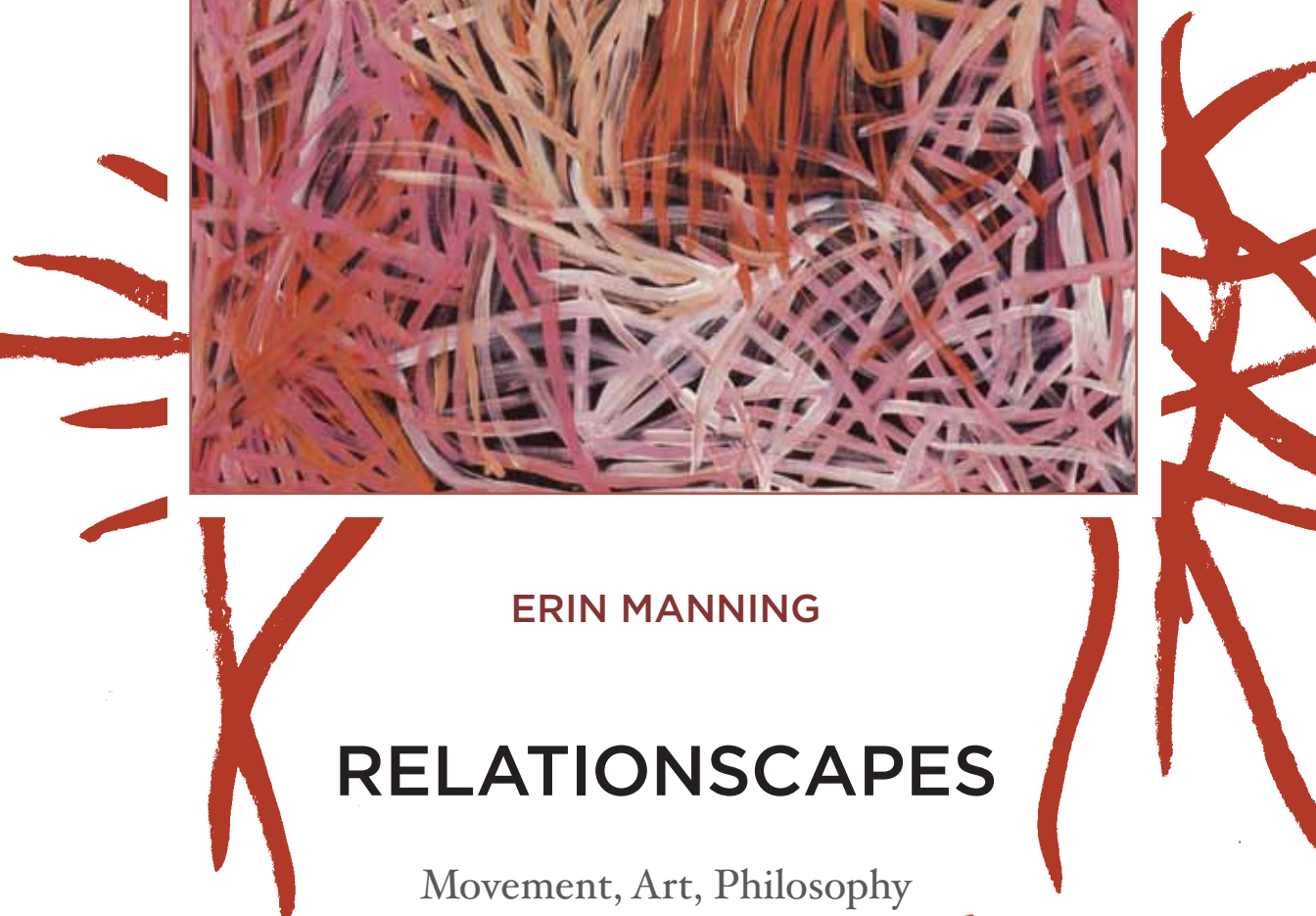




ERIN MANNING

RELATIONSCAPES

Movement, Art, Philosophy



Prelude: What Moves as a Body Returns as a Movement of Thought

Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to rise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is not an object of recognition, but a fundamental *encounter*.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*¹

In 2005, with members of the Sense Lab² and the Workshop in Radical Empiricism,³ Brian Massumi and I started thinking about how we might envision a collaborative event that would create a movement of thought. For over a year, we considered what constitutes an event and how techniques of creation create concepts-in-the-making. In May 2006, the Sense Lab hosted “Dancing the Virtual,” the first of four events scheduled to take place over a four-year period under the larger rubric of Technologies of Lived Abstraction.⁴

