Choreographing collaboration:
A multilayered approach to somatic and site-oriented art practices

Caroline Laurin-Beaucage

A Thesis in the
Individualized Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Individualized) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2022

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

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_____ Supervisor

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Dr. Felice Yuen

_____

Dr. Effrosyni Diamantoudi

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ABSTRACT

Choreographing collaboration:

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Caroline Laurin-Beaucage

Choreographing collaboration: A multilayered approach to somatic and site-oriented art practices is a research-creation thesis project that focuses on multiple sites of collaboration between bodies and spaces (both physical and digital) and how collaboration informs and shapes a creative process in dance and choreographic practices. The creative period of this research project was informed by somatic explorations between my body, a vacant storefront located on Saint Denis Street in Montreal, and Zoom, which was used to communicate with an artist located in São Paulo, Brazil. The creative research period took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted me to critically reflect upon notions of time, my creative process, and my routines as a performer and choreographer in the field of dance for 20 years. As such, one of the goals of undertaking a creative process over a period of 30 consecutive days was to set up conditions for a different creative routine to emerge. Four main themes — intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity — arose in this process, and each is examined and described in relation to my analysis of the methods used to expand my approach to both collaboration and choreography.

Keywords: choreography, collaboration, contemporary dance, creative process, media space, rituals, site, somatics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fourteen years ago, when I lost part of my vision in a neurological incident, reading a book was no longer an option for me. However, I was told that the brain adapts and eventually reading would be possible again. I would like to thank Dr. Michel Bojanowski, my neurosurgeon, for sharing these wise words with me at the time: The most important thing is that you continue to do what you love in life, and the joy of self-realization will trace your path. Dr. Bojanowski's reassurance allowed me to dream again and to believe in the transformation that time can give.

I would like to thank Concordia University and the INDI program for creating an inclusive space for innovative and creative research. I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the teachers I met who were open to recognizing various forms of knowledge.

Thank you to those who are on my path and who have been supporting this journey for years: Ginelle Chagnon, Brianna Lombardo, Catherine Duchesneau, Sara Hanley, Sylvie Lavoie, Nicolas Filion, Ingrid Vallus, Jean Gaudreau, David Pilon, and Julie Alix. Thank you also to those who have joined me recently and who have offered me renewed energy and support in this quest: Hélène Duval, Chélanie Beaudin-Quintin, and Sarah Manya.

Thank you to Sonya Stefan, who has been my angel, helping me with technology. To Maurice-Gaston Du Berger, for assisting with the rental of the store. To Claire Majors, my editor. To François Blouin, for jumping in on Day 17.

I offer my gratitude to Erin Manning, for daring to team me up with Erneste and for sharing your knowledge the way you do, which has left a lasting impression on me.

To Angélique and Naj, strong and inspiring women, for your immense generosity, for believing in what I could accomplish, despite a steep learning curve. You have guided me to move from the experience of the body to the words.

To Shauna, for taking me under your wing, for offering me your time, your knowledge. You were a presence that allowed me to never lose sight of my goal. Your confidence at every moment was gold. Thanks to your hands-on approach, our meeting literally changed my life.

To Erneste, for simply being there, entirely, with all your love, your artistic sense, your energy. For having been my privileged accomplice in this journey.

To the Beaucage-Bonneau family and to my mother, Sylvie, always there to offer me time and support. Merci.

To my lighthouse, my nest. Those who make it all possible: Miro, Mia, Martin.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Choreographing collaboration: A multilayered approach to somatic and site-oriented art practices is a multidisciplinary research-creation project that investigates how multiple sites of collaboration — between bodies and spaces, both physical and media[1] — can inform and shape a creative process in dance and choreographic practices. This project is located within the discipline of performing arts and is informed by site-oriented collaborative practices and somatic exploration. In this thesis, I examine how my choreography is the result of an encounter between two spaces that merge, a physical space and a media space, through a performative stance and embodied gestures.

In order to expand my choreographic practice, I chose to undertake my research process at two different sites, a vacant storefront and on Zoom, a video communication platform, which facilitated a collaborative process with another performer and filmmaker, Erneste.[2] Questions about collaborating with a media space arose during the development of my relationship and creative work with Erneste on Zoom. The research-creation project was framed in a period of 30 consecutive days, using a somatic working method aimed at creating rituals which informed new practices of creation.

Choreographing collaboration was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset of the pandemic, I began to account for the history of my artistic practice and subsequently began to critically rethink my methods of choreographic creation and the spaces that I have previously chosen to carry out choreographic research in. Thus, the main questions driving my current research are as follows: How does my creative process evolve over time, framed by an ongoing process of 30 days of somatic practice? How do the sites — the vacant store, the Zoom calls, and my body — contribute to my explorations of themes such as intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity? How can somatic exploration inform creative processes taking place in both physical and media spaces? How did the specific sites of my creative process expand my approach to choreography and collaboration?

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[1] The term “media space” is used throughout this thesis to refer to the digital space of Zoom.

[2] Ernesto Bezerra Cavalcanti Filho is now using the name Erneste for their personal and creative work. “Erneste” will be used throughout this thesis.

Through this creative research, I analyze how my practice of choreography could be expanded. From a philosophical perspective, my understanding of the term "choreography" has been informed by the work of Erin Manning, philosopher and artist. In her book *Always more than one* (2013*)*, Manning presents choreography as a strategy to bring together all the elements in collaboration instead of focusing mainly on the moving body in space. Manning observes: "For what moves choreographically is not first and foremost a body. It is rhythm, a cut in duration, a field of resonance, an interval" (89). Following Manning, in this thesis I consider how my body, Erneste, a vacant storefront, and Zoom (as a digital interface) became tools for choreographic composition. Further inspired by the above statement by Manning, I analyze how my physically present body, Erneste's digitalized body present via Zoom, and the vacant store enter in relation with one another. This thesis is intended to illustrate how the elements of my research and the prioritization of collaboration produced a new approach to choreography for me.

One of my research goals has been to re-evaluate how creating in and across both a physical and a digital media space (the vacant store and the Zoom calls) can shift my choreographic practice and generate new creative routines. For the past 20 years, I have been a professional dancer and choreographer working in the contemporary dance scene. My choreographic works have been presented in traditional performing arts venues and outdoor public venues and have also taken on installation formats. Exploring new ways to perform with technology is another feature of my choreographic and creative process. The dance vocabulary I have developed is inextricably linked to matter, gravity, temporality, and spatiality. Movement in my work is often circumscribed within a moment or a space or around scenographic elements in a manner that constrains and structures the composition of the choreography.

The human experience of time in specific places has been the main focus of my artistic expression for a number of years.[3] In my choreographic and dance work, I frequently investigate how the qualities of dance can be expanded and experienced outside of conventional presentation formats and spaces. For example, I have crafted site-responsive works, using architectural

[3] I'm very much inspired by artists in dance who take a multidisciplinary approach to choreography and who consider themselves as both dance and visual artists. For example, I'm influenced by artist and researcher Kitsou Dubois, who investigates the body in relation to gravity in various forms, incorporating the use of media and film within her craft. My approach to site-responsive work is inspired by the early work of Trisha Brown, who developed site-specific work made of actions in public settings such as parks, public spaces, and galleries. Brown is also renowned for exploring how objects and architecture enhance the body and its relationality to space and gravity.

mapping and integrated projection mapping in my performances. I have explored ideas of time and gravity by working with a trampoline,[4] and I am presently developing a short virtual reality film performed in a pool.[5] *Habiter sa mémoire* (2016), which I discuss in more detail below, informed the creation of the solo work *Intérieurs* (2019), which was performed with embedded video projections.[6]

During the pandemic, like so many people, I began using Zoom to attend meetings. Additionally, I investigated how I could generate creative content with it.[7] Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing platform that can be used for meetings, webinars, conferences, and live chat. It operates on a computer, tablet, or smart phone, and it requires an internet connection. Zoom meetings can be recorded and then transferred as video files, a feature I used throughout the process to generate creative content. In this present study, I situate Zoom as a "media space," which refers to an environment where audio, video, and computer technologies are integrated to facilitate human interactions (Moore and Schuyler 20). This definition comes from studies on video conferencing from the early nineties undertaken by Gale Moore and Ken Schuyler in which they identify that "participants are able to actively share their physical presence and common work space, as well as have a background awareness of colleagues" (20). This description clearly reflects the working conditions between Erneste and me in this project. In complement to this definition, in his book *Media, Culture and Society*, Nick Couldry states that the term "digital media" refers to

> the institutional dimensions of communication, whether as infrastructure or content, production or circulation. Digital media comprises merely the latest phase of media's contribution to modernity; its complexity is illustrated by the nature of the internet as a network of networks that connects all types of communication from one-to-one to many-to-many into a wider "space" of communication. (qtd. in Patel)

This definition allows me to position the Zoom meetings between Erneste and I as a space of communication in which our collaboration could take place, realized with the use of

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[4] Such as in my projects *Ground* (2018) and *Rebound* (2018), a dance piece and an architectural mapping video project.
[5] Since 2019, I have been developing this project titled *Under Water*.
[6] This work was created in tandem with the gallery installation *Marquer le temps* (2019), exhibiting six hundred pictures of the work *Habiter sa mémoire*.
[7] As part of my course curriculum in my Master of Arts (Individualized) master's program, I took a course in video and internet graphic research in which my final project was a film that consisted of edited Zoom footage, called *The multiple faces of*.

technological tools and achieved with our computers and using the internet. It is only recently, in the context of my studies and the pandemic, that I began to integrate video editing into my creative process. By engaging myself in the process of editing the documentation of my improvisations with Erneste (which I explain in more detail below), new themes and questions about the aesthetic choices that I make as a creator began to emerge. I became interested in questions related to the experience of time in relation to creating across physical spaces and digital media platforms, which led me to explore how the themes of intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity shape my artistic work. In Chapter 3, I elaborate upon how I position these notions in regard to the research-creation process.

Context for undertaking *Choreographing collaboration*

Choreographing collaboration represents my evolving line of thinking about my creative process and choreographic propositions as a performer and creator. It is an extension of the performance *Habiter sa mémoire* (Laurin-Beaucage), which toured worldwide from 2016 to 2021. *Habiter sa mémoire* is a 4-hour-long performance occupying a transparent 12-by-12-foot box without walls, installed in different public spaces. This solo performance, based on the theme of memory, allowed me to explore my experience as a woman and performer in a personal way, while occupying a designated public urban space. The dances that emerged were performed spontaneously while I was being witnessed by the general public, who moved around the performance space. The project was built around durational improvisations, allowing me to immerse myself in dances that revealed intimate thoughts and feelings, generating extreme vulnerability. This project marked the beginning of my engagement with dancing in public spaces.

Performing *Habiter sa mémoire* revealed to me certain behaviours and social codes related to my gender. For example, I was wearing a red dress with small shorts underneath, and due to the durational aspect of the work, I would lose my sense of inhibition as the performance progressed. However, I frequently felt that my dress had to stay down, close to my body, so as not to be misinterpreted, since I was in public. This particular context also made me think about the power and limits generated by my female body as a dance artist performing in the public sphere. For example, I was not comfortable performing movements that suggested a certain form of sexuality, such as moving my pelvis in a repetitive manner. On the contrary, performing upper

body movements, such as arm movements, and playing with repetition, tone, and flow made me feel empowered and assertive.

Furthermore, by working in a public space, I could collect direct feedback and questions from the viewers. These interactions brought reflexivity into my practice and also allowed me to feel connected to the place of and the people in each performance. The present research and creation work comes as a response to the experience of occupying the public space for about 250 hours over a 5-year period. I wanted to explore more deeply the experience of being witnessed while creating in a site that offered more privacy and comfort for my physical practice. My objective as a creator is to make the creative process visible and accessible, right from its genesis. This is where *Habiter sa mémoire* and *Choreographing collaboration* share similar goals. By locating my research in a vacant store, I aimed to facilitate an encounter between the public and the creator that occurs through unexpected encounters within the creative process, not only in the unique moment of a traditional performance.

Moreover, bringing my creative process into a vacant storefront, a "nonart" (Kwon 24) or "found" space, is a choice I made in order to move away from my usual circuit of performance spaces and producers in the cultural industry. As I discuss below, with this research-creation project, I wanted to shift my creative routine. The vacant store is a place that allowed me to approach the creative process while moving away from the forms and formats institutionalized by the cultural industry. The use of the vacant store and its location was a conscious choice for displacing myself and my creative practice.

Since 2010, my work has been presented at a number of cultural institutions in Montreal, including Tangente, L'Agora de la Danse, and Danse Danse,[8] known and recognized as predominant producers of contemporary dance. These institutions promote a certain model that implements and frames how, where, and to whom the creation will be addressed. To produce a show in spaces like these, partners are necessary, but the conditions of creation and diffusion are highly governed and not very flexible. For example, the working hours are fixed, the schedules are pre-established, and the working spaces have precise rules. Spontaneous meetings, variable hours, and atypical schedules occur little or not at all. For this research project, I chose to remove

[8] These producers offer studio space for practicing in as well as theatre venues, all situated in the downtown Montreal area called Quartier des Spectacles.

myself from the presenter circuit in order to allow myself the freedom to explore new creative rituals.

Previous work: The experience of time as a key concept

My previous performance works have investigated a certain perspective on the corporeal experience of time and duration. I created with an affected sense of time in my earlier works, either by the use of accumulation or by displaying loops. For example, *Habiter sa mémoire* was a 4-hour durational performance. After each performance, I would record my thoughts and impressions with voice memos. This soundtrack, edited over time by a sound designer, accompanied the performance in an attempt to express the unique aspect of each place and encounter. Since the project took place over a 5-year period, and in more than 20 different public spaces, every time I performed the work, the soundtrack of all these performances was available for the public to engage with.

Another example of my work that features time is *Rebo(u)nd* (2018), an architectural video projection unveiling and magnifying bodies on the verge of escaping gravity. It reveals the ephemeral instant when the performer floats, between momentum and falling, between liberty and unbalance, just as the body seems to defy space and time. Projected onto buildings, the video was played in a loop and the images were presented in slow motion, erasing the notion of a beginning and ending to the performance. Evidently, I am interested in creating durational work and using video and audio to develop methods that play with the perception of time within my choreographic proposals.

Choreographer and researcher Geisha Fontaine has informed my thinking about the role of time in my practice. In *Les danses du temps* (2004), she suggests that[9] the new generation of choreographers is confronted with different temporal strata than those of dance. Live music, video, computer installations (sensors, networking), and text add other modes of temporalization (Fontaine 63). Playing with and altering the perception of time is recurrent in my work and is a

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[9] What follows is my own translation of the original text: “Les chorégraphes sont de plus en plus nombreux à s'impliquer dans une démarche transdisciplinaire. Ils sont ainsi confrontés à des strates temporelles différentes de celles de la danse. La musique live, la vidéo, les installations informatiques (capteurs, mise en réseaux), le texte ajoutent d'autres modes de temporalisation” (Fontaine 63).

method I use to compose and organize choreographic material. Framing my research within a 30-day somatic practice in a vacant store and using Zoom are therefore ways to mobilize another sense of temporality. By displacing my creative process and investigating it on a continual[10] basis, I want to temporarily transform my personal routine as a mother, a teacher, and artist working in the professional dance circuit. In *Choreographing collaboration,* the 30-day exploration constitutes a modality of research-creation, allowing me to modify my experience of time, in connection with a physical place (the vacant store) and a media space (the Zoom calls with Erneste).

There is one additional aspect I would like to point out when articulating this experience of temporality. For parts of my work, I have been involved as a performer, playing and surpassing my own limits while also being the composer of the work. Fontaine invokes a specific complexity found in dance creation when analyzing the sense of temporality (8). There is the perspective found in the dancer viewpoint, experiencing time via embodiment, and on another level, there is the perspective of the choreographer, who experiences time from a more reflective and observational stance. These two positions are often intermingled. Fontaine suggests[11] that the distinction between what is strictly the dancer's experience (the act of dancing) and what is strictly the choreographer's experience (the act of composing) is sometimes complex (9). She assesses that the choreographer is often one of the performers, or even the sole performer, and the dancer may participate in the composition (Fontaine 9). In this research creation project, I assume both roles: that of the dancer and that of the choreographer. For this project, the focus is not on how to develop new movements to generate dance sequences, but rather to look more closely at how time is experienced from the intersecting roles of the dancer and choreographer in this specific context and within certain parameters. As Fontaine asserts, the artist who problematizes their work by questioning the performance and its meaning reflects more on the global time of the performance than on the temporal parameters of a danced sequence (63).

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[10] The term "continual" is used to signify that I worked in the vacant store and with the media space of the Zoom call with Erneste without taking any day of pause for 30 days. I want to specify that I did not sleep overnight in the store but went home after each day of work.

[11] What follows is my own translation of the original text: "Enfin, la distinction entre ce qui relève strictement du danseur (l'acte de danser) ou du chorégraphe (l'acte de composer) est parfois complexe : le chorégraphe crée une œuvre de danse, le danseur la danse, mais le chorégraphe est souvent l'un des interprètes, voire l'unique interprète, et le danseur peut participer à la composition" (Fontaine 9).

One of the aims of the project is to explore how the different layers of my proposal could be assembled and composed together. The succession of 30 days combined with my physical presence in the vacant store while interacting in a media space with Erneste are all elements that can shift my sense of temporality in the act of creation, from the point of view of both the roles of the dancer and the choreographer.

