

Choreography as Mobile Architecture [1]

Erin Manning

The world is astir with cues. Every situation swarms with primes. A situation is made of primes, nothing but primes.

Brian Massumi (forthcoming)

Two main questions direct this paper:

- 1) What makes a work work, and how is this 'working' perceived?
- 2) What is the relationship of the participant—what is the participatory ecology — in the working of a work?

The first question leads me to the notion of "mobile architecture", via the *Synchronous Objects* web-based platform (part of the Forsythe Company's Motion Bank Project), and William Forsythe's stage-based work *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. Here I explore mobile architecture as a diagrammatic concept in line with Francis Bacon's 'diagram' (Deleuze, 2005), with Umberto Boccioni's 'dynamic form' (1970), or with Susanne Langer's 'commanding form' (1977). Mobile architecture is a stand-in-term for how a work extends beyond its content to create a lingering affective environment that persists even in its absence. It is a concept that seeks to articulate how a work outdoes itself and exceeds its form, carrying into that excess the tendencies and effects that perhaps best exemplify what 'art can do'.

The second question takes me in the direction of my own artwork in a continued exploration of the limits of participation (for what work is not, to some extent, participatory?). How can we think of what 'art can do' in a context where the conditions created are activated by a participatory ecology? What kinds of conditions must be in place in such practices in order that the work outdo its initial form-based proposition?

PART 1: Choreographic Ensembles

'At the beginning,' says graphics research specialist Matthew Lewis, William Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced* was 'all a bit, 'what is this about?'" Unfazed by Lewis's confusion, William Forsythe suggested that Lewis think of 'what else' the dance could look like. This 'what else' is the project of *Synchronous Objects*—a web-based platform for the visualization of the choreographic as it expresses itself through Forsythe's staged performance *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. [2]



Synchronous Objects (2009), screenshot.

A joint project with Ohio State University's Department of Dance (Norah Zuniga Shaw) and its Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (Maria Palazzi), *Synchronous Objects* creates visualizations of a series of screen-based 'objects' that actively explore what else *One Flat Thing, reproduced* could look like. The resulting synchronous objects for the visualization of choreographic data reveal the patterns and complex interlocking systems of action and organization at the heart of Forsythe's choreographic process. This opens the dance toward a 'what else' of the choreographic, targeting a cross-disciplinary audience that departs from the strict arena of dance studies to include mathematicians, architects, cognitive scientists, and philosophers, to name a few. 'Our goal in creating these objects,' the team explains, 'is to engage a broad public, explore cross-disciplinary research, and spur creative discovery for specialists and non-specialists alike.'

As demonstrated by Forsythe's work on choreographic objects (2008),[3] the what else of the choreographic can be activated in an infinity of constellations. From an eddy to a flock of Canada Geese to movement propositions such as Forsythe's *Scattered Crowd*—which stages an environment through which the participants are incited to move very slowly—to the constellation of a social movement. The what else of choreography emphasizes that choreography is a proposition not for the body itself, but for the relational force of movement-moving in an ecology of life-living.



William Forsythe, *Scattered Crowd*, 2002 (Photo Credit: Julian Richter)

Here, I propose the concept of ‘mobile architectures’ as another way of conceiving the choreographic when it becomes an event not for the individual body but for the ontogenetic architecting of environments in the moving. A mobile architecture is one way of naming the event of choreography’s self-generative force. It is what can be felt when the choreographed event generates a more-than that touches on its propositional nature. It is the direct experience of the more-than in its field effect. And, I am suggesting, it is ‘what makes a work stand on its own’ — what makes a work work. Deleuze and Guattari write:

The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand on its own [*doit tenir tout seul*]. The artist’s greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*. Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality. But these sublime errors accede to the necessity of art if they are internal means of standing up (or sitting or lying). [...] On the other hand, many works that claim to be art do not stand up for an instant. Standing up alone does not mean having a top and a bottom or being upright (for even houses are drunk and askew); it is only the act by which the compound of created sensations is preserved in itself - a monument, but one that may be contained in a few marks or a few lines, like a poem by Emily Dickinson (1994:164-165 *translation modified*).

The question of what makes a work work, it seems to me, is the question of how an artwork evolves to exceed its form, to create from its force-of-form a more-than that can be felt, if not easily described. With the concept of mobile architecture, I am suggesting that a choreographic work ‘stands up’ when human movement evolves to include its associated milieu such that the milieu’s ecologies of relation themselves can be felt. This happens when

the choreographic begins to shift toward a wider fielding of movement where spacetime itself begins to vibrate with movement expression. From choreographic stagecraft there evolves a sensation that the dancing is happening with and across bodies rather than on them. Bodies dance in an ecology of movement-expression that in turn dances them.

Choreography becomes a field for movement expression when the body becomes an intensive participant with the evolving milieu rather than simply the instigator of the action. This occurs when the choreographic begins to make felt the coming-into-eventness of the field of relation. This happens when the bodies begin to move the relation, dancing in concert with movement-moving, with space-timing. When the field of relation itself becomes mobile, what begins to erupt from its intensive spatialization of time is an architecting of mobility, a mobile architecture that does not stabilize form but extracts from form the intensive traces of its reemergence as field effect. A mobile architecture is less a structure than an agile surfacing that makes felt the force of incipient form: it is, as Deleuze and Guattari might say, a bloc of movement sensation—when you experience it you can't quite say where it began or ended, but you can recognize it as a rare example of a work outdoing itself. The work continues to move you beyond its staged iteration — you can't say exactly why but it haunts you, it occupies you, evolving beyond its form-taking to create resonances that incite you to want to experience it again. It's not the *form* of the work that stays with you, it's the how of its capacity to dislodge the you that you thought you were. It's the how of the work's capacity to shift the very ground that continues to move you. Mobile architectures are one way of addressing what choreography can do when this shift occurs. I call them architectures only because there is a sense that something fleetingly collective has taken form, almost a structure but not quite. Or: that there has been a collective orchestration for a certain kind of constructing. But this is the paradox of mobile architectures: the work works when the constructing is felt not as a form in itself, but as the force of form—when the form or the structure is always already deconstructing.

