

Embodying Openness

A Pragmatist Exploration
into the Aesthetic Experience
of Design Form-Giving

Ariana Amacker



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Design at HDK — Academy of Design and Crafts,
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts,
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Business & Design Lab is a center of expertise and research
in Design Management and is a collaboration between HDK
— Academy of Design and Crafts and the School of Business,
Economics, and Law at the University of Gothenburg.

Doctoral dissertations and licentiate theses No 63

This project has received funding from the European
Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research,
technological development and demonstration under
grant agreement no 290137

Art Monitor is a publication series from the
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts,
University of Gothenburg

Art Monitor
University of Gothenburg
Faculty Office of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts
Box 141, SE-405 30 Gothenburg, www.konst.gu.se

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ISBN: 978-91-982423-6-2 (printed version)

ISBN: 978-91-982423-7-9 (digital version)

Photos: Ariana Amacker, Patricia Suarez Hermosilla,
Olga Nikolaeva, Hanka Syrová, Anita Saij

Cover photo: Olga Nikolaeva

Graphic design: Eva Erwander

Editing: Helen Faller

Printed by: Billes Tryckeri, Gothenburg 2017

DESMA⁺



Abstract

TITLE: *Embodying Openness: A Pragmatist Exploration into the Aesthetic Experience of Design Form-Giving*

LANGUAGE: English

KEYWORDS: Design research, pragmatism, aesthetic experience, form-giving, arts-based learning

ISBN: 978-91-982423-6-2 (printed version)

ISBN: 978-91-982423-7-9 (digital version)

This thesis explores the tension between a reflective view of design and design as an embodied, aesthetic experience. Most research exploring the nature of design follows a tradition of practice-based design research, which aims to empirically establish what constitutes design by studying what designers do and say. The challenge with this observational approach is that it depends on design as an object of study and can therefore only deal with its rational or cognitive dimension. The inherently aesthetic and subjective dimension of the immediate perception of designing remains largely unexplored in design research.

To address this lack of research, this project builds on the Classical Pragmatist non-dualistic view of experience and knowledge. In particular, drawing on Dewey's thesis in *Art as Experience*, I explore the embodied, aesthetic dimension of design through investigating in detail my experience of the activity of form-giving. This methodological perspective maintains continuity between thinking-feeling in action and in terms of subject-object relations.

From this non-dualist view, I critique the specific claim made by researchers and design practitioners who advocate that designers exhibit an attitude of openness that contributes to creativity. Assuming that openness is a quality that can be felt, I ask how this quality is felt in my experience of designing, and what openness means practically with regard to direct sensory and physical engagement and what it conceptually means in the way a designer approaches the world.

To explore an integrated experience of designing in the present, I follow an artistic method of movement improvisation called Butoh. Butoh provides a specific context of inquiry for exploring perceptual and physical engagement in the present through a heightened state of somatic awareness. The empirical work is comprised of four direct experiences from my Butoh training that are examined through the lens of Pragmatism and embodied cognition. Together, they show how I actually engage my 'self' through concrete sensory, emotional, and feelingful frames of experience of form-giving in the present.

This research makes theoretical and methodological contributions through developing an embodied, aesthetic perspective of practice-based and artistic approach to design. It suggests the potential of openness-capacity as a concept for understanding and actually practicing the type of creative approach attributed to a designer's attitude of openness. It provides a critique of rational mechanisms underlying the contexts of design inquiry, as well as having practical implications for design education and the kinds of teaching and learning that support the creative, self-directed, exploratory capacities of designers.

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Thad Amacker, who died in 2012 shortly before I found out that I would have the opportunity to embark on this PhD project in Sweden. His death has been a constant reminder for me to cherish this time to be able to pursue my interests.

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Acknowledgements

This research has been a life-changing experience and it would not have been possible to do without the help that I received from many people.

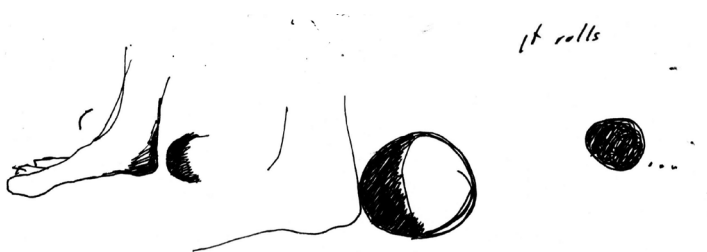
Foremost, I am indebted to my supervisor Anna Rylander, who took a gamble bringing me to Gothenburg in the first place and has given me precious encouragement and guidance to help me find my own path and to trust my intuition throughout this process. I cannot begin to express my appreciation for all that she has taught me. I also want to extend my deepest thanks to my co-supervisor Cecilia Lagerström, whose generosity in sharing her knowledge of performance practice has been a tremendous source of strength to my outsider perspective.

Thank you to Kristina Fridh and Otto von Busch who served as temporary supervisors, and to reviewers of my work who offered their feedback: Mick Wilson, Henric Benesch, Mary Jo Hatch, Christina Räisänen, Maria Nyström, and Lena Hopsch. My sincere thanks to Helen Faller, Eva Erwander, and for help from Anna Frisk and Carina Kauppi.

I would like to thank my colleagues and professors at HDK, Valand, the BDL, my DESMA colleagues and especially Andrew Whitcomb, Oriana Haselwanter, and Ulisses Navarro Aguiar, and to my friends that took on miscellaneous design ventures with me. I am so grateful for having had the opportunity to work with and learn from such creative and thoughtful people.

Heartfelt thanks goes to my teachers and friends I have made as part of my Butoh and Body Weather studies, who have opened my eyes to my work and to myself in countless ways. Special thanks to my friends who have been such an important part of my life in Gothenburg, in particular Tobias Sehlberg for his unprejudiced friendship and for being an exemplar of openness and the everyday art of jazz.

I would finally like to thank my mom and sister for their unwavering love and support. They are my source of inspiration to stay curious and to welcome the possibility of change.



Prelude

I am alone on the dance floor. It is dark except for a spotlight and what is left of the daylight trickling in overhead from the dormer windows. My body is exposed, with only a sheet of crumpled white paper draped over my underwear. I kept them on, the fear of being completely naked underneath the brittle paper, which I'm sure will fall off, knowing that the others will see my nakedness, my flaws. Not being truly comfortable with myself, that's it.

I release the grip of my hands and stare toward the far wall. I am haunted by an impression of wanting to disappear and find comfort in my body, my body that is usually an object of my disapproval. Trying again to forget or to dismiss the unpleasant sensation of having eyes on me, being picked over, and being helpless about this, having nowhere to hide. The sheer simplicity of the situation I put my body in with the sentiment that the enemy of the enemy is my friend.

From the loudspeaker, twinkling, kaleidoscopic sounds of electronic music fills the room, and I sense the shape of a field and an open night sky with crickets. Here I am alone, outside, unconstrained childlike daydreams of being a fairy or something. Mmmmm...twinkle. I settle into this fictional solitude. A song that I listened to yesterday, what is the name of it, comes to me and I start dancing, gyrating my hips and arms rhythmically, like a jig, stamping and brushing my feet over the black floor, kicking up pieces of dry tree bark. In my engrossment, moving backwards, my bare foot, there it is, bumps up against something cold. I stop dead.

Was I surprised by that? I knew it was there. I crouch and pick it up in my left hand. I study it for a minute, searching my memory for it, a stone, and transferring it to my right hand. It is round and worn smooth from the ocean, about the size of a baseball, a little heavier.

Without thinking, the impulse to throw it washes over me, the tantalizing possibility of piercing the space. I wind up my arm up like a pitcher and lurch forward, aiming the stone at the audience.

I catch myself, stopping, thinking that this not a good idea, and midair my body's forward movement is left suspended for a hair-thin second longer with hesitation, a hurling mass that has changed its mind. My right arm suddenly floats and I gently, slowly rest the stone back down back to floor.

I stand up, repairing the moment, maybe, then pausing with perhaps a little disappointment at not having thrown it. Maybe I should have thrown it, the ghost of a question still lingering as I back away and continue dancing.

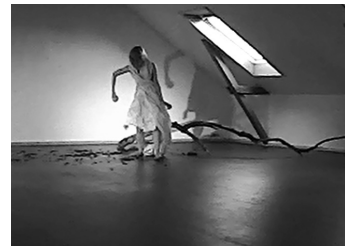
Context of the Present

In this instant when I went from being lost in the sensation of my feet shuffling backwards across the ground to almost throwing a stone at the audience, there was an impulse, which at least for a sliver of a second, meant an uneasy situation for me and the audience. Discussing the performance afterwards, my teacher says, "I thought, wow, now she really is going to throw the stone." We contemplate how that kind of unforeseen flash can only come from improvisation, i.e., creating in the moment, flowing from a mind in action instead of being premeditated or calculated. The spontaneity and instinctiveness of the gesture exposed the vulnerability of the situation. It required us, the audience and myself to be open to the moment, that is, be threatened to break down. In this diversion we are mutually present, passing beyond a readymade frame of performer and disinterested spectator to a degree of trust in and acceptance of not knowing what is going to happen next, that also entails an elasticity of mind to adapt to the shaping of a relationship in context.

This reciprocal experience is one point. But equally important to this thesis is how my instinctive move to throw the stone revealed something in my attitude that acts without any aim, one not rationalized or consciously intended, but instead is a kind of intrinsic motivation, an inner itch, a will. My colleagues' comment that this gesture, though unexpected, was also "true" to myself, that it felt authentic to the comedic chords that I tend to play in

my performance work, which, from their point of view has a touch of unsociability and exaggerated self-awareness. Right, and just cartoonish. So in my impulse to throw the rock, there is an aspect of my personality that slips out unawares and becomes expressed.

One fleeting moment, and I begin to wonder: How can this say so much about the way in which a person's imagination and expectations are a part their action as it is happening? And how can this way of moving in the moment, the freedom in it to move really any way, in any direction, reveal or express something about design as creative action? These questions lead me to my research, which concerns the relationship between subjective awareness in immediate experiences and thinking about design as a kind of "thinking."



Introduction

Exploring Design as a Creative Practice Formed by Artistic Origins

Today, design as a field of study is generally recognized to be multimodal and diverse in content, informed by both art and industry (Levy, 1990). Many design practices are still tightly aligned with the integrative and synthetic activities of art and craft and, in particular, the activity of form-giving which is traditionally understood as a fundamental material practice of design (Abidin, Sigurjonsson, Liem, & Keitsch, 2008; Hjelm, 2009). This builds on a tradition of studio-based training and aesthetic critique coming from a master-apprentice model in which, in very basic terms, design students learn in a studio environment through the applied giving of form through various material means. The formal outcomes are evaluated through the design student's presentation of his or her work while providing an explanation of and self-reflection on his or her decision process that is critiqued by expert designers (see Schön (1983, 1987) for examples). Thus, for many designers aesthetics is seen as central to form-giving and a basic part of the designer's professional knowledge (Hjelm, 2009).

Because design historically entered academic institutions under different circumstances from science, it has maintained a practice-based view of its knowledge, which consists of the embodied competence or capacities of the practitioner, as in the arts, rather than fixed methods or an underlying philosophy of knowledge (Haseman & Mafe, 2009). In one respect, the practice-based perspective on design generally embraces a connection to material culture in the creation of the artificial and artistic assessments in "embodied in the arts of planning, inventing, making and doing" (Archer, 1979; Cross, 1982). Accordingly, it also accepts, to a degree, that the conceptual unification of design is elusive, if not irrelevant, given that design is 'constructive' in the sense that every design, working from experience, is the result of its particular circumstances and characteristics (Koskinen, Zimmerman, Binder, Redström, & Wensveen, 2011). Thus, there are contradictory aims

with regards to a practice-based perspective in design theory and research, since it is also suggested by design academics that design practice is understudied and lacking a strong epistemological foundation for its practice (Buchanan, 2001; Niedderer & Reilly, 2010).

Coming from a background in architecture, which has kept explicit ties to its artistic tradition, I began this research project with an interest in exploring design as a creative process informed by its distinctively arts-based influences. This form-giving perspective in architecture and design directs their methods, as in the use of sketching and modeling to develop a ‘feel’ or gestalt for the qualities of form that express or convey an idea, “the sort of expression that will arouse in others what is going on in himself” (Mead, 1934/1967, p. 148). Design students trained in an artistic tradition learn to make their ideas concrete and available to the senses by physically engaging with materials and employing artistic conventions of technique and traditional elements of art composition like shape, line, surface, texture, and tone (Eisner, 2002a; Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). In order to draw out what is felt emotionally, designers learn an artistic approach and material sensibility of how “to think effectively in terms of relations of qualities” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 47).

In practice, designers regard emotional and empathic dimensions as equal parts of their work because they experientially involve their senses and perceptive bodies. In many disciplines, this use of the body’s interactions with the environment is referred to as “embodied,” which is meant to capture the role of the body and feelings in cognition or what is essentially an integrated thinking-feeling (body-mind) experience (Gallagher, 2007; Gibbs, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Learning from experience is at its center an approach of “embodied meaning-making” (Scarlinzi, 2015) which means there is no separation between perception and action (or thinking and feeling). Thus, the role of the designer’s aesthetic and imaginative abilities in pursuing qualitative experience is requisite to understanding design as an embodied approach. Such an approach in this research comes from a holistic understanding of arts-based learning and is particularly inspired by the scholarship of Elliot Eisner (2002a) that claims the primacy of the arts in self-directed learning within experience.

Experience from a Designer's Point of View

In short, the starting point for a designer is experience. One of the main tenets of design thinking, for example, is a focus on user experience (Brown, 2009; Dunne & Martin, 2006; Kolko, 2015; Lockwood, 2010; Sanders & Stappers, 2008). This is often discussed as the “fuzzy front end” or generative phase of a designer’s “research approach,” where he or she sets out to learn about the problem setting and the user. The kinds of methods used are often thought to borrow from ethnographic techniques like interviewing and observing the behavior of users in their everyday lives. The intention is to gain a broad and thorough understanding of the experiences of the people that have a stake in the outcome of the design. The general concern for users, in this regard, can be linked to the diverse grouping of process-oriented design approaches like participatory design, collaborative design, co-design, and service design that are meant to intentionally engage users in the creation of the design. Reasons for using these approaches include obtaining a better understanding of the emotional experience or “meaning” of a particular design issue and directly co-developing new paths to innovation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

The ways in which designers work with experience and have an exploratory attitude has been promoted as part of design’s creative ability in organizations and companies. The view that has been cemented in business contexts is that design provides a strategic tool for innovation that goes beyond form-giving and product aesthetics, with the now-ubiquitous term “design thinking” (Brown, 2008; Cooper, Junginger, & Lockwood, 2009; Martin, 2009). Practitioners who endorse design have been explicit about design thinking as an effective way to generate “creative potential” in business (Brown, 2016).

Design Empathy

Designers themselves in the field or context generally have the empathetic purpose of generating an experiential or embodied reading of users’ interactions with the environment — how they perceive, sense, and empathically respond to experiences firsthand (Mallgrave, 2013). In this regard, it is fairly consistently understood across design disciplines that designers are supposed to

employ empathy in order to move past functional uses and actually experience things and emotions as users do (Hassi & Laakso, 2011). More recent design research highlights the importance of empathy and emotions for the making of meaning and creativity (Lim, 2013), empathy being loosely regarded as the ability to intellectually and emotionally connect with the experiences of another person. Some writing about design is even compelled to use like terms like “empathic design” or “human-centered design,” rather than the term “design thinking,” to capture the specific focus on empathy and responses by designers that lead them to gain deeper insights into what people feel, want, need, and desire (Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, & Koskinen, 2013; McDonagh, 2008; Sato, 2009). In the field of architecture, for example, this empathetic focus on the “user” is embedded in what is generally accepted as a phenomenological approach from the architect’s own sensorial experience of a site or space.

Open Attitude or Mindset

Along with empathy, the other crucial component of the design approach to creativity is often characterized as a “design attitude” or mindset. Generally this is seen to be an orientation of openness to experience that allows for multiple ways of viewing a situation (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Michlewski, 2008). Design attitude is identified in literature on design generally as: tolerant of ambiguity, experimental and explorative, open to risk, dealing with ‘wicked problems,’ embracing discontinuity and open-endedness, an open type of abduction (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Brown, 2008; Buchanan, 1992; Dorst, 2011; Hassi & Laakso, 2011; Michlewski, 2008). And in many ways, such an exploratory or open attitude is strongly connected to exploration and learning (Beckman & Barry, 2007). It plays an obvious role in what is considered an important creative characteristic of designers who embrace the freedom to think and behave freely, and are open to change.

From the artistic perspective, it is accepted that new ideas come from pushing the boundaries, and for the artist that means literally stretching beyond what he or she is physically comfortable or familiar with (Eisner, 2002a; Hetland et al., 2007). One of the trademarks of artistic practice is not narrowing how the creative process can take shape. This requires not being trapped by the

safety of familiar territory and being able to work at ‘the edge’ and/or to play with different approaches and possibilities. This goes hand in hand with the whole idea of design as an exploratory activity that creates new meanings, which cannot be objectively validated, rather than as a problem-solving approach with a “best” solution. Similarly, there is a claim that an essential component of a design attitude is being tolerant of ambiguity or having a “willingness to engage in a process that is not predetermined or planned ahead and detail and where outcomes are unknown or uncertain” (Michlewski, 2008, p. 380). Thus, in order to actively experiment and take risks without knowing the consequences, there is an unmistakable subjective dimension of the designer’s practice that includes the sensation of uncertainty and the need to grapple with fears and tolerate failure.

The State of Design Thinking

In recent years, the emergence of the idea that design thinking contributes to innovation in various forms like design-driven innovation (Verganti, 2009), open innovation (Baldwin & Von Hippel, 2011), user innovation (Franke & Piller, 2004), or participatory innovation (Buur & Larsen, 2010) has undoubtedly served to elevate the implementation of design methods in business beyond the design ‘object’ to more strategic issues. In some cases, design is advocated as a partner to management (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Borja de Mozota, 2006; Cooper et al., 2009). It has also implicitly served research that has the aim of investigating how design works or how its nature contributes to innovation (Carlgren, 2013; Jahnke, 2013).

Design thinking as either a generalized process or thinking style, however, sets up a couple of inner contradictions for designers trying to encourage creativity. For one, design thinking is, by and large, promoted to management in a language they understand as a structured process, a set of methods or skills, or a framework for innovation. Yet, it has been well established for some time that creativity flies in the face of systemization and management (George, 2007; Sutton, 2001). And many designers recognize the contradiction that design creativity, in whatever form, is not fixed, asserting that “design thinking is killing creativity” (Ling, 2010). Bruce Nussbaum (2011), one of largest proponents of design

thinking, provocatively claimed that “design thinking is a failed experiment,” saying that it has caused the profession to “ossify.” In this case, “formalizing the tacit values and behaviors of design” (Nussbaum, 2011, para. 7) through reasonable and well-thought-out operations means taking something as elusive and unpredictable as creativity and essentially making it rational.

Furthermore, there is misunderstanding concerning one the messages of design thinking, which is that if anyone who uses it can “access [his or her] nascent creative capacities” (Brown, 2009) what makes it design? Don Norman (2010), another popular author on design thinking, calls design thinking a “useful myth,” which he clarifies is “a public relations term for good, old-fashioned creative thinking.” The selling points of design thinking in this case are what creative people in any discipline do, so, while designers are creative, creativity is not unique to design (Norman, 2010). Therefore, in trying to avoid the trap of set processes or methods, designers who are turning straight to design as a resource for creativity, for example, for forms of creative intelligence, creative inquiry, creative leadership, creative problem-solving, also trivialize and devalue the various kinds of specialized practices designers engage in and their elaborate training. A recognizable example is a marketing strategy of IDEO, the design firm credited with making the idea of design thinking popular with businesses, which now offers online courses for design thinking marketed with the tagline “solve anything creatively.”

The Problem of the Subjective

The types of contradictions that arise from promoting “design thinking” as a creative method in industry highlight the ways that designers develop an implicit understanding of their craft from an embodied approach and then feel the need to legitimize their process as a managerial concept (e.g., Rauth, Carlgren, & Elmquist, 2014). What occurs then is a perceived language “gap” between design and outsider perspectives from fields like management, so that designers are put in the position of having to develop a clearer vocabulary to better understand their process, if not to put their finger on what exactly makes it creative. From the design side, designers feel that this communication challenge leads to a general misunderstanding of what the creative aspects of design

are and what those specifically mean to a designer. The externalization and explicit vocabulary that make design objectively useful or transmittable in terms of “design thinking” conversely bounds design to the rational legitimization of those organizational and institutional contexts.

The tension in trying to conceptually apprehend “design thinking” coincides with the epistemological project established in design research that focuses on an objective perception of design’s tacit or practice-based “knowledge.” The taken-for-granted research stance of observing design as something external to oneself entails an artificial distinction between the subjective side of experiencing action and reflective thinking about that action. This distinction between the experiential (internal) and the representational (external) is what scholars in some theoretical fields refer to as a problem of representation (Hacking, 1983; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Thrift, 2008; Tsoukas, 1998). This problem runs parallel to the “explanatory gap problem,” also called the “hard problem” or “mind-body problem” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 6), where the very issue of not being able to represent subjective “knowledge” in some form or another is a scientific problem, i.e., a problem in terms of what can be objectively determined.

This type of observational approach gives rise to a Cartesian dualism, since it must reduce embodied experience, and the ambiguity of that ‘felt’ experience, to conscious thought. In compartmentalizing experience as external/internal, practical/artistic, intellectual/aesthetic, one side becomes objectively a “problem” for the other. Usually it is the case that subjective emotions, including the perceptual ‘feel’ that aesthetic sensibilities and judgments are understood to involve, become problematic with regards to rational explanation (Gallagher, 2005; Pallasmaa, 1996; Stephens & Boland, 2014). And because this way of viewing experience stresses mental faculties as a more significant intellectual capacity, it perpetuates a view of aesthetic “subjectivism” in which aesthetics are based on private feelings that are “non-cognitive, non-intellectual, and personal” (M. Johnson, 2015).

Again, this carries over into design. For instance, the way that the term “empathy” is preferred in design practice specifically without reference to “aesthetics” is indicative of the way that designers are often not willing or not able to make explicit connections between their embodied practice and the focus on experience in the tradition of aesthetic education (Tonkinwise, 2011). Thus,

as “design thinking” is increasingly called into the social contexts of practice and often institutionalized conditions, design practitioners, similar to design scholars, prefer speaking about design as a matter of principles and skills connected to an intellectual view of knowledge. It is not uncommon that they attempt to distance their practices from aesthetics and their perceived superficiality, “fuzziness,” or connection to product styling (Kolko, 2015). There is repetition in design literature of refrains like, “While a logic of form (aesthetics) or function governs traditional modernism in design, today’s radical design practices are guided primarily by a social logic” (Blauvelt, 2012, p. 45). An explicit turn away from form-giving and aesthetics gives rise paradoxical design efforts, like using objective processes to try to “constrain the subjective decision-making that must take place in order to realize the work” (Blauvelt, 2012, p. 45).

Thus, the embodied characteristics of designing within experience, the sensations of the freedom to explore and create, suffer from theoretical commitments to make sense of design. Design as experience is relegated to a substrate of rational experience apart from what is subjectively experienced and felt. Ironically, safely observing design from the comfort of conceptual clarity and/or coherence subordinates bodily feelings and emotions, specifically the feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty involved in an experience of exploration and creating something new. By estranging perception from action, intellect from aesthetics, and feeling from thinking through formalized objectives and descriptions of a generic design process, design sits more easily in people’s minds instead of in acts of physical engagement.



Theoretical View of Embodiment from Pragmatism

Because dualistic constructions underlying thinking and behavior in research are so omnipresent, the designer's subjective engagement in the experience of creativity or form-giving has been grossly understudied. Correspondingly, scant attention has been paid to an embodied approach and aesthetic experience in design in which feeling and thinking is not severed. Embodiment and process aesthetics have been addressed in design research (Dourish, 2001; Falin & Falin, 2014), but there is no contact with the immediate sensual, emotional, intuitional, or expressive dimensions of such experiences in relation to empirical conditions.

Indispensable in this respect is John Dewey's (1934) *Art as Experience*, which is one of the seminal contributions to a philosophy of art and its relation to experience. Dewey's thesis, which plays a central role in this research project, is that theories of aesthetics, by being analytical, run counter to *aesthetic experience*, which involves a perceptual continuity of relations and sequences of raw sensations that can only be found within experience, and specifically a pre-reflective (non-objectified) experience. For Dewey, because a unified "body-mind" experience integrates corporal motivational patterns, imagery, habits, sensations, and emotions, this gives any symbolic "meaning" a relational, visceral context (M. Johnson, 2007). Thus, the contention of a Deweyan view of aesthetics is that design, as an embodied experience, could never come into existence or find expression and meaning except by the designer's *aestheticized* transaction with the world. Integral to this, and often overlooked in the observation of what designers make and do, is the internal affective side of experience that the designer subjectively undergoes.

Dewey's vision of art as experience is a reflection of the rich philosophical movement of which he was part, known as Classical Pragmatism, which originated in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The Pragmatist school of thought breaks down traditional philosophical distinctions by emphasizing direct experience as ultimate foundation of all knowledge claims. It is already well understood in design scholarship that pragmatism is relevant to the practical nature of design inquiry and practice (Melles, 2008; Rylander, 2012; Schön, 1983; Steen, 2013; Stompff, 2012; Wetter Edman, 2014; Östman, 2005). By directing attention to the level of concrete feeling and taking the specificity of meaning in context as

one of its basic premises, the work of founding Pragmatist thinkers is essentially an *embodied* tradition (M. Johnson, 2007; Scarinzi, 2015; Shusterman, 2008).

One of the critical points made by the Pragmatists, to which I return throughout this thesis, is that an anti-reductionist view of human experience as embodied is defined by a particular ‘felt’ or *aesthetic* dimension. Put another way, by being embodied, thought by its very nature is aesthetic or ‘felt’ and therefore not functionally distinguishable as rational intellect or cognition (M. Johnson, 2007; Scarinzi, 2015; Shusterman, 2008). In this work, I use “aesthetic” to refer to the inherent aesthetic quality of all experience. I also use Dewey’s (1934/2005) distinction of “esthetic” as limited to the perceptual or phenomenological phase of experience and different from the entire aesthetic experience of art that is both appreciative and perceptive.

Aesthetic experience puts emphasis on the creative and corporal character of action, or “will,” that is sensed and cannot be determined by rationally attributed relations. This has profound implications for creative action and a sense of ‘self,’ since it advances the role of subjectivity and the ability to make non-determinate choices that is integral to creative making and doing, and ultimately learning, within experience (Joas, 1996). The Pragmatist view has to do with physical action and its perceptual, emotional, and empathic dimensions, which anticipate several recent developments in embodied cognition theory. It also precipitates a process-based or relational ontology in which all traditional metaphysical and epistemological dualisms like mind/body, subject/object, reason/emotion, representation/experience are only abstractions (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007).

Research Questions and a Pragmatist Approach

This research is aligned with Dewey’s (2005/1934) notion of creativity as a quality of experience. In that view, the subjective or internal experience of the artist or designer actively pursuing particular aesthetic qualities of experience is not separate from objective conditions of experience. Therefore, traditional research approaches that start from a Cartesian subject/object distinction and analytical criteria that differentiate between cognitive activities do not work. Such approaches prioritize outcomes and clear distinctions, and

thus, require an *a priori* view of knowledge and action (i.e., action as rationally determined and guaranteeing knowledge). They also stabilize the dynamic quality of ‘openness to experience’ to a fixed attitude or mindset.

The purpose of this research project is to embody a sensation of ‘openness’ firsthand and to explore what that experience directly entails in terms of the qualities of relations. Creative and emergent learning behaviors that are considered the source of novelty have to do with actual perception in action (Dewey, 1929/1984, 1934/2005; Mead, 1934/1967). Therefore, if a creative experience is something I actively do and am involved in, to really start inquiring into and acting in the world in an aesthetic way — to literally have the openness or freedom to perceive and create something — I cannot in advance provide the rational clarity of saying what the “problem” is or making explicit a research object. I need to understand the subjective, imaginative, and emotional dimensions that contribute to giving rise to creative action and the experience of a sensation of ‘openness.’ This engages with experimental behavior and the physicality and temporality of thought in experience. In short, experiencing the *continuity* of relations requires a non-dualistic, embodied approach as per arts-based learning mentioned earlier, in contradistinction to an analytical approach.

According to Classical Pragmatists, direct experience occurs when the content of our active engagement in the world is equal in terms of what is ‘thought-of’ and what is directly felt and seen. As far as the mind-body is empirically concerned, there is only one mode of perception — the immediate flow of consciousness in *the present* (Mead, 1932/2002). In the radicality of this experience, feelings of the relations between ‘things’ are as empirically real as the ‘things’ themselves. This implies that feelings are not merely subjective, but rather both subjective and objective. Even the feeling of ‘self’ is part of an ever-shifting aesthetic, an experiential dimension through which we relate to the world.

Pragmatists’ views on the loss of subject/object orientation in direct experience can be seen as precursor to what today is popularly known as a creative experience of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), being *when* one loses self-consciousness. The Pragmatists pointed out the same feeling of a continuity of experience found in a pre-reflective, esthetic encounter with the world. James’s (1890) phenomenological account of this stream of consciousness is “pure experience” where ‘self’ and world — inner and outer — perceiver

and perceived are undifferentiated. Dewey (1934) specifically focuses on the aestheticism found in the “body-mind integration” of this experience, which he calls aesthetic “in the raw.” Mead (1934) expands on the role of perception of others and ‘self’ in human action and the spontaneity or novelty which is found in the immediate flux of life, i.e., the present.

To concretize this embodied perceptual experience, I turn to the activity of form-giving, which is considered a central competence in design practice (Hjelm, 2009). To overcome the difficulties with using an aesthetic (embodied) approach in a research context that proceeds from objectifying design as a specific form of knowledge or “thinking,” it is necessary to further explore the tacit assumptions that structure many images of design theory and practice. The research questions involve paying attention to my direct experience of form-giving. This requires a basic research strategy of revisiting creative *experience* to ask the following questions:

How do I experience openness from an embodied perspective?

This contains the following sub-questions:

How do I conceptually understand and embody the continuity of experience, i.e., an integrated thinking-feeling experience of consciousness?

How do I methodically explore embodiment from a relational ontology, i.e., actively relate within a physical encounter with the world?

What does this specifically mean for design as an artistic ability that has a quality or attitude of openness?

Artistic Method of Movement Improvisation

To complement the Pragmatic view of the continuity of consciousness, I use a strategy of movement-based inquiry to progress beyond the bias of conceptual objectification toward the objects of design. Through movement I act directly in response to the world. Thus, movement serves as a basic method for recovering an

aesthetic integration in actual experience. Movement is therefore an explicit strategy to not rationally proceed from the ‘mind’ to experience to try to identify a problem and to solve it. It is about a physical capacity to *act* creatively, without the security of external constructs or knowing where things are headed, but in which bodily sensation and emotional feeling are inextricable.

I must perceive and ‘feel’ my way forward through active engagement with the world, which means my perception changes with respect to the objects at hand. At the same time, to explore the quality of openness, I must literally open myself up to the physical sensation of uncertainty — a quality said to be part of creative experience (Langer, 2014). As a double-barreled experience that includes objective intentions, as well as inner perceptions and affect, the expressive experience of shaping and giving form is inseparable from my sense of ‘self’ — emotions, past memories, impressions, expectations, impulses, desires, habits, and feeling tendencies.

Therefore, movement improvisation, in particular, offers a method for exploring the concreteness of form-giving that happens within a present, aesthetic mode of physical engagement. In this way, the mode common to form-giving in movement and the form-giving of design is the total immersion and thinking-feeling integration within an activity (a loss of self-consciousness), which highlights that movement and design the two are differences of degree rather than kind. Since movement as an artifact is ephemeral, its material form is the expressive and perceptive body. What is left is the distinctively human “bare physical existence” of form-giving and “the meaning not of what it physically is, but of what it expresses” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 209).

I have selected the particular Japanese form of movement improvisation called Butoh, since it is among the most radical in its claim to be an experimental and expressive method of movement without a particular style or goal of form. Butoh is shaped to a degree by Buddhist philosophy and Eastern practices of the body-mind, whose fundamental aim is the cultivation of ‘self.’ Its direct focus on bodily experience involves heightened awareness of the subjective experience or ‘interiority’ of the individual (body as a subject) through technical body training (body as an object). Thus, Butoh is an apt artistic method of exploration, since it has specific training techniques for being in the present with inner sensations and feelings and specifically “opening” the subjective ‘self’ to unfamiliar ways of moving and behaving. From my per-

spective as a designer, Butoh's explicit methods concerned with the felt, internal, and emotional experience of exploration and experimentation has the potential to reveal something about a design attitude of openness.

I also selected Butoh because of the accessibility it provides to somatic training for a non-dancer. Butoh training is open to anyone intending to cultivate subjective awareness and corporal sensitivity in order to expand his/her participation in the body's feeling and expressive capacity. Therefore, Butoh offers a means for me to become both more concrete in an aesthetic quality of openness in physical experience and to furthermore develop this as a quality in my design research.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis should be seen as exploratory and contributing to basic empirical research on design as aesthetic experience. It targets the areas of design research and education, which embrace embodied and artistic assessments of design practice. This research is not directed at any particular design field or design practice, but is motivated by the kinds of abilities, sensibilities, and dispositions that shape an aesthetic approach to inquiry shared across design (and art) domains. This has broader theoretical and methodological implications for arts-based learning and creative practices of exploration in making, doing, and form-giving.

My intention here is to question the observational view of knowledge and the ways that this rational discourse narrows the conceptualization of design by keeping the reflective, conscious experience distinct and separate from a phenomenological, esthetic feel of experience. The contention is that the limitation of this view has practical consequences for the ways in which knowledge is viewed and discussed in design theory, and by extension, for how a "design attitude" of openness and creativity is learned and developed as part of an aesthetic approach to design education.

This thesis proposes that a Pragmatist non-dualistic perspective on experience contributes an understanding of design as a fundamentally aesthetic form of inquiry. The aim is to help build a theoretical platform for design fields with the intent to develop a pedagogical approach to learning from the wholeness of experience that cannot be rationally interpreted or reduced to symbolic or

rhetorical accounts as suggested by design academics (Buchanan, 1995; Krippendorff, 1989). In particular, it positions a subjective, self-directed capacity as a central feature in an aesthetic approach to pedagogy that pertains to the designer's ability to engage in expressive and empathic learning within experience itself.

Another aim of this research project is to contribute an empirical exploration of the experience of form-giving and to practically address a lack of understanding for what it means physically and perceptually to have an attitude of openness in experience. In terms of methods, this work introduces a movement-based approach which presents a marked shift from an objective focus on the outcomes and form of design to an experience constituted by an aesthetic approach of an intensified sensitivity to context, listening, and responding through bodily feeling. This practical focus sets up a relationship between an artistic or creative attitude of inquiry and artistic methods for developing awareness of and sensitivity to physical conditions in the present that support a quality of openness and an embodied capacity for openness. It seeks to present concrete experience-based lessons that deal with somatic sensation, as much as with cognitive abilities or methods.

Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1: The Current Context of Design Attitude(s) includes a broad review of the context of design research with special respect to “design thinking” and the social or relational design paradigm. In this review, I draw attention to the aesthetic/intellectual dualism in thinking about design, which I claim leaves design in the position of a functional or problem-solving method, without taking adequate account of the creative character of bodily perception in action. This is explored in relation to how a design attitude of openness is currently perceived versus how openness as a quality of experience would actually be learned and embodied within the bodily activity of form-giving.

Chapter 2: A Pragmatist Philosophical Perspective presents aspects of Classical Pragmatist theory that I have found relevant to this study of design research, starting from their conception of experience. I illuminate how insights from the Pragmatists are important to considerations of creative and embodied characteristics of action. In particular the *body*, an anti-essentialist view of ‘self,’ and *continuity*

of experience that correspond to an understanding of cognition as embodied or 'enactive' come to bear on a non-dualistic foundation for design as an aesthetic form of inquiry.

Chapter 3: The Exploratory Study addresses my particular learning and experience with design inquiry from my background as an architect. I discuss my basic research methodology with respect to Pragmatist understandings of "knowledge experience." I introduce my choice of movement improvisation and the specific form of Butoh that I have used as an artistic method to explore an embodied approach to form-giving and its relation to a perceptual experience of openness.

Chapter 4: An Empirical Context for Form-Giving is a brief outline of the context of movement improvisation and a short background on the specific form of Butoh and an introduction to its social context and some of its training techniques.

Chapter 5: Four Direct Experiences of Form-Giving constitutes the majority of this thesis. The chapter focuses on the empirical models, which are comprised of four direct experiences from my somatic training with Butoh. The four experiences are entitled, *Practicing Self*, *Meeting Halfway*, *Embodying Form*, and *Sense of Process*, and serve to explore a present mode of aesthetic integration in an activity of form-giving. In them I come into direct contact with the physicality and subjectivity of action and try to consider a quality of openness in that experience at the granular level of sensations, memories, emotions, and feelings. I have tried to use different styles of writing for the narratives and for the theoretical analysis and model building, which include a blend of Pragmatist theory, embodied cognition theory, and Butoh philosophy that stems from a Buddhist perspective.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the Embodied Experience of Form-Giving contains a discussion of lessons from empirical work with movement improvisation with special regard to somatic awareness and how a quality of *openness* comes to bear on the direct experience of form-giving. This discussion sets up creativity, not as an object, but within an artist's active relating to the world (embodied) in the present with possibility for creative exploration and learning. This has practical considerations for addressing openness from a

subjective *capacity* for action and the qualitative and internal dimensions of that experience that is tied to a self-directed view of learning in arts-based education.

Chapter 7: Design Attitude as an Openness – Capacity deals with implications of the empirical work with Pragmatist theory on design research and education and suggests directions for further research.







The Current Context of Design Attitude(s)

Discourses on Design

Over the past two decades, design has emerged as a generalizable form of creative “thinking” and an enabler of innovation in society and business (Brown, 2008; D. Dunne & Martin, 2006; Kolko, 2015; Lockwood, 2010; Martin, 2009). As a result, design has been drawn upon in different contexts of practice and overlapping fields of study that emphasize applying design not only to material artifacts, but also to the “intangible” social outcomes of services, policies, interactions, processes, as well as to social innovation (Manzini, 2007). This expanding interest in design has put design scholars in dialog with one another about the shift of design from a “material practice” and the dematerialization of the design object to performative, relational, processual, participatory, strategic or “higher order” (Buchanan & Margolin, 1995) applications of design in social contexts (Bjögvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012; Blauvelt, 2008; Redström, 2006; Robertson & Simonsen, 2012).

Because of the thrust of design and design research towards more participatory forms of practice, practitioners in some design fields feel those fields are losing the material and physical connection to the designer. This has spurred questions about what is ‘core to design’ and “if everything is design, what then is a designer?” (Hjelm, 2009). Given this heightened epistemological situation or “knowledge” problem, design scholars have been trying to establish a research discourse for design that stresses the need to theorize and understand the nature of design practice with greater specificity (Buchanan, 2001; Friedman, 2003; Niedderer & Reilly, 2010). Beyond this, the promotion of ‘design thinking’ and a ‘design attitude’ in the context of innovation has been instrumental in sharpening the research focus on understanding what kind of knowledge constitutes designers’ practices, and especially to distinguish what is creative or innovative about that knowledge (Carlgren, 2013; Jahnke, 2013).

This theoretical trajectory aims toward an overarching philosophy or foundation for design as a particular kind of knowledge and a particular kind of research (Frayling, 1993). Although design is accepted as a practice-based discipline, there is a reoccurring sticking point for practice-based research concerning the nature of knowledge and the problem of distinguishing the type of knowledge used in practice (Niedderer, 2007). Being embodied, such practical knowledge by its nature eludes the current requirements of traditional research, as well as the idea that “knowledge” is even an entity that can be readily recognized and identified out in the world. Observational and interpretive approaches to “knowledge” in practice raise the challenge of needing to reflect upon or even validate what researchers refer to as “design” in design discourse through objectifying it. In the theoretical approach of qualifying design by various means, including situated practices (Kimbell, 2011), the culture or attitude of designers (Michlewski, 2008), the problems it faces (Buchanan, 1992), the meanings it makes (Krippendorff, 1989), the kinds of hypotheses or experiments of its inquiry (Bang, Krogh, Ludvigsen, & Markussen, 2012), academics split off the subjective experience of design from what can be objectively discerned as a phenomenon called design.

The ensuing discussion is intended to situate this project as practice-based research that addresses design theory and epistemology. It does not address design practice. The goal here is to not to survey a range of design practices in design research, but to instead confront more broadly the dualistic thinking in the kinds of explorations made to understand the nature of design in design theory, and specifically the changing meaning of design is perceived in a new “relational” paradigm (Blauvelt, 2008).

My particular point of departure to the ongoing design discourse has been from the area of design management, where the discussion concerning what is considered the ‘core of design’ has been perhaps most acute (Dorst, 2011). But instead of finding what is core to design, I recognize that what it means to be a design professional centers around each designer’s embodied understanding of his/her own practice and his/her way of experiencing design. What is important to this experience is how designers actually come to understand and approach the nature of design and “design problems” (Adams, Daly, Mann, & Dall’Alba, 2011) which is more than just learning skills, methods or ‘the design process.’

The assumption behind much of the design research community's commitment to practice-based views of design is that there is a "tacit" dimension to practice-based knowledge that cannot easily be made explicit (Niedderer & Reilly, 2010). The general problem for design researchers in this regard is framed around explicating the kind of practical knowledge or "know how," procedural knowledge, skills knowledge, tacit knowledge, embodied knowledge, silent knowledge, or aesthetic knowledge that design entails. One main avenue for design research in this respect begins from the idea that design is something inside of designers in the way they think or reason, like a mindset, an attitude, a temperament, or a way of thinking (Cross, 2006; Lawson, 2005). Canonical literature from this perspective on how designers think relies heavily on observation, either describing the actions of the designer from personal observation and/or from interviews with designers describing their experiences.

In particular, Schön's (1983) theory of reflective knowledge has been predominant in formulating a view of practice-based knowledge within design. He designates his view as "an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p. 49). From a research standpoint, in Schön's method of calling attention to practical knowledge through observations and interviews with designers, the designer's actual experience is already made an object of reflection. The struggle with Schön's reference, like accounts of "design thinking" in general, is that of assuming that an interpretation of tacit knowledge constitutes an experience of 'thought.' It presupposes that we can talk about "reflection in action" as an activity separated by time and space. This approach however cannot explain what a reflective dimension of consciousness, one that would presumably happen *in action*, actually entails or feels like.

The use of Schön's thesis of reflection-in-action is just one specimen of the kind of research frame employed in design literature to interpret experience through identifying and parsing the object of "thinking" (Ryle, 1962/1949). For example, the way Ryle distances reflection-in-action from other exacting terms like "knowing-in-action," which he claims is the mode of ordinary practical knowledge, means that he has to qualify the thought of professionals as different in kind from that of non-professionals.

Presumably, he does this to be able to raise the level of expertise and legitimacy within a specialized professional activity by laying stress on a sort of cognitive refinement of action through repetition. Or in the context of creativity, the perspectives that focus on the cognitive ability or thinking style of designers are parsed and named as future-orientated, abductive, iterative, explorative, holistic, integrative, ambiguity-tolerant, empathetic, convergent and divergent, intuitive, optimistic, or imaginative (Drews, 2009; Hassi & Laakso, 2011; Martin, 2009). The complexity that occurs with this, as with the notion of “design thinking” currently, is that by allowing this reflective dimension to exist in any of our actions and responses to the world, the distinction between one kind of reflection (design thinking) and other kinds of reflection (other kinds of thinking) becomes less easy to maintain. Schön’s example of practice-based reflection, for example, is not specific to design. This view actually leads design research to functionalize thinking, like that about design as a kind of “knowledge,” in order to distinguish it in kind.

An underlying motive for current design research, particularly with respect to the emergence of a social paradigm of design, is to specify something still known as “design” at the level of ideas, systems, organizations, or experiences. One must assume that an intellectual form of interpreting design provides sufficient material for making sense of design or that thought provides a higher, more important kind of reality of ideas. The thought/action dualism explains the view that a conceptual meaning-making of design is distinguishable from a material practice. One example of how extreme this can be is reflected in Norman and Verganti’s (2014) antagonism between “a quest for novel meaning” (design-driven research) and “considerations of practicality” (tinkering). In their model, the idea of “tinkering” is portrayed as having no goal of enhancing meaning, and therefore not seen as contributing to any change in meaning. This disembodied research approach shows the way that an aesthetic, material practice of making and experimenting in design and reflective processes of intelligence is seen to be at odds.

Research Through Design (Method)

For many designers, the theoretical concern of discovering a generalized inner form of thinking runs counter to the detailed

concrete activities and the artistic, embodied ways of working in the field (Kimbell, 2011). Drawing upon artistic traditions, design researchers claim “research through design” allows them to produce knowledge in practice (Bang et al., 2012). Consequently, their way around the knowledge problem has been to develop a position called constructivist design research (Koskinen et al., 2011), which is committed to idea that designers produce knowledge based on the skills and capacities of the design field itself (Archer, 1995). What has developed from this view is a type of methodology called research-through-design with the argument being that design research is primarily done through existing design practices because design practice constructs knowledge through its products or processes.

This approach adopts an empirical perspective that acknowledges that design has to do with the construction of ‘things’ outside of designers such as processes, practices, tools, skills, and methods. Practice is understood to be comprised of pluralistic and divergent methods situated in context (Kimbell, 2012). In this sense, to perceive design as an object of thought, the design process or practice becomes the object, which emphasizes analysis and framing of the operations or acts performed. Along with this, there is a perceived research task of developing specific methods to draw out “tacit” dimensions of knowledge, which appear to serve as justification or evidence that such knowledge exists (Niedderer & Reilly, 2010). As with thinking styles, design research approaches become objectified and sorted into categories such as design-oriented to research-oriented, user-centered and empathetic, generative and critical, and extend to the application of specific tools from prototyping, probes, observation, modeling, sketching, user tests, storyboarding, and mock-ups (Sanders, 2008).

Empirically, research through design focuses predominately on the outcomes or manifestations of design research and how those become categorized in lieu of the concrete qualities of the experiences themselves. This objective focus raises continuous questions about the formal criteria according to which to evaluate design projects and methods. In some cases, the focus is on making professional design practices understandable, explicit, or containing an inner logic through which they unfold (Krogh, Markussen, & Bang, 2015). The struggle with the practice-based approach, not unlike the qualitative approach to “thinking,” is that it makes the experience of design an object of reflection. By moving the focus

of design from one form (the design artifact) to another form (the design process), the tendency is toward the progressive objectification of different forms of design activities. This encompasses parsing and describing design as interaction design, service design, relational design, co-design, experience design, and so on. Consistent with the Design Methods Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the concern becomes formalizing design practices, particular tools, processes, behaviors, and methods for knowledge creation (Cross, 2001; C. Jones, 1984). From the manner of academic research and the instrumental nature of thought, it is predictable that practice-based research becomes drawn into the externalizing function of making methods explicit to have legitimacy or be understood as rigorous (e.g., Biggs & Büchler, 2007). The next logical step is formalizing methods according to the scientific method.

Separating Thought from Action

By not empirically addressing the designer's active perceptual engagement in the situation, literature on design by and large lays stress on the observational, reflective aspect of consciousness. This conception takes reflective consciousness as a substitute for an esthetic, perceptual experience, which in essence perpetuates a Cartesian view that separates thought from action. By mentally transcending the embodied activity of thinking and its situatedness and physicality, such logic establishes something *about* "thinking" or methods that gives design an explanatory power. It loses the embodied feel and sense of form-giving, and in that, the designer's subjective experience, ability, and sense of relations.

In Schön's (1983) often cited illustration of the architecture practitioner, for example, he relates a designer's artistry as a reflective "conversation with the situation" in which there is a physical, material "back-talk" (p. 79). This kind of artistic skill that a designer possesses means that he/she understands the *feel* for the media and language of his/her practice. This description says something about the conversational quality of artistic work, and Schön's (1983) research should be credited with having taken great steps to illustrate a tacit "art of practice" by establishing that a designer tests, experiments, and works empirically with an intentionality that might be initially inarticulate or inaccessible via verbal consciousness. The problem is that Schön's work does not

provide a qualitative sense of the physical and aesthetic feeling for conceptual metaphors or imagery, and how that relates to the designer's understanding experientially of material "back-talk." By picking up on the reflective dimension of consciousness without including its phenomenological stream, Schön reinforces the systematic detachment of objective thinking about the design process and a 'problem situation,' opposed to the quality of the experience and the kinds of sensations not limited to problem-solving had by the designer.

These dualistic approaches that draw on rhetorical and semantic content to analyze collaborative projects, while useful from a scientific point of view, are somewhat problematic from the embodied perspective of this thesis. Much practice-based research does very little to advance the integrality of an aesthetic practice of design that is imbued with physical and emotional qualities. Current design literature, especially that which addressed new forms of agency, for example, favor speaking about design as a matter of principles, such as participation (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012), co-creation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), prototyping, and infrastructuring (Hillgren, Seravalli, & Emilson, 2011).

Design researchers who address the systemic issues surrounding design production and consumption, for example, take on the function of agents of social change (Barnard, van Dartel, Beekman, Pieter, & Lindeman, 2015), activists (Fuad-Luke, 2009; Julier, 2013; Markussen, 2013), and critical practitioners (Barab, Thomas, Dodge, Squire, & Newell, 2004; A. Dunne, 2006) by mobilizing processes of collaborative and open-ended forms of production. These participatory and relational forms are seen to be distinctly art-like and claim to address an aesthetic practice (Markussen, 2013). While they reflect the kind of work that has been a part of participatory art practices for more than the past couple of decades (see Kester (2011) for examples), they raise similar questions about artistic forms in terms of the aesthetic qualities of the relations actually experienced (Bishop, 2004). For design research promoting social change, the question is if aesthetics is primarily only understood to address questions and issues of "meaning" that are functional and not fundamentally experiential. Much of what is being sought and discussed by researchers is around "enabling" people in trendy and provocative social forms of design. In applying design to issues that are a result of functionalism in the first place (e.g., the division between production/consumption), the question is

how they change and deal with the concrete feelings of relations between production and consumption.

In most cases, it is hard to sense the aesthetic, because most accounts of design are descriptive and there are no expressions from design researchers about the bodily sensations or qualities experienced firsthand (Whitcomb, 2016). The sights, smells, memories, emotional feelings, and sensations of the live, active body are overtly missing. This exposes the kind of instrumentality behind methodological claims of participation, co-creation, and empathy when designers are not dealing with their own empathic responses and reflecting on how they themselves actually open up their own perspectives (Whitcomb, 2016). Even the parts of design theory where there is work being done on designing for experience from an embodied perspective (Dourish, 2001) or exploring overtly aesthetic, craft-based approaches to making and perceiving (Falín & Falín, 2014), the research discussion is framed in response to analytical criteria and theoretical abstractions.

Between Industry and the Arts

As design education in the universities has evolved over the past century, design's identity has been in part defined by an industrial orientation together with an arts and crafts-based tradition of material practice. The connection to industrialization is in many ways what defines modern design as a profession and what differentiates it from the arts. It is also a source of tension in design, since it is largely through industry and, thus forms of scientific management, that design professionals seek legitimacy. For example, many aims of design education, such as specific technical skills, are seen to be directly aimed at industrial imperatives (Levy, 1990). At the same time, those recognizing the artistic tradition in design identify a worldview (norms, values, and understandings) that are in contrast to the values and epistemological approach of management (Rylander, 2009). For example, the increasingly overt instrumentalization of design as a strategic tool for innovation and decision-making, is seen as a problem to designers who identify design with embodied and material form-giving (Hjelm, 2009).

This friction is not the focus here, but it is worth calling attention to the fact that many forms of professional design practice today are intricately intertwined with the values of management, given that designers, architects included, typically work in orga-

nizational and institutional contexts of practice. The intersection between industry and the arts naturally creates a practical challenge for designers who seek to rationalize their embodied approach, and yields a label as a “paradoxical practice” (Jahnke, 2013, p. 83). This intersection is the “knowledge problem” for design academia. The issue thus revealed is that design research collectively reifies and determines design as a function of thought apart from embodied expression. For example, “design thinking” has been taken to represent “what designers understand about design and how they go about the act of designing based on this understanding” (Adams et al., 2011, p. 588). This has an impact not just on the meaning and identity of design as a field of study, but also on the way that designers themselves seek and create meaning.

In most practical situations, the human tendency is to concentrate on the functionality of carrying out certain processes to secure certain desired ends (Dewey, 1922/2002). However, only responding to objects of thought and not taking experience itself has the effect of maintaining a disembodied view of cognition. In design research, this anchors design to what is a functional perception of “knowledge” and of proceeding from what can be made conscious to the “mind.” This continues to align design theory with Herbert Simon’s (1969) pivotal suggestion that design is a problem-solving activity (e.g., Buchanan, 1992; Cross, 2001; Friedman, 2008). Perception is there *a priori* in order to act or give form. Perception is not something that we do and ‘feel’ to experience meaning. Thus, what is a concrete physical activity, a design “experience” in the Deweyan sense, is operationalized as proceeding from mind to form (Krippendorff, 1989). In a direct way, this narrows the scope of the designer’s actions or learning behavior by imposing a preconceived notion of a specific idea or form of behavior called “design.” In other words, the designer’s unconscious physical, emotional, and intuitional processes that are constitutive of creative action are conceptually predetermined. Holding the potential subject of design to a course of action and range of acceptable expressions and emotions brings about a practical separation of sensory experience from organizational life, in total, a “narrowed and dulled life-experience” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 23).

For example, the received view that design is a specific method or “research *on the future*” (Zimmerman, Stolterman, & Forlizzi, 2010), along with the use of tools like visualizations, mapping, and design scenarios, becomes a means for securing

anticipated consequences that ties design to future-centric, technorational activities like management, planning, and strategic decision-making. The emphasis on the future, the “future” being an object of thought, functions as a prediction (ends) into which our action (means) enters (Dewey, 1929/1984). The objects or “preferred situations” of design are understood as many different things in different fields of design. Design is proposed as “creating value” in some shape or other: as organizational change, customer experience, problem-solving, strategic decision-making, product meanings (Verganti, 2009) social innovation (Manzini, 2007), or generally purposed with finding new directions or a “deeper purpose of enhancing the lives of individuals” (Buchanan, 2015). The alignment of design activities to productivity and the expectation that design reliably produces creative outcomes, which includes the framing of design thinking as a creative resource (Kimbell, 2011), serve underlying functional or practical imperatives as means to an intended result. Thus, design enters into terms already defined, its activity already defined, and functions as a prescription for operations to be performed.

Design, if understood functionally, can provide a kind of assurance of intelligently directed ways of acting. And as “intelligent forethought,” design behaviors can be organized toward appropriate action (Buchanan, 2008). Hence, this paradigm is bent on formalizing practices, and more importantly, on how to discipline those activities that can be reliably called “design.” Conceptualizing thinking apart from bodily sensations and emotions in experience yields the kind of design thinking that is oriented toward narrowly practical processes, rational problematization, a clear articulation of operations, and possible consensus. Dewey (1928/1981) describes this kind of acceptance of institutional arrangements and object categories in industry almost a century ago. “Soulless and heartless materialism,” he says, is a “condition of action; that in which material and mechanical means are severed from the consequences which give them meaning and value” (Dewey, 1928/1981, p. 30). His use of the term “mechanical” is describes the mechanism of habits and routines severed from the thought and feeling that come to dictate bodily behavior.

This means-ends construal of design works to disunite consciousness from present actualities and immediate sensory engagement (Dewey, 1922/2002). In other words, the physical experience of design is shaped by a dualistic premise of knowledge creation

(Pallasmaa, 1996). With perception and action separated, design is no longer grounded in the bodily dimensions of experience and multiple layers of memory, imagination, perception, and emotion. Design in this one-sided vision can only address questions and issues of meaning that are also practical or functional (what can be made observable) and not fundamentally experiential (what is felt).

With regards to this same point of prioritizing thought over sense perception, many contemporary design practices aimed at innovation and meaning-making are framed around the idea of applying a design form in social situations. In many of these cases, there is primarily a focus on activities and methods for the participation of groups of people and to draw on participants' or users' "knowledge" and experience. They inherently waste the feelingful and expressive potential of design as a creative experience in itself to focus on the functional orientation of producing creativity or innovation, for example (Jahnke, 2013). In other words, if we take meaning-making to be mean more than the activities performed within situations which call for "solutions," many of these design activities and projects participating in a search for new possibilities are caught in the functionalist paradigm of reducing human creativity to problem-solving (Jahnke, 2013).

The concentration of design research that aims to make sense and grasp design in an explicit, conceptual vocabulary ultimately reflects an undeniable cultural desire to discern an underlying order to our relationships and our lives. We seek clarity and intelligibility in what is specifically a scientific paradigm of knowledge (Dear, 2006), a paradigm that Dewey (1929) explores in *The Quest for Certainty*. Dewey's thesis is that the scientific relation between knowledge and action is reinforced by a valorization of objective methods so that a theoretical quest for certainty in practice becomes a "search for methods of control" (Dewey, 1929/1984, p. 103). Instrumental operations and rules of action provide a trustworthiness and practical certainty in which chaotic and changing relations can be made to feel tacitly understood and in *control*. A sense of security or comfort is rooted in the understanding, clarity, and even predetermination of our actions (Dewey, 1929/1984). Dewey's view reiterates idea of Charles Peirce about the nature of humans to seek methods of fixation and belief. We form habits through experience, according to Peirce, to appease the irritation of doubt and to move toward a "serene, satisfying, and happy tone of mind" (Scheffler, 1974, p. 58). In turn, we avoid the sensations of

discomfort, insecurity, and loss of control that come from doubt, change, risk, or when we act outside familiar territory.

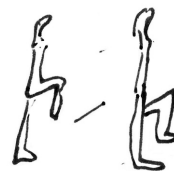
Thus, the sense of security and comfort underlying processual and organizational relationships found in management culture dies hard (Bauman & May, 2001). The value and expectation of qualities like clarity and usefulness, along with the sense of the practicality of action, remain unquestioned in how researchers talk about design. It is very common to read and hear design described as “useful, usable, and desirable” (Buchanan, 2001). This rationalist thinking structures our view of design, effectually keeping it nearer to the form of modernism and a vision of progress and security in where things are going (Bauman & May, 2001). The entire project of modernism severs means and ends, production from fulfillment, present from future (Dewey, 1922/2002). So for designers to take a critical approach to action, it is important to point out how designers’ own tacit expectations also shape the perceived expression of the poetic qualities and aesthetic potentials of their action.

The dissonance that arises in design research using a traditional research perspective, or at least holding knowledge up to a rational view, is that the creative qualities of a design attitude, which seemingly makes it different from ‘scientific thinking’ and able to produce organizational change (Hassi & Laakso, 2011; Kolko, 2015; Owen, 2007; Stephens & Boland, 2014), become abstractions. The creative actions of risking failure, exploration, empathy, the acceptance of ambiguity, and how those take place and feel in the temporality of experience, are divorced from the subjective perception of the action and the designer, who is actually doing the design thinking with the design attitude.

It is especially tricky when conducting research-through-design, for example, since many design researchers implicitly assume sensibility and judgment by a designer from a practice-based view of design, but do not provide a clear empirical connection to the *experience* of their relational forms and/or methods. The question that lingers for design research is how relational forms, even if artistic, are actually perceived or embodied as ‘designerly’ and connected to a creative artistic attitude, as opposed to one that is ‘managerly’ or ‘engineerly.’ For example, there are claims that such interventions are ‘designerly’ in the way that they lend a power of resistance (Markussen, 2013). By generically asserting that the interventions represent aesthetic practice by “opening the gap between doing and affect” (Markussen, 2013) or “doing and making,” such

projects miss detailing ‘designerliness’ in terms of concrete aesthetic qualities — as well as if/how exactly the sensation of resistance is perceived and felt in a form of doing and making, and not just a feeling that is “evoked in the people” (Markussen, 2013). A similar generalization is found in practices that claim to be empathic design (Mattelmäki et al., 2013) and build interventions “to trigger new empathic responses to inspiring new design openings,” (p. 74) without any concretization what empathic responses are actually generated and how that works and feels as an experience. One question here is if triggering empathy and using aesthetic practice are enough to qualify as ‘designerly’ in project outcomes. The deeper question is whether the design researcher is indeed openly questioning his/her own methods, sensations, and perception of experience, whether these projects are truly artistic and empathic forms, or do they just assert another form of certainty and control under the label ‘design’?

Designerly work presumably involves a designer’s sensibility, judgments, and attitudes, which speaks to the tradition of designers as “expert subjects” and “professionals with designerly ways of doing” (Bardzell, 2011). This involves something internal to the designer, exercising intuition and aesthetic sensibilities that include paying attention to his/her own feelings and inner states and intuiting and sensing what things need changing. But nothing is ever said directly about those. The use of creative forms and/or tools alone is not enough, since management promoted anything from objects and sketches (Eppler, Hoffmann, & Bresciani, 2011), social or interactive tools and platforms (Shneiderman, 2002), narratives and observation (Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000), to face-to-face sharing and prototyping (Mascitelli, 2000), with the idea of knowledge sharing and/or making tacit knowledge available. More critical is that many of these approaches through an analytic lens depend on a distinction between ‘self’ and the object, which continually shifts thought to the *form* of an activity to refer to what we determine as “design,” without attention to the *content* of the experience.



Subject-Object Integration

From the non-dualistic perspective of this thesis, what haunts the design researcher today as a “professional thinker” is the scientific sense of instrumentalism in wanting to reliably understand how design works and what it is — like a problem to be solved. The kinds of current research approaches *on* design and *through* design assume design, like they assume of science, to be a practice that has an formalized behavior or distinguishing feature such as a method or way of thinking, when it is the case that in experience itself no such distinction exists (Dewey, 1934/2005). Thus, qualifying the actionable, subjective expertise of design retains a pervasive subject/object dualism. This view carries the sense that design is something the designer takes on somewhat passively in terms of methods, tools, skills, and mentalities, instead of design being an action and form of learning that he/she achieves and undergoes. Even design expertise is seen as behavior the designer performs and applies like ‘problem framing’ (Cross, 2004). Thus, the reliance on a form of objectivity in the designer’s own learning activities gives design “the insoluble problem of how a subjective experience can beget objective knowledge” (Dewey, 1916/2004, p. 44).

