

TANZRECHERCHE NRW #30

RECHERCHEORT:
Köln

THEMA DER RECHERCHE:
Radio-Choreography

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RECHERCHEZEITRAUM
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Interview vor Beginn der Recherche

Radio-Choreography sounds unusual. What is the initial stage of your research project?

The starting point of this research is a critical examination of current trends in contemporary dance archiving and documentation practices. In the past two decades questions regarding documentation of ephemeral art forms like dance and performance art, have been at the center of many theoretical and artistic investigations. Dance and its ever-changing, bodily, elusive character have been especially challenging for traditional archiving methods. In recent years, artist-led initiatives have been producing fascinating dance documentation practices, challenging the scope of choreographic creation and knowledge production. However, it seems that the vast majority of such dance-documentation endeavors have been swept away by “the digital turn”—focusing on various applications of digital visualization technologies. For example, projects such as the “Digitale Atlas Tanz” by the Association of German Dance Archives or MOTION BANK by the Forsythe Dance Company come to mind. Without underestimating the significance of these initiatives, I believe

this is an important moment to examine the consequences of subjecting choreographic knowledge production to the realm of virtual visibility. Asking questions like what happens to choreography when such application of new-media technologies makes the ephemeral lasting, the elusive comprehensible, and dance into visual data?

With these questions in mind, Radio-Choreography is a radical call to recalibrate our senses and listen to dance. As an opposition to the cultural imperative for hyper-visibility and the digitalization of everything, Radio-Choreography seeks to develop a new artistic research methodology and practice a non-oculocentric form of studying dance. In this regard, the research resonates beyond the prism of dance documentation and explores a performative way of learning about the world, not by looking at, but by listening to.

Then why radio?

In the context of this research radio is interesting for me both as a communication medium and as an auditory space. I am interested in exploring the radiophonic as a space constructed by language, voice and imagination, and examine its ability to access and amplify the mental space of dance which is ignored when choreography is considered as a final, visual artifact. For instance, as dancers we often chant internal songs following the movement, during the rehearsal process the choreographer use’s abstract language in order to shape her desired movement qualities, I imagine that these forms of choreographic knowledge, that are beyond the scope of conventional research methodologies, might find their place and resonance within the space of radio.

In addition, I am very interested in the invisibility of radio as a choreographic medium. From historical or sociocultural perspectives, dance is considered as a marginalized, less institutionalized, less discursive and therefore less rigor art discipline, hence much of the work done these days by dance archives programmatically seeks to fixate a choreographic body of knowledge and increase the visibility of dance as an art form. As opposed to these trends, in Radio-Choreography I wish to delve into the invisibility of dance and follow its ambiguous modes of operation which I find extremely relevant for our time. Lastly, I wish to relate to radio as a telecommunication medium and examine its ability to render publics and imagined communities. Can radio allow us to disseminate invisible dances across borders? Could broadcasting become a choreographic gesture?

Why did you choose to hold your research in Cologne?

Cologne is an interesting context for this research for several reasons, first of all, it has a vibrant contemporary dance scene which I intend to connect with during the residency, and I am also very interested in working with two unique institutions- the Tanzarchiv Köln and the WDR. Historically speaking, the WDR in Cologne played an important role in the development of radio art and experimental radiophonic practices. In the early sixties, for example, the WDR Studio Akustische Kunst was the first to broadcast experimental acoustic literature, Neues Hörspiel and experimental music. Another interesting moment happened in the nineties, when a series of ambitious radio-sculptures by American artist Bill Fontana took Cologne as their base; Fontana's first "Sound Bridge" connected

Cologne and San Francisco, and the second connected Cologne and Kyoto, both realized by transcontinental broadcasting via satellites of the WDR.

As I wish to develop an experimental radio practice I am very inspired by this aspect of Cologne's cultural heritage. During the residency I intend to approach the culture department of the WDR, and let's see how much experimentally they will be willing to cope with these days... I promise not to ask for their transcontinental satellite!

From the aspect of choreographic research, the Tanzarchiv Köln is an international center for dance research and one of the most progressive ones when it comes to dance documentation and well, yes, digitalization. Exploring the Tanzarchiv will allow me to get acquainted with state of the art of dance documentation and archiving practices, which are important references for my work.

What are your plans for the residency period and how will you share the research outcomes with the public?

During the residency I plan to hold a series of ephemeral radio laboratory events. Some of these labs will revolve around collecting recordings, interviews and sounds from choreographic processes taking place in Cologne, which will become the basis of an experimental audio-dance archive. Another aspect that will be explored in these labs will be the perspective of the spectator, questioning how the experience of watching dance can be rendered into a radiophonic format. These interdisciplinary labs will bring together professionals from the fields of radio art, dance, dramaturgy, and journalism, and will be open for the public.

Another plan I have in mind is sharing the research process with the public in a form of a radio intervention, broadcasting radio-choreographies on a local radio station. Stay tuned...