Displacing routine and engaging with new rituals

For 28 consecutive days, I generated choreographic material with my collaborative partner Erneste.[12] My objective was to deconstruct the habitual creative routines that I have developed throughout my career, which were largely governed by Western practices and a working format of weekdays and weekends. As such, I have experimented with transforming my creative routine and explored another way of working — a new ritual. Approaching a creative process as a ritual is a first for me, and I suspect that doing so can foster a more instinctive perspective in accordance with an unconventional organization of time in my practice. The media theorist Ernst Wolfgang suggests that culture is technical in the sense of standardization and ritualization (57). Following Wolfgang, I attempt to erase the 7-days-of-the-week routine of a standard North American work pattern in order for a different routine to inform my creative process. As Wolfgang explains, "the technological *routine* (from the French for 'path of habit') denotes a fragmenting of work into simpler motor functions that can slowly be combined" (57). In my previous work, I have created distinct routines in the process of generating choreography. Firstly, I created movements and dance patterns, then I assembled them in relation to the scenography. In the present project, the purpose of the 30-day period combined with the daily interactions with the sites (the vacant store and the Zoom calls with Erneste) is to encourage new routines to emerge. My intention with this research was to afford myself the time to discover ritual as a strategy to shift away from the creative routines I have been conditioned to work in for over 2 decades. Wolfgang explains how rituals have always been cultural conditions that regulate communities through laws and traditions in divergence with the law of the machine (46).[13] Undertaking a creative process over 30 consecutive days was intended to allow me to deconstruct

[12] Days 29 and 30 were dedicated to cleaning and moving out of the space. During Days 1 to 5, I worked alone since I was waiting for an ethics approval to engage with Erneste.

[13] For example, the clock time system is a machine.

the working model and rhythm based on the cultural and technical mode presented in the form of the 7-day week.

From a performance studies perspective, Richard Schechner proposes a typology for identifying rituals: "1) as part of the evolutionary development of animals; 2) as structures with formal qualities and definable relationships; 3) as symbolic systems of meaning; 4) as performative actions or processes; 5) as experiences" (Schechner 228). In this regard, I situate "ritual" in my research as a series of embodied repetitive and performative actions that help me to discover the potential of transforming my relationship and approach to choreographic processes. As Schechner suggests, "it is also clear that rituals are not safe deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways" (228). The commitment of 30 days was aimed at expanding my physical experience of duration and the rigorous engagement which that demands. By focusing on duration, I was able to move away from the usual trajectory of my process, which prioritizes creating movement and dance patterns. The 30 days permitted me to experiment with somatic explorations as a mode of collaboration and generate a new creative ritual.

Moving the creative routine and sites through collaboration

Collaborating with space: The vacant store

I chose a vacant store to undertake my research-creation project in because I was looking for an unusual location that would allow me to both work in privacy and with the potential to be observed by the day-to-day public and sidewalk traffic of people passing by the store. In choosing this place, I was interested in exploring the themes and intersections of intimacy and being in public with notions of transparency and opacity. The vacant storefront served as a home base to displace my creative routines (as mentioned above) and also as a stage for exploring these themes in my artistic work. My relationship to "site" throughout this creative process is informed by art historian Miwon Kwon, who writes that "a dominant drive of site-oriented practices today is the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life—a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact)" (24). The vacant store I worked in is located at 4233 Saint Denis Street, a popular commercial and shopping street which runs on the north-south axis

of the city.[14] For as long as I can remember, this street was the place to go for its attractive boutiques and liveliness.[15] In fact, "it was the main axis of French-speaking Montreal in the 19th and 20th centuries and was a major communication route, as evidenced by its status as a provincial highway (no. 335)" (Lacoste and Robert). Due to major road work on the street and the addition of a bike path, this commercial street has undergone significant economic challenges since 2015. In August 2020, more than twenty businesses co-signed an open letter in the Montreal newspaper *La Presse* expressing their despair. They wrote: "The consequences will be heavy to bear, since behind each business that closes is a multitude of stories: lost retirements, entrepreneurial revivals that look the other way, destinations that will no longer exist in Montreal, non-renewed expertise, consumers who will go elsewhere" (De Villers and Gagnon).

The decision to undertake my creative project in a vacant storefront on Saint Denis Street was also related to the pandemic situation. This commercial street had been deserted, leaving plenty of spaces available for rent. The street-level commercial space I rented was about 2,000 square feet, with a basement of the same size. The shape of the space was a long rectangle, and on the left side of the wall, a wooden frame created a separation between the front and the back space, generating a feeling of three different spaces within one, reinforced by the configuration of the ceiling. Three concave areas defined the space above, and the lighting emphasized this aspect. The first floor had a back wall, suggesting that a counter with a cash register was there originally. There were some electrical cords and internet cables hanging from the wall. The basement area of the store also revealed its history. Signs indicating shoe sizes on the walls suggested that it might have been a shoe store, and there were also abandoned wooden objects, like a bookshelf, a trunk, and a statue, suggesting that a furniture store operated in this location. The architecture and spatial configuration of the store strongly influenced the site-oriented approach of undertaking 30 days of somatic explorations, which I analyze further in Chapter 3.

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[14] "Saint Denis Street, as it is popularly known today, was created in 1818 when the City of Montreal acquired the land north of Craig Street. It was named after Denis Viger (1741–805), a prominent Montrealer and former owner of land along the east side of the street" (Lacoste and Robert).

[15] I used to go to Saint Denis Street as a teenager to shop and spend time with my friends. I have been living close to this street for the past 15 years.

Collaborating with Erneste over Zoom

Thursday, March 12, 2020, proved to be a day that had a major impact on the development of my creative path and research project. It was the day I first met with the Brazilian performer and filmmaker Erneste, as well as the day before the World Health Organization announced COVID-19 as global pandemic and health emergency. My encounter with Erneste, which occurred just before the closing of schools, CEGEPs[16], and universities, triggered a process that led me to shift my methodologies as a dance creator.[17] We were introduced to each other because we both explore performance in public space and because we share a significant physical impairment: the loss of part of our visual field.[18] This common impairment brought forward a sensitivity towards each other's work.

After our encounter on this Thursday afternoon, I became aware of Erneste's artistic work, including the film *Not Tonight* (2015), with which I had a *coup de coeur*.[19] This 40-minute film, mostly captured with an iPhone, was composed and performed by Erneste. It presents different scenes in which they dance and poetically embody the words of the avant-garde singer Brigitte Fontaine. I was very impressed by the way their body movement was composed within the spaces they created in, generating a singular aesthetic where body, light, and objects formed a whole. I also noticed that the way they edited the video documentation was very close to the manner in which I approach composition when it comes to movement on screen. *Not Tonight* and Erneste's exploration of relationships between the body, materials, spaces and scenic elements became sources of inspiration that have informed this project.

Erneste and I share an appetite to connect with our surroundings, which allows us to be acutely sensitive to sound, image, touch, and interacting with objects. The following Sunday, we met in a restaurant, and it was the one and only meeting we had before their return to São Paulo, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This global crisis presented itself as a circumstance where

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[16] "CEGEP" is a French acronym that stands for "Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel."

[17] As part of my course curriculum in the master's program, I took a methodology class with professor Erin Manning. It is in this context that I was paired with Erneste to walk the streets near Concordia University the day before the lockdown. Erneste was in Montreal as an exchange student in the context of their doctoral studies for the writing of their dissertation: "As novas tecnologias e a potência política do cinema corpo" ("New technologies and the political power of the cinema body").

[18] Erneste lost part of their sight around the age of 4 years old, and I lost part of my sight when I was 30 years old.

[19] This is a French expression used to describe having a sudden and strong attraction to something, such as falling for something or describing love at first sight.

it became essential to rethink my approaches to creation and what it would mean for me as a performing artist to collaborate at a distance. Our brief meeting in March 2020 inspired us to stay connected for the next 20 months. Erneste and I undertook a long-distance correspondence, creating videos for each other[20] as we performed in public spaces such as parks, beaches, streets, gardens, and the back alleys of our respective milieu. During this time, I began to understand Erneste's artistic practice more deeply and realized how much it aligned with my own interest in the intersection of somatic work, technology and documentary practices. They did not have any connection with my previous dance collaborators that I usually work and interact with, so they were facilitating the arrival of new references into my creative practices. I decided to invite Erneste to collaborate with me in this research project, a process which I examine in more detail in Chapter 3.

As mentioned above, *Choreographing collaboration* is a research-creation project that I began during the worldwide pandemic of 2020. The creative component of this was carried out continuously over a period of 30 days, with the aim of transforming the methods and approaches of creation that I have used until now. Collaboration and somatic improvisations became methods that I explored for their potential to transform my creative routines. The creative process was documented via Zoom, on laptop computers, as well as with additional cameras, including an iPhone and a GoPro. The footage was then edited, resulting in the production of one video a day. The heart of this research-creation project is situated within the encounter between myself as an artist-researcher and performer and with the Brazilian performer and filmmaker Erneste, whose creative process (and personal journey) colours the intimacy of our collaboration and my own personal journey throughout the project.

What follows from here, in Chapter 2, is a discussion of theoretical frameworks that I draw from as well as methods that have informed my creative research process. In Chapter 3, I provide a critical analysis of the creative work that was undertaken over a 30-day period in the vacant storefront. Chapter 4 concludes by demonstrating how my expanded notion of choreography emerged through the concept of collaboration. I describe the process of editing and displaying video and analyze how the performative gestures that left material traces created a temporary gallery space. In addition, to support the critical analysis of this thesis, the creative content realized in November 2021 (i.e., the daily videos produced throughout the process) can be found

[20] I started to edit videos for the first time in my life while in this correspondence with Erneste.

in Appendix A. The written material from the somatic exploration is accessible in Appendix B. Finally, a list of each theme and how they were explored can be found in Appendix C.

Chapter 2: Theoretical frameworks and methods

Situating choreography as research creation

Choreographing collaboration: A multilayered approach to somatic and site-oriented art practices is shaped by theories of performative ethnography and collaboration as well as site-oriented and somatic exploration. Below, I discuss how the above theories and methods have informed my approach to the creative component of this thesis.

Kim Sawchuk and Owen Chapman's thinking on research-creation (2012) has been very useful to me for reflecting on how my artistic practice, as a dancer and choreographer, produces research. As a creator and dancer, I have been interested in dance technique, choreography, somatic practices, improvisation, physical rehabilitation, and pedagogy. What I know and how I acquire knowledge in my artistic work is through the body. The movement of my body is my source of thinking and conceptualizing. Dancing and choreographing are the sources of my movement-knowledge. From this perspective, my research aims to forge a path away from predictable or fixed ideas, and to engage with a research process informed by movement and embodiment.[21] "Embodiment," for me, to use Nancy Krieger's words, is "a multilevel phenomenon, as it necessarily entails the interplay between bodies, components of bodies, and the world(s) in which the bodies live" (351).

This research-creation project foregrounds embodiment as a potential source of knowledge production. Chapman and Sawchuk propose four paradigms within the realm of research-creation: "research-for-creation," "research-from-creation," "creative presentations of research," and "creation-as-research" (7). My creative research process aligns most strongly with the model of "creation-as-research." As Chapman and Sawchuk state, creation-as-research is the most complex process because it "involves the elaboration of projects where creation is required in order for research to emerge" (19). Within this perspective, creation-as-research indicates that the act of creation is first undertaken and then analyzed and criticized, which produces research. As Chapman and Sawchuk state, "[creation-as-research] is a form of directed exploration through

[21] "Embodiment is a verb-like noun that expresses an abstract idea, a process, and concrete reality. Whether used literally or figuratively, it insists on bodies as active and engaged entities. In the case of epidemiology, at the most general level, embodiment, as an idea, refers to how we, like any living organism, literally incorporate, biologically, the world in which we live, including our societal and ecological circumstances." (Krieger 351).

creative processes that includes experimentation, but also analysis, critique, and a profound engagement with theory and questions of method" (19). This category focuses on the intertwining of theory and practice, drawing from the perspective of what is being experienced (Chapman and Sawchuk 21). An important component present in this project and my analysis of it is how I navigate the relationship between theory (concepts) and practice (creative process). Creation-as-research helps me to situate the material I generated in the creative work through experiential and embodied knowledge. This perspective favours practical interventions: "It is a hands-on form of theoretical engagement at the same time as it acknowledges the processes of analysis and articulation of new concepts that are potentially part and parcel of artistic creation" (Chapman and Sawchuk 21). In my project, the data is collected through the creative practice and by experiencing the sites. As such, in what follows, I introduce theories of performative ethnography, collaboration, and somatic exploration as embodied methods of creative research.

Experiencing and practicing embodiment: A performative perspective

By answering my research questions from the standpoint of what was experienced during the process, I align with Dwight Conquergood's theory of performative ethnography. Adopting this perspective allowed me to undertake somatic, multisensorial, and embodied research explorations, complementary to the theoretical frameworks and concepts I am drawing from. For me, performative ethnography recognizes that my dance practice, achieved via movement and embodiment, plays an essential role in knowledge production. Performative ethnography suggests that "the ears and heart […] [reimagine] participant-observation as coperformative witnessing" (Conquergood "Performance Studies" 149). As Conquergood explains, "[in performative ethnography,] proximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return" ("Performance Studies" 150). Conquergood describes performative ethnography in three ways: 1) "[Performance] as a work of imagination" (153), which in my project includes the practice of improvisation and the video editing targets; 2) "As a pragmatics of inquiry (both as model and method), as an optic and operator of research" (153), aligning with the ongoing practice of 30 days that defined my creative process; and 3) "As a tactics of intervention, an alternative space of struggle" (153), which I can identify in the daily engagement that occurred via my collaboration with the sites (the vacant store and the Zoom call with Erneste).

I propose a performative ethnographic approach that supports my experience both as subject and researcher. As a researcher, my subjectivity was involved as I collected data and analyzed it for interpretation and validation. I, the researcher, participated in the dynamic of what was being investigated, just as how Conquergood writes: "Instead of the researcher presented as detached and controlling, the performative view admits the fragile situation of the fieldworker" ("Performing Cultures" 21). The artistic practices, both physical and facilitated through video media, were informed by an ethnographic and performative perspective. My relationship with the chosen sites of collaboration was continually shifting throughout the project.

In this project, I used two main methods for conducting creation-as-research: 1) collaboration; and 2) somatic exploration. Using collaboration and somatic exploration as embodied research methods frames how the creative act is generated and experienced. In consequence, because my creation-as-research work is largely embodied work, it is important to draw attention to bodies when engaging in an ethnographic and performative view. For dance scholar Judith Hamera, Conquergood's perspective implies that performance ethnography is a method for examining how we hold ourselves and others accountable to our bodies. Hamera writes:

> Whether on stage or in print, performance ethnography demands that we evoke, translate, and hold ourselves accountable to others' bodies: bodies, in all their precious, impossible specificity, that challenge us to analyze the forms of their persistence even as we reckon with their inevitable disappearances. (306)

This includes tackling the fragile fluctuation of the presence and/or absence of bodies within a performative perspective. I rely on this theory since my research-creation project intervenes with several bodies, which are not all named. My own body was situated in the vacant store and Erneste's body was present via a media space, but I also consider that all the people surrounding the store, including the passersby on the street, must be considered, even if they are not part of the data collection. As Hamera states, "performance ethnographers approach others' bodies, present and absent, knowing they can never be fully reached, captured, captioned" (308). In the case of the passersby, for example, their accidental presence as witnesses contributed to the performance aspect of the work. This theory acknowledges that other bodies and presences that cannot all be named were involved, informing my experience and consequently the creative

process. I will demonstrate how the presence and absence of the bodies, particularly within the project's public situation, influenced the creative process.

On another note, trying to draw on the immediacy of the experience, I will examine the theme of intimacy from the perspective of working with Erneste. As Hamera writes, "the same bodily participation is at play whether one moves into the centre of a village or inside a text through performance one is attempting to understand a form of life by learning 'on the pulses': dwelling within it" (307). Our collaboration generated a consideration of the totality of their bodily experience, as they experienced illness and an episode where they came close to death. The research was conducted from this viewpoint, acknowledging Erneste's body and personal history, even without them being physically present in the store.

In this creation-as-research project, I view certain moments as performances, thus implying the presence of a witness or spectator. Included in these actions are the moments spent with Erneste as we improvised over Zoom, the time spent in the storefront while I improvised alone, and the videos projected that played on a loop during my absence. The research challenged how the notion of presence could be defined in relation to the act of performance. Much of the content was produced in a media space with an embodied presence. Firstly, Erneste's filled the role of real-time spectator while they were witnessing my improvisations in our Zoom calls. Secondly, the passersby were other real-time witnesses to my movement exploration. On another level, the video content generated and displayed created a performance but in a deferred manner. In the context of the vacant store, passersby randomly watched what was being created either in real time or in deferred space-time. Performance in real time was juxtaposed with performances created in deferred time, thus challenging the function of presence in performance. Diana Taylor, performance studies scholar asks: "Is performance always and only about embodiment? Or does it call into question the very contours of the body, challenging traditional[22] notions of embodiment?" (11). In this regard, Taylor proposes that we expand the definition of performance and indirectly that of presence when introducing digital technologies (11). She exposes the complexity of this variable and argues that what passes through the body can inform the digital and vice versa, co-producing each other. Taylor proposes that significance can be given as much

[22] Taylor uses the term "tradition" to question the concept of presence, cited in relation to the ephemeral within performance practices (5).

to what is expressed in writing and recording as it is to what is experienced live. The notion of memory is then understood as being created equally by the physical experience of bodies and by the documentation that can result from such experience. Taylor explains "that these systems sustain and mutually produce each other; neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other" (27). From this standpoint, live performance can produce an archive of empirical documentation or can be considered as a repertoire. Taylor frames repertoire as the body being a site of knowledge in its sharing and production (12). For example, "a video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire)" (Taylor 19). Throughout the creative component of this research project, my body generated visible performances that could be identified as repertoire, part of my ephemeral testimony. Erneste was visible via the video montages that were projected in the store, which I consider both as part of the archive and my repertoire.

