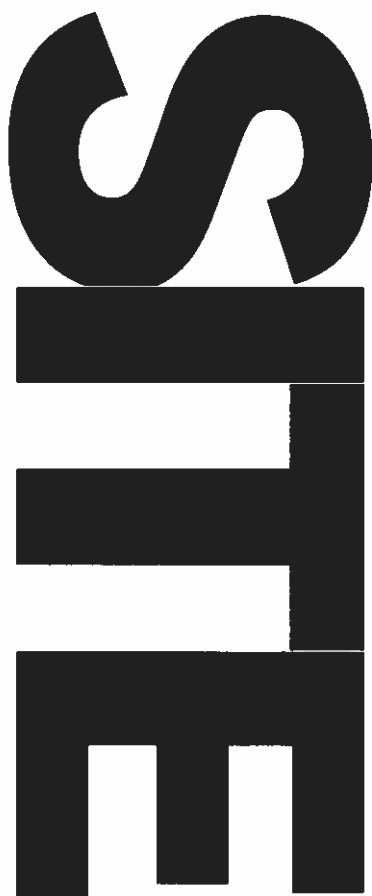


---

# Senses



**CONTENTS**     *Senses of the Sensible: Interview with Jacques Rancière • Baumgarten and the Invention of Aesthetics • Revisiting Laocoon; Site-Specific Imitation A Button is Never Just A Button: Realism, Fashion, and the Discovery of Society Accident and Absolute Guilt: Kafka's Jurisprudence • Must We Believe What We See? On the Filmic Aesthetics of Illusion • Art, Aesthetics — Divorce? • The Speech of Painting Notes: In the Beginning Was the Drawing • Somatic Materialism or "Is it Possible to do a Phenomenology of Affect?" • Duchamp the Messenger of Art Unlimited Re-Mediating the Medium • Printed Letters, Acoustic Space, Real Time Internet: The Message of Current Communication Media, Deciphered with (and Beyond) McLuhan Media and Maelstroms • Rosalind E. Krauss, Under the Blue Cup • Against the Empire: Pier Vittorio Aureli on the Possibility of an Absolute Architecture • A Third Wave of Receptions: Space as Concrete Abstraction • The Japanese Were Never Modern: Metabolism's Supra-Modernity • The Digital Dissolution of Disegno*

---

**33.2013**

# 33.2013 Contents

## 5 Introduction

### AISTHESIS

- 8 *Senses of the Sensible*  
Interview with  
Jacques Rancière  
Sven-Olov Wallen  
Kim West

- 32 *Baumgarten and the  
Invention of Aesthetics*  
Sven-Olov Wallen

- 59 *Revisiting Laocoon;  
Site-Specific Imitations*  
Cecilia Sjöholm

- 71 *A Button is Never Just  
a Button: Realism, Fiction,  
and the Discovery of  
Sara Danius*

- 84 *Accident and Absolu-  
tion: Kafka's Jurisprudence*  
Howard Caygill

- 93 *Must We Believe What  
We See? On the Filmic  
Nature of Illusion*  
Gertrud Koch

- 107 *Art, Aesthetics—Div-  
ided*  
Morten Kyndrup

- 119 *The Speech of Paintings*  
Pablo Bustinduy

- 136 *Notes: In the Beginning  
Was the Drawing*  
Marcia Sá Cavalcante  
Schuback

- 153 *Somatic Materialism:  
"Is it Possible to do  
Without the Phenomenology of A-  
esthetics?"*  
Susan Kozel

PUBLISHER & EDITOR:  
Sven-Olov Wallenstein

EDITORIAL BOARD: Brian Manning  
Delaney, Power Ekroth, Jeff Kinkle,  
Trond Lundemo, Staffan Lundgren,  
Karl Lydén, Helena Mattsson, Meike  
Schalk, Susan Schuppli, Kim West  
GRAPHIC DESIGN: Konst & Teknik +  
Caroline Settergren

SITE  
Box 19009  
SE-104 32 Stockholm  
Sweden

www.sitemagazine.net  
info@sitemagazine.net

SUBMISSIONS: Text proposals to  
be sent to info@sitemagazine.net

All rights reserved. No part of this  
publication may be used or reproduced  
in any manner without permission

