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Still Moving: The Revelation or Representation of Dance in Still Photography

Matthew Reason

Arnold Genthe's 1915 photograph of Anna Pavlova, taken as she leaps into the air, is perhaps the earliest photograph of free movement in dance (Fig. 1). Unlike many other early images, with long exposure times necessitating static poses or wires to hold up the dancers, this photograph depicts actual movement. This claim to authenticity and actuality is a powerful part of its appeal; looking at the image, viewers are sure that they are witnesses to a faithful reproduction of Pavlova dancing, that they are seeing the dance of the past. Considered in this manner, the photograph is an example of the *revelatory* power of the camera to show us what has been.

However, Genthe's photograph is not a powerful image simply because it is, authentically, of a dancer in motion. It might have mechanically frozen its subject in time, but the photograph communicates movement beyond the moment it depicts—beyond, in a sense, what it reveals photographically to what it evokes in the mind of the viewer. Viewers are able to see movement in details indicative of motion: the flowing fabric of the costume, Pavlova's bodily posture with raised and powerfully muscled thigh, the elevated arm gestures, and the sharply bent and thrusting toes. Additionally, the degree of blur in the photograph provides an indistinctness that is suggestive of something in motion; oddly, the partial obscurity of the picture prompts viewers to imagine more than they can see. All of these elements are evocative indications of movement; they are neither documentary nor part of what can be called photographic revelation, but are instead *representational*.

Assertions of authenticity and revelatory authority dominate much of photographic practice and theory, not least in dance photography. Indeed, since the early nineteenth century, technological developments have enhanced the ability of the camera to capture and perfectly reproduce an instance of dance. Genthe's photograph is famous as a

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Figure 1: Anna Pavlova c. 1915. Photograph by Arnold Genthe. Reproduced with permission of the J. Paul Getty Museum

documentation of free movement; today we have the ability to freeze motion even more exactly, perfectly, and authentically. This essay, however, seeks to reassess methods of representing dance in still photography and consider whether attempts to still time in photography have not resulted in the freezing, and losing, of all sense of movement. I will argue that it is the representational, rather than revelatory, attributes of still photography that manage to capture more of the spirit and movement of dance.

First, I consider how photography has been prized for its ability to present authentic and authoritative reproductions of the world and examine how perceptions of mechanical objectivity govern aesthetic responses to photography (also acknowledging the limitations and contradictions within this perception). I then reveal how dance, along with other forms of live performance, has often looked to photography as a method of halting its transience, relying on the photograph to extend its existence beyond the disappearing moment of performance. This continues to be the case today and I explore why the difficulty of representing movement in still photography remains a relevant issue in the age of video recording.

Then, I discuss the various methods employed to represent movement in still photography, contrasting "revelatory" and "representational" approaches in the work of two contemporary photographers. Working in the revelatory tradition is American photographer Lois Greenfield, whose images attempt to communicate motion through the depiction of a 1/500th of a second. While Greenfield produces remarkable photographs, her attempts to reveal movement through the freezing of motion are not always successful. Instead, her photographs can seem so perfectly motionless (unlike Genthe's "imperfect" reproduction) that they fail to allow the viewer to see beyond an accurately yet shallowly depicted surface. Although, as I will discuss, commentators often describe the aesthetic power of photography as its revelatory ability to show us the world, still photography cannot reproduce movement in surface appearances. In contrast, more interventionist approaches, demonstrated here by the work of British photographer Chris Nash, often undermine claims to mechanical objectivity but manage, as a result, to represent the real experience of dance.

Thus, I explore the practical and theoretical implications of such opposing approaches to the presentation of dance movement in still images and demonstrate how the different approaches have ideological implications for our understanding of both dance and photography. I believe that the practice and theory of any representation often reveals much about what is perceived as valuable in the original, or alternatively allows the characteristics of one medium to be subsumed by the specificities of another. The characteristic of dance is movement; the specificity of still photography is stillness. To counter this paradox, I argue that still photography is better able to present motion through undermining its own essential characteristics of revelatory authenticity.

The Aesthetics of Revelation

The faith in the intrinsic relationship of the photograph with the real was born with the emergence of photographic technology in the early nineteenth century. In *Visions of*

Modernity, Scott McQuire describes the immediate acceptance of the camera in western society and how the photograph quickly became "synonymous with fidelity in representation" (1988, 13). Contemporary testimonies and anecdotes asserting the authenticity of the photographic image support this observation, such as that of Daguerre, who stated that photography was a "process which gives [nature] the power to reproduce herself" (Marien 1997, 3). Nor has support for such perceptions significantly weakened as a result of greater familiarity with photography. At the end of the twentieth century, Roland Barthes, for example, suggests in *Camera Lucida* that the photograph's primal force lies in its unsurpassed power of authentication and ability to declare "that has been" (1984, 81). Today there remains a tendency to regard the photograph primarily as revelatory and authoritative: we prove our existence with passport photographs, record our memories with snapshots, and trust such images to show the world as it really is.

