MUSEUMS AT THE POST-DIGITAL TURN

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DANCE, PERFORMANCE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE POST-DIGITAL MUSEUM

(ITA, P. 105)

DANZA, PERFORMANCE E SOCIAL MEDIA NEL MUSEO POST-DIGITALE

(ENG)

As performance has become an increasingly frequent phenomenon in US and European museums, it has also come under fire from art historians and critics who see its rise as a misguided fad and a cynical marketing gesture.[1] Critic Jerry Saltz, for example, has been outspoken in his distaste for MoMA's extension plan because it "privileges live-action events, performance, entertainment, and almost anything that doesn't just sit still to be looked at. . . . The new MoMA is designed to allow for an ever-increasing number of events whose primary purpose is to produce little hits of serotonin and dopamine."[2] His comments are echoed by critic Sven Lütticken, who argues that the work of Tino Sehgal exhibits a "perfect compatibility with the temporalized and *eventized* museum, in which something (anything) must happen almost all the time"; when dance is brought into the museum, he writes, "the visitors effectively become co-performers in . . . the museum as three-dimensional Facebook."[3] More recently, a Canadian critic has complained that Anne Imhof's *Angst* (2017) is just a "supremely Instagrammable spectacle": a "repertoire of images drawn at random" in which performers labor four hours a night to produce carefully choreographed images that are ultimately "as fleeting as the Snapchats documenting it."[4] Even if these critics don't all directly draw an equation between performance and social media, they tend to equate performance with presentism, distraction, spectacle, and entertainment, and implicitly make an appeal for the pleasure of looking at dead objects.

These readings exemplify the dominant reaction to dance and performance in museums by art historians and critics, but cumulatively they have the reductive effect of rendering live art a victim of neoliberal forces and fodder for social media. They also blind us to other (perhaps more interesting) operations that take place when performance enters the museum. In what follows, then, I want to argue that

performance in the museum tells us important things about the changing character of spectatorship under digital technology. To show this, I will focus on a new, hybrid type of performance, the *dance exhibition*, which I define as the prolongation of performance to fill museum opening hours. It is a type used both by visual artists who hire professional dancers, singers, and actors to undertake their works (think of Pablo Bronstein, Cally Spooner, Alexandra Pirici, Anne Imhof) and by choreographers willing to adjust their stage works to gallery spaces in order to reach wider, more diverse audiences (e.g., Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Xavier Le Roy, Maria Hassabi).[5] I read the dance exhibition as the paradigmatic form of the new "grey zones" for performance that have evolved out of the historical convergence of experimental theater's black box and the gallery's white cube. One of the characteristics of the grey zone is that smartphones are an integral part of spectatorship. The dance exhibition emerged (and flourished) at precisely the same moment that our lives became dominated by ubiquitous portable technology—the first dance exhibitions took place in 2007, the same year as the introduction of the iPhone and the Cloud, and at a moment when museums chose to suspend the photography restrictions they once enforced so rigorously.[6] The symbiotic relation between the dance exhibition and new technology is therefore not a problem to be disparaged or discounted, but is fundamental to the proliferation and popularity of this genre.[7]

It's firstly important to note that the migration of the performing arts into the museum space brings about a number of effects, chief among them being a *retemporalization* of performance, from *event time* to *exhibition time*. I use the phrase "event time" to refer to a set of theatrical conventions that are not just temporal but also behavioral and economic: arriving at a designated venue, usually in the evening, for a seat at a ticketed performance, which one watches with others, from beginning to end. I will use the term "black box" as short-hand for this theatrical temporalization and its mode of

attention.[8] *Exhibition time*, by contrast, is more diffuse and linked to working hours, usually 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is governed by a self-directed viewing unsynchronized with the crowd, and by physical mobility rather than stasis: one can walk in and out of the exhibition at any time. I will refer to this apparatus as the "white cube," and use it as a shorthand for all gallery contexts, regardless of their actual architecture and décor.[9]

Both the white cube and the black box are purportedly neutral frames that steer and hierarchize attention, and thus construct viewing subjects, founded on long-established, unspoken behavioral conventions. In both black box and white cube environments, disruptions tend to be auditory rather than optical—coughing, rustling, eating, or talking too loud. Both discipline and shape a bourgeois model of the subject that monitors his/her neighbors for indications of non-conformist behavior.[10] When dance is inserted into an exhibition, then, both these frames break: a single-point perspective is replaced by multi-perspectivalism and the absence of an ideal place to stand. Lighting rarely direct our attention (more often than not, it is still directed to art on the walls); sound, if employed at all, tends to bounce horribly around the space. Because of the spectator's undefined position, the protocols surrounding audience behavior are less stable and more open to improvisation. This is why smartphone photography is rife at performances in museums, but remains unthinkable in the theater.

