

**Vivianne Rodrigues, John Taylor and Maria Ines Villasmil**  
**Proposal for continuing research into multi-media tools for dance education at the Amsterdam School of the Arts**  
September 2010

**Proposed research**

**Application of media tools in the classroom**

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**Open Media Notebook**

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**Motivation**

The two year collaborative research project *Inside Movement Knowledge* has informed and inspired the research group from the AHK Dance Department (Vivianne Rodrigues, John Taylor and Maria Ines Villasmil) to propose a follow-up period of research for the academic year 2010-2012.

A core motivation for this research proposal is not only the research itself but also the need to continue a platform for research within the AHK at the faculty level. IMK has proved that there is potential to create an ongoing discussion on subjects and matters related to our role in the institution as teachers, mentors and coaches. This platform will also be a means to share with and support each other in our individual research trajectories and artistic interests within and across the departments (departmental clusters) of the AHK. We believe that within the institution of the AHK we need a platform that will allow us to research and generate new knowledge and methods in education. This will have a strongly positive impact to inspire us as educators and to create an attitude of continuing innovation in the curriculum able to respond to the changing requirements of the dynamic workfield for which we educate our students.

**Background**

In October 2008 we (Maria Ines Villasmil, John Taylor and Vivianne Rodrigues de Brito) were invited to join the Inside Movement Knowledge research project as the AHK- Dance research team. Inside Movement Knowledge was a two-year (2008-2010) collaborative, interdisciplinary research project into new methods for the documentation, transmission and preservation of contemporary choreographic and dance knowledge.

The IMK project evolved from the research initiated in 2004 by Amsterdam-based dance company Emio Greco | PC (Pieter C. Scholten) into systems for recording and transmitting the essential elements of their creative work. The Interactive Installation Double Skin/ Double Mind was one of the outcomes of this research and it was taken by the IMK as a case study to further examine the artistic questions of EG/PC. The installation Double Skin/ Double Mind was created as a multimedia tool that allows the user to physically experience some of the movement qualities and important principles of the work of Emio Greco/PC. Our role in this project was to collaborate on the further development of the installation with a specific focus on its use for educational purposes.

Over the two-year period of the IMK we gave feedback on the learning processes of those using the installation. Based on our expertise as dance teachers we were able to generate much useful knowledge and new theories to improve the installation design and the learning experience of the user within the installation.

In this research setting, we also generated exciting new ideas and knowledge for ourselves. During our inspiring meetings we shared our experiences, our views and our individual approaches to pedagogy, teaching methodology, student assessment, application of media tools inside the studio and many other subjects related to our work as dance educators in the AHK.

Aware of the impact that these inspiring knowledge exchanges had on the three of us we decided to take this research modus forward and propose a follow-up period for collaborative research on the use of Media Tools in the Performance Arts Education at the AHK.

We believe that the encouragement and implementation of an investigative attitude in the studio and classroom would have a positive impact on the students and consequently on the curriculum at our school. We would be more informed, motivated and curious about what we do.

### **Why Media Tools?**

In a modern student-centered educational institution we realise that the students each have individual patterns and inclinations in learning as described in the theory of multiple intelligences. As such it is necessary to present the information we wish to share with the students in a variety of ways in order to speak to the variety of learning modes. The various learning modes support each other, complete and deepen the understanding of the students. Media Tools are a means to address the learning modes not normally activated in a traditional performance arts education. Additionally they allow for a more individual learning process than that found in group social learning activities.

The installation with which we have worked the last two years is an example of a media tool. As are the CD-ROM and documentary which emerged also from the Double Skin/Double Mind workshop. We see that these various media dealing with the same principles can complement each other in a learning process and help a student to reach a more complete understanding. We must not forget traditional media such as books and other new media as film/video.

We came to the conclusion that we as teachers are already using these various sort of elements in our classes/workshops. Our involvement with the IMK project over the last two years and our use of various media tools in our work at the school lead us to our desire to further understand the complementary working of these tools in an educational process. We would like to survey a broad spectrum of existing and emerging tools and to try to identify and classify the underlying principles in each tool and how they could be usefully grouped together for classes, workshops and coaching.

### **The Research**

In our discussions with Nik Haffner we considered our various interests for further research and were able to better group and define them into two lines of research.

