

***Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse.* Edited by / sous la direction de Franck Boulégue and Marisa C. Hayes. 2015. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 214 pp. Hardcover \$81.99, paperback \$61.99. ISBN: 1443874132.**

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Art in Motion brings together a collection of diverse papers from The Festival International de Vidéo Danse de Bourgogne's first *International Screendance Conference*, held in April 2013 with additional contributions from affiliated lectures and the festival's *Screendance Studies* blog. It is inevitable that published conference proceedings contain some papers that are of a higher standard than others, and to some, published proceedings may seem counter productive, traditionally seen as research in progress, or re-workings of papers in other forms. A counterview is that proceedings allow wider audiences access to new research, which would otherwise remain invisible. *Art in Motion* is a bilingual English/French edition, with every essay published in both languages, which especially affords French scholars the opportunity to share their research with a wider audience while also reflecting on the role screendance scholarship plays in France. The conference co-directors and book editors, Franck Boulégue and Marisa C. Hayes, acknowledge that while the term "screendance" is commonly used in academia, an alternative concept of *Art in Motion* suggests a more "inclusive" approach, one which examines movement created specifically for screen in many different forms, diverse dance styles, somatic practices, choreography of everyday gestures, and avant-garde film.¹ They also defend the variety of other terms used within *Art in Motion* as a necessary compromise in line with each scholar's specific rationale for their chosen terminology, which reveals conceptual, rather than medium-specific approaches.

Eleven papers written by critics, practitioners, and scholars are divided into four sections: Analysis and Discussion, The Somatic Camera, Heritage, and Artist Perspectives on Practice and Teaching. *Art in Motion* reinforces existing tensions in the discourse on identity, ownership, and past histories, which has already been examined by Carroll (2000), Pearlman (2010), Pottratz (2016), Guy (2016), and Heighway (2014).² The collection of papers from different schools of thought provokes additional

questions with regards to the relationships between avant-garde film, expanded cinema, performance, fine art, dance, mainstream film, choreography, and screendance.

Claudia Kappenberg's paper draws parallels between expanded cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, and the ongoing identity crises surrounding screendance today. Kappenberg's text proposes a case for a more porous screendance, doubting that we could ever write a definitive "laundry list" of what the field includes given the trouble with terminology. The paper adds to the current debate regarding the taxonomies in an experimental hybrid art form. If a "laundry list" is developed, she asks, who should implement it and what happens to work that does not fit the taxonomy?³

Stephanie Herfeld's text establishes a case for the inclusion of Marie Menken's films within the "dance-film" field, and creates a logical argument demonstrating that Menken's work exists in a "contemporary choreographic paradigm."⁴ Herfeld highlights tensions with the term "dance," given that Menken was not a "dancer" but an artist who danced within her practice.⁵ In contradistinction to Kappenberg, Herfeld argues that "what dance is" and "what makes it dance" still need to be addressed.⁶

Clotilde Amprimoz examines a range of fictional films asking, "Is death in the moving image choreographic?" The inclusion of Amprimoz's paper reminds us of tensions surrounding the term "choreographic" and its ability to destabilize the existing boundaries of screendance. Amprimoz's proposal adds to the existing debate about artists moving beyond the "dance" film category. A range of questions arises from Amprimoz's paper and its surrounding context. For instance, what is the relationship between "choreographic" sequences in fictional films and screendance forms? Where does a choreographic sequence end and a dance begin? Finally, can we locate an expanded concept of screendance within fictional films? Amprimoz's text is thus in dialogue with Roger Copeland's recent essay "The Best Dance is the Way People Die in the Movies (Or Gestures Toward a New Definition of Screendance)" and his discussion of the problematic ideas by which fictional film sequences are described as "dances," thus by extension meriting their inclusion in the screendance category.⁷

Philosopher Noël Carroll has noted that screendance's abilities are sometimes defined in relation to theatre's inabilities.⁸ Related discussions are continued in *Art in Motion*, where Sophie Walon claims that screendance is unlike theatrical performance where "dance is most often seen from a distance."⁹ Similarly, Paulina Ruiz Carballido suggests that choreographic possibilities on screen allow a break from traditional theatre's preoccupations with the "frontal image of the full length dancing body."¹⁰