From this perspective, embodiment is not only limited to the live performance, an ephemeral testimony, but also includes writing or recording, which according to Taylor, are just as valuable to performance making. Taylor reflects on the questions of performance and embodiment:

> Thus, one of the problems in using performance, and its misleading cognates performative and performativity, comes from the extraordinarily broad range of behaviors it covers, from the discrete dance, to technologically mediated performance, to conventional cultural behavior. However, this multilayeredness indicates the deep interconnections of all these systems of intelligibility and the productive frictions among them (12).

Taylor suggests that the interconnections between the live and the digital in performance brings out the multilayered component that is present in the creative process. In Chapter 3, I will elaborate on how working within a media space with Erneste and creating a daily video produced performances that informed the creative process and the choreographic act.

Collaboration

My research-creation project involved a process that produced knowledge through the act of doing, and my primary objective was to support this process through the act of collaboration. The idea of collaboration was explored between me, the researcher, and the selected sites: the

vacant store, my collaborator Erneste, and the Zoom interface. Since my project focuses on process rather than a final artistic outcome, using collaboration as a driving concept allowed me to remain open to unexpected forms of agency shaping the creative process. As interdisciplinary artist-researcher Shauna Janssen states, "the value of collaboration not only resides in production, but also in the labour of engaging in a process, and with processes that allow for unexpected forms of encounters and exchanges" (71). Furthermore, Kwon states: "It is now the performative aspect of an artist's characteristic mode of operation (even when working in collaboration) that is repeated and circulated as a new art commodity, with the artist him/herself functioning as the primary vehicle for its verification, repetition, and circulation" (47). In this research project, I consider myself to be the primary vehicle that implements the collaborative process. This research-creation project could be recreated, used as a template, in another place and in relation to another person. I regard collaboration as an inclusive practice, and I consider people and communities as well as places and technological tools to have agency and be collaborators in the creative process.

I have identified three categories of collaboration inherent to the project. Firstly, between individuals, in this case taking place between me and Erneste. Secondly, between individuals and place, taking shape through the occupation of the vacant store. And thirdly, between individuals and technology, as exemplified by the use of Zoom to communicate and to record our meetings (generating material to create video works). This broad understanding of collaboration opens up other methods and approaches, firstly, by considering that spaces, places, and technological tools can have a performative and material agency. This understanding also allows for the possibility of collaboration taking subtle forms that can be discovered by paying attention to the identity of a site. As Janssen writes, "tracing the associations and iterations of social histories and spatial relations requires using research methods that produce spaces for encountering multiple forms of agency; the visible and material agency of a location and, equally, a curiosity for encountering those less visible, unknown actors and immaterial forms of a site's agency" (69).

As part of my engagement with modes of collaboration, I was interested in how to work with collaboration as compositional element. From an art history perspective, Grant H. Kester identifies that, in the past 15 years, artists have been attracted to modes of production that place collaboration at the centre of their artistic process and collective practices. Kester notes, however, that every practitioner engages with collaborative work within their own singular view because

the context of creation is different for everyone (1). The most common way to address collaboration "is generally characterized by working together or 'in conjunction with' another, to engage in a 'united labor'" (Kester 2). In this creation-for-research project, I wanted to explore how this definition could be expanded upon in my practice and open up new avenues for generating creative content.

Kester also suggests the concept of a third artist who "marks a form of creative praxis that emerges at the intersection of these complex, overlapping relations" (3). In this sense, the collaboration emerges from multiple layers of making that interact with each other. With this in mind, a multilayered component is taken into consideration where the performance practice (Erneste and I), the materiality and spatiality (the vacant store), and the media space (Zoom) come into interaction with one another to generate a series of collaborative moments.

What then are the particularities that arise from working with individuals and communities when involving embodiment? A first layer that could be contextualized within this project is the collaboration between myself and Erneste. Lucy Lippard writes: "We need to know a lot more about how our work affects and disaffects the people exposed to it, whether and how it does and does not communicate" (128). Following Lippard's thinking, one of my goals of working with Erneste was to enable a relationship where attention is at play, allowing our life experience and cultural context to contribute to the process. In the work, there was a need to generate a common place, taking into consideration how our culture and environment impacts us and can become transmissible source material for the creative work.

Additionally, what does it mean as a researcher to situate creative work in a vacant store located on a commercial street in Montreal? By working in a street-level space with windows, I made myself visible to the passersby, making them active viewers of the process. As such, in this project, I also consider place and space (physical and media) as active participants within the creative process. Lippard reflects on the role artists can play in making visible the overlooked histories of locations when they employ a physical site as a collaborator. Lippard writes: "I wonder what will make it possible for artists to 'give' places back to people who can no longer see them. Because land plus people—their presence and absence—is what makes place resonate" (129). From Lippard's perspective, collaboration is a relational practice between the individual and a community as well as a method for working with overlooked histories of environments that have the potential to be activated through site-oriented artistic creation.

Although my research was not oriented to draw out a historical perspective or to involve a community, I do want to communicate my sensitivity towards the environments in which I create, in this case the vacant store, as well as the environment of my collaborator, Erneste. When collaborating with the storefront and Erneste's environment (in Brazil), "the idea," to use Lucy Lippard's words, "was to look at what was already in the world and transform it into art by the process of seeing — naming and pointing out — rather than producing" (126). In Chapter 3, I elaborate upon the realities and sites in which I was creating this research as well as my approach to creation and the actions I undertook to better understand Erneste's environment and reality. The telecommunication platform Zoom played a key role in my collaborative work with Erneste. We entered into relation and a creative practice in ways I could not have imagined using technology prior to the pandemic. He suggests that, in recent years, a wide range of new practices drawn from open source software, social mobile computing, and knowledge of collectives have been implemented (Finkelpearl 37). In an interview conducted by Finkelpearl, the artist Evan Roth highlights how collaboration does not necessarily imply face-to-face interaction or physical presence: "For the first time this year I released a project with someone I collaborated with directly but have never met face to face [lowercasekanye]. And the collaborations I completed with people I do know personally tend to move faster and involve less wasted time when we are online" (qtd. in Finkelpearl 331).

Collaboration via media spaces has increased dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Victoria Turk, editor at *Wired UK*, observed, "within a six-month period, [Zoom] became the new meeting place, the classroom, the studio space, the coffee shop, the happy hour, the family reunion, the place to celebrate weddings and funerals." Zoom founder Eric Yuan named his company after a book he was reading to his kids: *Zoom City* by Thacher Hurd. Yuan writes: "I loved this fun little book as much as my kids, and hoped to use the name someday for the perfect company that embodied the same values of creativity, exploration, happiness, and trust. And the name works perfectly with a product that connects us visually to one another and that always works so fast and seamlessly" (qtd. in Loeb). This story about the origin of the name highlights what Zoom has been offering during this pandemic period: visual and relational possibilities. Finkelpearl states that "the artist orchestrates a cooperative structure; participants respond and add their own creativity" (314). And it is in this transformation from their original role that creativity comes into play. One of Roth's goals is to endorse open-source culture within

popular culture. Roth states: “I see this as an essential part of the shift from consumers to creators that is already starting to happen in hacker, remix, and DIY circles” (qtd. in Finkelpearl 332). These modalities of embedding technology into collaborative practices were already present in the early years of the 21st century but the pandemic circumstances exacerbated the need to connect differently, and subsequently, within the context of artistic practices, re-evaluate and experiment with alternative ways of collaborating. By considering technological tools as collaborative spaces in this creative process, Zoom became a valuable medium because it allowed for me and Erneste to be present with each other and for us to record our conversations and improvisations. Furthermore, the Zoom interface has a particular aesthetic that involves a tile layout (in our case, two squares next to each other). It offered us a way to see each other’s bodies as well as the background environment in which we were situated. This specific interface and the way in which bodies appear on the screen already proposes an aesthetic in itself, which orientates the gaze and the manner of coming into contact, whether it be considered from the angle of performance or not. This interface afforded us an opportunity to play and improvise with the angles of view and gazes we held with each other, which were further edited into the videos that were eventually displayed in the storefront. In Chapter 3, I give a detailed analysis of how my Zoom meetings with Erneste played an active role in our improvisations and collaboration.

Site-specific and site-oriented practices

In this project, I identify three main sites that I worked with: the vacant store, the Zoom calls (recorded via a camera lens), and bodies — both mine and Erneste’s. My understanding and use of the term “site” has been informed by Kwon, who proposes three historical paradigms for site-based artworks: the phenomenological, the social/institutional, and the discursive (16). Kwon specifies that the paradigms do not have a precise order but that they compete, overlapping with one another, and can be present within a single artist’s project or approach to site (43). In *Choreographing collaboration*, I identify the phenomenological and the discursive paradigms as the main models present in the creative part of the project. This perspective allows me to situate the collaborative work across the physical (my body and the vacant store) and the media spaces (the Zoom calls with Erneste) which contribute to the creative process.

From a phenomenological stance, and historically, site-specific artworks were created in response to the physical characteristics of a place — its architecture, form, shape, scale,

geometry, etc. Kwon states: “Site-specific art, whether interruptive or assimilative, gave itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it” (11). This phenomenological approach to site aligns with my approach to creating in the vacant store. In Chapter 3, I analyze further how the physical experience of this space and its materiality influenced and informed the creative process. From this perspective, it is important to take into account that an indivisible relationship exists between the site, the performer’s presence, and the viewer. Kwon argues that the phenomenological aspect is “establishing an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work’s completion” (12). In this reasoning, the phenomenological aspect is achieved with the passersby of Saint Denis Street, permitting me to crystallize my experience in the eyes of witnesses. To some extent, I was able to capture and reflect on my process because of the intervention and responsiveness of the passersby.

Kwon’s discursive approach to site also informs the analysis of my creative process. This approach can be defined as conversational, socially engaged, and/or about political movements. It is concerned with

> [integrating] art more directly into the realm of the social, either in order to redress (in an activist sense) urgent social problems such as the ecological crisis, homelessness, AIDS, homophobia, racism, and sexism, or more generally in order to relativize art as one among many forms of cultural work, current manifestations of site specificity tend to treat aesthetic and art historical concerns as secondary issues. (Kwon 24)

At the heart of this approach, Kwon emphasizes that “the operative definition of the site has been transformed from a physical location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual” (30). The discursive approach frames the way I interact with Erneste, but the project is not an activist one. I identify with Kwon’s discursive category specifically because we live a life made up of communication and digital interactions carried out via media and technology and because the site-oriented aspect of my research is not solely phenomenological. Kwon also puts forward a number of categories or characteristics of working with site. Kwon writes:

> Site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, site-related. These are some new terms that have emerged in recent years among many artists and critics to account for the various permutations of site-specific art in the present. (1)

Moreover, she suggests that "contemporary site-oriented works occupy hotels, city streets, housing projects, prisons, schools, hospitals, churches, zoos, supermarkets, and they infiltrate media spaces such as radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet." (Kwon 26)

My project aligns most strongly with Kwon's category of site-oriented art practices. In order to expand my choreographic practice, the process of re-orienting my practice via the space of the vacant store and Zoom influenced my physical experience. It is by my employment of somatic strategies (which I discuss in the somatic section below) that the experimentation of the physical space as well as the media space informed the process. My objective was to stay attuned and sensitive towards how the different areas of these spaces could contribute to the creative process.

A site-oriented dance practice

Following Kwon, in my view, site-oriented dance practices uncover and increase the possibilities to analyze and draw attention to the interplay between site, embodiment, and temporality. *Choreographing collaboration* was a project, in part, about me reorienting myself and my creative practice, which also echoes a concept introduced by dance scholar and artist Melanie Kloetzel: "recontextualization," which means reframing the body in unusual contexts (31). The vacant store and Zoom meetings allowed me to move my body and my dance practice to new working conditions, which impacted how I generated creative content. My work in different spaces and outside of traditional creation and performance spaces is not new. As Kloetzel explains, "quite clearly, dance in its many forms has been performed outside of theatre contexts for millennia, with social, religious, ceremonial and other dances locating themselves in a myriad of environments" (28). For instance, in the late sixties, site-specific dance began to develop in North America, "as evidenced by the work of Meredith Monk and Trisha Brown in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then further emphasized in works by the next generation of site choreographers (Joanna Haigood, Martha Bowers, Ann Carlson, and others)" (Kloetzel 29). Kloetzel also highlights how "interact[ing] with a variety of environments functioned as a springboard for the majority of site dance experiments over the next two decades" (29).

One of the most important aspects of my work with the site was being able to anchor my bodily experience in a specific place while paying attention to it. Working in a vacant store with large windows at street level made me very aware that I was being witnessed (that I was being

seen by what I refer to as “passersby”) from time to time. Undertaking a practice involving bodily expression and movement in a vacant store, which involved dressing and undressing, playing with various types of materials and improvising in the window, etc., was a very important part of the process. In fact, I felt quite free to explore as I wished, but I was aware that this positioning implied the presence of certain witnesses during this process of discovery.

From this perspective, through the creative process of this project, I played with the way the body is (re)presented because I was involved in the space through performance using my body and Erneste’s body as the main sources of expression. In Chapter 3, I analyze the somatic improvisations and performance acts in detail and illustrate how the space of the vacant store proved to be a place of play and risk throughout the creative process.

Embodied perception of site

Relating to sites offers the possibility to reflect on perception, which was actively at play as I interacted with the physical site (the vacant store) and the media space (Zoom). I want to develop this specific aspect related to an embodied experience that makes itself sensitive to the physical space and to argue for the active process of perception. Victoria Hunter, practitioner and researcher in dance, identifies that “the process of perceiving space can be defined as a form of absorbing and ordering information gained while experiencing and interacting with space” (25). My responses in the physical space of the store were done either by leaving traces of each performance, reorganizing the storefront, posting writing in the window, or by choosing specifically where to project the videos. Hunter states that “perception is distinct from analysis and is an active process, occurring subconsciously, almost instantaneously. The act of perception is a personal one, subject to many variables” (26).

Karen Barbour, artist and scholar in dance, states: “Dancing with an expanded sense of awareness developed through somatic attention, acclimatization activities and embodied reflection offer[s] insight into the ecology of the local places” (Barbour et al. 60). I believe that using a site-oriented approach to creation placed an emphasis on my sense of perception, allowing me to act and react within a back-and-forth process that always brought attention to the physical and media spaces in which the process evolved. This sensitivity towards my environment and the sites of research was strongly supported by somatic work, which I elaborate upon below.

Situating somatic exploration

I used somatic exploration as a method of research to orient myself with the sites of collaboration that I described above. I distinguish three approaches within my research concerning this modality: 1) somatic exploration which happens in relation to the physical surroundings; 2) somatic exploration as an approach to interact with media space; and 3) somatic exploration as a method to engage with my collaborator, Erneste. Within *Choreographing collaboration*, I consider my participation as a human subject to be part of the environment I was working in — the store and the Zoom calls — without separating the mind and the body into two entities. Thomas Hanna, the philosopher and movement theorist who coined the term "somatics," describes "the soma as a dual talent: it can sense its own individual functions via first-person perception, and it can sense external structures and objective situations via third-person perception" ("What is Somatics?"). "Soma" is related to the phenomena of sensation and proprioception, where information is delivered to the body and, as soon as the information is perceived, it is immediately self-observed. Somatic exploration is an internal process that is constantly in motion when activated. Hanna observes that "the proprioceptive centers communicate and continually feedback a rich display of somatic information which is immediately self-observed as a process that is both unified and ongoing" ("What is Somatics?"). The first-person viewpoint, which concerns the soma, is a constant action that engages in perceiving the inner sensations that occur without predicting their meanings.

An important principle when undertaking a somatic exploration is to acknowledge that "learning begins by focusing awareness on the unknown" (Hanna, "What is Somatics?"). As Hanna suggests, "the soma, being internally perceived, is categorically distinct from a body, not because the subject is different but because the mode of viewpoint is different: it is immediate proprioception — a sensory mode that provides unique data" ("What is Somatics?"). The particularity of somatic exploration can take a variety of forms of inquiry. Somatic exploration in this research project (which I analyze in Chapter 3) was actualized by writing, moving, and exploring in relation to the physical space of the store and to the media space where I interacted with Erneste. The physical practice with which I chose to undertake the somatic exploration and generate movement was through improvisation. I worked with the embodied practice of improvisation in various ways, alone, with Erneste in the empty store, and over Zoom. Choreographer and educator Jonathan Burrows proposes the following parameters for defining

improvisation: Firstly, improvisation allows for "the freedom to work at the speed of a thinking body and mind" (37). Secondly, it allows one "to follow impulse and the intelligence of the moment," (37) and finally, "it corresponds to negotiating with the patterns your body is thinking," (40) which ties into the process of somatic exploration. Improvisation also supports the performance aspect present in the process. Burrows writes that improvisation is "an approach to performance that requires as much focus, clarity of intention, process, integrity and time as any other process" (36).

