

Criando arenas para interações sociais: “coleções de fronteira”

Creating Arenas for Social Interactions: “Boundary Collections”¹

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Resumo

Desde meados dos anos 2000, assistimos ao surgimento de novas formas de instituições dedicadas à produção, disseminação, preservação e conhecimento de práticas de arte performativa. Embora o desenvolvimento de coleções seja apenas uma atividade periférica nessas organizações, a coleção constitui um território propício à experimentação. Os atores envolvidos interagem com os objetos coletados, materiais ou imateriais, em suas ações artísticas, ou mesmo inventam novas formas de “fazer uma coleção”. Propomos a noção de “coleção de fronteira”, inspirada na sociologia interativa, a fim de mostrar que a coleção, em regime performático, prossegue e gera formas de cooperação entre diferentes mundos sociais e renova as interações entre seres humanos e objetos. Direcionando nossa atenção na Fondation du doute, no Watermill Center, no Musée de la danse, analisamos as formas de colaboração entre os atores que interagem com estas coleções, as habilidades e referências que são mobilizadas, as ferramentas que são construídas e as formas de conhecimento que são produzidas.

Palavras-chave

Arte Performativa. Coleção de Fronteira. Fondation du doute. Watermill Center. Musée de la danse.

Abstract

Since the mid-2000s, we have witnessed the emergence of new forms of institutions dedicated to the production, dissemination, preservation, and knowledge of performative art practices. Although building collections is only a peripheral activity in these organizations, it constitutes a territory propitious to experimentation. The actors involved engage the collected objects, material or immaterial, in their artistic actions, or even invent new ways of “making a collection”. We propose the notion of “boundary collection”, inspired by the interactional sociology, in order to show that the collection, in a performative regime, proceeds and generates forms of cooperation between different social worlds, and that it renews the interactions between humans and objects. By focusing our attention on the Fondation du doute, the Watermill Center, the Musée de la danse, we analyze the forms of collaboration among the actors who interact with these collections, the skills and references that are mobilized, the tools that are build, the forms of knowledge that are produced.

Keywords

Performative Art. Boundary Collection. Fondation du doute. Watermill Center. Musée de la danse.

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Over the last twenty years, performance art and stage or “living” arts have found their way into museums traditionally dedicated to the visual arts. Their inclusion in exhibition spaces that are still broadly modelled on the “white cube”; although it is better suited, the “black box” associated with multimedia artworks still creates important challenges. A few major museums – among them the Tate Modern, the Whitney Museum, the Centre Georges Pompidou, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York – have set up regular programs. Others have established specific spaces when they expanded or moved. A number of museums have changed their working methods to accommodate these practices. Such adaptations go beyond simply the issues associated with curating and collecting performative art practices. They concern the economic, social, and epistemological models upon which art museums have developed, as they mark these museums’ foray into an event – and spectacle-based economy. They are also indications of museums’ reaffirmation of their public and social vocation. Performative art practices enable modern and contemporary art institutions to experiment with new forms of social connections. For contemporary dance companies and promoters, programs in art museums broaden their ability to present performances and draw new audiences. They also respond to choreographers’ desire to invent and experiment with ways to produce and disseminate dance, detached from the dominant organizational model based on dance companies.

In parallel with the museums’ transformation, which many have called a “performative turn”, new organizations, smaller and more flexible, emerged in the mid-2000s dedicated to mediation of, preservation of, and knowledge about performative art practices. These unorthodox organizations have been able to respond with more agility than museums to the new economic and social expectations of cultural institutions, as they are better adapted to the ephemeral, corporeal, dialogic, interdisciplinary, collective, collaborative, political, and often protest-related nature of performative works. Designed by artists, scholars, activists, independent curators, and museum professionals, these new structures offer a wide variety of forms, levels of development, missions, and ways of operating, funding, and governance. From the outset, they unabashedly take performativity as a core activity, in various senses: the performativity of the art practices that they are concerned with; performative approaches to production and dissemination of knowledge; and relations with audiences and pedagogical conceptions that aim for forms of agency.

These new organizations are redefining the lines between disciplinary fields, setting new borders and forms of hybridization. They are encouraging actors that had never worked together to collaborate and share methods, skills, and knowhow. Aligning themselves with a performative approach, these organizations seek to establish action and experience as the privileged operating mode. Instead of disseminating content constituted by “expert” professionals, they propose that the actors involved produce knowledge together through collective actions. They are thus helping to establish models that are more horizontal and to invent new forms of production and transmission of knowledge.

In many ways, these new institutions fall within the lineage of “new institutionalism,” a movement that sprang up in the 1990s in opposition to neoliberal values and consisted of redefining the role and social customs of museums dedicated to contemporary art. Abandoning the traditional format of exhibitions of artworks for limited durations, the institutions that took this path turned to close and long-term collaborations with artists to develop new forms of

projects: laboratories, platforms, think tanks, schools, distribution chains, and so on⁴. To involve publics in their activities, they highlight the notion of hospitality, use alternative pedagogies that delegate the production of knowledge to “learners,” and formulate flexible, collaborative, and interdisciplinary working methods. When public funding of these institutions was reduced and their programs were challenged by local powers, some actors defended the idea of “instituting practices”, fluid and moving organizations, resisting their own institutionalization, in order to activate a continual process of “production of desires” within the communities to which they were attached (RAUNIG; RAY, 2009). The organizations devoted to performative practices that emerged in the mid-2000s adopted several of the orientations of new institutionalism and instituting practices: a predilection for organizational flexibility and for long-term projects, for the central position granted to artists, and for involvement of publics within horizontal pathways.

Although building collections is only a peripheral activity in these organizations, when it is not simply nonexistent, we felt that it is relevant, in the context of this issue of *Museologia & Interdisciplinaridade* devoted to connections between collection and performativity, to take a closer look. Indeed, in these organizations the secondary status of collections makes them a territory propitious to experimentation. The actors involved deploy efforts and inventiveness with regard to ways of engaging the collected objects in their actions or even inventing new ways of “making a collection.” Our goal is neither to build a typology nor to paint an exhaustive portrait, but to outline the conceptions and uses of the collections that are emerging from hybrid organizations devoted to performative art practices.

In focusing on three institutions – the Fondation du doute in Blois, France; the Watermill Center in Long Island, United States; and the Musée de la danse created in Centre Chorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne, also in France – we advance the hypothesis that the collection, in a performative regime, functions as a “boundary object” (STAR; GRIESEMER, 1989). Arising from interactional sociology, which involves observing and analyzing the dynamics of interactions among individuals (VINCK, 2009), the notion of the boundary object, in the context of these young institutions seeking to invent new models, allows us to show that the collection both proceeds from and engenders forms of cooperation among different social worlds, and that these collective actions assume more importance than the corpuses acquired. It would thus be possible to speak of a “boundary collection”. Such a hypothesis calls for a change of viewpoint and of framing. Instead of looking at the material or immaterial objects that comprise these corpuses, their artistic and historical value, and the serial logics underlying them, we observed the collective activities that they generate, the means of collaboration among the individuals and groups involved, the references and cultural knowledge that these actors mobilize, the tools that they build to facilitate this cooperation, and the forms of knowledge that are produced⁵.

4 Among these small and medium-sized institutions, most situated in North European countries, are Basis for Contemporary Art in Utrecht and Witte de With in Rotterdam, the Netherlands; the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland; the Bergen Kunsthall in Bergen, Norway; the Rooseum in Malmö, Sweden; and Le Palais de Tokyo in Paris, France.

5 Restrictions on travel imposed by the pandemic reduced the possibilities for fieldwork. We had undertaken preliminary observation visits to the Fondation du doute, the Musée de la danse and the Louvre Museum (for the exhibition *Le Louvre invite Robert Wilson. Living Rooms*) in 2014, but we had to cancel those planned for 2020. The research and interviews were therefore conducted remotely. We would like to thank

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First, we provide a short overview of the main theories of the collection from the mid-1980s to the present, and we show that these approaches, whether anthropological, sociological, or historical, pay attention to collective actions and cooperation networks. Then we outline a theoretical framework for thinking of the collection as a space for collective action and cooperation, drawing on theories about performativity and the boundary object. Finally, we address each of the three case studies in order to uncover different forms of boundary collections.

The Collection: Not Only Objects, but Also People

Etymologically, “to collect” comes from the Latin verb *colligere*, which means to choose and assemble. In the anthropological sense, a collection consists of a selection of natural or cultural, material or immaterial, objects, depending on the criteria chosen in advance by the individual or collectivity assembling it. Questioning the paradoxical status of the object in a collection, which has an exchange value and yet is deprived of a use value, historian and philosopher Krzysztof Pomian (1990) proposed the concept of “semiphore”: an object that is exposed to view and no longer handled. Endowed with significances, bearer of meaning, it “represents the invisible”. The collection thus helps to produce symbolic values. In the view of anthropologist James Clifford (1988), collections reveal what groups and individuals have chosen to conserve, to set a price for, and to trade from the material and immaterial world. It is, in a way, the seismograph of the value system of a society, its transformations, and its “zones of contest” (1988: 226).

A collection is organized in series, and how it is ordered produces meaning. It also constitutes a way of thinking about the world, of making it intelligible. Jean Baudrillard (1996) distinguishes a collection from an accumulation, a non-selective form of collection that involves neither sorting nor arranging in series, thus bankrupting meaning. Walter Benjamin (1979) dwells on the collector’s capacity to think up original ordering systems. By detaching things from their context, the collector destroys the orderings within which objects fit before they were acquired and must therefore keep them from being scattered and dispersed. The challenge for the collector is to “hold them together,” to invent new systems of intelligibility. Benjamin (1999: 211) speaks of the collection in terms of “creative” or “productive disorder”.

Collecting is also a process essential to the formation of identities, both individual and collective. As Clifford (1988: 217) shows, identity presupposes “acts of collection, gathering up possessions”. Individuals formalize their identity through the goods with which they surround themselves and that they own, whereas groups define their cultural “ego” by choosing “authentic collective ‘property’” (Ibidem: 217) – the patrimony. In addition, a collection is often a statement of social, economic, cultural, and racial prestige. It is a way of standing out.

Finally, collections weave complex links with past, present, and future. Benjamin (1979) shows that collectors present a constantly renewed experience of the past that they contrast against the linear, immutable conception of history promulgated by “positivist” historians. A collection is related to the work

the staff of and contributors to all three institutions for sharing their documentation and observations with us: Marion Louis, Mohamed Nechnech and Benoit Colin (Fondation du doute); Elka Rifkin and Brian O’Mahoney (Watermill Center); Philippe Malgouyres (Louvre Museum); Céline Roux and Florentine Busson (Musée de la danse).

of remembering, which brings the past into the present. It is oriented toward the future because, as a process of transmission, it saves for posterity that which is threatened with disappearance. Baudrillard (1996: 103) writes, very aptly, that collected objects “are accompanied by projects”.

More recently, the collection has been approached from a completely different theoretical horizon, in the perspective of understanding the new economic models that emerged in the early part of this millennium. It is becoming paradigmatic of a new form of capitalism. Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre (2017: 11) see the emergence of an economy of enrichment “based on ... exploitation of an underlying stratum that is purely and simply the past”. It consists of highlighting things that already exist, of transforming “a dormant legacy into an active heritage” (Ibidem: 39) through, notably, the production of narratives. It underlies sectors such as luxury products, patrimony, tourism, culture, and finance.

