

SHARON LOCKHART | NOA ESHKOL

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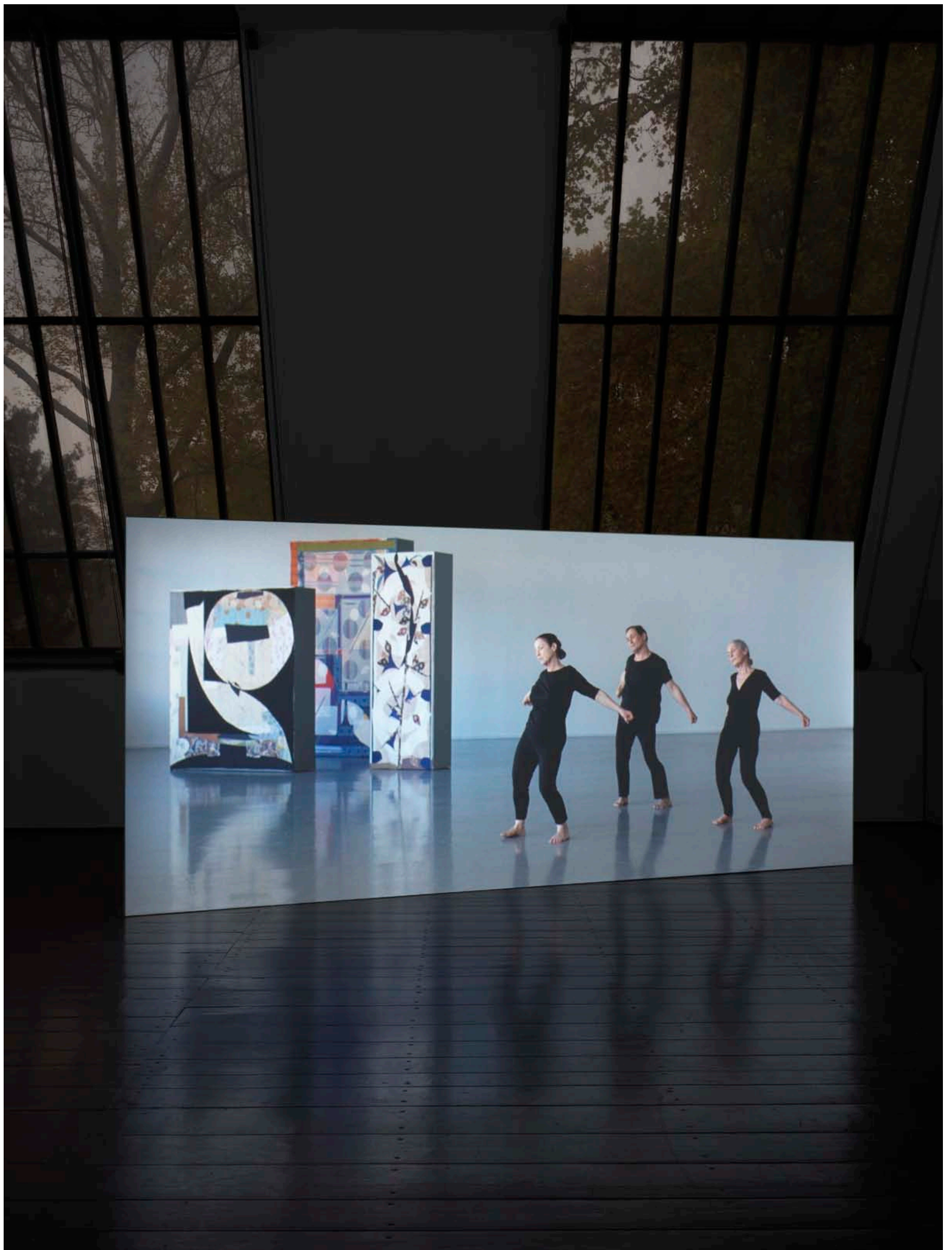
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Thoughts on Noa

Steve Paxton, October 12, 2012

In a small black-box theater at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1970, Noa presented two works. The first was about fifty minutes long. At intermission I was unsure if I wanted to see the second. Could I absorb more? It was a shocking experience, the sort in which time stops: hypnotic, understated, totally disciplined, choreographically rigorous. I am remembering a quartet of men and women, informally dressed. I recall varieties of complete unisons. I remember the ticking of a metronome, a soft voice from somewhere counting the beginning of a phrase, then the dancers off into kinesthetic mazes, movement coordinations that never touched on the Western dance of traditionally extended limbs and deep stretches, of ballet disguised within modern forms. Both the “classic” and the “modern” were absent, so we were in a new, coherent world of gesture and composition. It is extremely rare to have such an encounter; I remember four from the past fifty years. Noa of course didn't much like performance, so it was rare to encounter her work this way. It was just great luck to happen to see her work. It reorganized my brain, I'm sure, and from then on dance could be thought of in her terms: unique, formal, perfect, and indifferent to applause. As I bow to Merce Cunningham, Simone Forti, Lisa Nelson, Aris Retsos (not dance, but anyway ...),

I bow to Noa, deeply and fondly.



