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be coming

transcendence born from the concrete

by

Kathryn Alter

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ABSTRACT

When I began my MFA program, I never imagined that it would not be possible to present a live dance performance as the culmination of my graduate research. Now, I find myself on a new artistic search, looking for solutions related to alternative ways of presenting my work. Potentially, these concerns address more than the constraints imposed by the current moment in time. The pandemic has added momentum to technological shifts that as an artist I need to address. I have been pushed to clarify why I do things the way I do and to ask, are there other possibilities? My interactive virtual world, *be coming*, grows out of the question, “what happens when art that is made to be performed cannot be shared in a live performance?” In this paper I analyze qualities in architecture and interactive installation that have produced something similar to the exhilaration of a live dance performance. I probe Walter Benjamin’s conception of translation as a form, his recognition of the loss of aura in reproduction, and the changing nature of art as we participate with it in new ways. Benjamin’s conception of idea as constellation, alongside Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptions of multiplicity, becoming, and rhizomatic structure, become important theoretical tools for activating what emerges through an ephemeral moment of live performance in other, more permanent ways, becoming thus accessible in various times and spaces.

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Part 1

I have just placed my handwritten desire into the “wish machine” tucked into the corner of the installation space of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller’s piece, *The Dark Pool*. I was happily surprised to discover their installation here at Kunstsammlung Nordrhein -Westfalen K21.¹ I find myself at the museum today, on my first day off, because I couldn’t pass by the chance to visit a museum open in the midst of the pandemic.

I am in Düsseldorf, Germany restaging a work by José Limón for Ballet am Rhein. My arrival in Germany in mid-August 2020 for this reconstruction has given me a sliver of hope that dance as I knew it may continue. With very strict protocols the dancers and I are still able to share space in the studio and although they must work socially distanced, they will actually be able to perform for a live audience in four weeks. There is heaviness in the realization that this type of job, which would have been fairly standard pre-pandemic, is now miraculous.

I hadn’t expected to feel something similar to the exhilaration of a live dance performance while visiting *The Dark Pool*. What is it? I found myself involved in an exchange that closed the distance between myself and the objects I was discovering. Similar to the feeling of becoming one with people dancing before me in a live performance, I had the opportunity to be engulfed in the phenomena of this installation. Is this evidence that what emerges through an ephemeral moment of live performance can be established in other, more permanent, ways in order to be experienced in various times and spaces?

When I began my MFA program, I never imagined that it would not be possible to present a live dance performance as the culmination of my graduate research. Now, I find myself on a

¹ This piece first shown in Vancouver in 1995 was the first official collaboration between Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. In Bures Miller’s words, “We had done a lot of pieces by then, but ‘Dark Pool’ was the first work of ours that felt mature to me” (Wray, 36).

new artistic search, looking for solutions related to alternative ways of presenting my work. Potentially these concerns address more than the constraints of the current moment in our history. The pandemic has added momentum to a technological shift that as an artist I need to address. I have been pushed to clarify why I do things the way I do and to ask, are there other possibilities? What happens when art that is made to be performed cannot be shared in a live performance?

“To me the most fascinating part of our craft lies in a great search.”
-José Limón, *On Dance*

In his essay written in 1923, “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin discusses the purpose translation should serve and what the translator is attempting to transmit. Benjamin states that, “Translation is a form” (Benjamin, *Selected*, 254), thus suggesting that translation is an art in itself and cannot successfully transmit the original by just trading out words. The skilled translator knows that the object’s transmissibility depends upon bringing its qualities to life again as opposed to imitating, demonstrating, or explaining what they are. In Benjamin’s description of a literary work, “Its essential quality is not communication or the imparting of information. Yet any translation that intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but communication – hence, something inessential” (Benjamin, *Selected*, 253). Benjamin refers to the essential substance beyond communication as “the unfathomable, the mysterious, ‘the poetic’” (Benjamin, *Selected*, 253). To achieve a transmission of the poetic, a re-creation and reactivation are required. It is easy to see the parallel in the transference of art from one medium to another. Without understanding the aspects of a piece beyond the forms that come together to create it, how would one begin to find this essence with very different materials?

The Dark Pool

The moment I step into the sepia-toned space, cluttered with curious objects, I am unsure how to proceed. It seems that I am in someone's room, and it is not clear if they were expecting a visitor. The suspended light bulbs and spartan lamps placed among and on top of piles of books and other objects expose a disorder that asks to be explored. I hadn't imagined that the quick decision to try the anomalous door with a well-worn doorknob tucked at the end of a corridor in the museum would immediately transport me into such a potent atmosphere. The sensorial collection of information from the room quickly engages multiple parts of my body with my first steps in the space. I pick up on the scent of antique books, and a crackly recording can be faintly heard. Threadbare throw rugs and pieces of cardboard scattered across the floor speak to my feet immediately and I can imagine the effort of the inhabitant of this room to make it cozy despite the disordered collection of materials.

The swiss architect, Peter Zumthor comes to my mind. In his book from 2004, *ATMOSPHERES Architectural Environments-Surrounding Objects*,² he discusses atmosphere as an aesthetic quality sensed through first reactions and the immediate feelings that arise about a building. To Zumthor, the quickness of emotional sensibility is different from the process of linear thought. He notes that feelings arise from the interaction with objects. In his words, "The real has its own magic. Of course, I know the magic that lies in thought. The passion of a beautiful thought. But what I am talking about here is something I often find even more incredible: the magic of things, the magic of the real world" (Zumthor, 17-19). As an architect he deals with concrete objects and the possibilities within them. Zumthor identifies various qualities that come together

² This book was created from a lecture given in June 2003 at "Wege durch das Land" A Festival of Literature and Music in Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Germany.

to create atmosphere. He speaks of “The Body of Architecture” (Zumthor, 21) as the creation of a whole system where we can feel the material presence of things. An entire anatomy, seen and unseen, must be represented in this system. Zumthor describes striving to create a building that is “a body that can touch me” (Zumthor, 23).

