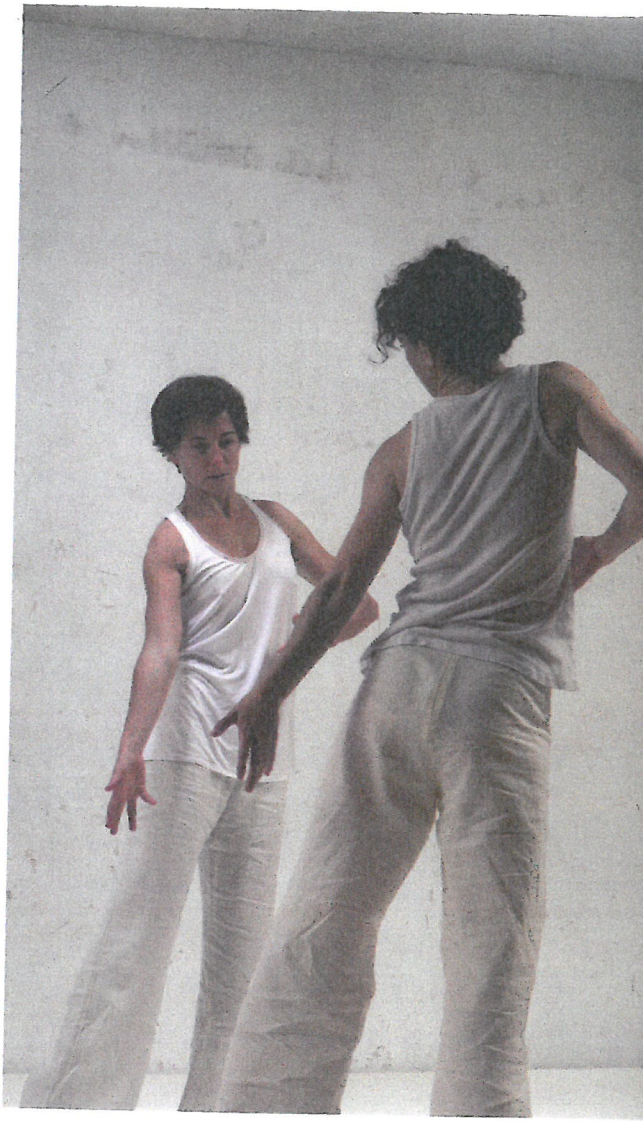
KINESTHETIC EMPATHY IN CREATIVE AND CULTURAL PRACTICES



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Chapter 10

Re-Thinking Stillness: Empathetic Experiences of Stillness in Performance and Sculpture

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This chapter will explore ways in which stillness has the power to move both our physical and emotional faculties. It will argue that in its apparent absence, movement becomes more present and we acknowledge that binary oppositions between stillness and movement do not and cannot sensibly exist; stillness is within movement and movement is within stillness, each reciprocating the other. As an artist working with performance and sculpture I intend to draw upon my own practice-based explorations of stillness in live performance coupled with analysis of engagement with two art works from different disciplines that allow me to test and illustrate this argument. In particular I will draw upon contemporary European choreographer La Ribot and her performance work 'Another Bloody Mary' (2000), and the sculpture 'Stuck' (2010) by 2010 Turner Prize nominee Angela de la Cruz, making connections back to my own practice with each discussion. This analysis requires an ability to draw upon complex interconnections between visual and corporeal modes of reception and thus employs an interdisciplinary methodology. Through each phase of this exploration I hope to articulate the kinesthetic experiences of stillness and the empathetic exchange that takes place between spectator/performer and spectator/art object.

Moving towards stillness

My own performance practice began as a professional dancer and has been significantly shaped by my physical and psychological experiences of rigorous conservatoire training. This training, engaged in for over a decade, was something that I undertook in order to transform my body into one that could move with strength, stamina, flexibility and apparent ease, the prerequisites of professional dance training. In my experience, the trained dancing body aims to communicate language and images through the body with a fluency based upon an efficiency of movement and an economy of kinetic effort in a manner that is not natural but is learnt. As such, my experiences of stillness have been troubled by dance, given that historically the art form has been driven by the promise of movement and a pleasure in the kinetic. In many respects, stillness in dance is used as a contrast: a temporal compositional tool that underlines movement; a choreographic device that offers the possibility of a dramatic suspense when placed in dynamic juxtaposition with movement. Stillness used in this way is always in debt to and in service to the potential for movement.

My current practice seeks to perform a critique of the prerequisites of this history and training in dance performance, and has involved a strategic shift away from dance into

realms of performance art and sculpture. Not coincidentally this has led to a shift towards stillness that has offered me a critical pause from the kinetic, a time and space to re-explore the rich potentiality of the kinesthetic. Sally Gardner offers a distinction between the two, suggesting that the kinetic derives from a modernist appreciation for the sensational, manifested in the visibility of movement, and that kinesthetic appreciation is concerned with what is corporeally sensed (Gardner 2008). The term 'kinesthetic' is therefore used in this investigation to refer to sensate and subtle bodily perceptions. Perhaps more crucial to this investigation, one that foregrounds empathetic experiences of kinesthesia between performer and spectator, is Gardner's assertion that kinesthetic modes of perception are 'intersubjective and intercorporeal'(Gardner 2008: 56). Thus, the corporeal exchange *between* performer and spectator will be foregrounded throughout this investigation considering the spectator as an active embodied subject.

