

# Introduction

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In Europe, dance has brought forth a multitude of new ‘worlds’ over the last few decades, especially in Germany against the backdrop of *Tanzplan Deutschland*<sup>1</sup>: dance houses, dance centers, dance forums, dedicated completely or in the context of other arts to dance and choreography; mobile self-organized, often temporary artist collectives, which are not limited to a certain region; new education programs at art academies and universities; academic and artistic research, not only in dance theory and as a result newly generated discourses; professional journals on dance and choreography, some of them residing in the digital realm; artistic work in dance projects at schools, in other educational and cultural institutions or in urban areas and public spaces. These examples demonstrate that contemporary dance has visibly gained importance in the fields of culture, education, art and academia in spite of its often precarious financial situation and meager lobby in educational and cultural policy. This new public attention for contemporary dance is connected to a number of changes within the dance scene: the differentiation and diversification of the European experimental dance scene and its audiences, a reflection of former historical, as well as contemporary fundamental assumptions about and categorizations of dance, new experiments with forms of collaboration, changing approaches to the concepts of practice and theory, a shift in the understanding of working and research processes.

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1 *Tanzplan Deutschland* (Dance Plan Germany) was an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation. From 2005 until 2010, the project acted as a catalyst for the German dance scene. Equipped with a budget of 12.5 million Euros, its goal was to provide dance in Germany. In 2006 and 2009 the German Federal Cultural Foundation hosted two Dance Congresses in Berlin and Hamburg which also came within the ambit of *Tanzplan Deutschland* (cf. [Tanzkongress.de](http://Tanzkongress.de); [Tanzplan-Deutschland.de](http://Tanzplan-Deutschland.de)).

Since the 1990s, the ‘world of dance’, so it seems, is (once again) in a productive crisis.

In this historical situation, all players in the dance field, be they dancer, choreographer, dance theorist, curator or scholar are faced with the challenge of handling a diversity of resources, processes, concepts, discourses and aesthetics. The concurrence of various differing frameworks of reference, discursive paradigms and institutional forms, the hybridity of dance identities and the simultaneous necessity of permanent (self)positioning create problems and paradoxes, which in turn are framed by the ‘new globalized world’ of post-Fordian modes of production, the globalized economy and the neo-liberal state. It is therefore no coincidence that contemporary dance is (again) directing its focus towards the processes that creating the world(s) in which we live, our ‘being-in-time’ – between affiliation and detachment, presence and absence, immediacy and mediation, particularity and the demand for universality, temporality and contingency. *How* are ‘dance worlds’ created? Is there an intrinsic logic to these ‘dance worlds’? *How* can ‘we’ speak and write about them? And how does the knowledge of these worlds become socially effective?

In his book *Ways of Worldmaking*, Nelson Goodman succinctly states: “If attempts to answer the question ‘What is art?’ characteristically end in frustration and confusion perhaps – as so often in philosophy – the question is the wrong one.” (Goodman 1978: 57) Goodman avoids the ontologization of the question “What is art?” by asking “When is art?”. This volume of essays also seeks to answer the question of ‘dance worlds’ by doing more than inquiring into their properties, but by instead examining their operative logic and the strategies of their production in specific historical and cultural contexts. In doing so, questions concerning the ‘nature’ of ‘dance worlds’ fade from the spotlight in favor of an interest in how – and if – the performative production of ‘dance worlds’ is different from other ways of worldmaking.

The idea underlying Goodman’s concept of “worldmaking” is that ‘world’ is not given, but a process of creation: ‘world’ is thus, according to the basic epistemological premise, made when actions and language bring forth meanings. Worldmaking is therefore always social, cultural, religious, framed, historically in flux and reliant on scientific and philosophical discourses and experiences. It does not only relate to one ‘world’ and cannot be comprehended in totality: different ways of worldmaking provoke different, interlocking worlds. World, originally a singular word, which only came into use in the plural sense end of the 16th century, here disintegrates into multifarious and yet structured concepts of world. In his symbol-theoretical approach, inspired by Ernst Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms, Goodman concludes that we live in as many worlds as

symbolic ways of worldmaking, i.e. linguistic or figuratively conveyed ways permit. However, which worlds are created with corporeal and dance-aesthetic methods? This question is not primarily directed at interpreting productions and dance pieces in the traditional academic sense, but instead seeks to focus on performative processes of the generation of meaning and, in doing so, concentrate on processes that organize the – possibly dance specific – creation of (social) meaning.

