

## Change It or Kill Me

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## Technologies Evolve

As HOBBERMAN explains, newer machines are created to respond to stricter performance demands. DARWIN stated that when environmental conditions change within an ecological system, natural selection weeds out less adapted individuals and allows more genetically advantaged individuals to reproduce<sup>11</sup>. Yet, biological evolution is often slow — incomparable to the alarmingly high turn-over rate that is visible with the development of technologies<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, it can be speculated that the recurring manufacturing cycles of technologies indicate an evolutionary similarity to that of living species.

To manage this phenomenon conceptually, it is believed that there is an urgency for the human body to evolve or « catch-up ». This has been expressed in works like STELARC's performance *Handwriting* (May 22, 1982, Maki Gallery, Tokyo). With his third arm prosthesis operating, STELARC composed the word « evolution » with his three upper « limbs » simultaneously on a blackboard. STELARC's concern with the theme of evolution is revealed as he often asserts that the human body is obsolete. His usage of *The Third Arm* to suggest the necessary direction of the human species is relayed directly when he states, « When we attach or implant prosthetic devices to prolong a person's life, we also create the potential to modify the future evolution of the human species<sup>13</sup>. »

## A Parasitic Relationship ?

There exist many types of relationships between species in the study of biology, for example, parasitic and symbiotic. Initially, technologies may be determined to exist symbiotically with humans, indicating a mutually beneficial relationship. However, once the environmental and physiological damages of various technologies is considered, the relationship between humans and technologies may be interpreted as quasi-parasitic more than symbiotic. The process of the biological infection of humans by viruses provides an enlightening analogy for the speculation that technologies parasite the human species. The analogy that technologies mimic the behaviours of viruses challenges the role and ultimate fate of the human race.

On an aesthetic level only, an examination of « T-even phages », a specific group of viruses, reveals that their twenty-sided heads, coiled tube shafts and extendable mechanical arms are similar to advanced pieces of technology, a lunar module or a syringe, for example<sup>14</sup>. When writing about his electronic art, artist Norman WHITE relays, « Turning to the biological level of complication, we would be told that the « lower » organisms exhibit a mechanistic sort of behaviour<sup>15</sup>. » This « on/off » mechanistic behaviour is indicated by the inert state of viruses during non-reproductive phases. Although viruses do not ingest food, move, breathe, excrete, they replicate when they come in contact with a host. In the same way, we consider technologies inert, made of lifeless, inorganic materials. Like viruses, technologies replicate at an alarming rate and humans can be viewed as the energetic force behind their proliferation<sup>16</sup>. A British physicist, Dr. Stephen HAWKING, illustrates this point with the example of man-made computer viruses where « a computer virus fits the definition of a living system even though it has no metabolism of its own. Instead... it uses the metabolism of a host computer and is parasitic.<sup>17</sup> »

An examination of the life cycle of the typical virus leads to a parallel between the parasitic reproduction cycle of viruses and technologies. The life cycle of viruses necessitates that a virus penetrates a compatible host cell. In his writing, STELARC's philosophies unknowingly confirms the virus-like penetration of technologies into the human body :

Technology begins as an external, explosive phenomena away from the body, proliferating in and modifying its environment. This phase culminates with technology encircling, assaulting and finally regulating the body's rhythms<sup>18</sup>.

The analogy of « virus entering host » may be applied to STELARC's 1994 performance of *Stomach Sculpture*. For this performance, he created and attempted to swallow a minute technological sculpture that included an illuminating light bulb and expendable mechanical arms. Manoeuvred down his oesophagus, this sculpture can be read as mimicking the role of the virus-like technologies within the human host.

It can be argued that the quality that has rendered humans evolutionarily advantaged over other species is their ability to make tools. It is this « tool-making drive » that has allowed the human species to survive despite its physical mediocrities. This instinct may be interpreted as an *internal virus* whose DNA program dictates tool production. Norman WHITE's artistic philosophy confirms this assessment :

There has evolved into man's mental nature an insidious quirk which has caused him to become constantly restless, bored with accepted values, images, definitions and such... One shares the growing belief that man's inventiveness has been the primary means by which he has achieved his own downfall. Our inventions have widely spoiled our world, and have led us into the most unhealthy, unfulfilling sorts of activity<sup>19</sup>.