Firstly the survey, classification and implementation of existing and future media tools for their usefulness in a dance performance education. This can be broken down into three parts. The Installation can be further evaluated as an educational tool. It can be treated as a case study from which we hope to generalise to the use of a variety of media tools in such an education. We would also like to look more closely at the use of such tools in our daily classes and workshops. What do we do already? How does that function? What new ideas can we implement? Further we would like to examine existing and emerging tools and classify them according to the underlying principles applicable to a dance education and create a reference catalogue which could be drawn upon in the educational environment to deepen the learning process. This means that we will try to de-contextualise the media tools we classify by removing the artist's signature and focusing on the universally applicable underlying principles.

Secondly we would like to survey the various social media tools available and their applicability to recording and preserving the creative process. We would like to suggest an Open Media Notebook which might be a suite of tools from which students, teachers and artists could draw upon to help there creative process, reflection process and the preservation of these processes.

AVAILABLE SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

STUDENTS/TEACHERS/ARTISTS ARCHIVES

SURVEY & CLASSIFICATION

OPEN MEDIA NOTEBOOK

APPLICATION IN CREATIVE PROCESSES

EXISTING AND FUTURE DANCE MEDIA TOOLS

CASE STUDY  
IN DETAIL ANALYSIS &  
EXCHANGE WITH  
OTHER INSTITUTIONS

APPLICATION IN  
CLASS/  
WORKSHOPS/  
COACHING

REFERENCE  
CATALOGUE  
OF PRINCIPLES

## **Application of Media Tools in the Classroom**

Media tools would be used in our classrooms as an extra layer to support our teaching. As teachers, we are committed to educating students to become autonomous dancers who are strong in their artistic individuality and yet flexible and skilful to respond to any choreographer's style. We are not interested in creating little clones of ourselves or choreographers in the work field nor are we interested in turning our learning environment into a factory for choreographers. Rather than teaching steps or tricks we are genuinely interested in transmitting knowledge expressed as movement principles which are universal and therefore applicable in any dance setting.

It is therefore imperative for us that our students understand the principles underlining any movement language. In order to effectively achieve that goal we need to be able to address the student's individual learning styles and modes. We know by now that students can respond very differently to verbal instructions, touch, imagery or sound when learning new information. The challenge lies in making this information as clear as possible using the tools that are already available to us in the studio: our body, our voice, our experience and our knowledge.

We see the implementation of new media as an extra tool that could help us to clarify further movement principles taught in classes. Showing an abstract image illustrating a certain principle from a DVD could enhance a student's cognitive and kinesthetic understanding, making their learning experience and embodiment of the principle more complete and potentially faster.

Another way of thinking about media tools in the studio would be using a video camera to film the class and show it to students as a feedback tool. Sometimes, seeing back an image of oneself can work much more effectively than verbal feedback from a teacher.

### **1. Case study - the installation in education**

During the two years of the IMK project the Double Skin/Double Mind installation was in a constant state of development. While there was much speculation as to its usefulness within and educational environment we were never able to test the theories which we put forward in a fully functioning version of the installation.

Since our entrance into the IMK project was to research the usefulness of it in an educational environment it seems logical to continue what we began in the IMK project and bring to fruition a series of tests of the installation. Over the coming three years there is a presence of EG/PC in the MTD of the AHK and Bertha plans to incorporate the installation in the one phase of this educational program. As such the Installation will be present in the school for at least two weeks each year for the coming three school years.

The work of EG/PC in the school bears a strong artistic stamp from the company and the choreographer Emio Greco. The end goal of the process is through a three year process to prepare students to be able to embody and perhaps perform a repertory work from the company. As such it is interesting to follow and document the use of the installation. However we feel that it is also important to test the installation as a media tool in a more general dance education. To remove the artist's stamp (signature) and see how the tool could be valuable outside the context of the work of Emio Greco.

#### **a. Transference of movement knowledge necessary to the specific goal of embodying the repertory**

First we would like to observe and report on the functioning of the installation as Bertha uses it to enhance the Double Skin/ Double Mind workshop and deepen the understanding of the second year students taking part in the program. This is directly related to the artist's signature a transference of movement knowledge necessary to the specific goal of embodying the repertory of the company. This would be a short term analysis of the two weeks of the second year program.