ISSN 1650-7894  
ISBN 978-91-86883-20-1

Distributed by Axl Books

looping, the feet show the nomadism of life out of which a person arises. The body that is drawing reveals the body — that is, the sculpture — as a living drawing, as drawn lines on the foundation of the world. These feet, stains and lines, these underlines and question marks, all of a sudden change into the figure of a hare woman (*Hasenfrau*) in whose empty stomach the formation of this event vibrates like the deer's horns drawn in the air. From the vegetal in the animal to the animal in the vegetal, from the human in the earth and to the earthly in human, Beuys follows "traces and residues of the first days of Creations." The secret drawings have no forms because they *are* the forming movements of form. This movement seeks a completed form, which would make visible their formless forming force. But because such a form would be the death of force, a force that would no longer strive for anything else — it must seek a way beyond form. Beuys once said to his friend, Hagen Lieberknecht, that "the purpose of Western thinking and the science that grew from it was to reach material, but one only does that through death."<sup>51</sup> For Beuys this means that matter is reached in its transformation to stone and in its petrifying transformation. Among the "secret drawings" there are some "self-portraits." Along the drawn-lines that rest on water, lines transformed into stone are visible. We see there the dead person, the human as stone. Life is the forming of matter but this concomitantly means that every material form to which life reaches always remains a preparation, since it is always already beyond itself, it is always already another. "The secret drawings" show that living forms — that which is stone-like or animal, divine or earthly, human or non-human — are preparations for preparations.

The secret bloc collects the gaze in the forming of matter, between absence and presence, time and space, life and death, between what comes and what goes. It is a nomadic gaze. Beuys' drawings show the way in which the human herself is a sign — a sign without interpretation — that has very nearly lost its language on foreign shores. *The secret bloc for a secret person in Ireland* is Beuys' gift dedicated to the secret beginning of things: the sign's drawing movement on the nomadic ground of life. •

Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback is Professor of Philosophy at Södertörn University. Recent publications include *Being With the Without* (ed. with Jean-Luc Nancy, 2013), *Phenomenology of Eros* (ed. with Jonna Bornemark, 2012), and *Att tänka i skisser: Essäer om bildens filosofi & filosofins bilder* (2011).

# Somatic Materialism or "Is it Possible to do a Phenomenology of Affect?"

Susan Kozel

## Writing while standing on my head

I have reached the stage in writing this journal article where I want to throw out all the words. I am also about to give a presentation where I want to avoid all visuals. This is not to say that I dislike words or mistrust visuals. I love words, I relish reading and writing, and I delight in sensuous visual narratives. I swim in words and visuals, but right now they seem to follow patterns that are stifling.

Writing on phenomenology, affect, and somatics is tying me in knots. It is forcing parts of me to stay silent so that other parts may be noticed. It is asking me to do something radically different with words and with the flow of ideas, to invert or turn inside-out the story of what I am doing and why. It is not asking, it is demanding that I do something different. Yelling at me even, and doing what mules or small children do when you ignore them: stubbornly refusing to move. Just not doing what you want them to do. OK. So I stop. What now? "We're going to be late you know." "It seems you don't care." "Let's hum a tune. Look around. Feel our feet. Sit on the ground. Stare at the sky. Get very wet in the rain until you are ready to move. Take a deep breath..."

Perhaps I can write this standing on my head, or while I am shouting very loudly so that I cannot hear my usual narratives, concepts, or arguments. I want to write it from

my peripheral vision. (I confess to have written the above paragraphs without my glasses, as a sort of intellectual protest against the usual structures of clarity, the visual blurriness letting my thoughts realign.)

I am aware that this sounds incredibly pretentious.

This writing conundrum is a direct result of an ongoing artistic research process into affect, dance, and mobile technologies in urban. The project is called *AffeXity*; it is a collaboration with screen dance artist Jeannette Ginslov and others.<sup>1</sup> We have set ourselves a challenge of creating short dance improvisations in urban locations that emerge from and reveal affective qualities. These are captured on video, edited, and then will be re-located using an Augmented Reality browser. The AR application running on mobile phones lets us locate the choreography in physical space using either GPS coordinates or small black and white “tags” called QR codes or fiduciary markers. Once the choreography of a fragment of affect is pinned, or tagged, to a spot in a city it can then be visited by anyone who happens to have a phone running the application.<sup>2</sup>

We began by improvising and recording movement sequences in Malmö and Copenhagen, but intend to expand these practices of performing affect to other sites. The choreographies can live in alternate media layers of any city. Not exactly invisible, they exist in Alternate Realities (a better deployment of the letters A and R). Embedded in the city, they are at the same time highly intimate because they live in your city, on your phone, in your pocket. If the project progresses as we intend, the small video choreographies will be augmented not just by the

technologies but by people as they add their own choreographies, or annotate and remix existing ones. The AR browsers we are currently exploring are open source and free, and are intended to be used as readily as one might send a text or consult a map application on a phone, but they are not yet as sophisticated in handling video as we would like.<sup>3</sup> As usual, artistic research pushes at the edges of technological functionality.

