EXHAXUSTING DANCE
PERFORMANCE AND THE POLITICS OF MOVEMENT



THE MAKING OF SPACE
IN TRISHA BROWN
AND LA RIBOT

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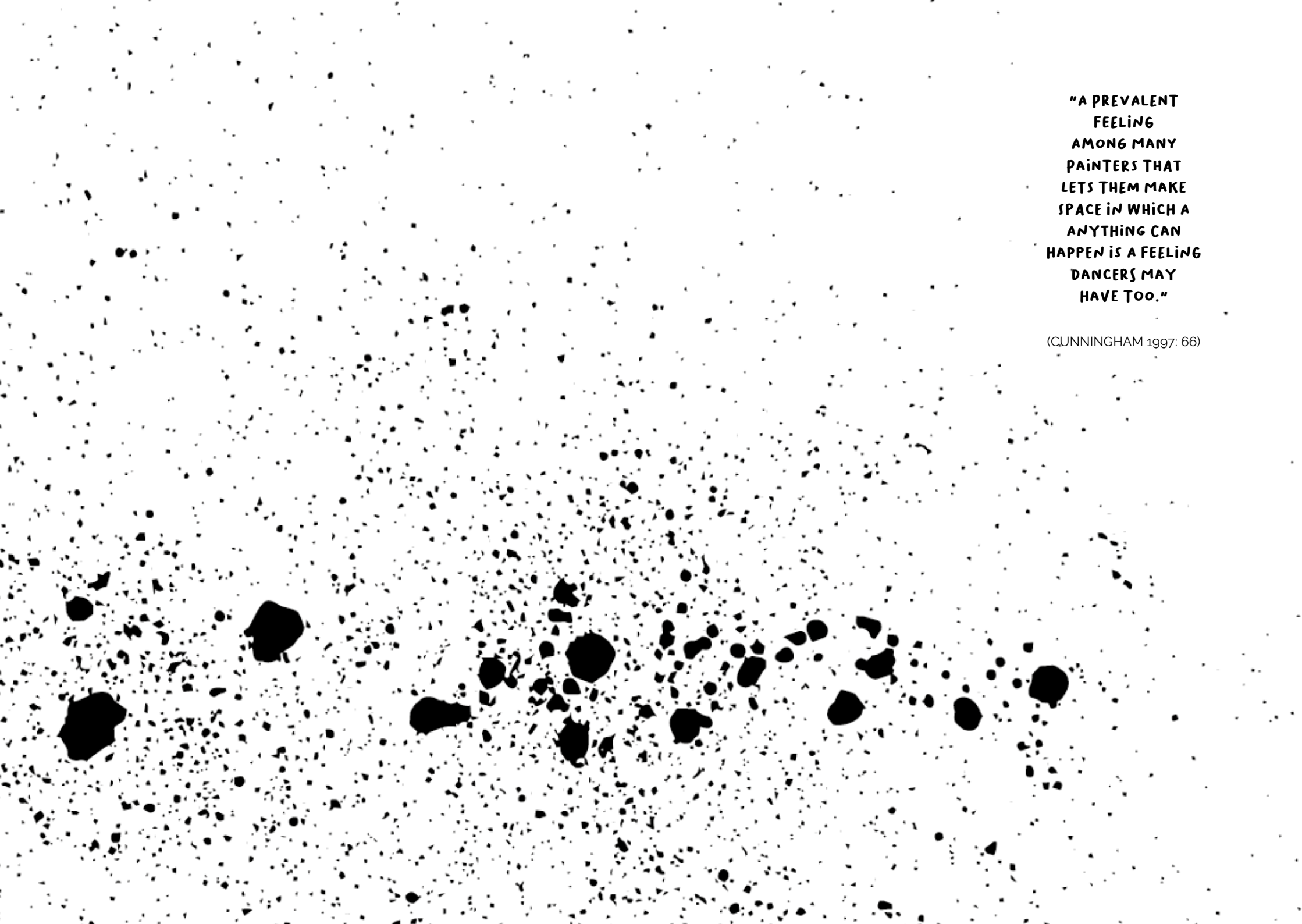
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THE making of **SPACE** in **TRISHA BROWN** and **LA RIBOT**

"A PREVALENT FEELING AMONG MANY PAINTERS THAT LETS THEM MAKE SPACE IN WHICH A ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IS A FEELING DANCERS MAY HAVE TOO."

(CUNNINGHAM 1997: 66)



Mid-March 2003. In two consecutive days, North American choreographer Trisha Brown performed at the Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) in Philadelphia an event titled It's a Draw/Live Feed – a collaboration with the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Brown's performance was an unusual one: alone in one of the museum's white gallery spaces she would create what FWM's press release called "monumental drawings in a public context." Brown's unqualifiable performance – a hybrid of improvised dance and automatic drawing – would be witnessed "live" by an audience placed in a separate space in the museum, where they could watch a live video feed of Brown drawing-dancing.

Mid-March 2003. In two consecutive days, Spanish choreographer Maria La Ribot performed at Tate Modern, London, an event titled Panoramix – a collaboration with Live Art Development Agency. La Ribot's performance was an unusual one: in one of the museum's white gallery spaces she would create what the press release called "a long duration performance," gathering her past ten years of work in a public context. As opposed to It's a Draw/Live Feed, La Ribot's Panoramix would be performed before an audience sharing the gallery space with the dancer.

These two temporally coincidental events – where dance happened in the space of, and in dialogue with, visual arts – were created by two women choreographers separated by nationality, style, geography, and generation. While extremely distinct, the two events were critically linked by their unique belaboring of dance's relationship to visual arts. In the case of Brown, her piece addressed dance's relation to drawing. In the case of La Ribot, to sculpture and installation art. Moreover, both pieces gestured explicitly towards a critical reassessment of dance and visual arts' complex relationship to horizontality. That is to say: both choreographers, in different manners, addressed with their work a plane with a particularly problematic relation to gender politics in twentieth-century visual art: the horizontal.

The use of horizontality in post-World War II twentieth-century visual art is usually traced back to Jackson Pollock's toppling of the canvas from the vertical plane to the horizontal in 1947. In her essay "Horizontality," Rosalind Krauss (Bois and Krauss 1997) writes that Pollock's lowering of the canvas from the vertical to the horizontal allowed not only the development of his dripping technique, but, more importantly, it opened the possibility for future subversions (never explored by Pollock himself) of the "phallic erectility" Henri Lefebvre says "bestows a special

status to the perpendicular, proclaiming phallocracy as the orientation of space" (Lefebvre 1991: 287). Krauss draws her reading of horizontality from an early fragment by Walter Benjamin where the German philosopher proposes a distinction between the vertical and the horizontal planes based on each plane's relation to figuration and to writing. To Benjamin, the vertical plane is that of painting, of representation, of that which "contains objects," the horizontal is that of graphic marking, of writing – "it contains signs" (Benjamin 1996: 82).[1] Following this insight, Krauss argues that Pollock's toppling of the canvas subverts painting's privileging of verticality as plane of representation (Bois and Krauss 1997). I would like to add to Krauss's observation that toppling also allowed Pollock to literally transform the canvas into a ground, a terrain, empty territory where the artist could walk on at will and imprint traces of his or her meanderings. In this sense, Pollock's actions on the toppled canvas were equivalent to a territorialization, understood here as an act that seizes a milieu and turns it into property by the means of the mark (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 314–16). Given the "founding father patrionics" (Schneider 2005: 26) that informs critical discourses on Pollock's action painting, his walking on the toppled blank canvas becomes infused with the mythical aura of claiming virgin territory, of colonizing the horizontal, as that "empty and wasted land where history has to be begun" (Bhabha 1994: 246).

Perhaps because his actions on the horizontal canvas were about marking virgin territory, Pollock was never able to commit to the border-crossing that his toppling of the representational plane suggested. He was never able to re-place painting outside the proper space of the canvas, to have painting follow the splatter of paint as it fell outside his territorialized domain.

As Krauss points out, Pollock's toppling was just a transitory moment in the production of his paintings; not an end, but a means for the canvas to ascend back to the verticality privileged by representational imperatives in the visual economy of art consumption. But his actions on the toppled canvas, his walking on it, his spilling of paint on it, clearly suggested that there was a potential for trespassing that could be taken by whoever would be willing to venture out of the pictorial frame. In 1958, Allan Kaprow famously described how Pollock's actions on the toppled canvas inspired him to create his own actions and "happenings." Kaprow saw in Pollock's actions on the toppled canvas the potential for liberating not only painting itself, but art-making as a whole: the artist should step across the canvas's

1 -We should speak of two cuts through the world's substance; the longitudinal cut of painting, and the transversal cut of certain graphic productions. The longitudinal cut seems to be that of representation, of a certain way it encloses things; the transversal cut is symbolic; it encloses signs. (Benjamin 1996: 82)

border and enter into the social sphere, or, as Kaprow put it, into "life" (Kaprow and Kelley 2003: 1–9).

