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# Artistic value and spectators' emotions in dance performances

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## Abstract

Our experiences of art are framed by the context and the rules that apply to it. Not only the theatre where performing arts are enjoyed, but also art museums displaying paintings, sculptures, installations and other artistic objects, dictate the distance to the pieces and the type of sensory perception permitted to the visitors. How art is presented to us reflects traditional established settings that determine the conditions of our appreciation and that have become part of each art's ontology. Moreover, what we are allowed to do in those public contexts, when confronted with art works, reflects the artistic value attached to them. But, in some cases, there seems to be a tension between the borders erected by categories of artistic value and the affective reactions by the perceivers. In this paper I will discuss contexts (original, transplanted and mediated) and perceptual conventions for dance art, and how these define spectators' roles and impact on their emotional responses to dance performances. In particular, I will focus on negative reactions to dance art to argue that the use of moving human bodies presents specific affective challenges to audiences.

## Introduction

In the field of dance, context has been highlighted as a frame for how movement can be seen as a dancing event, particularly in relation to postmodern choreography (Banes, 1987). My concern here is not discussing context to argue for a basic ontological distinction about dance but to look at differences between original contexts, transplantated contexts and mediated contexts of what has already been established as dance art. I will connect these ways of framing dance with what is expected from audiences but also with the effects of artists' challenges of conventions on spectators' emotions. For an explanation of emotional responses to performative events, I will be drawing on psychological accounts of trust and stress.

Philosophical theories of spectatorship specific to dance are rare. The anthropological semiotic explanation provided by Judith Lynne Hanna at the beginning of the 1980s constitutes an early insight into the performer-audience connection in dance. In her study she takes into account the historical context, the social structure and the process of events to look at emotions because all these aspects of the dance event "shape expectations that create meaning" (Hanna, 1983, p. 17). No other significant work in this area has been done since then. In the dance literature, experiences of art works are reported mainly as descriptions of artistic intentions and analysis by critics on the expected reactions from the viewers rather than on what individual affective responses actually are and how these tint the experience of a dancing event. What Hanna's empirical work did was to connect the emotional intentions with the receptions of the general public.[3]

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[3] Cf. rejection to the community view (McFee, 1992).

Every member of an audience, cognoscente or not, gets emotionally involved when watching a piece and responses reveal aspects of us as encultured human beings. As Hanna has explained, "audiences come to the performances with their expectations shaped by individual and social history" (Hanna, 1983, p. 191). After watching the Ballet Russes' production of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, Gaston Calmette, critic of *Le Figaro*, wrote a lengthy protest against the piece:

> "Those who speak of art and poetry apropos of this spectacle make fun of us. It is neither a gracious epilogue nor a profound production. We have had a faun, incontinent, with vile movements of erotic bestiality and gestures of heavy shamelessness." (quoted in Nijinska, 1992, p. 436)

Calmette's outraged commentary refers to having to contemplate a faun masturbating with a nymph's veil on a rock at the end of the performance. He, as many other members of the 1912 Parisian audience, found the action disturbing and distasteful. Serge Diaghilev, the impresario of the company, was delighted; his intentions to shock audiences had been fulfilled with this work. A century later, these particular actions would not perturb audiences anymore (see, for instance, comments in Farfan, 2008).

Artists understand the power of choosing to conform or confront within the established cultural borders. Their choices of medium, content and context affect spectators in a variety of ways. Diaghilev encouraged his Ballet Russes to amplify the taste of the ballet audiences with an extravaganza of new pieces "provoking a reaction by the majority public of dance lovers against the aesthetics and 'highbrow' defenders of his new repertory" (Garafola, 1989, p. 374). By stretching theatrical performance dance artists invite to the consumption of unknown or unexpected elements of art products. When artistic conventions are modified, expectations need to the adjusted or otherwise the mismatch between individual's artistic aims and artistic appreciation makes the experience fail. A sexual activity on stage at the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century was clearly more challenging for ballet goers than it would be today after decades of nudity, violence and sexual acts of various kinds. Contemporary spectators have been increasingly exposed to diverse and complex dance contexts, forms and narratives.

