

Unhappy Performatives: The Protocol Drawing of Günter Brus

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Focusing on Günter Brus scores of unperformed actions, this article explores the protocols used to rehearse, trigger and control the performance process. The article argues that because drawing involves simultaneously visual and motor imagery, it is used as a substitute for actions that the artist does not want or cannot perform on itself.

Key words: Drawing, Score, Diagram, Performance, Gunter Brus.

— ‘Do you see the act of drawing as a performance?’
— ‘Oh, what a funny question. I think performance is when other people are looking, I guess, so no. It’s rehearsing by myself. It’s creating the material by myself.’

(Trisha Brown)¹

‘You can draw anything – it’s just a drawing’

(Günter Brus)²

Beyond its social and computational meaning, protocol is an expression that encloses a paradoxical space within the ways that drawing visualises or reconfigures a performance process within the artist’s mind. The word refers indiscriminately to the visual scores by which a connection between an artist and a performer is established as an instruction to be followed to the letter;³ to the recording of thought in a performance;⁴ to drawing as a catalyst to allow multiple variables of the same movement⁵ or to the psychological strategies by means of which a person’s behaviour can be manipulated through visual instructions.⁶ To some extent, in all of these definitions there is an underlying idea: that the opening of possibilities happens in tandem with the invention of constraints and the discovery of limitations.

The spontaneous appearance of the word «protocol» as an expression of drawing is often diluted within unconnected critical texts. This expression transfers to drawing the common sense of a public act’s recording. At the same time, it qualifies drawing as an apparatus that triggers, anticipates, models and organises that same act. This proto-performative character is intrinsic to its own etymology, like the first leaf that is attached to a document (*proto*: first + *kollos*: glue).

By questioning the protocol dynamics of drawing, we intend to focus on the strategies through which drawing inscribes a performance piece in a virtual space — both as image and bodily trace, as control and release — and how it generates the phatic element by which a response that is no longer contemplative is provoked.

Navigating in such a heterogeneous landscape implies a casuistic approach, one that is built or adapted to the singularity of each circumstance. That is why we focus on a specific group of Günter Brus’s drawings made as scores of unperformed actions, which are inseparable from the performance practice that both informs and is informed by them.

Making verbs visible

In the mid-1960s, Günter Brus (b. Austria, 1938) made several drawings as part of a performance practice focused on body analysis and an obsession with its limits. The subversive character of these actions and the radicalization of their relationship with the audience led him to a forced exile in Berlin in 1968 to escape a six-month sentence in prison. Gradually, the direct experience of the early performances was replaced by its representation in picture-poems, thus overcoming the physical constraints of pursuing a dramaturgy based on severe self touching gestures.

Aktionsskizze (action sketch), *Ablauf einer Aktion* (run-through of an action), *Partitur* (score) and *Aktionsskizzenheft* (action sketchbook) are the names that delineate, in Brus's work, the surface of inscription of these virtual performances.

These drawings activate a space, which we will call protocolar, where the relationship between the intention to act and the outcomes of the action is formalised both as image and gesture.

Although close in designation, these names reveal distinct intentionalities and nuances in the correspondence they establish with the performative act: they sway between the function of a programme, a document of unrealised actions and that of a vehicle for substitute actions that the body does not want to or cannot perform on itself, redirecting them onto paper.

Digging under the surface of this protocolar relationship between drawing and performance means facing a space that has remained discreet under the spectacular media staging with which photography and video had built the experience of performance in contemporary art.

This discretion is symptomatic of its own instrumental condition — 'no more intrinsic to the finished work than is the sculptor's hammer or the painter's easel'⁷ — which renders performance drawings expendable after execution. But it is also a sign of the difficulty of fixing the action of the body, in its movements, drives and transitions, in a combinatory system that can apprehend it beyond quantitative measurements, while inscribing it within the place and duration of an event that has not yet taken place.

Like the choreographic notations emerging in the second half of the twentieth century, with which they share obvious concerns,⁸ the drawings used to rehearse, trigger, control or otherwise represent these performance processes, are closely linked to the singular strategies with which artists prepare their bodies for a gestural activity, visualising the variants of their own dramaturgy.

As places of an autography, these drawings often stand as an idiolect, invented in a closed circuit between the body, the imagined stage and the props of the performance, unintelligible outside the artist's frame of reference.

But the urgency of transcribing the internal representation the artist has of the action while performing it, into the external and intermittent view of the photographic lens, also demands another focus, one that is dialogic and collaborative. This focus often places performance drawings in another reception context, usually dominated by anonymous

graphic systems such as pictograms and storyboards, as well as representation protocols such as maps and diagrams, in an amalgam of representative conventions that the draughtsman does not invent but inhabits as a common ground, a strategy for '*making verbs visible*'.⁹

The drive behind these drawings occurs as an imaginary approach to the previous hypothesis of an event. It is known that the perception of an event depends not only on the present moment but on the way we compare it to the recollection of what preceded it, and where we suspect it is heading to.¹⁰ In actions with a high degree of complexity, such as Günter Brus's body analyses to which these drawings relate, such memories and expectations are never fixed. They redefine themselves by the constant readjustment of our perceptions and knowledge.

