Transcript: Dominique Rivoal in conversation with screendance artists:

Jeannette Ginslov / Ami Skånberg / Sumedha Bhattacharyya

Dominique Rivoal: When and how did you become a screendance artist?

Jeannette Ginslov: Well, wow. How far back do you want me to go? I mean, the thing is that I think instinctively, I wanted in the 1980s, when video cameras first came out—these big camcorders. I kind of wanted to not only just record my rehearsal process, but I wanted to document my dance-making, my choreography, and my processes.

Ami Skånberg: What actually happened is that we had this seminar open for artists from dance and film. It was in Stockholm in 1994. And there was somebody from Denmark, Vibeke Vogel, and Charles Atlas from New York, and Walter Verdin from Belgium. So it was about, you know, talking about screendance. But what it was mostly was that we watched a lot of films. So I think it was my first encounter with Maya Deren, but I didn't know Maya Deren. But I was just so moved by all these short pieces of art that we were watching together. So from the start of, like, 1989 to the mid-90s, that was when I started to hear about—because the internet had just kind of surfaced—and I started hearing about these people like Katrina McPherson through some emailing lists that I belonged to. I thought, wow, there's a medium out there. And it wasn't like a step where I went, Oh no, I'm going to become a screendance maker. It was about, first of all, just providing some sort of background visual material to my dance works or some sort of interactivity.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: I was introduced to the world of screendance during a course I audited in my master's programme at the University of Roehampton, London. And that's part of the larger Erasmus Mundus scholarship programme that I was a part of. The last semester was in London, and we had Dr Heike Salzer as the instructor of the course, and it was called 'Mediated Choreography'. Under that course, there were multiple things—dance design, dance architecture—screendance was a part of a larger module where we were all dancers, pretty much working with the camera for the first time.

Jeannette Ginslov: First of all, a masterclass with Katrina McPherson at The Place in London. And then I heard about the MSc at Dundee University, and that's when I thought, That's what I want to do. So, it took that span of time to sort of realise, there's another whole medium out there where I could look at the digital materiality of the body. And that really, really fascinated me. So yeah, it was a progressive, long step—it took many steps.

Ami Skånberg: And there was particularly one sentence by Walther Vanden, who said that, to take away the pressure that you have to come with a ready-made script and have all your ideas there—to be really professional from the start. Walther Vanden said, Screendance happens because filmmakers and dance makers make friends. And that's what he was saying then, because he worked so much with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. But, I mean, today, as the field has evolved, from where I am, I feel that it's maybe closer to dance, but it's particular artists within both dance and film that are doing it now.

Dominique Rivoal: So where do you now situate yourself within the field of screendance?

Jeannette Ginslov: I consider myself to be not in the mainstream, the field of the mainstream makers, because that, for me, is about narrative filmmaking or dance film. I rather see myself on the peripheries or as somebody providing some sort of alternative view of the moving body in relation to the camera. And definitely not only in what you see but in the methods that I use, so that it's not really for mainstream consumption, but rather for ways of teasing out the body's relationality with the camera and seeing what kind of new visual aesthetics arise from that.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: When I started to know about screendance, there was no way of knowing screendance as a genre in India that was being practised, because it was primarily a very Western-oriented, European-Americanised space. Which is where I could not— I think I was situating myself as this one body. But then only when I came back from my master's to India did I realise—India has almost the largest visual culture because of Bollywood and Hindi cinema. And I realised, I had discovered—it was never called screendance, but it was experimental cinema that has happened since the Lumière brothers, you know, that has travelled to India. And different other films, which I only came to know about after I came back, and I thought, Oh, that is screendance, this is also screendance, this is also screendance.

Ami Skånberg: I'm always curious about the next step, so I don't see myself in a static way. But, of course, I have moved more towards a kind of feeling that I don't have to work with a professional camera person, because the technique now has become much simpler. But I mean, I love narrative—I'm also a storyteller. So I'm also wanting to tell stories through choreography and dance. But I also have a strong improvisation practice. So now just to kind of understand how to proceed. I don't know about where you are, but in Sweden, there is this discussion that it's quite difficult to fund projects because there are still people in the film institute who are like, But what about screendance? They still haven't really got hold of what it is. So that's why I also try to have this spontaneous relation to screendance that, for example, Omari Carter from

London—he came to Stockholm to teach. And I asked, could we please, you know, instead of me interviewing you, could we move together and also decide where we would like to put the camera? So that became a collaboration. It was a silent improvisation. We had two cameras and then we edited it together. So, I saw that as a positive way to think that screendance can also happen as a kind of ongoing, friendly conversation with a colleague. But at the same time, for many years, I have worked on a documentary about my great-grandmother. So that is something that I'm still collecting material for. And, I don't know—maybe that will be a five-hour film in the end. I don't know.

Dominique Rivoal: Do you consider yourself a mover as well as a filmmaker?

Jeannette Ginslov: Definitely. I've moved all my life, and I think my camera also moves. Whatever moves me moves the camera and also moves my audience. I find this interconnectedness between my sensibilities of movement through the camera, or my embodied self through the embodied camera, and watching these moving bodies. There's definitely some sort of synchronicity between these elements. And if they are captured in a certain way and edited in that way, then you're going to move your audience in another kind of way, other than within a narrative style. You know, that's quite a logical progression, because often my work is not about that kind of narrative logic, but some sort of inner sensibility about lived experience, really. So as long as audiences resonate with what's in front of them, I think it comes from being a mover and understanding that whatever moves me—like I said—and it doesn't mean emotional, it's about looking at those affective nuances, those resonances, and the somatic resonance that emanates from the performer in front of you. And it's about being very, very aware of that. And I think if you just lock off the camera and put it in the corner of a studio or on location or whatever, you're going to get very static images, and it will become very representational. So I just think that my legs are the best tripods in the world. I can shift and move through my core and through my centre, through my legs. And that's what I call the embodied camera. So I embody the camera within my own lived experience. And that's why I would probably claim that I am a mover, so to speak, you know.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: So my practice is rooted in this form of dance, in the Indian classical dance form called Kathak. And Kathak is this storytelling form. Kathak means the storyteller.

