

# BODY AND VIDEO

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By Brisa MP

There can be the many explanations about the look under technologies, which would help us to understand the context that artistic disciplines linked to the performing arts, which've been integrating these strategies to their productions, must experiment nowadays. In this case, dance is a discipline that has been experimenting strongly in the audiovisual matter in the last decades, integrating the electronic image both in the same scene and in a dialogue that transits and contours both disciplines. This doesn't intend to mention what's or isn't the video and dance or both issues together, but rather to find certain relationships, problems or origins where the electronic image and dance come together, always and in any case, fragmentarily.

## **Body -Camera**

The movement places a first relationship between camera and body, which is established from the first contact between an object (machine) and a body (human); body (cameraman) and the camera // versus the body filmed.

The camera movements are not the same as those of dancing bodies; each one has its own rhythm, because both are independent bodies entering into a dialogue and then are finally erased. In movies, classic or modern cinema, the camera moves like a body, from planes and movements, the spectator is introduced in the image little by little causing an identification process, breaking the separation between spectator-screen-story.

In this sense, I am interested in taking as an example, in order to interrogate the theory that in the cinema the camera is always a body, the practical-theoretical position of the camera in the Dogma method.

As it is known, this cinema is founded in Denmark in 1995, mainly by Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier, who propose a manifesto towards a new film production and establish the "chastity vow", rules that must be fulfilled in the different areas of the cinematographic work.

In this case, I would like to mention it from what the camera is as a medium, as a body-action.

The camera in this cinema suffers a transformation, the particularity of the digital camera allows new ways of doing, both from the economic point of view and from its aesthetic approaches. The Dogma camera is a camera that shows a body. It breathes, staggers, walks, runs and collects fragments, the medium becomes body and the body is the medium, the image becomes flesh. Out of a technification, of a mechanized control, evidencing not the movement of the camera, but the action of the body (cameraman).

The body is visible to me without seeing it, the body is in the action that it produces, the image will be nothing more than the movements of the body-camera.

Thus, an example of this body-movement-camera relationship, carried out in the area of Dance, we find the choreographer La Ribot, in *Still Distinguished*, of which Loret Goumare will describe it as:

"In the first moments of *Still Distinguished*, there is a coincidence between the image of La Ribot's body and her own body, since it's her own body that produces the image. That is to say, the camera that is supported by La Ribot's body, is a part of her body. And the image that we see on the screen, is the result of the action of that body." <sup>1</sup>

Here there's an incorporation of the image in one's body; the dancing body is the body-camera at the same time, everything is at the same level, the image that is projected is nothing but the product of the body action, a body that produces its own image, where the viewer is not just contemplating an image of the body, but rather a receiver of its action, the action of La Ribot's body.

This inseparable relationship of the body-camera, proposes a never linear reading, always fragmentary, pieces and parts that are produced after the action of that body that is impossible to build completely.

## **Video-Dance**

Videodance is one of the interdisciplines that has had the best development in the last decade, generating festivals around the world. The "video dance", also called "dance for the camera", is a work originated by creators coming from different disciplines, visual and audiovisual artists, choreographers and dancers. Usually, the writings coming from the audiovisual world, describe these productions as a movie genre, as would be

the Drama, Comedy, etc. But if we talk about a dance for the camera, it could also be said in the opposite way: "camera for dance". From this point of view, it seems wrong to discuss whether or not video-dance or dance-video is an audiovisual or choreographic line of work, since this is not a disciplinary object, but rather the opposite; there are no impositions of one part or another, as it could be said that the camera would limit itself to recording a choreography or a sequence of movements. This practice leads to a consensus between the parties, to generate an object that exists only in itself, a third time, a new and independent object that borders the disciplines of dance and film.

If we pretended to find an origin to these productions, a first approach could be (of course) between dance and cinema, citing the Hollywood musicals of the mid-twentieth century.

The academic and anthropologist Manuel Delgado, describes the "choreographic dimension of urban wanderings", which in this case serve us as a starting point in a dance and audiovisual relationship. Delgado says:

" The Hollywood musicals will seem trivial, but they have demonstrated to understand the forms of ballet that adopt the interpellations to which the pedestrian submits any of the exteriors of the city. In those films, in effect, the protagonists are impelled, without being able to avoid it, to, suddenly, literally dance on the streets, as if the dramatic moment represented inevitably required in a resolution of dance steps, dialogue without words between bodies or between bodies and physical environment, which leads to the ultimate consequences the capacity of these bodies not so much to "express feelings" - as it might seem - but rather to tell the action."2

For example, *A Day in New York* (1949) and *Singing in the Rain* (1952), by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, or the films of Fred Astaire. In these films, the camera follows the bodies that dance, establishing a relationship with the dancer as a dancing camera in favor of the choreography.

The emergence of video creation and experimentation on these two bodies (dancer-camera) and the common place they inhabit, plus the integration of creators from different areas, has made it possible to put into practice the relationship between dance and electronic image.

Video dance, as an object from the rearticulation of the principles of both disciplines, goes through different strategies of representation, in which we find the alterations of the stage space, opening the possibility of accessing non-traditional places for Dance,

being multiple , manipulable, rearticulating their identity, or the mysterious dimension of "no place" 3 . The body reopens the site, transforms it, establishing a spatial and objectual dialogue of a body that relates, appropriates, interrogates and moves. The camera captures the event being the same, establishing common or disparate rhythms, listening as an art of collective work.

The technological tools provided by the editing programs allow the intervention of bodies and places, their temporary and formal alteration, allow intertextual, fragmentation or chroma work and open the possibilities of linear or non-linear narrative.