What I would like to argue is that the offering and consumption of performative products can present specific powerful emotional challenges to members of the audience, including the critics or referees of artistricy and taste. A distinctive characteristic of the performing arts is that artists' display of their work and the public's reactions complement each other at an affective level. This is so because human beings are implicated at both ends.

## Art contexts

Familiarity with art contexts and conventions around them shape audiences' expectations about the characteristics of their art experiences and guide audience's recognition of artistic value. Art frames provide clues to the nature of artworks, dictate the distance to them and the type of sensory perception we are permitted but they also support the identification of valuable pieces.

The spaces where art is presented to us reflects traditional established settings that determine the conditions of our appreciation and have become part of each art's ontology. The performing arts (including cinema) are enjoyed in a theatre, while we go to art museums to look at paintings, sculptures, installations and other artistic objects. Of course, we encounter art collectively in other public spaces as is the case of statues in parks, but also individually in the comfort of our homes, for example, when reading poems and other kinds of literature.

Our senses of sight and hearing are privileged in our experiences of art. The standard norm is that touching is not acceptable in pieces located in museums and mostly not possible for works on a stage. "Do not touch" notices around museums are usually reinforced by virtual or physical obstacles (strings, wire, glass, etc.) in order to specify how close we are allowed to be to the objects. In the case of cinema, we are positioned in the dark separated from the projection of the filmic sequence which is not a unique tangible object; a mechanical technological process facilitates our audiovisual encounter with the work. Similarly, literary works are appreciated via books but there is no actual single valuable object, and it is in principle irrelevant whether we get to know the works through our eyes, or in the case of Braille readers via their finger tips.

Knowledge of art contexts and their cultural rules shape our expectations and provide us with clues for recognising artistic value. It can be said that the greater the artistic value attached to the work, the more sensory restrictions on audiences' interactions with them for the protection and preservation of the pieces, our role is to be distant observers. These restrictions are mostly clear for single material works, or for works very limited in number such as prints, which could deteriorate with too much human contact; limitations also apply to the fleeting works of the performing arts which are distant transient constructions in front of our eyes and ears. The proscenium stage removes actors, dancers and musicians from the spectators' area and therefore, makes unnecessary to warn the public about getting too close to the performers. The stage marks the fictional world of the performers and the seating area the real world of the spectators, although other public and more intimate spaces provide more room for proximity, action (e.g. tapping) and even interaction with performative works.

Dance can be described as inmaterial as a whole but temporarily embodied and therefore potentially tangible in some respects. Dance artistic value is mostly dependent on mastery of technique and style, and formal choreographic accomplishment which can be only grasped in the development of the performance. Some elements of the dance medium such as the setting or the costumes add to the overall value of the piece at an aesthetic level as well. Artistic value is also connected to other properties of the work, such as its historical, political and moral qualities.

As the world changes, particularly with the increased used of new technologies, the spaces and conditions of art have expanded modifying how we access art. Big plasma televisions with stereophonic or other widening sound effects make possible to watch films at home, but they can also mediate encounters with dance works, concerts and theatre plays. Land art is doubly mediated as it is captured by photographic images which are displayed in museums instead of enjoying them in their original sites. And of course, a great amount of all kinds of art is available in digital format from the internet. The impact of this diversity of contexts in which we encounter art should not be

underestimated in our modern world and, I believe, should be present in our considerations on perceptions and reactions to art.[4]

In addition, a necessary final observation related to the importance of contexts of art is that the levels of attentiveness can potentially change our art experiences. While traditionally the conditions of the theatre focus our attention on the performance by lighting the stage and darkening the seating areas, the new contextual possibilities allow for a multiplicity of stimuli to enter our consumption of the works and thus, affect our engagement and responses. Simultaneously listening to romantic music and reading a romantic novel in the comfort of our homes could reinforce romantic emotions, but the possibility of also moving around, eating a sandwich or performing other daily tasks such as knitting or cooking would require constant adjustments and reconnections as focus is diverted to these different actions. The increasing flexibility of the contexts in which we can experience art that allow us to combine art observation with external stimuli has the potential of enhancing but also of limiting and modifying our appreciation at a cognitive as well as an emotional level.