Boltanski and Esquerre also analyze how the prices and value of goods are established under such an economic model. They distinguish four forms of valorization. The standard form, characteristic of industrial capitalism, valorizes standardized things intended for use, mass produced by industry. In contrast, the collection form, the archetype for the enrichment economy is based on the scarcity of things or the position that they occupy within a series. This form makes it possible to revalorize objects that were devalued under the standard form. Midway between the collection and standard forms, the trend form enables a cyclical process of valuing and devaluing. Finally, the asset form is based on market potential: things are conserved in order to exchange them for money later. According to Boltanski and Esquerre, the enrichment economy proceeds from the transition from the standard form to the collection form. The asset and trend forms both provide this transition from one system to another and allow them to coexist.

This new economic model benefits the “patrimonial class” (BOLTANSKI; ESQUERRE, 2017), the wealthy and very wealthy, many of whom have inherited their fortunes. It has also engendered a new social group, “enrichment workers” (Ibidem: 460-466) or “precarious” cultural workers (Ibidem: 463-467). These workers, armed with university degrees, growing in numbers thanks to state investment in cultural policies and post-secondary education, are responsible for constructing legitimate narratives about things, producing the histories that transform them into legacies.

Although these approaches differ vastly, they all demonstrate the relevance of envisaging the collection as a field of interaction for various social groups whose bases of cultural knowledge, statuses, and interests do not necessarily coincide. In his book on the phenomenon of “hyper-auratization” of contemporary art, inspired largely by Boltanski and Esquerre, philosopher Jean-Pierre Cometti (2016) proposes an approach to the collection that privileges relations and processes to the detriment of objects: “The collection is a major component of, if not a condition for, a process of attribution and distribution of value that does not depend on objects as such, but on the relationship between objects and an individual” (COMETTI, 2016: 180, our translation). This is even more important, in Cometti’s view, because in contemporary art, the accent is shifted from artefacts to processes, gestures, and acts, without keeping the art market from becoming more and more important.

Therefore, two ways of apprehending the links between collection and performativity have arisen: first, the performativity of the objects collected (performance and living arts) and the challenges that it poses to the collection,

which traditionally privileges material culture; second, the performativity of the collection as such – that is, the actions and interactions that make it and that it makes happen. Whereas the former has been widely analyzed and debated over the last twenty years, the latter remains to be elucidated.

Collecting Performance: No, It Is No Longer a Paradox!

Performative art practices encompass the living arts (dance, theatre, circus, and so on) and performance art, which evolved in the late 1960s among established art disciplines, with a view to decompartmentalizing them. In the last two decades, however, there has been a tendency to associate performance art with the visual arts. Although they have different histories and institutions, these art practices have performativity in common. They are presented in the form of actions or gestures accomplished in the perspective of a confrontation or a rapport with an audience. They respond to criteria advanced by Richard Schechner (2002: 28) to define the field of performance and performance studies: “Doing, showing doing, explaining ‘showing doing’”.

The connections between performance and collection have been addressed by a number of theorists since the turn of the millennium. Most raise the ephemeral nature of performance works, which makes them, at first glance, difficult to conserve, thus consigned to disappearance. Performance studies scholars have written particularly prolifically on these questions, building an impressive genealogy of notable writings. In this flourishing debate, the term “archive” has been favoured over that of “collection,” in order to open the idea of perpetuation up to multiple modes of recollection and preservation: trace, documentation, memento, repetition, repertoire, technological mediation.

This discursive production developed, in large part, in reaction to the position of Peggy Phelan (1993), who linked the field of performance to an ontology of loss and excluded documentary recording and iterations from it. Amelia Jones (1997) rehabilitated documentation and defended the rich experience that it offers. Rebecca Schneider (2001) maintained that performance as an act of remaining and reappearing lasts over time through its repetition, whereas the archive performs its own loss. Diana Taylor (2003) proposed the notion of the repertoire, which conserves, yet transforms, performance, as it consists of a set of gestures transmitted by the body through living practices in a fully creative process of repetitions and differences. André Lepecki (2010) put forward the notion of the body-archive as space of reinvention and rewriting of artworks. Finally, Philip Auslander (2006), following Jones’s thought, proposed the idea of a performative document that establishes performance and makes it exist.

In France, starting from different theoretical horizons, Frédéric Pouillaude (2017) and Isabelle Launay (2018; 2019) contributed to the debate in the area of dance. Pouillaude conceived the transmission of dance works as an interrelationship between publicity (the sharing between an author and a public) and iteration (ensuring a form of permanence). The choreographic work, in Pouillaude’s view, is a surviving object that is perpetuated through repetition, and that is dismantled outside of the performance and yet does not disappear. Launay rejected the idea that the danced gesture is ephemeral and proposed that it lasts as long as it is taken up by groups that welcome and maintain it, whether to respect a tradition or in discontinuity.

Therefore, collection and performance are not antithetical, and it is now widely accepted that performative works are not beyond collection but are

integrated differently, through traces, vestiges, props, narratives, documents, scores, repetitions, appropriations, and in other ways. UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) helped to anchor and solidify this idea in institutional circles. In museums and the museum studies field, a change was observed at the turn of the millennium, and it has accelerated since: performative works are currently collected in documentary or living forms; countless exhibitions have been organized with the goal of challenging how they are exhibited. Furthermore, Cometti demonstrates that performative and ephemeral works are not excluded from collection but are paradigmatic of it. Thanks to digital technologies and communications networks, these works are now collected and made available to large numbers of people, anywhere and at any time. Moreover, performance is now paradigmatic of the concept of art. It makes clear "the conditions that must be brought together for a work to be perceived as a work and function as a work" (COMETTI, 2016: 84, our translation). In other words, performance exposes the contingency and sociality of art.

But how do we apprehend the sociality that plays out in collections of performative works? How do we think of this performativity, which is related not to the specificity of objects but to the actions that generate these collections and through which they are constituted and exist? Would it be possible, modelling the notion of boundary object, to speak of boundary collections to explain the forms of social cooperation that are at play in it? Should we thus envisage objects collected less as works than as agents endowed with the capacity to make people do something?

Understanding Forms of Cooperation between People and Things

Susan Leigh Star, who proposed the notion of boundary object to analyze scientific work, explains the choice of this portmanteau term as follows (STAR, 2010; STAR; GRIESEMER, 1989). An object is something on and with which people act, and a boundary is a shared space. A boundary object involves collective and coordinated actions in a given territory, without the people involved having a homogeneous identity.

Boundary objects enable different social groups to communicate and collaborate despite their divergences in skills, viewpoints, statuses, languages, tools, fields of interest, and other qualities – for example, amateurs and experts, professionals and volunteers, or specialists from different disciplines. Boundary objects facilitate cooperation but are sufficiently flexible to guarantee the autonomy of each group (STAR, 2010). They do not involve prior consensus with regard to the goals to reach or the means to attain them.

Boundary objects take different forms. They may be abstract or concrete, general or specific, material or conceptual. They oscillate between heterogeneity and standardization (TROMPETTE; VINCK, 2009: 6): malleable objects that everyone can shape (for example, drawings and diagrams), library objects from which everyone can extract what is needed (natural history specimens from a collection), objects that may be simplified (abstractions), and interface or exchange standards (such as databases).

Trompette and Vinck (2009: 10) dwell on the cognitive dimension of boundary objects and speak of "elements which facilitate the distributed cognitive process" that participate in the construction of shared knowledge through a process that articulates a "knowledge infrastructure" (Ibidem: 6) and "interpretive flexibility" (Ibidem : 3). They "materialise and transport an invisible in-

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frastructure made up of standards, categories, classifications and conventions that are specific to one or more social worlds” (Ibidem: 15). They also require negotiations, compromises, changes of viewpoints and perspectives, and flexibility from the actors concerned. When this cognitive dimension is not involved, the objects are simply intermediary objects – that is, artefacts that circulate from one actor to another or around which several actors gravitate (VINCK, 2009).

The notion of boundary object was proposed in the perspective of rethinking the “actor-network theory” (CALLON; LATOUR, 1991) in order to free it from its too-hierarchical conception of relations among actors and between humans and nonhumans, including objects. Following Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, sociologists and anthropologists who are interested in boundary objects (whether or not they have adopted the terminology) believe that artefacts make humans act and should be considered actors. However, the agency of objects runs into the thorny issue that an artefact, unlike humans, is not a “source of initiatives” (QUÉRÉ, 2015: 7, our translation).

In his anthropology of art, Alfred Gell (1998) speaks of the agency of objects in terms of intentionalities. He considers artefacts, in particular artworks, to be indicators of what was on the mind of the people who made or used them. They bear the imprint of all the agents who invested an intention in them and are therefore involved in continuous creation processes. Neither their entry into the museum nor their destruction puts an end to this. On the contrary, they add new intentionalities to those that went before. In Gell’s view, artefacts, as indices of intentionalities, mobilize the cognitive capacity of human beings to decode the intentionality of others similar to them. They enable people to imagine, and thus to recount, what went through the mind of the people who interacted with them. To reduce the agency of objects to the intentionality of people, however, reinforces the hierarchy between humans and things, and this is one of the limitations of Gell’s theory.

Louis Quéré proposes to apprehend the agency of objects in terms of operations. He distinguishes four types of operations. The first, which he borrows from Gilbert Simondon, is characteristic of the technical object. This object carries within itself information on the “operational template that governed the invention of a functionality” (QUÉRÉ, 2015: 8, our translation). The second is based on Margaret Mead’s example of the hammer, a tool that entails “a beginning of an act” (QUÉRÉ, 2015: 9, our translation). The body anticipates how to approach the object, pick it up, and use it. The third, based on John Dewey’s example of the stonemason, is based on the fact that objects are integrated with habits and with the arts of doing, themselves linked to specific materials. For instance, the stonemason’s tools “cooperate” (QUÉRÉ, 2015: 10, our translation) with materials, energies, techniques, behaviours, know-how, and so on. Finally, from the example of a cook putting together mayonnaise, Quéré shows that there is a coupling operations of different natures. He concludes that how objects make people act is very different from how humans “do”. Whereas people are instigators of actions, objects are “active centres of operation” (Ibidem: 11, our translation).

Whether formulated in terms of intentionality or of operation, the capacity of objects to make people act implies that they should be considered not as completed and inert artefacts, but as moving and becoming. In addition, attention must be paid to their materiality, and we may even have to revise our conception of them. In the view of anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013), materials

have their own life. Even the most rigid materials, such as iron, move and transform themselves. Rather than attributes, they have stories that must be told: “Materials are ‘already an ongoing historicity’” (INGOLD quoting BARAD, 2013: 31). Ingold proposes a materialistic approach to production according to which “making” consists of putting the person who is making into correspondence with the living material that he is working. Production of an object consists not of imposing a form on an inert material but of collaborating, co-creating, with the living material.

Approaching the collections of performative works at the Fondation du doute, the Watermill Center, and Musée de la danse as boundary collections involves analyzing the forms of collaboration among the actors who interact with these collections, whether at the stage of their creation, their development, or their dismantlement or, more simply, their use, and understanding the knowledge and references that are mobilized, generated, and compared during these interactions. We must also distinguish boundary collections, which involve the negotiation of common references, from intermediary collections, which merely put actors into interaction without “a cognitive negotiation” being in play. Finally, we must consider objects not as completed things or fixed forms but as agents, and we must understand their material flows, their formation processes, the intentionality networks that they signify, and their capacity to activate different forms of operations.

