

Written Response

This project began with methods of translating. I extracted the floor tiles from the video frame and used them as the basis for my grid. Then I collected the positions of pedestrians' footsteps, including how many tiles were stepped on at the same time. I placed this information back into the grid in different ways, which led to my initial iterations and my video.

However, after finishing these experiments, I began to question why I was using symbols, heat maps, or lines to represent people's footsteps. I also started to ask myself why I extracted the floor from the image and used it as the basis of my grid. If I changed to another scene, would this method still work, or would it become impossible to continue?

During this process, I found Labanotation. Labanotation is a system that uses graphic symbols to record human movement. Similar to the way a musical score records music, Labanotation translates body movements, directions, time, space and body parts into a symbolic language that can be read and performed again (Dance Notation Bureau, n.d.).

The problem was that "reality" was too large as an input. I needed a more specific field of observation. In order to reduce the input and make my translation more systematic, I started to focus on the body. The body does not exist alone. It moves within space, and it is also shaped by space.

William H. Whyte's *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* studies public behaviour through observing, photographing, filming and recording people in urban spaces (Whyte, 1980). This book helped me understand that public space can be studied through repeated observation of how bodies sit, wait, walk and gather.

Edward T. Hall's idea of proxemics helped me move from movement itself to the spatial conditions that shape movement. Space is not only where the body moves; it also communicates distance, permission, restriction and social relationships (Hall, 1966). These two books helped me understand that space is not a neutral background, but an information system that can affect bodily behaviour.

People's actions in public space are not completely random. They are shaped by spatial relationships and social rules. This also connects to Marcel Mauss's idea of "techniques of the body", where ordinary bodily actions are understood as socially learned rather than purely natural (Mauss, 1973). For example, in a library, people usually walk more quietly and lower their voices.

In a gallery, people often walk slowly and control the position of their hands. In a station, people look at the screen while waiting.

However, when the space is visually removed, the meaning of body movement depends too much on the viewer's personal interpretation.

At the same time, the method of layering used in the artist responses I chose is not suitable for me to use directly. This is because this method would blur the body movement and make the space itself become more dominant.

Idris Khan's *Every... Bernd and Hilla Becher Spherical Type Gasholders* takes the Bechers' long-term photographs of similar architectural structures and compresses them into one typological image (Khan, 2004). Corinne Vionnet's *Photo Opportunities* collects tourist photographs taken at famous landmarks around the world and layers them into one image. The work focuses on repeated tourist viewpoints and the way people often photograph the same places in similar ways (Vionnet, 2005–ongoing).

In my own project, if I used the same method, it would only blur the body movement and make the space itself more visually dominant. If I simply changed the subject from space to the human body, this would only be a formal replacement. It would not really change my research method.

Therefore, when space is removed, body movement becomes too dependent on the viewer's interpretation. However, simply layering spaces or buildings would blur the body movement and increase the presence of space.

Because of this, I started to turn to shadows. Shadows can show the trace of bodily movement, but they are also affected by light, environment and space. Therefore, shadows became my new research subject.

To test this idea, I first found several videos online that showed changes of shadows under natural light. In these videos, the object itself does not move clearly, but as the position of the sun changes, the shadow continues to stretch and transform.

Then, I tried to imitate the changes of natural light myself. By moving the light source, I tried to recreate the way shadows change when the sun moves. I also tried to control the movement of the shadow.

After that, I took a series of indoor photographs under different lighting conditions. Different from natural light, indoor light is not decided by the sun and time. The same object or body can create different shadow forms under different lighting conditions.

Then, I aligned the shadows by their edges. Through this process, the fixed object in the image started to create a sense of movement, and the shadow became the new visual centre.

Through these experiments, I started to understand shadow as a kind of visual anchor. It connects body movement with the spatial environment. Compared with directly filming the body or layering architecture, shadow allows me to observe the relationship between movement, light and space in a more detailed way.

By continuing to study the relationship between shadow and movement, I want to further explore how a sense of movement can be produced. Shadows made me realise that movement does not only come from the body itself. It can also come from changes in light, time and spatial conditions.

Bibliography

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