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## Excavating Genres

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As screendance in its institutionalized form—and more specifically in its nascent academic form—becomes historicized, and as that knowledge subsequently informs the practice, the field benefits from theoretical disruptions that question and disturb the received knowledge, replacing or augmenting it with alternative modes of inquiry. In this instance it is my goal to put forth ideas that counter the narrative of screendance as monolithic and without distinction as to genres, medium specificity, or identifiable differences that flow from formal or substantive approaches and concerns. By examining screendance alongside the structure of other art forms, I intend to suggest that the discourse around screendance would be made stronger by excavating and identifying its generic sources, which would in turn push screendance into a broader and more vital interdisciplinary dialog.

Screendance is a diasporic culture, one that constantly migrates through host cultures and assumes various vernacular elements, while often struggling to maintain both its empirical elements and the identity of its “cultures of origin.” At the core of this dynamic is the fact that the techniques of representing images on screen also flow from pre-existing genres, and so have material specificity that is readable as well. Both dance’s and media’s contingent origins thus conspire to create meaning that emerges from the cumulative effect of their grafting: traversing both temporal and physical geographies, dance and media absorb something of the landscape and culture of each, thereby generating communities of practice that share both common languages and stylistic elements. These “imagined communities”<sup>1</sup> exist across international borders and are linked via a diasporic family tree that may be read through the cultural objects they create. It seems accurate to claim, finally, that if both disciplines that make up the whole of a screendance have traceable affiliations with genres, then we should also be able to name the resulting genre into which the new work falls. In other words, screendance may be thought of as the product of a lineage that can be articulated in various ways, including: the provenance of the dance language within the work; the materiality and history of the media by which it is created; and also the complex cultural diaspora of its makers and its references.

That is not to say that genres are necessarily fixed, however; indeed, it is my observation that as dance is mediated within the site specificity of camera space and further by the material cultures of film, video or digital technologies, it tends to assume the characteristics of that mediation. In other words, in the diaspora of dance through the culture of media, dance becomes more like film or video than vice versa. Dance conforms to the space of media, to its pace, to the patterns of viewership and the way in which media objects are consumed. From a critical viewpoint, meanwhile, the discursive language of dance tends to persist, as the genre’s normative viewership is most often within the context of a dance audience. The way in which dance on film or screendance tends to be discussed and critiqued thus depends on the point of origin of the *speaker*. If dance and its diaspora are privileged by the speaker/viewer, the language of dance will be the currency by which

the work is critiqued. If the speaker/viewer privileges film or video (and its diaspora), it is likely that the language of the moving image will lead the discourse away from issues of kinesthetic and/or choreographic observations.

In the last decade at least, the screen has clearly become a well-understood site for dance. However, it is always a site that is doubled: the initial layer is the built environment or landscape in which the body (dance) is located; the secondary layer is the media by which the performance is inscribed, bonded into one screenic image. In short, the visual culture of screen-based dance cannot be separated from the signifiers present within the frame itself and in the device by which that frame is created. Meaning flows from the entire image as well as its fragmented parts, often exposing the numerous tensions between the two and the competing desires of each.

On screen, dance seems simultaneously to resist and to adapt to the space of media, to its pace, to the patterns of viewership and to the way in which media objects are consumed. In this capitulation, one tension that arises is the way in which the language used to describe the co-habitation of dance and media tends to also describe a service-based relationship. For instance, the often-used phrase, "*dance for camera*" (a common festival title)<sup>2</sup> implies that it is dance that is being staged at the pleasure of the camera, for the express purpose of the camera's desire.<sup>3</sup> It also implies that the camera is a spectator or receiver of the dancing body as opposed to a space in which dance flows with the agency of a collaborator. Thinking laterally, it would seem odd to use a phrase such as *acting for camera* to describe a similar hybrid, for instance a "narrative film," unless it was in the context of a course on the practice. *Dance for camera* does not imply a course, but rather a course of action, a privileged performance made specifically for the viewership of the camera-eye.

