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**Collaboration, Movement, Projection:
The Interdisciplinary Structure of Lucinda Childs's *Dance*, 1979**

A Thesis Presented

by

Jennifer Hasher Goldstein

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History and Criticism

Stony Brook University

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Abstract of the Thesis

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In 1979, postmodern choreographer Lucinda Childs, minimalist composer Philip Glass, and minimalist artist Sol LeWitt combined their disparate mediums to create a collaborative, multimedia performance titled, simply, *Dance*. To date, this interdisciplinary work featuring a unique integration of movement, sound, and film has received virtually no scholarly attention. Childs's recent 2009 reconstruction of *Dance* provides a timely opportunity for a close examination of its component parts, one that reveals several key aspects that initially gained prominence among the 1960s practitioners of interdisciplinary art—particularly the visual artists, dancers, choreographers and musicians associated with the Judson Dance Theater—and that continued to resonate in the outpouring of installation and performance-based work in the 1970s. These themes include collaboration, non-traditional forms of movement, the grid, and the screen, elements with clear ties to experimentation in postmodern dance, to minimalism in both art and musical composition, as well as to uses of the moving image outside of strictly cinematic spaces. The currently touring version of *Dance*, however, is not simply a historical reenactment. While Childs's reconfiguration reveals that the factors that she, Glass and LeWitt, explored in 1979 share clear similarities with specific precedents, the re-staging also gestures towards the continued relevance of these major themes. A sustained exploration of the work's individual elements will in fact reveal the hybrid form of this collaborative effort, one that is at once a historical performative object, and a contemporary work of art.

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Introduction: The Sum of its Parts

In late November 1979, just over a week prior to the New York premiere of a new collaborative performance known simply as *Dance*, the *New York Times* dance critic Jennifer Dunning conducted a cross-Atlantic telephone interview with its choreographer, Lucinda Childs, who offered an elusive explanation for the understated title of her innovative project. “It’s a not-title title,” she proclaimed. “I felt that’s what the piece needs. And that’s what it is to us.”¹ At the time of the interview, Childs was traveling in Europe with the members of her small troupe, the Lucinda Childs Dance Company. Accompanying them was Philip Glass, the composer whose score served as the inspiration for her choreography, as well as the Philip Glass Ensemble musicians, who performed with the dancers. In theaters in the Netherlands, France, and Italy, Childs and Glass presented an incomplete version of the work, one that appealed to the European audiences, as Childs happily indicated, but also one that would shortly change fundamentally.² Upon their return to New York, they planned to perform *Dance* as the collaborators intended it to be shown. The final version included a 35 millimeter black-and-white film contributed by Sol LeWitt. This film, comprised of footage of the fully-costumed dancers in Childs’s company recorded as they executed the choreography in a rehearsal studio space, was to be projected onto a large screen secured across the length and height of the entire stage in front of the live performers, resulting in a doubling effect whereby the ghostlike, filmic bodies moved in synchrony with their living counterparts behind the transparent scrim. Childs’s notion that *Dance* needed a “not-title-title” suggests a purposefully understated introduction to the project; one that could mistakenly lead a viewer to expect a mere execution of proscribed steps in front of a live audience. Instead, *Dance* serves as an understated, non-descriptive, and non-narrative title that belies the project’s complexity.

Dance was first staged at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) Opera House on November 29, 1979, and its five-day run concluded on December 2, 1979. This first New York presentation offered local audiences a chance to experience what the European viewers were denied: the unified, collaborative project as Childs had originally intended for it to be shown. While *Dance* operates as, and perhaps should be considered primarily as a composite whole made up of its primary elements of choreographed movement, musical score, and projected film, the evening-length program, which ran for nearly two uninterrupted hours, also included five twenty minute solo and ensemble sections.

¹ Lucinda Childs, as quoted in Jennifer Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1979, Arts section, New York edition, 8

² On October 17, 1979, Childs and Glass first performed the movement and music portions of *Dance* in Eindhoven, Holland followed two days later by a performance in Amsterdam. Venues in France and Italy followed. See “Lucinda Childs Choreography 1963-2009,” Lucinda Childs Dance Foundation, <http://www.lucindachilds.com/choreography-pre90.php#79> (accessed March 1, 2010). For Childs’s account of the successful reception she felt the performance had received in both Holland and in France, see Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 17.

Beginning with the unassumingly subtitled *Dance no. 1*, the opening segment featured the entire Lucinda Childs Dance Company performing to a recording of the score by the full Philip Glass Ensemble.³ A total of eight dancers moved behind the large scrim that functioned as a screen onto which LeWitt's film projected (fig. 1).⁴ Beamed light from the projector, coupled with a warm, blue glow from the stage lights rendered the screen transparent.⁵ This resulted in what Susan Sontag described as the work's double-space, or a space created both by the flat surface of the scrim that serves as the screen for the film, and the three-dimensional space of the stage that provides the physical area through which the dancers move.⁶ For *Dance no. 2*, (solo), stagehands removed the screen and Childs performed alone, mirrored musically by the live accompaniment of just one member of the Philip Glass Ensemble, Michael Riesman, on the electric organ. For *Dance no. 3*, the entire company of dancers returned to the stage, the full cast of musicians could be heard through the speaker system playing a previously recorded version of the score, the stage glowed in faint amber lighting, the screen returned to its prominent place, and along with it, the film. In the following segment, *Dance No. 4*, Childs performed her second solo, this time moving behind her projected image on the screen, and accompanied by a recording of Glass on the electric organ. In the fifth and final section, *Dance No. 5*, both the entire Lucinda Childs Dance Company and the full Philip Glass Ensemble performed together, the dancers rapidly moving across an open, red-lit stage, the screen permanently removed from the front edge of the proscenium arch. At this point in the uninterrupted performance (save for the repeated securing into place and removal of the large scrim), the music grew dominantly loud, approaching what one reviewer called "the pain threshold," and causing some audience members to walk out of the theater in restless frustration.⁷ The majority of contemporary critics, however,

³ At the time of the 1979 performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Lucinda Childs Dance Company members were Megan Walker, Susan Osberg, Judy Padow, Cynthia Hedstrom, André Peck, Erin Matthiessen, Graham Conley, and Daniel McCuster. The Philip Glass Ensemble (originally formed in 1968) consisted of the following members: Jon Gibson, who played the flute and soprano saxophone; Philip Glass on the keyboards; the vocals of Iris Hiskey; Jack Kripl on the flute, piccolo, and soprano saxophone; Kurt Munkasci ran the electronics; Richard Peck on the flute and alto saxophone; and Michael Riesman on keyboards and base synthesizer. See the *BAM Magazine*, which served as the playbill for *Dance*, located in Publications and Promotional Materials, Brooklyn Academy of Music Archives.

⁴ This same corps of eight dancers performed in *Dance no. 3*, and *Dance no. 5*. The *BAM Magazine* also lists the full film credits as follows: "Director, Sol LeWitt (in collaboration with Lisa Rinzler); Camera, Lisa Rinzler; Editing, John Neuburger; Gaffer, Abbie Carey; Grip, Bruce Devan; Camera Assistant, Stuart Math; Second Electrician, Mark Petersen; Production Assistants, Andy Blinx; Peter Kreutzer, and Rosalie Winard; Optical Effects, Videart." Ibid. Subsequent programs for the reconstituted version of *Dance* have not listed the entire crew for the film, but rather designate the film as being "by Sol LeWitt."

⁵ Beverly Emmons designed the lighting.

⁶ Susan Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," *Art in America* 71, no. 11 (December 1983): 102.

⁷ Jean Nordhaus, "Lucinda Childs at BAM," *Washington Review* 5, no. 5 (February-March 1980): 9. Dance critic Deborah Jowitt called the live music in the last section "almost unbearably assaultive" in her review "Dance, Music, Film," *Village Voice*, December 17, 1979. Martha Ullman West complained in her review that the music in the final section was "so deafening that it detracted from what was happening on the stage, making me understand why some dancers prefer to perform without sound," an ironic critique of a

considered the production a great success. As art critic John Perreault wrote in the *Soho Weekly News*, *Dance* was “one of those rare collaborations that actually works and is more than a sum of its parts.”⁸

Thirty years later, the parts of *Dance* underwent a significant alteration when the programming staff of the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College commissioned its reconstruction for their SummerScape festival in 2009 (fig. 2).⁹ As part of the process of bringing *Dance* back to the stage, the staff at Bard had LeWitt’s film and the recorded sections of Glass’s score digitally remastered.¹⁰ While it is not uncommon for institutions to convert older versions of time-based media to newer forms of technology, this shift, presumably undertaken for purposes of preservation, enhancement, or even ease of presentation, also signals a crucial reconceptualization of the work.

While on tour in 1979, Childs and Glass left the film behind in New York, facing pressure from European audiences who expected to see a dance performance accompanied by live musicians from the Philip Glass Ensemble. Technical limitations forced the collaborators to use recorded music for the three sections of *Dance* that included the film, and as a result, these sections were deemed—albeit temporarily—open for modification.¹¹ In the more recent version of *Dance*, Childs has chosen to present only the three sections of the five-part original that incorporate LeWitt’s film, eliminating

choreographer who before *Dance* had only made one work accompanied by music. See West, “Reviews,” *Dance Magazine* 54, no. 4 (April 1980): 46.

⁸ John Perreault in Sally Banes, Tim Page, and John Perreault “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” *Soho Weekly News*, December 6, 1979, 74. Of course, some critics quibbled with the performance as well. John Rockwell called the work a failure, but conceded that it is “a fascinating failure.” See his review in the *New York Times*, December 1 1979, Arts Section, New York edition. Judith Stuart, writing in a regional Pennsylvania newspaper, noted an “odd quality” about *Dance*, albeit one that she could not quite articulate. “It was interesting but not likable,” she wrote. “It was energetic and lively and unalive. It was constant motion and sound and no change.” See her review, “Dance: Energy in Three Media,” *The Phoenix*, December 6, 1979.

⁹ The remastered presentation at Bard commenced a worldwide tour. The dates and venues of the 2009-2010 tour are as follows: July 9-12, 2009 at Bard SummerStage, Richard B. Fisher Center at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; September 25-26, 2009 at the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts; September 29, 2009 at the Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, University of Florida; October 8-11, 2009 at the Joyce Theater, New York; October 15-17, 2009 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; April 14-17, 2010 at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, France; June 4 and 5, 2010 at the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina; and June 12, 2010 at the Shubert Theater in New Haven, Connecticut. Childs had previously revived *Dance* in 2001 with the Ballet du Rhin at the Théâtre de La Ville, Paris.

¹⁰ See Gia Kourlas, “The Medium Steps Behind the Medium,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2009, Arts section, New York edition, C4.

¹¹ Most reviews of the 1979 version of *Dance* mention that recorded music had to be used for the portions of the performance that included the film, citing unspecified technical reasons. According to Dunning’s *New York Times* article from November 25, the European promoters billed the performance as having live music by the Philip Glass Ensemble, forcing the collaborators to leave the film at home. See her “An Avant-Garde Threesome in New York,” 17.

the live musical accompaniment altogether. For the purposes of continuity, these sections, originally subtitled *Dance no. 1*, *Dance no. 3*, and *Dance no. 4*, appeared in the event program under the renumbered names *Dance I*, *Dance II*, and *Dance III*. Setting aside the resulting reduction in costs (recorded musicians, of course, need not be paid each night), there are other important practical ramifications resulting from the transition to this shorter version, including the elimination of the requirement to remove and replace the scrim, as well as the opportunity for Childs to perform *Dance* along with other choreographic works as part of an evening-length presentation. Indeed, the revised work cohered so successfully it prompted one reviewer to repeat, almost verbatim, the sentiment Jean Perreault expressed in 1979. “If good design equals the sum of its parts,” Gia Kourlas wrote in the *New York Times*, “it’s no question that 30 years later *Dance* endures.”¹²

Shortly thereafter in October of 2009, just two-and-a-half years after LeWitt’s death, Childs returned to New York with the reconstituted performance, this time to the Joyce Theater in Chelsea.¹³ There she staged the new, streamlined version of the work, effectively highlighting the unique collaborative effort of the three innovators in the more concise format. Indeed, the seamless presentation of moving bodies with simultaneously projected moving images—experienced within and alongside a minimal, repetitive score, basic costuming, and soft, colored lighting—combined to produce an exhilarating layering of actual and projected movement.

While Childs’s 1979 performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music may have marked the beginning of what Sontag deemed her shift from “giving dance concerts to creating dance productions,” it was not her first appearance there.¹⁴ In 1976, Childs wrote to Harvey Lichtenstein, director of BAM and a fervent dance supporter, asking for a slot on the schedule for her company for either the spring or fall of 1977. The Brooklyn Academy was already known at the time for championing experimental dance, indeed, they had a dedicated theater space specifically for the kind of work Childs produced.¹⁵ In order to bolster her request for exposure in this supportive setting, she attached to her letter a recent positive review of solo work she had presented at Danspace at St. Mark’s Church in downtown Manhattan.¹⁶ Lichtenstein added Childs and her company to the schedule, and in early November of 1977 they performed three new works.¹⁷ The

¹² Kourlas, “The Medium Steps Behind the Medium,” C3.

¹³ Childs also staged *Concerto* from 1993, and *Largo* from 2001, a solo in which she also performed.

¹⁴ Sontag, “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 100.

¹⁵ Lichtenstein had already commissioned a work by Childs’s fellow experimentalist, choreographer Laura Dean for the Lepercq Space. See Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8.

¹⁶ See Artist Correspondence, President’s Files, Brooklyn Academy of Music Archives. Childs sent Lichtenstein a positive review by Wendy Perron. See her article “Consuming Determination,” *Soho Weekly News*, June 17, 1976, 16.

¹⁷ The Lucinda Childs Dance Company performed *Plaza*, *Melody Excerpt*, and *Interior Drama* on Nov. 3, 1977 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. See “Lucinda Childs Choreography 1963-2009,” Lucinda Childs Dance Foundation.

relationship she forged with Lichtenstein during this time proved extremely worthwhile, as he was eager to help Childs, Glass, and LeWitt bring their complex collaborative effort to fruition, stating that he recognized that it was important to “follow through with those choreographers who could use more help than just presentation.”¹⁸ Just as she bolstered relationships with institutions that championed experimental dance, so too did she align herself with other artists who shared similar aesthetic concerns across various mediums.

Indeed, *Dance* did not mark Childs’s first collaboration with Glass. The composer and choreographer first began to discuss the prospect of creating a new project together while traveling abroad to participate in the first stagings of Robert Wilson’s opera, *Einstein on the Beach*.¹⁹ Glass contributed the score, while Childs appeared as a leading character and also choreographed and performed a walking solo section called “Solo for Character on 3 Diagonals.”²⁰ The four-and-a-half hour, four-act event consists of highly allusive scenes loosely related to Albert Einstein’s life and to his scientific explorations and achievements, resulting in what Craig Owens called “a complex portrait by association.”²¹ Describing his collaboration with Wilson and the overall tone of his composition, Glass noted that the score was characterized by an “...amplified ensemble of keyboards, winds and voices with which my music is usually associated.”²² Likewise, in an interview conducted while he and Childs were abroad performing the first iterations of *Dance*, he claimed that they, too, had “a lot of common associations.”²³ It was in this context that Glass and Childs determined that they should approach LeWitt to see if he would agree to participate in their nascent collaborative idea.

Childs’s career as a dancer, choreographer, performer, and collaborator, however, began well before she met and worked with either Glass or LeWitt. Born in New York in 1940, Childs studied dance at Sarah Lawrence College, where in her second year she took a master class with guest teacher Merce Cunningham. After graduating in 1962, Childs continued to train at the American Ballet Center and with Cunningham who had a studio in the Living Theater building at 14th Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. It was at his studio that Childs met dancer and choreographer Yvonne Rainer, one of the cofounders, along with other members of Robert Dunn’s choreography class, of the Judson Dance Theater, a loose collective of dancers, artists, and musicians who collaborated, experimented, and performed in the basement and sanctuary of the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. In late 1962, Lucinda Childs was invited to join the group,

¹⁸ Lichtenstein, as quoted in Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8.

¹⁹ *Einstein on the Beach*, directed by Robert Wilson, was produced by the Byrd Hoffman Foundation/Festival d’Avignon, and premiered in Avignon, France, before being staged at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in November 1976.

²⁰ According to Dunning, this walking solo “lives on in the dance lore as a supreme moment of modernist theater.” See her “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8.

²¹ Craig Owens, “*Einstein on the Beach*: The Primacy of Metaphor,” *October* 4 (Autumn 1977): 24.

²² Philip Glass, “Notes on *Einstein on the Beach*,” *Performing Arts Journal*, 2 no. 3 (Winter 1978): 63.

²³ Glass, as quoted in Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8.

which, until 1964 held weekly gatherings at which they would present new choreography and also organize public dance concerts.²⁴ Childs performed her own works, primarily solos, and also participated in the works of others, including Robert Morris, James Waring, Paxton, and Rainer.²⁵ In 1966, the same year that the Judson Dance Theater disbanded, Childs participated in the now legendary *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York, a series of multimedia performances spearheaded by Bill Klüver, an engineer at Bell Telephone Laboratories, and featuring collaborations between artists and engineers. By 1973, Childs had formed her own troupe, the Lucinda Childs Dance Company, which premiered at the Whitney Museum of American Art with four works performed in the open gallery space.²⁶

²⁴ It is important to note that there are slightly inconsistent accounts regarding precisely when Childs joined the Judson Dance Theater (JDT). In Sontag's version of this history (for which she did not provide a source), Childs was invited to join in 1963. See Sontag, "For *Available Light: A Brief Lexicon*," 105. It seems likely that Sontag is conflating Childs's joining of the JDT with her first performance with the group. Childs, writing a decade prior to Sontag in 1973, indicated that she joined the group in 1962, however she does not specify precisely when during that year. See Childs, "Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio," *Artforum* 11, no. 6 (February 1973): 50. However, Childs does provide another, more detailed account in 1978, stating that she saw one of Yvonne Rainer's performances in the summer of 1962 (following her graduation from college), and this experience inspired her to join the JDT. See Childs in "Lucinda Childs," transcript of an interview edited by Anne Livet, in *Contemporary Dance: An Anthology of Lectures, Interviews and Essays with Many of the Most Important Contemporary American Choreographers, Scholars, and Critics*, ed. Livet (New York: Abbeville Press, 1978), 61. In this same interview she confirms that she began to perform her own work with the group in January of 1963. Later she clarifies that it was Rainer's *Ordinary Dance* that proved so pivotal. See Childs, "Lucinda Childs," in *Further Steps: Fifteen Choreographers on Modern Dance*, ed. Connie Kreemer (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 96. These last two sources are the ones I am emphasizing here.

It is fairly typical to encounter problems determining specific dates during the nascent period of the JDT. Starting in the early 1980s Sally Banes began to painstakingly recreate its history and faced numerous errors in human memory. In her account of the very first concert the group presented on July 6, 1962 (the very same evening when Childs saw Rainer perform *Ordinary Dance*), Banes includes a caveat indicating this difficulty. "There will be a number of places in this account where people's memories differ on a particular point," she writes, "and there is now no way to arrive at 'the truth.'" Banes, "The Birth of the Judson Dance Theatre: 'A Concert of Dance' at Judson Church, July 6, 1962," *Dance Chronicle*, 5 no. 2 (1982): 168.

