–aesthetic experience. The consequence of this gap is that the kinetic–affective dynamics of dance assume an "as such" quality, which results in an experience of agentive ambiguity as to the source of the affect' (ibid).

Or, to put it another way: the minimal formal organisation exists in order to aesthetically transform an everyday situation, and should be able to 'extend, consolidate, transform, or heighten'[37] the always and already existing choreographic potential of the urban environment. In that way a condition for a kind of 'pre-reflexive' (re)cognition is given; something is different though the difference does not explain itself immediately, but nevertheless seems like its

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[37] For more on the phenomenological nature of the perception of art, see: Crowther, 2009, 11.

explanation might be within reach. In the next section we will return for a closer look at the role notions such as extending, consolidating or heightening play in aesthetic processes. But first, let me try to clarify the overall essential character of *The Urban Series*.

4.1   <u>Three essential aspects of the *Urban Series*</u>

I can say that in each of the three works that constitute the *Urban Series* a different idea or a 'certain urban moment or situation' has been chosen (for example, crossing the street, or getting in and out of cars). This was followed by having to find and apply a particular or specific type of minimal formal organisation for each of the three works. In the following text I will outline each of the ideas and the type of formal organisation behind them. However, there are also certain other aspects of the *Urban Series* that are essential to this specific idea of urban choreography, and together they constitute its serial aspects.

1. The first and most general aspect is that I always deal with the urban 'materials' themselves as they exist in everyday life, or that which urban space consists of. I am not concerned with the task of placing something (an action) that was initially created in a different context, in a theatre, gallery, or in another indoor space, for example and then subsequently (re)situating it outdoors, as is often the case in street theatre or analogous types of outdoor performances.

2. The second overall idea is the 'principle of sameness': in all of these works we look for a way to make the movement of several dancers (sometimes only two, sometimes up to twenty) appear synchronic, sometimes symmetrical, or as the certain sequential multiplication of a symmetry or sameness. This is always accompanied by the suggestion that everyone in 'the same movement' is also in the 'same thought'. The 'sameness' implied here means being situated in the same movement or form as others, but it is important to add that this does not mean simply copying or imitating the movements of others (as I have already stressed earlier). To the contrary, the idea is that to be in the same movement is to be in the same situation mentally. This aspect is decisive for each 'minimal choreographic frame' or each minimal formal (choreographic) organisation of movement.

The notion of sameness which interests us here can also be explained from the following point of view: when making or creating a kind of (artificial) sameness in the movement (of several performers in the city), we actually succeed in creating a difference. In order to clarify this, I feel it would be beneficial to call some attention to the thoughts of Robert Pfaller (Pfaller, 2014,

Introduction) who writes about how post-modern ideologies, or at least some of them, expand the ways in which we only believe in our own 'special difference(s)', and how this creates in fact so many differences that, on the face of it all, we fail to see difference any more.[38] Today, believing in a difference appears to be a good tool for neoliberal ideologies to successfully reduce or control the appearance of a 'real difference' outside of the neoliberal ideology itself. This 'awareness about sameness', which we try to create through our urban work could therefore be one of the few possible forms of sameness which, in such an ideological atmosphere, succeeds in actually making/creating a 'difference'.

Later I will come back again to the implications that effects like sameness can bring, but for now let's just think of a group of citizens that are suddenly and intentionally moving in exactly the same way, that could in fact promote the possibility of a contradiction for the way some postmodern ideologies understand our contemporary time.

3. The third overall aspect is the one of 'unannounced performing'. This is the manner in which the pieces in the *Urban Series* have been executed: as if they were situated in everyday life, within habitual activities. In all three works the performances coincide with all of the other idiomatic activities that continue to occur in the city life around them. Crossing the street in the performance seems as regular an occurrence as an actual street crossing in real life. However, at the same time it has its own 'difference' – an aesthetic quality – that captures the attention of the chance spectator. The idea here is to recreate the everyday movement of crossing the street in an aesthetic way, and thereby create a kind of implied 'mistake in the system' which, through its dominant aesthetic quality, first creates surprise and then captures the attention of passers-by, sometimes just for an instant, and sometimes for a longer period of time. Gradually, the spectator may start to contemplate it as an aesthetic experience.

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[38] Pfaller further explains that postmodernism has been so thoroughly reinforced through the neoliberal ideological apparatus that the importance now is for everyone to find, create, and develop their own specific 'uniqueness'. Further on he explains that by succumbing to this (believing only in one's 'own thing') or succumbing to illusions as one's own, we continue abandoning the need to render the illusions of others visible. 'This is what makes a crucial contribution to the kind of acceptance of, and weak resistance to, neoliberalism's economic policies in Western societies' (for more on this, see Pfaller, 2014).

This can be similar to what we have already come to know as 'Flash Mob' performances.[39] However, there is an important difference in the approach at work in a Flash Mob event. Both my work and Flash Mob performances work initially through the creation of surprise: this may involve synchronising or multiplying a particular movement. The difference lies in the improvisational approach of the Flash Mob. In our urban choreography there is absolutely no improvisation. It is very 'rehearsed' and, in its own way, is almost an 'object in itself' – admittedly a mutable one – but still an entity (re)defined clearly against the background of its urban space. For example, it is almost as if a huge picture, taken from a museum, would be carried across a zebra-striped crosswalk with the clear intention of showing it to people in cars while they are waiting at a red light – in this way it could also be perceived as a micro-economy of life, using time and space. The choreography is pre-prepared in this way, only to seem as assimilated or normalised as anything else on the street. This manner of performance also requires no particular prior notification that it will take place. This is in contrast to the case of most street performances, which require the public to gather at a specific place and time. In the *Urban Series*, the public is already, and by chance, somewhere in the vicinity. This extends to the way in which the *Urban Series* is documented on video. Some shots are from mobile phones, others from a larger camera, which mirrors the manner in which a passer-by would record the event.