In the section of *ATMOSPHERES*, “Between Composure and Seduction” (Zumthor, 41) Zumthor writes about the way architecture involves movement, and about his efforts to consciously shape the way people will move in a building. He contemplates the differences between directing and seducing a person to take various paths through a space. A person moving through a building is on a “voyage of discovery” (Zumthor, 43) and similar to designing a stage setting or directing a play, the spatial and temporal qualities of a building create the possibilities for how one will maneuver through it. Zumthor explains architecture as a temporal art by pointing out that his experience of a building is not limited to a single second; in fact, the building can ask its visitor to linger or demand that the visitor move through it quickly (Zumthor, 41). If you enter a dark space and there is only one area with enough light to see where you are, it is very likely that you will head there. You have been ‘directed’ by the circumstance of the space. This experience is very different than standing in the center of a rotunda and seeing multiple doorways each with its own unique quality. The motivation to approach a specific door comes from your desire and curiosity, and most likely through your senses instead of a cerebral logic used to determine the ‘right’ way. The door you chose to enter seduced you.

The mysterious strata of objects arranged in the space of *The Dark Pool* offer an irresistible invitation to explore. I step closer, peer around, and crouch to see what might be hidden at the bottom of a pile or behind something else. I am startled to hear the sound of someone pouring

water into a cup and instinctively scan the space for another person, but quickly realize that I am alone. It makes me laugh to myself that I had thought there might actually be someone in the room making tea, it is just an installation in the museum after all. It is confusing because the space does not feel like a constructed representation of somebody's room. There is the concrete reality of the objects in front of me but also something that can't be seen or known for certain. The installation does not lend itself to a rational understanding of what I am experiencing. It bypasses my mind and activates my other senses. Through my sensorial participation, I am freed from needing to make linear sense of what the installation is showing me and involving me in.

“We penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the every day as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday.” -Walter Benjamin, *Surrealism*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari present their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, originally published in 1980, as an assemblage and a multiplicity. To them, “A book as an assemblage is unattributable” (Deleuze and Guattari, 3). The moment we try to assign attributes or order the multiplicity through a system of organization it is no longer a multiplicity. It is better to recognize the “various formed matters” within a multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari, 3). Freed from the impulse to limit something to specific attributes, we can understand that depending on its “exteriority of relations” with other formed matter, it has varied qualities. “As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages” (Deleuze and Guattari, 4). Deleuze and Guattari suggest not looking within a book for something to understand it but instead looking to see what it functions with, “with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without

organs³ it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside” (Deleuze and Guattari, 4).

There are many phonographs and horns in the space that spontaneously come to life while amplifying different sounds. They fit right in with the other antique paraphernalia, suggestive of history and full of memories. Each mysterious sound that the phonographs and horns share become an added layer of context to understand something beyond what I can see.

To Walter Benjamin, the early 20th century thinker, the aura of an object had to do with history, tradition, cultural context, and what we bring to the process of understanding the object. For him, “aura” was related to the things we sense from objects that are beyond the objects themselves. In his essay from 1931 “Unpacking my Library” Benjamin is most interested in discussing what we sense from a collection that is not grounded in any of the functional aspects of the objects. He said, “The most distinguished trait of a collection will always be its transmissibility” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 66). But what is being transmitted? This transmission is about piecing together the life, passions, and history of the person who made the collection. He suggests that “Ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him, it is he who lives in them.” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 67). Objects become the receptacles for memories and are representative of a time and place.

The deeper I wander into *The Dark Pool*, the more invested I am in trying to understand

³ For Deleuze a body without organs (BwO) is without an imposed organization. “The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization. Lice hopping on the beach. Skin colonies. The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 30).

something about the “owner” of all these things. I have begun to figure out that movements and pathways towards and around the central table in the room triggers the release of different sounds and soundtracks from the horns. A bit of music sings out or suddenly a fragment of a conversation is heard. I sit down on a chair squeezed between two large horns and suddenly I am caught between the voices of a man and a woman discussing a shadow on the wall. Instantaneously my eyes search the wall for a sign of what they are discussing. I am oddly elated to then realize that the action of searching out the shadow suggests that I was starting to believe in a reality other than my own.

Depending on how it is done and for what purpose, the reproduction of an art object can dramatically change its nature. Walter Benjamin wrote his essay “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in 1935 as he was pondering the effects of a changing society on art and its creation, and the possibilities and necessities of these shifts. The developing industrialization and mechanization of the production of goods was changing the connection between the maker or origin of an object and the object itself. People’s relationship to art and the purpose that art served was affected by these changes. In his essay Benjamin explores what is gained and lost through the process of mechanical reproduction and what happens to art when it is dislodged from its original time and context.

For Benjamin, once there is the possibility to mechanically reproduce a piece of art its authenticity is destroyed. In his view *authenticity* is the essence of all that is transmissible from the piece of art’s beginning and “a testimony to the history which it has experienced” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 221). In the process of mass reproduction not only is uniqueness replaced by copies, but if the historical testimony cannot “rest on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by

reproduction” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 221).

Benjamin believed that authenticity is integral to the aura of an artwork. Aura is connected to the transmissible essence of art, related to the context and specific time and place of its origin. It is through the aura that we can experience catharsis while watching dancers in motion. We connect to something beyond their physical acts that is nonetheless grounded in the moment and circumstances that lead them to their physical expression. We tap into a commonality beyond the specific actions. The perception of aura comes alive in the encounter between the viewer and the tradition and context held in the existence of that art object. Benjamin explains, “It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the ‘authentic work’ of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 224). Benjamin does not simply say that the loss of aura is negative. The process of fragmentation destroys the connection to a specific history, but it also opens up new associations and possibilities. Benjamin points out, “for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 224).

Benjamin identifies a polarity between values within art, on one side for its cult and ritualistic value, and on the other for its exhibition value. If art has a cult value, the importance is on its existence more than its ability to be viewed. If the purpose of art is to be exhibited, the processes that make it more suitable for this purpose begin to fundamentally change its nature (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 225). What was once mystical and exclusive is now accessible to its audience. Although the art can come closer to us, Benjamin thought “the quality of its presence is always depreciated” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 221). Benjamin recognized that a reproduced object is detached from the domain of tradition but that “traditions themselves are thoroughly alive

and extremely changeable” (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 221, 223). Through his observations of contemporary mass movements Benjamin saw the inevitability of the shattering of traditions and the renewal of mankind. A potential benefit of this fragmentation could be that “in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 221). Through fragmentation people can participate with art in new ways. A new potential of closeness and ownership is offered to the viewer. The boundary between art and the realities of each viewer is broken down.