Eco soma

Hanna's identification of soma suggests a process in which the proprioceptive centre communicates, which is immediately observed in a first-person observation ("What is Somatics?"). However, the starting point when undertaking this process is not a neutral one. This is why I want to introduce the concept of "eco soma." Petra Kuppers, scholar, community performance artist, and disability activist, proposes eco soma as a method for "mix[ing] and merg[ing] realities on the edges of lived experience and site-specific performance" (Kuppers, "Eco Soma" 1). This concept should not be confused with the term "ecosomatics": "From a microscopic perspective of the moving body, an ecosomatic lens emphasizes the individual body as a network of interdependency where every single event in any one part affects and partakes in the actions of the whole" (Enghauser 85). What Kuppers criticizes about "ecosomatics" are its references to the neoliberal aspect of this practice as well as the appropriation of Indigenous practices by white settlers. Instead, as Kuppers explains, "in an eco soma inquiry, my own self is never 'unmarked' or the quiet center of the phenomenological self: I am part of both a human and a nonhuman ecology, and I am part of a set of historically and culturally grown relations" ("Eco Soma" 1). As mentioned in the section above, I see this creation-for-research project as a site-oriented project that fostered a somatic exploration in order to expand collaborative modes of creating. Furthermore, the interaction between sites (my body, the store, and the Zoom calls with Erneste) included the use of different materials (paper, aluminum, paint, etc.) acting as tools of exploration, a process which was undertaken from a somatic perspective. This aligns with Kuppers's observation that "eco soma sensing connects with materials, objects, and sites that one's moving body meets" (Kuppers, "Eco Soma" 1). Following Kuppers, eco soma enters my research-creation work by taking account of my identity, my cultural origin, and my personal

history, which colours my relationship to the world and therefore my way of entering the process and act of creation. I engage in creative work as a middle-class, middle-aged, cis-gendered, white woman, as a Francophone, a mother of two, a lover, and a visually impaired person. This acknowledgement of identity was also taken into consideration for my collaborator, Erneste. By acknowledging my own subjectivity, I was also able to consider Erneste's subjectivity — their cultural context, their relationship to illness, their personhood as a queer artist, and their way of embodying creative acts. All these aspects can be recognized as part of the creative process with the concept of eco soma. The somatic exploration of the creative process was conducted via the concept of eco soma as defined by Kuppers. In Kuppers's early work, she identifies the emergence of social somatics, which takes into account how the environment in which we create is an active participant. In other words, the process of perception participates in the proprioceptive centre and is also linked to the social infrastructure that we create. Kuppers states:

> How we live our somatic reality as social reality is as much shaped by the sensorium of our fingertips as by the images we inherit from biomedicine, as much by the textures and pleasures offered to us by popular media as by the culturally specific ways we establish intimacy with others, by the practices with which we weave ourselves into the internet or into the street scene. ("Performances studies" 3)

The practice of eco soma considers how places can move us by provoking sensations from an inner embodied perception, dependent on the cultural context in which we are situated. Kuppers's perspective is important to my thinking because it gives credence to the relationship that is being negotiated when collaborating with others and in the places and spaces that we evolve in. An eco soma perspective defines the process of perception in the first person while considering the social, cultural, environmental, and site context (my body, the vacant store, and the Zoom calls with Erneste) as constituting the experience.

Somatic exploration strategies

As mentioned above, the somatic exploration was undertaken via physical practice, writing, and improvisation. With Erneste, four strategies were applied: 1) improvising and reproducing our gestures identically, mirroring each other; 2) moving through our respective spaces with the other's voice as a guide and without using the video image; 3) observing the other move through

their space; and 4) interacting with the materials with a focus on listening and synchronizing gestures. We improvised, respectively, throughout the vacant store and in Erneste's apartment.

I also regularly spent time improvising on my own in the storefront. My somatic strategies were: 1) playing statue; 2) moving in a very slow rhythm; 3) observing the flow of the street; and 4) experimenting with various props and materials through movement. As Hanna suggests, these strategies served to help me be connected to my immediate proprioception. They allowed me to favour my sensations instead of being guided by formal or purely aesthetic choices. In addition, I engaged in somatic writing, another tool that developed my awareness of moving towards unknown territories. Throughout the whole process, after improvising or at the end of the day, I took the time to intuitively write down what had happened during the process, in terms of the interactions with the sites (the body, the vacant store, and the Zoom calls with Erneste) and the process of editing the video. It was a moment of reflection in which sensitive and intimate content was addressed. Somatic exploration via writing was introduced in my artistic routine for the first time in my creative process. It is with these strategies that somatic exploration was undertaken in the creative process, which I analyze in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, my thesis project and the following analysis of the work falls within the model of creation-as-research. The theory of performative ethnography helps me identify the main characteristics of the process I conducted over a 30-day period in November 2021. Performative ethnography also foregrounds the importance of my subjectivity while collecting and analyzing data produced from the research-creation activities. The main methods used to undertake this research-creation were collaboration and somatic exploration, fostering a porous interactivity between sites of bodies and spaces — both physical and digital. The site-oriented approach to this project was an investigation that is both phenomenological and discursive. The somatic exploration carried out from a practice of improvisation and performance was also an opportunity to position myself with particular attention towards the vacant store and the Zoom calls with Erneste. It also enabled a creative process realized through embodiment, giving me the ability to produce an intimate exchange that expands my creativity and imagination in the act of choreographing. This theoretical framework provides a clear direction for the development of the next chapter, in which I analyze the collaboration between the space of the store, the Zoom calls,

Erneste, and myself, and explain how collaborating across these sites allowed for new choreographic paths to be written.

Chapter 3: The unfolding process of *Choreographing collaboration*

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze how the 30 consecutive days of practice fostered a new creative ritual, allowing for transformation and the establishment of a new routine within my creative and choreographic processes. I then go on to examine how the vacant store collaborated in this shift. Finally, through the perspective of four themes — intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity — I discuss how the creative process was realized while collaborating with Erneste, the Zoom calls, and the vacant store. As it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detail about what happened on each of the 30 days, I have selected 4 days to analyze in relation to the above themes.

Figure 1 A video in the storefront on Day 28, projected overtop traces of paper left from Day 7. Photo by Brianna Lombardo.

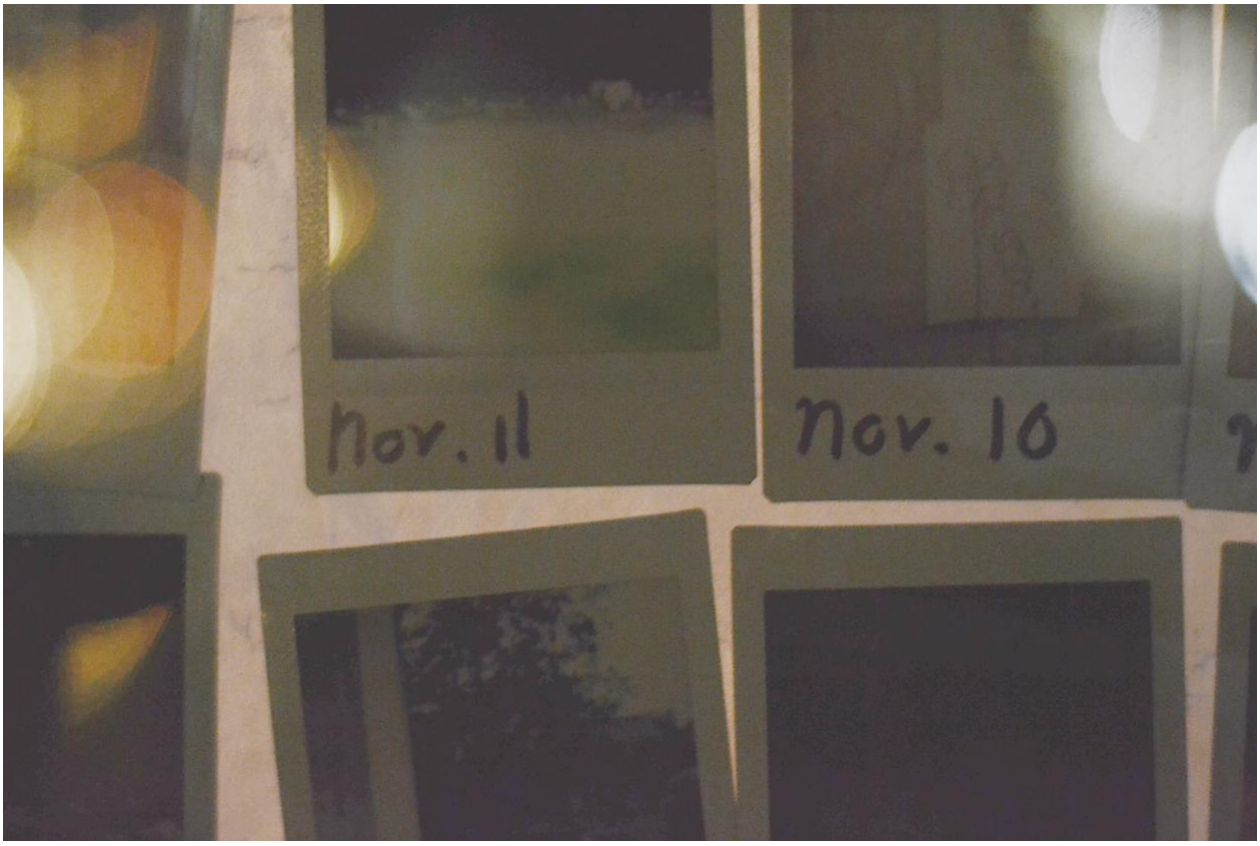

Figure 2 The Polaroid calendar on November 29, 2021, the last day of work in the vacant store. Photo by Brianna Lombardo.

Thirty days: Generating a ritual

Undertaking this creation-as-research project over the course of 30 consecutive days was a strategy I used to temporarily transform my creative routine. Within the process, the notion of time and duration was experienced through my occupation of the store (6 to 10 hours per day) and also by working in various time periods during the day and at night. The earliest I worked was 10:00 a.m. and the latest was 2:00 a.m. What helped create a unique shift in the creative process was the daily creation of a video (material taken from recorded Zoom calls with Erneste) and the act of improvising simultaneously in the physical space of the store and in the media space of Zoom.

Renting the vacant store, dedicated to my own ends, a place I knew I would be coming back to every day for a month, made me care about this physical location. I paid attention to cleaning and organizing while finding my own pathways to prepare what I would do next. My main daily practices were to meet with Erneste for a period of 2 hours and to edit the video

recordings of our meetings on Zoom and display them as videos in the space. In addition, some creative gestures complemented my main actions. Every day, I wrote on an interface called Padlet (where I collected all my thoughts and videos). I also took Polaroid pictures daily and posted these in the front door of the store and improvised in the window. My perception of time shifted as a consequence of repeating these practices every day. These creative gestures, including the meetings with Erneste, were developing day after day in a spirit of discovery. I felt that there was always something unknown to be discovered. This mindset gave me a lot of energy for achieving a large number of tasks each day, and I felt like the days flew by. The 30 days also allowed me to enter a creative zone where all other unrelated tasks in my life were relegated to the background, creating another type of routine in which my attention was directed towards maintaining this intense rhythm of creativity. By accomplishing these tasks, I maintained a rigorous approach to data collection in relation to my collaborative sites. However, I gave myself the freedom to intuitively choose the duration of the somatic strategies undertaken daily. I was flexible about their duration and how I would move from one task to the next within these explorations. As Schechner notes, "the ritual process opens up a time/space of anti-structural playfulness" (233). Working over a 30-day period allowed for daily rituals to emerge as well as a shift towards more playfulness and freedom since I did not define a specific duration for each action, except for the daily meetings on Zoom with Erneste, which happened in various hours of the day or night.

As expressed in the introduction, throughout my career, my periods of creation have been dictated by schedules that were imposed on my creative process. I have never had much control of the spaces that I create or present my work in. For example, most locations or studio rentals are usually shared between various artists, meaning there are standard time frames for a creative process to take place in. Furthermore, when I have been invited to work in a creation residency, generally, a schedule was imposed. Working in a vacant store afforded me the possibility to commit to a creative process in a consistent space where I was the only person with access. By working and performing daily in the same space, it became possible to generate new routines with more freedom and all these practices culminated to become my 30-day ritual. From this perspective, possessing my own space gave me the opportunity to improvise with objects and materials, and I chose to maintain this practice through the given time of the project. I left traces of the improvisation in the space, which was, in a way, a manner of reporting on my developing

relationship with Erneste. I was thus making visible in a phenomenological way, as Kwon suggests, these mediated interactions where the objects, materials, and video eventually accumulated in the vacant store. Furthermore, spending time within this space allowed for recurrent actions to arise without planning them. A daily routine germinated as I took time to simply be attentive to embodiment within the space. Schechner observes how a "ritual process is a machine for introducing new behaviors or undermining established systems" (258). For example, every day I spent time in the front window, eating my lunch and/or observing the flow of the street. I took the time to sit, and I captured these moments by recording voice memos of what I was observing. I also built several small installations in the front window with elements such as paper, books, chairs, dishes, fruits, and written material that was generated throughout the process. This action of curating the elements in the front window became a ritual in itself.

These periods of engaging with the space expanded my sense of awareness towards it and gave me permission to take time for transforming my routine as well as the site of the vacant store. As Barbour observes, dancers are skilled in "movement, speed, rhythm, pathway[s] or route[s], stillness/pauses and the experiential quality of movement, and offer another beginning point for engaging in place" (Barbour 254). This process reinforced my perception towards the interplay found in my personal routine and the rhythm I felt in my body and in relation to my environment. For example, I observed that at least 30 minutes each day was necessary to settle into this place and to start preparing to work. I identified a recurrent path that I took almost every day when entering the vacant store. Firstly, I would walk around in the store, thinking of a plan for the upcoming meeting with Erneste while taking care of chores. Secondly, I always had trouble figuring out which light I needed to turn on in the store for the ambiance I wanted to work in. Depending on the amount of sunlight in the space, I balanced the parts of the space that should be lit or not. These actions took time, and I was slightly annoyed that I was spending time on these chores. I am used to the feeling of rush while being in creation, because I often feel that I will run out of time. Usually with a studio rental, I want to start working right away because every minute is paid for. This period of time that I considered at the time to be unproductive was actually reinforcing a transformation — a change that slowed down my internal rhythm and therefore affected my time perception, favouring a new creative routine. For example, right from the beginning, I faced an important sense of displacement within my landmarks as a creator and performer. On November 3, I wrote in the Padlet:

> *The past three days, I had dreams about the store, dreams that the store was located in Spain. Dreams where I was looking for my path. Dreams of being with my partner Erneste. Moving my practice from the studio space to the store, even in a city I know, is affecting my sense of organization and coherence. I'm looking to find my rituals, to find my way to access my inner voice for gestures to come.*

Shifting my personal routine affected not only my life during the day but also at night. I could see that my experience of the day continued to influence me during the night. My engagement in the process affected me in a conscious and an unconscious way. The ongoing aspect of the practices undertaken on a daily basis helped to establish a consistency and ease in the process. The vacant store that felt foreign to me at first turned into a play space because I was able to manipulate props and materials and also because I could experience Erneste's presence via our Zoom calls and in the subsequent video recordings that I edited and displayed in the store. By allowing myself to occupy the store space with the intention of engaging in a creative process, I was able to feel how my creative habits and routines, in relation to time and space, were shifting. It took a full week for this recognition to emerge.[23] On November 5, I wrote in the Padlet: *Today I feel I am really starting to dive into the work. Being more comfortable with the space transforming into my space of play.* This feeling of searching to establish my base and my bearings gradually faded, allowing me to enjoy my space as I wished and to lose track of time. On November 18, I wrote: *One more note: I don't know which day we are anymore.*[24]

I point out the above Padlet entries concerning the evolution of the process over time in order to assert how access to periods of sustained creation over time can contribute to the development and growth of a creative work. As mentioned above, in my experience, the cultural industry in live art has mostly offered me work periods based on a 7-day work week model, including 5 consecutive days of work, which has indirectly influenced how my creative content (data) is developed. Below, I demonstrate, for example, how time played an important role in the development of content with my collaborator, Erneste.

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[23] I specify this information because in the dance industry residencies are usually given for 5 working days.
[24] This phrase comes from the French expression: *Je ne sais plus quel jour on est.*

Daily meetings with Erneste: Emerging intimacies

My daily meetings on Zoom with Erneste allowed for a deepening of collaboration as well as a change in my time perception, which was also reinforced by the interactions on Zoom. Our period of improvisation via this media space was in every manner an unknown procedure within my dance practice. When our meetings took place, we always started with a long conversation, which is something I would have never previously allowed myself to do when producing a work because of my fear of wasting time. Time on Zoom, however, was experienced differently. The silences seemed longer, and there was a need to wait to hear the other person speak. It was a bit inorganic. There were also issues almost every day with my internet connection, depending on where I situated myself in the store. Our daily exchanges were about 2 hours long, except for the night where we shared a dinner which was 3 hours long. Without planning our discussion, we started most of the time by discussing the video I had created the day before, since Erneste would watch them at the end of each day. The way we dealt with what we had experienced together gave us the opportunity to expand on other related topics. Erneste and I would also share about situations or events that were happening in our lives. Then we would discuss what we wanted to explore. I would share my creative desires, and, from my proposals, we would decide together how to approach them. Since I did not need to rush in and out of the vacant store, I took the time to establish encounters with other modalities than those I was used to. This is another example of how time played a role in the development and consolidation of the creative work. In contrast, the time spent improvising seemed to pass very quickly. In our routine, our conversations led us to set our respective spaces with the elements chosen for our physical dialogue. Then, there was a shift. By undertaking the somatic strategies mentioned in the introduction, I experienced a transformation within our presence, an intensity within our movements. I experienced encounters where time was suspended. I can conclude that this time spent talking with Erneste helped to set the table for engaging with movement, in a physical dialogue, generated by trust and generosity.