Milieus for Transmitting the Fluxus spirit: The Collection of Collections at the Fondation du doute

Conceived and directed by Alain Goulesque, the Fondation du doute, dedicated to the Fluxus movement, was inaugurated in 2013 in a cultural space in the French city of Blois, in the Val de Loire region. The centre is also home to an art school and a music conservatory. Occupying the former Couvent des Minimes, built in 1619, this art structure functions atypically. It is based on the deposit of private collections over many years, a period during which exhibitions and mediation activities are programmed in collaboration with the complex's two educational institutions. Each new deposit offers an opportunity to rebaptize the institution and to completely rethink the activities and content addressed. For instance, from 1996 to 2013, the space hosted the collection of gallery owner Éric Fabre,⁶ focused on appropriation of artefacts of daily life (New Realism, English New Sculpture) and challenging the notion of the object (conceptual art). At that time, the site was named the Musée de l'objet (Museum of the Object), playing on ambiguity both temporal (permanent or temporary space) and disciplinary (art or anthropology). The École d'art de Blois was involved in programming activities. Designed as an “observatory of new pedagogies” the mandate of which was to initiate young publics to contemporary art, the non-diploma-granting educational institution took advantage of its cohabitation with the Musée de l'objet to develop educational approaches based on the direct and continuous experience of the works. This unusual cultural complex was inaugurated under the mandate of Jack Lang, then mayor of Blois and previously minister of culture under the presidency of François Mitterrand, whose cultural policies encouraged this type of initiative.

6 Éric Fabre had a gallery in Marseille in the mid-1970 and another in Paris until 1997.

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“Neither museum nor art centre, but an original site where the spirit of Fluxus reigns,”⁷ the Fondation du doute received works from Italian collector Gino di Maggio, founder and president of the Fondazione Mudima in Milan, who had built one of the most important Fluxus collections in Europe, and from Italian gallery owner Caterina Gualco, founder of Galerie Unimedia Modern in Genoa, who since the 1970s had curated numerous group and solo exhibitions devoted to Fluxus. Documents from the large archival fonds of artist Ben Vautier (known as Ben), a central figure of the Fluxus movement in France, complete the corpus. This collection of collections, called the permanent collection, is on display in the exhibition halls of the main building, in a layout – designed by Ben, Goulesque, and Di Maggio – that undermines traditional museum procedures and allows for proximity with the works. Outside, in the heart of a nineteenth-century cloister, a windowed building called the Pavillon d'exposition temporaire (Temporary Exhibition Pavilion) offers complementary exhibitions by artists not represented in the collections or exploring certain practices in greater depth. A café, the Fluxus, replaces the traditional cafeteria. Laid out entirely by Ben, a true experimental art environment in progress, it offers a program of debates, encounters, performances, videos, music, theatre, and daily Fluxus meals created by a chef. Finally, the Cour du doute is an outdoor space for performances, concerts, and experimental art events involving the Conservatoire's students and teachers. Picnic tables, trailers for artists in residence, and temporary works are set up there to create a friendly, lively space. A work by Ben, a public commission from the Ville de Blois and the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, inaugurated in 1995 just before the Musée de l'objet opened, is on display there. Titled *Le Mur des mots*, it is composed of 313 writing boards on which visitors can read short sentences on art, the artist's ego, and the meaning of creation, some of which are taken from other Fluxus artists.

The Fondation du doute updates atypical structures that the Fluxus artists had created to disseminate and preserve their art practices. Emerging in the early 1960s, difficult to define, Fluxus was less an art movement concerned with an aesthetic project than an informal international network of artists, all disciplines combined, who shared a single attitude: anti-art, a fusion of art and life, experimentation, transdisciplinarity, collective creation, provocation, ridicule, a taste for the random and for play, and so on. Seeking to evade established classifications, the artists who contributed – sporadically or more regularly – to the network had practices in the visual arts, experimental music, found poetry, theatre, and experimental film. Some of them, deeply marked by John Cage's teachings, privileged ephemeral modes of creation, based on experience and inscribed in the flow of daily life: performances and happenings or events that generated new forms of expression such as scripts, scores, and instructions gathered in booklets or boxes.

The Fluxus artists rejected traditional art institutions and conventional forms of art dissemination and marketing; instead, they invented and ran their own art-distribution channels: concerts, festivals, galleries, publications, shops, sales of multiples through the mail, and so on. They also produced critical and historical discourses concerning the movement. Through countless writings, anthologies, chronologies, almanacs, and compilations, they constructed their own historicizations, which were plural, often contradictory and conflicting, but which sought, each in its own way and according to the unique perspective of

7 Unless otherwise noted, the quotations in this section are excerpted from the website of the Fondation du doute, www.fondationdudoute.fr, and are our translation.

its author, to inscribe Fluxus in a history that was not specifically artistic but cultural and global.

By offering Fluxus programming spread over eight years and mobilizing three institutions, the Fondation du doute was reviving not only a state of mind and a philosophy but, above all, the project of imagining a hybrid form of organization likely to ensure the emergence and propagation of a Fluxus attitude. This project also raised the question of the musealization of Fluxus, which has given rise to lively debate in recent years. In fact, a number of museums that recently organized exhibitions on the movement were criticized for their inability to keep the works alive, their tendency to canonize them, notably by not allowing the public to handle them and thus to experience them, which was core to the artistic conceptions of Fluxus. All of the curators of the main Fluxus exhibitions, which included *FIAT FLUX*, *la nébuleuse Fluxus*, 1962–1978 organized in 2012–13 at the Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne in France; the presentation of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman collection acquired by MoMA in 2008; and *In the Spirit of Fluxus (L'esprit Fluxus)*, which toured the United States, France, and Spain in the early 1990s, were confronted with these difficulties. How could experience be privileged in a museum context? How could the artists' desire to create a close connection between arts and daily life be taken into account? What critical and historical discourses could be produced when the artists had largely taken charge of this discursive production? In an article titled "Exposer Fluxus," Jeanne Brun (2013, our translation) summarizes the movement's institutional fate this way:

So, over a few decades, we went from a representation of the movement by the artists themselves, in a context that one could call underground ... to the interest of private collectors and galleries, culminating more recently – though still twenty years ago – in major institutional exhibitions, the fate of which seems both expected, to give Fluxus its rightful place, and decried, because the institution, precisely, and museums at the head of the line, are deemed incapable of apprehending and disseminating it properly.

Brun (2013, our translation) suggests that one of the ways to escape this aporia would be to privilege pedagogy: "[The place of Fluxus] is perhaps today, in an indirect way, in a certain conception of pedagogy (the word returns constantly in Fluxus artists' descriptions of their works) as a guide to opening consciences. 'Teaching and learning as performing arts'".

Indeed, many Fluxus artists were interested in teaching and education, and practised them not as activities separate from creation but as overlapping with art. Fluxus helped to construct the figure of the artist-teacher (KRAMER, 2020): Maciunas with his "Bauhaus Fluxus" to be established on an island in the Caribbean; Vostell with his "ideal academy," a mobile laboratory moving from city to city; Kaprow advocating a reworking of academic practices through happenings; and Filliou suggesting pedagogy through play. Although they differ from each other, these pedagogies are not aimed at transmission of knowledge about art; rather, they privilege communication, collaboration, and exchange to create multiskilled individuals able to perform social actions with a view to inventing new ways of living together.

The Fondation du doute project superimposes Fluxus's three periods and three bodies of legitimization by having the artist, the collector, the gallery, and the museum – or what functions as such, in this case the exhibition centre – work together. The involvement of the two teaching institutions, the art

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school and the music conservatory, makes it possible to reaffirm the position of pedagogy within the Fluxus movement and to grant it a central role in a project of transmission and musealization of the movement.

What conceptions of the collection emerge from the Fondation du doute? How are the notions of collection and performativity articulated? Can one speak of a boundary collection, or is it simply an intermediary collection? These are the three questions that we try to answer below. The Fondation du doute sets up an encounter of a collector, a gallery owner, and an artist. What is designated by the institution as its “permanent collection” is the product of their collections and personal archives. It thus consists of private collections tightly linked to the individual and professional paths of the people who built them. The case of Di Maggio is particularly enlightening.

Di Maggio was born in Sicily and had a career as an engineer in the oil industry, a collector, a patron, an organizer of festivals, an author, and a publisher (he founded the publishing house Multhipla). In 1989, he created the Fondazione Mudima in Milan. The first organization of its type in Italy, it is dedicated to experimental practices in contemporary visual arts, music, and literature through the organization of exhibitions and concerts, within the foundation or elsewhere, in Italy (including regular collaborations with the Venice Biennale) and other countries (including France and Japan). Many exhibitions have been devoted to Fluxus, among them the important show *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus* in 1990. Di Maggio designed the organization as a niche outside the art market: “My idea was to create a neutral place compared to the market where the artist could find for a moment, once in a while, the time and the desire to exercise his research, regardless of the relationship with money” (CECCONI; MAGGIO, 2013, our translation).

In his biographical notes and during the interviews he grants, Di Maggio prefers the term “anti-collection” (CELEUX-LANVAL, 2020) or “shared or common collection” (KRAMER, 2020) to “collection”. What does he mean by these expressions? Art is alive, he insists, and his collection is the reflection of his travels, of his encounters with artists, and of friendships that he has woven them: “I’m not a collector, because it is ... difficult or inappropriate to define as a collection what I’ve collected by chance over the years. What I have is the result of encounters, situations, human relations that were not aimed primarily at the acquisition of artworks” (PIODA, 2020, our translation).

In addition, he specifies, many important pieces in his collection are the result of bequests or gifts by artists following events that he had organized, notably at the Fondazione Mudima. For instance, the prepared pianos that had been commissioned for *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus* were left on site at the end of the exhibition by the artists who had created them. Similarly, Daniel Spoerri’s twelve *Tableaux-pièges astro-gastronomiques* were the result of meals that the artist had organized in 1975 at Di Maggio’s Galleria Multhipla in Milan. This uncertainty with regard to the ownership of certain pieces (do they belong to the artists, Di Maggio, or the foundation?) caused him to come up with the lovely expression “common or shared collection”.

Di Maggio, who had been involved in the Italian Federation of Communist Youth at age sixteen and had visited the USSR at nineteen, paid particular attention to the social function of art. His collection is a space of sociality, collaboration, and cooperation. It now offers a unique vision of twentieth-century art history in which the social utopias of the avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes intersect with his life journey, his personal relations with the artists, and his

philosophical and political allegiances. His collection proceeds from the construction of an individual identity that has enabled him to position himself within a collective history, that of the avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes, while formulating his own principles of intelligibility – his creative or productive disorder, to use Benjamin’s expression.

Like all collectors of this scale, Di Maggio is seeking to secure the future of his collection by integrating it into public institutions and having it collectively legitimized by narratives, whether on the regional, the national, or the international scale. The creation of the Fondazione Mudima in 1989, the donation of a large body of Fluxus works in 1998 to the Vostell-Malpartida museum in Cáceres, Spain, the deposit of part of his collection in Blois in 2013, and the exhibition that Les Abbatoirs in Toulouse devoted to his collection in 2020, *Viva Gino. Une vie dans l’art*, are all attempts to permanently inscribe his own vision of art and life in public institutions and in legitimate art history narratives.

Figure 1 - George Maciunas, *Flux Ping-Pong*, 1976-2013, Ben Vautier’s collection, Fondation du doute, Blois.



Source: © Fondation du doute - Ville de Blois.

At the Fondation du doute, collecting and performativity are articulated through multiple processes: the traces of artistic gestures (for example, a *Flux Collage* by photographer Peter Moore composed of thirty-one pictures documenting Fluxus performances); the objects involved in the actions (including Spoerri’s celebrated *Tableaux-pièges astro-gastronomiques*, which fix the remains of twelve meal-performances organized in reference to the signs of the zodiac, as part of the activities of the Restaurant du coin that Spoerri had created); and scores and instructions to be activated (notably the scripts of happenings by Allan Kaprow and Yoko Ono’s instructions).