²⁵ Her first piece performed with the JDT, an approximately ten-minute work called *Pastime*, was also her first work to be presented publicly. See Sontag, "For *Available Light: A Brief Lexicon*," 105. Childs performed *Pastime* to music by Philip Corner at the Judson Memorial Church on January 30, 1963. See "Lucinda Childs Choreography 1963-2009," Lucinda Childs Dance Foundation.

²⁶ They were *Particular Reel*, *Checkered Drift*, and *Calico Mingling*. See *ibid*. While Childs does not list it on her website's chronology, she also presented a revised version of *Untitled Trio*, originally performed at the Judson Memorial Church in June of 1968. See Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 136. The Company's premiere at the Whitney Museum on December 7, 1973, marked Childs' return to performing after a nearly five year hiatus. The Museum provided a particularly supportive space for this occasion, as many other experimental dancers had also presented works in the building's second floor galleries. Two examples include Trisha Brown's *Walking on the Wall* from 1971, as well as a performance that also appeared in Yvonne Rainer's film *Lives of Performers* from 1972. For a discussion of the types of movement Childs developed in the early 1970s, particularly in *Untitled Trio* and *Calico Mingling*, see chapter 2, 29-35.

Childs's recent 2009 reconstruction of *Dance* provides a timely opportunity for a close examination of its component parts, one that reveals several key aspects that initially gained prominence among the 1960s practitioners of interdisciplinary art—particularly the visual artists, dancers, choreographers and musicians associated with the Judson Dance Theater—and continued to resonate in the outpouring of multimedia installation and performance-based work in the 1970s. These themes include collaboration, non-traditional forms of movement, the grid, and the screen, all elements with clear ties to experimentation in postmodern dance, to Minimalism in both art and musical composition, as well as to uses of the moving image outside of strictly cinematic spaces. The currently touring version of *Dance*, however, is not simply a historical reenactment. While Childs's recent reconfiguration reveals that the factors that she, Glass and LeWitt, explored in 1979 share clear similarities with specific precedents, the re-staging also gestures towards the continued relevance of these major themes. A sustained exploration of the work's individual elements will in fact reveal the hybrid form of this collaborative effort, one that is at once a historical performative object, and a contemporary work of art.

Chapter one addresses the role of collaboration among artists trained in separate disciplines in order to both historically situate the collective effort of *Dance* and to indicate precisely how it diverges from its precursors. From interdisciplinary performances at Black Mountain College to Childs's participation in the experimental Judson Dance Theater to her contribution to *Experiments in Art and Technology* to her resurgent interest in more traditional theatrical forms, the examples highlighted here primarily emphasize collaborative works that incorporate both moving bodies and moving images. These forerunners to *Dance*, ranging from the 1950s to the 1970s, ultimately reveal that what is most crucial for Childs's innovative work is a collaboration of a different kind: that which takes place between its three inseparable primary elements of movement, music, and film.

The diagonal, the structuring grid, doubling, the formation of bodies in space, and repetition are all foundational themes at work in *Dance*, ones that Childs's began to develop in the late 1960s. Chapter two traces their origins, situating them within larger trends in postmodern dance and classifying the formal parallels they share with the five drawings (or what Childs calls diagrammatic charts) that the dancer produced for the sections of the original staging. The examination of these individual aspects of movement—both within bodies and through space—in fact discloses how they rely upon and inform each other, inevitably underscoring their intrinsic interdependence.

Chapter three examines the structure of LeWitt's film and its incorporation of the grid both in relationship to his larger body of work and as an element essential to *Dance*. This exploration reveals that the particular placement of the surface onto which the film projects ultimately serves as the crucial maneuver that transformed the work's primary elements into a unique hybrid form. The collaborator's determination that the screen should be positioned across the entire stage and in front of the space the dancers traverse explicitly encouraged the integration of moving bodies and projected moving images.



Figure 1: Lucinda Childs (b. 1940), *Dance*, 1979. Photograph by Nathaniel Tileston.
Photograph © 2010 by Nathaniel Tileston.



Figure 2: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979 / 2009. Photograph by Sally Cohn.
Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.

Chapter 1: Collaboration

Shortly after *Dance* premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the *Soho Weekly News* published a review in which three different authors separately addressed the three individual collaborators. Each mini-review was placed under a category heading named for the artists involved: Dance critic Sally Banes examined the choreography in the section on Childs, art critic John Perreault's review was placed under the sub-heading "LeWitt," and music journalist Tim Page discussed Glass's score, resulting in a seeming one-to-one correspondence between the artists and their unique contributions of movement, film, and music to the project.²⁷ Thus the reviewers examined the work by focusing on their personal areas of expertise while almost entirely ignoring the other elements at work in the performance. Banes provided a detailed explication of the physical steps Childs and her dancers articulated within the stage space while only briefly addressing the score (which she described as at once "loud" and "celestial") and other theatrical effects such as costuming and lighting. Additionally, Banes's analysis of the film consisted merely of a brief mention of its doubling effect, a visual motif that she simply tied back to a choreographic mechanism of "crisscrossing" Childs utilized in one of her solo pieces, *Particular Reel*, from 1973.²⁸ Page, for his part, completely ignored both the movement and the film, focusing instead on description and historical grounding, comparing certain aspects of Glass's score to Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*, and others to unspecified organ pieces by Franz Liszt.²⁹ Despite these two critics' separate descriptions and the resulting emphasis on the seemingly discrete sections of *Dance*, overlaps and blurrings inevitably emerge. Indeed, while Page extended only a hint that the music existed among other art forms in his text, his subtle commentary offered a particularly revealing clue. He began his review by characterizing Glass's working method as one in which he "composes a dance,"³⁰ thereby indicating that the score is fundamentally a piece of a larger whole. Banes and Page both gesture toward the elements' interdependence, but it was Perreault—ostensibly assigned to "cover" visual artist LeWitt's filmic portion—who indirectly yet effectively articulated the work's inherent interdisciplinarity. He claimed, with evident enthusiasm, that the performance was "no ordinary dance concert," rather, "*it was an art world event.*"³¹

²⁷ Sally Banes, Tim Page, and John Perreault, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," *Soho Weekly News*, December 6, 1979, 74

²⁸ Ibid. For more on doubling in Childs's work, see chapter 2, 36-37.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Page perhaps felt that it went without saying that this is in opposition to when Glass composes for opera or for other non-theatrical purposes. See *ibid.*

³¹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

Perreault argued that *Dance* exists as an art world event because, it is, as he put it quite simply, original, and that the art world prizes originality—“a heritage of modernism”—above all else.³² He likened *Dance* to a decades prior precedent: *Parade*, the seminal ballet staged by Serge Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes that combined dance, music, and the visual arts. For *Parade*, first performed in Paris on May 18, 1917, Léonide Massine choreographed the movement, Erik Satie composed the music, and Pablo Picasso designed the sets and costumes. Jean Cocteau, the poet and dramatist, joined the group as well and provided the text. Despite his direct reference to this key historical antecedent (one that numerous other journalists and critics noted at the time in their reviews of *Dance*) what is more revealing about Perreault’s definition of an art world event at the time of his writing is in fact what he indirectly indicated: it requires the merging of typically discrete artistic enterprises including visual art mainstays such as painting or sculpture (or in the case of *Dance*, a film created by an artist typically associated with sculpture) with movement-based or musical works intended for presentation to a live audience. Unlike his fellow critics Banes and Page, the art critic’s review meanders across each of the disciplines involved, emphasizing in particular the artists’ common interest in “repetition, system, and simplicity.”³³ By the late 1970s these elements had transcended well beyond the proscribed domains of individual forms of expression such as dance, music, or projected moving images, and Childs, Glass, and LeWitt examined them collaboratively in order to forge and perform a unified, interdependent, and interdisciplinary experience.

At the same time that *Dance* was first staged in late 1979, Nancy Foote contacted a group of artists who were, as she claimed, “dissatisfied with the exclusive posture of the traditional avant-garde and seem[ed] to be seeking ways to extend the art audience without compromising their work.”³⁴ She asked them to respond to a two-question survey, the results of which she planned to turn into an article for the January 1980 issue of *Artforum*.³⁵ The final reporting offers a coda, a pointed assessment of the then current state of art for which she used the ending of one decade and the approaching start of another as a convenient chronological marker. Her conclusions, drawn from participating artists’ responses, suggest that “... ‘70s, as distinct from ‘60s, art is characterized more by [a] change in attitude toward the audience than by a change in actual forms, or even

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Nancy Foote, “Situation Esthetics: Impermanent Art and the Seventies Audience,” *Artforum* 18, no. 5 (January 1980): 22.

³⁵ The first question was “How has the artist’s perception of his/her audience changed in the ‘70s?” It was followed by “What shifts in emphasis, esthetic or otherwise, have the impermanence and specificity of project and performance art brought about?” See *ibid.* Some of the artists who replied include Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Scott Burton, Peter Campus, Dan Graham, Nancy Holt, Patrick Ireland, and Mary Miss, among others. Interestingly, *Artforum* printed a review of *Dance* in the same issue as Foote’s questionnaire. See Deborah Perlberg, “Dance: Lucinda Childs, Philip Glass and Sol LeWitt,” *Artforum* 18, no. 5 (January 1980): 52-53.

content. The increase in the '70s of 'project,' performance, film and video art, all of which have their origins in the '60s, would seem to bear this out."³⁶ While printed responses from the participating artists involved in *Dance* did not appear in Foote's essay (indeed, they were most likely not queried), LeWitt indicated to Perreault that he wanted the film to allow for everyone in the audience to "see what was going on," a statement that clearly expresses LeWitt's specific interest in enfolding the audience into the work itself.³⁷ In a similar attempt to identify the comprehensive qualities of the American avant-garde at the end of the 1970s, Douglas Davis's 1982 essay in *Art in America* locates these characteristics in the works of artists who "establish[ed] several non-traditional genres as legitimate esthetic activities in the '60s and '70s—among them the use of the remote landscape as a site for sculpture, language and performance as working modalities in visual art, videotape (and broadcasting) as private (not public) tools."³⁸ Both Foote and Davis neglect to address another crucial "legitimate esthetic activity" in their attempts to summarize the major innovative impulses operating at the end of the 1970s: they omit from their conclusions artistic endeavors both based and dependent upon collaboration.

Scholars such as Henry Sayre, however, have identified the importance of collaboration in the art of the 1970s, an option which he describes as a "powerful alternative" to the lingering, albeit dimming, influence of the postwar Abstract Expressionist era's emphasis on the individual genius.³⁹ Indeed, Foote's questionnaire underscores Sayre's argument that "by the seventies the site of presence in art had shifted from art's object to art's audience, from the textual or plastic to the experiential."⁴⁰ The experiential in the art of the 1970s materializes out of the collaborative, but the site of presence Sayre refers to took some time to form, and its emergence can be traced to specific historic precedents. Sayre begins to explicate this, identifying what he calls the Rauschenberg/Cage/Cunningham collaboration as a "*working* model for the following generation of dancers, musicians, and painters," one that emerges from Cunningham's strict avowal of the inherent nonhierarchical and independent nature of component parts in his works.⁴¹ In fact, Sayre suggests that the Rauschenberg/Cage/Cunningham model of

³⁶ Foote, "Situation Esthetics: Impermanent Art and the Seventies Audience," 22.

³⁷ Foote indicates that not all of the artists she queried replied; however, she does not provide a complete list of those artists. See *ibid.* I am quoting Perreault here who is paraphrasing from a conversation he had with LeWitt about *Dance*. See Perreault, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," 74. LeWitt's filmic contribution to *Dance* is a primary subject of chapter 3.

³⁸ Douglas Davis, "The Avant Garde is Dead! Long Live the Avant Garde!" *Art in America* 70, no. 4 (April 1982): 17.

³⁹ Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde Since 1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 102. See his take on Foote's questionnaire on page 5-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴¹ Emphasis Sayre's. See *ibid.*, 108-109. Cunningham positioned his collaborations with Cage and Rauschenberg as a clear rejection of "conventional" dances wherein "the dance has been made to the music, the music supports the dance, and the decor frames it." Instead, Cunningham states, "what we have done in our work is to bring together three separate elements in time and space, the music, the dance and the decor, allowing each to remain independent." See Cunningham interviewed in *The Dancer and the*

collectively developed, performance-based work, as well as the feminist movement's impact on art making, comprise what he identifies as a new *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, this new total work of art rejects Richard Wagner's original notion, staking its identity in direct opposition to Wagner's championing of the complete integration of forms. In other words, it is in favor of "arts [that] coexist in the same time and space independent of one another.... The new *Gesamtkunstwerk* is above all an arena of difference."⁴² While *Dance*, as it will become clear in this chapter, is intrinsically linked to—and exists as an outgrowth of—Cunningham's collaborative practice, it does not operate merely as a rigid follower of its forerunners. Despite Sayre's inclusion of the Childs/Glass/LeWitt collaborative in his discussion of the new *Gesamtkunstwerk*, his definition does not encompass it, as its hybridity is inherently concerned with the formal cohesion of its component parts.⁴³

Dance progresses from a strong historical foundation of experimental, interdisciplinary collaborations. While its lineage can be traced back to *Parade*, as Perreault and others identified in contemporaneous reviews of the 1979 performance at BAM, it is in fact more closely related to primarily North American precursors beginning with Cunningham and Cage's early cooperative projects undertaken at Black Mountain College in North Carolina starting in the late 1940s, followed closely thereafter by the same artists' performance-based works with Rauschenberg in the 1950s. Cage's emphasis on what Carrie Lambert-Beatty has called his "radical inclusiveness"⁴⁴ served as one of the main inspirations for the limit-testing of the Judson Dance Theater, of which Childs was an active member. Similarly, these impulses continued to resonate into the expanded realms of collaboration involving engineers from Bell Laboratories who participated in Experiments in Art and Technology, evincing possibilities for the incorporation into art-making enterprises both participants and materials typically located well outside of even the most avant-garde forms of artistic expression. These antecedents, as well as specific examples of dance-based collaborations that include moving images, such as portions of Yvonne Rainer's *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968) and Cunningham, Cage, and Stan VanDerBeek's 1965 multi-media production *Variations V*, will each demonstrate investigations into movement (both live and projected) and space that align with *Dance*, but will also serve to reveal ways in which Childs, Glass, and LeWitt's collaboration diverges from the rigorously chance-based, "anything goes" format so pervasive during

Dance: Merce Cunningham in Conversation with Jacqueline Lesschaeve (New York: Marion Boyars, 1985), 137, as quoted in *ibid.*, 108.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 109. Wagner claimed that "the solitary unit is unfree, because confined and fettered...the associate is free, because unfettered and unconfined." See the relevant excerpt from his 1849 *The Art-Work of the Future* in *What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism Dance*, ed. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 192.

⁴³ See Sayre's discussion of *Dance* in *ibid.*, 134-135. Sally Banes has similarly suggested that Childs's approach to collaboration in the 1970s "has evolved as what might appear surprisingly traditional for a dance avant-gardist" in "From the Judson to BAM: Trisha Brown and Lucinda Childs," *On the Next Wave*, 1 no. 2 (October 1983): 3.

⁴⁴ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 42.

live performance of the 1960s. Indeed, this historical grounding will begin to reveal how *Dance* is in fact a highly structured, regimented, formal object that also shares commonalities with significantly more theatrical and large-scale works such as Robert Wilson's opera *Einstein on the Beach*. A tracing of these precedents will provide greater insight not only into the collaboration among the three participants, but also the types of interactions taking place as the work's elements form, intersect, and are performed for a live audience.

Black Mountain College, located in the mountains of North Carolina, was a highly experimental school of higher education that emphasized the arts as central to the learning experience. Despite operating from only 1933 until 1957 and enrolling fewer than 1,200 students, its innovative, open-ended pedagogical methods proved a fertile testing ground for artists, many of whom had already begun or went on to have prolific and influential careers. Students and teachers included Anni and Josef Albers, Ruth Asawa, John Chamberlain, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, as well as Cunningham and Cage, among others. The college provided a progressive learning environment without any fixed requirements, allowing for maximum innovation and cross-disciplinary exploration, both in the classroom and communally.⁴⁵ To cite just one example of the kind of work fostered at this unique institution, in the summer session of 1948, Cunningham, who, since the early 1940s had choreographed numerous dances using Cage's scores, performed in the play *The Ruse of the Medusa*, a lyric comedy by Erik Satie that was directed by Irving Penn, featured Buckminster Fuller's sole acting appearance, set design by the de Koonings, and Cage's score.⁴⁶ This early manifestation executed within a more traditional theatrical template presaged a growing interest in open-ended collaboration among dancers, musicians, and visual artists.

However, it was not until the summer session of 1952 that Cage masterminded an event that later became known as *Theater Piece No. 1*, now widely considered the first Happening. By this time Cunningham and Cage had already begun to emphasize the autonomy of dance and music within a given work, a nonhierarchical mainstay of their collaborative efforts that would prove profoundly influential on their students. Cage devised the framework for the performance during one afternoon following a discussion with musician David Tudor, also in residence that summer, and staged it the very same evening in the school's dining hall, purposefully leaving no time for rehearsals, scripts, or

⁴⁵ The first scholar to produce an in-depth account of the history of Black Mountain College was Mary Emma Harris. See her *The Arts of Black Mountain College* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987). Additional thorough sources include Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), and Vincent Katz, ed., *Black Mountain College: Experiments in Art* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Reina Sofía, 2002).

⁴⁶ Dana Miller, "Thought Patterns: Buckminster Fuller the Scientist-Artist," in *Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe*, ed. K. Michael Hays and Dana Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 27.

costume design. Each participant received an assigned time slot determined by chance procedures within which he or she carried out their individual actions.

There remains today some disagreement regarding what exactly each performer did during his assigned segment. This is due, in part, to the configuration of chairs into either concentric circles (or squares, depending on the eyewitness source) separated by four diagonal aisles. This arrangement allowed for activity to take place, not only in the open central space in front of the audience, but also in the aisles and around the spectators. That said, observers' generally agreed upon elements include Cage reciting a text while standing on a ladder (though its precise source is a matter of disagreement among those who attended the event), Cunningham dancing among the chairs, and David Tudor playing piano, while projected moving images (both film and slide) were shown upside down on slanted surfaces at the end of the dining hall. Rauschenberg, who had first met Cage in the spring of 1951 in New York and was a student during the 1952 summer session, played records on a phonograph or stood in front of his white paintings (four of which also hung from the rafters in the shape of a cross), which, for their part, acted as a type of screen that made visible the shadows of other moving figures.⁴⁷ Indeed, Cage later described them as "airports for lights, shadows, and particles."⁴⁸ His reflective commentary points to the interaction between moving bodies and moving images, a perhaps accidental effect that would ultimately play a crucial role in the interdisciplinary performance of the 1960s and beyond.