Mobile architectures have the potential to surface in an infinity of ways across various movement practices, and yet they are rare to behold. This paper suggests that one thing the *Synchronous Objects* platform makes apparent is how Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000) is one of these rare instances: through complex visualizations, and especially a foregrounding of the cueing/aligning/counterpoint of the piece, *Synchronous Objects* demonstrates how *One Flat Thing, reproduced* evolves toward an architecting of movement that emerges across multi-phased surfacings of experience, creating a mobile architecture in the making.

Forsythe describes *One Flat Thing, reproduced* as a 'baroque machinery,' defining the baroque as 'the apogee of counterpoint.' For Forsythe, counterpoint refers to 'a field of action in which the intermittent and irregular coincidence of attributes between organizational elements produces an ordered interplay (2009).' Counterpoint is not a mimicry of positions. It is a folding-through of points of inflection. These points of inflection are less positions than swerves in the movement. Counterpoint catches these tendencies in the making and folds through them, fashioning the beginnings of a distributed relational field. This field in turn folds through coming counterpoints, the dance increasingly dancing itself. This, in Forsythe's terms, is a baroque machinery, a machine for creating intensive folds of movement continuously moving-through, but ultimately escaping position. Deleuze writes: 'The Baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait [*trait*]. It is always making folds. It does not invent the fold: there are folds from the East, Greek folds, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Classical... Yet the Baroque twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, fold after fold. The Baroque trait is the fold that goes to infinity' (1993: 3 *translation modified*). *One Flat Thing, reproduced* is baroque in its emphasis on counterpoint's capacity to create tendencies for aligning and cueing that in turn create folds, not just bodies folding but spacetime folding.

Counterpoint is visualized in two ways on the *Synchronous Objects* platform. It is explicitly foregrounded in the 'object' called 'The Dance,' which clearly demarcates the system of cues and alignments in *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. Here, you find a movement score which demonstrates how the danced movements engage with and respond to one another. Simultaneously, counterpoint is offered up as a transversal mechanism for experiencing the 'what else' of this particular dance through the creation of a series of other 'objects.' These 'synchronous objects' are conceived less as objects than as objectiles: temporary delimitations of activity in germ. They are visualisable opportunities for fielding the choreographic experience: graphs (Statistical Counterpoint), architectural animations (the Data fan, the Furniture System), tools (the Cue Visualiser, the Cue Abstraction Tool). Emphasizing the objects'

generative potential - both for visualising *One Flat Thing, reproduced's* architecting of potential and for use in the creation of new work, Norah Zuniga Shaw writes: 'Because we focused on the dance as a choreographic resource - rather than scoring it for the purposes of preservation - we were empowered to take this rigorous process of data collection into new creative spaces [...] to generate new possibilities for ongoing creativity and research, both in the studio and in the lab (2009).'

The *Synchronous Objects* project is replete with what Forsythe calls 'choreographic thinking.' Choreographic thinking is the activation, in the moving, of a movement of thought. It expresses itself not in language per se but as the pulses across embodiments and rhythms, the durations and spatializations that create a 'contrapuntal composition of complex relationships, patterns, and trends (Palazzi 2009).' This contrapuntal force is active not strictly in the mind or in the body, but across a bodying-with that activates spacetimes of composition. 'The biggest difficulty [...] is not consciously shaping your body, it is actually letting your body fold [...] to develop a more reactive and many-timed body as opposed to a shaped body' (Forsythe, 2000). What stands out in *One Flat Thing, reproduced* is not the shape of this or that individual body but the velocity with which an emergent field appears in contrapuntal alignment with thought in the doing. Thought in the doing is a movement in the feeling. This is not thought abstracted from movement. It is *thought in movement*, activated not solely in the body, but across the machinery itself—in the folds of the evolving architecture.

The Dance

One Flat Thing, reproduced is a volumetrics in the structuring. It is a force that moves the choreographic surface into a multi-dimensionality that alters the very notion of surface-as-ground, intercalating movement and volume into an architectural surfacing, architectural because it composes with space in complex durations of experience.

To appreciate the intensive passage from choreographed stage-space to mobile architecture in *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, you have to think the choreography as the setting into place of future iterations of complex movement propositions active in a collective individuation of spacetimes of experience. Look at the tables moving to the front of the cavernous space and see them as their own incipient movement configurations. See the tables pushing the dancers as much as the dancers pushing them. Note that the choreography is already distributed, intensively fielding body-object recompositions. See the topological choreographic surface of the dance as co-constitutive of past-future movement events cueing to create a collective individuation for the deformation of the same yet divergent multi-dimensional supple surface. See *One Flat Thing, reproduced* less as a stable table-configuration with mobile dancers than as a field-surface of mobility, replete with different velocities, including those of the objects. Note that the objects are always already morphing into propositions for movement experimentation. Note that the tables are dancing, reconfiguring, moving movement as it persons. See the choreographic environment or stage-space not as a floor holding objects in place but as a dimensionalizing mobile surface moving tabled bodies, a folding event-space calling forth series of dephasings inflecting space, extracting figures, for the event of architecting mobility.