Protocol drawings thus reflect a near impossibility: to explain how, during the process of creating a temporal sequence, choreographers, directors or performers conceive the overall image of their work, while at the same time establishing the detailed action of the different events; and that it is not possible to perceive the performance process in its overall structure if it is not available as a synoptic image. This is so 'although the medium may be aural and the structure to be scrutinized not an immobile picture but a succession of happenings in time'.¹¹

At the same time, these drawings hold, at their genesis, an impressive element in which the author undertakes, or instigates others, to act in a certain way, leading or misleading the unfolding of the event.

The generative drawings of a performance are therefore accompanied by the implicit promise of making us see, in the course of an action, what is successive as simultaneous, what is contingent as necessary, what is inconsistent as logical, in an attempt to inscribe the sensitive tissue of movement in the visible, stable matter of the trace.

Usually, this promise almost always involves one direction: it uses drawing as a record to reconstitute the action, transforming it into a 'spur to memory';¹² it recognises that the seductive power of these drawings — when they are converted into documents — partly resides in the fact that they themselves demand a vision that always arrives too late at the events;¹³ a vision for which the action foreseen is already an accomplished fact. We look for it as if the surface of drawing were not opaque; as if it were itself a performance space without an audience where one does not think in order to act, but thinks in action. But if drawing can be a clarifying model for action in a performance context, can we consider the opposite? Can the performative act clarify drawing's motives and strategies, establishing a response relationship with it, even if it is an imaginary one?

The model of action

Günter Brus's work is particularly revealing of the use of drawing as an instructional protocol which establishes the nexus of spatial sequences of the body's movement. Although in its configurations it allows for multiple variants of that movement, it often conceives action as the expression of a programme that corresponds with what the drawing depicts. In a statement made about the acquisition of *Ablauf einer Aktion* by the

Tate Modern, the artist refers that 'the drawings were always made before the actions, other drawings were not made. However, there were frequent departures from the original concept made during the actual performance'.¹⁴

This art of escape, like any performative act, always presupposes the awareness of duplication,¹⁵ through which the actual experience of the action is mentally compared to the memory or idealization of the original model of that same action. At the same time, it evolves as a deviation from the movement idealised in drawing (which is an external memory), in a productive friction between the prior, provisional representation of the action to be performed and the demands that emerge from the circumstances of the event itself.

But it is mainly in the frustration produced by the mismatch between the internal representation of the action – formulated as a mental image while the action is being performed – and what is perceived as evidence in the documents that result from it, that the protocolar logic of Günter Brus's drawings is configured. As a graphic process, the genesis of protocol drawings is inseparable from dissatisfaction¹⁶ due to the way the photographic and film documentation of his first 'Self-Painting' action (*Selbstbemalung*), called *Anna* (1964), was carried out. The interference of Siegfried Klein's camera, more than documenting the event, integrates it as a co-participant in the real, changing the distance and the point of view from which it was conceived, constantly blurring the body, unable to follow the progression of the spatial sequence of the movement.¹⁷

If these marks can now be seen as visual metaphors of the laconic statement that 'actions must be recorded like a road accident, like a sensational event',¹⁸ they are also the underlying causes of a representational reciprocity between drawing and performance in Brus's work: the pencil provides what the wide-angle lens cannot – a choreographic access to the awareness of the body itself as it acts, as if it were seen by someone else's eyes. While some choreographic notations explore the nexus between actions based on patterns of random elements – Merce Cunningham saw in the imperfections of the paper the traces of an immanent drawing, prior to human intervention – Brus's protocol drawings reflect a strong compositional impulse which overlaps with the haptic perception of the movement itself. They express a rhetoric of the pose where the course of action is conceptually fixed as *tableau vivant*, anticipating or developing the scenic intention of photography. In fact, Günter Brus's performance imagery is strongly linked to the metaphor of the window, a conceptual foundation of the theatrical fourth wall convention which converts performance into a quasi-pictorial representation and, by extension, converts drawing into a quasi-scenic representation. If Günter Brus's first actions are, therefore, the amplification of a pictorial attitude towards the living space, his drawing assumes the inverse movement: that of the concentration of a performative attitude on the surface of the image. Drawing becomes a way of resisting the tendency to turn action into a documental spectacle.

What interferences occur between the process of drawing and the imagined action? What strategies define the protocolar meaning of this drawing?

Two particular drawings engage directly with the virtual relationship between what is imagined and what can be performed: *Ablauf einer Aktion* (fig.1 and fig.2) and *Aktionsskizze* (fig.5). Practically contemporaneous with each other, both drawings

describe actions that, for different reasons, never existed outside the immanence of the score. They are, in the true sense of the word, acts in reserve, notes about gestures, movements, objects, sounds, spaces, approximations to a pose that is staged as a sketch, as a deferred possibility. This status as a score holds all the poetics of the performative act.¹⁹ Outside its purely instrumental character, it designates the work without performing it: it inscribes gesture in the sphere of action, but clearly distinguishes, in Agamben's sense, the act (*agere*) from the making (*facere*)²⁰. Brus's protocol drawing makes (*fit*) the action, but does not act (*agitur*).

Ablauf einer aktion, 1966.

In 1966, Brus began to plan an action based on a 'especially pronounced musical structure'.²¹ *Run-through of an Action* (fig.1 and fig.2) was meticulously planned as a choreography score in 17 drawings. Using words, notations and images, the score places the body on the floor, connected by the ankles to the corner of a room; it describes the various pendular movements between one wall and the other, the distensions and contractions of the figure, while establishing combinatorial relations with all the different sounds and props that inconsistently organise the action within precisely 56 minutes²². Originally planned for the *Galerie Nachst St. Stephan* in Vienna, the action was cancelled moments before by its director on the grounds that it was 'too monolithic'. In contrast to other actions, no photographs therefore exist. *Ablauf einer Aktion* is, in fact, the score of an action that was never performed, a performance fictionalised as drawing.