In “Surrealism” (1929), Walter Benjamin introduces the concept of “profane illumination.” Profane illumination is a materialistic and anthropological inspiration offering a “true, creative overcoming of religious illumination” (Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 209). This illumination is grounded in everyday experiences and interactions. Illumination detached from religion parallels art becoming detached from ritual. Through mechanical reproduction the viewer can allow the newly formed art to wash over them as opposed to singularly focusing on it through distant contemplation.

When comparing film to a painting, Benjamin writes, “The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 238). Benjamin points out that the viewer’s process of association is interrupted by the constant and sudden change of images in a film (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 238). To watch a film shocks the senses, potentially necessitating a different manner of absorption and interaction. In “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” Benjamin states, “A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 239). In what Benjamin describes as a “distracted” state,

people can become involved with art unconsciously as well as consciously. If the mind is focused elsewhere, other modes of perception can take over and information penetrates us differently.

In the early days of film, new ways of participating with art had been criticized when some writers observed that film was enjoyed only as a distraction and no longer required concentration and intelligence from its viewers (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 239). Benjamin challenged this critique by pointing out that art in the form of architecture has always been appreciated by distracted masses (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 249). People participate with art not only optically but also through physical relations and habits with the object. He differentiates between appreciation and appropriation. Whereas contemplation of a painting is appreciation, “buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception-or rather, by touch and sight” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 240). Benjamin explains that a tourist standing in front of a famous building will not achieve appropriation because they have not formed a physical relationship and habits with that building. They can only appreciate and value it from a distance. “On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished, not so much by attention as by habit” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 240). To Benjamin, “the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation” (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 240).

The absorption of my reality into *The Dark Pool* very effectively enables my personal involvement in the discovery of this piece of art. I am able to enter into the middle of the installation and become a part of the process that brings it to life. At many moments in my experience of the installation I am unsure if I am allowed, “or supposed to” do something that I

want to and when I finally decide to do it, I am rewarded by the installation speaking back to me. It is a ripe exchange. There is potentially little meaning in the individual parts of the installation, but how everything comes together creates its significance for me.

Peter Zumthor carefully considers the interaction between the compositional elements of his buildings. To Zumthor, “material compatibility” (Zumthor, 23) is a crucial element to consider in the creation of atmosphere. Of the thousands of expressive possibilities held within a physical material, the perception of a specific “radiance” or “presence and weight” (Zumthor, 25-27) is only sensed in relation to other materials.

Walter Benjamin writes about ideas manifesting as configurations of concepts. A concept is made up of elements of phenomena, but the idea is born from a correlation we ourselves create between various elements within a concept or concepts. The form and manner in which ideas reach the phenomena is as their representation (Benjamin, *Origin*, 10). For Benjamin, “the idea belongs to a realm fundamentally different from the realm of that which it grasps” (Benjamin, *Origin*, 10). I can’t help but align Benjamin’s description of the idea with the artistic intent of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller in an installation like *The Dark Pool*. Their ideas are related to, in Benjamin’s words, “a configuration of elements,” greater than any individual part of the installation. They leave the viewer with both the representation of phenomena and the actual phenomena to be dissected or experienced as each viewer chooses.

For Benjamin, “Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars” (Benjamin, *Origin*, 10). A cluster of individual stars creates a constellation in the same way that the configuration of various objects or sound fragments create an idea that transcends the objects themselves. The constellation is formed from the perspective of the person who has identified it. The creation of

ideas is an ongoing process in response to the phenomena that one experiences.

The concept of the rhizome that Deleuze and Guattari introduce in *A Thousand Plateaus* echoes these possible interactions between various elements. A rhizome has no hierarchy and the possibilities of connections in a rhizome are unlimited. “Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be”. The rhizome is heterogeneous and includes “the best and the worst” (Deleuze and Guattari, 7). Deleuze and Guattari show us that once a true multiplicity is acknowledged, it “ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world” (Deleuze and Guattari, 8). Without attributes the rhizome is always in movement, in transformation at various speeds. “The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots” (Deleuze and Guattari, 21). “There are no points or positions in a rhizome” (Deleuze and Guattari, 8) and it “has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 25). In a rhizome, things can be as they are in one moment and in the next be something else.

The fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and...and...and” This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic...) (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand*, 25).

When we are free from conditioned expectations other possibilities emerge. The purpose of something does not need to be an arrival or an achievement. Deleuze and Guattari use music as an example of a “transformational multiplicity” comparable to a rhizome in the way that it constantly “overturns the very codes that structure it” (Deleuze and Guattari, 12). There is an aliveness to the rhizome in the way it defies our expectations.

In articulating the rhizomatic structure, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the idea of “mapping”

versus “tracing” (Deleuze and Guattari, 12). The action of mapping is not predetermined, nor is it about reproducing; the map “is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze and Guattari, 12). I imagine that a piece of art as a map is liberated from expectations of how it will be experienced and what it will communicate to the viewer. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller present the materials of *The Dark Pool* and it is up to the viewer to do the mapping. In contrast, the danger of tracing, as described in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is that it “translates the map into an image” and through structuralizing the rhizome it thinks it is reproducing something when in fact it is only reproducing itself. “The tracing injects redundancies and propagates them” (Deleuze and Guattari, 13). I imagine that an artist tracing is like being caught up in a style or habit that obscures the possibilities for newness.

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation (Deleuze and Guattari, 12).

My brain starts to piece together some common themes in the conversations that I catch in different parts of the room. A lot of the snippets of conversation and objects seem to revolve around a strange dark pool. I decide that the owner of this room is a scientist and involved in the study of this dark pool. A travel trunk sitting near the central table contains a diorama of a pool with a shiny tar-like surface.