The migration of the performing arts to the museum and gallery should therefore be read not (just) as a cynical attempt on the part of museums to attract audiences, but as a direct consequence of both white cube and black box changing under the pressure of new technology and eventually converging to produce a hybrid genre. Since the 1980s, the black box has become more technologically driven, less concerned with existential communion than with multimedia immersion.[11] The dance exhibition can therefore be seen as an attempt to recapture the intimacy and experimentalism imputed to the black box in an era when these values are no

longer synonymous with that apparatus: today, the white cube is where you go to see performers sweat.[12] The black box has also opened itself up to works of a longer duration and a mobile audience, more akin to installation art. Despite the mobility of the audience in this installation situation, the dark walls and theatrical setting still tacitly enforce a protocol of rapt attention that disincentivizes photography, talking, and texting.

Under the pressure of digital technology, meanwhile, the white cube has been recalibrated as a space for unlimited documentation: taking installation shots (and selfies) and publishing them on hybridized public-private online platforms. Museums have largely abandoned the photography restrictions they once enforced and even suggest hashtags by which viewers can label their uploaded images to Instagram, Twitter, and Flickr. The movement from black box to white cube therefore brings two distinct spatial ideologies and sets of behavioral conventions into tension. The dance exhibition confers temporality upon an institution that habitually denies time by collecting objects for posterity, and which now needs to confront a living body that must be fed, clothed, sheltered, medicated, and paid.[13] The sedentary, focused attention of the black box, meanwhile, confronts the harsh illumination of the white cube and its multiple, mobile publics with smartphones—or occasionally, even no audience at all.[14]

The uneasiness of the shift from black box to white cube can be seen in the reluctance among a certain sector of the art world to use the word "performance" to describe live art in the gallery; instead, it is said to approach the condition of sculpture. Throughout the 2000s, Tino Seghal argued that his "situations" were best thought of as sculpture, present in the gallery during the entire working day—an analogy best seen in his early works like *Kiss* (2004).[15] But the static, timeless quality of sculpture is a less accurate paradigm for performance in the museum than the automated loop, a mechanism synonymous with the compact disc and the DVD, respectively introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. The way in which the performing arts

accommodate themselves to exhibition time is above all by repetition—of scripts, gestures or movements—on a live loop for the duration of the working day.

This retemporalization of performance, and its intimate relationship to technology, can be clearly seen in three recent examples. The first of these, Maria Hassabi's *Plastic* (2015), was developed for the Stedelijk Museum, the Hammer Museum, and MoMA, and is what she calls a "live installation"—presumably because it doesn't animate the space so much as form a counterpoint composition of still bodies. At moments, the dancers even resemble lifeless corpses, as if recently shot or felled by hazardous radiation, an impression that was particularly striking when viewed from above. This abject horizontality contrasted with the vertical visitors who either stepped over the dancers as if nothing were happening, or who stared at them, moved closer, and reached automatically for their smartphones to capture what they saw. Movement is nevertheless central to *Plastic*: it is simply incremental to the point of only just being visible. It took two hours, for example, for Hassabi to descend the twenty-four steps of MoMA's main staircase while streams of visitors trudged past her. Like most performances in the museum, *Plastic* was disarmingly low-tech: no stage, no seating, no special lighting to demarcate the performance area, and no props or special effects. Nor was there an official beginning or end to the work, just a continual performance during opening hours.

