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## Editorial Comment

# Screendance: The Practice in Print

It is with great pleasure that we introduce this first edition of *The International Journal of Screendance*, and share some thoughts about its intentions and parameters. The journal is a new, peer-reviewed publication; the first-ever scholarly journal dedicated to the growing area of the inter-disciplinary practice of screendance. It is an initiative undertaken by an international group of practitioners, researchers, and activists engaged with screendance, who wish to establish a forum for debate for all those interested in the intersection of dance and the moving image.

*The International Journal of Screendance* is hosted by the University of Wisconsin–Madison under the Parallel Press imprint and will be available in both digital (online) and printed form. The editorial board is formed from members of the International Screendance Network, based at the University of Brighton and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as well as scholars and artists from related fields of inquiry. Intended as an open international platform, and seeking input and participation from the larger global community, the journal seeks to foster not only a multi-cultural but also a multilingual discourse. To this aim, guest-editors from other cultural regions and adjacent fields of practice and inquiry will be invited to curate future editions of the journal. The journal will engage in rigorous critique grounded in both pre-existing and yet to be articulated methodologies from the fields of dance, performance, visual art, cinema, and media arts, drawing on their practices, technologies, theories, and philosophies, to develop and expand the scholarly debates around the practice of screendance. It will include original scholarship and historically pertinent, yet hard to find writings, as well as specially commissioned articles. Each issue will be edited around a particular set of questions that discuss and reframe current topics in the field of screendance, as a means of promoting and enriching critical dialogue.

For the purposes of the journal, we have chosen to use the term screendance to broadly describe a field, while noting that there are no hard and fast criteria for a definition of screendance. Over the history of this art form, there have been a number of terms used to describe the work, often limited to an indication of materiality (e.g. Video-dance, Cinedance or Dance film). The term we have chosen articulates a common denominator between all of the above. Through this journal, we aim to reframe screendance as a form of research that examines the interrelationships of composition, choreographic language, and meanings of body, movement, space, and time; this is done in the context of contemporary cultural debates about artistic agency, practice as theory, and interdisciplinarity.

Since the advent of optical media and the moving image, choreographic sensibilities, bodies in motion, and 'dance' have featured prominently within the frame. From Muybridge's motion studies to Eisenstein's groundbreaking cinematic language, via the

Dadaists and Futurists, images of bodies in motion have been the object of exploration, through the media of still-photography, cinema, video, and digital technologies. Since the middle of the twentieth century, artists from the fields of dance and the moving image have developed a hybrid-practice, now commonly referred to as screendance. From the latter part of the twentieth century into the twenty-first, there were a number of curated events dedicated to screendance: the Filmdance Festival at the Public Theatre in New York City in 1983, curated by Amy Greenfield; Eyes Wide Open at the Dance Theatre Workshop in NY in 1989, curated by James Byrne; and events dedicated to scholarship such as the first conference on screendance at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1999, and at the American Dance Festival in 2006 and 2008. In the past two decades, there has been a rapid expansion of international interest in the field with conferences, symposia, and dedicated festivals, including: IMZ Dance Screen, Dança em Foco (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), MOVES, International Festival of Movement on Screen (Manchester, UK), Dance Camera West (Los Angeles, USA), International Dance Film Festival (Yokohama, Japan), Agite y Sirve International Video Dance Festival (Mexico), ReelDance (Australia), Festival Internacional de Videodanza (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Dance on Camera Festival (New York, USA), the What If . . . Festival (London, UK), and many more, too numerous to mention here.

This expansion in both exhibition and conference opportunities for screendance has not, however, been matched by an equivalent growth in written theorization, and there has been no dedicated forum for ongoing publication and dissemination of critical texts. *The International Journal of Screendance* aims to create a platform for the rigorous critical investigation of the myriad approaches to the practice of screendance and to encourage the development of a cohesive body of knowledge and scholarly texts. Additionally, the journal supports scholarship intended to expand the parameters of what may currently be considered screendance and apply a choreographic lens to screen-based and digital works that may not have been conceived of as part of this field, but which might contribute in some form to its practice.