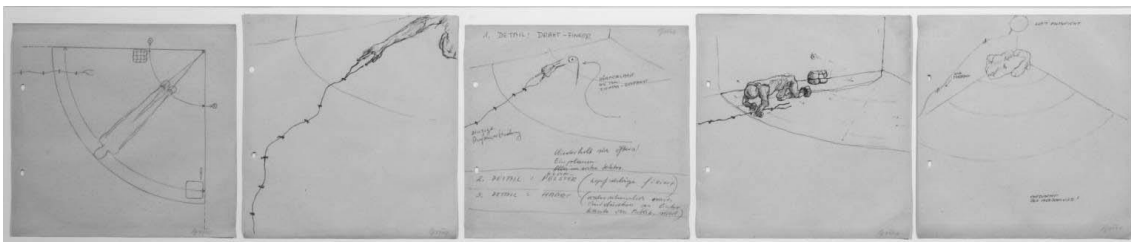


Fig.1

Günter Brus

Ablauf einer Aktion 1966

Sheets 9-12

Tate Archive T03695

How does drawing create the fiction of this performance?

It has been proposed that the construction of mental images often results from an exploration between discursive or propositional representations, and pictorial or analogical images.²³ The term by itself lays down some preliminary considerations. A

mental image occurs when the representation of a type, generated during the early stages of perception, is activated, but without the actual presence of a stimulus. These representations retain the perceptible properties of the stimulus and ultimately give rise to the subjective experience of representation. This formulation, as Stephen Kosslyn argues, does not limit the mental image to a visual modality. It allows for the parallel, sometimes superimposed, experience of auditory, tactile, kinetic mental images, among others.²⁴ On the other hand, when the mind commits itself to an idea that is visually expressed, it activates a play of representations where maps and mirrors interact to varying degrees.²⁵ It is therefore in this exploratory play that *Ablauf einer Aktion* protocolises the nexus between body and action.

The hypothesis of this protocol can then be expressed in two instances: as a *movement-diagram* where performance imagery is constructed as an ideographic reasoning — although not necessarily an abstract one — in which kinetic images and somatic sensations blend together; and as a figure where performance imagery is essentially pictorial, analogical and scenic.

This distinction is obviously an instrumental fiction, since the mental formulation of an action, when mediated through drawing, indistinctly integrates pictorial and propositional information, maps and mirrors; and in practice it is impossible to separate pictorial (analogical) from discursive and propositional (arbitrary) imagery, which is often the basis of the diagram but also of the figure,²⁶ even when the score is eminently pictorial.

But this distinction allows us to consider the generative thinking of performance as an act of drawing that exists in constant interaction between two conceptual modalities.

Following Gabriela Goldschmidt, we can name them 'seeing-how' and 'seeing-that'.

In her seminal essay on the dialogical use of drawing, Goldschmidt considers that the draughtsman *sees-as* when he resorts to a figural or *gestalt* argument while drawing; and *sees-that* when he uses non-figurative arguments about the object conceived or perceived.²⁷ The discrepancies that occur between these two ways of thinking through drawing are the drive that conceptually models action in drawing; they also explain the mismatch between the representation of the different stages indicating the position of the body in space and the written script on the first two sheets of the score.

Diagramming the effort

What *Ablauf einer Aktion* figures is what would never be observable in the field of the visible: the *diagram of movement*. This diagram is associated with a very particular need to inscribe the body in space, through the trajectory of a movement. We just need to think of choreographers' notations, of the protocols conceived in collaborative contexts such as Lawrence Halprin's RSVP cycle or, in another context, Bernard Tschumi's system of transcriptions. More than an explanatory abstraction, a structure or cartography of an existing or already imagined territory, the diagram claims in the protocol drawing a state of instability, of flow, of the trace as the appearance of a disappearance which allows us to visualise the movement as a first percept, distinct from the body, although attached to it.

In that sense, a diagram is understood as the tense of a verb – to diagram – and acts as a surface where the memory of what does not yet exist is inscribed in space. Not being the form of the movement, which is by definition formless, the movement-diagram configures itself in drawing as a refraction of the idea of form: as *information*, *transformation* and *performance*.²⁸ It is a representational apparatus whereby the mind seeks to reveal latent structures of organisation; but it is above all a generative and performative apparatus that acts as an intermediate state between the interiority and the anteriority of the performative action, dissolving ontological distinctions between the body, the movement and the acting space. It is therefore the place of mediation where, in Paul Virilio's words, geography meets choreography.²⁹

