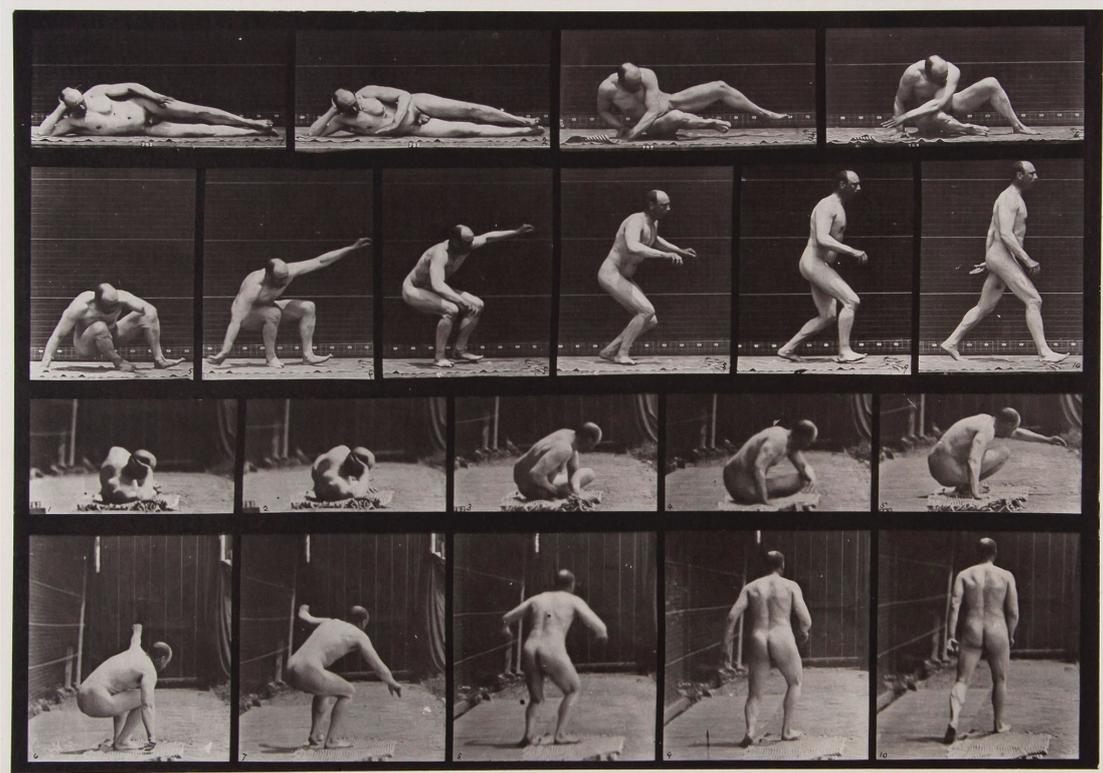


A brief introduction to
Real Time Composition method
By João Fiadeiro



Eadweard Muybridge

Arising from the Ground and Walking Off, 1887

Meeting a friend in a corridor, Wittgenstein said: - "Tell me, why do people always say it was natural for men to assume that the sun went round the earth, rather than that the earth was rotating?" His friend said: - "Well, obviously, because it looks as if the sun is going round the earth." To which the philosopher replied: - "Well, what would it have looked like if it had looked as if the earth was rotating?"¹

Most of the things we do take place without us becoming aware of them. And it couldn't be any other way. We would not be able to process all the data we deal with and it would be impossible to manage the different accidents and incidents that are continuously happening to us if we were aware of every little thing that surrounds to us (both outside and inside our body). Habits, routines and patters take over us and, till a certain extend, that's inevitably and necessary.

¹ See *Jumpers*, by Tom Stoppard, Grove Press (1972) p. 75

The problem is when we start taking things for granted. We stop being amazed, we stop discovering and, unsurprisingly, we stop being creative. The more comfortable and settled our environment is, the less effort we do in order to see the world again. This ability of seeing things for the first time (even the ones we think we have already seen) is a key tool not to fall into the trap of an existence that is reduced to confirm what has already been confirmed.

Art, if for anything useful, is exactly for that: to help us to see the world again. To see what is already there but is hidden behind the noise generated by what we take for granted, our own pre-conceptions and the manipulated images we project of the world and of ourselves.

The difficulty is that "seeing things for the first time" is a practical impossibility – once an image becomes imprinted in our imaginary, it's very hard to erase or extract it. In order to divert from this obstacle, Real Time Composition trains a contra-intuitive skill: the ability to look at ourselves looking at (ourselves looking at) things. It does that by activating the famous Bartleby's quality: "I would prefer not to...". This attribute keeps, according to Giorgio Agamben, "possibility suspended between occurrence and non-occurrence, between the capacity to be and the capacity not to be."²

This in-betweenness is the "playground" of the Real Time Composition practice.