There is indeed a great weight of cultural convention and conviction that prompts this strong instinct to respond to photographs on a quasi-documentary level. Yet it is not as easy as that. Photography does not reproduce reality in any simple sense; the cultural instinct to act as if it does, or at least can, needs further examination. After all, the qualifications for the authenticity of the photographic image are significant and well known, including inherent limitations such as the restriction of the image to two dimensions and the distorting and flattening effect of the camera lens. Photographic representations also transform their subject through the effects of lighting, shutter speed, camera angle, color distortion, methods of print development, and the results of cropping or shot selection. Such processes of photographic selection or transformation merge with more interventionist possibilities of manipulation, editing, and fakery. Through elements such as these, whether inherent to the medium or caused by the methods of its employment, we are all aware that the camera does not directly reproduce the world but instead transforms it into photography. Even employed neutrally, automatically, naively, the camera always distorts its subject.

Those eulogizing photography for its power to reveal the world do so, however, not because it actually reproduces the world, but rather as a mark of its dominant position in our culture. Barbara E. Savedoff, for example, notes the limitations of photographic authenticity in *Transforming Images*, declaring that despite an "aura of objective accuracy" a photographic reproduction always distorts what it presents. Nonetheless, while questioning the documentary power of the camera, Savedoff also reaffirms the importance of our perception of photographic authority: "Whether it is warranted or not, we tend to see photographs as objective records of the world, and this tendency has far-reaching influence on interpretation and evaluation" (2000, 49). André Bazin, in his essay, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," similarly affirms an "irrational power of the photograph to bear away our faith" (1967, 14). Unless directly prompted toward doubt, by evident fakery in appearance or impossibility in content, we faithfully continue to equate the photograph to the real. Indeed, for Savedoff, the "perceived special connection to reality can account for [photography's] distinctive aesthetic impact" (2000, 8)—in other words, the aesthetic quality of the photograph is that of revelation.

The tendency, Savedoff continues, is to respond to photographs according to how they present the world. Consequently, the subject of a photograph is always of primary importance (in a way not replicated in painting or sculpture) and it is almost impossible to consider a photograph without considering its subject in the world. The interest in any photograph is, therefore, in the relationship between the subject in the world and its photographic presentation. Susan Sontag suggests in *On Photography* that "what a photograph is *of* is always of primary importance. The assumption underlying all uses of photography, that each photograph is a piece of the world, means that we don't know how to react to a photograph . . . until we know what piece of the world it is" (1979, 93).

This faith in fidelity partly depends on perception of the image as an authentic presentation of the world. For photography does not reproduce the real but "realism." in that the camera is a machine designed to mechanically reproduce the dominant idea of representative reality, based upon geometric perspective, with the acceptance of the validity of that "reality" deeply ingrained (McQuire 1988, 18). That the camera is a machine, that it is a process of mechanical reproduction, allows an investment of faith in its truthfulness and objectivity that would not be possible with evidently artful depictions of the world. As Bazin suggests, it is possible to claim that the photographic "image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man" (1967, 13). Consequently, the camera is invested with a claim of neutrality, mechanical objectivity, and an independence from human interpretation or invention. Again, the photographic image is verification of the existence and appearance of its subject, something that is also the case with photographs of dance and dancers.

Photography and Dance

The relationship between photography and dance embodies many of these observations on the cultural dominance of photographic realism. Photography offers a method of recording dance endowed with a weight of promised accuracy and authenticity, providing a validating proof that the performance, now gone, actually happened. Photographs of dancers are also primarily responded to according to how they present their subject, according to how they reproduce the dance.

As a medium that can create documents of transitory performance, the service that photography can provide in recording the performing arts is obvious. The history of dance shows how quickly the camera was seized upon as a glamorizing, promotional, and documentary tool. From the very earliest days of photography in the 1830s, as William A. Ewing relates in *The Fugitive Gesture*, it was used to document the faces, appearance, and experiences of ballet (1987, 14–15). Very soon afterward, in the 1840s, there occurred an explosion in the publication of celebratory event programs crammed full of images, mainly of the ballerinas, along with albums of photographs designed to feed the period's "balletomania" (Sorell 1981, 288). Later, at the turn of the century, pioneering dance critic and photographer Carl Van Vechten drew on photography's apparent revelatory authority and set out to record the performers of his day, declaring

that his "interest in photography is purely documentary" (Padgette 1981, 6). This dual promotional and documentary role is crystallized in the many photographs taken of Pavlova, who once declared to a photographer, "My art will die with me. Yours will live on when you are gone" (Ewing 1987, 14). The apparent potential, therefore, for the camera to still the transient and capture the complete appearance of performance has provided photography with a significant documentary role in the live arts.

However, if the documentary importance of photography to dance cannot be denied, neither can the transformative effects of the camera, for the still photograph inevitably, if mechanically, reproduces dance without motion. Here the expectations and limitations of photographic authenticity meet, for although we expect the camera to reproduce dance faithfully, the inherent stillness of the medium limits the extent of that reproduction. This has been a problem confronting dance photography since the nineteenth century:

> Dance is the movement of bodies through space and time. Dance is fluidity and continuity. Dance connects, dance unfolds. Dance envelops us; it enters through the eye and ear. Photography imprisons in two dimensions. Photography flattens and shrinks. Photography tells the ear nothing. It fragments time and fractures space. Yet movement is the goal. . . . Elizabeth McCausland voiced the paradox when she called for "an image which though it cannot move and never can hope to move, yet will seem about to move." (Ewing 1987, 27–28)

Here the monumental demands made upon photography are clearly voiced: the dance must be captured truthfully, accurately, and completely by a method that communicates the essential nature of the performance. As Savedoff and Sontag declare, the subject of a photograph, and how it both reveals and transforms its subject, directs the aesthetics of photography. Hence, with dance photographs our interest is in how an image captures and yet translates the movement of dance. As dance is essentially the movement of bodies through time and space, then dance photography is valued according to how it communicates this movement. Unsurprisingly, many commentators, such as the critic Edwin Denby, perceive a failure to achieve this goal, complaining, "You don't see the change in the movement, so you don't see the rhythm, which makes dancing. The picture represents a dancer, but it doesn't give the emotion that dancing gives you as you watch it" (1986, 89). The desired photograph, therefore, is something that does more than accurately reveals surfaces, but instead presents a deeper perception of the cultural valuation of dance. Consequently, the still image is assessed according to how it records movement; but in the age of video recording, does this continue to be a relevant demand?

