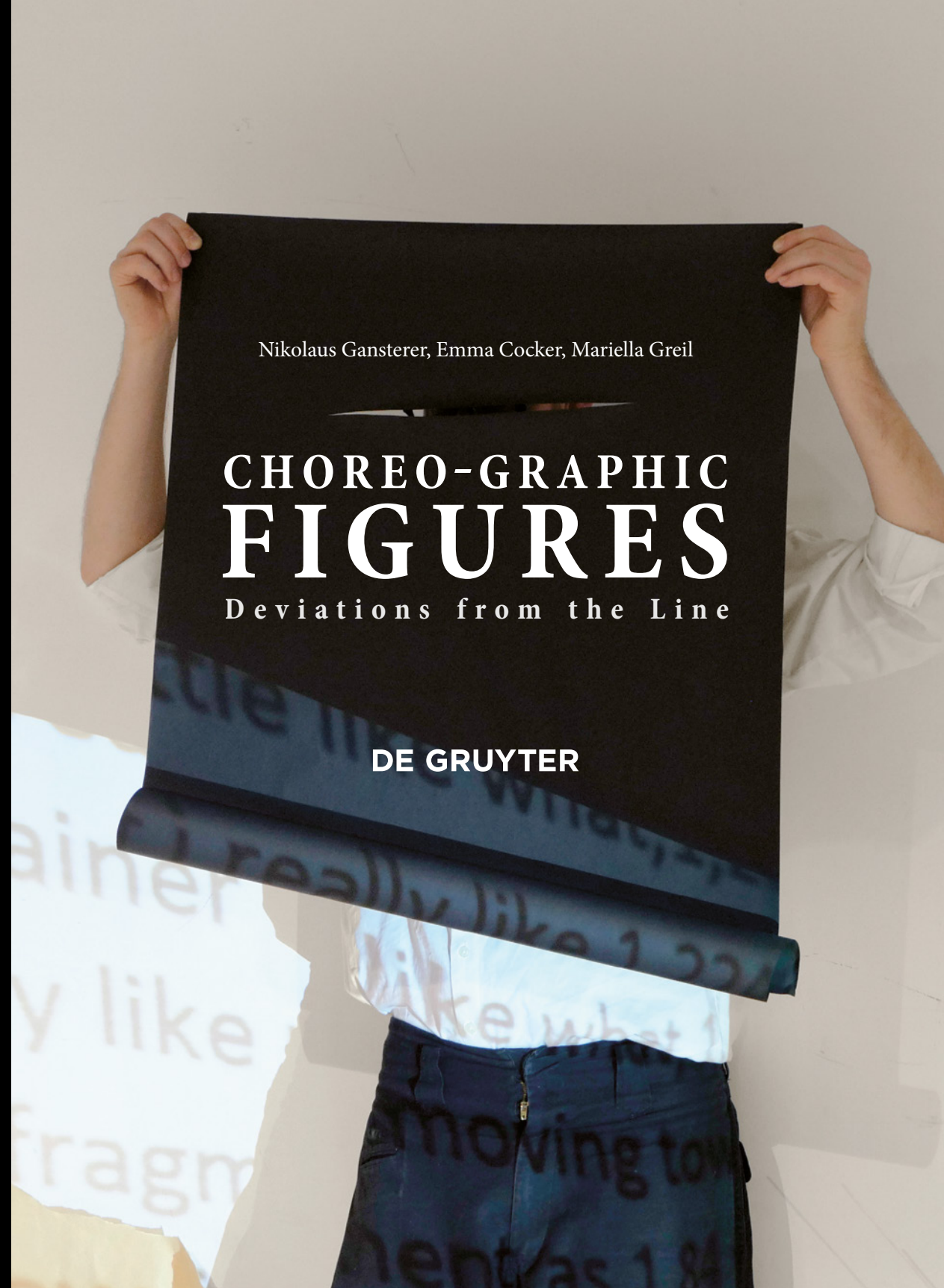


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# PROLOGUE

## CUTTING ACROSS, PASSING THROUGH

With artistic research at its heart, *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* stages a *beyond-disciplinary*, inter-subjective encounter between the lines of choreography, drawing and writing, for exploring those forms of artistic knowledge produced in the slippage and deviation as different modes of practice enter into dialogue, overlap, collide. Conceived as a studio-

*How can we attend to the process of artistic 'sense-making' from within or inside, that affective realm of energies, emergences and intensities operating before, between, and below the more readable gestures of artistic practice? How can we develop systems of notation and performativity for sharing this often hidden or undisclosed aspect of the creative process, for communicating the experience with others? How can we articulate the instability and mutability of the flows and forces — especially within collaborative exploration — without 'fixing' that which is inherently dynamic and contingent as a literal sign? Indeed, how might this focus on the micro-movements of aesthetic enquiry have wider implications at the level of the macro, encouraging the de-, re- and trans-figuring of our ways of being in the world, inviting new forms of relationality, sociality and solidarity?*

laboratory in itself, this publication draws together experimental practices and critical reflections from *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* (2014-2017), a three-year long artistic research project involving key researchers writer-artist Emma Cocker, artist-performer Nikolaus Gansterer and dancer-choreographer Mariella Greil, working with project 'sputniks'<sup>1</sup> Alex Arteaga, Christine De Smedt and Lilia Mestre, alongside guest collaborators Werner Moebius and Jörg Piringer, artist and designer Simona Koch and photographer and video-

grapher Victor Jaschke, with further invited contributions from Arno Böhrer, Catherine de Zegher, Gerhard Dirmoser (with Christopher Dell), Karin Harrasser, Adrian Heathfield, Krassimira Kruschkova, Brandon LaBelle, Erin Manning, Dieter Mersch, Werner Moebius, Alva Noë, Jeanette Pacher, Helmut Ploebst, P.A. Skantze and Andreas Spiegl (—> *Biographies*). Beyond functioning as an archival representation of the *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* project, we intend that this book might also invoke action, operating as a modular toolkit of performative and notational approaches for future experimental play. Indeed, we present our epilogue not as an ending but rather with the aim of opening, offered in the form of a 'score' to play (—> *How to Play the Score*). But first ... *how do we start? How do we prepare?* These questions were amongst the first within *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* (—> *How-ness*), and return again in our prologue.<sup>2</sup> *Pro-logue* (*pro* — 'before', *logos* — 'discourse'), a speech-act *before* speaking, preliminary preparation for what follows. Our prologue serves as an orientation device: we conceive the book as a *choreo-graphic* assemblage in and of itself, interweaving the textual and the visual, the sayable and the shown. Our enquiry is

polyfocal: its unfolding narrative not only linear but also diagrammatic, associative, rhizomatic, entangled. Hybrid of an artists' book and research compendium, our publication can be read in different directions, there is more than one 'way in'. To draw on the writing of Hélène Cixous, the book "does not have a front door. It is written from all over at once, you enter it through a hundred windows. It enters you."<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this prologue is not to provide an overview or plan of the book — as if viewed from above — but to indicate different routes through. Consider Michel de Certeau's distinction between map and itinerary: "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across. In Greek, narration is called *diegesis*: it establishes an itinerary (it 'guides') and it passes through (it 'transgresses'). The space of operations it travels in is made of movements."<sup>5</sup> We imagine the reader's movements — *cutting across, passing through* — as a *dérive* or deviation between the lines. Whilst we adopt specific project terminology, we elect against a glossary from the outset, but rather seek to dis-close — open up, unpack — our terms *en route*. However, first, some practical notes on navigation and the various 'voices' that are encountered within this book. We use different systems and symbols for making connections between the interrelated facets of our enquiry — indicating the entanglement of our practices and concepts — creating connective tissue between our thinking and that of invited contributors.

*Choreo-graphic*: the hyphen, a deviating line, holding two terms in proximity whilst also keeping them apart. *Choreo* — more than one or in relation to another, as in chorus, as in group, always a communication between. *Graphic* — the possibilities and sensitivities of inscription (of moving, drawing and writing and the modalities in between), not just for describing — representing or reproducing that which already exists — but as much a dynamic happening, capable also of bringing about, constituting, transforming.<sup>4</sup>

First, we use this sign (—>) to indicate a leap or link that could be made to another point in the publication. You — the reader — are invited to use the *Map of Contents* (the removable cover wrapped around the book) to navigate using these links. Related to (—>), you could begin in reverse, taking a nomadic route of 'leaps and bounds' based on specific keywords (—> *Index, cover*) involving — to draw on Rosi Braidotti's writing — the 'transposition' of "an in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing, non-linear but not chaotic, nomadic, yet accountable and committed; creative but also cognitively valid."<sup>6</sup> Second, pages edged in yellow indicate the contribution of an invited *wit(h)ness* (—> *Practices of Wit(h)nessing*) providing an 'external' perspective on the project beyond the voices of the three core researchers. Each 'edged' contribution has been informed through an experiential encounter with our research process: invited *wit(h)nesses* spent time with us during one or more of our *Method Labs* (—> *Method Labs, —> Biographies*). Third, pink pages are 'practices' (—> *Practices of Attention, Notation, Conversation, Wit(h)nessing, —> How to Play the Score*) developed, tested and written through intensive

collaboration with our sputniks and guest collaborators. We designed these pages to be practised; they contain practical exercises—even micro-scores—for activating exploration. We extend this colour coding system with blue accents to designate our nine different *figures* (→ *Figures*), the content of which we elaborate later in the prologue, and three blocks of brown pages highlighting the dynamics of → *How-ness*, → *When-ness*, → *Where-ness* within our enquiry.

Our project's journey has involved a transformative arc or a tripartite 'rite of passage'—movement from the realm of demarcated disciplinary gestures of choreography, drawing and writing—through a phase of interdisciplinary exchange operating 'between the lines' of our different practices, towards the *undisciplinary*. This arc is encountered through materials generated directly from the artistic research process itself including singular photographic images, drawings, textual fragments, alongside critical reflections—the *choreographic-diagrammatic-essayistic* interplay of embodied, drawn and written—that strive to distil, condense, expose or expand our understanding of the enquiry (→ *Method Lab: A Relational Milieu*, → *Method Lab: Porous Boundaries*, → *Figures*, → *Diagrams* → *Becoming Undisciplinary*, → *Figuring* < *Figure*, → *Embodied Diagrammatics*, → *How-ness*, → *When-ness*, → *Where-ness*).

The book's overall content and curatorial 'arc' are co-authored by Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer and Mariella Greil working closely with artist and designer Simona Koch to develop the format of the book itself. Content has emerged in and through a collaborative process—including dialogic encounters with our sputniks and guests (→ *Acknowledgements*)—where, as Félix Guattari argues (following Gregory Bateson), "the 'ecology of ideas' cannot be contained within the domain of the psychology of the individual, but organizes itself into systems or 'minds', the boundaries of which no longer coincide with the participant individuals."<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, we each took roles in crafting this book based on our specific

artistic sensibilities, which have undoubtedly also been transformed through our *undisciplinary* 'rite of passage' (→ *Becoming Undisciplinary*). Drawing on a 'conversational archive'—of over 150 hours of recorded conversation, resulting in over 300,000 words of transcript—writer-artist Emma Cocker distilled and developed the textual vocabulary of our project towards a series of 'essays', 'preludes', 'interludes' and 'figure introductions', weaving our own words into dialogue with the wider critical context of our enquiry. Extending his practice of 'thinking-through-drawing'—the reciprocity of *drawing-thinking* > < *thinking-drawing*—artist-performer Nikolaus Gansterer accumulated a rich archive of drawings over the project's duration in close nexus to our conversations and live explorations, which were condensed and elaborated anew as the manifold drawings encountered throughout this publication, immanent structures of interconnectedness for *showing* the diagrammatic entanglement of our enquiry.<sup>8</sup> Dancer-choreographer Mariella Greil 'dived' into our archive of photographic-video materials, searching for new choreographic relations for re-animating the embodied, *per-forming* of our shared exploration; threading this through with fragments of 'thick description'—a dense, viscous language of reflective recollection for activating sensate memory, for the purpose of performance for the page.<sup>9</sup> This relational sensitivity carried through her 'affective labour' in liaison with our contributors.

*Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* is an artistic research enquiry practised as the means through which to address its own processual unfolding.<sup>10</sup> Drawing on Sarat Maharaj's notion of the 'double drift' within 'thinking through art practice', our enquiry involves an attempt to think through art as "an investigative vehicle or probe" alongside the 'passage through' of an "introspective experience during which art practice takes stock of its own processes and procedures."<sup>11</sup> In recent years, the burgeoning field of artistic research has developed pace with increased interest in and support for those epistemological aspects of artistic exploration and experimentation—including sensuous, affective knowledge; bodily knowledge; the value of trial and error and of 'feeling one's way'; intuition, 'not knowing' (→ *Becoming Undisciplinary*)—that have habitually been marginalised by a (Western) knowledge economy that tends to favour rational and discursive logic, where knowledge is transmitted, traded and 'banked' as product, rather than necessarily activated as a live, embodied process.<sup>12</sup>

For Maharaj, the "query that crops up" in relation to artistic knowledge production is: "what sort of knowledge?" Hard on its heels 'What marks out its difference, its otherness?'<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Dieter Mersch advocates the need to differentiate an artistic—or rather an aesthetic—mode of thought beyond a vocabulary of linguistic discursivity and scientific methodology, where the alterity of an aesthetic epistemology is made explicit.<sup>14</sup> He asks what "thought in other media" might mean, where "thought is understood as a practice, as acting *with* materials, *in* materials, or *through* materials ... or *with* media, *in* media or *through* media."<sup>15</sup> In contextualising our enquiry, we consider Henk Borgdorff's criteria that, "Artistic research ... is the articulation of the unreflective, non-conceptual content enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic production."<sup>16</sup> He argues that, "artistic research seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather [...] invites 'unfinished thinking'. Hence, it is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, through and with art."<sup>17</sup> Whilst 'artistic research' can be applied as a 'method' for exploring something *other-than*, we activate it in self-reflexive relation to itself, where the epistemic aim—to follow Mersch—is to "reflect the perceivable through perception, and the experiential through experience, to push these to their margins or peripheries where their aporia and caesura becomes visible."<sup>18</sup>

*Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* focuses on the *qualitative-processual*, *aesthetic-epistemological* and *ethico-empathetic* dynamics within artistic research and creation: those micro-processes of unfolding decision-making, thinking-in-action, dynamic movements of 'sense-making', the durational 'taking place' of something happening live. In doing so, we contribute embodied understanding of 'knowing-thinking-feeling' within the process of



*Research*: from the Old French *rechercher*—to search; or else, from *circare*—to wander (*hither* or *thither*) or traverse. Towards *enquiry-as-exploration*: less examination, more *curious adventure*; artistic-researcher as explorer, wanderer, *renunçant*.<sup>19</sup> Not the conqueror of new frontiers, intent on territorialisation of the *as-yet-unknown*. Crossing of boundaries, not to stake a claim, but for unsettling what is *thought-to-be-known* and stable, “disruption of an habitual energy field—favouring the state of curiosity that arises.”<sup>20</sup> Towards “curiosity that precedes question-making,”<sup>21</sup> a *questioning-as-querying*: to ask, to seek. To *quest*, to strive: research as an endeavouring, as *conation*—to set oneself in motion. *Ex-plore*—out-pouring, from *pluere*, ‘to make flow’. To attempt, to try: *essayer, assayer*. Again and again: *re-searching*, repeating—done *in-and-through* the *doing*, always unfinished, never fully complete.

Nietzsche) “is not effectuated anywhere else than where it is given—thought is effective in situ, it is what ... is intensified upon itself, or again, it is the movement of its own intensity.”<sup>24</sup> Our enquiry explores how choreography, drawing and writing manifest this ‘immanent intensification’; mind-body engaged in an embodied process of live thinking active in its *pre-* and *during-ness*.<sup>25</sup>

We contribute to the field of artistic research through the three-fold—interwoven, non-hierarchical—relation of our process, enquiry and its exposition.<sup>26</sup> First, our *Method Lab* proposes a unique methodology for activating research in-and-through practice, for focusing towards the affective, embodied, relational sensitivities and intensities within artistic collaboration. The *Method Labs* (→ *Method Lab: A Relational Milieu*, → *Method Lab: Porous Boundaries*) are laboratories for experiential knowledge production, a dedicated ‘thinking space’ which “is both a processual movement of thought and a privileged site at which this movement is amplified and inflected by novel configurations of ideas, things and bodies.”<sup>27</sup> Whilst its general principles might be shared with other experimental ‘laboratory style’<sup>28</sup> precedents, one distinctive feature of our Lab has been the evolution of various practices (→ *Practices of Attention, Notation, Conversation, Wit(h)nessing*) for activating the ‘three ecologies’<sup>29</sup> of environment, (human) subjectivity and (social) relations (→ *Embodied Diagrammatics*). These specific practices are practised through ‘live exploration’—an unfolding temporal structure for bringing-into-relation the various intensities and energetics of our heterogeneous modalities of re-searching, as well as the dynamics of → *How-ness*, → *When-ness* and → *Where-ness* within a shared time-space. At times, we have referred to our live explorations as performative, even as performing.<sup>30</sup> In her contribution, Krassimira Kruschkova asks, “What if the constellation of words ‘artistic research’ today were on everyone’s lips? But in which tongue, *lingua*, language?” (→ *What if...*). It could be argued that ‘performing’ together has become the *lingua franca* of our *undisciplinary*

artistic exploration, a phrase used—specifically by Maharaj—for describing those modalities of *knowing* irreducible to dominant rational discourse or the logic of scientific methodology.<sup>22</sup> So too, we strive to practise artistic thinking in-and-through its doing, through the shared movement of thought that Erin Manning and Brian Massumi refer to as ‘*prehended* in potentia’: ‘thought in the act’ or ‘thinkings-in-the-act’.<sup>23</sup> We activate the *en acte* of ‘thinking-in-action’ practised in its “immanent intensification”, which for Alain Badiou (following

collaborative exchange, a bridging or vehicular language for facilitating a dialogue between our disciplinary dialects.<sup>31</sup> This seemingly pragmatic approach to performing—adopted as interstitial modality for operating ‘between the lines’ of choreography, drawing and writing—could be critiqued as failing to acknowledge the specificity of performance as a practice in and of itself. However, our enquiry was not about the practice of performance *as such*, but rather the epistemic potentialities and vitalities of *per-forming*.<sup>32</sup> *Per*—the preposition indicating *through*, a forward-through movement; artistic research practised through its forming, deforming.<sup>33</sup> Here, as Mersch states, artistic thought “reveals itself in the form of those practices that ‘work in the work’, the ‘becoming’ of the processes themselves.”<sup>34</sup> Likewise, our *per-forming* emphasises the process of exploration—its liveness, aliveness—as well as performance as epistemic artefact, rather

Within each *Method Lab*, we come together geographically in one place—in a studio-rehearsal space usually for a period of one to four weeks—to engage in collaborative exploration alongside our sputniks and guest collaborators.<sup>35</sup> The photographic documents in our first ‘essay’ (→ *Becoming Undisciplinary*) provide some visual identification for each of us—the key researchers, sputniks and guest collaborators—such that the reader can recognise us as they follow our journey.

than performance-as-product according to the exchange values of market and commodity.

Whilst each sputnik has impacted on the general trajectory of our research, they have also sharpened our enquiry—its methodology, its performativity—through the prism of their respective interests. Alex Arteaga’s research on the ‘roots’ of aesthetics—approached from an *enactivist* perspective—helped shape our understanding and articulation of the relation between our concepts *figuring* and *figure* (→ *Figuring >< Figure*), alongside the development of those practices (→ *Practices of Attention*, → *Practices of Notation*) required for becoming more attuned to this nuanced perceptual field of awareness (→ *Researching Aesthetically the Roots of Aesthetics*). Lilia Mestre intervened through her research—developed within the frame of a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies)—around the ‘relation between writing and performance’, the ‘conditions for the emergence of poetics’ and the use of ‘score’ as a ‘collective apparatus’ through which to “organize dialogical or inter-subjective formats for exchange in artistic practice and research”<sup>36</sup> (→ *Score It!*). Christine De Smedt’s carefully, inquisitive interrogation of our terminology—drawing perhaps on her background in criminology as well as dance and performance—prompted the *Practice Preludes* for clarifying our use of certain words and phrases, whilst her experience in movement research techniques enabled us to collectively pressure and refine our practices in action (→ *Practices of Attention*). Her interest in ‘questions’—what she describes as her desire to “wrestle with things, but preferably in the form of a physical and mental game”<sup>37</sup>—was instrumental in bringing this reflective aspect of our enquiry directly, playfully, into the process of our live exploration (→ *Questions*, → *Practices of Attention: Transquesting*).



Throughout our research journey, we were accompanied by guest collaborator Werner Moebius whose research interests within the fields of Sonic Art and Audio Culture brought heightened awareness to the activity of listening, “a radical dedication to the present (*dem Vorfindlichen*), to receptivity, auditory sensibility and the unearthing of (*acousmatic*) correlations” (→ *Practices of Wit(h)nessing: Listening*, → *Aspects of Undisciplinary Listening*). Guest collaborator Jörg Piringer brought techniques and technologies from his practice in sound / visual poetry, where — beyond signification — hybrid languages emerge between human and machine, through the ‘collaboration’ of embodied voice and electronic software manipulated text fragments (→ *Print Out*, → *Figure of Ventilating Meaning*). Photographer and videographer Victor Jaschke was a further travelling companion during our Labs, whose sensitive *wit(h)nessing* through the lens was performed less in terms of documentary ‘capture’, but rather in the key of our central question: how can we attend to the barely perceptible micro-movements within artistic exploration?<sup>38</sup> Artist and designer Simona Koch gently guided the transformation of our embodied, experiential enquiry into a page-based exploration. Drawing on deep knowledge gleaned from having *wit(h)nessed* so much of our journey, her design *presents* rather than *represents*, gives spaciousness to density, providing an enabling organisation for that which, at times, has seemed unruly.

The *Method Lab* facilitates different intensities and durations of collaboration: longitudinal collaboration between key researchers developed slowly over the project duration, alongside a more overtly discontinuous collaborative encounter with our critical sputniks and guests for provoking, questioning and deepening our understanding of the research process.