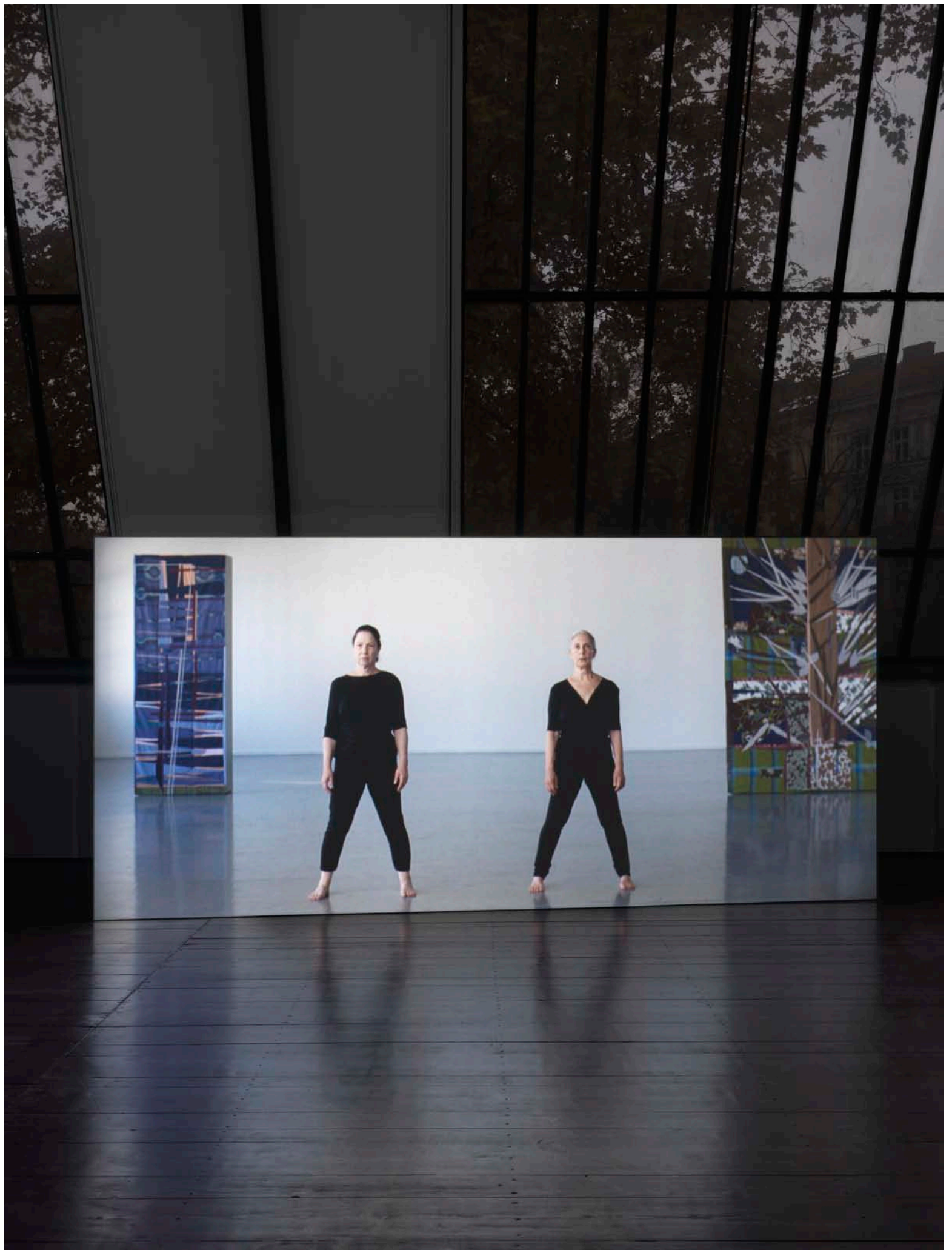




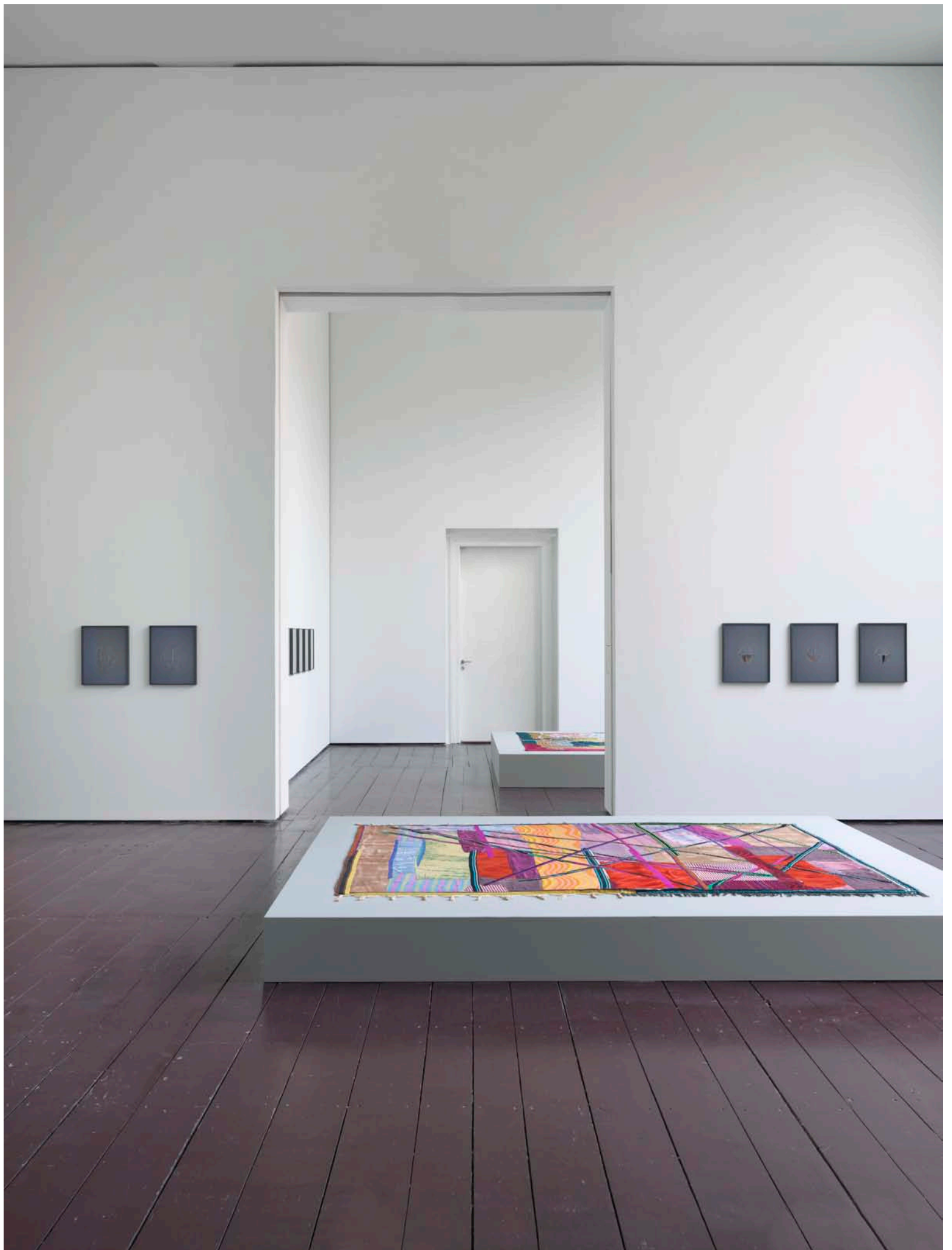
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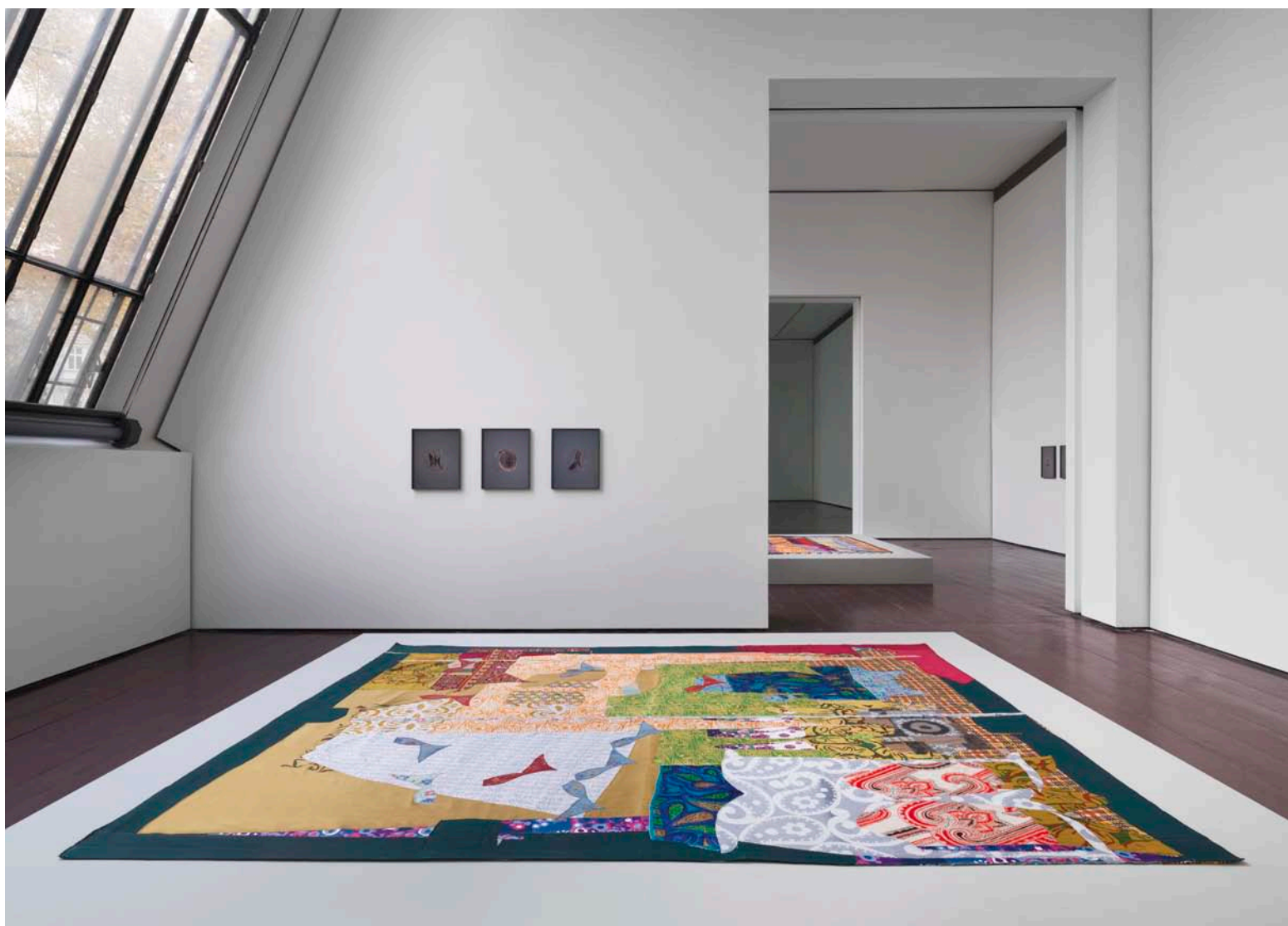
Sharon Lockhart, Models of Orbits in the System of Reference, Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation, 2011