Despite the liberating potential of Pollock's toppling identified and explored by Kaprow and other artists (particularly those gathered around Fluxus), it is also clear that Pollock's actions were informed by an extremely problematic gender politics.[2] Rosalind Krauss reminds us that Andy Warhol, already in the early 1960s, had clearly perceived in "the gesture that a standing man makes by spillinyg liquid onto a horizontal ground" the undeniable "machismo that surrounded action painting" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 99).

A similar critique can be seen in some feminist performance art of the early 1960s as in Shigeko Kubota's Vagina Painting (1965) at the Perpetual Fluxfest in New York City when the Japanese artist squatted on a white paper and painted it with a brush extending from her vagina to create "a deliberately 'feminine' process of gestural painting, flowing from the creative core of the female body, in contrast to the 'ejaculation' of thrown, dripped and scattered paint" in Pollock (Reckitt 2001: 65).[3] Rebecca Schneider in her extraordinary essay "Solo Solo Solo" agrees with Warhol's and Kubota's diagnostic and also identifies an epistemological impasse brought about by Pollock's machismo – an impasse derived from what she perceives as an unabated deference in performance art history to Pollock's figure as patriarchical hero:

"TIME AND AGAIN
WE ARE TOLD
(IN A REVERBERATING
ECHO FROM ALLAN KAPROW)
THAT THE
AMERICAN ACTION
PAINTING ARTIST
JACKSON POLLOCK
WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE SUPREMELY
MASCULINE ACT OF
LIBERATING ART FROM
THE CANVAS AND
SETTING THE ENTIRE
PERFORMANCE-BASED
ART OF THE LATTER HALF
OF THE TWENTIETH-
-CENTURY INTO MOTION.

ALL OTHER
POSSIBILITIES BECOME
AS IF RELEGATED
TO A FOOTNOTE."

(SCHNEIDER 2005: 36)

2- For an in-depth critique of Pollock's project in its philosophical framing, esthetic innovations, and gender politics, see Amelia Jones (1998).
3 - See also Schneider 1997: 38.

TOPPLING DANCE
The making of space in Trisha Brown and La Ribot

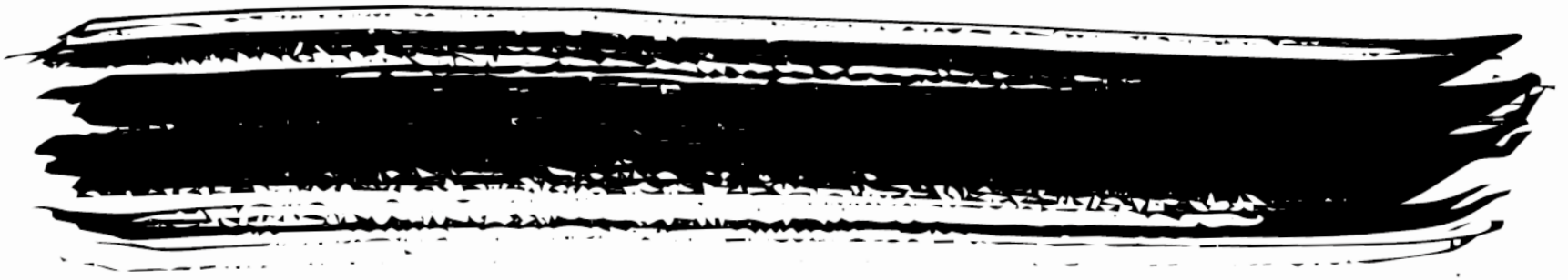
Being aware of Schneider's sharp comment, why do I invoke Pollock at the beginning of this chapter on Trisha Brown and La Ribot? Why bring up the figure of the dead father? Can't Brown and La Ribot be left alone, experimenting on their own? In her essay, Schneider provides an answer to these objections. Her critique of the modernist notion of the singularity and originality of the solo artist proposes a critical writing that stands against "the drive to 'single out' a unitary artist as against a consideration of the broader contexts of cross-national, cross-ethnic, cross-temporal pollination, dialogic collaboration and broadly diasporic influence" (2005: 35).

Thus, I invoke Pollock precisely to indicate how the two distinct operations Trisha Brown and La Ribot execute on the horizontal plane – as their dances meet visual arts in the institutional context of the museum and in the discursive context of art historiography – are already in "cross-temporal" dialogue with, and already in a "cross-national" critique of, the art practices and master discourses that preceded them. Both women inevitably have to negotiate with the intrusion of Papa Pollock's specter, as well as with particularly powerful (performance) art history master narratives that privilege myths of patrilineal masculine origin and lineage. It is the legacy of the patriarchal lineages in art history, of art history's "machismo," the legacy of "historical originality" predicated on the heroic male genius discovering by and for himself the pleasures of temporarily walking on virgin territory (the blank horizontality of his canvas), that Brown and La Ribot are inevitably faced with in their performances and in the reception of their performances. It is also what they must escape at all costs in their distinct and particular uses of the horizontal – a plane whose immediate association with the Pollockian toppling erupts as a curse.

I would argue that Brown's It's a Draw/Live Feed and La Ribot's Panoramix propose modes of relating to the horizontal that allow for nonphallogocentric (to use Derrida's term) spatialities and noncolonialist territorializations. In that sense, as opposed to Pollock, these two performances indeed topple the plane of representation.[4] Belaboring dance's relationship to visual arts, Brown and La Ribot update and gender Merce Cunningham's observation in 1952 that dancers draw from painting not necessarily its formal aspects, but the utopian desire to make a space of pure potentiality. What does it mean for women choreographers to make for themselves a space of pure potentiality when working on horizontality in their dialogue with visual arts? I'd like to start answering this question by addressing first Trisha Brown's actions in It's a Draw/Live Feed.

4 - On the relation between colonialism, the empty territory and representation, see Carter 1996.

Perspectiveless
HORIZONTALITY



dancing
DRAWING
FALLING

Trisha Brown has had a long relationship with drawing. French dance theorist Laurence Louppe writes in the catalogue of a recent touring exhibition on Trisha Brown's prolific career (Art and Dialogue 1961–2001) of the enduring, albeit somewhat secret (at least in the first decade of her work) "visual artist in Brown" (in Teicher 2002: 66).

Some of Brown's dance pieces of the early 1970's seem to find direct counterparts in her sketches from the time (for instance, her drawing series Quadrigrams and her 1975 choreography Locus). [5] Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Brown's drawings increasingly gained autonomous presence in the public display of her art. In the past few years, her drawings have been exhibited in galleries and museums across the world, including the Musée de Marseille (1998) and the Drawing Center and the New Museum in New York City (2004). The question then is of finding out what might justify the qualification of "unusual" that the FWM press release uses to describe It's a Draw/Live Feed. Certainly the drawings' "monumental" scale – although no novelty in painting – is unusual. Also, the fact that Brown draws in a public context subverts somehow drawing's more intimate nature – although, as noted above, the presence of the audience is deferred due to the live video feed (the only audience before Brown as she draws and dances is the video crew). [6] What I believe made this a very unusual event was none of the above elements, but rather how Brown choreographed a mode of appearing within the institutional and discursive space of visual arts by intimately fusing dancing and drawing and then inexorably linking both to horizontality through an approach to line exemplary of what Georges Bataille called "formless" (informe).

Yve-Alain Bois discusses the formless in Georges Bataille in terms of an antirepresentational operation: "Metaphor, figure, theme, morphology, meaning – everything that resembles something, everything that is gathered into the unity of a concept – that is what the informe operation crushes" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 79). In It's a Draw/Live Feed, it is precisely the dancing body's relation to figuration, theme, and meaning and to its mode of appearing within representational space that is put into question. Brown's uses of formless lines and moves in her drawing-dancing disrupt with meaning and its imperatives for clearly defined figures and themes. Her simultaneous dancing-drawing crushes all those concepts Bois describes as securing in place the smooth ideological reproduction of the economy of the representational. If the formless crushes meaning and figure, it also crushes the possibility of fixing representation within any grammatical or visual legibility. Let's see now how Brown formally accomplished these critical moves, and what she might have accomplished politically through them.

In It's a Draw/Live Feed, the audience sees Brown walking into an apparently empty white room: the abstract white cube of the modern museum. Lefebvre saw in "abstract space" a simultaneous material and ideological production of "an anaphorization [. . .] that transforms the body by transporting it outside itself and into the ideal-visual realm" (1991: 309). This transportation of the body into the ideal-visual realm is the necessary brutality at the core of the disembodiment that secures scopic and spatial hegemonies. In It's a Draw/Live Feed, we can say that the anaphoric transportation of the body into the ideal-visual realm is initiated by the force of the museum space itself, a force reiterated by the empty white room where Brown dances-draws and reinforced by the video camera's flattening of her image. The audience's point of view is predetermined by a fixed, unedited, and unmoving long shot rendered live by the camera feed to flat and vertical monitors.