This conviction has motivated WHITE to create electronic art that often expresses the futility of technologies, opposing its highly esteemed norm. One of the earliest electronic works exhibited in Canada, WHITE's *State of the Art* (1974), gets its name from this preoccupation. In this piece, WHITE wired electronic circuitry to flash one row of lights at a time, creating an undulating effect that coincides with the sounds emitted by nearby speakers. The work contradicts frequent promises of technology to provide a superior environment ; instead, it basks in its own uselessness and offers little aesthetic reward<sup>20</sup>. The use of technological materials in WHITE's work may imply a disappointment in the promises of technologies, challenging popular opinion that technologies are created to meet the supposed needs of society.

Viewed collectively, the work of some electronic artists indicates that not only can technologies be viewed as McLuhan-esque extensions of the body<sup>21</sup>, but they also possess distinct species-like behaviours. In some ways, the similarities of the reproductive patterns of viruses to that of technologies may indicate a threat to high-tech human populations. On the other hand, the virus-like nature of technologies may not be external but integral to the human body, having its origins deep within the human instinct of « tool-making ». Being a characteristic of humans, this internal program may indicate the eventual replacement of the human species by a more resilient, « techno-adapted » species. Are some electronic artists visionaries by their ability to collectively, even unconsciously, warn us of this emerging techno-species ? If so, the future holds the answer as to whether or not humans will live in peaceful co-existence with techno-beings or face their ultimate failure. ●

<sup>1</sup> Mary Anne FARAH, « Machines in the Garden: Interactive Video Art — Bringing Video to Life », *Parallelogramme*, vol. 18 (4), 1993, p. 48-54, and, Mary Anne FARAH, « Telematic Performance Loops Toronto and Quebec », *Fuse*, vol. 17 (1), Fall 1993, 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> *TV Bra* was premiered by PAIK and cellist Charlotte MOORMAN on May 17, 1969 at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York. *TV Penis* premiered during a performance by Stuart Craig WOOD on June 29, 1972 at the Kitchen, Mercer Arts Centre, New York.

<sup>3</sup> See Wulf HERZOGENRATH, *Nam June Paik Video Works — 1963-88*, London, Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, 1988, p. 36. PAIK also created a human-modelled technological artwork in 1964 titled *K-456*.

<sup>4</sup> *Luc Courchesne — Interactive Portraits*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media-The Extensions of Man*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964, p. 70-71.

<sup>6</sup> STELARC and James P. PAFFRATH, « The Splitting of the Human Species », *The Obsolete Body*, Davis, California, J.P. Publications, 1984, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> STELARC and PAFFRATH, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Contemporary vocabulary usage reveals that humans already treat some technologies as though they were alive ; in the same way that living organisms do, computers become « infected by viruses » that endanger their « health ».

<sup>9</sup> Norman WHITE, « Description of Sixteen Selected Works », distributed to the author April, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Ginette MAJOR and Hervé FISCHER, *Images du Futur 93*, 14 Mai — 19 Sept, Montréal : Cité des Arts et des Nouvelles Technologies, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Charles DARWIN, *The Origin of Species*, New York, The New American Library, 1958.

<sup>12</sup> Although the body's immune system can be argued to deal with foreign particles in a relatively fast, pseudo-evolutionary manner, at a macro level the human morphology has not changed its physical shape for hundreds of years.

<sup>13</sup> STELARC and PAFFRATH, *Strategies and Trajectories*, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald M. ATLAS, *Microbiology — Fundamentals and Applications*, New York, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984, pp. 288, 290.

<sup>15</sup> Norman WHITE, *Norman White*, Vancouver, The Vancouver Art Gallery, 1975, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> McLuhan stated : « Man appears as the reproductive organ of the technological world. » McLuhan, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> « Computer Virus a Life Form ? » - *Globe & Mail*, August 3, 1994, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> STELARC, « Triggering an Evolutionary Dialectic », *Obsolete Body : Suspensions* : *Stelarc*, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> WHITE, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> WHITE, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> McLuhan, p. 71.