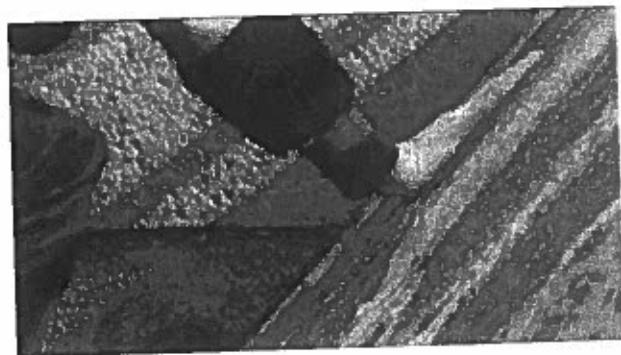
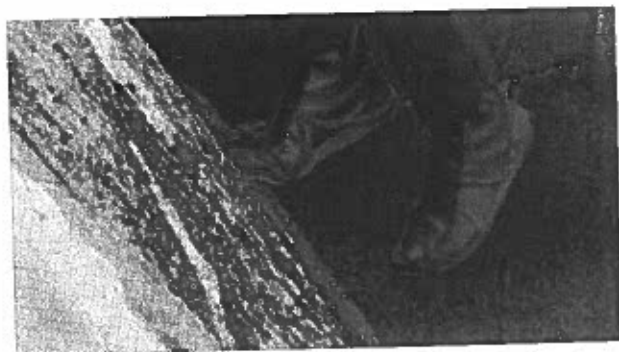
The *AffeXity* project has the goal of sliding from somatic activity (tapping into affect in our bodies and in the city) to social activity (creating a social practice where people will want to add their expressive physical movement to the cities in the form of short videos in their cities). This journey from the somatic to

1 • Collaborators for the first phase of artistic research include Jeannette Ginslov (screen choreography), Wubkje Kuindersma (dance), Niya Lulcheva (dance), Timo Engelhardt (media application programming), Maria Engberg and Jay David Bolter (technical consultation for Argon AR browser), Karolina Rosenqvist (audience development). I provide the artistic direction and some dance improvisation. The project is based at the Medea Collaborative Media Initiative of Malmö Högskola in Malmö, Sweden.

2 • These early artistic research phases are discussed in Kozel, “AffeXity: Performing Affect,” *Fibreculture* issue 21 (2012).

twentyone.fibreculturejournal.org

3 • Currently we are exploring two augmented reality browsers, Argon (argon.gatech.edu/) and Aurasma (www.aurasma.com/)



▲ From video of second phase of *AffeXity* development, images Jeannette Ginslov, Malmö 2012.

the social flows in the opposite direction from most of our media which are filtered through social or public spheres and pound incessantly on our somatic bodies. In the process we will lend a small slice of social media a deeper degree of embodiment and expressivity, at the same time as opening out choreographic impulses into the city using mobile media technologies.

There are multiple ways to situate the somatic, and a resulting lack of clarity around it. This lack of clarity is not surprising since it generally refers to an immanent level of experience, deep within the body, and somewhat resistant to language. Historically, somatics encompasses a set of practices involving touch, internal imagery, or movement that originated in the early twentieth century as a way to overcome physical trauma or to expand expressive range.<sup>4</sup> Somatics attends to the internally perceived body rather than the externally perceived body. There are methodological implications. Observation is accomplished from the first person viewpoint, with importance placed on proprioception, kinaesthesia, and internal visualisation as modes of sensory apprehension. As a result, "a categorically different phenomenon is perceived: the human soma."<sup>5</sup> An analytic stance notes that the somatic body is more than a "hunk of meat" mechanistically conceived and existing in opposition to the activities of the mind. The soma has intelligence, a particular logic, and myriad ways of holding and revealing memory.<sup>6</sup> Further, an ontological layer to somatics is valuable for reminding us that focus is never constrained to the being of an isolated body, but reveals the "embodied-belonging-together-on-the-earth."<sup>7</sup> A scientific perspective was provided by none other than Edmund Husserl in 1912. He established "somatology" as the science of the animate organism: "a material science to the extent that it investigates the material properties of the

animate organism."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary approaches to the somatic combine the methodological, analytic, ontological, and scientific to differing degrees.