## From dancing at a distance to dancing with you

Dance art (as opposed to folk dance, social dance, ritual dance, etc.) is also known as 'theatrical dance'; it is dance created by artists to be performed at the theatre. In fact, it is conceived to be observed from a specific location in the auditorium, that is to be viewed from a specific distance and angle. Susan Foster (1986) has enumerated the main framing conventions in dance art. These conventions refer to the space where art is displayed, programmes with explanatory notes on the pieces, lighting clues that guide the structure, dancers focus with respect to the audience. She has explained that theatrical conventions "also help define the viewer's role –as spectator, voyeur, or witness– in watching the event" (Foster, 1986, p. 65), in addition, as we will see, the contemporary dance viewer has had the role of full participant.

Dance art is no stranger to a variety of other contexts. Dance works have been designed to be presented in parks, office buildings, churches, museums, urban streets and stadiums, or some times merely transplanted there. During the 60s and 70s postmodern choreographers concentrated on altering how audiences experience the viewing of dance art making use of reframing strategies, among others. Trisha Brown's *Walking on the Wall* (1971) choreographed six dancers to move around the walls of a room of the Whitney Museum in New York City. Both dancers and spectators could move freely around the empty space. In this piece the museum offered a new set of conventions for viewing dance: proximity to the performers was reduced and perspectives of the action were constantly altered by the choreography itself but also by the spectators who chose to move around.

The selection of non theatrical settings have come up from a variety of experimental impulses some of which have focused on trying to displace the expected orientations of the audiences to the dance piece but new settings have also been prompted, for instance, by marketing strategies to sell dance

[4] Issues of perception depending on the medium have already been discussed, for instance, in the field of music with respect to differences between experiencing works during a life performance in a concert hall as opposed to via a recording, although it has been suggested that they are aesthetically equivalent (see for instance Uidhir, 2007).

to the wider public. In a recent interview to Tamara Rojo, one of the principal ballerinas of the Royal Ballet in Covent Garden, explained the decision behind performing Kenneth Macmillan's classical ballet *Romeo and Juliet* in London's O2 arena, a stadium with big screens and a capacity of 10,000 seats mostly used for megaconcerts and sport events:

> "We're constantly trying to expand our audiences and reach people that have never thought they would love ballet, and this is a great opportunity. It's a chance to change perceptions, which is difficult when you are at the opera house. People think it's an old-fashion art form, but if you take the art form away from that frame and put it somewhere else people might come with an open mind" (in Moss, 2011, p. 8)

The assumption is that ballet could be popularised by transplanting it to a more familiar setting. So the idea is that it is not the content or aesthetics of ballet, but rather the traditional context for presenting it, i.e. the theatre stage, that is alienating for some audiences. In this case, it was thought that a stadium gives a more accessible shell to younger audiences. It might be indeed that we can popularise art forms like ballet just by changing the context in which they are presented (transplantation) or by encapsulating them in a different format (mediation). Transplantation and mediation provide a new context that reframes or packages the art product. A case of mediation is, for example, how poster formats have made extremely popular some painting masterpieces, or indeed, how dances have been filmed, edited and commercialised in DVDs for the consumption of the masses. The dance world tells us "come on, have a look at this, you will enjoy it, it is a beautiful piece," and under those new circumstances, people get excited at the possibility of acquiring a bit of a valued object. My point here is that both phenomena, i.e. transplantations and mediations of valued art objects, alter not only the conditions in which it is delivered but also the emotional effects of how these are appreciated.

