"In the beginning is movement" by Vanessa van ’t Hoogt

Sculpting the body, dancing with clay

As the artisan thinks from materials, so the dancer thinks from the body (Ingold 2013, 96)." In the quote from Rizzo’s project proposal above, he emphasizes the material aspect of the body comparing it to sculpture and sculpting. His interest in dance and the body as material things, comes from a new immersive trance-like quality of the movement in the techno club, compared to the academic dance he studied at the School for New Dance Development across the table from Rizzo and could follow his process of creating while we were talking. He was telling me about movement possibilities, or thinking about movement possibilities, or moving into the world; we are pre- cisely not stillborn (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, 117)." Dancing philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone argues that the experience of dancing in the club to techno music evokes the memory of being in the womb, or in the words of Sheets-Johnstone, the memory of the spontaneous movement at the beginning of our animated lives. His intriguing work RIZZO (2015) emerged from his interest in the repetitive movement: trance-like quality of the movement in the techno club, compared to the academic dance he studied at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. With HIGHER XTN created, out of passion and desire, a dialogue between the reinterpreted academic dance in the studios and the spontaneous movements in the club and thereby incorporated these two divergent contexts and languages in one chorography. In the piece, three performers, including Rizzo, repeatedly perform one phrase to a hypnotic soundtrack composed by Lorenzo Senni (fig. 1). This phrase is constituted of movements from the club environment. Strikingly, the audience can observe how the dancers embody the movements in their own idiosyncratic way: making the same movements highlights the individuality of the performers. HIGHER xtn is an extension of this work and was performed at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam at the beginning of 2019. Again dancers, increasing from two to fifteen each performance, make repetitive movements to the music of Senni (fig. 2). The individual dancers make their way through the galleries, ultimately converging in the Stedelijk’s Auditorium. Then, pairs of dancers through the performance the entire group is eventually dancing in unison (9). While HIGHER highlights the primacy of movement and the individuality of the performers, HIGHER xtn further accentuates the connection between the collective and the individual. In the Stedelijk the audience was able to move around the performers in 360 degrees, a way of viewing.
correspondence as “In the dance of interaction” or “dialogue” to stress that it is not about two people doing something; going along with one another.” 11 “As with any correspondence the attention to the material, his idea, his body, and his brain emerges. In the process of working with the flux of materials within an encompassing, animacy of dance they “convert the gesture, flow or movement” of Rizzo “from one tool to another, register of bodily kinesthesia, to another, of material flux.” 12 The process or touch of the cutting and casting, for instance, originates from his hands, from his body to the material. Setting across the table from him while I can see his hands go through this procedure, I can witness the correspondence between him, the clay, and the sculpting tools. I feel that the process of sculpting clay (e.g. particularly figurative sculpture) coincides with his ability of creating movement. “While dancing I have learned to master a specific attitude which also guides me while I am sculpting a sensuous dialectic relationship between movement and material based on a synchrony between the knowledge of the human body and proprioceptive (the feeling of my own body, position of my body.) Observing the choreographer as sculptor, I notice how he takes his own hands as a reference point, looking back and forth between the molds and his moving hands, comparing them with each other. Sometimes he stops to lay his hands next to the sculpted counterpart.

hands - I quickly forget about time; too. Not only the maker’s (dancer’s) sculptor) can put in the flow, but also the audience can experience the sculpted bodies in a similar way. To me it is like following HOGER as well as RGBF in the viewers can, by means of the mirror neurons, also get caught up in the movements of the hands and the feeling of moving their own bodies. To some extent, the process of making the sculptures can be followed in the photos attached to this theoretical exposition (fig 4 and 5). These photos show what belonged to Lehmann (2020b) called “the sense of showing making”. The images show some of the aspects of the process of sculpting (e.g. the detailed modeling and the movement of the hands, e.g. the working hands of the artist). One of the functions of Lehmann that Architectsattribute to the sense of showing making is the participatory function, which means “that the demonstration [shown on the images] incites the viewers to engage themselves as equals by joining the intervention with the depicted process.” 13 Not only the photos but also the sculptures can evoke pleasure. The formed clay, the movements of Rizzo’s hand, the molding of the clay, is directly visible in the material and his actions have traces (e.g. a fingerprint). Art historian Ann Sophia Lehmann, building on the theory of affordances by psychologists Jerome Jerome Gibson, defines affordances as “the ways in which properties [of materials] draw out, encourage or inhibit certain actions.” 14 Clay affords molding but not casting, bronze affords casting but not carving, some affords sculpting but not cutting and so forth. According to Csikszentmihalyi, the immersion in the moment-to-moment activity, the experience of flow, is facilitated by having the feeling that “the end of the goal is just an excuse for the process.” 15

As mentioned above, Rizzo regards the process of sculpting as being important in itself (intrinsically rewarding) and summarizes the merging of movement and action as entering the space of imagination. To him, it is a place where he feels in touch, where time is distanced and exists for himself. While I was talking to Rizzo and observing his modeling