The use of the word *for*—as opposed to *with*—in this regard is fraught with meaning. It implies a slavish relationship in which it is the camera *for which* all is performing, a hierarchical suppression of dance as a method of communication with its own agency and desire and a casting of camera space as a kind of colonial space for which dance is simply another subjugated citizen. In this case, both dance and the camera ultimately suffer. Indeed, these linguistic constructions tend to reinforce the difficulties in critiquing such hybrid forms, as they maintain a material binary by continually re-stating their cultural and material affiliations. Dance/camera, camera/dance: either way, such terminology allows for the viewer/consumer/critic/theorist to attach their gaze on either solely dance or solely the camera, virtually piercing and eliding the hybridity of the form before their eyes.

Some of the information needed to unpack and describe individual works of screendance may be found in the terminology and language offered by its makers and presenters. To fully realize difference as well as to construct a narrative of related screendance communities and genres requires a closer reading of the practice, as well as some knowledge of the intent of the authors. In his book *On Criticism*, philosopher and critic Noël Carroll points out:

One very important access road to the intentions of artists has to do with the fact that artists produce works that belong to acknowledged categories. That is, in general, artworks belong to categories—like genres, styles, movements, periods, oeuvres, etc.—and/or they have lineages and traditions. We can locate the pertinent kind or combination of kinds to which the artwork belongs by, among other ways, calculating the number and salience of features that the work being criticized has in common with members of the prospective class of artworks which we suspect it belongs. (72)<sup>4</sup>

Following Carroll's logic of artistic intention, it is clear that by cataloguing the relative attributes of artworks within a greater context, we can both derive further meaning and also partake of a larger cultural dialogue catalyzed by each work of art. However, genres do not readily announce themselves, and this is where the process of excavation must be undertaken. While the quantitative methodology that Carroll cites is integral to the way in which the art world (as well as the world of film, music and other practices) functions as an evolving intellectual community, screendance has been resistant to most efforts to articulate its genres and categories of practice, even given the thoughtful and considered attempts to do so over the last decade.<sup>5</sup>

Manifesting precisely this desire for a more rigorous viewing of the field, dance scholar Sherril Dodds published *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art* in 2001, in which she carefully articulated a number of screendance genres. Dodds quotes screendance makers and directors who point out influences for their work that come from sources outside the dance world. She notes, for instance, that the director "[David] Hinton's fascination with the possibilities of movement on screen does not derive from a dance tradition, but from popular action films" (25).<sup>6</sup> In this case, Hinton appears in a spectrum of artists whose work flows from very particular genres with equally particular esthetic and material concerns. It subsequently falls to those who consume and circulate the resulting work to further articulate the meaning of those concerns when they are attached to a particular dance vocabulary in a film or video hybrid.<sup>7</sup>

Dodd's book articulates theoretical paradigms that have gone largely unchallenged since its publication. In a recent essay called *Does Screendance Need to Look Like Dance*, however, Claudia Kappenberg speaks back to Dodds, suggesting a number of alternatives to parsing the field into genres and noting that "a limited vocabulary for the discussion and critique of such work has continued to tie screendance practitioners and ambassadors to the pre-existing disciplines" that Dodds articulates (91).<sup>8</sup> It may be that the screendance community lacked sufficient critical mass to mount a response to Dodd's challenges for a higher degree of criticality; regardless, though, as the practice has grown in the last decade and as more exhibition venues have appeared, there has been a persistent resistance to adopting the same rigor found in the larger art world by which the community creates a vocabulary to articulate its process and practice.

