

## **#work #dance #labor #movements**

An exhibition by **Johanna Bruckner** and **Discoteca Flaming Star**  
curated by **Dimitrina Sevova** and **Alan Roth**.

**Opening:** Saturday, 20 August 2016, starting at 18:30h  
with a performance by **Discoteca Flaming Star** at 20:00h.

Saturday, 20 August 2016 - Friday, 23 September 2016

### **Opening Hours / Öffnungszeiten**

Wednesday / Mittwoch, 15:00h – 18:00h

Thursday / Donnerstag, 16:00h – 19:00h

Friday / Freitag, 15:00h – 18:00h

Saturday / Samstag, 14:00h – 16:30h

### **Curatorial Text**

*“A group of bodies is an instrument as varied and colorful as an orchestra; it offers the composer a material that is as rich for accomplishing the totality of her/his vision. The group has also the impersonal and architectural attributes of the orchestra, which should be distinguished from the personal, expressive and unique qualities...”<sup>1</sup> (Doris Humphrey)*

*A more serious side of the process (of developing a piece) necessarily entailed a great deal of soul-searching and agonizing on my part about control and authority. It seemed that once one allowed the spontaneous expression and responses and opinions of performers to affect one’s own creative process – in this respect the rehearsals were as crucial as the performances – then the die was cast: there was no turning back to the old hierarchy of director and directed.<sup>2</sup> (Yvonne Rainer)*

The exhibition **#work #dance #labor #movements** brings together the installation and performance *Love Any Out of (90 Seconds) End* by

1 Doris Humphrey quoted by Selma Jean Cohen. Selma Jean Cohen (ed.) *Doris Humphrey, an Artist First: An Autobiography* (Middletown/CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972). Doris Humphrey was one of the first to put the focus on dance composition for groups. “She proclaims the option of dance’s autonomy towards music up to the possibility of dancing to the silence,” this wave of vibrating silent and physical voices that makes the impersonal and singular individuation the passage to politics. Cf. <<http://www.contemporary-dance.org/doris-humphrey.html>> (accessed 2016-08-11).

2 Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings Are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge/MA and London: The MIT Press, 2013/2006), p. 322.

Discoteca Flaming Star, and the research-process-based video installations *Rebel Bodies (Episodes I & II)* and *Total Algorithms of Partiality* by Johanna Bruckner.

The exhibition project is about the pleasure of enjoying the other, and sets out to produce an impersonal refrain made of polyphonic tunes and collaborative rhythms. It consciously considers the current post-Fordist conditions and the precarious situation of creative labor and the immaterial aspects of productivity today, to outline how all of us as agents in a network of relations, urgently need to invent our corporeal bodies dancing at the limit. It inevitably prompts each of us to recompose one's relation to the other. In this movement of interplay, when one takes care of the other, "the limit cannot be exhausted."<sup>3</sup> What Franco "Bifo" Berardi defines as the limit necessary to the production of the affect and of potentiality, for positive and active estrangement to overcome technological alienation, which is also social alienation. At the intersection of the practices of DFS and Bruckner, the exhibition displays techniques of movement that can be used for rehearsals every day in our daily life, to linguistically, affectively and politically engage its audience. It does not require particular dance skills. One can experiment and improvise, to find a 'mutation point' of a body's movements that precisely defines a practice of dance – a dance that does not require something exclusive. The works of DFS and Bruckner trace the everydayness of practices of dance and movement, practices that need repetition and a consistency of imperfection. The rehearsal techniques of improvisation are molecular tools for putting a spoke in the wheels of apparatuses of control and the cognitive automation they embed in the sensible, tools for introducing other dynamics in the acceleration of everyday life in machinic capitalism. The flexible dancing bodies that arc as a fish swarm between personal and social time, elude the usual coordinates of the floor.

*#work #dance #labor #movements* is an exhibition project in motion that considers dance movements as a personal/social process that recomposes the social body, a body as a particular thing, as a temporally stable, durational construction of aggregated parts, a construction that can never be conceived outside its conjunctural nature. It probes how the concrete body is collectively produced with respect to motion and rest of its conjoined parts and their affective resonances. The movement has its own presence, writes Simone Forti, an individuating power of impersonal, embodied social knowledge, to be thought in biopolitical terms, i.e., thought with the body. Affect is another way to talk about power and the body's internal construction, the power to be affected and to affect. Affect is the power of the resisting body, of body struggles, of the dancing body. Affect distributes bodies across a larger space open to multiple durations. Affect is a body politics. Foucault asserts that power struggles always involve 'body actions,' and affective power is productive since it "posits and produces reality as much as it sets limits on it."<sup>4</sup> As Deleuze put it: "What a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected."<sup>5</sup> To dance at the limit affects the body more than representation. It gives the key to an understanding of affirmative politics. The dancing body can de-limit negativity, disentangle itself from it.