The presentation of the classical ballet *Romeo and Juliet* in the O2 arena is a case of transplantation where we are invited to consume dance art in a more informal space, a space that feels familiar, less intimidating. The arena also facilitates mediation to a large public via screens that provide alternative viewpoints and close ups. Echoing some theories of the performative, Patricia Bickers (2009) has suggested that where live and mediated creations run in parallel, the mediated version provides a "privileged view". However, although it is true that mediation in dance can give us access to costume detail, subtle movement, high musical reception and dancers' expressive gestures, mediation also separates us further from the actual medium of the dance, e.g. the moving bodies of the dancers, the space where they interact, the lighting details. Mediation, as we currently know it, does not always offer a privileged access to a performance, and it is usually controlled externally to the viewer. Moreover, for some pieces, their original frames specify aspects of the work that might not be suitable for some forms of mediation. Acting on a stage requires expressivity that does not suit acting for the camera. Dancer Tamara Rojo was aware of these issues when she expressed that she needed to watch out for the close-ups from the camera because she wanted to avoid "silent-movie-style overacting" (in Moss, 2011, p. 8).

Watching dance performances from the specific viewpoint provided by a theatre seat is a very different experience from being able to move around the dancers. Fixed seating emphasises a specific angle and precise distance for each seat to the stage. The audience is made invisible placed

in the dark. This positioning translates into a restriction of spectators' moves and their focused attention to the lit area of the action on the stage. In the words of Stanton Garner:

> "the proscenium stage continues to project optimal viewing positions as insistently as it establishes visual centers for its scenic arrangement: reinforced by the stage's rectangular framing and the audience's perceptual disposition toward a symmetrical, balanced point of view, this theatre tends to privilege viewing positions extending on an axis perpendicular to stage center. Ideal centrality in the auditorium mirrors ideal centrality on stage" (Garner, 1994, p. 84)

However, no conventional context and rules go without being challenged by an artist. If theatrical distance, optimal viewing and listening, strict performer/audiences roles were the norm in dance art, once each of these conventions was altered, spectators had to learn how to appreciate and enjoy dance anew. In a freer mobile setting, perspectives became more varied, and sounds or even smells acquire more prominence. The degrees of distance allowed, the potential points of view and even the invitation to interaction, change our aesthetic experience physically and thus emotionally.

Some contemporary artists have sought not only to blur the performative space but also to transform audiences into choreographers or performers. The works by the Grand Union or Meredith Monk in the 1970s exemplify the push for dance art to be displaced from the theatre and enter more flexible spaces that facilitate contact with their audiences, and even the merging of the roles of choreographer, performer and viewer. As Foster has noted, in some of the pieces "viewers are given the opportunity to see themselves as part of the performance […] They also participate in the creation of the event by choosing what to watch in a dance […], choreographers assume some of the critical perspective normally assigned to the audience" (Foster, 1986, pp. 225-226). Rather than tansplantation, these are cases of designing dance altering the expected space and roles. The original contexts of these pieces bring the medium so close to their audiences that they become part of it. More recently, artists like Felix Ruckert have explored further the possibilities of participatory dance theatre.

> "I began to undermine the world of ballet, which suddenly seemed more open towards less traditional forms of stage performance. The technical excellence and intelligent use of space and time, which I trained in these projects, could easily be converted into direct physical interaction with the audience, i.e. dancing strategies proved successful when they were to be applied to the bodies of the spectators" (Ruckert, 2007, p. 223)

Erika Fischer-Lichte (2007) has described this type of choreography as an example of "role reversal" between performers and audiences. For instance, in Ruckert's 2002 work *Secret Service* spectators are blindfolded so "they now had to rely on their other senses, on their sense of hearing, of smell, and especially their sense of touch" (Fischer-Lichte, 2007, p. 229), and in this way they become active parts in the piece. But works like Ruckert's go beyond including audiences and reversing roles. Some pieces of this kind aim at unsettling members of the audience, he encourages them to dance, kiss and cuddle. Ruckert massages, blindfolds, ties them up and whips them. He has noticed that audiences "were astonishingly willing to surrender themselves and clearly enjoyed

doing so. Sensing an opportunity to experience something new, they were capable of overcoming inhibitions and apprenhensions" (Ruckert, 2007, p. 222).