“Dancing the Virtual” was conceived as a challenge to the often upheld dichotomy between creation and thought/research. The specific aim of “Dancing the Virtual” was to produce a platform for speculative pragmatism where what begins technically as a movement is *immediately* a movement of thought. In the active passage between movement and movements of thought, the participants of “Dancing the Virtual” collaboratively began to build a repertoire of new techniques for experimentation that performatively bridge the gap

between thinking/speaking and doing/creating. Not only did this facilitate creation and communication across fields of inquiry during the event itself, it also provoked a continued exploration among many participants of ways to orchestrate future participatory events that challenge the active/passive model of speaker/listener or artist/spectator. For the events in the Technologies of Lived Abstraction series, new forms of collaboration are conceived not simply as locales for experimentation but as matrices of cultural becoming. We want experimentation to function as much at the collective level as at the conceptual level.

In August 2007, we hosted our second event, “Housing the Body—Dressing the Environment.” The force of thinking still emanating from “Dancing the Virtual” had by then created its own momentum: the participants from “Dancing the Virtual” were active collaborators in the fashioning of this second event.

For “Housing the Body—Dressing the Environment,” we attempted to shape the intensity of our collaboration by sending an open call for “platforms for relation,” relational techniques proposed and carried out by teams of participants who had either already participated in “Dancing the Virtual” or who would become new members of the series of events. “Housing the Body—Dressing the Environment” built on the concerns outlined for “Dancing the Virtual.” It was dedicated specifically to a collective exploration of the dynamic cross-genesis of the body and its constructed environment, where the environment is taken to include not only the architectural surround but also technological and cultural extensions of it. From selected platforms, we developed skeletal structures for relational improvisation through sound, skin, textiles, movement, architecture, and new media. These platforms were conceived as pragmatic points of departure for thinking/doing throughout the event. The way they took form throughout “Housing the Body—Dressing the Environment” made apparent the force of well-designed creative techniques to further the thinking of doing and the doing of thought.

For Henri Bergson, as for theorists of “embodied cognition,” the relation between perception in all its modes is one of reciprocal reach-and-return. This cross-genesis of action and perception opens onto thought. Every perception is already a thinking in action. Every act is a thought in germ. The premise of all Sense Lab events in the Technologies of Lived Abstraction series is that there is a generative nexus between action, perception, and conception that can be modulated from the environmental side. In constructing our environment we not only house the body, we build modes of embodied experience and thought.

This is a micropolitics in the making that in turn fashions us: we refit the body for new forms of life, cross-dressing its self-expressive potentials.

Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy was conceived amid the movements of thought generated by the Technologies of Lived Abstraction series. Like the events, it is a book that is immediately collaborative.⁵ I wrote it with the force of movement moving. Every aspect of the Sense Lab's events-in-the-making folded into the writing, provoking exploration into how thought works, where creation begins, what constitutes novelty, what a politics of movement might do, and how thinking through movement can alter the force of thought.

Sincere thanks are due to all those who have fueled our initiative to create movements of thought. Here in Montreal, I am indebted to those who make the Sense Lab the singular node it is. For your generosity, humor, and brilliance, thank you Brian. For your passionate dedication to thought-in-the-making, Nadine Asswad, Antoine Blanchet, Tagny Duff, Nasrin Himada, Valérie Lefebvre, Paul Mélançon, Céline Pereira, Chiara Paganini, Stamatia Portanova, Felix Rebolledo, Troy Rhoades, Bianca Sciar-Mancini, Alanna Thain, and Jon Yu deserve a special mention. Thanks also to all who participated in the first two events of the Technologies of Lived Abstraction event series and to those who are involved in designing the two final events, "The Society of Molecules" and "Generating the Impossible." We couldn't experiment without you!

Much of our thinking happens across various kinds of divides. I want to thank those who make these divides fluid, fielding difference with curiosity.

For your close reading of the manuscript in various stages, and your regenerating enthusiasm about all things processual, thank you Ken Dean, Sher Doruff, Brian Massumi, Steven Muecke, Andrew Murphie, Luciana Parisi, Philip Rothfield, Steven Shaviro, Philip Thurtle.

