

Shadows Between Worlds

Claire Vionnet & Christelle Becholey Besson

Shadows Between Worlds emerged from conversations between visual artist Christelle Becholey Besson and anthropologist/dancer Claire Vionnet.

Claire was writing her PhD on the emergence of the gesture in contemporary dance plays. She was questioning the performative presence of dancers and the way they inhabit their gestures. To avoid the binary opposition between an *outside* form visible (the gesture) and an *inside* invisible life (feelings, emotions, thoughts, visualisation), Claire used the shadow as a metaphor: what lies in the shadow of the gesture that gives strength and depth to the gesture? How do feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories and storytelling initiate/lead/shape gestures?

Christelle was interested in collaborative research. This project gave her the opportunity to experiment with someone from another research field. The human body is an important element of her artistic practice since she often works with video performance and installation. For Christelle, shadows materialize the ephemeral and the invisible dimension. For this project, she was interested in bringing video and performance in a living installation and in creating different characters with shadows.

In Fall 2016, Christelle installed a white screen – bigger than the human kinesphere – in her art studio and placed it in front of a projector.

Claire Vionnet is an Anthropologist, Dance Scholar and Dancer. Marked by her time lived in Africa, she is particularly interested in the role humanities play in society and keen to reflect on better reuniting Anthropology, Art and Society. She develops alternative forms of ethnographic restitution (video-essay, lecture-performance, performative dialogs in festivals) to reach a broader audience. Website: <https://www.clairevionnet.com>. **Christelle Becholey Besson** is a visual artist. She was born in 1985 in Switzerland. She lives and works in Vancouver, BC. “In my practice, I like to follow my curiosity, which takes me in unfamiliar places. I then use and misuse art to shape fictional narratives and create atmospheres from parallel times. Collaboration is essential to my creative process. Sharing bring complexity and chaos to the linear thinking and give me more unknown.”



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31 Christelle prepared a set of images that she created from different filmed ma-
32 terials. She worked on different sensorial environments to respect the diver-
33 sity of the world: water, space and human technology. The aim was to re-enact
34 organic, material, technological and human worlds. Christelle was looking for
35 specific atmospheres she could create with Styrofoam, snail traces, and silk
36 paper.

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45 When the setting was ready, Christelle invited Claire to her studio in Lau-
46 sanne, Switzerland.

47 C and C aimed to explore the way dance emerges from specific environments
48 and how space affects the quality and the texture of movement.

49 For technical reasons, it wasn't possible to film Claire's shadows with the im-
50 ages. Claire had to dance behind a white screen, remembering the visual en-
51 vironments in her body and her memories.

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55 Christelle composed the final video integrating the shadows from the created
56 gestural repertoire. She developed an abstract narration with the biological
57 (water, snail traces) and the human built environments (tunnel, computer).
58 She played with contrasts of hosting/hostile environments for the human body
59 (the water as a welcoming bath versus the threatening stone/cave with pink
60 silk paper).

61 C and C chose to organize the sequences in a storytelling [format?] with a
62 guideline based on rupture/continuity. Departing from the digital world,

63 shadows were crossing water, space, cave and tunnel environments to finally
64 land on a bed of grass and threads.