The Pragmatists recognized that traditional philosophical accounts misapprehend the reflective or objectifying function of our consciousness (the naming of it) in place of the pre-reflective, perceptual function of our consciousness (the subjective forming of it). This confusion restricts the emotional and physical dimensions of creative action to a rational idea of knowledge or knowledge generation. Deeming design pre-rational action is not only problematic from the perspective of creativity and embracing open-endedness, but also for a profession that continually maintains a human-centric and empathic approach. The possibility of exploring emotional and aesthetic responses and the content of human experience beyond functional and external purposes, particularly those that do not fall within the rational paradigm, like fear and sorrow, conflict, and insecurity, allow for the understanding of the empathetic qualities of care, nurture, compassion, or love during the process of design.

Assuming that emotion and feeling are integral to creativity (Radford, 2004), it is important that design research explore the feelings beyond comfort, control, and security provided by intelligent forethought. Direct lived experience, however, is where subject-object or thinking-feeling are indistinguishable. A designer’s

internal will and sensation, used to connect to and engage with the physical world of urges, impulses, reactions, affect, and a sense of ‘self,’ must be taken into account as a part of creative experience and a design attitude. Design occurs not merely in experience, “but because of it, through interaction with it” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 12). The sensibility, judgment, and attitude of the designer cannot be addressed in a functional way because that circumscribes what are considered design behaviors and the designer’s methods for creative action. Creativity is bound up with intrinsic motivation (Hennessey, 2003), exploration, and the ability to challenge one’s own perception and sense of ‘self.’ At some level, an openness to experience or a “design attitude” must come from the designer as a doer and change-maker so as to direct his/her actions toward bodily experience, and this entails exercising intuition and breaking loose from old mindsets. A design attitude of openness must be empirically confronted in terms of how design is actually experienced and felt in the world and not merely as a search for control. Yet, recent literature on design that acknowledges aesthetics and form-giving in design go beyond rationalized processes, problem-solving, visualizing, storytelling, and framing provides little in the way of a substantive discussion about the emotional, ideational, and “tacit” sensitivities in the experience of design or a design attitude (Tonkinwise, 2011). In-depth discussions about the aesthetical practices of design, like form-giving, that “have the possibility to embody and materialize issues” (Hjelm, 2009, p. 3), are conspicuously absent from design literature.

The Aesthetic in Design

Having a history as an artisan craft activity, subjective expertise, aesthetics, and form-giving have been an integral part of modern design education (Gropius, 1965). The particular activity of form-giving, for which Swedish has the word “gestaltning,” is seen to be foundational to the intuitive, tacit, and material understanding of design practice and is often referred to by design authors (Abidin et al., 2008; Hjelm, 2009). The fact is, however, that design literature does not much address how the subjectivity of the activity of form-giving, that of perceiving and manipulating the physical world, is experienced by the designer. Owing to a dualistic perception form-giving, and thus creativity, design *as an experience* presents both a conceptual and empirical challenge for

design academics. Instead, design scholarship continually reifies form and, respectively, the experience of form-giving. This completely misses the kind of ‘feel’ for a design gestalt or wholeness through bodily perception that might say something about the creative abilities of designers and a design attitude of openness. And instead, design literature, by not explicitly recognizing an artistic mode of thinking-feeling integration, pushes more and more notions of craft, sensitivity, perception, intuition, affect, judgment, and expressiveness into the shrinking realm of artistic practice.

In general, scant attention has been paid to aesthetic theory in design research (Folkmann, 2010). Where the aesthetic is considered, design literature turns on the notion of aesthetic with respect to something to be regarded objectively, rather than subjectively experienced. Aesthetic is presented in formal terms as decision-making about a design object. These concerns range from visual appearance and the surfaces of products of design (Crilly, Moultrie, & Clarkson, 2004; Karjalainen, 2007; Person, Schoormans, Snelders, & Karjalainen, 2008), elements and images of form (Abidin et al., 2008), to pertaining to a discrete type of subjective judgment like “styling” or “taste” that deals with “pleasing appearances” (Tonkinwise, 2011).

This dualistic frame takes a cue from traditional aesthetic philosophy, which is associated with analytical constructions of what aesthetics consists of in terms of formal qualities and how to evaluate them (Folkmann, 2010). Aesthetics in this tradition has been synonymous with a form of ‘sensuous knowledge,’ which stems from a deep-seated conceptual separation between feelings of beauty, as a judgment of taste, and thought and rational logic, whose goal is truth. This view of aesthetics is credited to philosopher Immanuel Kant who accentuated the perceived contrast of art as an experience grasped and admired in and of itself, rather than for its uses, notably saying that a key feature of aesthetics is “purposiveness without a purpose” (Richie, 2007). Thus, a dualistic approach to understand the nature of art and ‘sensuous knowledge’ underpins the compartmentalization of the useful, practical arts from expression in experience more broadly (Dewey, 1934/2005). That design is seen as separate from art at all is due to a much more profound split between fine and practical arts stemming from a Platonic dualism. The former was seen from the perspective of serving a poetic aim (poesis), while the latter was seen to be practical or useful (technic) (Buchanan, 2001).

The favoritism shown toward ‘higher’ forms of cognition and intellect in design literature reduces the Pragmatist appreciation for bodily, aesthetic engagement as the model of all human learning (Joas, 1996). For example, that design is said to be a “reasoned state of making and planning for the future” (Buchanan & Margolin, 1995) is characteristic of a large portion of design theory that places value in thinking or design as an intelligent pursuit. Formative writings in design academia over the past thirty years generalize design as a mental phenomenon or act of cognition through a number of articulations, like reflective (Schön, 1983), solution-focused (Lawson, 2005), reasonably “making sense” (Krippendorff, 1989) abductive and ‘designerly’ (Cross, 2006). It disconnects designers from their practice and embodied sensibility with materiality, if not also generally dismisses internal processes. The preference for objective criteria and principals enthrones “the rational, the orderly, the manageable” and cuts us off from all experience of the unconscious while there is “widespread repression of all physical emotion, i.e., all bodily expression of joy, grief, anger, affection, fear” (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 244). In much of our institutional and organizational culture, we experience alienation from our bodies, a lack of contact with feelings, and suppression of emotions (Johnson, 1995; Shusterman, 2006). Organizations manifest a distrust of the practicality of sensory knowledge (Gagliardi, 1999). For example, that the designer’s use of his/her body in contexts of practice identified with objective validation and rational action brings uncomfortable feelings suggests that design “will be limited by feelings of ‘this is kind of silly’ and questions of, ‘Where is this going to go?’” (Stephens & Boland, 2014, p. 2)

This type of institutional fear owes to a mind/body detachment. As Dewey (1928/1981) writes, in an essay entitled “Body and Mind,” the cultural situation that has “brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh to spirit” (p. 21). Emotional, visceral meaning is not taken “in connection with what it actually does and effects in the distinctively human medium,” but treated “in connection with processes which are going on outside the body, the processes which it shares with inanimate things” (p. 31). Recognizing that habit and human will lend toward the objective security found in mental abstraction, Dewey, like the other Pragmatists, urged reconsidering bodily operations. “The question of the integration of mind-body in action is the most practical off all questions we can ask of our civilization. It

is not just a speculative question; it is a demand” (p. 30). Bodily experience is not only a practical question, but it is an aesthetic one (Shusterman, 2008). The subjective and emotional and affective side of experience is where meaning is experienced and created in action (M. Johnson, 2007).



Creative Action and the ‘Self’

From the Deweyan view, aesthetics takes place *within* experience — full, living experience. Aesthetics is literally “of the senses,” concerning the actual motivational patterns, images, feelings, qualities, and emotions which give context to meaning in the world, a “process of embodied meaning” (M. Johnson, 2007). The main contention regarding this embodied view of aesthetic is that, because it takes place in the flux of the phenomenological present, it can never be rationally interpreted. And without an analytical distinction between thinking and feeling, the rational does not take precedence over the intuitive and the emotional. Therefore, analytically clarifying design from art is not practically helpful. Rather what is important to see is something fundamentally “artistic” in design, in an embodied aspect or dimension of practice. It is the integration of aesthetic dimensions — sensuous, kinesthetic, intuitive, poetic, expressive, visceral — and practical dimensions that preserves the wholeness of experience in a procedure of making or doing. Thus, a non-dualistic view of the aesthetic is understood in integrative terms of the ‘felt’ meaning of experience (Dewey, 1934/2005; Gendlin, 1997).

If there is a central concern for creativity within design, researchers studying design are overlooking a central question about what kind of experiences are meaningful to designers. This meaning takes place in the subjective dimension of content and feelings of ‘self’ that are bound up with physical experience and the possibility of acting in the present. Design is not only what one does. It is also what is subjectively undergone — how the experience is perceived and felt. This idea is found in the Pragmatist orientation to experience, where this reciprocal relationship contributes to an experience of ‘self’ (see more on ‘self’ p. 80). Due to the emotional, felt meaning of experience, design is intricately related to ‘self’ and the opportunity to express something personal about experience (Dewey, 1934/2005; Eisner, 2002a). The active and voluntary agency of a designer implies a concern with how designers perceive and appropriate the world through their actions and the actual experience of creating new meaning and things. From the Deweyan view, aesthetic training also has something to say about the designer’s bodily and sensory craft that allows him/her to secure feelingful and meaningful form.

Therefore, taken as an aesthetic practice, design offers a holistic experience including the bodily perception and identification

of 'self'. Research shows that designers value their freedom to think and behave differently (Michlewski, 2008), which means part of what makes design a meaningful experience is the opportunity for self-exploration or testing the 'self' in concrete situations and specifically through different aesthetic relations and qualities. In a concrete, material sense this concerns the physical opportunities to do, make, intervene, manipulate, appropriate, meet, and relate to the world. So while designing, an individual is not only giving form, but also learning how to create 'self' (Eisner, 2002a). This being the case, for many designers the formal outcomes of design are not just objects of thought, but simultaneously a manifestation of the designer's relations to the world, a kind of extension of their self-identity. There is intrinsic value in the possibility for an exploration of 'self' that goes beyond an objectified image of 'self' and, furthermore, an objectified image of design. It becomes to a personal sense of intentionality and purpose in exerting a physical sense of will over one's own actions.

Therefore, this creative experience is about the range and diversity in the ability and perception to *act* in the first place. The Pragmatic perspective of creativity in this thesis, then, revolves around how the ability for creative action is tied to a particular *quality of experience*. In the action of designing is where there is volitional experience to choose and act in indeterminate and open-ended forms. This creative experience is where a designer experiences a sense of freewill and an ability to aesthetically materialize expression and meaning in the world with respect to his/her own learning interests. It should be mentioned that this aesthetic experience, connected to subjective volitional experience, offers a course of action through forms which is not limited to a formal ideology of beauty or pleasure, but any desired intensification of life's experiences from the horrific, melancholic, anticipatory, remorseful, and disgusting, to the mysterious, and embarrassing.

Given that creativity is tied to action, this is not about trying to identify or capture the nature of something objectively described as "creativity" (e.g., Amabile, 1988; George, 2007; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003) since this kind of model lends itself to trying to control for outcomes of creativity, instead of searching for new forms of action and imaginative experiences that give birth to creativity. The most notable work in the literature on creativity with respect to experience is by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who provides accounts of creative activity by people when

they are *in* the experience of the activity. He discusses this with respect to an intrinsic motivation for the kind of flow experience that reinforces a sense of ‘self.’ Making the present instant more enjoyable, he writes, “has the potential to make life more rich, intense, and meaningful; it is good because it increases the strength and complexity of the self” (p. 70).

Because Csikszentmihalyi’s view returns us to the *qualitative* experience of the individual, it connects very closely to the Pragmatist views of consciousness and experience. For instance, Mead’s (1934) thesis is about a deeply sought expression of the ‘self,’ to do something novel on his/her own, carried out in his/her own way that gives rise to creativity. And similarly, in Dewey’s (1934) view, there has to be a unification of internal sensation (subjective undergoing) and habit (the externalized form of doing) to permit any chance for the detection and discovery of innovative and imaginative behaviors. With respect to a ‘creative act’ for which the outcome is uncertain, the intent is actually toward changing habit and routine (Dewey, 1922/2002).

Frame Creation and Form-Giving

The fact that design is about perceiving the world in different ways should be familiar to many in the design community, who already understand “the creation and use of frames” as a critical part of professional design practice (Dorst, 2011, p. 527). “Framing” in general is a popular term in design literature, since Schön’s (1983) citation of a designer’s process and his/her use of a standpoint or frame of reference to view a problematic design situation. While design thinking and design expertise are tied to the idea that designers iteratively frame and reframe problems and issues over the course of a design process (Cross, 2004), this is not so different from other reflective and artistic practices that claim to use frames. In arts-based learning, for example, a frame is a search for an aesthetic perspective, metaphor, or image that provides a certain way of seeing an experience and provides the artist with a specificity and focus, like of an emotional tone, for example, to derive the form (Eisner, 2002a).

From the perspective here, a designer’s embodied, experiential way of working integrates thought and feeling and what provides the basis for what is referred to as “frame creation” in design. This

brings me to the point that frame creation is virtually connected to 'form' as an aesthetic activity. Frames rely on a specific perception and emotional reference, which "requires in some cases, a disregard for the label or function of the thing seen in order to pay attention to matters of form, that is to the way qualities are configured" (Eisner, 2002a, p. 85). Feeling and sensation are used to secure the metaphorical, qualitative, and emotional attributes that cause us to be touched or moved by a particular experience.

Throughout this thesis, I refer to *form-giving* to concretize the aesthetic experience in the context of design. Form-giving is described by designers as expressing, materializing, or 'shaping' an abstract idea through sensory perception (Abidin et al., 2008). It places emphasis on embodiment and thus can be understood as an activity dependent on the aesthetic sensitivity and perceptive 'feel' and judgment of form by the designer.

The idea of form-giving in this project starts with *form* taken in the Deweyan sense to be "the operation of forces that carry an experience of an event, object, scene, and situation to its own integral fulfillment" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 134). Form as an experience of perception is defined through time and by the nature of rhythm or organization of energies, as opposed to a static view of an artifact or something visible. Form is an expression of a bodily and sensorial journey, "the moving integration of an experience" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 134), through crescendos and diminuendos, compression and release, calm and fury, which incorporate both physical and mental structures.

Because there has been a pervasive neglect of feeling and perception in form-giving or bodily dimensions within design research, there are a few critical points about form-giving from a Pragmatist view worth noting here. First, because form and content are inextricable, *how* a thing is given form is equally as important as the form itself. This is an idea of Dewey's (1934), which is lost in the continual treatment of form as one that stands alone as an objective reference to thought without the perceptual, emotional process of the embodied individual. In a well-known paper in design theory literature, Klaus Krippendorf (1989) claims that a form is semantically informed by content (what he calls "meaning"). This assumes a cognitive act on the part of the designer or receiver, in that there is a mind that gives meaning to a representational (objective) form. This does not consider the physical dimension of experience, which inherently involves expressive and emotional content in connec-

tion to ‘self.’ Thus, Krippendorf’s suggestion assumes a practical, rational orientation toward a cognitive understanding (making sense) and the usability of ‘things,’ rather than suggesting the role of feeling, effort, and emotion in making sense and giving form to experience itself.

A second point is that an embodied perspective to practice indicates that form-giving is not merely spatial and image oriented, but is a profoundly kinesthetic, perceptual experience. This again refers to the fact that form-giving is not just symbolic or visual, but is concrete and rooted in physical sense-making. For instance, a designer’s intuition of, “I think with my hands” (Collopy, 2004), can be taken quite literally in that his/her perception is actually shaped with respect to physiological conditions. The way he/she uses his/her tools also shapes the way a designer thinks about or ‘grasps’ a situation.

This also means that there cannot really be what has been suggested as a “higher order of design” that is mostly concerned with the intangible or with thinking or symbolic terms for ideas (Buchanan, 2001). Given that perception is embodied, any perception of form and giving of form happen in a particular way and are comprised of concrete relations. Form-giving requires the particularity of tangible qualities, its significance is in how it *feels*, how it relates, separates, unifies, articulates, structures, prohibits, or invites us to experience. Design “thinking” can only happen within a medium (even if that medium is only a body). There is a reason why many in the design world, from Charles Eames to Mies van der Rohe, are famously known for having said that design is in the details. For most designers, design is not merely generative and imagining possibilities, but is in the realization of the aim and its material existence (e.g., Brown, 2008).

From an artistic perspective, the form and content of an experience are inextricable. *How* something is made is part and parcel of *what* is made (Dewey, 1934/2005). If design research views human processes from an objective view of form, those experiences feel rational and like problems to be solved. It is like trying to achieve an outcome with a certain approach, for example, using a design tool where if I do this, the result will be such and such, which feels different from trying to openly investigate possibilities and explore experience through emotion, intuition, fear, and doubt. The two are not mutually exclusive, but the quality of the experience of inquiry is different in terms of exploration; the first has a predic-

tive orientation requiring a kind of result or “knowledge,” while the second asks an open question which there are many ways to answer. These approaches have a different quality of feel in terms of the content of the personal inquiry. One has the expectation of results or a solution and one is open-ended and what might feel like play or exploration. If design research does not promote the subjective *content* of exploration through the qualities of relations, which includes the internal feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, and ultimately the living sensation of doubt, the *form* of design relations will serve rational, functional forms.

‘Self’ in Arts-Based Learning

The experience of creative action and the ‘self’ puts us back in touch with the embodied understanding of design of designers and how that understanding is learned and experienced. It highlights the kind of education that designers receive that places this variety of possibility for creativity at the heart of the learning experience. In a sense, the ‘core of design,’ where designers learn the skills of a material practice, is also part of the shaping of a certain set of values and/or worldview and the fulfillment of a quest for inquiry and meaning. Action is the origin of learning how to create ‘self’ (Dewey, 1938/1997). Take, for example, this quote from Lawson and Dorst (2009) that suggests that there is something intrinsically more to design learning than just skill and tool acquisition:

designing is not just something you do, or that you take lightly when you practice it, but rather it helps form your identity...design becomes a part of one’s being because it involves so much that is personal, like your creativity, way of approaching the world’s problems, you own history, learning style and view of the world. (p. 270)

It is unsurprising from an embodied view of practice that designers identify themselves with their work and find it meaningful given that they “connect to work on emotional, rational, and aesthetic levels” (Michlewski, 2008, p. 387). This internal approach is distinctive in the arts, which is very much a process of ‘self’ and the development of individual learning. “Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating

our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 3).

Therefore, to consider the kind of design attitude championed in design literature is to recognize a broader understanding of what a design epistemology represents — “an interpretive, emergent, and explicitly embodied approach” (Rylander, 2009, p. 7). It should be remembered that this epistemology is historically embedded in a model of artistic development. There is some importance attributed to creativity from an arts-based model of education in design, since, for example, the design attitude is very near the disposition upheld in arts-based education that “fosters flexibility, promotes a tolerance to ambiguity, encourages risktaking, and depends upon the exercise of judgment outside the sphere of rules” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 35).

The work of Elliot Eisner (2002a) in his book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, predicates an art-based educational theory based on the way that experience and inquiry is framed in an aesthetic paradigm. His work draws heavily on Dewey’s (1934) thesis of esthetics and maintains that the importance of what the arts teaches lies in the fact that it does not rely on verbal clarity, but works directly through qualities in experience. Eisner presents some aesthetic ways of working learned in an artistic education such as, “noticing subtleties among qualitative relationships, conceiving of imaginative possibilities, interpreting the metaphorical meanings the work displays, exploiting unanticipated opportunities in the course of one’s work” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 35). These ways of working undoubtedly relate to the idea that “aesthetic knowledge defines design thinking” and is a kind of approach that “engages the body in sensory experiences that reframe organizational issues” (Stephens & Boland, 2014, pp. 1–2). Arguably, what is not well understood from the view of design research is what and how designers actually learn from an aesthetic foundation that integrates aspects of consciousness. Design theory does little to address the learning and engaging in the art of form-giving through which meanings and qualities of experience are embodied and expressed.



A Pragmatist Philosophical Perspective

In order to explicate embodied experience, this research project draws upon the writings of the founding Pragmatist thinkers, who include Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910), John Dewey (1859–1952), and George Herbert Mead (1862–1931), along with a few contemporary Pragmatists who have focused on the aesthetic side of experience, including Johnson (2007) and Shusterman (2008). Additionally, I draw from the emerging field of embodied cognition, which offers increasing empirical evidence of an active, embodied view of consciousness (Engel, Maye, Kurthen, & König, 2013) and complements the Pragmatist non-reductive view of experience (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007). While an embodied perspective of design is often associated with the philosophy of phenomenology, the Pragmatists' contribution to a notion of creativity and subjectivity within experience has received far less attention in design.

The Pragmatist notion of continuity between thought and action is also supported by the embodied perspective current in cognitive science. A number of researchers have discussed the integral role of the body in cognition and the inherently emotional and felt nature of that experience (Damasio, 1999, 2010; Gallagher, 2005; Ziemke, Zlatev, & Frank, 2007). These perspectives together help to reclaim subjective experience and bodily awareness as constituting an experimental, creative means of inquiry within design, what some authors refer to as “embodied meaning-making” (Scarinzi, 2015). Turning to the Classical Pragmatist writings is intentional, since, in this respect, it is recognized that this canon offers a complex and diverse resource for radical thought about experience that is far richer than supposed by contemporary neo-Pragmatist philosophers of the ‘linguistic turn’ (Kloppenber, 1996; Rylander, 2012). The influence of Pragmatist thought has largely remained confined to the United States, where it also has been losing ground for many decades, but it provides a pertinent viewpoint to many of areas of debate, as well as skepticism regarding a theory of action, that have been a part of postmodern philosophy.

Why Pragmatism for Design Research?

Pragmatist theory is frequently referred to in design literature. However, the way in which it is used often lends design research an instrumental view of knowledge. Often Pragmatism is employed to provide the designer with a practice-based justification for what he/she chooses to do or what works best in the casual sense of the word “pragmatic.” Design research, for instance, often connects to pragmatism by association with Schön’s (1983) ‘problem situation’ or by organizing design as a process that reflects Pragmatist themes such as a “learning by doing process” (Stompff, 2012), Dewey’s concept of inquiry (Steen, 2013; Wetter Edman, 2014) and logic and reasoning as abductive (Dorst, 2011; Kolko, 2010). There is a meta-level connection made between design as a process of abduction, inquiry, or learning. But there is no more complete understanding as to what those Pragmatist concepts actually look or feel like in a ‘designerly’ way, since they are reasonably applicable to any field of study. Because of this shallow treatment of what designers empirically do and feel in experience, and by extension how they work creatively, design research approaches give rise to skepticism among many scholars. Without any empirical nuance, design appears loosely considered and in line with a ‘pathos of creativity’ and a kind of undisciplined muddling through or “anything goes” approach (Feyerabend, 1975).

Because of this and what I saw as misunderstandings of both Pragmatism and form-giving in design, I felt it was worth regarding the pragmatist approach and design at a more granular level. I eventually came to Pragmatist philosophy from my desire to address the issue of “design knowledge,” stemming from my research premise to clarify a designer’s capacities in terms of an embodied approach (see research description in Chapter 3). Reading various philosophical views across theories of science and postmodernist criticism, I resonated most with the texts by James, Dewey, and Mead. I found myself deeply fascinated with their ideas regarding inquiry, perception of ‘self,’ experimentation, and experience. I thus decided it was worth exploring their critique of Cartesian thought and their specific ontological account of perception in action. Rather than trying to generate a broad theoretical base with multiple perspectives on design, I chose to embark on a longitudinal study of design experience while drawing from a few main Pragmatist concepts. It made sense to perform this in conjunction

with detailed empirical work on detail and the 'feel' of my experience with form-giving. Together, they complement and sharpen understanding of the Pragmatists' insights on learning from within experience, and how that comes to bear more precisely on design inquiry as an aesthetic form of inquiry, instead of the habitual loose use of Pragmatist terminology in design. This inquiry serves basic research on an embodied (aesthetic) dimension within the experience of designing.

Brief Introduction to Pragmatism

Classical Pragmatism, also known as American Pragmatism, grew out of the distinctive intellectual and historical context of America in the nineteenth century. Each of the original four Pragmatists sought a way forward within a number of opposing cultural tendencies and intellectual changes taking place at that time. Each in their own way provides a critique of modern scientific foundations as a taken-for-granted way of engaging in philosophy that appeal to intellectual or analytical processes, and which imposes a distinction between thinking and feeling. Many of the inherited dualisms they thought to overcome like knower/known, mind/body, abstract/concrete, observing/perceiving are still relevant as concurring themes, not of the least of which is the subject/object problem, which today the philosophy of science, feminist theory, and post-modernist studies all problematize. This concern suggests that the Pragmatists were actually ahead of their time in insisting that a "science" of experience must be founded upon a merger between the naturalized, epistemological division of the logics of art and science, which still remain polarized in design research to this day. The Pragmatists' achievement in terms of a mediating or non-dualistic view, which has considerable relevance to design, is not only to offer a theory of knowledge or an ontological worldview, but also to also contribute a methodological approach that is distinctly embodied, i.e., sensory and perceptual (aesthetic) experience, and not just the functional nature of thought. Subjectivity with feelings of 'self' is integral to acting creatively and experimentally, but also to acting empathically and reflectively within experience.

In the Pragmatist view, it is the secondary conception of talking about an activity from an observational and reflective stance that alienates the experience and conditions from how

they came to be. Their contention is that this reductive approach places weight upon objective distinctions and what are principally mental images of human experience, rather than on physical interaction in the immediate present, and thus, what is directly felt or seen. On the level of kinesthetic and visceral contact with the material world is how the ‘mind’ actively performs *within* and is thus constituted in experience. Therefore, intellect was not only a cognitive act, but also part of a stream of consciousness in the present that consists of an aesthetic experience of ‘felt’ meaning. They inquired into modes of experience, including inferences, as well as imaginative and emotional processes that are integral to a sense of ‘self’. And each one addressed areas of experience that he felt should not be excluded from science’s purview, including in religious experience (James), aesthetic experience (Dewey), experience of interpersonal relationships (Mead), and feelings of doubt, belief, and inference (Peirce).

Thus, Pragmatism’s non-dualistic perspective on experience has important practical implications for design (Rylander, 2012). It is worth revisiting the Pragmatists’ views on experience, especially with regard to a non-reductionist, embodied engagement within the world. The Pragmatists took seriously the premise that human experience is defined by a subjective, phenomenological dimension, and particularly one that has a creative will to change the world in which it exists. For them, consciously attributed relations, as per what can be interpreted or revealed, are not the sole building blocks of life. Dewey’s (1934) thesis on aesthetics, *Art as Experience*, in particular, is essential for design research because it places aesthetics at the center of conveying and producing embodied meaning. It opens the door to empirically explore an avenue of design research, which must also deal with a subjective, affective dimension of experience.



*Pragmatism vs. Phenomenology
and Non-Representational Theory*

Pragmatism takes the view that direct experience or experience in the present constitutes the specificity of meaning or what can be objectively called “knowledge” (James, 1890/1950a). From this perspective, the Pragmatists adopted accounts of experience and perception that were radically different from the established views of philosophers like Hume and Descartes, who accepted experience as a ‘given’ that it happens to us. In different ways, Pragmatist philosophers argued that persons are not simply recipients of sensory data, but that perception is active. This is developed in current research on embodied cognition, which contributes to the theory that aesthetics is tied to action that subserves the human capacity to abstract concepts and symbolically represent experience. Pragmatists pointed out the continual nature of bodily experience, the relations between the substances that hold experience together make it comprehensible, which entails a subjective feeling of experience.

The Pragmatists’ view clearly relates to a phenomenological lens, in that it is rooted in lived experience and calls to the primacy of perception and embodiment. William James has even been called the “founder of phenomenology” (Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1980). Existential interpretations of phenomenology from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, in particular, sought to include the active body (embodiment) in experience. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “body scheme” is one of the first major philosophical contributions to approach the mind-matter dichotomy since Descartes. And similar to the Pragmatists, Merleau-Ponty extends an embodied philosophy to develop a non-dualistic and context-dependent ontology. However, the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl that embraced going “back to the things themselves” (Todres, 2000, p. 229) is a philosophical discourse that does not resolve the representational problem of a conscious mind revealing a world outside the mind. Moreover, it is difficult to find a method that connects the empirical with the philosophical investigation of phenomenology, since phenomenology begins as a sensorial investigation that rejects the value of empirical science (Shusterman, 2012).

The Pragmatists, on the other hand, emphasized action and the empirical over the phenomenologists' interpretive preference for apprehension and descriptions of underlying structures. Pragmatism argues that perception enables us to act within the real, rather than to cognitively derive or represent an essential nature of reality. Pragmatists claim that humans do not need to reconstruct the world in representations, or for the "mind," because we have evolved to act in a world that is there for us. Our thinking is alive in our relations, rather than in intrinsic properties. Where the principal assumption of realism and Kantian idealism is in the service of truth or knowledge about the empirical world, for the Pragmatists, knowing is purposive. Humans naturally intuit, analyze, synthesize actively, sort, and gather information in the pursuance of particular interests. So while the ultimate aim of phenomenology, and more broadly realism, is to uncover the patterns of an essential nature of phenomena, pragmatism is not focused on "what," and thus leaves interpretations of the world and phenomena open. The Pragmatist assumption of the changing nature and impermanence of reality yields a non-essentialist view of the world, meaning that objects, including 'the self,' have no fixed essence. This view undermines the interpretive approach to sensory data that starts from an assumption of a pre-objective or "primordial" consciousness, referred to as the "lived body," that can be revealed to us rather than an integrated consciousness of 'self' that is an active process within experience. In other words, it is sufficient that one observe one's own bodily consciousness, or "being-in-the-world," since even the perception of 'self' is creative action.

In fact, the difference between an interpretive and a pragmatic understanding of experience goes to the heart of current discourse about design knowledge and the problem of trying to represent something that is not objectively observable, as in "tacit knowledge." The conflation of tacit knowledge with being able to represent it presents the kind of internal/external split between an internal thought or "representation" and action that the Pragmatists sought to transcend. The non-essentialist view destabilizes the sort of representations or descriptions that treat phenomena as objects, and even the idea that research produces "knowledge" about phenomena in the objective sense.

Embedded in pragmatism is a process-based ontological view of reality that corresponds to a theme of postmodern criticism, the sociology of scientific knowledge, and 'non-representa-

tional' perspectives of knowledge (e.g., Barad, 2007; Chia, 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Haraway, 1988; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Thrift, 2008). These perspectives by and large frame knowledge as situated and practice-based and, owing that the material world has agency and relationships have presence, point out the limitations of interpretivism for handling the material-subjective integration of knowledge in practice. Thus, a postmodern critique of modern philosophical foundations, calling for moving from passivity to action or from an explanatory stance to a 'performative,' empirical one, can be seen as part of the broad, diverse, non-representationalist view of mind found in pragmatism (O. Jones, 2007). Many of these postmodernist concerns are revived Pragmatist arguments employing a new vocabulary. Thus, playing on William James's (1907) title for a series of lectures called "a new name for some old ways of thinking," one historian, Kloppenburg (1996), writes that pragmatism now is "an old name for new ways of thinking" (p. 101).

Because these process-based, ontological views are a kind of reinterpretation of pragmatism, they are not in conflict with Pragmatist ideas. If anything, they can be seen as offering a different vocabulary more pointed toward current concerns ethics, politics, methods, and epistemology. The point is not to limit pragmatism to a linguistic loop of critical thought or what can be read as a problem of "nominalism," the continual naming and re-naming of relations that are always open to new interpretations of meaning. Without intervention, action, material arrangement, and ideas alone have little relevance to an embodied perspective of action — to what practical and qualitative difference an action makes. What pragmatism offers is a link to an empirical approach toward design that includes an embodied, kinesthetic, felt experience. So although a major fault laid at the door of Pragmatist theory has been that "it lacks sufficient coherence to be deemed a distinctive doctrine or 'school of thought'" (Elkjaer & Simpson, 2011, p. 57), it is precisely because pragmatism is about concreteness and taking place in the "rich ticket of reality" that it offers an experimental attitude toward design knowledge. Like design, it takes place in a specific relational context, not an objective context. Hence, as capital "t" theory it will always lack the coherency and cleanness of a rational narrative. Its mutability lies in the inconsistency of human action itself, and just as it is said regarding design practice, its strength is in its resistance to a single definition (Buchanan, 2001).

Taking this into consideration, I should clarify that I am not trying to participate in philosophical discourse on pragmatism. Nor is my aim here to tackle all of the criticisms leveled against Pragmatism or to present a unified theory. Pragmatism is considered suspect by those committed to a realist or objectivist truth. It is not cohesive in the sense of being a meta-narrative, since the question the Pragmatists faced concerned the practical consequences of applying thought in experience.

My aim is to methodologically test the Pragmatist approach to experience as embodied and to understand what that means for designing (in action). Again, because this is an empirical investigation and application of pragmatism, I am not taking Pragmatists' philosophical perspective as something that is fixed or absolute. Rather, as a style or way of engaging with philosophy, this work reverts to my direct physical conditions and inward impressions, with that being what concretely presents the limits of my perception and my ability to overcome dualistic thinking.

A Pragmatist Theory of Creative Action

Of the many critiques leveled against Pragmatism, one has been its instrumentality. It has been disparaged from a philosophical standpoint for emphasizing the empirical or technical requirements of science (Gendlin, 1997). Along similar lines, it has been negatively dismissed because of its American turn of thought and being distinctly of its time of place, if not somewhat apologetic for the status quo or even elevating the *useful* (Thayer, 1982). Thus, it has been perceived as inferior to European philosophical traditions, in that it does not offer enough resistance to existing social and political relations, and thus is overly optimistic in its treatment of capitalism, too liberally idealistic, and politically naïve (Elkjaer & Simpson, 2011, p. 57).

These criticisms are correct, in that pragmatism is in one sense an instrumental *application* of knowledge. It sought to establish a philosophy for the purposeful and experimental nature of thought. Logic itself was considered to be instrumental. James (1907) states that, "all our theories are instrumental, are mental modes of adaptation to reality" (p. 86). But it is not necessarily the case that that early Pragmatists carried the conceit that instrumentality meant useful or utilitarian to the exclusion of the aesthetic or a

more phenomenological understanding of experience. In fact, their point was the opposite, that there is continuity of experience that gives meaning and does not reduce human interests to models of science. Such criticisms have much to do with how pragmatism is mischaracterized through instrumental representations, and from exposure to the routine notion of being “pragmatic” (Stuhr, 2010). Interpreting views of Pragmatism through mental constructs or cognitive representations, as is often done with Dewey’s views on learning from experience (e.g., Boud & Miller, 1996; Kolb, 1984), for example, loses the inseparable connection between perception and action that is fundamental to Pragmatism, and consequently, to its aesthetic interpretation.

Pragmatism is critical of methods of inquiry that give primary attention to linguistic categories or “nominalism” and a construal of knowledge which rests upon an *a priori* relation of knowledge and action. Pragmatists claim experience does not involve an objective problematic reference, thus denying the Cartesian nature of the problem (universal doubt) or the idea of the “production of knowledge.” Instead Pragmatists consider the concrete to be where an individual finds established ways of working inadequate and seeks to develop new concepts and practices that work. Pragmatism works to transcend the scientific constraint of treating the world as it ‘really is,’ meaning with properties independent of our opinions about them or interpreted by something called intellect within which there is logical order (Mead, 1932/2002) (e.g., the fallacy of misplaced concreteness), and perhaps more importantly, in methods that work to secure a feeling of security through control (Dewey, 1929/1984). In some sense, all forms of inquiry are aesthetic and practical (having purpose) since humans are concerned with transforming the situations in which we find ourselves. The continuity of thought is aesthetically constituted. It arises in experience and in the realms of human action and freewill possessing non-functional, non-linguistic relational and behavioral qualities that are not solely a product of rational action.

Pragmatism seeks to liberate the individual from the naturalized validity and authority of received ideas and the dualism of Cartesian thought, by raising the importance of self-certainty and the right to doubt (Joas, 1996). Because Pragmatists insist on the body’s central role in informing our social selves (embodiment), as well as artistic judgment and appreciation (Shusterman, 2012), it is important to see their ideas as supporting artistic creative

dimensions of inquiry, and not being merely instrumental. The Classical Pragmatists must be credited for having anticipated the major methodological and theoretical obstacles of a subjective, first-person account of experience with which scientific views of research have yet to come to terms.

Contributions from Each of the Four Pragmatists

The originator of Pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce, touches on the theme of subjectivity in his proposal that within inquiry there is a continuity between doubting and believing. Peirce's major contribution to scientific thought was a shift from a third-person stance, which required reflection on the relationships to an objective problem, to a first-person account of the problem situation. He criticized strategies of rational thinking about objective "problem situations" and the Cartesian doubt that introduces the illusion that the meaning or 'problem situation' is has a sort of "fixity" (Scheffler, 1974). A "problem" is sensed when our established habits of conduct are inadequate to achieve a desired end within actual experience. In Peirce's opinion, "real and living doubt" occurs in context. And because it arises in a 'learner' and involves sensation and internal awareness, inquiry has an aesthetic quality, in particular, an uneasy state of irritation (Scheffler, 1974). Therefore, doubt does not qualify all experiences of "thinking," such as simple problem-solving, for example, but can be qualified to some extent by a deep-seated physical motivation in which an individual ultimately seeks trust in perceptual beliefs, not just in theoretical ones. Because of this, trust is understood to be obtained empirically. Instead of a kind of scientific approach to possessing certainty or wanting to avoid error, the pragmatic response is that individuals should strive for an experimental attitude to continually learn from, cope, and deal with experience in the concrete.

In this idea, Peirce substantially laid the groundwork for the concept of creativity contained in pragmatism (Joas, 1996). His move to a feeling of subjectivity highlights a fundamental sticking point in the whole Pragmatist project — whether any first-person accounts of experience can be made in any way short of the experience by a body, that is, by a personal self in accordance with the feelings and thoughts of a bodily situation. The experience of a problem takes on the form of a living question, a corporal sensa-

tion of doubt. In other words, a question meaningfully posed is not a stated problem, but a sense of discomfort, a bodily sense of something unresolved. Therefore, for Peirce, the production of new hypotheses is not relegated to a cognitive process or logic, but it must be constituted through the bodily experience of making sense, i.e., the emotional and ideational processes. It must involve a “creative act” and creativity must also be subject to the learner (e.g., scientist or artist) intentionally interacting in the world (Joas, 1996). Peirce, consequently, developed a pragmatic notion of creativity in the sciences: an adaptive activity that “nurtured with loving care — as opposed to applying force and determination — unfolds according to its own logic until it is finally ripe for testing” (Joas, 1996, p. 135).

Like Peirce, bodily experience shaped James’s entire approach to inquiring into the processes that enable the feeling of self to come about. He concluded that the purview of science precludes human creativity in its underlying assumption of objective and natural laws. If things were causally determined as science supposes, human actions and decisions could not have influence in the world (Joas, 1996). Our feeling that we can exert effort in order to direct and control parts of our lives would be an illusion. The feeling of intentionality in experience, where there is force of will and belief, is, for example, where James sees that there could be ‘truths’ of different sorts for (different) individuals. James elaborated on the religious and psychological dimensions of the strong feeling of self, particularly regarding the belief in freewill and the ability of humans to consciously direct attention to the imagination, both of which have strong implications for creativity as action. Without “belief” in general and the ability for attention to perception and thought, people would not be able to experience their own creative abilities, such as the feeling of intention or spontaneous acts of freewill. James’s theories connected the concrete affective side of experience and its importance to the feeling of volition and human creativity.

Mead expanded on James’s physiological views to focus on the way in which personality structures are constituted by interpersonal relationships. His concept of human action and ‘self’ is conditional and center-less, in the sense that there is no inner logic to which a ‘self’ unfolds passively. The ‘self’ is not a result of internalized social expectations or self-image. ‘Self’ resides primarily in direct encounters and “feelings” of relations, the perceptive ex-

perience with environment and social conditions. And because an individual has a bodily “pre-personal” ability to act, this is a source of spontaneity that can surprise the individual him/herself. In other words, the experience of will or spontaneous action emerges in the performing and testing ‘self’ in specific situations, through different aesthetic forms and perceptions. And the individual’s ability to make sense of relations in new ways has an inherent value of self-actualization, intentionality, or self-expression.

Dewey rounded out these views in his contribution to a non-dualist theory of aesthetics that pays attention to art and its relation to experience as an activity, rather than as an art object. He also takes the drastic step of shifting the focus of art as a separate sphere of cultural activity to the aesthetic dimension of creative experience in general (Joas, 1996, p. 139). In doing so, he distinguishes experiences of a holistic coherent nature as ‘an experience’ and as having a special quality of fulfilment or consummation in the material of experience. In Dewey’s estimation, art is not separate from the model of science, but the two are polarized aesthetically. Science excludes the acknowledgement of aesthetic, bodily, felt qualities, while art is an integral experience of both feeling and thinking, and hence, a form that is expressive of creativity, rather than merely a statement about creativity. One of Dewey’s major assertions in *Art as Experience* is that what art expresses is the perceived, aesthetic qualities of experience, “not with conceptions symbolized in terms” (p. 140). Dewey (1934, 1938) argued against the routinization of production in order to present other kinds of embodied meanings. This refers not to the meanings of signs and symbols (which must mean something), but meaning directly embodied and ‘felt’ through relations with things. These relations have “assignable meaning” (Dewey, 1905, p. 657) based on a person’s desires, interests, needs, and so on and so are fundamentally *open* in scope (non-deterministic), since they are not based on categories of language.

Themes for Creative Action in Design Theory

The following Pragmatist themes are intended to help establish the connection between creative action and an embodied approach to learning, inquiry, and exploration, which is currently referred to in design literature as a “design attitude.” A Pragmatist view

of inquiry comes not just from appreciating the physical world, but acting, changing, and learning through ‘felt’ relations within it. The Pragmatists’ insights into this learning experience help to overcome discontinuities between perception and action to consider how embodied learning occurs in experience. They afford that learning includes subjectivity with the sensation of freewill and the possibility of acting from aesthetic frames like the kinesthetic, emotional, inferential, affective, and imaginative, which are not attributable to rational action, but used to embody and express one’s experience and meaning in the world. These themes together provide groundwork for a relational worldview and aesthetic inquiry rooted in direct experience.

Body

Pragmatists begin with the body as the organizing core of experience. In their view, there are no “mediated” experiences, but being embodied, there is only a single mode of experience — that of the body-mind in the present (Rosch, 2004). James (1982/1890) explains this as follows:

The world experienced comes at all times with our body as its center, center of vision, center of action, center of interest. Where the body is “here”; when the body acts is “now”; what the body touches is “this”; all other things are “there” and “then” and “that.” These words of emphasized position imply a systematization of things with reference to a focus of action and interest which lies in the body; and the systemization is now so instinctive (was it ever not so?) that no developed or active experience exists for us at all except in that ordered form. (p. 154)

The Pragmatists recognized that the nature of having physical body, and the consciousness of such, has a two-fold character in different respects: One is the perception of being both a subject and object, and the other is experience which is both universal and personal (James, 1912/2003). This direct experience, where we perceive both an object (physical body) and a subject (subjective awareness) our individual sense of ‘self’ is constantly changing (James, 1890/1950; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Mead, 1932/2002). Being active, then,

is what it is to “think,” in that we are constantly distinguishing material content in the world by way of perceiving what is subject and object with regards to ‘self.’

In the first condition, it is immediately ambiguous that we can be both an acting body and have a body at the same time, both “be” a subject and have an object. For example, I perceive that I am body. This embodied dimension is a subjectivity that feels and acts in the present, what I associate with a mental experience. At the same time, I also have a body that I think of as “me” or “mine.” This body is an object of awareness, the physical object of my ‘self.’ James illustrates this contradiction, “Its breathing is my ‘thinking,’ its sensorial adjustments are my ‘attention,’ its kinesthetic alterations are my ‘efforts, its visceral perturbations are my ‘emotions’” (James, 1912/2003, p. 80). Identifying this duality in the basic structure of consciousness, the Pragmatists begin from the fact that the immediate, subjective encounter of moving, manipulating, and feeling one’s body as an object is subjectively the same as manipulating and feeling physical material outside one’s body (Mead, 1932/2002). Our body is an intentional object of our perception. And perhaps more importantly, this intentional corporal engagement in the world includes an ongoing subjective formation of ‘self.’ For example, we use words like “*myself, I, or me*” (James, 1890/1950a, p. 238) as objective references to our bodily sense of continuity, and this continuity we attribute with a particular personal identity (James, 1890/1950a). Our actions involve a form of self-referential intentionality (Ziemke et al., 2007, p. 274).

Because we have seemingly two dimensions of ‘self’ that are perceptual (phenomenological, esthetic experience) and reflexive (conceptual understanding) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), in modern philosophy and in science, this experience has contributed to a dualistic structure of perception and action (also the mind/body problem). Conscious thought is seen as a way of distinguishing content, that is, material in the world, by way of distinguishing what is subject (inner, thinking) and object (outer, material) with regards to ‘self.’ We then label the subjective to refer to internal mental activities in contrast to objective states of affairs in an external world (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007).

The second condition of bodily experience, that of the universal and personal, means that we all have bodies and, in that way, we share something common in experience. But at the same time, each of our experiences is singular. My experience of my

body is mine alone. There is something internal and unique to my own body, my own way of behaving, my own bodily functions, et cetera. In one way, I can only formulate what I sense and what I feel, my particular medium, furnished by my body. And yet how is it I can relate to your experience of sadness, your pain, your ecstasy, your joy? There is something materially 'felt' that appears to be universal in human experience, which suggests there is "nothing intrinsic in the individual experience" (James, 1912/2003 p. 80). The sheer physicality of our bodies (form) means that emotions, effort, attention, and feelings are not purely immaterial, which makes it difficult to refute that the experience of particular qualities (content) is not shared among all humans. As James grants, "a feeling only is as it is felt; there is still nothing absurd in the notion of its being felt in two different ways at once, as yours, namely, and as mine" (p. 70).

At this intersection of 'self' and the world is where, the Pragmatists claimed, meaning comes about. And because this meaning is both symbolic and visceral (abstract and concrete), it does not and cannot exist inside a 'mind' or in mental representations, but is actively played out by thinking and the feeling of relations. This does not call upon symbolic interpretation to provide a sensation of certainty in an abstract meaning or 'truth.' Thus, the experience of having a body and feelings of 'self' are not purely subjective, but has the following universal characteristics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 269):

- is grounded in dimensions of everyday experience.
- has a place and time.
- is perceived between the self and the world, not an inner world of "thinking," but a point of relation, a meeting with the outside, the interplay of experiencing a physical body and the control or manipulation of physical objects and/or environment.
- enters social relations.
- has an emotional projection, that is, the conceptual projection of 'self' onto someone/something else.

'Self' as Changing

Taking that our bodily experiences are the center of our meaning-making, the Pragmatists understood that we both physically, kinesthetically, and emotionally relate to the world, while continually objectifying, reflecting on, and learning from that experience. For the Pragmatists, this ongoing transaction and the continuity of it is organized with respect to a sense of 'self': "The human body, and the way it structures human experience, also shapes the human experience of self, and perhaps the very possibility of developing a sense of self" (Gallagher, 2005, p. 3). So in other words, an actual *sense* of 'self' is a feeling comprised of concrete sensorial relations and is corporally attained. Thus, 'self' in the Pragmatist view can only be constituted through subjective *and* objective relations (Mead, 1934/1967).

From the non-essentialist approach of pragmatism, becoming closer to the experience of the immediate present is to paradoxically find there is no nucleus of 'self,' but only an experience of 'self' that is ever-shifting and center-less. While the center of self appears to be one's body, Pragmatists assume that we have a force of will that seeks to consciously make sense or organize experience into a 'self' (Mead, 1934/1967). Humans have consciousness that is creative, active, and pliant because it is based in the conditions and continuity of bodily experience. Personal continuity is for James and Mead really a feeling, precisely in James's words, "Self is *felt*" (James, 1890/1950a, p. 298). The bodily feeling of me-ness is felt in our moment-to-moment acts of attention, interest, response and the ways we choose to conduct ourselves. The feeling of a subjective stream is often connected to an essentialist view of 'self.' In the widely perceived view of selfhood, humans 'possess' a self in terms of a subjective mind, as proposed in phenomenology, for example (Shusterman, 2008). This includes a kind of basic innermost identity of 'self' comprised of an ego, a personality type, a mindset or otherwise discernable characteristics of personal essence — basically the thing that makes "me" me. We goal-orient ourselves, and thus orient a 'self' because we identify and derive our sense of self using the object of our thought. This view has contributed to the idealist, Kantian argument that thought is an expression of an individual's inner 'self,' as in the way that art is considered totally subjective or coming from an artist's mind. Beyond this, an essential or unwavering attitude towards the 'self,' just as a person can have a personality

'type' or unconsciousness that can be revealed or understood by a conscious mind, has served the traditional practice of psychology. By treating an "independent consciousness," which is intellectually formulated apart from a material body of habits and actions (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 85), 'self' is concluded to be within our own personal possession. In that sense, a 'mind' is basically enacted by a body. From this view, it can be seen why a large part of psychology focuses on fixing a 'self,' for example, rather than learning to be comfortable with the ambiguity and doubt engendered by the changing experience of 'self' (Epstein, 1998).

From the Pragmatist viewpoint, 'self' is better understood as an organizing activity. Embodied habits and patterns frame our interactions with our world and the sense of continuity we call 'self.'¹ The experience of habits are not just individual responses, but are socially produced, transmitted, and reinforced (Dewey, 1922/2002; Mead, 1934/1967). Thus, there is continuity between habits and social norms, which is always present and necessary to inform meanings of behaviors. The experience of 'self' is always to some extent social. This view of the socially constituted 'self' is particularly manifest in Mead's (1934) work, *Mind, Self and Society*, in which he suggests that the 'self' is in development in experience and not in a final or essential form. 'Self' is not wholly subjective or inside the mind, but rather is intersubjectively organized through objective conditions. In particular, the conscious activity of self that involves abstraction and reasoning is shaped, developed, and consolidated by cultural activities and conditions, which he terms symbolic interactionism. Therefore, 'self' as an activity of consciousness, is a double-barreled experience. It has both a reflective aspect and an esthetic aspect, which Mead linguistically terms the "me" (object of consciousness) and the "I" (subject of consciousness) respectively.

Another important aspect of the Pragmatist understanding of 'self' is its agency to act creatively, or at least spontaneously and not in premeditated ways. This concern is important to James's

1. This is close to the scientific perspective of embodiment, in which both the conscious sense of 'self' and that of subjectivity are felt through bodily experience (Damasio, 1999). The sensation of 'self' can be seen as an ongoing organizational process, naturally incorporating the feelings of bodily activities, responses, motivations, and resistances that have built up over time, through experience. They are physically established through neurological pathways in the body (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007).

image of non-deterministic freewill. He goes to lengths in *Principles of Psychology* to paint a picture of a naturalistic and embodied volitional sense of ‘self’ that makes decisions over the course of life. In his view, because we feel ‘self’ as both subject and object. Subjectivity is the feeling of volition over the body as an object, rather than a different kind of ‘thought.’ Subjectivity is at some level a consequence of the body, in that we guide our thoughts and body and thus feel “the birthplace of conclusions and the starting point of acts” (James, 1890/1950a, p. 303). While a force of will is crucial to intentionally acting on beliefs and emotions, we cannot definitively prove that choice and acts of will exist. Therefore, James appeals to arguments that speak to feeling that we have choice over our action and that we have a feeling of interest and attention. He contends that if there were no spontaneous acts of will, then the physical sensation that we have of exerting effort and directing control over our bodies and equally over our life would be an illusion. “But the whole feeling of reality, the whole sting and excitement of our voluntary life, depends on our sense that in it things are *really being decided* from one moment to another, and that it is not the dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago” (James, 1890/1950a, p. 453).

Continuity

Pragmatists emphasize the *continuity* of perceptual experience, a notion which responds to the constant change of thought directly apprehended in experience. Because continuity emerges as a sensation of movement through time it is a “definite sort of experience” (James, 1912/2003, p. 26). There is an aesthetic, bodily ‘feel’ to thought, like the way that ‘trains of ideas’ have an esthetic character and James and Dewey preferred metaphors like “stream” for “flow” to speak to the relational, dynamic nature of our consciousness. They sought to call attention to how this sensation serves as a unifying element to thought that “does not appear to itself chopped up in bits...It is nothing jointed; it flows” (James, 1890/1950a, p. 239).

James’s was particularly concerned with the relational sensation of thought, as he terms it, “transitives,” that are intuitively present in direct experience. He remarks how one experience follows another in consciousness, but these discrete states or “substantives” are not at all disconnected. We are continually inferring connec-

tions. Experience is something we actively do rather than what is given or revealed. Accepting the continuity of consciousness, an important point for Pragmatists is that the conjunctive or synthetic relations of experience give things a sense of “wholeness” opposed to only disjunctive elements (James, 1912/2003). This perceptual sense of wholeness is critical to Dewey’s theory of aesthetics, in which he criticizes reducing our understanding of experience to parts and seeking to impose distinctions. Dewey raises the point that aesthetics can only be understood and appreciated holistically in direct experience. He repeatedly emphasizes the continuity of bodily experiences as a matter of sensory material that cannot be made a matter of intellectual thought:

Qualities of sense, those of touch and taste as well as of sight and hearing, have esthetic quality. But they have it not in isolation but in their connection; as interacting, not as simple and separate entities. (p. 125)

Another point of continuity for the Pragmatists is that sensory experiences are not given, but are something we achieve. To denote the active performing of associations and constructions, the Pragmatists consistently used terms like attention, discrimination and inference, adaptation, et cetera. For example, James (1890/1950a) claims that thought itself is selective, “It is always interested more in one part of its object than in another, and welcomes and rejects, or chooses, all the while it thinks” (p. 284). And Dewey, rather than thinking of what we do as a response to an outside world, considers that the original unit of behavior is an *act*. Using the example of sight, he writes that “the real beginning is with the act of seeing; it is looking and not a sensation of light” (Dewey, 1938/1982, p. 263). Because the individual participates directly in sensorimotor coordination, there is no conscious distinction between motor response and the shaping the sensory stimulus. Any categories of ‘things’ or objects of thought, including ‘self,’ are a matter of attention. And the physical effort of attention is inherent in the way we corporally approach ‘things’ the world. Thus, we directly relate to conceptual categories through movement impulse and perceptual action — in essence by embodying them (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

The overall point of continuity stressed by the Pragmatists is that human existence is concerned with action and behavior. In fact, the term pragmatism is derived from the Greek word *pragma*

that means “action” or “practice.” Experience is concrete and “the *use* of most of our thinking is to help us change the world” (James, 1907/1982, p. 133). This is not merely about the practical, but also posits that there is no division between abstract meanings and ongoing sensorimotor interactions in the world.

This view and James’s postulate that the “mind” is not discrete from the physical world and that “reality” is a function of perception have been accepted in recent years as embodied consciousness or ‘enactive cognition’ theory (Damasio, 2010; Gallagher, 2005; Langer, 2014; Noë, 2009; Scarinzi, 2015). In the ‘enactive’ paradigm, our cognitive processes emerge not only as abstractions or deriving mental representations “which might then provide a database for thinking, planning, and problem-solving” (Engel et al., 2013, p. 202). Rather, because the body is necessary as a point of reference in action and our ability to affect the world around us, we are not able to extract ourselves from the “rootedness of thinking in bodily experience and its connection with the environment” (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007, p. 22).

The perceived challenge of embodied cognition to the philosophy of science today is the same as it was for Pragmatist writers over a century ago. There is a profound inclination in a scientific approach to thinking to separate conceptually and atomize experience through analysis or “disjunctive relations,” which subordinates the connective sensory “stuff” we cannot put into words as merely “mysterious” and “elusive” (James, 1912/2003). James calls this operation, where there is a choice to be made between this *or* that, a matter of *subtraction*. He contends that in the present flux of experience we cannot wholly distinguish between subject and object, or in other words, between the knower and the world. We are always making corporal sense of relations, and to do so, we house memories and embodied associations to shape and perceive our ‘self’ in relation to the world around us. We can speak about the subjective and objective at the same time because to ‘know’ the object, the subject must be present. He writes:

Experience, I believe, has no such inner duplicity; and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition — the addition to a given concrete piece of it...
(James, 1912/2003, p. 5)

With regard to this idea, James (1890/1950a) repeatedly observes that our attention to language can divert us from kinesthetic, ‘felt’ meaning, for instance, that, “language works against our perception of the truth” (p. 241). By naming parts of experience, for which, at any point, a thousand different names could be given, words serve to ossify and break up the undividedness of the subjective stream. In common experience, the present experience is continuous, occurring through connective relations, while the reflective naming of it is discontinuous. Words lay emphasis on parts, the division between inner and outer worlds, the causal organization of events, instigating assumptions about ‘realities’ of the physical world, as opposed to real sensations of that experience within a physical world. Perceiving an activity through the function of naming it can only help exaggerate distinctions of objective content. Thus, this view of knowledge serves to perpetuate an indefinite process of discriminating and identifying parts with respect to symbolization (Dewey, 1949/1989; Gendlin, 1997), but it does not necessarily move us any closer to the visceral meaning of experience.

This discussion can be seen as a distinction between the operations of scientific inquiry and artistic inquiry suggested by Dewey (1934/2005), and as the distinction between a statement and an expression within experience. “Science states meanings; art expresses them” (p. 87). Scientific inquiry, by naming the conditions for existence, states meaning. Cognitive interpretations that are meant to correspond with reality are like directions or “sign-posts” that objectively stand apart from the emotional dimension of experience. Artistic inquiry, by contrast, expresses meaning because it operates from an integrated experience that does not separate itself from the subjectivity and the “inner nature of things” (p. 88). It operates singularly in experience to include what the artist senses, perceives, and undergoes. In the artistic approach, there is continuity between representation and expression, rather than the reliance on representations correlating to an objective view of ‘reality,’ and thus, art has a difference in meaning.

Without going much into the issue of representation here, about which the Pragmatists have written much more, the idea that I want to convey is William James’s point about language: there is not a congruent relation between representation in “thought” and experience. The way that words possess a thing-like quality cannot match the sensuous “affectional” qualities of experience. In other words, the real failure of putting things into words is in

the assumption that words can act as a kind of direct, one-to-one reference to our inward receptivity of bodily feelings and sense impressions. With regards to this non-dualism Mark Johnson (2007) writes, “we must never think of the formal, patterned, ‘objective’ side as somehow copying the ‘subjective’ side, for that would entail that the words could stand in for, or represent, the subjective side and thereby replace it” (p. 82). The challenge of relying on conscious thought to grasp reality is that this separates, divides, and attributes symbolic relationships to what is continuous and fleeting in direct experience.

With regards to this point, the Pragmatists caution against making the mistake, as objectivism in research tends to do, that there are two distinct sides of experience, and especially that there is tacit dimension (unconscious) and an explicit, prepositional (conscious) dimension. This dualistic trap, in which such dimensions carry the same kind of meaning to our “minds,” poses the problem that they are simply different in kind (Gallagher, 2007). By extension, the unconscious could purportedly be made conscious, in a Freudian sense. By attributing thinking to an internal image, we forget about the continuity between our symbolic processes and our physical bodies in space, engaging in social activities that give rise to those processes. As Dewey (1916/2004) puts it, “One’s own thinking and explicit knowledge are already constituted by and within something which does not need to be expressed or made explicit” (p. 6).





The Exploratory Study

Pragmatist Methodology and Radical Empiricism

Pragmatism has been described in some detail to serve as the theoretical frame for this inquiry and the methodological approach of starting from experience and working in experience. The methodological view of pragmatism holds that bodily and sensorial engagement is inseparable from symbolic, reflective forms of “knowledge.” In Dewey’s (1905) anti-dualistic coinage, “knowledge experience” takes place in the intersection between the subject and the world, where mental and physical sensations of ‘self’ are irreducible. Therefore, exploring this *embodied* experience necessarily involves myself as a subject of the research, which is connected to my ability to actively sense, meet, mold, and manipulate my surroundings.

I am explicit in stating that my embodied approach to understanding design does not serve a methodological concept that functions to create objective validity or is imbued with rigor, from a traditional scientific frame of “knowledge.” This view requires separating the explanation of method from the active participation in situations and thus reduces method to its conceptual or formalized view. Pragmatism as a methodological approach cuts through this tension between scientific value for rational clarity and an artistic value for embodied practice. In order to be open to the diversity and richness of human perceptual experiences, Pragmatists appeal to us to learn about consciousness through the primacy of direct experience. Their approach is both phenomenological and empirical, in that it appeals to concrete perceptual experience “just as we feel it and not [to] confuse ourselves with abstract talk about it, involving words that drive us to invent secondary conceptions...” (James, 1912/2003, p. 26). Pragmatists argue that the aesthetic content we feel and infer in direct experience, but cannot consciously observe or explain in words, should be available to inquiry. James

(1912/2003) calls this kind of non-dualist methodology “radical empiricism,” in that feeling as a real material experience is empirically “radical.” In other words, because we *feel* stuff, thought is not just conceptual; “the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system” (James, 1904/2000, p. 315). Feelings constitute both an objective and subjective element.

From a Pragmatist position, the logic of modern science starts with a methodology that disregards the fact that in the immediate experience there exists a body-mind integration. Scientific methodology proceeds from analysis, more specifically from the naming and specifying of parts, instead of primarily *being present* in them. Mead (1932/2002) clarifies his view of what he sees as an epistemological problem with regards to the primacy of affective, ineffable, continuously transitioning qualities in immediate experience:

The condition for the experience may be found in the pressure of the hands or of other different parts of the body against each other; but the action upon us of the thing from its inside is a fundamental character that cannot be thus accounted for. (p. 125)

Thus, by trying to communicate and account for relations using analytical means, relations are functionalized rather than felt. The “apartness” of analytic reflection means there is an inability to sense viscerally how perception and expression arise from physical experience. As Dewey (1938/1997) points out, “Observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and touch. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon” (p. 68).

The Classical Pragmatists agreed that all thinking originates from direct experience and that methods arise, and are therefore situated, in the course of action. Their view, which is basically a commonsense view, recognizes this thought-feeling continuity in our everyday experience. This method of inquiry, derived from the Latin word *methodus* meaning “way of going,” happens within experience, which ‘knowledge experience’ Dewey (1905), in his anti-dualist way, interprets as a “pattern of inquiry.” This pattern of inquiry is common to all human thought that is carried out in action. Experiencing and inquiring are simultaneous because

experience is put to a subject as a living question to which he/she must continually respond.