In the “permanent collection” space, two participatory areas were created by Ben, upsetting the impression of a traditional museum display and encouraging experimentation with the “permanent collection”. One space is devoted to mail art, a frequent practice among the Fluxus artists. In a layout that evokes a studio, artists’ objects and correspondence are mixed with visitors’ creations;

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visitors are invited to post these in a letterbox belonging to the French postal service, with which the institution has negotiated an agreement. The second interactive area is occupied by the Centre mondial du questionnement. Furnished with work tables, blackboards, and computers, this “space of expression and questioning of art, its limits, or its boundaries”⁸ invites the public to take part in debates that involve geneticists, computer scientists, philosophers, sociologists, astronomers, psychiatrists, and other professionals.

Finally, reactivations of Fluxus performances by artists, students, or young visitors regularly punctuate the programming. For *Ping-Pong Club* in 2014 and *Ping-Pong Remix* in 2017, members of the public were invited to play ping-pong with distorted tables and rackets inspired by those made by George Maciunas (exhibited in the permanent collection space) and by Alain Biet, a professor at the École d’art, and designer Luc Chevalier. Corinne Melin reinvented *Words*, the environment that Allan Kaprow had created in New York in 1962 “to bring in members of the public and have them produce actions without the artist’s control”. At the opening, on April 6, 2013, students from the conservatory joined Philip Corner in performing *A Piano Activities Togetherness*, an action during which the participants destroyed a piano with various objects while trying to extract rare and unexpected sounds from it. The instrument was then put on display, accompanied by graphic traces of the action, and a video recording was put online⁹. The Fondation du doute used a wide variety of transmission methods for the performance: documentation recycled into artworks, accumulations of vestiges and traces of artistic gestures, reactivation of scripts, and more. Such effervescence contributes to creating a Fluxus repertoire, managed by a milieu that the foundation mobilizes and helps to activate, consolidate, and expand.

Figure 2 - View of the exhibition *Ping-Pong Club*, 2014, Fondation du doute, Blois.



Source: © Fondation du doute - Ville de Blois.

8 Retrieve from : <https://www.fondationdudoute.fr/1579-presentation.htm>.

9 Retrieve from: <https://vimeo.com/98922739>.

The Fondation du doute's permanent collection is an intermediary object around which a number of actors gravitate and cooperate. But is it actually a boundary object? Can we speak of it as a boundary collection? At the Fondation du doute, the collection constitutes a shared territory. It is composed of several collections and therefore combines Fluxus's plural gazes, which had to be anchored to one another through collaboration and negotiation among collectors, artists, and institution personnel. It can be approached according to the typology of boundary objects formulated by Trompette and Vinck (2009): malleable objects (handling Fluxus boxes and creating new ones during FLUXBOX & Cie or Boîtes à jeux workshops), library objects (choosing a work or a score to reactivate during *À vue d'œil. Ne pas avoir froid aux yeux* visits), objects to simplify (retaining only the sonar qualities of the works in the collections during the *À vue d'œil. Les yeux fermés* visits), and interface objects (the collection available online through information files).

Collective and coordinated actions have taken place regularly at the Fondation du doute over the years: educational, culinary, and playful activities, performances, temporary exhibitions, and more. Some of them involve diversified social groups, who are invited to mobilize different "knowledge infrastructures" requiring negotiation and "interpretive flexibility" (TROMPETTE; VINCK, 2009: 3-6). These include, for example, cooks invited to the Café Fluxus. From 2014 to 2016, Rémy Giraud, a two-star chef in the region, offered culinary creations in dialogue with the Fluxus works exhibited at the foundation. For the Campus Fluxus in 2017, the Bye Bye Peanuts culinary association organized a cooking workshop on the very Fluxus theme of inversion rituals aimed at upending the established order of things. The collaborations with the Conservatoire de musique during which the professors and students were invited to appropriate a Fluxus repertoire also require a negotiation among different cultures, skills, aesthetics, and levels of expertise¹⁰. These collaborations allow for the construction of shared knowledge by guaranteeing all individuals autonomy and independence in relation to the goals pursued and the methods used.

The close association with the École d'art¹¹ helps to make the Fondation du doute's collection a "cognitive mediator". Establishing a network of lasting relations with elementary and secondary schools in the vicinity¹², the pedagogical team, composed of eight artist-teachers, develops participatory guided tours and workshops based on experimentation, play, and process. The visits, intended for young people four to eighteen years of age, are conceived using a selection of objects from the collection as a starting point, around targeted themes and issues. They aim to develop a critical view of contemporary art and beyond – of questions of society and living together. They privilege a pedagogy of listening, exchange, and action, and they encourage speaking, collective and individual emulation, and debate.

The notion of boundary object, as we have seen, challenges the hierarchies between things and people, and it grants agency to objects. At the Fondation du doute, the artefacts are involved in actions, whether they are past, present, or future. It is one of the singularities of Fluxus objects, and it is why it is so problematic to exhibit them in showcases and to forbid handling them.

10 Café Fluxus is a space shared with the students of the Conservatoire de musique, who perform there regularly. Events such as Concert Musique Action, on June 29, 2013, offer such possibilities for exchanges.

11 Alain Goulesque is director of both the Fondation du doute and the École d'art.

12 Every year the École d'art hosts between nine hundred and fifteen hundred pre-school students from CM2 (Blois and vicinity).

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These are objects to act on and with. They have the capacity to make humans perform gestures and actions; they bear the intentionalities of the people who created them and have used them (to use Gell's terms); they involve the execution of operations (to use Quéré's term). This agency of objects and the reversal of hierarchical relations underlie the scenography of a number of spaces. For instance, in the middle of Spoerri's twelve *Tableaux-pièges astro-gastronomiques*, hung on the wall without protective plexiglass (which is unusual), a dining table is laid out, surrounded by chairs, awaiting new guests invited to produce a thirteenth “table-trap”. Maciunas's *Flux ping-pong* has an incredible capacity to make people do something: not only do artists, adult or child amateurs, or designers create other distorted tables and rackets, but the people who use them reinvent a series of gestures, a behaviour, a goal, rules, a spirit, a philosophy of table tennis.

Although of course, in many respects, one can speak about a boundary collection at the Fondation du doute, many of the activities around the collection nevertheless involve collaboration among relatively homogeneous social groups. These are people from the visual arts and performance areas, artists, gallery owners, collectors, independent curators, and art students who compose what Howard Becker (1982) calls an “art world” – in this case, Fluxus's art world. A world, according to Becker, is a network within which social actors cooperate following conventional procedures (even when they seem anti-conformist) and a distribution of roles and knowledge, with the goal of making a type of art exist. Art worlds are constantly in transformation and oscillating between inertia and change. In the 1960s, the Fluxus artists who rejected established art institutions ended up creating new cooperation networks to produce and disseminate their extraordinary practices. They invented new organizations and original working methods and generated new publics. They built a new art world that still exists today. To develop the Fondation du doute project, Goulesque drew on existing, well-established networks. For instance, Di Maggio, Ben, and Gualco have collaborated closely. Galerie Unimedia Modern and the Fondazione Mudima have devoted a number of exhibitions to Ben; Gualco curated several shows for the foundation, including one on the Fluxus composer and artist Philip Corner. She has worked with the gallery belonging to Eva Vautier, Ben's daughter. In addition to lending works to the Fondation du doute permanent collection, she organized, in the Pavillon temporaire, an exhibition by Corner in 2016, one by Geoffrey Hendricks in 2017, and *Fluxus Eptastellare*, a tribute to seven Fluxus artists, including Ben and Corner, in 2019.

We can identify two types of complementary cooperation at the Fondation du doute, one specific to the Fluxus art world, with its well-established networks and methods; the other, more exploratory, approaching the collection as a boundary object in order to create zones of negotiation among the actors concerned to allow for changes of points of view, perspectives, and skills. With these two levels of collaboration, it is possible to create an ambitious program while maintaining an experimental and exploratory spirit. In other words, the institution takes full advantage of an established network while breathing new life into it and, to a certain point, reinventing it. In a very Fluxus spirit, it involves stimulating the collective production of desires. This double register maintains affinities with “instituting” practices (RAUNIG; RAY, 2009). The Fondation du doute seems to hold itself in the fragile interval between an organization already constituted and a practice that resists its own institutionalization. Its coming dismantlement, programmed from the beginning of the adventure, and its “rebirth”, arising from other collections, other issues, other modes, and under

a new name, guarantee the maintenance of a process of self-instituting and self-implementing.

Mediators for Co-creation: The Objects in the Watermill Center Collection

Open to the public in its current form since 2006, the Watermill Center was created by director and visual artist Robert Wilson in the hamlet of Water Mill, on Long Island, New York. It occupies an eight-acre lot and a former Western Union building that Wilson bought in 1986 and has gradually renovated. It is administered by the Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation, which is a registered charity. It is also home to RW Work, Ltd., a for-profit company owned by Wilson, that produces his shows and art activities. Designed as a “performance laboratory”, the Watermill Center is a site for interdisciplinary creation and research (theatre, dance, art performance, visual arts, music, and film, as well as human sciences and scientific research, among others). It hosts artists for creative residencies and organizes shows, seminars, conferences, and educational activities. Its art activities were launched in 1992 with a five-week international summer residency program. Twenty-four young artists of different disciplines and from different countries were gathered to work together on their own projects and on Wilson’s. Wilson was careful not to “run a school” but to encourage the young creators to find their own voices. The residencies were conceived in a spirit of collective creation and community life. The Watermill Center is the outcome of different occasional or aborted attempts at community spaces devoted to creation that Wilson had made since the 1960s, including the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds in New York, active from 1968 to 1975.

A large part of Wilson’s personal collection is conserved at the centre: about eight thousand pieces, increased each year by about three hundred acquisitions. Eclectic, blurring geographic, historical, cultural, and disciplinary categories, the collection also includes many works of contemporary art (Donald Judd, Paul Thek, Bruce Nauman, Agnes Martin, Richard Serra, a good number of emerging artists, and more), ancient and modern art, and quotidian objects that Wilson has acquired during trips, including ceramics, masks, and steles. It also contains sculptures that he has made, objects of sentimental value, set elements from his theatre productions, and other items. Some corpuses are particularly well developed, such as a group of chairs and stools from various epochs and continents, some produced by celebrated designers, including Carlo Bugatti, Gerrit Rietveldt, Charles Eames, Gio Ponti, and Shiro Kuramata, and others designed by Wilson himself. He is also the custodian for private collections, notably the works of artist Paul Thek, who appointed him the executor of his will (SUSSMAN, 2011).

The collection, which deconstructs disciplines, categories, and hierarchies, is installed in the interior and exterior spaces of the Watermill Center, so that the residents can live and create with it. It is also used for educational purposes in the activity programs that the centre offers to different local communities. The uses made of the collection do not have the scholarly aims traditionally attached to a collection but are clearly oriented toward collective creation.

Parts of the collection have been lent to different museums – for example, for the Paul Thek retrospective at the Whitney Museum in 2010. In 2013, an entire section moved to Paris for the *carte blanche* that the Louvre Museum offered Wilson. Some pieces are sold at auction during the centre’s fundraising galas, so the collection helps to fund the organization’s activities, following a

common practice at foundations in the United States.

The centre also contains an impressive library containing books on arts of all periods and cultures, open to artists, researchers, students, and visitors. It is designed as a library dedicated to creation, and the acquisition of books is under the artistic direction of Wilson.