Noa Eshkol, Sunset in the Lake, 1995









Noa Eshkol, Village in South Lebanon, 1985

Sharon Lockhart, Models of Orbits in the System of Reference, Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation System, 2011



Sharon Lockhart, *Four Exercises in Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation*, 2011









Who Am I, Dancing Body?

Daniela Zyman

communal situation of collaboration, leading to the (re)construction and portrayal of everydayness as an independent object of exchange.

“My work is not ‘reality,’” Lockhart says, “it’s somehow formalized, or a translation of real life. In the past I’ve spoken a lot about how I choreograph movements or work with movement advisers and about how what looks like something spontaneous is actually highly orchestrated.... I want viewers to know that there’s a conversation between the subjects of the films or photographs and me, the artist.... Equally, the part of the process in which I work with a community, a person, or a group is very enjoyable for me as an artist; it’s the part that really produces the work.”⁴

Lockhart’s relation of exchange integrates the seemingly contradictory impulses of orchestration, choreography, and translation, which can be formalized as systems of order and an intuitive reliance on process and self-organization (“the part that really produces the work”). It conveys a sense of urgency and establishes an apparatus of instrumentation (the camera, the setting, the display) to capture in a very specific manner communal constellations as played out by individual members of a group. At the same time it communicates a matter-of-factness, detachment, and nonchalance (“something spontaneous”) in the way the protagonists play themselves and the way their subtle narratives unfold within the system of representation conceived by the artist. This seemingly effortless collapsing of disparate interests mirrors the dispositives of social production at the heart of Lockhart’s interactions. It is a social practice shaped by the conscription to the group’s relational commitment pivoting around the respect for the artist’s framework and the entitlement of a person or group of individuals to his/her/their self-representation: “Together we’re creating a solidarity that can then be externalized in the films and photographs.”⁵

Clearly, the *moderated* solidarity between artist and subject(s) is programmatic and conceptual. A “disciplined collaboration,” as Carrie Lambert-Beatty calls it, resonating to disciplined bodies.⁶ It requires intense preparation

Sharon Lockhart’s artistic practice, as exemplified by the exhibition *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol*, rests on the exploration of singular encounters. We can call it a practice of encounters in film, photography, and exhibition making. The encounter as a figure of two: the artists and the protagonist(s). “The figure of the two invokes symmetries and reflections, serials, but also intersections, crossings and transitions. It raises questions of the self, individuation, in- and exclusion and illustrates dichotomous dispositives of theoretical reflection and aesthetic practice,” writes Sandra Noeth.¹ Within the boundaries of the dyadic relationship emerges the polyphonic expanse of experience, responsibility, intersubjectivity, empathy, staging, and negotiation. It also holds the vast disciplinary regimes of representation and its critique but does not dispense with hierarchy, ontological status, questions of framing, media history, subjectivities.

The singular encounter at times takes the form of “collaboration”² or common labor. Collaboration is a relation of exchange, a commitment to a relationship. Sometimes these are friendly, close, and lasting; at other times they are weak, precarious, and distant. Regardless, they build on a “relational cohesion”³—the relationship expresses itself in an *independent object of attachment* and solidarity. The relationship becomes an expressive object. Lockhart and the protagonists of her works engage in a

1. Sandra Noeth, “Notes on a Practice of Best-Friendship-ness” (unpublished paper presented at “Unpredictability and Speculations: Lopud Academy 2012,” Lopud, Croatia, September 16, 2012).
2. See Sabine Eckmann, “On Collaboration: A Conversation with Sharon Lockhart,” in *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol*, ed. Stephanie Barron and Britt Salvesen (Munich: DelMonico Books, 2012), 106–12.

3. See Edward J. Lawler and Jeongko Yoon, “Commitment in Exchange Relations: Test of a Theory of Relational Cohesion,” *American Sociological Review* 61 (February 1996): 89–108.
4. Lockhart, “On Collaboration,” 106.
5. *Ibid.*, 107.
6. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, unpublished essay.

and the framing of interactions, a precondition for what is constructed as the everyday to happen. Diedrich Diederichsen singles out this convergence of paradigms in Lockhart's art as a rare quality in the practice of artists today: "These [paradigms] are, on the one hand, a form of Realism understood as a commitment to a self-experienced and testified reality which the artist however encounters rather than creates, and, on the other hand, the adherence to a strictly formal, immanent working method whose rules are explicitly not determined by this segment of reality."⁷

It is no coincidence therefore that Lockhart's artistic explorations aim at portraying and memorializing fragile social and cultural realities, engaging with communities in transition. Memorializing—as in memory work, against forgetting—the day-to-day rhythms, the routines, the slow passing of time in the processes of labor (work, production, exercise, practice). Alternatively, they capture the apparatuses of production, the paraphernalia of work life, the emblems of blue-collar industrialism. In the present exhibition, Lockhart revives a system of movement notation and dance composition devised more than fifty years ago and sliding into obscurity. Minor histories, it seems, are rendered in melancholic and ephemeral gestures, choreographed as serial movements, redundancies, silenced repetitions.