Forsythe's choreography is replete with actual and virtual cues. He defines the cue as 'an aural or visual signal that triggers an event.' Cues do 'person,' as Arakawa and Gins might say, but they need not move through an individual body to have effect. The cue is an enabling constraint for structured improvisation opening onto the collective individuation not of an individual movement but of the body of the dance as a whole — what Arakawa and Gins would call an architectural body (2002). More than personing, cues move the surface of the choreographic field, opening it to the complexity of infra-alignments and cues not taken. 'When you stop, create silence. Do not stop individually,' Forsythe warns (2010). To move is to move as a collective. As one dancer explains, 'You get to know other people's choreography so that if you miss a cue, you move on to your next sequence, or you look at someone else waiting for that same cue and follow them (Johnson 2009).'

Too often, cues and primes are associated with a stable notion of recall. In Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, despite the emphasis of timed cueings and alignings associated with specific dancing bodies, there is no such simplistic notion of a repetition of the already-formed. The 're-produced' of *One Flat Thing, reproduced* connotes the repetition with a difference that is at the heart of each of Forsythe's stage-based choreographies. The cue

functions not as a simple tool for the memory of a rehearsed past, but as a call toward the future. Responding to cue is at once realigning and priming to future realignments.

Think of the event of cooking. You are standing at the sink, washing the lettuce, while your partner reaches into the refrigerator to get the cucumbers, reaching back at the same time to turn off the stove. With one hand, she gives you the cucumber and despite the fact that you move across to reach for the grater at the same moment as she moves to pick up a fork, you somehow do not bump into each other. It's not just that you've cooked together hundreds of times. It's that the cueing is continuously rejigging the now of movement-moving. You are both dancing the interval of the decisions as they realign your cooking bodies.

Moving through cue is landing decision. This is not a decision-from-without. Decision's cut is the more-than human force that repositions the field in the event of an occasion taking form: decision is how experience singles itself out as *this* or *that*. In the moment of decision, we know not the cue-as-such, but only the nextness of its result: movement aligning. This nextness of movement-moving recalibrates the cueing bodies even as it recomposes the environment, event-fully poising the event for future priming. In this priming, the event is not poised for the repetition of the same. It is poised, always, for difference. As Massumi warns: 'If the cue were merely recognized, and the action triggered a simple repetition, its functioning would be dangerously maladaptive (forthcoming).' Think of cooking together in a different kitchen and imagine the mess!

As the cue primes the choreographic surface for the event of difference, it is setting up the conditions for event-time. Event-time is the time of decision, the time of the cut that dephases the field toward transductive recomposition. Cues make event-time felt by subverting linear clock-time. With every cue-alignment constellation comes the uncanny meeting of the memorial in the futuristic, the time-slip of a loop where the present is tightly woven out of a dynamic line of pastness energetically entwined with a thread of futurity (Massumi, forthcoming).'

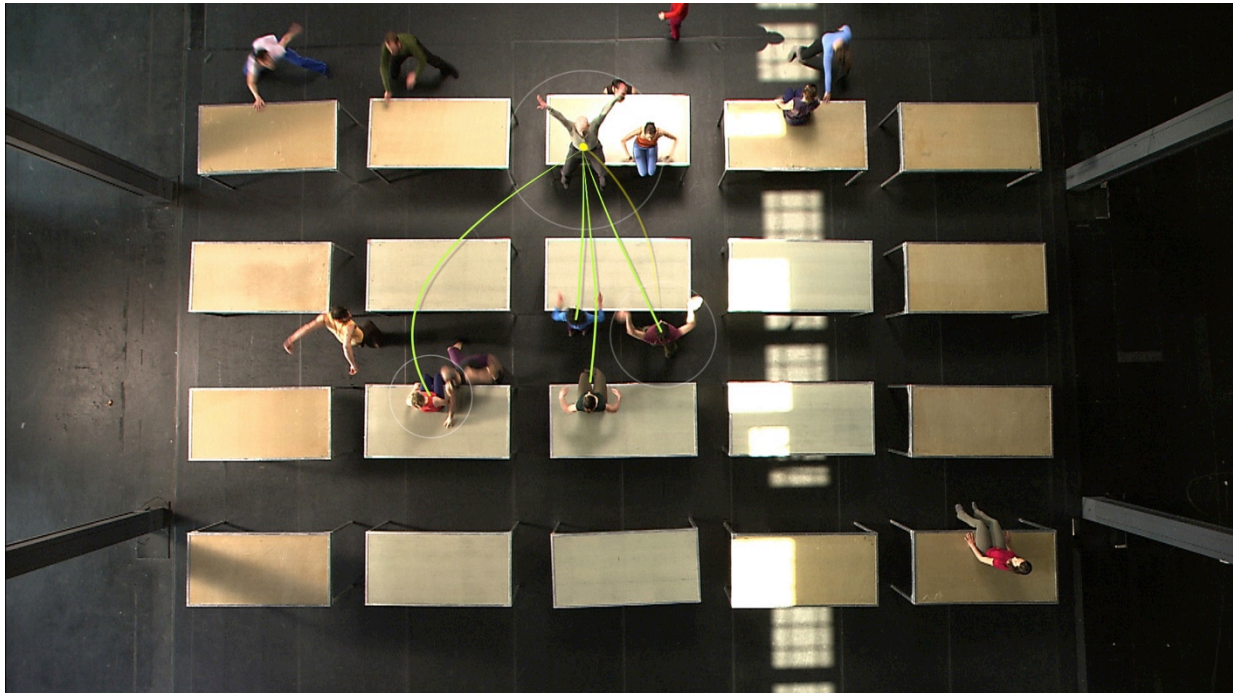
Event-time is durationally multi-phased. Every response to cue activates the future as it courses through the no-time of the decision in the present passing. No-time because the decision is immanent to the event's recomposition. The event-surface becomes thick with time-signatures. Dancers cueing through alignment move with the time of the cue's making and all the pre-existing and future-forming time-signatures in the making, all in the no-time of decision. The no-time of decision coupled with the making-time of movement-moving brings the durational surface of the event to the fore, opening the sender-receiver relation to the collective individuation of a distributed relational movement.