The *Method Lab* also provides a contextual milieu for our enquiry: various specialists were invited to spend time with us in the Lab as critical *wit(h)nesses* (→ *Practices of Wit(h)nessing*). Rather than only citing the theoretical work of others (for example, Erin Manning, Dieter Mersch, Alva Noë), we wanted to engage them in our research process through a live encounter. We additionally staged conversations with those critical interlocutors whose *thinking-making* has informed our enquiry,

but who were unable to be *wit(h)nesses* in the Lab itself (→ *Dialogue: On Sedimentations of Sensitivities*, → *Dialogue: Thinking-Making in Relation*).<sup>39</sup> Our invited *wit(h)nesses* bring diverse perspectives: from philosophy; artistic research; art history; critical theory; curating; theatre, dance and performance theory; sound culture; systems analysis, and from the intersection of media theories, subject theories and theories of space. Though from different (inter)disciplinary backgrounds, our *wit(h)nesses* are still each concerned with the specific potentiality of artistic or even aesthetic exploration: this is the focus of our enquiry. In their contribution to this book, some *wit(h)nesses* reflect on what is at stake in the call to ‘respond’. For P.A. Skantze, the practice of being a spectator involves a “methodology of care” practised alongside “critical immanent attention”, the inventive, improvisatory weaving of a delicate rope — a bridge — to cross the “chasm

of distance” between the experience of encounter and its remembering, retelling, re-counting (→ *Take Me to the Bridge*). “How do I remember? What do I remember? What can I say about this — in words?” asks Jeanette Pacher, the “challenge of writing about something that’s hard to put in words” provoking her towards experimentation, for reflecting on the “circumstances and conditions that propel setting free creative processes” — *emptying out; preferring not; open-ended time; a carefree, untroubled mind* (→ *Delightful Drifting*). This question of how to articulate, communicate — even translate — one experience into another is a central preoccupation of the project (→ *Practices of Wit(h)nessing: Translation*, → *Figure of Translational Flux*).

In proximity to our first ‘essay’, Krassimira Kruschkova reflects on the ‘interminability’ — even tactical nature — of the artistic research ‘project’, where “as soon as it normatively empowers itself, it weakens in order to strengthen”; artistic research practised as “*desœuvrement* — in the sense of a doing nothing, but also of de-working”, the “digression from *doxa*, turning towards the *paradox*, always in uncertainty relations” (→ *What If ...*). For Andreas Spiegl, the *line* neither connects nor does it demarcate difference, rather

Drawing on our research in-and-through practice, three ‘essays’ (→ *Becoming Undisciplinary*, → *Figuring* < *Figure*, → *Embodied Diagrammatics*) — forming a conceptual spine of interconnected parts — articulate not only the journey from the disciplinary to *undisciplinary*, but also the core thinking — and theoretical orientation — of our enquiry. *Interluding* these ‘essays’, we elaborate the qualitative-processual dynamics (→ *How-ness*), temporal — even temporalising — dynamics (→ *When-ness*) and environmental-spatial-relational dynamics (→ *Where-ness*) of our research process. The first ‘essay’ (→ *Becoming Undisciplinary*) asks what is at stake in the deviation from the (disciplinary) line, addressing the implications — both epistemological and ethical — therein.

its directionality is non-linear, non-teleological — it does not serve as “path or track leading from one argument or word to the next”, nor does it move towards culmination of a work as such (→ *Unlined*). Our ‘line of enquiry’ strives less towards accumulation of knowledge, but rather to *unline*, unfolding — to follow Luce Irigaray — an “other meaning” which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid being fixed, immobilized.<sup>40</sup> We seek to *un-draw* the structural lines of our respective practices in search of a subjunctive, anti-structural realm ‘trembling’ within unexpected — perhaps *unruly* — potentiality. For Brandon LaBelle, the deviating line is conceived as a cut, a wound, a gap or break; a porous line scored between folding / unfolding; inside / outside; with / without. A deviant line of monstrous hybridity: liminal line of hyphenation, of a “monster-logic; a thing-body.” He asks, “Can we inhabit the cut as a space?” (→ *The Thing*). Indeed, can we inhabit the hyphen, the deviation of the line itself?

Dieter Mersch elaborates on “the dialectics of figuration and defiguration, as they belong together in one single act” (→ *Figuration / Defiguration*). Against the rhetorical model of a ‘movement figure’ (*schēma*) that immobilises the ‘ephemeral’ of processuality, Mersch advocates an ‘aesthetics



of movement' predicated on mobility, transitoriness, continuous transition or transformation. His model of aesthetic experimentation privileges singularity, 'alterity in iteration', the 'primacy of passibility'; it finds its way through witty leaps, is formless in its plasticity, inconclusive in its *essaying*. Alex Arteaga conceives our enquiry on *Figuring* >< *Figure* as 'aesthetic research', where aesthetics is understood as a "variety of cognition". He formulates — then expands — his conceptualisation that, "aesthetic cognition — the roots of aesthetics — is the spontaneous, sen-

Our second 'essay' (→ *Figuring* >< *Figure*) reflects on the relation of two core, interrelated concepts within our enquiry — the experience of *figuring* and the emergence of *figures*. We use the term *figuring* for referring to those small yet transformative energies and experiential shifts within the artistic process that are often hard to discern, but which ultimately shape or steer the evolving action, whilst *figure* describes the point at which awareness of 'something happening' (*figuring*) becomes recognisable, communicable.

sorimotor, emotional and operatively present realisation of a viable coherence." For Arteaga, a *figure* is "an incipient formation in and of this viable coherence", "a meshwork of qualities operatively present as a whole, that emerges out of a dynamic disposition of actions performed in interaction with phenomena." A *figure*, he asserts, "is an emergent entity whose appearance cannot be completely under our control [...] It is not contoured, it is not graspable." Here then, aesthetic enquiry necessitates passivity — "understood as the minimisation of will and target-oriented action" — where the "increase of our receptivity towards the agency of others — equally autonomous or heteronomous units ... is therefore the key for entering aesthetic conduct" (→ *Researching Aesthetically the Roots of Aesthetics*). The act of "tuning experience to the *more-than*", of cultivating deep awareness of our own enmeshing with "the environment and its complex materialities" returns in the trialogue between Catherine de Zegher, Nikolaus Gansterer and Erin Manning, through the prism of the 'minor gesture', which for Manning, "has a capacity to make felt a shift, a variation in experience that deeply alters the ecology of that experience"<sup>41</sup> (→ *Trialogue: Thinking-Making in Relation*). Reflecting on the re-connective *gesture of reaching out to the other* (→ *Empathetic Figures*), the trialogue foregrounds the *micro-political* dimension of the 'minor', in turn, anticipating the 'line of flight' of our final 'essay' (→ *Embodied Diagrammatics*). In proximity, Werner Moebius diagrams various currents of receptivity and awareness, reflecting upon the vital act of listening, "through or with de-lays, re-sonances and re-verberations both as signal processes but also in the felt sense" (→ *Aspects of Undisciplinary Listening*).

Reflecting the *ethico-empathetic* aspect of our enquiry, for Arno Böhrer, *figural figures* — and the realm of sensation to which they give rise — "are not private phenomena. They are forms of *transport* into the world's world-wide-ness." He elaborates how, "feeling 'oneself' means perceiving oneself as a body *touched* by others, *exposed* to others *in the middle of the world*." For Böhrer, the striving, 'driving force' — even *conatus* — of 'choreo-graphic figures' can be thought

of in Deleuzian-Spinozist 'ethical-aesthetical' terms, capable of producing an immanent vector of joy — even freedom — experienced as the *beatitude* of 'bodies-in-agreement'<sup>42</sup> (→ *Sensorial Bodies*). These ethical-aesthetic sensitivities are explored further in the trialogue between Emma Cocker, Mariella Greil and Adrian Heathfield, which shifts attention from the "micro-dynamics of emergence" towards the "macro-political significance of these affinities" in order to, as Heathfield states, "take us out of the framework of general event-hood and into a framework that is more about sustained life practices of experimentation." Here, the empathetic register of subject-to-subject relations opens towards the transformative: an emergent ecology of 'radical coexistence' beyond the anthropocentric, a space of immanence where subjects and objects co-relate in mutual becoming (→ *Trialogue: On Sedimentations of Sensitivities*).

One challenge for our project is how we might articulate the instability and mutability of our *figures* without 'fixing' that which is inherently dynamic and contingent as a literal sign. Indeed, the dilemma of how to document the embodied, experiential dimension of enquiry is a perennial problem for artistic research and live performance alike. "What are the best ways to report non-conceptual artistic findings? And what is the relationship between the artistic and the discursive, between what is presented and displayed and what is described?" asks Borgdorff.<sup>43</sup> He adds, "Is it possible to achieve a linguistic-conceptual articulation of the embedded, enacted and embodied content of artistic research?"<sup>44</sup> Peggy Phelan's oft-cited cautionary against the attempt to capture the experiential, ephemeral nature of performance, suggests documentation to be an impossible project: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance."<sup>45</sup> Whilst we consider the live *per-forming* of our *figures* as the critical site of activation and vitality, our attempt still has been for a page-based presentation *beyond* representation.

Our own aesthetic enquiry (→ *Figuring* >< *Figure*) has involved developing practices for attending to and marking the event of *figuring* (→ *Practices of Attention*, → *Practices of Notation: Clicking*); the identification, qualification and naming of various *figures* (→ *Practices of Notation: Affirming*, → *Naming*); alongside distillation of the qualitative properties of key *figures* so we can 'call' for their constitutive conditions (→ *Figures*, → *Practices of Notation: Calling*). We elaborate the qualities of nine *figures* grouped according to three categories: → *Elemental Figures* refer to key moments within the arc of creative exploration, addressing the opening up and exposition of process (→ *Clearing and Emptying Out*, → *Spiralling Momentum*, → *Temporary Closing*); → *Empathetic Figures* invite the diagramming of relations, drawing attention to the sensitivities and sensibilities of *being-with* (→ *Vibrating Affinity*, → *Wavering Convergence*, → *Consonance/Dissonance*); → *Transformative Figures* involve an explicit shift or transformation in property, quality or state of being, collapsing the lines of distinction between activity/passivity, animate/inanimate, subject/object, self/world (→ *Ventilating Meaning*, → *Becoming Material*, → *Translational Flux*).

Accented in blue, our *figure* pages (→ *Figures*) present an assemblage of photographic documents drawn from our live *per-forming*, re-activated through their proximity to Gansterer's 'diagrammatic drawing' — hyphenated abstract-figuration, qualitative, evocative — alongside



different modalities of experimental writing: Greil's 'performative, thick description' embedded within the image field for articulating an embodied singularity juxtaposes with Cocker's introduction to each *figure* comprising an 'inter-subjective poetics' of 'conversation as material', an 'immanent impersonal' or infra-personal mode of writing distilled from extensive conversation transcripts.<sup>46</sup> Our *figure* pages make productive the close relation between the German words *Aufzeichnungen* (notes) and *Zeichnungen* (drawings), conceiving of the 'in-between-space' from draft to articulation as a site of potential for unexpected connections. Our examples are not definitive, rather singular iterations of a potentially infinite experiment, provocations for future exploration.