"João Fiadeiro works exactly with the matter of the 'in-between' and his Real Time Composition method (...) is based upon the challenge to produce - by cultivating molecular clarity - a re-assessment of what freedom in improvisation might be, as well as of what the creativity of the artist might be. (...), Fiadeiro has, so to say, woven a whole philosophy of the event applied to dance. His method, encompassed by the dense-light delicacy of simple things, does not deal with anything other than life; it is just a clarification of vital functioning, of the operative dynamics of human relations, of cohabitation."

These are words from Fernanda Eugénio - a Brazilian anthropologist that moved to Lisbon in 2011 to engaged in a post-doctorate on the relation between the Real Time Composition and the Philosophy of the Event. Our involvement within her post-doc led us to an intense collaboration under the frame of the project AND_Lab where between 2011 and 2014 – together with the performers

² Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency" in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, Stanford University Press, California, 1999

Carolina Campos and Daniel Pizamiglio – I was finally able to realize that there is no contradiction between the need to de-subject the performer's body so he or she *becomes a thing*³ (a central premise in Real Time Composition) and, simultaneously, activate the *affect* as the driving force of choice, decision-making and action.

This period also allowed me to formulate in a more accurate, precise and simple way what my research on Real Time Composition: that the roll of the performer in a composition or improvisation process (like a conversation or any social interaction) is not about *understanding* but about *standing*. I realized that my central subject of research was to state this very simple (but contra-intuitive) principle: that there is nothing "under" the "stand".

Real Time Composition is about giving the adequate tools to performers (and whoever wants to use them) so they can position them selves (take a stand) instead of trying to create a composition (trying to under-stand). And for that, one needs to substitute the idea of *com-position* with the idea of *position-com*. In Portuguese, the preposition "com" means "with", meaning the performer's task and focus in this practice should be about taking a *position-with* instead of composing.

This *modus operandi* will eventually give place to a set of relations between positions (position-com-position-com-position-com-position...) which is how an emergent system can be generated within humans: "by *replacing manipulation with handling, expectation with waiting, certainty with trust, complaint with commitment, accusation with participation, rigidity with rigor, avoidance with attendance, efficacy with sufficiency, conditioning with condition, power with force, abuse with use and discarding with repairing*"⁴. In one sentence: by becoming a consequence and not a cause.

That's the only way the other (a colleague, the spectator, the other-in-you, etc.) will be able to perceive (and receive) ones contribution not as an *opposition* or an *imposition* but as an open position, creating the (initial) conditions for a relation based on collaboration instead of competition.

³ André Lepecki, OCTOBER 140, Spring 2012, pp. 75-90. "A body that becomes thing" it's a body that inscribes itself in "(...) a choreographic logic where any links between "manipulation" and "subject," "utility" and "object," would be bypassed—so that other possibilities for things could come into being."

⁴ João Fiadeiro and Fernanda Eugenio, *The Encounter is a Wound* (Ghost Editions, Lisbon, 2012), p. 4

RTC Background

At a first stage, Real Time Composition's main framework was the need to create a "common language" that could be shared by João Fiadeiro's collaborators along the creative process. At a second stage, it asserted as a tool to explore modalities of dramaturgic writing within the field of dance and became an object of study, ultimately further developed and used by several artists and researchers. Since 2009 it has been asserting in the territory of research at large, namely focusing on the issue of "pre-action", "emergency" and "decision" thus widening its range of interest and use beyond the boundaries of dance and even art. The method has been strongly influenced by recent advances carried out within scientific fields such as anthropology, neurobiology, economics, complex system sciences and cognitive science.

Biography



JOÃO FIADEIRO (1965) belongs to the generation of choreographers that emerged towards the end of the 1980s and gave rise to the Nova Dança Portuguesa [New Portuguese Dance]. A large part of his training was carried out between Lisbon, New York and Berlin.

In 1990 he founded the Atelier | RE.AL Company that supported the creation and diffusion of many choreographers including his works, regularly presented all over Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and South America.

Between 1995 and 2003 he collaborated with the Portuguese theatre company Artistas Unidos [United Artists] where he staged plays by Samuel Beckett, Sarah Kane and Jon Fosse.

Between 2008 and 2014 he co-directed with anthropologist Fernanda Eugenio the AND_Lab, a research laboratory around sustainable coexistence, working on the relation between ethics, aesthetics and politics.

In 2014, after a 6 year hiatus, João Fiadeiro come back to his chorographic work trough the re-enactment of some of his early solos and by creating a new group piece called "What to do with what remains" in 2015.

Real Time Composition a research developed for the past 20 years in cooperation with many other disciplines besides contemporary dance - such as economy, neurobiology or complex systems sciences - has lead João Fiadeiro to coordinate workshops in Masters and PhDs in several national and international schools and universities. João Fiadeiro is currently attending a PhD degree in Contemporary Art at the University of Coimbra in Portugal.