Dominique Rivoal: How do you describe your style of filmmaking? Do you use scripts, mise-en-scène, or do you work with improvisation?

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: So, I think an intuitive and hands-on approach is my thing, and improvisational ways of making the film. For example, *Sarab*, the one that I made in 2018, had a very intuitive filmmaking experience because it was around a very personal memory of a loss. So, I did not want to get into a lot of aesthetics, as that can make you very disembodied when you become too technical about it. So, we were going with the flow, literally.

Jeannette Ginslov: As a choreographer, I have always been very concerned about societal problems and political hegemony, in a way, because I was brought up in apartheid South Africa. So that always became something on my shoulders that I had to bear and work through. I felt that I had to script something, make it definite, and define it. But as the years progressed, I realised that, hold on—if I move in a certain way and I edit in a certain way, this…This realisation happened during my transition to Scotland in 2007.I became more aware of working with haptic imagery and the emotions of the dancer. And I thought, wow, the camera can do more than just voice my political opinion on the world. And so, the body became much more of a political stance—going in closer, using my methods as a feminist practice, really. Because that is a tool for a woman to discover alternative methods and to give voice to the body. You know—what are these liminal states in the body? So, it became about *the personal is political* rather than an overt political stance. As that progression happened, I lost the idea of having scripts and became less and less concerned with location. Instead, I got in really, really close and examined the body—what my methods of filming and editing could bring out— these inner landscapes of the body, somatic states, or affective qualities. And that's not another kind of politicisation of my work.

Dominique Rivoal: What are your strategies for making and teaching? You write that dance filmmakers develop their own strategies, structures, maps, and storyboards.I'm just wondering if you could talk about your own strategies.

Ami Skånberg: Maybe we could talk a bit about discourses.The strong… I mean, no, I'm exaggerating, but the strong discourse from dance is that you don't engage with technology at all—because you care about your body. I mean, I'm not—I'm not talking about the choreographer. But now we have also changed. So most of the time, we are both choreographers and dancers. And that means that you are interested in the world, in space, in relations, in politics. And then the other discourse is really, you know, about crazy technology. And, I mean, also using verbs like *shooting* and *creating* a film—it has to be three acts, there has to be a certain dramaturgy. And I think that Screendance, you know, processes both those worlds, which could mean that when you begin, you feel like, Oh, maybe I have to follow more of the traditional strategies from the film world, or No, I will stay closer to the dance world, and then you maybe end up in the middle. But now, since I also teach, I have—for example, I've discussed this with Claudia

Kappenberg. When I try to do a screendance workshop and also include the film department, there is not so much curiosity and openness still. And Claudia said that as well when she was in Brighton. So that is sad because I think that the curiosity would be there if we were in the same space together and could start exploring together. But one colleague from the film department said, you can never make a screendance workshop in the university because it's so much about the technology. And how would you have time for it? So then I just said, We already have our own strategies, and that means maybe, in that context, we are only using simple cameras—maybe just handheld cameras or mobile phones. And then we are curious about the editing tools that are available, but it's really about embodying technology. But of course, I also wonder—where is the education? Now, in the world, you can become a film director. But *film choreographers*—that's just as exciting, I would say. And then it also connects to the beginning of the film, when so many dancers were there.

Dominique Rivoal: Curiosity—I think—is the right word.

Ami Skånberg: And totally. And I go back to Trinh T. Minh-ha, for example. I was like, why didn't anybody talk about her when I took a course in film directing? But when I did the first screendance course at the University of Gothenburg, I said, Okay, we are going to do the movement exercises without the camera, as Katrina McPherson proposes in her book. And I also had one that Omari Carter did with his students. And I said, the dance students and the film students—we have to start on the same day. But, then the film students didn't come. And so, I felt like—but I said this is the most important thing! Because I don't want it to be that when they meet, suddenly the dancers feel like they have to jump all over the place. I want them to really feel safe, like, *No,* I know what I want to do. I'm not going to entertain the camera or the photographer. Because I guess I've had those feelings myself—such stress, where I've ended up becoming the clown or the monkey, just jumping around like crazy. So I was really sad and I felt really disappointed, but I just had to accept the situation. But what happened was that when the dance students *did* meet the film students, at least they knew how to address the problem. So they were like, Wait a minute. What do you mean? Are you just going to put the camera there? We have to do something together. And the film students were first like, what do you mean? What is it that we are going to do? And then the dance students didn't start doing workshops with them, but they talked about how they had prepared—to really be careful of the moment when they start working with the technological eye, or whatever you call it. Like, when you start working with that eye, you have to be aware of the traps or gaps or sentiments that come with it. Then all the film students said, we have no training like that, and we're supposed to work with people, with animals, with nature—those are the workshops we need. So, I still think—it's like they need their own revolution. But maybe we can't do it for them.

Dominique Rivoal: That is so interesting.

So what you're saying is that maybe one of your strategies—and Katrina's as well—is to begin the workshop with no technology.

Exactly. Yes.

Ami Skånberg Yeah. That's great. Yeah. And then that's what Douglas Rosenberg did also. I mean, the first time I went to the American Dance Festival in 1997, I had already done two films. But I was so lost. So I felt like I needed to learn more and understand how to proceed. And then, you know, it was all about movement. And then he just told us to hold the camera in front of the belly instead. So, really about embodying the camera.Yes. Right. Yeah. And, I mean, Katrina's book is amazing. That it's like—and, yeah.