While cues in preparation for *One Flat Thing, reproduced* are rehearsed, in the doing they land the dance in an infinity of ways in a shifting landscape of infinite catalysed reconfiguring. Cues thus open the choreography to a making time that occasions the coming into expression of a making place, their complex orchestration across collective strata landing the dance in a time always configured anew.

Landing sites, as Arakawa and Gins define them, don't need to actually either land or site. They can travel as immanent configurations of possible worlds, tweaking the affective tonality of an event while remaining virtual. Negatively prehended, as Whitehead would say — they can be felt as virtual tendencies that have the potential to act on future reconfigurations without ever coming to the fore as actual occasions.[5] Cues also work like this. They propel tendencies that may or may not reach the surface of their articulated expression in the field of the actual. They float at the threshold of perception, they field surroundings, landing narrowly and widely, affecting, imaging, dimensionalizing. And they create paths of resistance and cohesion, propelling incipient actions even as they re-cast spacetimes of recombination. Active virtually and actually, cues move movement, and, in doing so, they catalyse event-time.

Each landing is a cue in motion. Each cue in motion is a dancing. Each such iteration of counterpoint in the dancing — the activation of a field of action that creates a coincidence of attributes generating an infinity of folds — is a proto-architecture. And each proto-architecting of choreographic thinking is an impetus for a mobile architecture in the making. This mobile architecture is never a simple iteration-as-structure of a past configuration or idea. It is created *in the moving*, moved by the enabling constraints proposed not only by the rehearsed cues that propel the

organization of the dance, but equally by the folding surfaces of the landings that never quite find their sites. The mobile architecture is itself a proposition for landing. It is less a figure than a diagrammatic praxis that marks the durational field of the dance in its eventful unfolding.



Cues, One Flat Thing, reproduced, 2009

For Forsythe, the durational field of the dance is propositional: it is configuring more than configured. This, despite the long hours of rehearsal and the complex movement vocabularies for cueing and aligning invented and studied by his excellent dancers. The choreography is configuring rather than simply configured because the choreographic field is itself continuously evolving through the cueing/aligning process. We experience the complexity of this evolution when we approach *One Flat Thing, reproduced* as an open field of distributed relational movement that operates with but also in excess of the human body: the cue lands non-locally, meeting the dancer in the between of movements-moving. The dancer cues or aligns not by stopping the movement but by engaging directly with the non-local interval of the cue as it meets movement-moving. The resulting movement moves the relation between cueing and aligning in the mode, always, of the already-mobile. The dancer does not watch, think, count, decide and then move. The cue moves the dance, and in the choreographic field's subsequent realigning, dancers find their position, continuously moving through relational posture.

The protagonist? Attention. Attention is another name for the fielding of the cue and the moving into its resulting alignment. The field is attentive. Attention is the enabling constraint of the structured improvisation that cues movement-moving. It is the non-local intensive node around which constellations of movement aligning collectively regroup.

Practice and technique are key to the creation of a dance of attention. The readiness to align of the attentive dance is what spurs the choreographic surface to come alive collectively. To cue to complex alignment in a practice of counterpoint, a body must be open to landing in more ways than one. It must attend to its tendency toward habit in order to evolve toward openness-to-invention: from technique to technicity. It must learn to respond not only to actual landings but to the virtual forces of cues that don't land. The dancer must learn to move in attention with the complexity of the cue's incipient multiplicity. The dancer's ability to align to cue with more than habitual responses to forms of cueing allows her to dance into the cue in a recalibrating of collective movement. The dancer dances this recalibration, dancing not simply her own movement but the very mobility of the choreographic surface. This

proposes a renewal of movement expressibility within the stream of movement-moving.

Movement expressibility calls forth a dance of attention that moves in open circuits, looping across non-local tendencies, feeding-forward into the multi-phasing surfaces of movement aligning. Dancing attention is dancing-with the environment cueing. It is less being attentive-to than becoming in attention-with: the dance of attention is alive with the tendencies of a mobility that can only express itself through the future-forming interval of event-time.

Attending to the dance in the event-time of structured improvisation is dancing the incipient mobile architecture of distributed relational movement. Like its dance of attention, distributed relational movement is a concept that begins to touch the non-human that is at the heart of movement-moving. At the interval where movement aligns to cueing, where the choreographic surfaces as collective individuation, the body never acts alone. The field's proprioceptive surface is agitated by incipient relationality. Relational movement's preacceleration is always already coursing through the welling event.