4.2   Introducing three works from the Urban Series individually

4.2.1   *Green Light*

The piece titled *Green Light* deals with the already existing 'urban choreography' of crossing the street in cities at traffic lights. In a sense, with the red and green lights directing the traffic at road crossings, this is an organisation of traffic in cities between cars, trains and/or pedestrians, and is already a kind of modern urban choreography.

Simultaneously, after the pedestrians on the street stop for a red crossing light, and the green light reappears, there is a kind of surprise that takes place. Instead of a normal crossing movement by the public, which could occur in the street, or in addition to it, dancers cross the street in a carefully orchestrated way. Furthermore, *Green Light* can also be perceived as a kind of sanction to 'move freely' during the short time-interval when we are unrestricted; it can be

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[39] For a thorough understanding of the phenomena of Flash Mob performances in general, see: Muse, 2010.

taken as permission to create a surprise, to provoke a reaction, or to exercise the right to freely reinterpret this limited period of time provided by a green light.

For the creation of movement in *Green Light*, if we refer back to the approach of the Russian Formalists, it is possible to draw the following analogy: instead of the habitual crossing of the street at a traffic-controlled and lit zebra crossing, we create an 'estranged' one. The minimal formal organisation is in the choice to have all six dancers create movement when traversing the street using the zebra and its stripes as objects. For example, when stepping on a white cross-walk stripe we take it as an object and twist it as we would twist a peace of board or section of carpet under our feet. The white cross-walk stripe of course does not move underfoot, but the body makes an estranged yet functional movement. In another example, while taking a step, we stretch the spaces between two white cross-walk stripes, and enlarge the in-between space, whilst stepping simultaneously on two stripes. A third example: the zebra-striped path is a sort of movable floor, perhaps like the deck of a ship, and we imagine that this 'deck' is tilting almost ninety degrees from one side to the other – like a ship in a storm. The dancers produce a movement that glues the body to the striped crosswalk (in order not to fall off the deck) and the body/torso rotates strangely (yet in a related way), to maintain its balance on the 'tilting ship'. These are a few examples of creating movement with the zebra crossing as a kind of object, or like an entity that conditions our movement. Another example follows the logic introduced in earlier chapters – a walk that we are walking under the zebra crossing to the other side. The projection of such walk creates a strange and yet still conscious defamiliarisation. Here, this choreographic suggestion, between the zebra crossing and the performers, is the minimal formal organisation, or perhaps a suggested choreographic frame, for motivation and thought (or choreographic affordance), which conditions both the form and movement.

Green Light is therefore motivated by the initial premise that human locomotion in urban environments is actually already a kind of choreography in itself. The word choreography and the meanings and functions associated with it, from the beginnings of the aesthetics of modernism, have somehow migrated into disparate fields such as chemistry, biology, traffic management, and even meteorology. During the second half of the 20th century this type of translation of the term choreography into other domains has become ubiquitous, and the *Urban Series* aims to continue this type of transformation. There is something about the 'steps' and the 'stepping' which we can perhaps take even quite 'literally' in relation to the following thought from Andre Lepecki, which describes what it is that we should be concerned with in this reality of the everyday:

There always remains the possibility of resisting the traps set up by representation in the persistent renewal of the conditions under which monstrous crimes are staged once, without relief, before our eyes, in our streets, with rigorously predefined and anticipated steps: the steps of habit and indifference (Lepecki, 2009, 250).

4.2.2 *Parking Packing*

PP is the second of the series that draws its content from the endless motion and locomotion of everyday activity. Several cars are parked next to each other, and in and out of each car (from the trunk or back seat) performers load suitcases, bags, and other luggage in an extremely synchronised way, making their movements with each other synchronised, symmetric, reversed, or in canon. Each of these (from two to six) cars has one or two 'occupants' performing these unified actions. What results is an unexpected synchronicity and multiplicity of gestures and movement which is imitated endlessly in cities, day in and day out (for reasons which have already perhaps been forgotten): 'packing' ourselves in and out, loading bags and suitcases endlessly in and out of cars, again and again, for almost a century now. It appears as if this routine might be the myth of Sisyphus for our time.[40]

In this case, the minimal formal choreographic organisation is the way in which we deal with the objects in the choreographic constellation: these could be the dancers' bodies (or their parts), the bags and suitcases, the cars and their trunks, etc. The choreographic suggestions propose a projection or an imagining of an exchange between all the 'objects'. For example: I pack my torso into the bag and unpack it again, I 'pack' my hand, shoulder, or head inside a bag, and place it into a car just in order to take it out again. When *Parking Packing* appeared daily in the parking lots of Ljubljana – with regard to the 'forward and backward' motion of the packing and unpacking, in and out of the cars, where bodies and bags become somewhat (re)mixed and interchanged – Slovenian dance theoretician Rok Vevar wrote the following thoughts:

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[40] Philosopher Renata Salecl reflected on her experience with the work *Parking Packing* by writing that the constant activity (which we perform in everyday life of coming and going, packing and unpacking, endlessly taking things out of cars, day after day) seems to be our modern day version of Sisyphus' task. By 'believing' that we are progressing through constant activity, we might not notice that we actually remain in the same place.

One could say that the modern organisation of life is full of hidden, non-transparent choreographies. *Parking Packing* perhaps develops the concept of the 'readymade' choreography and the field of contemporary dance thoughts in the extended understanding of choreography, in which 'choreography' spreads from the exclusive domain of dance into something that has the characteristic of everyday life. With this it also raises the question of personal freedom in the choreographic (infra)structure of the modern world.[41]

4.2.3 *The Unnoticed*

The Unnoticed is based on theories from cognitive science, which suggest that our basic perceptive sphere and activity is comprised of paying close attention only to those things that are essential for immediate survival. Whatever seems unnecessary for our immediate survival, or whatever does not immediately seem important for our own survival is therefore perceptually put in the background. Therefore, the idea behind *The Unnoticed* is to 'trick or force' into our attention to focus on matters that are seemingly less essential for our immediate wellbeing or survival, but are possibly essential for someone else's. *The Unnoticed* has been created and placed in our shared everyday urban rhythm and space, and aims to refocus our perception on something which is often overlooked, and also on the act of overlooking itself as a kind of 'non-action'.