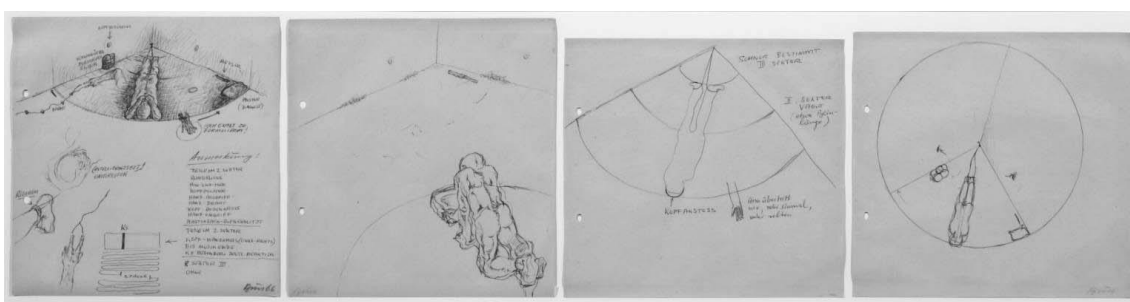


Fig. 2

Günter Brus
Ablauf einer Aktion 1966
 Sheets 13-17
 Tate Archive T03695

Ablauf einer Aktion uses a similar procedure. The movement-diagram emerges as the formation of a transcendental space where movement occurs, which in choreographic notation would be called zone³⁰ or kinesphere (Laban) and which is generally perceived as a topological and mutable space generated by the set of movements that bind us to the world, limited to the immediate location of the body. In Trisha Brown, for example, that diagram takes the form of a cuboid in whose vertices are arranged the notations that protocolise the order of motion in her solo *Locus*, of 1975 (fig.3); to Rudolf von Laban, this space, consubstantial with the body, appears as an invisible icosahedron where possible movements are revealed and activated in its twenty triangular faces. In spite of this geometric appearance (there is an inclination towards geometry when one projects), the movement-diagram responds more to a kinaesthetic and sliding sensation between body and space than to an Euclidean view that reduces movement to the stability of a form.

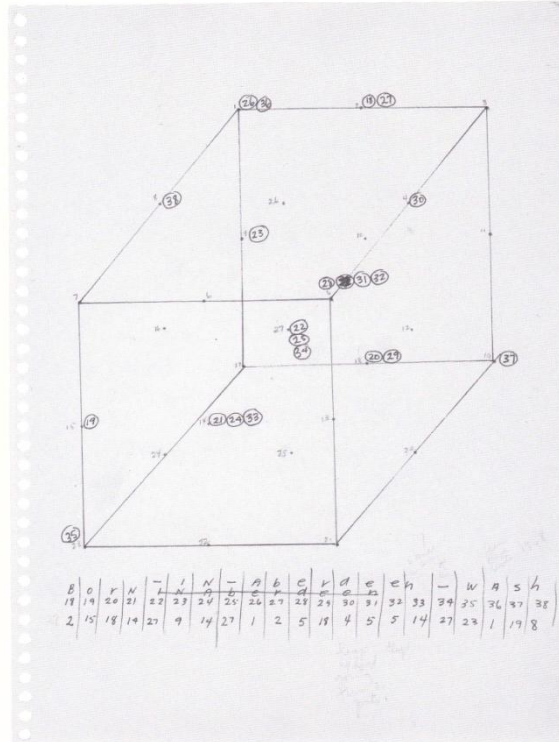


Fig. 3

Trisha Brown

Untitled (Locus) 1975

©Collection Trisha Brown

Photo D. James Dee

These spatial forms, when drawn, emanate from image-schemas. Image schemas are embodied patterns formulated from the sensory and perceptual experiences of the body as it interacts with and moves in the world.³¹ One become aware of them as spatial metaphors that organise thought and action: container-content; centre-periphery; interior-exterior, upper-lower, among others. They are therefore paradoxical forms, as José Gil suggests, conceived as movements of the body seen from within: they swell, shrink, and disappear.

In *Run-Through of an Action*, awareness of this zone appears as a floor diagram (as it often does in choreographic thinking), with the appearance of a pendulum oscillating along a quarter circle that stretches through space to the extent prescribed by the artist's body, plus the length of the strap that secures it to the wall. Only the arm can slide beyond this drawn containment zone, which Brus planned to do 'never, or once or seldom', opening up to the possibility of escape from the original model of the action. The conception of this zone as an incorporated diagram reveals the complexity of this apparatus in protocol drawings: the diagram is a process that enhances, but also constrains and limits, the movement being imagined. It participates in the very performance of acquiescence on which Brus's work is built. The acting body ceases to be limited by its *habitus* and

anatomical aptitudes to enter in a new space where movement is moulded as a disciplinary apparatus, expressed in the drawn line. As a graphic resource, a line is always perceived as the direct experience of a movement: 'the line that divides and draws a form is similar to the arrow fired by a bow'.³² But drawing a line is also establishing an impassable limit: to paraphrase Richard Serra, to draw a line is to make a cut. In Brus's drawings, the movement-diagram is not, however, the set of pendular traces suggesting trajectories imprinted on the floor as marks on a stage, as a more literal way of looking would perceive it. It is not that the body cannot voluntarily follow them as projected lines of an instruction, or submit itself without question to the spaces delimited by their imaginary limits. Its function is a different one. Peter Eisenman identified it in his stimulating claim on the performativity of the diagram:

Traces suggest potential relationships, which may both generate and emerge from previously repressed or unarticulated figures. But traces in themselves are not generative, transformative or even critical. A diagrammatic mechanism is needed that will allow for both preservation and erasure and that can simultaneously open up repression to the possibility of generating alternative ... figures which contain these traces.³³

