

Performance and Phenomenology

Traditions and Transformations

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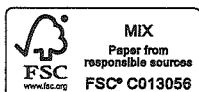
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3 Process Phenomenologies

Susan Kozel

the idea that the thinking person has to be a kind of dead person on holiday is inseparable from the ancient European culture of rationality

(Sloterdijk 3)

I reach down into my handbag to take out my book so I can take some quick notes in the dark when suddenly the house lights come on.

(Srinivasan 160)

I could make something up.

Do you want me to?

It is so easy to surprise you.

(Lilja 30)

breadth of thought reacting with intensity of sensitive experience stands out as an ultimate claim of existence

(Whitehead qtd. in Sherburne 202)

Phenomenological reflection sets in motion a process of translating, transposing, or transgressing lived experience into writing. Usually writing, I should say. Sometimes a phenomenology first produces drawings, scribbles, murmurs, or gestures. Or a big blank of confusion. A nothing that is something.

My contribution to this collection on performance and phenomenology opens up a phase of the phenomenological process that is less polished, less complete, and almost always overlooked. I examine closely the transition from raw experience into scholarly writing. Occurring between live performance and philosophical presentation of text, it usually exists only in a performer's personal journals or notes shared with collaborators as part of a working process. It is an essential part of enacting a phenomenology, and is frequently what those new to this methodology miss when they seek to understand and implement it for themselves. Phenomenologies are not born whole and complete; they are rather uncooked and messy at first.

In revealing the intermediary space between raw motion or affect and academic writing, I confront the accusation that academic writing deadens, dampens, or diminishes experience into the accepted discourses academic research. Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk aptly characterizes the problem

with the mode of writing most often used for scholarly journals, books, or catalogues as adopting the detached intellectual style of "a dead person on holiday." "Naturally," he elaborates, "we do not mean dead according to undertakers, but the philosophically dead who cast off their bodies and apparently become pure intellects or impersonal thinking souls" (Sloterdijk, *The Art of Philosophy* 3). Jean Luc Nancy identifies a similar problem, calling it "philosophical anaesthesia" (31).

Fine. So phenomenology, an embodied and situated methodology for conducting scholarly enquiry ideally suited to performance research, might help us overcome the dead-person-on-holiday problem. But there is more. My secondary intention for this chapter is to reveal the process of enacting a phenomenology and to locate this, not simply within the *work-in-process* phase of performance creation, but within a wider contemporary current of philosophy called *process philosophy*.¹ This implies that the interim phases of thinking, devising, and creation are significant parts of the phenomenological process at the same time as they are embedded in a wider philosophical movement. It also emphasizes a breadth of performative perspectives, not just that of the conventionally defined performer on stage. I suggest that a phenomenology itself is performed; it is not simply a methodology applied to performance.

Process philosophy, explained in fairly simple terms, is an effort to think clearly and deeply about the obvious truth that our world and our lives are dynamic, interrelated processes and to challenge the apparently obvious, but fundamentally mistaken, idea that the world (including ourselves) is made of things that exist independently of such relationships and that seem to endure unchanged through all the processes of change.

(Mesle 8)

Phenomenology and process philosophy are sometimes set off as oppositional currents in philosophical circles, but this is a brittle dualism that does not hold up in the face of contemporary revisions of phenomenological method. Nor does it hold up when Alfred North Whitehead's work *Process and Reality* (1929), the text generally considered to ground of process philosophy, is examined closely. Whitehead laments that philosophy has been too detached for too long and seeks to embed philosophical thinking in both practice and imagination (203–204). Processual thinking, call it speculative or phenomenological, twists free from yet another pernicious duality in much performance scholarship: the contrast between the ephemerality of live performance (the argument around liveness as disappearance) and the permanence of documents (the artificial construction of archives as closed and enduring). This opposition between "stage and page," as dance scholars Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht call it, is superseded by contemporary phenomenological approaches (4).² Process philosophy is consistent with the dynamic processes of devising, performing, interpreting, and re-enacting that occur in many arts. With relevance beyond manipulation of artistic content, it

accounts also for the processural transformation of aesthetics, concepts, performance techniques, technologies for representation and documentation, and relations between performers and audience members.

This chapter is composed of six examples of process phenomenologies and one methodological interlude. The six processes are brief and highly pragmatic glimpses into how various phenomenological notes were written: under what circumstances, from what perspective, what they felt and looked like. I call these *stories of notes* because I am telling a partial and idiosyncratic tale based on several phenomenologies performed by myself and by others. Often these notes do not yet have the formal structures of language. More akin to poetry, they might be scribbles, fragments of sentences, traces, or drawings. One story of notes below captures the act of taking notes rather than the notes themselves. Such interim stages of the phenomenological process may come from very tight cycles of action and reflection, reflecting while doing in rapid succession, or they may emerge out of periods of relatively unreflective performance followed by more structured phases of reflection. This latter coincides with many rehearsal processes during which there is a period of improvisation or performance followed by reflection, or director's notes. A familiar mode of phenomenological process is to write in fragments in the moments between focused movement or engagement with participants/audience.³ The open improvisational qualities of many installations and performances offer the flexibility to take notes almost in mid flow, but this is not always the case. A longer, strictly framed dance or theatre piece offers less scope for diving out of the action and into reflection, but reflection occurs throughout action and can be accumulated and held in memory until it can be noted down. Inevitably this holding process means that some details are lost but other qualities are gained.