We conceive the articulation of our various *figures* within this book as '**choreo-graphic figures**': *choreo-* (more than one), *graphic-* (form of inscribing). *Choreo-graphic Figures* are performative, relational and contingent assemblages; recognisable or identifiable whilst motile and instable, capable of evolving. Within our live exploration, various *figures* arise — sometimes called, sometimes unbidden. Accordingly, we devise new modes of 'exposition', a delicate choreography between the ephemeral, experiential — even phenomenal — event of live exploration, documentation and writing: multimodal entanglement of bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial and verbal-linguistic sensibilities.

The relation of writing to artistic research is much disputed, often perceived as discursive explication, 'accounting' or even ventriloquism, all too keen to explain away that which is untranslatable, unsayable. Yet, as Mersch states, how might one rise to the "challenge of nevertheless finding words to say the unsayable."<sup>47</sup> He argues that rather than 'talking *about* art', might not writing practise the "more careful and gentle 'of' which merely dares to touch" (→ *Figuration/Defiguration*). Contiguous writing: touching upon. To write *of*, in-with-and-through practice: writing-as-practice. Not to shy away from language then, but to strive for the right kind of words. How to write from the embodied, experiential, evental space of practice, perhaps even, following Nietzsche — as Mersch reflects — how to write with one's blood? How to write from the viscera, the breath and body's borders? Or else, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément ask, how "to steal into language to make it fly."<sup>48</sup> "Let me tell you" says Clarice Lispector, "I'm trying to seize the fourth dimension of this instant-now so fleeting that it's already gone because it's already become a new instant-now that's also already gone."<sup>49</sup> She follows, "And if here I must use words, they must bear an almost merely bodily meaning, I'm struggling with the last vibration ... I make a sentence of words made only from instants-now. Read, therefore, my invention as pure vibration with no meaning beyond each whistling syllable."<sup>50</sup> For Irigaray, "In this world otherwise lived and illuminated, the language of communication is different, and necessarily poetic: a language that creates, that safeguards its sensible qualities so as to address the body and the soul, a language that lives."<sup>51</sup> Likewise, for Heathfield, "to think in this space is a kind of *being with* phenomena, a surrender to the world, it engenders sensuous thought, poetic writing follows by necessity, for it's only in this disrupted,

altered language, that one can enter the folds of the sensate, the unthought thought, the articulacy of nonsense or of silence."<sup>52</sup>

This book provides a compendium of expanded, experimental writing/language practices of/as artistic research: performative, thick descriptions of an embodied process; the infra-personal immanence of 'conversation as material'; lists and scripts; diagrammatic notes, instructions and scores; collage and cut-up; a rope-bridge made of words; ekphrasis; visual language — mute, incommunicable; improvisatory writing — dense streams of consciousness; appropriation, remix; *choreo-graphic* essayism (always an open and incomplete attempt); word-play — activation of archaic etymologies and chance associations; key-word games; wild-talk and upwelling; reverberating voicings; ecstatic self-reporting; adverbial emphasis for describing 'how'; heightened attention to the anatomy of language — its prefixes and prepositions; poetic acts of *naming* practised by the 'babbling faithful'.<sup>53</sup> Here, as Manning asserts, "Swimming beyond the shallow end of language means composing-with language's prearticulations, its rhythms, its silences, its jumps in register [...] The dissolving, vanishing, falling apart of words even as they are crafted, this is language in the making. It is what spurs us to read *between the words*."<sup>54</sup>

Within *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, our engagement with language, with writing, with words, attempts to go beyond a model of discursive logic or informational 'exchange'. Arguing how language has been 'subsumed and subjugated' by financial capitalism — reduced to dematerialised data flows of automated information — Franco 'Bifo' Berardi advocates poetry's resistant function, conceived as a "line of escape from the reduction of language to exchange."<sup>55</sup> He states, "Poetry is language's excess [...]. Poetry is the reopening of the indefinite, the ironic act of exceeding the established meaning of words [...]. Poetry is ... the signifier disentangled from the limits of the signified."<sup>56</sup> Using computer-based conversational analysis software and receipt printer technology, Jörg Piringer pressures language towards a 'resistant poetics' of incomprehensible, stuttering fragments and repetitions, emptied of signification, evacuated of semantic sense (→ *Print Out*). Used as micro-scripts within our live explorations, machinic poetry is rendered sensuous, enigmatic, as human voice wrestles to enunciate that which is opaque, impenetrable, obfuscated. Indeed, Berardi's poetic "road to excess" — following William Blake — "leads to the palace of wisdom. And wisdom is the space of singularity, bodily signification, the creation of sensuous meaning."<sup>57</sup>

How might we reflect language's activity, affectivity, ambiguity, capacity, corporeality, curiosity, density, elasticity, ephemerality, fluidity, fragility, illegibility, instability, intensity, inter-subjectivity, hybridity, materiality, multiplicity, musicality, occasionality, opacity, performativity, physicality, plasticity, porosity, potentiality, receptivity, relationality, simultaneity, sensibility, sensitivity, sonority, synchronicity, tonality, temporality, visuality, vitality?

Our own systems of categorisation or taxonomy—for differentiating our various practices and figures—are not performed to order or control, but rather as a precondition for reconnection. Our ‘pulling apart’—even anatomising—of an aesthetic process into nameable ‘fields’ is first a means of *disorganisation* rather than of organisation, for destabilising or disrupting that which is often practised as habitual. Once separated, we explore how we might bring about their reorganisation or recombination, which has involved the development of an experimental ‘score system’ for *bringing-into-relation*, ‘scoring’ as a re-connective practice. (→ *How to Play the Score*).

Drawing on the historical connection between writing and bureaucracy, Helmut Ploebst asserts the relation between bookkeeping and scientific taxation, “the sorting of matter, materials, and things, and the taxonomy of living beings.” Against this classificatory order, he explores a *deviant association operation*, “that goes beyond the registration, calculation and balancing of the organisational”, the systemic activation of *αταξίες*

(*ataxies*—disorders, irregularities) as *over-challenge* to the logic of taxonomy (τάξις—*taxis*) (→ *Deviations in the System of Cultural Bookkeeping*). For both Piringer and Ploebst, the language of economy and bureaucracy are deviated towards radical exceedance, the generation of unruly surplus and excess.

For Lilia Mestre, the score is a tool for ‘imagining’, where “oriented towards bringing together different elements, the practice of the score can be seen as a laboratory, a study environment, a place to provoke and observe events.” She reflects on the relation between open and closed scoring systems, between control and contingency asking, “Is it possible to be in the paradox of improvisation and formalisation simultaneously?” (→ *Score It!*). A selection of Gansterer’s diagrammatic drawings extend the notion of scoring as an imaginative prompt (→ *Diagrams*); reflecting our enquiry whilst simultaneously operating as open provocations for inviting future explorative play. Conceived in proximity, Karin Harrasser draws on the example of Jesuit musical sheets for addressing the tensions between written notation and experience, highlighting those rhythmic and embodied particularities that certain scores fail to account for, alongside the scope still therein for deviation (→ *The Riddle of the Score*). For Alva Noë, the fixed and *a priori* symbolism of certain kinds of representational figures and notational forms—an outline or pattern like a triangle or numerical sign—alongside the ‘empty’, ‘hollow’ or ‘clichéd’ phrasing of common ‘figures of speech’, can be differentiated from a more fragile, emergent *species* of figure that “makes its appearance”, discernible as “a glimpse opened up by an action.” He asks, how might we ‘unlearn’ those ‘outlines’ that are already known and recognisable, in order to plot new lines of flight (→ *Fragile Figures*).

This question of how to retain the fragility, vitality and ever-emergent quality of our figures is taken up as the starting point for our final ‘essay’ (→ *Embodied Diagrammatics*). We elaborate on how we have developed ‘scores’ as systems of (re)organisation foregrounding artistic

compositional decision-making processes as a live event: live aesthetic exploration focused through the prism of various *Practices of Attention, Conversation, Notation and Wit(h)nessing* (→ *Practices*: especially *Notation: Calling*). Here, as Noë asserts, art emerges as a “strange tool” for engaging, “with the ways our practices, techniques, and technologies organize us, and it is finally, a way to understand our organization and inevitably, to reorganize ourselves.”<sup>58</sup> In his diagrammatic ‘remix’ of text by Christopher Dell, Gerhard Dirmoser expands the performative vocabulary of our ‘open scores’ towards the diagramming or re-configuration of social space, conceived even as a “life score” (→ *Measures for Creating Space*). As Dell asserts, “A diagrammatic approach to the world initially means practising one’s ability to register arrangements of people and things in their relationality, disassemble them into their structural components in order to deduce new connection points.”<sup>59</sup> In these terms, artistic research is a mode of researching our relationality, our *being-in-the-world*. We ask: how might the embodied diagrammatics produced through our experimental scoring—the *bringing-into-relation* of different compositional fields of practice—have the capacity to both dis-organise and re-organise us at the level of the micro and macro. Moreover, as Sandra Noeth states, “The inbetween spaces and their call for social responsibility open up the body in the constitution of presence not only in regard to the past, but also towards the future.”<sup>60</sup>

Likewise, we conceive this publication as hinged between past, present and future, not only an archival reflection on the artistic research project, *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, but also functioning as provocation for activating as-yet-unknown explorations, future experiments in artistic *knowing-thinking-feeling*. For Elizabeth Grosz, “Change is that which signals the openness of the future, its relative connection to but also its relative freedom from the past, the possibilities of paths of development, temporal trajectories uncontained by the present.”<sup>61</sup> This book is not offered in conclusion to our enquiry then: not an *epilogue* (as ending) nor *interlude* (as interval or pause)—rather, we finish *unfinished*. Our enquiry has ‘arrived’ at an experimental ‘toolkit’—even ‘ecology’—of interwoven practices and processes, which we propose to now test further through future collaborative exploration. Accordingly, we close with an opening: an invitation to *per-form*. No longer in the key of *prelude* (from *prae-* ‘before’ + *ludere* ‘to play’), we end with a *per-lude* (*per*—through, *forward through* + *ludere* ‘to play’) which takes the form of a *score* (→ *How to Play the Score*). Since our book’s structure and content have emerged from the embodied, experiential process of artistic research in, with and through practice, we hope that it will be practised or performed as much as read.