The Power of the Still Image

Before continuing to examine how still photography attempts to present dance movement, I will first briefly consider the relationship between still and moving photography, and particularly the video recording of dance. While there is an inherent difficulty

in representing dance movement in still photography, motion photography avoids this problem while retaining a similar potential for perceived documentary authority. Indeed, the video camera potentially solves many of the documentary fears of otherwise transient performance. Dance academic and archivist Allegra Fuller Snyder, for example, stresses the documentary importance of video, writing that "Since video made it easier to capture movement in time and through space, the ephemeral aspect of dance was fast becoming less of an issue" (Johnson and Snyder 1999, 8). Many other commentators similarly see video as a method of authoritatively recording dance performances, including Bob Lockyer, head of televised dance at the BBC, who describes national video archives as the proper "home for our heritage" (2000, 41).

Central to such perceptions is the ability to record in time, the attribute missing from still photography that allows video to capture movement. There are, of course, a number of difficulties and limitations in the video recording of dance that prevent this process from being considered, as Snyder declares, "easy." The video camera, like still photography, distorts the world it records. Some of these distortions are the result of technical and practical limitations, but others are inherent to the medium. These transformations include effects such as foreshortening and distortion of speed and dynamics, along with the imposition of the artificial frame of the screen, the removal of live presence, and the fixing of a single interpretation on tape. Indeed, it is possible to argue that video inevitably translates everything it records into video.[1]

These problems aside, it remains that the video camera can, accepting limitations, document movement in a manner that is inherently impossible for still photography. While it might be possible for a still image to suggest movement, it cannot reproduce it; the suggestion of movement is, therefore, unable to hold even limited claims to mechanical authenticity. In contrast, the video camera, despite distortions, does reproduce (mechanically and photographically) original movement.

However, it seems to me that, even with a subject as defined by movement as dance, still photography retains an authority and preeminence over video recordings, for in an age of moving pictures, the still image continues to dominate our perceptions, imaginations, and memories. We tend to remember in frozen moments that represent the highlights or consummation of our memories of the fluid event. Indeed, it is also possible to see how the original experience of dance is often defined by perceptions inspired by still photography. I have noticed this when watching dance I am already familiar with through still photographs; during the performance tiny fragmentary moments of the choreography strike me with a powerful sense of the familiar. However, I have not seen these moments before and in truth I am not seeing them at all, for the moments presented in the photographs are so fleeting in life that they are almost impossible to see. Indeed, the moments would be invisible in life if not prompted into existence by the photograph, and once recognized in performance they have already vanished. Yet although the static images presented in the photographs do not exist (as such) in the performance, these moments dominate and define my memory of the performance.

A similar relationship exists between still photographs and video, television, or cin-

ema, with any moment presented motionless in a still photograph holding a discernible authority over a flow of images. Sontag describes this experience precisely:

> Photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow. Television is a stream of underselected images, each of which cancels its predecessor. Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turning into a slim object that one can keep and look at again. (1979, 18)

It is clear that the selected image of the dance photograph is in contrast to the "underselected" images of both the dance itself and any video recording of dance. This potentially reverses any perceptions of a hierarchical relationship of original and copy between the photograph and the event—the dance almost becomess an imperfect repetition of the moment presented in the photograph. Such perception overturns the subordination of the representation to the original; it also highlights the continuing power of still photography.

This demonstration of the power of the still image reveals two things. First, faith in photography to reveal the world includes or creates a sense that what is revealed is what is significant. Second, still representations hold hierarchical status over moving subjects, with the act of selection privileging a single moment against the unselected whole. Despite the greater claims of video to complete documentation, the representation of dance by still photography continues to constitute the greater part of our imaginings about dance. This is despite the inherent immobility of the still image and the valued movement of dance. Indeed, perhaps it is the inability of the still photograph to capture movement easily that renders attempts to do so more significant. Asked to copy something, writes Jonathan Miller in *Subsequent Performances*, we will copy what we consider important (1986, 52). The photographic act of selection copies the world in a similar fashion, highlighting aspects considered important and ignoring those thought insignificant. The struggle to represent motion in still photography, therefore, dramatically underlines our very valuation of movement in dance.

It is clear that the still photograph transforms its subject, and for the viewer the aesthetic interest of the image is between that transformation and our perception of the subject in the world. This is certainly the case with dance and the transformation of movement into stillness. The still image cannot reproduce movement and attempts to do so are instead evident transformations; it is in our ability to relate this transformation back to our concept of movement that the still photograph has its power. This suggests that without the actual presentation of movement in time (found in video) still photographs have to construct some kind of dramatic representation of movement. How dance photographers attempt to do this goes to the heart of whether perceptions of revelatory authority do, in fact, dominate photographic aesthetics.