The approach to phenomenology in this chapter, emphasizing the interim phases of phenomenology as performed by multiple actors and locating these within the dynamics of process philosophy, contributes to the "radicalization of the phenomenological voice" (Nancy 28). Not a disinterested procedure of bracketing out the noise of context (the Husserlian life world) in order to get at the essence of lived experience, the phenomenologies in this chapter are reflective processes attending to the sensory and affective layers of embodied life. The thick descriptions sustaining these stories of notes deepen and expose the complexity and richness of experience, with little interest in producing generalizable truths. In short, when I refer to phenomenology I mean a reflective process that is subjective, embodied, and situated, but also exploratory and critical.⁴ A critical phenomenology is not a simple process of negation, instead it palpates the edges of what exists and the categories already in place for understanding the matter of experience. This mode of reflection exists "beyond affirmation and denial," and does not permit "a withdrawal into disinterestedness" (Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life* 14). Sloterdijk does not frame his extensive exploration of practice in this book as a phenomenology, but the mode of investigation he

describes is highly consistent with what I call phenomenological reflection: "the matter itself entangles its adepts in an inescapable self-referentiality by presenting them with the practicing—the ascetic, form-demanding and habit-forming—character of their own behaviour" (*You Must Change Your Life* 14). The radicalization of the phenomenological voice can mean many things, but for now it can be glimpsed as phenomenology in transition from the models of the early-to-mid twentieth century first phenomenologists (Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty) into modes for the current times as a reflective process closely entwined with practice and criticality.

Given that this is a collection of essays on phenomenology and artistic or theatrical performance, it is worth reiterating that phenomenological reflection in this discussion does not just come from the perspective of the performer. Audience members and participants of all sorts have meaningful phenomenological experiences in the wider context of performance. Further, the temporal dimension is something to play with rather than hide. All reflection is reflection of past events, even if that event happened 10 seconds ago, and events from 10 years ago are not necessarily phenomenologically or experientially stale. This opens the suggestion that phenomenology relies on a sort of corporeal, experiential archiving. Or storytelling. The point of view, voice, and general situatedness of each story of notes below differs: performer, ethnographer, audience member, choreographer, workshop participant, and somatic practitioner.

FIRST STORY OF NOTES—A PERFORMER'S PERSPECTIVE

This one is a memory. I once choreographed and performed in a piece called Liftlink, set in a lift, and recall buying a long thin spiral notebook to use for the devising process. It was shaped like an elevator shaft. I have no idea where it is, but I know it existed. I can even recall physically writing and drawing in that book. My fingers remember the thick creamy texture of the paper, the extreme narrowness making long sentences impractical, forcing me into short notes and pictures. Drawings travelled up and down the page.⁵

Memories of that notebook combine with its ambiguous physical status as an object. Is it lost? Destroyed? Misplaced amongst other things in the cluster of boxes that have survived my many moves over the years? Torn into pieces with only fragments remaining? Damaged by damp or mice? Perhaps someone else has it, one of the collaborating dancers or the producer. These notes exist in memory, or in the hybrid archive that spans physical reality and embodied memory. As such they point to qualities of this phase of the phenomenological process, often lost or forgotten once the final products of performance or publication are achieved. This interim phase is frequently written out of the officially preserved history of process.

SECOND STORY OF NOTES—AN ETHNOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE

"The pace of the evening has picked up. Even though the padam (within the Bharata Natyam Indian dance repertoire) was slow the fact is that she had already completed several pieces in quick succession. These pieces did not require the sustained energy and focus of the varnam, for example, which came before intermission. I reach down into my handbag to take out my book so I can take some quick notes in the dark when suddenly the house lights come on."

(Srinivasan 160)

Caught in the act of recording thoughts and ideas, and describing impressions, Priya Srinivasan evokes the clandestine sense of taking notes while contained in the audience of someone else's performance. The lights came on, and we almost sense that she froze in mid motion, hand halfway down to her bag or perhaps pen poised above the page. As if the role of spectator should be free from transcriptions of any sorts. Cameras are still prohibited in most theatres, as per conventional theatre etiquette, but also very few people take notes. Not many scholars discuss the act of taking notes. Of course note taking and transcription have huge roles in much ethnography, but Srinivasan's description captures the phenomenological process of actually translating into words her experiences of sitting in the audience of a Bharata Natyam performance. Throughout *Sweating Saris*, she dances across a wonderfully fine line between ethnography and phenomenology. Her descriptions, memories, and stories are embodied, at times dripping with sweat or cramped with pain; they comprise what she calls the methodological perspective of "unruly spectator." She takes the reader on a journey from a small, airless theatre in Southern California to recollections of purchasing in India the sari worn by the dancer. The dancer's foot bleeding on the stage exists in counterpoint with the thumb of the sari seller and the hands of the woman who weaves bells, a street vendor in New Delhi (Srinivasan 154). Dancing, bleeding, weaving, and writing are all embodied processes. Elspeth Probyn captures this simply and profoundly when she says "We work ideas through our bodies; we write through our bodies, hoping to get into the bodies of our readers" (76). Probyn does not say we write *with* our bodies, we write *through* our bodies; this implies immanence and process.

Being an unruly spectator means, for Srinivasan, inserting herself into her observations—her thoughts, memories, histories, and sensations. It also seems to imply taking notes at inappropriate or unruly moments, working against the conventional order that dictates when one dances, when one watches, or when one transcribes thoughts. It is clear that her process questions what is appropriate. Thoughts spill over and must be captured or they might be lost. Consistent with process philosophy there is no fixity of practice or of protocol. All can be questioned. All can be transformed.

THIRD STORY OF NOTES—AN AUDIENCE MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE

Small Acts (2011) was an unusual performance. Commissioned by Skånes Dansteater in Malmö, Sweden, it was a restaging of a piece by British choreographer Ben Wright. Deciding to avoid entirely the theatre with raked seating, Wright dispersed the choreography throughout the SDT building: the rehearsal studios, workshop, backstage area, small dancers' rest areas, and corridors became locations for small clusters of dancers performing while audience members wandered from site to site, in search of dance.