- 1) Maria Lind coined the term 'sputnik' to describe a 'partner or travelling companion' with an interruptive, inter-locutory function. Cf. Liam Gillick and Maria Lind (Eds.), *Curating with Light Luggage: A Symposium*, Frankfurt a. M.: Revolver, 2004.
- 2) Research findings have also been published as 'Choreographic Figures: Beginnings and Emergences', in *RUUKKU, Finnish Journal of Artistic Research, On Process*, 2015. [Accessed at [www.researchcatalogue.net/view/132472/132473](http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/132472/132473)]; 'Notion of Notation >< Notation of Notion', in Scott de Lahunta, Kim Vincs and Sarah Whatley (Eds.), *Performance Research*, 'On An/Notations', Vol. 20, Issue 6, Winter, 2015, and 'Choreo-graphic Figures: Vitality Gestures and Embodied Diagrammatics', in Alexander Gerner and Irene Mittelberg (Eds.), *Body Diagrams*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2017. We have presented at conferences/symposia including: *Operation on the Open Heart*, University of Applied Arts Vienna/Society for Artistic Research, Vienna, 2014; *Parenthesis: An Un/conference*, Swiss Artistic Research Network/HEAD, Geneva, 2014; *Tongues of Artistic Research*, Tanzquartier, Vienna, 2014; *Art as a Medium of Thinking: Artist-Philosophers — Philosophy as Arts-based Research*, AILab, Vienna, 2015; *PARSE Biennale Research Conference, Time*, University of Gothenberg, Sweden, 2015; *Plague of Diagrams*, ICA, London, 2015, *Please Specify!*, Society for Artistic Research/University of the Arts, Helsinki, 2017.
- 3) Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 120.
- 4) —> Dieter Mersch, *Figuration/Defiguration* for further associations conjured by the hyphenated *choreo-graphic*.
- 5) Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984, p. 129.
- 6) Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, p. 5. Cf. —> Dieter Mersch, *Figuration/Defiguration*, where he states, "the leap is always already at another place; its witty jumping—as a practice—always happens in between."
- 7) Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, p. 36.
- 8) Cf. Nikolaus Gansterer (Ed.), *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought*, Vienna and New York: Springer, 2011, for the correlations between thinking and drawing.
- 9) Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 5.
- 10) We use the terms 'artistic research', research in-and-through practice, and at specific moments, 'aesthetic research' to describe our enquiry.
- 11) Sarat Maharaj, 'What the Thunder Said: Toward a Scouting Report on "Art as a Thinking Process"', in Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vetese (Eds.), *Art as a Thinking Process: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013, p. 154.
- 12) Cf. Paulo Frieri, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. Cf. Emma Cocker, 'Embody Knowledge', in *The Yes of the No*, Sheffield: Site Gallery, 2016, p. 15.
- 13) Sarat Maharaj, 'Know-how and No-How: Stopgap Notes On "Method" In Visual Art As Knowledge Production', *Art + Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 2009, p. 1., [www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/maharaj.html](http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/maharaj.html)
- 14) Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015, pp. 8-9.
- 15) Mersch, 2015, pp. 9-10.
- 16) Henk Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research', in Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 47.
- 17) Borgdorff, 2011, p. 44.
- 18) Mersch, 2015, p. 46.
- 19) Cf. Catherine Clément, *Syncrasy: The Philosophy of Rapture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, where she reflects on the figure of the *renunçiant* who leaves the village (*known*) for the forest (*unknown*), p. 173.
- 20) Deborah Hay, *My Body the Buddhist*, Hannover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 2000, p. 62.
- 21) Hay, 2000, p. 62.
- 22) In 'Xeno-epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Sounding Visual Art as Knowledge Production and the Retinal Regimes', in *Documenta 11, Platform 5 Catalogue*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, Maharaj relates the concept of 'know-think-feel' to what Varela calls "embodied and enactive" knowledge. Cf. Francisco J. Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- 23) Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, pp. 28-29.
- 24) Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 58-59.
- 25) Cf. Heinrich von Kleist, 'On The Gradual Formation Of Thoughts In The Process Of Speech', in *Werke in einem Band*, Munich: Carl Hanser, 1996.
- 26) Cf. Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff (Eds.), *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.
- 27) Derek McCormack, 'Thinking Spaces for Research-Creation', in *Inflexions*, Vol. 1, No. 1. [www.senselab.ca/inflexions/html/node/McCormack2.html](http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/html/node/McCormack2.html). Our research process resonates in aspects with the 'research creation' process developed at *SenseLab*.
- 28) Cf. Henk Slager, *The Pleasure of Research*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2015, on 'experimental laboratories', 'critical autonomous spaces' and 'temporary autonomous research' (TAR) zones.
- 29) Cf. Guattari, 2015, on these 'three ecologies' (—> *Embodied Diagrammatics*).
- 30) Beyond the 'performative utterances' of J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), we draw on a model of performativity which emphasises co-emergence or co-creation, e.g. Cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: a New Aesthetics*, New York: Routledge, 2008.
- 31) Whilst our 'per-forming' in a 'minor' key *disrupts* the stratification of our respective disciplinary dialects, we acknowledge how the 'pragmatic' use of English as *lingua franca* arguably *reinforces* rather than disrupts the continued (linguistic) domination by a 'major' language. We are very grateful to David Ender for his sensitive, nuanced translation of original German texts by Arno Böhler, Gerhard Dirmoser and Christopher Dell, Krassimira Kruschkova, Helmut Ploebst, Dieter Mersch and Andreas Spiegl.
- 32) Cf. Mariella Greil and Vera Sander, 'On Practices of Shining Back', in *(per)forming feedback*, Centre for Contemporary Dance Cologne, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Dance Education Biennale, 2016, p. 23.
- 33) Cf. Mersch, 2015, p. 50, for reflection on the prefix per- and research 'through art'.
- 34) Mersch, 2015, p. 11.
- 35) Our Method Labs (and pilot *Preludes*) include: Beyond the Line I and II (December, 2013), WUK, Vienna, and Bonington Gallery (April, 2014), Nottingham; Summer Method Lab I (July-August 2014) within the frame of ImPulsTanz, Vienna; Autumn Lab (September, 2014), PAF, Performing Arts Forum, St. Erme, France; Spring Lab (March, 2015), Tanzquartier, Vienna; a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies), Brussels; Summer Method Lab II (July-August 2015), within the frame of ImPulsTanz, AILab, Vienna; Winter Lab (December, 2015), Tanzquartier, Vienna; Summer Method Lab III (July-August 2016), part of *Visual Arts X Dance*, a research / workshop programme curated by Tino Sehgal, Louise Höjer, and Rio Rutzinger, ImPulsTanz, AILab, Vienna.
- 36) Cf. Lilia Mestre, *Writing Scores*, Brussels: a.pass, 2014. See also <https://apass.be/sub-eject/> (—> *Practices of Conversation: Keywords*).
- 37) Christine De Smedt, *4 Choreographic Portraits*, les ballets C de la B, 2012, p. 36. [https://issuu.com/irisraspoet/docs/4choreographicportraits\\_eng](https://issuu.com/irisraspoet/docs/4choreographicportraits_eng)
- 38) Many of the photographic images in this publication were produced by Victor Jaschke or by the key researchers and Simona Koch in the form of photographs or as still images taken from video. Additionally, we worked with photographer Julian Hughes during our 'pilot project' at Bonington Gallery, Nottingham (April, 2014), and Tim Tom during Summer Method Lab I (July-August 2014) (—> *Acknowledgements*). We are also developing a 'living archive' for video materials and continued project reflections. See our website for details on this development: [www.choreo-graphic-figures.net](http://www.choreo-graphic-figures.net)
- 39) We also invited specific wit(h)nesses to contribute to a public Friday Lecture Series as part of our involvement in *Visual Arts X Dance*: 22.07.2016 — Dieter Mersch, 'Figuration/Defiguration: On the Dialectics of Choreo-Graphy' and P.A. Skantze, 'I'm A Strange Kind of In-Between Thing'; 29.07.2016 — Brandon LaBelle, 'This Weakness That I Am' and Alva Noë, 'Writing Ourselves'.
- 40) Luce Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle De Courtivron (Eds.), *New French Feminisms*, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980, p. 103.
- 41) Cf. Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, and *The Minor Gesture*, MSK — Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, Belgium, exhibition curated by Catherine de Zegher (18.06.2016-15.08.2016).
- 42) Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, (Trans.) Robert Hurley, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988.
- 43) Borgdorff, 2011, p. 58.
- 44) Borgdorff, 2011, p. 60.
- 45) Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked — The Politics of Performance*, London, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 146.
- 46) Cf. Emma Cocker, 'Writing without Writing: Conversation as Material', in Katja Hilevaara and Emily Orley (Eds.), *The Creative Critic: Writing As/About Practice*, London: Routledge, 2017.
- 47) Mersch, 2015, p. 10.
- 48) Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, (Trans.) Betsy Wing, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 96.
- 49) Clarice Lispector, *Agua Viva*, London: Penguin Classics, 2014, p. 3.
- 50) Lispector, 2014, p. 5.
- 51) Lispector, 2014, p. 12.
- 52) Adrian Heathfield in Hugo Glendinning and Adrian Heathfield (Eds.), *Transfigured Night: A Conversation with Alphonso Lingis*, 2015, 20:04-20:30.
- 53) Cf. Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, London and New York: Continuum, 2005, on the 'babbling' speech acts of the faithful. Cf. also Cocker, 'Moves Towards the Incomprehensible Wild', in *Art and Research*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Summer, 2011. [www.artandresearch.org.uk/v4n1/cocker.php](http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v4n1/cocker.php)
- 54) Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013, p. 167.
- 55) Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2012, p. 22.
- 56) Berardi, 2012, p. 22.
- 57) Berardi, 2012, p. 22.
- 58) Alva Noë, *Strange Tools — Art and Human Nature*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2015, p. xiii.
- 59) Christopher Dell, *Die Epistemologie der Stadt*, (Trans.) David Ender, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016, p. 34.
- 60) Gabriele Klein and Sandra Noeth, *Emerging Bodies — The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011, p. 250.
- 61) Elizabeth Grosz (Ed.), *Becomings: Exploration in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 4.





We emphasise a mode of live exploration and experimentation undertaken *in-and-through* artistic research, performed as the means through which to interrogate its own *becoming*. However, the aim is less about the sharing and testing of pre-existing methods or processes, but rather for attending to emergent processes as they arise. We conceive the Method Lab as a diagrammatic assemblage of interlocking or interconnected processes and practices each with a particular function or emphasis (→ *Practices of Attention, Practices of Notation, Practices of Conversation, Practices of Wit(h)nessing*).





Dieter Mersch

# FIGURATION / DEFIGURATION

## FOR A DIALECTIC OF CHOREO-GRAPHY

### CHOREO-GRAPHIC FIGURES

*Choreo-graphy*: the word, disrupted by a hyphen, evokes numerous associations. *Choros* on the one hand denominates the dramatic speaking choir in connection with ancient Greek theatre, on the other hand, deriving from its origin, dance and song, especially the ritual 'round dance' and the *symbolon kinēseon* connected with it, i.e., the symbolisation of movement through a

The following text thinks in constellations. In doing so, it draws various circles, all of them more or less self-contained. Often it refers to etymologies—not in order to call up origins, but in order to extend the associations. All deliberations are about the same question, that is, the problem of the relation between openness and closeness; or between rule, movement and event, as well in relation to what can be called 'cavity' or 'interspatiality'. They concern the artistic work and that which distinguishes art from other forms of thought. Various categories are proposed—beginning with the *choreo-graphic* (with a separating as well as connecting hyphen), through the dialectics of figuration and defiguration, towards 'movement' and plasticity, the ever preliminary and inconclusive experimentation and essayistic thinking in fragments. The repertoire of propositions serves the continuous 'turning' and 'inflexion', a repeated rethinking of the same thing in new and other ways, which in its actual sense represents the cause of aesthetical practice in order thus to approximate it in the shape of repetition and variation.

combination of word, music, gesture, and rhythm. *Chorein* therefore belongs to those arts which form movement as much as they endow it with meaning. This especially holds true for the coordination of 'the many' with regard to spatial arrangement as well as their temporal succession. Moreover, *choros*, the choir, and *chōros*, the place, are related to each other; the first is bound



PRACTICES  
PRELUDE

So, how do we let go of set disciplinary ways of operating, relinquish what is familiar or known, safe or certain? How can we become more attuned to the *how-ness*, the qualitative-processual dynamics within our shared exploration? How do we focus attention towards those affective forces and intensities (*figuring*) operating before, between and beneath the more readable gestures of artistic practice? How can we mark those moments when ‘something is happening’? How do we recognise and name the emergence of *figures*? How do we meet with difference whilst still striving for the common? How can this be shared?