Capturing Movement in Still Photography

In a still photograph movement must be inspired, suggested, or represented. However, some techniques by which movement can be communicated in a still image are (or are

perceived to be) revelatory and authentic, while others are clearly artful and artificial. The distinction is significant, for one method utilizes what Savedoff describes as photography's defining revelatory aesthetics, while the other undermines such responses.

Marta Braun suggests in "Extended Present: Photographing Movement" that the ambition to capture movement in still photography was addressed almost immediately after the birth of photography in the nineteenth century. She argues that "the desire to capture movement . . . stemmed from the medium's perceived role as guarantor of the visible" (1997, 150). Such scientific desire to reveal movement, to provide proof and documentary evidence of motion, depends for validity upon acceptance of the authority and objectivity of the camera. This faith is necessary as technological developments—faster film, shutter speeds, and strobe lighting—have enabled the production of photographic images that reveal movement beyond the scope of the human eye. Examples of such images include Eadweard Muybridge's picture sequences, which demonstrated in 1878 with photographic authority that a galloping horse removes all feet from the ground at once. Similarly, in the twentieth century, Harold Edgerton produced extreme stop-action images, which made the familiar strange but did so with utmost photographic truthfulness; the most famous examples include close-ups of a bullet passing through a candle flame and the impact of a drop of milk in a saucer. Edgerton's images call on our acceptance of photographic authenticity, since we must accept the depiction as accurate without ever being able to see it for ourselves. Their power lies in acceptance that the camera captures a world beyond our eyes, and that what is revealed photographically is true at the same time as it distorts our expectations.

However, even such advanced and purely photographic techniques do not reproduce movement; instead, they freeze movement. Yet if the communication of movement is the goal, the photographic image must seem about to move, an ambition in response to which photographers have borrowed from other visual arts methods designed to inspire the impression of movement. Here, the line between revelation and artfulness becomes increasingly blurred. Dance photographers, for example, have frequently used (consciously or unconsciously) aspects of emblematic representation: flowing hair or clothes as emblematic signifiers of movement. In painting or sculpture, such emblems construct the imagination of movement through suggestion of familiar experiences. In photography, the same emblems physically record the presence of movement, retaining the memory of that movement as if made concrete in fabric or hair. This use of emblems of movement takes a conscious, artful method of painting and endows it with the revelatory "artlessness" of photography: revealing movement as it was rather than consciously investing in it the image. Such "artlessness," however, belies the possibility of deliberate employment of such emblems and their conscious and artificial creation. Shot selection and the posing of photographs is conscious artfulness, and the importance of such elements of manipulation are often underplayed in attempts to stress the importance of the revelatory status of the photograph.

Taking such interventions farther are other methods borrowed from the visual arts that always highlight their artificiality. Prominent here is the use of graphic intervention into photography, adding lines or symbols to the print to represent movement. In

painting there is no difference in process between such abstract symbols and more realistic emblems of movement: both are artful inclusions. In photography, however, one is seen as revealed in the moment, authoritatively recorded as there by the camera, while the other is evidently an artificial intervention by the photographer. The difference may be one of perception, but it is a significant difference because the use of such overtly interventionist symbols undermines the perception of the photograph as revealing actual appearances, instead highlighting the image as invented for the camera. Such artfulness underlines the active presence of the photographer—in contrast to Bazin's claims, it stresses the "creative intervention" of the photographer—no longer allowing us to trust in the camera's mechanical objectivity.

In photography, however, it is not always possible to tell what is artfulness and what is revelatory. This is demonstrated with the uncertain status of other familiar techniques employed to represent movement, including the creation of multiple or repeated images in the same frame through blurring, overlayered exposures, and time-lapse photography. The perceived status of such techniques is significant. As "accidental," the blurred photograph retains all its documentary importance, but as artful and deliberate, such photography no longer merely objectively records but now constructs an interpretation of the world. Such techniques, to a certain extent, position the photograph as something artful and make the photographer's presence manifest.

While there are no strict divisions across this range of methods, it is possible to see two divergent possibilities as open to the dance photographer in the attempt to communicate movement in the still image. One option is to celebrate the ability to freeze time and capture a piece of the world in a photographic instant. This approach follows the cultural instinct to accept the photographic image as representative of that-has-been to proclaim "There!" The other possibility is a more interventionist technique, seeking to manipulate the photographic image with conscious elaboration and choice made both before and after the shutter opens. These methods are displayed in, respectively, the work of Greenfield and Nash, both of whom have been widely praised for their ability to capture dance movement in still photography.

Lois Greenfield

Two books, *Breaking Bounds* and *Airborne*, provide good presentations of Greenfield's work. Both are collections of black-and-white dance photographs, images of people leaping, hanging, flying, pictures of entangled duets and synchronized groups. Almost all of Greenfield's work is photographed against a white background, only occasionally is the floor distinguishable, and even more rarely is there a set or even a wall in evidence. Instead, Greenfield's images appear to show people hanging in air, photographs of moments that in life would have lasted a split second. The camera constructs these images through its ability to freeze movement instantly and accurately: they are literally stop-action photographs. Significant to such a method is absolute trust in the photograph's authenticity. As Ewing notes of Greenfield's work, "What first must be made clear is how she does *not* work," with no darkroom manipulation, artificial supports,

concealing lighting, or photographic sleight of hand (Greenfield 1992, 14). Indeed, Greenfield presents these images as seen through the viewfinder, and one defining characteristic of many Greenfield images is a hard black border, which reproduces the boundary of the negative or camera frame within the printed photograph. The square asserts that these images are uncropped and unframed except by the lens of the camera, and in many ways this device defines the ambitions of Greenfield's photographs: it affirms their revelatory status as unadulterated pictures of the world.

