



# The Way We Move

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**H**umans seem obsessed with how our bodies move. As children we learn to interpret the body language of our parents. This knowledge provides us with a background that allows us to almost subconsciously communicate with other people. How people change their posture, make or don't make eye contact, provides us with valuable information-- these minute gestures tell us how to react. The raising of an eyebrow can cause one to feel defensive, or a subtle smile can make us feel at ease. Throughout our lives we mentally record these clues into a catalog that becomes key to our personality and how we relate to others. This is a mental catalog of looking, of understanding the nuances of human movement.

We begin the process of collecting bodily information before we can remember. Jacques Lacan described the mirror stage of development as the point when we understand our bodies as a whole, as an object amongst other objects. It is through images that we continue to reflect on how we function as a physical being. Images provide a mirror to our corporeal nature.

Images provide a record of time, a snapshot of a past event. The invention of photography allowed people to see themselves in a permanent mirror. Eadweard Muybridge exposed the sequence of time. Simple actions such as walking became magic again. As these stills were reanimated, people were allowed to crystallize the events of their lives with the rhythm of flashing light. We have always been interested in capturing recording ourselves, inspecting our bodies from outside our skin. **The Way We Move** shows six video pieces that express the continued sense of awe as we use the moving image to understand how our bodies function in the world of forms.

**Peer Bode's** piece *Video Locomotion (man performing forward hand leap)* from 1978 uses the history of durational photography by Eadweard Muybridge as a way to connect the history of still images to the technology of video. *Video Locomotion* explains the mystery behind the curtain on video technology. The pauses in the frames reflect the fact that to make movement with images they have to move fast enough that we forget the still image is behind the magic. Peer exposes the flicker of light, the truth of how video is created by reanimating Eadweard Muybridge's famous sequence of a man doing a forward hand leap. By keying out information and shooting one grid of images over another, Eadweard Muybridge's stills come to life. Revealing the structure that makes video possible Peer shows us the potential for new visions through inspecting the process.

Through the use of X-rays **Barbara Hammer** continues this inspection of structure through image. Her film (translated into video for this exhibition) *Sanctus* from 1990 delivers the vision of new technology as it probes deeper into our bodies. Using the moving x-rays of Dr. James Sibley Watson, *Sanctus* shows how the body functions, revealing how our internal systems function invisibly as we move through life. Tasks such as eating and drinking seem like dance, poetic movements that keep us alive. The astounding view of what our bones do when we hold up our head to shave instills a new respect for the choreography on within our bodies. The powerful score by Neil B. Rolnick encapsulates the film and references the Christian Hymn of the Eucharist. *Sanctus* expresses the fragility of the body, since the process of x-ray technology itself can injure the systems it reveals.

Technology provides us with new ways of looking at our bodies. From microscopy to motion tracking, new inventions constantly push us to reexamine our corporeality. **Jeff Daniel Silva's** series *Second Sight/Split Second* uses a camera that captures film at 2000 frames per second. Recording simple actions, such as giving a kiss, the film makes us see ourselves as something alien when two faces meld to fit together. Jeff enables us to see our body become something other than the anatomy it is. Seemingly unnatural, the cropped gestures barely resemble their origin. The air forced through our lips looks more like a sci-fi effect than the childish

gesture of the “raspberry.” An eye, opening at such a slow speed, reveals every muscle that is engaged during the thousands of occasions when we shift our bodies each day. We look beyond the meaning of physical gestures and begin to see the minutiae that occur as our bodies perform within the spaces they occupy.

In these moments when we are reminded that we inhabit space, we are awakened to the fact that we are part of a system. Commonalities of how we function link us together into culture. **Aurelia Mihai** examines that in her piece ***Endless Motion***. The grid of people further gridded by the stairs handrail evokes the labor of Sisyphus but is also comforting in the ordinariness of the action. The characters in the scenes are everyone and no one. It is in the questioning of these people’s goals that the viewer is forced to include themselves in the scenario. We can recall all the places we encountered that would look strikingly similar to what we see. ***Endless Motion*** asks, “What makes a space? The design and its sharp delineation splitting up the air, or the people as they move in and out of that air?” The longer one looks, the more mysterious these scenes become.