While devising *Affexity* I realized I had to move differently as a dancer, to suspend my movement habits. I was dismayed, I will admit, by just how deeply my movement patterns, qualities, or improvisational gestures were engrained. We dancers like to think that when we improvise we are in a golden zone of free creative movement, but it is not so. There exist many techniques and strategies for helping dancers, musicians and theatre practitioners stay in the

## Aisthesis

moment, or for short-circuiting predictability or staleness. In deciding to move from affect rather than from form, narrative, impulse or even kinaesthetic sense, I had to stop myself from moving over and over again. Start again, no, start again, no, start again...<sup>9</sup> Patterns of writing and thought are also engrained. With this article, I had to start again, and again, and again, until I was writing (metaphorically) standing on my head.

You are witnessing in words some of what we experienced as artists in the early stages of this project: the complexity of an artistic research project that avoids formal, aesthetic, and even kinaesthetic starting points in an attempt to work directly from affect. A phenomenology of affect is necessary to better understand the performance of affect, but first it must be argued that it is even possible to do a phenomenology of affect. Then some of the wider political or philosophical motivation for doing so can be unfolded, for affect is not just a pure internal force, it is distributed across bodies of all configurations: physical, social, structural, technological, and institutional.

## From phenomenology of the senses to phenomenology of affect

There are many wonderful examples of phenomenological writing that explore, celebrate, or problematise the senses. Witness a memorable description of the taste of stone by architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa.

Many years ago when visiting the DL James Residence in Carmel, California, designed by Charles and Henry Greene, I felt compelled to kneel and touch the delicately shining white marble threshold of the front door with my tongue. The sensuous materials and skilfully crafted details of Carlo Scarpa's architecture as well as the sensuous colours of Luis Barragan's houses frequently evoke oral experiences. Deliciously coloured surfaces of *stucco lustro*, a highly polished colour or wood surfaces also present themselves to the appreciation of the tongue.<sup>10</sup>

Pallasmaa's writing is striking for its sensory descriptions, also its emphasis on the synaesthetic or cross-modal transference across senses, in particular between touch and taste, and between vision and touch. Despite the tongue-on-the-marble-threshold somewhat having the quality of a stunt, or a dramatic gesture to prove a point, it is effective. It is clear that his passion is to expand not just our relation to architecture but to critique certain practices in the creation of physical structures in our environments. With relevance to artistic research, his phenomenologies take in the encounter with architecture as well as its creation. For

4 • Examples include Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, Rosen Method, Rolfing, Body/Mind Centering, Ideokinesis. See Don Hanlon Johnson, ed. *Bone, Breath, and Gesture: Practices of Embodiment* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995).

5 • Thomas Hanna, "What is somatics?" in Johnson, *Bone, Breath, and Gesture*, 341.

6 • Johnson, *Bone, Breath, and Gesture*, XV  
7 • Jeffrey Maitland, *Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995), XVIII.

8 • Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences, Third Book, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980), 7.

9 • Phenomenological descriptions of the processes of dance improvisation, video shooting, video editing and choreographic direction can be found in Kozel, "Affexity: Performing Affect."

10 • Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 59.



<sup>A</sup> From *AffeXity* first phase, images Jeannette Ginslov, dance Wupkje Kuindersma, Copenhagen 2011.

## Aisthesis

him, the problem with many of our dwellings today is that they do not offer potential transactions between body, imagination, senses, and the environment: he traces this absence back to how the design process facilitated by computers and software has become a "retinal journey."<sup>11</sup> The visual process of using software to design buildings has sacrificed the rest of the senses.

Affect and the sensible are close, even overlapping, but they are not the same. This is also true of affect and the somatic. Affect occupies a different register from sense data, it is reliant on the senses but overflows them. Affect is reduced frequently to emotion but is more than "feelings." Further, it bleeds across the borders of a single body. Affect is more like a cloud: it is as likely to be creepy as euphoric and it does not just come from bodies, but encompasses objects, structures, animals, systems, and all things environmental. Recent research, both practical and theoretical, to refine a definition of affect has left me with this: affect is the passage of forces or intensities, between bodies that may be organic, inorganic, animal, digital, or fictional. It is located in the domain beyond reason, logic, or "conscious knowing."<sup>12</sup> This passage of intensities is like a vibration or a shimmering, in the sense that shimmering is based on change and is not a static state. Viewed this way, affect might travel through familiar states but it may also participate in the creation of something that did not exist previously, in what I am somewhat reductively calling "change."<sup>13</sup> I currently understand affect and the somatic in relation to one another. I hesitate to say whether one is a dimension of the other — perhaps it is too soon to tell, or perhaps that level of conceptual containment is inappropriate for the passage of intensities that characterizes both. I do know that a phenomenology of affect helps to open out, elaborate, and, to a certain extent, explain somatic experience.