The dance and the camera are related in three basic aspects: space, time and movement. The video dance places a broad territory of creation and investigation of the media and supports (the body, the camera, the stages and the assembly).

The dancer's body has its own rhythm that dialogues with the camera, both have a tempo, both bodies, both movements.

Nam June Paik is one of the first creators, who installs the relationships described above, in the audiovisual support. As an example, one of his first works in this line, the work *Global Groove* (1973). Paik establishes a relationship with Merce Cunningham in the 70s, which allows him to develop works such as: *Merce by Merce by Paik*, *Merce and Marcel* (1975).



**Global Groove (1973)**

**Nam June Paik**

Merce Cunningham, who installed an interdisciplinary relationship with visual and sound artists such as John Cage, also did it with different video artists with whom he began to look for the relationships between camera and body dancer. Another of these

creators, is Charles Atlas, a videographer who has worked with several choreographers in the United States, and who kept a job for ten years with Cunningham.

Atlas says:

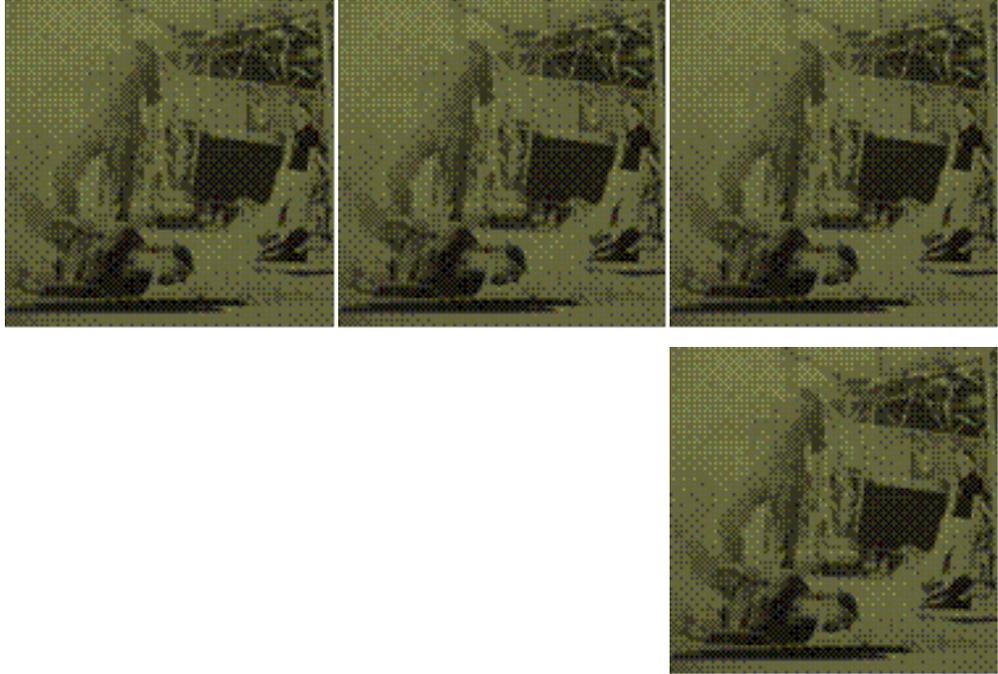
"My prolonged collaboration with Cunningham has influenced me to see music and dance as two distinct and separate elements. All the work I did with Cunningham was recorded in silence. The music was added later." 4

In this same time, other creators such as Ed Emshwiller, move the camera towards a close relationship between choreography and cameraman, establishing a kind of parallel dance that runs centrally and peripherally what happens, creating a new and own visual field, stripping the limits of the planes and counter-planes, articulating one's own space, from the real space of the event to the fictional space of the image.

" It's no longer a matter of representing dance, of reproducing representation, but of creating an electronic choreography, nonexistent on stage but based on the function of dance and image." 5

Other productions in the decade of the '80, open to new perspectives of research, part of the use of the medium and technological capacity, where post-production work comes to generate a new and unrepeatable product. In this same decade, we find artists like Jean Louis Le Tacon, Jean-Claude Gallotta, Rafael Montánez Ortiz, Daniel Larrieu, or artists such as Robert Cahen, who also travels through video art, and who has an exhaustive work of editing, in which the bodies in movement that he has captured are stripped of all representation and reality, establishing nothing more than traces, blurring and causing the bodies to lose all their matter, so that there's only a choreography of the video.

"I think that video dance is a genre that was born from the desire to show dance images with fast and cheap means. This has been the trigger. The video has transformed the images and the choreography, like a chemist who experiences something and realizes that there are nuances and colors in which he didn't think ever before" 6



## **LAS MANCHADAS**

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### **Quotes:**

1-Loret Goumare, interview in book "Cuerpos sobre Blanco", José Antonio Sánchez & Jaime Conde-Salazar, Desviaciones (Madrid 2001). Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha Editions, Cuenca 2003. Page 97.

2- Manuel Delgado, "Animal Público" Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona 1999, page 73

3- Marc Augé:

" Augé classifies as non-places, the lobbies of the airports, the ATMs, the rooms of the hotels, the large commercial areas, the public transports; but to the list could be added any public square, or any downtown street of any big city, no less memory scenarios-or with endless memories".

Manuel Delgado, "Animal Público" Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona 1999, page 40

"El Arte del video, Introducción al video arte experimental" J. R. Pérez Ornia. Printed by RTVE & Serbal.

4- Charles Atlas page 103,

5- page 106

6 - J.C. Gallotta, page 104

Brisa MP

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