Memory through distance becomes magical. Events in our past get recorded as a period of greatness, crucial to our own development. **Robert Campbell’s *Redress*** feels like one of those strange recollections that by the end of years of retelling could no longer function as the original event. Shot at Fort Warden amongst the decaying concrete walls of this former military base in Washington, we see the clash of narrative elements and the graceful gestures of the Maureen Whiting Company of dancers from Seattle, Washington. Through years of training in movement the dancers cross grace with utility. Editing and layering become metaphors for repetition and time. Animated sequences allow the viewer to drift into a sense of how surreal these abandoned places are. The intensity of the score enhances the viewer’s visions while piecing together the story through movement.

Movement becomes trademark of the cultural vernacular. Popular dances are expressions of place and age. Popular movements set one generation apart from another, often reflecting the desires or frustrations of a generation. **Monica Panzarino** and **Nadine Sobel** explain this in their piece ***Loose Control***. Backed by a brick wall they replicate the choreography of Missy Elliot’s music video “Lose Control.” Sometimes in synchronization, sometimes almost battling, they are clad with the energy of urban youth as described in Missy Elliot’s video. Their faces expressionless, they become an exhibit as they mold into the role they enact. With their quick popping movements we feel the aggression released through their form. One can’t help to wonder whether they are making fun of music videos or of themselves, as their facades crack in the moments when the scene shows its pretence. Stripped of the contextual information in the original video, their posturing shifts: they are youth exerting their strength, but they also remind us how we assume characters and try on different personas like clothes, returning the ones that we can’t make fit.

As humans we need to project ourselves into different roles; we look outside to look in. The moving image provides us a tool to become someone else through the suspension of disbelief. Once we forget that we are viewing the light flashing against a screen we become part of the story, we become the hero, the anti-hero, we are able to play out roles that will never become part of our actual life. These roles serve as escape from who we have become, but also allow us to set goals for who we would like to be. The image becomes the mirror into another life.

Video has helped us reconnect with our body safely guarded by the distance of the lens. The technology has allowed us to see ourselves and understand what we look like removed from the preconceptions our brains attach to what we see, and it sometimes shows us that we are not the physical beings we think we are. The paradox that it takes an inanimate device to explain the corporeality of our existence is amazing. ***The Way We Move*** displays this paradox while conjuring new ways of seeing as art.

**Peer Bode**  
**Video Locomotion (man performing forward hand leap), 1978/2010**  
*5 minutes, single channel projection*

Using two varyingly synchronized black and white cameras and a video keyer, Peer Bode's *Video Locomotion* reanimates the image grids of Eadweard Muybridge, an early pioneer in the history of photography. Bode started this homage to Muybridge's photo grids in 1978 and reworked it in 2010 for this exhibition. As Muybridge's photographs showed the world what split seconds of movement look like, Peer Bode's video reveals the trickery involved in film and video by flashing images in front of the viewers fast enough that they are fooled into believing the movement is genuine.

Peer Bode (b. 1952) is a second-generation American electronic video artist. He was first exposed to electronic arts by his father, the electronic music instrument pioneer, Harald Bode. Peer's work first appeared in the mid 1970s. He is now associated with the New York, Owego and Alfred schools of new media. His work has been featured at major museums and festivals including The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and the European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück, Germany. Peer Bode's work harnesses historical and emerging new media technologies in a reflexive investigation that explores and pushes their historical, technical, and semiotic conditions.



**Robert Campbell**  
**Redress, 2005**

*15 minutes and 10 seconds,*  
*single channel projection*

*Redress* is the result of a collaborative effort between Robert Campbell and the Maureen Whiting Company, a contemporary dance troupe. It is the third video in a series that were spawned from this collaboration. *Redress* was shot at the Centrum Creative Artist residency in Port Townsend, Washington in September of 2000. Using the architecture of this century-old military compound, *Redress* plays the fluid movement of professional dancers against the rigid but cracking architecture of the fort. Robert Campbell's video references the connections between beauty and decay, labor and play, memory and reality, against the background and surreal beauty of the fort.

Robert works as an installation artist, digital printmaker, documentary filmmaker and video artist. Since 1984, he has exhibited internationally in Europe, Japan, Canada and the U.S. His dance-on-video work has been presented in the Dance on Camera Festival at New York's Lincoln Center, and in Seattle's New Dance Cinema Festival. Since 2000 Robert has been awarded two Centrum Creative Artist residencies at Fort Worden in Port Townsend, Washington, a Hauberg Fellowship and an Artist-In-Residence at Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington, and a summer artist residency at the Burren College of Art in Ballyvaughan, Ireland. He earned both his BFA and MFA degrees from the School of Film and Video at California Institute of the Arts.