In a recent talk at the Medea Collaborative Media Initiative in Malmö, artist and scholar Chris Salter presented his collaborative art installations that challenge the senses by being "just barely noticeable" or by bombarding visitors with overwhelming visual, aural, or tactile stimulation.<sup>14</sup> I asked him about the relation between affect and senses, wondering if they were somehow pinned together like sine curves or if, as with some of his work, they sometimes collided. I saw a collision or a variance between affect and the senses in the moments when very strong affective

11 • Ibid, 12.

12 • Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1. See also Kozel, "AffeXity: Performing Affect with Augmented Reality."

13 • I notice that the directness of the word change is coming into favour, Peter Sloterdijk's newest book in English is called *You Must Change Your Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

14 • Medea's activities can be found at [medea.mah.se](http://medea.mah.se), and an archived video of Chris Salter's talk (18 October 2012) [medea.mah.se/2012/10/medea-talks-presents-chris-salter/](http://medea.mah.se/2012/10/medea-talks-presents-chris-salter/)

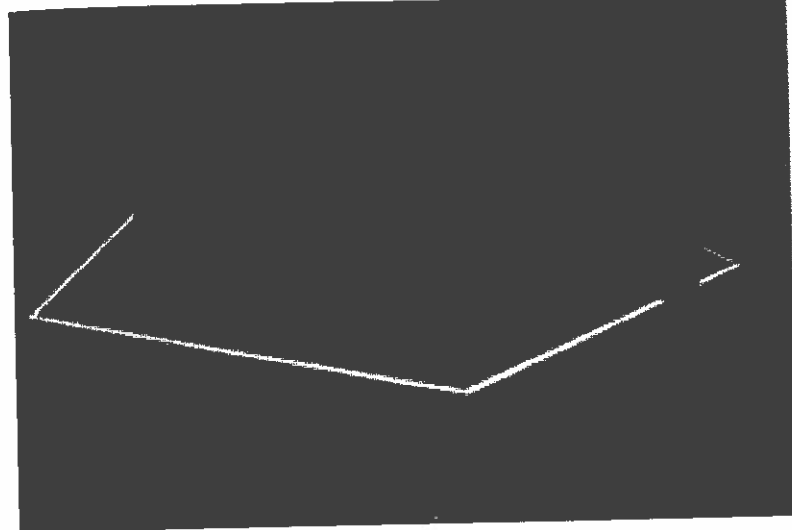
qualities were produced by extremely minimal sensations. Thinking on his feet, and basing his response on phenomenological recollections of his and others' experiences, he located senses and affect on a spectrum: indicating that affect is located at either extreme end of stimulation with senses in the middle.

This made me think of infra red and ultra violet, both intensities beyond the visual spectrum. Intensities are experienced somatically. Reflecting on my own experiences, I once saw waves of colour behind my eyelids, mainly indigo and dark electric purple, in the midst of the somatic practice called Rosen Method.<sup>15</sup> Ultraviolet blooms of colour characterised the somatic release, providing a fragment of physical experience to ground the important but otherwise abstract claim that a "processurally oriented materialism" yields "affectual bloom spaces."<sup>16</sup> These colour sensations were not directly pinned to clearly defined physical or emotional qualities. I was vaguely aware that the right side of my body was opening and lengthening but did not have any familiar sensations or memories of similar kinaesthetic or emotional events. Like Salter's suggestion that affect exists in a zone outside of familiar sensations, I was in the domain of affect rather than categorisation. I was experiencing a change in my corporeal schema.

Change is the goal of much somatic practice. Yet, in the worlds of art, design, and cultural discourse change, or transformation, are simultaneously contested and desired outcomes: change for whom? empty or authentic? at what cost? I will locate the possibility for change, for contingency, within the body and say that we can access and understand it by means of a phenomenology of affect; first it is worth seeing just how contentious (and ultimately desirable) this is by taking a philosophical detour through speculative materialism and the event of love.

