

## Extinct Choreography

### Society

Bodies are decaying. Society's technological progress is increasingly rendering physical functions and direct face-to-face communication dispensable. Kinaesthetic and tactile senses are not essential to perform in a society that is run by digital information and communication systems, with humans being bound to chairs. Typing on an information machine, *click, click, click*, is a virtually performed movement. Touch screens and voice commands translate such inverted micro-bodily movements of fingers and voices into streams of data. The transformation of agricultural labour, first to industrial machine-based and then to computer-based wage labour serves the administration of human data and growth of capital, as well as communication. Digitalised societal infrastructures of the twenty-first century mediate a form of reality in which modern humans can act and labour without the need to fully engage their bodily senses or to directly communicate with each other.

Bodies are dumbed down while technological progress, engineered by profit-orientated humans, grows the capital of today's leading American and Asian technology companies. The biological evolution of the human race came to an end about 300,000 years ago when the climate underwent dramatic changes, bringing forth the homo sapiens in East Africa, or put differently the modern human species who builds permanent settlements. And yet, the complexus of (Western) modern human society continues to transform due to the growing operations of capitalist extraction of natural resources and technological innovations. Social adaptation, securing social inclusion, goes hand in hand here with developments that reflect today's largely urbanized and digitalized infrastructures of the political economy.

### Bodies

The daily use of the body, the first tool of humans, co-develops negatively alongside societal climate change. Daily rituals and labour techniques have become hybrid on a structural level, and increasingly rely on compartmentalised physical activities. Sensory actions and reactions performed by hands, arms, legs, and feet have drastically lost their use everyday value since the first industrialization, with the leisure time industry compensating for the infrastructural disuse of physical labour. With the fourth industrial revolution of information and communication technologies, enabling nomadic living and working conditions, the spine—the mastermind of the human body—has increasingly been bending over desks and illuminated screens to remain up-to-date with social and work life rather than staying upright. As Carrie Noland notes on chair-sitting, it “establishes the maturity of a subject within Western Culture; however unhealthy it is for the hamstrings, the social advantages of chair-sitting outweigh the physiological disadvantages”.<sup>i</sup>

The engineers of computational machine operations have, in turn, attempted to reproduce the anatomy, mobility, and the steering of the nervous system of the human body since the mid-twentieth century. Artificial intelligence technologies mimic instinctive and experience-based bodily intelligence. But nuanced full-body kinesthetic awareness and self-consciousness is still mainly possessed by humans, not by machines. The improvement of machinic motor functions cannot fully replicate humans' somatic complexity, comprising of mental and psychological factors. Dance, a full-body performing practice, offers a lived cultural playground to move bodily knowledge, or put differently, bodily intelligence performed as physical work into the centre stage. Dance has the aesthetic power to call the increasingly digitalized and automatised age in which we live into question.

## Dance

Georg Blaschke's *Extinct Choreography* is presented at the basement of the Kulturquartier at the Seestadt Aspern, at the outskirts of Vienna, at a moment in time when the Western capitals of contemporary choreographic and dance practices are becoming increasingly inseparable from the globally popularized discursive field and institutional performance politics. Amidst the troubles of cultural standardization and societal digitalization, the four dance practitioners in Blaschke's choreographic concept break down *their* dance. They take apart their distinctly embodied movement vocabularies and dialogically re-join them within Blaschke's choreographic concept. *Extinct Choreography* brings together the individually embodied and culturally formed movements of the dancers, and stages them to electronic music in a new performance space located at the city's periphery. If choreography activates "writing in the realm of dancing to guarantee that dance's present is given a past, and therefore, a future", as André Lepecki writes, then dance is presented here as performed creativity through bodily sensibility.<sup>ii</sup>

Alina Bertha, Andras Meszerics, Julia Müllner, and Maartje Pasman's kinesthetic dance performance brings to the fore the fragility of modern humans in the twenty-first century, and notably not that of a theoretically fantasied posthuman figure. With his latest performance project Georg Blaschke shows that autonomously realized, collaborative dance performances, have neither died out nor have they become posthuman. And the spaces in which such corporeal movements are presented matter too.

## Space

*Extinct Choreography* inhabits the Kulturquartier of the Seestadt Aspern, a location where Blaschke has ongoingly investigated embodied and natural histories. The large underground cave-like performance space, whose large windows connect to the outside world, reinforces the dance's focus on questions of human evolution and bodily extinction in the face of recent climate changes in the cultural field. Political issues, such as who gets to perform in which space in the increasingly globalized urban infrastructures are as pressing as dance itself.

The city of Vienna keeps expanding through the realization of the so called "Masterplan" of the Seestadt. The once deserted area of the city's first airport is intended to house more than 25,000 people by 2030. Social mobility and spatial ability of an increasing population provide some enlightening reason for this expanding urbanizing infrastructure. Innovation in communication and information technologies is key to ensure that the transformation of this area into a "Smart City" is successful. What role culture gets to play in such sites remains a problematic question.

The bodies forming *Extinct Choreography* grab and embrace this new performance space in the Seestadt. If three-dimensional movements are the missing link that turn sites into socially used cultural spaces, then, ideally, dance cuts across class-based and spatially installed distinctions and physically establishes social bridges between cultural centres and their surrounding environments. While urban expansion seems to have improved some of the infrastructural living and working conditions for people, the corporeal materialism of human bodies remains the same. Perhaps staying resistant to the deteriorating environmental conditions in the face of infrastructural and digital expansion offers one way for human actors to stay inexterminable.

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<sup>i</sup> Carrie Noland, *Agency & Embodiment: Performing, Gestures/Producing Cultures*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 27.

<sup>ii</sup> André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 125.