This preliminary description demonstrates the difficulty of apprehending the Watermill Center’s collection through the prism of the boundary collection. To what extent can an artist’s collection, when it is associated with a creative individual, especially one who is famous and charismatic, be dialogic and collaborative? What modes of cooperation can it generate? What forms of performativity does the Watermill Center collection put in play? How is this performativity articulated with the attention that Wilson pays to the materiality of objects? Can we consider the Watermill Center collection a boundary collection even if its aims are not scientific but creative? What forms of knowledge can it help to produce? To answer these questions, it is a good idea to understand what a collection dedicated to creation is.

For the exhibition that the Palais de Tokyo devoted to the collections of visual artists Jean-Jacques Lebel and Kader Attia in 2018, critic Roxana Azimi described the artist’s collection as “a bric-a-brac of eclectic objects that leave the trodden paths of great history. Unlike many collectors, who follow fashions and speculative prices, artists poach in unknown territory, reject hierarchies, and highlight little-known colleagues” (AZIMI, 2018, our translation). As bartering among creators is the main means of acquisition, such collections reflect the elective affinities of their owners: attractions, shared interests, friendships, collaborations, dialogues, break-ups, and so on. They reveal how ideas about art circulates and the emotions tied to this transmission. For many artist collectors, the practice of collecting is an integral part of their creative process. The objects that they assemble feed their imagination and form worlds of references upon which they draw. The selection of objects or materials and positioning them in dialogue through series and presentation arrangements are the domain as much of the collector as the creator. The “creative” or “productive disorder” of the collector – Benjamin’s apt formulation – takes its full meaning here.

In this spirit, Wilson’s collection conserved at WaterMill is part of his artistic approach. The institution’s website notes, “It is very much a living entity that is one of the many artistic media in which Founder and Artistic Director Robert Wilson explores the relationship between the human body and its surrounding space”¹³. How the works are displayed proceeds from the art of juxtaposing heterogeneous objects. All types of connections are possible: formal, material, symbolic, metaphoric, metonymic, allegorical, and others. The arrangements may be crowded, like cabinets of curiosities, or uncluttered, following a minimalist aesthetic. They play on dissimilarities and contrasts or privilege analogies and equivalences.

These plays on visual resonances present numerous analogies with Wilsonian theatre. Deconstructing the text, stripped of action, drama, narration, and interacting characters, his “theatre of images” proceeds through a succession of non-referential tableaux that create dreamlike mental universes through which objects and humans move and are slowly transformed. Hans Thies Lehmann (2006: 77-81), who considers Wilson one of the pioneers of post-dramatic theatre, dwells on the abundance of historical, religious, and literary motifs that fill

¹³ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the website of the Watermill Center: www.watermillcenter.org. On the collection, see <https://www.watermillcenter.org/collection/>

his productions. In Lehmann's view, Wilson practises the art of quotation and incongruous encounters among a wide variety of eras, cultures, and spaces; his productions reveal a "playful delight he takes in quoting from the human store of images" and form "a kind of universal history that appears as a multicultural, ethnological, archaeological kaleidoscope" (LEHMANN, 2006: 79-80).

The Watermill Center collection constitutes such an inexhaustible store of images, a formidable laboratory in which it is possible to experiment with all ways of connecting, assembling, and metamorphizing them. The displays, always temporary, let new meanings arise. Noah Khoshbin (2011), curator of the Watermill Center, reports that for each new acquisition, he and Wilson study the potential for the object's integration into the collection and the centre's spaces (KHOSHBIN, 2011: 232). Every new object gives them an opportunity to imagine unusual sequencing systems, new kinds of "creative" or "productive disorder." The librarian, Deborah Verhoff (2014), speaks of the collection as a work in constant transformation, as artefacts are progressively rearranged. Khoshbin's title of "curator," instead of the more common "conservator", reflects the idea that the collection at the Watermill Center is an art medium unto itself.

The centre's library, the Library of Inspiration, contributes to this creation machine. The spatial organization of books does not conform to the cataloguing and classifications systems of library science. It creates surprises in order to stimulate curiosity, free association, and "creative inspiration" (VERHOFF, 2014: 2). In this respect the Watermill Center reinvents the relationship between the collection and the library. Whereas traditionally a library contributes to production of scholarly discourse on the collection and its objects, at the centre both spaces are intended to serve creation.

Figure 3 - Dawn Kasper, The Watermill Center's Inga Maren Otto Fellow, 2019.



Source: © Maria Baranova-Suzuki, courtesy The Watermill Center.

Another major axis of acquisition concerns Wilson's research materials. For example, there are books that inspired him to formulate the visual vocabulary for the operas *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) and *CIVIL Wars* (1984). A database makes it possible to cross-reference the pieces in the collection, the books in the library, and archives of Wilson's and his collaborators' works and the art projects produced at the centre. Developed by the librarian, with assistance from experts in exploitation of digital content, this ambitious project aims to design search engines oriented toward creative processes. They would make it possible to place an object in the collection in relation with a creative project by Wilson or by artists in residence inspired by it. They would also identify resonances between old works and those by emerging artists. The objective is not to locate influences but to understand creative processes: "We are exploring ways to map the traces of meanings given to these objects, from their original use to the creative acts that they inspire when moved into an artist studio" (VERHOFF, 2014: 2). In Gell's terms, one might speak of a cartography of intentionalities. The team formulates non-textual modes for searching the database – for example, by visual motifs, by weight of artefacts or the tactile experience of them, or by the sounds produced by blowing on the objects.

In many ways, the exhibition that the Musée du Louvre devoted to Wilson in 2013-14, *Le Louvre invite Robert Wilson. Living Rooms*, presented a microcosm of this creation machine. Departing from the *carte blanche* series that invited creators to intervene in the museum's collections, Philippe Malgouyres, conservator of the art objects department, proposed that Wilson present his own collection. The 760 objects selected were representative of the eclectic nature of the Watermill collection and bore the traces of Wilson's elective affinities. In the Salle de la Chapelle, normally dedicated to the variety and history of the museum's collection, the arrangement deployed from floor to ceiling played on free associations among artefacts of various origins and statuses. No wall texts identified the objects so that scholarly data would not impede the free flow of associations and so that visitors would apprehend the grouping as an artwork. The very plain scenography reproduced Wilson's bedroom in the centre, and around the edges the arrangement evoked that at the Watermill Center.

Organized in collaboration with the Festival d'Automne, a program of performative works complemented the presentation of the collection. At the Louvre, three videographic *tableaux vivants* created by Wilson and performed by Lady Gaga reproduced famous paintings from the history of art, including three from the museum's collection: *Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière* (1806) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Tête de Saint-Jean-Baptiste* (1507) by Andreas Solario, and *La Mort de Marat* (1793) by Jacques-Louis David. In the auditorium, Wilson performed composer John Cage's *Lecture About Nothing* (1949) to underline Cage's decisive influence on his own approach to art. Three of Wilson's pieces were programmed in Parisian theatres: *The Old Woman*, after a fragmented and absurd story by Russian poet Daniil Kharms, performed by dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and actor Willem Dafoe; *Peter Pan* by James Matthew Barrie, which Wilson transformed into a musical with the collaboration of CocoRosie and the Berliner Ensemble; and a re-creation, forty years after its conception and twenty years after its last performance, of the striking opera *Einstein on the Beach*, which Wilson and composer Philip Glass created in 1976, with the collaboration of choreographer Lucinda Childs and a young poet with autism, Christopher Knowles, who wrote the libretto.

Throughout the exhibition, a series of lectures, screenings, panels, and performances dwelt upon the importance of collaborations, sketching out what might be called a mapping of Wilson's elective affinities: performances by Knowles, now an accomplished artist, and CocoRosie; a screening of Giada Colagrande's documentary on the play-opera that Wilson created on the life of performance artist Marina Abramović; a panel discussion among Wilson, conservator Elisabeth Sussman, and gallery owner Ted Bonin on the world of Paul Thek and his contribution to Wilson's set designs; and more. Screenings with panel discussions punctuated the cycle. Excerpts from recordings of Wilson's early shows were shown, carefully selected from among his rich archive of filmed works. These screenings gave Wilson, alone or with others, an opportunity to "recount" his body of work, his encounters, and his collaborations and to highlight his conception of cooperation, his empathy, and his capacity to communicate with others, to understand their language, and to make use of it to co-create with them.

The diversity of the program enabled spectators to weave ties among the different forms of expression, between the collection and the performative works, and in doing so to grasp the complexity of this creative machine and the unique position of the collection within it. Although the program did not entirely avoid hagiography, it demonstrated the importance and diversity of collaborations with artists, amateurs, and creators from many places and different generations. In the Salle de la Chapelle, the collection bore the traces of this cooperation network.

And yet, can we talk, here, of a boundary collection? The notion of boundary object, as we have seen, involves cooperation among different social groups and a cognitive dimension in their interactions. Actors mobilize assets, skills, and tools belonging to their sphere of activity and their social group without seeking to establish a consensus about goals and means sought. The boundary object allows them to collaborate within difference and with autonomy. At the Watermill Center, the artists' residencies and the educational activities allow for uses of the collection that, indeed, are related to the idea of the boundary collection. Here, we look at the summer residencies, those organized through the rest of the year, and the school and community programs, in order to show that the objects in the collection play the role of creative and cognitive mediators.

For five weeks every summer, the young artists in residency work together on their own projects and on Wilson's. The applicants are chosen from their portfolios by a committee. No art training is required, and people who are self-taught or from fields outside of art are invited to participate. The objective of the residency is not to produce a final work but to develop experimental research. Wilson and the staff at the centre privilege artistic processes over results and emphasize the idea of the laboratory. The residents create freely in a spirit of exploration: they are asked to experience practices very different from those they have mastered, to collaborate with creators whose approaches and references may be unknown to them, to teach, to observe, and so on.

These explorations and rehearsals take place indoors and outdoors in proximity to the works and objects of the collection. These objects are made available to all residents. They can take inspiration from them, incorporate them into their project, handle them, and interact with them in a range of possibilities. They are free to move them around and take them to their workspace or living area. The Library of Inspiration is similarly available to them. They also help to enrich it, as they are invited to deposit documentation on the research they

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have done at Watermill into the database and the archives. Verhoff (2014: 3) speaks of a “feedback system”.

The objects in the collection weave unique relationships with the groups of people who work in the centre. They can be considered actors in their own right that have the capacity to make people do something. For example, in the rehearsal hall in the south wing, the anthropomorphic sculptures lined up at one end have an impact on movements in the space and on the corporeality of the performers in proximity to them. The chairs and stools set out throughout the building and often used during choreographic explorations induce specific postures in dialogue with their curved or angular lines, the height and inclination of their seat, their stability, their materiality, and other factors. They stimulate corporeal research.

The objects, never under glass, are available for handling. Wilson encourages interactions with them. His manipulation of a jointed wooden puppet from the Lake Toba region in Sumatra is exemplary of the agency that he grants objects and his desire to break down hierarchies between humans and things. Traditionally, the puppet, a Si Gale-Gale, made by the Batak Toba people, is kept in a box that keeps it immobile. It is brought out only at night to mourn the dead (BARBIER-MUELLER, 2011: 246-247). By activating the Si Gale-Gale, Wilson seeks to understand and master its “operational schema” (QUÉRÉ, 2015: 8) and to develop a posture, a gestural language, and a state of body in response to the puppet’s possibilities for motion. His anthropological and historical knowledge of the Si Gale-Gale informs his choreographic quest. It is not about compiling knowledge and activating a mechanism to document a piece from a collection, but about experiencing a piece from a collection to develop corporeal knowledge. One might speak, following Ingold, of a collaboration and co-creation between puppet and performer.