Plastic differs from the art historical paradigm of sculpture and installation in its organization of time. As Hassabi writes, "because we need to sustain the 'loop,' which is essentially the structure of the work, counting becomes very important. Each performer counts everything we do, and we synchronize our rhythm of counting with the iPhone timer in the morning—like little machines."[16] While many choreographers have abandoned musical beat in favor of clock time, what interests me in Hassabi's comment is her comparison of the dancer to the iPhone, whose digital time is internalized

by the performers. At the same time, however, the very title—*Plastic*—foregrounds the non-mediated and non-technological: a confrontation with physical materiality as the dancers press themselves against and into the building. Fingers stretch over the cold floor; a torso sinks uncomfortably into the staircase; a face pushes awkwardly into a sofa. This gravitational pull could not be *less* virtual: the dancers did not embody a gravity-defying verticality but were positioned vulnerably on the floor. *Plastic* exemplifies, in a particularly concise way, the dance exhibition's simultaneous repression and reassertion of the live body in relation to digital technology. Artists and choreographers strip back the theatrical apparatus to expose the degree zero of performance—bodies in space and time, without lighting, amplified sound, props, effects. But they do this only to reinstate technology (the digital loop, the internalization of the iPhone) as a means of organizing duration. Moreover, technology also becomes the primary mode of viewing these works: taking photographs and video on a smartphone.

A different internalization of digital technology can be evidenced in Xavier Le Roy's *Retrospective* (2018), a rotating cast of six performers who present in a gallery their own versions of Le Roy's solo works originally produced for black box theaters. The viewer enters an unadorned white gallery to find four performers stationed in different parts of the room, and engaged in different types of activity: holding a pose, performing a sequence of movements, talking to visitors, or engaging in some combination of all three. Every now and then three of the dancers make a curious buzzing sound and scamper out of view, only to return at a different station and resume their activity. It takes a while for viewers to understand the performance roles assigned to different stations in the room. Some can be understood rapidly, others demand more attention; the majority of visitors spend the most time at the station furthest from the entrance, in which one of the performers speaks about his or her career as a dancer—an informal lecture-demonstration that can last up to half

an hour. All of the stations were seemingly irresistible in terms of photographic capture, to the extent that it became difficult for the performers; Scarlet Yu, for example, has noted that "sometimes I have the feeling of dancing more for these cameras than for people."[17]

As the title *Retrospective* implies, Le Roy's performance is also an exhibition, spanning six to eight weeks in duration. A conscious part of the choreographer's schema was to use three different display modes as tools for presenting fragments of his solo performances—the sculpture, the loop, and the narrative. Sculpture is exemplified in the reduction of *Self-Unfinished* (1998) to a particularly iconic pose; the loop can be seen in excerpts of his most familiar works including *Sacre de Printemps* (2007) and *Giszelle* (2001); the narrative part comprises a lecture-demonstration, scripted by each performer, about his or her own path to dance, after the fashion of Le Roy's own lecture-performance *Product of Circumstances* (1999).[18] Although the loop seems to be the dominant display mode of *Retrospective*, it is inadequate to account for the exhibition's heterochronic structure. The audience pays attention to different sequences by the four performers, but three of these are regularly "reset" (i.e. refreshed) every time a new visitor enters the gallery.[19] The best technological analogy for this device is neither sculpture nor the loop, but in fact the multiple temporalities of the webpage, where the refresh rate of headlines, stories, videos, ads, banners, pop-ups, and so on are all different. *Retrospective* effectively amounts to a live browser that the audience can surf, and from which they can walk away/click off at any moment.

This digital logic is fully materialized in Anne Imhof's *Faust* (2017), produced for the German pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale. During the opening of the exhibition, visitors entered the performance on a highly-reflective raised glass floor, beneath which one watched a cast of ten performers engaged in a range of affectless gestures and activities. Occasionally the performers emerged from under the glass

to share the viewer's space, stand on glass shelves, or behind glass walls; poses seemed more important than movement, rendering the work irresistibly photogenic—not least because the performers exuded an attitude and sensibility familiar to us from fashion magazines and advertising. When I visited the work in May, the public's hunger to capture the work on their camera phones was overwhelming. Watching them, I was struck by the sense with which the pavilion functioned as a *mise en abyme* of screens: the central component of the installation—the glass floor and walls—was effectively one large touchscreen. The glass became an interface between the viewers clamoring to supplement their mediated vision with physical proximity, and the performers who, in turn, pushed up against the structure by breathing or licking its surface, or pressing their heads and torsos against its oppressive limits. The entire pavilion became an apparatus for watching a live performance through a screen.