If Brown's placing of herself directly into the abstract space of the museum is already a becoming ideal-visual, then the camera multiplies this becoming by placing Brown's



5 - Laurence Louppe proposes an analogy of Brown's quadrigrams and Donald Judd's boxes. If indeed the form is similar, the intrusion of the linguistic and the mathematical in Brown's own formulation of the cube as compositional device places it closer to the ontological question of choreography's creation of its own space as an ongoing negotiation between language, space, and body. See Louppe 1994: 147.

6 - On one occasion, at the Montpellier Dance Festival, Trisha Brown performed It's a Draw/Live Feed on a stage and before an audience. As of the writing of this chapter, it was the only occasion Brown had an audience before her. It is important to stress that I am confining my analysis exclusively to the performance in Philadelphia, due to the critical implications brought by the way this performance was mediated by the camera.

image inside a highly perspectival composition. In the live-feed image, it's as if the many white surfaces and planes (floor, ceiling, walls, large sheet of paper on the floor) reflect and refract each other, creating a minimalist specularity; a visual tension that subsists throughout the whole performance between the orthogonality of multiple bidimensional surfaces (the sheet of paper, the television screens, the walls) and the obtuse effect of a body moving in tridimensional space.[7] In the Philadelphia version of It's a Draw/Live Feed, the camera remains still. The video image functions as a window, creating a perspectival illusion by placing the image's vanishing point somewhere close to the ideal viewpoint of a spectator facing the screen.[8]

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If Brown's placing of herself directly into the abstract space of the museum is already a becoming ideal-visual, then the camera multiplies this becoming by placing Several layers of abstracted space then and Brown has not even started dancing-drawing. The first layer derives from the room's participation in the visual--ideological economy of the art museum. The second layer derives from Brown's performance being televised, thus further placing her dancing-drawing into the virtual. Third layer: the perspectival framing and its inevitable disembodiment of vision. Fourth layer, particularly relevant for dance studies, and brought by the specificity of the white space: the abstract space Brown walks in echoes historically with one particular foundational abstraction that initiated modern choreography. Brown's room for her dancing-drawing is conspicuously similar to the square French dance master Raoul-Auger Feuillet (the coiner of the neologism "choreography") proposed in 1700 as the ideal space for dance – an empty white square whose presence precedes that of the body and whose flat, smooth, blank surface is irrecoverably detached from the bumpy, mucky social terrain.

Dance historian Susan Foster associated the abstracted space of dance created by Feuillet with the blank page: "Raoul-Auger Feuillet simulated the rectangular floor of the dancing area with the rectangular lay-out of the printed page" (Foster 1996: 24). A very similar overlapping of page and stage is proposed in It's a Draw/

7 - Regarding the function of the obtuse as that which in an image remains beyond meaning and proper visibility, see Roland Barthes "The Third Image" (Barthes 1985).
8 - 'We shall speak of a fully "perspectival" view of space [. . .] only when the entire picture has been transformed [. . .] into a 'window,' and when we are meant to believe we are looking through this window into a space. (Panofsky 1997: 27)

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Live Feed. Such overlapping confuses the ground of drawing and the ground of dancing. The generative effects of this confusion at the level of perception, signification, and motility are the critical and esthetic impetus sustaining Brown's drawing-dancing in It's a Draw/Live Feed. If the space where Brown draws and dances is reminiscent of Feuillet's room, then Brown's movements in that space profoundly disrupt the historical link. There is a deep difference between Brown's improvised moves and the historical apparatus of choreography as a set of predetermined steps. Moreover, Feuillet's system could only map the tracing of steps brushing the dance floor-page (his system was intensely critiqued by his contemporaries for not being able to account for arm, head, and hand movements).[9] In this sense, Feuillet's confusion between book page and dance floor reveals the graphic-signifying function Walter Benjamin attributed to the horizontal plane.

As opposed to both Feuillet's and Benjamin's assimilation of the page with the horizontal space of graphic signification, what Brown does at the moment she begins drawing-dancing on the "transversal cut" of the Benjaminian symbolic has very little to do with signing, or with writing. If she draws on the horizontal, she seems very unconcerned about enclosing in the transversal a symbolic, or a signifying marking. Additionally, she will often dance lying flat along the horizontal plane, refusing the association of figure and verticality that Benjamin identifies with the representational function of the vertical.

By stepping out of the strict Benjaminian division of planes according to their semiotic functionality, Brown steps out of conventional axiomatics of signification and representation.

Outside of writing, outside of the transversal cut of the symbolic, outside of longitudinal representational, what does she do then?

If Brown's placing of herself directly into the abstract space of the museum is already a becoming ideal-visual, then the camera multiplies this becoming by placing Brown's image inside a highly perspectival composition. In the live-feed image, it's as if the many white surfaces and planes (floor, ceiling, walls, large sheet of paper on the floor) reflect and refract each other, creating a minimalist specularity; a visual tension that subsists throughout the whole performance between the orthogonality of multiple bidimensional surfaces (the sheet of paper, the television screens, the walls) and the obtuse effect of a body moving in tridimensional space. In the Philadelphia version of It's a Draw/Live Feed, the camera remains still.

9 - For a summary of such critiques see Jean-Noël Laurenti's essay "Feuillet's Thinking" (in Louppe 1994: 86–8).

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Several layers of abstracted space then and Brown has not even started dancin-g-drawing. The first layer derives from the room's participation in the visual-i-deological economy of the art museum. The second layer derives from Brown's performance being televised, thus further placing her dancing-drawing into the virtual. Third layer: the perspectival framing and its inevitable disembodiment of vision. Fourth layer, particularly relevant for dance studies, and brought by the specificity of the white space: the abstract space Brown walks in echoes historically ideal space for dance – an empty white square whose presence precedes that of the body and whose flat, smooth, blank surface is irrecoverably detached from the bumpy, mucky social terrain. Dance historian Susan Foster associated the abstracted space of dance created by Feuillet with the blank page: "Raoul-Auger Feuillet simulated the rectangular floor of the dancing area with the rectangular lay-out of the printed page" (Foster 1996: 24). A very similar overlapping of page and stage is proposed in It's a Draw/ Live Feed. Such overlapping confuses the ground of drawing and the ground of dancing. The generative effects of this confusion at the level of perception, signification, and motility are the critical and esthetic impetus sustaining Brown's drawing-dancing in It's a Draw/Live Feed.

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Brown enters the empty white room, about 6 by 6 meters, and walks around the historically resonant stage-page. In a concentrated and calm manner, almost hesitantly, she distributes charcoal and pastel sticks around the edges of the large sheet of paper (9 by10 feet). Holding the charcoal, Brown paces about, staying close to the periphery of the paper, not stepping into it right away. Moving closer to the drawing surface, she immediately suspends any possibility of associating



her dancing-drawing with simply a tracing of steps or a recording of movement patterns. What Brown does as soon as she approaches the paper is first to ponder – to take her time pensively, concentrate, not to move – and then, to fall.

In a controlled manner, Brown falls outside the limits of the paper, defying its surface as boundary for her actions. From the start, a trespassing: she deterritorializes the horizontal, by performing a first move of her dancing-drawing outside the proper limits of the paper. She withdraws just enough tension from joints and muscle, so that her body may critique of the vertical-perspectival through the anti-representational and asymbolic game that is It's a Draw/Live Feed. There is already a politics in Brown's careful falling outside the limits of the page: a gesturing towards the fact that her dance will always exceed the imperative of imprinting as the sole mode for artists' relation to space. As opposed to Pollock's masculinist stand on the toppled canvas, as opposed to his refusal to step outside the proper borders of representation, Brown does not walk to dominate the flat surface, neither does she confine her moves to the limits of the paper. She will not be a standing figure on the blank, white page terrain. By giving up her verticality, she refuses the "phallic erectility" that organizes the hegemonic

abstract "orientation of space" (Lefebvre 1991: 287). Rather, she will approach the horizontal by lying on it, by being with it, by rubbing and sliding against it. In other words: Brown's falling is more like a splattering: the formless splattering preventing figurability.

On the ground, Trisha Brown bec mes not a grapheme, not a sign, not a symbol, not a figure, but as formless as paint hitting floor. Her falling is a b coming formless. Splattering, Brown's dancing-drawing escapes perspectival economies of the gaze and of symbolic signification. But, as opposed to paint, particularly as opposed to Pollock's drip paint, and adding yet another formless layer, another possibility to resist claiming possession over territory, Brown's splattering will not be pinned down, dried out, fixed.