Adopting a Pragmatist methodological approach, I am concerned with how my embodied experience of design research qualitatively *feels*. This is bound with movement and action — the *continuity* of experience. Taking into account James’s view of a feeling of ‘self,’ it is not that universal feelings and thoughts exist, but that there is a corresponding idea of a personal nature in ‘I think’ and ‘I feel’ (James, 1890/1950a, p. 226). How this feels for me cannot be objectified because it is active within experience. It can only be experienced. Thus, addressing continuity of experience requires an embodied instead of an analytical approach.

Therefore, because my inquiry is embodied, I can say that I have developed and structured my study in a systematic way that connects to my interests, my circumstances, and the kinds of resources to which I have access. My inquiry is driven by motivation, bodily sensation, impulses, and urges that defy stability, linearity, and furthermore a nature or essence. With respect to creativity, it is argued that the separation of the sensual from the rational, pure thought from the relational, the intellectual from the poetic is not tenable, nor desirable (Radford, 2004). Feelings of change and ambiguity are acceptably embedded in my experience of inquiry, and these are, moreover, the source of my actions, learning, thinking, and creativity. This process should not be misunderstood as unconstrained or *ad hoc*. It consists of a constitutive background of habits and practice established in terms of physical action that establishes what Dewey (1922/2002) calls a “pattern of inquiry.”

Practice-Based Research

Because Pragmatism considers knowledge as action, it has been established as having affinities with research in design (Melles, 2008). Specifically, research in art and design over past several decades has assumed the existence knowledge creation within and through practice, a strategy of practice-based research or practice-led research (Gray, 1996; Haseman, 2006). As discussed in earlier chapters, in design this approach has been widely embraced as research-through-design or constructive design research, which frames “the possibility of design being done on the basis of design practice or through practice, i.e. by artistically/creatively making

objects, interventions, processes etc. in order to gain knowledge” (Bang et al., 2012, pp. 1–2). Practice-based research strategies are generally concerned with advancing practice and the nature of practice, coming from Donald Schön’s (1983) understanding of the reflective practitioner, and include the practitioner’s strategies, such as reflection in action, participant research, and action research (Haseman, 2006).

Drawing from this understanding of practice-based research, I build on the conceptual framework of design from a Pragmatist perspective and embodied approach to the empirical work, specifically the activity of form-giving. Schön’s practice-based view of practice and ‘the problem situation’ still have a strand of Cartesian dualism in terms of addressing creativity and action through reflection. His methods for observation proceed independent of the feelings, sensations, and emotions involved in what gives the problem situation meaning in relation to aesthetic qualities or a perception ‘self.’ Current efforts to use rationalized and observational approaches to describe and account for design practice reinforce assumptions about a form of thinking that lean closer to an analytical process rather than the integrative, creative one ‘design thinking’ is intended to promote. Empirically, design research has focused predominately on the objects or outcomes of design creativity. Without experiencing, we have no theoretical account of form-giving or its possibility. Much is empirically unexplored in design, in particular with the roles of feeling, emotion, and creativity in the embodied experience of designing, especially the focus on the imaginative experience of creativity that gives birth to ideas, rather than to the outcomes of creativity.

This said, the aim of this practice-based research is to expand design research and education with respect to “thinking” and creativity. Strictly speaking, this inquiry is not focused on clarifying an outcome of design as an object external to myself, but rather in the quality of the experience of designing.

Movement-Based Inquiry

In view of the fact that design tends to favor the object over experience, design fields like architecture have supported experiential approaches as a way to consider firsthand encounters of design, and criticized the dominance of visual representation techniques

in their practice (Pallasmaa, 1996). Movement has been used as an embodied method to heighten designers' intuitive, emotional reactions and their multisensory awareness (e.g., Bronet & Schumacher, 1999; Orru, 2016; Sara & Sara, 2006), as well as to generally explore relationships to space or place (Johansson, 2013; McLean, 2016; Merriman, 2010) and architecture (C. Brown, 2010).²

My personal selection of movement-based inquiry and my methods grew out of my desire to meet the empirical conditions of experience as the thinking and *action* of designing (form-giving), not the abstraction of thought from action. By movement-based inquiry, I am referring to a basic mode of bodily experience, in order to inquire into and refer to my concretely “felt” experience” (Gendlin, 1997) in this research. There are many differences in the approaches to movement and somatic practice that include Sensory Awareness, Focusing, Authentic Movement, the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method of Awareness through Movement, and Body-Mind Centering (Gendlin, 2003; Don Johnson, 1995). I refer to some of these in this investigation. Generally, they share a direct focus on bodily experience and therefore provide a vocabulary for empirical work so as to illuminate the intricacies of my experience in that respect. In terms of a concrete strategy, I specifically embedded myself in the context of movement improvisation (see Chapter 4 for a description), and the rationale for that choice is discussed in a following section.

Movement exploration offers a strategy for implementing the radicalness of Classical Pragmatist empiricism found in the immediate present of relations. Likewise, the experiential facet of movement serves a common starting point for exploring design thinking as embodied and as holistic aesthetic experience. As “live creatures,” we are constantly interacting with the environment around us, exploratory, and animate (Dewey, 1934/2005). It is originally through moving and acting directly in the world that we come to inhabit a world that has meaning for us. In this continuity of experience, I experience my “thinking” as not only cognitive

2. There are also examples of physical body-based methods like bodystorming, role play, staging, and experience prototyping that are being used in design practice, since they offer the opportunity to test and help identify perceived problems or opportunities for design solutions (Buchenau & Suri, 2000; Schleicher, Jones, & Kachur, 2010). However, these methods are generally used to replicate an experience, as a form of active prototyping, and not used explicitly to investigate perceptual experiences of relations.

functioning, but my bodily movement, urges, and impulses are indistinguishable from emotional, motivational, and ideational processes. Therefore, rather than revolving around a logical construction first, the exploration of a basic physical capacity offers a core aesthetic form of inquiry or “an immediate realization of intent” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 89). Because movement is inherently expressive and qualitative, movement creation can be thought of as constituting an expression of my “design thinking.”

In a profound and intimate way, somatic training reveals how I give form in action and how I actually relate to the world around me. Coming into contact with my bodily habits and the ways that I cope and respond to the material reality especially highlights how much the “artistic” is corporal (Eisner, 2002a). I learn my own possibilities for creative action in the concrete and my artistic potential and ability to have an experience of openness. Somatic practice ultimately gives me some insight into my physical and emotional nature, capacities, and limitations.

Although the act of movement, and hence creating movement, does not leave a mediated “form” behind to study, movement is an “emotionally expressive use of the body-mind” that “gives form to feeling” (Dale, Hyatt, & Hollerman, 2007). Movement creation follows the Deweyan view of form presented above, in that it is not the material that determines aesthetic experience, but the kind of qualities of relations, the intensity, and effort, and thought and emotion are significant in their immediate presence. In other words, when you strip away the specificities of whatever the material is to explore the action of form-giving itself, the experience of creating movement or giving form to feeling is the same as with any material craft. In the case of movement, the material is my body, which allows me to refer directly to experiencing — a tangible transaction in/with the world.

An Internal Feel

Because this places attention on the bodily dimensions of creating in the present, it carries the assumption that I must “know” design as an internal sensation and affect, which is not fixable in observed conditions, but is a feeling. This draws upon the Pragmatist view of continuity. Instead of taking my relation to “knowledge” to be objective and not in a search for methods of control, I am exam-

ining the relation between thought and action. This experience I cannot talk about. It requires experiencing — moving between thought and action.

Because everything we do is structured through movement, it is the nature of our bodies and kinesthetic sense that is foundational to shaping our possibilities, “We are literally feeling our way along the course of our lives” (Juhan, 1995, p. 376). By example, movement of the body contributes to the primary feeling of ‘self’ that cannot be reduced only to conscious processes. “In our experience of movement, there is no radical separation of self from world” (M. Johnson, 2007, p. 20). In particular, exerting effort or force of will over one’s *body as an object* informs a volitional awareness of ‘self.’ In this physical feeling of volition in action, an individual experiences a sense of control or agency over how he/she moves his/her own body, a body that is thought of as ‘mine’ and thus possess a sense of ownership and ability to guide thoughts and body (Mandrigin & Thompson, 2015).

Self-control and object control are inseparable experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 270). The experience of control over one’s movement is where we learn what we can do and make sense of ourselves through moving (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) and by recognizing that we have material influence and the ability to put a ‘personal stamp’ on our surroundings. When an individual explores a sense of ‘self’ in relation to the environment,³ stability in the sense of ‘self’ is materialized through the selection and establishment of repetitive behavior or “habits.” The sensation of preserving learned patterns ultimately results in a sensation of personal control or security. We secure our perception of ‘self’ and with and of ‘things’ through habit. Conversely, breaking patterns and habits of behavior (or movement) presents a feeling of uncertainty, a feeling which represents or an absence of personal control.

With attention to this connection between movement and perception of ‘self’ and ‘things,’ part of my intention in this inquiry was to challenge my perceived sense of security that emerges from maintaining learned patterns of behavior and set ways of acting.

3. In the enactive view of cognition, we are sense-making beings whose purposive knowing allows us to enact and bring forth significance in our bodily interactions in the world. Johnson (2007) states that, “purpose implicates in the most organic way an individual self. It is in the purposes he entertains and acts upon that an individual most completely exhibits and realizes his intricate selfhood” (p. 289).

My choice of movement-based inquiry is explicitly intended to move away from security in methods and tools — patterns of behavior — and toward how it feels to explore and create in ways that are not easily rationalized — an exploratory feeling. Movement, therefore, serves a practical concern for how I embody an experiential quality of openness via the way in which I conduct inquiry and the way that that experience feels.

Dewey (1934/2005) remarks that openness is qualitatively felt. He describes this quality as “roominess, a chance to be, live, and move,” saying that, “lack of room is denial of life, and openness of space is affirmation of its potentiality” (p. 217). He is writing about the need of the artist to feel a personal freedom to explore and express and to work openly from qualities of relations in experience. The artist cannot proceed mechanically from the same conditions and the same constrictions on categories of thought, but must proceed from direct esthetic, sensorial, and emotional contact with the world in which categories have yet to be determined (Dewey, 1934/2005). This sense of freedom to explore changing perception carries also the feeling of an unbounded sense of ‘self.’

Movement allows me to reassess my patterns and habits, which is interesting from the perspective of creativity and arts-based practice. This sense of “familiar” in terms of formalizing methods, or a sense of norm in methods, produces a way of doing things that has a perceived “trustworthiness” and expectation (Dewey, 1929/1984, 1922/2002). It provides a continued adherence to certain framed conceptions, which has a controlling purpose. Therefore, by physically expanding my repertoire of design through engaging in a wider range of movement, I expand the capacity for my own expression and form-giving. I do not simply want to assume methods that I knew from architecture (e.g., drawing, sketching, mapping, photography, digital modeling, or collage) as representative of design experience. I am seeking new terms through which I can find where I can push the boundaries of my understanding of what constitutes an activity of form-giving.

The Integrated Present

Movement-based inquiry also turns attention toward the temporal dimension of creative action. Since the *present* is where the novel is assumed to take place (Mead, 1934/1967), the integrated now is

how I relate to a Pragmatist notion of creativity. In this view, creativity does not necessarily mean coming up with a unique object, but is in the use of perception and the imagination in the moment of action, when an individual is in the middle of discovering the possibility of experience (Mead, 1932/2002). Since this occurs at the level of direct experience, there is a possibility to unify dualistic categories such as research/practice, design/management, subjective/objective, inner/outer, understanding/sensation, reason/emotion, and to experience dynamic relations instead of remaining at the abstract level of thought at which they were created.

A critical aspect of action in the present is that it shifts focus to the *quality* of experience, in that how we move changes our quality of perception. Our perceptual activities are typically object-oriented in character, which means our interest naturally moves toward the external goals of our movement (Shusterman, 2008). In our desire to effect change or to impose a force of will, we tend to lay stress on objective conditions (Dewey, 1922/2002). We name. We recognize. Our movement is typically instrumental. This is what the Pragmatist perspective is about; that *how* we think in action is a kind of “purposive knowing.” Yet, as the Pragmatists point out, our cultural leaning toward the reflective dimension of our consciousness, the instrumental over the experiential, is “one of dominant tendency rather than a rigid dichotomy” (Shusterman, 2006, p. 26). To act, make, and do anything in the world, we can proceed from categories as though they were things and we can proceed from the feelings of concepts.

The experiencing of moving of our bodies is also aesthetic, so movement is not purely functional, but carries a qualitative use of energy and is expressive not only of thought, but also feelings, moods, attitudes, and emotions. A somatic practitioner can specifically learn to follow the pre-conceptual flow of feeling, which often is fleeting, vague, and escapes attention in favor of practices of identifying and naming. Therefore, the ability to stay with the sensation of experience, without discriminating and identifying, requires a degree of cultivation, since culturally we are disposed to start from external goals and/or an outward image of self (Shusterman, 2006). It requires inward attention.

Dewey’s (1934) thesis is that artistic experience puts equal emphasis on the inward impressions and the sensations of bodily perception of experience. Art involves an ability to select and attend to aspects of our physical experience by simultaneously being able

to undergo and affected by that same experience. Movement-based methods, for example, demonstrate movement as an aesthetic method that is emotionally *expressive* of thought, instead of thought being instrumental. They allow us to deemphasize the objectifying tendency in our doing and thinking and to invest greater value in the pre-reflective, esthetic ‘nowness’ of action, and thus, the creative action of perception. The focus on movement does not silence reflective consciousness, but it allows us to become closer to an integration of aspects of consciousness in the present, and the integration of thinking-feeling. For example, in teachings on somatic and meditative practices, physical training techniques are not simply about ‘getting in touch with our feelings’ but entail the empirical, artistic ability to concretely feel and sense, to “get out of our heads and return to our senses” (Epstein, 1998, p. 112).

In this way, an empirical approach to movement turns attention to how different the models of scientific inquiry and artistic inquiry are with respect to the “instant field of the present” (James, 1912/2003). As the Pragmatists insist, the scientific method foregrounds qualities of intelligibility and clarity in the tools of analysis used to observe a natural order of things. This expression of rationality emphasizes getting rid of the active perceptive experience of form, which includes being present and feeling and perceiving connections, a stream, the so-called “transitives.” A subtler influence of a scientific cast of mind, Pragmatism points out, is that it denies that *continuity* of experience; it does not let the world *be* felt.



The Research Journey

Given that the embodied logic of my research comes from my experience, it helps to give some background of my research context as to how and why I arrived at this current line of inquiry. My particular design background comes from an architectural education in a studio-based tradition that emphasized starting by doing and working from experience. In that artistic tradition, I was encouraged to develop a personal approach to the discipline and gained exposure to a range of visual arts, representational approaches like freehand sketching, technical drafting, figure drawing, painting, and digital modeling and rendering, as well as woodworking, design-build construction, building physical models and mock-ups, as well as phenomenological and site-specific techniques. Thus, I learned to inquire and communicate primarily through drawing, modeling, constructing, writing, and discussing my ideas. I considered designing a hands-on way to make my ideas available to the senses (i.e., form-giving).

I came to the University of Gothenburg in 2012 to begin my PhD study associated with the academic field of design management. This research was part of a European-funded project, specifically the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Initial Training Network (ITN) called DESMA (DESIGN + MANAGEMENT). This framework was supported to provide researcher training, and specifically the DESMA project can be seen in the context of the burgeoning interest in design, as pointed out in the introduction, as it relates to innovation and creativity.

Within the structure of the DESMA project, I filled the “academic hub” researcher position by being situated at the University of Gothenburg. At the university, I am under the rubric of the Business and Design Lab, which is a collaboration between the School of Design and Crafts (HDK) and the School of Business, Economics and Law. The specified research objective at the start of my project outlined in the DESMA framework was “clarifying designers’ skills and methods in innovation processes.”

From the beginning of my research project, I intended to work from the perspective of my design background in order to approach the question of what it is I actually *embody* as a designer, meaning what kinds of attitudes and design competencies I embody from my education and experience with architecture and environmental design. Having worked with design in various con-

texts of learning, professional practice, teaching, and conducting research over the past fourteen years, I have a broad repertoire of approaches and changing relations to what I call design. However, in that time, I have never identified design with the use of certain methods, but more as an experience of exploration and learning in a hands-on way.

I intuitively, and inarticulately, felt that design had something more to offer in terms of a creative approach than was being discussed in any of the texts I had read in design management literature, and, moreover, in design literature. So in this respect, I was not interested in speaking about the technical skills of design like drawing or prototyping, but rather motivated to explore the way in which the view of cognition and “thinking” in design connects to what is understood as a creative attitude. I wanted to speak to how or what designers learn from the training and pedagogy of an arts-based education, instead of trying to make an argument for why design is important.

Early Research Case Studies

From the initial premise of “clarifying a designer’s skills and methods,” and within my context at the university, I had a great deal of freedom to explore. Not knowing where to start, but, as a designer, knowing that I had to start doing or trying something, I tested ways to achieve clarity about a notion of design “knowledge.” I initially worked on developing a collaboration, since I wanted to work with the “collaborative design” that is related to Design Management. Looking back, I can say I had an objective view of “collaborative design,” meaning that I saw “collaborative design” as a kind of medium or phenomenon. I specifically had an interest in artistic and entrepreneurial collaborations taking place informally, from my long-running research interests in how people appropriate spaces that align with their values. Therefore, in the conventional approach to conducting social and architectural research, I sought out case studies, specifically in the form of artistic, entrepreneurial projects. This led to a problematic and time-consuming process of pursuing a social milieu in which to work in Gothenburg. Having come to Sweden independently and being an English-speaker, I felt like an outsider not knowing anyone or the language. I was on my own to find a collaborative setting, so I looked at contexts

through networking, contacting people, writing research proposals, visiting workplaces, and lots of meetings. I also attended many seminars, and visited and spoke to numerous persons and organizations in the hopes of meeting people and developing a collaboration or case study.

This work included, but was not limited to, the following networking activities primarily in Gothenburg: Helping with studio work at Chalmers Center for Urban Studies in Hammarkullen; starting work with the University of Gothenburg's Institute for Innovation and Social Change; attempting a collaboration with PhD students at HDK and Chalmers University of Technology; writing to multiple artists/designers in Gothenburg and Stockholm to set up meetings with them; writing to multiple professors at the university about discussing their work (either artistic practices or research with social groups); visiting, touring, and speaking to the founders of multiple collaboration/coworking spaces in Gothenburg, including Entrepreneurial Hive, Frilagret, Pavement, the Collaboratory, and Lusthuset; visiting artist cooperatives in the Gothenburg area, including Lindholmen Konsthall, Hey! It's Enrico Pallazzo, Truckstop Alaska, and Not Quite; inquiring about opportunities with social design groups at Malmö University; meeting with the Performance/Performativity group at Gothenburg University and trying to setup a working relationship; contributing to workshops with the Critical Heritage Studies Group at Gothenburg University; attending workshops with the creative organization TILLT; meeting with architects from Chalmers about a maker space; attending start-up meetings in Lindholmen for entrepreneurs; attending creative networking events run by ADA and Brewhouse; visiting KKV and Röda Sten to ask about collaborative or working opportunities; attending architecture seminars at Chalmers; visiting and meeting with directors at the Interactive Institute at Chalmers; looking for opportunities with the City of Gothenburg's Älvstranden Utveckling in Frihamnen and Utveckling Nordost in Bergsjön. Other networking activities outside of Gothenburg included: Meeting with artist-researchers from Senselab in Montréal; proposing research with Engine Service Design firm in London; proposing research with City Mart in Copenhagen; and starting collaborations with DESMA researchers on DESMA activities.

These searches yielded the opportunities to work on three case studies that had aspects of a voluntary or self-organizing con-

text that were important to me, including two types of co-working collectives in Gothenburg and a social enterprise in London (See Appendix). In each of them, I participated in organizing collaborative design workshops, which is a common method of participatory design (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), and aimed at engaging members in imagining a vision for the organization. Although I did not end up using these case studies in my research, they were transformative in helping me realize that this form of design is not how I identify with my experience of design and/or form-giving. In each case, I did not encounter the sense of *openness* that I was seeking in a design experience. By trying to serve a rational purpose, these cases really seemed to miss out on the opportunity for acting and improvising in the moment and the quality of that experience.

Through the combination of these early experiences, I eventually became frustrated with the way that I was looking at my design problem and attempting to engage in some concept of “collaborative design” through a case study approach. I was equally discouraged by the framing of design knowledge in relation to practice as it was presented in the relevant literature and discussions within the field of design, such as the difference between propositional knowledge and knowledge associated with practice (Niedderer, 2007). Here I found a major limitation in terms of the idea of “knowledge” itself because I wanted to get at ‘something’ intrinsically experiential with design, instead of reducing my experience by making myself an object of my research.

Generally, I felt estranged from my bodily and sensory engagement in actively and materially exploring experience. This feeling eventually became the basis for my inquiry and methodology. It is one that I have continued to make sense of and reframe in closer detail in this thesis. Such an experience of tension is what the Pragmatists, most notably Peirce, warranted as the source of inquiry. He suggested that discomfort, a feeling of “real and living doubt” gives way to action, the impulse of resolve. Thus, this affective dimension means that in our living experience, we (all humans) have an intentionality to resolve that dissatisfied state (Scheffler, 1974). In line with Pragmatist thinking, I perceived internal feelings of instability in my experience of inquiry and within the context of academia.

Empirical Testing

In the same vein, I was trying to feel out creative latitude for *how* I could and wanted to actually make meaning of my experience, by trying to experiment with what I was calling “design experience.” In order to really approach this sensation of openness, I felt I needed to work outside the boundaries of what is objectively considered design. I had to be willing to use my body more, to physically expand my ways of doing things and my perception and expression of design, in ways that do not objectively look like design. So what I was really asking was what my bodily possibilities were for exploring, feeling, or understanding design as having a sensation of openness.

I was seeking to expand my work with my physical practice of design and my possibilities for acting, and thus, my experience of design. I needed to intuit and ‘feel’ my way forward, to interact and learn my way around, finding a way that was subjective and personal (used myself and my perception), but also poetic, imaginative, and sensual. Therefore, the choice to conduct collaborative interventions, sensory experiments, mapping exercises, and to play with models, videos, images, sound, et cetera, became part of the framing, through which I was trying to develop a particular form of representation to help me say what I wanted to say about design as an exploratory experience (see Appendix).

The choice of form affects what would be experienced by the ‘reader’ of my research and thus how he/she would see design. “The decision to use a particular form of representation influences not only what can be represented but also what will be experienced. We tend to seek what we are able to represent” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 23). So, in this sense, in my early experiments, I was trying to keep myself very open in terms of the kind of experiences that I thought would represent or express design, because I knew I was trying to convey something more than design theory and research currently offer. Therefore, I specifically tried not to impose too many constraints on the material and methods I would use and thus on my inquiry and “thinking.”

While I tried to keep an unrestricted and playful approach to an experience of “design” as long as possible, I also wanted to avoid preconceptions and dualisms, like design/management, designer/user, artificial/natural, that underlie an understanding of “design” in an analytical research context. Instead, I wanted

to question how “design” or “management” is actually perceived in experience. In that early process, I worked incrementally and reflectively, systematically trying out various actions, seeing them each as an activity of research, so as to understand my perceptions in those actions. I was looking, sensing, applying, and examining at each moment to understand how I was developing concepts in experience. This hands-on, form-giving approach is similar to how I would approach my work in architecture. It is in part a physical procedure of experimenting with modeling techniques and materials to investigate spatial or formal relationships, which are also in part conceptual and metaphorical ideas.

I encountered improvisational movement methods including a form of practice called Butoh in July 2014, while participating in an artistic methods course on movement in Borås, Sweden (see a description of Butoh on p. 117). This course was co-led by the Swedish dancer Carmen Olsson, who teaches a specific physical training framework derived from Butoh called Body Weather.⁴ I was inspired by this somatic practice, since it put me in contact with feeling and my body, which was something that was lacking in my context of studying design methods, theoretical discussions of “design thinking,” my frustrating quest for a “collaborative design” case study, and conducting design experiments. It struck me as a practical means for recovering an inner connection by paying attention to my experience, instead of looking for an experience outside myself.

In many ways, my choice of Butoh was circumstantial, and had I had access to other forms of somatic practice, I might have gone down another route. That said, however, I was undeniably drawn to movement, probably in part because of my background in dance, but also because of the loss of contact with a material practice of designing that I sensed during the theoretical phase of my research. I realized I needed to make sense of my research through bodily experience, or more precisely, to *feel* my “thinking” as embodied in my design research.

4. Body Weather Training is associated with the founder, Min Tanaka, and is concerned with deepening the dancer’s connection to and attunement with his/her environment, since each person is thought to be not just changing but changeable. Tanaka is quoted as saying, “The body is not a set entity. It constantly changes, like the weather” (Marshall, 2006). The training is designed to stimulate what one could call an improvisational mindset, or the capacity and awareness of participants to take part in the creation of a performance. Each person plays a creative role and has equal access to the material and in investigating what it means to “dance” or “perform.”

My interest in Butoh is as a designer and for design practice, so I do not intend to explore the performance aspect of Butoh. Obviously being an outsider, I would not do the practice justice from the depth of knowledge of experts in performing arts. I am following Butoh as a method specifically to point to the potential for design to expand its practice in a very broad way to a foundation of aesthetics. In many ways, this begins with basic somatic awareness and sensitivity toward the body. By training our inward attention to thinking-feeling patterns at deeper level than is usual in everyday behavior, Butoh somatic practice serves as an example of experiential inquiry into body-mind integration. Butoh is used to help people out of their habits and to be perceptually open. It is an artistic mode of integration in the Deweyan sense, where there is a “dropping away” of the conscious sense of ‘self’ (as an object).

Butoh is not without its share of criticism and internal inconsistencies. It should be seen as emerging from within a particular cultural history and performance tradition in which many practitioners choose to situate themselves, like, for example, contemporary or postmodern dance. As previously stated, Butoh admittedly carries a certain ideology of form in terms of trying to free or empty performers in order to expand the body’s capacity for movement. From that premise, there are many visions of the craft to which I personally do not subscribe. One is that there is a natural state or collective memory of the human that lies dormant in our bodies. Nor do I adhere to the theme of spiritual metamorphosis or cathartic release as being the aesthetic core of Butoh (Fraleigh, 2016). Furthermore, while Butoh is often claimed to not have a particular style, what emerges is often an ostensible vocabulary with similar elements. These include “extreme images of deformity or insanity” (Hamera, 1990, p. 55), a focus on death and darkness, “acutely controlled and contorted sequences” (Allain & Harvie, 2014, p. 136), dancers performing with squatted postures, whitened bodies and shaved heads to create a stripped or raw presence (V. Sanders, 1988). Among Butoh’s variations, some groups have developed the dark flavor for which a lot of Butoh is known, cultivating a practice associated with grotesque imagery and “a mixture of erotic obsessions and body sufferings” (Naranjo, 2010).

Beyond this, because Butoh is culturally specific to Japan, there are some critics who think it is suspect as an “export art” read through the “Western gaze” (Waychoff, 2009, p. 40). In this

respect, performers have a cultural responsibility to not merely adopt the tradition, without realizing one's own cultural approach to it. For example, in the Japanese pedagogical tradition of strong discipline, the training from a western sensibility can be seen as uncompromising and strict, "demanding personal sacrifice" and "crossing over into everyday life" (Allain & Harvie, 2014, p. 135). In my experience talking with people, they expressed criticism for things such like the requirement to faithfully observe Butoh masters, an over-obsession with the body, and following prescriptive exercises in a form that is said to resist fixity and routine.

It is easy to become mired in these fragmented questions and discourses solely around the practice of Butoh, but I do not see these as criteria for defining Butoh, nor for dismissing it. I have merely tried to recognize such complexities and understand my perspective within this art form, for instance, that my curiosity in a Japanese art form could be questioned as an interest in the "other" or a kind of exoticism. However, I do not naively accept Butoh as an overly neat analogy or panacea to design or even to somatic practice, and I do not see it as good or bad in the objective sense of an "artistic method." I understand it as pragmatically serving my particular research interests at a particular time. Basically, Butoh allowed me to 'see' what I needed to 'see' for this research project.

In its approach, Butoh offered a specific, internalized and somatic way of working that I felt I needed to take to explore the body as the generative source of action and immediate spontaneity. It was a first step in pushing myself to see "design experience" in terms of a creative technique and practice for knowing 'how' as much as knowing 'what'. Because Butoh was presented in a very stripped down and banal manner, as a kind of mind-body exploration without any particular goals beyond the exploration itself, it felt very accessible. We simply started using our senses and moving around in our environments. It was a form which allowed us to move at our own pace, and to develop our own learning and sense of purpose within it. I had some idea that it could be used as an open-ended method of exploration. In an anti-dualist sentiment, Butoh supports a critical perspective to self-awareness, the material conditions of the body-mind, personal volition, and self-discipline not found in a "western" research context of analysis and reflection. It was also a method for promoting expression and experimentation that I was not able to experience or find within the design contexts to which I had access. Particularly because

of Butoh's improvisational nature, I could give attention to the 'nowness' of my action and participate fully with my fears, drives, and impulses as those physically arise rather than intending my action and movement toward a goal or final form.

Empirical Material

After the first Body Weather session with Carmen, I began to seek out more opportunities to investigate these movement methods. Over the next year and a half, I attended a selection of European-based courses in Body Weather and Butoh based on access and resources. Currently, there are a limited number Butoh and Body Weather workshops taking place in Europe. They occur over the course of a week or weekend, predominantly in the summer, and in many cases happen in remote places, as a means to connect and explore the landscape. My choice to attend particular workshops was pragmatically based on factors like timing, travel feasibility, teaching language, connection to personal contacts, along with the written descriptions of the workshops' philosophy and format (see Appendix,). They were taught by dancers, who might be considered second- and third-generation Butoh practitioners in Europe. In addition to Carmen Olsson, these included Frank van de Ven (Netherlands) and Christine Quoiraud (France) who studied and trained in Japan at the Bodyweather Laboratory with Min Tanaka; Anita Saij (Denmark) who studied directly under Kazu Ohno; Sumako Koseki (France); and Tove Elena Nicolaysen (Norway).

One of the longest courses I participated in lasted nine weeks at the Art Culture Center – Bækkelund, run by Anita Saij on Bornholm Island off the coast of Denmark. Bækkelund is conceived as a cooperative living environment, in the tradition of Min Tanaka's Body Weather Laboratory, where inhabitants contribute to daily life and everything is shared. Participants help maintain the grounds that include a garden and a horse stable, in addition to their daily dance training in order to become more connected in their patterns of social and environmental engagement.

Without a particular emphasis during those sessions, I took things as they came and did what made the most sense at the time. When it felt appropriate, and as much as possible, I took photographs, made audio recordings, and filmed a few videos. In a few

workshops, the teachers explicitly asked that we not take photos since doing so “takes us out of the experience,” meaning that we become observers, rather than remaining within the subjective feel. I also took copious notes both during and after classes.

I also did not specifically “interview” any of the participants, but I had extensive interactions with them and the teachers over the course of the workshops. I actually did not feel comfortable with the idea of formally or informally “conducting interviews” because I did not want to effectively feel like a researcher in those training settings. I think this would have distanced me from the others and the practice itself. While I presented myself as a researcher exploring the art form and asked for their consent to take photos and sound recordings for my research, I never made myself specifically an observer by sitting out and observing the course. I participated as a fellow student, learner, explorer, and artist. Together with the other participants, I had many informal conversations in different settings regarding our thoughts, experiences, motivations, impressions, and interests in this type of work. The Butoh practice itself includes copious discussions about the work, including the performers sharing feelings and reflections, and the teachers describing the philosophy of Butoh. As a result, I felt I garnered quite a lot of insight through this arrangement without having to rely on “interviews.”

Given the ethical considerations this raises, I tried to follow these experiences in a way that would contribute to my own learning and values. Since the focus of my work was to tap into an embodied perspective, my intention was not to try to have an objective approach to the data. Because of this, I did not feel like I was “using” other participants in an exploitative sense as the subjects of my research. My approach was necessarily subjective, so their conversations and impressions of the experiences that they shared were only used to point out how our interpretations and circumstances are individual.

Analysis of Empirical Material

Even after I had attended a number of Butoh and Body Weather workshops, I was still unsure about how to make sense of and pull together all the materials I was collecting and how they explicitly related to design. At this point, the research was similar

to ethnographic research in that I had been in the “field” and my approach was situational and iterative (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I had let myself “get close the data” and “to know well all the individuals involved and observe and record what they do and say” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 586). I felt like I had accessed a level of understanding with members of the Butoh community so that I comprehended somewhat the philosophy and worldview that guide the behavior of the community and their ‘culture’ of practice. From my weeks of training, I had over twenty hours of audio recordings, and hundreds of photos, notes, and sketches.

From the beginning of my project, I was forthcoming about sensing and intuiting the kind of lessons I expected to learn and why I was drawn to an aesthetic foundation of inquiry. I intentionally did not set out to do a certain kind of analysis or with a certain approach or aim to code the information in a qualitative tradition, such as “grounded theory,” or with an expectation of an inductive analysis or to generate a conceptual framework. Instead, when I finally sat down with all of the collected data at the end of 2015, my primary interest was in how to convey the internal, somatic feel of the Butoh work. What had come up early on in the research was Dewey’s (1934) point about artistic ability that requires “showing” the reader and not just “telling” the reader. So a main aim of the empirical work was a desire to *express* something of what I actually felt in the experience — and especially something of the uncertainty, discomfort, and fear of being in the unknown.

I will note that this underlying intention is why I subscribe to the Pragmatist view of abduction. I was always forming a view or hypothesis of openness, while conducting this inquiry. The physical engagement and active forming of experience are contrasted to the qualitative research premise of grounded theory, for instance, in that the researcher can stay open to experience, and in the reflective analysis drop preconceptions or at least a “personal bias” by using methods of reflectivity (Glaser, 1978). This assumption of an inductive and linear progression for conceptual discoveries assumes that, one, there are objective methods, and, two, a cerebral ability of keeping an “open mind” is detached from physical experience and the tacit associations, recollections, expectations, and intuitions inherent in a researcher’s actions. This supposition of qualitative inquiry, that the researcher frees him/herself reflectively in this way, is a major reason for my interest in Pragmatist theory and in a methodology that uses movement as inquiry, as the foundation

for opening up my perceptive experience. Pragmatism brings to the fore how methods in research aim to observe phenomenon and emerging data from different lenses, but does not confront the question of how the researcher actively influences and manipulates his/her view of the world. Like everyone, I will always have former preconceptions, experiences, and interpretations. Moreover, I take action through experience, while reflecting on the empirical consequences of my actions. This understanding contributes to my Pragmatist methodological stance in design inquiry that includes the subject of design (the designer), who normatively interprets and changes phenomenon.

With respect to the form of analysis, it was not clear to me whether what I was feeling was better conveyed in an overall impression of the process or in concrete experiences. I also felt that I wanted to do something with all of the visual and audio documentation and continued to sift through all of those for the kinds of feelings they evoked in me. I also started trying to write about a few of the experiences, because, at that point, I knew I wanted to be precise about instances and feelings in the work. In that process, there were certain moments that I kept coming back to, memories that stuck out from the rest of the work I had done. I admit that I did not go through my notes and look for patterns or generalities, but instead I allowed myself to be drawn to the sensations that those memories caused to emerge.

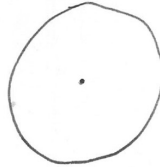
At the same time, I was taking an academic writing course. For that class I wrote about those evocative moments and explored them in relation to Pragmatist and embodied cognition theory, as well as Butoh's Buddhist perspective. I admittedly was feeling insecure in trying to express the feeling in the moment using writing. The first drafts were very crude and unstructured, but I was advised to keep trying and not worry about the interim results so much. I started experimenting a little more with my writing style to try to match the feelings of the movement experiences using the written word. I also tried to clarify to myself what it was in those instances that actually interested me. The form of the writing for the empirical section grew out of this iterative process of going back and forth between the writing and the point I was trying to make. This is also why the theory is directly connected to the empirical work, rather than presented apart from it in the discussion chapter. Since the empirical work was part of a strategy to directly connect to the theoretical material, it emphasizes for the reader the bearing

of what the Classical Pragmatists aimed to convey about the living integrality of experience.

Through this process, I noticed a theme of the specific kind of tension that was in the moments that most interested me. It was in the struggle to not to break from my perceptual experience — the here and now — and to lose my ‘self’ to the movement. I realized that this is where the ‘real work’ in the Butoh practice is. It then clicked for me that this intersection — the tension(!) between the reflective “mind” and the esthetic present — and the physical shift in awareness required to remain present is where the majority of this research lies. From this realization, I gained clarity with regard to what I was trying to say with the particular moments I had chosen. I settled more specifically on four moments that each seemed to say something slightly different with regard to my internal struggle and the specific feelings that those moments caused to emerge.

Focused on those four experiences, I wanted to go into as much detail about what I was feeling and thinking during those brief moments. Of course distinctions between form and content break down, so this became an arduous process of trying to clarify with some specificity what points those sensations and feelings were compelling me to make — it was process of words. I needed the text. Because of this, the photographs, sketches, and other materials I had collected over the course of my project were used to tell a parallel story of action, form-giving, and movement, rather than trying to “capture” or represent what I had done. I acknowledge that I certainly would have ended up with different conclusions had I worked through a different media to do the “analysis.” The sense of struggle came from the paradoxical nature of what I was trying to do and the fact that it was important for me to be able to articulate or verbalize something about form-giving in design, an experience that is mostly wordless and rests in the tacit ability to be open and comfortable with a ‘feel’ for things and ambiguity. In this sense the forms of text and analysis create a contradiction in using an aesthetic method and approach — that which requires experience — to become clearer and make a research case through a logical form of analysis. In the end, my movement in the writing process returned to where I started theoretically, that is to trying to close in on opening up.

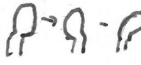
feel the "shape" of my hand.
I know it is five fingers; they are
split, but is that how it actually
feels. would I recognize my hand
by feeling alone, only because I see
it do I "know" it has 5 edges, from
experience, but hard to determine
rationally where "ends" body ends.





nothing ; everything
martial art - connecting to outside


Day 3. more mini exercise

Warm up exercises - moving
separate parts of body

 head only side
to side
front, back,
around

 Head up through
hole
only moving center
like snake

 down

 side to
side

 keep shoulders &
elbows in same
place
move center
side to side



An Empirical Context for Form-Giving

Overview of Movement Improvisation

As a context and category for this research, “movement improvisation” in the arts proves interesting, since it is one that involves taking risks and views art as a domain for any kind of radical experimentation from both an artistic and a theoretical research perspective. To introduce this context, I use the term “movement improvisation,” which comes from explorations of the physical experience of movement by contemporary practitioners who are interested in expanding the range of what might called “dance improvisation” (Blom & Chaplin, 1988; De Spain, 2014). Movement practitioners generally have a critical or philosophical aim in using the art form to push the boundaries of what is termed “dance” in life more broadly. It is a generative concept, intended to open the possibilities for collaboration or research among practitioners who otherwise find the term “dance” limiting.

Given the variety in the kinds of approaches to, questions about, and ideas around movement improvisation as an art form, there is unquestionably dispute among theorists and practitioners concerning what actually constitutes “improvisation.” A discussion of such terminology is not germane to the topic of study here and falls outside the scope of this work. There is a great deal to be said by other scholars about the historical and cultural context that is associated with improvisational practices and what today is known as movement improvisation. To briefly frame the philosophical context here, movement improvisation was born in the early 1960s and continued into the 1970’s, a period marked by experimentation and changes in ways artists thought about their processes, their roles, and their relationships to audience/viewers. All these were generally united by an interest in contextualized and nonhierarchical art. This shift in thinking brought a resurgence of improvisation to many fields of art, from music to visual arts to

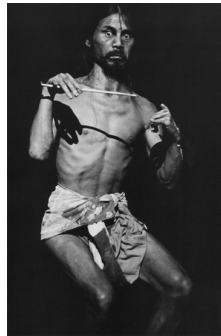
architecture (e.g., Situationist International and Fluxus), as artists began breaking away from the rigid structures of modernism. Guy Debord, core to the Situationist International, identifies the movement as “an experimental investigation of the free construction of daily life” (as cited by Bishop, 2012, p. 83). Particularly with the artists of this period, the forms of improvisation are often elusive, slipping from performance, to trainings, to happenings on the street, and between solos, group explorations, and duet activities like Contact Improvisation.⁵

It is important to appreciate that artists used improvisation as a critique of what they saw as the separation between the art object and process, production and consumption — between the work itself and the experience of the work, because this criticism plainly connects to John Dewey’s thesis that art is experience. Improvisational artists hoped to convey Dewey’s theory in the intrinsic relation between art experience and everyday experience (Baas, 2011, p. 15). They shared Dewey’s concern that categories of thought dictate choices and opportunities, and for them, scripted or cleaned up forms of performance and art were criticized as agents of security, comfortability, and the mechanical. By privileging the here and now and the “experiment,” the term which improvisers often used to describe activities for which the outcome is unknown, they sought to affirm the democracy of the present as a space of action. Also, by engaging with spectator participation through events and happenings, each individual could have equal and heightened access to the experience of making the event. This aesthetic experience had the subjective affirmation in feelings in bringing about a “form” (or gestalt), instead of simply focusing on the object itself. It demonstrated that everyone ultimately has the right to investigate his/her creative capacity.

5. Contact Improvisation, developed by American choreographer Steve Paxton, grew out of initial performance sessions in 1972. An early definition of contact improvisation given by Paxton (1979) is an improvised dance form “based on the communication between two moving bodies that are in physical contact and their combined relationship to the physical laws that govern their motion — gravity, momentum, inertia. The body, in order to open to these sensations, learns to release excess muscular tension and abandon a certain quality of willfulness to experience the natural flow of movement.”

Brief Background on Butoh Method

Butoh is a Japanese dance form of movement improvisation that emerged during Japan's post-war period (the late 1950s) in conjunction with the impetus for movement improvisation discussed above. It is credited to Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–1986) and Kazuo Ohno (1906–2010), who returned to Japan after studying modern dance in Germany, and were interested in experimenting with the practice of dance more fully as a medium of perception and expression, deliberately questioning established ideas about dance and beauty (Allain & Harvie, 2014; Hamera, 1990). They sought to develop a form of performance that was culturally Japanese, rather than copying classical styles, and that maintained a connection to the movements of day-to-day life and ordinary bodies, rather than those of trained dancers.



1. Hijikata Tatsumi (Tadao, 1968)



2. Kazuo Ohno (McLaren, 1985)

Loosely translated, *Butoh* means “earth dance,” and one of the sayings by the founders is that it is “born from the mud” (Bergmark, 1991). Tatsumi Hijikata, for example, “believed that by distorting the body, and by moving slowly on bent legs, he could get away from the traditional idea of the beautiful body and return to a more organic natural beauty” (Frost & Yarrow, 2016, p. 111). Originally called *Ankoku Butoh*, which means “dance of utter darkness,” (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 55) *Ankoku* was later dropped from the title, since *Butoh*’s range of expression is seen to be beyond what is dark (Yeung, 2002). The practice is understood to require that, “[t]he dancers must confront all aspects of themselves — even the ugly, dark parts — to give an honest representation of this process onstage” (Yeung, 2002, p. 2).

Because of this psychological endeavor, *Butoh* is described as both a philosophy and a movement practice, due to the fact that it comes from a combination of training techniques in movement and concentration, and a repertoire of choreographic and improvisational principles. Many practitioners describe *Butoh* as open and relevant to anyone interested in investigating the body in relation to time and space. The *Butoh* philosophy of art and life that is practiced by *Butoh* masters is in their “daily interactions with the world,” a consequence of which is that discipline and especially *training* are a large part of the movement practice and pedagogy.

The principals apply to life in general, so training in the Butoh context is not just done to generate performance material and the practice does not simply switch on during a performance. Training and practice are the nuts and bolts of a corporeal process, an unending material process of producing a certain kind of body-mind relationship so as to perform in a certain kind of way.

Butoh training has many philosophical influences from Buddhism, which treats the body-mind as an interactive whole. Butoh ground training methods, while varying from practitioner to practitioner, flow from various influences ranging from Eastern and Western dance forms, sports training, meditative arts, martial arts, and samurai practice, as well as various theatre practices (e.g., Noh theater, physical theater, miming, circus arts, flamenco, and street performance). The intention behind them is generally to develop a conscious relation both inside one's self and to one's surroundings. Therefore, Butoh's point of entry for affecting the body-mind is by contact with the body. This process of exploration includes paying pointed attention to little-attended aspects of the body-mind, including tics, facial and bodily distortions, one's posture, and other involuntary movements and gestures.

Butoh has training techniques, yet it resists routinization, which is due teaching by masters who stress that every person "must find their own Butoh," (Waychoff, 2009, p. 51) their own way and form of moving, in order to be true to themselves. By working with and cultivating *subjective experience* as a medium, Butoh techniques are seen as a way to support dancers, movers, and performers in defining their own relation to movement practice, instead of learning a set form or method. Often repeated about the genre is that the number of definitions of Butoh is equal to the number of people doing it.

Therefore, where there seems to be some consensus about Butoh is in the understanding that it is not a static entity with any particular aesthetic. Instead, it is understood by Kazuo Ohno as "living art," since "the essence of life is change" (as cited in Waychoff, 2009, p. 45). It is an art that is mutable, with practitioners having their own interpretations of what it is that involve their own inner experience and change. In that way, the dancer's body-mind integration is the subject of the movement, rather than a particular aesthetic form of movement. Because of this focus, Butoh training intentionally breaks from structured dance forms like classical ballet, where movement is codified or put into steps

and language, and whereby the dancer's stream or flow of the body is rationalized or objectified in the pursuit of a conscious aesthetic form of movement.

Butoh-Pragmatist Connection

Like the Pragmatists, Butoh begins with a naturalist perspective with regards to movement, meaning that there is a kind of original human nature, what they view as a primary “raw” self-interested experiential function of our bodies constituted by impulses and desires. “The organism” (Mead, 1934/1967) or “live creature” (Dewey, 1934/2005) are two terms Pragmatists use for this sentient, perceptive state of esthetic engagement without a linguistic awareness. In the Pragmatists’ thesis, there is no “ontological rupture between ‘lower’ animals and humans” (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007, p. 32), in the live interactive coordination of the organism and its environment. The human activity of impulses naturally becomes shaped and influenced by the particular social environment(s) of the organism, an adaptive pattern that embodied cognition calls “coupling” (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007). The individual learns to influence his own conduct — bodily movement and activities — through symbolic interaction and the kinds of social conditions and expectations that shape and crystallize impulses into dominant habits (Mead, 1934/1967). Thus, the “mind,” referring to the uncanny human ability for abstract conceptualization, emerges through forms of social communication, interaction, and expression. Said differently, what we understand as a distinctly human “bodily experience of meaning” is enacted and “given voice” through socially and culturally transmitted behavior (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007, p. 47)

Similarly, Butoh founders claim that all human movement begins with impulses, the body responding to needs that arise from interaction with the environment. They consider this natural body, or subconscious body, that occurs from the stimulation and response of the senses to be subverted by social conditioning. Specifically, the body is believed to be subjected to a kind of reasonableness of mind, in the form of social customs and habits that place restrictions upon movement expression. This isolation of body from the mind is seen to be duly manifested in the split between man and nature, since the body is connected to nature.

Words like “flesh,” used in Butoh, explicitly contrast the perceived purity and immateriality of the “mind” by being grounded with a feeling of contact with the living body — the breathing, wrinkled, imperfect, suffering, dying body.

From this point of view, Butoh culture celebrates human impulse and instinctual responses, the supposed irrationality of the body. Through movement, the idea is to release the whole personality or the entire spectrum of aesthetic and emotional expression of experience, including the dark and the absurd, the miniscule and exaggerated movements and otherwise repressed impulses that are withheld from typical social activities due to embarrassment or shame. With this philosophy, Butoh training is geared to strip away or help break down the layers of collective habits and rationality, in order to allow the body to “speak” for itself, i.e., a natural or unconstrained expressiveness. Butoh’s somatic practice is therefore *radical* and *experimental* in the Pragmatists’ sense of being oriented toward inner experience rather than one that is objectively oriented toward external appearance or end results.



3. Body Weather landscape (van de Ven, 2003)

Butoh Training and Setting

Because the body is required as a point of reference and the source of experience for Butoh, it is necessary to learn Butoh through a training process, sometimes referred to as a laboratory. This training mostly consists of workshops given by Butoh masters throughout the world. It is way of working and networking, and is intentionally kept informal or relaxed while being structured, since participants must travel to the workshops in order to directly experience the movement and engage the body-mind. Most typical workshops are full-day classes beginning in the morning, with a lunch break, and then more sessions in the afternoon. Most people who attend these classes are not aspiring dancers with previous training, but individuals, usually with some sort of interest or practice working with the body, such as artists, performers, or architects, who found out about Butoh through word of mouth.

Through trial and error, the teachers have discovered that the practice must be properly learned through exercise training. Any written media and videos published for teaching the practices are intentionally scrubbed and now teachers generally prohibit note-taking by participants who intend to try to share the procedures with others through verbal or visual means. They insist that the transference of these methods involves embodied knowledge and must be mastered through repetition like any other craft or activity. This physical interaction with the practice is thus an integral part of the culture of Body Weather, for example, since the meeting situations also assign meaning to the overall philosophy and the kinds of attitudes, interactions, and social dynamics it contains.



4. The training studio

Basic Butoh Training Strategies

There may be questions here about using an artistic method in the context of design, but from a non-dualistic perspective there is no distinction between practical and aesthetic with respect to method. Nor is there a distinction between art and design in the way that many in design consider design to be different from art because of its concern with the practical or the “real world” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 98). In that regard, it is important to see that Butoh is practical in the sense that it has been designed with a strong philosophical outlook and with strategies for its intentions. Its matter of form, and the way it is taught and practiced, are not merely aesthetic, for performance, or for shock value, but there is a strong intention and philosophy behind the work, tying it to human experience and the physical body. It is both conceptual and grounded in real life experience.

I briefly present three Butoh strategies for training with somatic awareness, “unified body,” “soft focus,” and reflective discussion, as a way to point out how Butoh uses a philosophical understanding to inform its practical approach to operationalizing an integrated body-mind. These are not meant to paint a picture of the entire practice, since each practitioner of Butoh finds his/her own way to work with the material, but these strategies are emblematic of Butoh’s explicit focus on subjective awareness and philosophical approach through a means of physical training.

“Unified Body”

Foundational to Butoh is a natural posture of the body that is the dancer’s primary position, a kind of neutral position or a “point zero”. The posture is intended to train the body-mind to relax by developing the dancer’s contact with the center of energy (*ki*) through breathing. That is to say, the experience of the unified body relies in letting the mind connect with *ki-energy*. Like in Butoh, *ki-energy* is a pivotal concept in body-mind disciplinary training methods of the traditional Eastern meditation, medicine, and martial arts (Yuasa, 1993). *Ki* is difficult to grasp through explanation and not practice, but a very reductive interpretation for my discussion is that intentional, trained breathing allows the practitioner (subjective feeling) to connect to the material substance

(object) of his/her body. Therefore, the training of the breathing is the training of a self-apprehension, a perceptive sentient body. Learning to center our ki with the unified body helps generate awareness and feeling for the body.



5. Training the unified body (photo: Patricia Suarez Hermosilla)

To execute the unified body from a standing position, the feet are parallel about the width of a fist apart and the entire sole resting lightly on the floor. The practitioner tries to settle the gravity of her body in the lower abdomen while lengthening the spinal cord and centering the head with the head and chin pulled in. The effect is that the upper half of the body should be relaxed and open, while the body's energy (*ki*) is centered and rooted in the earth. From the outside, the posture should look effortless, but internally it is warfare and it requires considerable technical training. On one level, there is simply the physical dexterity and endurance necessary to hold the posture correctly. Especially when holding the unified body from a squatted position, the legs and back are usually screaming in pain after a few minutes. On another level, there is a mental disjuncture when trying to remember all the elements of the unified body together and at once, e.g., breathing, shoulders down, squatting low, maintaining *ki*, focus out, open chest, chin in, balancing the sky. It is intensely challenging not to become tense, to look natural, all while "enjoying the beauty."

What makes the unified body so difficult to grasp intellectually and to develop as a practitioner is its embodied contradiction(s). The key is to not think about it, but to *embody* it. The unified body does not subscribe to general dichotomies used to

express thought, so aesthetically one must be able to simultaneously embody two seemingly contradictory traits. The examples Sumako gives are of joy and pain, playfulness and death, imperfection and beauty, calmness and precision, efficiency and irregularity, sublime and subtle, consistency and change. These qualities can exist in the same space (our bodies) and not contradict one another. Therefore, the experience of the unified body is a practiced incongruity because we are at once “strong and flexible” or with “beauty and strength.” It is not one thing or another, but rather one inhabits both things at once a “but, and.”⁶ The body is grounded, firm, full of energy, while also soft and delicate, light, responsive, and receptive. This kind of dual energy of being able to control and surrender is the psychosomatic basis for all of Butoh performance — or that which the Butoh performer strives for — being both fully aware and present, but also empty of discriminating thoughts. The unified body is not about conceptualizing, but searching and pushing oneself to relate through unification.

“Soft Focus”

A particular element of the unified body that we practiced in training is what I will refer to here as “soft focus.” “Soft focus” is a concrete practice for the performers to be more centered and somatically aware of their surroundings and internal feelings. In training it is described as reversing our habitual ways of looking and sensing, going out toward what we want, instead allowing the world in and opening ourselves up, “Participants are asked to look at the surrounding and at other people without desire” (Bogart & Landau, 2005, p. 31). The purpose is to metaphorically not narrow ourselves by a vision of preconceived expectations. By allowing information to penetrate our sensibilities, we literally learn to move in new ways (Bogart & Landau, 2005).

6. This use of dichotomies is considered a more general trait of Japanese aesthetics that is based in a temporal perception of life. This aesthetic is marked by “an expression that lies in the brief transition between the coming and going of life, both the joy and melancholy that make up our lot as humans” (Juniper, 2003, p. 1), manifesting the Buddhist tenets of perishability or “impermanence.” So instead of aesthetic qualities being singular, the mixing of opposing qualities offers a fuller wholeness of observation, the perception of the temporal. By consequence there is a multidimensionality of form that ideally carries a sense of uncertainty of something that remains indefinable or “beyond.”

In Butoh, “soft focus” is practiced by having a diffuse visual focus, our attention not on any fixed point (or what is “seen”), but over the whole body and around the body *as one* feeling. It originates in a focus on the present by accentuating a constant body perception. As in meditative and martial arts, we practice continually pulling our attention back to what are considered automatic maintenance of the body’s physiological systems, like posture and breath.⁷ Also, because there is a cultural dominance in the sense of “looking” or “the gaze,” as it is called, that puts an objective focus on our movement activity. In Butoh training we often work with our eyes shut or practice a diffuse gaze where our eyes are relaxed and we take in information through peripheral vision. Beyond this, when we train inside, the studios are intentionally mirror free to prevent our attention from being literally diverted to a reflective, external view of ourselves.

We must be fully ‘in’ our bodies and allow our awareness to go both everywhere and nowhere at once. Some teachers refer to this as being aware in “3-dimensions” while others call it a “third eye.” The teachers describe how our skin, our backs and feet, all our body parts should be awake and letting our relations guide us. By having a focus on the internal feeling of the movement, we can let it come naturally and unhindered by the objective thought of what we are doing. In a way this is an art of focusing on the feeling of a situation as a whole body. Anita’s direct way of explaining it is, “Don’t look with the eyes.” In the exercises she frequently reminds the group:

You don’t need to look at your foot or your hand to know where to place them! Before you touch, you don’t need to *look* at the place, because when you look out, or you look at the spot, then you don’t feel *yourself*. . . . Take a *feeling* of yourself! First!

7. From the perspective of embodiment theory, normally in routine behavior, the body disappears or “tends to efface itself” by having many motor operations that are a matter of reflex (Ziemke et al., 2007, p. 275). Our body-minds tend to offload a lot of our cognition onto our subconscious through routine behaviors or patterns. An example of this offloading is in localized, daily, physical activities and the details of such bodily movement. These are in a way hidden to us consciously because our physical habits are so familiar. This automatic operation of much of our movement is done so that our “thinking” activities can be geared to other external goals.

Practice with “soft focus” is about becoming conscious of our non-seeing capabilities. It is similar to the way cognitive scientist Tim Rohrer describes the instant when our consciousness of the body returns to us:

Whenever we are forced to move about in the dark, we are forcibly reacquainted with our bodily sense of space. Problems ordinarily solved beneath the level of our conscious awareness become dominant in our cognition; we find ourselves noticing subtle changes in the floor texture underfoot, carefully reaching out for the next step in the stairwell. (Ziemke et al., 2007, p. 340)



6. Training soft focus (photo: Anita Saij)

Reflective Discussions

In Butoh we always follow up an exercise by informally discussing it afterwards, either in a group or with a partner. Such reflections form an essential part of Butoh training, where there is the movement as directly experienced and expressed and the movement as stated by language. There is no pressure to sound smart or clever, with the opinion being that the reflection is simply a process of memory. The movement is instantly gone, already behind us and only half remembered. Sitting in a circle, figuring out what to say is really like a second improvisation, very circumstantial, and this time, an unedited first-time-putting-it-into-words. How do we symbolically make sense of whatever just happened back there? It is like trying to replace a living, breathing thing with an overtly conscious and makeshift sequence of symbols.

We each test a memory aloud; motioning, gesticulating, pauses and “umms” are substitutes for our lack of words. We search for feelings, movements, sounds, any memories and visceral responses that come up, making our way through the web of impressions, swells and shifts of emotions. Frequently, we just have to laugh at the kinds of inadequate descriptions that fall out of our mouths. They are extremely abstract and peculiar to anyone listening. Just a few seconds of trying to verbalize the experience of streaming movement makes it instantly apparent how the kinds of feelings and motives that manifest themselves, the different sensory modalities, kinesthetic, emotional, and intuitional processes taking place, have little to do with language. There is a space between what we say and what we feel.

In the reflective discussions, the words themselves are not intended to directly represent the *content* of each our movement experiences. The reflections are more accurately about examining the kinds of meaningful qualities and patterns within each of our own experiences, the source of ‘felt’ meaning in movement improvisation. Our discussions always call our attention back to the connection between the feelings and emotions and thoughts of the improvisation, which presumably is where meaning emerges.

Therefore, in the context of Butoh practice, the improvisations and reflective discussions about them can be seen as playing an integral role in a somatic discipline of integrated awareness. We revisit the improvisations at a reflective distance to garner insights about the ‘felt sense’ of the movement, while also noticing our own embodied responses and patterns. The verbal reflections help us remember by clarifying our mental attention, so each experience becomes an opportunity for learning for the next time. We learn to “observe” or sense more exactly invisible and ineffable processes, our inner emotions and dialog, and our changing subject-object relationships, what we were paying attention to, like the space of the room, the image of our body, the time it took us to get from one place to another, the feeling of gravity, the sound coming from a plane overhead, or that we were simply not “in our body” enough, for instance. This, in turn, helps us focus differently and change our behavior the next time. In other words, the reflective capacity of meta-awareness helps stimulate and extend our different levels of awareness and capacities during the movement experiences.



7. Discussions after manipulation exercise.



Four Direct Experiences of Form-Giving

To make the empirical connection between form-giving of movement improvisation and form-giving of design explicit, I want to first describe the way that an improvising body-mind collapses conceptual distinctions between subject and object in experience, since the subjective encounter of moving, manipulating, and feeling my body as a material object is the same as manipulating and feeling physical material outside my body. Movement improvisation methods allow me to focus on the temporality of my perceptual experience, in particular, on my sentient engagement in the present as a critical aspect of the design activity of form-giving.

Dewey's Live Creature

In my experience of movement improvisation, the immediacy of physicalizing my thinking and, specifically when I lose awareness of my 'self,' is consistent in the *quality of feeling* with when I am involved in the specific form-giving (gestaltning) activities of design, like the making, doing, and crafting of design. Of course an entire design process is a process form-giving, but here I am concerned with the direct act of thinking-feeling through a material and giving that material form. An important part of design, like any artistic process, is in this sentient engagement with and in an activity form-giving.

In the Deweyan view of art as experience, the artistic is a perception of *when* it happens, rather than intrinsically of *what* it is. Dewey (1934/2005) states, for instance, that art and science are not different in the "intrinsic content of experience," meaning that, "it is not because of self-obvious and self-contained traits of the immediate terms that Dante's world belongs to poetry and Newton's to scientific astronomy. No amount of pure inspection

and excogitation could decide which belongs to which world. The difference in status and claim is made by what we call experience...” (p. 16). Thus, the artistic is that which takes place in the immediate flow of a kinesthetic, visual, and tactile modality, when hand-eye coordination and perception is engaged in the building of an architectural model or drawing, for example. Form-giving in action involves a direct sense of agency, the testing out of relations and movements empirically, the sequencing, spacing, and flipping between reflections and perceptions. Both improvisation and making have a relative quality of being present with and aware of the materiality of experience, notably perceiving relations and feelings, and the creation and perception of expressive form.

To speak of the integrative character of this consciousness is to go beyond the things that I can verbalize, to the sensations, movements, and connection between doing and responding. When I am moving, I do not have specific images in my mind, but rather a tactile, kinesthetic perception of the motor activity. So even when I start some improvisation exercises with an image sensation, I don't *see* images as pictures or an internal representation, but I have what feels to be an inner wordless dialog, a kind of running form-sensation-form, “organization of energies” that merge, flower, bloom, and dissipate. Having contact with bodily sensations and a feeling of connection with my surroundings, my moving, new actions, impulses continually emerge. New impulses, new impressions, new curiosities, new tests — one state giving rise to succeeding ones.

In the empirical examples, when I am immersed in the present and my self-consciousness disappears, I have observations about the kinds of movements I am making, but I do not identify with them. That is, I am not conscious of my ‘self’ or my movement from the perspective of how others see “me.” This experience that I move through is perhaps a meta-awareness of witnessing thoughts, where I am always semi-conscious of the timing, direction, spacing, and effort of my movement: its arrangement, what movements I have made, what I need to do to make it more dynamic, or where and how I am moving in relation to the others and the room. My perception of bodily motion involves a physical level of attention. There is a relationship between my thoughts and the situation, atmosphere, the environment, the others, my mood, memories, and energy level. I am generally observant of space and time and dimensions like near/far, low/high, back/forward, slow/fast. The thinking comes in impulsive bursts, not consciously in words,

movement with a desire, idea of form, direction, or shape of action, but no intended outcome. In that sense, the action is in the shape of a statement but with the character of a question:

Some feet here, go to the floor now. Roll backwards. Run to the other side of the room. Run as fast as possible. Faster. Go until you feel the need to stop. Go more. Faster. Repeat that earlier move with the arms. Change the pace. Enlarge it. Make it as large as possible. Larger until it becomes something new.