## CHANGE IT OR KILL ME

Stephen SARRAZIN

Of the nearly five hundred channels that promise Cable TV in America, more than half of them will be showing « real » TV : archives, history, portraits, tourism and travelogues, as well as home shopping, weather and direct theme channels, etc. Moreover, « channel surfing » already permits access to the image banks if one possesses the necessary hardware : in addition to PBS, we find The Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, The Life and Health Network, Arts & Entertainment, QVC C-Span, which diffuse American Congressional hearings and assist in court trials. CNN and MTV still figure among the top channels on the global scale by inventing within the scope of their thematic mandate new forms of television production ; hybrids issuing forth from their respective identities and from their numerical technological capabilities. For example, at the beginning of 1995, CNN broadcast one part of the O. J. SIMPSON trial and the investiture of Newt GINGRICH, the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, who from now on sits on the right side of Vice-President Al GORE. During the same week, CNN broadcast a daily program titled *Talk Back Live*, with GINGRICH or a representative for O. J. SIMPSON, in which the public interrogated the invited guest, in the studio on camera, by telephone, fax machine, or via the compuserve network. The exchanges could equally be transacted through tele-conferencing. Within the framework of the program, CNN not only created scoops, but

also represented communication technology in action, by transmitting these models of exchanges as pure information for the TV viewer. Thus the operator, camera on the shoulder, could always find in the hall a young man with a Powerbook on his knees reading to us the questions being forwarded on-line. The staging for the captions and the transmission of the information were, from the beginning, part of the imagemaking of CNN and has since been widely adopted elsewhere. At each pause, several seconds of credit titles are diffused, credits whose style and form we owe to... MTV (with its programs such as *Rockumentary*, *MTS Sports* and *MTV's Real World*, a reality show that brings together six young Americans from different regions of the country; each given accommodation in the MTV « loft » with an MTV film crew put in charge of chronicling MTV interactions between each individual newcomer and his/her socio-regional agenda), which in turn owes a determinant part of its aesthetic to art and video creation, not only in their treatment of clips, but also credits, technical skills and a command of short subjects. This new look does not explain everything, it's understood. The future of these images, already designed, depend on their method of broadcast, to their method of circulation: cable, satellite, new technologies, modems and networks. We are in the era the Canadian theoretician, Athur KROBER, the Marshall McLuhan of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY, calls *Data Trash*. Within the context of an overabundance of information, multiple alternative sites for the dissemination of information, what is at stake for the independence of the documentary?

The history of the video has been well documented and I don't intend to dwell on it except to recall the role of PBS played in setting up of their early productions. It was in 1969 that PBS first presented *The Medium is the Medium*, a program in which the viewer assisted in the first televisual experiments, which announced a new treatment of the electronic imagery, as well as the globalization of this same image. These two lessons, taken from Marshall McLuhan, trace the road that independent video might travel through. In one segment, we were presented with portraits of artists directed by Nam June PAIK, including the celebrated *Tribute to John Cage*; on the other, the birth of collective videos such as TVTV, DCTV, and *Art Farm*. The link between an artist like PAIK and a collective like TVTV shares a bond in its political and social engagement, which continues even today to animate an important part of electronic creation in America. The expressive quality of this mobilization brings with a series of new criterias in the realization of artworks, thus stirring up another analysis of what is the object of documentary, beginning with critical work on the heroic mythologies established by the movie industry. The specificity of the documentary has no prop to hold it up now, the CD-ROM is flagrant proof of that. Among these criteria, we should note the critical distance facing the principal of objectivity, which has been translated by artists by the use of « I », as well as the refusal of the authoritative voice-over, psychologizing (from a murmur to a grave, strong voice, from an awkward to a relaxing tone, the narrative remains a performance act), receptacle of learning, in the narrative. This critical distance however does not evacuate the dramatic bearing of its complicity, its humour; it clearly shows that it is not being duped. Nam June Paik goes down into the street with a robot, creates performances with Charlotte MOORMAN, allows John CAGE to tell stories, in his portrait of the composer. PAIK « represents » the cultural universe of John CAGE, and the significant range of his thoughts on art, instead of the history of CAGE. We find in his homage to CAGE, or those of PAIK on Merce CUNNINGHAM, Julian BECK, the origin of the creation documentary. To begin with, we are meeting up with the production of a creator who operates as much in the field of art as that of a plastician, whose video supported artworks are acquired by museums. In it, we trace the explicit manipulation of raw material, of the real, the subject, during the course of an elaborate period of post-production work. This manipulation was not manifestly ideological, though it