Dominique Rivoal: Yes. I remember doing an exercise where somebody is the camera, somebody is the filmmaker, and somebody is the dancer. And I loved that.

That is perfect. And I did it two weeks ago in Stockholm and, you know—Yeah.Yeah, it's really great.

Dominique Rivoal: Yeah, yeah. Totally forgotten about that. Yeah. It's such a great exercise. That's great. Thank you.

Yeah.

Ami Skånberg: And I wanted to mention that, in Gothenburg, my students are a bit younger. They are in their twenties. In Stockholm, they could be my age. Like, all of them—all of them are over 30. So, a lot of life experience. But that is also interesting because some can then say, I know screendance. I've done three films, but they never did these tasks that Katrina proposes. So, they were like, Oh, this is actually new. And now I understand. To embody the camera more. But what I also noticed is that I think Screendance is also changing the dance field. You know, younger dance students. I was mentioning my own inner clown and monkey. But they are so trained to just go out there. But when we do this task, there is such a beautiful focus in the room. And they make completely different choices in movement. Like, they suddenly understand—You know, just moving my hand really slowly can be—Can be the most dramatic thing I do today. Maybe dramatic is not the right word, but—Yeah, so they understand.

Dominique Rivoal: I mean, through my work, I've understood the power of stillness. I actually did a workshop recently, and I proposed a score,and then I realised they were

moving all over the place. And then I realised—I forgot to say—Start in stillness.Yes. Yeah. That was a revelation for me.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: Sound is also a very important strategy. It becomes a strategy, actually, for filmmaking. So, if I'm looking at an emotion like grief, which is something that I feel—Like, I look at the emotion and I see—What rhythm can—What is the rhythm that best expresses, say, the emotion of grief? So the rhythm in, for example, my own practice of Kathak, there is like...So it's like 1-2-3, 1-2, 1-2. So it's almost like in grief—I'm not sure if you have experienced loss, but—The loss is something like—You go three steps forward, you come four steps back. You go three steps forward; you come four steps back. So the emotion of grief is such, you know—So how do I bring that into the rhythm? So I constantly look at connecting the emotion of the piece with the rhythm that it has.

Dominique Rivoal: So could you explain how your work is non-representational?

Jeannette Ginslov: Well, Susan (Kozel) and I had a lot of discussions about this. And I think it stemmed from my work in my MSc, which was about this—This haptic exploration or effect—Or affect—That emanates from this digital materiality. And so you kind of have to think of the body not performing the body, not showing the feeling or the movement, but actually *being* the movement and *being* the feeling. So, when the dancer steps into being and steps into feeling—Or even just performing in a space. We had discussions about— So in my direction for the dancer, I would say, Okay, don't reflect the lines of the building. You know, because a lot of dancers—you'll say to them, I want you to perform in this space, and then they start to do the rounded corners, or they do the— You know, they become really, really representational. And instead, I want to take the dancer into an environment and have them feel the affective resonance—To feel the affect of the space. What does that actually do to you? How does it shift you somatically with the space. And there was one direction that I gave to a dancer—It was in 2011, 2013—And I said, just become part of the mortar. You know, not even the bricks—just become part of the mortar. And she just changed—From performing lines and being like the building—She became *with* the building instead. And suddenly, movement slowed down. She internalised completely, and the movements were no longer representational. And we sort of found a key—That was like the key to unlock what it was that we needed to be able to research affect.

Dominique Rivoal: Have you gained any insights about yourself—Your relationship with the world and with others—Through your filmmaking?

Dominique Rivoal: In my research, I am using filmmaking to interrogate my relationship to the world. Have you gained any insights about yourself—Your relationship with the world and with others—Through your filmmaking?

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: Yeah. Well—This is—I would definitely say it's an ongoing journey. So I don't have a definitive answer. But until now, what I feel this question has triggered is that I have been able to—Be more empathetic as a person, as a human. Because as someone who's filming, you really have to position yourself as the audience of the work—Constantly. So—How will this be received? You know—So—Most often, as a dancer, for me, it was just the opposite. I'm like, I know my choreographed movement. I will dance, and people will come to watch me. It's a very narcissistic endeavour, you know, that way. Taking care of my father, or observing my relationship with caregiving, has become a part of the filmmaking process, you know? So when I collaborate with someone, I know care is an important part. For example—care and rest and slowness. It's not, I want to make this happen within six months. It doesn't work like that. So there is a certain kind of acceptance, you know—There's a certain kind of non-verbal contract, rather, that you get with your collaborators—About the fact that this is going to take a long time. And it's a slow work. Of course, there are moments in the process that are very quick, but I'm talking about the larger framework. So, even when we are filming, we are not filming in a hurry. We're constantly being present in the moment, and being accepting about the fact that—If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work. It's okay.

Jeannette Ginslov: That I actually have a responsibility as a subject—Within my relations with the human and the non-human—To actually do something. And to try my best to reveal that through my filmmaking. And that's what I wanted to be anyway, you know?

Dominique Rivoal Do you see yourself as an agent of seeing?

Jeannette Ginslov: Of feeling and seeing? And seeing...Yeah, yeah. And of exchange. Because I can give and I can receive as well. And it's only through this relational, performative act of doing that it becomes apparent for me.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: I think only through filmmaking I realised listening to the other person, more than your own opinion. You are just a person who can be the facilitator. But how can I be more embodied so that she also connects with the camera? So these are—this is a fantastic question. I think I could write an essay about it now. But— Yeah, I was curious to know if you feel—if you want to share your side of things, because that may also make me actually think about things which I'm not even thinking, you know.