This sensation of the way I work in the present can perhaps be best described as moving forward from sensation to sensation. I focus on the corporal feeling of flow from one body part to the next, on the impressions and responses that arise from the quality of the movement(s). In this way I would say I mostly generate form through a feeling of motion through experience — both in design and in Butoh. I tend to try out particular motions and dynamics with my body to see how they feel in time and space and the kinds of emotions they bring forth. In my physical qualitative experience, there is no distinction between whether the emotions and images cause my movement or the movement causes the emotions and images.



Highlighting this immediate sense perception, it is helpful to zoom in briefly on the visceral activity of designing. In architectural practice, for example, drawing a line has a purpose of visualizing space, since a line represents a wall in an architectural plan. For anyone that is not familiar with this, on paper, a line expresses qualities of separation (as a physical wall) between one space and another. The physical act of drawing a line experientially generates a feeling and quality of separation based on the motion, pressure, thickness, et cetera of the line. A line (wall) as it is drawn, therefore, is both an object (concretely what is drawn, the wall) and an experience (a subject/object relationship with the line and space around it, the 'wallness'). There is always a figure/ground relationship in this sense with things themselves and the act of perceiving the things.

Here for instance is a diagonal line (now the figure), but there are two spaces on the lower left and on the upper right (now the ground):



So different qualities of lines visually represent different qualities of separation between the two spaces:



Hard, distinct, decisive



Blurred, transitional, straight



Light, uncertain, indecisive

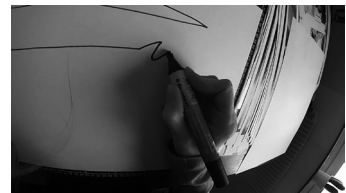
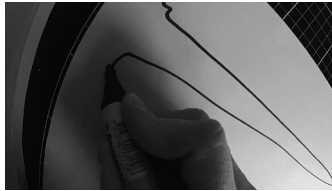
The act of drawing a line, then, naturally involves my embodiment of these feelings of relations, particularly how I understand the relationship between an object (figure) and its context (ground). I refer to the figure-ground relations from Gestalt principals of perceptual organization, which are generally taught in basic design composition. Designers learn these “emergent qualities of interactive aesthetic Gestalt” (Shusterman, 2012, p. 12) in which a visual field is perceived as articulated into two components, the figure or focal object and the ground or background. Gestalt means “form” or “structure” which represents an irreducible interpretation of perception, specifically the understanding that an overall form as perceived is greater than the sum of the parts. Because the perception of object-relations depends on feedback from kinesthetic, visual, and sensorimotor operations, the associated quality of gestalt is characterized by two-directionality.

In this perceptual experience of gestalt, every time I place a line on the paper, I flip between the sensation and feelings of the relations, as if I feel their presence in space, and thoughts about what kind of spatial relationship is being represented, how the line is conveying an emotional tone or mood. I am imagining the kind of experience that the wall in relation to my body and the type of space it would produce, would actually feel like. There is an aesthetic analysis of (figure/ground) relationships happening during the act of drawing. My thinking is often:

There needs to be a wall here...what is the spatial relationship between these two? large/small, surrounding/middle, top/bottom...what quality of wall should be here? What if the spaces were actually just one kind of space with two overlapping qualities? If the two spaces have a connection to one another but are disconnected physically? Could it be that the wall is low and short? Transparent? Perforated? Light and sound can pass through...There should not be an actual visual connection, but there is still a sense of connection through the sharing of shadow and sound. This conveys that there is something beyond, not directly able to know the other space but aware of it like in your periphery.

Making decisions of perception that the wall should be light and perforated to convey a feeling of connection requires me as a designer to imagine my experience with a wall in space and I do it by trying my thought out in the world with pen on paper. Like

movement improvisation, there is little distinction between the circumstances of fully engaging my body-mind. In both experiences, I am making aesthetic choices about what feels right in relation to the qualities that I hope to achieve. I am *feeling* the physical consequences of particular actions.



Introducing the Experiences of Form-Giving

The following section is comprised of four empirical models that explore physical action, sensation, and emotional perception in form-giving in the present. The physical techniques of improvisation and formal conditions in Butoh (see p. x for a description) relate to an integrated consciousness in the present. Each of the experiences comes from a movement exercise that offers a concrete instance of being focused in the present in an activity of form-giving – the immediate corporal and felt sense of thinking and constantly changing inner relations.

The four experiences of form-giving come from specific instances in my Butoh training exercises. Each experience forms an empirical model used to highlight the continuity between objective reflection and that sense of self-control and self-preservation with bodily, phenomenological presence without differentiation

of 'self'? In different respects each describes highly detailed and contextualized empirical situations of an aesthetic mode of inquiry and form-giving. They suggest the complex dynamics of that physical experience, including action, sensation, intent, imagination, emotions, memories, and states of mind in which I learn to notice patterns. This in turn helps me discover my capacity for expression and feeling. These four experiences are arranged in the following sequence: *Practicing 'Self'*, *Meeting Halfway*, *Embodying Form*, *Sense of Process*.

I would like to point out that a limitation of the analytic form of model-building in the following section toward my physical experience is that it strips away the direct, felt experiences of the body and by extension objectifies the body via explanation. Because direct experience takes place in a specific relational context, not an objective context, it will always lack the coherency and cleanness of rationalization's presentation of an either/or logic. The mutability of thought is in human action and it will always resist definition and classification. Artistic work is characterized by tensions in perception (Dewey, 1934/2005), and since this tension is what I grapple with in this thesis, the following texts inherently have contradictions. However, it is understood that in the exercises themselves I directly unite what is an apparent incongruity in that it is a both/and: I am both tense and relaxed, real and fictional, reasonable and unreasonable, playful and disciplined.

One: Practicing ‘Self’

The paint is chipped at the far wall. There is a clock hanging there, ticking. Bodies to her left and right, moving shadows out of the corners of her eyes, silently being pushed forward, the floor creaks beneath, singing to them. They are reminded that it is a gift. The edges of her body, the atmosphere, the room, some things old, some new, come and go. A kind of repetition of everyday motion expanded and intensified in the span of each moment. The base of her foot coming down meeting the bare floor, the back one lifting up, mockingly always both at any moment, having contact and passing through the air. No real outlines, toes, navel, skin. A band starts playing outside. The bass shakes the walls of the studio or her innards. The teacher is giving instructions for them to follow:

See how the music that comes from outside can nurture you... And then, for yourself while you are walking, just observe the emotion that you have inside. Give it a name. For yourself. Recognize it. Observe it, and accept it for yourself.

Her mouth is slightly open, nostrils flaring. The dancer’s breathing is audible. It isn’t looking or listening, but feeling. These words are not right. They are circling around. This, that, molecules, chemicals, fluids, guts. Like trying to get settled in bed to sleep, the

frustration of not having the right position. Not. Quite. Right. That arm that is stuck under in the weird position with no place to go. The innards are just a blur, or whatever it is. A feeble heartbeat. Silence. An irreducible calm. Softness? Indifference? Does she really have to know what it is?

And while you continue walking, find an image that goes with this emotion. It can be a natural image. It can be... whatever image that comes, yeah? And this image that you found, that just came, put it in your chest. And however you understand what I am saying is correct, yeah? So don't try to understand. Just do whatever feels right for you with the words that I am giving you.

There are half-formed pictures, flickering with no real sense if they are coming toward her or moving away from her. It's like shining a small flashlight into a black cave only to see shapes and shadows, particles of light and energy. She's trying to focus. Things are changing every second. There is something light, like paper, almost resting and not completely weightless. It is so insubstantial sitting doesn't describe what its mass fails to do, at least, the other surface does not seem to register it at all. It becomes clearer that it is ocean water, rippling and glittering... and there is a piece of small plastic, like the lid of a yogurt container riding on the surface of the water, bobbing up and down with the currents.

So put this image in your chest. And let your chest start to move from this image, which comes from an emotion, which comes from you in this moment. Maybe the image is a texture, maybe it has a color, maybe it is warm or maybe it is cold, it can be hard or it can be soft, maybe it feels good, maybe it doesn't feel so good. How can this image express itself through your chest? How can this image become alive inside of you through your chest? How can the walls understand what is inside of your chest? Without speaking, without telling, without trying to *do* anything...

She tries to let the rippling movement traveling through her body. For a second she is a little frustrated with having this image appear, wishing she could change it. She catches herself.

Damn, how banal. Isn't this water theme getting old? How is she going to do the flowing thing again? Is there anything new with this? Why does she keep trying to do this movement? Sigh. Try not to be disappointed in her. She's trying her best, dammit.

Her spine, hips, arms, neck now undulating without her consent. Everything moves like it is waving, foregoing her brain, pushing her body to answer the question — How does it feel on top of the water? How does it feel? Feel. Feeeel.

Like.

Lii ke

tight.

ward

still ward

for ward

quiet ward

for

for

had

wired. Tired. She was mired.

(you're fired.)

tight.

gliding

ward.

Ward. Ward's. Remember Ward's? Star wars. Let it go, girl.

Work it. Wired to.

Star overhead. Overheard.

Overhearing. star's conversations. The Stars.

Star struck banter ful. Bountiful. Fully full guly ful.

Fugly. Really fugly. Really fugly ful.

You are!

Star bright. Briiight.

(I I I saaiidd bbriiiighhtt!)

Tonight.

light it up. the

Fight it. Tight ward. Light ward. Star bright.

In your face, sucka.

POW, punch, boom!

You're hired.

It's all in a day's work.

Night, tight. tuck in light. Sight!

Take in that sight.

Don't fight.

hope,

hope,
nope, hope
nop
no

Which?

go back

n

trap

back nnnnnn

b e h i n d

' i n

f

e

l

l

falling words behind worse.

Feelin' worse, hoss.

was it pride ?

worry too

What up, shawty ?

Question mark!

Maker's mark. Pointers make. Point made.

Time shame.

Shame prime.

Half mad.

A damn prime

shame.

Mad cow.

Slime time prime

(don't do that on television)

Don't. back back it up

hay

tide

Away.

Rip

tide

Bona fide

Prime time Caroline.

Ridin' fide.

Sweet.

Lookin' fine. Fiiiiiiiiiiiiineee. Damn.

Hot

damn. Fine.

Hot

Hot

dig

git

y

Dust bust. Rust first. First. how old.

doog.

Dragged from the fold.

So bold. Booold.

Bustin'

Like that, random boy.

Calypso.

You don't know.

At all.

Atta all.

Attaboy.

Boy oh boy

At all...

At all...

Question mark.

X marks the spot.

Comma comma

shhhhhh...

Cold moving front.

A little. violent. Here. tiny-unhinged.

Variable-tiny-unhinged cloudiness. Unpredictable.

Pulling-tiny front. Arms flapping — wildly front. Legs, there.

Here. There. Falling out. Down from under. back there.

Legs. Here. Legs. Flailing cloudiness back there legs here.

Southeasterly legs there. here. there.

Lashing down where legs. there. where. Disconcerting emotional

rushes there-tiny-here. there. Rising, crashing legs down there.

Passing. haywire here. where. here. there.

A taste of anger. Tastes like iron there. dark around.

Hotness at the center. moonstruck.

Dripping sweat except for a hint of light. To the side dark around

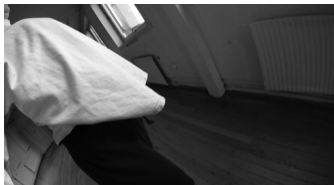
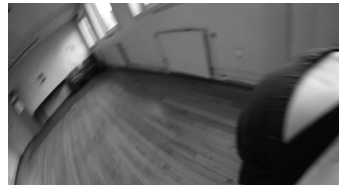
here arms flashing batty side.

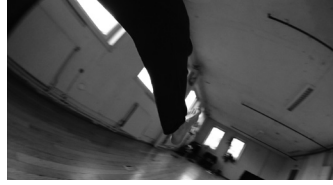
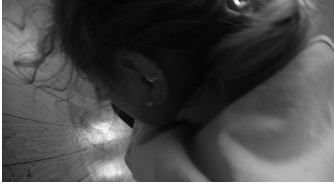
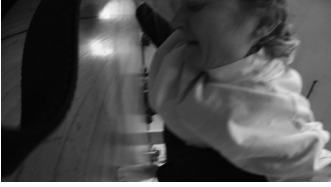
Dark balmy around and the grey bit moving behind

flickering. torrential flickering dark spots flailing legs around

raining arms pulling front.

Thunder-storming now down clouding all around. Neck heavy.
Turbulent flickering dark grey spots. Frantic specks of light.
Feet-upward peddling storminess shadow showers.
A mild barely fury tiny-there. Slapping skin flickering flapping
flicking. Skin. Skin. Skin. Skin. Skin. Skin. Flickering skin.





Immediately after the exercise, in our usual way, we try to put words to the aesthetic sources of our movement, the kind of sensations and feelings that give it meaning, and likewise, the kind of physical-mental strategies that we notice that we developed over the course of the improvisations. Sitting in a circle and our teacher asks us about our experiences, “What happened with the image?”

I hear myself describe finding the image of the piece of plastic riding the ocean ripple and how I specifically tried to embody that movement by letting the flowy motion grow and change through my body. I recall that I felt a sense of disappointment when the image came to me, that I was worried it would be boring, that I didn’t know what to do with it if I thought about it. But then when I just let go and literally rode the movement out, things started to happen, and I even became a little violent. This caught me off guard because I would have expected the movement to remain kind of tranquil, maybe indifferent, but somehow slack. But that

is what happened when I let my body really conform to the kind of emotions that came up. They went a bit dark. I don't know if this is the right way of talking about this but I've already started.

I notice that this theme of floating or 'going with flow' has been an attitude that I have been trying to practice more in my everyday interactions like with my work, relationships, and life in general. So I do not really know where this image came from when we were asked to listen inside ourselves, whether it is a matter of me seeking to act in a way that is different from my typical behavior. But there is something in 'the back of my mind,' however inarticulate and subconscious a view I have of myself.

Why am I saying this now?

The other students take turns describing the images and influences that came up for them:

S: I saw a color. I couldn't have an image, only like a color. And yellow. So yellow. And I think maybe if the...I think that maybe we should have an image from the start, when we start to work. I think it would be a different color or different texture. So it was nice to see that it ended up being yellow because I didn't feel yellow when we started (laughs). So it felt like a journey. Yeah.

T: And how did you react to the image?

S: Really, like, slowly. Really little things, but I felt more like, a whole...and very solid (gestures with her hands pressing). So it felt like opening. Like my body just really slowly opening up. So I just lied down on the floor and felt my body just like open up without feeling...anxiety.

G: I thought it was interesting because the word that came up was resistance. And when I was walking I didn't really —

T: As an image or as a word?

G: It was a word and then it came an image like, uh, (gestures by putting arm straight out with palm open signaling "halt") the hand doing like this. And that was like when it was like related

to the chest it was like very...because it didn't like actually until after you said put it in your chest, then I saw it as an image. And it was like very clear, and I thought like, "Wow, it's like a stop sign." (laughs) And uh, it was like going through different parts, and, but different parts came up things from my experiences where I kind of...would like to stop to myself, in other ways...like from different parts of the body telling different stories. And even if I am aware of these things from before, it was like coming up now. And in the end it was going a little bit with the shoulders (gestures by holding shoulders).

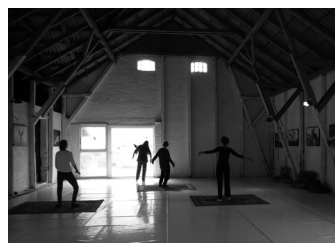
M: I saw a forest first, and then I was like, whew (pushes air from chest and gestures with arms crossed making X) a red X. Which was...and I know these movements from before, this (demonstrates with body a kind of struggling) really allowed myself to go...just like all the way to the roof. Just spreading that, whatever it is in the body. And then I had a moment, this frenzy or this panic. I know this place or this panic. It's like, what!? It's like, too small! I was just like, the walls were a problem and everything is...I'm more than the form. I don't know how to describe it. Because it's really like, I just wanted to like say, "Fuck this place, I just want to go." Yeah, like in a big space.

A: Myself? I have these movements and symbols that keep coming back in this workshop. And uh, movement like, circle and line. Which is really different for me to do (laughs). The symbols are the stars and the banana. (Group laughs.) And they are also very different. And then it is the complexity of like, how these things... what is in between the things, like, what is in between the banana and the arms? And the line is a lot connected to the arms. Because it is usually this (gestures with arm out straight), but it is like what is between, like, line and banana, but also what is between the arms and the banana, and between the hips and the banana, and the feet and the banana. (Group laughs.) And, it is very...the forms and the symbols are saying something. It keeps coming (laughs). And this crying, like, stress. And the stress, or movement or motion of crying...or stress or something is very connected to the circles.

An Imagery Exercise

These associative descriptions from the dancers are from an improvisation exercise to find an image from within and explore it. The way that we explored an image and then discussed whatever thoughts we had is typical of Butoh training. Commonly the teacher gives verbal instructions that draw students' attention to particular inner sensations, body parts, actions, or spatial and environmental relationships. We each move independently in the space using the soft focus technique, which involves having our eyes slightly closed in order to connect to the movement internally. These exercises take any number of forms since they are each led up to from different circumstances, but typically they start by layering movements and sensations from simple motions like walking, rolling, or shifting body weight. The formats also vary with the structure (few instructions or increasingly many), timing (lasting ten minutes or going on for hours), setting (music, props, fabrics, masks, ground coverings), and dynamics and organization of the group (working as whole class or individually, half the class working and the other half watching, working in smaller groups or pairs). On many occasions, because a lot of Butoh focuses on practicing in/with nature, the exercises take place outdoors and are framed as specific responses to the surroundings through touch, temperature, light, or sound.

Butoh, specifically among dance practices, is one that works with strong imagery and the improvisations are typically set up by questions or propositions surrounding such imagery. The instructor, for example, will ask how it is to move in particular ways with very detailed images in mind and the students investigate "finding their way through this image." From the perspective



of the teacher, the imagery comes from two directions: one is from the “outside-in” which is where the teacher gives a series of descriptions and prompts that the improvisers enter into by searching for a feeling related to those; and second is from the “inside-out” where the students are asked to find their own images based on how they feel. Some examples of the kind imagery and structure of the prompts that the students are asked to respond to are as follows:

- you are blind and the surfaces of your body can smell
- imagine someone pulling your leg so you fall to the ground, become the kind of shock and adrenaline you feel when that happens
- feel 10,000 points in your body, move them all, like micro-spasms
- melt to the ground like shattered glass as slowly as possible, as if over the course of many years, feel all the parts and what is happening there
- move as the sound of the rustling leaves, explore how the sound of wind moves in the different parts of your body
- imagine that all of your body parts move with a snake-like quality, now explore that movement with the personality of: a princess, an absent-minded scientist, a capricious child
- map the inside of your ear using your body, consider all the minute details, curves, fluids, nerves, hair fibers, the way sound vibrates it, etc.

Such prompts in imagery are focused on details to help the improviser realize the “concretion of feeling and perception” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 193) in the present. Students are encouraged to move and develop movement from whatever impulses are felt in response to such images without a reflective awareness or judgment of the thinking mind. Moving first is a way to enter into our thinking, to discover first its form — its contours, rhythm, energy, progression. Sumako tells us, “to follow a specific form of movement you need time to understand what it is.” This embodied view of experience willingly draws from felt motivations “that lie beyond words, and only in sensing and moving can those “thoughts” be expressed” (De Spain, 2014, p. 54).

The attention to imagery is pedagogically intended to help the improviser stay with the corporeal consciousness of the physical movement itself, the feeling of the stream of motion (e.g., hand to mouth, motion of jaw opening and closing, saliva filling mouth, sensation of sweetness, sensation of chewing, et cetera) without the focus on the identification of the movement (e.g., kind of activity: eating).

The teachers want us to focus on the kinesthetic, spatial, and corporeal sensations of the movement and the qualitative dynamics of that sensation (e.g., quick, restrained, jagged, smooth). Doing this brings up the practical fact that the quality of movement stimulates a feelingful, emotional response internally. The others and I can feel that our emotions are directly tied to the movement. For example after one exercise a dancer describes the simple experience of opening her hand and the kinds of emotions it physically brought forward,

I was really, uh, surprised that it really connected with my core, and like the emotions in my core. So when I, it felt like when I was closing, I could feel like, um, kind of dark feelings gathering, like that (motions with closed fist), and I felt closed. But when I opened the hand, they resolved. So it felt like I could feel tension, tension, tension, (closing fist) and then when I opened up...it (opens fist and sighs out with breath), it like resolved. So, yeah. I didn't think it would be like so emotional. But it wasn't like hard emotional to do, but more like...this is weird! (laughs)... Yeah, that was just weird and it felt more like holding the emotions, stuck in here (motions to stomach)...dissolved.

Awareness of 'stream of thought' in the present

Focusing on motor imagery provides us with an opportunity to develop an awareness at the phenomenological level of the feeling of relations. I use the term *awareness* to indicate a shift in attention from objective identification to the present, which is a term James preferred over the term "thinking," since it values sensory attention and the general embodied nature of perceptual and motor activity. This open awareness carries a kind of wholeness in receptivity that is integral to our 'felt sense' of the situation, meaning that as we

become aware of our concrete movement, we notice its meaning is fundamentally qualitative and aesthetic (Gendlin, 2003; M. Johnson, 2007). Our perception of motor activity cannot be reduced to states like snapshots but rather there is an intrinsic connection between the form of movement and content. “The act itself is exactly what it is because of how it is done. In the act there is no distinction, but perfect integration of manner and content, form and substance” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 114). This allows us to understand and describe the movement experience in aesthetically specific and sensitive ways, *how* it feels as importantly as *what* we are doing.

For example, our discussions following the exercises illustrate to us that movement is not just observable from a stationary view, but is perceived through time and juxtaposed through changes and differences in physiological conditions. We find it is nearly impossible to objectively describe our bodily movement without evoking our own sense of the movement and its expression. In class when we try to illustrate how the movement was executed in the most functional sense, labeling the shapes, direction, type, timing of movement or form a symbolic interpretation, like for example, when A. talked about her experience of being between a “line and banana,” the rest of us are all left wondering what in the world that meant. We all laughed. But the joke is really trying to use the words to describe our perceptual experiences. The idea of a line and banana stresses the humorous disjuncture between A.’s very concrete sensorimotor experiences and the abstractness of the symbols she relays to us. Her words without the physical sensation are nonsensical. What we quickly discover is that to perceive our motion, even to perceive *what*, there is still need the need for an aesthetic interpretation based in part on *how* the movement is qualitatively (e.g., whether it was light, smooth and buoyant or stiff and abrupt, and so on). Our bodies in motion inevitably activate qualities of feeling so it is impossible to separate the description and the aesthetic quality, nor would we want to. This is what gives some degree of expressiveness, suggestiveness (Dewey, 1934/2005).

But seriously, a line and banana?

Therefore, movement as a method of inquiry implies appreciation for the feature of awareness of *feeling*. This is the feature of thought that the Pragmatists stressed as the *continuity* of experience. Most notably James speaks to this aspect of consciousness as a ‘stream of

thought' in which nothing is disjointed, but relations are experienced directly and continuously. Dewey (1934) also stresses this in terms of the aesthetic, wherein any "form" requires in experience a temporal dimension of actively sensing transitory relations. This is an organizing experience of rhythms or energies that is felt in "relation of accumulation, opposition, suspense and pause" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 163). Perhaps it can be best imagined like a piece of music, is a stream of sensory relations, a sequence of phrases and emotional arrangements, the ineffable ebbs and flows, light and shadow, warmth and cold.

Because Butoh involves a highly focused state of consciousness, it cultivates a moment-to-moment corporal awareness in order to learn to inwardly attend to this ongoing flow, the sense of movement of feelings instead of fixed states. So in the discussions when we talk about *what* we feel in the improvisation, we are each talking about *how* we concretely feel and structure sensory information through a stream of sensations, memories, thoughts, ideas, and impressions of the experience.

According to embodied cognition, movement necessitates a *feeling* (Damasio, 2005). The durational quality of experience alone, and thus all movement experience, is inherently comprised of the kinetic, dynamic qualities of *how* we move from one thought to the next. Meaning for humans is not actually about "seeing" a whole picture or having all the data possible in order to stabilize thought, but meaning is derived from having a feeling of how things are progressing and how things relate qualitatively and temporally in terms of: direction (e.g., forward, stuck, going in circles); rhythm or flow (e.g., jumping around, sustained, suspended, rising and falling); and dynamics (e.g. limp, heavy, forceful, gentle). All humans experience form not as simply object-based as an entity, but as relation-based. From an arts-based view it is that *form* and *content* are inextricable (Dewey, 1934/2005; Eisner, 2002b) or in Marshal McLuhan's turn of phrase, "The medium is the message." The inner perception (how the dancer feels) is complementary to outer form or expression (how the dancer looks).

The Continuity of Thinking-Feeling

According to neuroscience and the perspective of embodiment, our sensorimotor systems integrate, link, pattern, and associate movement and response in our bodies (Damasio, 2005). This embodied

characteristic of our “thinking,” the feeling, is now appreciated as not just a process of cognition, as in a supposed inner process performed by the mind, but as a coordinated body-mind interaction situated in an environment, a kind of ongoing sensorimotor processing (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007). The perceptual signals that I and the other performers fumble around to describe have been evidenced by cognitive science research to be the mapping of our body-mind interaction in motor-spatial structures.

Specifically neural patterns of activation, dubbed “image schema,” shape our sensorimotor experiences, which, according to cognitive linguists, work as body-mapping structures and give our sensorimotor experience a pragmatic meaning (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007). Because they help us make sense of and “engage a world that we can understand and act within to further our purposes” (p. 33). In this view, it is not that humans derive mental models and then act, but that we act through direct the application of aesthetic and metaphorical frames, which serve as visceral “contours” we overlay onto our sensory encounters. There is both the concrete and immediate esthetic encounter along with a sense-making, metaphorical frame abstracting that experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

Although image schemas are thought to comprise a large part of our thinking in action, we are not consciously aware of them. Mark Johnson (2007) contends these images carry an aesthetic, emotional prominence, with the implication being that movement is a cardinal function of meaning and abstract thought. For him, they “constitute a preverbal and pre-reflective emergent level of meaning” (p. 37). As in embodied cognition, the physical sensation of movement between one thing to another, the kind of qualitative ‘felt sense’ that is perceived and expressed, is foundational to the formation of the very meaning of our “thoughts” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). We therefore express something abstract and meaningful about our experiences only directly from the way our bodies interact with and perceive the world, and this experience is not mental *or* physical because it is *both* a thinking and feeling activity.

The view of “decision-making” or choice from embodied cognition theory is that we are wrapped up in aesthetic feelings and situated in the countless particulars of any current situation. Thought is not developed through an internal language representing an external world, but we naturally engage in flexible and adaptive behaviors. Thus, action and behavior is not consciously

caused by “rational” thought. In all our behaviors are motivations and impulses that have a nonconscious attitude of self-interest. In the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio’s (2010) view, for example, much of our sensory processing involves the deliberate seeking of our own well-being. In his opinion, the internal force to implement movement, notions we refer to as “will” or “desire,” “precedes explicit knowledge and deliberation regarding life conditions” (p. 35). Regarding this he writes, “I am not downgrading consciousness but am most certainly upgrading nonconscious life management and suggesting that it constitutes the blueprint for attitudes and intentions of conscious minds” (p. 36).

Damasio’s view of will is like James’s, in that there is a case made for some physical effort of will contributing to a person’s stream of thought and subjectivity. Our feelings of attention, interest, and thus action, are integral to our bodies’ specific conditions of space and time.⁸ We are perpetually sensing changes in our physiological conditions and naturally assigning a kind of “value” to things in terms of our moment-to-moment imperative needs and conditions. Our pre-reflective instinct pushes us toward feelings of ‘good,’ meaning even if we do not explicitly know what feelings of ‘good’ are, we corporeally feel that we are not sensing something ‘wrong’ or discomfort. It is a psychological process of inference like a “gut feeling”:

You are troubled by the felt sense of some unresolved situation, something left undone, something left behind. Notice that you don’t have any factual data. You have an inner aura, an internal taste. *Your body knows but you don’t.* (Gendlin, 2003, p. 38)

Experiential practitioners accentuate that the body ‘knows’ what it feels, wants, and desires even if these things are not in our awareness as thoughts (Don Johnson, 1995).

8. From James’s perspective decisions are made when two conflicting values present themselves and a choice has to be made between them. Concentrating on the physical sensation of such action, any “choice” of movement (action) holds continuity with an instinctual sensation of preservation of the body. The philosopher Shusterman (2008), drawing from James, writes that the body is the “initial core of self-interest” so at some fundamental level in somatic experience our behaviors and interests are instinctively and aesthetically motivated by visceral information. “Our interest in friends and mental powers ultimately derives from their relation to caring for the body’s needs as necessary for basic self-survival” (Shusterman, 2008, p. 153).

With an integrated consciousness in the present, there is also a much more fluid perception of subject /object or inner/outer. The impression of being a bounded ‘self’ distinct from the world becomes porous. Improviser Ruth Zaporá describes her sense of presence thus, “There’s no skin...There is nothing like that. It doesn’t work that way. In my experience, nothing feels outside and nothing feels inside. It just is. It just arises” (De Spain, 2014, p. 87).

Instead of a distinction, one feels a connection, the dual mode of moving and being moved and a consciousness of both. It is an “interaction, the blurry melding of the inside and the outside when the conceptual walls that separate and delineate who we are and who we are not become porous” (De Spain, 2014, p. 81).

We are permeable and able to experience simultaneity of connection and separation. The specific, conditional *aesthetic feelings* of immediate social relationships serve *both* to delimit and define *and* to connect and associate (Dewey, 1934/2005). We are concurrently meeting and separating, specifying and empathizing, always poised between inner and outer. What is happening in moments of decision according to James’s (1890) view of thought is that we are being selective in terms of what information regarding basic subject-object (figure-ground) relationships that we perceive and act upon. James calls these principals of thought “intentionality,” that thought that always appears to deal with objects independent of itself, and “selectivity,” that thought that is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of other (Scheffler, 1974).

An individual can sense that self-apprehension between external stimuli and boundaries of ‘self’ are constantly changing, that he/she is engaged in a kind of figure-ground (subject/object) organizing of ‘self.’ This experience of “containment,” according to embodiment theory, is “one of the most fundamental patterns of our experience” (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007, p. 32). Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1995) creator of the School for Body-Mind Centering, describes movement experience, saying that it is, “in a way, separating out. It’s feeling the force that is in this body. But in order to embody ourselves we need to know what is not ourselves. It’s a relationship...‘This is the end of me; this is the beginning of something else’” (p. 186).

In Buddhist teaching, which does not subscribe to the Cartesian dichotomy of “inner” and “outer,” the skin of the body is not understood as what forms the boundary wall between an internal

and external world of consciousness. From an experiential view, the “mind,” or consciousness of ‘self’ in the present is always mediating between a sensation of our own bodies (I feel internal to my skin) and the outer world (the world outside my skin) (Yuasa, 1993). The “mind” in this sense is not located spatially inside a body but methodologically a conscious mediation of feelings of relationships in the world as *both* object and subject. Thus, a meta-awareness or meditative attention marks the “sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity” (Batchelor, 1997, p. 42)

Such a non-dualist mode is how professional improvisers describe how they simultaneously possess or flip back and forth between maintaining a reflective distance, an observational view of what they are doing, and the internal sensations they are generating (De Spain, 2014). This has a kind of meta-awareness of witnessing both perceptions external to ‘self’ and internal to the senses. De Spain’s (2014) interviews professional improvisers to ask about the experience:

Ruth Zaporah: I’m tracking my somatic, my physical experience, my sensory, energetic, emotional experience. But I’m not tracking it as if it were an object, I’m just “in” it. (p. 46)

Simone Forti: ...there’s what you focus on and then there’s everything that you’re not focusing on, but you’re also aware of it and it also influences you. So there are these two modes of influence: the focused and the out of focus. (p. 56)

Barbra Dilley: I’m not sure I can really say what I think about. It’s very freeing to me because there’s some almost in-between place of thinking and words and doing and response. (p. 55)

This artistic work involves a kinesthetic and perceptual awareness as part of a feeling of form and “sense of a situation.” Anita interprets this experience as a dialog between what is inside and outside the body, “It is a multi-dimensional experience. It has a kind of time in it, a rhythm... You pay attention to what is going on in the environment around you.” Similarly in my improvisations, my relationship to what I am doing constantly shifts. Sometimes I get

lost in the focus and determination of where I am headed, how I am responding to the environment, what the others are doing, or my relationships to them, our spacing, changing dynamics, levels, tempo, or directions. Other moments my attention moves to the inward sensation of movement, the emotions, the kinesthetic perceptions of my various body parts. Yet, there is no rupture in the actual consciousness of what I am doing and how I am feeling or what I am undergoing.

'Self'-Awareness of Habits and Patterns

The center-less notion of 'self' in pragmatism parallels the orientation to experience of 'self' in Butoh, grounded in a Buddhist view that holds that the question of 'self' is not about an entity, but pertains to an unfinished self, a self that is in practice (Epstein, 1995). This Buddhist teaching, as in the practice of meditation where the focus is on the cultivation of the 'self' through attending to the present (Yuasa, 1993), describes the experience of 'self' as "selflessness" or "no-self" (anatta) (Stanley, 2012).

In this Buddhist sense, Butoh teaches "uprooting the conviction in a 'self' that needs protecting" to allow a connection to our surroundings, feelings, and one another (Epstein, 1995, p. 45). The practice appeals directly to the senses which undermines the distinction between objective and subjective 'self.' The performer methodologically works on releasing his/her self-consciousness in the form of ego or objective identification and on finding an accommodating sense of 'self' or a subjectivity that is changing. Empirically, each of us is actively 'self'-perceiving and forming, rather than playing 'self' out. 'Self' is in part a physical-mental exertion taking place under direct conditions of the present so we are understood to be "engaged in a process of creating...[our self] in a specific and deliberate way" (Batchelor, 1997, p. 71).

In this vein, many in the Butoh community identify the development of the practice with a strategy of emptying the self sometimes referred to as "emptiness." The experience of emptiness has been critiqued by some practitioners, since a body in the present is deeply informed by a past and oriented toward a future (Taylor, 2010). However, emptiness should not be misunderstood as nothingness, but more precisely as being empty of the presuppositions we engage in during experience in order to interpret, structure,

or make sense of it. “Emptiness” (sunyata), is considered one of Buddhism’s core psychological tenets and a mode of perception which is expressed as just *being* one’s conditional nature, devoid of an intrinsic identity (Epstein, 1998). It adds nothing to and takes nothing away from the esthetic awareness of events. Therefore, emptiness refers to a release of self-apprehension and the kinds of narratives and worldviews that we continually shape. In the experience of emptiness, even the *idea* of ‘things’ are empty of preconceptions:

Whatever emerges in this way is devoid of an intrinsic identity: in other words, things are empty. They are not as opaque and solid as they seem: they are transparent and fluid. (Batchelor, 1997, p. 77)

In this way ‘self’ is always under question and to some degree made part of the movement inquiry. In practice we are challenged not to work from an identifiable character of ‘self’, but from the sensorial immediacy of imagery that allows us to transform. Our teacher Sumako, for example, imagines this way of continually discovering ourselves and liberating the “I” through movement as “finding new drawers into our personality.” As she explains it, we are like a chest of endless drawers and the work in Butoh is to keep finding hidden drawers in ourselves and opening them.

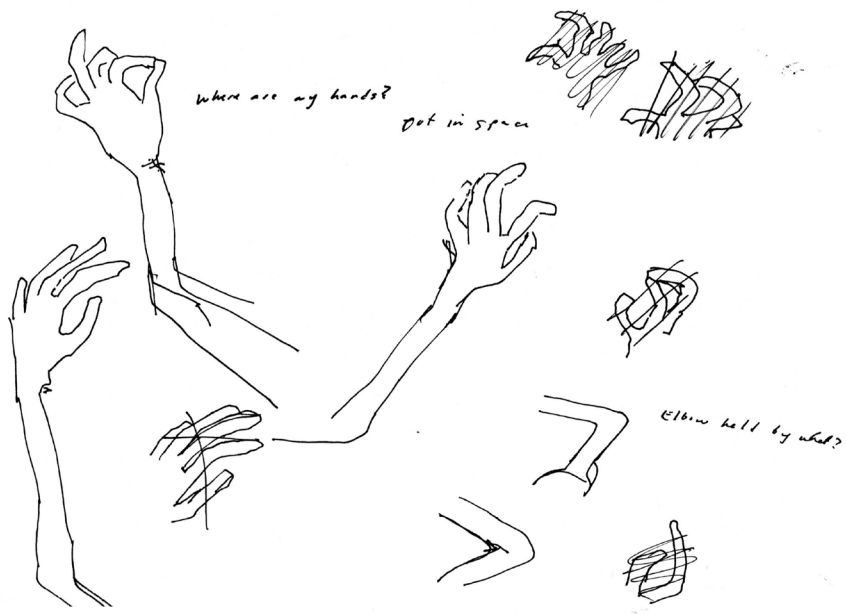
The notion that “the physical condition is in some way also the psychological one” (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 242) comes up over and over in our improvisation work. We inevitably ‘get in touch’ with the unconscious and longstanding habits, coping behaviors and defensive patterns that we embody. In our discussions we develop a reflective awareness of the tendencies and consistencies that we have when structuring our movement-thinking. Many of the dancers acknowledge that, when improvising, before there is a chance to think about what they are doing, they are already here and now, making certain movements and finding recurring threads of emotional and thinking patterns. Conscious thinking is too slow. For example, they mention knowing “these movements from before” or ones that “keep coming back,” like E who demonstrates her movement holding her head and saying, “Suddenly I was back in that.”

Am I the source of my movement?

The physical reality of our behavior is “a serious discovery of what we are like — for we are like our movement. People discover what parts of their bodies are not available, do not move, are not felt” (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 245). We might keep particular movements suppressed to keep from dealing with certain uncomfortable experiences. As an example of this, a Finnish dancer told me that after she watched videos of her improvisations she realized that she always kept her neck very still so the next time she performed she intentionally made a lot of head movements. That night after performing she had nightmares. She had unlocked some buried feelings, which taught her that the immobility of her neck is an evasion of painful memories that she does not want to feel, some event she needed to mask, in order to not have emotional contact with it. Our bodies in their postures, gestures, and movement are metaphors for our lives and can be stiff and distorted by a need to forget pain. Ruth Zaporah (1995) writes, “What we keep hidden we are hiding from” (p. 61).

When we share our experiences of the improvisations in the discussion, we find that if each improviser is faithful to their own exploration, the inquiry is actually not just “anything” or by chance. We inevitably tend to seek movement and experiences we know and with which we feel comfortable. So while we receive new stimulations and have a flowering of spontaneous actions, we are inextricably bound to our personal schematic structures and patterns of activation. Each of us has our characteristic patterns, qualities of movements, and ideas that are so hard to break free from. “Our ideas truly depend upon experience, but so do our sensations. And the experience upon which they both depend is the operation of habits — originally of instincts” (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 32).

Consequently, making an instinctual “choice” of movement has a bodily disposition (James, 1890/1950b). In other words, our instincts of what feels ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ give us a potential energy or pull toward a certain movement (Gendlin, 2003). Again, Antonio Damasio (1999) uses the term “somatic marker” for these sensations in our body. Thus, new movements we make are, in part, inspired by our past experiences, which suggest the kinds of habitual ways of thinking-moving-feeling in which we engage. A body is physical matter that carries memories, or in the teacher Anita’s phrasing, a “history” of past events. Each of our “histories” unconsciously shapes and influences our present existence, our physical movements and behaviors — how we see and sense the world, how we think, respond, and feel.



The somatic educator Deane Juhan (1995) describes how we establish senses of normalcy in our movement behavior by connecting with a certain way of doing something. He states, “We continue to do a thing the way we learned it, the way in which we first established our ‘feel’ for it, in spite of the fact that subsequent problems developed as a result” (p. 373). Juhan illuminates how, by maintaining these learned patterns through repetition, the feeling contributes to a sense of continuity and stability of body image, which implies what he calls “a conservative tendency inherent in the feeling of normalcy” (p. 374). In other words, we tend to want to preserve learned patterns. “If the individual tries to move in new ways on his own, his overwhelming tendency is to favor patterns of movement that feel familiar to him — movement that he has characteristically used before” (Juhan, 1995, p. 374). Thus, preserved patterns contribute to our sense of ‘self’ and what we feel we ‘know’ by providing us with a feeling of comfort.

Expressly by coming into direct contact with our corporal limitations or restraints, we learn how and when we can let go or even push the boundaries of our perceptual experiences. If there can be a release of the habit or pattern, you can literally let your ‘self’ go beyond the familiar. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen of the Body-Mind Centering practice points out how this potential for ‘self’ literally rests in an individual’s perceptual-motor processes. “Those that aren’t accessible are not going to be used in their everyday life — for thinking or for action. Each of the patterns are potentials within us, but until we actually *do* them, they’re not accessible to us” (Cohen, 1995, p. 193). Our habitual use of space, approaches, postures, and attitudes define us, and yet simultaneously give us the agency to change how we sense the world around us and how we perceive ourselves. There is no ‘self’ except as an unfulfilled possibility.

In this concrete way, Butoh can be seen as a practice of opening ‘self,’ or as some say, a “self-exploring process” (Kasai & Takeuchi, 2001). It is understood that there is ‘self’ exploration in the experience, which is not merely self-expression. To cite Dewey again, “If an art product is taken to be one of self-expression and the self is regarded as something complete and self-contained in isolation, then of course substance and form fall apart” (p. 111).

The Potentiality of the Present

Part of Butoh's artistic critique lies in the view that, in everyday situations, the demand is on the individual, by and large, to behave according to social expectations, thus, limiting expression of movement. For many in Butoh, it is important to break free from invisible mental and social constraints and to disrupt habits so as to achieve "free instinctual movement, to be spontaneous" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 63). The aspect of Butoh that focuses on unconscious movement is thought by some practitioners to be cathartic in the way that it allows natural, automatic or "primal" impulses of the body-mind (Fraleigh, 1999). Others describe it as more therapeutic in terms of a psychosomatic exploration (Kasai, 1999).

Seeing this through a Pragmatist lens, Mead's (1934/1967) theory of 'self' emphasizes this very indeterminate quality of the physical present. In his view, because experience is not given, self is not given. We must act in order to understand or objectively reflect on such actions as a 'self.' As Mead writes, "we can never become selves unless the action in which we are involved includes action toward our own organisms" (p. 149).

Mead makes an analogous claim to the view in Butoh that, in most social settings, there is social control in the form of the attitudes of others, which we carry in us. The terms he uses are the "I" and "me." He writes that both aspects of "I" and "me" are essential to the full expression of the 'self,' but in any social setting "the relative values of the 'me' and the 'I' depend very much on the situation" (p. 199). In his opinion "the expression of the 'me'" tends to determine our conduct "over against the expression of the 'I'" (p. 210). In this sense, Mead asserts that the image of "me" acts a censor. "It determines the sort of expression which can take place, sets the stage, and gives the cue" (p. 210). In other words, self-consciousness toward a certain organization of attitude or behavior can have the effect of control.

Roughly put, because we mostly relate 'self' through identification, we have a hard time staying in the immediate present, because our tendency is to remain in control of "me" as an object of our consciousness. This self-consciousness relies on holding patterns like thoughts of "this is not me," which come as memories or projections. So when we can let go of "me" in that sense, the present "I" is when consciousness is not bounded by an identification with a past and a future.



Therefore, in the course of the present, what Mead calls the “locus of reality,” the unknowability of one’s ‘self’ begets a space for novelty and inquiry. Mead describes the possibilities of the ‘self’ as belonging to the “I”:

what is actually going on, taking place, and it is in some sense the most fascinating part of our experience. It is there that novelty arises and it is there that our most important values are located. It is the realization in some sense of this self that we are continually seeking. (p. 204)

For Mead, the present experience of “I” is where novelty arises. “It is because of the ‘I’ that we say that we are never fully aware of what we are, that we surprise ourselves by our own action” (Mead, 1934/1967, p. 174).

To spur a sense of freedom, spontaneity, and experimentality, Butoh methodologically employs improvisation. Improvisation involves a deep appreciation for the fact that everything happens in action and brings attention to the ‘nowness’ that action. Our instructors accented the *potentiality* of direct experience, highlighting the physical basis of action and the “what if” of action within reach now. Right now. Movement potential “is the generative source of a creature’s immediate kinetic spontaneity. A creature’s initiation of movement, including the initiation of a change of direction, is always from a particular corporeal here and now — positionally, energetically, situationally, and so on” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 65). Becoming grounded in one’s perceptual processes reminds the improviser that outside of the empirical experience of the now everything is immaterial (Zaporah, 1995).

In Mead’s sense of “I” and “me,” Butoh specifically helps to ‘dial down’ the relative value of the “me” in order to improvise and be in a non-objectified present. Non-rehearsed, instinctive behavior and response by the “I” is the way in which the ‘self’ is expressed (Mead, 1934/1967). Therefore, by practicing ‘being present’ by literally relaxing our self-consciousness and identification (of the “me”) we allow for greater expression of the “I.” It is a situation that holds those values of the “I,” which Mead writes, “are found in the immediate attitude of the artist, the inventor, the scientist in his discovery, in general in the action of the “I” which cannot be calculated” (p. 214).

In my experience with improvising, I usually don't reach a point of fully letting go or being empty of the mental chatter until I become so tired that I actually just stop caring what I am doing. I stop trying to have a sense of personal control over the movement; my thoughts no longer wander into self-reflection, particularly into the realm of the self-critic, the perfectionist. Anita picks up on this pattern of mine in the body training and tells me, "It is like you give up, but then you go again. This is when something new happens." I realize it is at this point when things go mentally quiet that I really just start to listen to the sensation. When I reach the edge, a point of physical and mental exhaustion, is the moment is when I give myself potential.

For me, in a paradoxical way, being fully present is almost scary because it is when I lose control over my narrative. Yet at the same time I am excited by it. I personally feel a sensation of freedom unlike almost anything I feel in my daily life, by being able to move and engage in a world free of constraints or judgment. And, at the same time, I feel vulnerable and expose myself to emotions and parts of myself I normally turn off. I often feel an inescapable sense of embarrassment after the improvisations, a jolt of self-awareness, which brings unwelcome feelings of being apologetic, like waking up with a hangover and remembering things I wish I hadn't said the night before. I have a conflicted relationship with this creative process, especially in allowing the impulses that I see as alien to my 'self' and being willing to be open to other ways of acting and other identities. I have to let go of wanting to identify so closely with the improvisation.

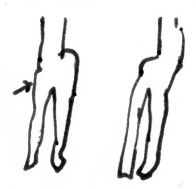
I'm a coward. Seeking approval. Eager to please.

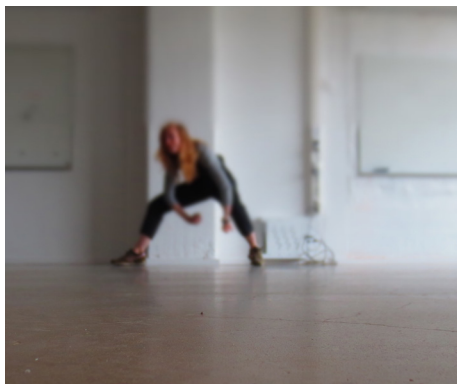
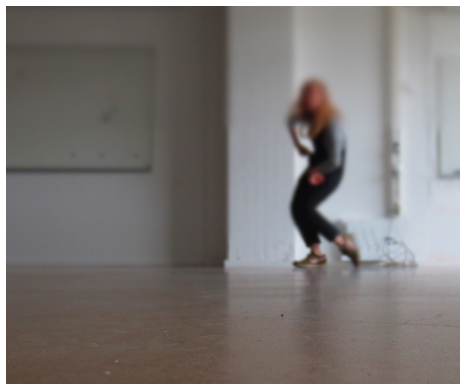
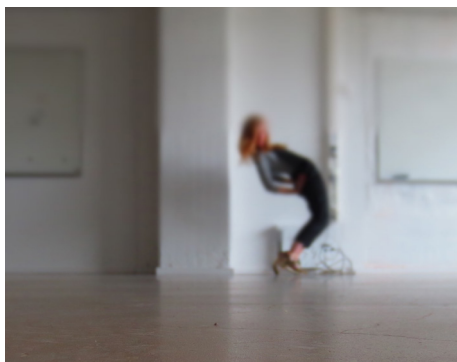
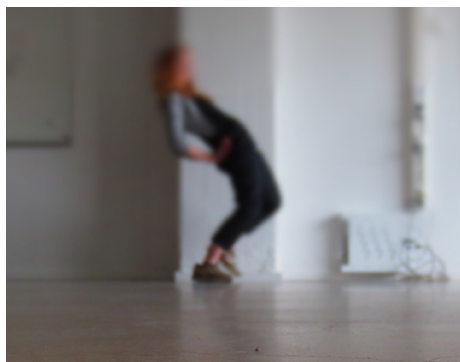
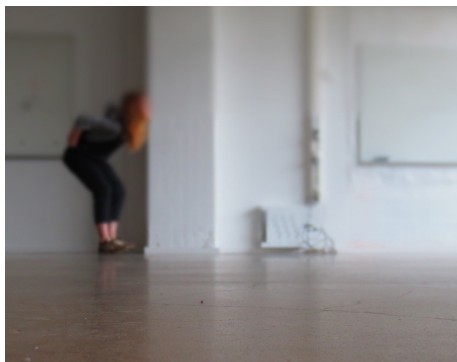
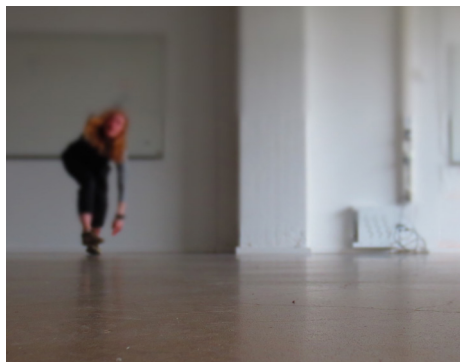
Our teacher Sumako speaks of this experience as "body on the edge," taken from a performance by the Butoh master Hijikata entitled, "Body at the Edge of Crisis." Metaphorically being 'on the edge' signifies the fundamental *uncertainty* of the experience of 'self.' Similarly, the improviser Barbara Dilley speaks about the experience of uncertainty in the concrete, claiming:

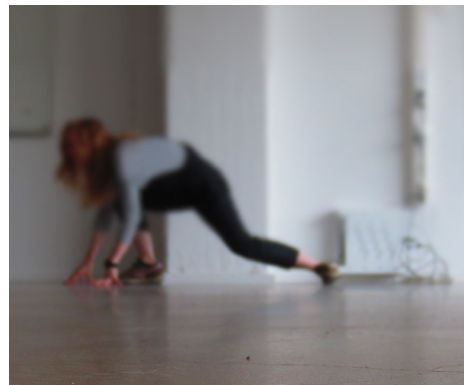
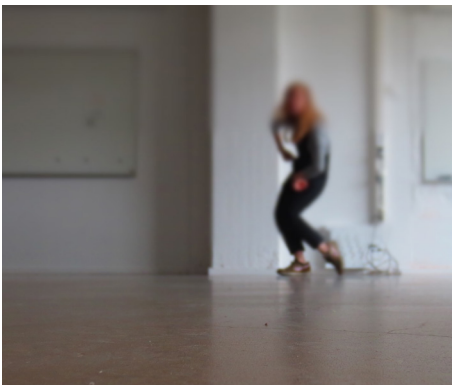
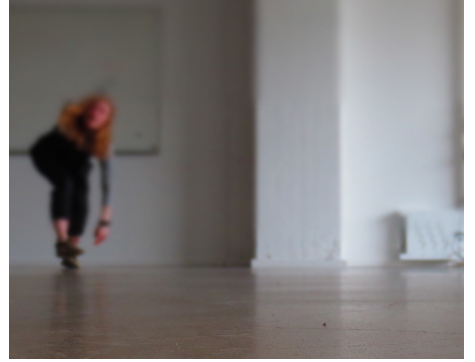
The thing I think is very interesting in improv is danger and the unexpected and the harm that can happen because people are working at edges on an interior level. They're

working at different edges of kinesthetic experience or thrill — you could even say thrill — and then get caught in and tangled up in stuff they can no longer track... (De Spain, 2014, p. 71)

The “stuff” she speaks about getting caught in is the sensation of when movement becomes a flow experience that we are not consciously trying to censor or even understand rationally. From the turn of phrase, you can ‘lose yourself’ in relation to how you see yourself and how you would typically move. Physically this has a sensation of literally being ‘out of control’ or as they say “on the edge.” Not knowing what is happening or going to happen for some individuals can feel thrilling. Like Mead’s (1934/1967) “I” in the present, it “gives the sense of freedom, of initiative” (p. 177).







Two: Meeting Halfway

The air is still, energy from the movement training settling down in the space, our bodies quieting, hearts pumping, blood moving, thoughts starting to rest. Our teacher asks us to find a partner. It is a vicious instant, apprehension rising in the back of my throat. It is like waking up in the morning and becoming conscious of that thing that you regret having said or done the day before, becoming frighteningly awake to a memory. This exercise is the returning thorn. I feel my flee instinct, a desire to go somewhere, but I brace myself. A sigh comes, my resignation of knowing what he is asking of us.

Fine. It doesn't matter who. I just want to get this part over with.

I halfheartedly look around to the other dancers. K.'s and my eyes meet. Two wordless, thinking creatures. An unspoken agreement that we will work together passes between us. She has an unruffled composure, which momentarily softens me. Is that a slight smile at the edges of her eyes? My face must read dismay, trepidation.

We already know the instructions. We walk toward one another and ask in a whisper who wants to go first, going through motions of courtesy, offering each other the apparent chance to decide.

But I know, and sense that she knows, that I want to be the first one on the floor. The peacekeeper in me would have politely given her that role if she asked, but I can sense that she is truly ambivalent about which role she takes. I shrug and without discussion go lie face up on the yoga mat, unnaturally quick, forcing myself to calm down. Feeling my back and skin against the floor, my chest pressed open, I wiggle a little, rotating my head and neck upward and sending a shake down through my arms, legs, muscles, tissue, bones to voluntarily relax. Or is it involuntarily? I don't know anymore. I release my hands. I see K. standing over me looking down. I close my eyes.

Try not to think. Try to forget she is there.

Sssssshhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. There is only the sound of the long concentrated hissing of my elongated exhales, winding out past my normal breath by a few counts. I try to push out the air out from the lower part of my diaphragm, feeling muscles and space in my abdomen that I don't usually come into contact with. With my new attention to my breathing, the surface of my body that is touching the floor disappears. For a fleeting instant I forget why I am here and am left with the inward and outward movement of air from my contracting and expanding chest.

K. is intentionally giving me this time to settle into my body, to become "light" and "ready to take the movement." I am supposed to be like a puppet, inert physical matter for her to handle. The sweat on my clothes begins to get a little cold. My skin is clammy.

I smell like sweat. Let it go. That's part of it. Don't worry about it. But I smell. How much does she smell me? She is going to touch me. She is going to smell me. She is so close.

Sssssshhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. K. is hovering over me. Her body near me. She gently lifts my right hand and then the rest of my arm, rotating it in the shoulder joint. Up near my head, then out, across my torso. She pulls it out away from the floor and my shoulder lifts off the mat. A space opens up in my shoulder socket. Her hands are lightly groping around my upper arm and my shoulder.



When we switch roles K. settles into the mat and begins her breathing. I'm unsure about where to begin. I try to give myself permission to not try to be too inventive. The last time we did this exercise I got caught up in trying to provide an interesting experience for my partner, looking over at the others, worrying if I was doing it right, if I am massaging enough, if I am experimenting enough with rotation and bending of the limbs. I am supposed to be listening to K.'s body to see what it needs, where I can stretch and push her. I'm scanning her body. Thinking. I start with the arm because it seems simple, less invasive, smaller.

*The legs are bigger. They feel a little more personal than the arms.
Just start easy.*

I go to her hand and work up her wrists, elbow, shoulder. The whole arm now. Simple. I move to different parts of her body. I am timid, lightly moving her around, trying to be gentle.

Should I go to the right leg now? How do I lift her body up? How much should I move it?

I slide down to work on her feet for a few minutes, lift her knees up and around, up to her arm again, then to her back. Then I try pushing her body weight onto her left side and swing her right leg that is now on top.

I shouldn't roll her over. Have I tried enough with different parts? I'm running out of parts. What else is there? Push up on her knee more. Don't hurt her. Try massaging her back. What should I move next? I haven't rotated her head and neck yet. Don't touch her rump. What are the others doing?

I see T. massaging his partner's face. I copy him.

After each exercise we are asked to speak with our partner. Honestly, I do not like either the role of giver or receiver, but I think it is easier for me to give than to receive. When we discuss, I tell K. that I need to work harder on receiving, telling her that, "I really hate receiving." I say that it is really hard for me and that I'm working on figuring out how to disappear. She reminds me that I'm not supposed to fall asleep, "You are trying to not be here but here at the same time." I think about it. I need to still be mentally present and aware, but not in physical control. It is a question of how to have complete physical relaxation but still be phenomenologically perceptive.

To my surprise, K. tells me that loves receiving, that she can really relax. She likes having someone else take control. I am surprised, thinking, "Wow, I wish I could be that comfortable. My focus goes to all my insecurities..." It is remarkable how different this experience is for each of us, how trusting she is and able to let go and how much I seem to suffer.

We talk about the exercise more and she tells me that when I am giving that I am too, she searches for the right word and says, "poke-y," gesturing with her hands. K. says that my movement from one body part to the next is not fluid. "You jump around," she tells me. I recognize this as well. I do not just let the movement have a natural progression and perhaps an arc. It should be more intuitive, following a bodily rhythm, in effect giving a physical coherency to her. Instead, she can feel my arrested focus jumping around from

one spot to the next. She can virtually feel that I am anticipating my moves. She can feel I'm not listening to her.

She points out that I also do not “go for it” enough. In my trepidation, I do not push her body, and likewise, her mental focus to new places. I am too careful not to challenge her or take any risks. I can go further. “More, more, more,” she reminds me of our teaching, “You will know when my body can't go any further.”

The instructions for the role of giving are that we should listen and discover what our partners need. We should stretch them — literally their limbs — to a point slightly beyond where they normally go. We are to help them release tension and create “spaces” inside their body. By finding literally “spaces,” he means physiologically stretching the limbs, rotating at the joints, massaging between the muscles and bones, opening up the anatomy of the body.

K.'s feedback catches me off-guard. I consider how much I struggled internally with how she was receiving my manipulations, mostly that I was trying to not be invasive or cause any pain. Now I see I was overly cautious, too gentle with her. My shyness got the better of me, and in a sense I backed away from the assignment to push my partner and help her find tension and new extension in her body.

“Damn,” I think, “here I thought it was the receiving role of the exercise was the part I need to work on, but it turns out it is both.” In both roles, I am not opening myself up to feeling the interaction.







This “manipulation” exercise, as it is referred to in Butoh, is a typical part of the training that involves partner work. This particular example is an improvised manipulation, meaning our actions with one another are improvised through the frame of manipulation, which entails having one person fully giving their weight into gravity and the other “manipulating” them. Within Butoh there are arranged manipulation procedures that involve a detailed series of stretching and relaxation postures, while also paying close attention to the breath and breathing. From the outside, this manipulation training looks like physiotherapy between two people, one person lying on the floor and his/her muscles and tendons being stretched and massaged by the hands of another person. The dual purpose with this bodywork is to, one, physically loosen the body through contact with it, and, two, loosen a “defensive mindset” through the sensations of passive and active movement with a partner. The practical emphasis on how to physically relax in the present simultaneously helps cultivate a mental attitude of relaxation.

The psychosomatic exploration at this intimate level is aimed at the dual character of the human movement experience: the sensation of *moving* and *being moved*. Many improvisational movement practices explore the relationship of moving and being moved through partner work, since the dual character is foundational to its social significance in performance work. In the pedagogy of improvisation, the relationship between moving and being moved are brought together through this kind of micro-collaboration. A defined window into the experience of relating to another through the very up-close-and-personal contact with another person’s physical presence.

Many of these types of partnered explorations grew out of initial experiments by the founders of various practices of movement improvisation. For example, one well-known duet form that overlaps with many exploratory somatic practices is Contact Improvisation. The use of partner work is one ingredient in movement practice that helps bring bodily awareness to the primary sense of movement. We are taught in improvisation that the way we each relate to our ‘self’ — an intersubjective process — is through others, through the meeting of body-minds. This is the foundation for the horizontal, relational structure of the practice in which it is assumed that we need others to do the training. Constant feedback is necessary. In Butoh we ask, how and when can we learn from

one another? How do we challenge one another? How do we trust one another? We are always relating, receiving new information, meticulously attending the meeting. We train our self-awareness and sensitivity for how we are relating. In the moment you touch and are touched, you are moving your partner is moving, one minute you are focusing on your tension, the weight of the body, your partner's breath, quality of movement, on her supporting you, on you letting go.

A Partnered Exercise

Personally I wonder why the manipulation exercise is one of the most difficult — most uncomfortable — parts of the Butoh training for me. It is something with the closeness and exposure that I feel in having to directly relate and work on that relating that taps into hidden deep-rooted responses that I carry. Why is it hard for me to let myself have contact with someone? By “contact” I mean not just physical contact, but also the internal affect that comes with our direct physical involvement. Coming from an embodied outlook, it holds that what is happening internally is fused with my activity.

In Butoh during a manipulation exercise, these moving relations are delicately explored through the roles of giving (moving) and receiving (being moved). In those roles, there is the potential in our heightened interpersonal awareness on the present to have the experience of both the sensation of moving and being moved in the same instance, as it is said in practice, “the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me” (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 243). In aesthetic terms, this is the quality of contact that each partnership seeks in these manipulation exercises — one of mutual connection.