At the far end of the room, I see the “wish machine” on a desk. By this point I have achieved total comfort navigating this mysterious space and I do not even question if I am allowed to sit down and try to make the machine work. I have decided that most likely a scientist lives in this room, and the “wish machine” seems like it is worth a shot. I have journeyed from hesitantly trying to understand what to do with the room before me, to happily trusting that there is a purpose

to sitting down at the desk and reading the simple instructions to operate the wish machine. My imagination is welcomed into maneuvering and discovering the secret world of this room, and I often lose sight of where my reality ends and that of the room begins. Of course, I want to enter something into the wish machine. I feel closer to the possibility of magic, but I do not need my wish to come true. Writing the wish is just the next step of the wonderful process that I am now a part of and believing that it might come true is fulfilling my part of the exchange.

Part 2

To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination, even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic or dynamic level, as in Jung or Bachelard. Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real.

– Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

The original conception for my thesis was the dual task of reviving a choreographic work I had made in 2014 and then creating a new piece in response to it. The piece, *Cantata*, held kernels of many things that I wanted to get my hands on again and it seemed the perfect portal not only to go deeper into exploring the existing structures within it, but also from which to depart in new directions. My *Cantata* was created to an entirety of Bach's Cantata BWV 150; choreographing to Bach's multi-layered music was an extraordinarily pleasurable experience. I began working with the second movement which alternates between two very different themes, each one creating a distinctive atmosphere and energy. The presence of these two themes was my doorway into the choreography. I was immediately able connect with two very different ways that the dancers could relate to each other. One way was formal and design oriented, the other was about the sweeping and jostling of energy through the space. As I continued to choreograph to the entire cantata, I leaned into the form and structure of the music as my road map. Bach's music kept me focused but also offered me inspiration to create contrapuntal lines within the dancing and establish streams of dialogue with the music.

For my MFA thesis work, I was motivated to return to the Bach score and my choreographic treatment of it in order to bring more consciousness to the choices I had made in relation to the theoretical structuring of Bach's music. I imagined that through deeper analysis I could have a different perspective on what I had intuitively done before. I also thought that unearthing the layers of form and harmonic structures in the music would offer rich inspiration for the response that I would be creating. I have always marveled how an artist like Bach worked

within very specific structures and theoretical rules and often achieved transcendence in his music. We are able to enjoy Bach's music first and then later consider the details of its craftsmanship.

The other kernel held inside *Cantata* was my source of narrative inspiration, the lives and stories of various women saints. I had a fascination with the gruesome and fantastical details that came together to create the stories of their lives and deeds. These women embodied the concrete and the spiritual. They were recognized through time, traveling into the future as reminders of the impossible becoming possible. These women were simple, legendary, representative, and unafraid to be sacrificed. Their stories were heart wrenching, ridiculous, offensive, courage generating, and inspiring. I loved the presence of magic and something deeply human in the retelling of their stories. *Cantata* was my tribute to these and all women, to their power, endurance, and magic.

At the core of both the narrative inspiration for *Cantata* and Bach's musical structures was the intersection of the concrete and the transcendent. With Bach it was about his ability to use very specific form to produce "liberated" music, and with the saints it was about the intermingling of basic human qualities and the magical. I realize I was drawn to revive *Cantata* in order to deepen my articulation of the play between the concrete and the transcendent. Finding embodiment for this intersection is directly related to what I consider to be sacred in dance.

Immanence is not related to Some Thing as a unity superior to all things or to a Subject as an act that brings about a synthesis of things: it is only when immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself that we can speak of a plane of immanence.

-Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*

I believe dance is all about the transcendent within the concrete. We do not need to look outside of ourselves and our physical realities to find transcendence. Transcendence for me is connected to breaking apart the boundaries and classifications that hinder our ability to deeply connect with the things around us. In his book, *Pure Immanence*, Gilles Deleuze writes,

“Transcendence is always a product of immanence” (Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 31). The wholeness that is created in one when an integration of body and mind occurs can extend beyond that person and connect to the people and things which surround him or her. Journeying through physical realities can bring us to understandings which transcend our personal experiences. To me, the discovery of immanence with things outside of ourselves is transcendent.

In dance we are constantly using the concrete to move us towards the transcendent. This is continuously revealed in the process of methodically working to physically transform one’s body. The internalizing of an idea, the process of embodiment, and the translation of a concept into various physical and sensorial expressions necessarily involve the concrete and the transcendent. Just as Walter Benjamin identified the successful translation as one that can carry forward the mysterious and poetic, a transcendent physical expression in dance is composed of the combination of the concrete reality of the moment in which it is performed and the meticulous work of finding a physical form for an idea needing to be expressed. When a dancer starts with a structure or with concepts that are outside of him or herself and then finds that the concept has fused with a kinetic and physical expression of who he or she is, transcendence may appear. Achieving a state of vulnerability that allows another person to lose themselves in the openness that has been created offers an experience of both the concrete and the transcendent.

I see the transcendent within the concrete in the works of José Limón. He took from his mentor Doris Humphrey the knowledge of the efficacy of communication using the physical metaphor. Instead of a physical imitation of a concept, Humphrey found the physical act that embodied the concept she aimed to speak about through her dances. Limón followed her lead. In

a section of his dance, *There is a Time*,⁴ Limón expresses the essence of being born, experiencing the world, and then dying through modulating his efforts with gravity. In “A time to be born and a time to die,” Limón struggles against gravity to rise from the ground, gradually finds his feet and balance, explores all the spaces available to him, often slowing down by exerting his will through the oppositions he creates in his body, and then starts to resist gravity less and less until he finds himself prostrate on the ground again. We see something deeply expressive through the physical acts alone, but we also can access something beyond the concrete physicality. His physical and metaphoric journey aims to bring us closer to what it means to be born and to die.