Initially, I met this performance of stillness with some concern, given that the desire to please an expectant spectator by moving was strong, as was the pressure to make explicit the act of 'doing'. However, stillness remained crucial to my investigation as it facilitated the time and space necessary for kinesthetic perceptions of the body to evolve between performer and spectator, as Henri Bergson states, 'Perception is prolonged in nascent action' (cited in Gardner 2008: 56). Dance critic Laurent Goumarre relates this approach to the work of La Ribot and comments, 'La Ribot, motionless, is not waiting *for* anything, especially not for the "birth" of motion. Her mobility is attentive *per se*; it is a posture in itself' (Goumarre 2004: 60).

By defining perceptual differences between the kinetic and kinesthetic, my intention is not to establish a binary position whereby one is deemed exclusively preferable to the other, rather I hope to propose a constructive tension. Conversely, throughout this investigation I intend to highlight that the two are not mutually exclusive by evidencing works whereby stillness is utilised to draw attention to the subtlety of movement within stillness itself. However, as Elizabeth Dempster reminds us, 'regimes of production and reception of performance work rarely foreground kinaesthetic (as opposed to the more spectacular "kinetic") value' (cited in Gardner 2008: 55). Therefore, by defining and articulating the value of kinesthetic perceptions (admittedly with a persistence that might seem to edge towards a bias) I simply aim to address this incomplete project of apprehending the kinesthetic (Gardner 2008).

Intuitively, a personal response to over a decade of dance training, whereby all possibilities for new movement had seemed exhausted, pushed me to the point of a stalemate. This rupture in my own practice is one informed by a critical discourse, brought to the fore in the early 1990s in contemporary European dance theory and embracing the work of choreographers such as La Ribot, Xavier le Roy, Mårten Spångberg, Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Jonathan Burrows and Tino Sehgal, in an ongoing critical and choreographic project that seeks to reconsider the politics of movement in relation to dance practices. As opposed to stillness being a negative transgression for dance, this critique reconceptualises the still act as a positive progression, one that has shifted the paradigm of movement-based performance. A key voice here, and one who has significantly transformed my own work, is

that of André Lepecki, in particular his book *Exhausting Dance* (2006).[1] In this work Lepecki suggests that the practised obedience of the dancer arrests their body in a system whereby it becomes a mute currency in an economy of movement, one that potentially erases the body's autonomy. This dancing body that Lepecki refers to is often unaware of its complicity; he refers to the naive 'willingness of this body to subject to commands to move' (Lepecki 2006: 46). Having engaged with this critical debate I felt compelled to reconsider both the politics and aesthetics of my own movement language, reflecting that '*my*' movement language had in fact been somebody else's; '*my*' body – the vessel – had transported a choreographed language of actions via virtuosic coded techniques.

In stillness I was able to reconsider the impact this training and its implicit ideology had made on my body and my self, having been interpolated into a powerful ideological system. This critique is not exclusive to dance but is one that resonates in wider performance and cultural contexts. It positions stillness as an act that challenges the politics of movement and economy of bodies in performance but also, as German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk claims, challenges 'the ethics of modernity' (Sloterdijk 2009: 4). This drive to move is one that Sloterdijk finds bound up in the modern impulse to be active and here movement becomes synonymous with an imperative to be productive. He comments, 'Ontologically, modernity is a pure "being-towards-movement"' (Sloterdijk 2009: 6) and we might argue that the common ontological perception of the dancing body is that it too is a being towards producing movement (Lepecki 2006; Sloterdijk 2009).[2]

A radical reduction of movement in performance, particularly for practices such as dance or those where action is intrinsic, potentially threatens the foundations upon which movement practices have been built. Stillness, as a mode of critiquing this is not, however, a strategy exclusive to the most recent developments in dance, having already been explored significantly by postmodern dancers and choreographers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Gardner states, 'The strategies of post-modern dance could be said to have grown out of artists' conviction that "the body" is always, already dancing. Movement is not something added to the body' (Gardner 2008: 56). A clear example of this strategy is Steve Paxton, recognised for his investigation of 'The Small Dance' taking place within 'The Stand', where for Paxton the simple act of standing still is not necessarily so simple or still at all.[3] In fact what is taking place is an intricacy of activity performed on a micro, seemingly invisible scale due to internal neuromuscular movements. The circulatory and cardiovascular systems, the skeleton's distribution of weight in the act of balancing on two feet and its resistance of gravity in the verticality of the stand contribute to this. Modernist dance critic John Martin asserted that 'perception itself was a neuromuscular event, an activity of and with our bodies' (Gardner 2008: 56). This claim suggests that as spectators perceive a performer, they too are performing neuromuscular movements by experiencing and perceiving the performance through their own bodies. This strongly supports the notion of kinesthetic empathy as applied to this investigation as a micro, intercorporeal exchange between performer and spectator. Emphasising this 'microscopy of perception' (Lepecki 2001: 2) through stillness, for both performer and spectator, became my own strategy in performance.