does proclaim a direct complicity between the director and the object of representation. This « I » will later confirm itself with the arrival of the camscope and low-tech recording tape, which adapts itself readily to the form of diary, the news correspondent and travel notes. The creation documentary is making history for itself by the showing and the narrating of the real. The collective, TVTV, went to the floor of an assembly for the election of a Presidential candidate, armed with Sony porta-packs, mixing with the crowd, asking questions prohibited by the bigger TV networks, etc. We know that during the 1970's and 1980's PBS established a « TV Lab », a professional administrative board at the disposal of video artists such as John SANBORN and Kit FITZGERALD (their *Olympic Fragments* on the Winter Olympic Games held at Lake Placid, New York, in 1980 inaugurated new rhythms for tape editing recuperated from the larger TV networks); Bill Viola (his poetic perception of the desert of Chott el-Djerid, without commentary, his spot-portraits of television spectators in *Reverse TV*, etc.). However, this presence of new independent artists did not lead to a regular diffusion of their creations, the works were brought together in the framework of a program that acted as a window of new support, but was often broadcast at a listening hour unfavourable for exposure to a vast audience. Other collaborations between PBS and these artists took place, one of which still continues to this day, that of William WEGMAN for the educational program for children, *Sesame Street*. At the same period of time the first video art festivals appeared, and the work circulated in and around this circuit. The video cassette, in so far as being a reproducible object, opened the pathway to another form of information exchange. The networks recreated themselves, the methods of the alternative broadcasting became a little more democratic. PBS, like ARTE, today sells commercially, or by correspondence, video cassettes of their documentary productions.

In this period, the big TV stations retained the style and form that flowed parsimoniously from their gridlike schedules. In 1989, during an interview that he gave for the series *El Arte de Video*, produced by TVE, a pure example of the recuperation by a big TV network of the « creation documentary style », Woody VASULKA explained that for the directors of his generation, in Eastern Europe, the 16mm cinematographic image in black and white incarnated the icon of truth. Today, it is the image of camscope. This economic new technology corresponds to the act of taking power (empowerment) by artists who did not have access to Betacam recorders, including those from diverse socio-ethnic minorities. It has led to a « guerilla » style practice in the gathering of information and puts into place a fragile system of resistance which permits the transmission of the latter. For example, the Public Access Services in the US, the community cable networks... Evidently, an aesthetic is emerging from this economy, establishing itself moreso in the shifting/leanings, rather than movement.

From 1980 to 1992, video creation mobilized itself around the necessity to take action with the politics the Reagan and Bush administrations and its consequences on the socio-cultural life in America. The political rectitude of « arts media » of this period, that which is now characterized as « politically correct », held fast to the duty of excluding all points of the compass which did not correspond with the conservative vision of the country. Brenda MILLER, James C. FINLEY, Tom KALIN and Gran FURY, as well as Shelly SILVER and Scott RANKIN, produced works which were employed to « denounce, inform, re-establish », without losing sight of a wheel to contribute to an aesthetic project. Paul GARRIN, independent video artist and collaborator with Nam June PAIK, filmed the evacuation of the homeless in Tompkins Square, in New York, but was not sensitive to the forces of the order who did not wish him to deliver this image as a public service. But, in 1991, a Canadian living in Los Angeles, George HOLIDAY, recorded the aggression on Rodney KING by the L. A. Police. The tape was broadcast by CNN, then by all the other TV networks. During