For making thinking and doing coincide politically, artistically, and philosophically, a warm thanks also to Michelle Barker, Lone Bertelson, Jean-Claude Bustros, William Connolly, Luc Courchesne, Joao Da Silva, Scott de la Hunta, Toni Dove, Pia Ednie-Brown, Nora Heilmann, José Gil, Heidi Gilpin, Michael Goddard, Steve Goodman, Catherine Herrmann, Yvan Joly, Thomas Lamarre, Bruno Latour, Andre Lepecki, Derek McCormack, Anna Munster, Sally-Jane Norman, Christopher Salter, Monique Savoie, Michael Shapiro, Christine Shaw, Isabelle Stengers, Sha Xin Wei.

For your generous openness toward improvisation and relation in dance, thank you Mireille Painchaud.

For believing in the Technologies of Lived Abstraction book series and for your ongoing encouragement, thank you Doug Sery.

For inviting thought, thank you to my family: Ben Jones, Margaret McCullough, Eric Manning, Pascale Manning, Yves Manning, and Jesse Massumi.

Thank you also to all the students in my classes who allow me to experiment with ideas in the making, and who take the risk of learning collaboratively. Relationscapes often start in the classroom.

Relationscapes was written with the generous assistance of a Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Grant.

Introduction: Events of Relation—Concepts in the Making

Concepts are events in the making. An event in the making is a thought on the cusp of articulation—a prearticulated thought in motion. How thoughts in motion become articulations is the subject of *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*. Throughout, my concern is to address the malleability of concepts that move, the expressivity of thoughts as they become feelings, the ontogenetic potential of ideas as they become articulations. This complex passage from thought to feeling to concepts-in-prearticulation to events-in-the-making foregrounds how thinking is more than the discrete final form it takes in language. To come to language is more than to finalize form. To come to language is to feel the form-taking of concepts as they prearticulate thoughts/feelings.

Many concepts are at work in *Relationescapes*. This proliferation of concepts builds on the necessity for language to create new parameters for thought in the passage from feeling to articulation. To create concepts is to move with language's prearticulations. In this mode of thinking/feeling, language does not yet know what it means. It has not yet defined where it can go. Language is creatively mired within the affective tonalities of how it can be heard, lived, written, imagined.

To arrive at language in the making, *Relationescapes* begins with the concept not of prearticulation but of preacceleration. The reason for this is that to think language before it takes form we must first understand how to conceive of taking form itself. Taking form, I suggest, is key to a developing vocabulary of movement that foregrounds incipience rather than displacement. What I mean by

this is that movement need not be thought, in the first instance, as a quantitative displacement from a to b. Following Bergson, *Relationscapes* places the emphasis on the immanence of movement moving: how movement can be felt before it actualizes. Preacceleration refers to the virtual force of movement's taking form. It is the feeling of movement's in-gathering, a welling that propels the directionality of how movement moves. In dance, this is felt as the virtual momentum of a movement's taking form before we actually move. Important: the pulsion toward directionality activates the force of a movement in its incipency. It does not necessarily foretell where a movement will go.

Incipient movement preaccelerates a body toward its becoming. The body becomes through forces of recombination that compose its potential directionalities. When I take a step, how the step moves me is key to where I can go. Gravity acts on the step such that the time span of the step's creativity is relatively short-lived. Nonetheless, there is an incipient potentiality even here, where the step can move eventfully in a witness of movement moving that exceeds the predomination of the ground: the step *can* become a spiral. Preaccelerated, what is felt is neither stepness nor spiralness. What is felt is incipient potential to move-with the intensity of extension. Moving-with the intensity of extension means that movement gathers first in the potential of its incipency, not in the extensity of its displacement. By the time movement displaces, few options for surprise remain: gravity's pull over the movement's directionality has taken over.

The dynamic form of a movement is its incipient potential. Bodies are dynamic expressions of movement in its incipency. They have not yet converged into final form. Throughout *Relationscapes*, I refer to bodies as pure plastic rhythm. I propose that we move toward a notion of a becoming-body that is a sensing body in movement,⁶ a body that resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity or identity, a body that is involved in a reciprocal reaching-toward that in-gathers the world even as it worlds.

These bodies-in-the-making are propositions for thought in motion. Thought here is not strictly of the mind but of the body-becoming. Thought is never opposed to movement: thought moves a body. This movement-with is durational in the first instance. Duration is the plane of experience on which expressive finality has not yet taken hold. As thought shifts toward expression, it moves through concepts in prearticulation. How thought becomes concept is parallel to how duration becomes experiential space-time.