The choreographic organisation (or minimal choreographic frame) for *The Unnoticed* is drawn out of the following question: how can one make the multiplication of gesture, body, position, or movement an intrinsic principle for choreography? There are numerous examples throughout dance history of this same question – almost all canonical ballets such as Swan Lake, La Bayadera, and the famous Romantic 'Choir de Ballets' exercise multiplication, equableness perhaps, and move into repetition and synchronicity. It is surely true that the choreography, lines, and, choruses of the same movement have been marked throughout history by questions that are no less relevant today than they were at any the time of their creation. These are questions about the universal versus the individual perhaps, and of objective versus subjective; questions of 'spirit' and production. In *The Unnoticed*, through another specific minimal formal

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[41] Slovenian theoretitian Rok Vevar wrote the quote as an introductory text for *Parking Packing* when it appeared on the streets of Ljubljana in 2012.

organisation, we tried to manifest another or specific kind of 'sameness' in which we could find relevance while confronting urban space and its issues.

In *The Unnoticed* this condition is represented by means of 'the inner-space of the body' of the other dancer here. I spoke about that principle in Chapter Two, when introducing the principles of recombination (section 2.5, *Recombination With 'Not Yet Objects'*). This same approach has now been tested in an urban-outdoor environment, where defining movement spatially is perhaps a more complex question than when working indoors in a similar way. What emerges is yet another 'estranged' quality by which a very common movement or gesture becomes estranged either specifically or differently, creating its own 'modus' or world of moving, posing, acting, and multiplying itself against the background and the intensity of 'other bodies' in the urban space. (See: fig. 23-24, p. 84).

First, there is the initial situation, or gesture, of one body placed in the urban environment. What the performers try to do then is to 'inhabit', with their own movement, the inner space of the other dancer (almost like placing your movement within a large vase). Perhaps this can be better explained with the help of what Barthes observed of Brecht, and which Brecht also described of himself: 'He thought in other heads, and in his own, others besides himself thought' (Barthes, 1985, 195). Or, there is what The New Yorker's 1992 obituary for John Cage read in part: 'A suitable epitaph might be: He composed music in other peoples minds.'

The shape of the space that one dancer offers (the inside of his or her body) shapes or determines the movement of the other, and so on. Sometimes this occurs more directly than others; it can be projected at a distance, or the distances can be reduced to nothing. The 'climbing in', or fitting into, another's body space becomes a never-ending story, a never-ending attempt. An adjustment in a gesture or movement produces a never-ending series or multiplied form, which is not a copy, though at first sight it might give rise to such an idea. The quality of movement choreographed in this way often has a sculpture-like structure; between moving and not moving, or perhaps between an action and its suspension. A passage from Andre Lepecki on the nature of choreography and sculpture may be useful here:

> 'If dance evokes the fleeting, the moving, the ephemeral, while sculpture evokes the solid, the stable and the concrete, then why have dance and sculpture enjoyed such an intimate and prolific interrelationship over the past five decades? The question is not only one of the sculpture serving as a background (set-design) for dances; nor of dances

(or dancers) serving as occasional inspiration or as extraneous corporeal frisson for sculptures. The question is: how dance and sculpture could be, at a much more fundamental level, one and the same art – 'dance sculpture', an art whose main concern would be to harness invisible forces (political, physical, affective) and make them visible through kinetic assemblages of bodies and matter (Lepecki, 2010, 157).

The quality of a suspended movement can be perceived or said to be a silent or silenced movement as well; one that is placed in the midst of noisy everyday rhythms, motions, and traffic. It is a kind of movement that consciously and determinately resists being normalised (or being pulled back into the noisy rhythm of its urban surroundings). And that is what we seek to achieve: a choreography that captures the idea of 'hanging' movement, all silent and/or suspended in the midst of its own path and the noisy urban reality. *The Unnoticed* explores this deeply, and thereby creates a rather sculpture-like choreography. When a certain moment of urban movement becomes intensely suspended (in form and dynamic) it can, through this kind of 'estrangement' offer the accidental spectator a sense in which a reinterpretation of this unstoppable everyday urban rhythm may be sensed or meditated upon.

In that sense, one of Merce Cunnigham's insights concerning the conception of the reciprocal relationship between sound and silence comes in useful here: 'The nature of dancing is stillness in movement and movement in stillness' (Copeland & Cunningham, 2004, 98). This comment, as well as the following one by Copeland on the reciprocal influence between Cage and Cunningham, actually clarifies the intention that *The Unnoticed* had – to create a kind of 'moving stillness' – a (different) kind of 'existence' in the city, resonating between movement, sculpture, and architecture, or the architecture, body, space, and sound of that same urban environment: 'No stillness exists without movement, and no movement is fully expressed without stillness' (98). However, and this is where the influence of Cage becomes most evident: 'Stillness acts of itself, not hampered before or after. It is not a pause or a premonition.(98)'[42] So, stillness is in itself a movement.

When performing *The Unnoticed* to mostly coincidental spectators, they cannot resist asking what it is that we are doing. We offer an explanation via a small card with one specific sentence, borrowed from one of the last books of Viktor Shklovsky, which applies extraordinary well to

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[42] Cited as 'Cage, 1957, 22' in Copeland & Cunningham, 2004, 98.

this work: 'All of us are merchandise laid out in neat rows for the inspection of our time. We must not die: kindred spirits will be found' (cited in Cohen, 2007).