The video editing process took me between 2 and 4 hours each day. It consisted of gathering the images I had created during the day, from my personal improvisations and recordings from Zoom, and downloading them on my external hard drive. After each meeting with Erneste, the transfer of the files took between 30 minutes to an hour before I could start editing. At that time, I felt Erneste's absence strongly. From this state, multiple desires and impulses emerged. This felt absence generated various creative gestures in the vacant store,

allowing this inner state to manifest itself. I often felt the need to move, sing, or write. I allowed the residual feelings of the Zoom exchange to be transmitted into my space while I was alone. Often, I had to stop this practice because I had to start editing. The video editing was done without taking breaks, and I ended each day by transferring the newly edited video to the flash drive. This task indicated to me that my day was over and I could leave the vacant store to go home. At the end of the day, I would project "today's" video on the wall, along with all of the other videos I had created up until that point. The videos accumulated every day, and at the end of the project, there were 28[25] videos playing simultaneously in the store.

From the beginning of the project, I spent time alone in the space, preparing, organizing, and improvising. Within the development of my new routine, I was internally debating: Am I doing enough dancing? Am I making too many videos? Am I spending too much time in front of the computer? Questions about how I dedicated my time towards certain tasks were emerging. This inner debate was very much present throughout the first week. At first, I was faced with the emergence of a large number of new tasks. It took time to accept that the project was not about the creation of movement vocabulary but about letting go of old routines and instead, being present for meeting via the improvisation practice, discussions, writing, and editing in relation to my sites of collaborations (the vacant store, the Zoom calls with Erneste, and my body). As mentioned above, my usual routine as a creator was to first generate the movement and then spend time developing that content. Since the methodology of this project relies on collaboration in an expanded perspective, such as Janssens suggests, I was encountering multiple forms of agency within my sites of research (69). For example, when I improvised in the basement, I had to deal with dust, dirt, and very bright lighting, which impacted my physical exploration. I experienced discomfort, which affected my movements and inner sensations but also brought a particular attentiveness to the materiality of this specific space. The space brought a unique aspect that informed my state of being while the movements were emerging. The basement imposed its own character onto the improvisation undertaken with Erneste. I allowed it to impact the work, finding my agency in it instead of trying to avoid it.

I was slowly accepting the Zoom interface and the vacant store as places of encounter and was able to let go of my expectations related to what I previously identified as "my dance practice." This internal debate, which may seem trivial, acted as a sort of rite of passage. These

[25] There are only 28 videos because Day 29 and 30 were dedicated to cleaning the space and moving out.

reflections demonstrate how the introduction of new routines into my creative practice were causing me some discomfort and tension. Though I came to see these moments of self-doubt, mentioned above, as productive moments in the process, despite their temporary destabilizing effects. My doubts and insecurities acted as a vehicle to slowly accept the new practices that were taking shape.

Primarily, the 30-day period was a tool to move away from the organization of my life as a mother of two, an artist in the cultural circuit, and a teacher, all of which is built around the 7-day work week. This framework allowed for: 1) firmly establishing a creative practice which influenced in a qualitative and positive way my collaboration with the vacant store and Erneste; 2) an accumulation of traces and creative gestures filling the space, creating a performative space (the more activity there was in the vacant store, the more people stopped in front of the window and 3) staying in a creative flow and generating a new routine.

Orienting my practice in a vacant store

Figure 3 Picture of the vacant store taken on Sunday, November 28, 2021.

In this section, I will analyze how the vacant store played a collaborative role in reorienting my creative process. The vacant store was chosen to distance myself from the cultural industry and institutional spaces in order to experiment with a different way of proceeding and to encourage new approaches within my creation work. Being completely autonomous in the vacant store put more responsibility on my shoulders with some technical chores, such as the maintenance of the space. But it also gave me a great sense of freedom, because I felt I had a lot of room to explore creatively. Throughout the month, I investigated the architecture of the space, such as the basement, the entryway, and the middle space of the store. The vacant store featured architectural details like those found in theatres, so I intuitively used the space in this way. For example, I placed all the equipment I had in the back of the store, as one might do in a backstage

area. The centre of the space featured a semi-proscenium arch.[26] The front of the store was like a rehearsal space, where my work table was tucked away to the side and the front projector delineated the space. I often worked at the front of the store because it was the place with the best internet connection. Engaging in a site-oriented project required tapping into attentiveness towards a space that was not intended for artistic purposes.

The vacant store required from my end both patience and a willingness to adapt my process to this precise environment. The space had been unoccupied for at least a year and required a good clean up. There was a sense of abandonment, evidenced by the amount of dirt on the floor, in the bathroom, and on the windows. I also had to figure out how the electricity and heating worked and identify which switches turned on which lights. Defining my workspace was an ongoing chore.

Although the space was dedicated to my own use, it was visible to passersby. The notion of performance came into play as soon as I stepped into the vacant store. At any point, it was possible for the public passing by on the street to witness my process and the actions I was undertaking in the space. Sometimes passersby peered in through the front display windows, knocked on the door, or communicated with me via social media. A description of the project was displayed on the door, outlining the context of the work. My physical presence in the store offered a material reality for the spectator (the passerby). I situate this context as the phenomenological paradigm in site work, as introduced by Kwon. I will develop this aspect further in relation to the theme of publicness. Reorienting my creative process in a vacant store made me realize throughout the month how the studio spaces I am used to working in are organized for dancing to occur, which presupposes what should happen. What the vacant store allowed for aligns with what Hunter proposes when she writes that "the meanings and associations encountered in sites and places then are not absolute but are open to the further processes of individual interaction and interpretation resulting in multi-'readings'" (30). The characteristics of the vacant store-as a "nonart" space transformed the way I initiated, conducted, and developed the work by allowing the site to inform the creative process.

[26] In a theatre context, this term refers to the wall that separates the stage from the auditorium, providing an arch that frames the stage.

Four themes: Intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity

In the following section, I explain how the main themes of this project both emerged and informed the collaborative aspects of the creative work. Firstly, the exploration of intimacy is a recurrent aspect of my work. I seek to make palpable how notions of proximity, interiority, and profoundness can be expressed. I also seek to create settings in which collaboration can be sustained through trust and caring. Secondly, the theme of publicness is rooted in my desire to share and participate in a social way. Publicness is rooted in a discursive approach to site-oriented work (Kwon) and is also driven by a desire to understand how my work may or may not affect people and the environment in which I am creating. It is in the spirit of openness to the other that this theme is articulated. Thirdly, transparency can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. It relates to the notions of limpidity and clarity, but it can also carry connotations of honesty and intelligibility. Transparency is also present in my work with video editing, in which I often superimpose two images with altered opacity, resulting in layers of moving images. In this creation-as-research project, I chose to define the theme of transparency through the prism of aesthetics, highlighted by the collaboration with Erneste on Zoom. These aspects were developed through our somatic improvisations and through the editing, which played a predominant role in the creative process. The theme of transparency also echoes the positioning of my research in a vacant store with large windows, but this aspect will be analyzed via the notion of publicness.

The theme of opacity is a counterpoint to that of transparency. It literally refers to darkness, but in an abstract way it implies incomprehension, complexity, or perplexity. The theme of opacity is used here to highlight the more complex moments experienced during the creative process. The themes of transparency and opacity are also employed in the literal sense and reflected by the use of various materials. To reinforce these themes in a concrete way, I improvised with materials such as paper, candles, rice, paint, pencils, clothes, and water. Playing with these materials, the themes emerged organically, and I decided to stay focused on how they appeared, as the process was unfolding while having them in mind. On another level, the location of the vacant store as well as the media space of Zoom greatly supported the themes of intimacy and publicness. Below, through the lens of each theme, I analyze how my collaboration with Erneste, the media space of the Zoom call, and the space of the vacant store contributed to an exploration of intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity.

Intimacy

Erneste

The theme of intimacy was very much supported by my collaboration with Erneste. As I mentioned in the introduction, we met because we share a similar reality: the loss of part of our visual field. This commonality quickly put us in a trustworthy relationship in which intimate exchanges occurred, related to our attitudes towards our bodies. These conversations allowed us to share our feelings very openly. It is for this reason that I must note that Erneste's facing of their disease is an integral part of their approach to collaborative work. From the very first time we spoke, Erneste shared with me their experience of being close to death after being diagnosed with HIV. To invite this artist into this project was to welcome a way of being and acting which influenced all the creative experiences and the whole process. In order to provide a clear context, I include here an excerpt from Erneste's dissertation:

> The fact is that I had an unusual relationship with the virus, my CD4, which are the immune system cells attacked by HIV, were already at a very low level, even though the infection occurred a little over a year and a half ago, according to my last negative test. I immediately started the treatment with antiretroviral drugs. A few months later I started to feel an insistent headache. I went to the emergency room a few times and, even though I reported my HIV and low CD4 count, they did tests and sent me back home. I started to become very weak inside my apartment. We went to the emergency room three days in a row and finally, on the third day, they ordered the CSF test, which is done through a puncture in the lumbar region. They found out that I had fungal meningitis. I was taken directly to the ICU.[27] (Filho 73)

Since the loss of part of my visual field is the result of a neurological event, I was sensitive to Erneste's experience with meningitis. This shared physical condition gave us a unique and intimate meeting point, fostering a fertile exchange in the creative process. For Erneste, this personal history is an important foundation to their way of being within all personal and creative exchanges. The idea here is not to make comparisons and attempt to stage these stories but rather to identify factors and sources that directly influence one's approach to creation and process. Far from having lived an experience that brought me close to death, I am fascinated and challenged

[27] This excerpt was translated from Portuguese to English using *Deepl*, a translation website.

by my sensitivity to the experiences of the body. I believe that, through my creative practice, this extreme sensitivity is palpable. As Erneste mentioned in their dissertation, this life experience made them "intensely connected with the force of what is alive" [28] (Filho 73). In light of their history, I discovered in Erneste a strength and resilience regarding the desire for a true artistic encounter. I perceived them as a collaborator of choice, who agreed to carry out a project as involved as the one I proposed (i.e., a creative process concerning the theme of intimacy carried out through a daily interaction over a period of 30 days during a pandemic).

This collaboration based on intimate exchange activated, provoked, and mirrored my process while I was physically involved in the site that exposed me to the gaze of random passersby on the street. As Kuppers suggests, we can identify "somatic education as a pathway to taking responsibility for one's self, in the absence of hard truths, in experimentation and playful process" ("Performances studies" 1). The somatic explorations supported the notion of intimacy in the improvisations because Erneste and I were taking responsibility for the unfolding of our own experiences. Erneste in particular expressed maturity by taking charge of their experience, which influenced my learning. A somatic approach also takes into consideration the relational stance with emotions. Regarding the emotional stance, I always felt comfortable communicating with Erneste if I needed to stop, share an emotion, or discuss an event that might be affecting me. And at all times, I also sought to listen to Erneste. As Hanna writes:

> In similarity to other basic neurological functions, the emotions have a basic polarity in somas: the soma is either in the mode of opening or of closing. In opening, the soma allows unrestricted passage of sensory input into its process; in closing, the osmotic process restricts sensory input, sealing off the process of experience in order to protect it. ("Selections from…")

This principle of opening and closing when feeling an emotion offered me and Erneste the possibility to engage fully in the experience while taking our own limits into consideration. Our collaboration took shape through laughing, listening, and crying, which established a safety net for building respect and trust when interacting together. The 1-hour conversations also offered a space for this sharing to happen. Our somatic interactions in the Zoom meetings allowed me to open up to the practice of working in nudity and to let go of the barriers I sometimes held or sensed in my usual practice. This was the first time in my career that my creative process

[28] This excerpt was translated from Portuguese to English using *Deepl*, a translation website.

included nudity; therefore, the experience contributed, temporarily, to transforming my creative approaches to choreography.

Zoom

As mentioned in the introduction, the pandemic prevented Erneste and I from working in person after our first meeting in Montreal in early 2020. As such, I invited Erneste to collaborate with me remotely, using Zoom, as a way to experiment with how we could deepen our individual improvisation practices. Engaging with Erneste remotely became a strategy to test and explore the theme of intimacy in depth. I remarked how the Zoom video interface — the camera — brought an intensity to both my own and Erneste's sense of presence and how we committed to each other. As Rosenberg suggests, working with the camera in the most experimental manner intensifies intimacy: "The presence of the camera is presupposed, a given, and as such the camera (or viewer) is invited into that safe-zone and may participate in the dynamic of the performer's space in a most intimate way" (153). Our Zoom meetings had the effect of reinforcing behaviours that were intimate because, through the lens of the Zoom video camera, we could get closer to each other to the point of having the sensation of touch. By improvising with materials and props, I felt strongly connected physically with Erneste, in the same way I can relate with physical touch. For example, we improvised by placing sheets of paper all over our floors. When we were manipulating the papers, by folding them, moving with them, grasping them while looking at each other, and mirroring each other's gestures, I felt like we were touching the same piece of paper. Within the analysis of this specific experience, I want to refer to the work of David MacDougall in *Transcultural Cinema*. MacDougall reflects on the separation of the senses when relating to images. He writes: "A further ambiguity surrounds the separation of the senses for although seeing and touching are not the same, they originate in the same body and their objects overlap, so that most of what can be seen can also be touched" (MacDougall 51). Here, I translate this concept in relation to the physical and mediatized body that specifically targets the sense of touch while working with telepresence.[29] The sensation of touch and the sensation of seeing were always present in Erneste's and my interactions. MacDougall explains how "touch and vision do not become interchangeable but share an experiential field" (51). In addition, our goal was to

[29] Technology that enables a person to perform actions in a distant or virtual location as if physically present in that location.

encourage deep listening during our improvisations, which was achieved by the four strategies developed via somatic exploration. This required sustained attention on both sides since we were coexisting in distinctly separate physical spaces. During our Zoom meetings, our practice of improvisation was established through shared listening, often mirroring each other's gestures, which favoured a common rhythm, informed by the time we took to pose together and also by our way of moving from one idea to another. For example, during our improvisations, it was not necessary to talk in order to understand each other. We would have an hour-long fluid dialogue, conducted only through movement. This resulted in a strong awareness of my state of presence. The constant presence of Erneste on Zoom, witnessing me, affected my experience, my movements, and my desires. The Zoom call framed everything we did in front of the screen, so our actions were seen by the other and recorded. In a way, Erneste became a first spectator, probably facilitating this state in which I found myself. The notion of performance was not an objective among our exchanges, but it was induced without our paying attention to it. Douglas Rosenberg, creator and theorist of "screendance," also speaks to this perspective of presenting the camera as a site: "If one considers the theater with its proscenium arch as a site for the performance of dance, then one might also consider video, with its specific frame size (or aspect ratio, the relationship of width to height) as a sort of architectural space as well" (153). Therefore, the Zoom videos and our computer screens become in and of themselves sites of performance.

The vacant store in relation to Erneste's apartment

The meetings on Zoom between Erneste and me took place in our respective spaces: for me, the vacant store located in Montreal, and for Erneste, their apartment located in São Paulo. They had dedicated a room in their apartment to host all our meetings. The fact that Erneste participated in the project in his own apartment gave a very intimate aspect to our exchanges. Since they were in their own environment, I had access to the architecture of their place, the landscape outside, the posters on the walls, etc. During our meetings and exchanges, seeing their place gave me a view into their personal stories and experiences. Everything on their walls has meaning, and those stories were openly shared with me. I believe that Erneste's being in an intimate space facilitated the quality of our exchanges, because, on my end, the vacant store was a brand-new space that I was getting to know. This context allowed for in-depth exchanges about our personal stories and established a ground of trust for our improvisations.

Figure 5 Screenshot of the edited video on Day 11, Candles.

Figure 4 Screenshot of the edited video on Day 11, Candles.

Day 11, Candles

The day I've chosen to exemplify the theme of intimacy is Day 11. On this day, Erneste and I both created an installation of candles to improvise with. I covered a third of the space with a white tarp to protect the floor, and I located the space for this improvisation at the very back of the store. I placed around 50 votives and five medium-sized candles all over the tarp. Erneste arranged around 25 tall candles on plates. Our main task was to slowly move the candles in a similar rhythm while observing each other. The movements were achieved in a slow pace since we had to manipulate fire without burning ourselves. This process was done with extreme care. Also, because we were manipulating fire, we decided to undress. I was in my underwear and Erneste was completely naked. The improvisation lasted 1 hour and was done at 6:00 p.m. in Montreal and 8:00 p.m. in Brazil, because we had a 2-hour time difference and I wanted to work at night. While setting up, we shared intimate conversations regarding romantic relationships. At the beginning of the process, I did not see a direct connection between the different subjects arising in our conversations. But later, around the middle of the month, I noticed that the talks

were intertwined with our physical practice. For example, during the improvisation with the candles, the intimate discussion we had about our past relationships put me in a state of trust. I felt quite comfortable entering this space we were creating. I later noticed that the conversation that preceded the improvisation was continued through our way of being in space and the movements we made. Our gestures were gentle, calm, and sensitive, and our listening was exquisite. This conversation led us to a deep listening in our gestures, with pauses while looking at each other. Somehow, for me, it became about discovering each other. Verbal exchanges were a way to enter into an encounter that was subsequently carried by our movements, which became vessels for communication. After the somatic improvisation with candles, our discussion continued. We shared our sensitivities about our appearances. We openly discussed our fears regarding our physical bodies and how our previous experiences have influenced our journeys to the present day (see the video of Day 11 in Appendix A).

