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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."

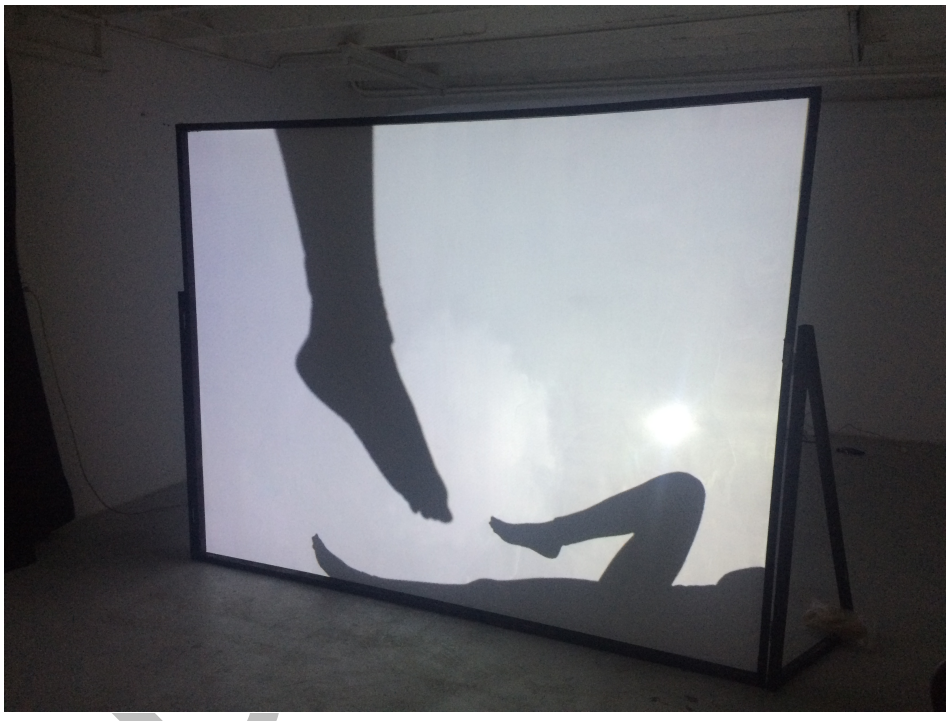
source: https://doi.org/10.48350/174981 | downloaded: 12.10.2024

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

When the setting was ready, Christelle invited Claire to her studio in Lausanne, Switzerland.

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

For technical reasons, it wasn't possible to film Claire's shadows with the images. Claire had to dance behind a white screen, remembering the visual environments in her body and her memories.



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

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

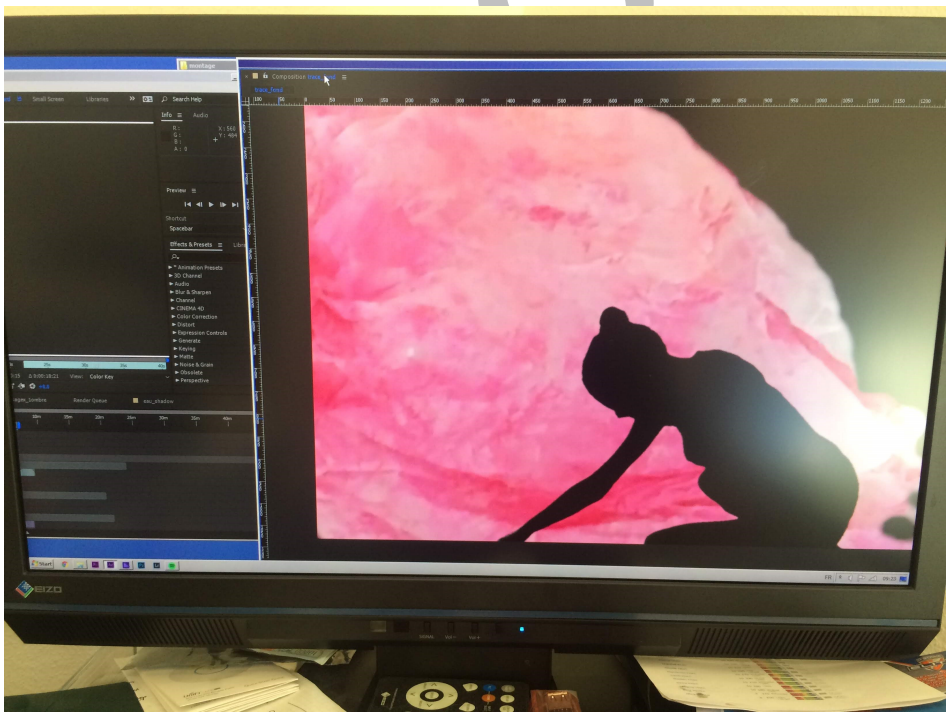
shadows were crossing water, space, cave and tunnel environments to finally land on a bed of grass and threads.

Concerning movement aesthetics, the dance resulted from the resonance between body, visuals and sounds.

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

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

Christelle filmed the screen from the audience's perspective.



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

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

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

The music was selected at the end of the production process. It was chosen to reinforce the feeling of the visual which shaped the quality of movement. We are grateful to Dj TMPLT, and to Patricia Bosshard & Simon Grab (MRI) who inspired us with their beautiful soundscapes: tracks *In* & *Pureight* by TMPLT[1], and *Step* & *Subambi* by MRI[2].

Finally, this project is an illustration of a participative collaboration between art and anthropology, in which the research question has been formulated together in an ongoing conversation. Instead of considering art as an object of anthropological analysis, we aimed to consider art and anthropology in a symmetrical way, noticing what we could gain from a collaborative research-creation in terms of knowledge production.

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

[2] https://simongrab.bandcamp.com/album/mri