As an act of post-spectacle, stillness carries with it a history and therefore a weight of responsibility. Paradoxically, inaction becomes action, artistically and politically, physically and conceptually. Thus, stillness performs both a conceptual movement towards new modes of being in and watching performance; and a cultural movement towards new ways of being in and watching the world.

Embodying stillness

My own practice has been informed by these theoretical debates and can also, I believe, be used to illustrate them. One example is a work that I made at the end of an MA in Performance research process at York St John University in 2009 titled 'Pleat' (figure 10.1).[4] 'Pleat' aimed to explore the relationship between performance and sculpture and was concerned with the reciprocal relationship between the materiality of objects and the body in live performance. Using my body and white bed sheets, 'Pleat' culminated in a series of 11 performed sculptures that I articulate within the tradition of action sculptures.

I use the term 'action sculpture' to define a type of sculpture that incorporates the live body as well as objects and other materials. It is a mode of sculpture akin to action painting that requires the physicality of the body for its coming into existence. Stillness became an integral part of this process given that each of the 11 actions within 'Pleat' resulted in a prolonged stillness, emphasising this moment, the product of the action, as sculpture. In addition, I also consider the process of arriving at this stillness as a form of sculpture, although a kinetic one. Influenced by La Ribot and choreographers who work in the space between dance and fine art practices, my own work also moves in between these territories. Adrian Heathfield, writer and curator of contemporary performance, describes this territory in saying: 'Its terrain is the place where dance dissolves into action, the movement of stillness and the exposed materiality of the flesh' (Heathfield 2006: 195). In 'Pleat' the affective experience of these action sculptures and bodily exposures, made possible via a prolonged stillness, is contingent upon a shared temporal and spatial relationship between my own body, the white sheets and their empathetic relation to the spectator's body.

Proxemic relations

I believe that the performance space is crucial in order to create the conditions for a relationship whereby the spectator kinesthetically empathises with the performer's own bodily state. The mechanics that a choreographer employs to make these conditions possible is what Gerald Siegmund describes as the 'apparatus' (Siegmund 2009). In the work, 'héâtre-élévision' (2002–2004), which I experienced at the 'Move: Choreographing You: Art and Dance' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in 2010, choreographer Boris Charmatz constructs a performance environment for one spectator.[5] To experience the work the spectator enters

Figure 10.1: Victoria Gray, Pleat, 2009. Performance stills. Image courtesy Nathan Walker.

a dark room and is instructed to lie down, with blanket and pillow, on a large object that is difficult to identify, but is described in the exhibition guide as a 'pretend grand piano' (Luckett 2010). A pre-recorded dance performance is playing on a single channel television that is suspended inches from the spectator's face, whilst small speakers are positioned close to the spectator's head. This proxemic apparatus enabled a private, very intimate and intense experience whereby a heightened microscopy of perception was made possible. Of this work Gerald Siegmund comments that, 'The Apparatus produces attention. Attention depends on exclusion and focus. I see and hear more when I see and hear less' (Siegmund 2009: 335). This experience provoked me to consider what apparatus I use in my own performances to produce this level of attention and through 'Pleat', and my performances in general, I realise that stillness is this apparatus, one that seeks to exclude an excess of movement so that the spectator has time to see and feel more. Additionally, stillness is an apparatus that allows a closer proximity between performer and spectator, one that excludes an excess of visual stimulation and distraction. This apparatus gives the spectator specific conditions of time and space to re-focus their attention onto the detailed materiality of my body and materials used.

Contemporary performance theorist SanSan Kwan comments that, 'When the body is at rest our powers of introspective proprioception experience a world of microscopic tremors, vibrations and pulsations happening within the body' (Kwan 2003: 17–18). This echoes Steve Paxton's claim to the activity integral in 'The Stand' and as a performer and spectator, I found I too experienced this heightened perception whilst in stillness.

It is intended that spectators of my own performances (figure 10.2) empathise with my physical state and enter into this acute mode of perception by being enabled to witness my body close up, or as Adrian Heathfield articulates, to witness 'the exposed materiality of the flesh' (Heathfield 2006: 195). They may notice fine age lines and veins under my skin, marks and scars accrued from past performances, or, perhaps witness the hair on my skin respond to changes in temperature in the room. Sweat may be apparent from the effort of the action, coupled with small bodily tremors caused by the physical and mental exertion of adrenaline and nerves.

Here, a magnitude of intricacies become visible, which are often illegible to the eye in the distancing that takes place between performer and spectator in traditional performance conditions. This is particularly true of classical ballet for example, or performances more generally that situate themselves within the context of the proscenium arch. The visibility of this detail in 'Pleat' was intended to give the spectator an opportunity to engage with the finite materiality of my body, not as a distant representation in theatrical space and time, but as an honest and vulnerable presentation of my own body.