Such contiguity between physical and virtual spectatorship has been reinforced in recent years by the aesthetic slippage between the white cube and the white webpage. As Mike Sanchez observes, galleries today "employ a large number of high-wattage fluorescent-light fixtures, as opposed to more traditional spot lighting, making their walls pulsate like a white IPS screen (the now-ubiquitous LCD technology introduced by Apple in 2010)."[20] More than ever, the white cube is the stage set for photographs destined to circulate digitally on a white webpage. Artists acknowledge that they now install exhibitions with the installation shot in mind.[21] These days, the ephemerality of the exhibition is now just a moment en route to its afterlife—if not its real life—as an online jpg. The question is to what extent performance in the gallery can resist a condition that is now the norm for visual art.

At stake here is not just the competing discourses of black box and white cube, and their ideological claims to neutrality, but the whole question of how technology impacts upon attention. Dance theorist André Lepecki has recently

argued for a fundamental distinction between the *spectator* of performance and the *witness*. The spectator is a passive, silent accomplice who Instagrams clichéd poses, and "who chooses to check his iPhone or to Google the latest blog on the piece he is presently (non)watching, so to be (forensically) assured of the *facts*. The spectator searches above all, for *information* for the sake of non-ambiguity."[22] Lepecki contrasts this spectator to the more political and ethical figure of the witness, an actor-storyteller who takes responsibility for the work by transmitting an experience of it to future audiences through the work of translation into language. For Lepecki, only the witness sees the whole performance and is properly "subjective-corporeal-affective-historical"; the spectator, by contrast, checks in and out.[23]

While Lepecki's opposition to the cult of information is understandable, he neglects the fact that focused attention is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of performance. It was only in the 1870s when Wagner designed the theater at Bayreuth to remove lateral views, provide a frontal perspective for everyone, conceal the orchestra, and plunge the audience into near-complete darkness, that the ideal of full immersion and concentration came into being. Before that moment, theater had been replete with peripheral distractions (primarily social) that were one of the main reasons why people attended theater in the first place. Images of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theater hardly ever show rapt audiences: people turn to converse with each other, or to look across the orchestra stalls to scrutinize their counterparts in the boxes opposite. During performances in eighteenth-century London, "fruit women" moved among the audience selling refreshments and copies of plays and songbooks, as did prostitutes looking for customers. By returning us to a model of spectatorship as sociability, the contemporary dance exhibition reminds us that attention and distraction have always been intrinsically intertwined and rarely exist as pure entities. The gadget has just changed: opera glasses have been replaced by cellphones.

This misleading dialectic of attention and

distraction has its roots not in theater but in the much broader context of industrialization. As Jonathan Crary has demonstrated, modernity gave rise to a dual concern for attention and distraction as a direct result of capitalism's reformulation of human perception. It imposed a disciplinary regime of attentiveness (for example, in the vigilance needed to stay safe when using factory machinery), but simultaneously worked *against* this by also requiring the subject to adapt to ever faster cycles of change, replacement, and obsolescence.[24] The Taylorization of labor in the early twentieth century was accompanied by a corresponding Taylorization of attention: minimizing interruptions and narrowing focus to maximize measurable productivity. The neoliberal digitization of labor, by contrast, challenges Taylorized attention, because it no longer upholds a manufactured separation between work and the rest of life. The computer is both a mechanism of distraction that impedes our efficiency at work—but it also allows work to invade our homes, our weekends, and our holidays.[25] The principle mechanism of our productive labor is also the engine of our distraction. Today's ideal subject of consumer capitalism therefore has to thrive within a structural contradiction because our primary tool, the computer, is used for both work and leisure. These contradictory demands have persisted throughout the twentieth century, but it is only in the last few decades that they have been pathologized as "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder" (ADHD), discovered in 1980 as a mental illness that requires medication.