Sharon Lockhart's Noa Eshkol

The questions of collaboration, staging/restaging, constructing/reconstructing, and the relationship to various temporalities thus particularly resonate in *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol*. Revolving around two film installations, a series of twenty-two photographs, textiles, documents, and a specific architectural intervention, the exhibition consists of a dense assembly of works created by Lockhart and the artist Noa Eshkol. Here again, as in previous collaborations, the project unfolds in multiple parts, refracted in symmetries, complementary readings, in multiple threads and divergent contexts. To prioritize the "central" filmic works at the core of this fine-tuned ensemble would be an oversimplification.

Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol relativizes the notion of the artist as single author and coheres various collaborative settings: Lockhart's dialogue with Eshkol, her practice with a group of dancers and friends devoted to Eshkol's legacy, and the participation of Escher GuneWardena, a Los Angeles-based architectural practice who together with Lockhart developed a minimalist language of presentation within elaborate display technologies. Eshkol being an artist in her own right and carrying the full agency for her work complicates the collaborative divide between artist and subject, representation and the represented. In view of her lifelong research dedicated to the development of a notation system and to her writing and thinking about movement and time, the assertive naming of the exhibition as *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol* also indicates a shared aesthetic and intellectual concern. The congenial "encounter" or "collaboration" of these two artists—one active, the other deceased; one working in film and photography, the other in movement and dance composition—establishes a dialogical space that speaks as much of one as of the other, or of each through the other.

The untimely interaction and dyadic relationship between Lockhart and Eshkol recalls Jalal Toufic's notion of "untimely collaboration," which radicalizes the figure of collaboration by insisting on the present effect of the second future ("it will have happened") and ultimately revoking the notion of historical linearity.⁸ In that sense, it is not unreasonable, following Toufic, to trace Lockhart's influence on Eshkol. Lockhart enters the space that Eshkol left vacant after her passing as a form of participation, activation, and recontextualization expressing true collaboration—that is, mutual influence and shared concern—and shaped by the figure of choreography. Choreography, "dance writing," organizes the syntax of the artists' collaboration, as argued by Noémie Solomon in this volume.

What for Toufic is an "ethical imperative: to be available so that what has the possibility of being created can be forwarded to us rather than blocked" can serve us as a metaphor to engage with the notion of resonances, effects, and affects penetrating and confusing the arrow of time and space.⁹ It offers a conceptual framework to

7. Diedrich Diederichsen, "Realitätsbezüge in der bildenden Kunst: Subjektkritik, Repräsentationskritik und Statistikkunst," in *Realismus in den Künsten der Gegenwart*, ed. Dirk Linck et al. (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2010), 18–19.
8. See Jalal Toufic, *Distorted*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Turnba Press, 2003).
9. *Ibid.*, 33.

think beyond *discovery, reconstruction, research, delegated performance, or portraiture*, some of the terms used to describe the project. To be “forwarded to us rather than blocked” also means that the source material is being “set in motion,” translated, reread, rethought, and retooled rather than frozen in stasis.

Extractions

Lockhart extracted Eshkol’s dance compositions and the underlying system of thought, the Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation (EWMN), from their assigned territory, the disciplined enclave the artist installed in her home and studio in Holon, Israel, to shelter herself from the world. “In movement notation I made a language for myself, not in order to distribute it in the world. It is a language for people who are searching, the way I did,” she writes in the Holon Diaries.¹⁰ Holon became a reclusive place for thinking, rehearsing, and textile work while eliminating over time all interference from or interactions with the outside world. Eshkol limited her entourage to a handpicked group of dancers engaged in all aspects of her life and practice. They transcribed notations, practiced dances, kept diaries, stitched wall carpets—a small collective orbiting around her. The daily diary that the dancer Ruti Sela began keeping in 1983 at Eshkol’s behest (excerpted in this volume) reveals the mundane rituals, the inertia, and self-referentiality of life “in the house.”

When Lockhart discovered Eshkol’s works and archives in 2008, “the miracle happened,” according to Mooky Dagan, one of her closest collaborators. Lockhart’s enthusiasm and her interest in the work exposed to light what had been internalized and had become eclectic and redundant. She reanimated Eshkol’s art and research and encouraged performances in public of a repertoire that has practically not been seen internationally since 1972. Eshkol had sealed off her compositions in hermetic time capsules. Lockhart also exposed the vibrantly colorful wall carpets: about 500 were assembled from scraps of found fabric, pinned together by Eshkol between 1973 and 2007 on the dance floor of her studio and painstakingly sewn by the

dancers and friends. (Because the workload of stitching the wall carpets was so enormous they were sometimes sewn and gifted to Eshkol as birthday presents or for other relational exchanges.) Lockhart places the carpets on large gray architectural volumes so that they inhabit the filmic space of her work.

Most importantly, she has, perhaps unknowingly, set in motion a different reading of Eshkol’s work on movement notation—possibly the artist’s most influential intellectual contribution. Today, some commentators regard EWMN’s System of Reference as an outdated and slightly old-fashioned knowledge system informed by the universalist claims of modernism. But the contextual shift from dance to contemporary art—very different from the cannibalization of dance “as art”—places the notation system in relation to the most crucial avant-garde ideas of the 1960s and 1970s. “When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair,” wrote Sol LeWitt in 1967 in his “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art.”¹¹ Collapsing LeWitt’s instructions intended for every “conceptual form of art” and their revolutionary effects on visual art with Eshkol’s explorations actuates a very different analysis of what should be called Eshkol’s knowledge production. EWMN, the system that she conceived in collaboration with Avraham Wachman, established a unified method of writing and recording movement using numbers and a minimal alphabet of symbols in a grid format, offering dancers and choreographers a systematized tool to compose and notate dance (and all other forms of movement, for that matter). Choreographers and dancers no longer need to rely on the body or the physical embodiment of the dancer—that is, on external, actual structures—as the main expression and referent of choreography. Movement in EWMN becomes a nonrelational structure, as described by LeWitt and Donald Judd, an intellectual proximity that Lockhart highlights by the introduction of minimalist volumes in her installations.

Furthermore, Eshkol’s system of movement notation creates a framework for dance to be reproducible. Rather than positing performance

10. Noa Eshkol, quoted in the Holon Diaries on April 29, 1994 in this volume.
11. Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” (1967), reprinted in *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, ed. Gary Garrels (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 369.

as an ephemeral expression of a nonreproducible present, EWMN offers the most exact method for choreography or dance composition to be fixed and always reproduced in identical ways. The relationship between movement and notation is most directly demonstrated by Lockhart's *Four Exercises in Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation* (2011). In this film installation, a single dancer executes a series of dance compositions, capturing our gaze with controlled, abstract movement sequences. The dancer's body describes the fluid and effortless synergies of the circular movements of her isolated limbs in space. In this solo work, unadorned and simplified by the central dancing body, we can see that what makes the articulation so remarkable is not the combination of the dancer's movements but the timing of their combination. The ability to express the subtlest nuances of timing in the simultaneous movements conveys *freedom* from any preconceived pattern. A freedom rigorously articulated in a system of analysis and notation that matches as nearly as possible the subtleties of what the body is capable of and makes them repeatable.

In EWMN, the body occupies and moves in the three dimensions of space inscribed in a spherical System of Reference. The position of each limb is defined by identifying its joint with the center of the system, and its axis with a line radiating from its origin to one of the points on the surface of the sphere. This conceptual model is applied to every moving limb segment, to every limb group, and to the whole body.