Albert North Whitehead's concept of actual occasions is central to understanding the spacedness and timedness of events throughout *Relationscapes*. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari emphasize by dating each of the plateaus in *A Thousand Plateaus*, events take form in the concreteness of time and space. This does not mean that time and space precede them. Quite the contrary: events create time and space. Whitehead demonstrates this by foregrounding the eventness of perception. For him, events of perception are always called forth through prehensions, which are the pulling out of expression from the durational plane of experience.⁷ When a becoming-event is pulled out, the activity of perception is experienced as such. This initial prehension creates the parameters for the taking-form of space-time in the context of a discrete experience.

The prehension "chair," for instance, brings with it the capacity to experience sitability as a key modality of chair-expression. We feel the sitting as part of how "chair" is prehended: the event-in-the-making becomes one of sitability. This actual occasion of chairness culminates in what Whitehead calls the subjective form of the experience: in this case, chair-as-sitability. What is prehended is not chair per se but the relation between body and chair, between movement and concept with the chair-as-object just one pole in the actual occasion. Once the actual occasion takes form (as a movement of thought, or as an actual experience of sitability), it perishes, its culmination marking the opening for future relational experiences colored by sitability. Chair has given way to sitability on a dated and timed relational nexus of experience. The event exists as such in a concrete (and perished) experience of space-time, even as chairness continues to collaborate in future events.⁸

Actual occasions are monadic in the sense that they are contemporarily independent. An event is always singular, completely absorbed by its particular iteration. Events are never relational in their actualization: they relate across the nexus of experience in their incipency—their pastness—or in their perishing—their future-pastness. Whitehead warns that without this monadic quality to events, there would be no elbow room in the universe. Within a vocabulary of movement, this can be explained by foregrounding the difference between preacceleration and displacement. In the preacceleration of a step, anything is possible. But as the step begins to actualize, there is no longer much potential for divergence: the foot will land where it lands. Incipency opens up experience to the unknowable, follow-through toward concrescence closes experience on itself. Of course, this closing-in is always a reopening toward the next incipient action.

Whether incipient movement or thought prearticulated, novelty is situated within process. When movement converges into its taking-form, or when thought converges into words, very little potential for creative expression remains. This is not to suggest that language cannot express creatively. It means that to remain post-iteratively creative, language must continue to express itself in a realm where thought remains prearticulated, where concepts continue to evolve. We must conceive of language as the eternal return of expression in the making.

Thought is ontogenetic: it propels more thought. *Relationscapes* takes this idea to the limit, proposing various engagements with movements of thought, from Leni Riefenstahl's complex movement-images to Umberto Boccioni's atmospheric body, from Dorothy Napangardi's dance with the ground to Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's maps and Emily Kame Kngwarreye's own relationscapes. With the concept of individuation—which also becomes infra-individuation—*Relationscapes* attempts to create a vocabulary for how movement becomes thought and vice-versa. In this eternal return of movement-becoming-thought and thought-becoming-movement, what emerges is the uncanny realization that movement tells stories quite differently than does a more linear and stable historicization.

This is particularly resonant in the animate form of Étienne-Jules Marey's cinematic experiments, which seek to locate durational movement's imperceptibility within a positivist framework *and* develop a vocabulary for movement that exceeds representation within a stable matrix of calculable coordinates. Although never explicitly outlined in chapter 5, I would argue that had Marey's experiments with movement been foregrounded within the history of cinema, cinema's early emphasis on theories of semiosis might have been derouted into a more developed exploration of how cinema moves. This might have redirected the study of cinema from its early academic embeddedness within formalist thought toward early twentieth-century expressions of movement such as the invention of modern dance, Futurism's concern with ontogenesis, Bergson's theory of duration. The effect of this convergence of cinema and movement would have been a foregrounding less of narrative strategies within the cinematic than experimentation with how images provoke durational flows that are themselves mobile even before passing through a projector.

Seen through the specter of movement, the history of cinema converges around concepts of force rather than ideas of representation. This is a key difference between Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, one rarely exploited in theories

of cinema: Marey's practice invests in the exploration of movement's durational force, whereas Muybridge's work focuses on movement's poses. Throughout *Relationescapes*, I explore durational force through the Deleuzian idea of series. This allows me—via Riefenstahl's work in particular—to foreground how movement does not work primarily across immobile cuts. Riefenstahl's extraordinary images make incipient movement felt, her “stills” mobile. Within her work we experience not images as contained by frames but a proliferation of relational series that move conjunctively across shots and frames. This serial aspect of her shots can be experienced without any effort by capturing images from her films: I encourage you to try this at home. Whereas with most filmmakers it is a challenge to find a striking image when capturing the movement into a still, with Riefenstahl each capture is evocative, foregrounding never a body as such, but how a body moves and becomes-body. What we are left with, always, is immanent movement, still-moving.

