

## **ASSESSMENT of the Artistic Research Fellow Eva-Cecilie Richardsen**

### **Project title:**

**EXHIBITING CHOREOGRAPHY – exploring transmission accross disciplines and discourses**

### **Assessment committee:**

**Professor Jeremy Welsh (chair)□**

**Associate Professor Ingrid Snelle Hall□**

**Professor Jeroen Fabius**

### **Extracts from assessment report:**

What makes this project stand out from this international curatorial revolution in dance is the focus on the choreographic through the architectural and multifaceted design of remnants of dancing. It is the absence of live dancing, it seems a strategy of ‘looking away’ (Rogoff 2008). Richardsen desires to strip the human body from the space, in her search for human recognition (Exhibiting choreography). She uses a spatial writing as a model for choreography. Here the choreographic is accessed through its remnants, the traces of past events of dancing, as such testifying of choreographic strategies. The exhibition is accessed through choreographic notions of the body, time, space, memory (Copeland 2013), one can speak of the installation as re- materialised form. Documentary, theatrical and textual materials challenge the “ontological priority of the live performance” (Exhibiting choreography). Choreography here is looked at through the labyrinth-like structure that forces the spectator to negotiate as an archeologist one’s path through the exhibition landscape, traversing texts of all kinds of layers of relations to choreographic processes.

(...) The main subject of professionalism proposed in the project deals consistently with an epistemological proposition. Richardsen proposes to think of knowing as processual, about thought “in passing”. For this purpose Richardsen consequently operates the perspective of the landscape and the way we access landscape in a bodily way. What characterizes this relationship is on-going change, and the emergence of changing images: “what you think is a hand is a blade”. It is about the acceptance of the image to change, the insistence on the invocation of this experiences through procedures of multi-choreography. The perspective of the experience of landscape makes clear our on-going changing responses to our surroundings. The surroundings move in and around the body, they are perforating our attention. Richardsen seeks to challenge the spectator to a dancer’s perceptivity, to open the senses, the gaze, the body and mind to forms of what she calls “pre-understandings”. This is why the work is “sporadic”, it is aimed to present opportunities, not objectives. The

work is also excessive, “alarmingly big”, in order to provide fields of resonance for the viewer, listener, spectator to traverse.

(...) Richardsen’s personal position and artistic philosophy is succinctly and clearly summed up, both in her own texts and by inference, in the texts of those she invites to contribute to “*Choreopetics*”. In “*A hand is a blade*” she writes “Writing is like making field recordings during the work process, a parallel track, a way to sketch things, to think. Sometimes the writing gets processed into text, in other cases, it never gets read again. The activity itself is always what matters most, like a corporeal link to thinking, to space; it opens a window onto the world. A micro - macro perspective that can be furled up and unfurled, that becomes a source of ideas another media and materials.”

This and other formulations in her book can also be seen as a valuable contribution to the discussion around writing, text and reflection within the field of artistic research, where the conventions of the standard academic text do not fit the requirements of a research embedded in artistic practice and aesthetic investigation. It is writing “*from the art*” and within the artistic practice.

(...) As a trans-disciplinary project, it has an exemplary relevance for the Fellowship Programme and for the field of higher art education in Norway. The further development of the experiences gathered through the project can and should have a broader national and international relevance which will be manifest and measured in terms of how it feeds into future practice.

The fundamental question here is whether the “subject area” is narrowly defined as “choreography” or whether it is much more broadly situated within contemporary performance practice or an expanded field of performance within the visual arts. Given what is termed “the performative turn” in contemporary visual art, one could readily see the extension of this work within museum and gallery contexts as well as in theatres and performance spaces. For professionals engaged in trans- or multidisciplinary practices the project provides useful insights, especially in the interconnection between the photographic publication and the live event.

**- the process (artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and professional environments etc.)**

Consistently Richardsen considers the choreographic as a methodology to access what is outside language. She writes “the choreographic comes into being outside language”. In this respect Richardsen clearly breaks with dominant theorization of choreography as that what fixes, what captures and controls, what is written and prescribed, remembered (Lepecki 2008, Spangberg 2015). The multi or interdisciplinary approach to choreography is closer to phenomenological perspectives on choreography (see also Joy 2014). The choreographic is approached as an epistemological project about knowing and what she calls the

ramifications of things, i.e. the processual experience of landscape that can only be known and accessed through embodied activity and in passing. The choreographic proposition has crystallized into an installation, it is the spectator who is processing choreographic relations between the various objects and constructions of the exhibit. Process here is also the product, there is both an archaeological gesture, for the spectator to retrace, as well as architectural score for the spectator to dance.

The anthology, "Choreopoetic" clearly engages with a network and professional environment within both choreography and contemporary performing arts more generally. Richardson functions here as editor of the book, which she contextualises through her introductory text "The emergence of something else - on choreographic writing and voice". Within this short essay, Richardson describes her approach to the relationship between choreography and text, summed up as follows "In *Choreopoetic* the work of writing is presented as an artistic act and an extended choreographic practice, in which the realms of process and work, bodily forms and written language can meet and divide" Later she writes "The term *poetics* is applied here to more than just the fields of established literary and dramatic forms: it is also a productive term in an expanded performance field, where it serves to articulate trans-disciplinary and post-disciplinary issues".

The following texts in the book, some of which are published in both English and Norwegian, function as variations or interpretations of the main points Richardson sets out in her introduction, and can be seen as a fruitful dialogue between herself and her discussion partners.