"A foot knows how to move in every possible direction, a leg, an arm, a hand, a torso, can move in all possible directions. The body is spatially broken in every sense and direction. It becomes, then, capable of every meaning, every sign, every designation," writes Michel Serres in "The Ballet of Alba,"¹² a description that could not be any closer to EWMN. Eshkol arrived at the perception of the body as a synergy of circular movements of the isolated limbs, "capable of every designation" through the organizing principles she adopted from serial music and its theoretical underpinnings to which she was introduced by the composer Herbert Brün. For Eshkol and Brün, organizing systems (in dance

or music) are the prerequisites for any forms of signification: that is, the material (movement or sound) and its organization are inseparably interlinked. To return to Eshkol's exercises described earlier, the destabilizing quality of the dance compositions lies exactly in the unfamiliarity and singularity of the "system" which does not reference any known forms of gestures, movements, affects, or expressions. They are composed in a contextual environment—EWMN—in which the semiotic frame is totally nonreferential and in which movements fail to mean what they always had meant.

Liberation of Movement

Being capable of every meaning, achieving fullest freedom, and becoming fully reproducible also means that Eshkol's dance compositions "behave" like objects. Describing the groundbreaking work *Accumulation* (1971) by the American choreographer Trisha Brown, Susan Rosenberg quotes Dan Graham on the subject of minimal art: "both the architectural container and the work contained within it were meant to be seen as non-illusionist, neutral and objectively factual—that is, as simply material." No other choreographer's work of that time resonates so closely with that description, and it is a surprising and yet thus far unnoted parallel that begins to unfold. Rosenberg writes: "Plagued by the body's 'inefficiency as an object for making art,' Brown identified her search for an 'acceptable gesture' with the search for 'pure movement.' From this concept—and hours of trials in the studio—she arrived at an abstract, nonreferential, physical sign-system that was grounded in the body's kinesthetic logic."¹³ The search for nonreferentiality, pure movement, the inexhaustible daily practice of refinement, the striving for stability of meaning, and the possibility of developing a body-based method for achieving permanence meet in this description.

Eshkol's passionate interest in movement led her to seek ways of seeing, recording, and ultimately animating movement in nonmetaphorical ways and to devise the analytical tools that would allow for "the expression of the slightest variations and therefore also the

12. Michel Serres, "The Ballet of Alba," in *Genesis*, trans. Genevieve James and James Nielson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 40.
13. Susan Rosenberg, "Trisha Brown: Choreography as Visual Art," *October*, no. 140 (Spring 2012): 38.

minutest differences of style.”¹⁴ Eshkol rejects the notion of “action” (or should we say the repertoire of deliberate acts and voluntary movements) as elements drawn “from life,” disregarding the hypothetical naturalness of mobility as the genuine expression of being: “A word used to describe an action implicitly describes a typical, characteristic form of movement ... we fall downward; soar upward; stand vertically and die horizontally. Life unfolds within endless frameworks of action ... [Eshkol-Wachman] movement notation does not at all attempt to describe actions; rather, it describes that primal thing from which actions are created ... i.e., movement.”¹⁵ By allowing events to be described outside standardized external referents, or “the endless frameworks of actions,” EWMN offered a system of “liberation of movement.”¹⁶

Eshkol’s phenomenology of movement thus embodies a unique mode of intellectuality that fully embraces experience and observation. It endeavors to systematically analyze the nature of movement in terms of visual and experiential codes, thus setting into motion a theoretical disciplinary underpinning and creating a new social and intellectual position for choreographers and dancers alike. It is legitimate to read EWMN as an epochal shift, advocating theoretical and critical exploration in an unparalleled manner.

Biographical Paradox—To End With

I think my fav was the way the textiles functioned in the film as a kind of biographical paradox. I loved the looming issue of mortality next to aging next to a composite of two women’s minds.
—Frances Stark¹⁷

I would like to argue that Lockhart’s refined practice of collaboration, her passion, her sensitivity, and her solidarity permits her to intuit and unlock the visionary qualities of Eshkol’s work. She reanimates the dormant dance compositions, brings them to life and gives them a new context outside their existence in the narrow framework of movement notation. She embraces the totality of Eshkol’s fragmented practice and encounters the group of dancers and friends in Holon as collaborators. The resulting work has

been most poignantly termed a “composite of two women’s minds” by the artist Frances Stark (and several dancing bodies, one could add). Whereas Eshkol’s mind was compartmentalized by rigid classifications and intellectual adherences, her “need to face the unadorned ‘raw material,’ ... the development of ‘cold’ consciousness,” Lockhart reintroduces her work into the gendered and bodily space of the practice. The “female” space of textiles—exiled from Eshkol’s “other” mind—penetrates the colorless world of dance composition in Lockhart’s films, in which the wall carpets are shown mounted on vertical plinths. Although Eshkol would never allow such intermingling on stage, the few snapshots of her studio that have survived reveal the presence of the wall carpets during practice.

The bodies of the dancers carrying the signs of age and “mortality” demonstrate most aptly the movements they have been trained for. The compositions that Sela, Racheli Nul-Kahana, and Shmuel Zaidel perform with such grace are what Rosenberg, writing about Brown’s dance, calls a “strenuous act of illusion, of material, conceptual, and linguistic artifice.”¹⁸ But in fact these very bodies expose the looming issues of life, aging, and fragility, but also the uncontrollable differences among the individual movement lexica memorized by the dancers’ limbs over time.

“Who am I, dancing body?” asks Serres in his poetic text on dance.¹⁹ The dancing body, for Eshkol, was never singular. She never wrote dance compositions for soloists. The dancing body is always a figure of two—it reminds us that outside the sphere of self-referentiality it encounters, harmonizes, and withdraws from other bodies. It also reminds us of the impossibility of being totally one with ourselves, enclosed in an abstract sphere of coordinates. The body is always on the boundary, movements emerge between bodies, bodies touch, intertwine, embrace, and encounter.

14. Noa Eshkol, preface to Noa Eshkol and Racheli Nul-Kahana, *Eshkol/Wachman Movement Notation: Classical Ballet* (Tel Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1968), 4.
15. Noa Eshkol, “Movement Notation: Invitation to a Revolution,” *Haaretz*, February 2, 1968; quoted in Talia Arnat, “Summer Wind in the Thistles,” in Sharon Lockhart | *Noa Eshkol*, 37.
16. See Z. Yanai, “Notation for the Liberation of Movement,” *Machshavarot* (1974): 36–37; English translation in Arnat 37 (1974).

17. Frances Stark, text message to Sharon Lockhart, July 2012.
18. Rosenberg, “Trisha Brown,” 33.
19. Serres, “Ballet of Alba,” 40.

In Medias Res

Walead Beshty

What is at stake here, I believe, is the close tie between cinema and history.

—Giorgio Agamben

Achat ... shtayim ... shalosh ... arba'...