So, the question always inherent in the nature of my work, the extent to which we recognise ourselves as objects, has been already implied by Shklovsky already a century ago. To be laid out as 'merchandise', neatly in rows and waiting, seems a more prevalent encounter than ever today.

The way in which the *Urban Series* takes place in an 'unannounced' way, and the manner of 'everyday doing' in the works, is also where the surprise lies for the chance spectator. It is a kind of disruption, but with the intention of bringing about an aesthetic experience. In the regularity of the everyday with its 'ins and outs', a usually predictable situation slides into a completely unpredictable one, emerging rather smoothly as a structure or form that seems both regular and irregular at the same time. A passer-by's glance enquires, contemplates, ignores, or gets involved. Susan Haedicke (2013, 8) writes:

> The performances hovering between art and non-art, elicit a strong kinaesthetic re action, often well before an intellectual. response'; they are felt before they are understood and so elude analysis through traditional aesthetic theories. Understanding the art is inextricably linked to experiencing it.

This means that experiencing art is just as important and undivided from understanding it. The kinaesthetic refers to the aesthetic. And the kinaesthetic response is the one triggered by the shock of a 'perhaps aesthetic difference'.We could say that the *Urban Series* does play on this moment of shock, but perhaps only seemingly in a more obvious way than in any other artistic or aesthetic process.

Here I could refer back to section 3.2 of this thesis, where I attempted to clarify works like *Room&Road – Remake*, which were placed in an indoor space (a theatre or gallery), from the phenomenological point of view, where it is precisely the dual experience, as Husserl claims, which makes the intersubjective empathy possible: 'One reason why I am able to recognize and non inferentially experience the other is that the experience of my own body has this remarkable play between ipseity and alterity characterizing double sensation' (Zahavi, 2003, 104).

Therefore, from that point of view, there is no difference in the perception of an indoor or outdoor performance. It is as through the initial intersubjective kinaesthetic effect or response – which the spectator actually experiences in his or her own body via another body – that the dimension through which we seek aesthetic experience and then transcendence of the subsequent content can be recognised. In this way we can say it is possible to understand and justify art as an experience, and not only a form of information. The (aesthetic) shock or effect means 'experiencing'. It is also true that in an everyday street setting we do not expect an altered (aesthetic) situation, but when we go to a theatre or gallery we do. The interesting thing is that whether we expect it or not, in either case, the shock or effect is the only thing that allows for an aesthetic process to take place. The intersubjective kinaesthetic mechanism, or the experiencing of the things around us (via the visual, acoustic, and tactile senses), is what seems to play this initial role as a kind of phenomenological 'original' or as an always 'original' experience in itself'. Here, another look at Husserl's thoughts on the intersubjective might be valuable:

> When I touch an object, what is deposited in my soul is its form and not its matter, I shall never have but forms (therefore I shall never have the matter)', yet I know, with an odd kind of certainty, which is not merely empirical, that the same path which leads me to scepticism (we have but forms) leads me by the same token to a naïve although institutive faith in the reality of the outer world (Ferraris, 2001, 34).

Furthermore, the following quote is important in this context. We see the choreographer Jonathan Burrows citing the writer William Burrows: 'it is the function of the artist to evoke the experience of surprised recognition, to show the viewer what he knows but not know that he knows [because] the audience wants to see something that they haven't seen before, and they want to recognize it when they see it' (Burrows, 2010, 65 [my addition]).

In a related vein, there is a quite remarkable description of a kind of 'mistake' or disruption to an everyday routine, which was provided by Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy in his text *So What Are We Supposed to Do?* (*Tak chto zhe nam delat?*), which also formed an important reference point for Viktor Shklovsky in his own linguistic studies:

> I remember walking down the street once in Moscow and seeing a man step outside ahead of me and peer at the stones in the sidewalk; then he selected one stone, crouched over it and began (or so it seemed to me) to scrape or rub with singular strain

and effort. 'What is he doing to that sidewalk?' I thought. When I got right up to him, I saw what this man was doing. It was a young man from the butcher shop: he was sharpening his knife against a stone in the sidewalk. He was not thinking about the stones at all, though he was scrutinizing them; still less was he thinking about them while performing his task. He was sharpening his knife. He had to sharpen his knife in order to cut meat; it had seemed to me that he was performing this task over the stones in the sidewalk. In exactly the same way, man seems to be occupied with commerce, treaties, wars, the arts and sciences when one thing matters to him and one thing is all he does: he tries to clarify the moral laws by which he lives.[43]

This paragraph from Tolstoy is actually a kind of testimony to an urban choreography that took place some hundred years ago. And it represents a kind of 'accidental' situation whereby an everyday movement was exchanged between one context and another, which has the effect of aesthetically 'framing; the moment.

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[43] Tolstoy originally wrote this text in 1886, and the first English translation to appear was in 1887. The paragraph here is cited from Cohen (2008).

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

The Unnoticed, 2013 / 2014

4.3   <u>Some More Questions on the Effects of Forms and Contents</u>

There is further intention to the *Urban Series:* whilst the works play with the actual movements and motions of our everyday life, they also experiment in a precise manner with certain illusions that exist in contemporary existence (illusions that are sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious). It is these illusions that we can say keep (re)creating or perpetuating our social environments. The concept of shared social illusions provides 'content' to the *Urban Series*, and the idea of a specific sameness of movements and behaviours of everyday urban life provides the 'forms' of the work(s).