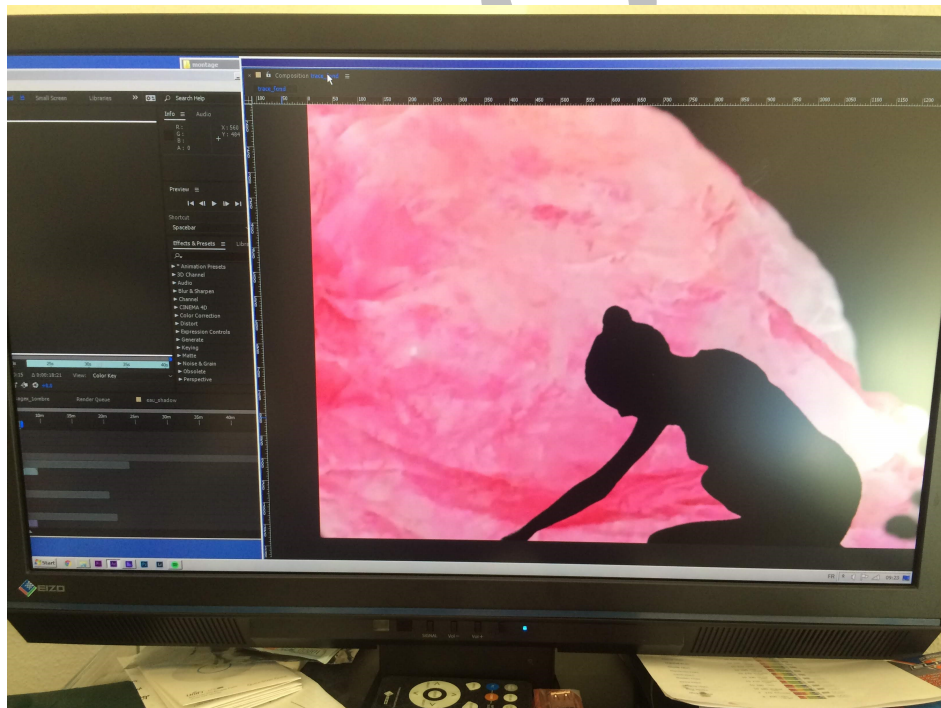
65 Concerning movement aesthetics, the dance resulted from the resonance be-
66 tween body, visuals and sounds.

67 While moving between the screen and the projector, Claire felt the atmosphere
68 of the visuals. The digital world (the first image) made her body nervous and
69 rigid, while the water (second image) relaxed her. While Claire was dancing
70 between the projector and the screen, Christelle filmed the shadow that was
71 enacting on the screen.

72 In Summer 2017, Christelle and Claire met in Aberdeen, Scotland, to perform
73 the show. The screen and the projector were installed in a very obscure room.
74 Again, Claire was dancing between the projector and the screen. The audience
75 was sitting on the other side of the screen, not knowing which shadow was
76 coming out of the live dance and which was already embedded in the video.

77 Christelle filmed the screen from the audience's perspective.

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82 This time, Claire's dance was mostly influenced by the presence of the shad-
 83 ows. She felt the impact of the sounds and the visuals on her body, but she
 84 was mainly moved by the presence of her other selves. She was affected by
 85 the emotions generated by the shadow moving on her own, on the screen. She
 86 felt it was part of her, meanwhile totally independent. The shadows had their
 87 own agency, as a part of oneself that was taking control on her real body. It
 88 was a beautiful affective encounter with her other selves, sometimes in a
 89 smooth organicity, other times in resistance and "fights": maybe parts of her-
 90 self Claire didn't like. These shadows became Claire's co-dancers, other reso-
 91 nances of her body.

92 Christelle and Claire wanted to explore further the potential of this artwork.
 93 What does it tell about our ways of inhabiting the different worlds we live in?
 94 C & C created a video essay with the two versions: the screening of the art
 95 studio and the live performance. In *Shadows Between Worlds*, the two versions
 96 run in parallel: the left side is the film created in the art studio; on the right is
 97 the footage of the live performance.

98 The creation of the video essay generated questions around the Anthropocene,
 99 addressing the environment we are living in and the milieus that might be bet-
 100 ter at welcoming our bodies in a more sustainable way. In which environment
 101 can bodies move, grow and breathe organically?

102 The music was selected at the end of the production process. It was chosen to
 103 reinforce the feeling of the visual which shaped the quality of movement. We
 104 are grateful to Dj TEMPLT, and to Patricia Bosshard & Simon Grab (MRI)
 105 who inspired us with their beautiful soundscapes: tracks *In & Purity* by
 106 TEMPLT¹, and *Step & Subambi* by MRI².

107 Finally, this project is an illustration of a participative collaboration between
 108 art and anthropology, in which the research question has been formulated to-
 109 gether in an ongoing conversation. Instead of considering art as an object of
 110 anthropological analysis, we aimed to consider art and anthropology in a sym-
 111 metrical way, noticing what we could gain from a collaborative research-cre-
 112 ation in terms of knowledge production.

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¹ https://soundcloud.com/tmplt_berlin/sets/tmplt-the-verge?fbclid=IwAR2x2AZwaQwiKbMnXUZIKCtnpn5X5iWChm5-IOJP_HNx2u9aioLtwRH20iI

² <https://simongrab.bandcamp.com/album/mri>