Affirmative practices concern everything that belongs to the sensible, affective resonances between the bodies' parts and their differences, all multiplicities and their variabilities or intensities of total joy in the incorporeal, immaterial and impersonal event. "The question of sensibility

<sup>3</sup> Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> Ladelles McWhorter, "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy," *Hypatia*, Vol. 19, Issue 3, 2004, pp. 38-62, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p. 218.

becomes one with politics.”<sup>6</sup> The aesthetics and politics of the sensible, thought in terms of radical metaphysics and biopower, eroticizes the body both in its everyday existence and in the digital realm, conjoining irregular bodies to undermine competitive principles in every fragment of social life – sensible bodies of solidarity, justice and rights. The way they treat, in their artistic practices, the aesthetics of the sensible and biopolitics, intersects in the positions and the works for this exhibition of the artists Discoteca Flaming Star and Johanna Bruckner.

“Art is a Weapon” was a statement by Edith Segal and her dance company *Red Dancers*. She travelled to Soviet Russia in 1930 and, coming back to the US, influenced the *New Dance Group*, founded in 1932 “for the purpose of developing and creating group and mass dances expressive of the working class and its revolutionary upsurge,”<sup>7</sup> to formulate their slogan “Dance is a Weapon,” or “Dance Is a Weapon in the *Revolutionary Class Struggle*.” For the Revolutionary Dance Movement, “dance must serve as a vehicle for social change.” The affirmative practices of the movements of molecularity also involved dance for social change, but dance understood as constituting an existential territory.

“The unemployed dancer was a tautology,” writes Mark Franko with respect to the great depression of the 1930s.<sup>8</sup> In the current post-Fordist economic model, the unemployed dancer is more present than ever, accentuating the link between the dancing body and precariousness. “Modern dancers labored”<sup>9</sup> and fought for the recognition of dance practices as labor. And yet, Franko concedes that “people who strike in the workplace also dance to pass the time.” It would seem that in the context of the workers’ struggles and labor movements of the 1930s, dance and labor are contradictions in terms. While dance consists of movements natural to the living body, the movements of labor are constrained, forced and subsumed. They can only be thought in antagonistic terms. The movements of dance do not coincide with those of labor. Mark Franko notes in the same context that “the strike’s unproductive actions” – unproductive from the perspective of capital-labor relations. From the perspective of the bodies involved in the strike, dancing is productive of resistant collective subjectivities. Dance to pass the time. Dance to waste time. Wasted time, understood not as leisure time, is this unproductive time that does not coincide with the valorization of time and labor for capitalist production ends, but rather supposes another productivity. At the same time, the strikers’ dance is “the intrusion of social dance into the workplace and time.”<sup>10</sup> If the workers were not dancers and the dancers were not workers, asks Franko: “What, then, is and was the work of dance?” Is dance work? Is it another form of conjunction in solidarity and love of the other that can be inserted into the working conditions? In the case of the dancing strikers, it organizes them in ways different from the choreography of the assembly line. Can this practice of dancing apply in a different way to organizing workers in the digital infosphere, where the dancing bodies would not be organized as a network, since dance is an erotic and corporeal presence of the body in which the process of socialization and becoming together resists appropriation and submission of their lives and mental activity to automated calculations? Unless, of course, the cognitarian workers are made to dance to corporate songs or levitate in yoga sessions by their employer as a contribution to corporate identity. How might dancing together be possible when the digital

6 F. Berardi, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

7 Library of Congress, *Politics and the Dancing Body. Finding a Political Voice* (exhibition 16 February – 28 July 2012) <<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/politics-and-dance/finding-a-political-voice.html>> (accessed 2016-08-11).

8 Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance. Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s* (Middletown/CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), p. 164.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

corporate production process involves workers in different locations and even time zones, often without physical contact?

Within the Revolutionary Dance Movement, which appropriated modern dance formalist techniques to transform them into revolutionary dance as a real weapon for the emancipation of culture, dance was the workers' radical rejection of the rationalization of labor practices under industrial capitalism. The Revolutionary Dance Movement used rehearsal in a new, radical way not only to develop a choreography but also as a training technique for itself that will not lead to a performance onstage. The repetition of the rehearsal opposes representation. It creates a situation of radical demand of participation (revolutionary dance was characterized by an ideology of radical/direct participation). The rehearsal was repeated over and over again, to the exhaustion of the performance and of representation, to an end at which the participants became conscious of power. It is "a phenomenon that, without assuring existing relation, unveils new potentials."<sup>11</sup> In the rehearsal, the participatory and emancipatory practices of the Revolutionary Dance Movement constituted the dance revolution of daily life – the repetition that is the formless being of all differences of the new multitude. In the density of their movements, dance embodied a new sense of realism and wild empiricism, not sensual for itself. Empiricism here is to be understood as techniques of observation of spontaneous behavior "like walking, standing-lying down or being born-dying,"<sup>12</sup> which mutates the score into a map of improvisation. It is the dance construction of molecularity, which is a new thinking about politics – a minoritarian politics of molecular revolution, no longer the Marxist idea of the pure proletarian act. For the molecularity, dance movements are a weapon in the militant techniques of becoming, making becoming as a social domain accessible to everyone, with all molecular affairs. In the anti-hegemonic struggles of the 1970s, with the introduction of automation and optimization of the working process, the mass deskilled laborers changed the revolutionary dance techniques to subdomains of struggles, subrepresentative and informal movements of a minor and ordinary people, "eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary."<sup>13</sup> In a dance, and everyone is a dancer, with or without training, in the dance of "the political composition of subjectivity." (Antonio Negri) Ideology cedes to subjectivity, which becomes the main productivity of the multitude. Johanna Bruckner, in her notations *All that is Solid Dissolves into a Weapon*, a selection of her collection of archive materials on the Revolutionary Dance Movement<sup>14</sup> and her video actualization of it, bends and reinvents the idea of revolutionary rehearsal in her simultaneously poetic and discursive language, to "make dance technique a rehearsal for mass movement; one that turns life into a living organism that knows its interiority; its body parts; its boundaries through which it confronts reality as a battlefield of contradictions."<sup>15</sup>