For a better understanding of those aspects of the above 'illusions' which interest us here, we can turn briefly again to Robert Pfaller's precise elaborations on the subject: [44]

> Where there is a reinforced focus on the content of the artworks, there is less importance admitted to its form. In my opinion this contributes to the destruction of 'illusion without owners' which is involved in the artwork, because the form is always the illusory part of the artwork. Where there is 'form', there is a signifier, and the law that: 'This has to be like that. I don't know why, I know its quite stupid but it has to be like that.' This is the aspect of form, and the moment you suppress this aspect you reinforce content; you reinforce a sort of imagination of the artist, who has to pretend

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[44] In his latest book Pfaller speaks about illusions without owners, which is a form of illusion in which we find a way to allow ourselves to enjoy doing something we actually do not believe in – such as enjoying Christmas with children and pretending to believe in Santa Claus bringing us presents from the North Pole. In that sense Pfaller claims that illusions without owners are the universal pleasure principle in culture. In the way one is 'able to take a distance' to something or create 'a gap' between self and one's illusion, but practice or enjoy it anyway, involves a kind of formalistic 'move' that creates links and social linkages; like politeness (as a form) does, for example. In this sense we could say that modernism encouraged such demands in a more courageous way than what we are witnessing in our contemporary postmodern times. Today we are endlessly encouraged to be focused mainly on ourselves; trying to establish what we are and who we want to be, as we are mainly supposed to find this one special 'own' and 'unique' self. This kind of attitude desolidifies social links and, with that, our common spaces. Appropriation in the field of illusions would mainly strive for self-respect. Illusions without owners and illusions with owners can also be understood as different kinds of subjectivities: one gaining more enjoyment and the other more self-respect (for more, see Pfaller 2014, Introduction).

that he knows very well what he or she is doing and, again, there is this appropriation where 'the artist derives more self-respect from artwork than pleasure (Pfaller, 2004, 20-24).

To jump back to the notion of our 'sameness', introduced in part 4.1 for a moment, is it not true that a ubiquitous modernist aesthetics (such as in the work of Robert Wilson for example) have emphasised this 'same' sameness? And, is it also not true that postmodernism erroneously sees sameness as subordination on one hand, and insignificant individual difference as a kind of liberation on the other (such as the dubious gender theories stating that 'everybody is his/her own sex' or that 'there are as many sexes as people')? Can it be that the more general issue here is the fact that, in modernity, one is able to see one as more than just oneself? At once you could be yourself and also something general, like a revolutionary. Our solidarity would then stem from the fact that we are the same general thing (despite being individually different). Postmodernism, on the contrary, with its emphasis on identity, only allows you to be yourself. You cannot also have a universal dimension. Therefore 'diversity' only comes down to insignificant differences, and no solidarity beyond identity groups.[45]

Additionally to this perspective it is also possible to better understand the current climate for funding and curating art, a symptom of which can also be seen with reference to Alain de Botton's 'widening participation' exhibition in a museum in Amsterdam. The exhibition has the effect of providing an artificial and ideologically motivated finitude to the procedural nature of aesthetic negativity. In an exhibition titled *Art is Therapy* (2014), curators de Botton and John Armstrong aim to subvert the process of captioning (and therefore of perceiving) the paintings in the Rijksmuseum's permanent collection by showing not where art came from or who made it, but what it can do for the viewer. To that end they have provided a series of new captions for the works in the collection, and in this way offer spectators indications of what they might 'see' or be 'looking at' or feeling while observing the work. The result is that in this way the procedural nature of aesthetic negativity is stopped early on, and a ready-made conclusion, or the content of the picture, is provided. In contrast, when form is allowed to dominate, the 'free floating' nature of the aesthetic signifier is allowed to return.

In that light it is therefore possible to observe that in *Urban Series* I am interested in achieving (via an aesthetically negative procedure) a specific kind of disruption in an urban environment –

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[45] Pfaller, 2014

one that tries, through its 'form part' to succeed in providing a glimpse, or exposure, into the will of our everyday life and its mundane striving as an illusion.

I should mention that in this last chapter I have dealt with my choreography in urban space as a case study, so far mentioning just one related principal of works in urban space (Flash Mobs). This does not mean that there are not many other urban choreographic and performative works, which are placed in urban or external environments and which are gaining more and more attention every year.[46] I would like to mention just two of these artists: Alexandra Pirici (Romania), and Willi Dorner (Austria). In their works, placed in the outside urban space, I can also find a relation to my own work. Pirici, for example, also plays with chance members of the public, and in a rather unannounced manner. Her works function more on historical and art-historical themes and contents, performing in public spaces, cities, parks, using historic places and monuments, and she often takes a specific art event as the context, often referring to works of other artists as well. In her work she clearly plays with the forms, sameness, and variations of possible sameness of bodies, which might also correspond well to what Andre Lepecki perhaps had in mind in his article on Berlin based South African artist Robin Rhode and his work *Frequency* (2007), speaking of listening, resonating, and of 'arrangements' of bodies:

> In this new, post colonial era called globalization, it is important to keep listening to the concrete singularities of those particular sounds and falls Moten writes about, not only to learn how sounds and bodies resonate and clatter against each other on the violent grounding of the world, but to identify the conditions of mutual co-creation and co-destruction. It is crucial to identify how the material conditions of sound production and movement production are predicated upon the specific (political desiring) arrangements of bodies (Lepecki, 2009, 251).

To use Lepecki's notion a little, specific 'arrangements of bodies' are present in different ways in the works of Pirici, and also in the work of Dorner titled *Bodies in Urban Spaces* (performed from 2006 onward). Dorner takes all kinds of city structures and their angles and curves as his

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[46] To only mention a few of the names of groups or artists who are known for their works in urban space: Hello Earth!, a collective of Danish artists; Rimini Protocol, a German collective; Karoline H. Larsen and Creative Actions; The Ligna Activists, who choreograph their listeners inside shopping malls; PVI Collective from Perth, Australia; Omer Krieger, an artist based in Tel-Aviv, Alexandra. Pirici (Romania), Wili. Dorner (Austria), and many others.

objects, and places (or 'fits') bodies onto or mostly into them. The bodies in Dorner's work seem to be extremely determined in 'becoming objects', and in being placed like objects around urban architecture and its 'details' in a city. The bodies in his work also tend to be arranged in such a way so as to permit perceiving them somewhere in-between a sculpture, or perhaps as some special arrangement of bodies. Even though they remain suspended in their choreographic structures, capturing an object-like quality, they produce strong and vibrating novel 'rhythms' and accents into urban space. They produce the subjective, soft tissue, in the form of concrete 'building material'. And it is precisely in this extreme 'object-ness' that this choreography becomes interesting; the more the bodies are objects, the more they produce aesthetic pleasure.