The countdown initiates synchronized movements, which are punctuated by the ticking of a metronome. The dancers' bodies, moving in unison, seem to pivot and turn on an invisible armature as though linked together by dowels and gears. The projectors are silent and out of view, yet their machinic presence, their position between our bodies and those we are watching, resonates in the tapping out of time at 120 beats per minute. The sound directs us back to the camera shutter, which too vivisects bodies in time, slicing them into manageable units. The movements themselves are full of stiff radial actions, like rack-and-pinion swaying, which at times veer close to the motions of the everyday and at others appear almost overwrought, brooding, and expressive. Yet in each instance they announce their avoidance of anything so blatant by retreating from citation or signification at the moment when meaning might be consummated. An almost militant fist pump turns into a lunge; what appears to be a glance over the shoulder is extended into a protracted lean. The movements appear commonplace, but in contrast to the routines associated with the Judson Dance Theater, which framed quotidian actions within the aesthetics of dance in an almost Duchampian manner, these gestures seem indifferent to the boundary between art and daily life, focused instead on the transitory act of signifying itself, which by necessity transcends those distinctions. They are movements

that announce themselves as gestures by repetition and synchronization in much the same way that Roman Jakobson has noted that “/pa/ is a noise and /papa/ is a word.”¹ And yet the gestures remain unattached to a specific referent, something like what would be if “papa” had never achieved its status as a word and was instead suspended just before the point where meaning becomes defined—an utterance caught in a moment of becoming, of approaching a limit, as a *being-in-formation*.

As the rhythm of the minimal dance develops, secondary effects begin to accrue; the bodies of the dancers start to betray their age through their varying rigidities and contours. As our awareness of the ticking recedes, the sound of the soft padding of feet on solid flooring, the gentle shuffling, the rumpling of fabrics, the hush of barely audible breaths come to the fore. The sounds of the film blur into the space of the gallery; the noises the film emits are only intermittently distinguishable from the sounds that our own bodies produce as we fold and unfold our arms, shift our weight from leg to leg. As the dancers pivot in front of us, we think about how certain movements feel and how we would sound making them. Our own actions fall in and out of sync with those in front of us; the noises of the dancers' bodies audibly identifying the surfaces they brush and pound against just as our own feet drag against the floor. When we move from film to film through the gallery, there is a consciousness of our own breathing, thudding, shuffling, pausing, and it is as though we can hear others experiencing the same awareness. We think, “If I can hear, they can hear; if they are making noises, I am making noises.” And even as we turn away from one of the five parts of the film to another, the metronome follows us, turning even our movements between the films into an extension of the projection.

Achat ... shtayim ... shalosh ... arba'...

The segments start again. Each of the five parts of Sharon Lockhart's *Five Dances and Nine Wall Carpets by Noa Eshkol* begins with the same countdown, each is synchronized to the same metronome, and each segment's looping keeps

Epigraph: Giorgio Agamben, “Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films,” trans. Brian Holmes, in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 313.
1. Roman Jakobson, “Why Mama and Papa?” in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 542.

time with the others. Our eyes wander: rather than being in a dance studio, it looks like the dancers are in an exhibition space not unlike the one we are currently in, their bodies flanked by large rectangular volumes much as we are at this moment. As the metronome metes out time for the dancers, it metes out time for us, governing our movements, pacing them. A fellow viewer is tapping her thigh; another is bobbing gently. Are these self-conscious acts, or are they unaware of their movements? *Was I the one who was fidgeting?* One is gradually co-opted into being a participant in the prolonged dance (and does that mean we were/are *always* dancing?), drawn into it simply by being aware of one's body while simultaneously standing apart from it in contemplation. Simply by being in the room, simply by noticing oneself, one is either in sync or out of sync with the metronome (there's no other option) and thus with the bodies of the dancers and the bodies of other visitors.

This is a moment of being-in-relation to all of the bodies, of producing relations through mutual sensitivities, the site of reception turning into the site of production, and vice versa. The image bleeds into the corporeal space. This is not to say that we are experiencing a waking dream, this would be image as illusion. No, we are here, aware, and present. This is not fantasy; it is simply a moment when it is possible to absorb stimuli from all bodies in the same way. This is experienced as an indifference, an indifference to the separation of the images of bodies from actual bodies in space while being fully aware of the constructedness of the context. It is a giving over to the image while retaining a sense of the real; here the image does not supplant the corporeal but coexists with it.

By definition, an image is not what it is of; this is its singular certainty. In order to be an *imago* (likeness) of some thing, it is also by definition not that thing. It is an approach of that thing, and its referent acts as its limit, performing as an adjacency that it cannot be. Thus, identifying with an image means approaching this boundary as well. It requires a moment of misrecognition, a moment when the clinical distance we feel when shielded by the image screen recedes, and boundaries between the

now and the “this has been” disperse into the immediacy of experience. This is what it is to be in the throes of what Walter Benjamin referred to as the dialectical image, “constellated between alienated things and disappearing meaning ... instantiated in the moment of indifference.”² It is this “indifference” to the boundaries between experiences that the work engenders, an indifference toward a position inside or outside the flow (and thus being enthralled in both at once), an indifference to frames of reference, placing us in a zone of counterintuitive continuities—it is fluidity where before there were only partitions. It is an indifference to the separation that lies between *Sharon Lockhart* | *Noa Eshkol*, not a disavowal of it, nor a making indistinct, but an allowance for a thought or action or gesture to move through that boundary between them. It is an indifference to the distinction between film and dance, between the optic and the haptic, as our sense of vision and sense of touch confound, conflate, and circulate through each other.³ It is an indifference to the division between then and now, between production and reception, between bodies in space and bodies in pixels. In short, it is an indifference that breeds other indifferences, that removes obstacles to the flow from one locus to another, that is affirmative, and that allows connections rather than destroys structures; it simply allows an alternate path of cursivity and fluidity to coexist within the taxonomic. It leaves it to bureaucrats and filing cabinets to police the bodies and separate them; it removes the burden of our having to act as functionaries of that program.

This quality of indifference, or being positioned in between and through—as in being in between genres, in between mediums, in between bodies, in between moments—marks much of Lockhart's work. The in-between is always in a state of disappearing or diffusion only to appear in another location. This in-betweenness disperses when signification becomes locked in, and this is why Lockhart has been so strongly identified with disappearances: disappearing cultures, disappearing crafts, disappearing groups. She is drawn to practices that operate in the margins: Japanese girls playing

2. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Roy Tickemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 466.

3. As Erika Fischer-Lichte observes, “In performance ... public vs. private, distance vs. proximity, fiction vs. reality ... are all based on the seemingly insurmountable, fixed opposition between seeing and touching.” Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), 62.

tongue; it never attempts to assert an oppositional language and does not seek to “acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant,” but rather it occupies the majority, perverting it, *détourning* it, putting it to different ends while emphasizing provisionality.⁷ Most importantly, it does not establish itself as the “true” condition, a real that lurks behind the scrim of false consciousness, but rather one reality of many. It stops just short of becoming the dominant, of replicating that which it sought to dethrone. Through this inhabitation, dominant structures become porous, and where they once asserted their naturalized authority to organize the perceptual world and to frame their chosen subject matter, they become one of many mediations, as fleeting as a passing gesture.

In Lockhart’s work, these disruptions often occur as the aestheticization of instrumental forms—the work’s acknowledgment of itself as an aesthetic object—turning on the awareness of the actions portrayed as being presented exclusively for the camera, and the camera being present for the sole purpose of bearing witness to those actions. For example, in one sequence in *Goshogaoka*, the young Japanese basketball players terminate their sprints at the edge of the film frame rather than at the edge of the court. The initial sense of naturalness of these actions is met with the realization of their picturehood; the participants were not only performing for the camera but also modifying their actions for it, adapting to its frame as much as the actions are adapted to their own bodies and the relations between them. The activities vacillate between mapping the field of vision and the field of action, and each location, the rectangular screen and the rectangular court, acts as a scrim or boundary delimiting and defining the other.