At the same time we acknowledge this revelatory aesthetic in Greenfield's work, it is also necessary to point out the complete alienation of the practice from actual dance performances. Greenfield photographs dancers exclusively in the studio, dispensing with dance works and choreographers altogether. This could seem to be a step away from documentation, from the photographic realism of presenting something that happened. These images, after all, are constructed for the camera and not revealed or found in the world.[2]

With Greenfield, however, this removal of the process from the world is made in the search for a deeper and more essential realism: the attempt to communicate movement. As Greenfield writes, "The root of my interest is movement, or rather how movement can be interpreted photographically" (1992, 99). Greenfield's photography therefore presents dance in the sense that it is attempting to capture the essence of dance, but is no longer *of* dance in a conventional sense.[3] Instead of photographing actual dances, Greenfield works with the dancers directly, creating dances for the camera that would be meaningless outside the studio. Nor could these dances be restaged for an audience, for the images the movements are intended to create are visible only to the camera, and even the photographer in the room cannot see them as they happen (Greenfield 1998, 11). Despite being fabricated images, therefore, Greenfield's work is revelatory, depending upon our faith in the mechanical authority of photography to reveal a world beyond the human eye.

Greenfield's photographs are, therefore, in the revelatory tradition of opening our eyes through the authoritative lens of the camera. To communicate movement the photographs depend on the viewer's attempt to relate the incredible positions presented to actions in life. Greenfield wants the viewer to look at the fragment of movement presented in her photographs, see the impossibility of stability, and ask what came a second before and what follows a second after. "It intrigues me," writes Greenfield, "that in 1/500th of a second I can allude to past and future moments even if these are only imagined" (1992, 116). In this manner the images are interesting embodiments of Henri Cartier-Bresson's thesis that by capturing the "decisive moment" the still photograph can be representative of the missing whole. They also match what Lord Snowdon describes as the ambition of his theatre photography, to "sum up a moment more than that moment" (1996, 7). Here, the decisive moment seeks to lead the viewer into contemplation of movement, reading a narrative of time into the still fragment.[4]

These images, therefore, display the decisive moments of extremes of movement—leaping, falling, flying, reaching—and it is difficult to imagine the human body in more essentially dynamic situations. However, ultimate responses as to whether Greenfield's

Figure 2: David Parsons 1986. Photograph by Lois Greenfield. Courtesy of the photographer.

work achieves the ambition of leading the viewer beyond the moment depicted are extremely individual. For me, some pictures do manage to capture the tension between the still moment presented and the inevitable movement beyond the image. One example features a single dancer, arms and legs spread-eagle, face up, ten or twenty centimeters above the ground (Fig. 2). His body forms a cross-shape, echoed on the floor by his shadow. Here the viewer is able, in some sense forced, to read a brief narrative of movement into the picture: the shadow and the figure are either converging as the man falls to the floor, or diverging as the dancer 'jumps' from a horizontal position. It is only at a surface level that the photograph freezes the man in an impossible, static midair; be-

Figure 3: Daniel Ezralow 1982. Photograph by Lois Greenfield. Courtesy of the photographer.

yond the photograph, the viewer expands the moment, adding narrative and movement to the stillness. Other Greenfield photographs manage to communicate movement in a similar fashion. One photograph features an unbalanced man, on one leg, falling to the side; here, the dancer's body shape, angle, and clothes indicate the movement. Again, the brief narrative of movement is there to be read into the picture (Fig. 3).

In contrast to these images, however, many of Greenfield's other photographs are more sculptural and stiller, indeed perhaps static. Often these static images are the more typical Greenfield photographs, featuring the white background framed by a hard black square, the dancers frozen as if in a void. These images contain no indication of

space or time, no context, no indication of effort or pain or sweat, no story or possibility of narrative. In a sense, they suffer as a result of being restricted to a perfectly reproduced moment, and as a result, while remaining impressive photographs, I believe that they fail to communicate movement or a sense of dance. One example is a photograph of four tumbling dancers who together form a circle in the air. In this frozen moment there is clearly the theoretical necessity of movement—to no less extent than with the falling or unbalanced dancers—yet there is no evidence of this in the photograph, and the knowledge of movement comes from elsewhere. The plate contains no demonstration of effort, rhythm, or indication of context, it hints at no possible futures or pasts, and fails to communicate a narrative of movement. In another example the dancers resemble a miraculous Miró sculpture: frozen somehow as a static mobile, supported on the female performer's hair and between the fingertips and extended toes of two figures (Fig. 4).