A dancer in the moment of transcendence finds a reconnection between parts of him or herself that are often separate and out of coordination. The mind/body hierarchy dissolves as visceral choice-making works in tandem with animal and intellectual awareness. The concrete and transcendent become one when the dancer is so tremendously focused that the tasks at hand are simple (not simplistic) and deep, and reach completion holistically. Self-consciousness falls away and the dancer is completely absorbed in making wholeness and fullness. Any unexpected turn of events becomes the most delicious opportunity to mobilize skills and sensations waiting to be activated. A transcendent quality in dance is the chance to step back while simultaneously coming close to the vibrancy of tiny details. In a moment of transcendence there is ample space and time to play with the body’s reactions, limits, and superpowers. The appearance of transcendence from the concrete induces a prickling of the skin and the experience of joining a force greater than oneself – riding it and defying it, effortlessly changing the flow of time. Both the observer and the doer can participate in the intersection between the concrete and the

⁴ Premiered April 20, 1956 at the Juilliard School in New York. The score, *Meditations on Ecclesiastes* was composed by Norman Dello Joio and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1957. Limón was the original dancer in, “A time to be born, and a time to die”.

transcendent.

As a choreographer I hope to set up the circumstances that usher forth transcendence from the concrete. In addition to the search for the physical metaphors and movements that speak beyond their form, I strive to find the best manner to highlight and share the deep and intrinsic aspects of the dancer with the viewer. The choreographer is an integral part of creating the atmosphere most conducive to the sharing of risk-taking and vulnerability. She achieves what Peter Zumthor has in mind when he asserts that “getting people to let go lies within the power of the architect” (Zumthor, 43). Choreographer and architect share this power. I attempt to sculpt time and space in such a way that the viewers connect to themselves as organisms, embracing the opportunity to breathe and to notice their heart beating. Coming back to the wholeness of the body is transcendent.

I am thinking of Deleuze and Guattari and “becoming”. In their words,

Becoming produces nothing other than itself...Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equaling," or "producing." (Deleuze and Guattari, 238-239)

For me, “becoming” speaks to the mysteriousness of a timeless moment. I say timeless because there is not a concern for before or after, only the essence of exactly where you are in that moment. “Becoming” cannot be anticipated or controlled. The moment we try to capture the “becoming” we are no longer becoming. What I find to be sacred in dance is related to this understanding of “becoming.” It is something that cannot be limited by a concrete description, it is in motion like an ephemeral moment in dance.

Through my thesis project I wanted to create a sacred space. This space would not be separate from the things that occurred within it. The sacred space would be concrete and transcendent. It would be a space in constant transformation. Constant in this context is about evolution, not about hastiness or superficiality. It would facilitate the joining of a process and open up the space to connect with other senses and sensations in the body. The body itself can become a sacred space for the dancer. I wanted to create something for both the dancers and the viewers. I imagined a space where the boundaries between the dancers and the audience would be blurred. The blurring of boundaries allows a coming together and a closeness. In closeness, the watcher could be the doer.

On one hand, I never imagined that this space would not be the space of a live performance, but on the other, all that I seemed to be envisioning was about an experience more than an actual place. The arrival of a world pandemic shifted many things for everyone. I wasn't sure how or what to hold on to in relation to my thesis project. How much of my conception of the concrete and the transcendent in dance was dependent upon its liveness? Could dance be shared body to body without occupying the same physical space? I had generally thought of the apotheosis of my art-the most sacred moments-being connected to its ephemeral nature. Being within a process suggests that no two moments are the same. When we are a witness to a moment that will never occur again there is great incentive to be fully present. The value of the uniqueness of each moment is amplified. What would I do if I could not have a live performance?

For me as a viewer, a live performance achieves moments of sacredness when I am able to become part of the process that is unfolding. Becoming part of the process opens the possibility to experience catharsis. I can go through an emotional or physical transformation by being a witness to someone else's physical acts and emotional journey. This opportunity emerges when

the experience of the performers and my own experience can connect and, almost impossibly, I come “closer” to what is happening before my eyes. It is a closeness felt physically through coming into tune with the dancers’ efforts and breath, sensing the actual weight of one body pressing into another, and riding the accumulated velocity of bodies falling through space as if I were one of them. I become part of the flow of bodily rhythms.

In the live performance I can comprehend the concrete relationship between a task and the passage of time, and I viscerally feel the effort and focus required for the completion of that task. This closeness is emotional and intellectual as well. I am able to come into contact with what challenges the dancers, and what brings them joy. I have been allowed to see their vulnerability and risk-taking. I care about what I am witnessing, and I am invested in how the energy flows through the people and the space. It is not locked inside or blocked by the 4th wall but volleys back and forth between the audience and the performers because we have become linked, all part of a communal breath. My energy is invested in how the dancer will navigate whatever they encounter.

I participate in the storytelling as active listener, absorbing what is being shared with me while searching in my personal archive of experience for the points of connection. I don’t fixate on one element of the performance but feel it as a whole. I receive the performance with all of my senses, and it soaks into my body. Despite being grounded in time, I have momentary escapes where time is modulated. Suspensions are free from time, physical tensions and confrontations make my heart race, and moments of intimacy tug at my viscera and slow down time as I try to touch a memory. In these sacred moments I am a part of the communication without having to parse out the meaning into various defining containers. It is an encounter and coming together of the meaning within me and the meaning outside of me. The space has been opened to watch

evolution; to watch an experience for the first and last time. It is mysterious.

In the search for a new form of my dance outside of liveness, I feel the urgency of Walter Benjamin's imperative of the use of translation as a form. What confluence of materials will allow me to offer an entry into an interactive process? How will I create the possibility for the viewer to come closer to the performer, be engaged through multiple senses, and be emotionally and intellectually invested in what will happen? Is it possible to sense physicality and the concrete realities of time, weight, and the movement of energy when we no longer share space and only have access to a reproduction of dance? What ensures the re-creation of wholeness when dance is reproduced through mediums that fragment and separate the dancer from an aura?

“Life goes on in an environment, not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it.”
-John Dewey, *Art as Experience*

With the realization that I could not share my dance in a theater space in real time, I turned to the camera to capture evidence of my moving body. Obviously, a film of a dance is only documentation unless the dance acknowledges the new medium it will be translated through and reconfigures itself accordingly. A dance for the camera is completely different than a dance for the stage.