The artist residencies organized during the rest of the year, when Wilson is not present, draw more from the collection. This program, which was initiated in 2006, when the centre officially opened, offers artists stays of two to six weeks. Like the summer residencies, in these residencies artistic process and experimentation are privileged over production of final works. The artists, selected by a committee, are encouraged to work with the collection and to engage in dialogue with local communities, in the form of open residencies, workshops, or discussions. Highly inventive uses of the collection emerge from these stays. Below, we describe four projects to show that the actors involved approach Wilson’s collection as a boundary collection, even though they are all from the field of art, artists in residence, or professionals at Watermill.

In June 2016, Giandomenico Tonatiuh Pellizzi explored the centre’s rich textile collection. He identified mythological, calendar-related, and astrological symbols, from which he invented his own cosmogonies, and he transposed them into luminous sculptures made of tubes and bulbs. He set them up in the spaces of the Watermill Center, composing a monumental installation titled *Constellation in Red, Yellow and Blue*. Pellizzi’s use of the collection was quite similar to Wilson’s operational methods for his set designs. He envisages it as a store of images of humanity from which he draws to make free associations of motifs.

In April 2018, sculptor Jarrod Beck designed a choreographic score intended to make elements formed of paper pulp, blown glass, and moulded aluminum, with objects from the Watermill Center collection, move around the space. Basing himself on a myth in which the crust of the moon becomes detached and fragments of it fall to Earth, the project, titled *The Full Rotation of the Moon*,

took the form of a procession of artefacts. Given his sculptural attention to materials, textures, and the corporeal and sensory experience that spectators would have of them, Beck approached the Watermill Center objects through their materiality. He helped to produce a sensory and incorporeal knowledge of the collection.

In March 2018, theorist and playwright Lauren DiGiulio reflected on the relations between the performing body and the notion of structure used by two artists who had been involved in the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds, Lucinda Childs and Christopher Knowles. In DiGiulio's view, they were emblematic of the transformation that performance art underwent in the late 1960s, when artists abandoned objects and props to turn toward language. Starting with documents from the Byrd Hoffman Watermill Foundation Archives, DiGiulio tried to show that life among the objects of the Watermill Center collection led residents to challenge the cultural and historical networks to which they were connected and to measure the extent to which erudition is an incorporeal practice. Through the project, DiGiulio, who had already contributed to a number of Wilson's theatre pieces and as a consequence knew the orientations of the Watermill Center well, tested the very idea of a collection the use of which is oriented toward collective creation and challenged the forms of knowledge that might emerge from it.

In February 2015, artist Mary Ellen Bartley proposed a project making use of the library. She identified and photographed the books and documents in which Wilson had left Post-It notes or annotations indicating the pages and passages that interested him. Through the resulting catalogue, which played on the pleasure of reading through another's eyes, she mapped sources of inspiration and connections among artists, works, ideas, and intuitive links, taking literally the notion of a library of inspiration. As aptly as DiGiulio, she tested the very project of the Watermill Center.

These four examples show that the conception of the collection and the library proceed from cooperation among Wilson, the centre's staff, and the artists in residence. The uses of the collection proposed by the residents help to transform it, augment it, think of it differently. They also invite the professionals responsible for the library, the database, and the archives to conceive of other ways to organize and challenge information. The feedback process that provides for the contribution of artists in residence to the content of the library and archives plays an essential role in this collaborative process.

Although there is, of course, cooperation, everyone has autonomy with regard to the goals sought and the means implemented. This diversity of ways of thinking and working requires constant adjustments by all actors involved. That it is why it is possible to consider the Watermill collection a boundary collection despite the fact that it was assembled by a single individual and is evidence of a strong attachment to objects. According to Trompette and de Vinck's categories (2009), it would be both a "library object" from which one draws and an "interface object" that facilitates the exchange of information.

To open its activities and resources to other social groups, the institution maintains close collaborations with a number of local community organizations that provide aid to disadvantaged groups, cultural minorities, and the Shinnecock Indigenous community. Several educational programs closely articulated with the artist residencies have been created. For example, the Young Artists Residency Project, in existence since 2013, involves partnering an artist in residence with children from eight to twelve years old at the Bridgehampton Child Care

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& Recreation Center, a community organization for children of immigrants and from disadvantaged communities. Every week, they work together at the Watermill Center in workshops designed by the artists in relation to their practice and project. The program brings the children into contact with international artists and introduces them to multiple art forms and processes: production of a filmed performance with Amy Khoshbin (Brooklyn) in 2015; making masks with Francesca Fini (Italy) in 2016; drawings performed in the rehearsal hall with the international collective Physical Plastic in 2017; performance filmed on the roof of the Watermill Center with Lilian Colosso (Brazil) also in 2017; dance with the collective El Colegio del cuerpo (Colombia) in 2018; music and audio mix with rapper Kirk Knight (Brooklyn) in 2019. These activities take place in the centre's spaces, among the works and objects of the collection.

Figure 4 - The Watermill Center's Dual Language Program with students from Southampton Intermediate School, 2011.



Source: © Hronn Axelsdottir, courtesy The Watermill Center.

Other educational activities require more direct use of the collection and the library. The *Dual Language Project*, inaugurated in 2010 in collaboration with the Southampton Intermediate School, addresses issues linked to immigration and the integration of Spanish-speaking cultural groups into the Hamptons. Grade 5 and grade 6 children with their teachers, the centre's employees, and an artist in residence produce bilingual English–Spanish creations. Starting from an Aztec legend (2013) or the story of Don Quixote (2012), they were asked to choose objects from the collection, write stories about them, and read them during a performance at the Watermill Center. In 2015, on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of Southampton, the show *375: Our Story, Our History / Nuestra historia, somos la historia* consisted of integrating the official history of

Southampton with family stories told by the children and marked by immigration. The multidisciplinary artist in residence, Helen Patarot, who was working on a documentary play on the life of her father, a French career military officer, contributed to the project.

This highly developed educational and community-oriented component, to which the Watermill Center devotes a position filled by an artist¹⁴, enables local social groups, most of which are from outside the art field, to use the collection, the library, and the archives, and to cooperate with the artists in residence and the professionals at the Watermill Center. These experiences undeniably enhance the centre's reflection on the nature of a collection devoted to creation, a library devoted to inspiration, and a database capable of recording and reconstructing traces of creative processes. The objects in the collection are well and truly creative and cognitive mediators enabling different social groups to cooperate.

Concepts for Action: The Virtual Collections of the Musée de la danse

Unlike the Fondation du doute and the Watermill Center, the Musée de la danse, our third case study, developed an approach to collecting that can be called virtual because it was not made concrete in the form of a corpus of objects, except temporarily. It did, however, constitute the main motive force for reflection and action in the art project that French dancer and choreographer Boris Charmatz ran for nine years. Through this project, emblematic of practices that emerged in the mid-1990s – termed “non-dance” by some theorists – Charmatz attempted to extend the frontiers of dance through interdisciplinary experiments and by reinventing relations with the public.

Charmatz founded the Musée de la danse in 2009 at the Centre chorégraphique national de Rennes et de Bretagne (CCNRB), of which he became director. The project ended in 2018, when his mandate concluded and the collective FAIR[E] was appointed to head the centre, which returned to its previous name of CCNRB. In France, the national choreographic centres had been created in the early 1980s on the initiative of Jack Lang. The very first French institutions devoted entirely to the creation, dissemination, and mediation of contemporary dance, they are directed by choreographers who offer an art program developed during their mandate. They also play an important role in the training of choreographers, dancers, and dance notators.

The Musée de la danse was the creative project that Charmatz submitted to the CCNRB, and in this sense one could say that he was proceeding from an imaginary institution to a real one. The figure of the museum was not, however, metaphoric. On the one hand, Charmatz modelled his art program on different museum operations. On the other hand, he multiplied collaborations with real museums. In its earliest form a manifesto published in 2009, the Musée de la danse proposed a reflection on how dance is transmitted. It confronted the museum, the archive, the collection, and the patrimony with the experimental, the ephemeral, the body, and the kinesthetic memory of the Other. This meant thinking of the transmission of dance in light of the vestiges, traces, perennial arts, and institutions that ensure its preservation.

14 Andrea Coté is responsible for educational activities.

The Musée de la danse was intended to upend the ideas both of the museum and of dance! An impossible marriage between two worlds, it explored the tensions and convergences between the plastic arts and the living arts, memory and creation, collection and wild improvisation, works in motion and immobilized gestures. (CHARMATZ, 2009, our translation)

Nourished by debates on the transmission of performative art practices, to which it made an important contribution, the Musée de la danse was imagined by Charmatz as a space of cooperation and friction: “It induces unlikely links, confrontations between worlds usually poles apart from one another” the manifesto read (CHARMATZ, 2009: 4).

The development of a network of diverse institutional partners and individuals was core to the mandate of the Musée de la danse: artists, dance companies, cultural institutions (theatres, opera companies, galleries, museums, and others), community organizations, and educational institutions (universities, colleges, high schools, elementary schools, daycare centres, extra-curricular organizations, adult education centres). The museum’s preferred mode operation was to design and organize a wide variety of activities in collaboration, such as shows; workshops and encounters; dance courses for professionals, amateurs, and children; lectures, debates, and participatory events in the public space; screenings of dance films; exhibitions; and acquisitions of archives and artworks. All of these activities were oriented around a single question: what should a museum of dance look like and what should it collect?

Three forms of virtual collection emerged from the Musée de la danse’s activity programs. The potential collection explored the possibilities of constructing a collection of artefacts related to dance, without necessarily producing such a collection. The immaterial collection was composed of dance works conserved in the bodies of dancers. Finally, the conceptual collection brought together scores, scripts, and scenarios that make it possible to activate and re-activate dance works, performances, and even events. We address these types of collections through several examples, showing how each offered a pretext for developing forms of cooperation that we might call *frictional* because they generated challenges. To what extent can a virtual collection, whether it is potential, immaterial, or conceptual, be a paradigm for the boundary collection? Is it more likely than a collection of artefacts already established to encourage modes of cooperation through which the actors involved negotiate their knowledge, know-how, and interpretations?

The potential collection consisted of imagining or temporarily bringing together a corpus of objects that could serve as a dance museum’s permanent collection: a “mental catalogue of works that the Musée de la danse might contain” (Musée de la danse, 2010, our translation). In Charmatz’s view, this meant “fantasizing” about the museum and its collection (OSTENDE, 2010: 76). He and his collaborators explored its different avenues through a series of projects conducted with artists and institutions, including *Service commandé* (2010) and *brouillon* (2010).

For *Service commandé*, the Musée de la danse, partnering with the creative laboratory of the Palais de Tokyo (le Pavillon), offered seven young artists and two curators a creative residency during which they were asked to copy, document, and redirect works that might be ideal for the Musée de la danse collection. The works considered raised the questions of representation of the body, of movement, of gesture, and of space lived in or travelled through – for

example, Henri Matisse's painting *La Danse* (1909), portraying a circle of dancers; Sharon Lockhart's film *Goshogaoka* (1997), about female basketball players' training routines; and Ari Fohlman's animated film *Valse avec Bachir* (2008), on the 1982 war in Lebanon. The idea was to look at such works through the prism of dance and performance and to return the body to a central position in relationship to them.