Since there is no before and after of total movement, the movement's relational distribution is what is at stake. How the redistributing relation moves between cues affects what will emerge as the resonant territory on the topological surface of the dance dancing itself. Some of the dance's movement is in and of the human body, certainly, but the force of its redistributive dephasing exceeds the bounds of the human, active in the non-local, non-human relation priming for collective alignment. In these complex dephasings, what moves the relation is as much the virtual as it is the actual. This is why even as complex an iteration as *Synchronous Objects* – with its many representations of what *One Flat Thing, reproduced* can look like – cannot fully map the complexity of choreography as mobile architecture. Representations function at the level of actuality. At their best, they can only peripherally deal with the push-pull of virtual potential that is part and parcel of choreography's incipient 'what else.' *Synchronous Objects* attempts to do this by foregrounding in an inventive manner the divergent modalities of Forsythe's choreography as it reemerges through a variety of synchronous spatial constellations. But no representation can, in the end, adequately attend to the durational force that makes mobile architectures come to expression. This is why it tends to be 'The Dance' that stands out most on the *Synchronous Objects* website. For 'the Dance' not only creates a visualization of a form, it makes felt how mobility is architected.

At its best, architecture is a diagrammatic praxis that brings to the fore the force taking form of what Spuybroek calls 'an original curve' and defines as the surface of action that is always also the surface of perception (Spuybroek 2004: 7). Cues as they actualize in alignment are an example of the bringing into confluence of perception and action. The cue affects the field of action in a perceptual sync-up that moves the body. It catalyses alignments that themselves create new priming opportunities at the interval where action and perception are one. These alignments return in varied iterations as refrains of activity that territorialize certain systems of perception.

In aligning to cue, what catalyses is the original curve of relational attention. This dance of attention is a collective enunciation of a tendency toward relational resonances rather than individual positioning. Aligning creates resonant territories not only of bodies but of volumes, diagrammatic surfaces in the making, enabling constraints for collective becoming.

The body's position in the field of relational alignment is more than a pre-constituted posture. It is the proto-architectural, the diagrammatic how of the then-now of movement-moving. It is always collective and, as such, relationally distributed, proto-architectural because already mobilizing into the force of a volumetric taking form. You don't strictly align to a rehearsed position, you don't align to a person, you align to the mobility of the architecture of the dance dancing you. You dance its volume, the quality of its coming into itself, as much or more than you dance its position or form. You align to the relational complexity of cues as they dance the environment reconfiguring. You move-with the topological surface of experience, moving the environment that persons, activating the relation.

The choreography of *One Flat Thing, reproduced* proposes modes of entry into the collective movement of a dancing surface that is inherently compositional. The dancers co-compose an event that in turn postures them. Their bodies are primed. But in this future-past vectorization of the surface welling toward a mobile architecture, it is not only the

dancing body that is primed. The whole spacetime of distributed relational movement is at the ready, already reconfiguring in a tending-toward-cueing. The thigh-tabletop, the table-spine, poised for recomposition. What is composing is the very between, the interval that activates each of these becoming-assemblages. What is composing is event-time, not time as separate from moving bodies, but time as collectively embodied duration, rhythmically attending to the dance.

PART 2: Participatory Ecologies

To move from a choreography of collective orchestration for a reiterative event such as *One Flat Thing, reproduced* to the choreographing of a participatory environment in the context of art involves the deployment of a new set of concepts as well as a tweaking of what choreography can do. This is a move already undertaken by William Forsythe in his shift toward choreographic objects for participatory installation events. In an orchestrated choreographic event for multiple iteration such as *One Flat Thing, reproduced*, movement is moved from within the performance itself, architecting a field of collective mobility that proposes an incipient architecting of a force of form that exceeds the bounds of the actual choreographic event. The question is how or whether participatory events for movement composition such as art installations are also capable of producing mobile architectures.

When the event moves out of the theatre into the arena of participatory installation work with the idea to activate collective movement, a choreographic object is often necessary. The object here functions not as a thing-in-itself but as a force of form that generates complex patterns in an ecology that touches on the everyday while moving beyond it into the time of the event. With or without an object as proposition for the event of movement composition, key is to generate within the field of the art event the conditions for a tweaking of attention that moves beyond that of the habituated art spectator. This poses a choreographic challenge, for these events cannot be choreographed in advance. They rely on a generative choreographing in the doing, spurred by an emergent collectivity.

In 2004, I began work on a movement experiment/art installation entitled *Folds to Infinity*, a 2-phased fabric-based exploration of how textiles move us. Phase 1, *Slow Clothes*, is composed of cut and serged fabric based on pattern designs that lend themselves to all kinds of garments when connected to each other. Each piece is singular both in its cut and in the placement of buttons, button-holes, magnets, hooks and eyes and can be attached to or paired with any other piece to create garments or environments of the participant's making.



Folds to Infinity / Slow Clothes (Photo Credit: Bianca Scliar)

Phase 1 tends toward surface folds, layerings that are thin and sediment-like, though the magnets' inherent attraction to multiple stickings does create a complexity of folding that already tends toward volumetric bunching. Phase 2, entitled *Volumetrics*, connects to Phase 1 but is based more specifically on the idea of volumes, generating foldings that are thick and bunched. Where Phase 1 plays with colour, the fabrics chosen for their chromatic weaves, Phase 2 is black, the emphasis on textural subtleties. Another difference is that *Volumetrics* is not cut from pre-conceived patterns that, in their shape, already call forth garment-potential. Phase 2 is thought as a supplement to Phase 1 that thickens the sediment, building out from under its interweaving layers. Each piece of *Volumetrics* is more-or-less a rectangle and is comprised of button-holes with elasticized string pulled through them and toggles for adjustment of the strings, as well as multiple magnets, snaps and zippers. To play with *Volumetrics*, toggles are pulled or loosened along the elasticized string, or gotten rid of altogether; zippers are opened or closed; snaps are multiply connected on a single piece of fabric or across pieces. In this fabric collection, the flatness of the body-surface is put into question, as is the idea that a garment layers directly on the human frame. The emphasis in Phase 2 is on the ontogenetic qualities of shaping: *Volumetrics* is conceived as a machine for creating volumes.