Over the course of the 20th century, dance in the modern age has addressed such relationships as fundamentally discussed in the topos of “worldmaking” – nature and culture, reality and the image, objectivity and subjectivity – in various ways. Parts of German Expressionist Dance and American Postmodern Dance at the beginning of the 20th century presumed that the way the body dealt with inner, as well as outer nature contained an incontestable certainty of being and thus regarded ‘world’ as given in an act of dance that was felt to be natural. Meanwhile, other dancers and choreographers – such as Oskar Schlemmer, who was active at Bauhaus – searched for formal and structural principles of constructing the body and choreography. In the 1960s, first in so-called postmodern dance and in computer animated dance, which developed in close connection with cybernetics, and also in other ways in the dance theater of the 1970s, the art of dance reflected prior aesthetic strategies of worldmaking as dance is capable of creating as a specific practice of movement and choreography and a specific way of organizing of movement, as well as arranging space and time. In doing so, new aesthetic positions of dance emerged, which interpreted the questions of accessing and creating world differently: less as phenomenally given or anthropological fixed points, but rather as subjective positions or as political-aesthetic strategies and transcultural practice. Since the 1990s, the question of “worldmaking” has gained new meaning in the face of globalization and trans-nationalization, which finds its expression in the humanities e.g. in the discussion on the concept of “global history” (cf. Foster 2009) or the establishment of *postcolonial studies* in international dance research. It has found expression in those styles, which have been written into dance history as post-structural dance or conceptual dance.

This volume is based on the assumption that dance reveals its effectivity not in the representation of existing structures and systems, but unfolds its potentiality precisely in the offering of alternatives, of utopias, developed with the help of the body and through the organization of movement. It therefore focuses on the challenges and the possibilities that lie in “ways of worldmaking” in dance. It asks how dance creates ‘world’ as a medium bound to the body and whether and how these processes and strategies differ from those of other arts

and sciences. A central motif that pervades the history of modernity and has been supported by the performative-theoretical approaches of the last few years is especially up for critical debate: that dance is an ephemeral, elusive medium, which creates 'world' in contrast with other media via the body and its ambiguous 'languages' and forms of expression; a world that has aspects of instantaneity. Critical involvement with the motif of the 'ephemeral' and of elusiveness is of central importance for dance research when inquiring into the 'how' of worldmaking. But it is also of epistemological urgency, considering that dance, as a medium of the body and presence, can be seen as a field of knowledge par excellence for research into how certainty about the world is created between the poles of perception, imagination, action and cognition.

The contributions inquire into how 'worlds' are made in dance. In doing so, they discuss specific worlds of production, perception and experience in dance and choreography and examine them from an interdisciplinary perspective. Against the backdrop of current theoretical approaches in the fields of social, cultural and media studies, aesthetic theory and philosophy, the specific worldmaking of dance and choreography is compared to other art forms and the research methods. In addition, forms of knowledge as practiced in the sciences are brought into relationship with those forms of knowledge, which can be found in artistic forms of working.

The subsection *social realms* brings together articles by Gabriele Klein, Randy Martin and Bojana Kunst. These are complemented by a conversation with the artist group LIGNA.

Gabriele Klein discusses various forms of worldmaking in dance and choreography. She focuses on the relationship of politics and aesthetics in contemporary dance and its historical genesis, as she inquires into the political and social significance of dance and the articulation of the political in artistic processes, dance aesthetics and discourses.

Randy Martin describes how dance moves between the poles of intervening practice and a conceptual definition of the future and how multiple notions and forms of the political become visible in dance. He defines the dance ensemble as a form of ideal community, the dance performance as a place in which artists and audience assemble, thus making it also, much like a political demonstration, ephemeral.

Bojana Kunst's contribution focuses on the organization of movement and work in the 20th century. Her argument is that due to changing production conditions, dance formulated concepts of freedom and future, which, because of the way that movement engages time and space, not only allowed an aesthetic,

but also the social and political potential of transgression to become recognizable.

In the performative audio play *Der Neue Mensch (The New Human)*, which was performed during the Dance Congress 2009, the artist group LIGNA employed movement instructions and multiple shifts of perspective and roles. In a conversation with Sandra Noeth, they describe the choreographic processes involved in producing a collective body by questioning the relationship of audience and action, as well as the construction of subjectivity and community through the body.

The subsection *hybrid spheres* contains essays by Susan Leigh Foster, Sabine Sörgel and Anette Rein, which all discuss the construction of identity. They are framed by an interview with German theater director Monika Gintersdorfer.

Susan Leigh Foster analyses the presence and representation of the category gender in intercultural collaboration from a postcolonial perspective. Her text is an imagined and staged dialogue with French choreographer Jérôme Bel, in which she critically reflects his artistic work with the traditional Khon dancer Pichet Klunchun regarding individual and collective processes of identity formation.

The postcolonial gaze also plays a role in Sabine Sörgel's essay, in which she shows how dancing bodies produce spaces of identity and imagined communities, in which transnational politics are negotiated. Based on the example of Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula she traces the ambivalence of contemporary dance, which is political, while simultaneously attempting to evade political exploitation and representation.

Anette Rein writes about 'world' as cultural memory. Based on her research into Balinese dances, she demonstrates the challenges faced by museums as places of collective memory in the collection and preservation of tangible/intangible dance cultures. By identifying the special ephemeral quality of dance, she formulates a perspective, which aims at introducing new terms of action for museums, but also at redefining their educational mandate.