I was an audience member, but it became clear immediately that the autonomy and spirit of exploration granted to all of us made us more than a passive group of watchers. We were explorers. We were given maps showing how to find our way around the building, but not revealing when we might find dance in the various places. It was both frustrating (so difficult to see the choreography when there were 15 people already blocking my view to the small space where dancers performed a duet) and delightfully intimate (I decided to stay put in a studio and without warning two dancers joined me and began a wonderful duet just an arm's length from where I was sitting). It was clear that the choreography included the constant reconfiguration of the audience members in relation to the dancers, and I was suddenly hit by the need to write down what I was thinking, seeing, and feeling. My thoughts burst out of me. I had a pen, but I had no paper. I had the map. I began to scribble.

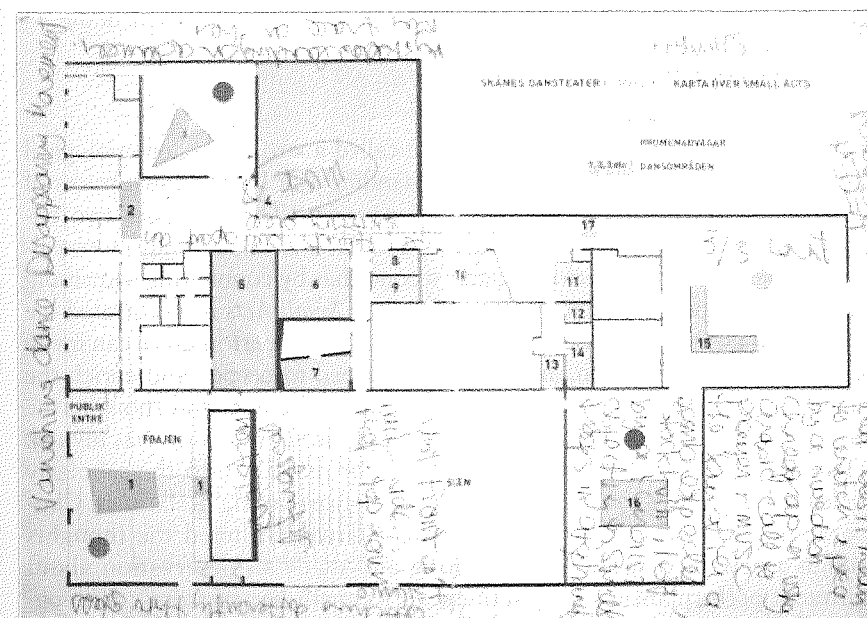


Figure 3.1 Scan of notes taken during *Small Acts* (2010) on the front side of the map given to the audience members to navigate the performance.

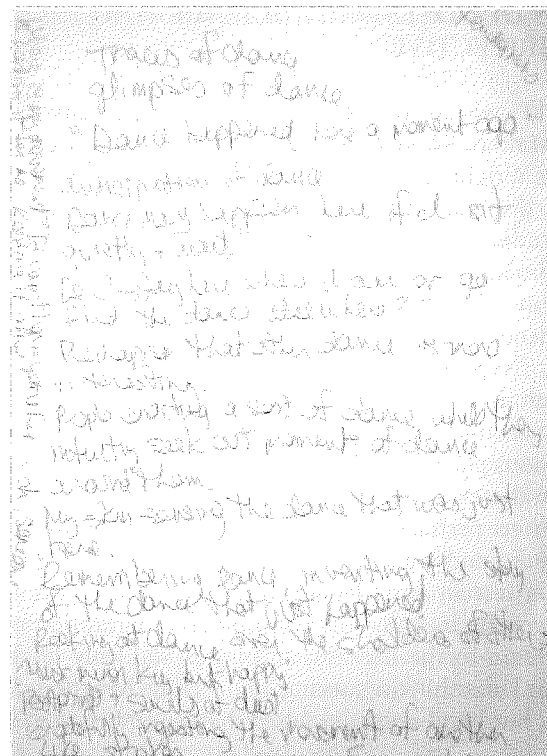


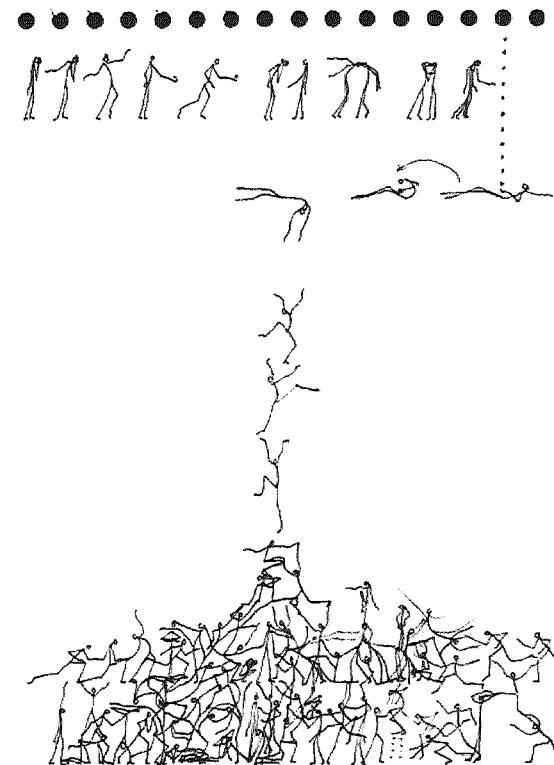
Figure 3.2 Scan of notes taken during *Small Acts* (2010) on the back side of the map given to the audience members to navigate the performance.