Stillness and 'Another Bloody Mary' (2000)

There is a connectedness between my own methodology and La Ribot that I wish to articulate in relation to her work 'Another Bloody Mary' (2000) (figure 10.3). In his essay,

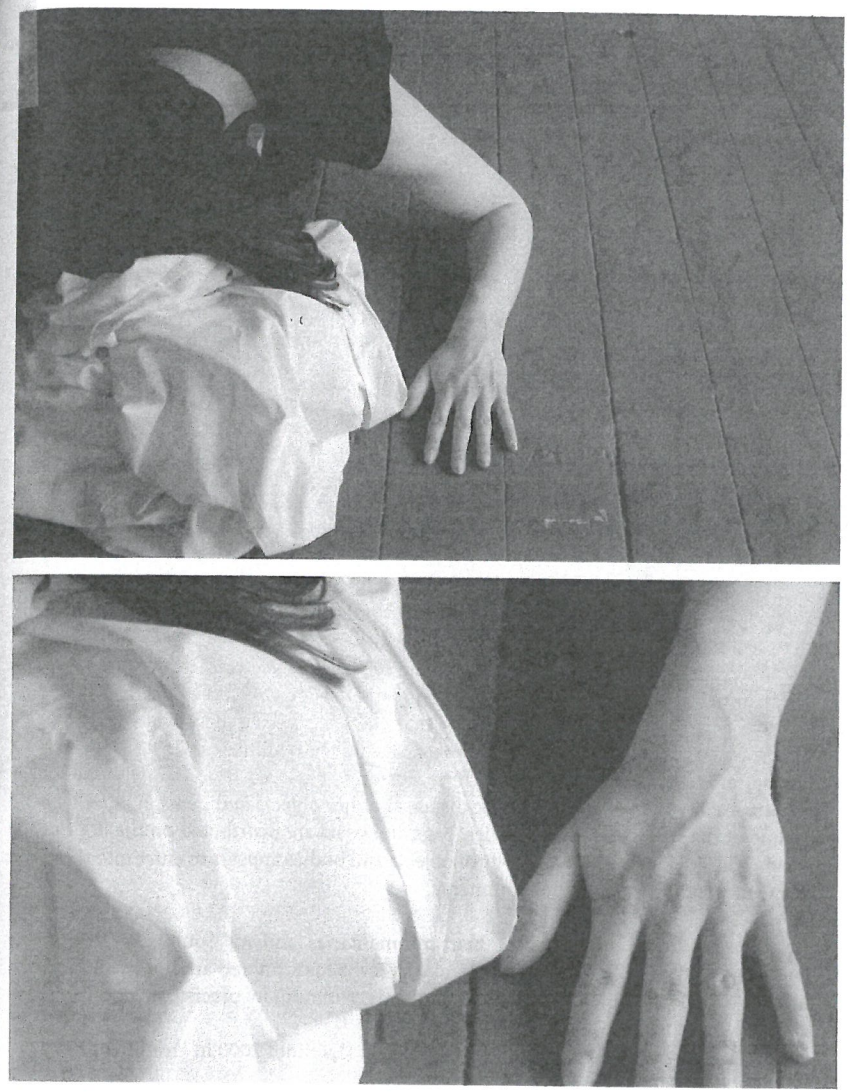

Figure 10.2: Victoria Gray, Pleat, 2009. Performance stills detail. Image courtesy Nathan Walker.

'After the Fall: Dance-Theatre and Dance-Performance' (2006), Adrian Heathfield describes how La Ribot's body of choreographic practice has reconfigured understandings of the body by transforming the spatial and therefore social relations between performer and spectator in performance situations. Echoing my own reflections on 'Pleat', of 'Another Bloody Mary' (2000) Heathfield comments;

> For here, the round of gallery spectatorship replaces the theatrical frame; the frontal cedes to panoramic exposure; and the binary division of the performer–spectator relation is dispersed. The spectator is liberated from a static place by the choice and fluidity of the promenade. This aesthetic side-step of the theatrical plane deftly brings the spectator into a field of social and sensory engagement.
>
> (Heathfield 2006: 195)

As well as the dispersion of the performer–spectator, it is the subtler point concerning social relations in the performance space that are for me crucial when considering ways in which sensory empathetic exchanges are possible. La Ribot demonstrates the effects of this in 'Another Bloody Mary' as she arranges a selection of red coloured objects, garments and clothes on the floor until this chromatic arrangement begins to resemble a pool of spilled blood. Wearing green heels that contrast with this pool of red she fixes a blonde wig to her head that covers her face, obscuring her identity and her ability to make eye contact with her audience. After applying a smaller equivalent wig to her pubic area she commences a slow fall to the floor, toppling over her green heels. Here she remains for some time in stillness amongst this sculptural, yet un-monumental arrangement, having choreographed the objects and space into a living sculpture that now incorporates her own body.