In live dance, on the other hand, though citations of genre may not be common, they are certainly present. In dance historian Sally Banes' *Terpsichore in Sneakers* (1977), she notes as early as the introduction that:

When Yvonne Rainer started using the term "post-modern" in the early 1960's to categorize the work she and her peers were doing at the Judson Church and other places, she meant it primarily in a chronological sense. Theirs was the generation that came after modern dance, which was itself originally an inclusive term applied to nearly any theatrical dance that departed from ballet or popular entertainment. By the late 1950's modern dance had refined its styles and its theories, and had emerged as a recognizable dance genre. (xiii)<sup>9</sup>

The articulation of dance by forces both inside and external to the creative circle of practitioners aids us in honing the field into sharp-edged focus in regard to how works of dance circulate and how they are received culturally. It also allows for critics such as Banes and Michael Kirby to refer to "the theory of post-modern dance" as early as 1975.<sup>10</sup> And it allows for artists working with other methodologies to distance themselves from the theory

of post-modern dance in order to articulate their own theories and practice. Indeed, Banes (in *Terpsichore*) goes on to parse dance into even smaller and more precise subgenres of practice and to recount the manifestos of each. These lineages and subgenres of dance are primarily embodied via a dancer's training and performance histories, as well as more overt political choices that that dancer may make as to her affiliations with a particular area of practice. By indexing the salient aspect of dance as they pertain to genre and categories, Banes helps to create a discourse about the culture of dance itself.

Thinking laterally, and taking as an example a common art world methodology, both video and performance art were part of a movement in the mid 1960's that was catalyzed by concerns about the body as a site of resistance and by new technologies of representation and witnessing. Both were originally attached to a master narrative stemming from the Fluxus movement, among others, until a critical mass of practitioners began to name their aims and concerns and to contextualize their creative output in more specific terms.<sup>11</sup> Early video art in many ways mimicked the practice of experimental film, yet in articulating both the material and contextual differences *from film*, video artists and curators were able to begin a discourse specific to the desires of video as an independent art form. Performance art was in its early days often termed "body art," thereby clearly locating the substance or material of the practice within the site of corporeality, inseparable from the body itself. And while body art or performance art might be confused with dance or theater, it was evidently the intent of its practitioners to distance themselves from those narratives and traditions, thus creating a space in which to address their own concerns.

If aggregate areas of art practice are delineated by master categories and further articulated by genres and subgenres, then by the same logic, "dance" is a master category that includes the genres of modern, ballet, tap, contact, and so on. Each of these genres creates its own literature, both by theory and by practice, which defines it as separate from other genres. The literacy of each is thus more or less refined by its practitioners and also by its critics (and historians), who collaborate in articulating its provenance and its relationships to other categories and genres of other forms of expression. Though screendance (known also by its various other titles: video dance, dance for camera, etc.) defines itself *in name* and through festivals, screenings and touring programs, there remains a considerable lack of literacy and scholarship or critical writing about the particular and differing formal and content-based approaches to the practice. In its stead, there is a reliance on shorthand and inferred meaning via the numerous names by which the practice articulates itself.

For instance, while the term *video dance* is used to describe a number of activities involving dance and the moving image, it is, from a linguistic perspective, both quite specific and simultaneously vague. The term implies that the method of recording involves a particular technology (video), which has a documented history both as a sub-set, of the visual arts (video art), and as a technology that flows from a particular historical moment (the mid-1960s). Those particularities place whatever may be referred to as *video dance* in a specific discourse situated in the continuum of the visual arts and a larger discourse around video culture in general. At the same time, the referent *dance* makes the term less precise. "Dance" tells us very little about the provenance of the movement vocabulary, its place within the history of choreographic strategies, or its politics in general. It does not name its place in one of the many specific techniques or schools of movement nor whether it is contemporary or modern, historical or ballet. Therefore, while *video dance* is a term that is

widely applied, the term ultimately does little to illuminate the nature of the work in question. Moreover, other terms are equally misleading or misrepresent the actual materiality of the hybrid of dance and its mediated image in common usage. To move forward with this argument, then, I will restate the idea that, like dance itself, *screendance* is a master category with numerous genres and subgenres flowing from it.

Screendance, being a hybrid practice, contains at least two disciplines: dance and screen-based, technologically mediated methods of rendering. In this capacity, it is an overarching master category: screendance implies that the endpoint of the endeavor is a mediated image of dance on a screen, any dance on any screen. Indeed, by design and intent, screendance does *not* imply the materiality of rendering, nor does it describe a particular genre of dance practice. It could be shot in film or video, or manifest in a camera-less digital environment. The choreographic language of the work could be modern, post-modern, jazz, ballet or any other kind of dance. In order to particularize a discussion about a work of screendance, then, it is necessary to further articulate both form and content—both the method of rendering as well as the choreographic language. In this way it becomes possible to extrapolate meaning from the common and/or accepted shorthand that is used to describe a range of screendance practices.