Volumetrics (Photo Credit: RT Simon)

Slow Clothes and *Volumetrics* are conceived as choreographic objects for the exploration of what a body can do at the productive interval between dressing and architecting.

To activate a mobile architecture depends on a series of enabling constraints. An enabling constraint is a setting in place of a series of conditions that foster a limiting of the field of experience even while they allow the incipient event to remain open to invention. Another name for structured improvisation, enabling constraints enable

precision of technique in an open field of experimentation. Enabling constraints for mobile architectures include inventing techniques for collective alignments that evolve beyond pure movement habituation. These techniques can begin with an object but must find creative ways of transducing the object into a proposition for the collective individuation of a distributed relational movement. Once again, technique must become technicity.

In *Folds to Infinity*, the objectness itself – the fabric’s texture and colour, the shape of the buttons, the geometries of the patterns, the elasticity of the cords, the surprise of the magnets – is the first constraint. The choreographic object activates a limit, becoming an attractor for a certain kind of collective approach. The diversity of bright colour and luminous texture, for instance, in *Slow Clothes*, immediately attracts a certain kind of openness in the participant, especially in children. The magnets have a similar effect, inciting a playful excitement that seems to undo the participant of the habitual self-consciousness participatory art events can foster. As attractors, the magnets in *Slow Clothes* and *Volumetrics* are examples of little machinic assemblages that turn the fabrics into more-than object. They assist in tuning the *Folds to Infinity* object toward its propositional nature, emphasizing that this is less an ‘artwork’ than a choreographic invitation for the activation of a collective dance of attention.



Slow Clothes, Montreal 2008. (Photo Credit: Sandra Bélanger)

Participatory ecologies such as *Folds to Infinity* propose to make felt the mobility of the concept of choreography beyond the collective body of the dancer. For a mobile architecture to emerge out of the process, the proposition, as mentioned above, has to exceed both the object-in-itself and the body-in-itself. Seen as two instances of the same conceptual grouping, the object and the body are anathema to mobile architectures precisely because they delimit the event according to pre-constituted interiorities. It is therefore incumbent on the event as it unfolds that

all pre-constituted constituents be transformed into propositions. In *Folds to Infinity*, a key enabling constraint to open the object toward its propositional force or prime involves creating modes of access or entry that incite a collective individuation. If a collective individuation emerges, what can result is the dephasing of the art event into an experimentation with collaboration, for instance. In such instances where a transduction occurs that brings art into the field of individuation, what emerges is an incipient choreography. This incipient choreography is inherently collective.[8]

Key is to maintain the balance between the active constraints built into the singular event proposition and the open system of its deployment. Mobile architectures never result from a posture of 'anything goes,' but nor do they emerge from strict replays of individual or object-oriented scenarios dedicated to predictable outcomes.

To turn the object into a choreographic proposition, the object must become diagrammatic. This means that the object has to form a series with the distributed relational movement of the event, opening itself to the event's vacuoles of potential.

Take two different *Slow Clothes* events. The first took place in March 2008 at the Society for Art and Technology (SAT) in Montreal. The set-up was complex: a magnetic assemblage of plastic tubes and fabric constellations covering approximately nine hundred square feet. The environment was set up through groupings of tonalities of colour to create a forest-like setting of fabric composition.[8] In addition to choreographing the actual compositions such that the fabric could easily be touched and moved, much thought was given to the way participants would enter and move through the wider event-space of the gallery. The idea was that how people entered would affect how they would continue to move through the installation and create with it.

With this in mind, we set up a single initial entry-point into the large space so that all participants would be funnelled toward the far left of the installation where the darker colours – greens and greys - congregated on and around sculptures beckoning to the wider constellation. [9] Upon entering into this secondary arena, participants had three options. They could move into the space in the most direct manner, which would siphon them toward the greens, from whence they would likely wander into the far-side of the room where tones of orange gave way to a large orange velvet couch where they could comfortably sit and view the unfolding of the event from a safe but still enfolding distance. Alternately, they might be attracted to the open center of the space where all colours came together. A move in this direction, however, rather than giving immediate access to the central space of the installation, landed the participant in front of a warped transparent screen hanging at eye-level.



Slow Clothes, Montreal 2008, (Photo Credit: Sandra Bélanger)

This screen was conceived as a velocity-prime, affecting not only the speed of entry into the event but the very appearing of the installation. We suspected that rather than simply ducking under this space-undulating screen, some participants might pause in front of it, taken aback by a certain vertiginous realigning of the event-space. Participants entering this way might find the posture of their engagement altered. The third option was to walk toward the right of the installation in a beeline toward the wine. Moving this way, the participant would likely not even notice the screen (or the dark greens on the far left), focused as they would be on the refreshment-attractor, the reds and browns at the far-right end of the installation appearing only at the threshold of their perception, if at all. Each of these modes of entry, conceived as enabling constraints toward affective tunings of the event in the moving, were techniques not only to alter how the installation emerged for participants but also to explore how a decisional cut changes the experience of participation.

As the participant moved through the “forest” and began to play with the fabric, or as the fabric magnetically caught the participants’ belt or metallic buttons and attached itself to him, the work began to unfold into its generative architecting. For the magnetic surround from whence the collection was hung was itself an architecture, but not one that was meant to hold in place: the suppleness of the architecture and its magnetic attractors were conceived to facilitate the architecting of a relational environment..