So there is a moment in the *Ablauf einer Aktion* drawings where the diagram is transformed into a *figure*. As Gombrich recalls, the diagram's tendency to combine with other pictorial instances emanates from the need to show things in temporal and semantic, rather than just spatial, relationships.³⁴ It is therefore as a figure that the diagram embodies movement as the effort of a body moving in a gravitational space. In the scenic vocabulary to which Günter Brus's drawings affiliate, the term 'figure' describes both appearance and behaviour, without specifying the features that would individualise it as a character (the German word *figur* indistinctly means silhouette, profile and character). It is a vague representation, perceived as a homogeneous and imprecise mass which acquires its meaning from the place it occupies among the other elements, as 'the form of a tragic function'.³⁵ In Brus's drawings, the figure is a type which summons the specific memory of the body's analysis as a forbidden and desirable subject. Its linear economy embodies the unperformed action, affiliating it to the transgressive body in Austrian modernism, from Egon Schiele to Gustav Klimt.

But the figure is also a function of protocol drawings – an actant – that triggers and incorporates movement, not only in its motor condition but as an intention to act (even, and above all, when the performance is based on a sequence of inconsistent actions without a logical or meaningful relationship, as described across the seventeen drawings of the score).³⁶

In *Ablauf einer Aktion*, then, we witness the re-emergence of a model of representation where action is expressed in a rhetorical way. This model is similar to Kellom Tomlinson's eighteenth-century schemas (fig.4), which describe movement by subordinating the choreographic diagram, the text and the music score to the *mirror* image of the performer's body.³⁷ However, if in Tomlinson's Baroque and courtly spirit the figure was a strategy for introducing the expression of the eye as a danced movement – something

that the diagrammatic notations left out – the figure appears to be, in Brus's performative score, a way of qualifying the action as *effort*.



Fig. 4

Kellom Tomlinson
Ground Plan With Figures 1727
 © British Library

Adapting the term from Rudolf von Laban's analysis of movement, *effort-shape* is a conceptual strategy for considering the poetic causes and effects of movement, and not just its spatial composition. In any life activity, Laban saw the body — and by extension its representation as drawing — as a kind of organic score whose guiding principle is the displacement of weight (fall vs. balance). The other factors would be flow (control vs release), space and time.³⁸

The figure of *Ablauf einer Aktion*, in his transparent representation in the manner of Tomlinson, is also the instance that inscribes the artist's body in space, through variations of the two fundamental movements associated with weight: fall and balance.³⁹ Rising, falling, crawling, banging (with the head), swaying, bumping, resting, stabbing (a package): in this litany of verbs described in the introductory script of the score, movement ceases to be an act and becomes a gesture.

By mobilizing a figural argument to give meaning to these movements, instead of a purely descriptive notation such as a *map* or a text, protocol drawing generates a space of shared information between perception and action, between movement and meaning. The hypothesis of this shared space in our capacity of generating meaning in a perceived action has been proposed from various disciplines⁴⁰ and can be summarised as follows: observing, imagining, planning or by any other means representing an action, triggers to some degree the same motor programmes used to perform this same action.⁴¹

This shared space is at the core of our internal imitation processes of other people's actions, of our capacity of predicting actions, but also of the ability to perceive the underlying drives of movement on the basis of what our own drives would be for that same action. It is known that this involuntary imitation or perceptual induction⁴² occurs not only when we directly observe an action but also when we imagine it based on a pictorial representation.

Can this be the physiological basis of the play of imagery that performance drawings activates in the dialectic of 'seeing-as' and 'seeing-that'? In any case, it is within this play that protocol drawings constitute themselves as a rehearsal place: the sketch becomes the stage where the body can test its limits without risking a consequence.

Aktionsskizze, 1966-67

It is probably in the set of drawings made between 1966 and 1967 — generically known as 'Action Sketches' (fig.5) — that the protocolar logic of Brus's drawing blends means and ends into a seamless representation. In these drawings, action is displaced to another instance that is still committed to the figure but is carried out through the transference of gestures from body analyses to drawing. If *Ablauf einer Aktion* is conceptually linked to the promise of an unperformed action by means of a semi-choreographic score, *Aktionsskizze* is already an autonomous drawing, freed from a direct relationship with action, albeit parallel and complementary to its experience.

The drawing no longer represents the scenic *figure* with which one can access, with some transparency, to the staged posed of the body. Instead, the gesture that (dis)figures the body in drawing becomes the direct expression of the analytical corporality around which Günter Brus's performance is developed.