### Speculative Materialism

Pallasmaa relishes the way we encounter and make sense of the world through our bodies: "We behold, touch, listen and measure the world with our entire bodily existence, and the experiential world becomes organised and articulated around the centre of the body,"<sup>17</sup> but philosopher Quentin Meillassoux calls this the correlationist circle and rails against it. In Meillassoux's attempt to craft a new relation between thought and the absolute he is deeply troubled by how the sensible, "whether it be perceptive or affective," can only exist as "a relation between the world and the living creature that I am."<sup>18</sup> The sensible is neither in me nor in the thing-in-itself, it is effectively,



▲  
From Salter's  
*Displace, 2.0* at  
Today's Art, The  
Hague 2012,  
Photo: Anke  
Burger.

to use his term, a correlation. Meillassoux wants to escape this correlationist circle according to which we can only ever know anything through our own situated embodied perception, thus making it impossible to consider realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently from one another. Phenomenology is the most pernicious and perfidious example of correlationism.

Meillassoux's words reveal a strong sense of claustrophobia; I see it as an affective force behind his rejection of phenomenology. It is troubling for him that a person can only know something through her own perception and cognition, for this means she will always be outside those objects in the world she wants to understand. This yields a strange feeling of imprisonment or enclosure within this very exteriority (the "transparent cage"). For we are all well and truly imprisoned within this outside proper to language and consciousness given that we are *always-already* in it (the "always-already" accompanying the "co-" of correlationism as its other essential locution), and given that we have no access to any vantage point from whence we could observe these "object-worlds," which are the unsurpassable providers of all exteriority, from the outside. But if this outside seems to us to be a cloistered outside, an outside in which one may legitimately feel incarcerated, this is because in actuality such an outside is entirely relative, since it is—and this is precisely the point—relative to us.<sup>19</sup>

15 • See [www.rosenmethod.com/](http://www.rosenmethod.com/) and the journal [www.rosenjournal.org/](http://www.rosenjournal.org/) The practitioner I am fortunate to work with is Karen Vedel. Vedel is training in Rosen. She is a dance scholar and professor at the University of Copenhagen  
16 • Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 14  
17 • Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 64.  
18 • Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009), 2.  
19 • Ibid, 7.

15 • See [www.rosenmethod.com/](http://www.rosenmethod.com/) and the journal [www.rosenjournal.org/](http://www.rosenjournal.org/) The practitioner I am fortunate to work with is Karen Vedel. Vedel is training in Rosen. She is a dance scholar and professor at the University of Copenhagen  
16 • Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 14  
17 • Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 64.

He pins the future of philosophical discourse on the possibility of escaping the correlationist circle, and his book *After Finitude* follows a logical structure of argumentation using the scientific example of ancestrality and an argument around facticity to reveal the instability of the claim that we cannot know the thing-in-itself. Ancestrality refers to science's ability to produce statements about events prior to the advent of life as well as consciousness.<sup>20</sup> In simple terms, if we can comprehend something that so far exceeds our human experience then we have escaped the containment of the correlationist circle.

Those who follow his writing believe that the only way for us to answer the problems facing us as nations and cultures, from global warming to migration, is to escape this containment in order to be able to think the new, or to be able to think a new absolute. This philosophical approach has been called "speculative realism" (a title Meillassoux does not support, preferring the term materialism to realism) and intends to "recuperate the pre-critical sense of 'speculation' as a concern with the Absolute" without denying the progress that was due to the labours of critique.<sup>21</sup> He has become the philosopher of radical change because he asserts "the absolute necessity of the contingency of everything."<sup>22</sup> Even more explicitly revealing the viability of change, he asserts "there is no reason for anything to be or to remain the way it is; everything must, without reason, be able not to be and/or be able to be other than it is."<sup>23</sup>

The celebration of radical contingency at the heart of the philosophical movement speculative materialism/realism can be seen as an attempt to glimpse a crack in what exists so that something else can slip through. Along with so many others, the philosophers who grapple with these ideas exhibit a vision (a desire? a hope?) that things can be otherwise: the philosopher sees his task as levering open a space in which this might happen. (I would normally say "his or her" task, but in the case of the philosophers loosely grouped under speculative realism there are almost no women.) Speculation is a sort of freedom from which other changes or possibilities for unprecedented thought and actions can follow.

In short, necessity constrains us, contingency opens up breathing space. Or does it? Can radical contingency become abstract and overwhelming?