Psychologists have long acknowledged that we still do not have an adequate theory of emotion in general (Fischer, 1989). It is believed that emotions are "initiated by changes in current circumstances appraised as significant to an organism's well-being" (Gross, Crane, & Fredrickson, 2010, p. 223); and that emotional states change due to three main factors: cognitive processes (activated by expectations), physiological states and environmental influences, which means that "we can have a large discrepancy between our rationalizations of our behaviour and the actual behaviour" (Lindsay & Norman, 1977, p. 687). While some art consumers may be willing to surrender to the new no matter what, clearly others would not accept any deal proposed by the artist, even when they enter the art experience knowing about its participatory nature. In participatory events we loose our position as viewers to become agents who contribute to shape the performance, so our emotional responses are bound to be more salient. Reactions could be related to perceptions of the risks involved, impact of actions on fellow participants, degree of uncertainty, level of physical comfort and so on.

## Emotional rollercoaster: trust and stress

In all artist-audience exchanges, emotions are also tie to another component: trust. Trust is a critical affective factor in our contact with performative works in the theatre, and particularly in participatory works, as it is not just trust involved, but interpersonal trust at various levels. Trust between agents has been described as a risky attitude we take with optimism (McLeod, 2011) or as "a willingness to be vulnerable under conditions of risk and interdependence" (Rousseau et al., 1998), but with some underlying shared ethical norms (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 25).

In a dance performance the context would define the limits of trust which, in principle, would be symmetrical and therefore multidirectional. The artist exposes his or her work to others and hopes that it will be properly interpreted (by the dancers) and valued (by audiences). The performer realises the work and hopes it will convey the intended actions and meanings (as required by the choreographer) and that audiences will be appreciative of the artistic efforts. The spectator is willing to attend an artistic proposal, and expects to be moved by it; his or her trust is based on the honesty and well intended creative work by the artist and on the capacity of the dancers to represent it appropriately. Trust operates at a higher level when audiences attend an event knowing that they will be invited to participate in some way.

But in the artist-performer-audience interplay there is also an implicit understanding that any of the agents could at any time push the borders of the expected norms under which their trust relationship operates. If one of the aims of art is to challenge norms, is then art constantly in danger of breaking a trust relationship with its audiences? How far can the agents of trust in an art event challenge shared ethical norms? It is reasonable to suggest that one of the agents should be able to act with total impunity whether as part of an artistic proposal or as a response to it. The artist can instruct the performers to ignore the expected conventional behaviour and test audiences perceptions and emotions by a variety of means but some limits need to apply to this freedom. By the same token, a member of the public can throw insults or tomatoes at the dancers if he or she feels cheated by the

quality of the work, again, it could be argued that responses will be only acceptable if there is no harm to others.

Looking at specific cases might help here. I would like to discuss the dance piece *A Little Tenderness for Crying out Loud* (2007) by the Canadian artist Dave Saint-Pierre. In this work, the choreographer goes on "exploring the fears and fantasies of 22 characters as they search for love in a brutal world" (Mackrell, 2011). I choose this piece because it exemplifies the breaking of some theatrical conventions by an artist and the variety of emotional responses these changes of circumstances and actions bring to the dance work.