Here, Greenfield's 1/500th of a second remains just that, with her images showing an abruptly suspended moment of fragmented space and time. As Bazin puts it, the camera "embalms time." Art critic and historian Alexander Sturgis suggests possible reasons for this in a discussion of attempts in painting and engraving to convey movement in a single image. While comparing various images of falling figures, Sturgis tries to determine why some "work" so much better than others in conveying movement. By way of possible explanation Sturgis draws attention to Hendrik Goltzius' series of "somersaulters," *The Four Disgraces*. Although depicting falling figures, Sturgis suggests the series communicates not movement, but instead a "curious calm." This, he suggests, is because the somersaulters are depicted with exact detail, every hair and muscle defined: "The elaboration of detail somehow militates against the impression of movement which, experience tells us, is more easily obtained with a few swift, dynamic strokes than by meticulous rendering" (Sturgis 2000, 40–42).

Greenfield's frozen images, precise and exact, with even the furrowed brows of the dancers visible and not a blur or smudge in sight, are perfect examples of this meticulous depiction. Now the depiction is automatic, with the camera having no problem distinguishing details no matter how fast the movement.

Greenfield photographs are in the tradition of Genthe's image of Pavlova, preserving a moment of the dance through a revelatory, stop-action technique. Technology, however, has enabled her (and many other dance photographers working today) to realize the ambition of freezing a single moment, halting movement, and revealing details beyond the scope of the human eye. Technology, however, has perhaps all too literally frozen the image, for it is possible to see that Genthe's image communicates movement not just in what it shows but also in what it fails to show. Without all the details, the viewer has to engage imaginatively with the image, and once engaged more readily reads the narrative of movement beyond the frame. In a sense it seems that perfect reproduction of appearances, perfect revelatory aesthetics, runs counter to aesthetics of movement. Consequently, this is where more explicitly representational and interventionist techniques of depicting movement in still photography become of interest.

Figure 4: John Gallagher and Ashley Roland 1991. Photograph by Lois Greenfield. Courtesy of the photographer.

Chris Nash

Like Greenfield, Nash largely works with dancers in the studio, although he does usually photograph prearranged choreography. He has also spoken of the difficulties of working in various locales: low lighting, dirty stages, not knowing what will happen next, and nothing being repeated. In contrast, Nash declares, studio pictures are clearer and "more immediate than all those grainy, harsh stage photos. And [the photographs] managed to convey the spirit and excitement of dance so elegantly" (1993, 3). Note here the emphasis on communicating not just the appearance of dance, but also the desire to

capture a more essential spirit and excitement. However, although Nash's intentions are similar to Greenfield's, the methods of his execution are very different.[5]

Greenfield's images rely on the camera's ability to declare authoritatively that-as-been; they hope to capture movement in a realm beyond that of our normal senses. In contrast, Nash seeks to work with our expectations and prejudices, displaying movement more as we might experience it ourselves. The surprise is that to achieve this aim Nash's photographs have to be more interventionist, less "realistic," as they undermine claims of surface fidelity to communicate a constructed representation of movement. His work employs a wide range of representational techniques, a large element of conscious choice of context and allusion, color, indistinctness, and intervention. Rather than "frozen" moments, Nash's work is one of bleeding or multiple moments.

Nash often employs a whole variety of techniques to communicate movement in a single image. A photograph of Javier de Frutos, for example, demonstrates how he uses fabric to symbolize and retain the memory of movement, while the use of multiple exposures creates the impression of blurred arms and multiple hands (Fig. 5). This photograph is in black and white, but characteristic of much of Nash's work is the use of brightly colored backgrounds and often distorting colored lighting. Another image features a dancer in what could be a trademark Greenfield pose, at the top of a leap with the potential of reading descent and therefore movement into the image (Nash 2001, 8). Here, however, Nash's photograph is far from perfect, with the bright colors and intervening lighting militating against overwhelming detail (the dancer's feet, hands, face, and indeed entire outline are indistinct). Lighting effects in Nash's work ensure that his dancers often display form but no detail and, along with distorting camera angles, seek to distort the human body; perhaps in doing so they remind viewers of their own physicality and thereby provoke the sympathetic sensation of movement. His work also has used animation, computer manipulation, and other graphic effects.

Many of these approaches are employed in an epic montage, *Assemblage* (Nash 2000), a cyclorama of dancers that creates a dizzying experience as the viewer walks past it, in so doing providing an interestingly literal twist to the idea that dance photography must provoke the sensation of movement. Another Nash image is startlingly similar to a Greenfield photograph already mentioned, featuring a single dancer just a few inches above the ground, her shadow echoing her body above. Interestingly, Nash notes of this picture, "Although it was tempting, there is actually no faking in this picture. I'm still not sure how Ruth managed to do this but she didn't have any help from me (or my computer)" (2001, 43). Although Nash feels the need to draw attention to the authentic status of the picture as a record of something that happened, this is not all-important and he (unlike Greenfield) does not reject intervention and manipulation (Fig. 6).

However, included in a collection of frequently edited and touched-up images, it is certainly the case that this photograph needs Nash's explicit statement of authenticity for the viewer to see it with such characteristics. Unlike Greenfield's work, where revelatory authority is powerfully asserted and reinforced, Nash's continual and overt reconstruction and manipulation of his photographs means that our faith in the images

Figure 5: Javier de Frutos, The Place does not Forgive, *1995. Photograph by Chris Nash. Courtesy of the photographer.*

Figure 6: Motionhouse, Fake It, *1997. Photograph by Chris Nash. Courtesy of the photographer.*

as documents of the world is undermined. The existence of such doubt is significant, as it affects our perception and interpretation of photography; through methods such as combination printing, double exposure, retouching, and particularly digital imagery (all used by Nash) the photographer explicitly constructs the image, rather than revealing something in the world.