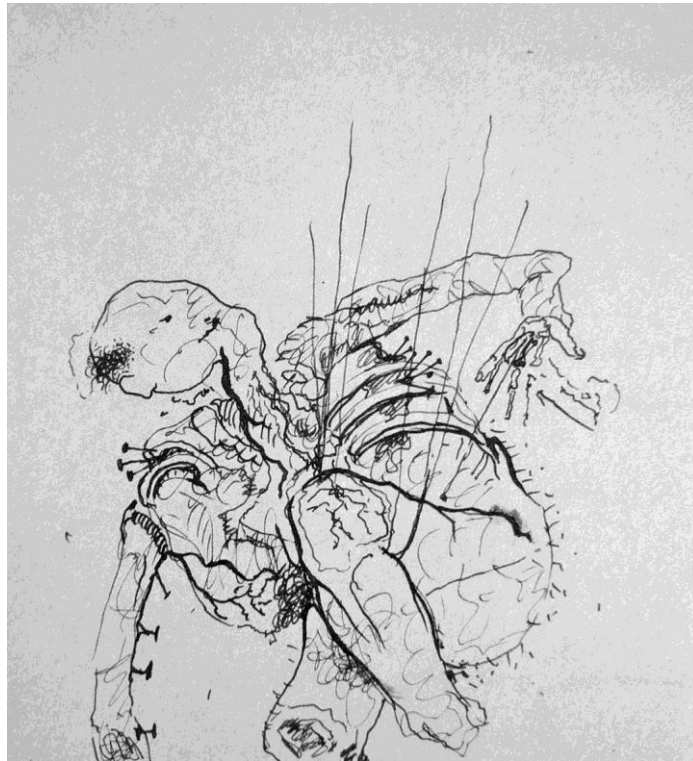


Fig. 5

Günter Brus
Aktionsskizze 1966–67.

Transference and motor contagion

Hubert Klocker pointed this out when he considered that

in the 'Action Sketches' the drawing instrument becomes a scalpel and the somatic reality of action is modelled on paper. Brus continues in the drawing what he can no longer carry out in action. In these works, he ends up transporting the intense somatic character associated with actions onto paper, through the direct path of the nerve endings of the drawing instrument.⁴³

'Sketch' is a paradoxical name here. It does not refer to a drawing made as a preparatory stage, conceived as the theatricalisation of doubts or, as Juan José Molina suggests, an equivocal perception that compels constant changes of direction.⁴⁴

As a protocol, these sketches are the agency of an action to be performed in the body, but transferring it to the medium and to the gestures of a drawing moving in a virtual space of

realization. It is a substitute action for a gesture that the body is no longer able, or no longer wants, to carry out on itself: piercing, cutting, stabbing, dragging, wounding. As David Rosand suggests, in his claim for the need of a new critique of the drawn image based on drawing acts, the gesture of drawing is in essence the metonymic projection of the body, and especially when we see a drawing of a human figure, we are inevitably confronted with that.⁴⁵ What, then, is at play in these action sketches? The visualization of a performance or an attempt to elude it? It is no longer a matter of making the body choreographically conform to the performance space, but of exploring its visual transformations in the medium, gesture and surface of drawing.

These lifelike gestures — if we understand them as protocols where action is performed without consequences — are often determined by the imagined action resulting from a process of intentional induction, as occurs when sports fans or film audiences do the gestures they would like to see performed but in another level.⁴⁶ In certain circumstances, this displacement may occur in means other than the original source of the drive — like using a tie's knot to asphyxiate someone — since the information of means and movements, and of ends and goals of action, is perceived differently in distinct motor areas of the human brain.⁴⁷

This cognitive process based on a functional unit between perception and action, gesture and meaning, is one of the fundamental drives of drawing: Chuck Close refers to his fingerpainting's method of transcribing the whole tonal spectrum of a photograph with fingerprints, 'as if caressing the face of the people I loved';⁴⁸ and Louise Bourgeois describes certain drawings as *knitting*, by transferring the gesture of tracing and interlacing the drawn lines to form interwoven patterns on the paper. These correspondences are not clarified in the surface of the image; they are generated in the deepest mappings that occur between somatic sensations, kinetic images and drawing acts.

This gestural dramaturgy that the action sketches stages in the materiality of its traces, can be seen as a motor contagion, a 'process of internal imitation of the action, which triggers a representation of this same action, through which the underlying goals and intentions can be inferred from what our goals and intentions would be in the same circumstances'.⁴⁹

In the substance and irregular character of the trace, we can recognise the body. Not the body seen or idealised for the photographic lens of 'Run-through of an Action', but the projected body, the body being felt. In *Aktionsckizze*, drawing is a parasitic act of another performative act, where the body is analysed in a radical manner, carried out outside the social and semiotic framework that traditionally defines it; where gestures are rearranged and reconstructed as restored behaviours:

Restored behaviour is living behaviour treated as a film director treats a strip of film ... These strips of behaviour ... are independent of the causal systems (social, psychological, technological) that brought them into existence. They have a life of their own. The original 'truth' or 'source' of the behaviour may be lost, ignored or contradicted — even while this truth or source is apparently being honoured or observed. How the strip of behaviour was made, found, or developed may be

unknown or concealed ... Originating as a process, used in the process of rehearsal to make a new process, a performance, the strips of behaviour can be of long duration as in some dramas and rituals or of short durations as in some gestures.⁵⁰

An unhappy performative

Should it become impossible for them to be materialised as performances, or because the artist pretends to carry out an action that he does not really intend to accomplish, these protocol drawings come close to John L. Austin's unhappy performatives. Unlike a statement that describes a state of affairs – that can be true or false – performative acts can just be happy (when they are fulfilled) or unhappy when their purpose is not achieved. This condition of unfulfilment is what often allows us, in drawing, to take risks without the actual commitment of a decision; to test everything without fearing the consequences. After all, recognized the impertinent space of drawing in the construction of models for action, this was what Günter Brus told his daughter Diana: 'You can draw anything – it's just a drawing'.

¹ Trisha Brown and Hendel Teicher, 'Dancing and Drawing: Interview', in Michèle Doucet, *Trisha Brown: Danse, Précis de Liberté*, Musées de Marseille–RMN, Marseille, 1998, pp.13–33.

² *Günter Brus: Handzeichnungen 1969–1971*, exhibition catalogue, Cologne/New York, Gebr/König, 1971.