Rauschenberg first produced work specifically intended for Cunningham's dance company in 1954, and he would go on to spend the next eleven years collaborating, carrying out a range of roles from scenic, lighting, or costume design to stage manager. For *Minutiae* (1954), one of the choreographer's earliest works for his still quite newly formed company, Cunningham provided the artist with loose instructions, requesting that Rauschenberg create something that the dancers "could move through."⁴⁹ The result was two discrete sections of large, freestanding panels painted with expressive, colorful, and thickly applied brushstrokes that also incorporated bits of collaged comic strips as well as found objects including a small rotating mirror.⁵⁰ Rauschenberg's Combine structures develop perhaps directly from the set for *Minutiae*, but more crucially for the purposes of this trajectory, the visual artist's contributions—in alignment with Cunningham and

⁴⁷ For a fascinating chronicle of participant and attendee recollections of this event, see Harris, *The Arts of Black Mountain College*, 226-228. Martin Duberman provides another account based upon the memories of five eyewitnesses (see Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* 350-58), who provided descriptions with such inconsistency that Calvin Tomkins deemed the results "hilarious." See Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 74.

⁴⁸ John Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work," *Metro* 2 (May 1961) as quoted in *ibid.*, 71. See also Branden W. Joseph, "White on White," in *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 25-71.

⁴⁹ Cunningham, in *The Dancer and the Dance*, 55.

⁵⁰ For detailed descriptions of the set and the choreography see Roger Copeland, *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 80-81 and Michelle Potter, "'A License to Do Anything': Robert Rauschenberg and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company," *Dance Chronicle* 16, no. 1 (1993): 6-8.

Cage's structuring philosophy of coexisting, nonhierarchical collaborative elements—exist on an even plane, no more or less important than anything else taking place within the performance space.

Cunningham's highly influential style reflected a decided turn away from the expressive and emotional choreographic attitude and technique championed by his modernist predecessors (Martha Graham in particular), as well as an embrace of the innovations in visual art making that he saw taking place around him. He explained that, "I used to be told that you see the center of the space as the most important: that was the center of interest. But in many modern paintings this was not the case and the sense of space was different..."⁵¹ It was this new "sense of space" and its various possibilities that dictated the design for a 1958 dance called *Summerspace* (and, as will become clear, comprises the philosophy of many of the next generation of choreographers associated with the Judson Dance Theater). For this work, to which Rauschenberg also contributed the décor, Cunningham conscientiously asked his now regular collaborator for nonspecificity, resulting in a proscribed space with no center.⁵² In trying to articulate what he envisioned for the project, Cunningham wrote to Rauschenberg, explaining, "I have a feeling it's like looking at part of an enormous landscape and you can only see the action in this particular part of it."⁵³ With this image in mind, Rauschenberg, along with the assistance of Jasper Johns (who also designed sets for Cunningham's company), transformed a forty-foot backdrop into a massive, "pointilist" canvas covered with brown, yellow, orange, pink, blue, and green dots that draped across the entire back wall of the stage, as well as onto portions of the floor (fig. 3). The artists then effectively offered a continuation of this vast "landscape" by making costumes that matched the set, thus allowing for an almost complete merging of these two typically related but discrete elements. When the dancers moved through space, they created a flickering effect, and when at rest, their bodies merged with the background, producing—despite Cunningham's typical advocacy for the inherent independence of each element—what Michelle Potter has accurately termed an "accidental synthesis."⁵⁴ *Dance*, for its part, echoes this effect. For, when Childs's rapidly turning dancers spin into the wings, their projected counterparts, often filling the entire screen, spiral off its edges, suggesting the movement's continuation beyond the confines of the theatrical space and away into an undefined landscape.

⁵¹ Cunningham, in *The Dancer and the Dance*, 18. Copeland provides a concise overview of Cunningham's artistic origins in his chapter "From Graham to Cunningham: An Unsentimental Education," *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Art*, 25-51.

⁵² Cunningham claimed that "I was trying to think about ways to work in space," and he explained to Rauschenberg that, "One thing I can tell you about this dance is it has no center..." *The Dancer and the Dance*, 96-97, as quoted in Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, 107.

⁵³ Cunningham, *Changes: Notes on Choreography* (New York: Something Else Press, 1968), unpaginated, as quoted in Potter, "'A License to Do Anything': Robert Rauschenberg and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company," 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 12.

Both Cunningham and Cage proved highly influential on the younger generation of dancers, choreographers, and musicians who studied under them. Indeed, Robert Dunn, from whose choreography class the idea for the Judson Dance Theater developed, had taken Cage's class in experimental music composition at the New School for Social Research and instructed his own course at Cunningham's studio, where he worked as an accompanist.⁵⁵ Dunn encouraged his students to adopt Cage's techniques of chance procedures and rule structures into their choreographic practices. While Cunningham's aleatoric technique marked an innovative turn away from his modernist precursors, he retained much of the elegance and grace of form associated with ballet, and, as Lambert-Beatty has argued, "one of the group's lasting contributions was to put the line between dance and ordinary behavior under erasure."⁵⁶ Childs, who had studied with Cunningham between 1959 and 1963, maintained his rejection of narrative plot or particular meaning,⁵⁷ while also incorporating nondance motifs, monologues, and objects into her still-developing style. Indeed, Dunn encouraged all types of movement, from walking, talking, and eating to total stillness.⁵⁸

Within the workshop participants' presentations of the body as a vehicle for tasklike, pedestrian movement (a standpoint which aligned them with contemporaneous practitioners of minimalist sculpture who conceived of their work first as objects rather than art), there also emerged a need for a clear definition of precisely what they, as dancers, were not. To that end, in 1965 Rainer articulated her delineation in what has come to be known as her NO manifesto. She famously declared, "NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe...no to seduction of the spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving and being moved."⁵⁹ Sontag identifies within Childs's work a related form of rejection, noting that

⁵⁵ Sally Banes has conducted the most comprehensive research on the origins of and performances associated with the Judson Dance Theater. See her *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). For her detailed explication of Judson's formation, see her chapter "Robert Dunn's Workshop" in *ibid.*, 1-33. It is also important to note here that there were other influences on the JDT in addition to Cage and Cunningham. Several of the workshop participants, including Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer, studied under west coast-based dancer, choreographer, and innovative teacher, Anna Halprin. Known for promoting analytic improvisation, Halprin conducted her classes on a huge outdoor platform at her house in the mountains of Northern California, where she instructed her students to move through space without composition or judgment. For a fascinating and thorough analysis of Halprin's life and work, see Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 42. See also her complete chapter on the history of the JDT, "Judson Dance Theater in Hindsight," *ibid.*, 19-74.

⁵⁷ Sontag, "For *Available Light: A Brief Lexicon*," 102.

⁵⁸ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, 42.

⁵⁹ Yvonne Rainer, "Some Retrospective Notes on a Dance for 10 People and 12 Mattresses Called *Parts of Some Sextets*, Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), reprinted in Rainer, *Work 1961-73* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 51. This statement is directly related to Rainer's most famous choreographic work, *Trio A*. For more on this see Lambert-Beatty's chapter "Mediating *Trio A*," in *Being Watched*, 127-165.

her dances suggested “The refusal of humor, self-mockery, flirtation with the audience, cult of personality.” Furthermore, Childs’s displayed, “The distaste for the exhibitionistic: of movement calling attention to itself, of isolatable “effects.” Beauty as, first of all, an art of refusal.”⁶⁰

The period from 1963 to 1966 marked the first phase of Childs’s career as a dancer and choreographer. While her early works are not strictly collaborative, Childs developed thirteen primarily solo works within the supportive Judson workshop environment. Her first experiments were “elaborately structured conceptual works,” Sontag argued, “Not dances but the *performing of ideas about dance*.”⁶¹ Sontag’s assessment surely arose in part from Childs’s *Street Dance* (1964), a performance that provides a telling entry point into the concerns of Judson dance members. The first iteration took place in (and on the street below) Dunn’s downtown fifth floor loft, and Childs also conducted a second version in the fall of 1965, this time using Rauschenberg’s studio on Broadway between 11th and 12th streets and the corresponding block across the street for the work’s split setting.⁶² To begin, she simply turned on a tape recorder, left the studio, and emerged from the building’s elevator and onto the street minutes later. Her recorded voice told the spectators in the studio to go to the windows and look down, as the dance would take place across the avenue below. From there they watched her meet another dancer, Tony Holder, and then continued to fix their gaze on the pair as they merged with the pedestrian traffic, occasionally stopping to point out particular aspects of their surroundings including architectural details, signage, and objects in storefront windows. At each carefully coordinated moment, Childs’s recorded voice would announce to the viewers in the studio the specific details of what the two dancers saw below. “Next to the antique store is a stairway concealed by a grating,” Childs dictated at one predetermined point. Moments later, while she peered into a storefront, the spectators heard the recording version of what she saw: “There are three rows of cardboard boxes to the right in the window,” she reported.⁶³ The highly structured nature of this performance still remained open to the chance possibilities intrinsic to working in public. Childs recounted how, “Some of the activities that happened were not planned; for instance, a pedestrian asked me a question so I stopped what I was doing to answer him.”⁶⁴ Despite the tension at play between the scripted tape

⁶⁰ Sontag, “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 100. Sontag’s assessment is rhetorically overwrought, for as Childs has indicated in the case of one section of *Pastime* (1963) known as the “bag section,” that she intended for it to be humorous. See Childs quoted in Banes, *Democracy’s Body*, 98-99.

⁶¹ Sontag, “For *Available Light*.” A Brief Lexicon, 100. Emphasis added.

⁶² Unfortunately there is no clear record of exactly what transpired during the first version. Childs later published a score and a transcript of the second version of *Street Dance* in “Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio,” *Artforum* 11, no. 6 (February 1973): 52. She has also described it in Childs, “Notes: ’64-’74,” *The Drama Review: TDR* 19 no. 1 (March 1975): 33, and in her transcribed interview “Lucinda Childs,” in *Contemporary Dance*, 63.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Childs, “Lucinda Childs,” in *Contemporary Dance*, 63.

and the unpredictability of any given moment on a busy New York City street, Childs indicated that she liked “the fact [that] the dance could fit into this self-contained setting where everybody, including me, was going about their business.”⁶⁵ As Lambert-Beatty has suggested, while the spectators looked out the window at what they understood to be a dance, to those out on the street Childs and Holder were pedestrians like any other, walking, stopping, perhaps talking, pointing. As a result, *Street Dance*, “redirects the question of what counts as dance: away from specific types of movement and toward the mode or condition of its viewing.”⁶⁶ Its meaning develops directly from a particular kind of collaboration occurring between dancer and spectator.

Nearly forty years later, it is tempting to idealize the collaborative nature of the Judson Dance Theater’s workshops and performances. Banes recounts that the informal, open-ended, and nonhierarchical nature of the group allowed for untrained, amateur, or otherwise nondancers to experiment with, perform in, and even to choreograph dances.⁶⁷ She does, however, also acknowledge that disputes arose, particularly as some members (Childs and Rainer among them) received more critical attention than others.⁶⁸ Conflict stirred not just interpersonally, but also, at least in the case of Childs, within the limitations of the types of movement Judson dance emphasized. Indeed, her close involvement with the group then as well as her lasting historical association with them now often obscures how her personal choreographic style never entirely fit with the general principles of the Judson dancers. While Childs made explicit and even sole use of nondance movements in works such as *Street Dance*, manipulated everyday objects in *Carnation* (1964) and *Geranium* (1965) and incorporated spoken dialogue into *Model* (1964) and *Screen* (1965), ultimately she indicated that her “involvement with objects was subordinated to formal concerns with respect to time and space, in order to arrive at a tension equivalent to any highly structured choreographic form,”⁶⁹ a statement that is anything but “anything goes.” As will be closely examined in the next chapter, Childs’s choreographic work weaves across dividing lines between commonly accepted definitions of postmodern and traditional forms of movement, and this is perhaps most effectively articulated in the collaborative work—both between the artists and between the elements—of *Dance*.

Despite its incredible impact on live performance in the early 1960s, the Judson Dance Theater technically ceased to exist as an explicit entity in April 1964.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, 38.

⁶⁷ Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 13.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Childs, “Lucinda Childs,” in *Further Steps: Fifteen Choreographers on Modern Dance*, 96.

⁷⁰ According to Banes, the JDT ended with its last numbered concert, “Concert of Dance #16,” on April 29, 1964. See *Democracy’s Body*, xiii.

Collaborative experimentation continued to flourish, however, perhaps nowhere more inventively (though many at the time argued nowhere less successfully) than among the artists, dancers, and engineers involved in Experiments in Art and Technology. Spearheaded in 1965 by Billy Klüver, a Swedish engineer working with Bell Laboratories who had already begun to help artists with technical aspects of their projects several years prior, *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering* consisted of a series of ten now infamous performances that took place from October 13 to October 23, 1966 at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York.⁷¹ Klüver wanted to connect artists with engineers at the early stages of a project's conception in order to ascertain how technology could assist in the development of artistic ideas. Along with Rauschenberg, who coorganized the event, Klüver specifically intended for *9 Evenings* to demonstrate the collaborative nature of the projects' efforts between ten pairs of artists (including Childs) and engineers, emphasizing their equal conceptual and participatory roles.⁷² Childs paired with engineer Peter Hirsch for her project, *Vehicle*, and she underscored Klüver's intended cooperation between artistic and technological elements when she stated, "Since I was interested in creating a dance which utilized technology as an integral part, it was evident at the outset that the dance would have to accommodate itself to the limitations of the specific equipment that I chose to have designed."⁷³

For *Vehicle*, Childs and two other performers activated Hirsch's custom-designed Doppler sonar system by interacting with various objects. Alex Hay rode inside a human-sized plexiglass box that was intended to be suspended on a cushion of air (although according to Lucy Lippard's account, another performer pushed the booth, which, she assumed, indicated a technical difficulty).⁷⁴ Hay delivered three buckets to Childs, who attached them from a scaffold and swung them back and forth, creating audible noise as they moved past ultrasonic sound beams installed inside the supporting structure (fig. 4). Additionally, there were three screens arranged in the space that served as both sets and collaborative elements. The center screen captured shadows from various movements, one of the side screens showed an oscillograph image of the sound waves from the sonar

⁷¹ Klüver first began to collaborate with artists in 1960, when he helped Jean Tinguely build his large sculpture *Homage to New York*, which famously (and purposefully) self-destructed in front of an audience in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art. The remnant remains in the Museum's collection. See Billy Klüver, "The Garden Party," in *The Machine as Seen at the End of Mechanical Age*, ed. K.G.V. Pontus Hultén (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 168-71. For an overview of Experiments in Technology (E.A.T.) as well as Maurice Tuchman's similarly ambitious program Art and Technology started the same year and based at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see Pamela M. Lee, "Introduction: Eros and Technics and Civilization," in *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 5-34.

⁷² In addition to the primary participants, however, there were numerous other performers associated with the JDT as well as upwards of forty engineers. Lee, *Chronophobia*, 12.

⁷³ Unpublished manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 1.4, as quoted in Catherine Morris, "9 Evenings: An Experimental Proposition (Allowing for Discontinuities)," in *9 Evenings Reconsidered: Art Theatre, and Engineering, 1996* (Cambridge, MA: MIT List Visual Art Center), 11.

⁷⁴ Lucy Lippard, "Total Theatre?" *Art International* 20 (January 1967): 39, reprinted in *ibid.*, 72.

system through a TV projector, while the other side screen reflected the moving image of a single object, lit from inside, and suspended from the ceiling.⁷⁵ Together, these results reflected Childs's longstanding interest in moving bodies and extended it to moving images, light, and sound. Lippard noted that because of the work's complexity it was extremely difficult for the audience to tell exactly what was unfolding in front of them, noting that, "Ironically, concept was blurred by technology and technology by action."⁷⁶ Indeed, in the face of numerous technical difficulties *9 Evenings* received primarily negative reviews from the popular press. The theater critic for the *New York Times*, Clive Barnes (to cite just one example), described it as a "sad failure" and a "limp disaster."⁷⁷ Despite immediate dismissive reactions such as this, *9 Evenings* was and remains an influential touchstone in the history of artistic and technological collaboration. For Childs, *Vehicle* marked a turning point, a crucial first experimentation with complex projected images, an idea she would return to, albeit in a much more unified manner, in *Dance*.

As will become increasingly clear in chapter 3, LeWitt's filmic contribution to *Dance* serves a collaborative instrumentality that emphasizes and alters the viewer's perception of the dancers' moving bodies. In the decade before Childs developed *Dance*, however, both Rainer and the cohort of Cage, Cunningham, and Stan VanDerBeek also examined methods of displaying live movement with projected movement. In these two cases, the experimental use of projected moving bodies presented within the same space as live dancers appeared as only one part of larger projects, but they nonetheless served as fundamental groundwork for Childs, Glass and LeWitt's later effort. For three nights in April of 1968, Rainer performed her multi-part, evening-length work, *The Mind is a Muscle*, at the Anderson Theater in New York. This event included both *Trio A*, her most well known sequence, which she had been incorporating into performances since 1966, as well as its variation, *Trio B*. More useful for the purposes of this analysis, however, is the seventh section of the multimedia work, called simply, *Film*.

Just two years prior to this performance, Rainer started making short 8 and 16 millimeter films, including *Hand Movie* (1966), and *Volleyball* (1967), both of which take as their subjects the close analysis of various movements, either of a solitary hand and its five fingers, or the repetitive motion of two legs (shot from the knee down) walking up to a volleyball and gently kicking it. Rainer incorporated a projection of *Volleyball* into this larger work, and when she later described the visual effect of the hanging screen on which the film was shown, she claimed that it "dominated the downstage center area"⁷⁸ in such a way that the entire group of eight dancers moved as a

⁷⁵ For a brief overview of what transpired during the performance, see *ibid.*, 10-11. Childs provides a more detailed account (as well as a and diagram of the component parts) in "Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio," 56.

⁷⁶ Lippard, "Total Theatre?" 72.

⁷⁷ Clive Barnes, "Dance or Something at the Armory," *New York Times*, October 15, 1966, 33. Shortly after *9 Evenings*, Klüver, Rauschenberg, Cage, and others established E.A.T. in order to both match artists with technical problems with engineers and to secure industrial sponsorship for the collaborations. See the bulletin *Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T) News* 2, no. 1 (March 18, 1968): 2 as quoted in Lee, *Chronophobia*, 13.

herd in the open space primarily behind the screen (fig. 5). When its presence blocked their traversing bodies, only their own legs (which were “very small in comparison” to those in the film) became visible below its bottom edge,⁷⁹ producing an echoing effect of live and mediated motion. For its part, *Film* highlights live pedestrian movement on the stage, and filmed pedestrian movement on the screen, and although Rainer served as the sole author of *The Mind is a Muscle*, this particular portion of the work does address another form of collaboration, one that is of crucial importance in *Dance*: namely, the particular relationship between projected moving images and live, moving bodies.

The intended interaction, incorporation, and overlap of projected moving images and moving bodies in space is articulated in even more explicit terms in the Cage, Cunningham and VanDerBeek collaborative work, *Variations V*. Like Childs’s *Vehicle*, which would premiere less than a year later, *Variations V* (staged in the winter of 1965 as part of a festival organized by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at Lincoln Center) combined a complex configuration of disparate mediums to produce interplays of art, technology, movement, sound and light.⁸⁰ As Andrew Uroskie has argued, *Variations V* “marked a major shift for Cage and Cunningham, in that it replaced their previous model of anarchic *autonomy* with a new paradigm of anarchic *interdependence*.”⁸¹ It is precisely this sense of a necessary intertwining of elements that presages the collaborative aspects among movement, score, and film in *Dance*.