This night with the candles represented a distinct turning point in the project and in our collaboration. From that day on, I began to notice that communication with Erneste illuminated my inner state, affecting the density of my movements, my sense of touch, and the quality of my gestures. Our remote interactions facilitated by Zoom, which may be considered as immaterial experiences, actually had a significant influence on my physical and material choices. As Bill Brown, scholar in media studies suggests, "when you admire the materiality of a sweater, you're acknowledging something about its look and feel, not simply its existence as a physical object" (49). The point I am making here is that my interactions with Erneste on Zoom did transpire as felt and material, or to use Brown's term, as "materialities of embodiment" (56). This qualitative term helps to elucidate the impact of what we both experienced while improvising in our respective physical spaces and over Zoom. It also suggests that, in some way, I was rematerializing and integrating what was experienced via the screen. Brown suggests that it is possible to "[rematerialize] media by exhibiting the physical interaction that occurs between human and technology and disclosing the multilayered histories that lie within any technology of communication" (56). In this regard, the communication with Erneste within a media space impacted my embodied experience, thereby generating a transformation. The candlelight improvisation opened the door to more risk-taking, allowing me to explore vulnerable states of being (working in the nude) while located in the vacant store. This experience also led us to play with other materials, such as saran wrap and paint, which I describe below.

Publicness

Collaboration between me, the vacant store, and Erneste via Zoom

In the course of this creation-as-research process, one element that emerged as foundational was the possibility of being observed publicly by people passing the storefront while intimate exchanges were taking place between Erneste and me. Within the growth of the process, the idea of publicness (socialness) versus intimacy (interiority) was very much in correspondence with the themes of transparency (limpidity) and opacity (complexity). Firstly, the storefront location allowed for constant exposure through front display windows, which afforded a clear view of the interior of the store. I also chose to place a surveillance camera in the second half of the space, where the proscenium arch on the ceiling was positioned. This camera was linked to a television displayed in the storefront window, which allowed passersby to clearly witness my activities. This camera, which broadcast images in real time, indicated to passersby that the action happening inside the vacant store could be watched. Generally, people were very discreet when watching. On my end, I did not bring much attention to the passersby except when I spent time in the front window, improvising or observing. Some of them knocked on the door wanting to know more about the project or wanting to discuss what they saw.

Although adopting a lens of performative ethnography firstly promoted the recognition and involvement of my input within the research sites, this theory also allowed for the consideration of the unexpected aspect relating to passersby. The increasing relationship that developed with the passersby was not foreseen in the approach of this creative process, and it is probably the dimension involving the most destabilization. This destabilization was positive, since I received testimonies that touched me deeply. I met people who told me how certain pieces of writing or videos had resonated with them. For example, I met passersby who were leaving their homes for the first time after the pandemic and needed interaction. Through the testimonies I received, I was able to perceive that my art practice offered a kind of relief, a window to hope and healing. I didn't expect so many reactions and interactions from that side. Performative ethnography has made it possible, through its epistemological position, to recognize a process which "admits the fragile situation of the fieldworker" ("Performance Studies" 21). I could not ignore the people who wanted to interact while I was creating.

Throughout the month, the more the space became inhabited with my presence, videos, and materials, the more the interactions with the passersby were accentuated. By positioning the research in a space of visibility, on a commercial street, I experienced a constant friction between the sense of intimacy developing with Erneste and being seen while improvising and thereby "performing" in the space. Our improvisation practice, supported by somatic strategies, was not intended to be a performance in itself. However, with the presence of passersby on the street, some people stayed for a long time in front of the window, transforming this experience into an act of performance. This is in line with Kwon's theory of the phenomenological paradigm, which links the experience of the site with the presence of the spectator.

As mentioned in the analysis on the theme of intimacy, relating with Erneste over Zoom was reinforcing our relationship and inciting an emotional and a physical proximity that often led to us undertaking somatic explorations in the nude. The site-oriented practice in the vacant store blended with Zoom, producing a space where I felt comfortable being seen or looked at. Conversing and improvising with Erneste on a daily basis made an important contribution to my artistic process, allowing me to take ownership of my space, to take risks, and to dare — even while being observed. On November 11, I wrote:

> *Waking up with the thinking thread of last night. How does the store collaborate within all of this? It enhances all the codes that I impose on myself as a woman. It enhances and questions and brings consciousness towards all my choices relating to my gender. Whenever I make a decision about a gesture relating to my physical body, undressing or moving with sensuality in the space, I question, re-address and make a decision. But being in communication with Erneste is allowing me to override the small talk in my head and engage fully with the action I am committing to.*

The vacant store amplified my awareness of my cisgender female body because I was literally peeling off layers (undressing) in front of the passersby. These gestures relate to Hunter's idea of perceptivity in dance. Hunter writes: "Both external and internal 'contexts' influence and inform our experiencing of space inferring a two-way interaction between individual/ space and space/individual" (29). The process of improvising in the vacant store while exposing my body acted on my inner perception in a two-way interaction. At first, my choices were felt in an introspective way through the exchanges I was experiencing with Erneste. Then, because passersby could witness me, I became aware of the impact my choices could have. Sometimes I

would finish improvising and I would realize that someone was sitting comfortably watching what was going on in the store. This awareness was possible because my choices were directly visible to the outside world, and this was simultaneously supported by the presence of Erneste. The physical distance with Erneste gave me a sense of security. It allowed me to express my femininity without feeling the pressure to make sure that I was not misread in my actions. Erneste's positioning in relation to their physical body — their cultural context, their relationship to illness, their identification as queer, and their cisgender male body — allowed me to be positively affected in the creative process. It gave me permission to push the limits of what I considered proper behaviour for a heterosexual cisgender woman. There was intimacy being shared which related to sensitivity but not sexuality. Even if I was seen, the vacant store felt like a protected space, with the door always locked. The fact that I felt that I had to work with the door locked demonstrates the complexity that emerged between the concepts of intimacy and of publicness. The constant friction between these two realities was tangible. I was drawn to the intimate experience of a sense of bodily freedom, but I had to make sure that this space remained safe, without anyone entering. The one time I forgot to lock the door, a man entered and kindly asked if he could "visit the art gallery."

Figure 6 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 17, Trio.

Figure 7 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 17, Trio.

Day 17, Trio

On Day 17, something unexpected happened. That day, Erneste and I were talking, and I felt a lack of inspiration for how to start our improvisation. Then, I decided to position myself close to the window so Erneste could see the street. As soon as we started improvising, someone came to the window and started to reproduce our gestures. We were dancing as a trio. My senses and my mind were completely occupied, firstly by figuring out if I knew this person and secondly by processing the double input coming from the street and the computer. The person was very close to me, and I could see and feel his presence from looking at the screen but also from sensing him in the window. It was almost hard to believe that it was happening because the person stayed with us and committed fully to what we were doing for 32 minutes. After the participant on the street left, Erneste and I continued to improvise for another 10 minutes. When we stopped, we were both in shock. At this moment I understood the effect and the strength of being public and witnessed in the act of creation. The space I had created was offering cues of inclusion, and the passerby felt comfortable enough to engage with me, even from the street level. Somehow, I was receiving feedback which permitted me to be more conscious of how my work affected people who were exposed to or encountered the work (see video of Day 17 in Appendix A).

Later the same day, the person who improvised with us came back and knocked at the door. I opened because he seemed excited to share what he had experienced. He introduced himself as a movie director and an artist with experience in clowning and mime. He said he had an issue with his own creative process and was going to pick up a book. He saw us, read the description on the door (which I mentioned in the site-oriented description above), and felt that the space was open for interaction to emerge. He could see that we were interacting through the computer and

that it was being recorded. He then followed Erneste and I from the images he was seeing on the computer. He shared that the experience made him reconnect to his body and his work and that clarity came to him after this time shared with us. After he left, I played music and started dancing in the space freely because the exchange brought me so much joy. I then realized that people were stopping by and watching. At the end of the song, a lady made the gesture of a heart with her hands while her face was leaning on the front door. From that moment on, I understood that my practice was developing in dialogue with those who passed by on the street. My artistic propositions — my writing positioned in the window, the videos, and my moments of improvisation with Erneste in a performative manner — seemed to have an effect in the public realm, on the street level. This impact was palpable through the interventions and gestures that the passersby testified to me.

Transparency

Erneste

I want to emphasize how collaborating with Erneste impacted my outlook on aesthetics. Erneste's creative practices involve creating and documenting live performance to generate video images for cinematic works. For Erneste, the capturing of video images is achieved by using the camera in a performative and embodied way. As they state, "it is as if a cinematographic genesis of the body and a corporal genesis of cinema [occur] simultaneously"[30] (Filho 8). Being in contact with them and witnessing their singular approach to artmaking rooted in the body and the image, which I saw in their film *Not Tonight* (2015), had a direct impact on shifting my gaze within my own process. Erneste's approach is experimental and experiential, involving the physicality of the body in relation to the camera (8). In this project, the way our bodies interacted with the lens, located in our computers, was with movement and was relational. Erneste influenced the developing aesthetic through our improvisations, imposing a non-rigid, embodied, and intuitive approach to the imagery. This aspect was realized daily by playing together and experimenting via Zoom. Throughout the process, I noticed that working in a media space and recording video content triggered what I identified as a "good" aesthetic. The daily contact with Erneste destabilized me and challenged my notions of aesthetics and beauty. I noticed that the

[30] This excerpt was translated from Portuguese to English using *Deepl*, a translation website.

more I filmed and edited, the more I cared about how it looked. I was suddenly spending time cropping and fixing the images. From the standpoint of exploring with an experimental perspective, I began questioning this sudden obsession of focusing on "good" aesthetics. There was a burst of creativity and freedom emerging from the collaborations, and I could notice friction arising on my end. Erneste's involvement was coming from a place of complete freedom, allowing me to reflect on this fixation that was appearing in the process. The somatic exploration explored via writing made me realize that my path as a creator evolving in an institutional system had somehow coloured my aesthetic approach. The context of research within an experimental approach gave me permission to shift my gaze. This transformation was also reinforced by the desire to displace my artistic routine by an approach where artistic practice and ritual were in correspondence. Based on Schechner's way of situating ritual (228), the collaboration between the sites (the vacant store and Zoom calls) became my performative system, generating new materials which allowed me to recompose my traditional creative process. While reflecting on Erneste's collaborative presence, I wrote:

> *They allow and embrace the uneven, the unpolished. I sense that I have been letting myself be affected by this way of entering into the work, but sometimes the choreographer is not far and steps into the way of the researcher. The choreographer has the reflex to craft, the reflex and desire to polish a proposition. The researcher in the room wants to allow the uneven, the crooked, and the sinuous to appear.*

I was conscious that in my previous work my tendency was to confine and structure my work to the point that the raw material would disappear. I needed to remind myself that one of the core objectives of this project was to experiment with how to transform my creative routines.

Zoom

The media space of the Zoom calls did not produce standard video image because it possesses a distinct architecture. As Paul Jones and David Holmes, scholars in media and communication, suggest: "Communication media 'are not neutral, transparent, or value-free conduits for carrying data or information from one place to another.'" (142). From this perspective, the Zoom space carried its own aesthetic, affecting our experience of time and space. Jones and Holmes acknowledge how the medium can affect the experience in this way when they state: "The peculiarity of a medium's symbolic forms might induce particular intellectual or

emotional dispositions, while its technical architecture might delimit temporal and spatial experiences" (142). With this perspective in mind, I made some choices that influenced our experience when interacting together on our Zoom calls throughout the process. There are various viewing options offered by the interface, and I chose to work with the one that presented our bodies on the screen in two juxtaposed squares (as seen in Figures 6 and 7, above). All of our meetings and conversations were recorded in this manner. This particular screen set-up was the stage for our interactions. Like a theatrical space, we could enter and leave the media space of the Zoom call, generating a large number of ways to enter and leave the Zoom frame. Each of us could choreograph our movements with our computer cameras as we wished. Therefore, Erneste and I could produce images independently. As Rosenberg states, "video space as a site for choreography is a malleable space for the exploration of dance as subject, object and metaphor, a meeting place for ideas about time, space and movement" (148). Manipulating the images independently gave Erneste and I the ability to individually determine how we would generate the images while playing with time and space. Moving our computers, and thereby where our cameras were situated, was another way of interacting and generating specific aesthetics related to the moment. We developed an embodied approach where our movements were intrinsically linked with the capturing of the images. This approach also relates to the manner in which Erneste approaches their work. In their dissertation, they "[consider] cinema as a body-media that thinks, feels, and articulates movements in the multiplicity of environments that (provisionally) constitute it"[31] (Filho 8). The research on Zoom as a site takes into consideration the fact that media is not only an object of archive but that it also can be considered as a site of performance on its own. As Brown, Kipp, and Voris state, "technology is both a constituent part of the work itself and a reflective (or perhaps refractive) tool embedded into our creative process that contributes, alongside other elements, to the play of relationship between bodies and site" (175). As stated above, sometimes the way we captured the images was by physically moving the camera (and computer) while our bodies were in movement and in interaction. The camera lens was our place of documentation, of communication, and of play. Having the possibility of multiple viewpoints, we could choose how we presented our bodies to each other in the Zoom call.

[31] This excerpt was translated from Portuguese to English using *Deepl*, a translation website.

Here, I want to draw attention to how a somatic perspective can open up the discourse in the representation of the body when relating to Zoom and my interactions with Erneste. Isabelle Ginot, dance scholar and practitioner of the Feldenkrais method, addresses how the body can be presented from a somatic standpoint. Ginot asserts that somatics does not pretend that there is a natural or original body which needs to be rehabilitated (15). She writes that, instead, somatics advocates for "the reorganization of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of that which we call the body" (Ginot 15). She claims that "the 'simple pleasures' of a well thought out somaesthetic culture cannot seriously exclude the most extreme physical imaginaries" (Ginot 15). The media space of the Zoom calls had its own aesthetic; therefore, the way we positioned ourselves in relation to the camera could fragment the body, affecting the reading of what we could identify as the whole of our body and its representation. For example, the Zoom interface allowed us to play and stage our bodies by presenting close-ups of various body parts while exploring a certain abstraction or focusing solely on facial expressions. Using Zoom to interact with Erneste revealed to me a representation of my body and their body in different perspectives that a dance studio or live presence would not have allowed. As Hunter proposes, "bodies are defined in terms of speed and slowness, and in terms of their ability to affect and be affected by other bodies" (97). The attentiveness and care supported by our four somatic strategies[32] created a connectivity between Erneste and I — a connection that felt "real" and transmitted to our bodies, just as Hunter suggests.

Figure 8 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 21, My Flesh is Like an Old Piece of Saran Wrap.

[32] The four strategies Erneste and I used were as follows: 1) improvising and reproducing our gestures identically, mirroring each other; 2) moving through our respective spaces with the other's voice as a guide, without using the video image; 3) being still and quiet while observing the other move through their space; and 4) interacting with the materials with a focus on listening and synchronizing gestures.

Figure 9 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 21, My Flesh is Like an Old Piece of Saran Wrap.

Day 21, My Flesh is Like an Old Piece of Saran Wrap

Day 21 consisted of playing with the aesthetics and the representation of our bodies from a somaesthetic perspective (Ginot). We played with our imaginations while stretching saran wrap over our bodies and playing with the transparency of this material. Choosing to work with this material accentuated the notion of intimacy, of being seen by my collaborator but also by the passersby, literally exposing my naked self in saran wrap. At this moment in my process, I was ready to challenge my own boundaries and take more risks. We took the time to unfold our saran wrap on the floor and attach it to adhesive paper. In the Zoom recording, on Day 21, there is a long sequence where Erneste and I enter and leave the space while trying to install this singular skin, illustrating the challenge of trying to fix it onto the floor. Then, we started to improvise by following each other's gestures. Soon, both of us ended up naked under the transparency of the material we were using. On my end, my material was resistant enough that I could play with it. On Erneste's side, the material ripped very easily, leaving them with not much to interact with. We played with various camera angles but mainly recorded our improvisations from the perspective of the floor. Within this improvisation, we exposed different body parts through the plastic while also playing with the plastic on our faces. The contrast between moving with Erneste in the Zoom call and exposing myself naked in the store on a bright Sunday was challenging. I specifically decided to avoid looking at the front of the store and stood at the opposite end of the store so that I could proceed with the improvisation. For the first time in this project, I was completely naked, and it was quite uncomfortable to move on the cold surface of the floor. On their side, Erneste was having so much trouble with the plastic that he almost

seemed to be fighting with it. On my side, the plastic seemed to somehow protect me by enveloping my entire body. We seemed to be oscillating between comfort and inconvenience.

After we turned off our Zoom cameras, I kept exploring with the material on my own for about 15 minutes, capturing the images with my iPhone. By revealing my body in such a way, with the contact of this material, this practice echoed how I felt about the physical changes I have experienced as a woman over the past years. From this performative state, I did an exercise of somatic writing:[33]

My body feels like an old piece of saran wrap.
Through, in, and outside.
Wrinkles, marks and gestures of time.
The flesh which is looking to find its grace again.

My flesh feels like ordinary ripples, lines, undulations, landscape of how the matter becomes.
The fruit has fallen from the tree, leaving behind every moment of freshness.
The becoming is a calling for acceptance and repair.
My flesh has too many histories.
My flesh says more about me than what I can share.
My flesh is the tracing path of my sorrow and joy.
My flesh is what is left after the tornado of life.

My flesh is the loan of my spirit, the garbage of time, the tiny mirror of the stories hiding inside my heart.
My flesh is like an old piece of saran wrap.

On this day, I recorded the above text with a voice memo and used the flow of my voice to inspire my editing of that day's Zoom meeting. I felt that I had not exhausted the subject, that I needed to say more about this experience, so, in the middle of video editing, I improvised another text that blended with the first one. The edited video was composed of images of our two bodies

[33] More of this soma writing can be found in Appendix B.