Marion Carrot argues that the film industry normalizes the dancing body by fitting it into the "narrative logic of mainstream cinema."¹¹ Carrot argues that we must look to early experiments that deconstruct these normative representations. Carrot proposes

that as screendance distances itself from the creation and recognition of the figurative, it opens up new relationships between the audience, dancers and filmmakers.¹² This argument mirrors the existing divide in screendance criticism, particularly between preferences for the 'cinematic' or 'figurative' body, versus the 'abstract' or 'metaphorical' figure. Carrot's usage of the term 'mainstream cinema' places screendance in opposition to a very broad set of practices, genres, and categories that themselves beg for more consideration.¹³

Art in Motion is a rich collection of diverse papers, which illustrate the breadth of research taking place within the field of screendance. This book offers multiple avenues for further investigation. Some papers could benefit from the inclusion of imagery to help steer the reader through nuances of arguments that refer to very specific visual transitions, or specific moments occurring in the work under discussion. Additionally, the mix of terminology in the publication can lead to some confusion. As the co-editors point out, contributors use individual terms that fit their topics. In the text "Minimalism and Video dance" by Mariann Gaál, for instance, the examples given contradict the proposals in Karen Pearlman's paper on video dance.¹⁴ An editorial introduction regarding the terminology, including clarifications regarding the meanings of terms as particular authors use them would have been useful. Similarly, although the co-editors hint at this in the introduction, it would be helpful and informative to the reader to include a contextual summary explaining more about the role geography and cultural backgrounds play in the shaping of these terms.

Kappenberg's "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Forms" and Herfeld's "Seeing Moving: The Performance of Marie Menken's Images" particularly shine through in this collection, and highlight the difficulty in identifying where this emerging field begins and ends. In summary *Art in Motion* makes an invaluable contribution to screendance criticism, by showcasing different schools of thought side-by-side. This publication mirrors the inclusive vision of the festival, by recognizing the importance of location and cultural context while simultaneously enabling the research to circulate outside its own community.

Biography

Carol is a first year practice-as-research PhD student at Coventry University. She has worked as a lecturer at The University of Lincoln, and Arts University Bournemouth. Carol studied Visual Communication at The Limerick School of Art and Design and completed her MA in Communication Design from Central Saint Martins in 2012. She is a designer and artist working with moving-image.

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Notes

- ¹ Franck Bouléque and Marisa Hayes, *Art in Motion*, xiii.
- ² See Noël Carroll, "Toward a Definition"; Karen Pearlman, "If a Dancing Figure," 244; Priscilla Guy, "Screendance as a Question," 201; and Anna Heighway, "Understanding The 'Dance,'" 44.
- ³ Claudia Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse," 25. This is related to Fred Camper's checklist which authenticates avant-garde films. More recently, Wyn Pottratz addresses Kappenberg's idea of a "laundry list" specifically for screendance, revisiting the (Hu)manifesto's own definition of the form. See Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot Be Everything," 183.
- ⁴ Herfeld, "Seeing Moving," 97.
- ⁵ Idem, 90.
- ⁶ Idem, 98.
- ⁷ Copeland, "The Best Dance," 228.
- ⁸ Carroll, 114.
- ⁹ Walon, "Screendance Sensations," 2.
- ¹⁰ Carballido, "The Screen as Choreographic Space," 130.
- ¹¹ Carrot, "Perpetual Becoming," 114.
- ¹² Idem, 121.
- ¹³ Chia-wen Kuo presents a more nuanced view regarding mainstream cinema, she argues that even from within the narrative conventions of Busby Berkeley's *Footlight Parade* popular film female bodies have the ability to transcend the male gaze and narrative constraints and problematize the spectator's position. Kuo, "The Digital Sublime," 13.
- ¹⁴ Pearlman, 244.

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