Regarding the body as an object, and listening and resonating, which Lepecki speaks about in the above quote, it is perhaps good to return for a moment to Adorno's thought about the primacy of the object ('Vorrang des Objekts', section 2.3 of this thesis), and its primacy in relation to the subject, which, for Adorno, does not mean that the subject is dispensable. On the contrary, it is only a strong subjectivity that is able to free something from pre-formed, already-given representations in the confrontation with the 'non-I'. Or, as an interpretation of his thought clarifies: 'Listening is more difficult, it requires more force, than saying' (Durao, 2008, 15). This might mean that it is the 'listening' that we have to strive for and make accessible through the work, rather than the 'saying'.

5 CONCLUSION

The very last notion of Chapter Four, that of emphasising 'listening' over 'saying', would also appear to be a useful way to begin this conclusion and recapitulate the main task from the written exposition, which was to inspect, while using my own work as case studies, the lens of Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity and Christopher Menke's more contemporary semiotic re-articulation of it in the field of dance and choreography together with the 'knowledge' derived from the choreography itself.

Why 'listening' we could ask? Attentive listening is a process; a kind of ongoing activity that must be experienced temporally, and in that sense, according to Adorno and Menke, the phenomenology of listening enacts an analogue to what aesthetic experience, whether in choreography, literature, or music, should essentially enact, and that is to re-experience the process of perceiving itself anew.

In that sense, 'listening' can also articulate what can be described as the methodology behind my work: the interdependence and interwovenness of three fields, Subject-Object, Recombination, and Projection. These three notions, when operating reciprocally with each other, succeed in producing an aesthetically negative operation into a choreographic process. If we look once more at recombining – between the dancers (as subjects) and their geometrical objects, like elliptic dots (in *Point-less*) or the box/room (in *Room&Road – Remake*) – the activity that recombination demands is precisely a kind of listening; a constant attentiveness on the part of the dancer and his/her entire body to the un-negotiable conditions given by the objects, and vice versa, a constant bodily attentiveness on the part of the projected doubles of the object (made of light) to the un-negotiable conditions given by the dance. The whole process of recombination therefore decides entirely in favour of 'listening' to what each (object and subject) is not, or could not 'be'.

An essential idea derived from Emma Cocker (2008, see section 2.3 of this text) is: 'Knowing what something is not in not the same as knowing what something is' gives us an insight into the essence of negativity that is at work in Adorno's thought in which knowing 'what something is not' might be the only way for a work of art to remain its critical essentiality, precisely by maintaining its distance or difference to society, and in that way realizing its autonomous status.

In the same light, Menke's semiotic clarifications of Adorno's notion of negation emphasizes its *processural* nature, in which 'things', as we know them, are to be denied habitual recognition. In semiotic terms, any definitve link between signifier and signified should be left undone. Enacting recombination between 'Objects and Subjects', either with projection or without which is the methodological proposition in my choreographic practice, produces precisely such an processural 'undoing' of the linking of signifier and signified, forcing one to exist disconnected from the other, which is where the form and content keep actively chasing, but never finally and completely catching each other. The processural nature of Adorno's negation, as clarified by Menke, therefore became a logical perspective for inspecting movement and choreography including my own and that of others. Extended from the field of literature and literary novel, where it was originally elaborated by Menke, this can also be recognised as an attempt to bring new knowledge into the field of dance, choreography, and movement.

The concepts of Adorno and Menke have also enabled me to form a specific 'bilateral correspondence' between my theory and practice, which, throughout this analysis, brings the two sides together into an unusually close but essential relationship. Adorno's concept of object and subject, for example, not only helps to clarify theoretically what we see in a performance, but also its methodology. This is when terms like 'object' and 'subject' or recombination and/or projection behave in such a way so as to inform both reception and methodology. Such bilateralism can perhaps be justified as an attempt to open up 'new spaces' between the terms and also add to knowledge at both ends of the correspondence– in theoretical research as well as in practical work, thereby enhancing the methods themselves – and through that perhaps also further influence changes in how these very concepts could be (re)defined *philosophically*.

This written exposition has therefore been aimed at that particular objective, while the practical exposition, consisting of the body of three works (*Point-less*, *The Urban Series*, and *Room&Road – Remake*), provides new 'practical' knowledge as well – the performances themselves. Let me once again identify why this claim is possible.

Projection, as a central 'tool' for recombination between Objects and Subjects in my work (elaborated more closely in Chapter Three), represents not only the only source of visible light, but at the same time it is also the *setting* or scenography of performances such as in *Room&Road* and *Point-less*. Its role is to create a double, made of light, of the actual situation in which the performance takes place, and this, together with a real-time response between the

space and its double made of light, between the objects and their doubles made of light, and together with dancers – enables an interdependent choreographic situation.

Simultaneously, projection seeks to stay completely in touch with its fundamental function as a tool for 'throwing' light, and thus enables another kind of vision, physically and metaphorically. It does not seek to play on the constantly advancing effects which can be achieved by means of technology in today's field of projection, but rather desires to play and expose the very simplicity and rationale for which projection might/must have been invented in the first place; to construct through light a double or simulacrum of a real situation.

In that aspect my work is distinct from other works using projection today and, especially in the case of *Room&Road – Remake* and *Point-less* and to certain extent in *The Urban Series*, as elaborated in chapter four, it can therefore represent new type of practical and scenographic knowledge in the field of choreographic practice.