We know that the category of visual art has numerous genres and subgenres. Film has genres, dance has genres; therefore, progressing logically, hybrids of any two of the above would result in both a genre *and* have beneath them numerous subgenres. By virtue of the fact that screendance is already a hybrid it may be thought of, then, as either a category or a subgenre of two or more parent genres. As in the case of film and other categories or parent genres, screendance would then propagate its own subgenres as well. These subgenres, given enough of a critical mass may then become a *movement*. Movements in turn catalyze new genres and are the product of a group of artists who agree on certain general principles and create both artwork and literature that support those principles.

For an example of these phenomena in the film world, we can look to *Dogma 95*, a manifesto-driven provocation and movement that included the Danish director Lars Von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg and others who formed the Dogma film collective. The group produced what was called the “Vows of Chastity,” a list of ten prescriptions in exacting language that described what a filmmaker could and could not do in order for the film to be considered a *Dogma 95* film.<sup>12</sup> As with most manifestos, it had a short-lived but intense existence. However, the manifesto catalyzed a movement that spread beyond film circles into other areas of practice including the screendance community. Shortly after the “Vows of Chastity” appeared in print, Katrina McPherson, Litza Bixler and Deveril Garraghan, dance filmmakers based in Great Britain, responded to the *Dogma 95* manifesto with their own screendance-specific manifesto, *Dogma Dance*:

YES to the development of dance technique for film—YES to a sharing of knowledge between dance and film—YES to the development of choreographic structure in film—YES to technology which aids rather than hinders—YES to human dancers—YES to the creation of a new genre—YES to safe dancers—YES to the encouragement of dance filmmakers—YES to a new hybrid form.

NO to unsafe dancers—NO to the primacy of equipment and technology over human creativity—NO to the breakdown of choreographic structure—NO to purposeless hierarchies—No to unbalanced wages—NO to the dominance of film in Dance film.<sup>13</sup>

*Dogma Dance's* stated intent was to "offer a challenge to dance-film-makers to make their work within the frame-work of 'artistic and production rules,' evolved to encourage the radical development of the medium and the individual's own approach to making work."<sup>14</sup> Illustrating their provocation was a curated screening in London called *Under Your Skin*.<sup>15</sup> The *Dogma Dance* manifesto has echoes of numerous other such statements of purpose in all areas of arts practice, most particularly Yvonne Rainer's NO manifesto from 1965, but also manifestos by the Futurists and other twentieth century movements that utilized such texts to both provoke and catalyze artistic production within a narrowly defined set of parameters.<sup>16</sup>

Manifestos and genres are a way to initiate the organization of data into manageable systems of intellectualized units. The early part of the twentieth century saw countless manifestos from the Dadaists, Surrealists, Futurists, Fluxus artists and others, which by mid-century had given way to a more coherent naming of styles and genres. Styles and genres such as Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and later Video Art and Performance, had traceable lineages that led back to the manifestos of the earlier part of the century. The manifestos of *Dogma Dance* and others mentioned above extend the legacy of artists defining their communities and subsequent experimentation. Screendance, however, as previously noted, has vigorously resisted the kind of scrutiny that comes from naming styles, genres and approaches to an area of practice.

Ironically, naming such affiliations does not necessarily close down a practice, but rather tends to open it up to new ideas and manifestations. The art historian Henry Sayre refers to the post-modern avant-garde as an art "founded upon contingency, multiplicity and polyvocality." That is to say that even lacking a coherent and/or recognizable style, art works made in the post-modern era are recognizable and "eminently amenable to a formalist approach [of critique]" (xii).<sup>17</sup> Screendance, being a hybrid and performance-based form, would certainly fit under Sayre's description. If we are to include screendance in the discourse of post-modern art practice, however, the task then is to begin to determine how to approach works of screendance in order to read them, name them, critique them, and begin to have a meaningful dialog about them.