Slow Clothes (detail), Montreal 2008, Photo Credit: Sandra Bélanger

By the end of the event, a relational architecture had indeed begun to appear, in the form of an enormous spider-web. The event had created its own choreography – replete with dancing human-textile sculptures in the midst of the growing spider-web – tuning the choreographic object toward a mobile architecture. *Folds to Infinity* had morphed in a way that would affect future enabling constraints for architecting movement.



Slow Clothes, Montreal 2008. (Photo Credit: Brian Massumi)

Another Kind of Play

Second event: November 2008, McCord Museum, Montreal. In an effort to create a new magnetic architecture for the textiles that wouldn't depend on hanging wire from the ceiling (the museum forbade any kind of hanging set-up) a very different installation was created for this second iteration of *Slow Clothes*. This time, rather than hanging from fragile plastic tubing and metal wire, the fabric was draped over industrial-looking steel racks, creating almost anthropomorphic chromatic shapes.

The installation was pristine, the colour startling, and the shapes seductive. What I didn't immediately realize, however, was that the museum was having its effect: the collection looked more polished, the racks lending it a professional aspect, but the architecture as a whole was far less supple. The collection looked contained by preexisting space. I worried about how to get the participants going since I had little control over the participants' modes of entry into the event-space and since the collection looked so much like an art object. I needn't have been concerned. Before I knew it, the participants had taken possession of the fabric, their rich and varied experience with textiles - this was part of a wider textile exhibition and therefore attracted many participants with extensive backgrounds in sewing and design - an obvious entry-point into the concept at work in *Folds to Infinity*. They were immediately engaged but on a different level, wanting to know more about the craft of the work: about the buttons, about the cuts, the patterns, the provenance of the fabric. I found myself enthusiastically involved in the object *qua* object: dressing and undressing, we talked about the difference between Indian and Chinese silk, between the

plastics used to make buttons of the early 1920s compared to those of the 1950s, about pattern cuts and the intensive passage between shapes and volumes.



Slow Clothes, McCord Museum 2008. (Photo Credit: RT Simon)

More than in other *Slow Clothes* events – in Brazil, in Berlin and in Montreal – these were participants for whom the cut of the cloth was already an affordance for the creation of certain specific shapes - they saw shirts and dresses and pants in the making. Where earlier participants might not, upon seeing the pieces, immediately see how they could be transformed from their two-dimensional cut into a three-dimensional piece of clothing, this was a group for whom the textiles - their cuts, their qualities, the placing of the buttons, magnets and hooks, carried meaning. The object itself was replete with information. The result: they moved through the fabric with a strong sense of technique. They knew, for instance, how to pair pieces, how to invent modes of fastening with the magnetic jewellery I had fashioned (composed of wires, magnets and buttons). And so they turned to the composition with a strong sense of what the fabric proposition could do. Unlike earlier exhibitions, they also took more time with each piece, examining the constellations of buttons, admiring the finishing, discussing amongst themselves how a single cut could create more than one garment or could fashion the garment in more than one way. And in contemplative slowness, they began to invent, turning the magnetic jewelry into corsets for the creation of hanging fabric designs, playing with the forms the folds could take, pairing pieces of fabric to create complex garments never before attempted. More than anywhere else the collection has toured, they experimented with how a body expresses itself in the dressing. They took literally the proposition that this is a textile collection for the dressing of all bodies, even bodies yet to be invented. And they made exquisite configurations. But they barely moved. They mostly worked in pairs, carefully designing, placing piece against piece, playing with colour. They wanted to know what their garments looked like and they were extremely interested in the idea that someday this collection would be presented as a proposition for the making of actual pieces of clothing. They took *Slow Clothes* at its word, engaging in a slow dance of still-moving dressing bodies.

This was a successful event - if participation and enjoyment are markers for success - but it remained at the level of the object. I left this exhibition with a renewed sense of what the object could do, but without a sense of having been able to activate an incipient choreography that exceeded the object. The push-pull of a mobile architecture in the making was missing.

And so I began work on *Volumetrics*, Phase 2 of *Folds to Infinity*. And as I did so, I realized that at the McCord Museum I fell into my own trap: I created a structure. And the very same structure remained at the end, denuded but not transformed. We must never underestimate the power of existing structures to predetermine the proto-architectural field.

Choreography as mobile architecture is anathema to any kind of setting into place of ideal conditions that transcend event-time, be they those of structure, of object or of individual. Choreography as mobile architecture emerges instead with the diagrammatic force of ideas in the materializing. It has to do with force taking form. All incipient architecting of mobility is already a volumetrics, an intercalating of surfaces and tendencies. As mobile architecture, choreography activates the volumes, turning the surface onto itself, making felt the coming into appearance of the event's own vertiginous movements, incipient movements that stay with us long after the particular occasion of their coming to expression has unraveled.

Techniques for the Everyday

While movement techniques for the stage might seem to be primarily focused on the individual body outside of the everyday, and techniques for participatory installations might seem to emphasize a group body (the subway, the sidewalk, the classroom), in fact both build on the associated milieu of relation. There is no arabesque that does not immediately and significantly entail the enveloping of a milieu into the movement: the air, the time of day, the quality of the space, the last arabesque, all of these shape this arabesque. Every movement is a relational movement. Whether choreographing for the stage or for participatory movement events, what must be honed is therefore a distributed relational body.