This aesthetic quality is in the passing moments. There is a feeling that action and reception fold into one another. Here the sensation of mutuality that “pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 38) makes the exercise “complete,” whole, or “fully esthetic.” Mutuality comes about when what is physically “done” and subjectively “undergone” in experience are intimately connected. “As we manipulate, we touch and feel, as we look, we see; as we listen we hear... In an emphatic artistic-esthetic experience, the relation is so close that controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception” (p. 51). Dewey terms this “interpenetration” where in

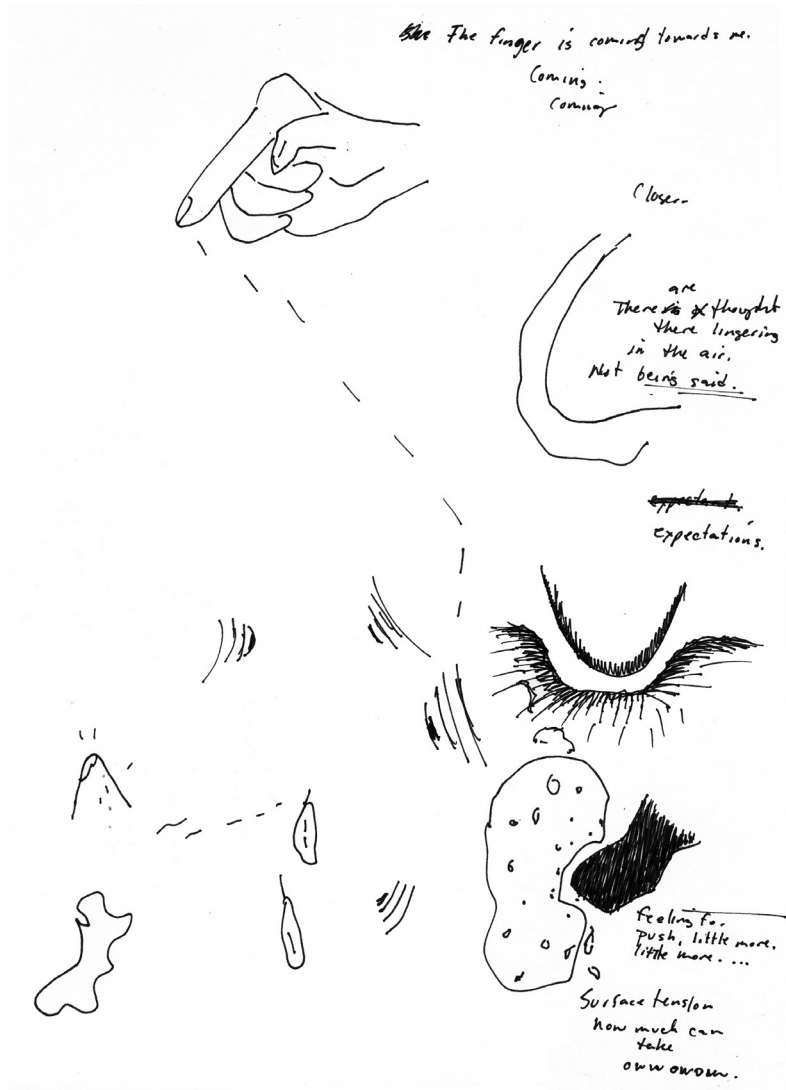
experience there are not two separate operations of one of physical material and another upon inner stuff, but that “two functions of transformation are effected by a single operation” (p. 78).

In the entanglement of giving and receiving, the both of us should remain actively open to one another, empathetically listening and responding, allowing us to have the immediate aesthetic experience of mutuality or connection. “Receptive perception” (p. 49) is the phrase Dewey (1934/2005) uses about the artist that is of that is both giving and receiving simultaneously. According to Dewey, this ability, “embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works” (p. 50) is what makes the experience aesthetically one of connection. Taking that we exist only in relation, between subjects (one another) and subject and object (subjective present and ‘self’ as object), we must allow and admit that perceptual alterations and affection change us, changes relations to ourselves, “someone is moved as he listens” (p. 109).

In this exercise with my role as giver, I lost the aesthetic experience of giving open and freely with K. because my movement was driven by my deliberate focus on trying to be creative by creating different sensations, moving around from body part to body part. In this way, my effort and attention is felt to be introspective or “me”-oriented, so when K. said that my movement was to “poke-y,” she could feel my self-consciousness. I am disjointed and micromanaging the moves I think would be interesting, instead of reciprocating and listening to her, and really giving us a “space to come together” or to “become one,” as it is said in *Butoh*.

Dewey (1934/2005) would say this is “non-esthetic” because it loses succession. It has “arrest, constriction, proceeding from the parts having only a mechanical connection with one another” (p. 42). To put emphasis on the aesthetic of mutuality in the partnership, my attention and effort has to be more with the sensation of the relating than with an attachment to myself. I am passing too quickly into reflection about what is, what has happened, or what should happen, and am not staying with the immediate perception of the kind of feeling for distances, rhythm, dynamics — a symmetry in our present energies. This expresses the calculated character of my “thinking,” which Dewey (1938) describes as “a postponement of immediate action” (p. 64). He says it can make the present

have a mechanical quality because it “is stoppage of the immediate manifestation of impulse until that impulse has been brought into connection with other possible tendencies to action” (p. 64). I restrict the natural, sensual, and unexpected energetic exchange, the flow of movement-thought.



Concretization of Qualities Through Feeling and Effort

Our physical effort carries an intensity, an intention, a force of will that another person can literally sense. This “energy” or “effort,” as it is referred to in movement studies, like Laban Movement Analysis, can be seen in relation to James’s notion of subjective “will” acting between one body and another. Because our intentions take on perceptible bodily forms, “the *qualitative* use of energy” is regarded as a cornerstone for movement studies, which is both functional and expressive part of movement vocabulary. Effort includes attention to the strength of the movement, the control of the movement, and the timing of the movement. For example, Dewey’s understanding of organizations of energies is not much different from such movement studies that understand and develop expressiveness of movement dynamics to include emotional color, texture, and inner intention of the performer as the means through which artistic meaning is conveyed.

In the exercise, for instance, when I am giving the manipulations, it does not only matter what I am doing at any moment, whether I am wringing K.’s arm, massaging her face, rotating her foot, but also there is a quality and expression of how engaged I am with her. The “whatness” of my thought, feeling, desire, and purpose is carried by the corporeal and energetic character of my touch. This has already been said in the sense that *content* and *form* operate in tandem in experience, accounting “for the existence of some degree of expressiveness in the object of every conscious experience” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 127). In the materiality of this experience, what K. senses is the effort of my movement, my flow and timing (bound/free, quick/sustained), my physical force and direction (heavy/light, direct/indirect). This form of nonverbal communication between our physical bodies involves “what is said and how it is said, the substance and form” (p. 111).

Dewey devotes entire chapters to energy and expression in *Art as Experience*, which express his thesis that qualities of materials in direct experience are not a verbal or intellectual matter for artists. “There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 77). Because art as an experience is characterized by immediacy, Dewey

contends that producing works of art is an ordering of qualities of material spatially and temporally, which *expresses* the meaning and intent of an experience to others, what he calls an “organization of energy.” In this experience of energies, “The artist selects, intensifies, and concentrates by means of form: rhythm and symmetry being of necessity the form that material takes when it undergoes the clarifying and ordering operations of art” (p. 190). Thus it is the energies of form, what he refers to as rhythm and symmetry, that are made significant in experience by the artist. This why and how art is expressive and communicative, “the fact of energy... made central: its power to move and stir, to calm and tranquillize” (p. 191). So like in all arts-related practice, this bodywork is to gain an intimate and inner awareness for emotional and physical processes, for where there is a sense of effort, and the willingness to experience the flow of energies.

We are learning the substance of artistic perception and expression, particularly how to express and feel between one another emotionally and energetically. This is part of the artistry of Butoh practice. It is a concrete question of physical and emotional communication — how to read and respond to one another’s gestures, how to corporally adapt to real and living contact, how to express receptivity. Thus, on one level how to physically sense trust and another we learn to concretely express our intentions at this visceral, sensory level of communication, one that is tangible yet inaccessible to words. We learn, for instance, technically how much physical force to apply, how to attain a sense of one another’s psycho-physical presence, and how to adapt and adjust our actions accordingly. As others in movement improvisation say, “The detailed perception we acquire through practice is reflected by precise expression. In order to express ourselves in detail, we must know and control our body and mind” (Zaporah, 1995, p. 30).

Our teacher Anita relates the manipulation exercise to riding a horse and how, as dancers, we can also learn to be precise with reading and speaking viscerally to one another’s body. To physically demonstrate, she grabs my forearm and applies different pressure on my skin with her hand. There are different messages communicated through touch, in the quality of the action and the pressure and upon the skin. She explains that in this work, we practice to “carry the energy” which can corporally, gesturally, kinesthetically send the meaning we want:

First, she applies a very, very light touch, so diffuse and delicate it is almost ghostly. Her hands and skin barely touch mine at all.

Next she pushes a little more with her fingers that I sense on the skin. It is not firm but feels slightly more honed in and compressed, quiet and soft, almost angelic or slightly distant.

Finally she applies more pressure that is channeled and compelling sending a message beneath my skin that has the sensation of warmth and assurance to “go this way.”

Each of her examples expresses an inner intention in its energetic and physical form in the way that “different ideas have their different ‘feels,’ in their immediate qualitative aspects, just as much as anything else” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 124).



Meaning in the Local and Specific

Given this qualitative foundation, in practice, every time we engage with a new partner to intimately find a sense of connection, we must dexterously sense and adapt to one another in a short amount of time. We both silently try to get to know and adapt to one another, to sense when things feel mutual and when we are communicating well with one another. Specifically we are taught to “sense the motion and movement” of one another’s body by testing how it moves and feels, reading his/her body, movements, energy, facial and bodily cues, and quality of touch and pressure, learning how much contact and pressure to exert to have your partner respond. In essence, we learn how to be more adept at sensing one another through the concurrent, unassimilated feelings of giving and receiving.

In the particularity of that meeting, the present is the opportunity for the partners to figure out how to connect by finding an expression and sense of mutuality. I explicitly mean “expression” in the etymological sense that Dewey presents as “a squeezing out, pressing forth” (p. 66), something being formed. The act of expression is a construction through time. Rather than patterns of holding or preserving as mentioned elsewhere, we allow a new interaction and consequent transformation of material and expressive feel of mutuality.

This coming together is both discovered and actively formed, an “intimate connection” where “subsequent doing is cumulative and not a matter of caprice nor yet routine” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 51). Both participants must be present with a willingness to meet the other halfway, according to our teachers, to learn from the other and to teach the other. “This is the *meeting*. It is communication,” as our teacher Anita says. The experience of connection is allowed to be brought to a “fulfillment” when we are not acting in a way that is simply automatic or “mechanical,” but becomes aesthetic, meaning received by means of the senses. It is a physical conversation, a flow of movement and wordless information between partners. It is essentially a dance.

There is no recipe or formula for mutuality, and in the Deweyan sense, it takes on a distinct, aesthetic feel in each partnership. We start from the experience of giving-receiving in the concrete to determine meaning. Instead of trying to force the connection, this practice brings us back to directly discovering our unique relationship and discovering what mutuality means in this situation

here and now, for the first time. Therefore, in practice we cannot just presume that mutuality is already there. We cannot take a shortcut to expression by executing a form, going through the motions, performing automatic behaviors. We are active and affected throughout, so that “the expression is emotional and guided by purpose” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 52).

The Pragmatist point is that any concept, like the concept of mutuality, has meaning embedded in the specific. In order to ‘grasp’ it in this instance, we must directly experience it, “we cannot possess it in its full force, until we have felt and sensed it, as much so as if I were an odor or a color” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 52). We make sensory information about our connection accessible by feeling it in the flesh, by making it tangible and perceptible, not principally by trying to understand it intellectually. In fact, it cannot only be intellectual but must be aesthetic.

You play right, I'll play right.

This demands that we train a sensitivity in our movements and gestures to seek and ‘know’ the particular sensation and expression of mutuality or connection. Thus, the feeling of psychosomatic connection we are seeking between partners is not an ends, but a means. These exercises are about training in that means — to gain trust. They are “listening” exercises, our teacher Anita explains, we must learn “listening in the body.” She emphasizes that why we work this way in a kind of micro-collaboration, “to teach the body to trust.” We do not reduce the ‘felt’ emotional experience of trust and the ability to apprehend it through physical expression and affect.

Willingness to be Moved or Affected

Once we become more skilled at the artistry of the body (material), with sensing its form and energy, we are able to feel changes in the body-mind as they are occurring and we are able to challenge ourselves to not simply act in ways habitually exercised or ‘learned by heart.’ I need to know ‘where I am,’ what my capacities and limitations, are in order extend and show trust to my partner. A visitor to one of the training classes put it as, “It is impolite to your partner to not know what you need.” You need to know what you

need and how your partner can help you in order to fully meet them. This is because by first knowing our patterns and gaining a sense of our kind of process allows us, to some degree, to *release* a feeling of self-control to give into that process.

It is important to point out that in movement practice, the sensation of release is not the same thing as *losing* control. Sumako, for example, teaches us that the relation between us and others or the environment “is not *losing* power,” but that getting in contact with that relationship “*gives* us power.” It only feels like losing if we associate a possession of ‘self’ with control. “It feels like losing self-dignity,” as she puts it. Releasing is not passive or a loss. In Butoh there is no such duality of action-passive. Instead it is understood there willful intention. Thus, when Sumako says we are not *losing*, she is acknowledging that we do not just become passive, but that there is actually a shift in where the intention and perception of control is located. It is a different kind of control, moving from a state of self-preservation to one of availability and the potential to be moved. Particularly, it is an effort to release the inherent desire to feel bodily control in our natural “manipulatory reactions” (Mead, 1932/2002, p. 131) toward objects of our consciousness. Dewey writes:

The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only thorough a controlled activity that may well be in intense. In much of our intercourse with our surroundings we withdraw; sometimes from fear, if only expending unduly our store of energy; sometimes from preoccupation with other matters as in the case of recognition. Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. (p. 55)

Turning back to the exercise, we can say that there really is no guarantee of a connection or forming of trust between K. and me. The collaboration cannot have a feeling of force. It comes equally from both our abilities to convey trust and expectation. Paying close attention to the sensation of trust is to notice that it involves acting on a feeling not of certainty, the feeling of security in knowing what

will happen, but what James (1896/1982) terms “belief.” There is, in fact, nothing for me to act on beyond the belief and expectation that K. will play her part, that she will ‘pull her weight’ and take care of her side of things. It takes a conscious release on my part to let K. meet me halfway, giving her space to do her work by being secure in that uncertainty and not wanting to grasp, control, or escape from the situation. Even more so, when she is giving the manipulation, I have to believe that she will respect me as I do her, and that she has my interests at heart.

Take a leap.



This brings me back to the willingness to trust and James's point that the creative and aesthetic existence of humans cannot exist without trust. In his view, if every action involves a choice, we first act with a force of will and liveliness measured in our "willingness to act." Therefore, a willingness to act inherently involves a sense of trust (belief) because we must repeatedly act on what we cannot know. "There is some believing tendency wherever there is willingness to act at all" (James, 1896/1982, p. 187). Because we must act with a feeling of uncertainty, in a larger view, trust is what makes it possible to achieve anything socially. Given a felt sense of will and agency, we have continually to 'put ourselves out there,' to act on the good faith of others. James maintains that this makes the experience of action a social matter. We have to trust. Because it is something felt, it cannot be a scientific matter based on objective evidence and reasoning. In *The Will to Believe* he writes:

A social organism of any sort whatever, large or small, is what it is because each member proceeds to his own duty with a trust that the other members will simultaneously do theirs. Wherever a desired result is achieved by the cooperation of many independent persons, its existence as a fact is a pure consequence of the precursive faith in one another of those immediately concerned. (James, 1896/1982, p. 203)

James's (1896/1982) also argues that an internal belief in a collaboration helps create the collaboration in actuality. This is related to his view of pragmatic relationships and the notion that truth is not independent of the activities and interests of what he calls "believers." So by virtue of happening in the world, any energy of intention or will of the "mind" is also a physical exertion (action) that helps create the fact. As humans we tend to produce the evidence of what we were already thinking. James makes this clear in a statement about the practical kinds of questions that are not scientific generalities, but are:

a certain class of questions of fact, questions concerning personal relations, states of mind between one man and another. *Do you like me or not?* — for example. Whether you do or not depends, in countless instances, on whether I

meet you halfway, am willing to assume that you must like me, and show you trust and expectation. The previous faith on my part in your liking's existence is in such cases what makes your liking come. (p. 202)

The point James is making is that there is no way to be certain of these activities from a scientific perspective because they are human relations the meaning of which we are actively and always creating and recreating. How can you be sure that you are in love? It is not as though you can weigh and measure it. There is nothing intrinsic in the experience of love. What evidence do you have to qualify it, other than at some point trusting and deciding that you are in love? It is a feeling that you must believe you feel, meaning it is also a choice to use the word "love" to describe what you are feeling.

Trust, as being dealt with here, comes from an ability to let go of an amount of self-related preservation and thoughts about the future, in order to share in a common space, a meeting with another person in the moment. To sense mutuality and to be willing to trust, to believe that another individual shares in the value of the connection, we do not simply place the social good above the individual as a decision. We should avoid talking about trust from another recurring polarity in our thought about action — that between the "individual" and the "social." A person's movement, behaviors, and feelings of action in relation to other people is much more multidimensional and complex than this kind of classical division (e.g., individual/social) with which symbolic abstraction provides us (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007). Just as in the integration of our perception of sensations of inner/outer, because a consciousness of 'self' is intersubjective, this arises not simply from the brain or body, but is partly constituted through social interactions and relations (Mead, 1934/1967). We embody both the social and the individual. So while the organism's basic "will" is self-interested, this understanding is not limited to the autonomous or private individual (separate 'self') that is considered to be deeply ingrained in a kind of possessive individualism of western culture (Joas, 1996). In the context of internality, there is not simply heroic subjectivity or the transcendental ego acting upon the world. The world is also acting upon the subject. We are

inherently empathetic and self-reflective, taking in the attitudes of others with 'self' (Mead, 1934/1967).

The view that stems from Buddhism is that connection between ourselves and others, and between us and the environment, is already present; it is the natural state of things. We are not separate or distinct, but, in fact, we must learn to let down our defenses in order to allow the connection. This demands the reverse of force, to "let things come." And instead of self-ownership, there is a surrendering of 'self' in order to connect. Dewey (1934) reflects a similar view, alleging that the discrimination of 'self' is not native and original to our nature:

Intrinsic connection of the self with the world through reciprocity of undergoing and doing; and the fact that all distinctions which analysis can introduce to psychological factors are but different aspects and phases of a continuous, though varied, interaction of self and environment... (p. 257)

Willingness to Show Trust to Have a Connection

In this way, trust goes back to the sensations of giving and receiving. There is no way to experience trust without yielding some amount of the feeling of self-control. Trust involves a meeting of movements and being moved in ourselves, an interpenetrating experience, as the author David Levithan describes it. "To get something, you must give something away. To hold something, you must give something away. To love something, you must give something away."

Again, Sumako reminds us that, "this is not about keeping," connecting this thought to the adage that the more one has, the more he/she fears losing it. She says, "When you feel like you have nothing to lose, it can be freeing." The 'self' is not matter of possession. It is also always being let go of. The goal is to not exert an ego, not be steadfast. The emphasis is on the relationship between simultaneously surrendering and holding, when the feeling of giving takes precedence over, or at least has equal value to, the value of holding on, self-interest, the feelings and force of habit. Charlotte Selver (1995), a pioneer in Sensory Awareness practice, describes how in working with the body you must go into each partnership anew and lose your habitual stance:

This approaching each activity anew means a person who is awake and changeable. When one becomes more awake, when one loses one's restrictions, the organism becomes a very movable and elastic entity. The more one loses the tendency to protect oneself, the more one becomes trustful on one's own abilities...with all this comes movability and elasticity. (p. 20)

Selver's phrase "movability and elasticity" is telling of the kind of subjective perception we train in Butoh, particularly through the receptiveness of the body. It can be seen that we are not learning methods as a matter of securing habits, but the converse: We are learning methods to remain sensitive to environmental conditions, to break patterns, to foster change, and to maintain an attitude and demeanor of openness or "movability," as Selver calls it, "always meeting new whatever reality brings" (p. 17).

A useful way to describe the empathetic, affective ability of the artist to *be moved* is the term "plasticity," in the sense that William James (1890/1950a) used it in discussing bodily structures of habit. "Plasticity, then, in the wide sense of the word, means the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once" (p. 105). For James, since the manifestation of mental life is best described in terms of properties of matter, the body is the site for influencing the change of material and the conditions for new thoughts, new ways of thinking, new sets of habits.⁹ In embodiment theory, this is described as, "the adaptive significance of a continuous bodily sensitivity in the form of an internally structured corporeal consciousness of movement or of movement potential" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 65).

In the book, *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey (1922/2002) also discusses the concept of plasticity, saying that it is the exercising of "reorganizing potentialities" in habits of behavior, using it to metaphorically signify a "willingness to learn," (p. 97). Therefore, it is comprised in part of a psychophysical willingness to

9. It is worth pointing out that the importance of James's view of plasticity is gaining traction as a result of findings in neuroscience in recent years. Where it was once thought that organisms build neural "maps" of their sensory environments, suggesting a static view of neurons that exist in reference to an outside world, new research shows a view of adaptive neural plasticity. Neurological "mapping" activities are constantly patterning and reforming which means, as James's theory suggested, our "behavioural adaptations have anatomical underpinnings in the plasticity of the neural maps" (M. Johnson & Rohrer, 2007)

re-make old habits in “the continuous modification of action... the cumulative carrying forward of old activity into new” (p. 85). It is not simply acquiring and copying the ways of others. Nor is it being completely pliant. It is both — having a marked, colored behavior, an accumulation of previously embodied customs that is felt to belong to one’s personality, while being receptive and responsive, in partial opposition to his/her environment, able to question assumptions or habits of thought. To not just be carried along by force of habit and to extend ourselves by learning is an important psychosomatic aspect of adaption, “otherwise we shall simply do the old thing over again, no matter what is our conscious command” (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 35).

Anita often repeats physical instructions as a technique to encourage us to let ourselves be emotionally open, “Keep your front open, chest open, face open to *feel* open to others. This is the key to empathy. You can’t curl up or shut down.” The failure to recognize that this practice of receptivity is both physical and mental, Dewey (1922/2002) says, is a continued separation of mind from body, “supposing that mental or ‘psychical’ mechanism are different in kind from those of bodily operations and independent of them” (p. 33). It is reaching down into the meaning of the motions and gestures and committing to a concrete action of “will” or intention to “meet the other halfway.” There must be an internal willingness to trust in this process and this we can *feel*.

During an exercise we are blindfolded and Anita whispers for us to put one hand out. I am waiting with an open palm, not sure what to expect. Anita comes near to me and tells me to relax my hand. “Don’t grab,” she says, “Let it come to you. Do not force.” She lightly places an object — what feels like a small, smooth stick — into my hand. It is very delicate with some small pieces attached to it. She lets me examine it sensitively through touch without opening my eyes. “It is a gift, welcome it.”

Anita is demonstrating the discrete corporal aesthetic of being receptive and welcoming. Without saying anything, a person can sense, even from the subtlety of such a hand gesture, the difference between an attitude that welcomes presence with warmth and an attitude that is slightly more wanting, asking, grabbing from the other person. In the Deweyan sense, it is expression of learning. “Learning is the opening of ourselves to the experience of life. The opening is a *motor act*; the experience is interaction between sensory and motor happenings” (Cohen, 1995, p. 203).

This corporal work is an example of becoming precise in how to open up our perception and exhibit a kind of inner stance of plasticity. We are navigating with another person with a whole 'felt' sense of empathy that we must also project onto our physical interaction. Empathy requires releasing the desire to control, a metaphor of which is holding a butterfly in your hand: If you hold it too tightly, you will crush it. If you hold it too loosely, it will fly away. When we practice physically altering our movement, stance, and posture, the way that sensorimotor information about material and interpersonal conditions reaches us also changes. We acquire an internal sensitivity to change that simultaneously manifests the ability to allow for change. To be open to receiving, there has to be a part of the image of 'self' that is endlessly generous, trusting, tolerant, elastic. Receiving is in the same motion as giving.

Take off your cool.

Going back to the exercise, lying on the floor, I am to be physically passive yet available. I cannot help K. with moving my limbs, so she must feel the dead weight of my arm or leg or head or other body part. If she lets go at any point, the gravity should be in my limp body and my limb should immediately fall to the floor like a sack of rice. This spontaneous release of a body part from their grip is the giver's check to see if the receiver has fully relaxed.

The more I focus on my experience and the physical sensation of the role of receiver (the one being moved), I find that it is especially provoking for me to feel like passive weight, to feel dependent and to release myself to this side of the partnership. There is an emotional memory that attaches to the feeling of giving the responsibility for physical control over to someone else, to literally not help myself and to feel inert and not able to take action for myself. My physical aversion to feeling dependent on anyone triggers a visceral response of tension and stiffness. Because having your body in your possession (as an object) is a way to exercise control of the 'self,' to let go in this way becomes a decision to yield a degree of my perceived agency.

I reaaally hate this. Can't I just choose the path of least resistance?



More specifically in the case of my own bodily reception in the improvisation with K., I mentally attend to my component thoughts about all the parts she is moving, those dozens of points of contact, so that my energy and attention is in my thinking. I actually try not to connect to the feelings of contact with K., the fact that she is touching me, examining me, perhaps smelling me, her nearness to me, having the weight and responsibility of my body. I escape into a kind of defensive character of thinking “no,” “don’t touch” the negativity of which is like lasers that tense my body. Unbeknownst to me, she can feel my resistance. My ‘thought,’ as invisible as it might seem, has a behavioral material effect. Even when I believe that I am relaxed, K. finds concretely in my body that I am tense. She has to shake my arm a little to remind me to relax.

So to connect with K. and to let go of my self-preservation, my insecurities, and my concern for what is happening, I have to practice releasing my connection with a childhood experience of the sensation of feeling dependent. More explicitly, I have to disconnect from the emotional identification of dependency from my past, feeling needy, a burden on a single mother, in order to feel something new in the experience of being deadweight in someone’s hands. The key to doing this is that I must learn not to take the visceral sensations of feeling inert and passive personally. I have to remember this is not about “me” and keep my attention to the physical sensation of the present. Then I can literally and metaphorically be available and movable. Then I can share the same emotional space as K.





Three: Embodying Form

Move without tension? How the hell to do that? Is this a joke?

I am lying on my side, thinking about how to begin. My eyes are closed. They have been closed for a while since we have been meditating for a couple hours. I'm feeling separated from the others. We have not talked to one another in two days. We have been practicing working in silence, meditating for many hours at a time, and laboring outside in the garden during a thunderstorm. The discipline required over the past 48 hours has been grueling. I have been wrapped in my own thoughts, but focused, noticing the minutia of how I am interacting with other girls, their gestures, their expressions, the actions between one another. The silence has been dragging on, making me second-guess myself, wondering if they are mad at me. I don't have the normal confirmation I need by making them laugh. I have to behave differently, express myself in exaggerated ways. Tired, weighed, lying here. The quiet has been calling me to sacrifice my sliver of dignity, for the group surely, I turn to juvenile physical comedy in their company, telling myself I am lightening the somber mood. The mood is somber, right? I project my insecurities into the silence, compulsively checking in with the others, scrutinizing, looking for visual cues, making sure everyone is happy, happy with me. My self-consciousness has been ramped up, features intensified, nuances and colors magnified, sounds piquant.

Now, the darkness melts into the labored silence. I have no idea how the other dancers are moving. I'm even more cut off. I cannot look to them for help. There are measured footsteps, birds chirping outside. I lie here for minutes, seconds, minutes, millimeters, nothing moves. Is it insecurity that covers me? There is a weight, Anita's prod for us to move without tension is rattling in my head. I start by trying to raise my arm, but all I feel is the enormous weight of my body, the bones, the muscles, organs, fibers, fatty tissues, heavy with fluids. Shapelessness. I'm lifting water now. My thoughts have a determination against my inert flesh. Talk! Parts of my body twitch with the thought of movement. There is lifting in my mind's eye, but my arms don't seem to move. Imperceptible. Millimeters. It is strained, swelling, like my body, or antibody, is rejecting my resolve. What is working against what? Myself against my mass against gravity. Outlines are invisible. There is the flat surface of the ground meeting my underside, mingling senses, sadness, food, organs, passions, temperatures, the sense of time spreading out, filling the room. There is the heavy effort, the inevitability of death, the strain and exertion, struggle, a dense and vibrant resistance. My heart is pulsating. I'm warm.

The teacher's voice passes into my purview and is murmuring something about moving slowly and kindly. She is asking us to think about a time when someone was dependent on us, and what that felt like, nursing someone, "What kind of movement can your body have if it is completely kind, giving?" I am immobile.

What does she mean move without tension?

I'm becoming a little frustrated with this assignment, thinking it is implausible, illogical, impossible. What kind of task is this? I try to imagine a time when someone was completely dependent on me, when I had to take care of someone. Have I had to encounter this sensation in my life? I'm searching instances. *Have I ever nurtured anyone? How close have I been to people? I'm trying to think about people I've been close to. I am unexpectedly overcome with melancholia, sorrow even. I feel alone, noticing my solitude. I start to remember my father in the hospital when he was dying and how I couldn't help him. His bloated and blue-tinted skin stretched out over the hospital bed. I push this fearful thought away, looking for a quick replacement to get away from*

that rushing wave of emotion. I don't think I have had anyone dependent on me. The sadness swells. I'm probing instances to latch onto a concrete feeling. A parade of memories and pale images roll by, family friends, moments, encounters, touches, hugs, embraces. The thought of children, but I don't have one...a sick family member...my ex-boyfriend when he broke his collar bone... Fluffy and far-flung recollections float by, like searching through a mist of corporal impressions and sensations, a foggy morning, a kind of belabored reverie. Looking for something vivid that sticks out in all the circuitry, roaming. A feeling. Someone needing me. Really *needing* me. Only to recognize that maybe I've never had to take care of anyone.

Anyone out there?

I have only been completely dependent on myself? Do I even know what it is to be selfless, have someone dependent? What is it to move in a way of absolute kindness? Have I ever carried total generosity? Should I be helping myself, or helping someone else? I remember having a conversation with colleagues once in university about whether altruism exists. And they said it couldn't, that every action on someone's part is motivated from a selfish need. I remember asking would this word exist if there wasn't also the emotion. The word wouldn't have any meaning or...Thoughts condensing, my body! Still impotent.

Am I thinking too much? Feeling too much?

I'm still testing how to move, if I can move parts of my body. I look for a kindness, a lightness. Can I move my skeleton at all? I roll a little to my side to test if gravity can take over my movement, if I can use my weight. My fingers spasm. It seems to require too much force on my part. I would have to feel the tension. Can I exert force in a soft way that I do not feel tension? I imagine lightly lifting my leg, like on a cloud. A feeling of space opens up between my muscles, joints, bones.

What is tension?

I still feel tension hanging in the air. The movement feels forced. It's unclear. I feel the question repeating itself and it is no longer

making sense, like when you repeat a word so many times it just becomes a sound, detached from something you once thought you knew. Tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension, tension. Or did you ever know it? I move very little, from side to side, my neck, arms, and legs a little, the possibilities of moving wane and drop into a void. I cannot reach any kind of action, any kind of certainty, any conclusion. Nonsensical. Nonsensical, nonsensical, nonsensical, nonsensical...



The teacher says 30 min have gone by. I feel myself back in the room and my thinking flip back to atomized time. I had forgotten about time and space, only mutating between memories and sensations.

She walks past us and prods us again, “Can you get off the floor and dance like this? Don’t sleep. Can you move like dancers? Try! Move kindly, without tension. If you cannot do this then you can leave the studio.”

I find myself swimming in the thickness of the search, trying harder to move, but the frustration only brings tension. Drowning. The more I think I don’t understand, the more I feel I’m failing the assignment. Thoughts about whether I am trying too hard push me back into the earth. She said we should get off the floor, and I try to sit up to see what it means to move. She said we shouldn’t feel our body. But now my focus is only in my body and on the tension. What did she mean? Drowning. My eyes are still closed. I’m so tempted to look, wondering if I am doing this wrong...well, wondering if the others are off the floor...I have no comparison. I am alone. Am I the only one barely moving? Okay. I let myself cheat a little, opening the smallest crack between my eyelids to let light in. If I don’t actually see anything it isn’t cheating, right? From my position I can’t make anything out. A cheat wasted. I am back in the darkness, now mad at myself for having left it. I stand up and try lifting my arms. I don’t want to be the only one not moving. Yet, I feel like I am lying by getting up. Of course I feel tension. I am not being true to this assignment. I don’t want to pretend. The strain of concentration, now only tension, overwhelms any other perception I have now. Everything is tension, is it not? My concentration on moving is shattered, travelling in the opposite direction of the assignment. It is just circling thoughts. How do I get out of this? What is the problem here? Why can’t I find kindness in myself? Did I forget? I scold myself. I only find walls, obstruction, gravity! Only gravity. Gravity again. Gravity is unkind. Still looking for a way out. Can this earnestness be kindness? Or does it need to be light? I don’t know any more if moving without tension can bring kindness. I think I should leave as Anita asked us to do. I want to be authentic to this assignment.

I'm doing this wrong.

Self-recrimination sets in. I feel myself giving up, accepting defeat in spite of the unlikeliness of me not persisting, from everything I have experienced of me, who I think this me is. I am growing remote, absent, outside myself, disappointed in this image, almost knowing that in this moment there is something uncontrollable, my mind or body is already determined, and I cannot stop my form. I am watching it, while it gets up to leave.

I open my eyes and make my way noiselessly through the silence and between the shifting shapes. A. is also standing outside the studio, and without gesturing, we reflect in one another's eyes. Frustration? Yes. Frustration. Disappointment in myself. My head wags to myself. The rest of the day passes in silence.

An Emotional Exercise

The next day when our vow of silence is lifted, we discuss the exercise and I record it. Since only myself and L. left during the exercise, I am surprised to learn that the other girls felt a similar misunderstanding and struggle to move. We are alone in a group, sharing the same time and space, emotional duress, and yet you are not there with them at all.

A: ...you do an exercise which is about, move without tension, it is *really* difficult. It is *really, really* difficult...We were like this (acts dead by releasing body and hanging) I cannot move! Tight like a (makes a sucking shhhwww sound). How to do?

D: (shoulders slumped, sighs) But it brought *soo much* into my body, like, that struggle. To move without tension that was like... it wasn't the word gentle...

A: Kind.

D: Kind!

Anita: Yeah, because gentle is too soft, huh? "Be kind" is more complicated, huh?

D: Yeah, it just...Wow! It moved me in, like, a really *deep, deep* place...to be in my body like that. Especially on the floor! I just felt like...

A: Struggling.

D: Yeah! Yeah. And then also — but then the *kindness*...being kind with the struggle. That was what was so moving about it. It was like...I can't *move*! And it — anger! So much anger. So much frustration. So much like (gestures with arms out and hands in a grip) and then the tension in my body immediately (snaps fingers) with that. And then remembering to be kind. And the softening in that. And then just accepting that I was going to be on the floor. (laughs)

Again, our conversation after the exercise makes evident how using our bodies to conduct the inquiry has immediate aesthetic significance, meaning it is a matter of both form and content. As the other dancers picked up on, the visceral feeling of the body, just the “weight” of it, is fraught with an emotional gravity to exert a force of will. The more each of us felt that we could not move, due to the perceived weight and strain of our bodies, the more we took on a psychosomatic response of sorrow. In trying to be “kind” and to “move without tension,” we found fear, suffering, and pain. It is difficult to touch on the feelings, to embody them and make out the contours of kindness, without touching on the contrary — pressure, compression, strain, tension. Like with the exercise using giving and receiving, Buddhism teaches that every emotion, feeling, and sensation contains within it a seed of its inseparable opposite. It is the back and forth, the yin and yang, the figure and ground, the intensity and extensity, the movement of energy between, rather than being one or the other.

D: The thing that I discovered is that there's a difference between...*weight* and — I found that I could lift my arm without tension. And it was very, very, very heavy. And it felt like I was lifting, like, I was dragging so much, but it was actually, there was an effortlessness to it. And it — I was sort of — again, I keep coming back to this idea of kindness. And for me the kindness was, like, sending out, sending out...and like, then the arm just lifted. And there was no effort...It was like a surrendering up...because when

I when I felt anger and frustration, trying to move my body (motions with arms pressed down at sides) without moving, without creating tension, it was *futile*. And then with the kindness came so much sadness. Like, *sooo muuuch*...

A: It is so strange, huh? That it is so near. When the true kindness comes, it is full of sadness, huh? You know, it is not on the surface.

Searching for a physical connection to kindness, I personally only found tension. I looked for real memories, concrete instances of being a caretaker to bring into my current situation. I ended up dwelling on emotional burden and my autobiography, looking for this instance in my past from which to draw. I made the mistake of falling into self-identification and the “me” and “my” possession of those specific memories. Fixating on the past gave way to a literal strain because I was stabilizing the memories, rather than letting them be the genesis of moving in the present. In a reverse way, the freedom to move became stifling for me because I started to feel like I needed to mentally know what I was *supposed* to do, like I was misunderstanding the exercise.



Expressive Form-Giving Through Emotions

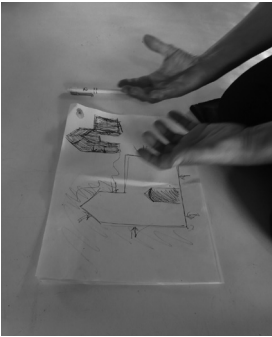
This Butoh improvisation exercise trains with an investigative technique of emotional embodiment and the physical sensation of form-giving. Butoh begins with the perspective of embodiment that entails an internalized shift or “transformation” by performers rather than beginning with external appearance. We learn to take part in the material means of form-giving with emotions — the experience of how it feels to be kind, to move without tension, to be giving over and beyond just “getting to” the form of kindness, like what kindness looks like or how it is portrayed. The transformation or qualitative change sought in this exploration is a “thorough and complete interpenetration of the materials of undergoing and of action, the latter including a reorganization of matter [our bodies] brought with us from past experience” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 107).

In this instant, the word kindness suddenly ceases to have meaning for us, without the concrete evocation of the experience. What does kindness actually feel like? There has to be a literal connection — neural, felt between the concept of “moving without tension” (kindness) and the action, the physical response. Seeking motor imagery through the sensation revealed to me and the others how emotions make up the ways we imagine and make sense of the lived experience of “moving without tension.” There is an inherent question of how to physically manifest that concept to embody it, so that there is a meeting in the emotion (content) and the physical movement (form).

In particular, methodically working from emotional feeling and sensations is how we engage an expressive use of the body, which is sometimes referred to as “filling in” by my teachers. “Filling in” is a corresponding experience to the philosophical stance of emptiness that Butoh practitioners are expected to have. “Filling in” form presumes the Buddhist teaching that “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” which implies that the experience of emptiness paradoxically allows for “filling in” form. So from a Buddhist perspective the somatic form of expression confirms “a two-way ownership, referring qualities back to entities that possess them and referring experience to ourselves as the one who experiences” (Tarhang, 1994). This is much like an aggregated definition of dance proposed as “consciously organized energy that gives form to feeling” (Dale et al., 2007, p. 581).

Our teacher Anita illuminates her perspective of “filling in” by grabbing a sheet of paper and sketching the outline of a building. She points to the lines explaining that this is how we normally look and conceive of a form. We decide how it is seen on the outside. We concern ourselves with the form in terms of a product (end).

Then Anita starts scribbling with the pen. She eventually fills out a shape similar to the first but without drawing any external lines. She says this is the artist’s way of embodying form through the content, through sensing it, feeling it, empathizing with it. It is the “internal integration and fulfillment” of matter and form (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 40).



As Anita describes, unless we emotionally feel (content) the kinds of qualities we wish to fill in or express, our physical expression (form) will not have the desired effect. This is how the aesthetic experience of the Butoh art form is secured. It is an embodied way of working common to art practice in that, “What is aesthetic is pervaded by an emotional tone made possible by the process of being engaged in a work of art” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 81).

In Butoh practice we use two interrelated approaches to embody or ‘fill in’ form, what could be seen as an outside-in approach and an inside-out approach. The outside-in begins with the form of the emotion, which is when, in this case we display the shape, movement, and demeanor of the emotion we are intending to represent. This goes on to stimulate an emotion in the performer. The inside-out begins with an inner quality of being, tapping into an “essence” or inner-ness of some quality that again

stimulates an emotion. Both routes are really the same in terms of expression and effort and the continuity between emotion (content) and emptiness (form). Both awaken the need to imagine and feel. As Ruth Zaporah instructs, “if nothing is going on, pretend there is” and “be in the nothing” are useful for triggering feeling. Neither is to be about “portraying” emotions, but emotion is part of what moves the dancer. It is the motivation and trigger to make form-expression.

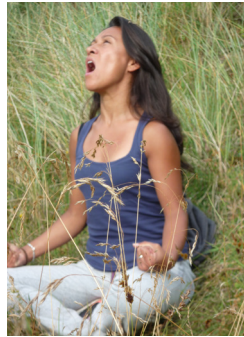
For me, in the cases of the outside-in approach, I have an emotional block and dumbly stand there. To even try to begin with the form of an emotion, I have to imagine being someone/thing else or go outside myself to really be able to embody that energy. When Sumako asks us to express anger (ANGER!!!), it is almost as though I do not know where to begin. She tells us to “go wild,” “lash out like animals” or “act violently,” and I am not even able to start to enter into the movement. To even contort my face in an extreme way to show anger, I feel ridiculous and immediately become paralyzed. Shyness — shame really — becomes my default emotion. I realize that I am not used to showing or connecting to the energy of rage much at all. It is a sensation that I have spent my entire life trying to repress. I revert back to shame again and again. Shame.

Do not be a hysterical woman.

The inside-out approach, by beginning with a description of the type of movement, like “moving without tension” instead of “kindness,” for example, provides me with an entry into emotions from a more objective place. For instance, if I am instructed to explore the energy of thrusting my arms out wildly, I find that I am less emotionally invested in terms of the idea of letting myself go wild. So if emotions and feelings come up for me along the way, they arise more as a discovery or flow in recognition not because I was just trying to mimic the emotion. Focusing on the quality, energy, and nuance of the movement helps me stay emotionally detached from myself, so to speak.

When we discuss these types of exercises using emotion, like the work with anger, some of the others say they also have a hard time performing emotion. I identify with a comment from

an artist who says she was shocked to find that she really did not know how to illustrate an emotion. Then she remarks that she remembered Sumako told us to, “Think of the inner part, not the outside,” saying, “It’s not you.” Sumako’s comment, she says, gave her “freedom” or “permission to let go.” Like me, she has to let herself feel the emotion without identifying it as herself. Working this way, I start to realize that there are many emotions on a daily basis with which I avoid contact. I actively try not to express or feel them, or have contact with their energy. I sense that I have a limited emotional vocabulary of expression, and consequently feeling, because I work within professional environments and cultures that ask me to constrain those ways of behaving. So to have an expressive body, my “instrument” in this art form, I need get in touch with those feelings.



The perceptive experience of emptiness in Butoh is intended to tap into an inner awareness of feeling as a step toward an expressive body. To recall an earlier discussion, Buddhism teaches that the ‘clinging’ nature of self-identity is what separates us as objects of thought from one another. So by learning to not identify with the ‘self’ as an object of our possession (“me”), we can empty our physical presence of the self-identification. In that sense, when we are not bounded by our egos, we allow connection between inner-outer and self-other.

Because emotion is not physically abstract for performers, we must learn with some accuracy where and what emotions are stemming from inside the body and how we are responding. It is a “matter” of my body to directly sense in order to express that experience. Emphasis on this kind of physical-emotional awareness is similar to Buddhist meditative awareness or a kind of “intimate distancing” (Stanley, 2012). In “intimate distancing” one learns to distinguish one’s personal memories and attachments to an emotion from the raw physical energy of the emotion. This requires loosening one’s possession on the ‘self’ identified with control of the body, which goes hand in hand with learning a methodical attentiveness to internal, proprioceptive (or perceiving of self) systems. Such systems are by which the body-mind “judges spatial parameters, distances, sizes; monitors the positions of parts of the body; and stores information about laterality, gravity, verticality, balance, tensions, movement dynamics...” (Blom & Chaplin, 1988, p. 18). This impartiality from the objective “me” should not be seen as the same as trying to mentally detach from our bodies (Stanley, 2012), but more as a shift in attention and meta-awareness of ‘self’ and emotion in the present.

From a scientific perspective, this type of emotional distinction is described as the difference between the sensation of moving energy and emotional attachment (Damasio, 2005). What we think of as emotion is the experience of energy literally moving through the body. The Latin root of the word emotion, *emovere*, means movement or energy in motion. Emotion involves changes in bodily ‘states’ that are felt as sensations. Of these there are two general ones: contraction as tension and expansion as calm. As Dewey (1934/2005) articulates, “there is rhythm save where there is alternation of compressions and releases” (p. 186). So the *feeling* of those changes, in the movement of emotional energy itself, is

supposedly neutral, simply a connection of “intensity and extensity” (p. 186). It is our experiential and psychological identification with the physiological experience that causes an emotional response (Damasio, 2005). Thus, for example, we perceive happiness or sadness, which are positive or negative emotions, because the signal of the bodily state triggers perceptive experiences from the same system. As William James theorized, when the body conforms to the pattern characteristics of emotions, we feel those emotions and attach positive or negative associations to them (Damasio, 2005).

As my experience with the kindness exercise shows, without somatic discipline and introspection, the “filling in” approach is incredibly challenging. It actually requires that the performer become closer to their emotional vulnerabilities by being physically and mentally open and allowing the embodied *feeling* of emotions, not exactly emotions themselves. By learning not to attach ‘self’ to the emotion, but to witness its presence, “filling in” celebrates a capacity for empathy, expression, and a connection with others. It is similar to how performance artist Laurie Anderson (2015) quotes her Buddhist teacher’s instructions, “You should learn how to feel sad without actually being sad.” As an embodied approach, it relies on performers accessing the emotional energy and somatic change *in* the present, while maintaining a meditative attitude toward the emotion, with what Buddhists would call “bare attention” (Epstein, 2004, p. 31). The improvisational dancer Nancy Stark Smith speaks to the required meta-awareness, stating, “...you have a sense that I could change any minute and it doesn’t matter that much — it matters and it doesn’t matter — and we’re looking at it from an abstract point of view as well as a personal point of view, that you can switch levels on it” (p. 144).

In calling attention to the difference between emotions and feelings, the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2005) notes the skill of actors and opera singers to recognize the same specificity of physiological changes going on. In neural terms, he describes the embodied approach as *feeling an emotion*, which is when the perception of the substrate of emotional processes is in “juxtaposition to the mental images to that initiated that cycle” (p. 145). He says the ability to generate the emotion “requires special talent and maturity to rein in the automated processes unleashed by the real emotion” (p. 142).

Therefore, it is possible to train embodied consciousness, for example, “embodied actor training” which “is able to focus

on the feel in the body, often ambivalent or enigmatic, instead of conventionally categorised feelings. In embodied training, the fundamental question is: How does it feel?” (Tuisku, 2017, p. 41). One specific technique involves learning to shift or relax the focus of our control to a broader esthetic awareness of our body in the present. Ruth Zaporah (1995) gives a description in her improv practice of learning how to consciously examine emotions, with the following example of shame:

In a training such as this, they being to examine shame and the physical expressions of it. Again, they feel shame spontaneously arising, but this time shame surfaces within a different context. As they experience shame, they notice a configuration of elements (breath, temperature, tension, quality of motion, voice, etc.) that comprises shame. It’s no longer stigmatic “shame.” It’s just a feeling and sensation that can be noticed. (p. 58)

Said elsewhere, a major component of Butoh practice, as with somatic practices more broadly, is in learning to perceive and navigate our own personal relationships to incoming sensory information. “Because our senses stand between intention and action, they can affect us deeply. In conscious and unconscious ways, we learn to control them, to filter them, to bury and uncover them in our awareness” (De Spain, 2014, p. 106). Instead of controlling our emotions via our habitual responses and possessive patterns of behavior, meaning that, instead of keeping or pushing away the emotions in habituated ways, we learn to control our defensive behaviors to “let them pass,” as my teachers say.





Attending to Details with Sensation and Imagery

Pointed out previously with regards to the manipulation exercise and trust, we practice embodying experience by finding ways to feel it, instead of trying to understand it intellectually. For our teachers, having a ‘feel’ is about reestablishing contact with our bodies, the intention in the feeling, or as Anita says the “will” or the “imagination to do.” In this way, they constantly stress that the work is very *concrete* and not insubstantial or impractical. We should feel the whole physical and mental body to inform the movement, instead of only “looking” or “thinking.” Sumako, for example, repeats again and again when we are doing imagery exercises that, “*It is matter.*” She instructs us, “Don’t just contemplate. Incarnate! You can *feel* it. Make it come alive.” For her, the movement does not simply come from an image as a mental visualization in the head. Rather we internalize the image; we embody the emotion and feeling of it. She teaches, “We are not just demonstrating the good and beautiful and so on. We take desire, our pride, subconsciousness of the whole body, and are just passing, carrying that. We are the medium.” She emphasizes, “It is really change — physical change and chemical change.”

In our training, Sumako says that the challenge for us is how to find the vividness and detail in the images, the sparks in your imagination that are going allow you to honestly react to express or fill in. “The question,” she says, “is how to make the *body* believe” It is tremendously difficult to falsely create feelings, like adrenaline, for example. You cannot pretend. She says, “You’re going to have to imagine a cockroach (screams loudly and jumps back with a shocked face) whatever it is...find it, use it.” The more we invest in the imaginary, the ‘fiction,’ the more the sensory detail becomes tangible to us and, in this way, more real to us. This is not unlike other movement practitioners who describe how they teach their students to improvise, like Steve Paxton, who writes:

I try to teach them what to feel in order to understand the physics of what I’m talking about, because if you just present physics they don’t feel anything. They just make little models in their minds and it takes a while to get into the body. So I start with feelings. (De Spain, 2014, p. 103)

This materialization of feeling, as my teachers say, is not merely simulating emotions for theatrical effect. We ground concepts and

images in the flesh as an investigation. Sumako, for one, makes a strong distinction between contemplating and feeling because by using the body, you can actually *feel* what we are talking about. She also discriminates between feeling and sentimentality, saying, “You don’t have to create it. It will be there. Let it be immediate, not sentimental. Let it be the emotion, not how it should look.” One day she elaborates her view by telling us that we can understand this aspect of Butoh by reading *The Doors of Perception* by Aldous Huxley. Describing the book, she says:

I remember a flower. He sees a flower...and he says that the contour, the outside line of this flower disappears and only a kind of...I don’t know, essence...a kind of just “floweriness,” you know? Itself. We don’t *need* a form. We are the center of that. And then he describes after about a chair. And, uh, he says I am the chair and that that chair is me. So there is no more separation with the thing and me. So these descriptions are very near what I ask (laughs) you to be. When I say, “lose your wall...you are the air.” I mean it. It is not just an expression. I am the air. The air is me. It should be really this. It is not to just believe that you are air. It is completely different. It should change something.

As described before, Butoh’s particular attention to expressive use of the body is said to involve the ability to use highly detailed imagery. This precision in imagery, which is a bit of an obsessive feature in the practice, is portrayed as more than, “Just sitting under a tree. It is also knowing what the ground under you feels like. What the tree tastes like. It must be exact, down to the eyelash, down to the smell you are thinking about in the side of your nose” (Yeung, 2002). We learn that the depth and granularity of our movement is how the experience carries a sense of connection with another person. “It is not just about moves,” as Sumako says, it is “10,000 pixels,” the gritty details, not forgetting to add that, “You must express for us to feel.” So we must feel to express to feel to express...

The imagination is a source of content for both memories and anticipating things. Because the use of the imagination in our kind of movement is connected with tangible sensations like textures, temperatures, shapes, mood, and smells, it virtually brings the “thought” of imagery to life. It makes the movement “authentic” from the perspective of Butoh, i.e., the involvement of our entire

person, in full force, with our sensorimotor and emotional experience. In this sense, it ‘makes’ the expression of our imagination real. It becomes a belief in a present sense of ‘reality,’ or as in James’s (1890/1950b) words, “For the moment, what we attend to is reality; Attention is a motor reaction” (p. 322). You are making it come alive so others can feel it. It becomes believable.

It's not a real problem, just a luxury problem.

The committed integration of sensing, feeling, and fantasy means that the closer we seemingly get into the detail via feeling and sensation to believe in the imagery, the more it is like we are making things up to truly go into that feeling. It feels both more real and more illusory at the same time. Dewey (1934/2005) writes that this empirical-emotional tension arises because there is always a deepened perception along with a physical medium in the arts, “There is something physical, in its ordinary sense of real existence...there is an experience having a sense of reality, quite likely a heightened one” (p. 209).

But it is by virtue of having material existence, by which any art (form), can be expressive of feeling. There must be a material to express a meaning. Dewey (1934/2005) continues, “the meaning not of what it physically is, but of what it expresses” (p. 209). Thus, in the Deweyan sense, we are exploring the sensory potential of the “material” of the body. We are learning to use our bodies as an artistic material to “convert it into an authentic medium of expression” (p. 208). We are learning the qualitative, emotional feel of the use of that material (our bodies).

The Continuity of Feeling-Expression

The Butoh emphasis on the body as a direct means of perceiving and relating to the world is not so distant from the Pragmatist notion of the body as a common object of our communication. For Dewey, bodily experience is the common substance of expression, so while everyone’s experience is individual, it is not private (Dewey, 1934/2005). As Shusterman (2008) puts it, “Bodies provide a common place for the meeting of minds, whose intentions, beliefs, desires, and feelings are expressed in a bodily demeanor and behavior” (p. 145). This Pragmatist view subscribes to the idea that physical expression is something inseparable from thought-feeling,

that through movement and in immediate contact with reality, action and intention precede verbalization. Actions are direct expressions of a so-called “mind,” or conversely the “mind” is a ‘felt’ quality that takes shape through action.

James (1904/2000) presents this the very idea of “mind” that can only be directly expressed through the body, what he labels as a “conterminousness of different minds.” He writes:

Why do I postulate your mind? Because I see your body acting in a certain way. Its gestures, facial movements, words and conduct generally, are ‘expressive,’ so I deem it actuated as my own is, by an inner life like mine. (p. 40)

He goes on to say that we resonate with one another’s experiences through the *empathetic* responses in our bodies:

In that perceptual part of my universe which I call *your* body, your mind and my mind meet and may be called conterminous. Your mind actuates that body and mine sees it; my thoughts pass into it as into their harmonious cognitive fulfilment; your emotions and volitions pass into it as causes into their effects. (James, 1904/2000, pp. 40–41)

Cognitive science currently demonstrates some of the workings of James’s physiological view of intersubjectivity, in which he suggests that our understanding of one another involves activating kinesthetic sensations and empathetic responses within our own bodies. We do not simply register another person’s body as an object or a representation, but we physically resonate with and feel that person’s movement, behavior, gestural expressions, and reactions. It is a pre-reflective and direct intersubjective understanding that is not a symbolic or intellectual achievement.¹⁰

In this way, the attitudes or quality of mind that each performer brings to the training physically reveal themselves. For instance, as much as I try to intellectualize why I respond phys-

10. Specifically a person’s movements, their motor activities, activate the same neuronal areas in our systems as the person’s so that there is physical, structural equivalence or coupling between the other person and ourselves. Scientists point out that this “inter-corporal communication,” meaning when a person “sees” how other people move or how another person’s face is like their own face, this is automatically registered as a proprioceptive sense of how it feels to move in the same way (Gallagher, 2007).

ically in a certain ways, my Butoh teachers can immediately tell me things about my own patterns of thinking in the ways that I move and gesture, my timing, energy, posture, et cetera For them, motivations of desire, force of will, impulses, and emotions cannot be consciously faked and they can perceive if someone tries to “fake” or hide impulses or expressions in his/her performance. The bodily experience communicates, in a palpable way, the inner landscape, the force of will behind the thoughts. “Emotions are attached events and objects in their movements...And even an ‘objectless’ emotion demands something beyond itself to which to attach itself...” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 41).

Bodies speak, people mumble.

Our physical manner of expressing inner, ‘felt’ experience comes instinctively from the body. This is a striking discovery of working with physical movement: The body, if you like, cannot lie. Feldenkrais quotes someone as saying that, “Words are more to hide our intentions than to express them” (Feldenkrais, 1995, p. 139). He continues, “I have never met anybody who cannot tell a friendly touch from an evil one. Touching, if unfriendly even in thought, will make the touched stiff, anxious, expecting the worst, and therefore unreceptive to our touch” (p. 139). Mary Whitehouse (1995), a body movement therapist and founder of Authentic Movement practice writes that:

Our impressions of people are gathered fully as much from physical attitudes and gestures as from words and clothes. Nervousness often shows itself in little extra movements of hands, feet, and face; tension, in raised shoulders as well as voice; fear in limited and carefully controlled movement, and so on indefinitely. They are all communicated to us by others and by us to others, whether we know it and describe it in words are not. Often other people are more aware of our condition than we are able to be ourselves. (p. 242)

Pursuing a Qualitative Experience with ‘Authenticity’

In short, there is an inner and outer integrity to the movement experience, in that *how* we perceive also expresses that inner feeling. The emotional perception is essential to the act or gesture. It

has expressiveness (Dewey, 1934/2005). So when our teachers say, “let it become true,” they are referring to this integration of form and content, going from surface to substance, from appearance to realness, to respond with the fullness of presence (being) rather than particular mental projections. For them, expression is “not on the surface.” Anita remarks, “It is maybe not the *things* that are in front. Go deep. You have a feeling in the body.” She elaborates her view on this during her reflection on the kindness exercise:

They have a lot of responsibility to express there and to touch. This empathy is not funny for the Butoh dancer. It can also be very painful and *daaark*. And to carry all this is something...You are not afraid for chaos — *I'm* not afraid for chaos, or dead or whatever like this. I don't dance for show. I am too alive, huh? No. It is not like that. The seriousness is there. The gravity of the body is really — just bringing the gravity of the body brings in the perspective of the dead. It is nature. When we die, we are in the ground...If no life, we cannot stand up. So this conflict is interesting. How can we be alive inside...and we're not able to stand up? How is it possible? Is it dance? Is it choreography? Can you bring it to the stage this situation? For the dancer, it is an improvisation; it is a *reality*. It is improvisation into reality. And it needs *a lot* of empathy. *A lot* of empathy.







It is said that Butoh's intention in form is to expose or to restore a natural state to the body, since in its tradition there is a philosophical aim for an "authentic" way of moving and being in the world (Taylor, 2010). Butoh references an early ritualistic function of theater and dance, which aimed to connect with and celebrate ancestors by seeking a kind of truthful or intrinsic nature of dance. Its art form, as an investigation of a more authentic expression of the body-mind, is not solely for enjoyment or pleasure, but explicitly for a connection found between the performer and audience.

By extension, Butoh's art form is not about inventing something new with movement. Its significance, and perhaps creativity, resides in the refined aesthetic qualities of the movement. Formal movement itself cannot really be new in the sense that is an object that we possess, so the specific qualities of a performance are independent of the categories of new or not new. For example, given the physical difficulty of holding movement at an abnormally, and in many senses excruciatingly, slow pace, it is an art of subtlety. So for both the mover and the viewer, it is not about "having" an experience of new or interesting, big, exciting, excess in that way, but about meeting present experience with a fullness of intent. It is a form of persisting with the body-mind that pushes the performers to get down to the fine levels of our being, to be more alive and present with whatever qualities are found there. In fact, the work can be seen as a liberation from strivings to get, to have, to own, or to objectify someplace or something.

Likewise, notions of truth, honesty, or beauty in Butoh are understood with respect to internal attention and emotional expression and not objective judgments of taste. Consequently, in practice there is no judgment in method or style, meaning how the improvisation should be performed. The approach of "filling in," for example, is irreducible to the appearance of style or a type of physical form. It is drawing from actuality, an immersion of person and world, a lived experience of emotion, feeling and empathy for others. This parallels other perspectives on movement improvisation:

The audience may not actually understand what you are 'doing' (what you are exploring, what connections you are making, etc.) What they *really* follow is your engagement, your experience of the moment; its joy, its terror, its humanity. So while moving, trust in the process. Turn off

the critic, invest in the now. And let the rest take care of itself. (De Spain, 2014, p. 80)

Its expressive form is honest by virtue of coming from a human body in its “immediate sensuous effect” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 130). So what is meant by *honest*, *genuine* and *authentic* in this context, terms used by Dewey (1934/2005) is ‘truth to form’ in terms of the expression found in the materiality of the experience:

The resultant emotion is impersonal because it attached not to personal fortune but to the object to the construction of which the self has surrendered itself in devotion. Appreciation is equally impersonal in its emotional quality because it also involves construction and organization of objective energies. (p. 193)

People relate to the energetic presence, “those potencies in things by which an experience — any experience — has significance and value” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 192). For example, improviser Ann Halprin describes how her level of intensity goes up during performances:

And it’s not because I’m afraid of not looking good or not doing right. I don’t judge myself. I gave that up a long time ago. I’m not concerned about an audience’s judgment. I’m concerned that we have a connection, and that what I’m doing as I’m doing it is connecting with them. (De Spain, 2014, p. 62)

For instance, in Butoh our emotional reactions of liking or disliking are not inhibited, but are carefully brought out and distinguished as responses to the aesthetic quality of the movement. This helps the practitioners learn not to conflate the esthetic, emotional effectiveness of the qualitative us of energy with judgments of good/bad or pleasurable/unpleasurable with respect to the outcome or content, such as the improvisation style or appearance or the emotions stimulated. In other words, just because we do not like the way a performance makes us feel or the way it looks should not to devalue appreciation for the fact that it moves us and that the work comes from “the intimate depths of the artist” (Richie, 2007, p. 24).

Anita asks us one day, “What do we look for, what is beauty in improvisation?” We all give different answers, but they all revolve

around a sense of a loss of ego by the dancer such as, “letting the body be an instrument,” “just following the movement,” “going completely into the dance,” and “being focused and connected in the present.” Our answers reinforce the idea that performing for the audience is not about the dancer’s own self-identity or self-expression. Anita says sometimes that “no one cares about us,” meaning that what is important to others is not who we think we are, but the sense of connection we feel to their presence. We empathically connect to the experience of the person that is unabashed, unself-conscious, sincere, and natural and we share their experience of happiness, anxiety, relief, pride, pain, hope, fear, or curiosity. We seem to agree that what captivates a viewer is the dancer’s focus or immersion in perceiving the world, how ‘in the moment’ he/she is, and his/her degree of emotional rapture.