Dominique Rivoal: Yeah. No, totally. I mean, I—I'll—I'm very—play with attention. So if I first film somebody, I think I will put my attention on them. And then I can also shift to put my attention in between. And then I also put my attention on myself. And that's

kind of a way. And to begin with, always being in stillness, I think, because I think that a movement is like a communication to—to the person. I have—I've tried so hard to not film always with me moving, because as a dancer yourself, your body's tendency is to move with the dancer. And it is the hardest thing to do is to be still.

Dominique Rivoal: Because I've really understood the power of stillness. Oh. Yeah. To be still until I feel moved, instead of just—you know, my tendency is to move, to dance with the dancer. But actually, you know, waiting for the right moment. And sometimes, I find that I am shy as the camera person, and then I feel like I can't face them, and I find it more interesting to film them from the back, and we are facing the same way. And I'm not— And then if something happens, something brings me together with that person. Then I feel, as you said yourself, they are allowing me in, and now I allow myself to come closer. So, all those things are very subtle. Yeah. So, and then, I mean, also what I've noticed and realised is that by focusing in—in, through, in soma, it's a different way of operating a camera. So, I notice— Suddenly, I'm not breathing so deeply. The things that are not said but felt—I'm interested in that.And these things coming to the surface. And—yeah. And so these things are being translated into thoughts, rather than just being in the feeling state. The more—the more I film, the more I become aware of habits as well. Oh, yeah. This is my habit. I do this, I do that, and—Another strategy that I have is not to take the first impulse. It's to wait, to be patient, to wait, to wait. And sometimes the movement happens on its own accord. It's not like I've decided to move. I was moved, and I didn't even think—it just happened. I like those moments.

Ami Skånberg: I should just say that, you know, also, thanks to artistic research, some artistic practitioners—We are—we are also—We are interested in art and in the work, but we are also interested in what is happening in the world. And I think screendance helped me to develop that—And not to think that it's something that I can't do. So, yeah, again, maybe I could say it gave me agency. And also—Yeah. I mean, developing ways of workshopping around it, but also talking and finding peers, of course. So, yeah, I think that's my encounter with the dance-on-camera world. That is maybe something that actually made me stay in the field of dance, even though I processed— Who has the right to dare to call him/herself a dancer? And who gets to dance, like Liz Lerman asks? So, yeah, I think screendance— Also, I mean, looking at the young students—They are finally making other choices. That are not about—'Does this angle look good in the camera' No, no, no. They totally go to a different space. And that is really beautiful to experience.I think. Yeah.

Dominique Rivoal: So do you use any preparation or technique to establish a relationship of trust between yourself and the person you're filming?

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: Conversation, for me, is a very important methodology, which entails talking about personal memories of coming to dance, and, you know, the earliest memories—Childhood memories of dance. That way, we establish a connection, because most often, it's either the parent who got you into dance, it's the mother, it's this—You know, these sorts of relational realities. I mean, I would say more like parallel realities that we both, or many people, go through, because of how we learned to dance. So it goes back to their own personal memories of dancing, which is where I start to build the trust. That's my first thing. The next part is to bring, if possible, archive photographs—Family archive photographs. So, I bring mine as well, and then that person also feels safe to bring theirs—You know, their vulnerable side to this. And then, after that, it becomes phenomenal. Because then, they do not— The camera is not something like, 'I'm filming and you are dancing'. Now, we have a memory. We have created a memory together. Yeah, I mean, how do I relate to human filming? That could be me as well, because sometimes I film myself. And that is very much again—

Jeannette Ginslov: Yeah, I mean, how do I relate to human filming? That could be me as well, because sometimes I feel myself, and that is very much again, it's in terms of -I obfuscate—I'm no longer Jeannette I am just a receiver. And I negotiate. And I—Yeah. I'm a dancer. It's—it's as if— Yeah, it's similar to contact improvisation. You don't know who's leading who. I don't want to say it sounds very spiritual, but it's like a kind of union between two elements that come together, and the ego is somewhere else. I don't know where it goes, but there's **a** hypersensitive state of awareness. And, I think that that's all that becomes important. So, I think it kind of becomes egoless, meditative, flowing. This feminist perspective of making film is not about dominating, not about capturing something. And it's not about creating fantastic visual imagery. It's really about being absolutely open, and completely—you know, ego just goes out the window.

Dominique Rivoal: I can't remember if it was Jean Rouch— We become entranced.

Yeah, right. Wonderful, wonderful. Yeah.

Dominique Rivoal: For me, you know, What I'm trying to do is to remind myself that I'm here as well. Because I find that if I'm entranced, I lose—I lose myself. Because I have a tendency to merge. So, what I'm trying to do in my practice is, while using Authentic Movement and inner witnessing, to hold back and stay more in my body. And not so— Oh, like, you know—

Jeannette Ginslov: So interesting. Yeah..I think then, you know, I mean, obviously because I've been working with this somatic presence and somatic resonance, I've had to be 'entranced'. And probably if I make a dance film again, who knows what might

transpire, I might actually object. Objectify slightly again. You know, it's interesting how your research affects your methods, you know, and, for now, over these last few years, really just being guided by what is being felt in front of me, you know, not even in front of me, just what is present and the sense of liveness. And it's interesting that you say that

Dominique Rivoal: The camera is a bit like a boundary and because you have to deal with the technical aspects, in a way it offers a boundary for me, which is really useful.