When I started experimenting with filming dance, I was struck by how the location and the framing became much more important than the dancing that I was doing. To reestablish the centrality of the dance, it had to help the viewer make sense of the space and environment that it was occurring in. Regardless of where a dance is taking place the viewer will search for an understanding of why you are doing what you are doing. There is a satisfaction in the wholeness that is perceived with the intentional creation of context and relation. Just as I work diligently to

make sense of movements in relation to each other as I choreograph, I want the viewer to feel like the dance they are seeing is happening where it is for a reason and not just by chance.

When Alma Hawkins discussed space in her book, *Creating Through Dance*, she pointed out that unless something is happening in the performative space, the audience has little awareness of that space. I was used to encountering space as something that the dance activates. My impression was that the physical realities of space had been created and defined by my dancing. Space helped create tension or a frame for the various distances that my energy or another dancer's energy could travel. My considerations of the space and location of a performance generally occurred only during my performance in it. Being fully present in the moment of performance included acknowledging my spatial environment, but it was not something I gave much preparatory consideration to.

Looking through the camera I started to feel that I no longer needed the dancer to activate the space. Perhaps this is a fundamental difference between the constructed conception of the neutrality of the theater and the outside world. The theater is ready to be molded to each presentation's needs and comes alive with the acts within it, while the outside world exists beyond a performance that occurs within it. To achieve a true integration between the dance and the space, the performance in the outside world must be built from its relation to that space. The environment can contribute much information to the piece that is made to occur within it. The power of a site-specific choreography doubles when in addition to the intrinsic value the environment adds, the choreography consciously sculpts and interacts with the space in alignment with the intended choreographic expression. In this regard Alma Hawkin's observation about space rings true. She states, "The aesthetic value of space is dependent on the dancer's ability to define and control it in such a way that it heightens the kinesthetic impact and thus, the meaning of the dance as a whole"

(Hawkins, 43).

In the theater space it is easy to imagine that the space is something other than it actually is. Inside the theater we have already entered a level of abstraction. We work with certain assumptions and artistic methodologies. Outside the theater, there are different metaphors and symbols available. I see now that when we step out of the theater it is impossible to ignore the concrete realities surrounding us. The practices and perceptions that allowed me to reduce the theater space to simply a platform to show a work were incredibly limited. When I look at a video recording of a space, I cannot ignore the personality of each location and the many layers of information that a specific location creates.

The recorded movement materials for *be coming* started accumulating with my dancing in a variety of environments and searching for immanence with them. This search for immanence consisted in trying to embody the energetic qualities and tactile textures of the environment through my dancing. The dance became a way of having a sensorial dialogue with each location. Coming closer to each environment activated magical moments in which I became the environment. In these experiences I began to reconnect with what I perceive as the sacred possibilities within dance.

There was a lot about performative spaces that I had taken for granted. I have special memories of performances in non-traditional spaces, but overall, until this project, I have not been forced to begin my choreographic process in response to a specific space or location. Now, instead of taking location for granted, it has become a crucial element in the films I have created for my project, *be coming*. Each environment has offered input as a creative partner would, and instead of working with other dancers, the environment became my partner. I started by making duets for myself and the various spaces I encountered. The process of discovering each environment by

moving in it became a practice within itself.

Travel, actual and virtual, is a theme in *be coming*. I was drawn to collect materials from very diverse locations: the locations were connected to my literal journeys over the last half year but also to the desire to feel the difference between finding immanence in nature and in urban settings. The experience of solitude in the face of the ineffable power of nature as opposed to the concrete energy of the city and the elusive possibility to actually interact with other people, more so in a pandemic, offered very stimulating contrasts in my site-specific explorations. I hoped that through my films, the unique qualities of each location could be felt, but I also hoped that something would be carried from film to film. The ongoing search for immanence and the creation of wholeness is part of this through-line. Travel is a journey of growth and movement of the mind and imagination. It was my intention that through my videos a visitor to *be coming* would have a chance to travel with me to all the places I went. I was thrilled by the fact that *be coming* would most likely live in a virtual space and thus be more equitably accessible and easier to disseminate. Technology allows us to travel in ways that were not possible before: it is a different type of traveling when there is no need for the physical body to propel you. But how could I ensure that there was still a way to engage multiple senses of the visitors that traveled with me? Could Benjamin's tactile appropriation occur without objects and an actual space? How could I encourage commitment and concentration from viewers when the normal modes of interacting with virtual material is in quick spurts and with the compulsion to multitask or easily open another window if the attention has faded?

I needed to make sure that *be coming* had a way to exist as a “wash over” experience but that it could also seduce the viewer to step closer into contemplation.

When I considered how I would want to present dance outside of a live performance the

idea of multiplicity had great resonance for me. Moving material from three dimensions to two and dislodging it from time encouraged me to approach creating a piece more like a mosaic and constellation. Multiple materials would be substituted for performative texture changes. The opportunity to see many small dances could create a surprising topography. The overlap and simultaneity of the “speaking” of materials could create multiple impressions and outcomes.

I can enjoy the wholeness of a bush of roses or an individual blossom on that bush. The same is true with stars and constellations. The constellation lets us see the overarching idea without getting lost in one star. I wanted each film in *be coming* to be strong enough to stand on its own but to exist as a part of a larger picture and experience. An obvious relation between the films in *be coming* was not important to me. I was intrigued by the idea that someone would have at least the chance to see a few of the films and be left with them all jangling around in their mind. I thought Walter Benjamin’s reference to a mosaic was resonant to my desire,

The value of thought-fragments is all the more decisive the less they are immediately capable of measuring themselves by an underlying conception, and the brilliance of the presentation depends on this value to the same extent that the brilliance of the mosaic depends on the quality of the poured glass (Benjamin, *Origins*, 3).

I started collecting footage before I was sure what I would be doing with it. I was in the process of learning about using the camera, making framing choices, and experimenting with crafting movements in relation to how they would be seen from the perspective of the camera. All of this in conjunction with the joy of discovering each environment through moving in it was incredibly rich. I stopped building “performance oriented” material. My creations were no longer funneling towards a performance date but were about the discovery of a new movement practice. The search was a meditative practice. It no longer needed to be bound to a specific moment in time. It helped me recognize once again how dance has provided me a way to find wholeness and I wanted to share this.

