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Articulating a movement pedagogy in retrograde: mapping an embodied research process

This presentation draws from a recently completed movement research project that sought to disrupt representationalism in South African contemporary dance praxis. By tracing the pathways of my own practice through a series of dance projects and performances, I offered that instances of movement research, embodied practice, or dance-making are epistemic spaces that open possibilities for eliciting new technique. The research documents of this process were gathered in an online cartography that offered momentary stabilisations or agential cuts (a concept borrowed from Karen Barad) that marked shifts in knowledge over the course of the research journey. By mapping the research journey through the cartography, it became possible to imagine that choreographic praxis, as embodied research, functions according to its own logic and operates and circulates according to its own rate of transfer and multiplication, as its embodied techniques begin to sediment into possible, new pedagogies. I suggest that positioning dance-making as movement research disrupts conventional understandings of curriculum as a linear and scaffolded organisation of concepts. Rather, movement research is a practice of ontology, a working with “what is” that challenges the teleological reach of the material and its idea of progress, and that circulates across the bodies of practitioners before it can be pinned down by a conventional research document. Only in retrospect does the practice unfold its logic. An emerging movement pedagogy unfolds in retrograde.

The presentation combines a paper presentation with a digital walk-through of the cartography that holds the creative research documents of this project. The cartography, as an archival mapping of my movement processes, exposes ways in which the embodied techniques traced in this research begin to take shape as principles that inform my artistic and pedagogical practice.

Biography

Kristina Johnstone is a dance artist and teacher. She has worked in various dance communities in Cape Town and Kampala, Uganda. She currently teaches movement and physical theatre at the University of Pretoria, School of the Arts: Drama.