The other book, "A hand is a blade" contains texts, in both Norwegian and English, that span diaristic entries commenting upon her working processes, comments upon themes, issues and ideas encountered underway, observations and short narratives, often with a memorial character. The style of writing is non-academic, personal, close to artistic practice. There are references to theory within both books, though it can not be said that any extensive investigation of theory or theoretical positions is a characteristic. One can however read theoretical analysis into and through the writing - as something embedded, possibly latent, rather than explicitly expostulated.

### **- the research fellow's personal artistic position/work in relation to the chosen subject area nationally and internationally**

Richardsen applies the term "multi-choreography" to indicate that her work is permeated with references to others, other choreographers and sources of writing and thinking. For this purpose she designs multiple formats and uses a great range of media that produce "multi-choreographed" spaces. She is interested in the way language, ideas and forms, circulate, how discourse can be understood to be without origin, running through the texts

in the room. The engagement with this on-going traversing discourse she calls “formative conversation”, which is to be discovered, of which the elements are beyond good or bad. In this sense Choreopoetics can be understood. For the reader, the texts do present a circulation of ideas, but perhaps not accessible in what way they matter. Here, selection and editing are put at risk, the reader has to negotiate one’s access to the text, the quality of text and writing, and move along this landscape of different styles of writing.

Richardson’s personal position and artistic philosophy is succinctly and clearly summed up, both in her own texts and by inference, in the texts of those she invites to contribute to “Choreopoetics”. In “*A hand is a blade*” she writes “Writing is like making field recordings during the work process, a parallel track, a way to sketch things, to think. Sometimes the writing gets processed into text, in other cases, it never gets read again. The activity itself is always what matters most, like a corporeal link to thinking, to space; it opens a window onto the world. A micro - macro perspective that can be furled up and unfurled, that becomes a source of ideas another media and materials.”

This and other formulations in her book can also be seen as a valuable contribution to the discussion around writing, text and reflection within the field of artistic research, where the conventions of the standard academic text do not fit the requirements of a research embedded in artistic practice and aesthetic investigation. It is writing “*from the art*” and within the artistic practice.

Elsewhere in “*A hand is a blade*” Richardson states “It strikes me that my work is thoroughly methodically sporadic, and not the other way round. I strive to maintain a focus on what is determined not be objectives, but by opportunities.” - a reflective comment that can usefully be applied to her body of work as a whole.

**- how the project contributes to professional development of the subject area, including any artistic innovations.**

In several of the texts that “*A hand is a blade*” comprises of, Richardson takes up questions and issues regarding choreography as a field and a practice, especially in terms of trans- or post-disciplinarity. In certain texts we get the sense that she is exploring the idea and the practice of a choreography beyond dance: “Dance, I feel, can go and do whatever it likes. Either alone or with anyone else, beyond responsibility or useful purpose. It was my concern for long enough, through countless attempts to make or use dance for something worthwhile. Which you don’t have to do just because you can”.

Also in the collection “Choreopoetic” the reader is exposed to a series of contrasting formulations of contemporary choreography and its relation to text and writing. The form and style of these texts varies considerably, from the fragmented poetry of Moa Frantzen in “The mouths in which we are relatives”, through Tove Salmgren’s photo/text essay “An inventory of my artistic practice-or documentation of a specific materiality of a

performance score called *Object and Speech*”, to more straightforward accounts such as Alexandra Piracy’s text “The second performative turn in the visual arts and the smart material of the “immaterial.”

Whilst “A hand is a blade” is a clear example of an artist writing in and through her own creative practice, and functions also as a purely literary text, “Choreopetic” could be seen as a useful reference book for discussions in, but not only in, contemporary choreography and performance.

The main subject of professionalism proposed in the project deals consistently with an epistemological proposition. Richardsen proposes to think of knowing as processual, about thought “in passing”. For this purpose Richardsen consequently operates the perspective of the landscape and the way we access landscape in a bodily way. What characterizes this relationship is on-going change, and the emergence of changing images: “what you think is a hand is a blade”. It is about the acceptance of the image to change, the insistence on the invocation of this experiences through procedures of multi-choreography.

The perspective of the experience of landscape makes clear our on-going changing responses to our surroundings. The surroundings move in and around the body, they are perforating our attention. Richardsen seeks to challenge the spectator to a dancer’s perceptivity, to open the senses, the gaze, the body and mind to forms of what she calls “pre-understandings”. This is why the work is “sporadic”, it is aimed to present opportunities, not objectives. The work is also excessive, “alarmingly big”, in order to provide fields of resonance for the viewer, listener, spectator to traverse.

In the afterword to “A hand is a blade”, Richardsen writes “I consider that, taken as a single whole, the work functions precisely when allowed to speak for itself; it both highlights and manifests questions concerning choreographic implications that traverse the boundaries of various disciplines and discourses; it amounts to a meta-level negotiation about space and verbalisation, methods and processes - issues relating to work demarcation, autonomy, forms of documentation, presentation and display”. It is perhaps tempting to infer that the latter is a kind of manifesto for the future development of her practice.

## **CONCLUSION.**

Richardsen's project is an exemplary instance of an experimental and trans-disciplinary artistic practice where research is inseparably embedded in artistic development. Her work, reflection and artistic profile clearly reflect the fundamental values and principles of the Norwegian Programme for Artistic Research.