It is important to acknowledge the efforts of numerous people and initiatives leading up to this moment. In 2006 Katrina McPherson and Simon Fildes, along with Karl Jay-Lewin, organized Opensource {videodance} at the Findhorn Foundation Community in the North East of Scotland. That undertaking brought together the group of artists and thinkers who would ultimately begin the process of creating this journal. A subsequent iteration of Opensource {videodance} was held in 2007, along with two publications about the symposia. In October 2008, Katrina McPherson, Claudia Kappenberg, and Douglas Rosenberg huddled by a fireplace in a remodelled pigsty behind Fildes and McPherson's home in Ferness, Scotland to clarify the concept of a new, dedicated journal of screendance and to begin drafting an editorial. In 2008, Katrina McPherson also worked with Claudia Kappenberg to secure funding from the Art and Humanities Research Council (UK) to establish the International Screendance Network. Numerous meetings and discussions between too many people to name took place over the next few years as support for the journal gathered momentum, bringing us to the present and this first issue.

We would also like to acknowledge the recent publication of Volume 5 Numbers 2 and 3 of the *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, edited by Sherril Dodds and dedicated to screendance. For the edition of the journal, Dodds (whose own book, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art* (2001), was one of the

first scholarly investigations of screendance as an art form) gathered a set of papers that explore screendance in the context of the performance arts and digital media. The publication points to the growing interest in scholarship about the art form, to which we intend to add.

This first issue of *The International Journal of Screendance* is dedicated to the proposal that *screendance has not yet been invented*. This is an appropriation of film theorist Andre Bazin's suggestion, in *The Myth of Total Cinema* (1946), that the *reality* of cinema had not yet embodied the *ideal* of cinema. Bazin's writing had been discussed in the first seminar of the International Screendance Network, together with Professor Ian Christie (Birkbeck College, University of London), who had given the 2006 Slade Lectures under the title "Cinema has Not Yet Been Invented." The proposition that screendance has not yet been invented is intended as an incitement to the community to think about the art form in new ways, both critical and theoretical, and this journal aims to create a forum to sustain the debate.

A number of themes emerge in this first issue. The presence of Maya Deren is felt in a number of articles, as are ideas about genre, criticality, authorship, disability, performance, and the phenomenology of screendance itself. Chirstinn Whyte looks at amateurism and idea of "professionalism" in "The Evolution of the 'A' word: Changing Notions of Professional Practice in Avant-Garde Film and Contemporary Screendance." Gravity is explored from differing perspectives in two essays: Ann Cooper Albright rethinks the act of falling on screen as an instant in which new meaning can arise while Harmony Bench filters twentieth-century, modern and postmodern, dance techniques' shared faith in gravity and weight through a digital and electronic lens. Sarah Whatley raises questions about the portrayal of dance and disability on screen, and Argentine critic Susanna Temperley (in Spanish with English translation) addresses the role of the critic in screendance in "Perplexed Writing", while Kyra Norman explores ideas around the body, perception, and place in site-based screendance. Claudia Kappenberg reviews notions of originality and authorship in "The Logic of the Copy", and Douglas Rosenberg proposes theories about genre and the diasporic nature of screendance.

In addition to in-depth discussion and theorization of particular aspects of screendance practices, each issue will include interviews and reflective writing by practitioners in the field. In this issue, we publish a transcribed interview with BBC dance for television producer Bob Lockyer. In an effort to reacquaint readers with out of print or hard to find extant articles, we will be including such texts in forthcoming issues, and we begin by re-printing a paper by film theorist and philosopher Noël Carroll entitled "Toward a Definition of Moving Picture-Dance." The paper was originally presented at the Dance for Camera Symposium in 2000 at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In the paper and talk, Carroll, who has been writing about movement on screen since the 1970s, lays out an argument for a definition of the field in order to, as he states, "compare and contrast the various categorizations in play and to develop dialectically from them a comprehensive framework that makes sense of our practices and that resonates with our intuitions about its compass" (2, this issue). Finally, Karen Pearlman's recent publication, *Cutting Rhythms, A New Perspective on the Rhythmic and Choreographic Nuances of the Edit*, is reviewed by Cari Ann Shim Sham\*. We trust that what results is a volume of pertinent, challenging, and enlightening material that will set the tone for future issues of the journal, which we intend to publish twice per year. Our wish is that this journal functions as a living space for

serious, lively, on-going debate about the art form. We aim to encourage contributors to move freely between discourses while making screendance relevant to a broader field of art practice. We hope that this first issue inspires both intellectual debate and a sense of community.

*Douglas Rosenberg and Claudia Kappenberg, editors*

Letters, comments and feedback can be sent via [screendancejournal@gmail.com](mailto:screendancejournal@gmail.com).  
Calls for papers for future issues will be circulated online.