

Skin and Body Lab

Short Abstract

This practical workshop will investigate the body and its boundaries, especially the skin as a porous surface marked with traces of experience. Through practical exercises we will ask: How might we extend ways of thinking and feeling with the skin? How do stories narrate the skin? We will move, touch, listen, feel, talk and question through movement.

Long Abstract 249

This proposed *Skin and Body Lab* aims to collectively investigate the boundaries of bodies, and particularly skin as a porous 'surface' marked with traces of experience, through movement and anthropological dialogue. We are especially interested in ideas and experiences about skin as felt experience, and in relation to the notion of 'boundary' as something that connects as well as divides. These ideas have emerged from diverse fieldwork, with contemporary dance in Switzerland, and in relation to nuclear ontologies in post-disaster Japan. We propose an open workshop that considers skin as a living 'event' with the capacity to activate memories, feelings and stories. Through practical exercises, we will explore ways in which skin intertwines time (body as archive), specific spaces (an ecological approach) and people (collective bodies).

We consider workshops to be an innovative way of producing knowledge collectively. Drawing on our ongoing collaborative research practice (dance workshops, writing and performances, transdisciplinary work across dance, visual art, and anthropology) this lab will explore skin and boundaries by moving, reflecting, and mark making.

Workshop Outline and research questions

- The workshop will be 90 mins in length.
- We will begin with a 15 min discussion to orientate ourselves, to take into consideration the different perspectives, experiences, and positions, of the workshop participants. We will frame our experiments in workshoping as a mode of knowledge generation in relation to inter- and trans-disciplinary practice led research across anthropology and the arts.
- The practical activity will develop through evolving experiments with a single exercise: working in pairs and small groups we will explore a body-drawing, or body tracing, exercise. Such activities are increasingly popular both in art therapy and as live drawing events that combine contemporary dance and the visual arts.
- We will draw on ongoing experiments in gestural drawing, in the expanded sense, as well as contact improvisation techniques, which involves an exploration of kinetic awareness, between bodies, by using the fundamentals of sharing weight, touch, and finding a point of contact between partners (www.contactimprovisation.co.uk).
- Considering skin and body boundaries, between people and things, surfaces and supports (floor, walls, bodies and objects) as well as those of our own bodies, we will ask:
 - How might we extend ways of thinking and feeling with the skin?
 - How can personal and collective stories 'narrate' the skin?
 - To explore surface and skin, inside and out, present and past, here and elsewhere, we will move, touch, listen, feel, talk and question through movement, considering to what extent body work generates specific *modalities* of thinking.