Reviews by dance critics and commentaries of the general public have not focused very much on the actual dance scenes. Most of the criticism has been reporting and evaluating the most controversial part of the piece where naked men with long blond wigs descend to the seated area of the theatre and behave childlike jumping over the seats provoking the spectators, apparently causing alarm, outrage and fun in equal measures. During this part of the performance, the expected performer-audience theatrical distance is not only reduced but is so close that actual physical contact between performing and viewing agents takes place. Moreover, the fact that this contact involves naked bodies adds to the emotional reactions to the art experience. Dancer Michael Watts has commented that the reactions to this scene are varied including "lot of taps on the bottom from old ladies" (in Mackrell, 2011). Critics have observed that some spectators reject the physical contact with the dancers hitting or pushing them, others leave, run away or just cover their faces avoiding to look at their nudity (Mackrell, 2011). What we have in this part of the piece is an unexpected alteration of many theatrical conventions. Shock and tension is reached by simultaneously breaking the conventional theatrical distance between the dancers and the audience, expanding the sensory perception, and reversing the focused attentiveness from the action to an interaction. Critic Christine Twite asks "Does the fact that this behaviour took place in a theatre auditorium, in front of an audience who paid up-front for the experience, mean that the performances can play havoc in such a way? A sort of theatrical diplomatic immunity to any offence caused? How far will this wild card take you?" (Twite, 2011) Her answers to these questions appeal to the concept of trust. For her, a level of trust is understood between performers and audiences and if humiliation or pain arises in this relationship, then respect for the performance is lost and the point of the piece is ruined.

The breakdown of trust when failing to follow expectations provokes emotional responses that could range from feelings of disappointment to physical violent actions. In the case of *A Little Tenderness*, extensive publicity informed audiences beforehand that they were going to watch a performance with nudity by someone known as the "enfant terrible" of Canadian choreography. The work was presented in London at the Sadler's Wells theatre and information on the website for buying tickets included images of the show and the following warning: "Please note the performance contains explicit adult material that some may find shocking." The performance was rated 18. The choreographer himself had commented that "We have to democratize nudity, put out all the mystery of it […] People say nudity is not provocative any more but that's not true. It was important for me to create a piece where we go too far" (Gallant, 2011). Interest would have also lead potential spectators to information about the choreographer's previous outrageous pieces so it seems to me that Saint-Pierre had not hidden his intentions to push audiences' perceptions so, in

this case, he was appealing to an unconventional situation of trust in a conventional dance setting. Therefore, being shocked by the piece equates to complaining about being scared at a horror movie. In the viewing of *A Little Tenderness*, negative emotional responses were probably not prompted simply by the fact that performers were undressed but rather by the fact that they also established tactile contacts with members of the audience.

Critic Luke Jennings acknowledged that he was aware of the warnings about the work and was ready for the nudity but, judging from his reactions, he was clearly not ready for the action. He described the show as "the most unpleasant I've ever had in a theatre" (Jennings, 2011) recounting his experience this way:

> "At a given point in the show the stalls are invaded by a dozen or so naked guys in ratty blond wigs. They're yelping, screeching, clambering over people and sticking their genitals in their faces. Further down my row a guy parts his arse cheeks to expose his anus to a visibly alarmed woman. Then he fixes on me, and tries to grab my pen and notebook. I hold on and he pulls my glasses from my face. Then deliberately, clearing his throat, he gobs phlegm all over the lenses, and with a sneer, hands them back to me.
>
> I'm angry, revolted, upset. I say "Fuck you!" I figure in that moment that he's changed the rules of the encounter. Broken our contract, so I can react within the new frame of reference that he's established." (Jennings, 2011)

Jennings' emotional reaction displays a high level of stress with the rupture of the trust he had put in the artist attending the performance. Psychologists have explained that "in a stress-provoking situation, the important factors are not the objective facts of the situation, but the individual's appraisal of them" (Lindsay & Norman, 1977, p. 670). In our daily lives, we need to believe that we are able "to master the contingencies of the world" so "when such a belief is broken, the results can be feelings of helplessness and hopelessness" (Lindsay & Norman, 1977, p. 671). One of the causes of these feelings is when the individual realises that "there can be no adequate response" (Lindsay & Norman, 1977, p. 671). The situation can be described as either a misjudment from the complaining members of the audience who had failed to understand the level of trust expected for this particular piece, or that the artist, despite all his warnings, had gone beyond the tolerable unexpected actions within our contemporary shared ethical norms. There is no possible single account of the dynamics of trust in the experience of this dance event because while some spectators were running away, others were taking photos and reaching for contact with the dancers.