Michelle Ellsworth and Jennifer Monson are two artists that have inspired me in this journey. I see how their creative practices grow and sprout beyond a particular performative moment. They commit deeply to process as a way to collect materials and live. For Michelle Ellsworth,⁵ the artistic inquiry creates the process which she dives into fully without knowing where it will lead. In fact, my impression is that there is not an expectation of where her processes will lead. She just needs to be in the task and the art and information are found there. She creates with all aspects of herself and there is no boundary to what direction she may go. Her grounding is simply in the action of making. The result is unexpected and extraordinarily creative.

Jennifer Monson has a specific resonance to my explorations in various environments in her deep belief that dance, and somatic practices play an important role in environmental and aesthetic understanding (iland.org). She sees the body as an archive, able to transmit information about things and places we have experienced. In her words, from a conversation with DD Dorvillier about her work,

I wanted to dance outside and many other things. I wanted to put myself in different kinds of ecosystems and different kinds of communities and use dancing as my tool—to look at how dance might transmit information about ecological systems.

There was something really particular about the way my body had produced knowledge about the world to myself, so my question is also: Does it produce knowledge of the world to other people through the dancing? (Creative Capital)

Generally I leap into the abyss of a new choreography by just beginning to move. I may come into the studio with a few concepts to play with, but the generation of material almost always starts in mystery and I slowly uncover a path as I stumble along. I constantly work as an editor, working from movement to movement, and once something strikes my fancy I build from there. I have no obligation to add a movement to my slow accumulation. I just keep trying things until

⁵ I had the good fortune of getting to meet Michelle via Zoom to brainstorm with my classmates about potential new directions we could take our thesis projects. The impressions shared in this paper are based upon the few conversations I had with her this fall.

what feels like the proper link reveals itself. Flowing through movement opens the index of sensations and textures and chasing a sensation can start to spin a thread. It is not long before I have to bind thread to thread in order to keep track of a passing idea or movement sensation. There is no rational understanding or anticipation of how my small phrases will fit together or even if they do work together. Later with more material I start to clarify the relations and the contexts within and between the materials.

My process for *be coming* was different. A large part of my choreographic tasks was done in the editing process after all the raw footage had been shot. My choreographer brain was of course involved in the types of shots I wanted to capture and the qualities of movements that I thought would resonate in the environments but with the exception of the last shoot of my project on the Williamsburg Bridge, the movement captured in the films is spontaneous improvisation. During the improvisations I was free to follow thought tangents without my innate editor interfering. The innate editor is the part of me that judges and analyzes the choices I make. Often these judgements eliminate possibilities. In the process of building *be coming* I allowed myself to swing towards intuition and impulse.

Nietzsche, in his book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), examined the presence of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian in ancient Greek culture and inspired Doris Humphrey to believe that good dances needed both logic and intuition, stability and risk. My improvisations were my way of relinquishing control and the process of video editing was my way of imposing order to my process. I was alleviated of certain responsibilities in the moments of spontaneous improvisation knowing I could look back at the footage, and even more powerfully manipulate it – change the order, splice and put things together that I wouldn't have thought putting together in the moment of moving, change tempo, and distort directions. These new editorial powers allowed

me to turn on the camera and just offer a committed spontaneous performance. Since I would not be returning to the material for a live performance, I stopped worrying about recording each step of the building process and I could just follow movement threads in the moment. I treated my improvisations as performances and all choices about phrasing and development of ideas were directly connected to what was happening in real time. I fully committed to the choices I was making in the moment and stayed focused and engaged until the camera was off.

I chose the Williamsburg Bridge to be the last location I would shoot at. I wanted to dance in an environment where I could encounter people and where we would be unified by a task required by the location. In the case of the bridge, all people on it were in the act of crossing, journeying from one side of the river to the other. The collection of this final material was different from the previous sites in a few ways.

First, I wanted it to be recorded by an actual cinematographer. Up until this point all of what I had recorded I had done myself or with the help of my family. When I started collecting material for the films in the summer, I was just trying to continue a thesis project that due to Covid no longer seemed to be supported by the skills I had spent most of my life cultivating. Holding the camera, making framing choices, and experimenting were invaluable in helping me wrap my mind around the changing form of my project and the way to accomplish what I wanted to do. I had not reflected deeply on whether or not I should personally be recording. I just knew I had to keep going and I was grateful for the opportunity to learn about the new world unfolding before me. In the process of editing my other films I ached to see more sophistication and perspective in the way my material was captured. I also wanted the possibility for the camera to be in movement as I was in movement, and short of holding the camera myself and dancing with it in my hand, I had not been able to accomplish this.

Second, I wanted more time to develop my process of getting to know and working at the site. Visiting the bridge regularly would allow me to have a deeper understanding of its qualities (the flows of traffic across it, the varied path along it) and to build an improvisational score in response to all of these factors. I enjoyed deciding that certain movements would begin in relation to a type of interaction I would have on the bridge or a specific sound I might hear. These experiences on the bridge were incredibly exhilarating. I felt like I had discovered the most inspiring dance studio in New York City. I was very excited to learn that the Williamsburg Bridge had been the private practice room of the saxophonist, Sonny Rollins, over the course of about two years from 1959-61. It made perfect sense.

My thesis project during a world pandemic had pushed me in directions I had never imagined and necessitated the quick acquisition of many skills I did not have. It was humbling and exciting, but at this point, I had yet to solve the most difficult question: What would be the container for all of this?

I had a vision of a dream-like virtual space where visitors could be surrounded and immersed in my collection of videos. I wanted the visitors to be involved in a kinetic process in order to wander around the world of my project. Somehow, they would need to use their own physicality to explore. Although visitors would be guided by visual and aural clues, I also imagined that there would be moments where visitors would feel lost and out of control. There needed to be a balance between the efforts of moving through the spaces and the ability to appreciate the content in the rooms. I wanted the whole array of videos to resonate as a whole, without imposing an order on how they would be experienced. The world of the installation would need to feel manageable without reducing the potential ways the visitor could engage and interact with the content. I imagined various spaces within the world that could be visited but I was not

completely clear which materials should go in each room.