On the ground, she will keep moving, she will not stay put. And just as her fall and splatter is a becoming formless, so her doodling with charcoal will succumb neither to figuration, nor to signification, nor to representation. While lying on the transversal plane Benjamin associated with writing and graphic symbolism, Brown's dancingdrawing remains decidedly outside signification – nothing is being written, nothing is being symbolized. Her body, charcoal, and pastel move between the intentional and the accidental, between forethought and spontaneity, between marking and erasing, between almost drawing and almost writing but never quite. Both Brown's body and her drawings refer to nothing except themselves.

This is the self-referentiality of the splatter, inexorably tied to the fallen. As she draws-dances, Brown creates nothing that proposes a theme, that foregrounds a full figure, that advances a well-rounded metaphor, that initiates meaning. The charcoal and pastel lines Brown traces while lying on the floor – lines traced with hands as well as with feet – vaporize in dust, twitch in hesitation, break under her attack, initiate flow, reflect precision, and fall into error.

Occasionally, we see her tracing around a body part (arm, foot, knee). When viewing the drawings later, the most we get are possibilities for recognizing that a body might have been there on the canvas, that she might have opted to fully draw it – yet, the final result resists representing complete bodies or properly formed morphologies, just as they do not register steps that can be decoded, rehearsed, and danced again. These dancing--drawings are definitely not representations. They are operations, performances. And yet . . . something is inscribed on the

paper. In order to understand the performativity of the inscriptions made by a woman choreographer falling, moving, rolling, skipping, rubbing, sliding hands, feet, legs, back, breasts, head, face, butt, and belly on an improbable, small paper stage (or, on an improbable, huge empty page left on the floor) it is important to account for the specificity of Brown's movements in relationship to their economy, that is, to their eventual destiny as traces. French dance theorist Laurence Louppe, when writing on the history of choreography's relationship to drawing, notes how "the paper in no way retains a record of the dance, it retains a trace which itself cannot be consigned anywhere else" (Louppe 1994: 22).

This remainder that is not a recording of the dance is exactly what we witness in Brown's dancing-drawing. For what is fascinating in It's a Draw/Live Feed is not so much that a choreographer is drawing, nor that a choreographer is improvising dances while drawing, nor even that a choreographer is displaying so openly, so generously, her intimate moment of creation to an anonymous, absent present audience.

What is fascinating is to see how Brown's dancing-drawing is not at all narrowly and exclusively aimed at producing a final work on paper. Rather, Brown generates an inordinate amount of movements, gestures, small steps, microdances that are not at all aimed at the paper, that will not at all imprint or leave their mark on the paper.

In Brown's careful, quiet, attentively concentrated, and playful motility and gestures, there is a surplus of actions and steps and tracings that will not be arrested or bound to the horizontal, a plethora of actions that cannot leave a mark, that have nothing to do with marking, nothing to do with claiming possession over a territory, with territorializing. Some of Brown's dancing will result in inscriptions, as foot or hand rubs the sheet and leaves a mark.

Others will remain unmarked as she dances with her focus away from the horizontal, as charcoal misses the page, or as pressure on the pastel is too weak to leave a mark. Missing the mark: a traceless expenditure that is already a deterritorialization of art. Brown's particular mode of making space but not marking a territory brings with it some micropolitical implications. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari associated what they called "the territorializing factor" with the becoming of art when they unequivocally posited "the territory a result of art" (1983: 316). They write: "The artist: first person to set out a

boundary stone, or to make a mark" (1983: 316). It may well be so. At least, that seems to be the case with the masculinist mode of occupying the toppled canvas that Andy Warhol identified in Pollock's "machismo," where "the gesture that a standing man makes by spilling liquid onto a horizontal ground is simply decoded as urination" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 102). If the "urinary" character of action painting is in accordance with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of art as the marking of a territory, Brown's dance-drawing allows us to momentarily disagree with their proposition; or at least, allows us to consider other ways of making art, or of thinking about the relation between art and space that refuses the colonial implications of marking a territory with the artists' flag.

Brown's dancing-drawing – where so much of Let's return to the experience of watching It's a Draw/Live Feed on the flat, vertical screens. As Brown dances-draws, the audience's attention must go through a series of splits. Should it look at the paper to follow the making of the drawing? Or look at Brown's body, to follow the making of the dance? Should it look at lines, or at gestures? To keep track of both one has to look up and down and sideways simultaneously. In this dance of the gaze and of attention produced within an excessively parergonic space – frames within frames within frames: the still frame of the video screen, the still frame of the camera lens, the still frame of the gallery walls, the still frame of the paper on the floor – the audience must attend simultaneously to the vertical plane of representation of movement and to the horizontal plane of inscription of traces.

Brown operates simultaneously in both, generating conglomerates of vanishing points in the bidimensional space feed live to the audience as hyperbolically perspectival. Thus, she creates a ceaseless dispersing where no act (dancing, drawing) or artistic genre (dancing, drawing) is privileged in relation to the other. Instead, there is a dizzying simultaneity of genres and acts. This dizziness is already a dismantling of the striated order of the perspectival.

Perspective is the effect created by a specific organization of lines on a representational surface (usually vertical) that secures a geometrically coherent figuration of spatial depth. Perspectival effect is predicated on a "central vanishing point" – the mathematical point where all orthogonals meet, "and which is determined by the perpendicular drawn from the eye to the picture plane" (Panofsky 1997: 28). Erwin Panofsky has shown that,

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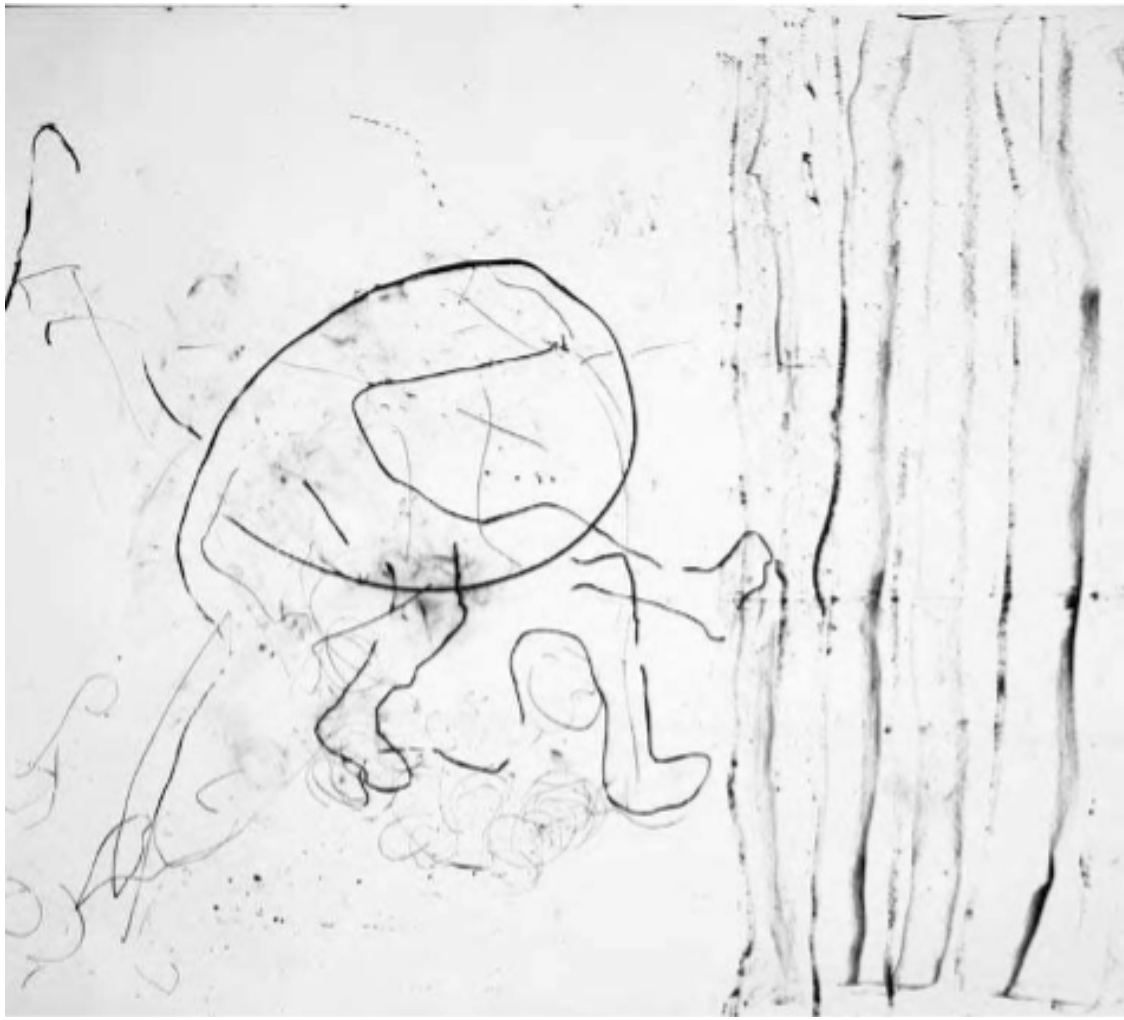


FIGURE 4.1
TRISHA BROWN. IT'S A DRAW
(2003)

Charcoal and pastel on paper.
Courtesy Trisha Brown.

although a correct perspectival representation may be obtained with more than one vanishing point on a single image, perspective's privileged relationship to hegemonic practices and ideologies of representation could only be secured once painting grounded its claim to truth on an image organized around one single vanishing point. The single vanishing point is essential to unify and harmonize the viewer's gaze with representational, theological, and discursive powers (Panofsky 1997: 141–2).