VanDerBeek, a filmmaker particularly interested in the space of cinematic enterprises, experimented with the collaging of moving images and performance in what he termed Expanded Cinema.⁸² He proved the perfect collaborator for a project such as *Variations V*, producing for the set what he called the *Movie-Mural*, which was comprised of a series of slide and film projections culled from numerous sources to produce a collage (or mural) of moving and still images. Varied imagery was projected from a dozen different locations within the performance space onto screens placed near the rear of the stage. The dancers, executing Cunningham’s choreography, moved in front of the screens, and from these numerous sources VanDerBeek projected slides of drawings, paintings, and diagrams, television commercials, animated short films, and segments of Hollywood films (fig. 6). Added to this mix of visual stimuli was footage he shot of the dancers while they rehearsed the movement prior to the performance. These segments of film—shots of full bodies in motion as well as close-up views of hands and feet—displayed for the audience altered views of the same dancers that performed live in

⁷⁸ Rainer, *Work 1961-73*, 89.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* For a comprehensive examination of the entire performance, see Catherine Wood, *The Mind is a Muscle* (London: Afterall Books, 2007).

⁸⁰ For a detailed description of the work’s component parts and their various interactions, see Andrew V. Uroskie, “From Pictorial Collage to Intermedia Assemblage: *Variations V* (1965) and the Cagean Origins of VanDerBeek’s Expanded Cinema,” *Animation* 5, forthcoming July 2010, as well as Leta E. Miller, “Cage, Cunningham, and Collaborators: The Odyssey of *Variations V*,” *The Musical Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 545-567. The following description is drawn from these sources.

⁸¹ Uroskie, “From Pictorial Collage to Intermedia Assemblage,” forthcoming. Emphasis Uroskie’s.

⁸² *Ibid.*

front of them, offering a repetition of live and filmed moving bodies.⁸³ For *Movie-Mural*, VanDerBeek projected images so that they would spill off the edges of their assigned screens, breaking the boundaries of their frames and creating collaged effects often rendered even more fragmented as the dancers moved in front of the projectors' beams and cast their shadows onto the moving images appearing on the screens. "The audience's impression of *Variations V*," recalled Gordon Mumma, a composer who worked on the sound portions of the work with Cage, "...is that of a superbly poly: -chromatic, -genic, -phonic, -meric, -morphic, -pagic, -technic, -valent, -multi-ringed circus."⁸⁴ Childs's first experiments with works that might also be described as "poly" began with *Vehicle*, but it was not until the 1970s that she recognized the possibility of integrating collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts into her own work.

According to Sontag, the year Childs spent developing, rehearsing, and performing in Robert Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* marked a significant turning point in her choreographic practice. Indeed, Sontag argues that the 35-minute solo Childs designed for it, which was the longest piece of her career thus far and the first she had composed for music since 1963, marked the transition from the second phase of her work to the third.⁸⁵ In the second phase, which lasted from 1973 to 1978 and encompassed the founding of her Company, Childs created sixteen different dances, including solos and pieces for small ensembles that traverse strictly organized units of space with movements such as walking, skipping, running, and turning, and that last from between ten and thirteen minutes.⁸⁶ In the third phase, which Sontag argues began in 1979, Childs initiated a major shift, and echoing Perreault's observation from several years prior, "moved from giving dance concerts to creating dance productions."⁸⁷ *Dance* was the first of these productions, which generally included longer works designed for music, as well as sets, theatrical lighting, and costumes. Childs claimed in a written description on her body of work that what she found "especially pleasing" about collaborating on *Einstein* was the opportunity to bring certain aspects of her performative and choreographic style that she

⁸³ It is this aspect of VanDerBeek's *Movie-Mural* that is, of course, most relevant for what LeWitt later created for *Dance*. LeWitt did not mention this particular predecessor in any of the limited number of statements he made about the work. For more on the references he did point to, see chapter 3, 50, 51, fn. 177.

⁸⁴ Gordon Mumma, "Technology in the Modern Arts: Music and Theatre," *Chelsea* 20/21 (May 1967): 102.

⁸⁵ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 102. Sontag does not get this history entirely correct here. She claims that Childs's choreography for *Einstein* marked the first time she had ever choreographed for music. This inaccuracy was partially corrected in an interview Childs gave in which she states, "...one of my first dances at the Judson was a collaboration with Philip Corner. That was in 1963. But since then, I haven't worked with music." See Daryl Chin, "Talking with Lucinda Childs," *Dance Scope* 14 (Winter/Spring 1979-80): 80. Childs refers to *Pastime* here, but does not mention that another musician, Malcolm Goldstein, provided music for *Three Pieces*, also from 1963, and also staged at Judson Memorial Church. See Sally Banes, *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1994), 314-15.

⁸⁶ Sontag, "For *Available Light*," 100.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

developed in the 1960s to the elaborate multi-hour production.⁸⁸ Indeed, in her solo Childs utilized the diagonal, a streamlined device in her practice that allowed her to travel the greatest distance across the stage without changing direction.⁸⁹ This resulted in a bridging of the divide between the fervently antitheatrical aesthetic of many practitioners associated with the Judson Dance Theater and the high theatricality of operatic works like Wilson's *Einstein*.

Sontag's emphasis on the third phase as one marked by a turn toward more elaborate dance productions ignores another, even more crucial transition: Childs's experience working with Wilson and Glass triggered her interest in a new phase of collaboration, one that also began to materialize with *Dance*. This is not just the collaborative spirit of the Judson Dance Theater, where dancers and artists discussed their projects, provided feedback, and participated in each other's performances, but rather a sustained development of projects with specific artists and musicians who served as key players contributing to a cohesive final product. Similarly, Childs's experiences with Wilson also provoked her interest in designing dances for traditional theatrical spaces, a distinct shift away from previous sites including the basement of the Judson Memorial Church or the open gallery floors of the Whitney Museum. In an interview she explained, "When I saw—and performed in—the work of Wilson for the first time, I realized that one could design something within the context of the proscenium."⁹⁰

Childs recognized in Wilson's directorial style the ability to select from traditional structures and systems of live performance that existed within the confines of the proscenium stage, and then incorporate them into a work that simultaneously resisted the "architectural values" of that same space.⁹¹ Indeed, in keeping with Sayre's definition of the new *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wilson's *Einstein* is truly a "theater of differences" comprised of purposefully separate elements that never quite cohere within the space of the theatrical setting.⁹² Classified as an opera, this naming is in fact too specific for a wide-ranging work in which Glass's score and the narrative action often transpire independent of one another. In the second Knee Play (the opera is comprised of five hinges, or "Knee Plays," interspersed between the major acts), Childs and fellow performer Sheryl Sutton recited text and moved in synchronization while sitting on chairs positioned in front of a large white backdrop that serves as a type of screen on which

⁸⁸ Childs, "Lucinda Childs," in *Further Steps: Fifteen Choreographers on Modern Dance*, 99.

⁸⁹ For more on the role of the diagonal in Childs's choreography, see Sontag, "For *Available Light*," 102, and Chapter 2, 35-36.

⁹⁰ Lucinda Childs interview with Sophie Constanti, "Swimming Against the Tide," *Dance Theatre Journal*, 8 no. 4 (Spring 1991): 8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, 129.

images appear. These “screens of visual images,” Wilson noted, “are layered against one another...sometimes they don’t align, and then sometimes they do.”⁹³

By the late 1970s Childs’ development as a choreographer seemed positioned in an unstable, perhaps indefinable place somewhere between the vastly different impulses of Judson dance on the one hand, and the theatricality of works like *Einstein on the Beach* on the other. Describing the reception of her work in the early 1990s, Childs claimed, “Many people don’t find my work easily accessible because of what they perceive as a lack of theatricality.... I think the abstract, formal nature of my work is something which was more the mood of previous decades. The fact that I’ve continued in that style has caused a certain controversy because people regard the theatricalisation of dance as the inevitable direction for the art—and obviously, I don’t fall into that category.”⁹⁴ Despite the resistance to categorization apparent in this retrospective statement, it is clear that Childs’s work in *Einstein* activated her interest in collaboration across disciplines. It is also possible to argue that the experience, as well as those she gained throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, instigated her thinking about just how component parts arranged within a given space might interact.

Dance, as it has likely become quite evident, does not fit comfortably into any of the interrelated models discussed here. The inextricably intertwined filmed footage, live performers, and closely related score that comprise *Dance* is an unprecedented departure from earlier 1960s experimental collaborations among artists, choreographers, musicians, and even engineers, such as the early examples and outgrowths from Black Mountain College, the more explicit experimentation undertaken by members of the Judson Dance Theater or participants in Experiments in Art Technology, wherein projected images, movement, sound, and other everyday or technological objects shared the stage often in undifferentiated and nonhierarchical combinations. Perreault addressed the connection with—and the pointed move away from—preceding collaborations, writing in his review of the performance that, “The very influential Cage-Cunningham philosophy of artist-musician-dancer collaboration emphasizes the unrelated contribution of each, leaving interrelationships to chance and audience perception. This faith in chance and therefore in some underlying order in the universe—as objectified by the performance experience—is not a factor in *Dance*.”⁹⁵ So what, then, are the factors in *Dance*? How do they operate, both individually and collaboratively?

This chapter has traced the historical roots of cross-disciplinary artistic collaboration that relate closely to Childs, Glass, and LeWitt’s undertaking. At the same time, these precedents also underscore the collaboration taking part among the component parts. The following chapters will attempt to parse the individual elements of the movement, score, the grid, and the screen in order to emphasize certain aspects of them both individually and in relationship with one another. It will become clear, however, that they do not and cannot operate as distinctive entities, for they are

⁹³ Wilson, as quoted in *ibid.* Photographer Babette Mangolte took numerous photographs of Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach*. For reproductions of Lucinda Childs and Sheryl Sutton performing in “Knee Play 2,” see *ibid.*, 128-29, figures 47, 48.

⁹⁴ Childs, “Swimming Against the Tide,” 8.

⁹⁵ Perreault, “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74.

intertwined, constantly underscoring and referring back to each other. For example, Childs's choreographed movement is inherently connected to the score (to which she designed the movement in a pointed departure from previous working methods), and the grid exists at once as a structure underlying Childs's movement, as a projected image on the screen, and as an art historical mode, one that provides a crucial basis for much of LeWitt's conceptually-based sculptural objects, wall drawings, and serial photographs. It is within these intersections and overlaps that Perreault's definition of *Dance* as an art world event will become elucidated.



Figure 3: Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), *Summerspace*, 1958. Dancer: Carolyn Brown. Photograph by Richard Rutledge. Courtesy of the Cunningham Foundation.



Figure 4: Lucinda Childs, *Vehicle*, 1966. Still from 16mm film transferred to video (black and white, sound). 10:17 min. © 2010 Experiments in Art and Technology, New York.



Figure 5: Yvonne Rainer (b. 1934), *Film from The Mind is a Muscle*, 1968.
Photograph by Peter Moore © The Estate of Peter Moore / VAGA, New York, NY.



Figure 6: John Cage, David Tudor, Gordon Mumma (foreground), Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, Barbara Dilley Lloyd (background), in *Variations V*, 1965.
Photograph by Hervé Gloauguen. Courtesy of the Cunningham Foundation.

Chapter 2: Movement

In tracing the choreographic and stylistic trajectory of Lucinda Childs's body of work, Susan Sontag articulated identifiably clear divisions, breaking them down into a three-part chronological development. Writing in 1983, presumably while Childs was still in the midst of what the writer defined as her third phase, Sontag viewed the dancer's career as an "exceptionally logical" one, and as already discussed in some detail in chapter 1, these subsections begin with her earliest, primarily solo, work executed from 1963 until 1966 both within the workshop environment of the Judson Dance Theater and immediately thereafter.⁹⁶ Into these conceptually-driven dances—her own and her fellow Judson dance members'—Childs's incorporated unequivocally nondance movement, everyday objects, atypical performance locations (recall here her influential 1964 *Street Dance*), as well as commonplace, inscrutable, or even humorous dialogue. But by the mid-1960s, when she went into the studio to brainstorm, she found herself moving in very different modes, ones that seemed in perhaps regressive opposition to the innovative non-technique members of the Judson Dance Theater typically espoused. There she would practice the foundations of her training, rooted in ballet and even more firmly in Cunningham technique, incorporating in particular his emphasis on the upright, extended body, on quick, skilled footwork, and on cool, anti-expressive, impersonal presentation, into her own personal, still nascent, style. Reflecting on this time period in a 1978 interview, she began to feel, as she put it, "very schizophrenic."⁹⁷

Childs's description of her experience reflects an unease, one with broad implications not only for her own work, but also for the state of experimental dance as the 1960s neared their end. And she was not alone. As Carrie Lambert-Beatty reveals, fellow Judson Dance member Yvonne Rainer also sensed an impending crisis in her choreographic practice following the early-1960s heyday of the group, one that led her to the conclusion that, "It was necessary to find a different way to move."⁹⁸ For both

⁹⁶ Sontag, "For *Available Light: A Brief Lexicon*," 100.

⁹⁷ Childs, as quoted in Chin, "Talking with Lucinda Childs," 74. As previously mentioned, Cunningham proved an early and pivotal influence in Childs's life. "...When I first saw him perform," she explained in this same interview, "When I first began to study with him, it was realizing that the dancing was 'about' dancing. That was such a revelation!" See *ibid.* Emphasis Childs's. Elsewhere she referred to this time as a "difficult and perplexing period as I struggled to establish a plausible aesthetic expression in the midst of a welter of contradictory influences," citing her appearances as a member of the James Waring Company from 1963-64 as another element adding to the din of various movement sources. See Childs, "Lucinda Childs," in *Further Steps: Fifteen Choreographers on Modern Dance*, 97.

⁹⁸ Rainer, "Some Retrospective Notes," 46, as quoted in Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 83. Lambert-Beatty further explains that for Rainer, this meant rejecting the quirky or silly aspects of some of her earlier work in favor of a kind of "workliness," or an emphasis on the serious presentation of ordinary movement. See *ibid.*, 83-84.

dancers this desire certainly reflected changing personal preferences, but as Lambert-Beatty argues, Rainer was also “participating in an art historical shift, as the youthful abandon, the anything-goes and why-not attitudes that had given New York-based avant-garde art its energy since at least the late 1950s came to seem unsatisfactory.”⁹⁹ Childs, too, had responded to this artistic atmosphere, citing as influences for her work in the early 1960s not only Cage and Cunningham but also trends in painting and sculpture, in particular the work of Rauschenberg and Johns.¹⁰⁰ But as the definition-defying openness that inspired and fueled Judson dance evolved into an identifiable style, both dancers began to absorb into their work other tendencies circulating among artists in the mid-to-late 1960s. These trends, which Lambert-Beatty identifies as modular or serial structures as well as neutral presentation,¹⁰¹ seemed to concurrently arise in both experimental dance and art and bolstered both Childs and Rainer’s stated interest in figuring out another, arguably more rigorous, approach to their individual practices.

It is perhaps no mere coincidence that the emergence of these “other solutions” also aligns with Sontag’s identification of Childs’s second choreographic phase, both stylistically and chronologically.¹⁰² Beginning in 1968 with her first version of *Untitled Trio*, the “dramatic change of tone and means” as Sontag describes it, included qualities such as disciplined and complex relations in space, as well as simple movements such as walking, skipping, jumping, running, falling, or turning.¹⁰³ In her attempt to figure out a “different way to move,” Rainer embraced the impersonal, calling on the dancer to be a “neutral doer,” one who rejects emotion, narrative, or in the case of her *Trio A* (first developed in 1965), even eliminates eye contact with the audience.¹⁰⁴ Taking Rainer’s claim of neutrality as a terminological starting point, Sontag argues that Childs instead developed into a “transpersonal doer,” one who does not simply evoke Rainer’s purposeful detachment or Cunningham’s cool distance, but rather assumes a “positive impassivity.”¹⁰⁵ In Sontag’s simple play on Rainer’s language the author inadvertently defines Childs’s unique style: a coupling of ordinary, serialized movement executed with

⁹⁹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Rainer, as quoted in Chin, “Talking with Lucinda Childs,” 74. Childs has also cited other visual art influences including paintings by Barnett Newman and Frank Stella. See the transcribed interview “Lucinda Childs,” in *Further Steps*, 97. Similarly, she has suggested that one particular experience of standing in front of a Jackson Pollock painting at the Metropolitan Museum of art during her early adulthood proved pivotal, and claimed that she had “never seen anything that seemed so overwhelming.” See the transcribed interview in Chin, “Talking with Lucinda Childs,” 78.

¹⁰¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 83.

¹⁰² This phrasing follows Lambert-Beatty’s eponymously titled chapter in *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Sontag, “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 100.

¹⁰⁴ Rainer, *Work 1961-73*, 65. Also see her recent questioning of this designation in Rainer, “Where’s the Passion? Where’s the Politics? Or, How I Became Interested in Impersonating, Approximating, and End Running around My Selves and Others,” and “Where Do I Look When You’re Looking at Me?” *Theater* 40 no. 1 (2010): 49.

¹⁰⁵ Sontag, “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 105.

a dancerly grace that is closely tied to classical dance forms. In fact, within this terminology Sontag locates a hint of affirmative—rather than neutral—emotion, and in so doing she effectively dislodges Childs from a comfortable fit within any generally understood view of the Judson Dance Theater aesthetic and its outgrowths. For, “positive impassivity” underscores the hybrid forms so crucial to Childs’s work in the late 1970s, and in *Dance* in particular. A close examination of the types of movement utilized in *Dance* will reveal this in greater detail. However, in the early 1970s, Childs displayed many of the same concerns Rainer articulated, and thus specific works from this period warrant a sustained discussion here.

Shortly after beginning the “second phase” of her choreographic trajectory in 1968, Childs took an extended break from performing. She continued to dance informally, however, and during her time away from the public stage she earned a Master’s degree and started teaching at various locations including in a women’s correctional facility and at the School of Visual Arts in New York. In 1972 she began to form her company, and the following year she returned to live performance in a concert at the Whitney Museum of American Art. As previously mentioned in chapter 1, she and her new troupe premiered several works there, including two (*Untitled Trio* and *Calico Mingling*) whose forms will be addressed in greater detail in this chapter.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps coincidentally, Sally Banes demarcates the time period from 1968 to 1973—the precise date range of Childs’s hiatus—as a transitional period in the development of postmodern dance. For her part, Childs seemed to literally sit out some of the developing trends during these years, which Banes identified as explicit political themes of participation, democracy, and cooperation, wherein choreographers convened large groups for dances that addressed issues of leadership and control.¹⁰⁷ Steve Paxton, for example, made several works organized around themes of censorship, war, or civic responsibility, and in 1970, the Grand Union, an improvisation-based collective, formed. Their first performance, staged the following year, served as a benefit for the Black Panthers.¹⁰⁸

And yet in 1973, coinciding with Childs first presentation of her work for a public audience, another shift occurred. If the polemical first phase of postmodern dance to emerge out of the Judson workshop emphasized forms such as the provocative incorporation of pedestrian actions, humor, and the acceptance of nondancers onto the stage (in other words, configurations that rejected previously held definitions of the medium), then the early 1970s ushered in what Banes defined as the “analytic post-

¹⁰⁶ This biographical information is drawing from Chin, “Talking with Lucinda Childs,” 70. Sontag also mentions her hiatus, indicating, however, that an illness triggered it. See “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 100.