Scholar Mark Franko, in "Aesthetic Agencies in Flux: Talley Beatty, Maya Deren and the Modern Dance Tradition in *Study in Choreography for Camera*" offers a reading of Maya Deren's dance film works that give us a glimpse into the possibilities of viewing such "classic" works through contemporary theoretical lenses.<sup>18</sup> Franko proposes that in Deren's film, both the presence and absence of the dancer Talley Beatty is a "product of the film's manipulation of time and space as well as the vehicle wherein the film itself attains movement." He goes on to say, "This is what Deren identifies as film dance: 'a dance so related to camera and cutting that it cannot be performed as a unit anywhere but in this particular film'" (141). Deren's definition of film dance has been the default standard for dance on screen that is *not documentation*, most likely since it was first uttered. However, that definition cannot be depended on to speak for all works in which movement codified by some metric as "dance" and the technologies of screen media intersect. Franko, in reflecting on Deren's dialectical view of choreography and film goes on to say:

For Deren, the limitations of dance arise from the limitations of architecturally defined space germane to live performance. The mobility of the camera and the manipulations of editing disrupt such limitations and transfigure them. Through the agency of camera and

editor, "a whole new set of relationships between dancer and space could be developed." (141)

This statement, though of importance to the form, overemphasizes the dialectic of dance and media. This dialectical understanding or view of dance and film is rooted in what Sayre describes above, as being "eminently amenable to a formalist approach [of critique]." It neutralizes any of the diasporic traces that are brought to bear in either the dance or the media elements resulting in a visuality that is in the end a method of conforming to Deren's prescription at its lowest common denominator. Furthermore, it almost completely effaces issues of race, gender, and all of the diasporic flotsam and jetsam that attaches to both sides of the dialectic: the choreographic language and its provenance, the cinematic history and materiality of the methods of inscription. In short, the family tree of such work—its generic heritage—is rendered invisible in favor of a reductive, modernist reading of its formal qualities.

Given the evolution of theoretical discourse in the arts beyond screendance, however, it is no longer adequate to define a work for the screen by those formal qualities that simply imply that the work could not be created as a live event. Rather, it seems necessary to define new models and critiques related to works of screendance, ones which take into account the commitment of makers to defining the practice in novel and often eccentric ways. In addition, these models should facilitate a deeper understanding of the context by which the work becomes a part of a larger collective discourse on the body's representation on screen, as well as innumerable other concerns that attach to the arts in a contemporary world.

The methodology for analysis that I would like to suggest in order to probe the practice and to excavate its genres looks at a work's screenic<sup>19</sup> attributes as well as its vernacular, choreographic attributes. In other words, what are the qualities of the work that are "of the screen"? What are the contingencies that tether the work to the screen and what are those histories and theories that attach to the work in the process? What are the formal qualities of the rendering (which may include style, genre, materiality), and what are the formal qualities of the choreographic language (which may include schools of movement, choreographic vernacular, lineage and other material associations)? What is the intent of the work—that is, what can we divine from the way in which the work is described by title, by the meta-data and by formal designations such as video dance, dance film, screendance, etc.? And finally, what is the content of the work, what are the inferences that can be read by the performance contained within the frame of that which we are consuming, what are the politics of the work?

Putting these rhetorical suggestions into practice, we can look to Viking Eggeling's *Diagonale Symphonie* (1924)<sup>20</sup> as an example of a film that might be probed for its screenic qualities in order to excavate its characteristics, and thus assign its relationship to a particular genre. *Diagonale Symphonie* is a silent film in which no humans appear, and yet the film's stated intent is an exploration of the depiction of movement. Eggeling himself called it an "abstract film." To more accurately contextualize the film's relative value and to locate the film in a larger interdisciplinary, intertextual discourse, however, we need to also consider the diaspora of Eggeling from Germany to Zurich, Switzerland, where he became associated with the Dada movement; the surface qualities of the film (paper cut-outs and tin foil figures photographed a single frame at a time); and also his artistic associations

(Hans Richter, Jean Arp, Tristan Tzara, and others). In so doing, we will be able to index those aspects of the film that both separate it from and attach it to other work that flows from a similar set of historical and material circumstances.