Her body holds itself, apparently inanimate, apart from evidence of her steady breathing, as a sculptural being, manifesting what I have already discussed in terms of 'action sculpture'. The horizontality of this action and the dispersal of her objects and items of clothing echo the plane of the spectators. Their bodies, bags and coats are distributed on the floor of the space and this incidental choreography of objects and bodies appears to enter into the work. Of these incorporations La Ribot comments,

> My objects, their bags or coats; their commentaries and my sound; sometimes my stillness 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.
>
> (La Ribot 2000 in Heathfield 2004: 30)

Here La Ribot identifies a contingency that includes the spectator as she suggests that her own stillness and spectators' stillness, their commentaries and her sound, become and belong to the same realisation of the work. There is a reciprocal exchange taking place here between performer and spectator, and it is one that I too experience and encourage in my

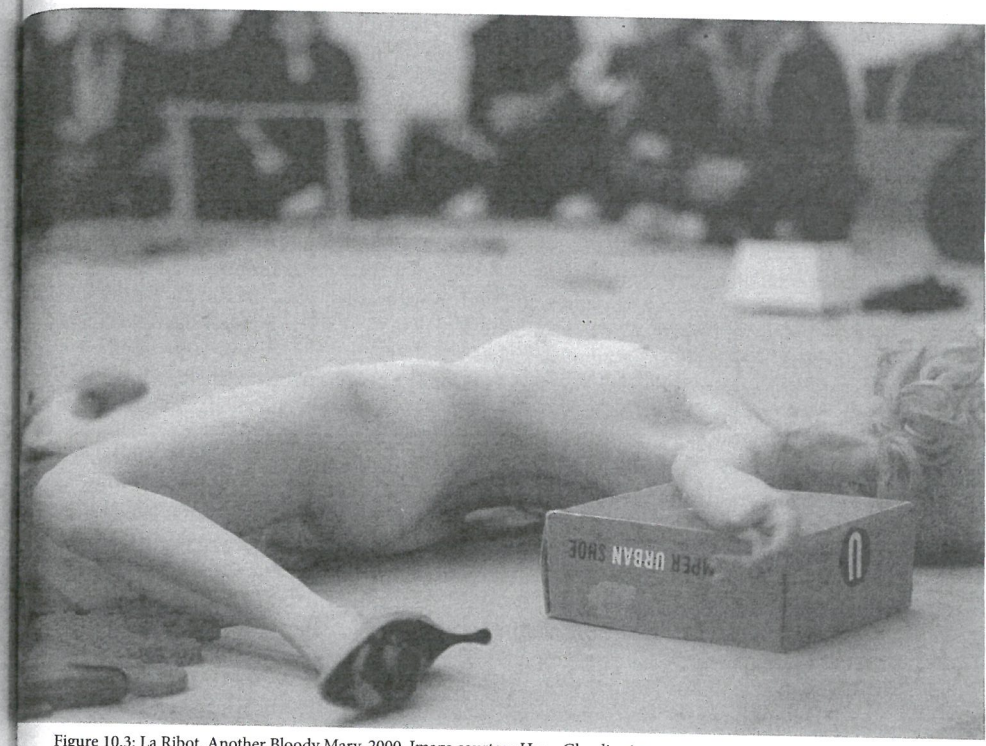

Figure 10.3: La Ribot, Another Bloody Mary, 2000. Image courtesy Hugo Glendinning.

own performance. To maintain the point I make above, I feel this is where the potential for affective kinesthetic empathy lies, in a blurring of spatial and social boundaries, in an incorporation of other bodies and objects.

I have noticed a similar blurring of experiences between performer and spectator in a variety of ways in my own work. For example, I notice in my performances that the longer I remain still, the more the spectator seems to have a desire to move. Like the need to fill an uncomfortable silence, the spectator fills my uncomfortable stillness, putting movement where there previously was none. There is a tension in the expectancy of the spectator, manifested in their slight shifts of weight, in heavy and often impatient breathing and in occasional talking. These shifts and occasional commentary make tangible their physical and mental struggle, both to remain still and to witness stillness, presenting a threshold of boredom to be surpassed. My apparent lack of activity requires a perceptive adjustment and a silent agreement must be made between performer and spectator to give sufficient time and attention to these small details. As theorist Antonia Payne comments, 'To witness the stillness of another is an act of complicity – a necessary empathetic transaction, a performance of mutual attentiveness to the body, space, the incidental details of each other' (Payne 2006: 121). I witness this complicity as slowly, the spectator and I settle into a mutual stillness, the positioning and shape of our bodies tessellates, occasionally mirroring or accidentally echoing the other. If my stillness requires a standing position, it is common that the spectator shares this plane by standing too. If my stillness requires a move to the floor, I have known spectators to lie or sit with me and so consciously or unconsciously we begin to share a similar distribution of weight. This is particularly true of the largely horizontal action sculptures of 'Pleat' and can also be seen happening in the image of 'Another Bloody Mary' where audiences share the ground with La Ribot. In a levelling of planes I hope that spectators experience a physical sense of what it might feel like for me to maintain stillness in difficult positions for what can sometimes be a long time. Post-performance, spectators of 'Another Bloody Mary' are known to have verbally expressed specific empathy and perhaps sympathy for La Ribot as she held her final contorted position on the floor.