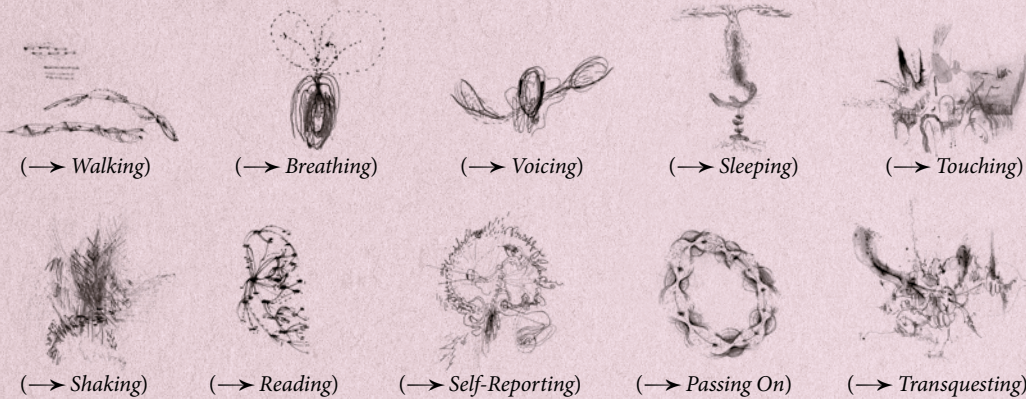
Central to our research process has been the development of various practices for deepening, widening and sharpening our aesthetic enquiry, each with a different function or emphasis: (A) *Practices of Attention*—for sensory heightening, for cultivating perceptual awareness, increased alertness, vigilance and receptivity; (N) *Practices (or Modes) of Notation*—for noticing *and* marking the event of *figuring* and the emergence of *figures*; (C) *Practices of Conversation*—dialogue as a verbal-linguistic means for reflecting on the process of our live exploration; (W) *Practices of Wit(h)nessing*—different tactics for *being-with*, for

blurring the division between participant/observer, for inviting another’s perspective. Whilst these practices have enabled the research process from ‘behind the scenes’, they have also been activated more explicitly, more performatively, as part of our live explorations through the use of a ‘score’ (→ *Embodied Diagrammatics*, → *How to Play the Score*).

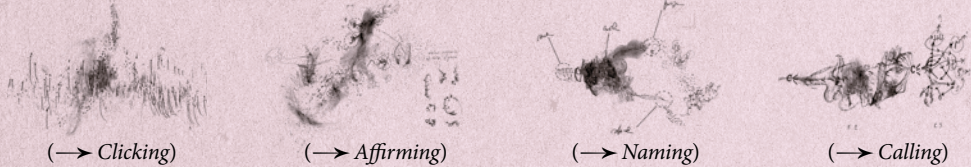
What follows is a more detailed exposition of each of the practices (A), (N), (C) and (W), specifically as performed or played within the context of a live exploration. Each practice is prepared for by a short prelude (from *prae* ‘before’ + *ludere* ‘to play’) introducing its core characteristics or qualities, presented alongside practical exercises and variations combining concrete instruction, poetic invitation, and diagrammatic drawing. Whilst these practices have been developed and tested (→ *Method Labs*) through intensive collaboration—specifically with our sputniks (Alex Arteaga, Christine De Smedt, Lilia Mestre) and guests (Werner Moebius, Jörg Piringir)—the ‘writing up’ of each singular example has been undertaken by one (or two) individual(s) allowing for a diversity of both voice and approach.

INDEX OF PRACTICES

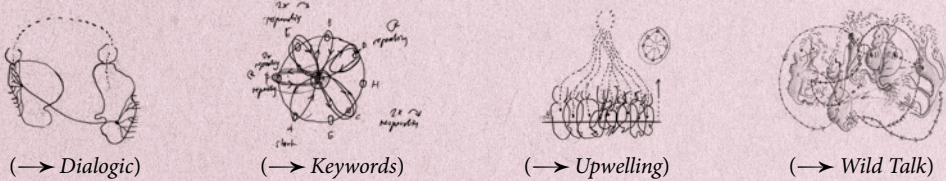
ATTENTION



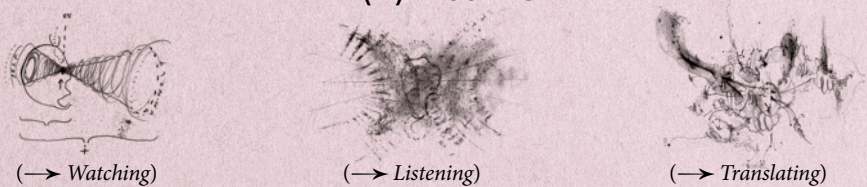
NOTATION



CONVERSATION



WIT(H)NESSING





## READING



**J**ust reading. It must be empty, words encountered lightly, not grasped towards. Three variations — different affects.

### TEXTUAL BODY SCAN

Take a printed page of text — any will do. Imagine the page as if it were your body. Take your attention to the foot of the page, the bottom lines. Allow your eyes to gently encounter the words. Without reading them, just observe what is there. Now, slowly move your attention *up* through the text, from the bottom to the top, sentence by sentence. Left to right, then right to left. Gradually move your attention up through the text, as if you were shifting your awareness from your feet up through your body to your head. As your attention reaches the top of the text, read out loud the last word upon which your eyes settle. Now, let go of the text.

### NOTICING ATTRACTION

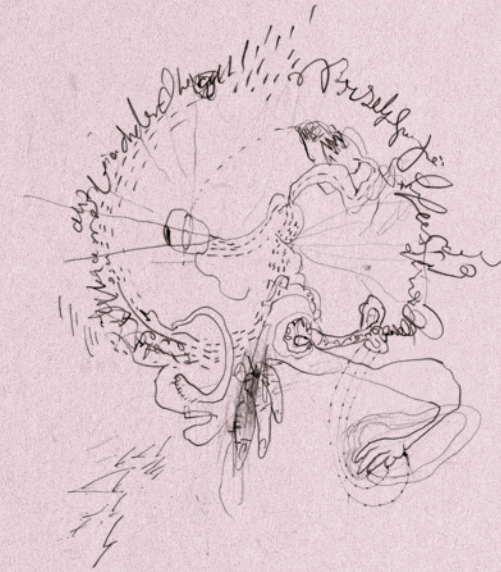
Take a different printed page of text. Allow your attention to roam the page, moving

freely, or perhaps in a spiralling movement from the centre of the page to the edges. Soft attention, floating across the surface. Not reading for the sentence's sense, just *noticing*. When a word catches your attention, mark this impulse with a sign, a click or clap or another gesture. Repeat this process until you feel ready to let the text go.

### SPLIT ATTENTION

Take a new printed page of text. Begin reading from the first line, but with your 'inner voice', reading silently. When you encounter a word beginning with A, say it out loud. Keep repeating this same word, speaking it out loud over and over, *whilst* at the same time continuing to read the text with your 'inner voice'. Keep repeating this same word until you encounter a word beginning with B. When you encounter a word beginning with B, say it out loud. Continue this process through the alphabet until you reach Z.

## SELF-REPORTING



**V**erbalise what passes through your mind — *thinking out loud*. What are you *doing* when you are doing something?

Create a state of mind where you become the main voice of an inner speech — a kind of *soliloquy* — you turn into sender *and* receiver, speaker *and* listener, mouth *and* ear, at the same time.

This introspective practice creates an auto-reflexive loop, which activates your language centre. Report on observing yourself observing whilst reporting. An egocentric practice; it feels a bit like hyper-ventilating your thoughts. Become aware moment-to-moment of your subjective non-/conscious flows of information from a first-person perspective. Self-reporting makes apparent what is taken for granted. It will influence and guide you in generating action, in turn it will again effect how you report and observe this new action.

This practice can be done alone or with others. (Performed in a group it could lead to → *Wild Talk*). Self-reporting is not directed towards others. It is an auto-communication; you address your voice towards yourself.

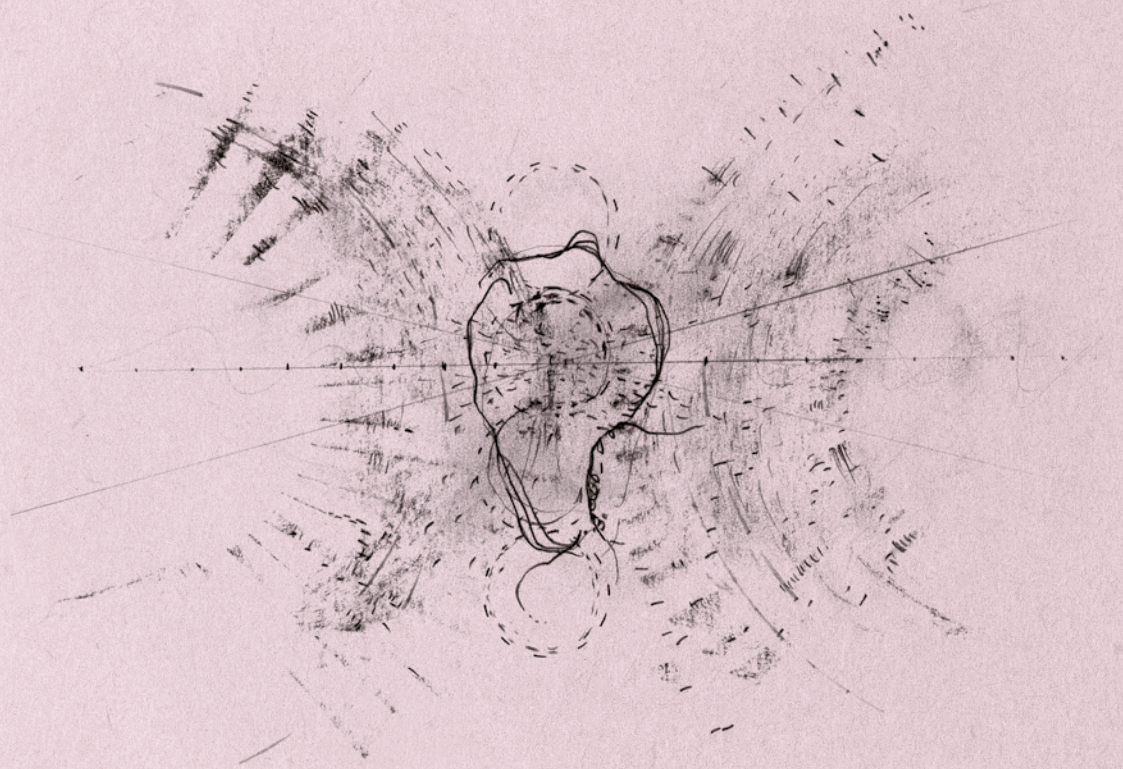
Start listening to your inner voice(s), tune into your inner radio programme. Focus on what thoughts, ideas, emotions, sensations and observations are passing through your mind. Begin by mumbling these snippets, fragments, words, short or endless sentences, be it banal, secret, obscene, obscure, boring, exciting. Do not judge. Broadcast your inner waves. Surf your stream of consciousness. Be clear in your decision of what and how you report. It is not *whatever*, but also 'whatever comes to you' might be an option.