As another example of this process, we might examine Hans Richter's *Rhythm 23* (1923), a silent black and white study of movement through objects, which comes out of the post-World War I cinematic avant-garde that originated in Germany and was composed mainly of painters and photographers.<sup>21</sup> Richter's artistic and political affiliations are evident in his own writing at the time, but also in the visuality of his films. Without elaborating on the diasporic history of Dada and Cubism that is attached to Richter's sense of cinematic materiality and spatial understanding of film, it becomes less possible to accurately place this work within a conversation about screendance. Thus, while neither *Diagonale Symphonie* nor *Rhythm 23* are works of screendance per se, an activist curator<sup>22</sup> might include these films within an exhibition of screendance works in order to demonstrate the flexibility of a particular subgenre of screendance practice.

The above examples demonstrate that in order to understand and articulate screen-specific works, it is of value to know the meta-narrative of the work and to "read" both the surface qualities of the film and the meta-knowledge one can attach to the discourse around the work. The films of Eggeling, Richter and others of the time were materially unlike any other art form. While there is a resemblance to drawing or graphic design, theirs is a set of visual images that is more filmic (or screenic) than graphic. The sequential appearance of discreet shapes and forms is so deeply embedded in the surface of the film that they are irretrievable as graphic objects in their original form.

To compare two simple subgenres useful to the discussion of screendance, we might examine the dialog between *narrative* and *poetic* forms. These classifications are broad yet simultaneously specific. A work in one category may seep into the other, but it is a starting point by which to address both the intent of a work, (as Carroll describes) and the result of the work. Erin Brannigan's recent essay offers an insightful discourse on the use of the close-up in screendance using Miriam King's film, *Dust* as an object of contemplation.<sup>23</sup> Brannigan states:

... one of the projects of dance in the twentieth century has been to reactivate or investigate exactly this function of the body: the body as receptive surface and responsive organ which can articulate, through the most subtle micro-movements, the registration of flows of energy, sensory activity and exterior stimuli which occur through and upon the body. When applied to dancefilm, this calls for a reworking of the dominant theories of the cinematic close-up. (126)

While I agree with Brannigan in theory, in "reading" the works she cites as well as others that conform to her theory of *micro-choreographies*, I would suggest that the use of the close-up in screendance is most often encountered within a kind of discreet narrativity, one that while not explicit (though often so) it is rather *implicit*, made so by an opening combination of shots and edits that lay out a series of juxtapositions by which all subsequent images are referenced.

I would propose that it is the rare work of screendance that does not begin with a series of shots that are implicitly narrative. In other words, projects that begin and end with the body in motion (or "stillness"), offering no other juxtaposition of place, inanimate objects, locative devices or musical overlays that contain in and of themselves multiple

layers of implied or inferred meaning. In her reading of Miriam King's *Dust*, and subsequent contrasting with Amy Greenfield's *Element*, Brannigan says, *Dust* begins with a close-up of sand particles blowing across surfaces, creating patterns as they dance and scatter, then hard sand cracks and a hand emerges. This begins a series of close-ups of performer Miriam King's body; her back, fingers crawling across the sand, her eyes which are covered by goggles. King's body emerges through fragments until we see it as a whole, attempting to swim across the sand dunes. The first full close-up of King's face is followed by a close-up of a ticking watch, and then various odd angles render her face strange and unfamiliar. The second half of the film features King's body parts in close-up submerged in black water, the solid form of the figure dissolving in the dark liquid and play of light (Figure 2). This sequence recalls Amy Greenfield's body struggling in thick black mud in *Element* (1973), emerging and disappearing in a study almost entirely shot in close-up. Greenfield's pioneering work in the 1970s combined close-ups of the moving body with intensely motile and loose camera work that 'ungrounded' the figure to a radical degree. In both films, the drama is spread across various surfaces, substances and the body of the performer equally, with detailed movements of fingers, limbs and back muscles filling out their intensely visual tales. In such dancefilm examples, the performing body and the close-up have combined to create a new mode of filmic performance. (126–127)