Like La Ribot's slow and sustained fall, I also experience a settling down taking place, often manifested in a synchronicity of breathing between performer and spectator. This strategic slowing down brings attention to the rhythm of stillness through breath and serves to evoke a 'dense slow-moving sensorium' (Heathfield 2004: 8) in the work. Here, the temporal properties of the work are emphasised as having an important function in the underlining of its sensorial qualities. As Heathfield comments:

> Things take their time, and time itself is exposed as a product of bodies, senses and perceptions. This time as it is experienced is not the normative, progressive time of culture, but a time that is always divided and subject to different flows and speeds: a time out of time.
>
> (Heathfield 2004: 8)

I find Heathfield's last phrase 'a time out of time' particularly relevant. As discussed earlier in relation to my own training as a dancer, the temporality of the art form was continually hinged upon being '*on*' time for a cue or '*on*' time in relation to other dancing bodies moving in space. Stillness as a mode of being in time that would allow me to justify a falling '*out*' of time appealed as a transgression from the dancing norm. Not only does this represent another way of experiencing time in performance situations, but as suggested by Heathfield might also sidestep the progressive time of modern culture. Peter Sloterdijk comments, 'The categorical impulse of modernity is: in order to be continuously active as progressive beings man should overcome all the conditions where his movement is reduced, where he has come to a halt, where he lost his freedom and where he is pitifully fixed' (Sloterdijk 2009: 5).

Stillness in my own work and in the work of such contemporary European dance performance makers as La Ribot operates against this model of time and therefore against the impulse of modernity. Practising stillness becomes an embodiment of these critical theories and, as opposed to fixing bodies, stillness has the effect of freeing bodies from the frenetic kinetic drive of modernity. Here, the body might experience time kinesthetically as opposed to the more dominant kinetic experience, creating a space where 'orthodox clock time slides into the immeasurable fields of sensory time' (Heathfield 2004: 8).

This paradigm of performance work negates the constant delivery of more and more new images and asks audiences to be active in observing single images for longer. It aims to steady the fast, mediated pace of our times and resists the obligation in performance to entertain. So, whilst stillness in my performances denies a spectator the spectacle of the kinetic, this resistance simultaneously offers them something different. My body in stillness seeks to underline the activity going on at the periphery of the space, under the surface of the skin, for both performer and spectator. Therefore stillness in 'Pleat' was harnessed as a methodology to engender a hyper-awareness, to promote a search for something where there first appears to be nothing.

Stillness, 'Stuck' and activating sculpture

One discussion that has been prominent in performance practices and theory in recent years, particularly since the early 1990s, is the relationship between dance and fine art practices.[6] This relationship is not new and should be acknowledged as a re-visitation of collaborations between dancers and fine artists in the 1960s, particularly between Judson Dance Theater and minimalist and conceptual artists practicing at the time. This shift historically and currently negotiates a move from the theatre into the gallery space, where as Heathfield commented (cited above), 'the round of gallery spectatorship replaces the theatrical frame'.

As mentioned earlier, the 'Move: Choreographing You: Art and Dance' exhibition focused precisely on this interrelationship between dance, installation art and sculpture.[7] In connection with this exhibition, a symposium was held where panel discussions sought to interrogate the politics of stillness and movement and draw parallels between dance and

sculpture. It reconsidered sculptural objects as performative choreographic objects, which despite their apparent inanimacy could be activated by spectator's bodies. In turn these works physically affect and mobilise the choreography of spectators' bodies in the process. This animation took place most clearly with works that required the spectator to physically interact by holding, climbing into or carrying elements of the work. For example, to experience William Forsythe's choreographic object, 'The Fact of Matter' (2009), spectators must navigate their way across the space whilst balancing on a series of climbing rings, hanging from the ceiling at various heights, posing various degrees of physical difficulty. In this example the kinetic effect on the performative object and spectator was explicit. I am keen, however, to consider the animating effects of sculptural objects whereby no literal choreographed physical contact or visible manipulation is made. Here, I am considering instances where a more sophisticated, subtle and implied sense of movement and sensation is transferred between static art object and spectator through empathy. Having already considered these possibilities in relation to live performance I wish to test these theories against a sculptural object.

An experience of the exhibition *After* (2010) at Camden Arts Centre London by artist Angela de la Cruz served as a powerful reminder of why I am moved by stillness. One sculptural piece in particular, appropriately or inappropriately in this context named 'Stuck' (2010), underlines the tension held within an object caught between animate and inanimate states, tensions I empathise with in my body's stillness in performance (figure 10.4). Initially, I visually registered the work's synthetic materiality, and noted that the gallery description of the work was 'Oil on Canvas'. However, 'Stuck' disrupted traditional notions of oil on canvas as a 2D and static form; as such this 'painting' appeared to be oil spilling from the wall and took on 3D and dynamic sculptural qualities. The sculpture itself did not move but it moved me, both physically and emotionally, leaving a melancholic resonance. This dynamic visual image translated synesthetically into a physical sensation of thick oil pouring through my hands, causing a haptic shift in senses. I wanted to touch it yet, unlike my playful and tactile experience of William Forsythe's 'The Fact of Matter' (2009), the conventions of the gallery would not let me.

The canvas had folds that I felt a desire to fit my hands into, the depth of which would tell me something of the structure's weight. I could feel my own weight balanced in relation to an estimation of its sturdiness; the heaviness of 'Stuck' made my body feel light in comparison. I watched 'Stuck' be still from a number of perspectives: from the floor, from the opposite side of the room; I stood by its side, I kneeled at its feet and I faced it head on. The closer I came to 'Stuck', the taller it seemed and the smaller I became. The further away I stood, the smaller it seemed and the taller I became. I was an amalgamation of weak and strong in its presence.