As an audience member I had what can be called a strong phenomenological moment, both sensory and conceptual, demanding that I write down traces of it prior to the thoughts and sensations disappearing. This addresses two critiques of phenomenology of performance: first that it is only relevant to revealing the experience of the performer, and second that by committing something to words, the experience is necessarily deadened. *Small Acts* demonstrated the opposite. All positions of perception and reflection on a performance can invite phenomenological reflection, and the words helped to deepen and enrich the strange social and aesthetic experience. The more I jotted down my thoughts the more I appreciated what I was experiencing, and further reflection was invited.

The notes include observations that did not make it into the scholarly article I subsequently wrote about the performance (Kozel, "Relational Choreographies"). Writing sideways and upside down, I filtered the thoughts through a new project I was formulating and made an observation about a different performance, a re-enactment of Kenneth Kvarnström's choreography from 1996 *no-no*, through contemporary political events.⁶ Process phenomenologies are not linear, from experience to final performance or

publication, but ripple outwards to include other creative and life experiences. E. Robert Mesle describes an "urgency" behind the process-relational philosophy inspired by Whitehead. More than just a commentator on another philosopher, it is clear by Mesle's writing that he has an ethical and personal commitment to this philosophical world view: "there is an urgency in coming to see the world as a web of interrelated processes of which we are integral parts, so that all of our choices and actions have consequences for the world around us" (9). The decision to let audience members wander through sections of choreography has consequences, as does the decision to write about it.

FOURTH STORY OF NOTES—A CHOREOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE



Figures 3.3 Drawing reproduced with kind permission from Efva Lilja, 2012.

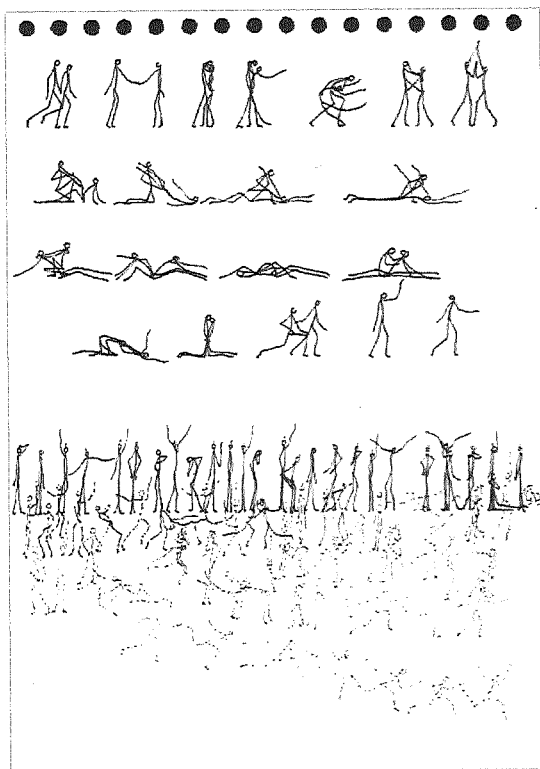


Figure 3.4 Drawing reproduced with kind permission from Efvá Lilja, 2012.

Efvá Lilja is a unique choreographer and dance writer. She writes with a rawness and a directness that makes it feel as if her publications are close to the phenomenological notes she has taken. Her publications are oddly sized and produced more in the vein of art books than academic publications. You can feel the thought processes; you can feel the pulse of the words; you can feel the motion and affect. Barely veiled. Pulling at the flesh of the paper.

She probes at the edges of dance writing and in doing so circles the practice of phenomenological expression. She speaks of the opportunities and insights of “losing oneself” when moving beyond what is established and accepted. “Transformed into action through artistic methods and practices, it creates images and tales that make us question what we hitherto believed was true and curiously explore an alternative. Our ideas of what a performance is are upended and new forms of expression make us share desirable events and sequences that mirror our different realities” (Lilja 107).

The early phase of transposing movement into words frequently requires sketching or drawing. Even dancers, notoriously wary of drawing because their skills gravitate to kinaesthetic or physical expression, not the expression of ink on paper, find themselves using lines, dots, or colors to capture a

fleeting motion or intensity or spatial relation between people.⁷ Lilja’s drawing above is used as an example of notes, but I am aware this is the version included in a published book—perhaps there were earlier sketches, rougher drawings, weeded out in the publication process. Does she have them still? The drawing in the book points backwards to its (possible) earlier versions, ones we never see but can imagine. It calls attention to processes over time. The little figures also suggest a narrative of trembling and loss of control, sliding out of the shadows of bodies. They are a foreshadowing of the discussion of affect and somatics found at the end of this chapter.

METHODOLOGICAL INTERLUDE

Emphasizing the processual quality of phenomenology opens an alternative to the usual formulation of doing a *phenomenology of performance*; this alternative is the act of performing a phenomenology, or *phenomenology as performance*. This does not mean we display ourselves in the performance of a phenomenology, but calls attention to the necessarily processual and dynamic qualities of performance based on an understanding of performance as emergence (Kozel, “AffeXity”).

There are practical implications to this, influencing how we do a phenomenology, or in more formal terms, how we implement the phenomenological method. Previously the way I answered the question “How do you do a phenomenology?” emphasized attention, or even the sort mindfulness familiar to anyone who does meditation. Here is an extract:

- Take your attention into this very moment.
- Suspend the main flow of thought.
- Call your attention to your body and what it is experiencing.
- Witness what you see, hear, and touch, how space feels, and temperature, and how the inside of your body feels in relation to the outside.
- Take a break (a moment, a day, a week, a year).
- Describe what you experienced. Take notes, record sounds or images.