¹⁰⁷ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, xix.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. The Grand Union, which lasted from 1970 until 1976, emerged from Rainer’s work *Continuous Projects — Altered Daily*, which she began in 1969. In another interesting parallel with Childs’s trajectory, Rainer also turned away from performance in 1972 when she transitioned to filmmaking. By 1975 she had discontinued performing altogether, and did not return to the stage until 1999. For a fascinating look at Rainer’s life and career, see her memoir *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).

modern” turn based on consolidated structural devices.¹⁰⁹ Repetition, reversal, mathematical systems, and the scientific reading of the body through simple movement, she claimed, combined to encourage “low-key presentation and physical intelligence in a way that seemed to define a new virtuosity—a heroism of the ordinary.”¹¹⁰ Other dance critics who have attempted to trace the developmental stages of postmodern dance concur that Childs’s work from the early 1970s exemplifies this larger trend. Judy Burns, to draw upon one such example, argued that Childs’s work represented “the choreographic epitome of minimalism: a stripped-down vocabulary performed along geometric floor plans, in rigorous structures that repeat or mutate minutely and precisely over time.”¹¹¹ The viewing of many of Childs’s live performances certainly informed these writers’ conclusions; however, it is also quite clear that they incorporated the dancer’s own documented tracing of stylistic transitions in her work into their descriptive dance lineages. In a 1973 issue of *Artforum*, Childs distinguished her aims from the concerns of some of her fellow Judson dance participants. She wrote, “While some of the choreographers adhered to chance methodology and task-oriented rule games to extend the range of movement outside the traditional guidelines, I was among others who developed different methods.”¹¹² These “different methods”—which Banes alluded to in her definition of “analytic post-modern” dance and which Burns confirmed by singling out Childs as the “perfect embodiment” of Banes’s claims—can be best articulated in an examination of *Untitled Trio*.

For the revised version of *Untitled Trio* made for three dancers, Childs explained that she “discarded dialogue and action governed by materials as the sounding board from which the earlier dances had been derived,”¹¹³ signaling a marked shift away from her previous methods. As a result, she discontinued the use of props, including objects such as chairs, mirrors, and dirt. Similarly, she eliminated her reliance on monologues for the specific subject matter of her work, and rejected her dependence upon a choreographic premise wherein “action drifted in and out of a context relevant to what one was hearing.”¹¹⁴ Instead, Childs determined that she was, in fact, “interested in finding a structural logic or illusion of dialogue central to the actual movement of dancers completing specific sets of selected activity in predetermined configurations and patterns in space.”¹¹⁵ To this end, she first constructed phrases of movement and presented them to the audience, then she emphasized minute changes by breaking the segments down

¹⁰⁹ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, xx.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxii.

¹¹¹ Judy Burns, “Lucinda Childs,” in *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*, ed. Martha Bremser (New York: Routledge, 1999), 58.

¹¹² Childs, “Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio,” 50.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁴ Childs, “Notes: ’64-’74,” 34.

¹¹⁵ Childs, “Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio,” 51.

into their component parts before ultimately reconstructing them. The attentive viewer could observe that within a single repeated series of movements the dancers articulated small inversions, insertions, or changes of direction that continued until they had exhausted all possible permutations.

Childs supported her primary interest in the rigorous framing of a set of movements within a clearly defined structure by dividing *Untitled Trio* into three interrelated sections. During the first segment, she organized the three dancers spatially within a grid formation so that when they walked, kneeled, sat, rolled, squatted, lunged forward onto one leg, jumped, and even assumed a prostrate position on their backs, they retained parallel or perpendicular relationships to each other regardless of their spatial distances at any given moment. In the second section, the dancers articulated a diagonal line in a combination of steps based on straightforward phrasings that included walking, sitting and lying down; and in the third segment, they traced out curved formations using various tempos to walk forward, backward, and to execute a progression from standing to sitting.¹¹⁶ Thus each dancer, Childs wrote, “redefin[ed] the movements of the other in an unbroken continuum of their individual paths through space.”¹¹⁷

Filmmaker and photographer Babette Mangolte viewed the performance at the Whitney Museum that evening, and in one of her photographs she captures visual evidence of dance critic Jennifer Dunning’s claim that, “The air was heavy with respect” at the sold-out concert.¹¹⁸ The audience members are seated three rows deep—many directly on the floor—around the entire perimeter of the open gallery space. Several can be seen cupping their chins under their hands so as to steady their attentive gaze upon moving bodies as the dancers executed three distinct variations on Childs’s series of ordinary steps marked along clearly defined paths beneath the gridded ceiling above. Accompanied only by the sound of their bare feet shuffling against the smooth floor, one dancer is suspended mid-stride, arms swinging low at her side, another raises one foot up as if she is about to jump into the air, aided by the upward momentum of her half-raised arms, while the third performer lunges her right leg forward while thrusting her arms above her head in a gesture of active propulsion.

Untitled Trio served as Childs’s first public presentation of the major themes she started exploring in 1968, emphasizing in particular simplified, yet malleable movements arranged to create particular formations in space. In *Calico Mingling* (1973), a “walking piece” that she premiered during the same Whitney Museum concert, Childs examined the possibilities available to a group of four female dancers who executed one basic step in multiple directions.¹¹⁹ “It was a breakthrough for me,” she explained, “not so much that it required dance training to do the dance, but in the application of dance training, each individual dancer contributes his or her own kinesthetic interpretation of my

¹¹⁶ This description of *Untitled Trio* is drawn from Childs’s own description from the transcribed interview in Anne Livet, ed., *Contemporary Dance*, 63, and Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 136-137.

¹¹⁷ Childs, “Lucinda Childs: A Portfolio,” 51.

¹¹⁸ Jennifer Dunning, “Mathematical Precision Marks Dancing by Childs Company,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1973, 56.

¹¹⁹ Childs, as quoted in Chin, “Talking with Lucinda Childs,” 74.

work.”¹²⁰ The results offered Childs the chance to physically articulate a unique combination of Judson-inspired pedestrian actions, such as walking, with her personal fascination with formal arrangements based on a rigorous structuring of bodies along straight lines and semi- or fully circular loops. For *Calico Mingling*, four dancers completed a strict, six-pace movement phrase comprised of walking forward and backward along parallel lines, half-arcs or full circles. In the first of four sections, the dancers all faced and moved in the same direction, followed by a repetition of the same walking steps in the opposite direction for the second segment. In the last two sections, the quartet split into two facing pairs before doubling back over the same steps in an articulation far removed from the original phrasing.

Mangolte’s photograph of *Calico Mingling* appears to capture the dancers in the final section, where the audience views one pair moving along parallel lines while the others execute arching strides in opposite directions. Seen one after the other, the four parts to the dance produced moments of unison, diversion, intersection, and most crucially, repetition. Burns provides a useful summary of Childs’s work from this period, arguing that, “What has grown and developed since the early 1970s has been the way in which the steps are assembled, accumulated, varied through re-viewing from different points of view, and intensified through repetition or doubling.”¹²¹ Indeed, she created effects in both *Untitled Trio* and *Calico Mingling* that resonated into her work of the later 1970s, and in *Dance* in particular: the sensation of continuation, of ceaseless, restless movement that endured even after the sound of the dancers’ pounding feet faded or the Glass score ceased to play. Banes gestures toward a similar impression of these works’ lasting effects when she suggested that the viewer of *Calico Mingling*, “feels that if one could view the dance from directly overhead, one would be watching a design being engraved onto the floor: the body as stylus.”¹²² The body’s ability to carve space with motion is part of the more complex movement vocabulary that first developed in Childs’s work from the early 1970s.

A glance back through the descriptions of the two dances from Childs’s second phase presented here—culled from the artist’s own statements, photographic evidence, and several dance critics’ interpretations—reveals the basic terminological framework of her choreographic style. The diagonal, the structuring grid, doubling, the formation of bodies in space, and repetition, all of which appeared in *Untitled Trio* and *Calico Mingling*, solidified in *Dance*. Indeed, whether applied individually or in combination, these five elements structure the movement of the dancers’ bodies and inform how they operate within space. Sontag specified Childs’s 1979 collaboration with Glass and LeWitt as the starting point of her third choreographic phase, one that reflects increasingly ambitious production levels, full-evening length presentations, and the integration of

¹²⁰ Ibid. The following description of *Calico Mingling* is based upon Childs’s account of the work in both “Notes: ’64-’74,” 36, and in her transcribed interview in Anne Livet, ed., *Contemporary Dance*, 66, as well as from Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 137.

¹²¹ Burns, “Lucinda Childs,” in *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*, 59.

¹²² Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 137.

movement with music, lighting, and costuming.¹²³ Childs's transition to cohesive productions (recall John Perreault's laudatory classification of *Dance* as an "art world event") has its origins in her exposure to and participation in Robert Wilson's opera *Einstein on the Beach*, a multi-media performance invested in innovative theatricality. Sontag's description applies quite neatly to *Dance* as well as to other large-scale works that followed, such as *Available Light* from 1983.¹²⁴ And yet while her tracing of Childs's development correctly demarcates a growing emphasis on overall effects, what is in fact more crucial at this chronological moment is Childs's confirmation of the particular ways of moving dancers' bodies—individually, as a group, and through space—that she first explored in the early 1970s. Just as the three primary elements of choreography, film, and music in *Dance* interweave to shape the whole, so too do these essential forms of movement rely upon and inform each other. It is therefore necessary to examine them independently in order to begin to understand how they work together.

Prior to the premiere of *Dance* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1979, Childs described its choreography as adhering to "definite geometric patterns, with simple movements, a spatial format, and in each dance, some kinds of obvious and more subtle progressions."¹²⁵ Each of the five elements mentioned above, the diagonal, the structuring grid, doubling, the formation of bodies in space, and repetition, can be located in her characteristically straightforward statement, and are similarly illustrated in the drawings that correspond to the five sections of *Dance*. Childs initially produced scores (or what she has also called diagrammatic charts) as a record-keeping device executed after she finished a dance.¹²⁶ Originally intended as a type of memory trigger to help her dancers chart their assigned paths through space, Childs's habit of illustrating specific segments ultimately proved more useful to her in the developmental stages. She utilized sketched notations as tools to work out various options for structuring her material.¹²⁷ Sontag observed that the choreographer's diagrams parallel the movement, that Childs's "...tightly organized choreographic structures have a graphically remarkable equivalent in the elaborate scores, really spatial maps, she makes for each of her dances."¹²⁸ Similarly, Dunning noted that, "A relentless intelligence informs Miss Childs' conceptual

¹²³ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 100.

¹²⁴ Childs continued to explore her interest in large-scale productions in *Available Light*, a project commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and staged in 1983. Fifty-five minutes long, choreographed for eleven dancers, and incorporating music by John Adams, a set by Frank Gehry, costumes by Ronaldus Shamask, and lighting by Beverly Emmons (who also designed the lighting for *Dance*), *Available Light* served as the impetus for Sontag's 1983 *Art in America* article on Childs. (Her essay, organized as an alphabetical lexicon, is an invaluable resource for any study of this under-examined choreographer.)

¹²⁵ Childs as quoted in Dunning, "An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn," 8.

¹²⁶ Childs in Livet ed., *Contemporary Dance*, 66.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 109.

dances.... It is as if dance notation had been turned into dance.”¹²⁹ Both critics accurately identify a connection between the diagrams and the carefully plotted, cerebral nature of her work, and yet the implication that Childs’s practice of putting ink on paper serves merely to support her primary aim of moving bodies in space elides the drawings’ status as art objects in their own right. An examination of the five diagrams created for *Dance*, paired here with the key choreographic themes, suggests a still, abstracted counterpart traversing in lockstep with the active dancers. These are not rigid alliances; indeed, each drawing could potentially provide a visual articulation of any of the movement-based terms identified here. And this is precisely the point: the attempt to single out one particular form for the purposes of a close analysis immediately reveals and underscores their intrinsically intertwined nature.

In *Dance no. 1*, the first section of the 1979 performance, eight dancers, each clad in matching white leotards, flowing white pants, and crisp white sneakers, moved across the stage in successive progressions, executing quick leaps and rapid turns, gliding effortlessly across the floor.¹³⁰ For this segment’s accompanying diagram, Childs filled in a solid square with a blue fiber-tipped pen, a tool that creates an uneven result. Stretches of deep blues are interrupted by thinner spots that reveal the white paper beneath the ink, as well as the varying amounts of pressure her hand exerted as it as moved across the blank page. She then inscribed across this brightly colored expanse (the background color applied in each drawing corresponds to the tinted lighting gels used for the five sections of *Dance*) sixteen thin, black lines running horizontally from edge to edge within the confines of the box (fig. 7). As Childs has indicated, her scores correspond to trajectories in space, but do not provide any information about the dancers’ actual movement.¹³¹ It is clear from the diagram that the dancers move from side-to-side, off the far edges of the visible stage space and into the wings, but this purposeful ambiguity allows for multiple orientations to coexist within this one direction. Indeed, while the drawing seems to suggest lateral motion, the performers are in fact positioned frontally as they leap and skip across the stage, facing the opposing wings while showing their profiles to the audience (fig. 8).¹³² Through this steady stream of horizontality (both of hand-drawn lines and of live moving bodies), a solitary black line bifurcates twelve of the parallel ones—leaving uninterrupted two on the top and two on the bottom—in order to form a clear diagonal. Sontag has described this form as a “signature element” in Childs’s choreography,¹³³ and indeed, she utilized the diagonal to carve through space in *Untitled Trio* as well as in her solo section for *Einstein on the Beach*. More than mere directional

¹²⁹ Dunning, “Mathematical Precision Marks Dancing by Childs Company,” 56.

¹³⁰ A. Christina Giannini designed the costumes.

¹³¹ Childs, in Livet ed., *Contemporary Dance*, 66.

¹³² Banes, “Childs,” in “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74. The following descriptions of the physical movement in the 1979 version of *Dance* are drawn from this source as well as from Jowitt, “Dance Music Film,” *The Village Voice*, December 17, 1979.

¹³³ Sontag, “For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon,” 102.

angling, for Sontag, the diagonal is a “principle of avidity,”¹³⁴ one that in Childs’s work signals an intensification of motion. In the final moments of *Dance no. 1*, four pairs of dancers scurry repeatedly from upstage left to downstage right and back again, their filmic pairs moving right alongside them, echoing in two dimensions the deep recession the movement carves into space with the simple diagonal.

The grid assumes several different forms in *Dance*. Marked out in black lines on the white floor surface of the studio where LeWitt filmed the dancers, this same grid appears projected onto the stage during the performance. There, its filmic representation supplants the once tangible overlapping lines, functioning instead as both a formal element and one that divides space. For Childs, the grid also provides a framework for her choreographic marking process. In previous works such as *Untitled Trio*, she utilized what can be termed the structuring grid (so called to emphasize its difference from the visibly marked floor in the film) as a conceptual tool for arranging directional pathways through space, indeed, the attentive viewer could recognize the mathematically grounded patterns the dancers traced. Despite its crucial role in *Dance*, particularly in the film, a complete grid does not appear in any of her five diagrammatic charts. In the drawing for *Dance no. 1*, parallel lines are not intersected by perpendicular counterparts, but rather by one slicing diagonal. Similarly, in the ink and graphite sketch that corresponds to *Dance no. 2*, Childs gestures toward a gridded form by depicting a large black “X” that evenly divides the white paper along two intersecting diagonal lines. The two lines terminate at the four corners of the sheet of paper and connect back to each other with four inward-scooping arcs (fig. 9). Childs performed this solo section in 1979 accompanied by music played live on an electric organ, but without the film. Bathed in neutral lighting and wearing a black version of the previous section’s all white costuming, she moved through the stage space, articulating the drawing’s precise design.¹³⁵ Childs’s movement sequences based upon the structuring grid result in effects that are not as readily apparent as LeWitt’s clearly visible grid. Her dancers certainly travel along strictly determined routes, but she consistently negotiates with the grid’s rigid form. *Dance no. 2* began with the basic cross of an “X,” but Childs ultimately maneuvered her body along sweeping half-arcs, subtly disrupting its equivalent angles while remaining within its predetermined spatial confines.

Childs maintained the symmetrical format of the choreographic score for *Dance no. 2*, but further complicated the diagrammatic chart for *Dance no. 3* by incorporating into it a series of overlapping and interlocking straight and curved lines. Childs also reversed the process of the drawing’s fabrication, first masking the lines and then revealing them from within the negative space of the yellow ink (fig. 10). This approach suggests an equality among the forms, as the technique eliminates the possibility that one inked line can overlap any other. Similarly, with her entire company positioned on the

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Banes offers an explanation of Childs’s movement trajectory in *Dance no. 2* that also precisely describes the drawing. As a seasoned dance critic, she may very well have recognized the exact form of the choreographic score in the dancer’s articulation of it, however, it is more likely that she had access to the drawings at some point prior to publishing her review. See Banes, “Childs,” in “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74.

brightly lit stage following her first solo, Childs's varied the non-stop motion and horizontal orientation utilized in *Dance no. 1*, adding alternate trajectories along linear, arching, and circular paths, as well as dotting the dancers' rapid, gliding movements with sudden pauses and abrupt direction changes. Despite this increase in complexity, the dancers moved within strictly defined relationships, often paired, but never partnered. "Neither dancer is the consort of the other," Sontag observed, "One does not assist or accompany or accommodate another."¹³⁶ Instead, they are simply duplicates. More importantly for Childs, they are doubled. While closely related to repetition, doubling signals an act of splitting that has recurred in Childs's choreography since the early 1960s.¹³⁷ And nowhere in her body of work is this more richly explored than in *Dance*, where filmed dancers double their live counterparts (fig. 11). She has described LeWitt's film as a "visual construct," one that allowed her to further develop her interest in doubling, a theme of primary importance.¹³⁸ By projecting the movement onto the large scrim, Childs and LeWitt explicitly highlighted the choreographic elements for the viewer. Forms such as doubling appeared both on the stage and on the screen, making them not only perceptible, but also clearly visible in a way they had never been before.

For Childs, the formation of bodies in space signals consumption, a using up of an allocated area within a given set of parameters. Dancers are "space eaters," she claimed,¹³⁹ and indeed, for *Dance no. 4* (her second solo), she traveled from the back edge of the stage toward the audience, stopping just behind the scrim's surface. Following an invisible center line, Childs executed skipping steps, never lifting her feet far off the floor, while swinging her arms at her side in a natural (and yet entirely controlled) pace (fig. 12). The triple white line in the corresponding score indicates her steady path back and forth and back again, in what Banes described as an "impressive frontality" (fig. 13).¹⁴⁰ Childs occasionally deviated from this clearly marked path, moving along the outer edges of the two circles, one small and one large, but both bisected by her steady, straight line. "Dancers are always, indefatigably, going somewhere," Sontag claimed. "In a state of non-imploring urgency, they never stop; though they may go into movement-absence, they do so in order to repopulate the space."¹⁴¹ Childs effectively underscored Sontag's observations by utilizing the same masking technique previously seen in the diagram for *Dance no. 3*, one that allows for the negative space of the white lines to extend beyond the boundaries of the black square. They too never cease.

¹³⁶ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 103.