Monika Gintersdorfer speaks in a conversation with Gabriele Klein about her experiences working as a theater director with dance and choreography. Based on the series *Logobi*, she reflects on the conditions and possibilities of intercultural artistic work and gives a detailed account of her collaborations with dancers from the Ivory Coast. According to Gintersdorfer, political work and artistic work cannot be separated from one another.

Gabriele Brandstetter, Julie Townsend, Knut Hickethier and Michael Diers address the particularities of dance in the subsection *art worlds* by reflecting them in the context of other art forms.

Gabriele Brandstetter discusses the ambivalent relationship of dance and *Schrift* (writing as a material trace, i.e. text), dancing and writing (as an action) and emphasizes the similarities between these two media of worldmaking. Manifestations, materiality and signature are the perspectives under which Brandstetter argues convergence and resistance in dancing and writing, both of which she regards as movement phenomena.

Julie Townsend focuses on desire and concentrates on the production of desire in the body and in texts, based on examples from the so-called literature of the *coulisses* and the figure of the *danseuse* in the 19th century.

As moving images, respectively pictorial movements, dance and film are movement phenomena, which create worlds in different ways. Knut Hickethier examines the relationship between dance and film by discussing theoretical and analytical strategies and concepts of creating, visualizing, repeating and recording movement in film based on selected dance scenes from popular mainstream films.

The relationship of dance, music and the filmic image are the main focus of Michael Diers' essay. Here, Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow Up*, which not only concisely captures the mood of the 1960s, but is also a contemplation on the nature of the image itself, here serves as an object of research for questions of media differentiation.

The subsection *digital worlds – processing bodies* gathers contributions by Frédéric Bevilacqua, Norbert Schnell and Sarah Fdili Alaoui, Stephen Turk and Norah Zuniga Shaw. By looking at various artistic-digital projects, they inquire into the medial quality of dance based on various processes of notation, digitalization and storage.

Frédéric Bevilacqua, Norbert Schnell and Sarah Fdili Alaoui work at IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination Acoustic/Music, Paris) at the interface of movement and music. Their research on *Gesture Capturing* aims towards a paradigm shift. Their work goes beyond mere experimentation with technology and digital interactive systems in dance to instead pursue more fundamental issues concerning the description, notation and transmission of gestures and movement.

Stephen Turk focuses on the relationship of choreography and architecture and its rendering in digital space. He presents and reflects the research project *Synchronous Objects*, which translates the choreography of William Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced* into digital space. With recourse to concepts and figures of thought such as environment, entanglement and the frame, he draws attention both to the 'architectonic affinity' of choreography as well as to the

performativity of architecture, to which he ascribes dynamic potential for the perception and the occupation of choreographic space.

Norah Zuniga Shaw's research takes as its starting point the interface of dance and digital media. Based on the project *Synchronous Object for One Flat Thing*, reproduced, she analyzes in her interdisciplinary theory and practice the relationship of movement and media and the translation of one medium into another. Using these processes of transmission and translation as examples, she demonstrates the potential of dance knowledge for dancers and dance researchers alike, but also for theorists of other disciplines.

*Working principles* is the broad title of the last subsection with contributions by Sabine Gehm and Katharina von Wilcke, Gesa Ziemer and Sandra Noeth, all dedicated to the discussion of curatorial, artistic and dramaturgic working processes.

Sabine Gehm and Katharina von Wilcke inquire with Elisabeth Nehring into suitable formats for an artistic and academic occupation with dance. Based on their experiences with the Dance Congress 2009 in Hamburg, they describe curatorial strategies for developing topics and formats that facilitate a 'dance congress world' as a temporary choreographic construct.

Gesa Ziemer focuses on the situational potential of artistic working processes in dance and performance art in her discussion of complicity as a specific form of collaboration. By differentiating it from other social and organizational models such as teamwork, the forming of alliances, networking or friendship, she inquires into the creation of collectivity and collaboration in the context of instable and temporary 'dance worlds'.

Finally, Sandra Noeth's essay addresses current attempts at redefining dramaturgy in the context of contemporary choreography as a place for negotiating coexistence and community. In this sense, dramaturgy also gives room to discuss the body's capacity for action and questions choreography's mechanisms of effect as critical practice.

This volume took its beginning at the international conference supported by the German Research Foundation on the subject of *Performing Reality. 'Making Worlds' in Dance and Choreography*. It took place in November 2009 at the International Kulturfabrik Kampnagel in Hamburg in cooperation with the Dance Congress 2009, which was attended by ca. 3000 people. The organizers of the Dance Congress and thus also cooperating partners of the conference were the Federal Cultural Foundation, together with the Department for Culture of the City of Hamburg, Internationale Kulturfabrik Kampnagel and K3 – Centre for Choreography Hamburg/Tanzplan Hamburg. The cooperation sought to facilitate encounters between different fields of science and art, theory and practice, aca-

demetic and artistic research and encourage the transfer of knowledge between them. The topics introduced in the lectures at the conference found their continuation in various artistic and practical formats (panel discussions, lecture demonstrations, workshops, open spaces) during the Congress.

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## REFERENCES

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