Jeannette Ginslov: Oh, really? Oh, you see, but the thing is for me, if I go to Don Ihde, who is a post-phenomenologist, if your relationship with technologies is so good that you understand your technique or your technology so well, you don't actually even have to think about your camera anymore, it just becomes a living object that's in your hands.And that's the point where I just think, I believe in that, you know, it just becomes an extension of my body, of my body schema, so that I can make changes without even having to think about what frame am I in, or what, you know, what aperture, what temperature. Unless I say stop. Like the lighting's atrocious or whatever, but that hardly ever happens because we've been filming in closed conditions. So yeah, even that for me, I just, you know, I try not to let it be a barrier. I really do, because I find if you're busy fiddling too much, you lose that 'entrancement' that I'm talking about.

Dominique Rivoal: How do you relate to where you are filming?

Jeannette Ginslov: Locations, I think, have always played a very, very important role because they do feed into the world of the performer. I also believe in keeping the sounds of diegetic sounds of the environment because that also gives you much more of a truthful perspective of where the dancers are performing. If you're having, you're getting a sense of their somatic experience within that environment. I cannot stand watching dance films when all of the diegetic sounds have been taken away and they just slap a piece of music over it. You just go, well, these dancers are floating in space, you know, because there's no sense of the body being grounded with gravity and their lived experience of this space.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: I was in a location which was surrounded by a beach. But then something triggered at that moment—the thought, why am I doing this in a studio and filming it here? That is the beach. Let's go to the beach.

Ami Skånberg: We as movers, we started to create, for example, a shape in the space. And then I was so aware that the camera was there, and the camera trusted our choice because the camera person was totally still and kind of trusting that we were creating this particular path in space right now. And then it changed, and then you are always feeling. I mean, this was then when I had a handheld camera.

Dominique Rivoal: And so, you know, you said that you were making a shape, and you felt that the camera was present and static. Did that support you in making the shape?

Ami Skånberg: Yeah. Yeah. And what it does is that I felt, you know, sometimes in an improvisation, it can be very capricious—you go there and then you go there. But with the camera present, you feel like, okay, I'm ready to go there, but I feel the presence of the camera. I want us to then break this moment together. So, it was this listening and waiting—oh, now the camera moved to me, now we can break the situation. So, it was really the work of three persons, but the person holding the handheld camera was not, of course, dancing with us, but was not visible in front.

Dominique Rivoal: When you said that you wanted to be embodied in yourself to help the dancer be embodied as well, that was interesting. And I was wondering, do you ask your performers, your dancers, to be camera aware? Do you acknowledge the camera? Forget the camera?

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: When I'm filming, I often tell them to forget the camera because I am the voice of the camera. So, I become the voice so that, you know, that's how I embody. So, the voice is not an object that's sort of externally gazing. It's like a voice that is soothing you, bringing you towards this emotion, whatever you're going through. But when I'm in front of the camera, it's interesting. I've tried to do the other way round. I have explicitly told my co-director that I want, again, embodied in that way—it's a very interesting question. I love this question because I told the co-director that I want the camera to be the ghost of my grandmother. At least I am thinking about it so that I feel connected to the camera, so that we, the director, also know where to place the camera, how to bring it forward. Because a ghost is not filming from here. A ghost is constantly lingering. You know, a ghost is coming close and then leaving. It gives you a presence and then it goes away. So, it's almost like this whole thing that you had asked me about—what is the camera? The witness, the dancing body? How can you address that? It's the role that I give the camera, I guess.

Dominique Rivoal: So you have a relationship with the camera? It's not.

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. Like some metaphor. Either it's embodied, or it's something else.

Dominique Rivoal: When you improvise, would you have this moment like, oh, the camera completely missed it. And what was the point to do it anyway?

Ami Skånberg: Yeah. Yeah, of course, I've had that too. Not in that situation, but maybe in another situation where I felt, oh, there was such an interesting moment here with two feet, and the camera was, you know, closer to the head or the ear or something.But

I think that also becomes part of the practice. I also feel that I cannot demand that. Because if it's an improvisation, maybe that is easier. If you have a kind of set choreography, then you can discuss it, but it's different when it's live. Would be wonderful to have a film about that situation also.

Dominique Rivoal: And also, I found that even in my own work, I don't communicate. I'm like, okay. And I could maybe say, I'm not really having this moment with my feet—that could be a prompt. And then sometimes speaking doesn't happen for some reason.

Ami Skånberg: Oh, thank you for saying that, because now I remember the task that Omari Carter brought. (this score is my list of scores from other people) I did it again, quoting him. There was this task in pairs, where one person was the dancer and the other the camera person. And in that course, you could shift roles. That was great because the dancer spoke up about everything they planned to do—I'm going to lift my hand, I'm going to run away, I'm going to lie down on the floor, I'm going to do something with my toes. Then the person holding the camera would respond—I'm going to lie on the floor, I'm going to jump after you, I'm going to make sure that your knee is in focus. That became quite interesting, a very focused work. It did something to the choices made in the space.

Jeannette Ginslov: It sounds quite childlike, but it's as if the camera becomes an extension of my body. It no longer is an object in my hands; it becomes part of my body schemata, part of my actual lived and embodied experience of the world. It's through that that I see and feel the world in front of me. And I call that way of filmmaking. It's like an extrusion. I'm not just using my ocular-centric capacities, but I'm using the whole entire embodied modus, like my body lived experience and who is dancing in connection with what I have in front of me. So, I don't even go, oh, that looks sensational. You know, I go, that feels great. And what is happening, I call it like a hot spot. So, whatever's happening in front of that camera lens, I'm using the whole embodied state of being to extrude that information, not to capture, not just stage, not to visualise, but to extrude so that it becomes much more of an organic process that's about bodies. It's about the body behind the camera, the body in front of the camera, and all that the camera is doing is just negotiating and extruding these states, whatever state it is that the dancer is giving. So yeah, it's not about, well, in the beginning, maybe it was. You know, I used to plan as a script: this is the wide shot, this is this. And I think I went away from that, and I just thought I must concentrate really on close-ups, moving camera, moving bodies. And then suddenly something else started to happen.