¹³⁷ As Sontag points out, in one of Childs's earliest works, *Street Dance* (1964), the dancer assumed the role of two performers. Her voice played over the tape recorder in the loft space, dictating for the audience descriptions of what she saw around her while she performed on street below. See "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 102.

¹³⁸ Childs, "Lucinda Childs," in *Further Steps: Fifteen Choreographers on Modern Dance*, 104.

¹³⁹ Childs, as quoted in Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 110.

¹⁴⁰ Banes, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," 74.

¹⁴¹ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 110.

The formation of bodies in space functions additively in *Dance*. As the fifth and final segment of the performance approached, Childs gestured toward the cumulative nature of her movement phrases, rendering her intended effect of building upon and varying basic choreographic steps more readily apparent to the viewer.¹⁴² The film, for its part, accentuates this process. During Childs's second solo, LeWitt displayed the documented movement in a split screen format, simultaneously showing Childs facing toward the audience on the right half of the screen and away from it on the left (fig. 14). This resulted in the presentation of temporally fragmented imagery, as the audience watched the live dancer moving forward and backward along the center stage axis coupled with the filmed version of what came before or what would happen next. The intensification of the spectatorial experience was made even more explicit when the split-screen gave way to a single shot of Childs's filmic double. It loomed large, overflowing the boundaries of the screen, and actively reversing the role between the dancer and the physical space. For, in *Dance no. 4*, the dancer was no longer the space eater; rather, the projected space consumed the dancer, enveloping her entirely.¹⁴³ And yet, just as the continuous building of momentum seemed inevitable, LeWitt's film halted. Stilled in a freeze-frame shot as the live motion continued, this abrupt disruption—a rare moment of difference between live and projected bodies—served as a vivid reminder of the stillness inherent in movement (fig. 15).

Sontag's designation of the dancers' utilization of space as a form of "movement-absence" closely relates to a concept of significance in recent dance and performance theory, namely, the notion of presence, and its attendant opposite, absence. As André Lepecki indicated in the introduction to a 2004 collection of essays on this topic, presence (and the body) exist "as complicated sites where subjectivity challenges subjection, where resistance initiates its moves."¹⁴⁴ Lepecki's notion of presence as a complex location of movement held in a state of tension by opposing forces appeared in Sontag's writing on Childs in the early 1980s under the rubric "presence/absence." The assuming of a body in space in Childs's work operates, according to Sontag, as a "tribute to the ineffable, to absence." What Sontag termed ineffable, Lambert-Beatty has called a haunting, accurately arguing that the "investigation of the absence that always haunts the presence of the moving performer, was embodied in the dance art of the 1960s."¹⁴⁵

Dance, as it has become quite clear, emerged from Childs's exposure to and participation in the experimental choreographic practices of the 1960s. It was during this

¹⁴² While Banes acknowledged that each twenty-minute segment could "stand on its own" as an individual dance, she also recognized the viewer's pleasure in seeing the parts come together, writing, "When the parts fit together into the whole, though, you can see how the work progresses with a brilliant, inevitable logic." See Banes, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," 74.

¹⁴³ Suggesting that the space eats the dancer means slightly different things for the 1979 and 2009 versions: in 1979 the live and filmed dancers are the same while in the 2009 version (and, of course, any subsequent stagings) they are not.

¹⁴⁴ André Lepecki, ed., *Of The Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 2.

¹⁴⁵ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 63.

time that she first employed the crucial element that lies at the very foundation of her (as well as many other 1960s practitioners') movement formation: the simple act of repetition. According to Henry Sayre, the act of repetition as a crucial tool for choreographic phrasing emerged out of postmodern dance's rejection of traditional balletic steps.¹⁴⁶ In order for the audience to recognize and understand the new forms, he claimed, it was necessary for dancers to repeat them, in effect, to teach the audience to see them.¹⁴⁷

The emphasis on three identical centerlines in the score for *Dance no. 4* presages the diagram for *Dance no. 5* (fig. 16). Corresponding to the number of dancers who performed in the final segment, the eight black lines are oriented horizontally across a red-inked square background. Executed in sweeping arches that curve upward (or upstage) from the left and right edges (or wings), each line reaches an abrupt stopping point before changing direction and shooting straight back, cutting through the paths of the others. The dancers moved without the screen in front of them, basked in red stage lights, and dressed in black. Their trajectories were not intended to pass through space from one side to the other, as in *Dance no. 1*, or to circle around its entire expanse as in *Dance no. 3*. Rather, the company emphasized the center, moving toward it from both sides along curved paths. Often divided into quartets, the dancers carved out paths along eight different routes, maintaining movement phrasings used throughout the previous four sections.¹⁴⁸ At designated places, they stopped, turned and strode—depending on their point of origin—either into or just out of the center. The live Philip Glass Ensemble accompanied the final section of *Dance*, reaching a near ear-splitting volume as the performance hurtled toward its end, conveying a feeling, as Banes described, of “both of finality and of constant surprise.”¹⁴⁹ Banes’s description captures the simultaneous familiarity and spontaneity at work in Childs’s choreography. As the dancer has indicated, her work arrives at variation “not so much through making up new movements, but by constantly editing and rearranging existing movements.”¹⁵⁰ Indeed, we have seen these types of simple markings on the page (and on the stage) before. Childs’s movement and accompanying choreographic charts underscore Lambert-Beatty’s claim that, “With the repetition of the dance phrase, what was barely perceptible is apprehended.”¹⁵¹

These basic terminological markers in Childs’s movement vocabulary are tentatively assigned to corresponding diagrams here in order to further elucidate their functions; however, they each easily associate with another drawing, and could even be

¹⁴⁶ Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, 117.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ The quartet, too, appears as a type of formation of bodies in space that Childs favored. Recall, for example, the four dancers in *Calico Mingling*.

¹⁴⁹ Banes, “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74. See chapter 1, fn. 7 for accounts of negative audience reactions to the music in the final section of *Dance*.

¹⁵⁰ Childs, as quoted in Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, 127.

¹⁵¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 65.

added to or entirely replaced by different descriptors. Likewise, each term (the diagonal, the structuring grid, doubling, the formation of bodies in space, and repetition) includes the essence of the others. The diagonal operates as a directional trajectory, but in doing so it also forms bodies within space. When the dancers move back and forth along this angled path in *Dance no. 1*, for example, they make use of repetition. The grid depends upon repeating forms for its very structure, and similarly, doubling, which is based upon pairing, is nearly interchangeable with repetition. This attempt to connect Childs's five choreographic charts to particular movement in *Dance* reveals that any separation of these elements in fact elucidates their inevitable overlaps.

Childs's drawings have their notational counterpart in Glass's musical scores, and not surprisingly, several of the movement elements examined here relate quite closely to his compositional techniques. In a very general sense, the formation of bodies in space in Childs's work resonated with Glass's arrangement of particular instruments, including electronic keyboards, bass synthesizers, flutes, saxophones, and vocals. More specifically, repetition served as a fundamental technique that was of crucial importance to both artists. Through choreographed movement and composed instrumental sound, subtle variations on their individual dance or music vocabularies created a ceaselessly building momentum without a specific climactic termination point. These correspondences were not mere coincidence, rather they indicate a common aesthetic that inspired a fruitful working relationship.¹⁵² In the summer of 1978 Glass provided Childs with a preliminary version of the score. "I had to have the music to work with first," she recounted, and once Glass had completed it in April of the following year, she began to finalize her choreography.¹⁵³ Since Childs had not used music in her dances since 1963, arranging movement to a particular soundtrack marked a major transition in her work, one that, as Banes aptly described, drowned out what had until then been her typical form of aural accompaniment: the skids and stomps of feet pounding on the stage floor.¹⁵⁴ Despite this fundamental change, Childs claimed that she "had no problems adjusting to music," for, as she stated, "I had to *create a structure anyway*."¹⁵⁵ Likewise, for Glass, structure is the antecedent of his musical arrangements, a commonality across disciplines that further underscores the intertwined nature of the work's primary elements.

Just as Childs's diagrammatic charts offer visual representations of her choreographic forms, so too do their simple configurations of straight, curved, or circular lines on paper suggest key aspects of Glass's compositions from the 1970s. Typified by the use of modular structures, a reliance upon repetition, and the exploration of purposefully limited amounts of notational material, Glass's scores have often been linked with those of his contemporaries Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and La Monte Young,

¹⁵² Childs and Glass would work together again on *Mad Rush* in 1981.

¹⁵³ See Dunning, "An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn," 8.

¹⁵⁴ Banes, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," 74. Dunning made a similar observation just a few weeks prior, writing that that Childs's use of music marked a change from her previous work, which had been, "for the most part accompanied only by the sound of her dancers' thudding feet." See *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

musicians who share similar concerns.¹⁵⁶ Glass, like many innovators, has consistently resisted categorization, inveighing against the frequent designation of his work as “minimalist.”¹⁵⁷ Recalling the works he performed with his Ensemble in the early 1970s, frequently staged in gallery and loft spaces in New York’s SoHo and supported primarily by the visual artists also living and working there,¹⁵⁸ Glass claimed that “...the things I was thinking about had nothing to do with minimalism,” a term he derided as “journalistic shorthand.”¹⁵⁹ Lacking a satisfactory name, he has offered a more descriptive terminological approach to defining his work, indicating that, “I talk about music that’s based on process. I talk about *repetitive structures*...both harmonic and rhythmic.”¹⁶⁰ Some early members of his audience found the combinative effect of volume, intensity, and repetition transfixing, others experienced it as dull reiteration, but it is precisely his emphasis on identifying a structure and manipulating content within a set of parameters that aligns him not only with Childs, but also, as the next chapter will make clear, with LeWitt.

While Childs and Glass both worked within frameworks that break down into smaller, modular units, they effectively avoided creating rigid structures by allowing for tension to exist between self-imposed regulation and more open-ended possibility. In 1979, critics’ reactions to the music frequently emphasized particular bodily effects—both for the dancers and for the viewers—that emerged from this state of suspension. For instance, Banes observed that the movement, “amplified by the buoyant, celestial tones of Glass’s electronic orchestra...seemed to carry the dancers aloft.”¹⁶¹ Instead of examining the component parts or individual sections of *Dance*, music critic Tim Page attended to the work’s cumulative impact, directing the viewer to “immerse yourself in the whole, in an aural kaleidoscope that slowly turns and develops.”¹⁶² Another reviewer observed that *Dance* has “no ‘organic’ beginning, middle, or end, no reason why the composition

¹⁵⁶ For example, see Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁷ For a concise overview of the history of “minimalism” as a musicological term, see Edward Strickland, “Minimalism: T,” in *Writings on Glass: Essays, Interviews, Criticism*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 113-128. Glass’s work has been referred to as solid state or steady state, as hypnotic, or even trance, and yet minimalism remains the predominant nomenclature.

¹⁵⁸ Glass explained, “It was the visual arts people who were really behind these events and solidly supported them. In my case, this meant material contributions, often money, sometimes sound and/or lighting equipment, from the artists themselves—Richard Serra, Sol LeWitt, Nancy Graves, for instance.” See Philip Glass, *Music by Philip Glass*, ed. Robert T. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 23.

¹⁵⁹ Transcribed from the Scott Hicks documentary film *Glass: A Portrait in Twelve Parts*, 2007.

¹⁶⁰ Glass, as quoted in Tim Page, “Dialogue with Philip Glass and Steve Reich,” in *Writings on Glass: Essays, Interviews, Criticism*, 46. Emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ Banes, “From the Judson to BAM,” 9.

¹⁶² Page, “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74.

shouldn't go on indefinitely."¹⁶³ These critics each recognize the possibility of immersion, of carrying aloft, and of undefined temporality at work in *Dance*. Gesturing toward an unspecified sense of momentum, an aggregation of movement and sound that does not necessarily require a identifiable destination, these interpretations align with Sontag's observation that "dance for Childs is an art of euphoria." She further explains that in Childs's third phase, the choreographer "reaches for a poignant 'elevation' of mood...a deeper joyousness" that is "distilled through [her] spare unifying esthetic."¹⁶⁴ For Sontag, the state of emotion in Childs's work also seems to be held in a place of tension. It hovers between an elevated mood and a deeper joy, and yet also somehow always manages to reach a point of unity.

Undefined momentum also affects the experience of temporality and physical place for the dancer and the viewer. As Erin Manning has recently suggested, movement should be understood not as a displacement of space, something perceived and understood after the fact, but rather as incipience, or what she terms *preacceleration*. "We are going," she argues, "always already."¹⁶⁵ *Dance* does not build toward any clear climax, as critics of the 1979 performance noted. It could either go on indefinitely or stop abruptly. As Manning claims, "In the preacceleration of a step, anything is possible."¹⁶⁶ Her conceptual reconfiguration of movement also upsets the relationship between Childs's choreographic charts and the physical steps, re-locating it somewhere within this "anything," or, for that matter, any place. Indeed, the question of how they inform each other is effectively shaken loose from the chronology of their making. For, even though Childs initially produced the scores only after completing a dance—recall that they originally served as devices to help the dancers remember their assigned trajectories—they ultimately proved more useful to her as part of the developmental process. The diagrams are therefore embedded into this loose designation, the temporally non-specific space of the "developmental" where they inform (in no particular order) the concept, the physical marking process, rehearsals, filming, and live staging. Through the lens of preacceleration, Childs's drawings and their physical and temporal relationship to the movement in *Dance* is further complicated by LeWitt's film, which projects onto the screen previously shot footage of the dancers performing the same steps as the same time that they are articulated live on the stage. The film's role in this collaborative, interdisciplinary performance, both the original 1979 and more recent 2009 iterations, is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁶³ Nordhaus, "Lucinda Childs at BAM," 7.

¹⁶⁴ Sontag, "For *Available Light*: A Brief Lexicon," 103.

¹⁶⁵ Erin Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 14.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.



Figure 7: Lucinda Childs, *Dance #1*, 1979. Ink and blue fiber-tipped pen on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2009.156. Photograph by Bill Orcutt.



Figure 8: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979. Photograph by Nathaniel Tileston. Photograph © 2010 by Nathaniel Tileston.

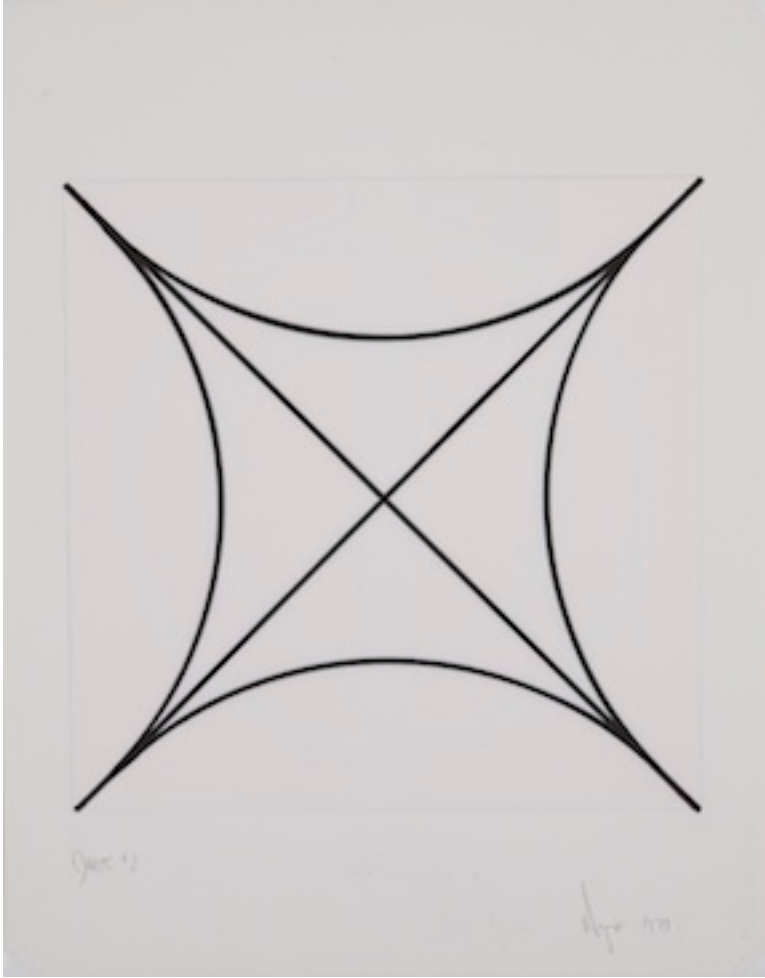


Figure 9: Lucinda Childs, *Dance #2*, 1979. Ink and graphite on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2009.157. Photograph by Bill Orcutt.



Figure 10: Lucinda Childs, *Dance #3*, 1979. Yellow fiber-tipped pen on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2009.158. Photograph by Bill Orcutt.

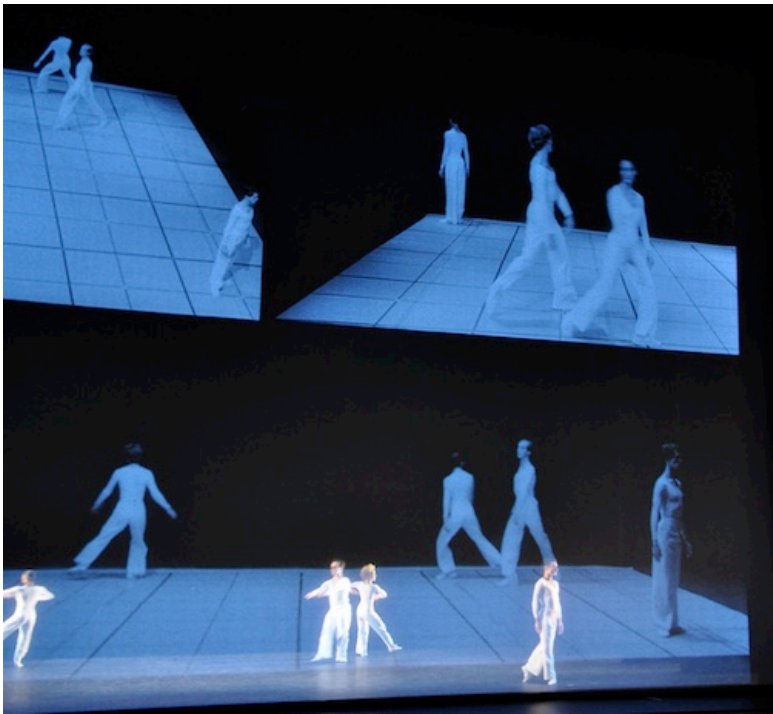


Figure 11: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979 / 2009. Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn. Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.



Figure 12: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979. Photograph by Nathaniel Tileston.
Photograph © 2010 by Nathaniel Tileston.

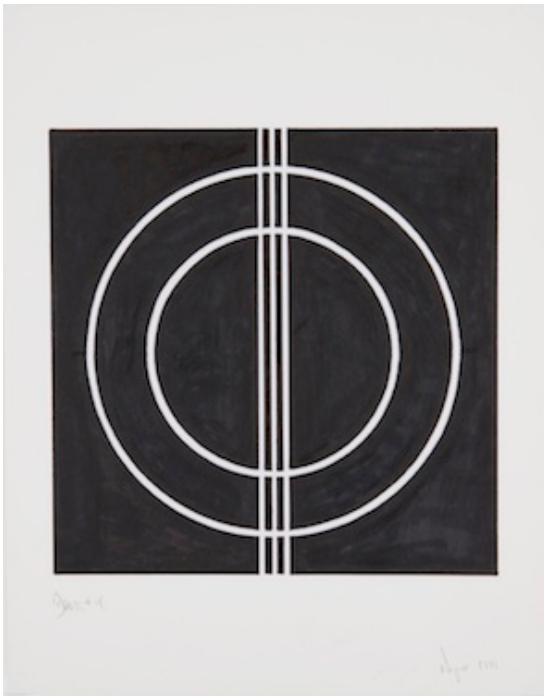


Figure 13: Lucinda Childs, *Dance #4*, 1979. Black fiber-tipped pen on paper.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2009.159.
Photograph by Bill Orcutt.

