In your own time: Alicia Frankovich's *Defending Plural Experiences*

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On Saturday 11 October 2014, at Melbourne's Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), a group of 23 performers enacted a rolling sequence of short scenarios over four hours. Variously in small groups, individually or as a corps, they cycled through a repertoire of brief sketches of movement, recalling at times Michael Jackson's *Thriller* music video, raging metalheads, lounging cats and camera-ready grinning celebrities. Spreading at will across the width of the main gallery, the troupe remained on the same plane as their audience, with no defined stage, no soundtrack, no special lighting, no spectacular beginning or ending to signal the spatial or temporal edges of the work. The unspeaking dancers formed large groups to practise soccer moves, then broke off into impromptu groups to enact birthing scenes – in which the 'mothers' were performed not only by females – then moving off into individual stretches and poses, moving solo but in unison, keeping time among themselves only with glances and rehearsed interactions.

This was the debut of Alicia Frankovich's *Defending Plural Experiences* (2014), as part of the ACCA exhibition 'Framed Movements', curated by Hannah Mathews. Read as an informal survey of cultural and biological transformations, the performance and its video counterpart, *Defending Plural Experiences: MOCAP Creation*, presented moments representative of the possibility of change in the human body, and suggested the importance of digital media as a source, process and site of a twenty-first-century form of prosthesis.

In an exhibition whose central question was the nature of choreography as a medium engaged by contemporary artists, Frankovich's work was an adroit proposition for work that exceeds the limited systems of modern dance and task-based conceptual performance, the two historical touchstones of the current revival of performance in contemporary practice. Here was a more

present-oriented understanding of movement as the sum of myriad small, unrelated motions gleaned from different sources; action that reflected the experience of bodies determined by the internet age.

As in Frankovich's recent works, such as *Free Time* (presented in 2013 for the Anne Landa Award at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and at Palais de Tokyo, Paris), gestures from everyday working life and leisure activity were selected, studied, altered and re-expressed. The choreography or 'writing of movement' in *Defending Plural Experiences* appeared thoroughly mediated, and not only in or by each dancer's body: Frankovich designed the work through a process of image and video searches online, first finding source imagery from certain key words or ideas, then conveying those still and moving images to the dancers and allowing each to find their own way to express that image.

Here, then, choreography was a form of analogue 'compositing', stitching disparate sources together in the body: the gaps between one image and the next simply filled in, made up by each individual dancer. Frankovich's work has often involved trained bodies, particularly those of dancers; for this work, she sought lives *in train* to becoming something other, and people whose chosen careers convey or teach transition: some professional dancers, but also mathematicians, a bike courier, net geeks, transgender persons, a pregnant woman. These performers were chosen to play themselves, as were those cyclists, runners and freelance content-producers in *Free Time*; however, an important distinction being that in *Free Time*, performers were simply doing what they always do, relocated into the museum; in *Defending Plural Experiences*, the performers were engaged to play themselves becoming images becoming real.

Making a more overt case for the digital extension of the body, *Defending Plural Experiences: MOCAP Creation* presented the same performers, in their same own-clothes
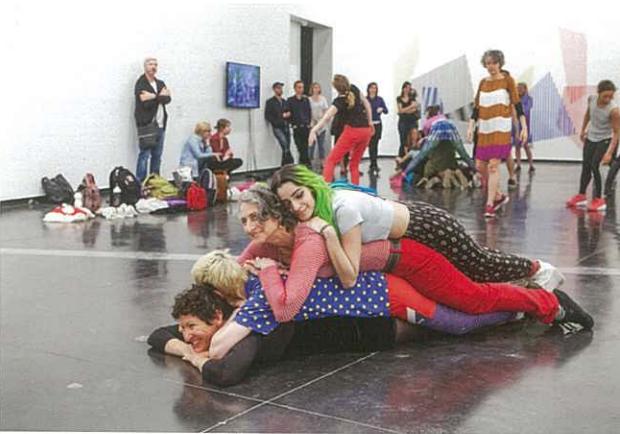
Alicia Frankovich, Defending Plural Experiences, 2014, performance views, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2014; live performance, 4 hour duration; images courtesy the artist