Dominique Rivoal: In your work, could you describe your camera as a witness, as an instigator, as a dancer?

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: Oh, yeah. So, I know I can talk about the work that I had done, and that will help me encapsulate. So, the camera as a witness was when I was not into screendance a lot. I was photographing as a hobby. I was photographing a friend of mine; she was my roommate, and she was from Iran. Dancing is still illegal there, so she was an underground dancer. I come from a country where dance is celebrated too much, you know, so I did not know what it meant to not dance, for example. So for me, then, I became a witness to her life. And that conversation and that friendship that we had became a part of the work we did. It was more of a witness. I did not show myself; I showed more of her. I was more of a witness. And of course, there's a lot about me as well, but it doesn't show on the visual. As an instigator, I think about the work that I did with just the face. I don't know whether you've been able to see that one. I think I've submitted it to many festivals, but again, the role that I gave to the camera at that time, you know, different phases of your life, you deal with a lot of different things. And that phase of my life, when I was exploring, that particular work was about gaze, about looking at somebody, looking at you constantly, surveillance. So the camera became an instigator, something that instigates an emotion. I took the camera as something that is constantly looking at me, and that was my beginning point. The way in which the filming was done was reminiscent of how CCTV is, how surveillance cameras start to look at you. That's how the camera becomes an instigator. And then the last is the camera as the moving body when really it's all about the relationship that I want to build with the dancer. You see the dancer there, you see the camera person, you see the relationship coming in, in some way or another.

Dominique Rivoal: I encountered your work firstly in the Screendance symposium, and then in your workshop, you asked your participants to reflect on who is making the image and who is dancing and what might exist between those two positions. I was wondering what insights you have gained about this space between the filmmaker and the dancer.

Ami Skånberg: Yes. I mean, that workshop, now when I look at it, I feel it became an artistic piece in itself. It came from all these years of frustration. Like you were saying also, that you are teaching a workshop and then it's like, how come everybody is, or maybe you work with the camera and a young person. I did that once, and I realised for them the camera was really dangerous. That was really something that you are like pointing at somebody, owning that moment, and putting it on social media as a kind of method for bullying. You ask about stillness. For me, my PhD is also about slow walking in urban spaces to ask society what happens if one person walks slowly. Will she be totally run down, or will she even be noticed? Or when a group walks slowly, what happens? When I crafted that, I wanted to have this sensation of being still and being very close to you, the kind of inner body. Because you are going to hold the camera, be very, very sensitive. Don't think of it like a tool we use every day. Now we use the

camera, our mobile phones, as an extension of our body. But what if we take a step back and think: What is this? What is this really? And then, so meditation and also using the theories of Trinh T. Minh-ha, of being instead of speaking about, 'speaking nearby,' combining this with my slow walking. One more thing that I think it does is it starts to erase this binary situation where you are filming, editing, and then showing it in a salon to an audience. Because the instructions here were first the meditation, to give everybody the possibility to slow down a bit and reflect. I also made this task that you stand with your eyes closed and then open them as if you are the camera. The things we ask technology to do, we can also use for our bodies. Maybe your next question is about opacity. Since I then asked that you have meditated, I hope it creates this almost magic sensation. Okay, so I'm going to lift up this technology and treat it with care. When I press record, I will first record myself and walk with my camera, and then I can film the space. But it's your choice when you are ready to do that. Then you have the choice to record yourself or the space. You can also play what you just recorded. So then it becomes the same space—we are both filming and kind of editing because we are choosing when to show somebody in the room what we have recorded. In that situation, we were quite many, and everybody had screendance practice. With all the screens in the same room and the moving cameras, moving, filming, and showing at the same time, I mean, I have made workshops with the mobile camera and then we put them on the floor. That's also nice. And then we press play. That's also kind of wonderful screening situation. But here I felt that that workshop, because we were all so embodied and slow. I mean, I can't speak for everybody, of course, but I think that there was so much care, but then also surprise. So, for example, I, I go and I press play, I look at what I have filmed and then I show it to somebody, and they could see ah it's, it's the same space but you cannot really tell first. Is it like, is it pre-recorded. Is it now or is it one minute ago I just found that that the kind of like we were holding space and time in such a magic way together. I also collected, everybody's, film. So, I edit them together as a kind of a documentation of what we did. But I really think that workshop is something that we need to be there together, because new things tend to happen when we are recording and recording and screening at the same time. So somehow.

Dominique Rivoal Yeah. But I must add that I was on zoom doing the workshop on zoom at home, and I really felt, just so special. And it, I felt like, refreshed my eyes and I felt like, I moved away from concept and came much more into here and now. Doing the workshop. Yeah, it was amazing. I actually remember vividly my cat suddenly jumped in a basket and I was as if I felt like a cat. Also just felt. That that was just, Wanted to perform and wanted to find a cosy place. Oh, yeah, it was, it was. I still got the picture. I'll send it to you.

Dominique Rivoal: Could you explain your notion of extrusion?