Everything could actually collapse: from trees to stars, from stars to laws, from physical laws to logical laws; and this not by virtue of some superior law whereby everything is destined to perish, but by virtue of the absence of any

## Aisthesis

superior law capable of preserving anything, no matter what, from perishing.<sup>24</sup>

A desire for change, for things to be other than they are, seems to require the abandonment of phenomenology and other sensory approaches to knowledge. Change seems to require an escape from the correlationist circle. However, as Ian Bogost neatly summarises, "speculative realists have not yet concerned themselves with particular implementation," their metaphysics has not yet become a practice, it remains in the domain of grappling with first principles. It is not at all clear how (or if) it is possible to have a "pragmatic speculative realism."<sup>25</sup>

## The event of love

On the way to somatics let's be distracted for a moment by love. Alain Badiou discusses love. He praises it. He says that once the One is disrupted by the difference of viewing the world as Two the world is experienced in a new way. This experience gives rise to a risky and contingent form: it becomes an encounter. "Love always starts with an encounter. And I would give this encounter the quasi-metaphysical status of an event, namely of something that doesn't enter into the immediate order of things."<sup>26</sup> There is an implicit sliding scale of disruption from experience (not really offering something new), to encounter (disrupting the order of things), to event (radical contingency). Never far from the surface of discussions of contingency or the event is the deep desire for the possibility of change: perhaps a glimmer; perhaps an explosion.

As a philosophical approach, phenomenology is both vulnerable and frequently under attack, at the same time as it is extremely robust in the ways it is applied by practitioners such as artists, dancers, architects, musicians, pedagogues, and designers. Rarely has a philosophical current been so condemned in some quarters but at the same time so tenacious. Those who are committed to expanding and challenging phenomenology as a practice know the problems with classical or traditional phenomenology. These have been rehearsed (and dealt with) many times: transcendentalist, reduction to *corps propre*, elevation of the male universalist subject, solipsistic, concerned merely with the structures of consciousness, and now correlationist.

However, Badiou's discussion of love, and indeed his entire vast project around logic and the event, opens the most significant critique a pragmatic approach to phenomenology must address: the limitations of experience. He asserts that it is "essential to grasp that

20 • Ibid, 9.

21 • Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 3.

22 • Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 62.

23 • Ibid, 69.

24 • Ibid, 53.

25 • Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 29.

26 • Badiou, with Nicolas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012), 28.



the construction of the world on the basis of difference is quite distinct from the experience of difference."<sup>27</sup> The mere experience of difference implies that the sensory patterning is only marginally disrupted. In effect, we have our experiences along a continuum. This relates directly to the difficulties of circumventing habit in the improvisations and choreographic patterns around *Affexity*, or of any use of media in our media-saturated age: media is all around us but how much of it is created or consumed with any critical or disruptive potential? Are our experiences expanded or dampened as they are reproduced? What of that which turns us upside down, which makes us catch our breath, or stop in our tracks in the face of the previously unexperienced? This, for Badiou, is an encounter or an event such as love, "an encounter is not an experience, it is an event that remains quite opaque and only finds reality in its multiple resonances within the real world."<sup>28</sup> It amounts to constructing a world from a "decentred point of view."<sup>29</sup> It does not reaffirm one's own identity.

The event is in need of a recalibration. I agree with Bogust when he expresses concern that for Badiou "events are not commonplace affairs. Rather, they are wholesale changes." Bogust observes that "Badiou's ontology appears incapable of describing the ordinary being of things, limiting itself to the extraordinary being of human change."<sup>30</sup> I can be accused of thinking small. Intimate. Acts of movement or perception that begin with a step, a breath, or a shift of weight. I reject the notion that, with the exception of rare and dramatic moments, change is extraordinary or somehow outside the human's scope. This is where the sensibility of the dancer can help: contingency is motion but not all motion offers contingency. Change is what repetition permits, what many repeated moments of technical execution (lifting a leg) or perceptual awareness (sensing the flow of your body's subtle energies) can yield: contingency within continuity. Somatic experiences offer a glimpse into the event as it is embedded deep within the body. Radical contingency within flesh, or just contingency within flesh?

### Somatic Materialism

And here my words begin to falter again. This time because I am only just beginning to explore what somatic materialism might be. In scholarly terms, I am at the beginning of a research programme that has philosophical and artistic currents. When I am at a loss conceptually, or aware that my attempts to force concepts into shape enacts violence upon them prior to the unfolding their actual shape, I turn to experience.

27 • Ibid, 23.

28 • Ibid, 24.

29 • Ibid, 25.

30 • Bogust, *Alien Phenomenology*, 28.

