

Introduction to Part I: Art World

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.

—Arthur Danto (1964)¹

Danto's well-known article, published in the *Journal of Philosophy* in 1964, coins the term the “artworld” and develops a philosophical approach to the sociology of arts. Danto showed that artworks were not solely artefacts given meaning by the labor of the artist, but were rather contextually embedded processes involving many people (such as curators, critics and collectors) who also contribute to a work's meaning in significant ways. In the course of the 20th century, first in philosophy and then in sociology, the factors of artistic distribution and valuation were added to the study of aesthetics and production, shifting the focus to looking at how these assemblages—or art worlds—function dynamically in society. Art worlds have been considered as institutions (Danto), interactions (Becker), fields (Bourdieu), networks (Latour), systems and communications (Luhmann).²

Within dance studies, the influence of institutions, critics, discourse and production conditions upon dance works is well established.³ Gerald Siegmund's scholarship has, in particular, looked at how Forsythe's work was tied to the resources and politics of the *Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt am Main* (municipal theater of Frankfurt) and the ideology of ballet. Siegmund writes: “Forsythe's development as an artist has always been related to questions of the institution, which he in turn questioned.”⁴ *Duo*, as a work made in the context of the Ballett Frankfurt, reconstructed in The Forsythe Company and touring since 2015 with the performances arranged by the Sadler's Wells Theatre of London, has been shaped by contact with all these different institutions, in a dynamic process that has lasted over two decades. The focus of this section is *Duo's* art world: a

1 Danto, “The Artworld,” p. 580.

2 Van Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds*, pp. 7–10.

3 Hardt and Stern, *Choreographie und Institution*; Husemann, *Choreographie als kritische Praxis*; Sabisch, “For a Topology of Practices”; Klein, *Pina Bausch's Dance Theater*.

4 In Siegmund, “Of Monsters and Puppets,” p. 23.

web of institutions, artists and contexts of production and performance. Rather than a singular work shaped only by the intentions of the choreographer and the original dancers with whom he made the piece, I wish to show how the choreography of *Duo* emerges through a network of people's activities, in cooperation shaped by the contexts in which they work. Borrowing from Howard Becker's study of art worlds and focusing upon the activities involved in production and distribution, I show how the choreography of *Duo* is interlaced with organization happening on many levels—supported by the resources and routines of institutionalized practice.

My motivation is to chronicle and analyze the history of *Duo*'s institutional enmeshment. To arrive there by chapter 5, I slowly conduct an intricate institutional autopsy: gently unpacking the organization in which this project was embedded, layer-by-layer. Like the systems of a human body, these strata are also overlapping, integrated and best observed living. Yet the ensembles of Ballett Frankfurt (1984–2004) and The Forsythe Company (2005–2015) can now only be reconstructed at a distance, as they are now institutions of the past—organizations living as memories within the people who constituted and shaped them. For readers seeking information beyond the case study of *Duo*, this section provides a historiography of the ensembles of Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company—a history (re)written from my perspective—shaped through my interviews, review of the literature and my history as a Forsythe dancer. My writing is also marked by the emphasis I lay upon the art world concept, warranting the slow approach necessary to unpack the elaborate cooperative framework. The next chapters will bring into focus: the central figure of choreographer William Forsythe; the ensembles' infrastructural and financial conditions; the dancers' transnational and professional histories and finally the dancers' artistic practices. Through this, we learn how the production of choreographic works—including *Duo*—dynamically constitutes an occupational culture, engendering an entwinement of dancer, institution, context and choreography.