An interesting aspect of such a performance is that it does not/cannot have the same effect on all members of the audience. In the mentioned scene where the naked performers jump across the stalls, where the spatial limits are crossed, the body distance is violated, the physical contact with the audience tests taboos, there are in fact different levels of emotions for different groups of viewers. Those in the stalls are forced to enter the performance, being physically invaded and forced to participate in some way. This situation forces them to a more intense direct emotional experience than those who can observe those invasions to others at a distance. Some people like Jennings who found themselves in the thick of the action felt helpless due to their "inability to

control the environment" (Lindsay & Norman, 1977, p. 671). Therefore they experienced stress and responded with fear or anger failing to engage in the fictionality of the performance and fighting to maintain their status as observers. Other members of the audience who seemed to cope with the assault were reacting passively following the cultural norms of the theatre at a distance. In fact, the alteration of the expected conventional activity had an impact on their levels of attention to the piece not by external stimuli (e.g. a ringing mobile phone) but by the activity within the work itself. It also translated for these people in an annulation of the aesthetic imagination resulting in the devaluation of the work. Yet others became participants and took the opportunity to interact positively with the dancers. For the more distant public, the invasion did not cause direct personal stress. The emotional situation would have been more equal for all observers if the dance event had been organised in an open space. In such a frame, anyone would have been potentially approached and pushed for interaction with the dancers.

One important consequence of these situations is that once trust has been betrayed from the part of the artist, performer or public, it is hard to recover. Trust and distrust are dynamically linked in our interpersonal relations. This means that, after a traumatic experience watching *A Little Tenderness*, individuals will not be in a good position to judge other works by Saint-Pierre because their trust in the choreographer's artistic ability has been destroyed, and they are bound to be suspicious of him in future encounters.

## Emotional responses for self-transformation

Perhaps a way to understand Saint-Pierre's choreography is to see it as continuing with a choreographic tradition that aims at engaging the audience in a process of self-awareness leading to self-transformation[5], but rather than doing it by directing the observer's attention to performative activity, he points directly at their emotions by a forced physical interaction. Matthew Pelowski and Fiminori Akiba (2011) have recently discussed the process of self-transformation from our engagement with art. They have suggested a five-stage transformative model of aesthetic experience in art. In this model, they link art appreciation with viewers personality, beliefs and identity which lead to personal associations in the reception of artistic information. In their model, aesthetic experience is connected to "personal growth or cognitive development" (p. 82).

Pelowski and Fiminori Akiba (2011) recount Danto's famous encounter with Warhol's *Brillo Box* and how he could achieve transformation due to "discrepancy between his pre-expectations and perception, self-reflection and self-change". They also quote Nodelman who has highlighted the role of frustration when you are "thrown back to yourself […] when you become the center of the room. You think about your conduct, your body […] art forces disturbing questions about the nature of the self and its relation to the world". It is, of course, different to engage in meta-cognitive reflection when we confront an art object like a painting or sculpture. When the process of disruption in art is prompted by the actions of another human being which do not demand imaginative participation but actual involvement in the work, it is understandable that emotions

[5] Nick Kaye's described the works of the choreographer Lucinda Childs as pieces that "are set against a self-conscious frame, the observer is drawn toward an awareness of her own pivotal position in the definition of the piece" (Kaye, 1994, p. 108).

might overpower the experience in the strongest sense. Spectators could experiment betrayal of trust, frustration and stress but this process should not prevent them from achieving self-transformation just because the feelings are prompted by interacting with others. In fact, despite potentially stronger reactions, it might be easier in a way to think about ourselves in the context of the performing arts precisely because they are mediated by other real human beings.

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