Panofsky reminds us: "'central perspective' makes two tacit but essential assumptions: first, that we see with a single and immobile eye, and second, that the planar cross section of the visual pyramid can pass for an adequate reproduction of our optical image" (1997: 29). Thus, perspective always operates by reduction. And what is reduced in perspective is not only the tridimensionality of space, but the embodied nature of perception as the corporeal grounding of sensation surrenders itself to algorithms of visibility. What is lost then is the embodiment of vision by the means of an operation that subtracts from perception our stereoscopic, decentered, constantly moving eyes and replaces them with an artificially monocular and monomaniacally fixed point of view.[10]

This is why "perspectival construction is a systematic abstraction from the structure of psychophysiological space" (Panofsky 1997: 31). Of relevance for our discussion of Brown's creation of space in It's a Draw/Live Feed is that perspective's operation of abstraction, its perceptual reduction for the sake of monocular consistency, "is also true, of course, for the entirely analogous operation of the camera" (Panofsky 1997: 31).

But, in It's a Draw/Live Feed, the audience's eyes are never allowed to become immobile. Even if the piece is hyperbolically stilled by a multiple layering of frames (camera, monitor, walls, paper), Brown's movements and actions create a visual-kinetic troubling brought about by her constant creation, redistribution, and mobilization of multiplying vanishing points. What Brown accomplishes in her dancing-drawing is the transformation of the reductive operation of the camera as perspectival machine into a multiplying operation of vision. Distributing, creating, and destroying a multiplicity of vanishing points, Brown makes a space in a closed room that will not place her under the economy of the perspectival, that mode of gazing that historically consigned women to their house arrest.[11] Refusing to be placed under house arrest, Brown transforms space

10 - For a critique of perspective in relationship to mobility and embodiment, see Weiss 1995.
11 - On the question of women, dance and house arrest, see Derrida 1995.

from a noun into a verb: her dancing--drawing, above all, adds to the vertical and the horizontal planes of inscription and representation an unsuspected dynamics, it transforms them from planar dimensions into zones of intensities, thanks to the formless, unfixable operations of a falling, bodied agency.

By the end of the It's a Draw/Live Feed, Brown will have created four different drawings. After the completion of each drawing, a process that takes somewhere between 10 and 12 minutes, Brown leaves the white room and two museum workers walk in pushing a scaffold. They carefully pick up the inscribed sheet of paper from the floor and hang it on one of the walls.

As the assistants lift the marked sheet of paper, a clean one appears right below, ready to receive Brown's renewed moves and impressions. After completing their task of lifting up the drawing from its horizontal-choreographic plane of the floor and fixing it to its new vertical plane,[12] the two assistants leave the space, and soon the choreographer returns, starting the process all over again. But it is in the final rising of the sheet of paper – a rising that all of a sudden reveals an unsuspected teleological impetus framing the whole event – from the horizontal into the vertical plane of representation and contemplation that we may find the limits of Brown's radical deterritorialization and the full activation of the territorializing force of the museum machine – a machine that must always erect something and fix it in the (vertical) plane of representation. After all the disruption of the gaze Brown performs by her yielding to gravity and to splattering, by the means of her undulating dancing, by the means of her ongoing dismantling and decentering and creation of so many vanishing points, by the means of her uses of formlessness in dancing and in drawing, something eventually is erected once Brown's dancing-drawing is completed.

The entrance of the assistants marks the entrance of those visual-architectural-economic demands that characterize the museum as a territorializing machine. By fixing the paper back onto the vertical plane of display, the assistants as proxy of the museum machine transform deterritorialized spacing into a territory ruled by the imperative of displaying the (authorial) mark(ing). Thus the formless must be lifted from its horizontal plane of kinetic production for the sake of its relocation on the vertical as object for contemplation.This rising is a recoiling from the radical motions Brown had performed before us. It is reminiscent of the critique Rosalind Krauss makes of Pollock when

12 - The top of the drawing is the side that is parallel and nearest to the wall on which it is going to be hung.

she writes that Pollock embraced gravity and horizontality only to evacuate both at the moment the representational economy demanded the displaying of a final product, thus reinserting the toppled into the "proper" longitudinal plane of visual consumption (Bois and Krauss 1997: 93).

During the performance of It's a Draw/ Live Feed the space of Brown's dancing-drawing explodes in a series of dizzying explorations between genres, between focal points, between confounding positions and certainties about spectatorship, authorship, artistic disciplines, documentation, original, copy, presence, liveness, dance, and art. But in the end, and because there must be an end (for museums have a hard time with incompleteness, the temporal aspect of l'informe), the entrance of the two museum assistants in black reminds us of the force of the vertical in the economy of representation, it reminds us of the lack of neutrality of any space whatsoever – no matter how abstract and empty that space appears to the viewer. No longer dancing-drawing: the end product must surrender itself to the destiny of art objects on the vertical-phallic space of representation.

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The
OBLIQUE



sculpting
DANCING
wasting

Mid-March 2003. I am sitting next to a few dozen people on a cardboard floor in one of Tate Modern's large gallery spaces. Glued to the wall, as audiences of live art tend to be when not so sure about where the proscenium is, feeling the warmth of the cardboard, sensing its indefinable smell-color, we are all waiting for Panoramix, the durational performance where La Ribot presents, for just over 3 hours, all of her thirty-four Piezas Distinguidas (Distinguished Pieces, 1993–2003). This is the first time all of La Ribot's distinguished pieces will be performed in a single event. Thus the title Panoramix suggests a summation, a panoramic overview of ten years of its creation. However, as I settle into the large, white, gallery space, waiting for La Ribot's entrance, it becomes apparent that the set-up of the room undermines any possibility of framing Panoramix as an event participating in the overarching optical-historical drive that characterizes the representational function of the panorama.[13]

Piezas Distinguidas is the name of a series of short performances La Ribot started to create in 1993 and finished in 2003. The dramaturgical premises of this series were: each of its constitutive piezas had to take the form of a solo performed by La Ribot; each had to last somewhere between 30 seconds and 7 minutes; contents and duration of each pieza had to be negotiated with its "distinguished proprietor" – individuals or businesses who would acquire each distinguished piece from La Ribot. At first, these pieces were performed in theatrical spaces: small stages or black boxes. This was the case with Piezas Distinguidas (1993–4) and with Mas Distinguidas (1997).

It was only with Still Distinguished (2000) that La Ribot rethought the question of space and relocated all of the pieces outside of the theatre. This relocation brought obvious changes in terms of their presentation: light design would no longer be possible, thus radically changing the formal impact of the carefully constructed images that awed audiences of Piezas Distinguidas; frontal viewing would no longer be guaranteed, given the dismantling of the proscenium; sound sources would become localized and have less acoustic quality. Also, La Ribot appears in the gallery space naked. She only dresses up according to the requirements of each pieza. Once she finishes each pieza, she returns to nakedness, leaving her clothes scattered around, as detritus, or sculptural lumps on the horizontal. Thus, relocation did not only change the pieces esthetically, it changed them in kind. As La Ribot wrote, For La Ribot, relocation had a very

13 - For a historical analysis of the ideological and representational functions of the panorama, see Otterman 1997.

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"NOW THE SPACE
BELONGS TO THE
SPECTATOR AND TO ME
WITHOUT HIERARCHIES.

MY OBJECTS, THEIR
BAGS OR COATS:

THEIR COMMENTARIES
AND MY SOUND:

SOMETIMES MY STILLNESS
AND THEIR MOVEMENT,
OTHER TIMES MY MOVEMENT AND
THEIR STILLNESS.