Initial notes can be a sort of “brain dump.” Do not worry about style, grammar, or relevance at this stage. This stage may occur immediately following your immersion in a specific sensory experience, or it may happen after an interval. Memory and imaginative reconstruction are involved regardless of the lapse of time between experience and documentation of the experience, but obviously too much time passing can dull the recollection.

(Kozel, *Closer* 52–55)

Latent in this rather simplistic description are the qualities of process phenomenology I now want to emphasize: first, in performing a phenomenology we continuously modify our own practices and methods, sometimes without realizing it. Second, we *create* sensory and affective content though our

awareness; we do not just *describe* what already exists. Third, this process is relational across other bodies and objects. Phenomenology, like all philosophical ideas, develops through “limitations, adaptations and inversions” (Whitehead 196). I am not prepared to offer new step-by-step instructions for how to do a phenomenology, given how inadequate my first attempt now seems. However, to stir things up even further, I will introduce Nancy’s instructions on how to do a phenomenology of listening, based on his deep reflections on music, sound, and resonance. Nancy’s writing on music aims not to be restrained by the primacy of language. He has some recommendations for how to do this in relation to music and listening:

- treat “pure resonance” not only as the condition but as the very beginning and opening up of sense
- treat the body as being wholly a resonance chamber or column of beyond meaning (like the part of the violin that transmits vibrations)
- envisage the “subject” as that part, in the body, that is listening or vibrates with listening to—or with the echo of—the beyond-meaning (31).

His instructions, necessarily quite abstract because sound and the experience of music are his material, open the conditions for the translation into language of that which originates beyond language. His consideration of resonance also provides a clear dynamic of relationality. He writes, somewhat obliquely, that “sense reaches me long before it leaves me, even though it reaches me only by leaving in the same movement” (Nancy 30). If we think of experience as enveloping us, then dissolving into something else, our writing about it is a play between it arriving, making sense of it, and it transforming. Frequently, we only really understand what we experienced once we set a phenomenological process of reflection and writing in motion. Then it changes.⁸

The process phenomenologies that fascinate me, only 6 of which I have included in this chapter, exist between sound, visuals, poetry, sketches, and ethnographic field notes. They exude a form of corporeal listening and translation. They can be euphoric or frustrating, full of insight or fraught with uncertainty. These notes can fall completely flat, missing what they try to capture. They palpate the borders of what we have known or thought before.

Prior to this methodological interlude I included four stories of notes from the perspectives of performer, choreographer, and those who are mobile or “unruly” spectators. The two remaining stories of notes come from expanded constructions of performer and performance; the fifth comes from the experiences of participants in a workshop and the sixth from practices immersed in somatic awareness or affective qualities. These are part of a programme of expanding phenomenological processes so that they are refined enough to assist the exploration of more subtle and affective domains. Such subtlety is not outside the domain of existing phenomenological reflection. Witness two resonating fragments: “ashes of movement,” a fragment from my *Small Acts* notes, and Lilja’s poetic disintegration of the little dancing figure into particles, or indeed, ashes.

“ashes of movement”

Figure 3.5 Crop from *Small Acts* notes.

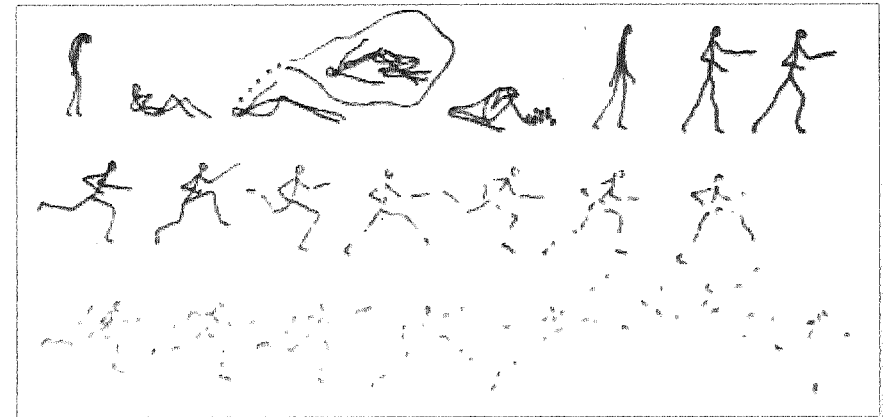


Figure 3.6 Reproduced with kind permission from Efva Lilja, 2012.

FIFTH STORY OF NOTES—WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS’ PERSPECTIVES

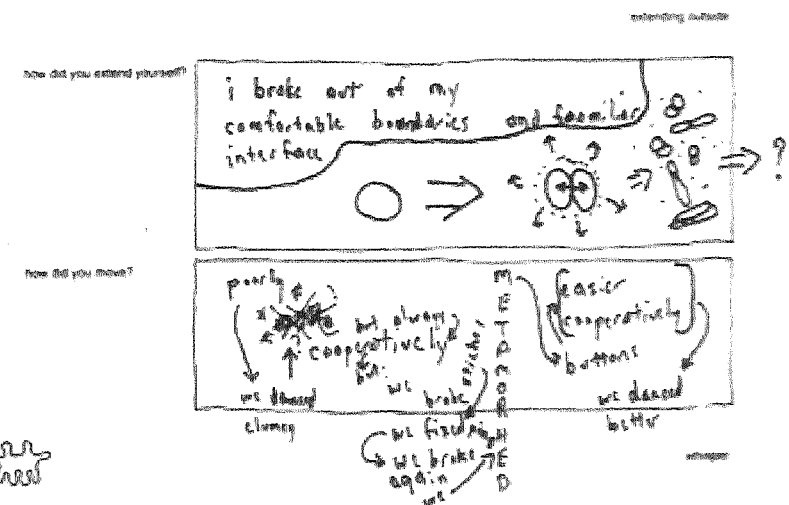


Figure 3.7 Drawing from participants of the *heart(h)* workshops for the *whisper(s)* wearable project (2004).