Secondly in the context of the three year educational program of EG/PC we would like to split the first year students into two groups. One group would follow the curriculum as planned by Bertha and only experience the installation in the second year of the program. The rest of the program would be direct student and teacher contact. The other half of the students would be able to use the installation at two moments, between the 1st and 2nd year and between the 2nd and 3rd year. This group would be unguided and able to use the installation as a self study module to refresh their memories and answer lingering questions. Our expectation would be that this group would have a better understanding of the underlying principles of the artist's work and as such should ultimately better embody the work during the repertory workshop in the third

year of the program. This would be a long term study encompassing the three years of the EG/PC presence in the school.

#### **b. Testing the the functionality of the developmental progression within the installation**

We would like to be able to test the 4 modes/scenarios which have been developed during the IMK labs.

Workshop Mode  
Learning Mode  
Customising Mode  
Play/Creative Mode

For this we like to begin to look at the general functioning of the installation and at its usability outside the context of the work of EG/PC. To this end we wish to create a test group of students from across the various departments of the AHK. In the two week residence of the installation in the coming year we would like to have this group make a progression through the 4 modes/scenarios of the installation outside the context of the physical Double Skin/ Double Mind workshop. This group should have further no specific knowledge of EG/PC or their work. The experience should be purely that of the installation. To that end we will again split the group in two. One group would go through the process seeing images of Emilio Greco as teacher. The other group would have all "teacher" images removed. This second group would experience the installation as a pure media tool without the signature of the artist.

What is the functionality of the installation for a more general group of students?

What is the impact of the artist's image as teacher/ mentor?

How does the progression of the 4 modes/scenarios serve to deepen/ enhance the understanding and embodiment of the underlying principles?

What is the usefulness of the creative mode for a dance student? For a choreography student?

This is in the first instance a short term project centered around the two weeks that the installation will be in the school next year. It is certainly the expectation that this experience will lead to further research ideas for the future.

## **2. Selected multi-media projects to support the class/workshop situation**

During our discussions about multi-media tools in education, we realised that we are already using them in our school to support our teaching. The implementation of these tools in our classrooms to date varies from showing DVD's of artists' work for information purposes, making blogs for sharing/documenting and videoing the classes for documentation/feedback purposes. The purpose of further research into the application of these tools in our education are:

- To examine in depth how can they provide a deeper and more complete learning experience to students
- To improve their effectiveness
- To generate knowledge

#### **a. Contact improvisation**

For this we propose the use of existing choreographic resources to support information transfer within individual teacher's workshops. As an example we describe here making use of the DVD Material for the Spine from Steve Paxton in the context of Vivianne's Contact Improvisation workshops. This DVD can be used as a historical reference tool to help students prepare for a fuller understanding of the work (who Paxton is, what his reference points are, etc.), but also to further enhance and make more effective the learning process through studying the video annotation and interactive scenarios on the DVD. This might be augmented by using video as a documentation and feedback tool in the workshop.

#### **b. Partnerwork**

When dance related resources don't exist for a particular workshop or class, a combination of reference materials might be drawn from other multi-media sources: e.g. the use of visual and interactive reference material to illustrate and study the principals of physics in order to inform dancers participating in John's Partnerwork classes. The idea is that concentrating on underlying principles might enhance how the dance

students use partnerwork more effectively in a creative context and their ability to analyse and solve problems they encounter when working on a situation when weight (mass) is shared or supported.

### **3. Individual Coaching in relation to survey of available choreographic resources**

This is a proposal to make a survey of available multi-media tools (the installation, DVD's, software, video) and how they could be used as coaching tools, e.g. through analyzing the movement qualities or physical principles which each specific tool addresses and for which it can give meaningful feedback. Working together we could observe a group of students to ascertain what the specific coaching needs of those students might be and then make a choice among the available tools to best help these students.

### **4. Survey and cataloguing of basis principles**

There is a necessity to survey and catalogue a wide range of existing and emerging media tools. It is necessary to remove the artist's signature and determine the underlying principles which each tool can be appropriately used as a learning aid. By classifying these principles and grouping them it will be possible to easily find a whole suite of possible tools which could be drawn upon in each specific case.