Up close, afforded by our mutual stillness I could see that the grain of the canvas resembled lines on human skin and the black oil paint had a patina to it that when witnessed up close reflected me in its surface; its shine reflected and repelled my body as I edged closer. Here I am reminded of Jenn Joy's observation, on seeing her own reflection in the

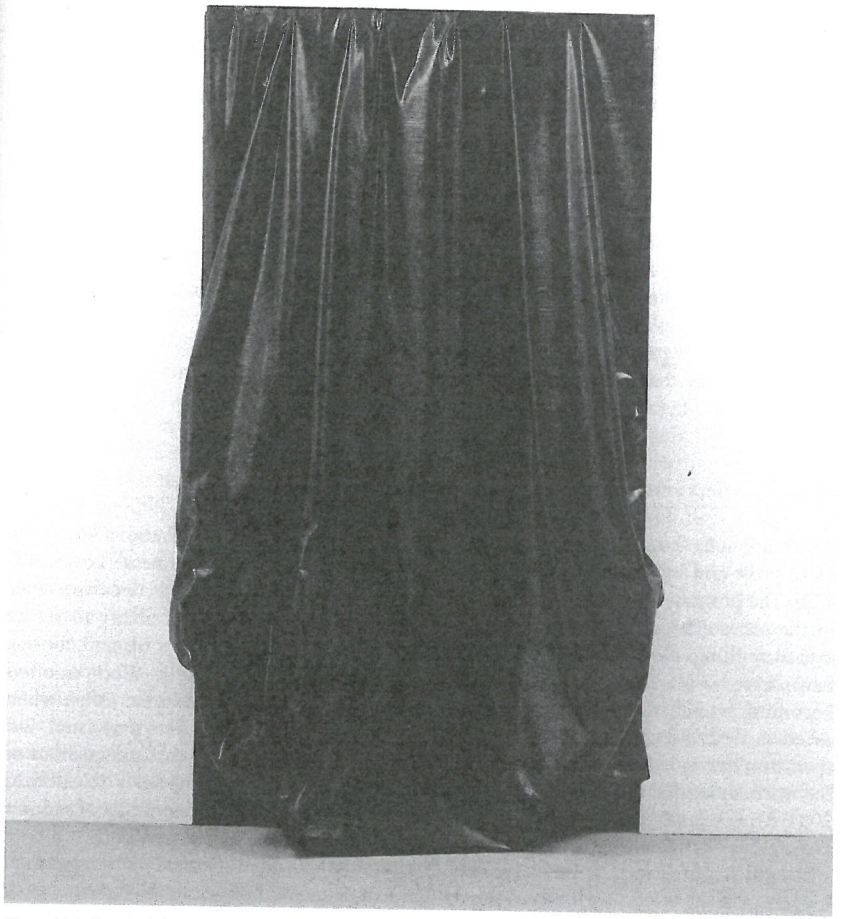

Figure 10.4: Angela de la Cruz, Stuck, 2010. Oil on canvas. Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery.

glass of a framed photographic work 'Cyc-7, C-Print' (2007) by Bill Durgin, 'Standing in front of the photograph, my reflection disturbs the surface, casting a shadow that imposes a particular way of seeing that obscures the image in the very moment that I attend to it' (Joy 2009: 64). My corporeal reflection caused by the light cast on 'Stuck' from the gallery ceiling caused me to shift so that my own body did not impose itself when viewing the work. I moved in relation to the stillness of 'Stuck', both avoiding seeing myself yet knowing that I am always projecting myself and my readings onto its surface. I could see qualities of my own action sculptures in 'Stuck', recognising aesthetic and material similarities that either already exist in my own work or that I strive to bring into existence. When I make work like 'Pleat', I would like to think that spectators have a physical experience, somewhere close to the one that I had looking at 'Stuck'. Whilst proximity and stillness are apparatuses that allow the spectator to look closely at the *performer*, I hope that, like 'Stuck,' this stillness also promotes a reflexive awareness of the *spectator's* own corporeal materiality, and of the movement taking place within the stillness of their own body. This is where affective and empathetic experiences can be located, through an apparatus for a heightened perception of an experience that is both physically and emotionally moving, a contact made without touching.

Empathy, affect and language

In the previous discussion I would identify within my language and reflections what Kate Love, artist and writer of fine art history and theory, has named a 'muzziness' (Love 2005: 170). The proximity to my own work when writing about it and my subjective experience of the other artworks discussed risk a closeness that might distort my ability to see or articulate things clearly. These empathetic experiences seem to surpass words and, for me, have caused a blurring of distinctions between emotion and kinesthetic affect, emotion becoming interchangeable with affective experience despite being different. Often when asked to describe what we experienced during a performance, both as a performer and spectator, our emotions take precedence over an articulation of the sensorial qualities of the work, those that Heathfield described as belonging to 'immeasurable fields' (Heathfield 2004: 8). For example, in the case of 'Pleat' I have often experienced emotions of sadness during a performance, prolonged by the melancholic resonance of stillness. Both as a doer and a watcher of performance, I have used this emotion as a quantifier and defining term of my sensorial experiences. However, this assignment of an emotion seems to be shortcutting or devaluing the complexity of these affective experiences. Theorist of affect and sensation Brian Massumi articulates this clearly in commenting,