I thought that all I imagined could be contained in an interactive website, but the creation of this site was way beyond my area of expertise. With limited resources I had to find someone for whom this project would be mutually beneficial. At the last possible moment my collaborator from the bridge shooting, Ty Turley, said he might be able to help. He needed to learn the gaming engine Unity and was much more interested in attempting to build my imagined world than a video game. *be coming* was officially born.

“Even in the most mechanical modes of expression there is an interaction and a consequent transformation of the primitive material which stands as raw material for a product of art, in relation to what is actually pressed out.”

– John Dewey, *Art as Experience*

“Coherence...The idea of things coming into their own, of finding themselves, because they have become the thing that they actually set out to be.”

-Peter Zumthor, *ATMOSPHERES*

be coming is a virtual world created on the game engine Unity. Forty-three films arranged in different groupings populate the spaces that the visitors are able to visit. When one enters this world, they must find their way through various locations which include rooms inside a sphere and platforms floating in the sky. The visitor must use her/his/their mouse, arrow keys, and space bar to have the ability to move within the world of *be coming*.

It was an invigorating experience to dream up all the characteristics of *be coming* and then have Ty find ways to bring them to life. We had decided that once the visitor entered our site they would fall through the sky and into a sphere. They would arrive in ‘the rotunda,’ landing in the central chamber of the sphere where one film would be playing across all the walls. The film that

would welcome visitors to the world of *be coming* is called “Sky Dance.” It was my intention that from the center of the rotunda the viewer could experience breath and expanse. I chose “Sky Dance” for the welcome because I felt it was a simple embodiment of a process that includes searching for immanence. Shot against an endless backdrop of grey clouds, the gestures captured in “Sky Dance” reach to touch something beyond myself. “Sky Dance” unfolds and gathers, simultaneously moving outward and unexpectedly inward. I wanted the rotunda to feel continuous and outside of time.

From the rotunda there are doorways to three rooms and a hole in the floor. I worked with composer, Scott Allen Miller, to identify certain qualities and characteristics for each room. Using our ideas as prompts, he created music for each space. Scott and I had been working together for many months, analyzing Bach, and imposing music and dance forms on our compositions. I ended up singing in a number of the films and Scott transcribed my melodies to weave them through his compositions for other films.

There is a hole in the center of the rotunda that we ask the visitors to fall into when they have finished exploring the rooms. I am also happy if they accidentally fall into the hole. They float down out of the sphere slowly enough to watch two films they pass along the way and then find themselves on a landing. From there they can learn to fly to various constellations of films in the sky. A platform sits amidst each of these constellations, offering the viewer a chance to land and contemplate the films surrounding her/him/them. The films within the rooms contained in the sphere can be seen at a distance as part of the gallery of each room or entered into by the viewer in order to be watched in full screen. The films in the constellations outside are all constantly playing and in random alternation approach the viewer on the platform, offering a closer look.

The greatest challenge that arose in the creation of *be coming* was figuring out how to make the physical navigation through the site aligned with the overarching intentions of my project and manageable enough so the video content would not be completely overshadowed by learning how to move through the world. Addressing the navigational concerns turned out to be a huge choreographic task. As suggested by Peter Zumthor, there were many things to consider in relation to designing the flow of movement in the site and in the making of choices about the order and timing in which visitors would be exposed to various pieces of information. Deciding how to try and control the movements of visitors with sound, color, and minimal written words required my choreographer brain applied to new materials.

I don't imagine that a visitor to *be coming* will see all the films, but I hope that they will invest time in watching at least a few. I also hope they will feel compelled to visit the site numerous times to establish tactile appropriation of the site. Ty and I had to experiment with ways to entice the viewer to commit to taking time to fully watch videos. To walk into a video and have it appear in full screen was one solution that I think is on the right track. We are dreaming of a way to allow the viewer to choose a video before leaving each room to take with her as a talisman. At the end of the experience a constellation consisting of each participant's talisman collection would appear in the sky. I like the idea of asking the viewer to consider what they might want to bring with them from their discoveries.

I enjoy the fact that it takes a bit of time to learn how to navigate in *be coming*. This is in line with my intention of entering a process that is not about completion or arrival. I have tried to emulate Benjamin's conception of the constellation and mosaic and have pushed myself further to try and touch upon qualities of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. Like a rhizomatic structure, ideally there would be multiple entry points and exits in *be coming*, and it could be explored in

any order and manner. I had to find a balance between the rhizomatic structure and offering a bit of guidance to the visitors of my world. I am completely enamored with setting up a scenario where the viewer has total agency to make meaning as they wish, and I believe that there is no hierarchy in the films that make up *be coming*.

I have tried to choreograph different ways of interacting with the films in *be coming*. Some need the viewer to pass by in order to begin playing and need the participant to move even closer to offer the opportunity to be played in full screen. Some of the films are looping endlessly completely independent of the action of the viewer. Deciding if and when the viewer should rise or fall, be inside or out of the sphere, and whether experiences could be returned to or repeated were all choreographic choices.

Finding an end to the experience of *be coming* has been elusive. It seems contradictory to end something that is all about being present within a moment in time. I don't want to be in charge of deciding when the experience of *be coming* is finished for the visitor. I want it to be the 'middle' that Deleuze and Guattari assign to a rhizome.

We are in the process of building a disintegration of the sphere when a viewer has seen a majority of the films. He/She/They will have the opportunity to float up into the sky, away from where the sphere once was, and be with the birds and a constellation created from each talisman they have accumulated from their journey. The rest of our visitors will just have to let themselves fall with the pull of gravity when they have had enough.

I appreciate that *be coming* is accessible to many people as a website, but I think that we could get closer to involving visitors in a spatial and temporal experience if we try *be coming* as a VR experience. For me this would bring it closer to the elements of liveness that have changed in translation. I think it is impossible to create a substitution for the human-to-human sharing that

occurs in a live performance. That being said, there is no way that a live performance could stand in for what we have created in *be coming*. I hope that through this virtual world an opportunity to experience both the concrete and the transcendent is created. I am left with the understanding that a live dance performance and *be coming* are two different expressions of art. We are still in the search for the most successful embodiment of our ideas. It seems appropriate that *be coming* keeps becoming and I look forward to continuing to work on it.

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