Mark Godfrey, in his essay “The Flatness of *Pine Flat*,” noted a similar instance in *NŌ*, in which the performance of the activity again draws attention to the pictorial qualities of landscape and thus film, while at the same time the activity provides a legible metric, a kind of pictorial time stamp indicating the duration of the film through the relative “fullness” of the frame.⁸ As James Benning describes, Lockhart “designed the haystacks to appear relatively

American basketball, an artist performing ikebana with agriculture, the eroding culture of American skilled labor, children carving out their own private spaces in the world. When Lockhart comes close (some might argue dangerously close) to certain genres—say ethnography or structuralist cinema—she similarly pulls back and away, inserting a deviation, a wrinkle in the smooth trajectory toward instrumentality. It appears like a search for the point that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari posit occurs when “language stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities or its limits.”⁴ This capacity is something that Lockhart shares with Eshkol (or at least it is this quality that she draws out of Eshkol’s work), an ability to approach clear and defined expression fearlessly and then, at its limit, the emphatic retreat from the definitive, a retreat from signification in order to display it *as signification*, asserting the communal nature of discourse, what Giorgio Agamben has called the “being-in-language of human beings,”⁵ or what we could call here the “being-in-mediation of human beings.”

This in-betweenness could be understood as a form of inhabitation and deformation, a mixing of genres whose meanings are overdetermined, overloaded, and dominant. It appears at times in Lockhart’s work as a creolization of conventions, a kind of patois or hybrid language: for example, her confluences of German romanticism and structuralism (*Pine Flat*, 2005, figs. 12–16, and *Podwórka*, 2009), of documentary and performativity (*NŌ*, 2003, figs. 9–11), between orchestrations for the camera and events the camera records (*Goshogaoka*, 1997, figs. 6–8), serialization and still life (*Lunch Break*, 2008, figs. 1–5), of social experimentation and contemplative meditation (*Teatro Amazonas*, 1999). It is a deterritorializing of the dominant mode, what Deleuze and Guattari have described as the *minor*, or “that which a minority constructs within a major language”: a *minorization* if you will. They note, “minor languages are characterized ... by a sobriety and variation that are like a minor treatment of a major language ... deterritorializing the major language.”⁶ The minor language consists of meanings and innuendo that operate within the “cramped space” of the mother

4. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 23.

5. Giorgio Agamben, “Notes on Gesture,” in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 60.

6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizoanalysis*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 26.

7. *Ibid.*, 106.

8. See Mark Godfrey, “The Flatness of *Pine Flat*,” in *Sharon Lockhart: Pine Flat*, ed. Chus Martínez (Bilbao: Sala Rekalde Erakustataroa, 2006), 112–13. With regard to his discussion of duration, see 113, n. 1, where he writes: “I wanted to note another remarkable feature of the work. The duration of the film was determined by the space it depicted, namely by the size of the field. When you watched the film, even if you did not know how many minutes it was, you knew it would last as long as it took for the two farmers to fill the field. As a result, just as the farmers went about their activity with neither haste nor slowness, the viewer had no anxiety about the film’s length.”

equal in size ... by making the stacks smaller as they were placed closer to the camera, while their locus was chosen to describe a trapezoidal field, making it easier to map them into the rectangle of the camera frame."⁹ In short, the performed action acknowledges the synchronic and diachronic constructions of the filmic both in duration and as pictorial form. Thus the filmic and the performative engage in a dual modeling, the filmic splaying out the actions presented for the camera as pictures conveyed in sequence, the performative mapping out the filmic visual field as it also circumscribes its temporal axis. It should go without saying that while the former is a description of the conventional use of images, and of film (and really all instrumental mediums), the latter is the truly remarkable aspect of Lockhart's work. Thus, the collapse of the distinction between performance and film, along with the intertwining of the documentary and the phenomenological made explicit in the Eshkol films, had already occurred in Lockhart's work by the mid-1990s.

In the internal dialectic between film and performance, the conventions of authenticity and instrumentality, of genre and convention, become as malleable as any other stylistic conceit in the cinematic repertoire. This serves as an assertion that the film is not, as it might have originally seemed, simply a recording of a phenomenon. Nor is it being essentialized as an autonomous art form; rather, its status is poised between the two, as a "medium" or agent that acts between agendas or forces and is defined by the tensions between those forces. There is no function to the activity other than its being shown and no function to the depiction other than the activity conveyed by it. Instead, the work situates itself between these valences, opening up a site from which the question of fact or fiction, real or staged, is abandoned as literally immaterial. Here the camera-based operations of cropping and flattening, and even the duration of a roll of film, become social mechanisms, structures that mediate and organize the relations between viewers and images as much as those among viewers. Thus, technological mediation can (or even must) be understood as wholly continuous if not indistinguishable from

the social field as part of the structures through which the generation, production, and reproduction of sociality are here made manifest.

This condition of mediality extends to the subject matter Lockhart concentrates on, such as the drills of the young women in *Goshogaoka*. In the film we see only the drill, itself a preparatory act or *apparare*, structuring an approach to a limit without becoming that limit. Furthermore, these drills are modified and established in conjunction with the young basketball players, as were their uniforms, akin to but apart from the conventional forms of each; rather, they are minor adjustments and revisions of the conventional, distinct from, yet embedded within, the standard from which they deviate. Despite their independence from the established or standardized, these activities are pursued with an earnest determination, what Agamben, channeling Kant, called a "purposive purposelessness," attaining a significance that is specific to the context within which the activities developed.¹⁰ Yet they are no more intrinsic to their circumstance than they are autonomous from it; instead, the activities are embodied within and exist in relation between the communities in which they originate and the broader world.

Or consider the film *Lunch Break*, consisting of a ten-minute take of a 1,200-foot hallway at Bath Iron Works where workers spend their time during their mandated midday respite. In real time the film would last only ten minutes, but Lockhart extended it to some eighty-three and then looped it. We never reach the end of the hallway; nor do we approach it from the outside. It is in itself a full world, a world as "break" or "cut." *Lunch Break* is projected in a construction that forms a light baffle with an adjacent wall and appears like a long hallway from the outside. In other words, the spatiality of film is mapped onto the architectural armature, which creates a phenomenological sensation of looking down an expansive hallway, proposing this not as an illusion but as a provisional continuity (this aspect recurs in *Five Dances and Nine Wall Carpets* by *Noa Eshkol*, in which the films are projected on forms that sit on the floor and create a spatial continuity between the architectural site and the space depicted in the projection). When one is

watching the film, the hallway appears endless, and one settles into its indeterminate length. The incidental movements are drawn out to the point of being durational and then rise to the fore as gestural; they exist as part of the continuity of the film but also as autonomous events that are isolated and stand apart from arc of the film. In essence, the film behaves as an extended interruption, a cut drawn out to occupy an almost endless event, its medial nature extended and stretched until it is mediality alone, an in-between with no external edge. Actions that could be seen as subordinate to the motivated behaviors of work, that could be understood from the perspective of the workday as insignificant (i.e., without meaning), ascend, expand, and gain momentum, transcending the managerial regime that initially gave them shape.