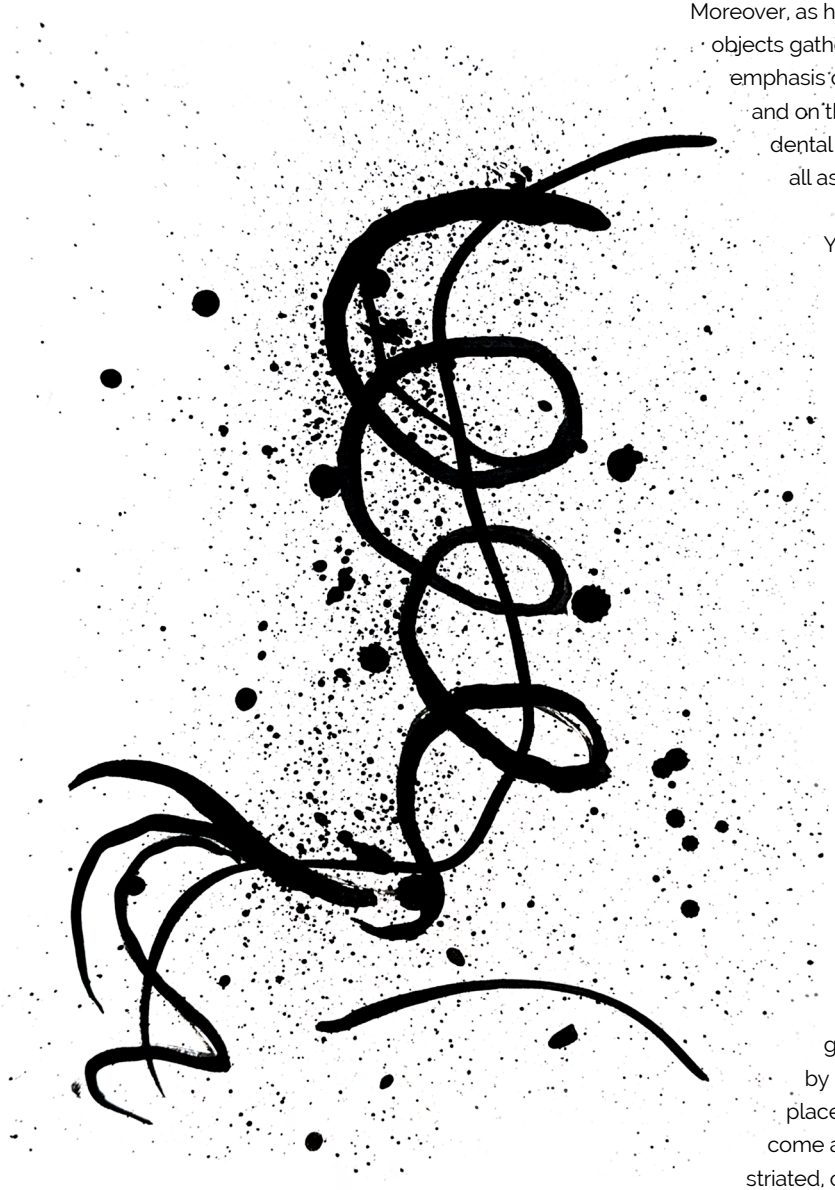
EVERYTHING AND
EVERYONE IS SCATTERED
AROUND THE FLOOR,
IN AN INFINITE
SURFACE, IN WHICH
WE ARE MOVING QUIETLY,
WITHOUT ANY PRECISE
DIRECTION, WITHOUT
ANY DEFINITE ORDER."

(IN HEATHFIELD AND
GLENDINNING 2004: 30)

important purpose: the dismantling of the hierarchical machine that is the theatre. The scattering of her audience and their stuff on the same floor that she and her objects perform, the leveling of "their commentaries and my sound," the sharing of an emphatic horizontality, reflect three important aspects of this change in kind in La Ribot's Piezas Distinguidas: a yielding to the gravitational pull, an intensification of the microperceptual, and a nonteleological presentation of small pieces.

By privileging aimlessness, meandering, drifting (even as one stays put), by privileging the creation of indefinite points of view (no fixed place for the audience) and attention spans (the audience may come and go as they please), La Ribot deterritorializes the striated, orthogonal space of the institutional gallery and turns it into a dimension both indeterminate and precarious. Moreover, as her body and our body and her objects and our objects gather on the cardboard floor, there is an unavoidable emphasis on the pervasive effect produced on the art-works and on the audience alike by that unacknowledged transcendental force: the downward pull of gravity. Panoramix levels us all as already falling.

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Yielding to gravity is the necessary consequence of La Ribot's moving away from the theatrical framing. Yielding to gravity also allows for reading in her desire to relocate her piezas a parallel desire to initiate a toppling, a debasing of whatever may be considered "well-built" – the well-organized, the directional, the teleological, the aimed, the representational, the perspectival, the architectural, and the choreographic. Rosalind Krauss, writing on sculptor Robert Morris's uses of gravity, horizontality, and weight in a 1961 performance where he toppled a 6-foot-tall column on a theatrical stage as a dance performance, observes: "A function of the well-built, form is thus vertical because it can resist gravity; what yields to gravity, then, is anti-form" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 97). 1997: 97).

Similar ly in La Ribot's desire to debase the well-built choreo-graphically, antiform is initiated by her For La Ribot, relocation had a very important purpose: the dismantling of the hierarchical machine that is the theatre. The scattering of her audience and their stuff on the same floor that she and her objects perform, the leveling of "their commentaries and my sound," the sharing of an emphatic horizontality, reflect three important aspects of this change in kind in La Ribot's Piezas Distinguidas: a yielding to the gravitational pull, an intensification of the microperceptual, and a nonteleological presentation of small pieces. By privileging aimlessness, meandering, drifting (even as one stays put), by privileging the creation of indefinite points of view (no fixed place for the audience) and attention spans (the audience may come and go as they please), La Ribot deterritorializes the striated, orthogonal space of the institutional gallery and turns it into a dimension both indeterminate and precarious. Moreover, as her body and our body and her objects and our objects

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La Ribot's move away from representation operates an inevitable change in kind regarding her body's presence. Now, her body deploys a positive relation to gravity that is ontologically crucial. There is a Heideggerian operation taking place here, as we saw in the previous chapter, one that understands presence as an ethical being-in-the-world associated to a particular kind of falling ("thrownness," Verfallen). For Heidegger and for La Ribot, gravity appears as that given transcendental force (and law) to which we all submit without necessarily having to be submissive to it. Thus, one of the ethical tasks of Da-sein (the being who knows to be already in thrownness and that must strive to master this condition) is of understanding how being-in-the-world is conditioned by that earthly imperative (Heidegger 1996: 319).

Similarly in La Ribot's desire to debase the well-built choreo-graphically, antiform is initiated by her moving away from the enframing performed by the proscenium and is immediately reinforced by a generalized yielding to gravity as equalizer of presence. La Ribot explained her move



FIGURE 4.2
LA RIBOT. STILL DISTINGUISHED.

(Distinguished piece: Candida Iluminaris.
Distinguished proprietor:
Victor Ramos [Paris]).

Photo: Mario Del Curto. Courtesy La Ribot.

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Moreover, for Heidegger, the coming into being of the work of art is precisely the expression of this permanent tension between the earthly downward pull and the wordly antigravitational operations.[14] This is why La Ribot's withdrawal of her performances from the representational to the presentational must involve an attending to the earthly downward pull, an embracing of a transcendental falling, and thus her emphasis of the function of the horizontal plane as an active membrane, a tympan humming the tensile dialectics of world and earth as a dialectics overdetermined by the force of falling. As dance scholar Salazar-Condé once wrote, when we watch La Ribot performing in a gallery, "the only certainty is the weight of our bodies on the ground" (Salazar-Condé 2002: 62).

Even before La Ribot walks into the gallery space at Tate Modern, the invisible work of that persistent menace to the well-built called gravity already makes the space perform. The yellow-brown smooth surface of cardboard covering the horizontal plane is littered here and there with a couple of folded wooden chairs, one large piece of white cloth, some undistinguishable small stuff: matter and color and form lumping about just like our bodies squatting, our coats piling, our bags spilling out. On the four walls around us, hovering some 7 feet high, dozens of objects are held by brown tape. It seems as if any of our own stuff could be taped up there as well. The whole gallery becomes a sculpture; but a sculpture with all the instability and precariousness of the "badly built," all the aimless vibration brought about by the fact that the audience's "stillness and movement" are the foundational elements of that sculpture.

Visually, instability played itself out in Panoramix thanks to the tension between the soft yellow-brown cardboard floor where the audience squatted and the rigid orthogonality of the modernist esthetic imperative performed by the white walls (Wigley 1995). This tension was reinforced by the colorful plethora of improbable objects cheaply taped on the white walls, objects that La Ribot would soon take down to manipulate or wear in the following 3 hours: scuba-diving goggles, translucent pair of pants, very large dark-blue paper wings, large yellow foam angel wings, glass of water, green dress, green dress with flowers, black dress with faces, pink dress, electric blue wig, boom box, "for sale" sign, white towel, red shoe, white enamel bedpan, microphone, rubber chicken, plastic bottle of water, brown coat, snorkel, pearl necklace, flashlight, red shoebox, bike helmet, black marker, and on and on.