Brannigan's detailed reading of the two works illuminates the inherent difference between a work that relies on external cinematic devices to ground its meaning and one that does not waver from or capitulate to film's desire for narrative strategies outside of the body's own landscape. The opening of Brannigan's description of *Dust* states that it "begins with a close-up of sand particles blowing across surfaces, creating patterns as they dance and scatter, then hard sand cracks and a hand emerges." Before we even encounter King's body and are allowed to begin our own relationship with its corporeal meaning, we are set up by a series of shots designed to foreground a very particular narrative. She goes on to describe the fact that "the first full close-up of King's face is followed by a close-up of a ticking watch." Again we are brought out of our relationship with the body that Brannigan eloquently describes in her exposition of King's film, and into a consideration of the concept of time via a shot of her wristwatch.

Brannigan then notes that "The second half of the film features King's body parts in close-up submerged in black water, the solid form of the figure dissolving in the dark liquid and play of light"; and also that "This sequence recalls Amy Greenfield's body struggling in thick black mud in *Element* (1973), emerging and disappearing in a study almost entirely shot in close-up." The difference here is not without consequence. The use of close-up in *Dust* conforms to a historical use of the technique designed to enhance narrativity and thus impose meaning in a manner that is closely aligned with the way in which literary devices are used to tell a story. In *Dust* they are used as a kind of steering device to keep us, the viewer on track. In *Element*, no such external narrative is present, no literary devices, no juxtapositions of the visual culture of objects or the kind of editing techniques that suggest a narrative outside of the body's experience with itself and its environment. The use of the close-up to contrast the wide shot in *Element* is always limited to the body and the site it inhabits. No other signifiers are present in *Element*; thus, we are free to imagine our own metaphors for the engagement of Greenfield's body to the landscape and her performance within it. In illustrating or engaging in the process of excavating the salient features

of a work of screendance, and given the evidence of difference exemplified by the above examples, it becomes possible to parse these works into subgenres that are themselves contained by the larger category of screendance. I would therefore name King's *Dust* as narrative and Greenfield's *Element* as poetic, again keeping in mind that these delineations are meant as a catalyst for both curating and critical discourse.

At this juncture, there are two points that I will make that might seem to be counter-intuitive: the first is that the visual culture of work that transpires at the intersection of dance and screen media is often more dance-like than film-like; that is, it *looks like dance*. The second is that it *seems* like film. Even the most abstract or "pure" (i.e., non-narrative) choreography tends to capitulate to the desires of cinema, to the desire to be narrative. As Claudia Kappenberg observes, "Almost 30 years after [Amy] Greenfield and 50 years after [Maya] Deren, much of screendance remains rooted above all in dance traditions . . ." (qtd. in Brannigan 93). That is to say, dance resists the *nature* of cinema or video and maintains its identity even if edited and temporally altered. Though embedded in the site of film or video, dance as a realistic technical performance tends to maintain its own nature: again, it still looks like dance, or at least the visual culture of dance. However, often the presentation of the visual culture of dance is embedded in the narrative structures of film in a way that telegraphs a kind of mistrust of the body's ability to transmit its own stories without additional signifiers. Greenberg's *Element* is a possible answer to the rhetorical question that Kappenberg poses: *Does Screendance Need to Look Like Dance?*

To achieve the sort of hybridity that other interdisciplinary art world practices have achieved, it would seem that dance must necessarily become more screenic and more conscious of its own diasporic wanderings. At the same time, to begin to create a linguistic apparatus by which to articulate the relationships between works would open new territories of critical thinking in the field. ■