One of the ways of becoming attuned to distributed relational movement is to become sensitized to the collective attunements activated by cues and alignments in everyday movement, thus learning to work with the array of decisions that wider field of movement, human and non-human. This involves working with a modality of attention that lurks below reflective consciousness. For it is impossible, even in the most organized choreographic process, to map-out every possible alignment. A choreographer of participatory ecologies, let alone a choreographer for the proscenium of the theatre, cannot predict how the environment will mutate. Much can be gleaned from participating in moving sidewalks. As with the cooking example, it is striking how rarely rapidly moving bodies run into one another or into open doors, garbage cans, or bus stops as they walk on busy streets. In preparation for a participatory choreographic event, time on the sidewalk is key.

Tentative Constructings Toward a Holding in Place

When an event architects a mobility that outdoes it, the relationship between body and spacetime has fundamentally shifted. No longer do we have the human at the centre. Instead, we have priming-for-movement, cues, alignments, inflections, vacuoles of expression. We have an architecture that persons, and a moving that choreographs. This is not to discount the human dancing body, but to open it to its relational potential as a participatory node in the milieu of movement. It is to emphasize that there is no outside of movement, that movement already moves and that we are moved by it and move it on the topological surface of its deformation. Movement is already an architecting. It is already landing, already making space, making time. Configuring, it individuates bodies-in-movement that express a collectivity of alignment that resolves, often, on a singular body, but also moves, always and incessantly, across the distributed milieu that is choreography's architecting of relational movement.

Mobile architectures: 'tentative constructings toward a holding in place' (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 47). Architectures, in the words of Arakawa and Gins, that comes into their own with the "ever-on-the-move body" in the tense of the

tendentially indeterminate. Only nomads, Arakawa and Gins argue, have taken such architecture seriously. Perhaps not. Perhaps choreographers have been inventing modes of architecting all along, creating out of everyday movements to make felt how the collective individuation of participatory ecologies is always already architecturally inflected. Perhaps they have always already sensed that landing sites are dispersive, tangential, productive and forceful, and must not be confined to pre-existing or finalized structures of repetition. Perhaps choreographers have always already known that difference erupts no matter how often you rehearse, how often you practice counterpoint, how often you step onto the stage.

In the aligning of choreography to mobile architecture we have an opening toward the notion that 'space is the result of the surface's operation' (Semper in Benjamin 2004: 345). The surface's operation: the original curve where the mobile topology of collective individuation attends to the tangential volumetrics of an environment for architecting.

Notes

[1] There is a slightly different version of this paper is a chapter in Manning 2013.

[2] The second phase of the Motion Bank Project, this time foregrounding the choreographic work of Deborah Hay, will be launched in late 2013. See <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/>

[3] I have also written extensively on the choreographic object in Manning 2013.

[4] *Synchronous Objects* is a substrate of the wider Motion Bank project initiated by William Forsythe. As the first instance of Motion Bank, and as a initiatory collective project between dancers, architects, mathematicians, computer scientists etc. *Synchronous Objects* is a remarkable feat of creative scoring and choreographic thinking. As a website, however, it doesn't always reach its highest potential. The web is an extremely difficult medium for generating process, and the digital in many ways is too set in its computational ways to produce much of the potential we see active and coursing through the dance itself — which is why 'The Dance' (which merges the digital with the analog to bring out the potential in each) is by far the most alluring 'object' on the site. Other objects that work well include, in my opinion, those that are dedicated to creative use, such as 'The Movement Material Index' which shows detailed close-ups of the dance sometimes performed by more than one dancer in slightly different ways, providing rich material for practitioners to work with. While the rest of the objects are interesting visually, they don't always incite the question of the 'what else' that is their mandate, deactivated as they can be by the representational status they tend to garner. For this reason, I found I appreciated the work most when exhibited by Norah Zuniga Shaw as a participatory installation at the International Symposium of Electronic Art 2010 in Germany. In this context, participants could watch 'The Dance,' compose with a counterpoint tool (a large movement-based proposition set up as a participatory installation), look at the data stream on one computer while other computers showed various visualizations (objects), all the while interacting with one another. This, it seems to me, better created the conditions for the collective engagement with choreographic thought that is the mandate of the project: to rethink what else choreography can look like.

[5] There are three kinds of landing sites (each of them interweaving) outlined in Arakawa and Gins' work. The landing site described above would fall most closely into the realm of the 'imaging landing site' - there are also 'perceptual landing sites' and 'dimensionalizing landing sites.' (Arakawa & Gins, 2002).

[6] William Forsythe and Norah Zuniga Shaw describe alignment this way: 'Essential to the counterpoint of the dance is a system of relationships that the company refers to as alignments. Alignments are short instances of synchronization between dancers in which their actions share some, but not necessarily all, attributes. Manifested as analogous shapes, related timings, or corresponding directional flows, alignments occur in every moment of the dance and are constantly shifting throughout the group. [...] Other words the company uses to describe this phenomenon include hook-ups, agreements and isometries. Within the thousands of alignments in the choreography, approximately 200 can be understood as a subset called sync-ups. These are moments in the choreography when a dancer's task is to briefly join with another individual or group (2009).'

[7] This collective experience occurs not only in so-called “participatory” installations. It has nothing to do with an object or a genre of art. The only difference is the vocabulary I might use to touch on the more-than. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6, Manning 2013. For a more detailed engagement with how painting can activate the more-than of experience in the making, see my chapters on Australian Aboriginal art in *Relationships: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Manning, 2009).

[8] A video of the event can be found at www.erinmovement.com

[9] These sculptures are made of different gauges of fencing metal and fabric. Pictures can be found at www.erinmovement.com under “artwork” then “sculpture.”

[10] This was part of the proposition for the final iteration of *Folds to Infinity* entitled *Stitching Time - A Collective Fashioning* (June-September 2012, Sydney Biennale).

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