But alongside the pathologization of attention, we also find its moralization. Every month, articles and books are published that lament the emotional costs of smartphone addiction, the need to take a "digital detox," the recalibration of knowledge as a result of the internet, and the inability of students to endure a seminar or lecture without checking their phones or email.[26] While many of these critiques are salient—there is no question that digital technology is reorganizing both the intellect and social relations—distraction is often presented as a weakness of character that can be reined in through

willpower and inner strength; attention, by contrast, connotes agency and self-determination. The requirement to be *both* attentive *and* distracted is, however, unfulfillable: the ideal subject of neoliberal capitalism is not in fact human at all, but a computer, able to multitask and perform several procedures simultaneously.[27]

When dance enters the museum, then, we find that audience attention is oriented towards the performance, but not exclusively; we participate in a collective experience and its documentation, but selectively turn away from the performers to converse with our friends, virtually or in real life. Rather than presenting a troubling new mode of attention deficit, these works only externalize and make literal the mental drift that occurs *whenever we watch any performance*. Attention exists on a continuum of other states not necessarily attached to the optical, including trance, reverie, daydream, hypnosis, meditation, and dissociation. These internal states were once thought essential to creativity, but today tend to be devalued as nonproductive time. Durational forms of dance, theater and opera provide a particularly rich space for such internal meditation. Philip Glass has observed that it is perfectly acceptable for audiences to nod off during his four-and-a-half hour opera *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), and quotes Robert Wilson: "Well, you know, if you fall asleep, when you wake up it'll still be going on."[28] The difference between duration in the 1970s and duration today is that the two-way oscillation between watching a performance and the mind's own "internal journey" is now opened up to a three-way communication that triangulates the performance, inner drift, and cyberspace.

The denigration of performance in museums can thus be positioned as the latest iteration of longstanding anxieties about attention and technology. It also puts pressure on the debate around live and mediatized that so dominated performance studies in the 1990s. Mediation today is less a question of documentation than a compositional method: Hassabi holding poses that invite photographic capture (*Plastic*, 2015–16)

or Anne Imhof installing a vast glass floor under which the performers move (*Faust*, 2017)—effectively one vast touch-screen. This is because the very apparatus that artists choose to engage with—the post-digital museum—*is already a form of mediation*: stepping past performers on a museum staircase, or watching their movements through a glass floor. Spectatorship has always been a function of mediation; the difference today is that attention is also externalized, existing not just in the individual mind but directed socially, outwardly and online. The dance exhibition thus foregrounds the coexisting (and competing) regimes of attention that contemporary performance brings to the fore: not just the blurring of black box and white cube, but the digital technology that infiltrates both these *dispositifs*.

This, then, is the grey zone: an area in which behavioral conventions are not yet established, and up for negotiation. It is perhaps not coincidental that in *Plastic*, Hassabi and her dancers were clad in grey denim, and that the walls of MoMA's atrium were painted grey—identifying neither with the black box nor the white cube. The dance exhibition thus occupies a hybrid realm in which audience behavior is unpredictable and unprescribed, and the performers may even need to be protected by guards. The only thing that seems to be certain about the grey zone is the extent to which photography and social media are unavoidable aspects of this hybrid genre. The emergence of the smartphone is of course external to many of these developments in dance and performance art, but the former has unquestionably propelled the popularity of the latter, and has unwittingly come to define its identity. It also exposes what previously remained hidden: the extent to which audiences are always distracted. The dream of full concentration and focused vision, as an attempt to recoup perceptual unity and subjective wholeness, is a twentieth-century fantasy that arose in lockstep synchronicity with the routinization of perception in modernity. Distraction is actually just another form of attention. In the post-digital museum,

therefore, spectatorship returns to pre-modern sociality levels: it is perfectly possible for full embodied attention and absorbed thinking to exist alongside the process of continuous archiving.

A curatorial interest in the performing arts has unquestionably resulted in a certain defanging of visual art performance, which is no longer concerned with transgression, protest, or institutional critique. That role has instead fallen to activist interventions such as Liberate Tate and Gulf Labor.[29] What the migration of black box into white cube *can* offer, however, is a zoom lens onto the conflicts underlying technology's reshaping of our sensorium. Dance exhibitions are a strange hybrid, both a symptom of and compensation for the virtualization of perception and attention. While insisting on a largely de-technologized and stripped-down approach to production that foreground the intimate proximity of the human body, they nevertheless carry the negative imprint of digital technology in their very structure. By asserting the inextricability of immediacy and mediation, dance exhibitions foreground and problematize the way in which contemporary attention—and thus the contemporary subject—is configured at this particular historical moment. This is a subject caught between competing notions of public and personal, subject and object, physicality and virtuality, being institutionally-shaped and being self-constituted. The question is where we head next: to codify the ideological stakes of the grey zone, push its contradictions further, or to avert its paradoxes altogether by taking performance out of the gallery and back into dedicated spaces that are more comfortable and reliable, but that also lack the friction of an interface with the public in all of its uncontrollably distracted multiplicity.[30]

1 Performance is also increasingly present in commercial art galleries, but the focus of this paper is the museum due to its commitment to publicness.