Jeannette Ginslov: I came across this in my PhD because, I was looking at Rosi Braidotti and she talks about a post, a new kind of post-humanism, a new post-human being, that is about she talks about extrusions, actually, and, and about how biosensor technologies like the heart rate monitor because it doesn't visualise, it doesn't capture by taking visual imagery of your heart. It extrudes electrical information from you, your heart rate is determined by it. The amount of electricity is given from the nervous system. So that is an extrusion because it's not it's not a visual. It's not about visual mediation So I, I, I thought of this with the camera and I thought, well, if I'm not working with this ocular centric way of, just looking at the visual dimension of the movements of the dancer, and shape and form, then I thought, well, if I'm embodying the camera and the dancer is also embodying the camera, because there we were in this lived experience, they're embodying it within their lived experience. Then I thought, something else is happening through that camera. So I thought, well, can we not then call it an extrusion rather than a viewing of through a piece of glass, which puts me at a distance, which puts me as an objective observer to something that's visual outside of myself, so that we are all within the 'worlding' of cameras, of human materials, non-human materials, and we just exchanging affective forces with each other, basically.So then I thought, well, I cannot call it a capturing. I cannot call it a visual mediation. I can call it an extrusion. So, it's like referring because an extrusion is like a volcanic eruption, that lava extrudes out of a, out of a, out of a volcano. And for me, that is in is in much more in keeping with an, an eco-feminist point of view. And then serves my method and methodology, which is an Eco-feminist, post-humanist point of view so that, yeah, that's what it is.

Dominique Rivoal Interesting. So, you mean that, the camera is not only capturing a visual image, but also your kinaesthetic sense maybe as you move it. Speaking of other. Yeah. Absolute data. Yes. Yeah. And also the affects.

Jeannette Ginslov: Actual data and my effect and the dances affective states as well. Definitely. I mean I've had, I've had, I've held my camera like this, without the steady lock on. And I've watched my heart rate actually beat in the, in the film. And I thought, that's very that's what was experimenting with that. And eventually it got very irritating. But I thought, you know, that just shows you that, this camera can pick up your heart rate. You know, I thought that was a very interesting. So maybe I'll make that a film like that again one day, I don't know.

Dominique Rivoal: You concept of opacity, maybe if you could you introduce that?

Ami Skånberg: Maybe I would like to say where it comes from first. I mean, I trained, I trained for many years in Japan, in Kyoto with my teacher Nishikawa Senrei and in the Japanese dance. It's more important to dance with your ancestors than with the

audience that is there. So, she would always say, you know, when we did performances, she sat us down and she said this. You have this is the most important. And for me, first, it was a bit problematic. Like I needed to understand, like, who do you mean is my ancestor? Could it be whatever appears in that room? So it's something that I, that I struggled with, a long time, and I decided to first really value my professional ancestors, like, you know, going to Douglas Rosenberg and going back to him like you on my first, screendance teacher, tell me, please, practice slow walking together, as me kind of thanking him and how can we experience something together there? But the first time I got aware of it was when writing my PhD. And maybe I should also say that it is about slow walking, but I was using documentation, so I submitted text, and I have and it had 11 hours of video. And I know that I see now that becomes more and more common. But for first I was in that department, but they were like, not at all supporting it and said, like, nobody's going to watch the video. So, I needed to again think about what why would they be there? And, really making sure as I write that I put new links all the time, like, please explore this with me. I'm writing about this. So, then the concept of opacity came up because I, when I walked alone slowly in, in very, very busy places, I often had a feeling I became invisible. So, I wanted to. Maybe that's also a kind of feminist question that, you know, I'm a woman. I should not be invisible. I have to, you know, put myself forward there. But then I thought that such a kind of, that's also quite a difficult demand. And I thought, you know, our society will be terrible if we keep saying to people who are silent, like, you should speak up or speak up more and make yourself visible. Why not also ask, for like, I feel that my teacher did, like, lean back in space and time and look what is there and make sure that you also include. I mean, this you can then collaborate with post-human theories and new materialism that you are also aware of. I am this person. I don't have to be an exclamation mark. I can take a step in space and then other things will appear. And then since it's also a technological tool that you can just pull parameters and you can make somebody on the screen invisible or visible and really like, you know, 100%, 50%. That's how you work with those tools. And then I thought, this, this, this is also a, I think, a nice mental experiment to do with our bodies, to feel like, how do we feel if we imagine that we are invisible? And now I have done, I have exercised that together with artists and students. And there is always this moment of surprise that some, some get very, very moved and they have to sit down and say, but, you know, I'm totally surprised. But suddenly, you know, this person from the past came, so, so then it it's almost like a. I mean, that, I mean, I think in, in theory, in academia, we could say that it's, it doesn't have to be a kind of very strange and very magic exercise. It's like, of course they are there, but it's like we are constantly creating situations where we like, we don't listen or we think that we have to be this exclamation mark. Like when I look at my old screendance pieces, I'm like, oh, I worked so hard to be visible. The power of screendance is that you can really make invisible things. I think that is also the magic of screendance. That's what I would say. What do you think?

Dominique Rivoal: What I felt is that in my practice, because I'm very much more often behind the camera. Yes. I always felt that I wasn't visible behind the camera and I was really interested in actually bringing my opacity up. Yes, I, I suppose that depends what kind of person you are. But, I always felt. Well, yeah, that's. I always wanted to say I always wanted to bring attention to the meta-aspect of who is doing the looking. And I wanted this to be more obvious, more present, that this is a relationship rather than an invisible person behind the camera. And we don't know.

Ami Skånberg: Oh, that's so interesting. Of course, now and you say it, I can, you know, finally, the camera person, you know, start to experiment with the role of the camera person.

Dominique Rivoal: Yeah. Well, and my first strategy was to start including my limbs, including my body and. Yes, but then I moved away from that. I was very, very attentive to the movement. And I felt that the movement and how I moved and when I was moved, yeah, that showed me behind the camera or should. Well, I was more sort of sensitive to that. Yeah.