Similarly, *brouillon* was deployed from a corpus of plastic artworks selected by a team of curators according to criteria that were broader than for *Service commandé*. The works were chosen for their capacity to accommodate bodies in motion and to encourage interactions with dancers, actors, and performers. Examples included a photographic installation by Gustav Metzger on the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, Fred Sandback's installation of cords stretched across a space, and Atelier van Lieshout's improbable body-building equipment. Performers continually installed and uninstalled them, constantly updating the juxtapositions, subtracting certain pieces and reintroducing others. They also performed with the works. For instance, Marlène Saldana interacted with a photograph by Metzger of a child being rescued; Charmatz and Jan Ritsema experimented with the sculptural equipment made by Atelier van Lieshout; and Eduard Gabia performed in the spaces defined by Sandback's sculpture.

Figure 5 - *brouillon*. Musée de la danse's exhibition, Performatik Performance Art Biennale, Brussels, 2013.



Source: © Hans Meijer.

In these interactions and exchanges between the artefacts and the performers' bodies, the works became actors in their own right. They made the performers act. In Quéré's terms, as "active centres of operation", the artefacts were bearers of "operational schemas", instigators of "beginnings of acts," and they fully collaborated with the humans who handled them. Moreover, through artistic experimentation, the actions involved exploring the agency of plastic artworks, extending their operational field, and co-creating with them. Forms of corporeal knowledge emerged from these artistic exchanges between humans and artefacts. What can a body teach us about a plastic artwork and, inversely, what can a plastic artwork teach a body? *brouillon* thus had a decidedly cognitive scope.

The potential collection is never set in stone. It unsettles the idea of permanence and longevity attached to the collection. Its content and orderings are always becoming. It is open to experience. The objects that compose it are endowed with agency and make humans do something. It is a bearer of potent (in French, the second meaning of the adjective “potential”) gestures. Because the interactions between the humans and the artefacts that it generates have a cognitive dimension, it can be envisaged as a boundary collection.

In 2014, as part of a project titled *La Permanence*, this idea of a potential collection was put to the test in a “real” institutional collection; the collection was that of the Fonds national d’art contemporain developed, conserved, and managed by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP). For a one-year period, *La Permanence*, curated by Charmatz, Sébastien Faucon (director of the CNAP), and Sandra Neveut (production manager for the Musée de la danse), was presented in different institutions in Rennes that were partners of the Musée de la danse. The project consisted of four process-related cycles. Works from the CNAP – videos, photographs, installations, performances, and others – were selected in response to the question “How can the body be exhibited as a potential for unsettling, an enigma addressed to perception?” Each cycle was based on a different corpus.

The first cycle explored the idea of replaying performances and grouped together such works as Édouard Levé’s *Pornographie* (2002), a photographic lexicon of X-rated gestures; *Bruits* (1993) by Absalon, a video in which the artist howled at the camera; and photographs of John Coplans’s hand as self-portraits. Combining the two preceding projects, the artists installed and uninstalled the works, moved them into associations of their own, and took free inspiration from them to produce performances.

The third cycle, which dealt with relations between photography and movement and was addressed to children, took the same operational form. It was titled *Le petit musée de la danse*; photographs from the CNAP were exhibited, all portraying bodies in motion (Denis Darzacq, *La chute* (2006); Teun Hocks, *Lamp* (2002); and others). Playing at once the roles of mediator, performer, and teacher, two dancers explored with the children the capacity for a photograph to represent and generate movement.

The operational modes of the potential collection, applied to an established institutional collection, transform the latter into a repertoire of gestures. The works that compose it call upon and generate actions. This shift from collection of works to repertoire of gestures challenges the fields of both plastic arts and dance. It upsets the conventional conception of the museum collection, understood as an inalienable and organized grouping of permanent works that were selected according to art history criteria and categories. It also overturns the traditional notion of the repertoire, which is often lumped together, in the living arts, with a more or less frozen grouping of canonical works, fixed by notation systems or by the institutions that take them in charge (the Opéra national de Paris or the Comédie-Française, for example). Finally, it forces a visual, scholarly, and erudite approach to the collected works to be articulated with a corporeal, playful, and artistic experience. By taking up Trompette and Vinck’s typology (2009), it is possible to propose that the potential collection, when it is anchored to an existing institutional collection, functions as a “library object” that has the capacity to generate other “library objects” (repertoires of gestures).

La *Permanence* encouraged actors from the two institutions involved to examine their working methods. The CNAP professionals explored which limitations to the uses and manipulation of works could not be transgressed, if only for obvious conservation reasons. They had to make the dancers and choreographers aware of their code of ethics. The experience enabled them to develop haptic approaches, very different from their own, to the works. The Musée de la danse, for its part, had to structure itself to carry out the project and be able to present some of the works and activities in its own premises. For example, it had to hire people to greet visitors¹⁵. It would have been difficult for the selection of corpuses not to take into consideration the logics underlying the CNAP collection. Performing among the works and the public also raised many questions about dance practices.

The second form of collection developed by the Musée de la danse was the “immaterial collection” – that is, it consisted of the mnesic and kinesthetic traces that a dance has left in the bodies of the dancers and that are transmitted from body to body through practice. This “archival body” or “living archive” of dance, as Lepecki (2010) calls it, is a space for the reinvention and rewriting of works. Mobile, precarious, undetermined, bodies do not fix the original dances but transform them, update them, explore their potentialities.

In Charmatz’s view, it was essential that a museum of dance present (or exhibit) dancers transmitting their own corporeal memories of the pieces that they had performed or learned. His project titled *20 danseurs pour le XXe siècle*, which underwent numerous iterations from 2012 to 2020, is an excellent illustration of this idea of the body as a living archive. Without a stage, set, or costumes, accompanied only by a soundtrack, twenty performers with very diversified approaches danced fragments of solos from the twentieth-century choreographic repertoire – George Balanchine, Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch, Nijinsky, Isadora Duncan, Dominique Bagouet, and Jérôme Bel – with which were mixed more popular practices, such as voguing and Michael Jackson’s choreographies. Presented in spaces not dedicated to dance shows (a library, museums, public areas of several theatres), *20 danseurs pour le XXe siècle* established a sense of proximity with spectators because no separation was defined between the performers and those watching them. The audience circulated freely from one choreographic fragment to another, inevitably building discontinuous, anachronic, and personal histories of dance, linked to their own experiences, backgrounds, and sensibilities.

In several museums – for example, at the Tate Modern in 2015 – the danced fragments were presented in galleries containing works from the permanent collections. Each performer chose one of the works on display related to the solo that he or she was performing in order to art histories and memories of dance intersect. As in *La Permanence*, the collection and the repertoire were brought back to back. Two types of relationship with the past confronted each other: one the heir to a teleological conception of history (the modern art museum); the other memory-related, discontinuous, and symptomatic (the body archive).

At the Opéra de Paris, in 2015, *20 danseurs pour le XXe siècle* was performed by ballet dancers from the Opéra national de Paris, which gave the piece a completely different scope. This dance company, one of the oldest in Europe, has

¹⁵ In this respect, the title of the program became meaningful; the French word *permanence* designated the permanence of the Museum collection and the staff that ensures a continual operation of an organization.

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the mandate of bringing alive the repertoire from the classical ballet tradition while being open to innovative contemporary choreographers. The works, some of which date from the seventeenth century, have been transmitted from generation to generation of dancers by the performers themselves. In this context, Charmatz's proposition created friction between two conceptions of the dance repertoire, one canonical (a process of stabilization), the other experimental (a dynamic of transformation).

Another activity undertaken by the Musée de la danse that explored the idea of the immaterial collection borne by bodies was the series *gifts*. These weekly workshops for amateurs, adults and teenagers, were hosted each week in Rennes by artists most of whom came from dance and performance, but some of whom came from other disciplines, such as theatre and the martial arts. Each session offered an opportunity to transmit, in a festive and unorganized way, works or corporeal practices related to the artist's approach: remaking Mary Wigman's *Witch Dance* with choreographer and performer Latifa Laâbissi, who had herself proposed a re-creation; experiencing the “Sacrificial Dance” solo from Vaslav Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* with Julia Cima, who had performed it several times; being introduced to Brazilian jiu-jitsu, a martial art imported from Japan to Brazil in the early twentieth century, with dancer and fighter Julien Fouché; and so on. Over the weeks, the amateurs who regularly took these workshops developed a vast and eclectic corporeal culture. They formed a community, a circle of the memory of appropriated, approximate, hybrid, diverted gestures. Céline Roux (2015: 233, our translation) speaks of a living and iconoclastic collection of embodied gestures:

The amateurs' bodies become the receptacle for a plurality of archives, more or less “scientific,” more or less “pirated” or “diverted,” which they makes their own and of which the museum is, in a way, dispossessed and cannot contain. Emanating from this is the construction of unorganized collections in which the dregs, the fake, and the failure are part of the process of collecting.

Figure 6 - expo zéro. Musée de la danse's exhibition project, Le Garage, Rennes 2009.



Source: © Martina Hochmuth.

This immaterial collection borne by the bodies of dancers and amateurs was composed of malleable boundary objects (TROMPETTE;VINCK, 2009) that it was up to each individual to shape and transform freely, in his or her own way, in interaction with others. That is why the immaterial collection is in fact a boundary collection.

Finally, the third form of virtual collection developed by the Musée de la danse was conceptual. It was composed of scores, scripts, and protocols that made it possible to reactivate dance works, performances, and events. The conceptual collection confronted several traditions: notation in dance, instructions for scripts in performance art, and directions and protocols arising from conceptual art. Since the fifteenth century, dance has adopted a succession of notation forms in response to aesthetic conceptions and unique social customs: the Feuillet system, Conté's and Stepanov's notation, Meunier's stenocholeography, Benesh's choreology, Laban's cinetography, and others. Since the 1990s, a number of choreographers have used existing notational systems or formulated new ones to challenge the transmission and autonomy of dance works; the status of the choreographer; the role, margin of freedom, and creative responsibility of the performers; and other issues. Unlike dance, the visual arts and performance do not have notation systems. Therefore, artists use verbal communication, diagrams, and sometimes photography to formulate their scripts. The use of instructions in the field of visual arts goes back to the late 1950s and became widespread two decades later. Fluxus artists, happening artists, and conceptual artists made great use of them, with the goal of demystifying the work of art and its creator. Indeed, scripts challenge the conception, solidly anchored in art history, of the unique work of art made by the hands of a single artist. It allows execution of artworks to be delegated to other people and multiplies their occurrences.

The second cycle of *La Permanence*, titled "Lecture/Mouvement," offered a good example of the desire to confront notation practices in two fields. Devoted to works that combined reading and movement, this cycle explored the idea that reading puts the body in motion and that dance is moulded through language and books. A corpus of works was selected from the CNAP collection, among them John Giorno's sonar and visual performance poems, Lawrence Weiner's ideas for works to be materialized or not, and Dora Garcia's *Instant Narrative* (2006–08), in which texts describing the behaviour of visitors to the installation scrolled on a screen.

As a complement, a workshop was organized using the catalogue *do it* (OBRIST, 1995) as a point of departure. Initiated in 1995 by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, the highly celebrated exhibition *do it* consisted of making works from instructions by artists, without them being present. No iteration acted as an original. Reactivated many times in various countries, *do it* highlighted the differences among the iterations of works that had been executed using the same instructions. This exhibition helped to generalize delegation practices in museums. Charmatz provided the book *do it* to dancers, visual artists, and art students at the Université de Rennes, so that they would execute, before an audience, the instructions of their choice. The workshop enabled them to compare their conceptions and uses of the texts and encouraged them to invent new ways of working with the book, which over two decades has become an essential reference, a model.

In this context, *do it* can be envisaged as a boundary object. It constitutes both a “library object” and an “interface object.” It offers a collection of scenarios and repertoires of potential gestures that can be freely drawn from; it allows for the exchange of information between artists and performers in different disciplines; and it encourages reflection on the methods, codes, and uses of this interface.