### VARIATION

- \* You could focus on what you hear and report, you could focus on what you smell and report, you could focus on what you taste, touch, feel, think and report; whilst being still, whilst moving around, or a certain combination of these and report.
- \* You could self-report by writing down rapidly what comes to your mind.
- \* You could decide to focus only on yourself or on the interaction with someone else.



# LISTENING



**"W**e know more about hearing than listening. Scientists can measure what happens in the ear. Measuring listening is another matter as it involves subjectivity. Listening is a mysterious process that is not the same for everyone." (Pauline Oliveros, *The Difference Between Hearing And Listening*)

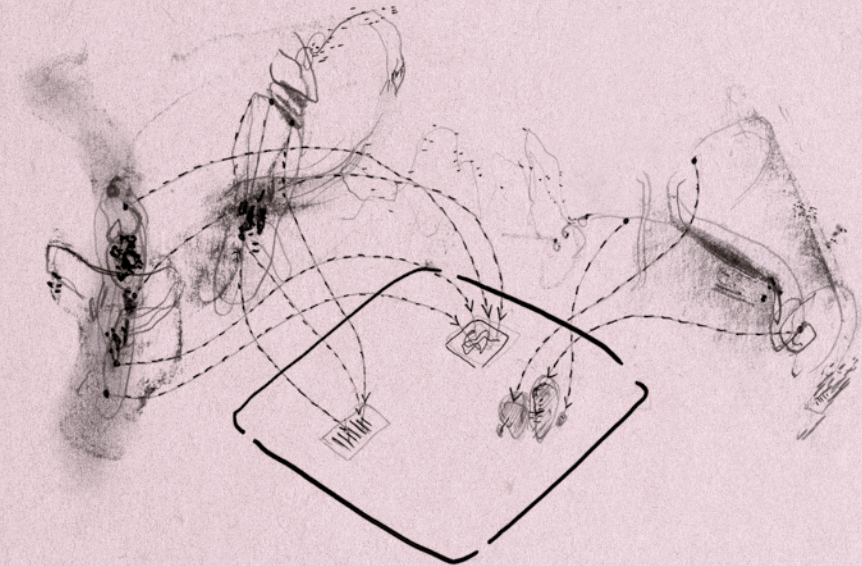
Let go of the dominance of the eyes. *Open up* your ears. Tune in to the *acoustic space*.

## VARIATION

Find a position—lying, sitting or standing with eyes open or closed. Open up the spatial range of listening to those *sounds surrounding* you.

Stay with the sounds neighbouring or close by, the movements or actions that you can hear nearby. Now stay with those layers of spatial expanse. Then *extend your listening* to the whole space and its *acoustic agents*.

# TRANSLATING



**A** process of mediation practised through different modalities—e.g. writing, drawing, forming, moving. Each modality is an invitation to interpret one reality through another.

Define and mark a field in space as your *translationscape*. There, position your tools and means of translation: materials—pens, paper, clay, wire, writing devices. When entering the *translationscape* start to observe the situation you are wit(h)nessing by asking yourself:

What do you observe?

Which elements call your attention, attract and affect you? What resonates with you? What is essential to translate? Can you make a sketch, a draft, a model of these forms and forces?

What language, alphabet and sign system do you have (to invent in order) to articulate the complexity of the very situation?

How could the situation be transposed along the categories of time and space, movement and imagination into another plane of reality?

Try to avoid becoming too literal.



Every paper creases and is grown together with memory of the planet, the woods, the roots, its growths, its paper manufacturing history, and burns in the future. The feeling of my somatic memory—I crush the paper, rubbing it against its inside, wrapping it with the past moment when it still resisted my hand. Its folds and creases wrinkle up, becoming a light sculpture. Subatomic pleasures. I try to slip under the skin of the material, passing every point of its history, the paper's memory of having been printed with transcribed, condensed, collated, collective experience. The death of the paper in my hand proves its vitality.



Working with the resistance of concrete materiality—second folding-in. Finding the emergence from the black substance. Unpacking the elasticity of materiality.

Second fold, first squeeze.

Layers of experiences crossfade and coalesce into something that has become a black substance with a peculiar texture, a quality, a relational intensity. No pre-informed conceptions concerning its function or use, its purpose. Purposiveness without purpose. Kant's third Critique resonates in the third crease.

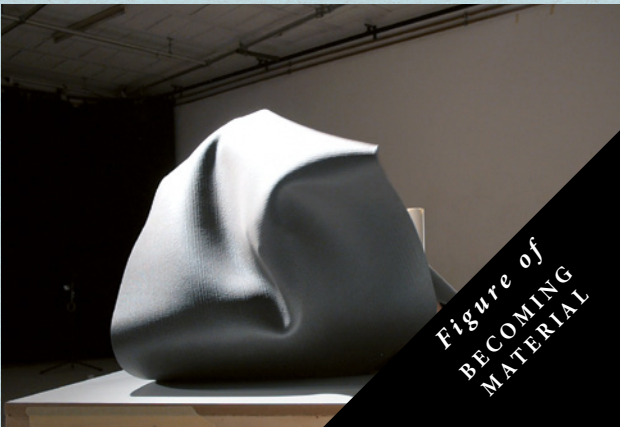
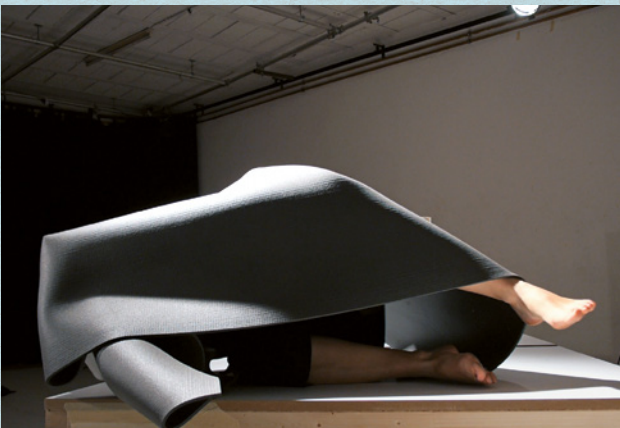


Figure of BECOMING MATERIAL



The encounter becomes an empirical object or thing that implies one another. Multi-folded strata of perception transform.

The encounter becomes an empirical object, a thing that implies another other. Strata of perception transform. Whirls and winds between us. Wild. Reaching beyond you and it.

Becoming  
body — click — becoming  
intransigent — click — becoming  
extended.



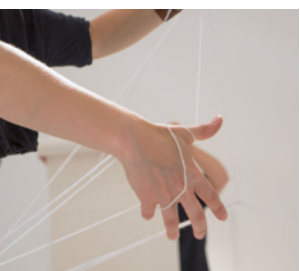


# EMBODIED DIAGRAMMATICS

*Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* seeks to enrich and expand a vocabulary for reflecting on artistic process itself, going beyond an account of ‘how to’ — a description of practical ways of doing things with an operative ‘how > so’ emphasis on technics and techniques — in order to address the *how-ness*, the *micro-level* of vitality dynamics and affects within the process of process itself. We ask: how might specific focus on the micro-dynamics of artistic endeavour provide new insights in relation to artistic research, through emphasis on the qualitative nature of vitality, force and intensity within the creative process, rather than on its operational procedures and resulting products? How does this modality of attention expand the conceptual parameters through which artistic — even aesthetic — research is practised?<sup>1</sup> If, as Vilém Flusser states, “the gesture of searching is the model for all our gestures”<sup>2</sup>, then how might attending to the micro-gestures of artistic (re)searching shape and inform our relationships with others, our own intermingling with the world? In this sense, attending to the specificity of artistic (re)searching is conceived as an intrinsic part of a wider ethico-aesthetic project, where the modalities of being and behaving practised within the context of artistic exploration might in turn give rise to

new ways of practising the self, the production of a critical, self-reflexive subject capable of understanding its own enmeshing within a wider ecology, co-constituting new realities made possible through this realisation.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, as Henk Borgdorff argues, “Artistic research is therefore not just embedded in artistic and academic contexts, and it focuses not just on what is enacted in creative process and embodied in art products, but it also engages with who we are and where we stand.”<sup>4</sup>

Our focus on the relation between the event of *figuring* and emergence of *figures* experienced within artistic endeavour is thus not only about artistic process, not only concerned with augmenting understanding for a specific epistemological field of practice. Daniel Stern argues that we should further explore dynamic forms of vitality — conceived as the “manifestation of life, of being alive”<sup>5</sup> — for it is through this barely recognisable realm of sensation that we cultivate greater possibilities for inter-subjective



experience, a deeper capacity for “implicit relational knowing’ (how we implicitly know how ‘to be with’...)”<sup>6</sup> Beyond focusing on the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of experience and existence, for Stern, it is through addressing the *how-ness* of vitality dynamics that we develop spontaneous and receptive — cross and metamodal — ways of being in the world, in turn enabling creative responses to new situations as they arise, “in the moment-to-moment process of adaption and enactment.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, for Brian Massumi, “Politically, thinking on this affective, germinal level of events in the making, suggests that we can create collective platforms for experimentation at the level of our shared belief in the world. In other words, we can experiment with techniques that bring people together, leaving behind their subject positions, suspending their personal beliefs, their doctrines, but bringing with them, what moves them.”<sup>8</sup> Herein he argues, emerges the potential of a “germinal politics”<sup>9</sup> Or else, as Erin Manning asserts, to focus on the ‘minor gesture’ is to attend to the “force that makes the lines tremble that compose the everyday, the lines, both structural and fragmentary, that articulate how else experience can come to expression.”<sup>10</sup>

But, what — or rather *how* — is the critical specificity of artistic *knowing-thinking-feeling* in relation to our understanding of these vitality forces and affects? Why explore this realm

Beyond attending to the qualitative sense of *how-ness*, our research asks ‘how else?’ How does artistic research support the production of ourselves, our subjectivity — our being-with others, our being-in-the-world — as *otherwise*? Here, the initial speculative ‘what if’ direction of our enquiry shifts towards the imperative ‘what for’, where the deterritorialisation and hybridity of knowledge and opening of disciplinary borders can be argued to have implicit nano-political as well as aesthetic implications for both art and society.<sup>11</sup>



of experience through artistic research rather than another research modality? Significantly, for Stern the reason is three-fold: first, “the arts provide an excellent example of how arousal-related vitality forms work on us [...] We are moved ... from moment to moment as well

as over longer stretches of time. Tensions, forces, and excitement rise and fall. The time-based arts are largely about the dynamics of experiences. Vitality forms are the working