³ See Mike Sperlinger, 'Orders! Conceptual Art's Imperatives'. In Mike Sperlinger (ed.) *Afterthought: New Writing on Conceptual Art*, Rachmaninoff's, London, 2005, pp.1–26. To Sperlinger, thinking of art as an activity that can be delegated and transformed into a written protocol, like an instruction that has the ability to provoke the gestures to be performed, requires one to think of it as a continuum, 'the imaginary extremes being protocol, on the one hand, to be followed to the letter, and pure play on the other, with no suggestion that it is actually to be carried out (...)'.

⁴ In the preparatory drawings Helena Almeida made for *Dentro de Mim* (Inside Me), a photographed activity from 1998, drawing becomes the creation of a virtual performing space, from which emerge the reasons to act. Symptomatically, Delfim Sardo names them as 'a game of recognition, a possibility to generate a *protocol* of representation as close as possible to the transience (...) of mental processes'. See Delfim Sardo, 'Atlas. Helena Almeida e o Uso do Desenho', In *A Visão em Apneia – Escritos Sobre Artistas*, Babel, Lisboa, 2011, p.127

⁵ See Ricardo Nicolau, 'Erwin Wurm: Lisboa Photo 2005'. *Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado*, <http://www.museuartecontemporanea.gov.pt/pt/programacao/265>, accessed 2 November 2017. Instructional drawings, which are often at the source of Erwin Wurm's

One Minute Sculptures, are another paradigmatic example of the protocolar use of drawing. To Nicolau, these drawings define 'a seemingly rigid frame, based on an instructional *protocol*, which is later perceived to allow variables (...) and to be only a catalyst for innumerable possibilities'.

⁶ The term protocol is also used by Michael Evamy to refer to image-based communication such as the drawings used as propaganda and psychological warfare by the CIA's Psychological Operations Division during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. See Michael Evamy, *World Without Words*, Laurence King Publishing, London, 2003, p.94.

⁷ Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art: an Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, 2nd edn, Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge, 1976, p.127.

⁸ See Laurence Louppe (ed.), *Traces of Dance — Drawings and Notations of Choreographers*, Dis Voir, Paris, 1994.

⁹ See Edward Tufte, 'Explaining Magic — Pictorial Instructions and Disinformation Design', In *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Graphic Press, Cheshire, 1997, pp.55-71.

¹⁰ See Johannes Birringer, 'Thinking Images', *Performance Art Journal*, vol.30, no 89, 2008, pp.17-37.

¹¹ Rudolf Arnheim, 'Space as an Image of Time', In *To the Rescue of Art: Twenty-six Essays*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, p.37.

¹² See Peggy Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction', in *Unmarked: the politics of performance*, Routledge, New York, 1996, p.146.

¹³ See Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History and Performance*, University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p.xi.

¹⁴ *The Tate Gallery 1984-86: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions*, Tate Gallery, London, 1988, pp.497-9. The digital version is available in 'Gunter Brus: Run-Through of an Action 1966: Catalogue Entry' in *Tate*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/brus-run-through-of-an-action-t03695>, accessed 15 October 2017.

¹⁵ See Marvin Carlson, *Performance: a critical introduction*, Routledge, New York, 2004, p.5.

¹⁶ Drawing often results from a sense of frustration at the impossibility of reconciling desire and performance. Sculptor Rachel Whiteread also recognises this impulse when she admits that during the particularly painful negotiations for the *Holocaust Memorial* in Vienna, drawing emerged as pure frustration because it was 'the only way to visualise it and make it happen'. See Allegra Pesenti, 'Like Shallow Breaths: Drawings by Rachel Whiteread', In *Rachel Whiteread Drawings*, exhibition catalogue, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2010, p.10.

¹⁷ Monika Faber, 'Exceso Pictórico: De la Pintura de Acción al Body-Art', In *Günter Brus: Nervous Stillness on the Horizon*, exhibition catalogue, MACBA, Barcelona, 2005, p.9.

¹⁸ Hermann Nitsch, *Das Orgien Mysterien Theater - Die Partituren aller aufgeführten aktionen 1960-1979*, Freibord/Studio Morra, Viena/Nápoles, 1979.

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- ¹⁹ See Laurence Louppe, *Poética da Dança Contemporânea*, translated by Rute Costa, Orfeu Negro, Lisboa, 2012, p.361 (English version: *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*, translated by Sally Gardner, Dance Books, Alton, 2010).
- ²⁰ See Giorgio Agamben, 'Notes on Gesture', In *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, Verso, London, 1993, p.141.
- ²¹ See *The Tate Gallery 1984-86*, 1988.
- ²² A detailed description of each of the pages can be found in *The Tate Gallery 1984-86*, 1988.
- ²³ See Stephen Kosslyn et al, *The Case for Mental Imagery*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p.4.
- ²⁴ Ibid., pp.3–4
- ²⁵ See Ernst Gombrich, 'Mirror and Map: Theories of Pictorial Representation', in *The Image and the Eye, Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1986, pp.139.
- ²⁶ See Gabriela Goldschmidt, 'The Dialectics of Sketching'. *Creativity Research Journal*, vol. 4(2), p.131.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.132.
- ²⁸ See R.E. Somol, 'Dummy Text, or the Diagrammatic Basis of Contemporary Architecture', in Peter Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1999, p.8.
- ²⁹ Paul Virilio, 'Gravitational Space: Interview With Laurence Louppe, Daniel Dobbels' In Laurence Louppe (ed.), *Traces of Dance — Drawings and Notations of Choreographers*, Dis Voir, Paris, 1994, p.36.
- ³⁰ See José Gil, *Movimento Total: O Corpo e a Dança*, Relógio d'Água, Lisboa, 2001.
- ³¹ See Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.
- ³² Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, translated by Philip Armstrong, Fordham University Press, 2013, p.98.
- ³³ Peter Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1999, p.32.
- ³⁴ See Gombrich 1982, p.139.
- ³⁵ Patrice Pravis, *Dictionary of the Theatre – Terms, Concepts and Analysis*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1998, p.150.
- ³⁶ See Anthony Howell, 'Inconsistency, Catastrophe and Surprise', in *The Analysis of Performance Art: A Guide to its Theory and Practice*, OPA, Amsterdam, 2000, pp.71–86. For the performer and poet Anthony Howell, inconsistency is, along with repetition and immobility, one of the primary actions from which the entire spectrum of performative possibilities can be developed. It is often associated with the condensation of multiple objectives in the same action, which are sometimes contradictory to one another. In Brus's drawings, inconsistency results from the decomposition of action into several tasks. We recognise the same figure in several sheets of the score, but not the causal link that unites them. The perception of causality in the drawn image is anchored in mnemonic processes that, in a sequence, relate a scene to a previous state. Generally, causality is activated as a cognitive response when a homogeneous structure contains a heterogeneous element; but because discontinuity is only partial, the sequence is still

recognised as a whole, allowing one to relate the scene represented in drawing with a previous state that the drawing also depicts. This inconsistent drive, which Brus's score explores in its multiple sheets, is similar in intention to the choreographic procedures used by Merce Cunningham to 'undo the organicity of the body', creating sequences that were uncoordinated among themselves, or series of disconnected movements that unfold at the same time in the same body. See Gil 2001, p.35.

³⁷ The same model of representation is still visible in the choreographic notations of Vaslav Nijinski in the early twentieth century, where the drawing of the figure is replaced by its photographic representation, and Tomlinson's perspectival space is transformed into an inventory-space. See Catalina Mollá and Juan Molina, 'El dibujo del coreógrafo', In Juan José Molina (ed.), *La Representación de la Representación: Danza, Teatro, Cine, Música, Cátedra, Madrid*, p.122.

³⁸ See Virilio 1994, pp.35–59. The relationship between these factors – weight, flow, space and time – generates a conceptual indistinctness between event and space in the representation of action. This indistinctness, as has been proposed, has biological foundations that result from the vital need to act in a dynamic environment: the representation of a space cannot be properly understood without information related to the actions we are performing or that we are predisposed to do. There is also increasing evidence of a functional unity between spatial-visual perception and action, which acts not only from perception to action but also from action to perception, in a shared circuit. See Jochen Müsseler, Van der Heidjen and Dirk Kerzel (eds.), *Visual Space Perception and Action*, Psychology Press, Hove, 2004, pp.129–136.

³⁹ See Louppe 2012, p.105.

⁴⁰ See Sarah-Jayne Blakemore and Chris Frith, 'The role of motor contagion in the prediction of action', *Neuropsychologia*, no.43, 2005, pp.260–267. See also Susan Hurley, 'Active Perception and Perceiving Action: The Shared Circuits Model', in Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (eds.), *Perceptual Experience*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp.205–259.

⁴¹ See Blakemore and Frith 2005, p.261.

⁴² See Hurley 2006, p.212.

⁴³ Hubert Klocker, 'Der Zertrümmerte Spiegel / The Shattered Mirror', in Hubert Klocker (ed.), *Wiener Aktionismus 1960-1971 / Viennese Actionism 1960-1971*, Vol.2. Ritter Verlag, Klagenfurt, 1989, p.107.

⁴⁴ Molina 2007, p. 66.

⁴⁵ See David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p.16.

⁴⁶ See Hurley 2006, p.212.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.217.

⁴⁸ Chuck Close, 'Putting English on the Stroke: Chuck Close in conversation with Bice Curiger', *Parkett*, no.60, 2000, p.56.

⁴⁹ Blakemore and Frith 2005, p.265.

⁵⁰ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1985, p.35.

Acknowledgements

A previous version of this paper was first presented at the meeting 'The Vocabulary of Drawing', held at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, Portugal, in March 2012, and published in Portuguese language in *PISAX – Estudos e Reflexões Sobre Desenho e Imagem*, no.2, série II, Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto, 2013, pp.71–87.

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Tate Papers, no.28, Spring 2017 © Paulo Luís Almeida

Captions

Fig.1

Günter Brus

Ablauf einer Aktion 1966

Sheets 9-12

Tate Archive T03695

Fig.2

Günter Brus

Ablauf einer Aktion 1966

Sheets 13-17

Tate Archive T03695

Fig.3

Trisha Brown

Untitled (Locus) 1975

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Photo D. James Dee

Fig.4

Kellom Tomlinson

Ground Plan With Figures 1727

© British Library

Fig.5

Günter Brus

Aktionsskizze 1966–67.

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Fig.1: Tate Archive T03695

Fig.2: Tate Archive T03695

Fig.3: Collection Trisha Brown

Fig.4: British Library

Fig.5: Waiting for confirmation