2 Jerry Saltz, "This Renovation Plan Will Ruin MoMA, and the Only People Who Can Stop It Aren't Trying," *New York*, March 25, 2014, http://www.vulture.

com/2014/03/saltz-renovation-plan-will-ruin-moma.html.

3 Sven Lütticken, "Dance Factory," *Mousse*, no. 50, (October–November 2015): 91, 96.

4 Allison Hugill, "The Instagrammable Angst of Anne Imhof," *Momus*, October 5, 2016, http://momus.ca/the-instagrammable-angst-of-anne-imhof/.

5 See for example the comments of curator Frank Bock in Sara Wookey, *Who Cares? Dance in the Gallery and Museum* (London: Siobhan Davies Dance, 2015), 68.

6 Although Tino Sehgal can be said to have devised the protocols for sustaining performance continually in an exhibition space, it is telling that he insisted upon banning the photography of his work. By the time of his solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 2010, it was no longer possible to control the photography of his performances. The first group exhibition to involve continuous performance in the gallery space is arguably *A Choreographed Exhibition*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, in 2007.

7 Although artists have found a way to exhibit theater and music continually in the gallery, it is the visual and sensuous character of *dance* in particular where we find the strongest convergence of contemporary anxieties around technology, attention, labor, and collective presence. This is why I use the phrase "dance exhibition" rather than "performance exhibition."

8 Within visual art, the term "black box" began to be used in the 1990s to refer to the darkening of galleries to show video installations and other projected media.

9 For Giorgio Agamben, an apparatus is defined very broadly as "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings." Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?," in *"What is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009),14. I use "apparatus" in a more limited sense, akin to film theory's description of the cinematic apparatus as the ideological production of a spectating subject who identifies with the (gendered) point of view on screen.

10 Playwright Howard Barker writes that "In all collective culture, your neighbor controls you by his gaze. In darkness he is eliminated and you are alone with the actor . . . In the black box you are trusted to be free, to be responsible." Barker, *Arguments for a Theatre* (London: Calder, 1989), 74. I disagree with Barker's diagnosis; the black box is dark, but hardly a space where we can't see or monitor our neighbors. As George Home-Cook points out, the main disruptions to attention in both theater and cinema are auditory: phones ringing, people unwrapping sweets, whispering, etc. Home-Cook, *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 3.

11 This development was spearheaded in part by the Wooster Group's use of video alongside live performance, first seen in *Route 1&9 (The Last Act)*, 1981. The number of screens currently used by contemporary companies like Temporary Distortion is undertaken with conscious reference to video installation.

12 Trajal Harrell: "I like working in the white cube. I like what it does to the body, how you see the body differently. I like the intimacy, the different way that people deal with time." Interview with Harrell by David Everitt Howe, "Dance in the Ruins," *Mousse*, no. 50: 78.

13 Tate curator Catherine Wood notes the institutional struggle simply to gain permission to bring water into the galleries for the performers: "There are pressure points in terms of care, between the classic one—whether the dancers can bring water in, which they need—and collection care—being worried about the artworks on display—but also pressure points around audience behavior." Cathrine Wood, in Sara Wookey, *Who Cares?* (London: Siobhan Davies Studios, 2015), 34.

14 Choreographer Jennifer Lacey, discussing her contribution to a gallery exhibition in 2007, notes that her work had to become an endurance piece: "The question of duration was. . . glaringly obvious to me. It was a crazy thing for the dancers to go in and to work constantly with all these different notions of performance and *with the possibility of being exposed to maybe nobody all day long*." Lacy in conversation with Mathieu Copeland (2010), *Choreographing Exhibitions* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2013), 123, my emphasis.

15 Tino Sehgal: "[I] was trying to fulfill all conventions to make my work comparable to a traditional sculpture." Sehgal, quoted in Elizabeth Carpenter, "Be the Work: Intersubjectivity in Tino Seghal's *This Objective of that Object*," Walker Art Center blog, 2014, http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/be-the-work/.