In such ways both the practical and theoretical components of the submission seek to articulate distinct new knowledge and, in so doing, they articulate, inspect, and enlighten each other. The intersection between both expositions lies in the way in which the methodology – used in my practical processes for creating performances – is simultaneously inspected through the theoretical lenses of Adorno's theory of aesthetic negativity and Menke's semiotic extension of it.

There can be no doubt that choreographic practice represents the substance and background for the theoretical approach taken here, but no matter how productive both processes can be, I am no less convinced than before that the artistic process, or the making of choreography, should always remain autonomous from pure knowledge. That is to say, theoretical understanding or knowledge and artistic processes are each practices in themselves. Nevertheless, I cannot deny the fact of how, through their intensity and thoroughness, one may uniquely intermingle with the other. In this sense, perhaps it would be good to once again expose the bilateral approach to theory and practice as one in which the terms behave so as to inform reception on one side, and methodology on other. For example, a deeper philosophical understanding of the dialectics behind the subject/object relation can inform practical choreographic methodology. Equally, the *singularities* and *uniquenesses* of dance as a practice may suggest new forms of dialectics that could in turn inform philosophy and theorising. This is also something that Bojana Cvejić repeatedly asserts when questioning 'what philosophy can do

for dance', and more specifically what dance and movement practices can do for theoretical and philosophical issues developing within the field today[47]

However, this does not ever mean that that philosophy and practice amount to the same thing: they remain autonomous.

Through this analysis of my own work (as a series of case studies), a certain contextualisation has been built as well. On one hand, this contextualisation is concerned with a particular historical frame of reference, including the works of the Bauhaus group and Oscar Schlemmer, which I find closely related to my own practice, while also being related to the (aesthetic) negativity that, according to Adorno, becomes inherent to all modernist artworks. On the other hand, the text provides several examples of modern and contemporary choreographies. Some of these are probably familiar, others are unique but lesser known works in which the theoretical postulates of Adorno and Menke, together with the literary formalism of Shklovsky, can nevertheless be clearly seen to be at work. And again, certain examples have been chosen more in relation to proximity to the methodology used in my own work, such as the recombination between objects and subjects, while others have been selected with the intention of analysis through the lens of aesthetic negativity. In doing so, they also build a certain context of their own.

Therefore this study has also opened up another distinct field of enquiry for me, one that deals with contextualisation and the clarification that this brings; to the core interests I have always maintained in my practice, but also to the way dance and movement can be productively analysed.

There can be no doubt that contemporary dance has great potential for the further development of aesthetic 'theory' of today. This dual way of functioning – which, on one side, questions the experiencing of aesthetic enjoyment through Menke's semiotic reading in choreography and, on the other, looks into phenomenological understandings of how movement is embedded in human perception and comprehension – allows the theories to touch 'one another', and opens another areas of research, such as the exploration of the complementarities of both understandings.

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[47]   As an example see Cvejić (2015, Abstract)

This interest in analyzing the choreographic process through certain phenomenological perspectives consists in the written submission primarily with my interest to linger within choreography with the quality partaking to movement as a phenomenon in itself; as something which escapes semiotic understandings, and, at the same time, perhaps enables them.

I have already mentioned that the theoretical study and research which enabled the writing of this analytical study, using Adorno's and Menke's aesthetics, together with its historic and contemporary contextualisation, has significantly enlarged and deepened my knowledge in this area, as well as my capacity to comprehend and articulate my own practice and the practices of others.

In the light of an increasingly neoliberal global political hegemony, pushing its way thorough our postmodern times, the discussions surrounding the critical and thereby autonomous nature of modernist thought appears, to me at least, to be growing quite urgent again. Art, according to Adorno, should maintain an essential distance (through aesthetic negativity) and/or its difference to the normalizing functions of everyday reality, and thus also maintaining its autonomy; this is the only way it can also remain critical to society.

My own research trajectory is continuing with two new works, one of which, titled *Green Table*, has been commissioned by the city of Ljubljana for an external urban space. It borrows its title from the 1932's masterpiece by Kurt Jooss. The work will look for a way to build a rather complex path between its historical reference points and the reality of today. The big green table placed in the stage of Kurt Jooss's work will be exchanged for several little coffee tables at regular coffee shops in the streets of Ljubljana.

The extended research done in *The Urban Series*, as well as the contextual and theoretical knowledge gained, will no doubt again become included here – most likely to enhance the possibility of extending and sharpening the critical potential which the idea bears in its title.

The second work was commissioned by a programme titled Art and Science, from Slovenia's Congress and Cultural Centre Cankarjev Dom, for season 2016. The idea takes for its 'object' this institution's huge main entrance hall, and intends to split it down the middle with a line. This long continuous line, like the one in the middle of a road, will be 'the line' between art and science, or perhaps between theory and practice, or left and right, etc. The only space for the dancers to move, otherwise freely, on will be the long length and narrow width of the line itself – in that way causing the line to 'become the dancer's movement itself'. This last idea in

particular will benefit from the current study, because in related and enhanced ways it will attempt to research another 'everyday' geometric object(ivity) into its subjectified existence.

Both of these works seem to be continuing in a specific direction; one in which what we call 'choreography' appears to be evolving increasingly in terms of its artistic practices, while simultaneously making its way into new levels and aspects of everyday life. The understandings of the mechanisms that organise our everyday movements, which willingly or unwillingly keep us travelling, keep raising questions about movement and dynamics, and offer an extended and larger sense of choreography and the choreographic within the social sphere: the way markets move; the way weather and clouds 'organise' themselves; the way new technology invents movement and 'choreography'; even, perhaps, the lines and forms of financial fluctuations. This aspect of choreography (articulated in more detail in Chapter Four), seems to be forming an essential addition to the field of dance and movement today, while enlarging the space for contemporary thinking as well.