the riots that followed, TV produced its proper version, from the height of a helicopter, of the beating of truck driver Reginald DENNY. Note that the document of George HOLIDAY figured prominently in a group of artworks shown at the controversial biennial at the Whitney Museum in New York in 1993. Another artist present at this manifestation, Sadie BENNING, withdraws to her room with a Fisher-Price camera and recites to us entries from her diary, in which emerge the necessary elements for the construction of an assertive lesbian identity. Another approach to this subject revealing in its deconstruction, is the heart of one of the most revealing works of Lynn HERSHMAN LEESON. Direct descendant from a contemporary art milieu (performance and photography) her work touches on themes of schizophrenia, the social possibilities offered by reinventing one's name, residence, profession and physical appearance. She creates the character of Roberta, whose existence she documents during the course of her production. Lynn LEESON already investigates the real, the virtual. She poses the question as to what constitutes the identity of the approached subject, its derivations, the sliding and manipulation of its identity. She furnishes a problematic choice and underlines the temporary dimension, the mutation, of what is seen in front of our eyes. She undertakes a video practice during the 1980's in which she privileges the docufiction genre. She directs a masterful series of tapes, *The Electronic Diary*, retracing her proper history of women: beaten, abandoned by her first husband, her mother, a period of obesity, illness... She uses her past as a performance artist and addresses herself directly to the camera by exploring not only the events of her life, but by inserting the stereotypes propagated by social problems, thus mixing up the public and private to the point of confusion. She touches on the possible of the flesh, of the relations that these maintain in the social context, including the first interactive video installation created by an artist, *Deep Contact*, in which a woman invites the spectator to join her and proposes, on a tactile screen, a series of routes to reach her. Lynn LEESON has lived in San Francisco for the past twenty years. She was a witness to the birth of cyberculture in this region and has integrated it into her work. Today at the summit of her art, she is directing tapes such as *Virtual Love* (1993) and *Twists in the Cord* (1994). These docufiction realizations place at the same time virtual reality, the networks such as Internet, through a series of interviews with specialists, theoreticians and engineers who explain the principle of interactivity (an illusion at the same level as documentary cinema), the virtual body, as well as the fictions of couples called upon to question the motivations of their relationships by reason of their professional links with the same milieu of new technologies. In the *Twists in the Cord*, things get scrambled up a bit, as the fictional woman establishes intimate telematic contacts on the WELL with R. U. SIRIUS, one of the principal collaborators of « the » review of cyberculture, *Mondo 2000*. Note in passing that ARTE and ZDF have participated in the production of Lynn HERSHMAN LEESON's tapes.

To finish, I come back to television to conclude on a work which appears to me the most exemplary and pertinent in the framework of the creation documentary, that of Stephaan DECOSTERE. *The Culture Department of BRT* has produced, since 1979, the documentaries of DECOSTERE; all have been broadcast in Belgium and several times in Holland. His realizations have won him numerous prizes and have been presented in numerous museums. They incarnate, at one and the same time, a real contemporary sensitivity to the treatment of documents, a rigorous intellectual ethic, as well as a modesty in the hands-on production element of his projects. Other than the remarkable documentaries such as *Danse+Camera*, *Warum wir Manner die Technik so lieben*, *L'esprit du Mal*, DECOSTERE has produced two series of testimonial during the course of the last decade, *Charbon-Velours* and *Trav-elogues*. DECOSTERE's method tends to establish a mosaic of approaches, perspectives and sources with the intent of enlarging the framework