16 Maria Hassabi, e-mail to the author, November 7, 2015.

17 Scarlet Yu, in Marisa Hayes, "Exposer la danse au musée: Entretien avec Scarlet Yu," *Repères: Cahier de danse*, no. 38–39 (2017), 6, my translation.

18 When the dancers weren't performing in one of these three modes, they occupied a separate space for rehearsal and research that was also visible to the public.

19 This device was first used by Tino Sehgal to signal the arrival of new visitors (and thus a resetting of the work to the initial position) in *This Objective of That Object* (2004).

20 Mike Sanchez, "2011: Art and Transmission," *Artforum* 50, no. 10 (Summer 2013), 294–301. He continues: "Such fluorescent-lighting systems became ubiquitous in galleries in the mid- to late 2000s, at the same time that galleries began systematically posting images of their exhibitions on their websites."

21 See for example artist Simon Denny: "I look at an installation and wonder how it will photograph as I install. It makes to be realistic about how viewers will encounter the material. These images are an important part of the exhibition experience." Denny, in Brigitte Oetker and Nicolaus Schaufhausen, eds., *Attention Economy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 64.

22 André Lepecki, *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 175.

23 Lepecki, *Singularities,* 173.

24 Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 12–13.

25 Cathy Davidson, *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform The Way We Live, Work, and Learn* (New York: Viking, 2011), 169.

26 See for example, Joelle Renstrom, "And their eyes glazed over," *Aeon*, September 12, 2016, https://aeon.co/essays/can-students-who-are-constantly-on-their-devices-actually-learn.

27 Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 14.

28 David Sillito, "Philip Glass: Have a Sleep During Einstein on the Beach," BBC News, May 4, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-17958400.

29 Performance remains the preferred option for activists: consider the

group Liberate Tate (2010–), who pressured the museum to divest itself of BP sponsorship via numerous 'oil spill' actions at Tate Modern and Tate Britain, or Gulf Labor's intervention at the Guggenheim on 1 May 2015, showering the rotunda with On Kawara flyers to protest the museum's employment practices in the United Arab Emirates.

30 This is an abbreviated version of a longer essay, "Black Box, White Cube – Fifty Shades of Grey?," published in the 2018 summer issue of *TDR: The Drama Review* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 22–42.

(ITA)

Le arti performative, un fenomeno sempre più frequente nei musei americani ed europei, sono state attaccate da storici dell'arte e critici, che ne considerano la diffusione una moda fuorviante e una cinica trovata di marketing.[1] Il critico Jerry Saltz, per esempio, ha espresso senza mezzi termini la propria avversione verso il progetto di espansione del MoMA, che "privilegia eventi, performance, forme di intrattenimento dal vivo e di qualsiasi cosa che non si limiti a stare immobile e farsi osservare. [...] Il nuovo MoMA è progettato per rendere possibile un numero sempre maggiore di eventi il cui scopo principale è produrre piccole scariche di serotonina e dopamina".[2] Le sue osservazioni trovano riscontro nelle parole del critico Sven Lütticken, secondo cui l'opera di Tino Sehgal mostra una "perfetta compatibilità [...] con il museo temporalizzato ed *eventizzato* nel quale deve quasi sempre succedere qualcosa (qualunque cosa)"; quando la danza viene portata all'interno del museo, scrive, "i visitatori diventano, di fatto, a loro volta, performer nel [...] museo come Facebook tridimensionale".[3] In tempi più recenti, una critica canadese si è lamentata del fatto che *Angst* di Anne Imhof (2017) non è altro che un "curioso spettacolo estremamente instagrammabile": un "repertorio di immagini scelte a caso" in cui i performer lavorano quattro ore ogni notte per produrre immagini attentamente coreografate che in ultima analisi sono "effimere quanto gli Snapchat che le documentano".[4] Non tutti questi critici tracciano un parallelismo diretto tra la performance e i social media, tuttavia hanno la tendenza a equipararla al presentismo, alla distrazione, allo spettacolo curioso e all'intrattenimento, e implicitamente lanciano un appello in difesa del piacere di osservare oggetti morti.

Queste letture rappresentano la reazione dominante, tra i singoli storici dell'arte e critici, di fronte alla danza e alle arti performative nei musei, ma sommate hanno l'effetto riduttivo di vedere la live art come vittima di forze neoliberiste