> [A]n emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically

> and semiotically formed progression, into narrativizable action–reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognised.
>
> (cited in Caspao 2009: 134)

This 'action–reaction' process that Massumi identifies, whereby affect is qualified by the linguistic articulation of an emotion, causes a delay. This delay is connected to German phenomenologist Bernhard Walfendels' idea that we experience something before we register it is happening and once we do it is too late. Walfendels comments that, 'This deferral means that here and now I am somewhere else, where I never was and never will be. That which we perceive happens too early, the remarking happens too late' (cited in Siegmund 2009: 335). We are past the point of experience, already moving into and out of a new one, therefore, unable to comment from within experience itself. Everything I describe, post-performance, and indeed everything I reflect upon during the performance becomes an approximation, an after-effect of affect. As Paula Caspao comments, 'That is the reason why an emotion is just a very partial expression of affect' (Caspao 2009: 134). However, I would argue that this is not to imply that these emotions, although partial and often abstract reflections, are less important or embodied. In fact, however mediated and changed, these reflections are still very real, lived experiences. As emphasised earlier, as perceptions, these reflections are neuromuscular events and are therefore experienced with and through our bodies (Gardner 2008).

These moments of recalling empathetic exchanges are for me powerful yet difficult to articulate as they are experienced fleetingly. What are we left with if all that we have are abstract and partial expressions? Somehow my loss of words demonstrates the fullness of something else that I cannot seem to articulate. Gardner asks, 'What are we *doing* when we apprehend with our sense of movement? There is difficulty in language. We cannot culturally "index" a particular level or modality of sensing that is in the joints and our relation to gravity and instability' (Gardner 2008: 55). And so, I have often tried (but failed) to be more concrete, to pinpoint the place on my body where the affective experience of stillness leaves its impression on me: is it my neck, is it in my stomach, is it my back, is it my chest? As a performer I can be certain that I most often leave the performance sore, my muscles aching from the exertion and the tension. I also consider where my own stillness might leave its impression on the spectator's body. I believe the spectator carries similar pains sympathetically in their own body. Watching can sometimes be a painful experience, manifested in the physical, mental and emotional effort involved. An active spectator is as active as a performer, particularly if through kinesthetic empathy they embody and partake in a shared experience with me.

An economy of stillness

These moments of empathy, as interrelated and reciprocal experiences, necessarily invite an engagement with the phenomenological dimension of our perceptions. Thus, I have

often experienced a difficulty in articulating them in a way that renders them visible or communicable via language. Emma Kirby explains that, 'Our sense of materiality of matter, its palpability and its physical insistence, is rendered unspeakable … for the only thing that can be known about it exceeds representation' (cited in Bolt 2004: 154). The only thing I appear to 'know' about my empathetic experiences, and this is not a short cut, seems to be rendered unspeakable in linguistic terms. This therefore undermines the economy of representation through the body's resistance to the fixity of any sociolinguistic terms. In parallel, stillness is an apparatus that has offered me the spatial and temporal conditions to escape the economy of bodies that I once circulated within in the fixity of conservatoire training. Paradoxically, in stillness I have moved my body towards an experience identified by Lepecki as a freedom from 'its commitment to produce a pure being-towards-movement, a dazzling dumb mobile' (Lepecki 2006: 52).

As a result, stillness can become an active performative space for empathetic experience, which identifies affect as a very difficult yet crucial mode of criticality. As an act of artistic and political criticism, we could say that stillness is the physical realisation of a 'quiet theory of loud mobilization' (Sloterdijk 2009: 11), the physical embodiment of a mode of criticism that Peter Sloterdijk suggests is crucial. Stillness is a movement that pushes against and is different to the type of movement that it sets out to criticise, performing the difficult act of challenging movement from within movement itself.

Notes

1. Mark Franko's essay (2007) is also significant to this debate.
2. A reading of Sloterdijk's 'Mobilization of the Planet from the Spirit of Self-Intensification' (2009) is key to this discussion.
3. Relevant discussion of this can be found in Goldman (2004). Ramsay Burt also discusses this in relation to Paxton's works 'Satisfyin Lover' (1967) and 'State' (1968) in Burt (2008).
4. This work was also presented at Axis Arts Centre, Manchester Centre for Contemporary Art, January 2010, as part of Curating Knowledge, curated by Jane Linden, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Further documentation can be viewed at www.victoriagray.co.uk.
5. The 'Move: Choreographing You: Art and Dance' exhibition was curated by Stephanie Rosenthal, October 2010–January 2011, Hayward Gallery London, www. move.southbankcentre.co.uk.
6. Ramsay Burt relates minimalism and conceptual art practice to postmodern dance and particularly to Judson Dance in Burt (2006). André Lepecki (2006) addresses this in his chapter. Siobhan Davies Studios have an ongoing programme that addresses links between Fine Art and Performance.
7. Rosenthal, S. (2010). *Move: Choreographing You, Art and Dance Since the 1960's.* Hayward Gallery Publishing accompanies this exhibition. MoMA's Performance Exhibition Series presented a programme of live performance and dance in conjunction with the group exhibition 'On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century', in 2011.
8. The Move Weekend symposium took place between 26 and 28 November 2010 at the Southbank Centre, London.

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