## Notes

1. See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983. Print.)
2. The festival that I direct at the American Dance Festival is called "Dancing for the Camera: International Festival of Film and Video Dance." It was so-named more than 15 years ago.
3. *Dance on Camera*, a slight variation, has similar resonance, though the probable meaning here is a combination of dance *for camera* and *dance on screen*. Claudia Kappenberg notes that, "The home page for the annual 'Dance on Camera Festival' in New York demonstrates this legacy, stating that since its creation in 1971, its mission has been to facilitate the preservation of dance, encourage documentaries on dance and further screen adaptations. I would argue that all three categories are representative of a 'dance for film' approach in that the film-making and its technologies are predominantly put at the service of the dance" (93). See note eight for full citation.
4. Carroll, Noël. *On Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
5. Such attempts have been made via conferences which focus on screendance as early as 2000.
6. Dodds, Sherrill. *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
7. Marcel Duchamp writes: "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act" (Kepes, Gyorgy. *The Visual Arts Today*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1960. 111–112. Print.)
8. Kappenberg, Claudia. "Does screendance need to look like dance?" *PADM* 5.2 and 3 (2009): Print.
8. Baner, Sally. *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1977/1987. xiii. Print.

10. Banes, Sally and Michael Kirby. "Introduction." *The Drama Review* 19 (1975): 3. Print.
11. See for example Rose Lee Goldberg's *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, Revised and enlarged ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988. Print.)
12.
  1. Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. If a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found.
  2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. Music must not be used unless it occurs within the scene being filmed, i.e., diageitic.
  3. The camera must be a hand-held camera. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. The film must not take place where the camera is standing; filming must take place where the action takes place.
  4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable (if there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
  5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
  6. The film must not contain superficial action (murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
  7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden (that is to say that the film takes place here and now).
  8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
  9. The final picture must be transferred to the Academy 35mm film, with an aspect ratio of 4:3, that is, not widescreen. Originally, the requirement was that the film had to be *filmed* on Academy 35mm film, but the rule was relaxed to allow low-budget productions.
  10. "The director must not be credited." (*Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*. Eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie. London: British Film Institute, 2003. 199–200. Print.)
13. "Dance Dogma." *Left-luggage.co.uk*. Eds. Katherine McPherson and Simon Fildes, 18 Aug. 2007, Scottish Arts Council and University of Dundee's School of Media Arts and Imaging. Web. March 2010.
14. Garraghan, Deveril. "Dogma Dance." *Dance and Technology Message Board Archive*. Scott Sutherland, 20 Oct. 2000, Web. March 2010.
15. Garraghan, "Dogma Dance."
16. See Douglas Rosenberg's 1999 manifesto in *Purity and Provocation*, 173.
17. Sayre, Henry M. *Object of Performance: the American avant-garde since 1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Print.
18. See Franko, Mark. "Aesthetic Agencies in Flux: Talley Beatty, Maya Deren and the Modern Dance Tradition in *Study in Choreography for Camera*." *Maya Deren and the American Avant-Garde*, Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 131–150. Print.
19. This use of the work "screeninc" was introduced to the screendance network in discussion by Harmony Bench. It has also appeared in common usage in places such as N. Katherine Hayles' "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis" (*Poetics Today* 25.1 [2004]: 67–90. Print.) Hayles writes; "In the computer, the signifier exists not as a durably inscribed flat mark but as a screenic image produced by layers of code precisely correlated through correspondence rules, from the electronic polarities that correlate with the bit stream to the bits that correlate with binary numbers, to the numbers that correlate with higher-level statements, such as commands, and so on. Even when electronic hypertexts simulate the appearance of durably inscribed marks, they are transitory images that need to be constantly refreshed by the scanning electron beam that forms an image on the screen to give the illusion of stable endurance through time" (74).
20. *Diagonale Symphonie* is viewable at: <<http://www.ubu.com/film/eggeling.html>>.
21. See Richard Suchenski's "Hans Richter." *Senses of Cinema* 49 (2008): n. pag. Web. Mar. 2010.
22. See Douglas Rosenberg's "Curating the Practice/The Practice of Curating." *PADM* 5 (2&3): 75–87. Print.
23. Brannigan, Erin. "Micro-choreographies: The Close-up in Dancefilm." *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 5.2&3 (2009): 121–39. Print.