The exhibition of *Lunch Break* at the Colby Museum of Art in 2010 prefigured the approach Lockhart took to the exhibition *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol*. *Lunch Break* included the craft works of the skilled laborers at Bath Iron Works, displayed alongside art objects from the museum's collection, one of several instances in which Lockhart's work provided a context and occasion for a broader inclusion of cultural practices; in short, a solo authorial gesture is opened up as a passage for alternate agendas and independent flows, becoming a site of exchange within a group rather than a unidirectional message from producer to receiver. As Lockhart put it with regard to the Colby exhibition, "People were coming to see what they did as much as they were coming to see what I did."¹¹ While in the Eshkol work Lockhart similarly uses the frame of her own practice to support and distribute the work of another, again allowing her work to act as a vessel (this also occurs in the photographs that accompanied the film *NŌ*, in which she presented the practice of Haruko Takeichi, a *No-Ikebana* artist), the *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol* exhibition is a markedly more radical step, in which Lockhart's authorial presence begins to dissipate, transforming a solo exhibition into a two-person show. This was a deliberate effect, a process that Lockhart herself implies was a necessary result: "That my authorship disappeared, in a way, would strengthen the viewer's

perception of my actual project and the complex relationships of authoring and interdependencies it implied."¹² These "interdependencies" are the instances of fluidity, of continuity despite existing divisions that Lockhart has repeatedly managed to draw forward.

The hybridization of the conventions of exhibition (solo show and group show, the monographic and the two-person exhibition, the artist and curator), even the intermittent appearance and disappearance of Lockhart as author, blows back on the conventional solidity that naturalized forms of aesthetic management, from curatorial practice to authorial autonomy, assert. Just as *Lunch Break* posed the question of who produces culture for whom, and what possibilities are open to museums as conduits for social exchange among the communities in which they are embedded, *Sharon Lockhart | Noa Eshkol* proposes not only the individual artist's work as a conduit for histories lost or unacknowledged within the institution but also that *all* practices contain other practices embedded within them, each telling provisional histories of art, and that these provisional histories are legible and exist as multitudes extending in every direction if we choose to see them.

While always careful to indicate the interdependencies that exist between her and her subjects-cum-collaborators, here Lockhart turns the same attention to Eshkol, devoting considerable effort to interviewing her dancers and charting the shifting conditions of their relationships and the effects they had on Eshkol's output. Thus, Lockhart positions Eshkol's practice as a kind of platform for interpersonal exchange, a frame for others to inhabit, and in so doing, constructs a similar space from which the reception of Eshkol's work might develop through an engagement with Lockhart's. Yet, Lockhart does not claim this open territory once it is established but simply releases it into the cultural infrastructure (i.e., catalogues, museum collections, galleries, etc.), and by not claiming it under the umbrella of her practice, she refuses to define it or give it boundaries that are circumscribed by her own work, allowing this proposition to achieve potentials beyond the reach of her own practice. Lockhart thus makes a cut in the museological

and the historical that can expand to the entirety of the museum or art history and that, while diffusing throughout the structures it inhabits, upends the neat taxonomies and evolutionary canons that permeate them.

This is the political dimension of the minor, for under the auspices of the minor language, "everything takes on a collective value ... there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that 'master' and that could be separated from a collective enunciation."¹³ It is just this condition that mediocrity provides, for it is not a circulation of images or symbols, or even things; nor is it the hierarchical relation between the originator of a message and its receivers, but the spaces between things, the links, the connectivities, the flows back and forth, exhibited on their own, in states of motion. It is this that Agamben defines as constituent of gesture, proposing it as "the exhibition of a mediocrity ... the process of making a means visible as such," for in gesture, "nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported." It is the expression of a conveyance, an expression of a "being-in-language." This is where he locates the impulse of cinema, because "in the cinema, a society that has lost its gestures tries at once to reclaim what it has lost and to record its loss."¹⁴

In short, while the image obstructs or banishes the gesture in its resolute stasis and its ease of dissemination, the cinema recovers it, reinscribing the gesture through the very means by which it was banished, in presenting the gaps between images where gesture reemerges as a mode of communication that stands apart from and outside of the filmic narrative and achieves its once central role as the connective tissue between human beings. This is not only a theoretical argument. It has been noted that a whole generation of Americans who first grew up with cinema credit it with instructing them in multiple forms of sociality as adolescents, most often those of intimacy (the acts of gazing into a lover's eyes or grasping the back of a lover's head are most often cited as being of cinematic origin), which were accessible in still images previous to cinema but became tangible and communicable *as gesture* under the conditions

of cinema alone. (That cinema provided a semiprivate location for the pursuit of these intimacies should not be ignored either.)

The gestural disappears into the ticking of history and the accumulation of images, only to reemerge in the gaps between images, for that is where the body reasserts itself in film (both on screen and off), and that is where film understands itself as a corporeal medium. Its movement, its gesturality, is not an illusion despite being a composed sequence of stills. Quite the opposite: the movement of film is the movement of our bodies; it is the embodiment of perception that images so often place at a remove. This is the *persistence of vision*, the body's suturing together of the fragments into a whole, completing and filling the gaps, at the loci of loss and absence. Where the gesture was lost, it returns, this time in the body of the viewer. Thus, what Lockhart reawakens here is the work of Eshkol, inserted back into a phenomenological reality, but also the physicality of perception; film, in her hands, allows for the rescue of the past in the uncertainty of the present and thus posits the possibility for a better (more ethical) future, one where history is not opposed to the bodily but is indistinguishable from it, where the politics of perception is manifest, and where distinctions between the collective and the individual collapse, as do the divisions between production and reception.

The bodies of the viewers are the medium of this transformation; they are the in-between, extending it to the entire exhibition. This is an in-betweenness that is the same as the community, as the collective, which is always poised between outcomes, between concrete definitions, and, in short, is always in a state of formation or becoming. In retrospect, the invisible mechanics between the dancers is actually their being-in-gesture together, the constant production and reproduction of the relations of one body to another, their shared status of being-in-the-world together, and their assertion of this to one another. As we watch the film, inexplicably, the invisible armature extends to us, and whether or not we move with it in time, we feel and are connected to it. This mechanism extends outward from the film and the bodies that immediately

surround it and expands to fill the room, the galleries, and so on, dissipating slowly over the extended topographies that the various bodies who came into contact with it traverse. Even as the sensibility, the awareness of bodies, of one's own body, diffuses throughout the life world, it remains inscribed within the viewers, permeating them, and establishing possible communities cohered around this establishment of collective sensation, a means of understanding our status as human beings engaged in relations with one another, a sensibility that "reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed."¹⁵

It is this notion of collectivity, of self-awareness and awareness of others, a state of collective empathy and transference, that Agamben is describing when he writes, "Politics is the sphere of pure means, that is, of the absolute and complete gesturality of human beings."¹⁶ And it is this notion of ethics and collectivism, unencumbered by the obstructions and abstractions of images and symbols, of institutions and their managers, that Lockhart posits and recovers simultaneously.

15. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 12.
16. Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," 60.

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Editors
Eva Wilson, Daniela Zyman
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Graphic Design
Sara Hartman, John McCusker

Translators
Michael Barchet (Martina Leeker essay)
Aya Breuer, Martin Guttman (Holon Diaries)

Copyediting
Maia Gianakos, Karen Jacobson

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Jens Ziehe

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Peter Barci

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