(Erneste's and mine) wrapped in saran wrap, accompanied by close-ups of my body with the remains of plastic, revealing intimate experiences that my body had undergone. This video proposal allowed me to question the way I perceive the aesthetics of my own body while giving me the opportunity to alter the images to bring out my inner perceptions (Hunter 26). The next day, I wrote the text on tracing paper and hung it in the window. Later during that week, a woman found me on Instagram and shared how powerful the text was for her. She finished her message by saying: "You are a true artist." After receiving this message, I was very touched, but it also made me reflect on the singularity of the creative process. All these steps were necessary in order to generate sensitive and evocative content, which led me to explore in new ways how I approach aesthetics. The theme of transparency permitted me to engage with the representation of the body by considering other standards and establishing new routines which became my new ritual (see video of Day 21 in Appendix A).

The vacant store

After Day 21, an important reflection emerged concerning the somatic approach to my collaboration with the vacant store. The vacant store acted as a site that could fuse multiple processes, over differences in time and space.

The saran wrap improvisation positioned me and Erneste in a state of vulnerability. After our Zoom call ended, I kept improvising, staying in the same state of vulnerability. This experience then informed another gesture, writing, which I made visible in the store window.

All these gestures could be perceived from the outside by passersby on Saint Denis Street. I noticed a practice in which one action led to another. The actions were superimposed, like in double exposure photography.

In the process, I generated evidence of my artistic actions, which I call traces, which passersby could witness. My process was thus made visible, permitting me to receive almost direct feedback. The creation and display of the videos reinforced the concept of transparency. All of my actions were engraved in time because they were the archive of my repertoire, just as Taylor suggests (19).

Opacity

The term opacity is used here to address two perspectives within the experience of the creative process. In the literal sense, opacity refers to the quality of being difficult to see through, and, in a figurative way, it is the complexity of specific realities, of being opaque.

Erneste

The theme of opacity emerged from several challenges of collaborating with Erneste. These challenges arose since they were located in a different physical space and also in relation to our different cultural backgrounds. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Kuppers's concept of eco soma recognizes the physical location, its cultural and social stance, as taking part of the soma experience. Kuppers states: "In an eco soma inquiry, my own self is never 'unmarked' or the quiet center of the phenomenological self" ("Eco Soma" 1). In this regard, an important experience relates to interacting at a distance with Erneste. I did not expect this situation to have such a strong impact on the creative process. As Kuppers states, "eco soma sensing is interested in the kind of gaps and opportunities that open up when phenomenological awareness of being in the world encounters uncomfortable spaces" ("Eco Soma" 1). Erneste and I were coexisting in different social, cultural, and economic contexts, which we did not pay too much attention to until one day when I asked Erneste to send me a piece of clothing in the mail. I was obsessed with a pair of overalls that they wore when improvising. I thought that it would bring an interesting perspective to our creative work to wear their clothing. When they went to the post office, the price to ship the overalls to Montreal from Brazil was very expensive. We talked about it, and I said: "It's okay. I will pay for it." I was thinking in production mode: "We do crazy things sometimes to make it work." But then they shared with me that they felt very uncomfortable with this expense. They explained to me, in depth, the economic situation in Brazil, and they explained how it had been exacerbated since the pandemic. "People don't even know if they will be able to afford to eat and feed themselves three times a day," they explained. In this context, for them, it did not make any sense to mail their overalls. Of course, I agreed. Suddenly, I felt my own limitations. I felt so locked into my own Quebecois Canadian reality. I realized that I was a privileged artist who was supported by a whole system and that while trying to realize my project, I had lost all social and cultural perspective. The next day, I wrote:

Today, I decided that I will visit Erneste in the spring and go to São Paulo. There is a need to feel the heat, to smell this collaboration from an embodied perspective. That decision feels good and maybe allows some openness within my own space.

The decision to visit Erneste was visceral. With this in mind, I would like to refer to Lippard's perspective, presented in Chapter 2, on the act of recognizing our cultural position and practicing seeing and naming during a collaboration (126). My request for receiving Erneste's overalls and my decision to visit Erneste in Brazil were thinkable because I am a privileged artist. My desires reflect a complexity related to the theme of opacity, because even when I had the best intentions, I was never too far from a blind spot. Lippard's perspective calls for vigilance when collaborating. The discussion about the overalls and Erneste sharing their discomfort represents exactly how seeing and naming can be crucial in a creative process. I knew that Erneste had different socio-economic conditions, but I had not experienced how concretely these conditions of privilege and lack could manifest themselves within the process and the collaboration. The conversation with Erneste about the situation in Brazil made me realize that our intimate sharing, even with its intensity, needed to be supported by having a shared experience of where we each live. This intention was realized by a 2-week visit to São Paulo between May 20 and June 3, 2022.[34]

The vacant store

The vacant store felt like a protective space where I could expose myself and explore freely. There was a fine balance between my level of exposure in relation to the public space (the street) and it being a place that offered protection (the store). If I had not had a place where I felt safe to develop a bodily experience in a "nonart" space, the collaboration with Erneste would have been affected. Because I felt safe with the door always locked, I could respond freely by responding with the same level of intimacy that was being offered. The physical opacity of the store contributed positively to an intimate collaboration taking place with Erneste.

[34]I will not explain my trip to São Paulo here because it would require extensive explanation. The main point is that the process of recognizing my privilege as a Quebecois artist shifted how I undertook the creative process. Recognizing my privilege demands care and attention in the development of any future project.

Zoom

The media space of the Zoom calls also generated moments of opacity. Almost every day, we experienced issues with the internet connection on my end. This generated a specific rhythm in our interactions, as we rarely had a completely fluid conversation. Often, someone would talk and the other one would question if the other person was still understanding. Recurrent sentences — such as "Are you there?" "No, it is frozen. Do you hear me?" — were part of our daily encounters. These moments were so recurrent that there was the potential to generate artistic content just from this singular perspective of the meeting, but we did not get too affected by it.

Figure 10 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 25, Paint.

Figure 11 Screenshot of the edited video, Day 25, Paint.

Day 25, Paint

Since the beginning of the process, I had been asking Erneste to buy paint. I was interested in playing with this medium in our improvisations, but every time they went to the store, they either could not find it or it was out of stock. Early in the process, there were signs that reflected

the different economies in which Erneste and I were working in, such as the difficulty to get paint, but I did not pay too much attention to this at the start. Then the incident with the overalls happened, and I asked them at this point if they were still comfortable to get paint, even if it was difficult to find. They said that they were comfortable with the idea, but it took until the end of the project for them to find paint. Just before starting our improvisation practice, they wanted to make sure that they had washable paint that could be applied to skin. Unfortunately, the salesperson had made a mistake, and the paint could not be applied to the body. I suggested that Erneste use the paint however they wanted to, maybe on paper or using brushes. I consider this improvisation to be related to opacity, firstly because of the literal meaning of the substance used, paint, which implies the application of a layer, and secondly, because Erneste did not have the right kind of paint, which almost aborted the idea of using it. It was at my insistence that we finally used that medium. Erneste was a little afraid of contact with paint because when they were younger their parents always told them to be careful with toxic products because of their eyesight issues.

We were faced with a complex situation, but we decided to go ahead with it and adjust our expectations. We started to improvise without knowing how this constraint would affect our interaction. I was comfortable using paint on my body, which I did right from the start. When applying the paint on my body, I saw Erneste doing the same gesture on the wall behind them. We suddenly connected strongly through gestures imposed by applying the paint onto the surfaces available to us. By following each other's gestures, we entered into a state of observation. We followed each other's actions for about an hour. Erneste would sometimes go wash their hands to remove the paint and return to continue our interactions. While they were gone, I would apply more paint. This happened without the need for discussion. For this improvisation, I positioned myself near the store window and felt comfortable in that position. In the middle of the practice, I removed my bra with ease, while Erneste struggled with the application of the paint. These details show the complexity that emerged from the use of this substance, highlighting our differences in the handling of this material.

Towards the end of our 1-hour-long improvisation, I noticed that Erneste was slowly opening their mouth. I followed by mirroring the gesture. For about 4 minutes, we slowly opened our mouths, arriving at this intense silent scream, which completed this improvisation. The imposition of the paint on different surfaces played an important role in creating a depth of field

for us to play with. There was a form of encounter between the application of the paint and the state in which the gestures were deployed. Throughout the improvisation, we gave our attention to each other, which allowed us to tune in not only by reproducing the gestures but also by adopting the states of being that the gestures led us to explore. The opening of the mouth is an example of how this action was done first in a very naive way and then how it transformed into an intensity in our faces in a very gradual way (see Figure 11 above). I remember slowly becoming aware, during the process of the mouth opening, that I was transforming into someone who was silently screaming, feeling the emotional charge that accompanied my gesture. This is another example of how the somatic explorations facilitated this listening to each other. Working with red paint and imposing an opacity, on the body and on the wall, permitted me to generate strong images. The complexity revealed by the images I witnessed and participated in made me lose track of time. I had created a world of my own, a little bubble that could refer to opacity in a figurative way. I was completely absorbed in the practice, forgetting the passersby, the city, and the time of day. The opaque traces on my body were in a way another skin, a layer of protection, while also being an affirmation that allowed me to dive into a deep darkness screaming at the world with Erneste (see video of Day 25 in Appendix A).

Conclusion: Choreographing the collaboration

Figure 12 Picture taken of the space on November 29, 2021, the last day of work in the vacant store. Photo by Brianna Lombardo.

Over the past 20 years, I have choreographed dance pieces and performed as a dancer in public or theatrical spaces, using specific scenographies as inspiration. In this project, by using collaborative process as one of the primary creation methods, I aimed to change my creative process. Situating the creation-as-research within a performative ethnographic approach opened an unexpected personal narrative. It gave space to acknowledge my experience as a researcher, adding room for Erneste's input and the interventions of public passersby outside the storefront.

With *Choreographing collaboration,* I wanted to discover how a continual process of 30 days informed by somatic exploration could help me find new choreographic approaches. After having spent 30 consecutive days in a creation process, I can see a direct link between the organization of the creation time and the nature of my actual artistic propositions that resulted. The 30-day period was a powerful way to deepen my relationship with Erneste and to explore the vacant store. Throughout the month, I realized that by focusing on the collaboration between my

body, the vacant store, and the Zoom calls with Erneste, I could let go of my usual creative routines and, eventually, movement creation became a secondary preoccupation. I divided my time between investigating the sites (my body, the vacant store, and the Zoom calls), improvising, and video editing. For the first time, I used a media interface to create and communicate with an international collaborator, and I chose to edit one video per day. These practices — performed every day, with no days off — became my new routine, introducing performative actions and processes that generated my 30-day ritual (Schechner 228). The 6 to 10 hours a day that I spent in the vacant store shifted my perception of time. The intensive 30 days influenced me physically and emotionally and impacted the way I produced creative work. I fully abandoned myself in a kind of trance resulting from repeating the same tasks daily over a period of 30 days.

The sites greatly expanded the thematic explorations of intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity. Firstly, daily work in the vacant store focused my attention through its strategic position in the city, architecture, and materiality and reinforced the chosen themes of intimacy and publicness. It offered a home-base where my practice could unfold slowly and organically. The reorientation of my practices in the store was witnessed by passersby who reacted to the work. Secondly, the discursive approach (Kwon) was experienced by being public as well as by being in the media space (the Zoom calls) that allowed transparency and intimacy to develop. The improvisational practice infused by somatic exploration with Erneste, facilitated the growth of experimental, multisensory and embodied aspects of the work. These aspects defined the creative work, revealing the interplay between intimacy, transparency, and opacity. The playfulness carried out in our interactions with the screen acted as its own site, thereby enriching my imagination and influencing the video editing. Thirdly, the meeting of my body in relation to the screen and situated in the store, accompanied by Erneste's presence, produced a new materiality and viewpoint. The theme of transparency was ever present and brought up questions about risk.

I used somatic exploration methodologies to engage with both the physical and mediatized aspects of the work, which encouraged the transformation of my practice through physical and emotional affect. Though I worked closely with digital images, the somatic approach generated an orientation that made it easier to detach from potential projections, allowing me to focus on the relational and qualifying aspects of the work. I learned to deal with a renewed sense of

aesthetics and beauty that gave me more distance and freedom from my own body image. I presented myself clearly, exactly as I was in that precise moment of my life, entering states of being in which I discovered new ways of experiencing the sense of touch. I felt a transformation taking place through my interactions via the screen with Erneste; this influenced my way of entering into other creative acts, such as composing digitally. The somatic exploration supported the deepening of each step, while creative content was bursting forth. I relate to circus artist Dana Dugan when she writes: "My body was a material site that has learned to negotiate opposing inertias between my physical and theoretical practices — a renegotiation of time and space in an attempt to capture material and immaterial knowledge" (77). My process of somatic exploration, influenced by an eco soma perspective, fostered a focus not only on the first-person perception of the mind-body process but also on my environment. I was able to contextualize my economic, social, and cultural background with Erneste's, which had an impact on the work and my way of doing it. This perspective allowed us to address our similarities and differences in relation to the places we live in (Montreal and São Paulo). The reflection on these similarities and differences was so strong that I went to visit Erneste for 2 weeks in June 2022. This meeting could be the subject of another thesis, so I won't go into it. This visit confirmed that the experience of reciprocity, as we experienced in our Zoom meetings, could also be experienced in our physical encounters. Erneste's collaboration in this project was of great value because they were extremely generous towards the process and offered a sustained presence.

In this project, I expanded my knowledge and skills in the field of choreographic creation in two ways: 1) by exploring video editing; and 2) by creating a temporary gallery space by performing gestures that left material traces. In addition, the daily edited video was exhibited in the vacant store. The creation-as-research process allowed me to approach the choreography differently from what I was used to doing (focusing on movement) — firstly, because of the nature of the collaboration carried out over Zoom and in the vacant store, and secondly, because I decided to generate a daily video from these collaborations instead of creating a live performance. Throughout the process, the physical space of the vacant store and the projected video content were in constant dialogue. As the process evolved, I decided to curate the placement of certain videos. Some did not belong near the front of the store, but rather in the back, as their content was intimate and perhaps suggestive. In the way I was organizing the video content, the themes of intimacy and publicness appeared, as I was conscious that certain images

could trigger, provoke, or be questioned. A sensitivity to this was at play while achieving this task.

In addition, the traces left behind by somatic improvisations were not moved during the process. I left them in the very places where the action occurred. The embodied practice was reflected in the material exhibited in the space, juxtaposed with the playback of the videos. These traces were not only from the improvisations but also from the encounters with Erneste. For example, for the remainder of my 30 days occupying the store, I left out the table, the wine glass, and the bottle from our shared dinner, and when I ate a clementine, I left the peel in the store window. The places where I decided to position myself for the improvisation practice were chosen in relation to what had happened previously. What I was leaving in the space were the traces of my presence, articulated in relation to the deployment of the elements that were surrounding me through time — such as how Manning observes that "what is crafted choreographically are not bodies as such but relations" (75). My improvisation practice was allowing for a choreographic act to emerge. By leaving traces, I reinforced and made visible the relations between the sites. Human and digital traces intermingled: performative gestures met the digital presence of video. The core of the choreographic practice was, for me, achieved within the gesture of my daily editing and by leaving traces of the improvisations while staging the videos within the vacant store. I named this practice "choreography of collaboration."

Video editing was a new experience for me. The method I used for editing was exploratory and innovative in my artistic practice. These videos were 3 to 8 minutes in length, incorporating footage from solo improvisation in the store, from the Zoom exchanges with Erneste, and from engaging with the passersby on the street. The footage was recorded on Zoom, my iPhone, and/or with a GoPro camera. Capturing moments from multiple perspectives and sources created some challenges. When should I start recording? How many cameras should I place in the space? What angles to choose? Each time, the more I shot, the more choices I had to make about what I wanted to share that day. From my point of view, these questions are closely linked to the development of a choreographic proposal. I found that this type of video exploration was about capturing the right moment in time and space, just as you do when working with performers for a live performance.

In line with my creative practices, I realized the importance of the flow of editing and recognized that this practice was intrinsically linked to the somatic improvisations I was doing

with Erneste. When I was editing, the experience was so fresh that I hadn't analyzed the images. I was working from what I felt in the Zoom call. In the end, the edited videos were not a recreation of what had happened but instead a representation of my perception from a somatic perspective. It is from this standpoint that I approached the choreographic dimension. I played with the video content by considering the rhythm, its variations, and the sensations that emerged from the experience, proposing a re-mediated perspective on the live experience. To borrow from Manning, my video editing process was "about the interval, the differential across which a multiplicity of rhythms make up event-time" (89). I selected the images I was most drawn to and composed with them reflecting the multilayers present within each day.

The videos I made incorporated my conversations with Erneste, music, and some of the daily writings from the Padlet. I selected the images from a performative perspective rather than with the intention of composing a specific narrative or aesthetic form. I composed primarily from intuition, where the residue of the physical experience (led by the somatic strategies) guided the editing. I was trying to understand how the elements related to each other, and I was instinctively following the creation of a rhythm that emanated or a more poetic feeling by applying a transparency between them. An intuitive process emerged as soon as the images were downloaded, and that state would continue for the next 2 to 4 hours. The production of the montage took shape from the leftover feelings of the experience. The videos were a reformatting of my reality. Other elements took part in the composition, such as the music of a playlist shared with Erneste and music by the composer Jean Gaudreau.

Choreographing digitally by creating a daily video allowed me to reinterpret what I had experienced. This routine, undertaken over the course of 28 days, fortified the collaboration between myself and Erneste as well as the interactions with the random passing of an audience on the street. This routine included uploading the videos onto the Padlet for Erneste to watch after each day's work, which gave Erneste the possibility to engage with my daily experience in the store. Because the videos were also displayed in the storefront window, they became the focal point between what I had made in the store on my own and then with Erneste, over Zoom, giving Erneste and the passersby a context for the full experience I was having. These videos acted as a site and meeting point that illustrated the collaborative aspects of the residency I undertook in the store.