The value of this experience, then, is the *absorption* in the present experience, the connection that is ‘felt’ within it. It is the very possibility for an integrated consciousness where an esthetic quality pervades. Dewey writes, “This absorption is characteristic of esthetic experience; but it is an ideal for all experience, and the ideal is realized in the activity of the scientific inquirer and the professional man when the desires and urgencies of the self are completely engaged in what is objectively done” (p. 285).

According to the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990), this type of absorption in the present is a marker for a “creative” experience. His reasoning for this is that people are internally motivated by different forms of activities, regardless of what they actually are, but the important thing is that they are activities which provide this level of quality of experience when involved in them. He notably terms this quality of enjoyment in an experience “flow” because, in his research on experience, respondents describe “the feeling when things were going well as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 110). His research reflects Dewey’s thesis that it is not the objective form that determines “creativity,” but an aesthetic quality of experience:

So we have to assume that it is not *what* people do that counts but *how* they do it. Being an engineer or a carpenter is not in itself enjoyable. But if one does these things in a certain way, then they become intrinsically rewarding, worth doing for their own sake. (p. 107)



When we align our physical activity with the subjective and creative enjoyment of it there is often pleasure. “Full absorption in what we do feels good, and pleasure is the emotional marker for flow” (Goleman, 2013, p. 22). It bears repeating that the emotional marker that makes such an experience pleasurable and consuming is not “pleasure” in an objective sense. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) writes that flow experience, “often involved painful, risky, difficult activities that stretched the person’s capacity and involved an element of novelty and discovery” (p. 110). And in terms of stretching, the challenge must be to the right degree. Otherwise it can give way to frustration or anxiety. He notes that the experience must have the right mix of challenges and competencies so that “we feel that our abilities are well matched to the opportunities for action” (p. 111). Again, it is a *feeling* of a relationship going well, balancing between boredom and apprehension.

In art-related practice, this integrative experience is where there is the connection between representing and expressing. “Representation may also mean that the work of art tells something to those who enjoy it about the nature of their own experience of the world: that it presents the world in a new experience which they undergo” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 86). Effort, motivation, and intention — a force of will — is in part what physically moves other

materials. Thus, not to belabor the point, but it is the intensity and focus of the engagement of the artist, which involves pain, difficulty, effort and the feelings produced that gives us an emotional connection with any material form.

In this artistic approach, we can see honesty with regards to expression operates in line with a Pragmatist stance to 'truth,' which moves away from scientific truth claims as a goal, i.e., for knowledge to say something about how the world is. Opposed to the scientific position that seeks certainty in representation, a notion of being true to nature, artists seek a kind of 'truth to form' via the immediacy of what we can actually sense and feel. For the Pragmatists, to act in the material world, we organize our experience of it and that depends on material change, intervention, change, and manipulation. This pragmatic idea of replacing truth with method is about empirically testing in experience how well actions work to serve a purpose. A skill of method in a practitioner's quality and way of perceiving, expressing, and intervening in the world only matters with respect to consequences. Because our embodied "logic" is a matter of habits and patterns of behavior for coping with reality, 'truth' is constituted through subjective-objective relationships, that is, how a subject is interacting in the world internally and externally. It is more of a conversation with what we feel and believe and how we act as real, rather than an outside theory of knowledge. Therefore, with respect to a sense of 'truth,' the experience of art is not just about understanding, but it is about *feeling*. Being fully understandable is not what makes art as experience valuable (Dewey, 1934/2005).

Four: Sense of Process

We are all sitting in a circle looking at the teacher. He has been telling us about the practice of slowing down and how that allows us to have a new experience of movement. Now he softly asks us to all take 20 minutes to get out of our chairs and to go onto the floor. Looking at the distance between the seat of the chair and the surface of the ground, I immediately begin computing.

20 minutes — how long is that? We just did an exercise that took five minutes, so four times that.

I try to project into the future how long that might take, imagining myself doing it before actually doing it, trying to spatialize 20 minutes...He is giving us a few more directives, reminding us that all of our body parts should be moving at the same speed so if we need to scratch our nose or something, we have to do it at the same slow speed, and that we should not try to plan the movement ahead but follow gravity, where we feel our body naturally tending to go. "Don't only move functionally," he says.

Okay, I got it. 20 minutes.

I'm still absorbed trying to get a sense of what 20 minutes looks like. The teacher looks at his stopwatch and I am waiting for his signal to begin. He's still looking at his stopwatch. It seems like a really long time that he's looking at his stopwatch. A pause just hanging in the air. "Okay, begin," he says.

As if I had forgotten what was coming, suddenly I'm here, hello, and intensely aware of my body, everything outside of this moment disappears. My hands gently resting in my lap, the weight of all the parts, the way that the flesh of my thighs and buttocks spread across the chair, my feet gently resting on the floor. There is the wet taste of air.

My mouth is slightly open?

My focus moves to my mouth closing as slowly as possible, while I feel the rest of my body come down to meet my lips and jaw that stays in the same position.

20 minutes. Am I moving? Or just sinking?

This is what, thirty seconds?

I'm starting to feel the bad posture my mom always corrected, letting gravity pull my chest downward and slightly forward. It feels like my insides, organs bones, are sinking into one another, my lungs meeting my spleen, meeting my liver, meeting my kidneys, meeting my stomach, meeting my intestines, all space being squeezed out, doubling over, headed toward the floor. Creeping. My shoulders slouch. Neck folding in. Head dropping slightly. Navel folding in. Inch by inch my upper body descends invisibly and slightly to the right.

The weight of my hands slips over my thighs into the seat of the chair, the elbow of my left arm lowering into my thigh while my right arm slips off the chair and is now dangling off my shoulder. Thank god for that shoulder. There isn't a control of the movement so much as giving in to the gravity, just releasing one tiny bit of structure or resistance at a time. It is shaping me. A joint here, there, at my finger, nose, neck, elbow, knee, foot, knee, hip, spine, shoulder, knee, spine, finger, wrist, pelvis, neck...The sudden awareness that brings a discontinuity to feeling, quantum hops spacing one joint from the next, arbitrary shifts in focus. The skin around my face sags, a flash of a sense memory, imageless and at the same time a feeling of dropping

dropping

The tiniest of sounds enter my purview, trailing in and out. The rustling of cloth around body parts, faint squeaks of the joints between meeting parts on the wooden chairs, birds chirping outside, somewhere the sound of steps of a person walking, it is like hearing a slow-motion weight change, the house breathing, a drone of motion. Are the sounds coming to meet me or am I seeking them out?

The stillness is arresting in its depth. We keep going as if there was no choice anymore, trapped in one super. slow. speed. My hair is hanging from my head, which is completely withdrawn into my neck. I am feeling the sense somewhere of an off-white, yellow color, not quite happy, not quite vintage. Double, triple, quadruple chin. The blood entering my forehead. My entire body falling to more to the right, creasing, muscles twitching, joints jerking.

Take your time. Don't press. It's only been 5 minutes, maybe.

I'm trying to judge the distance of where I think I should be in five minutes. I start to feel my bodyweight move off the surface of the chair, and onto my legs, mostly my thighs, and I'm trying to postpone the inevitable by keeping my butt as long possible on the edge of the chair. It starts to slide.

Nooooooooooo...

Now the entire strain of holding the crumpled, peculiar position goes completely onto my legs. Thighs! Pain. I'm telling myself it is to be, as if it is natural against all that I feel. Relentless pain. I feel pain as my knees are bending and warping. Arms dangling. My entire body now wants to just fall to the floor, giving itself into gravity. I no longer want to know this heavy lump and yet I'm stuck with it, trapped in it, left with quivering muscles trying to hold up it up at this agonizing pace.

Hold the position.

There is tension in my face. I'm trying to figure out how to actually get out of this impossible position, realizing that I can't go any

further with the way my legs are. I am stuck, trapped in my own body or mind? Calculating how I'm supposed to get out of this, I'm unsure of how to solve this problem but my body is still falling. The problem is passing and I'm trying to keep up.

Do I turn my legs to one direction more or spread them apart?

My right leg is entering into a contorted position and there is nowhere for it to go unless I slowly begin sliding it backwards behind the other leg. Each second, or millimeter, or whatever, is lasting longer than the one before it. My limp fingers are just beginning to meet the floor.

Hold. hold. No. I have to get my knee to the floor.

What is this game I am playing? Is it my own fabrication? No, it is there. Pain in the muscle tissue. Real pain. This is all I can think about now. It isn't a word really. I just *am* pain. After being so cramped my right leg jerks into another position. Damn. Problem solved. That was completely out of sync with the slow speed. I feel like I lied a little to the exercise, to myself, to the others really, hoping they didn't see it. I wonder if I would care if I were alone. I catch a breath with the weight of one knee on the ground. But even with my weight on three limbs, the sheer malformation of my legs and back is unbearable. Did I forget how painful it was only few moments ago? Gravity does not like me. This feels like a realization I've had many times before.

Pain is the only measurement. All there is holding on. Just. a. little. longer. My body hunched over in a palsied twist, there's no more meandering or gentle tilting. Things are more direct now. My only goal is to get down. My focus homes in on my right elbow that is so close, so close to the floor really. It is right there.

Hello floor.

My elbow approaches the ground and the same thing that happened with my leg happens again. The anticipation or sheer keenness of putting my weight down, and my body naturally lurches forward wanting to release the tension. Simultaneous disappointment. Self-aware again, I try soothing myself — I just

didn't have the strength, okay? — and I partly notice some of the others spasm as their weight meets the floor. Emotionally I relax a little.

I'm guessing it has been about fifteen minutes and my body is almost fully on the ground. I sense that my movements have sped up, parts of my arms, legs, any muscle just jumping ship to the floor. In a brief moment I stop caring that my movement is unmeasured. I'm just happy to let all my parts have contact the ground. Oh sweet, sweet ground. My head, legs, everything sinks even when it feels like there is no more space. Air keeps finding a way out and my muscles are able to keep inching down, if it is even down any-more, every crack of space, closing. Vacuum tight. I sense darkness where my body had an outline, just the pressure of weight. Floor is me. I keep trying to push my limbs out, finding parts to flatten.

“Time.”

It takes us a minute to pull ourselves up from the floor, to reorient ourselves back into time, the room, the chairs, one another. I'm physically tired after controlling my body with such attention. The teacher asks if anyone wants to say something about their experience.

Several of the performers mention how meditative they found the experience and how they completely lost track of time. Or some lost track of where they are in space, which direction they were actually moving. One of the artists, G., remarks that she had a moment of not knowing if she was up or down or which way she was moving. Another artist confessed that he “enjoyed the darkness.” He tries to clarify, “There was a lot of space...I don't know if it was more in the body, it was more like in a room with lots of space, but I wasn't physically in the body.” He and some of the others observe that when going so slowly the movement is mechanical in a way, not really smooth.

Remarks about emotions come up for everyone, how all the bodily sensations are so near to emotions or feelings. One guy concluded that, “it was good to allow myself to feel tired, feel sadness... irritation...” Then other dancers affirm that they experienced a polarity between the struggle and the “giving up” or the “wanting to do it slow” and just “wanting to get it done.” One girl describes how she watched her feelings of anxiety transform, saying:

But, you know, when you *feel* it, it's like, ohhh... I shouldn't feel this stress, and then, ah, I can feel this stress. It's maybe good or *okay* to just try to accept (gestures by opening posture and breathing out) ...and the stress is very much in me today so I just try to go with it... (speaks softly) and just have to accept.

Because the experience is slowed, things that would otherwise be insignificant become markers, and the time is vivid with the passing thoughts, out-of-body moments, awareness of what others are doing, physical sensations, twitching body parts, and many levels of perception melding. When thinking and moving are given more space, you zoom in on every passing detail and the way feelings and intentions change.

A Slow Exercise

In Butoh training we often we work with ultraslow movement called "*bisoku*," which means "subtle speed" in Japanese (Fukuhara, 2013). *Bisoku* requires the dancer to move all body parts at the same slow speed, which is expressed as "one millimeter per second." It requires vigilant attention to the control of the body's movement through time. *Bisoku* consists of movement tasks like walking, falling to the floor, opening or shutting a hand, or opening the body from a fetal position. That the body could take 20 minutes to go from being closed to open introduces a tangible change in our typical experience of the duration of time, and in the way we move our bodies. Since we move our bodies and carry out our actions at fairly regular and predictable speeds, we are, "unconsciously aware of the normal rhythm of things (walking, talking, gestures, etc.) in a way that allows us to turn our focus to anomalies (changes from the norm in terms of time or space or whatever)" (De Spain, 2014, p. 116).

In this way, the *bisoku* exercise, even if it is a "prosaic idea" of simply slowing our movements (De Spain, 2014, p. 116), is an intricate way of investigating the conditions of our habitual movement and thinking patterns that helps us make microdiscoveries about our perception, our movement, attention, thinking, energy, physical strength, et cetera. Stretching the perception of time in particular intervenes into our expectations of conventional forms of action, meaning the bodily speed at which our intent is normally

acted. This is not about adding more activity or making something happen, but it lets us peer into what is already there — the granularity of our thoughts and the sensation of each passing moment and of the changing *process* of intention. It is simplicity wrought with complexity.

Merging Action and Awareness to Stay in the Present

Slowing relations through the *bisoku* technique requires full participation in the present, so that the experience “is not merely a means, but actually partakes in the nature of the end” (Batchelor, 2015, p. 56). As with the rest of Butoh practice, this brings a fidelity to the process and self-awareness of the performer, or as it is said, has a “transformative” effect. The Butoh philosophy toward physical work is aimed at nurturing an aliveness in every moment and an attitude of continual exploration as much as getting to some kind of result. This is mirrored in the way that Butoh training is valued as performing in the sense that both contribute to self-cultivation. They equally pertain to enhancement of the ‘self’ by way of keeping the body-mind integration near and active and keeping a connection to one another and the environment (Yuasa, 1993).

For example, as much as I struggle in the *bisoku* exercises and the eternal gaps of feeling like I just waaant toooo geeceet thiiiiis ooovver wiiiiith, the experiences are always intense and memorable. I learn to appreciate that about *bisoku*: It is making *an* experience in the present. It is not about reaching some conclusion, but rather revisiting experience itself. In the slowness there is a rare chance to perceive and question my physical responses and relations. I have the time to notice the tiny, mundane, nuanced thoughts, sights, smells — what am I sensing this time, what is that knot in my neck, how do I deal with the itch on my nose, now my arm is twisted, why am I thinking about last week — which normally pass by unnoticed. This elaborates, intensifies, and elongates the sensations, colors, and textures of my feeling. This depth of feeling is Dewey’s (1934/2005) formulation of an aesthetic experience, “Such an experience is a whole and carries with its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience” (p. 37).

In the embodied sense, the concrete exploration of movement in space and time aims at what is felt and therefore what is

individual. Thus, the novelty of the performance is considered to reside in the fact that it is an individualized experience. Dewey says that “immediacy and individuality” are the traits that mark our concrete existence. Each individual finds different meanings, personal realizations, and “manners of response” in their relations to the same conditions in the world. Dewey writes:

A new poem is created by everyone who reads poetically — not that its *raw* material is original for, after all, we live in the same old world, but that every individual brings with him, when he exercises his individuality, a way of seeing and feeling that in its interaction with old material creates something new, something previously not existing in experience. (p. 113)

Like in the slow exercise when we are instructed to not only move “functionally,” the teachers often remind us before exercises to have a “nice experience,” insisting that we should be there to “let the exploration go deep,” “meet each other,” “experiment together,” or to “just play.” There is acknowledgement of the enjoyment, pain, social, and aesthetic experience of movement. The work “is not about rushing through,” as they say. From the perspective of a creative “flow experience,” Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls this kind of enjoyment of what we are doing as an end in and of itself “autotelic” (p. 113). Many times this seems to be what the Butoh experience provides, the kind of movements where, “there is no reason for doing them except to feel the experience they provide” (p. 113).

Given the focus on the quality of experience and not the end goal, the use of slow movement clearly overlaps with the meditative arts in which our present awareness reveals the defensive or avoidant dimensions of our thinking that often are about not being present, wanting to escape, the desire to be somewhere else. By practicing at not shying away from unpleasant feelings, we are able to be with the present and take in the range and depth of life’s experiences, which in Dewey’s (1922/2002) words, “increase the intrinsic significance of the living” (p. 267). If we do not control or shut ourselves off through our defensive habits, we are able to discover how and when things get difficult, painful, or uncomfortable for us. Butoh art form often attempts to find consolation in physical and mental toil, to accept the sensations of agony, fear, and doubt as much as the sensations of pleasure, beauty, and ease.

Thus, there is an expression of pain, futility, distortion, and struggle that is a part of the Japanese aesthetic tradition, but not necessarily common to Western culture (Richie, 2007). It is a feeling for qualities that allow humans to cope with fears and the pain and fragility of intimate and personal relationships with the world, those beyond the desire for comfort and safety (Bauman, 2001).

To turn briefly to pragmatism, an ongoing idea in this thesis is that the current dualisms of mind and body, thought and action are deeply rooted in our cultural sensibility, which relies heavily on objectification of experience. This is because we identify with thinking about the past or future. The more we identify with time as a projection of our thinking, the remembered past or the anticipated future, the harder it is to physically be in the physical sensation of the present. As Dewey (1922) argues in *Human Nature and Conduct*, we tend to let our thought about future happenings determine the present, instead of appreciating the significance of the sensual present. In other words, by giving the future so much power over our thinking, an instrumental relationship to our bodies arises.

Dewey states that making the future a sole aim, “is to throw away the surest means of attaining it, namely attention to the full use of the present resources in the present situation” (p. 266). In such a space-time detachment, we subordinate our body’s actions to a projected ends-in-view, every step taken in anticipation of some projected result or expectation. The future continuously appears in our thinking as a series of “what nexts,” focusing our present state on acting toward the ends (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 36). Our bodies, our physical presence in a sense, become a controllable factor, secured in terms of producing an outcome we can foresee. The movement practitioner Mary Whitehouse (1995) describes this detachment thusly. “Movement has become a means to an end, usually a rational and purposeful end, and takes place automatically in response to hundreds and hundreds of mental images of going someplace and doing something” (p. 243). We do not listen to our own feelings and corporal presence. In Dewey’s view, it is important to remember that the future is not physically within our control and to not become totally mindless of the qualities ‘felt’ in the now. By intellectually preoccupying the present with prescriptive feelings of right and wrong, we cut ourselves off from the experience of choice and potentiality in the moment.

Giving the present over to comfort and security of the planned is a habit of behavior that Dewey (1922/2002) qualifies as

“mechanical.” In these cases, by Dewey’s estimation, people do not have to think or feel because they play out habits and behaviors that they have acquired by “previous mechanical exercises of repetition in which skill apart from thought is the aim” (p. 71). Behavior and action can be thoughtless and emotionless by being taken up and executed through routine habit and patterned behaviors and activities. In this case, we no longer pay attention to sensations, but routinize our corporeal activities in a patterned way to not feel many parts of life, to not feel pain, discomfort, vulnerability, uncertainty. Again, Mary Whitehouse (1995) says it is like “living in our heads” which:

the body faithfully reflects, since it must move, acquiring a whole series of distortions, short circuits, strains, and mannerisms accumulated from years and years of being assimilated to mental images of choice, necessity, value and inappropriateness. At this point movement is *in spite of* instead of *with the help* of the mental life. (p. 244)

Paying attention to the present by no means completely frees us from goals or future plans. Instead for Dewey (1922/2002), it implies recognizing the amount of control we actually have is securing our bodies’ action in the present. Because habit is “the thing which is closest to us, the means within our power” (p. 37), he advises that we acquire habits infused with thought and feeling to foster an inner suppleness and ability for continuous modification. Instead of stiff formality or routine, individuals must be “alive and sensitive to consequences as they actually present themselves” (p. 51), attentive to his/her reflexes and impressions, to the context, and to one another.

Form-Giving in Space and Time

In this way, an embodied approach places emphasis on the space and time of the present — to perceive and express without anticipation or expectation and to learn from that experience. It starts with framing the body as a present way of knowing rather than a controlling it as a means toward some expectation or particular outcome. Our inseparability from knowledge and enacting knowledge is “an entry into an investigation of the relationship of self to the world we inhabit, other kinds of virtuosity — of attention, of choice, of connection, of revealing the nature of experience

in the moment” (De Spain, 2014, p. 13). We can only bring our thoughts-feelings into our awareness by physically activating them through experience. We have to feel our way. I often hear the other dancers say, we just “have to allow the movement to happen,” to “see where it takes us,” or to see what the body operating in the present “tells us.”

Such a tolerance for non-identification offers time to investigate our “preconceptual” experience or a *felt* dimension of experience (Gendlin, 1997). In Dewey’s (1934/2005) phrasing, it is a “space of time” to physicalize and spatialize thought and feeling into form. As with “filling in,” instead of a superimposing form upon a material, we allow the body-mind a means by which its “material effects its own culmination in experience” (p. 153).

Butoh, like other art practices, connects space and time in the present, materializing a necessary “roominess” for the artist’s process that must connect and flow at his/her own pace. Hijikata, one of the founders of Butoh, used the phrase “revolt of the flesh” to describe this attitude of giving the body freedom to explore. Butoh was conceived by Hijikata as a reaction to “traditional Japanese modalities and the cultural conventions undergirding them” (Hamera, 1990). In his view, because the life of the body includes the life of the mind, the less we control and inhibit the body, the less we control and inhibit the mind. Butoh, therefore, grew out of his methodological search to abandon the perceived restraint of Japan’s formal behavioral patterns and classical definition of beauty. Contextually the practice offers this metaphorical “space of time” to access a psycho-social experience of other extremes — the unpredictable, naive, spasmodic, magical, violent, mysterious, grotesque, playful, and imaginative (Hamera, 1990).

Our teachers invite us to “feel our way.” It is not always that we can make immediate sense of our action cognitively because a felt, qualitative sense of a situation involves duration. This is not about doing things efficiently, but instead we are literally making sense by being able to pay attention to the environment, our inner feelings, and the expressive and imaginative features that emerge in the moment.

Context Without the Pressure of “Reality”

As the various exercises have illustrated, Butoh’s strategic use of relaxation, slow movement, play, and imagery serve a philosophical

purpose, to help the performer to pay attention to the present with greater somatic awareness. The work is expressly about emphasizing present experience to fully explore and investigate with the body-mind. This resonates with Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) research on creative experience, for example, in that it specifies the importance of not having distracting thoughts, to be able to immerse oneself in the activity at hand. He writes, "Another typical element of flow is that we are aware only of what is relevant here and now... flow is the result of intense concentration on the present" (p. 112). As he says, many moments of creative experience are ones without expectations and worry of failure.

When we are not distracted by noise of goal-oriented tasks and self-oriented thinking, there is a "silence" where an integrative or open awareness allows us to assemble information in imaginative, unexpected, and non-linear ways (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Goleman, 2013; Gross, 2014). To "accept invitations as your body presents them" (Zaporah, 1995), by letting wandering thoughts and feelings find expression, gives our bodies in a sense "time to speak." Relaxation techniques and establishing a sense of freedom are specifically intended to help performers restore contact with feeling and an integrated consciousness, a creative "flow" or, as explained above, the release of the "I." Such an experience cannot be forced because it entails letting loose and the easing of perceived external pressures. For example, our instructor Tove relates to our slow exercise in terms of each body needing his/her own space and time:

That is very interesting in relation to the concept of space and time, which is what we are working in this exercise — *is how to take our space and time* (claps hands together at the words 'space' and 'time'). And that is different for every person. And that is different every day, and that is different every moment. Uhhh, so I *don't know* what is your space and what is your time. *You* know. I don't know. I just give you exercises, and you observe what happens... So I propose to you today in this class to take your space and time. Just do whatever you need to do. If you don't relax, then don't relax. Don't push it because if you push it you will never relax. You know? Just take your space and take your time to do whatever your body and your mind and your emotions need to do. And that goes for everybody?

If I give you an exercise and you don't want to do it, then you don't do it. If I say go to the left and you want to go to the right, then go to the right. I will give you guidelines that you can take or not. That is also important in the work because it is only guidelines. And then you will find your own space and time.

In this way, the pedagogy of Butoh is not geared toward a pursuit of an aesthetic ideal.¹¹ So the process does not carry the sensation of a rightness or wrongness in an objective sense — that there is a right way or a wrong way of doing, of moving. By stressing the performer's own sense of responsibility and choice — to take one's own sense of space and time — the work does not feel prescriptive in terms of a feeling for what one should or shouldn't do. It is about discovering this space and time of action. For example, the dancers are encouraged to “just try,” to feel, and in particular to “make mistakes.” Sumako often repeats that is the struggle for us, to *try to make mistakes*. “It is not interesting to stay in control,” she says, “Don't be afraid. Don't try to be nice. Let go.”

Our teachers recognize that the pursuit of “rightness” can pull the performer away from being present and available to the now, and the freedom of choice in the present. They continually reject our attempts to define or judge how things should look, instead focusing on there being a *sense* of the unfamiliar or discomfort, being in the unknown. Therefore, instead of feelings of “right” or “wrong,” we talk about feelings of comfort (our patterns of behavior) or discomfort, which serves as a proxy for where we can extend ourselves. The feeling of discomfort is a welcome sign because it means we are touching on a feeling of possibility, specifically our limits and claims to identity. We necessarily introduce and activate the physical sensations of vulnerability or discomfort to break out of our own patterns and create “a palpable hint of what it would be like to respond differently” (Juhan, 1995, p. 375).

11. One of the challenges with Both practice, as with any practice, is the gradual formalization of a movement vocabulary or repertoire. Because similar elements appear across many Butoh performances, there is a fear of stylistic clichés within the Butoh community (Waychoff, 2009). In order to fulfill Butoh's initial task of remaining open and fluid, it is understood by many practitioners that it is up to each individual to continue his/her own investigation of looking for unfamiliar movement (to him/herself) and personal expressivity. For this reason, some practitioners, including the ones I studied with, “refer to themselves as *butoh-influenced*” to avoid a stylistic claim of Butoh (Waychoff, 2009, p. 51).

In particular, the teachers emphasize the use of imagination to give performers a greater sense of empowerment and freedom to explore. Imagination engenders images of the possible, allowing the performers to disconnect from self-conscious discriminating thoughts about ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ or even what is ‘real.’ At the same time, the imagination enables us to empirically try without consequences from the ‘outside world.’ It opens the sensory potential of the body. “The interaction of flesh and feeling and fantasy enrich the moment and stimulate new movements, and sensations, and ideas, and embodied metaphors” (De Spain, 2014, p. 131). This is especially the case with respect to the sense of ‘self’ and what we embody as ‘real’ about ourselves — who we think we are, how we think we move.

In addition to imagery, a frame of playfulness is used to elicit an exploratory and curious attitude without fear of failure. Exercises are sometimes framed as experimental or even ‘silly’ to channel a greater range of unconscious behaviors (actions, movements, perceptions, and aspects of being), without the fear or shame that inhibits ‘serious’ adult behavior. The metaphor that comes up for unlocking a light and playful outlook from our teachers is to release a “childlike” part of ourselves. This “childlike” feeling in the present that Butoh refers to is similar to what Mead (1934/1967) calls the “naïve attitude of the ‘I’” (p. 206) or, as it is said in meditation, a state of naivety, “without knowledge and understanding, like a three-year-old-child” (Batchelor, 2015, p. 43). Instead of an objective concern for doing things in a certain way, following the creative nature of the child, to be free and spontaneous in play before we are socialized to place judgment or reflect upon our actions. This echoes the experimental improviser Deborah Hay, who observes that in her work the sensation of asking a question has a “lightness” (McDougall, 2014). She encourages questions or propositions that are unanswerable or impossible to truly comprehend, so that the exploration cannot be “wrong” or fixed by mental phenomena but rather can be imagined conditions that have, as she says, “potentiality.”

The approach of a lightness and a sense of play should not be conflated with the idea that the work of improvisation itself is not disciplined, or that it is recreational or frivolous. “Play” is a psychosomatic state, loosened from the kind of mental boundaries that the self-consciousness of ‘being taken seriously’ operates within. Play, then, is the mode of exploration. A mind that is free to play is

a mind free to wander and imagine, free to follow the feeling and attitude of the body, free to shift attention to the “illogical” and nonsensical and sensual. In discussing the philosophical implication of play, Dewey (1934/2005) states:

The very existence of a work of art is evidence that there is no such opposition between the spontaneity of the self and objective order and law. In art, the *playful* attitude becomes interest in the transformation of material to serve the purpose of a developing experience. Desire and need can be fulfilled only through objective material, and therefore playfulness is also interest in an object. (p. 291)

Developing a Relation to One's Own Process

To work improvisationally we find that there has to be appreciation and trust for one's corporeal perception beyond what can be said or articulated. This goes straight to the processes of embodying the feelings for working in experience. We are learning directly through use of our bodies. “Just as the body changes in the course of working with the psyche, so the psyche changes in the course of working with the body” (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 242).

Each dancer learns and forms responses that become the source of his/her particular ways ‘knowing,’ for example, “I know emotions because I feel them myself” (De Spain, 2014, p. 143). This artistic way of learning is contrary to a traditional way of learning through analysis, differentiation, sorting, and compartmentalization. Working within experience, it is important for artists to become familiar with their own inner experience with their process — their structuring of thoughts, perceptive and sensorimotor capacities, intuition, and passions. It is an interaction between ‘self’ and the world, involving physical transformation, learning how to listen and sense within our own bodies, developing our own unique language and tools of movement, responses, attitudes, and presence.

An improviser, like any artist, viscerally needs to ‘know’ or sense what their limits, patterns, weaknesses, and strengths are and therefore become comfortable with his/her own “process” or way of working. They learn to understand the “constraints and affordances of a material” to use it as a medium of expression (Eisner,

2002a, p. 97). Barbara Dilley, a pioneer in improvisation, speaks of the movement artist's trust in his/her process as, "learning to layer through familiarity, a repetition of improvisational practices, mindfulness of what it is that you are doing, establishing a comfort with the flow of energy in a moving body" (De Spain, 2014, p. 49). Particularly in somatic practice, performers must continually train not just their physical agility and strength, but their perceptual capacities as well. As pointed out above, we learn to *relate* to our processes with both self-reflection and meta-awareness. In other words, relating to our own process goes hand in hand with self-awareness and learning to pay attention to our own habits and patterns, perceptions, interests, and preconceptions. And in this way, we develop trust in ourselves by having our own tools and approach to understanding and taking responsibility for our own action and effort.

In particular, by working in experiential ways that embrace acting moment to moment, the improviser learns to emotionally, intuitively, and imaginatively navigate through unfolding situations. It is an activity of adapting ourselves. There is a physical emphasis on the uncomfortable feelings that arise and are unforeseen by constantly putting the body off its guard. This serves the task of creativity and changing perception rather determining our conduct in the present by trying to anticipate or fixing techniques of execution. Charlotte Selver (1995) of Sensory Awareness speaks of how a discipline of bodywork provides the occasion to discover that one can trust oneself:

This is the practice. While people are attending to the given task, the attitudes which they bring with them clearly show. At first, only other people see it, but by and by, people feel it themselves, and they discover how they acquired these attitudes...It takes patience and time to discover what the gesture says...They discover it in themselves. (p. 21)

This means we develop trust in our perceptive and intuitive abilities without always being able to conceptually grasp the situation. We have to trust that we can do the work in our own way, but it is also about being able to open ourselves to a relational process that is not determined, fixed, prescribed, safe, or controlled. This especially requires an attitude of acceptance of the fact that human error, inaccuracies, needs, drives, insecurities, and surprises are

part of this process. A level of acceptance for things as they come is what allows the artist to become comfortable with an inevitable sense of uncertainty and ambiguity to remain with the effort in the present, without worrying too much how things will end up. In a similar vein, those in movement practice, like Ida Rolf (1995), generally learn “the feeling that it’s all right to be insecure” (p. 178). By calling attention to the body, the discipline teaches accepting and trusting this feeling. Ida Rolf describes her teaching as a way to live with practices that are completely insecure, saying that it is, “to get secure in an art in which there is no security. Your only security comes from relationships” (p. 177).



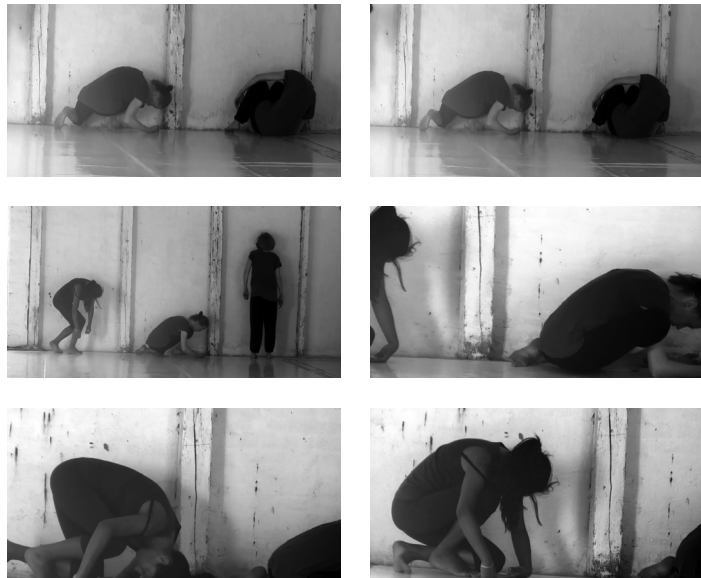
Staying with the Problem

When an individual's own action is the locus of exploration, the endurance and self-discipline needed to follow and stay 'true' to the exploration, as in the *bisoku* exercise, becomes acute. Of course there is a level of physical skill and technique required to maintain the same level of intensity over the course of the twenty minutes. There is a lot of information to deal with suddenly when you get your knees into a bent position. There are questions about how to get your body from one position to another and physically control it and, at the same time, not deliberately force or guide it. It requires a kind of craftsmanship, to use a design word, to execute in an even manner. But in addition to the physical strain, there is a level of concentration and dexterity required to "stay with the problem," as Anita describes it. There is the pure muscularity and effort to stay concentrated, engaged, and to "not hop over." We cannot drown in thoughts of pain, but we have to keep showing empathy in the situation and receiving perceptual information to continually touch "how it is to be there as a human being."

After an exercise of melting slowly to the floor, Anita stresses that last ten millimeters are the most important saying that, "This is where the problem lies." How do we keep going down the same way and not "lose it?" The movement must stay specific and believable "down to last millimeter," she says. To do this, our level of energy has to remain the same until the end and not just fall apart when we reach the ground, as she says, we should not just become a "dead body on the floor." So when I'm there squatting with my legs quaking, my muscles aching, and the only thing I hear from my body is to "stop." Then my legs jerk. This is a slip-up to me. It is bad craftsmanship in the sense that it disrupts the feeling of the form, the form being the illusion of a slow measured melt to the ground. And then there is the fact that I am going slowly, which only elongates the mental agony of seeing my process in action. I do not exactly have enough time to plan ahead, but I also cannot quickly move on and forget about what I have already done. I am here with it...giving into to the conditions of actual experience, the gravity, the pain in my legs, my lack of strength, and my desire to cheat. I am observing it while doing it, simply having to accept it for what it is.

It is a living thing.

So figuring out how to “stay with the problem” and trusting in ourselves, our own way with our own abilities, is how we become “good explorers,” according to Anita. We develop an improvisational skill of interweaving phases of sensing, opening awareness, and responding. For example, to “stay” has a physical and emotional dimension, which pushes me to not give up when it is tough, or when there are unanticipated consequences. It entails that I ‘keep with’ my process — however it is going — noticing the flaws, habits, preconceptions, and so on to open up. Given this uncertain path, I have to also keep responding in action, literally adjusting movements and directions and changing paths with respect to my intention. The physical reality of the situation is simultaneously being enacted and (re)evaluated. Therefore, trying to stay present and open also practically teaches me where I need train to become physically stronger and technically precise with my body to be able to hold the position. In short, I have to develop “tools,” as our teachers say, meaning our embodied “tools” of sensitivity, awareness, and physical expression (Zaporah, 1995, p. 17). Therefore, the “tools” to do the work are not just a mechanical routine, but working with craftsmanship, artistry. Each and every time is an improvisation, a new lesson.



Practicing an Attitude of 'Letting'

The training of a personal awareness for our physical and emotional process is framed from a non-reactive or observational stance. This attitude or meditative ethos with regard to the practice of Butoh is expressed by our teachers as “letting things come.” “Letting things come” connects back to the willingness to be moved and a sense of plasticity in an empathic and nonjudgmental attitude.

“Letting things come” is about allowing the moving sensation of events and rhythms, without stabilizing our knowing or getting clear on what is happening (Tarhang, 1994, p. xxxi). This quality of being open and present to change and impermanence is often mixed with doubt and what Buddhists call “suffering,” since it accepts larger existential questions and ceaseless transformation. For example, Buddhists teach that, “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form” (Batchelor, 2015, p. 55). This kind of quixotic statement represents the meditative attitude of ambiguity and doubt that is inherent in the continuous questioning and cultivation of ‘self’ within experience. There is a creative, human characteristic of continually needing to and wanting to reexamine and question how it is to relate to the outside world. From the Buddhist perspective:

...the more we grasp emptiness, the more we feel real — that the core, the incommunicado element, is really a place of fear at our own insubstantiality. This is why we defend it so fiercely, why we do not want to be discovered, and why we feel so vulnerable as we approach our most personal and private feelings of ourselves. (Epstein, 1995, p. 38)

Therefore, instead of following a tendency to move toward prescriptive views of how things should or should not be, there is a relaxation, there is an acknowledgement of doubt and uncertainty. “Instead of clinging, it lets go. Instead of insisting that things exist in a certain way, it accepts their mysteriousness. Such unknowing loosens our hold on the immutability of the familiar” (Batchelor, 2015, p. 43).

Butoh, like meditation practice, uses adjectives like “gentle” and “kind” to describe the quality of an attitude that does not use force. For example, they use language like, “gently allow the environment to come to you.” The tenor of this approach is distinctly unguarded and open since there is seen to be a need for humility, compassion, generosity, trust, tolerance, and acceptance

to promote connection to others and one's surroundings. For Dewey (1934/2005), "Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be 'loving'; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised" (p. 49). This involves empathetic feelings for human qualities such as kindness, tenderness, nurture, care, intimacy, warmth, and affection.

The idea behind "letting things come" stems from the view that the creative character of reality is in the fact that it is impermanent and changing. In Buddhist teaching, creativity is already there for us, happening all the time. It requires, on our part, more of an attitude or behavior of letting it happen, rather than blocking it. Letting ourselves be open to what comes in the "unknowing present" allows us to be part of the ceaseless mutation and ultimate freedom in each passing moment. In Butoh practice, we often work to simplify our actions in order to notice this. Our teachers remind us, "don't try to be creative" or to add more action, but to have more attention. Slow down.

In my experience, the attitude of "letting things come" in improvisation work brings up a palpable feeling of exposure and fear. That the work happens in a moment-to-moment irreversibility before I have too much time to edit and self-correct makes me feel uneasy, uncomfortable...unprotected! I don't have my filters. To work without judgment I have to work on surrendering to the moment, which means letting people metaphorically see me naked. Really letting them see my underbelly, my process — how I am thinking, struggling, feeling insecure, and making mistakes. Instead, I have to learn to accept or witness the imperfections and unfiltered moments I immediately wish I could go back and edit. I have to develop a kind of plasticity in my sense of 'self,' an ability to yield a sense of ownership and have tolerance and forgiveness for my own imperfections and mistakes.

As a self-involving process, "letting things come" resonates with the Pragmatist concept of "fallibilism" in inquiry, which comes from Peirce's view that uncertainty is a given and that mistakes are going to be a part of any empirical, experimental, human process. It requires also having empathetic feelings toward oneself and one's own process, a process that is not mechanical. I have to let myself be caring to myself, to not be judgmental or too hard on myself, and to give myself time. I have to let myself be both flawed and lovable. By the same token, my process can become a more authentic medium, having a human expression of coping in the world.

Ruth Zaporah (1995) uses the term “relaxed awareness” (p. 41), while another improviser, Steve Paxton, states, “What I try to do is to not intend and to find out” (De Spain, 2014, p. 70). And the improviser Deborah Hay describes this as a quality of exploring, but not “trying to reach out for anything” saying that:

The experiment is “here” (she gestures in the space immediately in front of her), and my work as a performer and as a dancer and as a choreographer is noticing what’s happening here and here and here and here (as she repeats the word, her focus reengages again and again in front of her). (De Spain, 2014, p. 38)

In Buddhist texts, this quality is expressed as, “Waiting; but never expecting. For expectation involves conceiving of something...As soon as we conceive of what we are waiting for and make it into a thing, we are no longer waiting” (Batchelor, 2015, p. 61). Instead of trying to make things happen, we express empathy by making “the space for what we want to come to us” with the acceptance of “still getting what we do not want” (Batchelor, 1997, p. 23). In experience there will always be the things we do not want — sickness, sorrow, pain, grief, despair — the feelings we shy away from. The empathy “to let” negative perceptions come allows a fuller aesthetic range of experience. Again Dewey (1934/2005) writes:

There is about such occasions something of the quality of the wind that bloweth where it listeth. Sometimes it comes and sometimes it does not, even in the presence of the same object. It cannot be forced, and when it does not arrive, it is not wise to seek to recover by direct action the first fine rapture. (p. 151)



*Accepting Feelings That Are Knowable but Not
Nameable*

The emphasis of Butoh practice is on an integrative experience where the value and meaning of such an experience does not lie outside the experience itself. We answer questions in experience by letting the integration of imagination, emotion, thought, and feeling be the source of our discoveries and conceptualizations. Therefore, the meaning of what we do is not found in generalized abstractions and treated as an object to itself. With respect to exploration and inquiry, this work is a form of artistic inquiry that does not make claims on objective experience in that way — there can be no objective reality to get. We simply are in a ‘reality,’ actively organizing that reality, moving, gathering, sorting, communicating, and modifying sense data. It is only through our internal sense of things that we have contact with ‘reality,’ which exposes a kind of experiential inquiry that a person cannot approach with certainty. This is because being open to discovering experience happening in the present is not intended toward an object of thought with subject-object or means-end preconditions. It is not premeditated in that sense. The authority for what we ‘know’ from experience is found in the localized and specific, the here and now that makes a direct difference. As the exercises show, to ‘know’ the sensation of trust or kindness, it entails an active aestheticizing function of consciousness, the perceptive “forming” of it.

Therefore, this artistic practice is an ongoing process of discovering and identifying meaning. Direct experience is incapable of being reduced to a problem that can be referred to objectively, since you can never extricate feelings of ‘self’ from the experience. As an artist, you move consciously in and out of what the actual experience of the “problem” is. Therefore, you will not have the same feeling of certainty, stability or even finality in an answer. It will always change.

Instead, we learn to expand our ideas about our tools (our body-mind) and our craft (movement). It is an ongoing process of making microdiscoveries about our attention, what we observe, what motivates and moves us, why we react the way we do. Its method involves deepening the intimacy within the here and now by getting in touch with the sensation of feeling. By observing the way we internally mediate our movements, we can become more disciplined and precise in the physical work and closer to an inte-

grated body-mind, unbroken flow, or a “unity of consciousness” (James, 1890/1950a).

It is clear in Butoh, for example, that we develop a bodily awareness or sensitivity to form by magnifying the feeling of movement experience. “As science takes qualitative space and time and reduces them to relations that enter into equations, so art makes them abound in their own sense as significant values of the very substance of all things” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 215). To develop this awareness, we must give time and space, as we are taught by our Butoh teachers, for these kinds minuscule, illusive, often nameless reflexes and sensations to be magnified and felt in our own practice. One day during a discussion after an exercise where we moved our hand very slowly, one of the Butoh teachers said about our observations:

We don’t normally...many people...outside in the society and in our everyday life, we don’t connect with the inside of our body physically. We do connect with emotions and things because that is so fast (snaps fingers). The body has many reactions that we never get to know because we’re not present. So, so many things are happening in the hand in one day that we don’t — we have no idea what happens. And when you feel this (motions, tck, tck, tck, tck) mechanical thing in the hands, its actually the joints, that you’re giving them kind of attention because you’re moving so slowly, opening space, and you’re giving them space, and you’re giving them presence, and they’re not used to... (laughs) the body is not used to being seen, or felt, or heard, no?



The value of many of the exercises is in having this silent kind of “behavioral inquiry” (Dewey, 1949/1989). Practically, the perspective of Buddhist meditation in Butoh asks the individual to stay with this kind of open-ended awareness as long as possible, what is seen as a kind of state of forming or pre-reflection. The application of this awareness is rendered as follows:

we note qualities, characteristics, and interactions without assigning them back to objects that possess them. For example, we might identify a red color, a specific shape and texture, and a pleasing fragrance without making the normal connection to the name ‘rose.’ At a more subtle level, we could even allow this naming tendency to operate, without accepting its conclusion as final. (Tarthang, 1994, p. 21)

Dewey’s perspective is remarkably similar to this view, which considers part of artistic process to be about letting go of the characteristic of our thinking that seeks premature closure or imposing coherence and definitions upon experience. To the Buddhist it is about accepting the unsayable:

We can know what it means when someone is happy, even though there is no language to communicate this feeling and no logic to define it. We can sense such happiness and experience it in our own bodies and minds. (Tarthang, 1994, p. 35)

The point here, then, is that the Butoh exercises, being a physical exploration, take on Dewey’s (1949) *transactional* form of inquiry, which recognizes and preserves the seamless integration and continuity of method, expression, and process. Our relations are indeterminate between consciousness and action. Like in any arts-based practice, we are learning to qualitatively organize what is directly experienced. In these exercises we circumvent the abstractness of naming to ‘know’ by way of felt, emotional, empathic dimensions of behavior. Questions of naming, what is being felt, which part is which, who is doing what, are not necessarily unanswerable, but also not so important in terms of our learning from the aesthetic dimension of experience. What is important to the performer is the direct perception-expression of particular qualities.

The artistic view holds a qualitative difference between an observable action and a transactional experience, which includes an internal ‘feel’ for the emotional responses and volitional actions of ourselves and others. Dewey (1949/1989) defines transactional inquiry as:

inquiry of a type in which existing descriptions of events are accepted only as tentative and preliminary, so that new descriptions of the aspects and phases of events, whether in widened or narrowed form, may freely be made at any and all stages of the inquiry. (p. 113)

This occurs in the flux of sensorial experience and amid linguistic categorization. We feel the *connections*, the contours of experience, rhythms, or Dewey’s (1934) “organizations of energies” directly and viscerally, communicating independent of the organization of symbolic and linguistic systems.

Being embodied, humans are involved in an ambiguous logic of both-and, an ever-present process of sensing and learning, meeting a stimulus and corresponding with it, “There is an adaptation of the stimulus and response to each other” (Dewey as cited in (Miller, 1963, p. 15). The transactional treatment of behavior connotes a bidirectional relationship between cause and effect, each affecting the other. It does not have the same feeling of causal logic, but aesthetically is comprised of a sensation of mutuality or reciprocity, a feeling Dewey calls “organic.” In short, a transaction is an adaptive behavior that expresses a relationship between the organism and the environment.

For example, even with a relationship that is seemingly straightforward like giving and receiving, the concentrated and intimate sensing of the manipulation exercise exposes a profound uncertainty in terms of “naming” the roles of the partnership, particularly when both partners are open and responsive. In a kind of reciprocal causality, action has the sensation of being open-ended in that both partner’s actions internally and externally contribute to the experience. Moshe Feldenkrais (1995), developer of self-awareness through movement, describes this feeling of reciprocal causality in the relationship in the following way:

Through touch, two persons, the toucher and the touched, can become a new ensemble; two bodies when connected

by two arms and hands are a new entity. These hands sense at the same time as they direct. Both the touched and the toucher feel what the sense through connecting hands, even if they do not understand and do not know what is being done. The touched person becomes aware of what the touching persons feels and, without understanding, alters his configuration to conform to what he senses is wanted from him. (p. 139)

Both sensations of moving and being moved are in the embodied experience of both roles of the exercise, as the giver and the receiver. I cannot actually refer to a particular procedure of giving > receiving with the action expressed as a cause-effect. Being embodied minds is not an “either-or affair.” The feeling is that both roles are always intentional and willful and both are a mix of giving and receiving. I have to ask what is happening in this relationship — which part is actually active or passive? Is it not also that I experience giving < > receiving, a reciprocity? There is an integral dynamic between intention and action and release and control at a micro level, where to exert will or force and where “let things come.”

This degree of intimacy illustrates that this relationship is an energetic flow and rhythm, given the kind of aesthetic sense of volition and effort (force of will) involved with the way we actively interpret and engage with the world around us. Ida Rolf (1995) identifies with this in a statement about how, when working with the body there is never one cause, it is not one way or another, but that there are circular processes of reality that, “do not *act* in body but *are* the body. The body process is not linear, it is circular; always it is circular” (p. 174). Moving and sensing moment to moment does not prioritize divisions, but through the continuity of perception and action coming from the sorts of emotions, impulses, and intuitions we experience, we subconsciously feel and read into our contact with others.

With respect to the transactional view, this pre-linguistic participation in direct experience has no absolute attribution of “knowledge” in an objective sense. It is understood that a transactional relationship between organism and the environment is in flux, ambiguous, and never fully “knowable.” Dewey (1949/1989) distinguishes, rather, the linguistic aspect of human behavior, what he refers to as “naming.” Here he describes “naming” as a phase in the transactional process:

the procedure which observes men talking and writing, with their word-behaviors and other representational activities connected with their thing-perceivings and manipulations, and which permits a full treatment, descriptive and functional. Of the whole process, inclusive of all its "contents," whether called "inners" or "outers," in whatever way the advancing techniques of inquiry require. (p. 114)

Our linguistic behavior of naming allows us to make things, qualities, and actions available in functional terms. So "knowledge" as "naming," serves a practical purpose because distinctions aid our specific intentions of action at different moments. But everything that is named, even that which is distinguished as "inner" thoughts or "outer" objects, is open to redetermination and renaming depending on the circumstances (Dewey, 1949/1989). We are *in motion*. What we internalize in direct experience is its ultimate ambiguity, that it is simultaneously knowable and unknowable (Batchelor, 1997; Tarthang, 1994).

A larger point to be made with using sensation and feeling to form qualities of relations in experience, as with art-based practice, means there is no radical separation between inquiry and learning. Dewey suggests that transactional behavior is the intrinsic organization of social life and all of our learning behavior. He describes how in all of our ordinary everyday behaviors, if we examine them closely in a transactional way, we would find that our social relationships are all characterized by the embodied relation of moving and being moved. This is an idea that recurs throughout Dewey's (1938) writings. For instance, in *Experience an Education*, he discusses the learning process in terms as a "co-operative enterprise," rather than a one-directional kind of dictation. In this enterprise, he writes, "The development occurs through reciprocal give-and-take, the teacher taking but not being afraid also to give. The essential point is that the purpose grows and takes shape through the process..." (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 72). He sees living behavioral processes as being adaptive or responsive, a "progressive organization of subject-matter," where further experience is never absolute but based on contingencies and correspondence between subject (percept) and matter (object). Dewey, then, emphasizes that this learning behavior, particularly with respect to the aesthetic dimension, is an issue of the *present*. The materials we have are immediate. Formulations of ideas that are future-oriented, their arrangement and conditions, are actually situated in present experience.



Discussion of the Embodied Experience of Form-Giving

The question I have confronted in this research concerns what kinds of experience and qualities of relations I as a designer seek in a creative approach to design. I have taken from my background in architecture, and with support from design literature, the idea of an attitude of openness to experience, and that there must be a concrete way to experience a quality of openness and perhaps to become the architect of my own experience. That is, to shape my relations in a way to allow for a perceptual openness means encountering a visceral sensation of uncertainty when working outside my comfort zone or taking risks.

To do this I have drawn on an artistic method of movement improvisation, one, to feel a physical sensation of openness from an explicitly aesthetic, embodied approach to experience; and two, to train myself and learn how movement practitioners have a methodology and vocabulary to communicate and describe their bodily sensations and conditions for working with relations in the moment. My reasoning for using Butoh is that it presents a practical context of rigor and concentration with an aesthetic mode of internal awareness. Its practitioners have developed specific techniques, the result of years of experimentation, for relaxing and creating a rapport with the body and with feelings and emotions — “listening” with the body, which is deliberately more receptive than “looking.” These techniques are precise in their instructions to pay attention to the present and try not to become distracted by self-identifying thoughts, expectations, fears, insecurities, and so on. They present a practical approach to training an ability to be fully present to sensory experience and, in turn, have a greater potential for a quality of integrated experience or a creative experience of flow.

Summary of Lessons for an Aesthetic Approach to Experience

In my analysis of Butoh movement inquiry in the previous chapter, with the help of pragmatism and embodied cognition, I showed how and what an aesthetic approach to experience actually entails psychologically and physically. I identified nine broad lessons with special regard to the integrative experience of an activity of form-giving. These lessons are a combination of attitudinal dispositions, which include how the work is approached philosophically, along with methodological practices. They are experience-based lessons that deal with somatic sensation as much as with cognitive abilities or methods. In that sense, they encompass an artistic way of learning and approaching the world, so they apply to design as much as to other art disciplines. They also pertain to the relationship between experience in the arts and a basic design attitude of openness and creativity.

In the following section, I summarize these nine lessons in order to clarify what an embodied experience of form-giving actually teaches us with particular respect to a quality of openness. The capacity for a disposition of openness is what makes practices of art and design valuable in many contexts of inquiry. As presented above, ‘openness to experience’ has been highlighted as a key characteristic of creativity (McCrae, 1987), as well as of a design attitude mentality championed by design professionals (Boland & Collopy, 2004). This attitude is common to artistic fields of education and a conception of artistically rooted forms of practice (Eisner, 2002a). It has much to do with an artist’s overall ability to trust and enhance his/her own capacity to explore in their experience. This ability can be seen more generally as a characteristic of creative practice that has been addressed as *self-direction* (Edström, 2008; Williams, 2000). Self-direction can be seen as an embodied learning process in which learners are independent and taking responsibility for managing, initiating, and evaluating their own learning. Again, this begins from an anti-essentialist view of ‘self’ that acknowledges a volitional, subjective capacity that comes from within the individual to apply personal (physical-mental) control and direction over one’s bodily and perceptive activities.

Because many of these lessons relate very closely to the findings of arts-based education (Eisner, 2002a; Hetland et al., 2007), and in particular self-direction (Edström, 2008), they build on

the work of those investigations. They support a return to direct experience and a feeling of art in the Deweyan view, which as a way of learning is foundational to a Pragmatist forms of artistic inquiry, discussed in earlier chapters.

Awareness of 'Stream of Thought' in the Present

From the Butoh exercises that work from direct experience, I show how the performers pay close attention to what is happening from one moment to the next as physical sensations. In the post-exercise discussions, we talk about the kinds of sensory information received from the environment and from one another, along with our inner personal thoughts, feelings, and responses to this information. For instance, the performers discuss how they feel and the kinds of sensations and impressions that come up during an improvisation, which indicates how they are actively relating to this information. In short, we develop a skill of conscious attention to the internal sensations and feelings of inner-outer connections, which I refer to as a pre-reflective *awareness*.

Artistically, awareness in the present helps us learn to perceptually sense a continuity or wholeness of experience. Becoming very concrete about the kind of structuring, or stream, or 'feel' of our thought as it comes helps us put emphasis on the qualities and feeling of our experience. Likewise, because we maintain perceptual continuity between thinking-feeling, we learn an artistic lesson concerning how to take form and content together — the how and the what. This integration of form and content connect to the ability of the artist or designer to have a kind of feelingful relation to the world and to "frame" experience and meaning in terms of aesthetic qualities and relations, not merely in terms of symbolic frames.

Lastly, it is with the concentration in the moment, being focused in a new way, that we really are able truly to perceive our experiences since our habitual discriminations and ways of moving and doing blur and deform. In this case, awareness is really the direct starting point for opening up one's perception, which is considered a core creative skill.

'Self'-Awareness of Habits and Patterns

In Butoh we use the strategy of discussion to help detail our awareness by reflecting on our perceptions during the exercises. Within

those discussions, we are encouraged to explore the intricacies of our experiences and what they reveal about ourselves. For example, we carefully observe the kinds of environmental circumstances and relations in which particular sensations, inhibitions, defenses, reactions, inclinations arise in our movement. This helps us continually recognize where we acting in familiar ways and the patterns that dictate our performance. I refer to this as a lesson of self-awareness that comes about through reflection and learning to notice our perception of ‘self,’ which is grounded in embodied habits and patterns of behavior. Seeing oneself in terms of habits (Dewey, 1922/2002) helps us to not only experience our own individuality in our work (our own process), but also helps us to experience change in our selves. That is because noticing our habits also reveals our unconscious inhibitions, preconceptions, and limitations in thought. In *Butoh I* show, for example, that we work on literally sensing discomfort in order to learn to stretch and push ourselves to go past habitual ways of doing that feel familiar.

Self-awareness, therefore, is an important artistic lesson to learn in order to develop work to be more self-directed in terms of being able to reconceive habits, projects, and selves — to continually learn. It is already well argued that becoming self-aware of our tendencies in action and thought allows us to become reflective of practice (Schön, 1983). But, beyond this, self-awareness is said to be foundational to social relationships and “emotional intelligence” or empathy (Goleman, 2013; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Obviously self-awareness must be applied in any kind of practice or work environment, where individuals want to find meaning. By looking inside ourselves, we are better able to manage our emotional world and our relationships in order to make and do things that have the kinds of meaning and value with which we want to identify. Awareness lets us focus on what has meaning, on what matters.

Concretization of Qualities Through Feeling and Effort

As I showed in the exercises, when we physically investigate concepts like “mutuality,” we have to revisit and re-question the experience of that concept through ‘felt’ sensations. As in our investigation of mutuality in a partnership, we must physically learn to ‘read’ each other by applying force and responding. In this way, the sense of mutuality and its meaning are constructed in the particularity of our partnership and through the concreteness of that

physical feeling and effort. Artistically, it is important for us to learn to sense how our intention is directed by our physical effort, for instance, how much pressure to apply to one another's body so that neither of us feel like the other one is leading, but that we are equally guiding. Communicating viscerally and palpably this way, like a dance, requires us to move away from thinking about representing mutuality in images or symbolic forms.

Therefore, it can be seen how we train in an artistic craft to precisely grasp and convey meaning through the qualitative feel of material. Notably, this involves a sensory and somatic perception that goes beyond simply visualizing, but includes direct expression through the physical and energetic qualities of experience. It is therefore both a technical skill and a sensitivity to be concrete with our feelings, as our Butoh teachers stress, for us to learn to feel rather than merely to contemplate.

Willingness to be Moved or Affected

The detail of the exercise of giving and receiving with a partner is a reciprocal encounter in which we somatically have to open ourselves up to our partner. When we emphasize the bodily feeling of that experience, there is not only the physical sensation of our body being moved by our partner, but there is the internal affect. The physical feeling of letting our partners support us carries with it, to some degree, a sensation of loss of self-possession or self-control. Therefore, to be moved requires that we consciously work on emotionally opening ourselves up to a tangible feeling of vulnerability and giving up our need to control. This requires us to expand our capacity to “surrender” to the present and let the external world affect us (Dewey, 1934/2005), which commonly in training is expressed as “letting go” in order to emotionally connect or to be able “to meet the others halfway.”

In this way, letting oneself be affected, the artist discovers the breadth and depth of what he/she is actually capable of experiencing (Eisner, 2002a).

In the detail of the partnership can be seen how this receptive ability, which I refer to as “plasticity,” takes voluntary effort and exercise by the individual. I emphasize this as a *willingness* to be moved because, to some degree, it is about consciously choosing to trust in the situation and in the other. Therefore, a willingness to be moved also enhances a capacity to show empathy and trust.

Thus, we can see how the capacity to surrender control and to voluntarily act in uncertainty and to ‘put oneself out there,’ so to speak, is directly related to the creative attitude of risk-taking and a tolerance for ambiguity. Plasticity is obviously also important to a creative practice that requires actively adjusting and adapting. Exercising the ability to keep oneself movable clearly helps the artist work against routinization and, in this way, the artist must exercise the ability to continually reorganize his/her habits and patterns.

Expressive Form-Giving Through Emotions

Butoh employs an expressive technique in which the performer learns to embody an emotion in order to effectively express the emotion. I describe this empathetic technique as “filling in,” like in the example where we concretely investigated the emotion of “kindness” by testing and perceiving how it is to move without tension. This technique specifically starts from inside the artist and with the sensation of energy through the body, in contrast to mimicking or representing the outward expression of an emotion like kindness. The specificity of this embodiment technique requires a meta-awareness placing attention on an emotion as an energized thought pattern, so it is not identified with part of one’s personal history.

The example from Butoh specifically highlights how the artist’s use of emotion in an embodied sense is not just emotive, sentimental, fuzzy or intangible, but involves precise attention, insight, and control over visceral activities within the body. In an artistic sense, by training a sensitivity and intimacy to differentiating emotional responses, we train a capacity to better manage our body as a physical and emotional tool. We become skilled and disciplined with the body as a material, through which we convey, and essentially give form to, emotional content. And given our use of emotions as an artistic medium, the precision in this technique is not about making bodily “knowledge” explicit or functionalizing it, but in making emotional sensations and responses available as an expressive form in experience.

This ability to form and understand experience through empathetic uses of emotion is clearly in line with an empathetic or human-centered approach taken by many artists and designers. Working from experience, the artist draws on the emotional consequences of physical action. Therefore, the route taken to fully embody or express meaning is inherently an empathetic one.

Attending to Details with Sensation and Imagery

I have discussed how in Butoh we work to concretize qualities of relations through feeling. One way that we practice attending to the detail of the ‘feel’ of the movement is by generating specific images from our imaginations. For instance, we are given instructions to explore the quality of fluidity, how it moves through space, the dynamics and changes in the motion, how it travels through your different body parts, and so on. Thus, the improvisations that operate with imagery are a way to practice internalizing an imaginative experience. Because the *feeling* is always the tangible point of departure for the work, meaning the tactile, sensorimotor perception, we are never fully abstract or “immaterial” in our thinking. The Butoh teachers actually stress that we keep the work tangible down to the last detail.