For some commentators, the prompting of doubt in photographic authenticity that results from the use of interventionist techniques is significant and far from positive in its consequences. Savedoff, for example, argues that the greater creative opportunities intervention provides are "bought at the cost of photography's distinctive power" (2000, 8). Her language on this point is loaded, manipulation "imperils," "threatens," "costs," "destroys," and could have "far-reaching implications for the aesthetics of photography" (2000, 202). Among other things, Savedoff laments that the decisive moment can be constructed, artificial, or anything other than accidentally found in the world. It seems to me, however, that perception of photographic authenticity has always been a perception and never an actuality, for while Greenfield's images, in contrast to Nash's, are of things that happened, they are equally constructed for the camera rather than found in the world. Greenfield records dances in the absence of the onstage reality and constructs images for the camera that would never occur if it were not for the presence of the camera. I believe that there can be no absolute distinction between such preshutter intervention (posing for the camera, shot selection, lighting) and the more evident postshutter manipulation employed by Nash. Instead, a major part of the aesthetics of photography today is the play between revelation and deception, equally present in the staging, framing, and cropping of photographs and in more recent technological advances. Manipulation, artful intervention, conscious, and explicit choice are all tools of photographic representation and not, as Savedoff appears to argue, threatening dangers to a purer tradition of photographic revelation.

Nash, it is clear, does not hesitate to use interventionist techniques, all of them seeking to go against conventional use of the camera to show perfect surface appearances of how things "really" are. However, by employing these methods Nash often manages to successfully capture the movement of the performers and communicate the essential appeal of the dances he is representing. In one photograph, many of these elements combine in an image that physically communicates movement through posture, intersubjective awareness of balance, indistinctness, and lighting, right down to the sharply bent toes of the dancer (that she is grounded only adding to the image's potential to narrate motion) (Fig. 7). Richard Alston, the choreographer of the movement depicted, describes it well: "I find this almost painterly image a powerful metaphor for things which are for me essential about the dances I make. Energy without tension, a sense of flying through space but at the same time a real weightiness of movement" (Nash 2001, 38).

Observing most successful dance images, viewers become engaged with the movement themselves. The pictures that "work" do so because they manage to escape the limits of the photograph's constricting temporal and spatial frame by engaging the viewer's imagination. Discussing Nash's photographs, gallery manager Peter Ride also

Figure 7: Richard Alston Dance Co., Red Run, *1988. Chris Nash. Courtesy of the photographer.*

describes this idea, noting that the skill in dance photography is in making the image suggest more. But Ride notes that this is not just a case of the photograph working; the viewer must also have the imagination to look deeper into the picture and see what might be possible (Nash 1993, 8). Novelist and art critic John Berger also describes this lucidly: "An instant photographed can only acquire meaning insofar as the viewer can read into it a duration extending beyond itself. When we find a photograph meaningful we are lending it a past and a future" (McQuire 1988, 59).

As images of dance, therefore, what we see in Nash's photographs is not what happened in life. However, in a more meaningful sense they are pictures that attempt to capture what we would experience in life and what is valued of dance. The value of

these photographs lies in their ability to show us a world that we could not witness and did not happen but which is somehow "true" all the same. It is this transformative quality of the photographs that makes them able to represent dance and movement.

Conclusion: Representational Aesthetics

Photography is often extolled for its ability to show us the world. For many commentators, the important relationship and aesthetic of photography is between the image and the subject in the world. With still dance photography, however, I have examined how the inherent inability of the still image to reproduce movement has meant that photographic revelation is insufficient to represent our cultural perceptions of dance. Instead, the photographer has to reinvent dance for the camera, using representational as well as revelatory techniques. With Nash's work in particular, we can never be sure that what we see in the photograph ever occurred in life—their revelatory authority is undermined—but we do perhaps perceive his images as accurate representations of the emotions and experiences of dance.

In relation to dance, in other words, we are interested not in how the photographs reveal movement (for they do not), but in how the photographer represents movement. While Greenfield's photographs authentically stop movement, the occasions when the viewer is able to read movement into her images are the result of imaginative engagement with the representation, rather than revelatory demonstration. Similarly, when Nash's photographs communicate to the viewer the past and future of the movement they present they do so not by asserting the photographic ability to show us the world, but by inspiring the imagination of movement in the mind of the viewer.

The still photograph does not reproduce, document, or reveal dance to us but can represent our perceptions, values, and experiences. The meeting of dance and still photography reveals that photographic invention, construction, and imagination are as significant and legitimate as authenticity and revelation. To capture the experience and perception of movement, the photographer must reinvent dance for the camera. In a sense this marks the contrast between two types of authenticates, one that shows movement as it is in a frozen instant and the other that shows movement as it is experienced. Looking at images of dance we must decide which is more revealing, more "truthful": the images that capture the world as it appears beyond the human eye or those that reveal to us how we experience the world. For me, the still photograph cannot reproduce movement and must therefore seek to create something new, not revealing but constructing a new and still moving dance seen through the eye of the camera and experienced in the mind of the viewer.[6]

Acknowledgements

The photographs printed here are reproduced by kind permission of the photographers, Lois Greenfield and Chris Nash.