In the case of students we could choose the tools which best speak to the learning strengths of that student or which best compliment the information already available.

In the case of a class or workshop a suite of tools would be available which would allow the teacher and students to see the information and learn about it from various perspectives, enhancing the learning process.

## **Open Media Notebook**

### **1. Social media as a tool for documenting collaborative creative practices**

#### **Summary:**

This proposal focuses on research into how existing social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, blogging, twitter, mySpace) and other available software can be assembled into an integrated package (working title "Open Media Notebook") to more effectively support the documentation of collaborative dance creation practices. For students making their own choreography, this tool can be used to capture the development of their research, facilitate the sharing of material and ideas and show the developing stages of their work. This will help support self-reflection and remote contact while working on dance pieces. In the case of performers, this tool could facilitate the begin stages of the work process with invited choreographers, e.g. creating a reference space and documentation of reflection on the process; to assist in organizing ideas, material and feedback. It could also support individual coaching sessions during the creation process and enhance future rehearsals of a piece taken into repertoire. It could document the process in a form which would enhance reconstruction.

#### **Motivation:**

The use of media tools is not new in education. Nowadays students get to know the artist views, ideas, work method using existing media that respond to the need of each of the artist they investigate. That is the case of the DVD Material for the Spine, fully incorporated during the Artist in Residency of Steve Paxton with the SNDO in 2009, but also the use of media is quite incorporated in the every day life of the community as a vehicle to communicate with each other. In a less sophisticated level, student's often use existing media applications to document their work and to promote and discuss their ideas ( facebook, MySpace,Blogs etc,etc)

The use of other media to support teaching is familiar and also was an important part during my Master Education in the AHK where I created the bases of a CD-Rom to self explore choreographic devices.

#### **Plan Maria**

In a long term -and also considering the kind of work I am developing inside of the AHK- the research will be more orientated to develop a tool Open- media- Note Book to allow the documentations of process (any kind of process).

This will be applicable to facilitate documentation on several levels: For dance-makers, for dancers/performers and teachers/mentors.

1. In the case of dance-makers, will allow them to have a platform to document the development of their own research, having a tool that will facilitate the sharing of their material and ideas but also – visually- showing the state of their work. This will facilitate –among others thing- the feed back session and even show their work on line, in order to have contact with people that are not physically present. (For ex. some times our students invite advisers that are not in the country) while they are working on their pieces.
2. In the case of dancers/performers, this tool will facilitate to have an overview of their work, also while starting any research or choreographic work. I have the experience of coaching students while doing their choreography work and often demand a very accurate documentation of feedback and reflexion over the work and process. This will be a way to help them to organize their ideas and material, but also have a documentation of the process and feed back, in order to work individually before any coaching session.
3. For a teacher, will have the same use. It will document the process of any course.

A first phase of the research will consist in finding out what platforms are already available and in use; and then how can we improve the effectiveness of their use.

The goal is to improve the documentation, reflection and communication process. These tools will function to improve the networking of the students and the dissemination of information between them.

### **Specific actions**

1. First phase of the project will consist in doing a catalogue of the use of existing social media tools available in our community.
2. Second phase will consist in making an overview among the community of how these tools are being used -if this is the case- and with what kind of purpose. This will consist in several sessions of observation and questionnaire among the AHK dance community (teachers/mentors and students).  
(\* Outside consultancy with experts in communication technologies and social networks (e.g. De Waag Society for Old and New Media) may be required.
3. I would like to study the real impact of the use of this tools as a way to facilitate documentation and as an ongoing vehicle to communicate and disseminate ideas, process etc.
4. In a later stage, and more as a long-term project, I would like to see if there is any possibility of creating a tool that can incorporate several features in one tool. In other words, I would like to see if there is any possibility to create an interface that can incorporate in one all the possibilities that several social media offers.

### Where:

The investigation will be done inside of the existing spaces that my teaching allows me to have in the faculty. In this way I will make use of the actual planning and situation to try out some ideas, instead of overloading the curriculum with a new activity.

In this sense, the fact that I am actively engaged with the AHK will allow me to have an ongoing research based in real practice, and certainly this is a very unique and inspiring environment for any educational institution, but mostly in Art Education.

### When:

The first phase of this research will take place in the next academic year 2010-11.