These imaginative explorations help us exercise the use of imagination as a source of content, which is an important feature in artistic work (Eisner, 2002a). The practice of imagination helps to support an exploratory nature, allowing artists to go beyond what they would normally do and literally break from a practical acceptance and existing habits in the world ‘as it is’ to discover new ways of moving, new impressions, and new interpretations of ‘reality.’ Possibilities are generated not merely by mental imagery, but are also suggested through fully embodied attention to details and participation in the surroundings. Because the performers fully immerse themselves in the materiality of imagery, the experience carries an energetic weight and a character of absorption or feeling of transcendence (Dewey, 1934/2005; James, 1902/2012). Taking pleasure in the sheer exploration of the sensory potential of the body embellishes the present and helps it achieve aesthetic meaning and fulfillment in terms of the intrinsic *quality* of the experience.

Merging Action and Awareness to Stay in the Present

Through the previous lessons we see how important it is to learn personal awareness in order to remain present in action and what is at hand. In Butoh, for instance, in the slow exercise, the work is framed to place emphasis on the experience of movement and slowed perception. Heightening attention to the detail and qualities in the present is how we connect directly to the ‘felt’ content of what we are doing, beyond just the form of what we are doing. This is important to artistic work because in creative “flow,” the

present is where there is a possibility of actually detaching from 'reality' and encountering the world with curiosity, wonder, care, struggle, and passion. The present is where the practitioner feels freedom to explore in unconstrained ways and to disappear into his/her imagination. This ability to merge action and awareness also means that we have to be free from worries and distractions, and the judgments of 'right' and 'wrong' that pull us away from what we are doing.

In this way, the 'now' provides and a space of discovery, enjoyment, pain, and fascination. Butoh methodologically provides strategies for this experience, for example, with the use of techniques for relaxation, imagery, and play that are practically aimed at helping to generate a light or playful context. For example, the exercises are often framed with instructions to "just investigate," "to make mistakes" or to "have a nice experience," which place emphasis on the experience in and of itself. This promotes risk-taking, going outside our comfort zones, making mistakes, 'lightening up,' and in a sense to not take ourselves so seriously. Metaphorically, we have to learn to 'let our guard down' with regards to the need for self-preservation.

Emphasizing the present helps us learn to appreciate and trust the use of the body as part of the process to explore, develop and embody our work. Therefore, as a self-directed form of practice, space, and time are individualized to each person's way of working through thoughts and feelings. This means that we each literally move at our own pace in terms of physical and sensory learning. In other words, we need the time and space to make material sense of our intentions, to make mistakes, to consider alternatives, to make adjustments, and to apply judgment in experience rather than before it (Schön, 1983).

Developing a Relation to One's Own Process

In the slow exercise of Butoh, I show how in its intimacy I must practice a kind of "craftsmanship" to maintain the pace and intensity of the slow movement (the form-giving) with my body (material). I actually learn the material craft with my body, my physical and emotional limits and potentials, in relation to my ability to give a quality or form or expression of slow movement. For example, in order to precisely express what I want to do, I have to develop technical and physical skills, strength, control, and dexterity with

my body, but I also have to continue to refine a sensibility to my ways of behaving, feeling, perceiving, and acting.

Therefore, since the outcome of the work is ultimately is uncertain, I demonstrate how I have to gain a detailed and conscious relation to my practice, in order to make the work self-determined. It requires listening and adapting. Noticing possibilities within situations is critical to any practice-based craft (Schön, 1983.) Thus, it is necessary to develop a relation to “my process” as it is expressed in artistic practice, which is how any artist essentially becomes self-directed in their work. Although knowing his/her own “tools” and approach to the work implies a greater range of self-direction and autonomy, it also implies a need for self-discipline. An artist continually develops and refines his/her practice by being able to sense what he/she needs to improve, to know what and how much work to put in, and to ultimately persist (Hetland et al., 2007). This empathetic outlook on one’s practice is described in Butoh is “letting it come,” which suggests an important attitude in approaching a living process that cannot be forced or made rigid. In many ways, this has to do with learning to be comfortable with a sensation of genuine uncertainty and to embrace social qualities such as tolerance, nurturance, compassion, and care in the way of animate relations that require a degree of intimacy, inner mobility, and pliancy.

Accepting Feelings That Are Knowable but Not Namable

The detail of the somatic work in Butoh demonstrates, particularly with the exercise of giving and receiving that became ambiguous in the actual sensations during the experience, that practitioners have to learn to be present to ambiguity. I have to accept the feeling for relations that cannot be named. Accepting ambiguity, however, does not imply that we do not sense or ‘know’ a feeling or that we do not know how to respond in action. It does not discredit our ability for action. In this way, the mutability of “naming” in direct experience shows how art-making is a kind of nonverbal or relational intelligence because an artist still acts on and responds to feeling. This is extremely important in terms of creative action and in that artistic inquiry is not only about identifying or objectifying the world, but also concerns seeking an experience of inquiry that involves the continuity of experience, the emotional wholeness, that which makes it fulfilling.

This ability to be in direct experience, being perceptually open to being touched and moved, and to know sensations and feelings without having the certainty of words is inherent to embodied practice in the arts. This is consistent with the holistic or integrative view of the artist or designer, which does not reduce the embodied and ‘felt’ experience and his/her acceptance of and comfort with the ambiguous.

Relations that are Internally Felt

These lessons help articulate the relationship between aesthetic experience of form-giving and the creative approach found in a design attitude. The empirical detail from the Butoh somatic exercises show how such a way of inquiring, in which there is no objective criteria, takes a creative approach to shaping and framing experience in ways that are meaningful and purposeful. This form of work and learning develops an openness, flexibility, reflexivity, and tolerance in one’s approach to dealing with multiple and changing demands in a situation that is uncertain. But engaging in the aesthetic aspects of work also contributes to the development of imagination, a willingness to experiment and take risks, and a holistic and empathetic stance that are said to be central to the creative aspects of designers’ approaches and thinking styles (Brown, 2008; Cooper et al., 2009; Fraser, 2007; Michlewski, 2008). Embodied form-giving, for example, shows how the “experience of design practice matters beyond being adept at applying design methods” (Jahnke, 2013, p. 338), while also speaking to how designers can be comfortable in ambiguity and emotional experience.

However, a critical point here is that beyond the kinds of objective characterizations that a design attitude consists of, in general, these lessons underscore a felt perception of ‘self’ or the experience of subjectivity. The virtue of this experience coincides with the Pragmatist’s critique of science by taking seriously the *internal* and affective sensations of the individual. Dewey (Dewey, 1938/1997) says that the freedom of intelligence and judgement is “exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while” cannot be limited by fixed arrangements with the stipulation that the “external and physical side of activity cannot be separated from the internal side of activity; freedom of thought, desire and purpose” (p. 61). Experience itself engages thought and feeling

together and therefore requires “qualitative forms of intelligence” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 232).

From an aesthetic perspective, the emotional and felt areas of human experience that fall outside of the rational paradigm are put back in place or given more weight. Because of this, the work of art or design is perceived as intrinsically valuable because it is a source that allows for experiencing the range and contours of one’s own capacities and emotional ‘self’ (Eisner, 2002a). Accepting that humans possess an impulse for ‘self’-understanding or finding ‘self’ in their work, the meaning of inquiry in art and design is not limited to the merely functional. There is an existential sense of value for inquiry and a self-initiated pursuit of leaning.

The possibility for creative action is in many ways the basis of the Pragmatist assertion that perceptual, sensorimotor experience not be regarded as separate from cognition. In this respect, the lessons each conspicuously direct our attention to understanding design as part of one’s own bodily experience and to what is not only an objective view, but equally an inward process that includes sensations, feelings, memories, thoughts, curiosities, impulses, instincts, and responses. In other words, the tactile feelings of relations are at the heart of the creative *act* of forming ideas, frames, hypothesis, impressions, and notions about the world. This is critical to a Pragmatist conception of creativity in experience that centers around the perception and feel for how it is to *act* (move) creatively, meaning to *act* in ways that are risky, or without truly knowing what the consequence will be, where there is a tangible sensation of discomfort and vulnerability.

The lens of subjectivity, therefore, embraces the Pragmatist premise of a whole person in possession of self-determination, freewill, and a ‘self’ that is center-less and changing. Creativity, in the Pragmatist view, must be subject to internal control by the individual (Joas, 1996). In a context of human intentionality, for example, the creative individual, with creative will and the volition to generate meanings is not an identity that is constituted by a static condition, an ego, personality, or a person with canned routines and habits. In experience, there is the sensation of a socially constituted individual who has the sensorimotor guidance of a ‘feel’ for things, or emotional markers embedded in habits and patterns of behavior (Damasio, 2005). This is how the individual naturally confronts his/her own psychosomatic constraints and potentialities, which are necessary to notice and move beyond our own boundar-

ies of perception and similarly to revise and change our own position or identity as we act. “There is no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some remaking, of impulses and desires in the form in which they first show themselves” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 64). Therefore, intelligent behavior in the Pragmatist view is predicated on the ways in which individuals act upon the world.

This said, what is significant about this Pragmatists’ perspective on the aesthetic is that design is not the product of certain internal and external interactions, but resides in a designer’s relation to the world including his/her relation to ‘self.’ Design to some extent necessarily involves designing one’s own relations to the world, others, and the ‘self.’ An embodied approach conspicuously entails bodily action in the present as a source of novelty, and more so, a substance of ‘self’ discovery and formation. Physical sensation, situation-specific behavior and the perception of one’s own body are intertwined with reflective identification, i.e., the social and psychological image of ‘self’ (Mead, 1934/1967). We must touch on our inner feelings in order to make, do, and express anything new, but that inner feeling naturally touches on an inner sense of ‘self,’ which is connected to habits and patterns (Dewey, 1922/2002; Mead, 1934/1967).

Awareness and Willingness

From a Pragmatist perspective on creative action, I find that the lessons can be further distilled into two main points about the perception of subjectivity: *awareness* and *willingness*. Awareness and willingness are taken as two indispensable dimensions of a felt experience of meaning, which especially reflects William James’s embodied psychology and his introspective explanation of a non-deterministic subjectivity or volitional ‘self’ (see p. 81 for more detail). This pragmatic view is critical to confronting a view of creativity and openness that is in pursuit of action entwined with internal, affective meaning versus one in pursuit of externally defined goals. Accessing perceptual experience of inner operations in this research is intended toward a non-dualistic view of subject/object integrality in direct experience and should not be misunderstood as slipping toward a notion of subjectivity apart from experience.

The first dimension, awareness, is in large part what the empirical work establishes again and again in different ways — that

aesthetic inquiry requires a core awareness of relations in the present. For example, Butoh is about cultivating a conscious relation to the changes going on inside and outside the performer. I show how we become skilled at expanding our subjective awareness to such features as the force and effort of our focus; the link between feeling, emotion, and imagination in the movement; the experience of the interaction of being moved and moving; and the physical sensations of concepts.

In the way that I use the term, awareness carries an appreciation for a full, somatic mode of perception, not merely visualization, thinking or Schön's (1983) "reflection-in-action," for example. Awareness explicitly entails a different kind of focus from with the analysis of the parts and a functional character in thinking what we want to do with things and of things. It puts emphasis on the continuity of experience, its qualities and feeling so that, "the difference that is thus made is not one of just intellectual classification. A difference is made in appreciative perception and in a direct way" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 50). Such appreciative perception speaks to the way that the designer seeks holistic meaning and frames that are coherent across aesthetic, emotional, and rational dimensions (Michlewski, 2008). This has been identified as a critical artistic skill of paying close attention to experience within experience. "One of the large lessons the arts teach is how to secure the feelingful experience that slowed perception makes possible; the arts help student learn how to savor qualities by taking the time to really look so that they can see" (Eisner, 2002a, p. 24).

While the awareness of the present has to do with paying attention to an internal sensation of feelings in action, there is also a meta-awareness or self-awareness that comes about through reflection and noticing internal feelings of relations with the materials. This again possesses an appreciation for awareness of somatic experience, but the intricacies of those experiences reveal our perception of self over the course of working physically to give form. This self-awareness and a sensitivity toward habitual patterns of behavior affect the quality of our experience in the present because they contribute to the potential to open oneself up in direct experience. The search for novelty and originality and pushing oneself to go past one's preconceptions or limitations of thought has much to do with how one identifies with 'self' in one's actions. Therefore, this awareness of one's own emotional identification, history, prejudices, habits of thought, tacit expect-

tations and inhibitions opens the door to looking past one's own patterns and ways of working. It is the internal dynamics of the creative process "in which new ideas present themselves, in which old ideas loosen their grip, in which the force of habit can be seen for what it is" (Epstein, 2004, p. 32).

The point about awareness brings me to the second dimension of felt experience that I call *willingness*. Willingness refers to the distinct feeling of volition and effort in trying to stay with the present. The sheer muscularity and effort to maintain focus in the present makes it obvious how awareness, or what some academics refer to as "mindfulness" (Langer, 2014; Shusterman, 2008; Stanley, 2012), is not merely a passive state or attitude. It requires a physical effort and will that entails welcoming the sensation of discomfort that allows new perceptions and ideas to emerge. For example, I show from the somatic investigation that in order to continually confront experience anew and to 'stay with the present,' I must work to not be carried along by the kinds of familiar habits and comfortable patterns that allow me to mentally detach from my physical situation. Because this is a methodical and exacting exercise with emotional thought patterns, it is important to remember that awareness is voluntary and a learned function that can be expanded and trained.

Openness-Capacity

Currently it is assumed that a design attitude of openness is constituted by certain qualities or creative features (Michlewski, 2008), but there is a lingering question about whether such a creative attitude is learned or a personality characteristic (Lawson, 2005). The pragmatic answer here is that, because design is ultimately comprised of physical actions performed by a designer, those actions must be subject to change by him/her. Creativity is an experience that is mutually constituted by the designer's actions (thoughts) and material circumstances. So whether or not creativity is a natural trait or not is not really relevant in the Pragmatist sense of action — individuals can form new habits, develop new modes of action, and change their own ways of thinking. This carries an underlying assumption of creativity as a quality of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; S. Johnson, 2016), and not merely an innate ability, mindset, personality trait, property, or type of tacit

knowledge. A strictly naturalistic assumption of openness misses the motivation and voluntary action on the part of the designer to resist closure, to actively keep his/her identity open to question, and to not only assert and express the 'self,' but to challenge the 'self.' As Dewey (1922/2002) puts it, it is "the difference between a self taken as something already made and a self still making through actions" (p. 139).

Because managing one's own process in terms of self-direction is considered a characteristic of artistic development (Edström, 2008), many artists and designers specifically manage their process to be continually creative. This ability is considered by some in the arts to be the core of creativity (May, 1994; Tharp & Reiter, 2003). It means seeking out the unusual, experimenting, pushing the boundaries, or as I have been told, "never being able to get comfortable." In that sense, part of artistic development is working on losing inhibitions, being messy, making mistakes, and "stretching" oneself (Hetland et al., 2007). Therefore, pursuing openness in one's own process comes from an intrinsic motivation on behalf of the designer to engage in a risky process of challenging his/her own habits and patterns that are comfortable. Creativity as a quality of experience holds that it is a result of hard work and discipline (Baker & Baker, 2012).

I have stressed the point that sensing openness as an action tied to subjectivity and not just an attitude involves effort or will-iness. James's sense of volition in terms of "will" means that designers themselves are what make openness happen. An important practical consequence of the embodied approach is that it demonstrates that openness is not a static entity, attitude, or facility, but comprises a cultivatable self-directed *capacity* on the part of the designer to stay "open" and change patterns. To express it in a commonplace way, it is not that a designer/researcher can talk or think his/her way to something, but it actually takes exercise and discipline to change habits and routines to revisit his/her own positions. For example, in somatic practice we learn that new patterns and imaginative potentials are within us, but they are not actually accessible until we *do* them. Hence, it takes *physical* courage to discover new patterns, new forms, and new expressions within oneself (May, 1994).

Relations in the Present

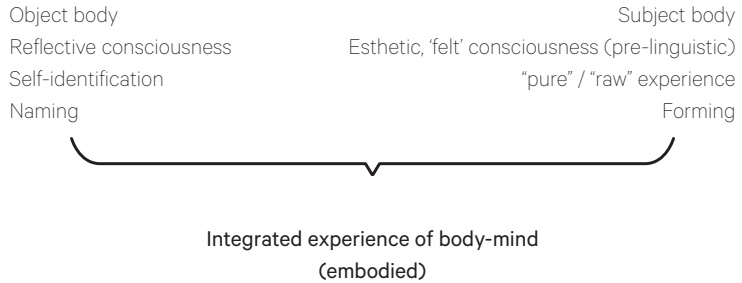
From the ideas touched upon regarding awareness and willingness in embodied activity, I elaborate upon two equal requisite experiences of openness-capacity, which I refer to as *control and surrender* and *trust*. I arrive at these two concepts based upon the changing and fluctuating experiences of ‘self’ and the fact that actions taken in the present contribute empirically to an ongoing process of self or self-forming. In the primacy and intimacy of this experience, there is a shift toward tactile feelings of experience that entail, in the Jamesian sense, a force of will — a sensation to voluntarily act that comes from within. Thus, there has to be corresponding features in the “the living act of perception” (James, 1902/2012, p. 347) and the ability to take creative action that exceeds a verbal and objective formulation of creativity. In the following section, I outline these felt features of subjectivity employing insights from the empirical work to describe how they are experienced as part of an openness-capacity.

Control and Surrender

The nature of movement improvisation explicitly focuses the ability to engage in form-giving in the sense of feeling and shaping a way forward as one goes. This demonstrates a shift in attention from mental expectations, wants, and images of ‘self’ to present circumstances so that action and movement are attended to through reference to immediately felt relations. As an artistic discipline, improvisation involves feelings of change and temporality of experience, which are explicitly not about force but about letting change happen. This integrative consciousness, as I have illustrated in this work, has a critical spatial and temporal dimension of *the present*. This is when space and time meet in action. One’s focus moves to sensing kinetic possibility and taking action toward what he/she has immediate control over in the “corporeal here and now” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 65) rather than trying to mentally determine and plan for what he/she neither has the ability to predict nor has control over. The connection, then, between the possibility for creative action and the present is regarded as a main finding of this investigation.

By practicing being in the present with our inner sensations and feelings and the kinesthetic and motor activity, I showed that

it is possible to become aware of the esthetic stream of thought in relation to the observational function and the perception of ‘self.’ The various terms used throughout this thesis to denote these continuous aspects of consciousness include:



While I try to integrate these two sides of experience in this research, the dualistic model used here is intended to draw attention to the continuum *between* these two aesthetically. This will be made clearer in the next chapter, but I will note here that it became important in my own approach in the context of design management studies where I started my research, to first exaggerate or magnify this tension (“the problem”) to have a conceptual vocabulary for it. Being able to ‘see’ this tension provided me with a way to circle back to sensing it in the concrete and to refer to it in a direct and intimate way within experience. The point here is that we can never escape these types of dualisms or leave them behind, but we can become aware of the dynamic between them in the reality of experience, i.e., embodying them, instead of only seeing them as isolated qualities of experience.

From a movement-based perspective, the explicit recognition of the present highlights a world that is viewed to be open-ended, creative, and non-deterministic. The performer can choose to move and act right here and now. Thoughts ‘pop into one’s head’ in accordance with the living body’s experience, so that a person’s streaming of thought is not apparently spontaneous but *necessarily* spontaneous (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 361). In the present we are always improvising, happening, ordering, performing, physically initiating, and reacting. Allowing that the fleeting quality of experience — moving from one ‘thing’ to another — can feel erratic and illogical, so in improvisational practice it emerges that we must

first become aware of that non-discriminating quality of movement and try to have a radical acceptance for it, rather than trying to detach from it or to control it. In short, to let experience be open, changing, and unpredictable, I must control my attention to stay present with an embodied sense of ongoing movement and change.

In this way, somatic work helps to focus our sensitivity on the psycho-physical continuity of feelings of control and surrender in that immediate experience. It is not an experience of simply being ‘out of control,’ but it is a tension and release between reflective discernment and just feeling. I refer back to the example of the “unified body” when we practiced a stance of being both strong and flexible. If I think of being strong and flexible, I cannot embody the sensation because my attention is confined to being either strong or flexible so the sensation only becomes unified in my posture and presence when I stop thinking in those terms.

I refer to this notion of the continuum between these two aspects of consciousness, the reflective and the esthetic present as *control and surrender*. Dewey (1934/2005) refers these two phases of consciousness in artistic work as “a rhythm of surrender and reflection,” saying that in aesthetic experience, “we interrupt our yielding to the object to ask where it is leading and how it is leading there” (p. 150). Surrender involves, as he says, the phase of pre-analytic and qualitative impression, “before knowing what the picture represents you are seized by its magical accord” (p. 151). Similarly, in James’s somatic introspection, he notes that the instrumental nature of our consciousness is to focus on the limb’s movement toward something instead of the internal feelings of movement.

In movement practice, this relationship is articulated as identifying or discerning versus “letting go” or “letting things come.” I also heard my teachers use the phrase the looking “eye” versus the sensing “I.” I mostly refer to this dynamic in the empirical work in the following ways:

Doing	Undergoing
Moving	Being moved
Grasping	Letting go
Discerning	Letting come
Possessing, identifying	Releasing
Control	Surrender

To move forward from a perceptive, esthetic mode involves cultivating the ability to witness and be present without an estrangement from the present due to “cognitive closure,” for example, and the qualification of experience through identification, discernment, judgment, or expectations. This generally involves taking a “feeling of the body” and having an acute sense of physical presence. The integrated, artistic approach requires what Dewey calls “esthetic understanding,” which he illustrates in the following:

The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may be well intense. In much of our intercourse with our surroundings we withdraw; sometimes from fear...To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. (p. 53)

Specifically from my experiences with Butoh, the struggle to actually be able to ‘be at one’ with the present is the particular sensation of surrender. Surrender comes to that experience when an individual voluntarily opens him/herself up to the experience of change (being moved), a palpable openness that carries with it simultaneously the sensation of giving up a degree of self-preservation or loss of control — what some in the field of improvisational arts call “surrender,” “letting go,” or “acceptance” to being in the present (Nachmanovitch, 1990).

In this fundamental way, we can see that an openness-capacity means being with the particular feeling of the experience of surrender by being with the inherent insecurity of immediate experience, and not always having the words to describe it. To inquire from this aesthetic perspective and to not take away from direct perceptual experience that is active, there has to be openness in the sense of some things being left unspoken, undefined, and simply ‘felt.’ The ultimate ambiguity of experience is that it is simultaneously knowable and unknowable, that we both grasp and also let go (Batchelor, 1997). There is an artistic ability to be in the present with what is an indeterminate experience for an unspecified amount of time.

Trust

We can see movement improvisation as a practical strategy for being present and meeting the pre-reflective and fluctuating character of consciousness. In the moment-to-moment experience of change, the relational experience of *control* and *surrender* goes hand in hand with a shift in feeling of not being able to answer in experience with certainty and the perceived control or validation of a reflective consciousness. This overlaps with the ability to continuously accept transience, impermanence, and change. There is movement from the feelings of possession or control of objective thought brings — familiarity, security, clarity, and safety — to the kinds of feelings that surrender brings — discomfort, unknowability, and doubt. As the empirical work shows, the sense of vulnerability is inextricable from a dynamic experience of ‘self’ that is truly open for being expanded, changed, and uncertain. In practice, this is discussed as dropping the ego, pride, or self-preservation to be emotionally available and empathetic in order to internally “connect” with one’s surroundings and the others.

Therefore, truly opening oneself up to the indeterminacy of the present and natural feelings of fear — fear of loss of control, failure, rejection, as well as shame, ridicule, and vulnerability, lies in an ability to show *trust*. From a Pragmatist view, the willingness to act depends upon a “believing tendency” or trust. Thus, at the risk of sounding cliché, trust is not a feeling, but an ability and willingness to act in uncertainty. Here I use the notion of *trust* to describe the sensation of security that is developed directly within an artistic, embodied way of working and an openness-capacity. Working experimentally and/or improvisationally is not about eliminating uncertainty, but about having the trust to move and act and spite of sensations of being unsure, uncomfortable, or fearful. Assuming that uncertainty is a source of creativity (Langer, 2014), it is a matter of how to be with that sensation of surrender and let oneself see where things can go in unexpected ways. Consequently, there must be a value for, but also a trust in, that uncertainty and a method of working in immediate experience.

There is a qualitative change that happens when we go from talking about a rationally determined context that provides a sense of security through repetition, predictability, and observable outcomes to an embodied feeling of security. This brings us full circle to the founder of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce, and his original pragmatic conception of understanding inquiry as con-

stituted by a subjective feature. In dealing with real-life situations there will always be living doubt. And for Peirce, on the other side of living doubt is active *belief*, belief being defined as the sense upon which a person is prepared to act, a feeling of conviction (Scheffler, 1974). In Peirce's opinion, doubt brings discomfort or unease and humans are prone to seek belief, which offers a sensation of calm. To Peirce's point, I contend that there needs to be a sensation of belief in order to act, but instead of using his term belief, I use the term trust, which is a more prevalent term today.

I develop here the notion of trust from the empirical work with somatic practice with respect to design and an openness-capacity, grouped into three interrelated, yet slightly distinct, aspects of trust. They include: *Trust in feeling uncertain, trust in one's own process, and trust in one another's capacity.*

Trust in Feeling Uncertain

An openness-capacity requires the ability to cope with feelings of uncertainty or fear, vulnerability, and discomfort that change and openness to change bring. In Butoh, for example, it is critical to provide a context for learning and working with sensations of discomfort, since this is understood to be when creativity happens — in the experience of when you are testing new behavior, acting in new ways that feel unfamiliar, and going against your habits or patterns of thought.

In common understanding, the opposite of a sense of security is perceived as a kind of 'state of anxiety,' which sets up a false equivalency between stability, on the one hand, and anxiety and fear, on the other. The feeling of anxiety emerges when having to make political or moral decisions (Kleinman, 2006), admitting to "not knowing," not being in control of one's image, or the inability to predict, or to be truly certain. Thus, the fear of making a mistake, disappointment, feelings of incompetence, and so on create anxiety concerning taking responsibility for one's personal judgment (Kleinman, 2006).

As somatic practitioners point out, this perceived anxiety has to do with the structuring of modern education and institutions around a pursuit of certainty that is systematically eroding our ability to be with the feeling of instability (Rolf, 1995). The feeling of fear is suppressed through mechanisms that proceed from an emphasis on "objective" knowledge, more data and information,

and secure ground to stand on. As we learn in somatic awareness, it is natural to feel uncertain. Truthfully, the inner sensation of uncertainty and fear involved in doing anything empirically does not ever disappear. In the relational nature of the present, there is always a physical sensation of surrender and the feeling of insecurity or uncertainty that comes with that does not have to lead to anxiety. Instead in personal experience, we learn that we develop the ability to feel insecure and to be okay with uncertainty. Working experimentally, we learn to let go of getting things ‘right’ and our inhibitions, to welcome mistakes as a source of learning and possibility.

This ability to feel uncertain is closely shared with the following condition of ‘trust in own process’ because, at the same time that we learn to be uncertain, we also find that a sensation of feeling secure in our process becomes about what we can do to change our own behavior, to act differently, and to figure out what we need to do. One way to see it is as a kind of meta-level consciousness of ourselves in relation to our process, as described in the lessons from the empirical work. We learn the subtle distinction between what has been pointed out as self-doubt versus the idea of doubt (Grant, 2016). While self-doubt can feel paralyzing because it is about one’s ‘self,’ by training and becoming familiar with our process, we learn to feel when the process concerns the idea in which doubt means more research, more testing, reframing, and so on (Grant, 2016). This is tied to the creative approach and intimately learning the limitations and workings of our body-mind. Trust in uncertainty only comes about by developing a trust in one’s own senses and valuing the body as a means of empathy, emotions, and judgment. It also means having the awareness to listen to others and to refine one’s way of working, which constitutes of a sense of trust in others by being able to admit uncertainty and fear of failure when taking risks.

Trust in One's Own Process

The strong human desire for security or comfort in modern institutional and organizational environments is typically provided by rational and cognitive means and ways of progressing, that is, the scientific quest for certainty. Today, this sense of security is largely promoted by a culture of management so that qualities of control and predictability become valued in and of themselves for

the comfort they provide (Bauman & May, 2001). This leads to focus and effort on getting rid of the kinds of negative feelings that come with uncertainty or doubt, and restoring a sense of comfort in external structures or by acting in a way that can provide objective assurance. This makes a process feel safe, because it is clear, defined, and, moreover, reliable. So by knowing what one can expect from a given procedure, an individual can become a “passive spectator” and simply escape actually feeling uncertain — the personal doubt and anxiety of having to rely on one’s own judgment. It is easier to adopt a set of beliefs, procedures, and objective criteria, not to feel fear, insecurity, or doubt, but to “stay on track” and to feel you are doing the right thing. But in order to achieve this reliability, work processes are structured around habits and repetition, externalized rules and notions of “quality control.”

Living with fears, tensions, a sense of unease or anxiety at not having objective criteria mean that the “artistic” entails physical sensation and bodily response to situations. The artist works in and deals with the aesthetics of relations in the wholeness of experience. By not neglecting his/her own experience in favor of theoretical certitude, the artist learns precisely the opposite — that he/she must learn to trust his/her feelings, intuition, and bodily sensations in the living integrality of his/her process. Especially in relation to creativity, the artist must use physical sensations and judgment to guide him/her outside of the comfort zone of expertise or context of “knowing.”

It is also important to understand that the kind of self-awareness practitioners develop in their own creative and expressive activity does not simply discard control or objectivity in favor of irrationality, an “anything goes” approach, the overly emotional, or the purely subjective. Self-awareness provides the practitioner with a indispensable self-objectivity and reflexivity to his/her own process so that intuition is not divided from rigorous thought; fantasy and enthusiasm from and reality testing; lightness from criticality, and so on. The freedom given to imagination and playfulness is wedded to self-management and an individual capacity for expression. In fact, as stated previously, increased autonomy and the exercising of self-determination and volition mean more self-discipline and self-management.

In this regard, Butoh uses the metaphor of nature to teach that creativity is about determination and consistency to persevere and “stay with the problem,” as it is said, over qualities of speed or

force. As with the slow movement exercises, we are often encouraged to take a simple concept and develop it through persistence, commitment, consistency, long training, determination, and focus. The instructors have us work on the parts of our training that we sense are difficult for us. If we need more physical strength, we have to do pushups, squats, and abdominal crunches. If we cannot emotionally handle an exercise, we need to reflect on why, where the problem is, and how we can overcome it. We teach ourselves to persevere through our own frustration and unease.

Movement training, therefore, intensifies how an artist must know his/her own body-mind and the kind of physical and mental self-discipline that is needed to make oneself a sensible and responsible 'instrument.' By closely observing my moment-to-moment physical tendencies in Butoh, for instance, I simultaneously uncovered long-term habits and patterns in the places that I struggle, as with my indecisiveness and sense of fear in making forceful and fluid movements. The trepidation I express toward decision-making in Butoh received a similar critique in my architectural training, in that my drawings were too light and timid. Both artistic mediums (movement and drawings) possess the same feeling of too much deliberation and restraint, and not enough of expression, conviction, or energy of 'going with it' or 'letting go.' This is where I personally need continual training — in relaxing and being more emotionally present.

Precisely because somatic awareness is a capacity tied to the embodied individual, it is tied to his/her responsibility to care for the self physically and emotionally. This self-directed capacity is exhibited by a form of personal discipline and management in our own work process, by taking responsibility for what we need to do. It is also expected, because our work is experiential, that we have to put time and effort into making sense of our process, developing our own expression, and contextualizing our work. Correspondingly, because it is a physical activity (as any activity is), we have to know our own boundaries, to treat our bodies with care and compassion, and to not hurry or make things happen, but to let them come. "Everything is already there for us," our teachers say. It is learning to recognize and nurture a kind of empathetic relation to a creative process that has bodily and natural limitations.

In this way, Butoh training fosters trust in using the body that allows the artist to "rest assured" in the changing relations to one's own process (Edström, 2008) and not only relying on

rationalizations, comparisons, and plans for what to do. Training in Butoh strengthens our ability to be in the moment and, in my case, to mute my overwhelming urge to control my actions from the reflective aspect of my consciousness, but to “let things come” and to feel “on the edge,” as it is communicated in practice. This acceptance, along with the patterns and habits that we become intimately aware of, contributes to developing a qualitative relation to our own work in terms of a kind of familiarity or closeness to our process, not just consciously, but holistically and emotionally in action. We gain confidence in working improvisationally with our instincts, impulses, and gut reactions that can simultaneously pull us in different directions. We learn to trust that this is part of an integrated body-mind practice that is not always rational, but sometimes we need to just “see how it goes,” before we try make sense of the experience, of the corporeal and kinesthetic learning. Before most exercises, for example, Butoh teachers remind us that we have to “find our own way” or to take our own “time and space.” We are always told to “listen” to our bodies. This artistic approach puts value and trust in the time and space needed to physically explore, find out, and make discoveries.

Trust in one Another's Capacity

The social component of trust is equally as important as the other two, ‘trust in feeling uncertain’ and ‘trust in one’s own process’ because it offers the necessary contextual foundation for opening up, and feeling safe enough to express oneself honestly. Part of allowing oneself to become vulnerable and dependent on others, to help determine a process or project, is taking the risk of putting one’s feelings of self-control into someone else’s hands. Ultimately, unless a person actively places their faith in another, the feeling of security between people will not exist. There is a giving-receiving dynamic, as I illustrated in the Butoh exercise, where in order to begin to establish trust, it is also necessary to take the risk of trusting. For that reason, what I am pointing out here is that ‘trust in one another’s capacity’ comes from the self-direction and self-trust developed in one’s own capabilities, identity, expression, and values. ‘Trust in one’s own process’ is a precondition for the ability to trust in another person’s process, but also to trust oneself enough to be exposed and vulnerable. A person must have his/her own ability to sense and understand his/her own weaknesses and strengths and

to know when to ask for help or how to help stretch and challenge the other person when he/she needs it.

In Butoh, for example, where there is a strong emphasis on an openness-capacity, there is an equally strong emphasis on cultivating trust in order to create a context where participants feel safe to literally act out or go beyond socially conditioned movement patterns. To “liberate” or “free” performers from their ‘ego,’ as it is sometimes called, there is a specific mixture of practical conditions which always have to be reestablished at the beginning of every course/session, since an instinctual and distorted way of behaving and moving is somewhat antithetical to one’s daily routine and patterns of movement governed by social norms. We essentially learn to play together through methods of relaxation, which help to mentally and physically open people up, establishing a lightness and playful energy to encourage the freeing of participants from expectations of “right” or “wrong” ways of moving, and the potential for the practitioner to dare to push or extend him/herself in new ways.

‘Trust in one another’s capacity’ helps establish a sense of mutual trust among actors, which means it is really supporting an ability to cooperate. By supporting the performer having a strong self-directed process, as creative actors we are able to connect and collaborate with one another on an equal level. Individuals have their own internal will. They have different preferences as to what they would like to do, and will act in a way to fulfill in some part their desires, needs, and concerns. Again, this is different from generating a sense of security in the form of consensus or an overall meaning to which everyone conforms. Rather, it is about having the sense of security through interpersonal dynamics that seems to be related to an openness-capacity.

As the manipulation exercise with giving and receiving showed at a micro-level, every relationship between people has an interpersonal dynamic of being able to listen and respond to one another, to know how to open up when needed in order to meet the others halfway. In that respect, our close personal relationships require a characteristic of openness-capacity in terms of letting go of wanting to control from the perspective of one’s expectations of outcomes in order to also respond to and meet the others. This is about shifting from control towards expectations and outcomes to enable more improvisational behavior and the ability to sense and perceive opportunities in the moment. To some degree, it

takes acceptance of letting things happen, as my Butoh teachers expressed it, letting people do things in their own way at their own time, and not using force or control to see or know where things are headed. It requires being in the present with the other people and exercising judgment, based on feeling for the energy and dynamics of relations in context. By opening up perception, as somatic practitioners encourage, you thereby open your “options for sensitivity, awareness, ability to respond, and to feel successful in yourself and in your communication with others” (Cohen, 1995, p. 203). This is about listening to one another at an individual one-to-one level in order to form the kinds of relationships that foster respect for another’s process, in other words, supporting an empathic approach.

This kind of direct interpersonal listening and responding has a critical qualitative aspect that is behavioral or gestural. In this sense, dance is really an apt metaphor here for how designers should be thinking about relations as dynamic and changing, and how designers must continually be able to develop the internal capacity to listen and respond to others with emotional and expressive content. Gestural qualities of humility, compassion, generosity, tolerance, respect, care and concern, positive intentions, acceptance, and belief provides the kind of opportunity for an sense of security (trust) to take root. As sentimental or old-fashioned as it sounds, trust needs to exist in order for people to open up. It is difficult for people to expose themselves by acting in new ways, if they do not feel safe to do so. There is socialized fear and shame that inhibits adult behavior, so in this sense they can become risk averse, adopt a skeptical stance, give into fears and doubts, and the want to protect themselves from the potential of feeling embarrassed, silly, rejected, ridiculed, and so on.

Therefore, if design as a field of study is honest about innovation and enhancing possibilities for creative action, like taking risks and doing anything novel, there has to be some part of openness-capacity that addresses trust.¹² In a context of action and cooperation, the inherent uncertainty of creative action means that

12. Trust is already a large topic in theory related to cooperation and organizations (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; G. R. Jones & George, 1998; Kramer & Tyler, 1996; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). The benefits of trust with regard to social capital, networks, voluntary membership, and social action has been well established (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Assuming that trust creates value and, to some extent, is necessary for innovation (Dovey, 2009), I highlight here the importance of recognizing interpersonal trust with respect to creative action, and thus, design.

people must feel a sense of security in social relations. In other words, acting in the social world, the consequences of one's choices are not predictable and an individual does not have absolute control over the outcomes of a process. Accepting this indeterminacy in the view presented here, a sensation of security or trust in social relations comes from one's own corporal capacity. Trust in the physical sense is a capacity that is facilitated, generated, and achieved in a self-directed approach to our relations with one another and within ourselves that allows us to open up and have courage to take action.

Brief Summary

The purpose of this discussion has been to call attention to the lessons taught by the empirical work with Butoh that address a lack of embodied understanding for what it physically and perceptually means to have an attitude of openness in experience. Drawing upon those lessons, I present the need for an aesthetic view that incorporates the internal sensations of the designer in addressing relations in the present. This presents a shift in conceptualizing openness as merely an attitude or objective state to openness as a capacity for action. It is important to focus on design from this subjective perspective in order to address the exploratory capacity of a designer to deal with uncertain situations, to make judgments without objective criteria, to cope with contradiction, to take risks, to apply imagination, and to meaningfully frame experience through empathetic and qualitative means. This is important for the designer to experience design as exploration with the freedom to create and embrace different meanings and open-ended paths (Dorst, 2011).

Especially in terms of openness and creativity, this means recognizing a designer's internal capacities for *awareness* and *willingness* to explore and create. A designer can practically learn to fight preconceptions and the desire to have mental clarity or to control expectations of what is produced, made, or "designed." This points to his/her ability to stretch and refine his/her practice through perceptual experience specifically with respect to a subjective, emotional dimension and a sense of 'self.'

The empirical work demonstrates that in order to practically foster openness-capacity, there have be conditions for addressing this internal perspective of embodied relations. With that aim,

I present the two primary conditions of ‘control and surrender’ and ‘trust,’ which are special to an aesthetic way of addressing the world in immediate experience. In immediate and felt experience, these promote a self-directed or self-managed practice of creative exploration and openness-capacity. They also speak to the intrinsic and experiential meaning discovered through bodily practice that is equally as important to the designer and his/her practice as the discourse and symbolic meaning around the practice.

This discussion takes up a practically oriented perspective because it links Pragmatist theory to the embodied experience of design. It suggests the beginnings of a qualitative experience of form-giving as an embodied form of design experience and inquiry not secured in the current discourse on design research. This is not unique to design, but it is particular to an investigation and articulation of an aesthetic, embodied perspective of development and context of creativity. It illustrates how design can be physically sensed and experienced with respect to a feeling of openness, one that is self-directed.

Design Attitude as an Openness — Capacity

From an Externalized View to an Embodied Sense

To put this all in the context of professional design practice, design as an area of study has, for some time, been considered at the heart of human activity in a social reality and a means for meaning-making and creativity (Buchanan, 2001; Dilnot, 1982). As framed in the chapter on design research, this view is predicated on the view that the traditional focus of design has moved from the production of discrete objects to social outcomes. As a result, in design research and practice it has become pertinent to ask, “Without the integrity of form-giving and making that lies at the core of design, what can the designer do that is not already within the sphere of other disciplines?” (Buchanan, 2008, p. 9).

Again, my approach to this question has been to maintain that the “integrity of form-giving” in design is found in the direct physical interaction between the designer and the world. This begins from the Pragmatist insistence that all engagement with the world is embodied, and thus, all cognition and bases for meaning are situated within concrete experience. In the same way, what is at the “core of design” is living, physical experience. This has been the reason for using Pragmatism as a point of departure throughout this work — that the designer’s bodily experience is what grounds creative thought and symbolic interpretation.

An embodied understanding of design practice requires an ontological shift from a world of objects to a relational, process-oriented worldview. When applied, this has serious epistemological and practical consequences for design research and education. The Pragmatists put subtle and crucial emphasis, especially William James (1912/2003), on the fact that we do not just experience a world of objects to which we consciously attribute relations, but

that we sense and feel relations that are equally real to experience as objects. Relations themselves are experiences to one another. This entails a genuine consideration for the experience of form-giving from the *aesthetic qualities of relations*, which is a point that design research has largely ignored. Instead, the focus in form-giving has been primarily on an externalized some ‘thing’ or consciously explained relations, such as material phenomena and methods.

In this respect, one main contribution of this work has been to earnestly pursue the embodied practice of designing and the radicalness of that experience in the Pragmatist sense. An aesthetic perspective on an embodied design process cannot be reached from the observational view of the process, but can only be part of direct experience. Therefore, I have tried to show a Pragmatist understanding of aesthetics through my physical engagement in form-giving, specifically that of a transitory, living, breathing artifact of movement improvisation. In that sense, the artifact is the experience of movement itself without a mediated outcome.

This empirically demonstrates the profound Pragmatist point that our perception within experience is intrinsically *aesthetic*. There is an aesthetic dimension to *all* human action and form-giving, so aesthetics is *the* entry point, coming from *aisthanesthai* meaning “to feel and perceive,” to live through (Flusser, 2014). Aesthetics is how humans “think” given that our thinking is physiological. We use conceptual metaphors and frames in general to make sense of situations and to solve problems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). An aesthetic feel even underlies what we perceive as a rational logic (M. Johnson, 2007). Therefore, a holistic aestheticism based in experience in the pragmatic sense of the word is about developing patterns and ways of doing in action that ground the meaning in the situatedness of action, instead of in representations of an external reality.

When design is recognized as an embodied activity, and not reduced to a representation of what one understands about it, design is not universally experienced. The “integrity of form-giving” demands that there must be some ‘body,’ a subjectivity, a “knower” that is the source of continuity for any “knowledge experience” (Dewey, 1905). The ‘core of design’ does not stand alone as some manifestation of “knowledge” or practice. Subject and object are not discrete entities that reject a notion of pure subjectivity or that subject/object relations are in the world. Design and knowledge are not merely ‘out there’ but given meaning and form in action. It is therefore difficult to attribute certain bound-

aries to actions and behaviors that can be readily recognized and determined as design in a dualistic construction. This is largely due to how action is irreducible and only adequately expressed or developed in relations in *the present*.

Taking subject and object together in immediate experience most importantly highlights the changing subject/object relations, and that ‘self’ and the world mutually affect each another. In the Pragmatist tradition of speaking in terms of continuities instead of dichotomies, this present experience is a ‘transactional’ affair of double resolve. For example, in the analysis of my experience with this transient process, I called attention to the *internal* relations in that process with particular regard to a mode of thinking-feeling integration. This embodied experience is one that is integrative and allows us to grasp experience in synthetic terms, where emotion, thinking, imagination, and feeling are together. Therefore, the present is vital to a perceptual openness and provides an opportunity to consciously engage with action and a certain feel or quality for action, instead of only toward the object.

An orientation toward action in the present, and an empirical emphasis of it, most notably demonstrate the unmistakable feel of an effort or will for action that comes from within. This feature of subjectivity is indivisible from any non-dualistic theoretical concept of a “design attitude” or approach, which claims openness to experience as a means to creativity. The embodied approach shows that openness is not passive, but is *action*. A quality of openness and exploration in experience requires a cultivated capacity to open oneself up to potential feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, exposure, fear, or discomfort that come with taking a risk.

In this project, I refer to this subjective, self-directed feature of action as *openness-capacity*. The notion of self-direction comes from an embodied view of arts-based learning that focuses on developing trust in one’s process and the ability to face uncertainty and the absence of rules, to go into the unknown, and to stretch oneself outside of the comfort zone (Eisner, 2002a; Hetland et al., 2007). Self-direction shifts the burden of learning and exploration to the designer, again as an active participant, and to his/her attention to the aesthetic dimension of experience, which entails a sensibility of the immediate sensorial presence of relations, what is actually happening and felt, rather than to objects of thought. This relational experience is a matter of the dynamics of working through time, developing perceptual gestalt and emotional

frames of relations, and sensing energetic rhythms and flows. This response and approach inform an ability to “create both physical space and time as well as a space inside of them that valued, nurtured, and supported their exploration of feel and creative experiences” (Lussier-Ley & Durand-Bush, 2009, p. 213).

This inquiry lies in understanding how an openness-capacity is learned artistically, through what is a direct empirical approach — a hands-on approach to feeling and sensing — and accepting being without words or visual clarity. As exemplified in the lessons in the last chapter, this is about how arts-based training with bodily integrity and learning-by-doing helps develop a general perceptual capacity to be present to experience, without objectifying and pushing things to happen but rather “letting things come.” This openness-capacity means letting go of psycho-physical defenses connected to ‘self’ in order to open oneself up to being affected. In other words, because openness requires the designer to connect with and trust in others, to adapt, cope, deal, and *empathize* with the world around him/her, subjective dimensions of awareness and willingness are indispensable to embodying a design attitude. Opening up requires an awareness and willingness to express vulnerability and ambiguity.

What openness-capacity calls attention to is the connection between design and physical action and the internal sensation of that action. Empirically it is not different from other approaches to inquiry in the fact that it is experienced by the designer at the individual level in firsthand relations. It is at a level where there is concern with what is felt emotionally and physically as a conduit for meaning. There is emphasis on the internal capacity of the designer. The decision and embodied habit to act with a quality of openness come from within. The difference in approach is therefore in how the designer chooses to experience the world, what kinds of relations to which he/she chooses to attend and how. The designer chooses whether or not his/her relations are treated as primarily objective (functional) or emphasized as more embodied (relational), and thus integrated. To engage with the latter, action must be taken with the internal feel and affect of truly opening up and connecting to one’s craft or process. This entails empathic and emotional expressions of human qualities of experience like care, nurture, respect, compassion, kindness, and *trust* which, according to the Pragmatists, cannot have artificial substitutions because they occupy natural and moral relations to the living body.

The following table is for rough comparison between: on the left side, an externalized view that sees relations in terms of objects and which revolves around rationalization and clarity, and, on the right side, an embodied perspective that sees relations as qualitative and ceaselessly changing. The right side covers an artistic way of experiencing from the present, the relation of the designer to his/her own process, and the sense of security in that relation as part of the development of his/her creative practice and openness-capacity. This is only used to draw attention to the general difference between understanding design from an analytical view and from an artistic, creative point of view that takes an embodied approach. This is not intended to be an either/or representation.

Table 1

<p>Externalized Attitude or mindset Prescriptive Determinacy</p>	<p>Embodied Openness-Capacity Self-directed Indeterminacy</p>
<p>Objective intent Functionalization</p>	<p>Present relations Control and Surrender</p>
<p>External sense of security <i>Need to feel certain:</i> Feel in control of 'self' image as expert in role</p> <p><i>Trust in system:</i> Rationalizing and visualizing "the process" Objective validation, goals, methods "Quality control"</p> <p><i>Knowing what others are doing:</i> Use of universals, principals, directives, standardization, habits of action</p>	<p>Internal and relational sense of security <i>Trust in feeling uncertain:</i> Feeling alright being in the unknown, feeling silly or vulnerable to critique, making mistakes, learning own limitations</p> <p><i>Trust in one's own process:</i> 'Feel' for gestalt, use of emotion, intuition, learning and using judgment for specific aesthetic qualities</p> <p><i>Trust in one another's capacity:</i> Caring, nurturing, tolerance, acceptance sensitivity to interpersonal relationships</p>

From Form-Giving Objects to Relational Form-Giving

If we view design in a relational paradigm, we speak of professionals who, at some level, have a concern with the tangible aesthetic qualities and feelings of human relations, both with what is happening between individuals and in relation to his/her context, but also with what is happening internally in the designer, the different emotional, intuitive, and inferential dimensions of thought in action. To engage with form-giving as actively relating by the designer, design as a field of study must not only consider the ways in which the designer engages in social contexts, but also the way that the world engages the designer. A relational worldview most notably prompts a shift in practice from an objective focus to an awareness of relations in the present, which takes with it, as Dewey (1928/1981) says, “esthetic, affectional, moral relations” (p. 31).

This might not seem very controversial, since designers in many areas of application of design (user-centered, social innovation, co-design, participatory design, design thinking) currently claim to engage in human-centric and empathetic practices (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012). Given this premise, they have shifted the focus from form-giving of an object up to the level of form-giving of “systems” and “organizations,” which requires a shift in tools, approaches, and methods of participation or engaging others in a “design process.” But design focused on the process, even in this admittedly relational paradigm, generally approaches the world as an object of manipulation, meaning that the intent is to grasp the social world within the scientific view of a phenomenon external to oneself, i.e., approaching the world in an ‘object-like’ way.

Thus, a Pragmatist philosophical and methodological stance makes it clear why rationalistic and outside-in perspectives on design practice and research cannot advance very far in addressing creative action and form-giving processes that include the volitional capacity and emotional content of ‘self’ to create meaning. The externalized approach to creativity as an outcome is embedded in methods, processes, procedures, and environments, like co-design for example, that give individuals tools and methods for inducing creativity (Sanders, 2002). “It is easier to enhance creativity by changing conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 1). Approaching creativity from the outside will always seem the easier

option. This constitutes a reduction of creative action that “explains why we attribute a will to power to others but not to ourselves” (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 143). It serves persons with the idea of security in something outside themselves, rather than forcing them to look inside to the source of creativity.

Along the same lines, it is easy to say that designers have an open attitude because objectification indicates that the designer *is* open as a state of mind or that they allow the world to change them. This again reduces the subjective ability for creative action to a reflection of the nature of openness. Because of this, the generally adopted research approach is to do more research to clarify how openness works by making it static and inanimate through progressive differentiation (of features and/or relationships). Rationally advancing “knowledge” in this way will consistently chart a course toward the instrumental production of “creativity” via externalized formulations and better and more precise concepts. This is rooted in a view of rational action and an incremental, problem-solving logic found in the scientific method. While this empirical method is known to also lead to paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962), it is not about living, breathing, and internalizing creative action, the quality of creative experience or, for that matter, “radical innovation” promoted in some design literature (Verganti, 2009).

It has been pointed out by researchers that part of what makes design as a practice meaningful for designers is the freedom to explore and behave differently (Dorst, 2011; Michlewski, 2008). Just as designers want “ownership” over or self-identity with their design processes, embodiment demonstrates that it is inherent in human action and personal experience, generally, to have a sense of identity with and a desire to exert control in appropriating and altering the world around us. As this thesis argues, design in a really fundamental way is about the potential to “design” one’s own relations and perceptions. Part of what makes design a professionalization is the designer’s participation in his/her own self-development as a designer, his/her own reflection and familiarity on their process, a willingness to experiment, and the ability for self-criticism or self-evaluation (Adams et al., 2011). Becoming a professional designer is not merely about the methods, tools, and skills, but also in part goes back to the aesthetic training that designers receive to embody a creative disposition and reflexivity by doing and making, and perceiving and dealing with materials and situations through hands-on experience.

Understanding creativity as a quality of experience and a matter of voluntary will is a major source of conflict for designers who receive studio-based training and develop an embodied approach to their art/craft and then go to work in organizational settings and contexts built upon industrial imperatives. The knowledge paradigm in this context does not value an approach to the whole individual and self-directed learning. As this research shows, to practice creativity, a designer has to have a felt and formative experience of a ‘self’ who acts in the world without being determined and, in many senses, without routine situations. So to act creatively, a designer has to have the perceived opportunity and freedom to do so. This is about providing the opportunity for a qualitative experience of being immersed in the present, a chance to work, play, relax, and exercise the imagination without constraints or directives (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

It is also here where there is a major contradiction upon which a lot of design research lays emphasis. That is the nature of the practice of design in “objective conditions” and scientific knowledge-claims, when an essential aspect of the practice is that designers themselves often seek personal direction and meaning from the creative experience of form-giving. Designers are shown to be motivated to think and behave differently, to exert their will or imaginative capacity, and to learn by self-directed means (Michlewski, 2008). Since the observational paradigm is often set on externally defined relationships and criteria, it really cannot address the psychological motivations, emotional responses, and will of designers (or any person) to act and move in unscripted, unspecified ways. And as long as a designer’s role or identity is rationalized for purposes of action, it essentially disciplines the creative resistance that the perceptible body offers (Joas, 1996), resistance in the form of impulse, spontaneity, nonlinearity, non-linguistic, ambiguous, non-instrumental, and divergent relations. This resistance in some sense is what defines a “design attitude” and why, physically, designers see their work as pliable, accepting of open-endedness, nonlinearity and change, and going with intuition and ‘feel,’ to trust in an indeterminate process — essentially all the qualities that are claimed to make design creatively valuable. It is known that a degree of uncertainty is a distinguishing feature of creativity (Langer, 2014) and artistic work (Eisner, 2002b), so the ability to experience design as an embodied uncertainty is requisite for a designer’s creative experience. Design is a method of creative action and learning for designers.

*Implication of Classical Pragmatist
View of Experience*

This research illuminates the value of a Classical Pragmatist view to help deepen an understanding of how aesthetic experience constitutes self-directed approaches. A Pragmatist outlook to design inquiry lays emphasis on the continuity of immediate experience. The Pragmatic view is often misinterpreted as being overly instrumental and used to make practice-based interpretations of research without empirical details. Yet, Pragmatism's founders expressly stressed the *creative* character of human action that must be understood differently from a rational model of action (Joas, 1996). This emphasis has crucial implications for how design research and education, if focused on creativity, must be radically and explicitly empirical. In a Pragmatist view, this means starting with the concreteness of direct experience, which includes what is actually felt by the designer, and to some degree the ongoing relational sense of 'self'.

The non-dualistic commitment of Classical Pragmatism, if more than loosely understood as practice-based, generally offers a research foundation for design not limited to abstractions and Cartesian doubt in terms of 'problem situations.' Returning to direct experience is foundational to a Pragmatist form of inquiry in terms of a continuity in "knowledge experience" as discussed in Pragmatist theory. This commonsense view promotes a holistic and emphatic approach to learning and approaching the world without the dualisms of art/science, practical/aesthetic, individual/collective (that are obviously useful for many kinds of study and other contexts of inquiry). Instead, by understanding the continuity and integrality of perception and action, subjective sensations and feelings of making and doing are not subordinate to words, and furthermore, the latter cannot constitute the former.

The designer, put into contact with qualities of meaning in experience, the intuitive 'feel' for things, and the emotional and self-reflexive tension of work has perceptually more freedom to explore and more reason to be empirically experimental. Thus, the plurality of the writings by all four of the founders of Pragmatism contributes to the philosophical platform in different respects as to why an aesthetic focus is so significant in design pedagogy, and moreover, for a self-directed and openness-capacity for action. Instead of the search for an essential nature of a design attitude or creativity, the strength of Pragmatism is that it calls for focus to

practically on how a designer seeks to answer questions, not just questions of usefulness and what works, but on how a designer actively manifests and surrenders a sense of ‘self’ in relation to the world. A felt empathic approach to form-giving, including form-giving in social forms, will need to empirically address the physical and emotional dimensions of action, where “there is continuous movement between fixed and fluid states — holding things constant and letting them loose, and choosing to push things and letting them go” (Yoo, Boland Jr, & Lyytinen, 2006, p. 227).

On the ground, the pluralistic strength of Pragmatist methodology is also its limitation. The theory is limited by the interpretation and habits and patterns of the designer, and by how much he/she is willing to overcome tendencies toward dualistic thinking. Pragmatism opens up a necessary discussion about what a self-directed practice of design really means in terms of opening up to the kinds of experiences and values that designers want to manifest and give form to, and how they are educated to do so. It suggests that design research working in the social sphere should not reduce forms of action or lose the sense of resistance, tension, and existential mediation involved in a seeking safer ground and validation in objectivity. The Pragmatist lens opens up for consideration the volitional and identity-oriented actions of design researchers and an understanding of design based on aesthetic experience and intrinsic values of self-exploration, discovery, and learning found within direct qualities of experience.

This brings me to an important Pragmatist distinction, which is that awareness of an aesthetic experience of design should not be simply applied toward functionalizing the use of the body to design interactions, but should concern the designer’s own feeling and learning experience. The lessons provided in this thesis from the empirical work, while they offer a kind of description of what is experienced in form-giving, are not meant to serve to perform a function of “design” or as design skills. The experiences themselves also must be understood in connection with the intrinsic subjective experience of learning. This cannot be framed as or substituted with a functional paradigm. Those concrete experiences provided me with a time and space to explore and discover my own learning objectives. Such lessons must be experienced, in order to be understood as a capacity.

A view of self-directed learning has to be more than an objective knowledge orientation of productivity. This form of learning

underlies a design epistemology and pedagogical view that includes subjectivity and a holistic view of human life happening in an environment. For example, one of the points of Shusterman's (2012) perspective of someaesthetics that becomes glossed over in a functionalist paradigm of education is that someaesthetics offers a practical approach to personal cultivation or self-knowledge, as from traditions of meditation or Eastern philosophy, which contributes to one's personal ability for a "disciplined, reflective, corporeal practice" (p. 45). The designer's working habits, patterns, feelings, and thoughts cannot be ignored but, in fact, should be brought out and reflected upon to provide the designer with insights into his/her own process and body-mind awareness. Cultivating the designer's sensibility, mastery of bodily capacities, and the ability to engage emotions and to tune in and focus on aesthetic qualities of experience should be an outcome of design education and not merely a means to an end.

The main takeaway from the Pragmatist aesthetic experience and this empirical research is that a reflective understanding of design fundamentally misses the subjective dimensions of awareness and willingness in how a designer chooses to discipline his/her craft in terms of the qualities of relations. The empirical lessons from a Pragmatic theoretical outlook emphasize that an aesthetic mode of inquiry is self-directed. It is a mode of perceptual action that happens at one's own pace and in relation to one's own purposes. This fact makes it crucial to remember that creativity cannot be reached merely by external objectives. The designer must be willing to internalize what kinds of relations he/she wants to have to his/her practice. A relational view requires revisiting the aesthetic qualities of experience that constitute the actual giving of form in terms of an organization of energies or emotional rhythm and tone in social settings.

Design research that aims to include the active, subjective side of experience has new thinking and practice ahead. By way of illustration, there are those in somatic practice who suggest that the tangibility of physical practices present the possibility for a "science of subjectivity" (Johnson, 2004, p. 118). I think this is an interesting point for design, since the Pragmatists also claimed that there are innumerable varieties of sense experiences that could fall under the purview of what we call "science." Design research especially should not limit itself to the objective side of what can be "seen" (Pallasmaa, 1996) and to rational explanations of experience, but

learn to appreciate the significance of *physical* experience and the innumerable ways that is empirically sensed and felt. Perceptual awareness of feelings and qualities of experience require ‘designerly’ methods that are rigorous, disciplined, teachable, systematic, and also expressible.

An Embodied Approach to Design Research

While this research can be seen as an extension of practice-based views of design, the embodied approach really makes evident the inadequacy of existing theoretical frameworks for studying the subjective dimensions in the physical activity of designing. The implications of pragmatism with regard to embodied experience here are primarily methodological instead of theoretical. Because this is an early attempt to address and connect different dimensions of an embodied approach to design, there is admittedly much more research required from within the field to develop these ideas. There are no significant studies available in design that address embodied experience from a direct experiential, artistic point of view. As one of the first studies in this respect, this research serves as an example of how close examination of immediate experience can lead to a more detailed discussion of the interrelations between what is considered practice-based research and the kinds of physical-mental capacities and strategies a designer trains and embodies. This research includes practical-aesthetic methods for engaging in artistic inquiry and the lessons that that form of inquiry teaches. Thus, one methodological contribution to an embodied perspective of design research here is in the turn to one’s own physical, material practice and learning concretely how to view something from a new perspective presumed by a “design attitude.”

I have specifically taken an approach of movement-based inquiry to turn my awareness to the intricacies of physical experience of form-giving, but there are many other ways to do this with material processes of making and crafting external to the body. This kind of research approach to explore the *process* of making, for example, has been raised as a perspective of “process aesthetics” and the experience of “making that cannot be reached with the outcomes of the process” (Falin & Falin, 2014, p. 11). These kinds of approaches draw on the imperceptible, tacit features of designing, not just material outcomes, but the perception and action of

making and form-giving. Butoh as a method of movement improvisation gave me a first opportunity to employ a somatic technique and expressive form-giving outside of fields of design. The limitations of Butoh with respect to design are largely due to the fact that the practice serves its own form of movement improvisation, with a particular ideology toward getting rid of social constraints. Its abstractness presents a practical challenge to trying to directly translate Butoh into a method within design as a field of study.

Not taking Butoh methods formally, however, the art form reveals general lessons for aesthetic inquiry and how openness is not purely theoretical but physically achievable. Butoh demonstrates, for one, a pedagogical strategy specifically aimed toward personal creativity, since it puts a premium on both working experimentally and developing a personal expressive capacity. This strategy is deliberately directed to training a physical and sensorial awareness. It is not aimed at specific theoretical concepts, but how an integrated *mode* of thinking-feeling in the present is practically supported. In this respect, the responsibility is put on us as performers to learn our own habits, emotional capabilities, and ways of working in order to be able to change those.