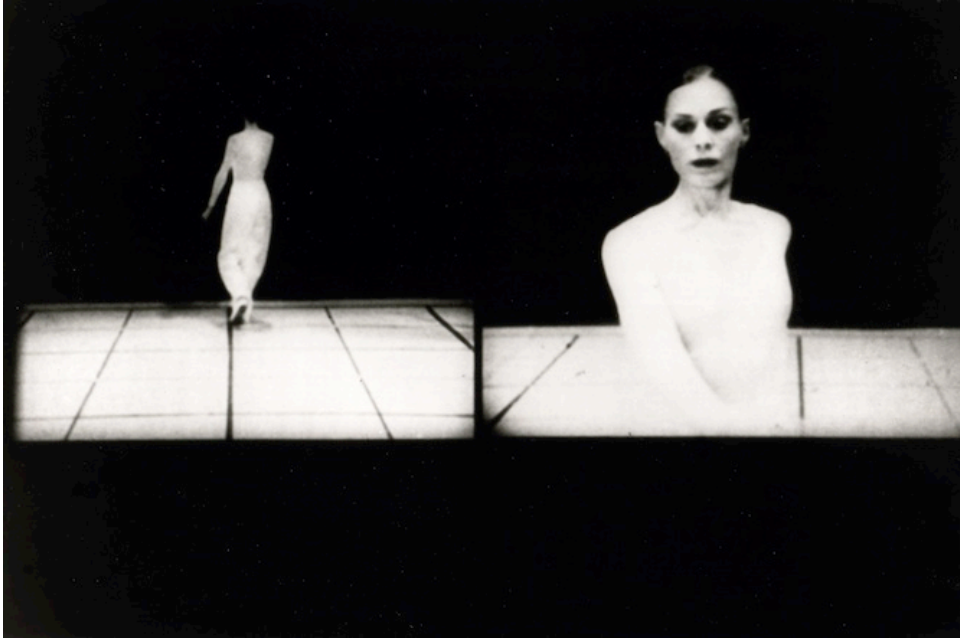


Figure 14: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979. Photograph by Nathaniel Tileston.
Photograph © 2010 by Nathaniel Tileston.

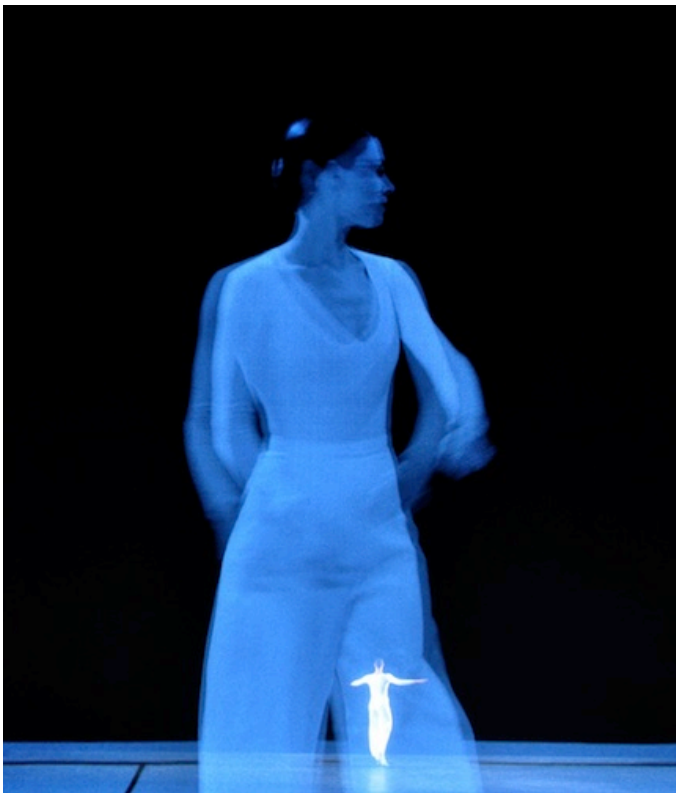


Figure 15: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979 / 2009. Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.
Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.

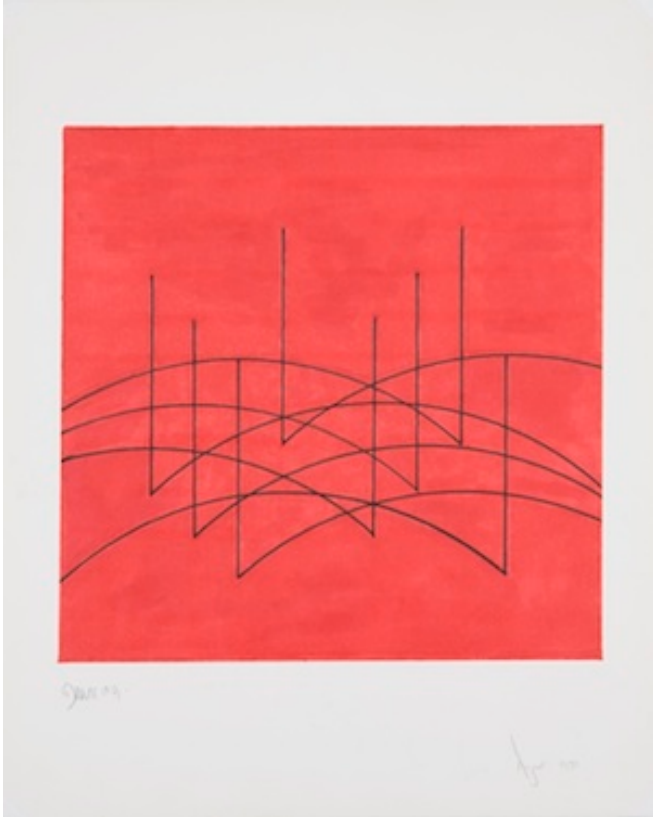


Figure 16: Lucinda Childs, *Dance #5*, 1979. Ink and red fiber-tipped pen on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2009.160. Photograph by Bill Orcutt.

Chapter 3: Projection

When Lucinda Childs and Philip Glass asked Sol LeWitt to participate in *Dance* in the early months of 1979, the well-known artist had recently been the subject of a mid-career exhibition survey of his sculptural structures, wall drawings, and photographs at the Museum of Modern Art, a significant indication of his individual success. He was, however, also a long-time friend of Glass's as well as a supporter of experimental music and dance. During the 1960s LeWitt attended numerous concerts by musicians Steve Reich and La Monte Young, and he similarly viewed dance performances of work by Tricia Brown, Deborah Hay, and Robert Morris. He believed that he, along with these innovators in live performance, "wanted to re-invent art."¹⁶⁷ These artists, as well as Childs and Glass, "mirrored his own thinking,"¹⁶⁸ and despite his limited experience with collaborative art making, he nonetheless shared with both the choreographer and composer a sustained interest in process, seriality, and most crucially, repetition. In Childs's choreography in *Dance*, for instance, she adjusted and recombined specific movements to create subtle variations on straightforward steps such as walking, skipping, or spinning. Glass, for his part, reiterated certain notes and compositional phrasings in his musical scores. Indeed, in an essay published in the MoMA exhibition catalogue in 1978, just one year prior to the making of *Dance*, Robert Rosenblum presciently posited a clear parallel between LeWitt and Glass, arguing that the "calculated look" of LeWitt's wall drawings "dissolve into diaphanous veils of a strange, engulfing sensuality," just as the "intellectual order" of Glass's compositions ultimately result in a "kind of slow immersion in a sonic sea."¹⁶⁹

Rosenblum's perhaps overly poetic analogy belies a simple similarity shared across the three artists' different mediums: they each emphasize the repetition of *particular types of marking*. It is perhaps only logical that Childs and Glass looked to LeWitt to design the décor for their new dance, and even felicitous that their common interests took the form of a film in which projected bodies move through a regimented, gridded space, repeating in near perfect synchrony the same movement the dancers performed live on stage. This chapter examines the film's making as well as the role of the grid and the screen, both individually and as integral elements of this collaborative project.

¹⁶⁷ As described by LeWitt in faxed correspondence sent to film producer Patrick Bensard in 2005 regarding the making of *Dance*. (Bensard's documentary, *Lucinda Childs* [2006], traces forty years of her career.) Text of the fax transcribed while on view in the exhibition *Lucinda Childs: Dance* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from June 10 through November 8, 2009. The copy included in the Whitney exhibition remains in Childs's personal collection. Hereafter referred to as "LeWitt Fax."

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Rosenblum, "Notes on Sol LeWitt," in *LeWitt*, ed. Alicia Legg (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 20.

Despite their original suggestion that he design a stage set, LeWitt ultimately rejected that offer; he did not want his contribution to merely serve as background, but rather as something that would be, as he put it, of equal status with music and dance.¹⁷⁰ LeWitt had never worked with film before, but he had the idea that he could capture simultaneous images from different viewpoints.¹⁷¹ With that image in mind, he produced a 35 millimeter black-and-white film of the dancers performing the identical steps in a rehearsal studio space (fig. 17). There, the members of Childs's company skipped and spun across a gridded floor. The footage was then projected onto a large screen secured downstage in front of the dancers. In one moment the real and simulated bodies align, obscuring their individual identities, in the next the projected dancers appear to hover above the heads of the live ones, and in another, they are rendered larger than life, filling the entire screen and bleeding off its invisible edges while moving simultaneously with their present counterparts (see fig. 8). Using replays, freeze-frames, close-up shots, split-screen effects, and various angle shifts, the interaction between the filmed and live dancers creates an exhilarating layering of actual and projected movement, one that alters the viewer's visual and temporal perception of the performance.

LeWitt primarily produced modular cube structures based on mathematical grid patterns and hundreds of wall drawings,¹⁷² works that closely associated him with the emergence of conceptual and serial practices beginning in the mid-1960s. He started experimenting with photography in 1964, and frequently cited Eadweard Muybridge's late nineteenth century studies of human locomotion as a major influence on his own sequential photographic works. However, this collaborative project was, to quote the artist, "the first, and only time, I had done this kind of thing."¹⁷³ As argued earlier in chapter 1, Childs's choreographic development stemmed from a trajectory rooted in the early 1960s experimental work of the Judson Dance Theater, her own classical training, and in a resurgent interest in aspects of traditional theatricality beginning in the mid-1970s. Similarly, the resulting film, despite its singular status in LeWitt's body of work, shares several of the basic principles he had been exploring for at least a decade, including how the production of an artwork is physically carried out, and seriality as an organizing principle. In his seminal 1967 "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," a set of concise instructions that also served as a personal manifesto, he posited that, "What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It has to look like something if it has physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea."¹⁷⁴ The idea of

¹⁷⁰ LeWitt Fax.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² At the time of his last retrospective, organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the wall drawings numbered more than 900. See Gary Garrels, "Sol LeWitt: An Introduction," in *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, ed. Gary Garrels (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 200), 23. It seems safe to speculate that the final number at the time of his death in 2007 is even higher.

¹⁷³ LeWitt Fax.

the wall drawings assumed the form of detailed specifications, which assistants would interpret and carry out.¹⁷⁵ And yet idea and process held equal ground. Indeed, LeWitt believed that his working drawings, covered in marginal scribbling, calculations, and hand-written instructions often resulted in the most interesting art objects (fig. 18).¹⁷⁶

The look of the film underscores LeWitt's emphasis on process. His use of various framing angles and shot distances captures his stated intention to feature simultaneous images from different viewpoints.¹⁷⁷ As is the case with the wall drawings, he effectively relied upon the work of others for the film's ultimate outcome: the dancers performing Childs choreography to a recording of Glass's score provide its content, and, well aware of his inexperience with the medium, he even brought in a filmmaker, Lisa Rinzler, to operate the camera.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, as an artist deeply invested in serial processes, he claimed that, "The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of the premise."¹⁷⁹ To that end, LeWitt first surveyed the dancers' movements from multiple angles, and then, by projecting the results in front of the moving bodies he in effect doubled them.

The first-time filmmaker began watching rehearsals of *Dance* in April of 1979. He then worked with Childs to plot out the three sections selected for the film in order to determine, as he described in an interview, "what kinds of shots and approaches we'd use with each."¹⁸⁰ Shooting commenced in June, and took place in a television studio on Third Street in Manhattan.¹⁸¹ During this process Rinzler decided that they should use black and white film in order to create greater contrast with the white costumes and the

¹⁷⁴ Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 5 no. 10 (June 1967), 80. For a general overview of the wall drawings, see Brenda Richardson, "Unexpected Directions: Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings," in *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, 36-47.

¹⁷⁵ Drawing directly onto the wall resulted in a rejection of illusionism, of commercialism in the sense that the wall itself cannot be purchased, and the permanence of the art object, as they are typically painted over at the end of an exhibition period. The instructions themselves, however, can be purchased, and in some cases collectors also commissioned specific wall drawings. See Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (New York and London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 152.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ In an interview with Perreault, LeWitt that claimed he was inspired in part by the special effects used in televised football coverage, where plays are shown multiple times from various angles. Coincidentally (as Perreault also notes) Childs performed to an edited broadcast of the National Football League game in her 1965 dance *Geranium*. Perreault, "Parade Rest: Dance Moves On," 74. LeWitt confirmed this particular inspiration more than three decades later in his fax correspondence with Bensard, but he also referenced the fragmenting of images in Picasso's Cubist paintings. LeWitt Fax.

¹⁷⁸ LeWitt noted in his fax that Rinzler had previous experience filming dance. Perreault emphasized that she was "*his* collaborator," effectively underscoring the importance of the collaborative process at every level of this project. Emphasis Perreault's.

¹⁷⁹ LeWitt, as quoted in Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, 152.

¹⁸⁰ LeWitt, as quoted in Dunning, "An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn," 17.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* Dunning does not specify in her article if the studio was located on East or West Third Street.

colored lighting. Moreover, the collaborators agreed that its “artificial” look emphasized the difference, as LeWitt wrote, “between the ‘real’ (the dancers) and the image (the film).”¹⁸²

LeWitt indicated two interrelated reasons for why the film occurred only in the first, third, and fourth segments of the 1979 version. First, the collaborators did not have the money to “do it all the way,” so they consolidated their efforts instead of stretching their limited budget out over all five parts.¹⁸³ In addition to their financial constraints, Childs and LeWitt also faced resistance from the musicians who wanted to play the music live for the entire length of the performance. However, in order for LeWitt to capture the precise shots he wanted, including from overhead, from the front, and from both sides of the stage, the film timing had to perfectly synchronize with the performed movement. “Even a small deviation would not work,” he explained, as the dancers on the stage and on the screen would not align, and he wanted them to be “an exact replica of each other.” Achieving this effect required the use of a previously recorded version of the score, but since the musicians objected to what they called “canned” music, the collaborators decided to compromise, striking a balance between live and recorded accompaniment, between performing the individual dances both with the screen and without.¹⁸⁴ He recounted that he did not produce a storyboard to plan the various shots in advance, but rather that he simply asked Rinzler to capture the dancers from several different angles (after which, he claimed, “we reviewed the film takes, eliminated some, reshot others and decided which to use and how they would be placed on the scrim”);¹⁸⁵ however, this recollection reveals a gap in the artist’s memory. For, he did in fact mark up (perhaps with Rinzler and Childs) a series of notational sketches that correspond to the sections of the three-part film, and can be read like a storyboard that charts the filmmakers’ shot sequences.¹⁸⁶

The storyboard labeled “*Dance no. 1*” is comprised of eleven pieces of paper mounted on cardboard. LeWitt divided each individual sheet into two columns which are further demarcated by a numbering system that seems to correspond to the camera positions used in each frame. Overlapping triangular wedges (some filled in with ink, some left outlined) indicate the camera orientations necessary to capture the dancers as they moved across the space, directing the filmmakers to specific locations upstage or down and to the left or right side. Handwritten notations inscribed in ink provide additional instructions (such as “splits,” “eye level,” “fast tracks,” and “full body tracks”) and are either scrawled on the page, or scribbled in blue or yellow crayon on a clear piece

¹⁸² LeWitt Fax. Emphasis LeWitt’s.

¹⁸³ Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8, 17.

¹⁸⁴ LeWitt Fax.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ The scholarship on LeWitt completely elides his involvement in *Dance* and the film as a part of body of work, perhaps in part because these “storyboards” have been unavailable to the public. Childs held them in her personal files before donating them to the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2009.

of acetate placed over the arranged sheets of paper. “The shots from above seemed to echo the choreographic drawing[s] that Lucinda made,”¹⁸⁷ LeWitt recounted, and indeed, his charts for each of the three sections of *Dance* either reflect the form of Childs’s choreographic diagrams or are mapped out on top of streamlined versions of her scores. The camera’s diagonal orientation in the storyboard for *Dance no. 1*, for example, echoed the formation of the dancers in this section. As they travelled across the stage on this angled path, the filmed figures (shot from both sides of the rehearsal space), echoed their trajectories, moving off the screen’s edge as the live bodies disappeared into the wings.

The basic grid appeared in LeWitt’s work consistently over several decades and in various forms. For his open cube sculptures from the mid-to-late 1960s, he constructed modular units based on the grid’s regimented parameters (fig. 19). The grid also served as the instructional system for numerous wall drawings, and similarly, its combination of parallel and perpendicular lines provided the organizing template that he followed when arranging many of his serial photographs. For *Dance*, the black grid lined the surface of the white studio floor in a ten by twelve rectangle, echoing the standard palate for LeWitt’s cube structures as well as the one used for the dancers’ simple costumes. Once projected, the image of the grid filmed in the studio space passed through the scrim’s porous barrier and aligned with the stage floor, creating the illusion that the live dancers—not just their filmed doubles—moved upon its surface. The overlap between the projected and actual floor was so convincing that viewers were reminded of its illusory presence only when the film cut to shots featuring simultaneous multiple camera angles. As Ann-Sargent Wooster noted, in these moments, the combined frames (doubled or even quadrupled) seemed to replicate the lattice form of LeWitt’s cube structures, creating the effect that the dancers moved both on top of the grid and within it (see fig. 11).¹⁸⁸

In 1978, Rosalind Krauss took up the grid as the subject of her eponymous essay, noting that its form emerged in painting in the early decades of the twentieth century only to take on “a structure that has remained emblematic of the modernist ambition ever since.”¹⁸⁹ Its “ubiquitous” appearance “map[s] the surface” of canvases by artists including Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian, Robert Ryman and Agnes Martin.¹⁹⁰ She argues that “...one of the most modernist things about it is its capacity to serve as a paradigm or model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical,”¹⁹¹ and indeed, the grid’s rigid, mathematical underpinnings evoke a static neutrality, one that is also located in postmodern dance’s firm rejection of narrative and emotional expression. Krauss recognized this similarity, noting that the grid does not only appear in painting,

¹⁸⁷ LeWitt Fax. He indicated that large versions of the drawings were used as sets when the film could not be shown. It is presumable that he was referring here to the 1979 performances in Europe, for which the collaborators did not project the film (see the Introduction, page 3, fn. 11), but he did not clarify this point.