PARADOXICAL  
PHENOMENON

FIGURING

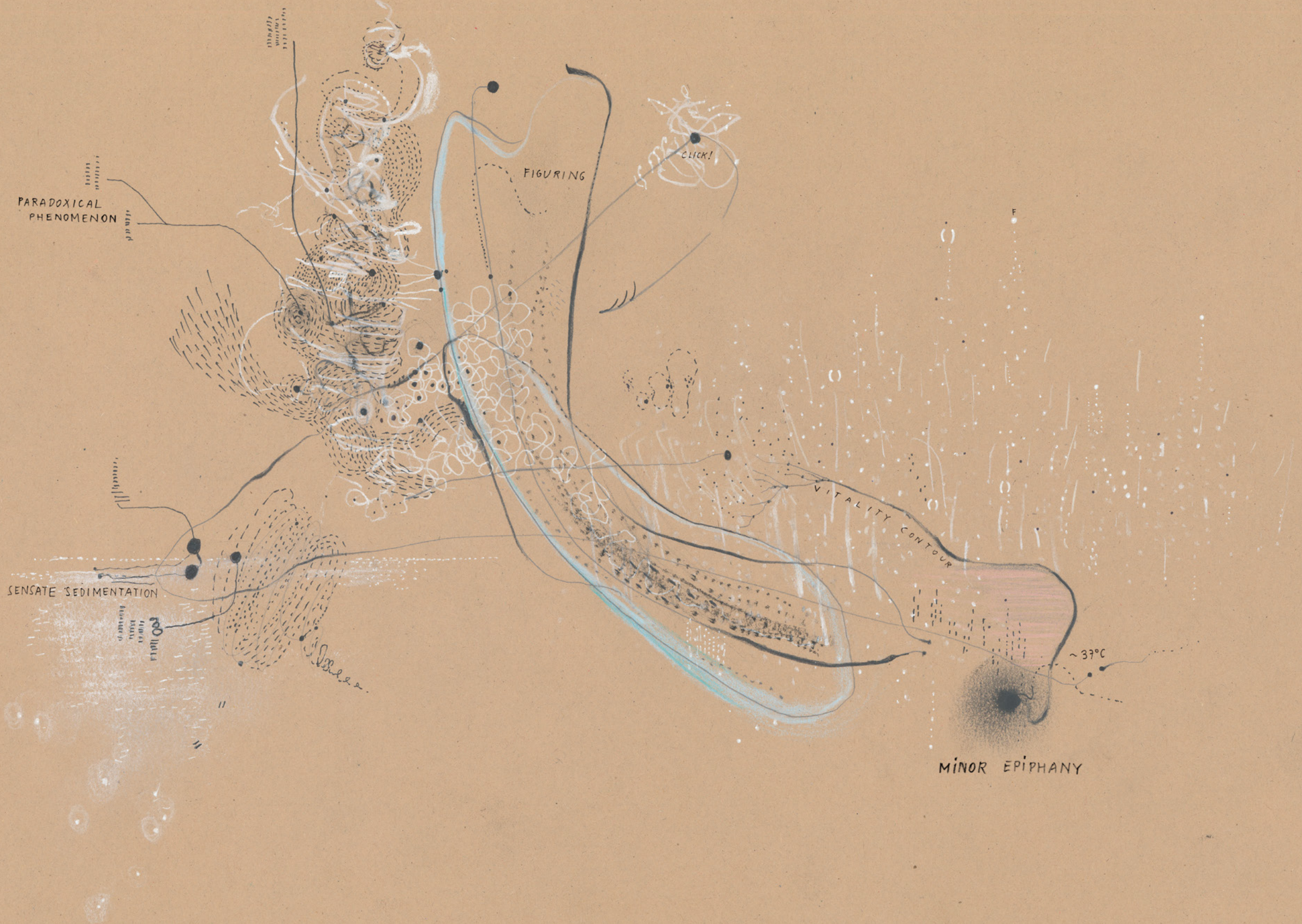
CLICK!

SENSE SEDIMENTATION

VITALITY CONTOUR

~37°C

MINOR EPIPHANY





# HOW TO PLAY

We draw our ending less as a conclusion or epilogue, but rather with an opening, an invitation to play. Our afterword—that ‘after words’, we make the *call* once more for exploration in-and-through artistic practice. Our research enquiry is perhaps best experienced through the experience of live exploration itself, practised or even played at the level of embodiment rather than only read in the pages of a book. Our score is one means—a vehicle or apparatus—for bringing into relation the various practices and *figures* outlined in the publication (see list), a device for foregrounding artistic compositional decision-making processes as a live event.

Before beginning this live exploration, you will need to have some familiarity with the characteristics and variations of the different practices (→ *Practices of Attention*, → *Notation*, → *Conversation*, → *Wit(h)nessing*), as well as a clear sense of the quality, vitality or atmosphere of different *figures*. We have elaborated the qualities of nine specific *figures* (→ *Elemental*, *Empathetic*, *Transformative Figures*), but there is an infinite list of potential others. It could help to have some understanding of the wider conceptual frame for the exploration (→ *Figuring >< Figure*, → *Embodied Diagrammatics*); however, the score can also be played without prior knowledge, understood through the experience itself.

To begin, choose which practices and *figures* you want to explore; it could help to make a visible note of your selection as a point of reference during the exploration (for example, write them down on the wall or on blackboards which are easy to ‘re-set’).

## VARIATIONS

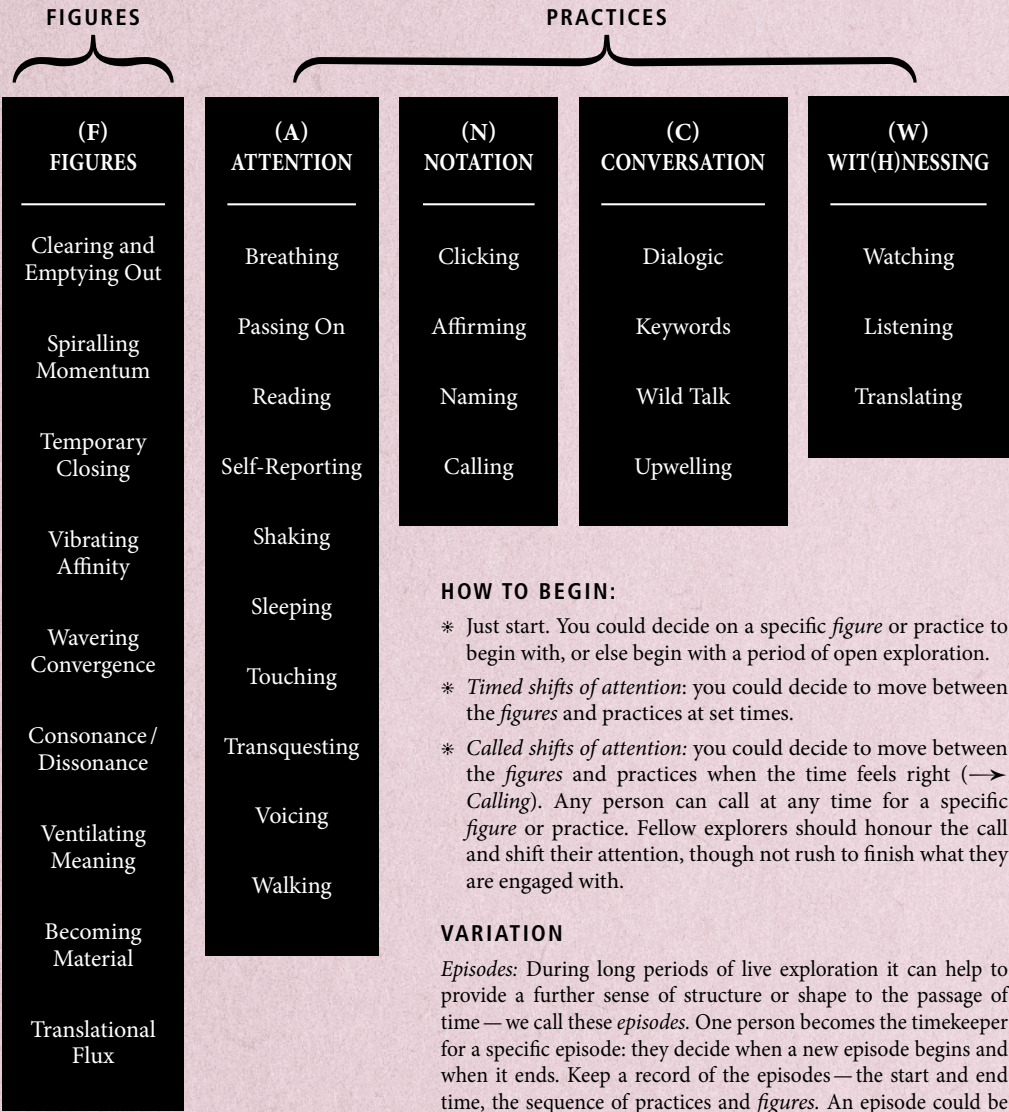
Initially, you might choose only one or two options from each of the categories (F), (A), (N), (C), (W). The number can be gradually built up over time, with practise.

- \* Or, you might choose to explore the relation between the *figures* and specific practices (F) and (A) or (F) and (C).
- \* Or, you might choose to practise in a notated or non-notated form, i.e., with or without the (N) practices.
- \* Or, you might choose to divide your group of fellow explorers so that some explore the (F), (A), (C), (N) and some focus on (W). These roles can be swapped.

## SETTING THE PARAMETERS

- \* **Where:** Decide on a space, location or environment within which to undertake your live exploration. This could range from a closed space such as a studio or rehearsal space, to an open space in the public domain—a park, a plaza, a promenade, or else perhaps a forest, a mountaintop or beach. You will also need to decide what kind of materials, resources, even technologies, are required as part of your exploration. This will depend upon the nature of your practice(s).
- \* **When:** Decide a length of time for your exploration—set an alarm, use an hourglass, or allocate a timekeeper. The minimum amount of time needed is around 30 minutes but the maximum is open. You could experiment with different lengths of time, e.g. 30 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes, 180 minutes, 360 minutes ... [and so on]. How much time is required to create the necessary level of attention and focus? When is enough, how much time is too much—the point at which exhaustion becomes an obstacle or distraction?
- \* **How:** Since the live exploration requires heightened awareness and attunement to the qualitative-processual dynamics of howness, consider how you might need to warm up, tune in or generally prepare yourself and the space before beginning the exploration itself.

# THE SCORE



## HOW TO BEGIN:

- \* Just start. You could decide on a specific *figure* or practice to begin with, or else begin with a period of open exploration.
- \* *Timed shifts of attention:* you could decide to move between the *figures* and practices at set times.
- \* *Called shifts of attention:* you could decide to move between the *figures* and practices when the time feels right (→ *Calling*). Any person can call at any time for a specific *figure* or practice. Fellow explorers should honour the call and shift their attention, though not rush to finish what they are engaged with.

## VARIATION

*Episodes:* During long periods of live exploration it can help to provide a further sense of structure or shape to the passage of time—we call these *episodes*. One person becomes the timekeeper for a specific episode: they decide when a new episode begins and when it ends. Keep a record of the episodes—the start and end time, the sequence of practices and *figures*. An episode could be very short or very long. Different episodes can have very different vitality contours (to draw on Daniel Stern’s term), their distinctive vectors of energy taking the form of curves and arcs, rising and ebbing, fluctuating waves of intensity.

*Enjoy playing!*



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