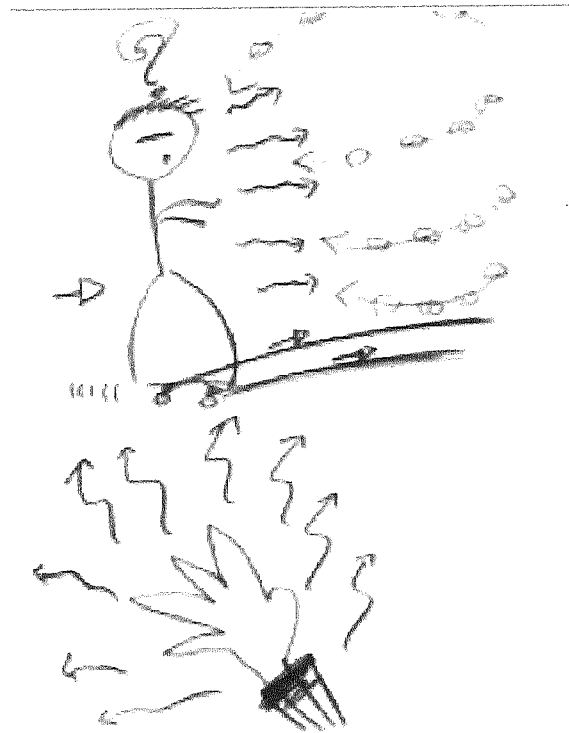


Figure 3.8 Drawing from participants of the *heart(h)* workshops for the *whisper(s)* wearable project (2004).

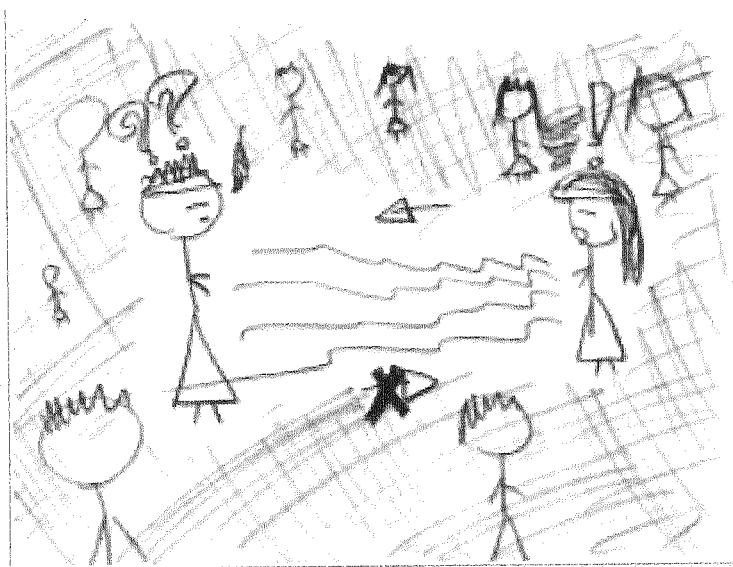


Figure 3.9 Drawing from participants of the *heart(h)* workshops for the *whisper(s)* wearable project (2004).



Figure 3.10 Drawing from participants of the *heart(h)* workshops for the *whisper(s)* wearable project (2004).

These drawings came from the *heart(h)* workshops in 2004. They were part of the devising phase of a large performance project in wearable computing that came out of a collaboration between dancers, fashion designers, engineers, software designers, and sound artists. For this project, called *whisper(s)*, garments embedded with electronics that could sense non-verbal bodily communication and transmit this to others were designed and constructed. The public presentations of this research project occurred as participatory performances; the *heart(h)* workshops were used to help us clarify and deepen the poetic and performative dimensions of the concept so that embodied qualities could lead the engineering and programming.⁹

Thecla Schiphorst, Camille Baker, and I lead the workshop participants through a series of improvisational exercises, with an emphasis on sensing between bodies and deepening the sense of space around bodies. Participants were asked to respond to questions in written form. This was similar to design ethnography in the field of interaction design and basic ethnographic practices, but diverging somewhat from standard ethnographic practices there was also a blank page in the questionnaire asking participants to draw their experiences of performing their sensations in space. A bridge between ambiguous corporeal experience and language can occur by means

of inscription other than words: drawing, moving, vocalizing. As we saw with Lilja's sketches, and know from the way choreographers work, drawing is not just mere notation. Nor is it a reduction, or a telegraphic way of acting as a placeholder for words. Drawings can be condensations of phenomenological experience. Details of bodies, space, relations, and affect can be present in a few lines. These lines are generally not intended to be seen by audiences or readers.

Increasingly, experimental performances are constructed around various phases of workshops. The model of the workshop may come from theatre games, pedagogy, interaction design, or ethnography, but it still can have strong phenomenological grounding and provide phenomenological insight. It is significant that the workshop format intends to flatten the creative hierarchy somewhat: creative actions and agency are not just the domain of the director or dominant artist of the project; they are opened to other groups. Reflecting a process philosophical view, it is possible to discover something from the smallest sliver of one person's experience, no matter how insignificant or eccentric (Mesle 42–43).