of the representation of the subject matter. He surrounds himself with a team of « consultants-collaborators » : artists, critics, historians, journalists, philosophers, and theoreticians. He is equally active as a producer by ordering the works of other artists which will then be integrated into the documentary. Among his collaborators we find Paul VIRILIO, Dan GRAHAM and Jeff WALL, Chris DERCON, Jacques CHARLIER, Tony OURSLER, Arthur KROKER, Henri-Pierre JEUDY, Geert LOVINK<sup>1</sup>. DECOSTERE draws his materials largely from history of images, of cinema and of television, art and photography. This approach seems to have as its origin a certain concern for archaeology (a constant return to archival strata). But the splicing of these appropriated images reveals a concern for the encyclopedic information. More and more in his work it is the subject itself that delivers this paradox : assurance, conviction, rage and the urgency of the form underlining the conviction in the treatment of the subject, all the while suggesting that this intention is not fixed in a self-assured truthfulness, but that it is unshakable and unharmed. A recent major work, *Déjà vu* (1994), well illustrates this state. Last documentary in the series *Travelogues*, *Déjà vu* makes a stop at the virtual world that Japan created for those people who would like to be elsewhere without ever leaving the country. These pretend worlds are theme parks of a Europe preserved by its cultural signposts (Holland with her tulips and canals, the Austria of MOZART...) of a multifarious Japan : a Samurai village, Tokyo's high-tech hotels, room for sado-masochists... All these possibilities represent for the Japanese on one hand an eco-technological quest to be one with the world, as well as proof that faith in the virtual is the solution. To what ? That is what *Déjà vu* tries to establish, by avoiding the traps of an « occidental » discourse but tackling, at full whip, the ethical part of this rapport with the real. We are very far here from the travel notes of the great French videomakers (characterized by the concern for the aesthetic, pictorial, pedagogic, lyrical, impressionistic, etc. ). There exists many great things, such as *La peinture cubiste* de Philippe GRANDIEUX and Thierry KUNTZEL, *Godard-Sollers : L'entretien* de Jean-Paul FARGIER, *Hong Kong Song* de Robert CAHEN, and most recently *J'étais Hamlet*, a portrait of Heimer MULLER, by Dominik BARBIER. The political, the social, the theoretical, brought together the past few years in America under the expression « cultural theory », has not yet found a taker in France. *Déjà vu* was co-produced by BRT (Belgium), VPRO (Holland) and the INA. It was broadcast in Belgium and Holland ; in Paris it was presented in the framework of programs from the association of X WORKS, then at the Centre George-Pompidou<sup>2</sup>. In fact, television preserves in its turn its independence from television : in Canada, where the cultural landscape is socially and politically engaged, the CBC English Network refused to broadcast the fourth travelogue of DECOSTERE, *Coming from the Wrong Side*, which treats the economic links between Western Canada and the tourism generated by the people of the First Nations. ●

<sup>1</sup> The last documentary of Stephaan DECOSTERE, *Lessons in Modesty*, was to be shown in March, 1995, on BRT, and presented at the Berlin *Videofest*. DECOSTERE has worked on this project with Arthur and MariLouise KROKER, Paul GROOT, Gert LOVINK, and Mark van TONGELE.

<sup>2</sup> The broadcast of X WORKS took place in March, 1994, and at the Centre George-Pompidou in June, 1994.

Traduit du français par Richard RIEWER

## THE BODY OF DANCE AND ITS INTERACTIONS WITH THE MACHINE

Maria SUESCUN-POZAS

Montréal. Galerie La Centrale. September 25, 1994. 8 : 20 pm.. A metallic structure is being filled up with images, light, and sound, while a dancer seems to be orchestrating the whole event with her movements<sup>1</sup>. *Le Partage des Peaux* : « What is this all about... ? » I wondered for a while. And after that day, I kept wondering and thinking on what had been presented on stage, but this time in the company of the performer, Isabelle CHOINIÈRE, who agreed to regularly meet with me in order to open up a space for discussion and reflection on the work. This was a unique opportunity to start an art historical inquiry into artistic production and create a channel of communication between two parallel discourses.

« If you really want to *know* about it, then, before saying a word, listen and reflect on what you will hear », I told myself. Before our first conversation took place, I already had several ideas in mind, those I had availed myself of in order to understand, to see, to remember what had only lasted 25 minutes. As any one does, of course. What had I seen ? What had I heard ? Had I experienced anything ? What was expected from me ? There was the body... the bodies, the choreography... the choreographies... and some technological mediations I could not really explain. The mystery would be resolved later : there was no mystery, they were the most elementary videographic and infographic technics.

One thing was clear to me since the very beginning : the materiality/immateriality of the body was at the core of the experience of the performer and the technological devices were there to amplify its qualities, the lived ones. Thus, one should be suspect of any discussion of the work which does not acknowledge the presence of the body of dance or does not reflect on it in terms of its relationship with the technological devices in an integrated way. I realized that questions such as : « What is this performance about ? What does it mean ? How does it mean ? », could only be answered by going through that site in which all originates and for which the explorations into the virtual world are valuable : the *lived body* of dance, which unfolds in the passage from appearance to disappearance always overcoming a threat of *loss* and a sense of *limitedness*.

I want to restore back to the performer that space of signification from which art historical and critical discourses often remove her/him because « ... what else ought to be done if we are talking Art » ? The following reflections are meant for contemporary works which both resist categorization and devise a framework for discussing the notions of the technologically mediated and the body of dance which has been put into a state of crisis.