PQ: is British spelling intentional?

Notes

1. The issues raised by video recording dance, and specifically the recording of movement on camera, warrant consideration in their own right. However, both the problems and methods of video recording are essentially different from the challenges and practices of still photography. This said, it is worth providing a very brief review of the issues raised by video recording. As I noted, there is significant advocacy of video as the solution to the problems of documenting dance and ensuring it a place in culture, history, and scholarship. This is the position taken by organizations such the National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance (Brooks 2000 and Aloff 2001) and archivists such as Michelle Potter (2000). Similar debates occur in consideration of video recordings of theater, where discourses highlight the potential for the medium of video to dominate and direct the performance it records. Marco de Marinis, for example, stresses the importance of the video not becoming a replacement or "surrogate" show in its own right (1985, 386). Other important contributions on this issue include Robert Erenstein (1988), Gay McAuley (1986; 1994), and Annabelle Melzer (1995a, b). Away from the concerns of video documentation, and without the same concerns of theater practitioners (where work made for the camera is more readily subsumed into preexisting forms of film or television drama), much interesting work has been done in constructing dance works specifically for the camera. Prominent here is video artist Douglas Rosenberg, who describes his work as "screendance" and suggests that dance on film is a site-specific practice in "which the camera may be thought of as the site" (2000; 2002). Rosenberg is not interested in representing live performances, instead constructing entirely new dance works for the camera, and the possibility of equating dancers' occupation of stage space directly to their occupation of the space of the screen is intriguing; it can perhaps be compared to the manner in which Greenfield and Nash reconstruct dance for the still photograph. Other prominent examples of this kind of work include Merce Cunningham's collaborations with filmmaker Charles Atlas, such as their 1979 work *Locale*, where the camera moves around the stage almost as if it is one of the dancers. As this demonstrates, the challenges and developments of video recording dance utilize methods distinct form the practice of still photography.

2. Of course, much supposedly "revelatory" photography has this quality. The posed photograph is as consciously constructed in its way as any painting or other non-mechanical representation. However, with photographs this constructedness is often a matter of process and is largely invisible in appearance.

3. In fact, Greenfield says that the description of her as a dance photographer "makes me bristle" (1992, 99). Instead, she would rather her work be considered not as documentations or handmaidens of dance, but as photography and an art form in its own right. This is compatible, however, with my examination of her photographs as representations of dance, especially considering her stated objective of presenting movement as a still image. It is also the case that as photographic images, Greenfield's work will always be assessed in relation to their depiction and transformation of dance. What an image is of is always of primary importance in our response to photography.

4. The "decisive moment" of photography clearly also has links to Sontag's idea of the "privileged moment" of the selected still image. Merging both these ideas intriguingly is the tradition in dance photography of attempting to capture the "perfect mo-

ment" of the choreography: the pinnacle of the leap or the perfectly outstretched toe. This is a tradition that is particularly dominant in ballet photography, where an image that does not capture the perfect moment can simply be termed wrong (Greenfield 1992, 102; Mitchell 1999, 74).

5. In contrast to Greenfield, who detests the notion of being seen as "documenting" or "serving" dance, when asked if it was frustrating to tailor his work to the vision of somebody else, Nash replies, "No. It's what makes it challenging. Besides, with collaborations, people take you in directions you may not have thought of yourself, so actually it's very fruitful" (Meisner 1998, 26). Whle Greenfield works in collaboration with dancers, and clearly does depict some aspect of each performer's individual style, Her work consistently bares her own imprint and style. In contract, Nash entirely transforms his own style according to the choreographer represented: "I have to remain faithful to the choreographer's intentions. I try to imagine what kind of photograph the choreographer would take if he could. I provide a gateway for the viewer to step into the choreographer's mind" (Meisner 1998, 26).

6. The substance of this debate on the representation of movement in still photography was the subject in 1986 of an American court case between Barbara Horgan, executor of the Balanchine estate, and the publishers Macmillan. Horgan brought an action of copyright infringement against Macmillan for the publication of photographs of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, the principal issue being whether still photographs could infringe the copyright on the choreography for a ballet. In the original trial, the court decided in favor of Macmillan, taking the argument that "choreography is the flow of steps in ballet, which could not be reproduced from the still photographs in the book." The courts, therefore, essentially argued that still images could not communicate movement. On appeal, however, the original verdict was overturned. First, the appellate court argued that the test for infringement of copyright was not "whether the original work may be reproduced from the copy—as the district judge held—but whether the alleged copy is substantially similar to the original." Second, on this point of similarity, the appeals court found that it was possible for still photography to communicate movement, arguing that the first court "took a far too limited view of the extent to which choreographic material may be conveyed in the medium of still photography. A snapshot of a single moment in a dance sequence may communicate a great deal. It may capture, for example, a gesture, the composition of dancers' bodies or the placement of dancers on the stage. . . . A photograph may also convey to the viewer's imagination the moments before and after the split second recorded" (Horgan v. Macmillan Inc 1986). A repeated comparison in the case was made between a photograph of choreography and a single note of music, perhaps inspired by Denby's suggestion that a shot of a single gesture "is like hearing only one note of a piece of music, or one word of a poem" (1986, 89). The second court dismissed this comparison, arguing that it was possible for still photography to "convey to the viewer's imagination the moments before and after the split second recorded" and finding for Horgan.

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