### Aisthesis

Above I described internally seeing ultraviolet blooms during the practice of Rosen Method. On another occasion while working with Vedel, I had the experience that ignited my fascination with the somatic in terms of phenomenological practice: I felt something that was nothing. I felt and did not feel." She said "look at that," and I felt nothing, but something at the same time.<sup>31</sup> A nothing that was something. To use other words, what I felt was not something I knew *how* to feel, thus grounding the claim that with somatics there is "no knew knowledge, only new knowing."<sup>32</sup> It was beyond my ability to sense, so it felt like an open space. A gap. An openness. It was disconcerting that such a strange void could open up in my body, but also a source of relief and fascination precisely because something so unknown was part of my body. I saw it as the possibility for something new, but it was opaque. In my description of this event it is possible to detect an affective tone of pleasure relating to discovery, but it is also important to state that my initial affective response to this alienness was a desire to shut it down, to run from it, and retrench into the familiar. The affective quality of a somatic event tends to be multiple and contradictory.

A few words on the alien are useful as this article draws to a close. For Bogust, the alien is everywhere around us but a latent assumption in his *Alien Phenomenology* is that we are clear and known to ourselves. We have to look beyond our own bodies for alienness. It is outside of us that is unknown, provoking "benighted wanderings in an exotic world of utterly incomprehensible objects." He sets philosophers the task of amplifying "the black noise of objects."<sup>33</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels in his *Phenomenology of the Alien*, however, sees corporeality and alienness as "intimately connected." Somatic materialism as I sketch it, is consistent with his assertion that a "corporeal being is never entirely present to itself."<sup>34</sup>

Somatic practice reveals that a form of contingency is located in the body. It might not be radical, but if radical contingency is a severance from all we know then it is possible to ask how we can identify it sufficiently to even notice or be aware of it, or as Waldenfels would say, how we might attend to it. There is a dimension to his thought that is consistent with process or practice. "When something comes to a person's attention, at first he does not know with what or whom he is dealing. Attending itself is the first response to the alien."<sup>35</sup> The practice of attending underpins phenomenology.

31 • It is somewhat difficult to describe the directionality of action with Rosen, because the practitioner does not work on the other body, does not manipulate, but works with the body to "meet the tension with her touch, to sink in, show possibilities, and stop if there is resistance." (Vedel email correspondence nov 2012) I see it as a sort of affective duet rather than having someone "do" something to me.

32 • Johnson, 62.

33 • Bogust, *Alien Phenomenology*, 34.

34 • Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the Alien*, trans. Alexander Kozin and Tanja Stähler (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 43.

35 • Ibid, 58.



▲  
From *AffeXity* first phase, images Jeannette Ginslov,  
dance Wupkje Kuindersma, Copenhagen 2011.

## Aisthesis

As a practical philosophy, phenomenology is not a system, not a dogmatic set of instructions. It is a sensibility and a way of living in the world. In scholarly terms it is concerned with the construction and validation of knowledge, and it is utterly essential for it to be transformed from its original tenets: for it to be challenged, revised, reworked, critiqued, dismantled, and reassembled. This is akin to the artistic process, or what designers do when they set in motion iterative cycles of design. The practicality of phenomenology is that while it is not simply a set of instructions, it is possible to implement it. This responds to a desire for an applied or pragmatic approach to philosophy. My somatic experience of “something that was nothing or nothing that was something” works in counterpoint with the improvisatory practices of *AffeXity* to expand my phenomenological practice from a phenomenology of the senses to a phenomenology of affect. In effect, sense data is replaced with affective intensities. Or they intertwine.

For Badiou, love constitutes a kind of resistance against “the obscenity of the market and the current political disarray on the left.”<sup>36</sup> For Meillassoux and those who expand his ideas, the necessary of contingency has a tone of emancipation from the straightjacket of the contemporary intellectual landscape and the insanity of global politics. Somatic materialism, a term I may or may not hold onto, is the corporeal parallel. Contingency, or simply change, can be located in the body and can be, if not exactly understood, touched or explored by a phenomenology of affect — perhaps in the way Pallasmaa touched his tongue to the marble threshold.

Responding to the question: “Is it possible to do a phenomenology of affect?” My answer is yes, with continued refinement of our practices of reflection and capacities for attention, combined with an openness to witness what might arise even if we have no way of immediately understanding, integrating, or even facing it. Somatics has been called fiercely pragmatic.<sup>37</sup> Phenomenology can be that way too. •

Thanks to Jeannette Ginslov, Wupkje Kuindersma and Karen Vedel for permission to reproduce images and words.

Susan Kozel is Professor of New Media at MEDEA Collaborative Media Initiative, Malmö University.

Her most recent book is *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology* (2007).

36 • Badiou, 95.

37 • Johnson, Bone,

*Breath, and Gesture*, 60.