¹⁸⁸ Ann-Sargent Wooster, “Sol LeWitt’s Expanding Grid,” *Art in America*, 68 no. 5 (May 1980): 143.

¹⁸⁹ Rosalind E. Krauss, “Grids,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 9.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

but also in temporal forms including music and dance. “It is no surprise then,” she writes in the final lines of her text, “that as we contemplate this subject, there should have been announced for next season a performance project based on the combined efforts of Phil Glass, Lucinda Childs, and Sol LeWitt: music, dance, and sculpture, projected as the mutually accessible space of the grid.”¹⁹²

In Hannah Higgins’s recent examination of the grid, she turns away from Krauss’s firm positioning of it within modernism, arguing instead for a longer historical view of its form and influence. She suggests that its role can be traced back much further to ancient Mesopotamian bricks from 9000 BCE stacked one on top of another to construct buildings and cities. From this pre-modern origin, she then tracks the grid through its various iterations, ending with the development of computational networks in the twentieth century.¹⁹³ Higgins situates LeWitt’s modular structures within the larger category of the box, linking them to the utilitarian functions of shipping containers and skyscrapers.¹⁹⁴ While Higgins cites Krauss’s 1978 essay, she overlooks its concluding point regarding the grid’s “accessible space.” Instead, she turns to an earlier *Artforum* article from 1972 in which Krauss’s description of LeWitt’s grids renders them cool and distancing. LeWitt’s grid “forever leaves the viewer outside looking in,”¹⁹⁵ Krauss argued, and it is precisely this dividing line between the interior and exterior experience of space that Higgins attempts to erase. Under the category of the box, LeWitt’s modernist sculpture becomes a skeletal framework packed within the “postmodern container.”¹⁹⁶ In other words, his gridded structures are forms that can be experienced from within, and this is precisely what occurs in *Dance*. The dancers are inside LeWitt’s projected grid.

Despite the importance of the grid historically and in LeWitt’s body of work, relatively few critics mentioned its presence in the press coverage of the 1979 performance.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, LeWitt (who was notoriously reclusive and gave relatively few interviews at the time of the original staging), addressed the filmmaking process, but did not indicate why he included the gridded floor, nor whether there was any discussion about its use with Childs or Glass. He did, however, reference Eadweard Muybridge’s

¹⁹² Ibid., 22. It is not clear from her language here if she heard about the upcoming collaboration among these three artists or if she read a published announcement. Nor is it entirely clear how much she knows about the work’s form. She indicates that LeWitt’s contribution will be sculptural, but then immediately following this three-dimensional designation she indicates that the collaborative effect will be projected in space.

¹⁹³ Hannah B. Higgins, “Introducing Grids: A Meditation on Mrs. O’Leary,” in *The Grid Book* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ Higgins, “Box: 1817,” in *The Grid Book*, 201-233.

¹⁹⁵ Rosalind Krauss, “Richard Serra: Sculpture Redrawn,” *Artforum* 10, no. 9 (May 1972): 38 as cited in *ibid.*, 231.

¹⁹⁶ Higgins, *The Grid Book*, 231.

¹⁹⁷ For a brief mention of the grid, see Nordhaus, “Lucinda Childs at BAM,” 7. In the most comprehensive coverage of its appearance in the film, Wooster noted that the presence of the dancers “humanized” LeWitt’s grid. See Wooster, “Sol LeWitt’s Expanding Grid,” 143.

late nineteenth century studies of animal and human locomotion arranged in serial progressions as a major influence.¹⁹⁸ Muybridge used multiple cameras in a dogged attempt to capture animated figures, and positioned his results one after another in order to simulate live action (fig. 20). LeWitt followed this structuring model in his 1978 project, *Photogrids*. “No matter where one looks in an urban setting,” he stated in an explication of the project, “there are grids to be seen. Whether decorative or functional, grids provide a kind of order.”¹⁹⁹

LeWitt travelled extensively to install wall drawings, and while walking the city streets of numerous countries, he “found grids to photograph.”²⁰⁰ These repetitions provided him with a sense of order, perhaps, in an itinerant existence. The gridded patterns he recognized on his excursions materialized in architectural decoration or even in sewer covers, resulting in a “kind of art made without art in mind (I suppose).”²⁰¹ In one example from the *Photogrids* series, LeWitt observed the striated walls, windows, and doorways of Florentine Renaissance buildings, capturing segments that highlight the variations in the ornamented stone surfaces, including perpendicular lines or nestled rectilinear or diamond-shaped boxes in his snapshots (fig. 21). LeWitt then arranged the selected images into a nine-part grid, using the very form he photographed as the template for the layout of each page. As Pamela Lee argues, “LeWitt’s gesture is to reveal difference within repetition through a predetermined formal system.”²⁰² Arranged together, the nine photographs individuate themselves while simultaneously conforming to their confines, drawing the viewer’s attention to particularities within each even as they remain tied to the others on the same page.

Although the grid typically assumes a physical presence in LeWitt’s sculptures, wall drawings, and photographs, and serves as a spatial framework in Childs’s choreography (despite its omission from her diagrams), it takes on a virtual form in *Dance*, tangible only through the filmic medium and solely during the live performance. It therefore requires a surface onto which it can be projected, as it is ultimately the combination of beamed light and the screen’s surface that render LeWitt’s grid visible while also revealing for the audience its underlying structure in the movement. The screen, therefore, is paramount.

The collaborators did not immediately settle on either the support for or the positioning of the screen across the front of the stage. LeWitt initially wanted to install

¹⁹⁸ See Dunning, “An Avant-Garde Threesome in Brooklyn,” 8, and Perreault, “Parade Rest: Dance Moves On,” 74. A random event led to LeWitt’s first introduction to Muybridge’s photographs. Upon moving into a new apartment in New York City in 1953, he found a book on the photographer that the former occupant left behind. Needless to say, the discovery was a turning point for the young artist. Garrels, 25)

¹⁹⁹ LeWitt, cited in *Sol LeWitt*, 158.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Pamela M. Lee, “The Austerlitz Effect: Architecture, Time, Photoconceptualism,” in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960-1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: The Walker Art Center, 2003), 189.

panels both above and on either side of the dancers. This was ungainly, he later recounted, and did not show enough.²⁰³ Childs then suggested using a scrim, and the collaborators determined that it was the best solution;²⁰⁴ one that resulted in a monumentally scaled physical element that literally divided the stage into separate parts. Secured into place at a particular angle such that when light from carefully chosen colored stage gels and the projector's beam reach and pass through the surface, its presence is effectively neutralized. It simply disappeared before the audience's eyes, merging the experience of moving bodies and moving images. The screen, then, is also a window.

The viewer is not just transported into a three-dimensional world conjured by the film. We are in fact actually seeing the filmic space—through the screen, out the window, to the place on its other side. Perpetually vacillating between vertical and horizontal, between flatness and depth, perception changes as the film merges with and diverges from the bodies in motion. Split screens and angle shifts reveal subtle differences between the dancers' live and recorded performances (or, in the case of the 2009 restaging, between current performers and the filmed original ones). The effect of the simultaneous screen-slash-window, coupled with the doubling of moving images—both live and projected—gives *Dance* its unique hybrid form. This is not the non-hierarchical, open inclusion of varying elements on a stage (recall Yvonne Rainer's inclusion of films in *The Mind is a Muscle* or Stan VanDerBeek's *Movie Mural* for John Cage and Merce Cunningham's *Variations V*), nor is it mere theatrical spectacle. Rather, each element—the score, the choreography, and the film—is dependent upon the others for it to achieve its final collaborative shape. *Dance* is, above all, a performance based upon the simple repetition of form across the three disciplines.

²⁰³ See LeWitt fax. It is not entirely clear here what he meant by “show enough.” Unfortunately he did not elaborate on this point in the fax, and the reader is left wondering if he meant that the panels did not show enough of the film footage, enough of its overlap with the live dancers, or perhaps both.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

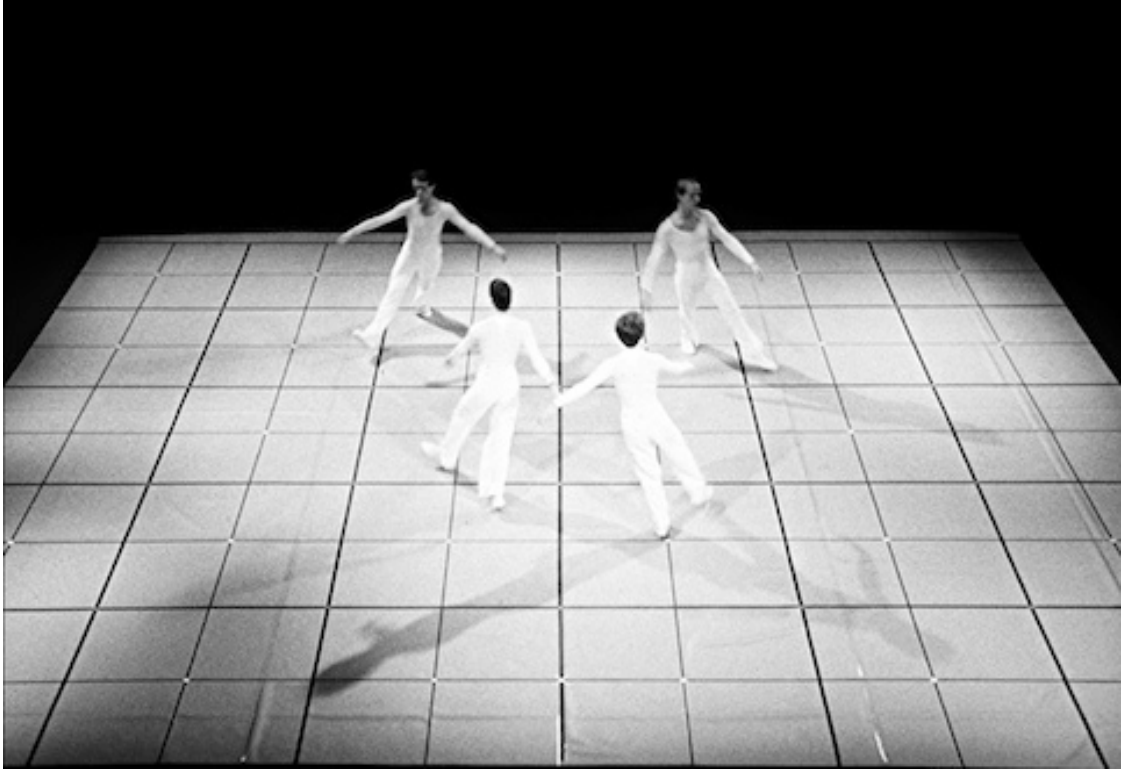


Figure 17: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979. Photograph by Nathaniel Tileston.
Photograph © 2010 by Nathaniel Tileston.

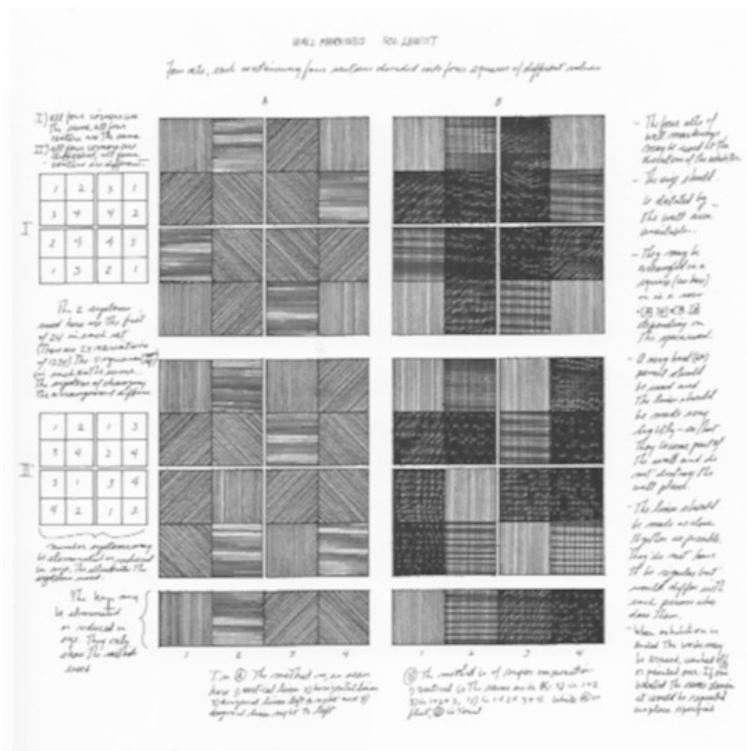


Figure 18: Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), *Wall Markings*, 1968. Ink on paper. (Whereabouts unknown.) © 2010 The LeWitt Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

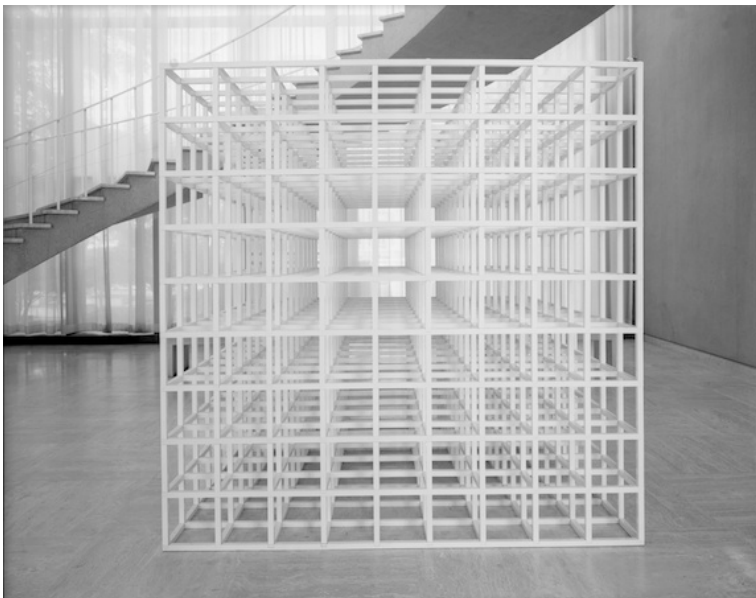


Figure 19: Sol LeWitt, *Nine-part Modular Cube*, 1977. Baked enamel on aluminum. Ada Turnbull Hertle Fund, 1978.1022, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago. © 2010 The LeWitt Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Figure 20: Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904).
Woman Ricochetting on One Foot, ca. 1887. From the book *Animal Locomotion*.
Collotype on paper.
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Paul and Laurette Laessle.



Figure 21: Sol LeWitt, *Photogrids*, 1978. Photo-offset-printed book.
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Conclusion: Momentum

In 1979, Sol LeWitt's film appeared in three of the five sections of *Dance*. For the more recent 2009 version, however, Lucinda Childs has chosen to present only the three parts that incorporate LeWitt's contribution, eliminating the live musical accompaniment altogether, and effectively suggesting her preference for the combinative result of the dancers and the film (fig. 22). The recent re-performances beginning in the summer of 2009 raise certain questions that are at the forefront of much critical debate among performance art practitioners and scholars. Issues surrounding forms of documentation, the salability and collectibility of related objects including still photographs, filmed recordings, or other ephemeral materials, as well as artists' intentions regarding one-time or multiple iterations executed by either themselves or others, hint at the complexities inherent to time-based art practices.²⁰⁵ Despite the crossover appeal of the collaborative team behind *Dance*, these fascinating issues are in some ways less controversial for artists who identify as choreographers than they are for those who fall under the loosely defined category of performance artists. Indeed, choreographers typically create works specifically intended to be presented more than once and by different dancers over the course of many years. Childs's interdisciplinary project is no exception.

For his contribution to the project LeWitt wanted the filmed dancers moving on screen to travel in synchrony with the live performers on stage, the result of which (perhaps unwittingly) complicated the issue of how a multimedia work such as *Dance* should or could be revived in the future. The bodies captured on celluloid remain perpetually rooted in a particular moment in time, preserved as the original company members from the first iteration for as long as the physical material (or the recently remastered digital format) survives. The dancers who performed in the recent 2009 versions, of course, are not the same as those who seem to traverse in lockstep with them on the massive scrim, nor can any future configurations align live and projected bodies as they appeared in 1979. For the contemporary viewer, this marginal difference produces a slight disjunction, one that is only keenly felt in the solo section of the revised presentation. Childs performed this straightforward solo both in the film and on stage for the 1979 audiences; however, recent stagings of *Dance* feature another dancer moving in her place.²⁰⁶ This dancer may physically resemble Childs, she may articulate steps in the

²⁰⁵ A great deal has been written about the role of documentation in performance art. See for example Peggy Phelan's polemical view that performance, by its very nature, exists solely in the present tense. "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulations of representations of representations," she argues. "...once it does so, it becomes something other than performance." Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146. Phelan's controversial stance aside, Childs's recent donation of her drawings, LeWitt's storyboards, and other ephemeral materials related to *Dance* to the Whitney Museum perhaps points to her interest in them as physical *objects*. Her decision inevitably results in an increase in their visibility (through display in exhibitions) and in their status (due to their placement in a public collection).

²⁰⁶ Caitlin Scranton performed *Dance II* (originally *Dance no. 4* in 1979) at the Joyce Theater in 2009.

choreographer's recognizably cool, erect, and graceful style, but she does not serve to duplicitously pass for Childs, nor to convince an audience that they are witnessing anything other than a variation on the "original." Childs's presence remains visible, looming large on the screen in black and white, resulting in a successive combination of moving bodies and projected moving images. Emerging from the collective efforts of the old footage and the new dancers, *Dance* ultimately forms a historical object that also functions in the present.

The momentum in *Dance* is an inevitable outgrowth of repetition, a form that serves a crucial role in every aspect of the work's primary elements of collaboration, movement, and projection. From its informing of the individual steps the dancers take to their directional trajectories on stage, repetition similarly constitutes the basic sound of Philip Glass's score, which seems to continuously build toward an undefined, never quite attained conclusion. Likewise, this simple reiterative maneuver provides the very concept of the film's doubling form. As Childs, Glass, and LeWitt make quite clear, their use of repetition in the component parts of *Dance* extends well beyond mere structure and into the temporal dimension, thus allowing for its seamless restaging despite the fact that the dancers who appear in the film no longer perform on the stage. No matter: As one critic of the 1979 BAM performance observed, "Once this machine has got moving, there doesn't seem to be any reason why it shouldn't keep spinning indefinitely, like the world, on its own momentum, long after the lights are out and we've all gone home."²⁰⁷ When Childs's rapidly turning dancers glide into the wings, their projected counterparts, often filling the entire screen, spiral off its edges; suggesting the movement's continuation beyond the boundaries of the theatrical space, beyond the limits of a single evening's billing, and away into an undefined, unconfined, contemporary perpetuity.

²⁰⁷ Nordhaus, "Lucinda Childs at BAM," 7.



Figure 22: Lucinda Childs, *Dance*, 1979 / 2009. Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.
Photograph © 2009 by Sally Cohn.

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