The objects hanging on the wall fixed with brown tape created two effects: a semantic confusion resulting from the incongruity of their display, object-nouns lining up as if they were jumbled words in a sentence yet to be organized into grammar; and a more physical effect resulting from the precariousness of their display, the cheap way they were fixed to Tate Modern's walls, emphasizing how these objects did not quite belong, how they were not quite art objects, not even (or no longer) ready-mades. The double nature of the objects' presence in space (as series of nouns, as series of forms) when associated into their precarious display indexed the constant menace of impending falling: their physical falling, and their linguistic one.

In Panoramix, the threat of this double falling generates one very specific result: La Ribot creates space that operates as an architectural disturbance. I am using architecture here in the sense Denis Hollier defines it in his reading of Georges Bataille – that is, architecture as a function of the "well-built," as a privileged accomplice to hegemonic economies of representational propriety (theoretical, theological, desiring): "Imperialism, philosophy, mathematics, architecture, etc., compose the system of petrification" of humanity (Hollier 1992: 50), a process where "the book and architecture are mutually supportive and foster such a monologic systematicity" (Hollier 1992: 42).

This system of petrification as guarantor of the monological stability of form is

14 - About the ontological distinction between "world" and "earth" see "The Origin of the Work of Art" (Heidegger 1993).

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predicated on an unwavering signification, the minimum requirement for representational success.

That is why "architecture, before any other qualifications, is identical to the space of representation" (Hollier 1992: 31), and that is why, "when structure defines the general form of legibility, nothing becomes legible unless it is submitted to the architectural grid" (Hollier 1992: 33). In other words: architecture is an economy of legibility, a double structure of citationality and command legislated by the stability of the upright form. In Panoramix, the operation of architectural disturbance is achieved linguistically by the imminent threat of a falling into asignification of the object-nouns precariously fixed on the walls; it is achieved infralinguistically by the pervasive smell of the cardboard, by the pervasive yielding to the gravitational pull. The intrusion of asignifying objects, formless forces, and subtle sensations messes up the architectural as hardened orthogonality.

Thus, in Panoramix's operation of architectural disturbance, a series of micromovements are set in motion right from the start, their quasi-invisibility attesting rather than undermining their force and impact. First micromovement: the subtle smell of the cardboard not only complicating the very constitution of the representational space of the gallery as purely visual, but relentlessly eroding the solidity of planar surfaces, undermining the gallery's trust on its planar orthogonality. Smell blurred straight lines and folded flat planes; it vaporized the rigid striation of the grid. Smell performed the distension of the horizontal and the vertical planes into so many obliques, folds, and curves, thus creating what Alain Borer (writing on the role of smell in the work of Joseph Beuys) called an "impalpable dimension" (Borer et al. 1996: 19). It is the production of such an impalpable and yet materially impacting oblique dimension (in contradistinction to the striated legibility of orthogonal space) that traverses Panoramix. Hence, the second micromovement: the replacement of spatiality by dimensionality. La Ribot makes for her pieces not a space but a dimension. Indeed, uses of dimensionality that stand against the spatial grid abound in La Ribot's work.

Thus the centrality of scale in her pieces; the necessity of being out of scale in her pieces – actions out of proportion with their intention, or with the tone of voice, or gestures that are too grandiose for the dimensions of the room (dysfunctional scale); drawings that contain smaller versions of themselves within themselves (Poema Infinito [Infinite Poem] Distin-



FIGURE 4.3
LA RIBOT. STILL DISTINGUISHED.

(Distinguished piece: Another Bloody Mary. Distinguished proprietor: Lois Keidan and Franko B. [London]).

Photo: Mario Del Curto. Courtesy La Ribot.

guished Piece[21], 1997, property of Julia y Pedro Núñez, Madrid) or objects aligned according to a forced perspective (distorted scale). Both the distorted and the dysfunctional reveal the inadequacy of orthogonal spatiality before the impalpable dimensionality La Ribot creates for the presentation of her body. In Candida Iluminaris (Distinguished Piece #30, 2000, property of Victor Ramos, Paris), La Ribot switches on a pocket flashlight, places it on the floor aiming it at the farthest wall, and within the cone of light shed on the floor, proceeds to line up a series of objects, starting at the vertex with a minuscule piece of jewelry and going all the way up to one of the dismantled chairs on the floor, to finally end the sequence with her naked body lying on the floor, belly up, eyes closed, humming with mouth shut for some 2 or 3 minutes. Here, the forcing of perspective within a field of light leads from a sequence of odd objects to a vibrating, sonorous body, horizontally dancing its active stillness.

Third series of micromovements: La Ribot rigorously performing what I've called in previous chapters "still-acts" and their "slower ontology" – as if to emphasize the thickness of time contracting in the impalpable dimensionality of the nonrepresentational.[15] Thus, a still-act punctuates Candida Iluminaris, by also extending it into time; another one structures a whole pieza when, lying sideways, La Ribot dons a blonde wig and, covering her legs with white paper, lies on the floor to become a dying mermaid spasming quietly on dry cardboard, a sac of energy, an odd vision of femininity (Muriéndose la Sirena [Death of the Mermaid], Pieza Distinguida #1, 1993, in memory of Chinorris); another happens when, standing up, she drinks a liter and a half of water without catching her breath, then spreads herself on the floor, and does not piss (Zurrutada, Pieza Distinguida #32, 2000, distinguished proprietor Arteleku, San Sebastián); finally in Another Bloody Mary (Pieza Distinguida #27, distinguished proprietor Franko B. and Lois Keidan, London), she lies naked on the floor, a red patch of fake hair clamped to her pubic hair, legs spread out wide, red spilling out all around her (not paint, but red paper, red boxes, red dress), a revisiting of Duchamp's Etant Donnés (1946–66) or Courbet's Origin of the World (1866). Thus, a necessary condition for the third micromovement to be effective in Panoramix is La Ribot's nakedness. Many of her piezas are perfomed naked; when performing those that require a dress, or an angel wing, or a wig, she puts them on only for the pieza's duration, and disrobes as soon as it is over. And if her naked body operates sometimes as an image, this image is always subtly trembling, always revealing its physiological nature through its small tensions, its pulsations, hesitations, imbalances, shivers, contractions,

15 - See also my essay "Still: On the Vibratile Microscopy of Dance" (in Brandstetter et al. 2000).

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" WEIGHT AND GRAVITY
ARE KEY ELEMENTS IN
THE ORGANIZATION OF
PERCEPTION. THE NOTION
OF UP AND DOWN LINKED
TO THE EARTHS GRAVITY
IS JUST ONE ELEMENT OF
PERSPECTIVE.

THE QUATTROCENTO
PERSPECTIVE CANNOT
BE SEPARATED FROM THE
ORIENTATION EFFECT OF
THE FIELD OF VISION CAUSED
BY GRAVITY, AND ALSO
BY THE FRONTAL
DIMENSION OF THE CANVAS WHICH IS
NEVER AT A SLANT.

BOTH PAINTING AND
RESEARCH ON PERSPECTIVE
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN
CONDUCTED ON A
FRONTAL DIMENSION."

(LIMON AND VIRILIO 1995: 178)

expansions – the inexhaustible kinetic elements of La Ribot's small dances and still-acts.

La Ribot wrote about the function of the still at the time she moved her pieces from the theatre building to the gallery space. In her text, she mentions how stillness is a choreographic strategy, one that allows dance to step out of representation and into a different economy of presence. La Ribot explains how for her stillness also initiates an undermining of the rigid linear temporality of representation, replacing it with "the sense of being, or of feeling a corporeal presence and of contemplating inside a non-theatrical time, understanding 'theatrical' as something that starts and finishes" (in Heathfield and Glendinning 2004: 30). With the "theatrical" defined by La Ribot as a teleological enterprise, one contained within a linear temporality marked by a clear beginning and aimed at closure, we arrive at the dramaturgical question Panoramix asks, imposes and provokes – a stupid question, a too literal question, but an absolutely necessary one. The question is this: where did all that cardboard covering the huge area of the gallery come from? First we laugh at the question, as laugh we must with several of La Ribot's incredibly humorous piezas. But, if after the laughter we stay with the literal question for one more second, we find out it is not at all an unreasonable one. Actually, Panoramix quickly seems to provide an answer – one weaving a nonteleological, nonchronometric time with the generative instability of badly built space.