The elasticity of movement as developed in chapter 2 makes a case for bodies always reconverging around the elasticity of their becoming. Riefenstahl's work makes this elasticity felt both within and across the frame, opening thought toward the articulation of how movement can also be felt within stillness (within a “still”). Working from a perspective of incipient movement, I explore how force takes form through an elastic movement that is curved through inflection. Inflection is a mathematical concept that demonstrates how lines are moved by nodal points that not only change the line's direction but also alter the parameters for its mapping. Inflection makes apparent how even a “still” can move as it curves with the force of preacceleration: movement's elasticity is felt in its curving-through a nodal shift that redirects its force. This nodal shift is movement's elastic point.

Thought also moves through the elasticity of the almost. The elastic point is the creativity of movement in the making. It is the ontogenetic force through which becoming-form is felt. Movement folds around this elastic point such that what is felt is not the point per se but the elasticity of its becoming. This is a topological sensation—which is a paradox in itself: a topology of experience is a force-form before it is a feeling. Still, when we feel this sensation of ontogenetic force-taking-form, we do tend to smile, laugh, or at least feel surprised by the event as it expresses us.

There is a rhythm to all of this. To posit rhythm as extra or external to experience is to misunderstand how rhythms make up events. Rhythm gives affective tonality to experience, making experience this and not that. Rhythm techniques

are not solely dedicated to sound: there is rhythm in inflection, in Kngwarr-eye's brushstrokes, in William Forsythe's movement improvisations, in Marey's chronophotographies.

Rhythm comes to the fore through techniques for invention. Gilbert Simon-don (1995) defines techniques as modalities for the creation of machinic resonances that defy a machine's strict organization. He suggests that a technical system is one where the whole cannot be subsumed to its parts, where what converges is more than the sum of its coordinates. Techniques are imbued with rhythm, they move-with the machine's own forces of recombination. To understand the relay between technique and machine, it is useful to be acquainted with Guattari's concept of the machinic. For Guattari, the machinic expresses forces of creativity: "A machinic assemblage [is] an assemblage of possible fields, of virtual as much as constituted elements, without any notion of generic or species' relation" (1995, 35). Machines demand life: they process always in the realm of the more-than, constantly recombining. Pure plastic rhythm is a machinic way of redefining what a body is, and even more so, what a body can do.

Techniques for invention cannot be captured. When they are, they become redundant: you cannot recompose with something that has already been spoken for. Techniques for invention must remain on the plane of composition. This means that *Relationscapes* is not a how-to book on movement. It does not provide a theory of movement that can be mapped onto all forms of movement. Each preacceleration must be experienced in its complexity, concepts must be found to invent with it, and tendencies for its actualization have to be diagrammed. When these diagrams are made, they cannot read as maps. They must remain intensities-in-the-making, force fields for future thought. This is what Francis Bacon means when he evokes the concept (Deleuze 2003). He is not talking about a map but about a field that resonates beyond the image-content of a painting. The diagram is the feeling for the painting that moves with its force for expression.

In chapter 6, I extrapolate from this notion of the diagram toward the concept of the biogram, as proposed by Brian Massumi in "Strange Horizon."⁹ I define the biogram as that which propels a becoming-body. This force of becoming is a reconvergence of affective tonalities that transpire into a form that is itself continually mutating. Whereas a diagram makes felt the force of a painting, the biogram propels a moving-with of the ontogenetic body.

Ontogenesis is a reminder not to get stuck in ontologies of being. Ontologies must remain thresholds—from being to becoming, from force to form to force. Identities do take form, but these are always brief individuations. To still

becoming into a lingering identity is to try to stop movement. What must be sought is neither a total becoming nor a fixed identity: the dynamic equilibrium between identity and individuation is metastable. This means that it converges on many planes at once, more stable on some, more active on others. To locate identity as the point of departure of a body is to deny the complexity of the concurrent planes of thought, expression, conceptualization, articulation.

Simondon's concept of the associated milieu is a provocative way of conceptualizing how different planes converge around a concept. *Relationescapes* resides in the associated milieu of conceptual metastability. All concepts mobilized for *Relationescapes* emerged through the process of writing. Never was writing an add-on to this process: writing developed through the activity of thinking-with that movements of thought propel. As with prehensions that invent the subject of perception through their activity of pulling forth, writing wrote me into the process of inventing-with relationescapes.