SIXTH STORY OF NOTES—A SOMATIC PERSPECTIVE

indigo

ultraviolet

cramps in my gut

somatic blur

rats in a barrel

pain ricochets through my body

brittle edges, like ice

holding till I'm burning with fever or pain

radiant burst of sunshine

dark dark electric purple

(personal notes, autumn 2012)

There are far fewer words in my notebooks when I try to capture affective or somatic experiences. And fewer drawings. The narratives are almost painful in their intensity, with much reliance on color. Or they are the opposite: the somatic zone of affect is beyond not just my words but my ability to integrate internal perception into anything resembling previous categories of comprehension or articulation. Still, affect is performed. It is set in motion and it unfolds, taking oneself and others on a journey we participate in but do not fully control.

Some context is useful. I am in the process of expanding phenomenological "tools" to capture not actions or senses but affect and somatic awareness.

In order to do this I am exploring various somatic practices, yoga, meditation, and other means of accessing internal body states through visualization, physicalization or other sensing techniques. These are performances of perception; the tools are variations on a theme of attention, reflection, breath, and multi-sensory perception. Currently I am exploring affect within somatic practices, but it is clear that all performances have affective and somatic layers. Generally these are unaddressed or are filtered through other forms of description or critical judgment. Performances that move us, those that are traumatic or euphoric for example, are imbued with affect but frequently are discussed in terms of narrative, technique, dramaturgy, musicality, or composition. Affect is part of the great invisible domain that supports and sustains the visible, to use the formulation that gives the title to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's posthumous collection, *The Visible and the Invisible*.

Phenomenology is well established as a methodological approach for capturing, questioning, sharing, and even problematizing sense experience, but affect exists in a different spectrum from the senses. Affect inhabits bodies and the spaces beyond them. Bodies, objects, architecture, imaginations, memories, even meteorological or atmospheric qualities, make up the affective clouds within which we live. More like particle systems or fields, affect is an ever-fluctuating exchange of forces. It is most commonly reduced to emotion, but philosophical thought contributing to the area of affect theory reveals it is much more subtle and expansive than simply human emotion.¹⁰ It can be seen as a shimmering, or rippling of material and immaterial forces (Kozel, "Somatic Materialis" 90–92). A wider question is whether it is possible to do a phenomenology of affect. Elsewhere I have begun to address this question—with the suggestion that approaches to phenomenology in the twenty-first century have rendered it less a faithful reproduction of early twentieth-century method and doctrine, than an expanded and subtle means for understanding that which is beyond comprehension, but which is still experienced (Kozel, "Somatic Materialism"). As such, phenomenology can be useful to contemporary performance, as performers tackle wider and more nuanced questions relating to bodies, cultures, artistic practices, politics, environmental issues, and scientific knowledge.

Continuing to navigate within the focus of this chapter—process phenomenologies and stories of notes from the interim phase of transposing experience into words—this final story asks what affective notes look like. I suggested above that colors and intensities played a stronger role, but these color sensations are not always directly pinned to clearly defined physical or emotional qualities. Returning to Nancy's nuanced take on phenomenology, we learn that when it comes to affect the expected relation to experience is reversed: "no longer a question so much of letting a fundamental affect come to expression but of shaping such an affect, of forming it and conforming it to a measure not yet registered in nature or in history" (56). This relates to a quality of somatic experience I have encountered occasionally: noticing something that is so unusual that it at first registers as nothing. Or a ripple in

something-ness. It is possible to feel nothing and something at the same time. A nothing that is something (Kozel, "Somatic Materialism" 164–167).

In addition to affect materializing as internally perceived colors and the play between something and nothing, this research into performing a phenomenology of the somatic yields one other observation: the first attempts at taking notes often read like stories. Small extrapolations of narrative spiral into being as a way to fill in the gaps in more concrete sensory description. There is a fine line between my writing or telling these little stories, and their seeming to tell themselves. This sense of the story creating the affect is part of the reversal or "inversion of sense" Nancy identifies when affect comes to the fore. Shifting the agency of telling a story to the nebulous zone of affect, "the intimate and ineffable experience must give itself, recreate for itself, and forge for itself, its tonality, its voice, its sonority" (Nancy 56). The implication for phenomenology is that this method is not a passive description of experience. Phenomenological processes do not just describe what is there; they create meaning and deepen experience. In effect, we venture into a domain where meaning is not immediately accessible but has to be probed, palpated, and stirred into being. Notes from a recent experience in an anechoic chamber¹¹ provide a glimpse of this.

Infinite blackness.

Like velvet

I have never seen black like this. Blacker because of the silence.

My eyes struggle for perceptual distinctions between floor, wall, and ceiling.

Is this room round, I wonder?

I like this black. At least at first.

No sound, even though I know I am here with 3 others.

I hear my body, it surges up to my attention like a fountain.

Like vomit rising, I feel this rush of sound up the core of my body to my ears.

I hear my breath, my heart—then my ears travel down but get lost somewhere around my navel.

Then I begin to ... panic? Or float?

(I feel an urgent need to touch you

Where are you? You were next to me.

I reach down: you are sitting on the floor.

I touch your hair. Silky. Real. Comforting.

You are there.)

This means there are people in this world of blackness. This supposed social space that has suddenly become a space of sensory confusion and affective surges. I decide to act, to dampen the spiral of unease, the disintegration of all that is familiar. I quietly rub my fingers together near my ear. Comforting, soft cricket sounds. I let my hand float away from my ear in this deep utter blackness and there sound is taken from

me. Swallowed up. At arms length I can barely hear my fingers. Fragile. Without resonance. The sound dies.

The door opens and we are let out into light and sound once more.

Something inside me releases.