Early on in the unfolding of the thirty-four piezas, La Ribot grabs from the wall a small square piece of cardboard (maybe 30 inches wide) and proceeds to walk back and forth across the gallery carrying it always parallel to the vertical plane of her body. This is Pieza Distinguida #12 (Fatelo Con Me [Do it With Me], 1993, distinguished proprietor Daikin Air Conditioners, Madrid) performed to the sound of the homonymous Italian pop song by Anna Oxa. Right from the start of the Piezas Distinguidas series La Ribot takes as a privileged object a vertical plane of cardboard. While Oxa sings, emphatically asking to "do it with her," La Ribot walks naked back and forth with this cardboard square alongside her body, holding it always aligned with the vertical plane, as if to remind us precisely of the intrinsic alliance between the verticality of walls and the verticality of the body in representation. Could it be that this small cardboard square, which emerged apparently out of nowhere right at the very start of Piezas Distinguidas, ten years before Panoramix was conceived, is the origin of it all – a portable miniature,

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a perpendicular teasing, an anachronic announcement of the massive cardboard floor in Panoramix? If so, how come it traveled from verticality, from standing alongside La Ribot's upright naked body, to horizontality? How did it expand itself massively across the floor to the very limits of the gallery space?

Again, the question is that of architecture as structure of legibility. In the context of a proscenium theater, for which Fatelo Con Me was first conceived, the piece of cardboard had a specific visual-dramaturgical function: as La Ribot paced across the stage, she kept the cardboard always between her body and the audience, thus covering her breasts, buttocks, and sex. This choreography of humorous modesty was only possible due to the frontal position of the audience in relation to the perspectival proscenium. But, in the space of the gallery, such architectural legibility collapses: there is no front, no back, no proper placing of audience, no proper placing for the body to become image. Thus, at Tate Modern, just as in Trisha Brown's It's a Draw/Live Feed in Philadelphia, the organization of visibility is taken over by two museum workers. In the case of It's a Draw/Live Feed, we saw that two museum workers lifted Brown's drawings from the horizontal onto the vertical. During the rendition of Fatelo Con Me in Panoramix, two museum workers stood on

opposite walls of the gallery and kept the audience behind an imaginary line running between them. The workers became living proxies of the proscenium arch, ensuring a proper point of view for the audience that could guarantee this particular pieza's proper visual success. As stand-ins for an absent architectural construct, the museum workers prevented the audience from crossing over the boundary they defined. They were the embodiment of the architectural imperative of the representational.

> This is an interesting moment; a moment where the choreographer's intention is sabotaged by a representational inertia embedded in the visual machines of the theatre and the museum. This is a moment that once again reveals the relationship between verticality, architecture, representation, and the gaze. As Jacques Lacan has shown, if there is something of the body that precedes its structuring while nevertheless determining its building, if there is something in perception that participates of the signifying-representational premises of the well built, that something is the gaze.[16]

In this sense, the gaze can be considered the first antigravitational machine, the primary psycho-physiological technology allowing access to the visual only as vertically framed legibility. Paul Virilio discusses the parallels between gravity, representation, architecture, the vertical figure, legibility, and the weight of the gaze: It is interesting to see how, even after La Ribot abandons the frontal framing of the theatrical-perspectival, even after she embraces "presentation" through a yielding to gravity, to stillness, to horizontality, remnants of the well-built invade her work through the explicit marks of the institutional. And that is why the stupid question about the cardboard is so crucial. For, if a piece of cardboard appears to function for and with frontal viewing, the fact that

16 - I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution of the subject in the visible. What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. (Lacan 1981: 106)

years later it ends up extended on the floor of the gallery implies that the presentation La Ribot is so interested in must be one constantly oscillating between the (vertical plane of the) representational and the (horizontal plane of the) choreographic – the choreographic understood here as the inscription on a page of a symbolic of movement. This constant oscillation, these translational movements, imply the insertion of many obliques, of the slant Virilio sees as neglected in Western representation (and architecture). The slant refers not only to oblique angles, those mediating the vertical and the horizontal, but to the force of oblique looks, sliding glances with eyes at an angle. In the case of Panoramix this fundamental oscillation between vertical and horizontal that introduces the oblique – a plane on which everything is already sliding, falling, hard to hold – is performed via three antiarchitectural (the architectural being understood here as the well-building of form and signification) operations: the dilution of the orthogonal, the dilution of objecthood in the very objects used in piezas, and the dilution of a presence and a subjectivity subservient to the representational.

This is why, despite the vivid presence of visual arts in La Ribot's work, it is impossible to think Panoramix and the Piezas Distinguidas series outside of the ontohistorical grounding of Western theatrical dance. What this ontohistorical ground generates as its privileged model is a body that had to be able to simultaneously operate on the vertical plane of objectal and formal representation and the horizontal plane of writing and drawing. This is a body whose integration and congruence happens by and in the split between the two Benjaminian planes. This ontohistorically split body of the Western dancer, doubly inscribed simultaneously onto the vertical plane of representation (of the figure) and onto the horizontal plane of the symbolic (of writing), has created a

specific mode of perceiving dance's coming into presence in the field of visibility. On the vertical plane, dance demands perception fall within the parameters of frontal representation and linear perspective (as already required by Georges Noverre in his famous Letters on Dancing and Ballet);[17] on the horizontal plane, dance demands perception to follow traces of steps, so as to guarantee the possibility of reading the choreographic design (as with Feuillet, for instance). In both cases, it is visibility as legibility that is privileged. It is the orthogonal fixity between the two planes that is required. La Ribot initiates a different relation, through her critique of the orthogonal, by requiring an attending to the oblique nature of the dancing body – one implying an impending falling off of visibility, legibility, verticality, the well--built, and teleology.

So far, I have discussed the generative spatial instability of Panoramix related to the slanted motions of the badly built. What of its temporality? Could there be a temporal slanting taking place? I mentioned how Panoramix is not about historical accumulation – a term whose connotative charge for dance history immediately evokes Trisha Brown's Accumulation pieces (1971–3, 1978, 1997). Panoramix produces a different temporality. Rather than accumulative, an operation predicated on

17 - "If, in order to create a sense of illusion, the scenic artist works in accordance with the laws of perspective, why should the maître de ballet, who is likewise an artist, or should be, transgress them?" (Noverre 1968: 45).



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repetition and sequentiality, Panoramix jumbles up the chronological sequence of production of its series. So, instead of repetition, it emphasizes a temporal effect that is contractile. In Panoramix, there is spatial obliqueness as much as there is temporal contraction, which is, as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out, already an introduction of oblique lines within temporality. Contraction implies an operation in temporality isomorphic to La Ribot's operation in spatiality.

Contraction is a term drawn from the philosophy of Henri Bergson – it implies an understanding of the present as simultaneously and permanently splitting open towards the past in dilation and towards what-will-come in contraction.[18]

For performance in general, and specifically for a performance that purposefully, explicitly, presents itself under the guise of the historical (the panorama-mix), the notion of contraction has profound implications for the understanding of the body's presence in relation to temporality, memory, and action. For contraction implies not only the body opening itself up towards what-will-come, but also to all the potencies of the temporally subjected body, in what Gilles Deleuze called contraction-subjectivity (Deleuze 1988: 53). in a spatial grid, but in the multifolded

18 - I am using in English "what-will-come" in the sense of the French "l'avenir." What will come (l'avenir) is to be distinguished from the "future" as Jacques Derrida has already pointed out. One belongs to the always unforeseen unfolding; the other to the programmatic regimentation of efficient chronometry.

dimensionality of its unstable, slanted, oblique throwness into time? Panoramix acts in the present tense while pushing the past against the future of memory.

This is the piece's operation of uniting the virtual with the material, absence with presence – contraction. But Panoramix proposes that contraction, which is a temporal operation through which matter and memory mingle ontologically, can happen only after the toppling of the archiframing of the vertical plane of representation and only after the angling of the horizontal plane of inscription. Disturbance of space, production of dimensions, contraction of all that has happened with all that is to come but still remains unannounced – all unfolding in those visual and kinetic exchanges between the orthogonal-representational grid holding up the gaze's weight and the oblique dimensionalities of folds, masses, and gravitational and antigravitational lines of vision.

Like the image of La Ribot lying as dying mermaid on the cardboard, spasming next to our bodies huddled on the floor, receiving the weight of our gaze, expanding her presence across the glow-hum scent of the floor, becoming weight, becoming floor, pulsating on the floor, pulsating the floor, pulsing time, making space in the unstable obliqueness of the unconstructed. It is interesting to see how, even after La Ribot abandons the frontal framing of the theatrical-perspectival, even after she embraces "presentation" through a yielding to gravity, to stillness, to horizontality, remnants of the well-built invade her work through the explicit marks of the institutional. And that is why the stupid question about the cardboard is so crucial. For, if a piece of cardboard appears to function for and with frontal viewing, the fact that years later it ends up extended on the floor of the gallery implies that the presentation La Ribot is so interested in must be one constantly oscillating between the (vertical plane of the) representational and the (horizontal plane of the) choreographic – the choreographic understood here as the inscription on a page of a symbolic of movement.

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POLITICS OF MOVEMENT

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CHAPTER 4
TOPPLING DANCE:
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DESIGN
LILIANA DE ANDRADE

PRODUCTION
SINGLE EDITION