In the molecularity, dance is not only a humanist privilege or technological achievement. It is post-humanist disjunctive micro movements – always incomplete. They never coincide, but can sometimes intersect and co-exist. This is the kind of micro-movements studied by Simone Forti, close to the micro-tonalities of John Cage: "Every movement, every stepping off a curb, every fall of a leaf has its own particular quality. We used the term

11 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

12 Maria del Pilar Naranjo Rico on Doris Humphrey's approach, on her website <<http://www.contemporary-dance.org/doris-humphrey.html>> (accessed 2016-08-14).

13 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis/MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997 (1993)), p. 4.

14 Library of Congress, Washington DC.

15 Johanna Bruckner, *Rebel Bodies*, 2015-2016. Text from video still.

movement quality to help us focus on this particularity of essence, and to help us not discriminate against any movement we could experience.”<sup>16</sup>

Simone Forti integrated everyday movements as both valid performance form and practice. Discoteca Flaming Star's practices and works are influenced by her philosophy, studies of movements, logomotions, dance techniques and poetics, and especially in the construction of their 'notation' for their installation, which can be read, and looked at, and danced as a parallel, simultaneous, or even independent events that exist in different planes of the notation coming from the same source, the notation for their dance construction *Love Any Out of (90 Seconds) End*. It is simultaneously drawings, a numbered sequence of seconds collaged from cellar tape bent into the figures of a cryptic alphabet of numbers, and written poems of disentangled poetic lines that give space for improvisation and reinvention of the score. "Behind difference there is nothing," and in this logic of sense, poetry is rather nothing. What, then, does poetry do? How do the written text and the dance coexist in the affected empty space, to implicate one in the other, to animate the plastic tape, which alludes to the ribbon, an apparatus in rhythmic gymnastics? A dance construction concerns structures and events, and how the body is formed in their relation. It is an aesthetics and politics of duration, a play on the virtual plane, and multiplicities beyond identity. It is that which can only be composed on the plane of composition, the body that fails on the dancing floor in order to overcome gravity and to find power to jump again and to give another spatial resolution.

The two scores for movements by DFS and Bruckner in the exhibition are both abstracted devices and very visual and material that can conjoin or disjoin bodies and movements. They are extraordinary algorithmic functions that animate another meta-economic play of subjective and extra-productive marginalities of time and space. The practices of DFS and Bruckner both actively engage to re-think collectivity and collectivism, the aesthetics and politics of movements and dance as an existential territory that concerns every movement given in experience and inscribed in the body – an affective memory of both the body and the brain. In parallel, they provide the score for another movement, where one can use one's own experience and recompose out of these two directions of movement one's own dance construction. The existence of the body and its geography always apply the notion of irreversible duration, the actualization and architecture of concrete duration. Duration is the passage to politics. It is the difference of the passage, this in-betweenness, the empty space in-between the times and between the bodies. The politics and aesthetics of the interval, in between the duration of two dance – the space of individuation.

Following Forti's *Logomotion* techniques, an improvisational dance practice that involves both body movement and speaking as independent planes in the construction of the movement, "mixing and animating both speech and physical embodiment,"<sup>17</sup> another intersection of their practices can be drawn, as both DFS and Bruckner bring together written text and movements in their works in the exhibition at Corner College. The text is not complementary or explanatory, but rather makes another, independent movement or *logomotion* in which language has become detached from representation, from the relation between the signifier and the referent. Impersonal and rather disjoint from the physical movements of the body, the *logomotion* is a poetic expression in which language crumbles into a chaotomic figure of variabilities and intensities of individuation. Being singular, these enunciations collapse and spill out into

16 Simone Forti, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

17 In her own words: "I'm mainly focusing on how movement and language very naturally work together in our everyday lives, in our cognition and communication. I'm improvising from that root behavior, simultaneously dancing and speaking, trying to keep it earnest, light and surprising." *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the enigmatic multiplicity of the non-space (or heterotopia) of language, an entrance into the virtual and the vulnerability of the body as its own temporal death. The *logomotion* in the work of Bruckner is embodied in the discursive realm where she collects heterogeneous voices from their respective social, economic and media conditions. In DFS's work, their *logomotion* is a poetics and politics of aesthetic implications of the personal and the social that works as a cure, as therapeutic techniques of e-motions.

*Text: Dimitrina Sevova & Alan Roth*