To this point, there are concrete techniques that performers learn to deliberately and selectively keep their perception open in different ways. One example is that in some exercises, we consciously work to not let our thoughts roam or pass to external labels or object categories, but instead to tune into the immediate kinesthetic and sense data like weight, verticality, gravity, volume, tension, stretch, release, timing, and spatial orientation of our movement and relations. This type of exercise of following impulses and playful instincts without suppression requires us to retrain our normal habits of attention. We have to practice responding freely with our bodies and get used to the sensation of erraticism, spontaneity, or feeling ‘out of control’ that that kind of unedited behavior brings. And although this feels unfamiliar due to social conditioning toward rational action, we find that we are not merely losing control, but we are shifting it (I discuss the continuity between *control and surrender* on p. 270). It takes disciplined practice to be present to this form of associative ‘wandering’ action and knowing specifically how to ‘let go’ of our familiar behavior, since we are not supposed to allow ourselves to revert to our normal ways of moving that feel familiar and/or ‘acceptable.’

This type of active training with body-mind integration builds

our awareness of sensations and feelings and streams of thought in the present. For example, we learn to sense discomfort as a signal of learning because as long as we are inclined to want to feel security and in control over what we are doing and the kinds of forms we produce, then we are not being with the sensation of exploration. It is difficult to develop new and expressive content if we are seeking security or being resistant to change. Therefore, we learn to not let our actions and behavior define our image of 'self'. Nurturing an attentiveness to present sensation and emotional energy actually helps with a distancing of 'self' from the perceived identification with external forms of movement. The performers question self-consciousness to see that actions and behaviors are malleable and that we have the capacity to embody a vast array of qualities and emotional energies that we do not typically see as part of our identity. When we learn to let go of a desire to control our identity or to look cool or interesting, our work can, in fact, can become both more objective and expressive.

Butoh's close attention to training this perceptive experience also makes obvious how much a self-directed capacity relies on cultivating trust in an individual way of working, and also how, in the empathy of that approach, there is a strong sense of trust built among performers. The personal capacity we each work on so as to be affected, to surrender aesthetic control, to meet the others halfway, to be uncomfortable, and to feel exposed comes with a sense of vulnerability. There has to be a willingness to show one's vulnerability, which, at the same time, shows trust among one another. This emphatic connection builds a social context of support and reassurance to be comfortable with the sensation of openness. Specifically, one-on-one partner work helps us become intimate with having to non-verbally exhibit trust to relax in one another's presence. The Butoh art form, therefore, presents a contextual contingency for exploration that comes from the performers' active willingness to show courage and to trespass fears. By creating an atmosphere where feeling exposed and vulnerable is encouraged, it allows performers to let go of established social norms and expectations in order to explore and play. Interpersonal trust fosters experimenting, going beyond, mucking around, not worrying, letting go of 'reality,' making mistakes, breaking habits, letting go, and lightening up.

As a result, what experimental and radical practices like movement improvisation can serve to exemplify is a more direct rela-

tionship between self-directed capacity and trust. The content and form of the social context in which artistic practices are managed and practiced “influences the kind of meaning” and capacity for inquiry that designers are “likely to derive from the work” (Eisner, 2002a, p. 27). In other words, the concern for embodied creative experience revolves a physical energy and dynamics of immediate experience so that managing for outcomes also means managing for mobility and feelingful content in the present. In the case of Butoh, emotional feelings of doubt, fear, and vulnerability require a social form that equally expresses and invites empathy, concern, acceptance, and tolerance toward one another’s process.

I will briefly mention two other points about Butoh that come from its process-oriented approach and dismissal of dichotomies that are noteworthy for design research methods. The first concerns the possibility of questioning the existence of one’s ‘self,’ to train oneself to “drop the ego” or let one’s guard down to “meet” others, as opposed to a need for self-preservation. For instance, the design field is known for celebrating the celebrity personality of the designer and this places focus on the individual. But the backlash to this is to turn to collective forms of collaborative participatory design and consensus-building (Quental, 2015). There is not full consideration of the kinds of methods used and for what is lost by moving from the individual to take up diversity in teambuilding, cooperation, decentralization, open-source systems, and networks. Butoh demonstrates how, by specifically dealing with the intersection of self/no-self, there is a possibility of exploring the nuances of personal relations and manifestations of self-identity or ego in the designer’s work. Moreover, there are methods that can be used to corporally practice and exhibit empathy (a willingness to be moved). With all of this, there is potential to deeply question the presumed dichotomy between the individual and the collective in design. Butoh does not begin with this division. All the work is collective (in a group setting or as an aggregation of individual interests), but it is not necessarily collaborative (with a common goal). This integrative stance could open up fruitful investigation of self-directed capacity and the freedom to both develop individual projects and personal expression, as well as to collaborate at will.

A second point is the way that the Japanese influence of aesthetics in Butoh revolves around the premise of embodying what would be thought of as mixed aesthetic qualities like spiky-gentle, dismal-splendor, sweet-melancholy, rough-tranquil, subdued-in-

trusive. The precise focus on an aesthetic experience connected through intuition and perception offers interesting directions for design research to move away from dualistic thinking to more poetic interpretations. In current design discourse, for example, there is a predilection for taking up inverse descriptions to convey a concept (e.g., making/unmaking, learning/unlearning, managing/unmanaging). While calling out either/or propositions functions to conceptually parse opposites, this is not particularly helpful in that these are already tacitly understood. Conveying a gestalt and ‘feel’ found in relational experience means calling directly upon aesthetic associations. Sensed physical qualities operate directly to “turn our stomach” opposed to concepts of “disgustingness” (James, 1912/2003, p. 80), because qualities are not conceptual entities (M. Johnson, 2015, p. 28). This suggests that poetic and metaphorical methods of use of language, not purely in the abstract, but tied to sensory perception and modes of interaction, can help refer back to qualities of aliveness and uncertainty rather than entities of possession. For example, the Japanese use methods of juxtaposition, assemblages, and bricolage to generate such dynamic types of perceptive experiences (Richie, 2007).

Implications of an Embodied Approach

A contribution of this research is that it calls attention to the integral role of design research to influence design education. Given the dramatic changes the discipline has seen over past decades, design research is key to understanding and/or articulating methodologies and approaches used to teach and learn design with respect to particular philosophical outlooks. Design education should not just follow design practice and take up the tools and methods, but in some way, it is the responsibility of design research to critically reflect on the epistemological implications of those tools and methods (Buchanan, 1998). Design research is often ahead of the conditions of design practice and is in the position to make recommendations with philosophical bearings.

For example, some design educators are calling for design programs to “move beyond basic aesthetics and ‘form giving’” to “participate in strategic planning, innovative product development, and interdisciplinary collaboration” (Kolko, 2005, p. 1). Especially in programs promoting design thinking, participatory, and tran-

disciplinary design, is where it is suggested that design education supplement aesthetics and form-giving with business development and user-centered design (e.g., Kolko, 2005). These initiatives need to be scrutinized and considered for how they support aspects of an embodied creative practice and the kind of capabilities necessary to actually pursue qualitative experiences and not just technical expertise and skills directed at an industrialized view of education. A subversive result of holding on to objective methods, skills, and tools to conduct an activity and/or the intellectual apprehension of experience is an erosion of trust in the ability to be with discomfort, the uncertain, and to find and represent meaning through the non-instrumental aspects of human experience. There is a disregard for the “subjective,” sensitivity, and admission of idea-doubt when these aspects are part of an expressive process that involves a disposition of “letting come” and being able to surrender.

In particular, a pedagogical approach aimed toward a self-directed capacity for exploring and learning raises issues surrounding the view of “knowledge” and behavior that is encouraged in the current trend with visually-oriented and systems-oriented approaches in the fields of design. Many fields of design currently lack an appreciation for artistic modes of thinking-feeling integration and the kind of aesthetic capacity that relies on a ‘feel’ for a design gestalt or wholeness through bodily perception. In many ways this has been implicitly assumed in design, but an understanding of how design’s aesthetic tradition explicitly contributes to designer’s self-directed capacity for creative inquiry seems necessary when, for some, the concept of design is understood to be dematerialized. Self-direction is timely when there is so much confusion in the field around what is ‘core to design’ and while design is being aimed more broadly at social learning situations and having a professed cultural relevance amid today’s increasing economic complexity, the want for innovation, the fear of declining community participation, and the rise of a concern for sustainability (e.g., Fuad-Luke, 2009; Julier, 2013; Manzini, 2014). Focusing on the use of sensory modalities and the basic ability to discern qualitative and expressive features of experience now becomes important in a social climate where designers and individuals are generally becoming more dependent on visualization, information technologies, and data-driven decision-making as bases for action. That is, turning inward to concrete experience as a source of expressive and creative action and to find meaning is increasingly valuable amid empty abstractions.

The embodied approach, like Pragmatism, is a return to an old way of thinking and doing. Relational concerns from the pragmatic view present a living question of how to integrate design form-giving into the direct physical experience of human relations. Form-giving in design does not simply disappear at the level of the ‘social.’ The areas of design that promote participation and collaboration should appreciate how qualities of action and perception are aesthetically oriented toward social experience and, in particular, empathy and trust. Expressive and nonverbal communicative qualities like gesture, demeanor, effort, and feeling underlie how we actually make and interpret intersubjective meaning (Bergen, 2012). These are tangible, embodied experiences of form-giving. Just looking at the field of performing arts, for example, one sees how there are possibilities for embodying and materializing social concerns in aesthetic forms.

One challenge to considering the embodied experience of form-giving is that currently in the design research community “there is a slight tendency in design research to also be mostly interested in the final product” (Krogh et al., 2015, p. 42). Likewise, many designers want aesthetic control over design outcomes, since this is, in a sense, what they are trained to do. It not unreasonable to presume that many design researchers want to make things that look good, to have a sense of control over their self in that image, and to be cultural ambassadors of taste and style (Julier, 2006; Tonkinwise, 2011). The fact that much of design research relies on interpretive “accounts” of the designer’s process instead of ideas of aesthetic judgment, which start with perceptual awareness, is revealing of the commitment to a dualistic thinking. Part of the analytical focus in design is also related to how designers and design researchers learn to write about their decisions, choices, and understandings. Many important theories in design research make the case that there should be a more analytical and reflective methodology within design (Buchanan, 1995; Cross, 2006; Krippendorff, 1989; Simon, 1969). Design research has not fully come to grips with the Pragmatic implication that the objective existence of design methods or designed artifacts alone does not discern what can be observed as design knowledge, taste, or style — that which is subjectively felt.

Seeing skills and methods as objects generates misunderstandings for design educators concerning what and how to train for general design sensibilities and judgments. By way of example, in

fields like interaction design one answer to this has been to train students in detailed methods of how to do to design in order to contribute to “the development of personal judgment of what is good design what is not” (Kuutti, 2009, p. 45). Clearer methods appear to offer more specific accounts of the kinds of things that designers do as part of personal judgments or decision-making, rather than something internal to designer. The design theorist Jeffery Bardzell (2011) frames this conflict in the following way:

Whereas user-centered design positions the designer in an almost passive position of discovering existing needs using scientific methods and then designing around and for what is discovered in that activity, traditional design activates the designer as a perceptive, insightful, and imaginative meaning-maker, an ability that is individualistic to a certain degree and dependent on judgment rather than data, and offers a radically different view of the foundations of a design problematic. (21.10.1)

Bardzell presents the struggle within the discipline that wants to prioritize the “subjective expertise of the designer — as an active meaning-maker and speculative reasoner” (21.10.1) as the foundation of design and, at the same time, wants to address objective validations of ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ Of course in practice, as Bardzell clarifies, there is not “an exclusive opposition between expert judgment-based approaches and methods” (21.10.1) but the tendency of design research to seek intellectual authority in formulating “knowledge problems” by abstraction and separation tends to legitimize scientific and/or industrial approaches to learning. This thereby influences design education to appeal to generating clarity and certainty in their approaches from similar values.

If design education is serious about creativity, reflection on the empirical qualities of relations of design has to happen at a deeper level than claiming a kind of pseudo-objectivity via methods for participation, systems, and infrastructuring processes in managerial matters of design. An embodied approach cannot regard design methods and work as precious and absolute and have the design student learn them passively. It involves critically asking if designers themselves are trained to cope with the uncertainty of creative action. Practical concern must be for how to address the personal attitude, responsibility, and self-directed capacity of the

designer to seek and stretch his/herself outside of familiar territory, to be willing to engage emphatically, touching on emotional responses. To take the Pragmatist route, in experience itself the knowledge problem is a false problem. The answer is a matter for design research to be able to emphasize the learning experience over an analytical discussion that is favored in a view of “knowledge production.” Embodied, perceptive, and internal capabilities as part of undergoing an experience cannot be overlooked as part of a designer’s art-based training. This experience of meaning and ‘self’ has to be given space in the design studio in an increasingly rationalized and deterministic approach to education (Danvers, 2003).

There is a lot that can be done toward building up areas of design as a field of study from an embodied perspective. But design communities truly focused on the empathetic and relational aspects of designing, and especially creativity and an openness-capacity, will only be furthered by research that dares to participate in an aesthetic approach and the empirical and subjective experience of action. Such exploratory research is going to have to be, in the embodied sense, comfortable with the uncertainty and ultimate indeterminacy that being present to the changing nature of reality brings.

Implications of a Self-Directed Capacity for Design Education

One major implication of openness and creativity as a self-directed capacity is that designers must actively show a willingness to take risks and present a ‘self’ open to change and revision through action. So if there is a genuine interest in developing a openness-capacity in design education, there has to be some acknowledgement by the designer to critically call into question his/her practice and to take personal responsibility in a context where there are actually no objective criteria. To truly explore different modes of action, to try and fail, to experiment, and to dare to put oneself ‘out there,’ there has to be an artistic ability to surrender or ‘let go’ and to be with the sensation of not knowing where things are headed. As this research shows, this carries physical sensations of vulnerability, fear of failure, exposure, which are counteracted by the ability to show trust. Developing a sense of trust in one’s own way of working is actually to be without a safety net of methods by being able to apply personal judgment to concrete aesthetic qualities in lived experience.

One point about self-direction that should be emphasized is that it is not an individual focus on ‘self’ from a notion of rational self-interest. Again, from an anti-dualistic perspective, this is about the designer’s ability and empathic attitude to focus on the quality of the experience of a design activity that is comprised of both internal and external relations. With that there must be a self-awareness and tuning into habits and emotional dimensions, which is not excessive introspection, but should be seen in terms of understanding where personal inhibitions, defensive patterns, and habits of thought stem from. This is an important part of managing a creative relationship with one’s process and being able to be explicit about actions that are taken and to call into question how relations are being perceived. It is also about overcoming a sense of ego or self-consciousness to have connection and partnership. Thus, a self-directed capacity for openness and trust is really the cornerstone of carrying out exploratory design collaborations.

‘Self’ actually provides the link to an experience of creative action, rather than being pushed aside in favor of rational descriptions of “creativity.” The experience of ‘self’ and the freedom to act and create cannot be addressed from dualistic perspectives where the intellectual is isolated from physical and emotional experience, or where what gives the individual internal meaning and feeling and sense for inquiry is separated from just the doing. Discipline and emotion are not incompatible in experience, but it is because they are not addressed from an embodied perspective that it is not often recognized that working creatively requires an emotional dimension that is also intensely reflexive (Radford, 2004). Dewey (1922/2002) writes, “there is here no antagonism between creative expression and the production of results which endure and which give a sense of accomplishment” (p. 143). Openness is not unbridled creative freedom or the opinion that everything is relative, but it is wedded to an increased responsibility of ‘self’ and to managing one’s behavior and action toward the unexpected and unforeseen. The designer must develop his/her own relation to inquiry and learning design through self-awareness of his/her own limitations, capacities, interests, motivations, and aesthetic judgment. This requires not just drawing from objective means, abstract data, and “thinking,” but turning inward and focusing on experience and emotional connections. This is how the designer can be expected to define and find personal motivation for meaningful possibilities for action and critique, and not simply serve the client’s wishes or ‘business as usual.’

An argument made in this work is that the nature of a self-directed approach is rooted in the embodied approach of art education (Edström, 2008). While there is no single vision of the aims of design education, the results of this research contribute to a pedagogical perspective grounded in the distinctive values of art and design. In many ways, the arts-based tradition of learning by doing can be viewed as an active, relational approach that does not reduce experience, but takes part in its indeterminacy and continual change. This perspective is still a large part of design education and it has much to say about why design is actually valued as a means for creativity, risk-taking, exploration, and a meaning-framing activity in other contexts of inquiry, but often overlooked because of how designers talk about their work through an objective lens.

An embodied view resists the current trend toward ‘scientific’ management of objective qualities in the sense of “quality assurance” by standards, principles, or methods to stand in for what is ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ Instead, the designer’s self-direction involves how he/she wants an experience to feel in order to evaluate and coordinate his/her own experience through aesthetic experience of action, not merely as a rationalized process. This relies on tuning into and being able to describe what qualities one is specifically talking about and what ‘good’ or ‘bad’ empirically means in relation to a particular context and intent that has an embodied, aesthetic ‘feel’ for form. The designer will have to go beyond stating and not be afraid to express his/her feelings.

The qualitative shift to self-direction rests in a combination of an aesthetic vocabulary, or way of talking about emotional relations, and a sensory ‘feel’ and training with that aesthetic sensibility and the trust to apply it. I elaborate these two aspects further as some preliminary recommendations for educational research in design.

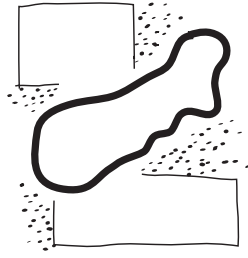
Vocabulary: Going Beyond the “Tacit”

As discussed in earlier chapters, in the field of design, design knowledge has been maintained as a form of practical or tacit knowledge that cannot be made explicit. An implication of this research is that it is critical for design research to look beyond the ‘object’ of knowledge, or rest on a practice-based view of design, and actually tackle what seeking and inquiry feel like, how those work in experience. Even referring to “reflection-in-action” does not give

enough articulation and shading to the perceptual, sensorimotor processing happening within the body and which can be discussed as concrete, tangible, aesthetic information. Designers are notorious for struggling to put words to what design is. But as long as they rely on the kinds of descriptions and terms that generalize their “knowledge” from an outside viewpoint, it actually keeps design tethered to a need for objective justification and being assimilated to mental images of “thinking” or a design process.

These terms do not sufficiently allow for the kind of detailed training designers receive in aesthetics and perceptual awareness in an arts-based tradition. Instead, because this kind of perceptual, sensorial processes cannot be “seen” or made explicit, really because it is not given a vocabulary in a context of rationality, there is increasing fear that design attitude and creativity will become a loose idea like creative thinking. This has much to do with the impression of creativity as occurring in some mysterious realm or with the personality of an unreflective, unbridled, autonomous ‘free spirit.’ Designers must be encouraged to develop an adequate aesthetic vocabulary to express the emotional and visceral content of their physical conditions. This internal awareness of design experiences must be critically reflected upon by designers. However, there is little discussion about how the design researcher organizes information based on an intuitive and inferential feel for direct qualitative aspects and being very concrete and specific about those.

For example, in Butoh we use reflective discussion to connect back to the ‘feel’ of the work and describe our emotional responses and psycho-physical sources of movement, rather than logical explanations. This is different from my architectural training, where there was a strong emphasis on articulating our projects from an observational perspective and in terms of various theories, concepts, and programmatic requirements. But the forms I developed were based in the aesthetic, the feel, and sensation of the relations. I actually learned to design a building from a *parti*, which refers to the organizing concept of the design. It is presented in a simple sketch of form and movement, which means it is about directly conveying qualities of spatial relationships that communicate an aesthetic concept, which includes an emotional and ‘felt’ sensation of relations, rather than reducing a concept to words. It is intended to have a metaphorical clarity and a sense of artistic intent that helps drive the wholeness, form, or gestalt of the design.



As the parti shows, there is a form of aesthetic judgment and sensitivity learned in my architectural training for an expression of qualities of experience that becomes lost at a ‘higher level’ abstraction of architectural design. Given how we relate through both form and content, designers should qualitative and metaphorical descriptions that allow them to tune and refer back to their actual experiences and to their “sensory intentions” (Pallasmaa, 1996, p. 49), instead of doggedly aligning to certain philosophical discourses and dualistic frames. The changing feelings and sensations in the making, organizing, and moving through perceptive qualities is what helps discern and clarify patterns, images, metaphors, and emotional content. This dynamic is what helps the designer realize an overall gestalt or emotional tone.

Training: A Specificity with a ‘Feel’ of Experience

Taking into account the above points, a key artistic ability here is sensitivity toward one’s own bodily condition and specifically being able to be affected or moved. Evidence from this research suggests that practically introducing somatic training with listening to the body and developing awareness in the phenomenological present should help designers to think and feel in emotional and qualitative terms, as much as in formal ones. This internal awareness is where the designer learns to physically sense when he/she is stuck or trapped by inhibitions, habits, insecurities, preconceptions, or tendencies to action. At the same time, it is where one challenges a sense of ‘self’ to change habits and move past fears. Therefore, using the body should not feel ‘silly’ or unfamiliar, but should be understood as the source for designers to imaginatively play, learn, and explore the world. Bodily behavior is how the designer opens him/herself to the potential breadth and depth of experience, to pain, kindness, liveliness, sensuality, and poetry. This openness-capacity is where the designer’s creative process is expanded,

by acquiring more tolerance for and expression of different kinds of emotions and bodily behavior.

The empirical lessons also show how important an embodied learning process is to building awareness of one's own "tools" or way of doing and making. This self-awareness, a personal objectivity to one's own process, is necessary as a creative ability for the artist to know when he/she needs to focus, to be exhausted, to get some fresh air, to relax, or to push him/herself to be uncomfortable. The designer can develop "tools" as part of a self-directed approach and to ultimately self-manage his/her physical process. This moves away from a scientific management need to visualize a creative process through models or steps, and towards being able to 'rest assured' in a state of trust in one's own ability (Edström, 2008).

For example, the kind of bodily form of trust with the process in Butoh, particularly an awareness of one's own bodily experience, is very similar to something that I learned in my architecture studio training. By using the process of form-giving to explore how to make ideas available to the senses, in architecture we cultivated and relied on our bodily perception to materially express, reexamine, and question our relations to the world. The mantra in my architecture courses to "trust the process" expressed the idea that physical actions are a way of working through thoughts. "Trust the process" reflects this same comfort with the body and with a physical process that is uncertain as in Butoh. My architecture professors encouraged the students, just like my Butoh teachers, to experiment, play, make mistakes, to see accidents as new material, and to not be concerned with the outcome. This attitude is reflected in discussions of the way that design practitioners embrace open-endedness and a kind of "let's see how it goes" approach (Michlewski, 2008) and the way that it is said that the designer learns by "tackling problems rather than acquiring theory then applying it" (Lawson, 2005, p. 156).

The focus on movement and change magnifies the temporality of the form-giving experience and that awareness and the concreteness of the quality of openness. When I must practice keeping my posture and demeanor movable and elastic, while having an attitude of "letting things come" without discrimination, this is not a static faculty or innate ability but requires constant physical-mental work and discipline. It should be thought of like training or exercise, rather than in conceptual terms. Training to show empathy, to continually see where I can be stretched and challenged, and to have a connection with others and/or the sur-

roundings makes it important to recognize that internal sensations and a sense of openness are, in fact, detailed and able to be consciously identified, articulated, and therefore nurtured, cared for and given space and time to be practiced.

The Present

In particular, the experience of physical sensation in the present without relying on naming or trying to determine or force relations is what really allows designers to *trust* — to trust their senses and to trust in their own physical emotional processes when there is no objective validation. Direct experience — here and now — is the space where a designer can actually be less fearful of distinctions between right and wrong, but let him/herself be in and learn from the ambiguity that is experience. It is the time and space where there is possibility for action. Dewey's (1934) thesis is a reminder that art is a matter of when it happens more than of what it is. Turning attention toward the qualities of the immediate present and being able to pursue and explore that experience aesthetically, instead of only having the pressure of a future or externalized purpose, is key to designers being able to learn to be with sensations and feelings that are not always nameable but are knowable. This is when it comes to terms with the changing, impermanence of experience. This space for uncertainty and the emphasis on the present is where designers will be able practically counteract the drift towards an overly narrow cognitive and rational approach to viewing design “knowledge.”

Further Research

As basic research into an embodied view of experience, this project brings to bear the Pragmatist perspective of embodied experience and Pragmatist insights on subjectivity in inquiry to design. As far as I have found, this embodied perspective is relatively new territory in terms of design research and theory. It should be furthered as a theoretical and practical means to aid designers in an aesthetic-based foundation for their inquiry.

Addressing all the applied implications of this for design practice is outside the scope of this project. Instead, it should be generally seen that with the embodied perspective there is potential

for incorporating a descriptive aesthetic vocabulary with practical exercises, like perceptual awareness and emotional reflexivity, into design research. This research specifically introduces movement as a methodological strategy for this type of approach.

The pedagogical view of pragmatism, if not reduced to an instrumental view but grounded in radical empiricist stance, provides an alternative perspective to the way in which learning is typically conceptualized in terms of skills. This Pragmatist sensitivity embraces the holistic and emotional development of the designer to learn in and from the experience of designing. By implication it suggests how important empathic and expressive ways of inquiring are to design, especially if design as a field of study takes on an artistic domain of inquiry. In the long run it will be critical for design research to establish how practical ways of working with emotion and feeling build a foundation for self-directed learning and a sense of trust in design practice.

The empirical lessons of this research raise an elemental issue for the field of design about what arts-based inquiry with an aesthetic focus really brings to design education. For one, the embodied approach challenges the tacit assumption in design research that does not question the empirical basis of design as practice-based phenomenon of “knowledge creation.” Design researchers must be explicit in how and what they do and undergo is ‘designerly’ or creative or open. Determining what is ‘designerly’ can only come from action. It is tied to form-giving and the creative sensations of searching, exploring and wandering, or to following the curiosity, impulse, spontaneity, impermanence, and unpredictability of bodily experience not limited to what we can say.

That said, it is imperative that designers continue to show and describe how *form* in their practice is not only a matter of objects, but also a kinesthetic and perceptual experience that is embodied. The embodied experience advanced here is critical to how design relates to the kind of skills and abilities coming from training as a designer. First, embodiment puts emphasis on the subjective, internal relations of an experience felt by the designer, which also points to the relevance of working through feelings and emotions by using sense modalities. Being attentive to how to open up and sense qualities will affect how the meaning of design form-giving is expressed. Second, embodiment raises the possibility for action in the face of uncertainty and voluntary movement as a source of immediate spontaneity. This makes it important to expose and

discuss design inquiry and aesthetic ways of acting, creating and learning, not just observing and finding out how things work. “Embodied meaning-making” (Scarinzi, 2015), or how it is to make, create, do and what that feels like as the subject, is where the designer’s expertise is based.

While Pragmatism relates design to an “epistemology of an expert subject” in the form of “disciplined embodied practices” (Bardzell, 2011, 21.10.2), there are any number of other artistic methods that could contribute to an aesthetic and relational orientation to design. In general, from the perspective of an embodied mind thesis, a more creative application of bodily behavior and emotions in exploring experience is assumed to contribute to a designer’s expansion and refinement of perceptual, imaginative, and expressive abilities. Here is where it will be helpful for researchers to unpack how specific methods and different forms of experiential and sensory training with awareness, bodily perception, and use of emotions can extend and enhance current design approaches.

I think that the somatic route is promising for further developing some of the ideas touched on in this work, including empathic relations to others and environment, opening the perception of ‘self,’ and aspects of temporality and the present. Besides movement improvisation, for example, there are numerous forms of somatic practice and performing arts that offer practical exercises in introspection, mindfulness, somatic awareness, focusing, personal expression, somaesthetics (e.g., Johnson, 2004; Langer, 2014; Shusterman, 2014; Stanley, 2012) that would serve future design research. Beyond this, particular concepts like ‘resonance,’ ‘rhythm,’ and ‘phrasing,’ for example, could be developed methodologically to help designers think temporally, improvisationally, and about form in terms of moving qualities of perception and emotional progression (e.g., Atienza & Sand, 2016; Höök, 2010; Lussier-Ley & Durand-Bush, 2009). In terms of the form of the research document, where I took a safe route by using a scientific structure, this could be integrated more succinctly from an aesthetic and expressive approach through performative, architectural, choreographic, poetic, and dramaturgical structures. Philosophical works like *Rhythmanalysis* by Henri Lefebvre (2004) or *Gestures* by Vilém Flusser (2014), for example, draw attention to the interrelations of body and movement and space and time and open up for styles and forms of non-linear analysis that are expressive of the transaction between the world and the one doing the analysis.

Moreover, an embodied view could benefit from other philosophical perspectives such as feminist theory and other postmodern theories that challenge essentialist views. These offer promising avenues with regard to other vocabularies and methodologies for subject/object integrations and ongoing materializations of the world. They could provide a more critical stance and complex readings of relations of power, legitimacy, identity, the personal, economics, industry and so on. The question to continually ask will be *what* such terms methodologically do and *how* to help connect with the continuity of experience rather than analytical abstractions. Walking as a method of movement, for one example, has long been utilized among philosophers and scholars (Benjamin, 1968; Certeau, 1984; Guattari, 2014), artists (Debord, 2006; Schaub, 2005; Thoreau, 1862/2010), and has been more recently tested in other fields of research as a theoretical approach to embodied engagement, sensory experience, and memory (e.g., Pink, 2015; Schine, 2010; Stevenson, 2014). In this respect, there are an infinite number of frames of human behavior that do not rest on a dualism of internal/external ‘reality,’ but provide examples of perceptual play and imagination in connecting with our surroundings.

I see this thesis as a first step in my practice as a researcher with which I have been trying to become clearer in my philosophical stance and approach to design while also trying to place where I stand in a professional field of activity with other design researchers. Noted previously, there are numerous individual design and architecture researchers exploring methods to multisensory and embodied experience (e.g., Höök, 2010; McLean, 2016; Orru, 2016; Vaughan, 2006), but their research is not specifically aimed toward a view of design pedagogy. In this respect, there are many examples of contemporary artists working at the intersection of art and pedagogy (see Bishop (2012) on pedagogic projects), and to my knowledge there are some examples of academics philosophically engaged with experimental pedagogical formats and exchanging creative/artistic practices such as SenseLab in Montreal. Coming to the end of my studies, I now see that there needs to be continued investigation for more examples and approaches, including historical ones, to education that includes social, ‘managerial’, or subject-oriented forms of learning and creating. This would help to philosophically connect the subjective learning experience of form-giving to a vision of design as an aesthetic discipline and self-directed learning regardless of the production of particular

outcomes or the use of particular materials. One next step in my practice will be to test my recommendations by trying to create new forms/models of design that integrate embodied approaches, emotional and somatic intelligence, and/or sensory awareness.

Final remarks

The point of this research is to help provide philosophical grounding for the artistic origins of design and equally for design as an embodied and creative practice. This work begins to shine a light on the different aesthetic dimensions of designing, particularly the feel and the physical and emotional aspects in the activity of form-giving. It contributes to basic design research on creative action and focuses predominately on the quality of an experience of openness or exploration, rather than the outcome of creativity. Consequently, this research offers an early example of embodying exploration and creativity in experience and the ideas explored here hopefully inspire other design researchers to have the courage to explore the unfamiliar, to express their own learning process, and to address matters of the heart.

Secondly, the embodied perspective should be seen as a call to action for design researchers and educators who are interested in supporting creativity. It shows how philosophically and methodically there must be a turn to the inner experience of what creativity entails in empirical design conditions. The learning implications of an embodied, aesthetic approach to exploration and action are tremendous. The embodied thesis ultimately represents a shift in worldview for design from an objective stance to include a subjective, internal one. Referring back to Table 1 (p. 289), this approach turns on the relation between the designer and his/her own creative development and is founded upon a philosophical perspective of learning from experience and the continuity of that experience. This, in turn, relies on the opportunity to engage with self-direction, trust, compassion, and a sense of empathy toward others in the intimacy of firsthand relations. Our encounters cannot be solely determined by rational intellect, but some form of somatic and emotional intelligence, an aesthetic sensitivity and expressiveness, is necessary to create embodied meaning (M. Johnson, 2007).

In this view, it is really the appreciation for *feeling* that marks our humanity and the qualities of action that are “warm and sym-

pathetic” (Dewey, 1928/1981, p. 30). Nurturing feeling and the freedom to choose how to act will not provide easy conditions for comfort or certainty. An embodied approach, thus, requires designers to *trust* in their own capacities for action enough to be willing to *surrender* and open themselves up toward learning and shaping new experiences with uncertainty. This capacity, what I call openness-capacity, is crucial, given the recognition that much of education, design and arts education included, is headed toward external learning objectives and frameworks to seek solutions and generic terms of “quality assurance” (Skelton, 2012). This research starts to outline how openness-capacity, which actually depends on aesthetic sensibilities and trust, is critical in developing any kind of self-direction in one’s own learning process. Self-direction is consistent with an artistic ability of finding expressive, sensual, and poetic ways to construct and find meaning (Eisner, 2002a). Basically it is an artistic way of learning from experience that integrates thinking and feeling.

The critical point here is that the current calls for design research to turn to more methodological rigor, the adoption of ‘language games,’ and the dependence on rhetorical value to legitimize design’s form of inquiry all miss an opportunity for artistic views of design education and the designer’s embodied “capacity to rest assured in the intimate and in the work process” (Edström, 2008). The danger is that the more that design educators and researchers endorse strategic compliance and feelings of comfort in external evaluations, the more they devalue specific and fundamental aspects of designer’s embodied approach and ability for creative action. The externalized accountability for action narrows the designer’s internal creative capacity for openness and feelings of being comfortable with discomfort, insecurity, and vulnerability.

The question that design educators and research need to be asking is if design should be adopting industry and management methods of problem-solving and decision-making or if it should be developing self-directed capacities of exploration and innovation. The arts and arts-based education is one of the few places left in our institutions in which embodied practice and open-endedness in the ability to choose what to do is still explicitly exercised. Creative action requires going into the unknown with aliveness, emotion, and curiosity. This highlights why learning through the arts and training aesthetic sensibilities like listening to intuition, developing emotional reflexivity, and following an ‘inner rudder’ are so

important to dealing with many contexts of study (Eisner, 2002a). An artistic approach integrates subjective awareness, sensitivity, and feeling into how to take action. Subjective content is taken with the giving of form.

Artistic views of design cannot take inner sensations of exploration and openness for granted in a research turn to more managerial frames and objective process-based methodologies. Rather than assuming scientific views of knowledge, practice-based design research will need to be specific and concrete in artistic capacities as part of an aesthetic approach to inquiry. Especially with respect to inquiry and self-direction, design education should also focus on artistic forms of pedagogy that support the designer's abilities to work with sensory and emotional awareness in the present, the ability to transcend the 'self,' and to ultimately build trust and comfort in an aesthetic way of working.

In the bigger picture, as we culturally turn more and more to externalized forms of accountability for our own experiences, we are experiencing a crisis in our capacities of emotional intelligence, self-management, mindfulness, and moral will (Goleman, 1995; Langer, 1997; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). Externally determined "quality assurance" and fears of getting things 'right' or 'wrong' overreach into our inner worlds and embodied abilities to self-determine and specify different aesthetic qualities of experience. People feel fear and anxiety with regard to their own decision-making and even struggle to recognize what they are feeling in situations (Gendlin, 2003). Furthermore, work stress, constant distractions, and the pursuit of an end diminish our ability to focus in the present. Being able to be present, relax, and open is critical to the quality of attention that a creative "flow" and the emergence of new associations and thought patterns thrive on (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Goleman, 2013). There is a space of time needed to be physically without the security of labels and to find 'felt' meaning through what we do and make (Dewey, 1934/2005).

Our basic loss of the value and practicality of our senses and even the sense of 'self' is comparable to the warnings issued by the Pragmatist philosophers a century ago. They pointed out that a cultural emphasis on what is identifiable and measurable is to the detriment of lived experience. For example, the trend today toward technocratic and deterministic approaches to education (Danvers, 2003), and similarly the excessive reliance on rules and incentives in our institutional conditions, are said to dehumanize activities

and deprive students of the opportunity to exercise their own self will to action (Schwartz, 2011). Withdrawing from learning in the present essentially squelches curiosity and capacity for action that is alive with “purpose and desire” (Dewey, 1928/1981, p. 30). This is essentially Dewey’s (1922/2002) argument for self-management and learning from experience that was raised by Schön (1983).

The field of design, principally if wanting to promote exploration and creativity, should be moving in the direction toward embodied capacities and artistic form-giving and the aesthetic methods to make abstract ideas concrete. This comes from an integrative wholeness of experience that does not disembodify subjective feelings and emotions from action. The creative will for explorative and empathetic participation with the world involves an internal openness-capacity. This cannot come from mechanically imposed methods of organization and separatist terms, but rather comes from feelings of trust and intuition and the willingness to surrender to the sensuality of the ineffable. In the end, popular themes in design today like sustainability and innovation, or speculative, fictional agendas will not matter very much without trust and value in the designer’s own senses. To make change, to act upon what is felt, and to pursue subjective interests and expressive qualities of experience beyond those that are comfortable and safe, but that are new and varying, necessitate an openness and willingness to change. Embracing failure, internally identifying the sources of discomfort and/or sources of curiosity, and being with the uncertainty of the work process are critical parts of creative development in the arts. It will be crucial for design research to take on aesthetic experience, and really the dynamics, imagination, and unpredictability of the present, to continue to broaden artistic understanding and practices of exploration and learning within the field of design.

Lastly, in terms of my own openness-capacity for artistic inquiry, I had to experiment methodologically with ways to challenge myself in order to feel a sensation of exploration and being in the unknown. In the same way, I had to be able to sense where my own habits of thought come from and how to practice ‘letting go’ of those to face my vulnerabilities and fears. By seeking a quality of openness in inquiry, the *how* and *when* that quality of openness can take shape in experience is a finding of this research. In my case, I found a quality of openness in my design approach through Butoh method and specifically within the integrated experience of the present. Somatic practice became a way for me to explore and

connect with the present without the overwhelming concern for producing an outcome. Likewise, the present became a way for me to make space for experience, an inner space, without necessarily creating an artifact.

In my work I kept returning to Dewey's (1934/2005) point that part of the artistic experience is about expressing that opportunity for "movement" in thinking, a sense of "roominess" and "a chance to be, live and move" (p. 217). Perhaps coming from architecture, it follows that I would be intensely curious about space and "roominess" and how that perception of space can be achieved in experience. But finding such freedom in the "space of time" reminds me that, as a designer, I must learn to make a habit of valuing the uniqueness of the here and now and to be alive and alert with an aesthetic quality of openness.

To go back to a Pragmatist outlook, an embodied approach, by integrating the 'self,' invites a way to find personal meaning in inquiry. It turns on the actual feeling of exploration that is rooted in existential concerns, the living doubt and questioning and seeking of experience. It also offers a stance toward an aesthetic dimension of living where parts of human experience can and must be left unsaid just like "every work of art must have about it something not understood to obtain its full effect" (Coleridge as quoted by Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 202). This involvement in experience is not about acquiring or proving anything, but entails surrendering to the poetry of that which is unknowable and impermanent. Pragmatism ultimately offers a philosophical platform for design research to be able explore how design can help us understand who we are, to express feelings and ideas that words cannot, and to enhance one's own sense of 'self' through the freedom to explore and the desire to create.



Appendix

Empirical material

Who

Activities, methods

Leaders

Duration

People (inc myself)

Where

Dates

What

Activity/Context

Case Studies "Collaborative Design"



Kviberg villorna
(Grow Kompanie 425
co-working space)

Feb–
June 2013

Göteborg

Varies

20 weeks

Stefan Molnar,
Ida Rosell
(Utveckling Nordost)

Marketing, site visit,
meetings, observation,
example collection,
group workshop

Target- "cultural
entrepreneurs",
local residents

Workshop with potential
renters, communication to
community (flyers, website),
case studies for business
model, Photos, Google
docs, Blog



The People's
Supermarket-
social enterprise

April–
July 2014

London

Varies

15 weeks

Andrew Whitcomb,
Lien de Cuyper,
Veronica Blugermann
(DESMA)

Meetings, site visits,
observation, group activity

Community members, local
residents (20's-70's)

Workshop with members,
photos, fieldnotes,
documented meetings,
conversations, google docs



The Collaboratory
maker space

June 2014
– contd

Göteborg

Varies

20 weeks

Jasmine Idun Lyman

Meetings, observation,
participation

Local residents, hobbyists,
interaction designers,
gamers, hackers (20's-40's)

Photos, fieldnotes,
documented meetings,
conversations

Workshops, Courses
Artistic Research / Practice



Research Project-
Walking in the
footsteps of Rubicon

28–29 Oct.
2013,
22–23 May
2014,
23–24 Oct.
2014

Göteborg

Varies

6 days

Astrid von Rosen,
Monica Meskimmon,
Monica Sand,
Ricardo Ateniãa

Seminar, Walkshop,
Workshop, Performance

Researchers, performance
artists, students (20s–50s)

Public intervention, videos,
photos, fieldnotes



Artistic Collaboration
focused on methods of
movement–
Future in Motion

9–27 June
2014

Borås

4

4 weeks

Lena Frilund,
Carmen Olsson
Guests: Kia Nordqvist

Bodyweather methods,
performance methods,
sound experimentation,
Viewpoints, artistic
intervention

Physical practice, videos,
photos, sound recordings,
fieldnotes



Butch Training Workshops
Movement improvisation, somatic
awareness training



Site Body Exploration-
Bohemiae Rosa

15–20 Sept.
2014

Czech
Republic

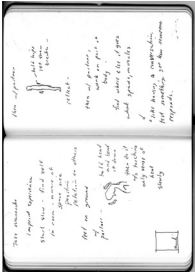

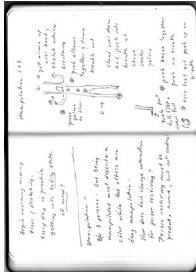

12





1 week

Frank van de Ven,
Milos Sejn

Bodyweather methods,
M+B, walking, peripatetic
records, mental topography

Physical practice, videos,
photos, sound recordings,
fieldnotes

Activity/Context	What	Dates	Where	# People (inc myself)	Duration	Leaders	Activites, methods	Who	Empirical material
	Exploring sensory experience-Walking Around the Corner	22-23 Nov. 2014	London	13	2 days	Christine Quoiraud	Bodyweather methods, Touch	Artists, dancers, movement practitioners from London (20's-40's)	Physical practice, fieldnotes
	Butoh- Introduction	17-20 Feb. 2015	Prague	10	4 days	Sumako Koski	Butoh performance method training, Ki+energy, imagination exercises	Artists, students, performers, engineers, researchers (from CR and Germany)	Physical practice, sound recordings, fieldnotes
	Bodyweather- Training Amsterdam	16-20 March 2015	Amsterdam	15	5 days	Frank van de Ven, Katerina Bakatsaki	Bodyweather methods, Touch, manipulation, M+B training	Dancers, movement practitioners, researchers (from Europe, 20's-40's)	Physical practice, fieldnotes
	Butoh- Intensive Training	27 June - 25 Aug. 2015	Bornholm	6	9 weeks	Anita Saij	Bodyweather methods, Butoh performance method training, integrated work lifestyle	Dancers, movement practitioners, researchers (20's-30's)	Physical practice, performances, videos, photos, sound recordings, interviews, fieldnotes

Activity/ Context	What	Dates	Where	# People (inc myself)	Duration	Leaders	Activites, methods	Who	Emprical material
	Self Animations	2014–2016	Göteborg				Work with body camera, bodily documentation, walking exercises, making and crafting exercises, experiments to capture form-giving & physical experience		Videos, physical exercises, material tests
	"Sensorial Dramaturgy"	27 June 2014 & 11 Oct. 2014	Borås Sound & Textile Festival		2 days	Hector Garcia Jorquera (performance artist), Inelda Cruz Linde (visual artist)	Collaborative performance, blindfolded participants experience a narrative told only through the senses, recorded responses after	Artists and public from Borås	Interviews, sound recordings
	"Sound Cosmetics" Walk through town	19 August, 2014	Bohemia Rosa, Czech Republic		25 Min.		Collaborative improvisation, play forest as instrument to capture wearable sounds	Participants from Bodyweather training	Video, sound recordings, group improvisation
	Movement sketches, line poems	17 August, 2014	Bohemia Rosa, Czech Republic				Experimentation with drawing while moving and drawing + text immediately after movement to capture physical experience	Participants from Bodyweather training	Drawings, movement improvisation, conversations



"Wear One Another"

18 Nov. 2014

Ted X,
Göteborg

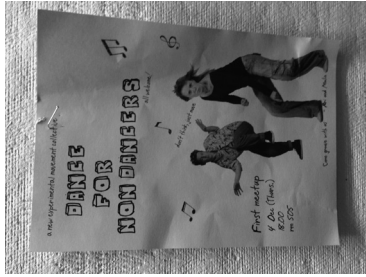
1 day

Sam Hookway (artist)

Intervention, two t-shirts
sewn together in different
bodily relationships- side to
side, back to back (or front
to front, front to back)

Entrepreneurs, students,
designers, young
professionals in Göteborg

Photographs, sound
recordings



"Dance for
Non-dancers"

Dec. 2014–
March 2015

HDK,
Göteborg

6 meetings

Malin Bellman (artist)

Bi-weekly meetups to
explore movement as an
artistic medium and/or
change in orientation of
thinking

Students from GU-Valand,
HDK, and Salgreńska

Movement improvisation,
conversations



Collection of bodily
material

July–August
2015

Bornholm

2 months

Daily collection to
record physical data,
experimentation with
capturing physical (non-
visual) experience

From left to right: Fingernail
clippings, skin shavings,
ticks found on skin, sand
found in hair, sweat, ear wax,
hair dandruff

Svensk sammanfattning

Att förkroppsliga öppenhet

Ett pragmatistiskt utforskande
av den estetiska upplevelsen av
gestaltande i design

Bakgrund

Detta forskningsprojekt har utvecklats ur mitt intresse för design som en konstnärlig, kreativ process. Med denna utgångspunkt ifrågasätter jag en syn på kunskap grundad i observation, vilken dominerar designforskningen idag. Detta synsätt begränsar förståelsen av design genom att fokusera på den reflektiva, medvetna erfarenheten som distinkt och separerad från en fenomenologisk, estetisk känsla av upplevelsen. Det har också praktiska konsekvenser för den kunskapssyn som förs fram i designteori, och i förlängningen för hur en ”designattityd”, som står för öppenhet och kreativitet, lärs ut i designutbildningar.

Design som förhållningssätt till kreativitet beskrivs allt oftare som en speciell ”attityd”, eller ett ”mind-set”. Denna attityd utmärks av ett öppet förhållningssätt som tillåter många olika sätt att se och förstå en situation (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Michlewski, 2008). Vidare karakteriseras den, enligt designlitteraturen, av tolerans för mångtydighet, ett experimentellt och utforskande förhållningssätt, öppenhet för risktagande, en förmåga att hantera komplexitet och omfamna det icke sammanhängande, samt en öppen form av abduktion (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Brown, 2008; Buchanan, 1992; Dorst, 2011; Hassi & Lakso, 2011; Michlewski, 2008). Forskare har också påpekat att möjligheten att tänka och handla fritt och vara öppen för förändring för att inte begränsa den kreativa processen, utgör viktiga aspekter av vad som gör design meningsfullt för designer (Dorst, 2011; Michlewski, 2008).

Det uppstår ett spänningsförhållande inom designpraktiken när designer marknadsför design som en kreativ process frikopplad från materialitet och gestaltning (exempelvis genom koncept som ”designtänkande”), samtidigt som själva praktiken utgår ifrån ett

kroppsligt förhållningssätt till det egna hantverket (Tonkinwise, 2011). Designer söker legitimitet för sin praktik inom företag och offentlig sektor, sammanhang som ofta kräver objektiv validitet för beslutsfattande, och försöker därför att konceptuellt klargöra vad design är eller gör. Men dessa försök att externalisera och verbalisera design för att enkelt kunna kommunicera dess värde leder ofta till missförstånd av de kroppsliga, estetiska dimensionerna av designarbete som är centrala för gestaltning.

Detta spänningsfält inom designers praktik återspeglas i det förhållningssätt inom forskningen som försöker förstå de estetiska och emotionella dimensionerna av design genom att observera och beskriva dem inom ramen för rationella paradig. Utifrån ett sådant reflektivt synsätt begränsas design till en snäv version av rationell erfarenhet som endast kan undersökas i termer av vad som kan studeras objektivt och beskrivas konceptuellt. Den roll som den estetiska upplevelsen spelar, olika aspekter av sinnesförmågor, känslor och intuition i det gestaltande designarbetet, har inte studerats i någon större utsträckning inom designforskningen. Kroppsliga dimensioner av den empiriska upplevelsen av designarbete, eller de estetiska aspekterna av detta arbete, har därför inte heller fått någon större uppmärksamhet. Det saknas därför väl grundad förståelse inom designforskningen för vad och hur designer faktiskt lär sig gestaltning utifrån en konstnärlig grund så att mening och kvaliteter av upplevelser uttrycks och förkroppsligas. Sådan kunskap är dock viktig eftersom utforskandet av kreativa handlingar genom upplevelsen specifikt involverar känslor av osäkerhet (Langer 1989/2014).

Forskningsfrågor

Det finns således viktiga aspekter av den kroppsliga upplevelsen av designers gestaltningsarbete som inte kan hanteras med traditionella forskningsmetoder som utgår ifrån Cartesianska subjekt/objekt distinktioner och analytiska kriterier för att skilja mellan olika upplevelser. Detta projekt utgår istället ifrån en kroppslig ansats och den inre perceptuella upplevelsen av att gestalta. Istället för att reducera förmågan till ”öppenhet” till en statisk attityd eller ett mind-set, fokuserar jag i detta projekt på att försöka uppleva känslan av ”öppenhet” och utforska vad detta innebär i termer av min egen upplevelse och kvaliteterna av relationerna i denna upplevelse. Det kreativa utforskandet som är källan till skapande och lärande utgår ifrån görandet (Mead 1934/1967), vilket bygger

på en icke-dualistisk syn på upplevelsen. Kort sagt, för att uppleva *kontinuiteten* av relationer krävs en kroppslig ansats.

För att konkretisera den kroppsliga perceptuella upplevelsen, inriktar jag mig på gestaltning som anses vara en central kompetens inom designpraktiken (Hjelm, 2009). Jag bedriver grundläggande forskning för att utforska konstnärlig kreativitet genom upplevelse och ställer följande forskningsfrågor:

Hur kan jag erfara öppenhet från ett kroppsligt perspektiv?

- Hur kan jag konceptuellt förstå och förkroppsliga kontinuiteten av upplevelsen, d.v.s. en integrerad tänka-känna upplevelse av medvetandet?
- Hur kan jag metodologiskt utforska ett kroppsligt perspektiv utifrån en relationell ontologi, d.v.s. genom aktivt relaterande i fysiska möten med omvärlden?
- Vad betyder detta specifikt för design som en konstnärlig förmåga som har en kvalitet eller attityd av öppenhet?

Teoretiskt ramverk

John Deweys bok *Art as Experience* (1934/2005) utgör ett viktigt bidrag till filosofin om konsten och dess relation till upplevelsen/erfarandet. Deweys tes, vilken spelar en central roll i detta arbete, är att analytiska teorier om estetik står i motsats till estetisk upplevelse. Det senare involverar en perceptuell kontinuitet av relationer, sekvenser av ”råa” sensationer vilka endast står att finna i upplevelsen, och specifikt i den direkta, icke-objektifierade upplevelsen.

Deweys vision av konst som upplevelse speglar den filosofiska rörelse han var en del av, som har sina rötter i det sena 1800-talets USA, den klassiska pragmatismen. Denna tradition inkluderar Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910), John Dewey (1859–1952) och George Herbert Mead (1862–1931), och är känd för att bryta ner traditionella filosofiska distinktioner genom att hävda det direkta erfarandet som grunden för all kunskap. En av pragmatisternas centrala utgångspunkter är att tänkande är kroppsligt förankrat, och utgår ifrån en icke-reducerande syn

på mänskligt erfارande. Detta innebär att känslan av relationerna mellan ”ting” är empiriskt lika verkliga som själva tingen; känslorna är inte bara subjektiva utan *både* subjektiva och objektiva.

Genom att vara kroppsligt förankrad är tanken till sin natur estetisk, eller upplevd, och därför inte möjlig att separera ut som funktionellt intellektuell eller kognitiv (Johnson, 2007; Scarinzi, 2015; Shusterman, 2008). Den estetiska dimensionen betonar den kreativa och kroppsliga karaktären av handling, eller avsikt, vilken är upplevd och kan därför inte bestämmas av rationellt tillskrivna relationer. Detta har starka implikationer för kreativ handling och en känsla av ”jaget”, eftersom det lyfter fram en viktig roll för det subjektiva och icke förutbestämda som en integrerad del i det kreativa görandet, och i förlängningen för lärande (Joas, 1996). Den pragmatistiska synen på handling och dess perceptuella, emotionella och empatiska dimensioner förutsåg många av de framsteg kognitionsteori gjort på senare år. Den utvecklar också den process-baserade relationella ontologi enligt vilken alla traditionella metafysiska dualismer, som kropp/sinne, subjekt/objekt, förnuft/känsla, representation/upplevelse, endast är abstraktioner (Johnson & Rohrer, 2007).

Empiriskt material

För att komplettera pragmatisternas syn på kontinuitet använder jag en strategi av rörelsebaserat utforskande för att kunna ta mig bortom de dominerande forskningsstrategier som grundar sig på observation. Genom rörelsen agerar jag i direkt respons till omvärlden, så att rörelsen utgör en grundläggande metod för att kunna fånga den estetiska integrationen i nuet. Att utgå ifrån rörelsen är därför en explicit strategi för att aktivt undvika en rationell process som startar från ”medvetandet”, att försöka identifiera ett problem för att sedan lösa det. Denna strategi syftar istället till att *agera* kreativt, i avsaknad av tryggheten av förutbestämda mål eller processer, där sinnesförnimmelser och känslor är omöjliga att separera. Rörelseimprovisation erbjuder metoder för att konkretisera den estetiska upplevelsen av gestaltande genom fysiskt agerande. På så vis fångas den totala immersionen i en aktivitet i nuet som är gemensam för all varseblivning i gestaltande. Eftersom rörelseimprovisation som designartefakt är efemär till sin karaktär, är dess materiella form den varseblivande och gestaltande kroppen.

Jag har valt Butoh, en japansk tradition av rörelseimprovisation, eftersom det är en av de mest radikala i sin ambition att

vara en experimentell och uttrycksfull metod utan någon speciell stil eller mål vad gäller form. Butoh är en form av rörelseimprovisation som grundades av Tatsumi Hijikata och Kazuo Ohno i Japan under det sena 1950-talet och beskrivs som en filosofi såväl som en rörelsepraktik. Den är präglad av buddistisk filosofi och österländska praktiker för att integrera kropp och medvetande, där det grundläggande syftet är att utveckla ”jaget”. Dess direkta fokus på kroppsliga upplevelser innebär en förhöjd uppmärksamhet på individens subjektiva upplevelse, eller ”interiör” (kroppen som subjekt) genom kroppsliga träningstekniker (kroppen som objekt). Butoh erbjuder på så sätt en relevant konstnärlig och icke-dualistisk metod för utforskande eftersom den har specifika träningstekniker för att vara i nuet med inre sensationer och känslor, och specifikt ”öppna upp” det subjektiva ”jaget” för olika sätt att röra och föra sig utanför sin egen trygghetszon.

Denna studies empiriska material består av fyra direkta upplevelser från min Butohtränning. De fyra upplevelserna kallas *Praktisera ”jaget”, Mötas halvvägs, Förkroppsliga form, Känsla av process*, och har till syfte att utforska en estetisk integration i nuet genom gestaltning. Buthos fysiska improvisationstekniker och formella förutsättningar relaterar till ett integrerat medvetande i nuet. De fyra upplevelserna belyser alltså, var och en på sitt sätt, en konkret och kontextualiserad situation av den direkt upplevda, kroppsliga känslan av att tänka, och de ständigt föränderliga inre relationerna i gestaltning. Varje exempel utgör ett empiriskt underlag för att utforska en viss kvalitet av ”öppenhet” genom den kroppsliga upplevelsen, och för att lyfta fram kontinuiteten mellan objektiv reflektion, känslan av själv-kontroll och självbevarelsedrift med en kroppslig, fenomenologisk närvaro, utan att särskilja det från ”jaget”. Dessa exempel visar på den kroppsliga upplevelsens komplexa dynamik, vilken inkluderar handling, känslor, minnen och sinnesstämningar, samt hur jag lär mig att få syn på mönster för hur jag förnimmer och uppfattar form genom rörelse. Detta kroppsliga utforskande hjälper mig att upptäcka min konstnärliga kapacitet för kroppslig känsla och uttryck.

Diskussion

Jag sammanfattar nio insikter från det empiriska arbetet med Butoh för att utveckla förståelsen för vad det innebär att fysiskt och perceptuellt anta en attityd av öppenhet genom upplevelsen. De nio

insikterna är: (1) *uppmärksamhet på ”tankeflödet” i nuet*, (2) *självmedvetenhet om vanor och mönster*, (3) *konkretisering av kvaliteter genom känslor och ansträngning*, (4) *vilja att beröras*, (5) *uttrycksfull gestaltning genom känslor*, (6) *fokus på detaljer genom sinnenförminnelser och bildspråk*, (7) *sammansmältande av handling och medvetande för att vara i nuet*, (8) *utveckling av relation till den egna processen*, (9) *acceptans av kunskap som kan upplevas men inte namnges*.

Utifrån dessa insikter beskriver jag behovet av ett estetiskt perspektiv som utgår ifrån designerns inre upplevelser för ta sig an relationer i nuet. Dessa konkreta upplevelsebaserade insikter behandlar kroppsliga intryck och uttryck likväl som kognitiva förmågor eller metoder. Detta innebär ett skifte från att betrakta öppenhet som en attityd eller ett objektiva tillstånd, till en syn på öppenhet som kapacitet för handling. Den subjektiva upplevelsen är central för denna utforskande kapacitet för att kunna hantera osäkerhet, ta designbeslut utan objektiva kriterier, hantera motsägelser, ta risker, använda sin fantasi för att meningsfullt kunna uttrycka upplevelser på empatiska och kvalitativa sätt. Detta är viktigt för att designer ska kunna se design som ett utforskande med frihet att skapa och omfamna olika betydelser och möjliga vägar framåt (Dorst, 2011).

Dessa insikter belyser vikten av att erkänna vikten av designerns inre förmåga till *medvetenhet* och *villighet* att utforska och skapa, i synnerhet för öppenhet och kreativitet. En designer kan genom praktiska övningar lära sig att aktivt motverka förutfattade meningar och önskan att ha mental tydlighet, eller att kontrollera förväntningar av vad som ska produceras eller ”designas”. Detta pekar på hens förmåga att utmana och förfina sin praktik genom kroppslig upplevelse, och specifikt i relation till den subjektiva, emotionella dimensionen och känslan av ”jaget”.

Det empiriska materialet indikerar att det måste finnas vissa förutsättningar för att kunna arbeta med detta inre perspektiv av kroppsliga relationer som krävs för att praktiskt utveckla kapaciteten för öppenhet. Jag sammanfattar de två grundläggande förutsättningarna som *kontrollera och kapitulera* och *förtroende* vilka är speciella för ett estetiskt sätt att förhålla sig till omvärlden i den direkta upplevelsen. De sammanfaller med en själv-styrd praktik av kreativt utforskande och kapacitet för öppenhet. Denna estetiska form av utforskande samstämmer också med den inre upplevelsebaserade mening som uppstår genom kroppslig praktik, vilken är lika viktig för en designers praktik som dess diskursiva symboliska mening.

Slutsats

Förhoppningen är att denna avhandling ska bidra till att beskriva designs konstnärliga grund i filosofiska termer. Den kopplar samman pragmatismen med den kvalitativa upplevelsen av gestaltning, speciellt vad gäller de olika estetiska dimensionerna som de perceptuella, kroppsliga och emotionella aspekterna. Teoretiskt visar avhandlingen att ett pragmatistiskt, icke-dualistiskt perspektiv av upplevelse utgör en grund för en relationell ontologi som bidrar till förståelsen för design som en kroppslig form av utforskande. Genom att företrädevis fokusera på kvaliteterna av upplevelsen av öppenhet, eller utforskande, snarare än utkomsten av kreativitet, bidrar detta arbete till att bygga en teoretisk plattform för design. Detta är speciellt viktigt för att utveckla pedagogiska förhållningssätt till kreativitet och lärande som utgår ifrån upplevelsen som helhet, och därmed inte tolkas rationellt eller reduceras till symboliska eller retoriska utsagor. I synnerhet positionerar denna avhandling en subjektiv, självstyrd kapacitet för öppenhet som central för ett estetiskt angreppssätt till pedagogik, vilket förhåller sig till designers förmåga till uttrycksfullt och empatiskt lärande genom upplevelsen.

Avhandlingen bidrar också till grundläggande designforskning om kreativ handling genom ett empiriskt utforskande av upplevelsen av att gestalta. Detta är ett första steg till att praktiskt bemöta bristen på förståelse för vad det kroppsligt, perceptuellt innebär att inta en attityd av öppenhet i upplevelsen. Det empiriska arbetet visar hur design kan fysiskt förnimmas och upplevas i relation till en känsla och en kvalitet av öppenhet som är självdriven.

Avhandlingen bidrar till metodutveckling genom att introducera en rörelsebaserad metodologi. Detta representerar ett skifte från ett objektivt fokus på designs utkomster och form, till ett fokus på upplevelsen av att gestalta, baserad på ett estetiskt förhållningssätt som framhåller förmågan att vara i nuet genom att kroppsligt och känslomässigt lyssna av och respondera till omgivningen och ”jaget”. Detta praktiska fokus sätter upp en relation mellan en konstnärlig, eller kreativ, attityd till utforskande och konstnärliga metoder för att utveckla medvetande och känslighet inför de fysiska förutsättningar som medger en kvalitet av öppenhet och förkroppsligad kapacitet till öppenhet.

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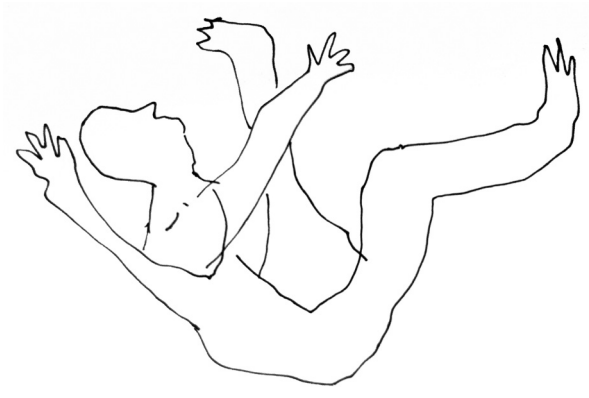
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