We were in the anechoic chamber for one minute. It was part of Kimsooja's piece *To Breathe* at the Korean Pavilion of the Venice Biennale (2013). The anechoic chamber is a room quite simply, without echo. Without light. The chamber deprives us of resonance, the constant exchange of sound, gesture, and sight that makes up the texture of relational and dynamic life. Nancy would challenge my sense of deprivation, preferring to say "silence is not a privation but an arrangement of resonance" (21). Nevertheless, I retain the affective imprint of my experience in that chamber. It is archived deep within me.

Ending by returning to the beginning: recall that my notebook from the first story of notes was lost. For a long time I was delayed in writing this chapter because I dearly wanted to revisit and explore my old notebooks and drawings from past performances. I knew most of these were lost but refused, in some unacknowledged yet highly obstructive way, to accept this. Phenomenological nostalgia? Perhaps, but also a deeper understanding of the full arc of a phenomenology and a mourning for what was lost. Once I accepted that it was enough for the memory of the notebook to exist, I could write this piece. I was able to see that in past years I (and others) did not place as much emphasis on this stage of phenomenological process as on the end products of the performance, the documentation, or the scholarly articles. Yet when I examine the documentation of performances I did in the 1990s, I see how poor it is by today's standards: partial, badly lit, and blurry. The notebooks seemed to point forward to the performance, the documentation to point backwards, but both exist partially in memory, part in imagination, and across various materialities that include muscle memory, ancient and now unreadable VHS or Hi-8 tapes, missing notebooks, and imaginative reconstruction. The documentation of performance is an incomplete sketch, just as the notebooks that produce a performance are fragmentary and incomplete. And when I read what I have written, I see how the words and ideas could have been otherwise.

It is not that I want to transform the previously overlooked interim processes into products themselves, rather that I want to inject processural qualities into all phases of a phenomenology. Donald Sherburne notes how Whitehead believed that "the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly," for we are in a perpetual process of setting thought, imagination, and experience into play so that we can generate ideas that will then be "capable of criticism and improvement" (204); and this edited collection demonstrates how phenomenology is currently critiqued, expanded, and applied to performances of all sorts. Attending to

the interim processes of doing a phenomenology, rather than performing one formulaically or with only the end goal in sight, is a way of “letting breadth of thought” react with the “intensity of sensitive experience” (Sherburne 202). It seems that I am giving the last word to the dead male philosopher; certainly his words describe of the powerful combination of forces that artists and scholars have at their disposal, but there are many voices in this chapter. Dancers, writers, students, philosophers ... words, drawings, and motions. Phenomenologies are rarely entirely solitary or isolated processes; they are multiple, they are populated, they are entangled performances.

NOTES

1. Traced back to Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (written in 1929), this dynamic approach to thought and the world is experiencing a revival as both process philosophy and speculative materialism. See Whitehead, Sherburne, Mesle, Bryant et al.
2. Further, Manning and Ruprecht note a shift from broadly sociohistorical to broadly philosophical and phenomenological approaches to dance history, the catalyst for this being a more conceptual approach to dance and performance.
3. I described a process of writing in fragments in *Closer*, when I was partially inside the *Telematic Dreaming* installation and partially outside the camera view (Kozel, *Closer* 88–89). Other variations on fragmentary phenomenological writing include Maurice Merleau-Ponty's working notes from *The Visible and Invisible*. This book was incomplete at the time of his death in 1961 and the publishers wisely included his fragments (comprising a full third of the book) rather than ignoring them or asking someone to integrate them into a more fluid text. Contemporary phenomenologist Jean Luc Nancy includes an “interlude” and a “coda” into his book on music, *Listening*, which have a fragmentary feel to them, and of course Jacques Derrida made famous an attention to margins, footnotes, and voices from the gaps between texts.
4. Expanding somewhat my earlier writing on phenomenology, the approach proposed here emphasises the critical, exploratory, and emergent qualities of phenomenological reflection. I also argue for the ability to use phenomenology to access affect and not simply sensory experience (Kozel, *Closer* 127–35).
5. *Liflink* was performed by Ruth Gibson, Annie Loh, Sterling Steward, and Susan Kozel. It is described in (Kozel, *Closer* 127–35).
6. From the top left corner of the map, a note reads: “What does it mean to watch a piece by a Swedish choreographer using Arabic call to prayer and music the day after a bomb explodes in Stockholm left by a terrorist objecting to Swedish troops in Afghanistan?” Kvarnström's choreography was performed as the second part of the double bill with *Small Acts* that day.
7. Video sketching can be used too but will not be discussed here because it opens up wider debates over the finished visual aesthetic invited by the camera and the gaze.
8. I contributed a video lecture for a Practice Based Research in the Arts course at Stanford University (taught by Helen Paris and Leslie Hill) called “Phenomenology in 5 Acts: A Short Lecture on Phenomenology.” In it I provide

guidance for performing a phenomenology that is consistent with the discussion in this chapter. <<http://medea.mah.se/2013/12/susan-kozel-phenomenology-practice-based-research-arts/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv7Vp3NPKw4&feature=youtu.be>>.

9. This project was a collaboration between Thecla Schiphorst, Sang Mah, Susan Kozel, Kristina Andersen, Robb Lovell, Pablo Mochcovsky, Jan Erkkku, Gretchen Elsener, Brady Marks, and Camille Baker. <http://whisper.iat.sfu.ca> (Kozel, *Closer* Chapter 5) (Schiphorst)
10. There is much fascinating work on affect. See Gregg and Seigworth (2010), Sedgwick (2003), Barthes (2005), Massumi (2002), Clough and Halley (2007), and Sedgwick and Frank (1995) tracing affect back to Tompkins in the mid twentieth century.
11. An anechoic chamber is a room with no echo; walls, ceiling, and floor are padded so that sound is absorbed. It is completely dark.

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