The activities of the Musée de la danse revealed another, broader use of the script. It made it possible to generate, activate, and reactivate organized events, whether exhibitions or activity programs, whether simple or elaborate. Indeed, all the activities at the Musée de la danse responded to a sort of “general run-through”, a procedural model. Even if there was no score as such, one could easily speak of written or oral scenarios that orchestrated the main components of each project. They made it possible to reactivate the exhibitions and activity programs in other places, for other publics, and with other actors. Furthermore, they ensured the Musée de la danse a form of perpetuation, as a number of scenarios have been reactivated since its closure in 2018.

Charmatz instituted this procedural model when the Musée de la danse opened. The first project under his mandate, titled *expo zéro*, consisted of inviting actors (choreographers, dancers, artists, curators, researchers, art critics, historians, architects, and others) to an empty space to reflect, discuss, and experience what a museum of dance could be. The project underwent many iterations from 2009 to 2016 in various spaces and with different participants. The catalogue of the resulting exhibition served as a reflective record of the project, a collection of ideas, but also drew the contours of an exhibition model to follow, in the spirit of Obrist’s book *do it*.

Throughout his mandate, Charmatz maintained this procedural method. The projects described above all resulted from scenarios to be reactivated: *brouillon*, *Service commandé*, *20 danseurs pour le XXe siècle*, and so on. From activity to activity, this operational method grew increasingly complex. The durations, spaces, and number of actors involved constantly grew; the temporalities, actions, and processes became more complicated. Frequently, Charmatz and his collaborators added on and superimposed several scenarios.

Shortly before the Musée de la danse closed, *A Dancer’s Day* gave a good illustration of this process, as it combined projects resulting from the museum’s nine years of activity. It was produced at the Centre National de la Danse (CND) in Pantin, as part of the event *L’invitation aux musées* (2018). Several atypical museums and institutions¹⁶ were invited to take over the spaces of CND and propose “a form of exhibition still to be invented, to which had to be added a performative event and a scientific intervention” (GAÏTÉ, 2018: 5, our translation).

A Dancer’s Day offered the opportunity to share the daily work of dancers. Visitors could participate in a warm-up, a rehearsal, a meal, a rest period, a performance, and the party that concluded the evening. This scenario of a dancer’s day had been activated in 2017 in Berlin, and several months before at Charleroi Danse in Belgium. It was performed again in 2019 in Zurich. In addition, a number of the elements that composed it had already been produced autonomously or as part of the other programs. For instance, warm-ups took place one Sunday per month in a public square in Rennes, during the *Fous de dan-*

¹⁶ The Art Institute of Chicago, the Musée national centre d’Art Reina-Sofía, Serralves-Musée d’art contemporain, MAGASIN des horizons, and the Musée éphémère de la mode.

se events, which also had a number of iterations. At the Musée de la danse, the scenarios were collected in the perspective of combining and recombining them differently, according to the logic of a dynamic and transformative repertoire.

The experiments that took place at the Musée de la danse intersect, in many ways, with theories emerging from performance studies on the memory of performative works. A number of activities explored the capacity of performance to last through repetition (SCHNEIDER, 2001). The idea of a discontinuous, dynamic, and transformative repertoire that forms through projects presents many affinities with the thought of Taylor and the dialectic that she establishes between the archive and the repertoire (TAYLOR, 2003). The immaterial collection of gestures borne by the bodies of dancers and amateurs echoes Lepecki's (2010) idea of the body archive as a space of reinvention of works. The Musée de la danse also extended what was called in France, in the 1990s, the "memory years" of dance. As Pouillaude (2009) and Launay (2018, 2019) analyze it, the transmission of choreographic works has become not only a priority for the dance field but an engine of choreographic experimentation and creation.

Incontestably, the virtual collections of the Musée de la danse, whether they were in potential, immaterial, or conceptual mode, were boundary collections. At once "library objects," "malleable objects," and "interface objects," they encouraged cooperation among different social worlds: the fields of visual arts, contemporary dance and classical ballet, amateur audiences, and others. Through their interactions, the actors involved were called upon to challenge their approaches, methods, knowledge, and interpretations. Each collection method arranged a confrontation of points of view and forced the actors to go beyond it: notation as seen by dancers and visual artists; the repertoire and corporeal memory in classical ballet and contemporary dance; the visual experience and the haptic and performative approach to visual works; and so on.

The status of the Musée de la danse and of the activities it conducted were deliberately ambiguous. Was this a real or an imaginary institution, for works by artists or for the cultural program of an art institution? Paradoxically, it was this indetermination from which Charmatz's proposition drew its effectiveness and its capacity to impact fields of art. As works, the activities proposed were "naturally" inscribed in the programs of cultural institutions. As propositions coming from an art organization, the projects conferred a form of agency upon the Musée de la danse. It became a partner with which to cooperate.

Over the nine years that the Musée de la danse was in existence, the museums that wished to open up to performative art practices and engage in reflection on the ways to exhibit and collect them solicited its cooperation. For instance, in 2013, the Tate Modern invited it to open the first meeting of its research program *Collecting the Performative*. Then, in 2015, it opened its doors to it for forty-eight hours to take over all four floors of its building, including the galleries dedicated to the permanent collection, around the question *If Tate Modern Was Musée de la danse?* The Museum of Modern Art in New York and the ZKM|Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe also invited Charmatz to similar collaborations. The Musée de la danse was thus decisive in the "performative turn" taken by museums because it contributed to reflections on the methods for integration of living arts into those institutions. The virtual collections that it built have the potential to extend its capacity for action beyond its existence.

Concluding Remarks

The Fondation du doute, the Watermill Center, and the Musée de la danse, three young institutions, dedicated to performative art practices, have made their collections into spaces of collective experimentation. They raise questions about connections between collection and performativity on two levels: how can performative art practices be collected? And how can performative approaches to collection be developed? Whether they are borrowed, fully acquired, or imagined, whether they were assembled by private collectors, artists, or communities, these groupings of material or immaterial objects function as frontier objects, whence our proposed neologism “frontier collection”. As shared territories, these collections result from and generate forms of cooperation among different social worlds. They give actors whose statuses, skills, and interests are not necessarily aligned an opportunity to collaborate, even as they enjoy autonomy with regard to the goals that they are pursuing and the means used to attain them. These interactions also have a cognitive scope because, as we have observed, the groups involved contribute to the production of knowledge through negotiations, challenges, and openness to other perspectives and points of view.

The Fondation du doute operates based on the deposit, over an eight-year period, of private collections of Fluxus works. Far from setting these corpuses in stone, this temporary institutional domiciliation propels them into a field of relations and social interactions among a wide variety of collectors, artists, professionals, educators, and amateurs. The works and artefacts are engaged in activities during which they become actors that make humans do something. These types of cooperation generate communities capable of taking responsibility for transmitting a Fluxus state of mind, philosophy, and pedagogy, both within and beyond the worlds of art.

At the Watermill Center, the personal collection of theatre director Robert Wilson constitutes both a community living environment and an activator of collective creation. Emblematic of the artist’s collection, reflecting its creator’s elective affinities, it functions like a creation machine: it composes a universe of references that can be freely drawn from. The corpuses of objects and archives and the library at the Watermill Center are made available to guest creators from different disciplinary fields and countries, as well as to groups of young people and educators from local schools and community organizations. These individuals and groups can simply rub shoulders with the contents of the collection during residencies, take inspiration from them, or integrate them into their artistic and performative experimentations. They thus contribute to a reinvention of relations between objects and bodies. Thanks to a feedback process, their research is incorporated into the centre’s archives and library, and sometimes into the collection.

At Musée de la danse, the potential, immaterial, and conceptual collections were composed of collection projects, memory-related and kinesthetic traces, and scenarios to activate. They took the form of corpuses (imagined or constituted) of plastic works related to bodies, mnesic traces deposited in the bodies of dancers and amateurs, and repertoires of scripts awaiting activation or reactivation, which can be freely combined from one activity to another. These virtual collections encourage diverse actors to engage in discussions and collective actions around a common subject of reflection, which could be a mu-

seum of dance. Far from a simple metaphor, the museum constituted a model to explore, as well as an interlocutor and partner with which to cooperate.

These collaborative conceptions of the collection borrow approaches and values from new institutionalism and its reformulation through “instituting” practices. These conceptions also seem to play a part, in many ways, in the economy of enrichment and its revalorization of the collection, even though these phenomena seem politically and ideologically at odds.

In the 1990s, new institutionalism contributed to a renewal of exhibition formats and a rethinking of the social role of art museums. The institutions that participated in this movement privileged long-term collaborative projects with artists that employed unusual curatorial processes. Through flexible and collaborative working methods, they reinvented their relationship with their publics so as to involve them fully in the production of content and knowledge. The three institutions that we studied employed several of these strategies, migrating them from the exhibition to the collection.

The three institutions that we studied have also proceeded from fluid and moving institutional forms that resist their own institutionalization (RAU-NIG; RAY, 2009). The Watermill Center takes sustenance from the utopias of community life and the creative collective that were at the heart of the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds, an informal organization that Wilson initiated in the late 1960s. The Fondation du doute and Musée de la danse superimpose fictive institutions on real organizations. This overlay confers effectiveness and even agency on the fictive entity. As an imaginary museum within the CCNRB, the Musée de la danse was, during its nine-year life, an essential partner to a number of cultural and educational institutions. For eight years, the Fondation du doute, whose name flew the flag of the Fluxus spirit, completely camouflaged the true municipal entity that hosted it. The planned ending of these institutions forced them to work with the idea of a programmed disappearance or reinvention and questions from the start the idea of the lasting collection.

Finally, paradoxically, the Fondation du doute, the Musée de la danse, and the Watermill Center are inscribed within the economy of enrichment identified by Boltanski and Esquerre (2017). In this system, the collection is a form of valorization of things of the past. By hosting private collections within a public cultural complex, the Fondation du doute, like the Musée de l’objet before it, worked, with a certain financial precariousness, to enrich private collections. Its action is inscribed in the redistribution of links between culture and the public and private sectors facilitated recently by legislation in favour of sponsorship, notably in France and Italy. Located in Blois, it helped to create, within its vicinity, interactions among patrimony (the heritage buildings that it occupied), tourism (which it stimulated), the visual and living arts, and the art market. The same could be said of the Musée de la danse when it interacted with the collections of the CNAP and the Tate Modern. Furthermore, we can consider, following Cometti, that the collections of the Musée de la danse, although virtual, are paradigmatic of the twenty-first-century collection because they carry potentialities that will always be possible to fructify – for example, the reactivation of scenarios after the closure of the Musée de la danse (this is the active form of valorization, according to Boltanski and Esquerre (2017)). Charmatz’s project also helped to energize the cultural offer in the town of Rennes and encouraged organizations in the art and heritage fields to collaborate. At the Watermill Center, the integration of the collection with residents’ art projects and edu-

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educational activities helps to enrich the gathering of new narratives. Its impact on cultural life in the Hamptons is considerable. As it receives no or little public support, its funding is conditional on its capacity to find support from actors in the economy of enrichment, in the fields of art and culture, and in those of the luxury industry and finance.

This dual lineage, new institutionalism and the economy of enrichment, is not so much paradoxical as it is symptomatic of a convergence of critical positions and the new economic models. The values of new institutionalism and those of the economy of enrichment do not contradict but complement each other. The new uses of collections in institutions dedicated to performance are evidence of this. It is not surprising to have observed in recent years that more and more art museums are redeploying their collections in displays that respond to current issues. Some even open their collections to cultural communities so that they appropriate part of the responsibility for their heritage and contribute to enriching it.

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