Ami Skånberg: And then also because then I was looking at what is, you know, has other people engaged with opacity. And then I found the poet. Edward Glissant, oh yes. And then I thought, but he is, he's also talking about opacity like don't, don't talk about, you know, bigger faster or like move away from this the scale and think, think more like in a room. It's not about. Always or I mean we like Trinh T. Minh-ha was saying that when you are a documentary filmmaker, some say like, giving voice to others, but are you really doing that? And have you asked if they wanted to voice something? Or is it like we have this Western paradigm that we have to talk about certain things in certain ways, and when we come from screendance we know we can meet each other and we can start to dance together. And it would become political and about caring for space as well. I think.

Dominique Rivoal: Does your concept of opacity compare with performativity or ego?

Ami Skånberg: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I think I mean, it doesn't it's not all, what I mean though I try to unpack it opacity also in terms of technology, but definitely. Yeah, that is one way of framing it like and I think that when we go to certain somatic practices and improvisation, we try also to let go of ego and that is quite difficult. I think. So maybe this, this exercise of lowering your own presence in space, like letting go of the exclamation mark, is something about the performativity that it doesn't have to be, claiming the space. And I mean, both you and me know that when we actually, when we use the camera, what can be seen? Not us. Too much in your face when you see it on

the stage. Because you have a distance. When the camera comes close, it becomes. It can become very, very intense and aggressive.

Ami Skånberg: And I, I heard people, actually from theatre who say like, oh, but so many of the screendance pieces, you look so self-obsessed and you are like, you are like looking away. And there is so much drama and it's like, you don't care about anything. Then, I mean, and they talk about certain, not the whole, but the, the, the piece that they have seen. But it made me also think that this is something we also need to be aware of, because I could, for example, in some film that had this criticism, I said, but. Oh, so you think that they don't care for each other like it was? Two people, approaching each other in dance, and they did not look each other in the eyes. So, I had to then tell the film director.But they have eyes on their shoulders and it's like they are looking at each other.So I mean, that's also interesting to ask. Like, you know, both dance and film are kind of visually centered practices. I think that we, they are also and both, embodied practices.

Concluding thoughts

Jeannette Ginslov: And it makes me sometimes question, I did this PhD, it's not about screendance. I did it did my Deep flow experience. It is about having a blindfold. So you have a blindfold on and you do this meditative dance practice, which is really, really ironic since I've been a screendance maker. But it was really about trying to find that lived experience in this felt sense and really expand on this 'inner worlding' just finding the joy in that. So, who knows, maybe it won't be a screendance maker anymore.

Dominique Rivoal: That's so interesting because in my methodology of Authentic Movement, we close our eyes. So, in a way, I don't know, it seems that we need to close our eyes to become.

Jeannette Ginslov: We are so reliant on the Ocular centric, the Ocular centric drives our way of life, and we all look at our phones, we all look at the Internet. I mean, we're just looking beings all the time. And this whole vast body of, of being in state of being in lived experience is being ignored. It's an ethical question of how to remain human and be and be a human being. You know, being a human in all of our ways of being, rather than just seeing something. You know, my argument was that we've got this vast storehouse of lived experience that technologies at the moment are separating us from by using our capacities to see because the visual dominance in the world, which is ocular centric, is far too strong. You know, it's really forcing us to see things and not feel things.

Okay. So anything else or anything?

I feel I have spoken myself into a stand still.

Yeah. Thank you so much. I hope you got something out of it.

I'd say definitely. Definitely.

Sumedha Bhattacharyya: Sometimes it's just listening to your, you know, dancer or that's all, you know, that's. And that choice when what happens in that moment, what choice you take, even if she's dancing or his dancing or whatever, where do you choose to put the camera at that very moment is so interesting. Like, I find it so intriguing because for you it's going to be completely different than me. And then somebody else it's and then we, you know, we make those decisions.

Ami Skånberg: We need to be really sensitive of what we put in front of the camera. Or when we think that, we want the camera to capture something. I mean, in the last symposium at the University of Madison, Wisconsin, we all promised each other, you know, remember that we are not going to call it shots or shooting. But, I mean, I'd say I'm I'm saying that I have this fear because of the directness of the lens and also this kind of maybe demand, now you have to make sure that the image is good quality and, and, you know, and I think that if you are trained photographer, maybe you embody that, but I still struggle with the embodiment of a camera. Yes. So, when I met the theories of to Trinh T. Minh-ha, I understood that what she is talking about is exactly something that I thought that, Ami, you have to get over this. It's about education. If you ar more a camera, it will become better. But, then I thought, and this is what I think research can do, like artistic research that you can allow yourself to hesitate. But wait a minute. There is a problem here. And not shying away from the fact that it is a problem. So, I mean, with her help, I crafted new workshops, where we are in the same room working with just that. But of course, that is also based on experiences of being in a situation where somebody who is this trained camera person and before it, you also used to be a man, and then maybe the dancers were women, and he would just come with his big tripod and put it down and kind of owning the whole situation.

And everybody who needed to be, you know, expose their bodies, their movements, it became a quite violent situation. And then I was in situations where I couldn't talk about it because there was no space for that. But I think that in research it does. So, I really feel that I am in the right place now. I mean, I also, having finished my PhD quite recently. I really value that we have now created such spaces for artists and also talk about technology with curiosity and care. I would say.

Dominique Rivoal: Yeah, yeah, I agree, but, and I also find that technology is getting so advanced that it really gets to meet us. You know, all the autofocus and all the lighting and all those settings are so intelligent and, yes, really help. It really helps. Yeah. Yes.

Yeah, yeah. I guess what technology doesn't know yet doesn't have is the empathy sense. Yes. and, so that is ours still yes. Yes. Yes. Make the camera more empathic. There should be a filter.

Maybe we collaborate in the future.

Yes, I would really like that. Are you coming to London?

I tell you, sometimes I do. I mean, my PhD was in Roehampton and I, I keep missing London, so I would love to go.