To write about performance is an acknowledgement of our impossibility to fully grasp what the experience of reality is. Despite our efforts to approach the work in its totality or to gain more knowledge of it through the interactions with the artists(s), we are confronted with the sense of limitedness and failure in securing a complete reading of the work. To render an experience meaningful becomes an exercise on loss and a continuous attempt to move beyond one's own boundaries.

### Bodies acting beyond appearance : between the visible and the invisible

C'est par un jeu de relais des peaux, naturelles et artificielles, que [l'amplification du langage physique] aura lieu. Le relais, ou ce partage des peaux, redonnera un caractère [...] organique à cet échange du corps et de la technique. L'interaction des membranes — le tissu corporel, le costume de données, l'écran vidéo, le moniteur d'ordinateur, l'écran transparent — engendre un processus de reconnaissance, d'apprentissage et finalement d'amplification de la corporalité<sup>2</sup>.

Skin-body. Skin-self. Borderline condition. Can the body of dance be thought only in terms of surface ? Is it surface ? Does it become surface once it is translated with video and infographic tools into representations and projected onto the two transparent screens hanging from the structure ? Are we to deal here with a body-self or a skin-self ? Does this distinction confuse the object of our concern ? It does, since at the heart of the performance's inquiry into representation lies the lived body of dance, one whose phenomenal appearance, and psychological effects, extend beyond the level of surface.

Three sets of bodies with their respective dimensions constitute the motifs of the multimedia event according to CHOINIÈRE : the real body, the videographic body and the infographic or virtual one. Their respective dimensions, it is worth noting, are to be thought not in terms of three dimensions, as the audience experiences it, but of four dimensions, four spatial variables none of which is time. Thus, the event unfolds within a conceptual realm whose impossibility (for our senses) already points towards that notion of the body lying beyond mere perception and visible completeness : the *body-in-progress*, the *body which is in a state of becoming*, the *lived body* : the simple notion of surface (as skin, as screen) must be expanded.

Our point of departure is then a body dressed up in cables, playing the game of interactivity<sup>3</sup>. But it is neither plugged in nor is it interactive with the audience avid for high-tech deployments. The body of dance is too demanding and complex for the actual state of technological development. High-tech's empty promises are made evident. This encourages an interaction between the organic and the synthetic which defies the idea that the machine devours the body, that the lived body disappears into the machine. A body in action demands inter-action, not just technical prolongations, to provide it with equally existential representations. The body of dance — lived, in flux — cannot be thought of as an alienated object and the organic/synthetic dichotomy is resolved into a state or spatial dimension for exchange and amplification evolving around the body of action whose autonomy is confirmed<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the lived body ought not to be thought of as something external to technology, nor as an extension of it, but intimately linked to the realm of the experience of the technical itself.

The lived body is the offcenter center of the experience of the performance<sup>5</sup>. It is the product of exclusion and acceptance of the possible. The notion of an original body of representation is thus permanently undermined. Nevertheless, despite this multiplicity, the body of dance is grasped as one, as a constant and stable body by the technological devices, and if it were not for the fact that the lived body permanently enacts all the realm of the possible it would be cancelled as a performative referent, as one which achieves *representation* without mere *repetition*<sup>6</sup>.

Once the body/dance dichotomy is overcome, a sense of agency is recovered by the performer. It is an individualized one, non-idealized, which is and means in multiple ways, not just as an instrument for *repetition* and *imitation*. The performer as imitator ceases to be a creative agent and just perpetuates the transmission of a norm, and only becomes one when she/he is able to enact her/his capacity to construct her/his own sense of body/self. It is the body's lack of definition and the constant state of becoming which provides it with new significations. The body is in the making, thus the shift from the notion of body as transparent medium to the body as an opaque site of production.

The lived body is the condition for the technological amplification, which becomes a site of excess and behaves as a visual rhetorical device. With this, the question of visibility emerges. We strive to know the body we see, and the body we know is there despite not seeing it. The gap between « seeing » and « knowing » is insurmountable through our visual apparatus. Our senses fail to successfully prove that what we sense *is*. The world cannot be equated to our experience of it, nor the notion of the body to the one we think we