

# Choreographic Objects: traces and artefacts of physical intelligence

Dr James Leach, University of Aberdeen, Beyond Text Research Networks and Workshops

**Dance has been an essential part of the cultural fibre of society through hundreds of years. But what can we learn from dance, and how can we capture this knowledge?**

Four internationally recognised contemporary choreographers: Wayne MacGregor, Siobhan Davies, William Forsythe and Emio Greco and their associated organisations have independently begun to explore the potential of interactive digital media and related technologies to document, describe, transmit and disseminate aspects of their practice. These 'choreographic objects' aim to further the understanding and evolution of contemporary dance as an art form which produces valuable knowledge.

The choreographers and their four projects: a digital archive; an online image of a body you can instruct with specific choreographic instructions; a website devoted to analysing different aspects of one famous dance; and the use of 3-D installations and motion-capture technology to educate people about bodily intention and movement, have been brought together for the first time by Dr James Leach, a social anthropologist at the University of Aberdeen, who received AHRC funding to critically examine the choreographers claim that dance is knowledge-producing.

James and a team of social scientists held three workshops with the project teams, applying theories of knowledge production and knowledge exchange to their endeavours. They examined how choreographic and kinetic understandings come to be embodied in transactable objects, and how easily others make use of and translate that value for their own projects.

As James explains: 'Contemporary dance has a lot to offer, but in today's knowledge economy, there is real pressure to demonstrate knowledge production. Thus the projects focus on the processes of making dance, and making those processes into things (knowledge objects) that can circulate and engage people. This development repositions contemporary dance and highlights its value. The project teams have benefited from this reflection and analysis, which has given them new tools to use in shaping the objects themselves.'

The choreographic objects from the projects will be made publicly available in 2009. Scholarship and analysis drawn from the workshops were presented in a public seminar at Sadlers Wells Theatre in April 2009, making the research immediately accessible.



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Interactive Installation Double Skin / Double Mind. Concept en realisatie: Chris Ziegler (ZKM, Karlsruhe), Bertha Bermudez (EG I PC), Frédéric Bevilacqua (IRCAM, Parijs).