

Amateurs and Contemporary Dance: Who? Where? When? What for?

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Lecture Summary:

1. In connection with the recent publication of M. Briand (éd.), *Corps (in)croyables. Pratiques amateur en danse contemporaine*, Centre national de la Danse, Pantin, 2017 (http://www.cnd.fr/patrimoine_ressources/corps_incroyables), this presentation analyses various types of amateurs in contemporary dance, through the semantic, aesthetic, and cultural study of fluid categories and typical examples.

2. General perspective: The so-called “amateurs” in contemporary dance present diverse and even sometimes contradictory aspects. They both intensify and disrupt the notions of choreographic work, creation, transmission, experience, and expertise. They move and transform aesthetic, ethical, and political norms and categories which contemporary dance spectacles and practices refer to. From expressionist moving choruses to post-modern experimental performances, as the body of un-professional / amateur dancers may considerably vary in age, gender, or ethnical, social, and cultural affiliations, it may be at once ordinary, neither virtuoso nor spectacular, but filled with human presence, and extraordinary, surprising, a witness of “something different”. The variegated fragility of amateurs and their tentative definitions call in question the very ideas of dance, spectacle, and contemporaneity.

3. Typical features of amateur dancers:

- who? children, teenagers, younger - older adults / female, male, trans-, inter-gender ... / straight, gay, queer ... / diverse ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and social classes, all in terms of intersectionality
- where and when? on different kinds of stages, in studios, in town / countryside / natural settings, on the streets, in closed environments (e. g. sanitary, custodial, educational ...), in festivals, ballrooms, political meetings and actions ... / in diverse periods (from the ancient Greek chorus to contemporary rave parties) and styles (traditional, social, urban dances ...), especially when variously connected with contemporary dance, in a *stricto sensu* definition.
- what for? recreation, leisure, seduction, transe, ritual celebration, show, communication, education, wellness, health, ecology, protest, activism ...

4. For a non-binary typology of amateurs. Family resemblances, prototypes and fuzzy sets:

- spectators / amateurs: bystanders, onlookers, critics, witnesses, visitors, guided – participating - immersed spectators (e. g. Simone Forti, Olga de Soto, Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Tino Sehgal ...)
- carnivals, festivals, rituals, communities: Dionysian dancers (trance and extasis, in traditional rites as well as ballrooms and urban cultures, e. g. François Chaignaud and Cecilia Bengolea, from “free dances” to *vogueing*), traditional and street dancers, “other professionals” (e. g. Ana Borralho and João Galante) ...
- staged / choreographed amateurs: “pretending amateurs” (e. g. dance students), “embodied archives” (e. g. the project *Danse en amateur et repertoire*, at the *Centre national de la danse*), “precarious galas” (e. g. Eun-Me Ahn, Jérôme Bel), apprentices and teachers, (inter)generational groups / solos (e. g. Pina Bausch, Thierry Thieû Niang, Mickaël Phelippeau).
- “fragile animals” and rebels: care and empowerment practices (e. g. Jorge Leon, Mathilde Monnier, Anna Halprin, Odile Azagury), rebellions and revolutions (e. g. Femen, Act Up, *Occupy Syntagma* ...).

NB. The .ppt will show pictures and titles of the referred choreographic works, especially: *Huddle* (S. Forti), *2006 vallée* (Mathilde Monnier), *So schnell* (Dominique Bagouet), *Gala* (J. Bel), *Dancing my Cancer* (A. Halprin) and the action of the Femen against the Front National (Paris, 5-1-2015).