To return to Kester's insights on collaboration, the creation of the videos and their presentation in the vacant store acted as a "third artist." These videos accompanied me throughout the process. Despite the fact that they were not a human presence, these images reflected my experience. I took the time to watch them and to feel Erneste's presence through them. They were a close-up of the experience in my physical space. Through them, I discovered how all the elements that were slowly woven together were articulated. My understanding of the "third artist" concept proposed by Kester is that the encounter produced by the collaboration creates a site of its own. The latter becomes an autonomous subject, external to each party, constituting the collaborative elements. For example, I frequently noticed how a few passersby would stop and watch the videos, being drawn towards the space and looking in. On November 15, I wrote:

> *I left the space and decided to watch some of the videos from outside the store. I was a little farther away from the store. A couple suddenly stopped in front of me and went towards the window. The woman said oh! there is a new video today, let's watch it. I felt shy and left immediately to give them space, but I smiled.*

By displaying the videos in the space, a performance was created without me or Erneste being involved. The videos offered a kind of performance in and of themselves, and in collaboration with the vacant store. Broadcasting the videos in the store and at the same time having Erneste view them confirmed that this media has the potential to generate a live audience and that, conversely, my daily recording of the improvisations was generating media. As Taylor proposes, "they mutually produced each other; neither was outside or antithetical to the logic of the other" (27). These practices, the improvisation and the video editing, established during the process were becoming a mode of transmission between the sites as well as an intervention with the outside world. Following Taylor, within my project there was a lack of hierarchy between the live and the digital; my body was now imprinted via performance, generating memories (35). The live and the digital, the repertoire and the archive, supported and built upon each other.

With this in mind, a relationship was appearing, bringing to light the impact of the collaboration among all the sites. My body, the passersby, the Zoom calls with Erneste and the edited videos projected in this space were all collaborating. I just had to flow with them, but it took a while before it became tangible to me. I believe I created the right conditions for the elements of my collaboration to inform my creative process and allow me to explore renewed

artistic content. The method of creation-as-research allowed me to leave aside the pressure of choreographing a performance and, instead, to reflect upon the ways that collaboration can move across different sites (my body, the vacant store, and the Zoom calls with Erneste). By reorienting myself (from working in culturally specific dance studios) to create in a vacant store and work over Zoom with Erneste, I temporarily transformed any preconceived ideas and certain judgments I had about my dance and choreographic practice. Undertaking a research-creation project involving different sites had so many elements that a considerable intensity emanated from this endeavour. By paying attention to every aspect, every layer of it, I could perceive the richness of what was emerging: a personal transformation. This project allowed me to take risks and experiment with how my body produces knowledge and how I embody knowledge.

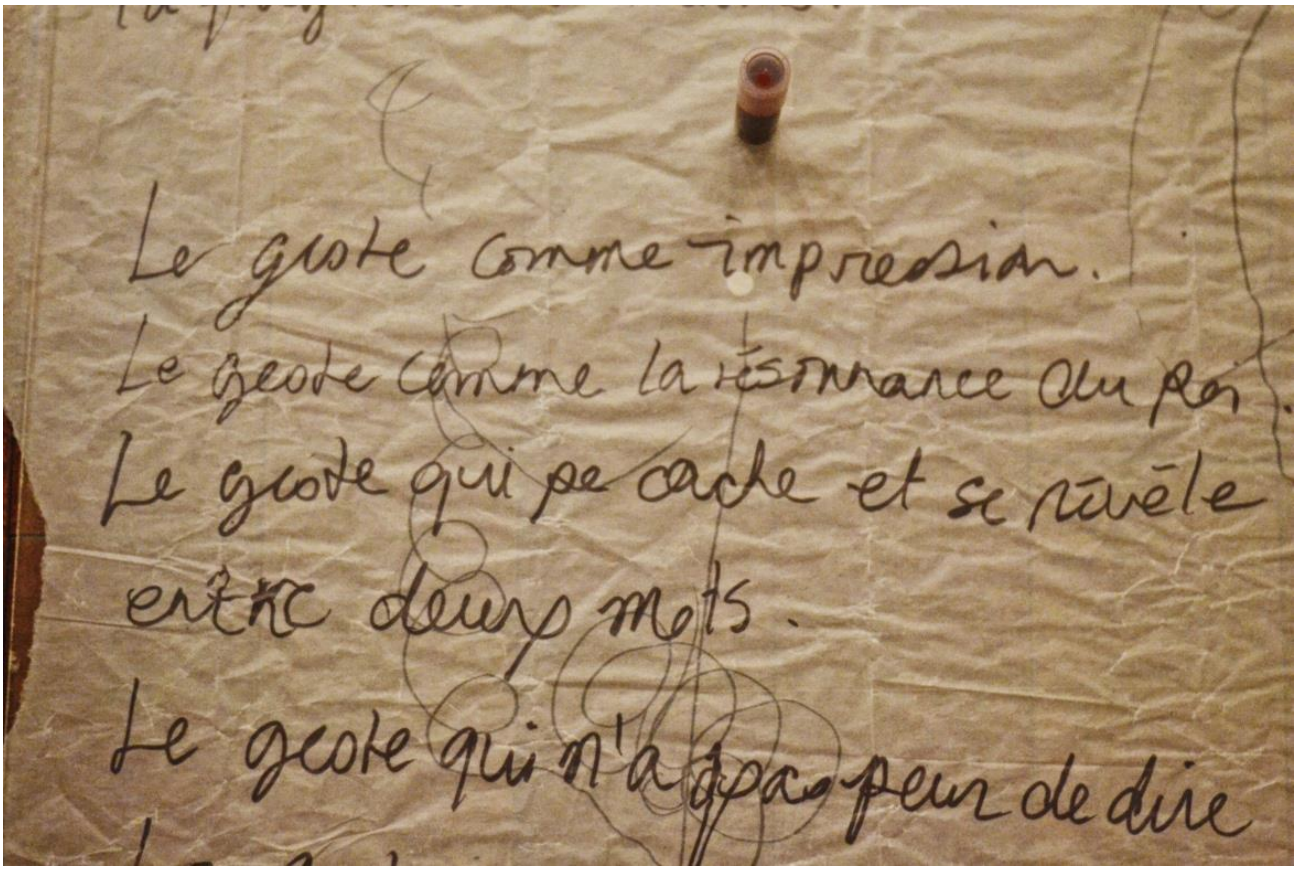

Figure 13 Picture taken of the material in the space on November 29, 2021, the last day of work in the vacant store. Photo by Brianna Lombardo.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Padlet of the 28 edited videos and pictures

Video links for each day of the process:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21
Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28

Appendix B

Selection of somatic explorations in writing

Note: The following text appears as it was written at the time, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, and sometimes in both languages.

Day 10

Doux et tendre
Le papier comme chemin pour trouver la peau de l'autre
Si l'amour est la vie, la vie semble apparaître dans la quantité de pixels générés sur l'écran.
Quand le geste devient le fil conducteur de la pensée
Quand le geste peut incarner la complexité de l'humain
Quand le geste de ma main rencontre la tienne, l'unité semble naître.
Es-tu la partie féminine dont j'ai oublié de me préoccuper ?
Peut-être que je suis la partie masculine qui est un lieu à devenir.
La rencontre semble vouloir, désirer, devenir plus que ce que nous sommes.
Plus que moi, plus que toi mais qui peut apparaître dans la transparence de nos cellules.
Comme une fine feuille de papier prête à être infusée par notre chair.

Soft and gentle
The paper as the route to find the skin of each other
If love is life, then life seems to appear in the number of pixels generated within the screen.
When the gesture becomes the leader of thought
When the gesture can embody the complexity of the human
When the gesture of my hand meets yours, unity seems to arise.
Are you the feminine part which I forgot to care about?
Maybe I am the masculine part which is a place to become.
The meeting seems to want, to desire, to become more than what we are.
More than me, more than you but it can appear in the transparency of our cells.
Like a thin sheet of paper ready to be infused by our flesh

Day 14

Je suis là. Avec toi.
Dans ce lieu improbable à toucher le cœur de la vie.
À toucher l'intérieur de l'être où les histoires font de nous les chercheurs du présent.
Je suis là avec toi.
Avec toi, dans ce lieu improbable, où les mots se déposent doucement au creux de ma propre histoire pour devenir nôtre.

Celle de notre rencontre où le dévoilement semble infini.
Où le toucher ne semble avoir de finitude.
Où chaque pas convoque vers les remous de la vie.

Day 21

My body feels like an old piece of saran wrap.

Through, in, and outside.
Wrinkles, marks, and gestures of time.

The flesh which is looking to find its grace again.

My flesh feels like ordinary ripples, lines, undulations, landscape of how the matter becomes.
The fruit has fallen from the tree, leaving behind every moment of freshness.
The becoming is a calling for acceptance and repair.

My flesh has too many histories.
My flesh says more about me than what I can share.
My flesh is the tracing path of my sorrow and joy.

My flesh is what is left after the tornado of life.

My flesh is the loan of my spirit, the garbage of time, the tiny mirror of the stories hiding inside my heart.

My flesh is like an old saran wrap.

Day 24

Le corps véhicule de la pensée
Le corps qui a envie de dire par l'entremise du geste. Simple. Doux. Discret.
Par les mouvements de mes yeux, la force et la fragilité de mes mains

Le geste comme impression
Le geste comme résonance du soi
Le geste qui se cache et se révèle entre deux mots
Le geste qui n'a pas peur de dire
Le geste qui évoque ton absence
Le geste qui me rappelle et me remémore que je suis toujours là pleine de vie

Day 25

Ça sent la fin de quelque chose.
D'un moment bien inscrit dans le temps.
Ça sent l'envie de vouloir en profiter.
D'un état de grâce installé entre deux corps qui se touchent par le biais de pixels.
Deux corps qui transposent leur fine pellicule de peau à travers un écran.
Ça sent l'envie de rien oublier ou de bien inscrire ce qui a émergé.

Appendix C

Analysis of the 28 days of creation in relation to how the four main themes (intimacy, publicness, transparency, and opacity) were explored in the creative process

Day 1. Site-oriented and publicness	Solo improvisation with tape. Displayed a dead plant in the space.
Day 2. Site-oriented and publicness	Exploration of the basement and improvisation with a statue found downstairs.
Day 3. Site-oriented, publicness, and opacity	In a voice memo, I described the actions happening on the street for 20 minutes. Improvisation with cardboard using the voice recording as a trigger to generate the temporality of the movements. I moved during the silences and stopped when I was talking.
Day 4. Site-oriented, publicness, and transparency	Night-time improvisation in the front window while wearing a dress and using the angle of the side windows to structure movement.
Day 5. Transparency	Improvisation in the first half of the space, interacting with the sunlight and plexiglass.
Day 6. Site-oriented and opacity	Solo improvisation hiding behind cardboard in the centre of the space.
Day 7. Opacity	Improvisation with paper on the floor.
Day 8. Opacity	Improvisation with the same sheets of paper on the floor from the previous day.
Day 9. Opacity	Improvisation with paper on the floor and introduction of manipulating the computer while moving.

Day 10. Opacity	Improvisation with paper on the floor and paper on the wall. Introduction of drawing. The paper was left in space until the end.
Day 11. Intimacy	Movement through an installation of candles.
Day 12. Opacity	We shared our experiences of peripheral vision limitations and drew on the wall. I washed the drawing on my wall. Erneste left the drawing on the wall in their apartment.
Day 13. Transparency	Improvisation in the basement. Just looking at each other. No interaction within our improvisations — observation only.
Day 14. Intimacy and publicness	Erneste shared their personal story about HIV. Solo improvisation and writing with paper. I placed the cardboard in the centre of the space on a long carpet and displayed soma writing in the front window.
Day 15. Opacity	Interacted with aluminum foil. Left the foil in the space.
Day 16. Transparency	Exploration with water. The buckets of water were left in the space.
Day 17. Publicness and transparency	Interaction with a passerby in the street. Exploration of the front window.
Day 18. Opacity	Interaction with rice. The rice was left in the space.
Day 19. Transparency and intimacy	No interaction via visual cues. We guided each other in our respective spaces with our voices.
Day 20. Transparency and opacity	No interaction via visual cues. We guided each other in our respective spaces with our voices.
Day 21. Transparency and publicness	Interaction with saran wrap. Conducted soma writing and exposed myself in the front window.

Day 22. Transparency and opacity	Improvisation about dressing and undressing, using various pieces of clothing which were significant to our personal life stories.
Day 23. Transparency	Improvisation with no material, following each other's gestures and movement.
Day 24. Opacity and transparency	Improvisation with lipstick, following each other's gestures and movement.
Day 25. Opacity and transparency	Improvisation with paint, following each other's gestures and movement.
Day 26. Intimacy and publicness	Dinner with Erneste accompanied by a playlist created by us with songs recalling certain periods of our lives. Solo improvisation with paint.
Day 27. Transparency	Improvisation with no material, following each other's gestures and movement.
Day 28. All of the themes	Improvisation in the various spaces we were inhabiting, dressing and undressing.

Appendix D

UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Choreographing Collaboration: a multilayered approach to somatic and site-responsive art practices

Principle Investigator: Caroline Laurin-Beaucage

Contact for Principle Investigator: clb@lorganisme.com

Project supervisor: Dr Shauna Janssen, CURC in Performative Urbanism

Contact for project leader: shauna.janssen@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: personal investment

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study aims to explore and experience multiple sites of collaboration; between bodies, spaces (both real and virtual) and time which informs and shapes a creative process in dance choreography. The purpose of this research aims to explore how a physical site and virtual site can enter in dialogue using the concept of collaboration. The research will be undertaken and achieve with the main investigator being in interaction with the participant located in a virtual space. The main investigator will be situated in a vacant storefront located in the heart of Montreal. The participant needs to be located ideally in another country to achieve the research. The main investigator invites the participant to collaborate virtually via the Zoom call interface for (30) thirty days consecutively. The research will be undertaken using somatic exploration which involves improvisation as the main tool of communication between the two collaborators (investigator and participant). Each practice will be two hours length on each day. At the end of every week, a questionnaire will be filled in written format.

B. PROCEDURES

As a participating artist, you will be asked to be available for thirty days consecutively for a period of two hours. To have access to a computer and the internet. You will be asked to perform and engage physically with improvisation practice. The thematic of public versus intimate, transparency versus opacity, performativity and temporality will be explored through the interactions. At the end of each week, we will discuss specific questions in relation to what we have been experiencing during these meetings. You will be allowed to write and share your thoughts within the process. The research will take place with the investigator only.

As a participant, your responsibilities will be to be ready to participate to the calendar agreed upon with the main investigator. The schedule is planned from November first to November 30, 2021

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Risk

The improvisation practice in the realm contemporary dance and performance practice engages with physical movements in space and can impact your physical condition. The main investigator will be guiding the practices but it is important to respect your own limits and physical condition. As a participant located abroad, I will ask for a contact in case of emergency as well as the local number for health emergency.

At any moment within the process if you feel any discomfort or present any issues that you would like to share with another speaker you can communicate with any of my committee members listed below.

Shauna Janssen shauna.janssen@concordia.ca

Angélique Wilkie angelique.willkie@concordia.ca

Najmeh Mahani-Khalili najmeh.khalili-mahani@concordia.ca

Benefits

Visibility, as participating artists' voices to share a process of contemporary dance practices with an artist located in Montreal without needing any form of transportation. To engage and refine improvisational skills as a participant and collaborator. To receive the footage for your own portfolio. The participant will be introduced to the Montreal artistic scene via the footage of the project.

The artist has the right to only share what they are comfortable with as well as making the request to remove specific information at any point until 4 weeks following the process.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The original recordings of the zoom call with video images will be uploaded on a password protected external hard drive; and a password protected cloud-sharing system that stores data on Canadian soil for purposes of communications with research supervisor. However, upon approval, the edited material would be accessible by researchers and the public.

The transformed version of the material into an artistic form will be available to public access published on platforms such as Vimeo, YouTube or via a Padlet.

The storage of the creative process of the digital recordings will be published on platforms such as Vimeo, YouTube or via a Padlet with a pass word for the committee.

The transformed version of the material into an artistic form will be available to public access published on platforms such as Vimeo, YouTube or via a Padlet.

The storage of the creative process of the digital recordings will be published on platforms such as Vimeo, YouTube or via a Padlet with a pass word for the committee.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, regulatory authorities might examine the information gathered. By participating, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

Scanned copies of the consent forms will also be archived on the researcher's password protected computer and backup systems. These will be kept in perpetuity since the consent forms also provide e-mail addresses for participants. This research intends to also make public the project. If we publish photographs and video stills emerging from the project, please indicate below whether you accept to be photographed/videoed in this project:

[ ] I accept that my name and the information I share appear in the presentation of the results of the research.

[ ] Please do not use my name as part of the presentation of the results of the research.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

An amount of 3000$ for the participation, 100$/per day of participation.

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you choose to participate, you can interrupt at any time if you feel uncomfortable. You may also request that certain shared information not be disclosed and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want me to use specific information, you must tell the principal investigator within 4 weeks after the creative process will be taking place. There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information. You will receive the remuneration in accordance to the number of days of your participation.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

ERNESTO FILHO

_____

FILHOERNESTO@GMAIL.COM

_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATA 12th NOVEMBER, 2021

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Caroline Laurin-Beaucage
Department:	Faculty of Fine Arts\Contemporary Dance
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Choreographing collaboration: a multilayered approach to somatic and site responsive art practices
Certification Number:	30015717

Valid From: November 05, 2021 To: November 04, 2022

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Richard DeMont

Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee