

Jo Kolski

accident contrôlé:
variation on rotation

OUT OF
THE BOX

MMpraxis & CAA Berlin

Jo Kolski

accident contrôlé: variation on rotation

Choreography, objects, performance:
JO KOLSKI

Dramaturgy and choreographic assistant:
BERNARDO DE ALMEIDA

Sound:
ANTUANTU

Interaction design and visuals::
BARIŞ PEKCAGLIYAN

Mentor:
JONAS RUTGEERTS

If dreaming is purpose-free thinking,
dancing would be purpose-free acting,
and a carousel, purpose-free building.

In the dance-theater piece *sp(!)n - accident contrôlé*, Jo Kolski explores the tension between the zen practice of the “controlled accident” and the western idea of utilitarianism, in the context of the amusement industry. *accident contrôlé: variation on rotation* is an adaptation of the piece, created for *Out of the Box*. It focuses on the interaction of the body with a use-less machine: a rusty pantograph. Combining a fascination for geometrical patterns, industrial civilization and purposelessness, soft shapes and rough materials collide to create a poetic landscape.

accident contrôlé comprises two chapters of *körpermaschine*, Jo Kolski's ongoing investigation and questioning of heritage - ruins? - of industrial society. “körpermaschinen” are kinetic sculptures, objects, and spaces that set bodies in motion and create narratives. Science meets tinkering, show culture meets social critique. By inserting playfulness into objects and areas associated with work, Jo Kolski deconstructs the seriousness of functionality.

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JO KOLSKI

BIOGRAPHIES

JO KOLSKI - as a choreographer, performer, dance educator and producer, Jo explores the friction between contemporary dance and various forms of art and knowledge, from New Circus to scientific research: he is interested in how dance unexpectedly emerges and becomes productive in diverse fields. This creates new spaces where body-based and other practices articulate and resonate together. Jo studied and worked in dance, theater and cultural management in France, U.S.A and Germany. Besides his own productions (*accident contrôlé*, 2022; *ti/l\|t*, 2021; *geometrical monsters*, 2021; *fête*, 2020), he performed for Alessio Trevisani, the Leipziger Tanztheater, Maeshelle West-Davis. As a producer he organized the Moving Cells Festival in Leipzig and is a founding member of Zukunft, organizing intercultural exchange programs across Europe. In 2022 he graduated from HZT with a Master in Choreography, supported by the Deutschlandstipendium and an award from DAAD.

ANTU LA BANCA is an audiovisual artist from Argentina, based in Berlin. Since her early childhood, she has been making music, as an extension of her daily life because of her musician father and her audiovisual artist mother. Besides music, Antu is a producer and sound engineer. She works with design and video, skills she uses to add more meaning to her work. She currently has her own studio in Berlin, where she prepares her shows, creates new material and works with local artists. During the last three years, she has been playing tirelessly in Berlin and in other places in the EU like Barcelona, Prague, Lisbon, making a place for herself in the local music scene.

BERNARDO DE ALMEIDA is based between Berlin and Lisbon. With a background in Portuguese contemporary theater he is currently graduating at HZT in the MA SODA program. He understands himself as a performance maker, having worked intensely as a performer and dramaturg in different projects, collectives and geographies over the last 12 years, around Europe and both Americas. He was also very happy when working as a bartender and dreams about being forever young, what a cliché. He was fortunate with some research grants such as INOV-Art to study the work of New York City Players, Elevator Repair Service, and The Wooster Group in NY; GDA Foundation to intern at AGORA collective in Berlin; or Gulbenkian Foundation to study at HZT and recently the GSE gGmbH Nachwuchsförderung for a long term residency along with Jo Kolski. He has an obsession with squeezing humor out of drama as a life-style, as living politically engaged can be pretty dramatic.

BARIŞ PEKCAGLIYAN is a Berlin-based artist and developer with a background in computer science and photography. He explores human, nature and movement abstractions in an altered space and time using both lens-based and digital techniques. Myths, psychoanalytic, spiritual and philosophical concepts and their reflections on inner landscapes fuel his works. He uses photographs, videos and creative technologies to create his stories in the forms of photobooks, virtual worlds, generative creations, interactive and/or immersive installations and experiences. In addition to his own work, he often collaborates with sound makers, movement artists, developers and image makers to create A/V performances, installations and XR experiences.

TINKERING & CHOREOGRAPHY

The geometric inspiration for the movement of the pantograph and the choreography is the "centred trochoid", which is defined by the simultaneous rotation of connected segments. This pattern can be found in the human anatomy, through the placement of our joints – your arm rotating around the shoulder, coupled to your forearm rotating on the elbow – in the carousel construction, or the pantograph. The pantograph is modular and consists of joints and segments. The joints come from the industrial field: ball bearings and slewing rings.

In her article *Tinkering Toward Success: Prelude to a Theory of Scientific Practice* (1979), Karin

Knorr Cetina uses the term "tinkering" to define scientific laboratory work. According to Knorr "the mechanisms ruling the progress of research are more adequately described as successful 'tinkering' rather than as hypothesis testing or cumulative verification". Scientific work should not be understood as the conceptualization of abstract concepts and ideas, that are first created in our minds and later tested in the labor. Instead, it is the result of constant negotiation with material reality. In other words, science is less about clear pre-defined strategies than about bricolage, fiddling around, combining and recombining things almost at random in order to see what works. Consequently, the successful scientist is not the one who is able to develop good theoretical models, but the one that is tuning in with and attuning to the material so that she can find a good connection with it.

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What do dancers and carousel engineers have in common? Perhaps a shared fascination with useless movement - or in other words, losing control in a controlled way?

My fascination with purposeless action and controlled loss of control stands in stark contrast with the ethos of our modern lives. I encountered the concept of "accident contrôlé" through Roland Barthes in his book *L'Empire des signes* (The Empire of Signs). The concept comes from Zen philosophy. Barthes uses it to describe many examples from Far Eastern cultures (calligraphy, cooking, haikus, dance theatre) but also uses the concept for his own life and to analyse Western civilization. Barthes describes the concept as an "anti-mythology." For example, he does not consider calligraphy as the expression of a sacred language, but observes such phenomena through a "reverse-engineering" (replication): What are the tools at play? What are the initial conditions for these expressions? In other words, what are the controlled variables of losing control?

The tension between Zen philosophy and capitalist utilitarianism is evident in their different approaches to "control" and "purpose". In our society, for example, I see this paradox in the gaming and entertainment industry, where purposeless action (entertainment) is embedded in a purposeful industry (selling entertainment). The word "industry" here is not only in the narrow sense of the secondary economic sector, but in the broader and etymological sense of human enterprise.

The idea of understanding dance as useless action reminds me of Paul Valéry's text *Philosophy of*

Dance. In this text, Paul Valéry sets out to answer the question: what is dance? According to the French philosopher and poet, dance is in its essence nothing but useless movement. Dance comes into existence at the moment when humans figure out that they possess "more vigor, more suppleness, more articular and muscular possibilities, than needed to satisfy the needs of existence". Dance is the art form that takes this excess as a starting point for the development of completely dysfunctional sequences of movement. However, dance movements are useless, but dance is not a useless art form. On the contrary, for Valéry dance is an extremely valuable art form, exactly because of its development of useless movements. Lifted out of the straitjacket of everyday life, where movements are merely a means to an end, we can experiment with the potential of the body and the movements it holds in reserve. This reservoir of movements takes its cue from everyday life but disconnects from it and ventures into different directions. Moreover, dance does not only allow us to explore the potential of our body but also to explore different modalities of time and space. According to Valéry "dance after all, is merely a form of time, the creation of a kind of time, or of a very distinct and singular species of time". Dance not only unfolds

in time, but it also folds the time in which it unfolds itself. Each dance creates its own time and space. Through our movements, we speed up time, slow it down, bring it to a halt or make it falter. As such, dance allows us to experiment with different bodily spacetimes that are not guided by the principles of order and efficiency.

BODYMACHINE & THE QUESTION OF THE APPARATUS: LEADINGFOLLOWING

We often think of apparatuses as tools, instruments that support us. However, we can wonder if the relationship between us, subjects, and objects is as simple as that. Are we simply using objects? When we think about it we can see that objects also shape the way we behave. Take for example something as simple as a bike. In the first instance, we might think that it is a tool that we can use to get from point a to point b. However, we have to learn to use the bike, to mold our body so that it can comply with its mechanics.

As Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben argues, subjects are not simply using objects to fulfill their needs. Instead, subjects are shaped by the objects they use. They emerge in "the relentless fight between living beings and apparatuses". "To be a subject is to be subjected to apparatuses. Today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus."

What are progress and technology? Perhaps: the human effort to understand and reproduce the laws and patterns of nature to optimise her*his life. What has gone wrong along the way? This imitation has unfortunately breached the boundaries of existing ecosystems in our quest to gain control and superiority over these same laws of nature.

In my work and in *Körpermaschine* I probe this transformation. The confrontation of craft and performance situates the physical and dramatic material in "professional" spaces: a railroad company, a professional kitchen, an amusement park. What happens when aesthetic experiences are allowed where they tend not to occur?

As an alternative to a project of retreat or new beginnings, I want to put the world on pause and take the chance to play with what humans work with: objects, machines, past and present working practices. A fascination for the relationship of the human body to its object-based environment drove me to this choreographic investigation of the ruins - or soon-to-be ruins - of our capitalist society. This "applied choreography" is an attempt to use the tools of a choreographer in different directions to and from technological and technical enterprises to create new patterns

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and meanings: first through the grace of re-enchantment, as a means to attract and seduce the attention of the spectator or participant, but immediately tackled through narrative strategies to deepen the questioning and critique of our civilization.

I hope to encounter many other playgrounds. The chapters of this research brought me for example to dig out material from the waste bins of the construction site of the Humboldt Forum (*geometrical monsters*) and collaborating with workers of the construction company, to dance with a roaring tractor and agricultural machines in a cattle field (*fieldtrip*), or to build a giant aluminium music instrument with an electro acoustician (*ti/l\|t*).

accident contrôlé started with the fascination for amusement parks and carousels, particularly with visits to the ruins of the Spreepark in Berlin: *Where have we left our joy for pure play? Maybe in the ruins of an amusement park, for example at the Spreepark. There, the Communist Party had to buy carousels from capitalist companies to bring joy to its citizens – a recognition that amusement is more "universal" than politics or space conquest? Later surrendered to a free economy, the park ended up in ruins.*

ANACHRONISM AS A METHOD?

Something is interesting about the use of these mechanical objects on stage: they evoke the feeling of being the future of the past, machines that once seemed to hold the promise of progress and prosperity, but now feel a bit outdated and quirky. Stripped from their original discourse and appeal, they appear in a different light. One can imagine that 100 years ago spectators would be in awe of the technical capability of the mechanics that you are using. For audiences would marvel at the technicality of the apparatus. For contemporary audiences, however, the mechanics have lost their innovative appeal. They no longer appear as technological marvels, examples of progress, but as anachronisms. They evoke the experience of contingency, chance, or the accidental. This feeling of randomness, however, does not make us lose our interest in the machine. Quite the contrary. Because of their uselessness, they point to something else. Something that stays once the usefulness has withered: the potential of freedom and free play. Freed from the context of progress and rationality, these mechanical objects appear at once as redundant and very powerful. Redundant because they no longer hold the promise of utility, and powerful because they open up a realm that is different from our daily utilitarian reality: a realm where we can trade work for play.

I am interested in the interplay of natural and industrial processes of movement, transportation, and time; humans imitate nature to optimise their life, but along the way, they

have lost their connection to nature. Industrial standards demonstrate this paradox of imitation and distance, which in extreme cases leads to the extinction of people through war or the progressive destruction of nature.

I dance with the paradox of the human relationship to nature by embodying and playing with industrial and artisanal manifestations.

Under the appearance of a dystopian environment, I search for an animistic paradise that feeds our wonder at life and nature. An important theme that emerges in this work is gender stereotypes that surround many activities. I see my project as a critique of masculinity, as many of the activities I want to engage in are laden with gender stereotypes that I want to address and subvert.

"Looking at the world built by abstraction, the subject sees reflected back not the rhythms

of the body but the rhythms of the machine, and above all the three great hammering rhythms of the first machine age: fragmentation (in bursts, spasms, jerks, pulses); repetition (the first precise repetition, since the body repeats only approximately); and velocity (the trio of train, cars, plans)" (Norman Bryson, Cultural studies and Dance History, 1997)

JONAS RUTGEERTS is a dance researcher and dramaturg based in Belgium. His research explores dance's potential to rethink traditional relations between time and space concerning the body. He is the author of *Re-act: Over re-enactment in de hedendaagse dans* (Tectum Verlag, 2015) and *Unbecoming rhythms: Performing Temporality in Contemporary European Dance* (Intellect Books, forthcoming).

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The experimental performance series Out of the Box, organized by MMpraxis and CAA Berlin in collaboration with Zönotéka, provides a platform for Berlin-based emerging choreographers to adapt existing stage works to a gallery space. Each edition offers a short residency and a mentoring program in which the artists receive support from a mentor of their choice.

The MMpraxis curatorial platform organizes exhibitions and events at the intersection of performing and visual arts with a focus on choreography, time-based media, and performance art.

www.mmpraxis.com

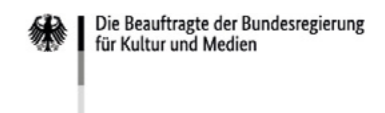
The Contemporary Arts Alliance Berlin (CAA Berlin) is a private platform for the promotion of contemporary culture in Berlin. It supports young artists from the fields of visual arts, theater, music and dance both financially and in practical matters.

caa-berlin.org

Zönotéka is a symbiotic exhibition and production site for innovative encounters. Focusing on an interdisciplinary understanding of art, its collaborative programs endeavor to creatively address scientific issues as well as to foster an inventive micro-community by offering individual working places.

zoenoteka.com

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