**Barbara Hammer**  
**Sanctus, 1990**

*20 minutes, single channel projection*

Barbara Hammer's film *Sanctus* was made by re-photographing the moving x-rays made by Dr. James Sibley Watson while working for Kodak in the 1930s. The imagery reveals the invisible systems that make our bodies function. *Sanctus* brings light to the magical events that occur during simple actions such as drinking milk or putting on makeup. Protected from the outside environment by skin and bones, humans are unaware of the fragility of their internal systems and how they are constantly under attack from the environment around us. The term *Sanctus* refers to the Christian hymn for the eucharist, the moment in the Catholic mass where the connection between spirit and flesh is recognized.

Barbara Hammer is a visual artist working primarily in film and video and has made over 80 works in a career that spans 30 years. Hammer was a Fulbright Senior Specialist in the fall of 2005 at the Bratislava Academy of Art and Design, Slovakia; she received the first Shirley Clarke Avant-Garde Filmmaker Award in October 2006 and the Women In Film Award 2006 from the St. Louis International Film Festival. In February 2007, she was awarded a tribute and retrospective at the Chinese Cultural University Digital Imaging Center in Taipei. The publication of her memoir, *HAMMER! Making Movies Out Of Sex and Life* this year will coincide with a retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Reina Sophia in Madrid, and the Tate Modern in London.

**Monica Panzarino and Nadine Sobel**  
**Loose Control, 2008**

*4 minutes and 52 seconds, single channel projection*

*Loose Control* is one of a series of collaborative efforts between Monica Panzarino and Nadine Sobel. Based on the choreography and song by Missy Elliot, the artists reveal the construction of music videos. By stripping down the background to a brick wall and performing the dance moves, the two artists seem out of place as they mime the action of the video. With stoic faces the artists become the joke and acknowledge how out of place they seem while attempting to mold themselves into a persona that acts in a pop music video.

Monica Panzarino is a MFA candidate at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and received a BFA from the Institute for Electronic Arts at Alfred University in 2002. Her videos have screened both nationally and internationally, most recently at The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, and the European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück, Germany.

Nadine Sobel currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received her BFA in 2006 from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. Her work examines comfort, empathy, and our ability to change, and she explores these themes using ceramics, video, performance, found objects, and mixed media.



**Aurelia Mihai**  
**Endless Motion, 1998**

*9 minutes and 50 seconds, single channel projection*

Set up as a grid of video footage of stairwells and people moving through them, Aurelia Mihai's video *Endless Motion* becomes both abstraction and reality. The piece asks the viewer to understand it as geometric abstraction, the people acting like marks on a canvas as well as the grid found on surveillance monitors. The longer one spends with the piece the more one recalls memories of passing through similar spaces when oneself could have been a flicker in the path of the camera's eye.

Aurelia Mihai was born in 1968 in Bucharest, Romania) and lives and works in Hamburg, Germany. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Bucharest, at the Academy of Fine Arts Düsseldorf, and at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. She has received numerous grants for her work and has had solo exhibitions in Bucharest and Goch, Hildesheim, Marburg, Düsseldorf, and Bremen, all in Germany. She has also participated in several group exhibitions in prestigious institutions worldwide.



**Jeff Daniel Silva**  
**Second Sight/Split Second**  
*(Raspberry Tom, Kiss, Mouth Trill 2, Raspberry Jill, Slap, Eye Open, Mouth Trill1), 2000*  
*24 minutes and 9 seconds, single channel projection*

*Second Sight/Split Second* is a collection of short videos showing simple actions such as opening an eye, a kiss, a slap in the face, and giving a raspberry. In 2000, Jeff Daniel Silva began shooting with a camera that could take 2000 frames per second rather than the standard 24 frames per second in film. This allows him to slow the footage down with amazing clarity. The resulting footage reveals vignettes of body parts as something much more extraordinary than the actions being filmed. Air blown through lips looks otherworldly, an eye opening reveals the delicate balance of skin moving over muscle. Cropped into circles, the footage resembles Petri dishes holding a secret into our own bodies.

Jeff Daniel Silva is a filmmaker and artist currently based in Somerville, Massachusetts. His films and moving-image installations have been exhibited at festivals, in galleries and in museums in the United States, South America, Canada, Europe and Australia including the Museum of Modern Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and Watkins College of Art & Design in Nashville. Jeff has been an instructor of Sensory Ethnography at Harvard University since 2006, and he is currently also a full-time professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA) teaching film production, history, and theory courses focused on documentary, ethnographic and experimental cinema.



**On the cover:**

**Barbara Hammer, Sanctus, 1990, 20 minutes, single channel projection**



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