Janna Parviainen starts her book with intriguing words ascribed to Heraclitus: 'The origin of movement is also the origin of ruling and directing' (Parviainen, 1998, 2). Perhaps this ancient maxim captures the essential question that intrigues us ceaselessly about choreography, today, an issue which requires further research, in practice as well as in theory, in order to perhaps one day discover how right Heraclitus might have actually been.

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1. ***Point-less*** (2012)

    Premiered 8-10 March, 2012, at The Old Power Station (SMEEL) in Ljubljana.

    Dance, movement, and collaboration: Maja Kalafatić, Kaja Lorenzi, and Bojana Mišić.

    Visual and light concept: Vadim Fishkin, Mateja Bučar.

    Sound and music: Marko Trstenjak and Brane Zorman – real time capturing of music, sound, news, talks, and radio on and between daily radio programs.

    Producer: The DUM Association of Artists.

    Co-producer: The Old Power Station (SMEEL, Stara mestna elektrarna, Elektro Ljubljana).

    Co-funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Cultural Department of the City of Ljubljana, and Zavod ZET.

    Point-less (2012), 27 minutes: The video is an excerpt from the performance. The documentation is the total plane of the performance space, from a set distance and with no close-ups. This is due to the nature of the work. Namely, the projection is at the same time the set and also the only source of light. The constant encounter between objects, especially between the projected objects and dancers, is what forms the choreography itself. Filming from close distances loses the object-points, especially the ones that are projected – and are made of light – the visibility of which changes or gets lost at a close distance. To get the idea of what is happening, it is essential to always view the entirety of the situation. That is why the shot is from a withdrawn perspective. For the same reason, the light, and its quality and dynamics, is also the result of being formed by spatial projection from one video source, and with no additional theatre lights present at any point.

    It is perhaps worthwhile to comment that *Point-less* also has a rather 'open' structure. This means that the way different parts follow each other, how long they are, and also the microchoreography inside each section, as well as the sound and music used, my vary from one performance to another. The decisions on which section will follow (for example, the sliding points or the jumping ones) can be made by either the dancers and/or the person behind the computer – manipulating the projected points – and this would be followed by the others. The way sound is used in this work also follows the

initial principle of using the daily regular programmes from radio stations and circulating between various music, news, or other transmissions in order to form the choice for the sound and music, which is sometimes done quite directly in real time, and occasionally in such a way that the accidental music or news falls very intimately into place with the choreographic material. For example, in 2012, the radio news was consumed with the world banking crisis, which produced huge 'holes' in state financial systems; thus the financial holes in the live news provided a parallel with our study of 'holes,' and this brought a rather amusing aspect to the proceedings. These processes, of using daily news radio programs and so forth, were established during the research and rehearsal process and were maintained throughout the performance of the piece. The performances documented in the video material here were done in accordance with that concept.

2. *The Urban Series* (2010-2014)

28 minutes of videos of urban choreography.

Producer: The DUM Association of Artists.

Co-producers: Kino Šiška, Ljubljana, Slovenia; APT Slovenia; Im_flieger, Vienna, Austria; Fabbrica Europa, Florence, Italy; The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Croatia; Invisible City, Schiedam, The Netherlands.

Funding and co-funding: The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Cultural Department of the City of Ljubljana.

Video: Sanja Kuveljić, Mateja Bučar and The DUM Association of Artists.

Videos of urban choreography are compilations of many concise shots documented mostly by mobile phones and/or small cameras. They are a documentation of the situations in the same manner in which passers-by in the city glimpse, observe, or encounter a situation, by coincidence, or within an everyday urban situation. *The Urban Series* consists of the three following works:

Green Light (2010-2013)

11 minutes, first performed on a traffic-light regulated street crossing in Ljubljana, Slovenia, between June and November of 2010.

Performers and co-creators: Dušan Teropšič, Manca Krnel, Nataša Kos Križmančič, Maja Kalafatić, Kaja Lorenzi, and Mateja Bučar.

Text: Renata Salecl.

Parking Packing (2012)

4 minutes, first performed during October and November of 2012 in car parks in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Performers and co-creators: Maja Kalafatič, Kaja Lorenzi, Nina Fajdiga, and Evin Hadžialjević.

Texts: Rok Vevar and Renata Salecl.

The Unnoticed (2013-2014)

13 minutes, first performed between June and September of 2013 in streets, squares, and parks of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Performers and co-creators: Aja Zupanec, Evin Hadžialjević, Martina Ruhsam, Aleš Zorec, Ivan Mijačević, Maja Kalafatić, Nina Pertot Weis, and Andreja Rauch Podrzavnik.

Text selection: Mateja Bučar.

3. *Room&Road – Remake* (2014)

33 minutes: premiere: 6-8 September, 2014, in the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, followed by the London premiere in the Laurie Grove theatre space on 12 and 13 September, 2014.

Dancers and co-creators: Rebecca Murgi and Jonathan Pranlas Descours.

Light and visual concept: Mateja Bučar, Vadim Fishkin

Music: Random Logic and Borut Savski.

Producer: The DUM Association of Artists

Co-producer: The Museum of modern Art Ljubljana, The Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London, UK, The Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in London, and the Ann Sayers Award Fund for 2014.

The documentation is the whole duration of the performance with just a few close-ups added. The close-ups were added with the intention to illustrate the different possible spatial distributions of the Room in relation to the Road on different performing occasions, as sometimes the Room and Road would be placed next to each other and spectators would watch both of them all the time, as in a theatre situation, while in other cases the Room would be on one side and the Road on the other, with spectators placed almost in-between them and watching first one and then the other.

With the exception of just these few close-ups, the whole duration is necessary because of the precise nature of the work: namely the 'set' is – at the same time as being the actual – also the only source of light as well. The constant encounter between objects, between the projected objects and dancers, is what forms the choreography itself.

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