

# ON TECHNO-AESTHETICS AND PERFORMANCE: MOVEMENT, DANCE, CINEMA AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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## ABSTRACT

*On Techno-Aesthetics and Performance: Movement, Dance, Cinema and Everyday Life* introduces the pretext for this issue of JSTA and how it relates to the research of the invited editors, Sílvia Pinto Coelho and Liliana Coutinho, the invited author, Ludovic Duhem, and each of the researchers that responded to our initial call for papers.

It also presents an understanding of techno-aesthetics related to J. J. Gibson's theory of affordances, and to a particular proposal of choreographic thinking. Finally, it establishes a relationship with all the articles in the special issue of JSTA.

Keywords: Performance; Affordance; Techno-Aesthetics; Aesthetics.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The choice of theme for this issue of JSTA was primarily intuitive. It emerged as our first choice, influenced by our appreciation for Gilbert Simondon's text, which we frequently share with students in the MA in Performing Arts programs.

Simondon's work *On Techno-Aesthetics* is highly relevant to the arts as it explores the intersection of technology and aesthetics and presupposes a relationship with the technical object that is relational and inter-individual-collective [or transindividual], creating couplings between the inventive and organising abilities of different subjects. (Simondon 2020, p. 367).

The invitation to organise this issue of JSTA went first to Sílvia Pinto Coelho, researcher and choreographer, who then, to create a sensitive constellation related to Simondon's text, invited Liliana Coutinho, a researcher and curator in the field of aesthetics, to co-edit *On Techno-Aesthetics and Performance: Movement, Dance, Cinema and Everyday Life*. Ludovic Duhem, a philosopher and artist teaching at the Haute École des Arts du Rhin, in Strasbourg, was invited to the initial discussions on this issue of JSTA as guest editor. Here, he publishes the essay *Hic et Nunc: Critical Elements for a Techno-Aesthetics of Performance* (2024, pp. 24-39), in which he gives both a state-of-the-art account of techno-aesthetics and, at the same time, extends it to the art of performance.

Delving into the intersection of technology and aesthetics, *On Techno-Aesthetics* is a letter from one philosopher to another. It still conveys the lightness of a person's relationship with another person whom he addresses with cordiality and friendship, an "affective tone" very different from his formal writing.

The letter addressed to Jacques Derrida, dated July 3, 1982, was not initially intended for publication. However, after Simondon's death, Michelle Berger, his widow, sent the letter to the original recipient, and it was decided to publish the letter in a special edition of *Papier du Collège Internationale de Philosophie*, dedicated to Simondon.

This letter was written in the context of establishing the International College of Philosophy, an initiative that Simondon supported. He advocated for including a wide range of subjects, some of which were not part of Derrida's initial project, and he strongly argued for incorporating aesthetics, both in theory and practice. He proposed the foundation of a research field and axiomatics, combining technology and aesthetics. In this framework, Simondon shifts away from the traditional focus on contemplation, emphasising the importance of action and usage as central to the aesthetic experience:

(...) contemplation is not techno-aesthetics' primary category. It's in usage, in action, that it becomes something orgasmic, a tactile means and motor of stimulation. (...). Aesthetics is not only, nor first and foremost, the sensation of the "consumer" of the work of art. It is also, and more originally so, the set of sensations, more or less rich,

of the artists themselves: it's about a certain contact with matter that is being transformed through work. (Simondon, 2012, p.3)

In his unfinished letter, Simondon formulates an idea of techno-aesthetics that includes an appreciation of the intuitive relationship in the making that is perceptual-motor, sensorial and reciprocal. We are made of relations; our being is the active centre of a relationship system. "The body of the operator gives and receives" (Simondon, 2012, p.3). Enjoying the process of making in the arts and everyday life invites us to look at operative modes as forms of care that are not only related to efficiency but, above all, to the ethics of handling and the aesthetics in the making. In performance and the live arts in general, this pleasure of doing and sharing a particular way of interacting with technique (and technology) can help us think of the human as a being of palpable sensory connections that shape ethics and aesthetics, even before they are perceived as "ethics and aesthetics".

Since Simondon does not fully define and close the concept, we invoke "techno-aesthetics" as a field of open possibilities based on what it suggests today. In this sense, we envision a reflection rich in possibilities that nourish and connect technique and aesthetics in a "continuous spectrum" and consider the entire ecology of relationships we are part of.

Techno-aesthetics is not a formal theory or a clear methodology but a proposal to reconsider the traditional oppositions between contemplation and action, matter and form, nature and culture, and overall aesthetics and technics from a new start. Other than simply putting together two disparate fields of experience—technique and aesthetics—the aim is to understand their interrelation, by which all reductionism is overcome, as well as the dualism between function and contemplation, object and subject. A way of thinking that, in fact, finds its ground in the long lineage of aesthetic reflection and joins contemporary philosophical epistemic ventures.

Beyond a possible kinship with the principles of functionalist aesthetics, techno-aesthetics responds to the appeal of technical objects stripped of any aesthetic intent. (Duhem, 2019, p. 4). Indeed, "it may not be true that every aesthetic object has a technical value", but "every technical object has, in some respect, an aesthetic content" (Simondon as cited in Duhem, 2019, p. 4). The very fact of showing technicality without a veil has an "undeniable aesthetic force" for Simondon; provided, however, that particular attention and knowledge can situate the technical object in its system of reality, that is, in its genesis, its functioning and its relationship with the operator and with nature. (Duhem, 2019, p. 4). Thus, Simondon attributes the strongest alienation in the contemporary world to a lack of knowledge about technique and not to technique itself (Simondon as cited in Bogalheiro, 2013).

However, oversimplifying Simondon's intentions using only this incomplete missive can take us away from the richness that the Simondonian proposal as a whole carries. For example, in the third part of the book *Du Mode d' Existence des Objets Techniques* — "The

Essence of Technicity” – after explaining technicity as a phase, Simondon expresses, with enormous density and detail, what he means by the “essence of magic” and discusses how this essence has been divided into “technical thought” and “religious thought.” He presents his understanding of “aesthetic thought” and explains how “technical thought,” “religious thought,” and “aesthetic thought” are all intertwined with both “theoretical thought” and “practical thought.” The discussion culminates in a chapter focusing on “technical thought” and “philosophical thought.” Whilst we do not intend to go entirely into Simondon’s philosophy, we cannot fail to emphasise the complexity of such a suggestive proposal, which has served as a motto for calling for new conversations between technique and aesthetics.

## 2. THE PROPOSAL FOR THIS JSTA ISSUE

Invoking Gilbert Simondon’s *On Techno-Aesthetics*, this edition of the Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts invites us to reflect on artistic processes that involve performance, movement research, and performing arts processes in the broadest sense, including cinema, and that embody what Simondon refers to as “sensorimotoric pleasure”, considering aesthetics in action, both in its reception as well as in its doing by artists or other doers and beings in relation.

This article focuses on the connection between techno-aesthetics and “choreographic thinking”<sup>1</sup> As far as the fruitful implications of techno-aesthetics are concerned, choreographic thinking does not need to realise precisely what Simondon envisages in *Du Mode d’Existence des Objets Techniques* [MEOT]; instead, it enters into dialogue with what is described in *On Techno-Aesthetics*.

For example, the pleasure of an action and the particular satisfaction of a dynamic regime are subjects close to the hearts of dancers and choreographers. While engaging in dances with partners, props or sets, techno-aesthetic relations are performative living facts. “The body of the operator gives and receives” (Simondon, 2012, p.3), or the “tactile, vibratory sensibility comes into play for the active artist” (Simondon, 2012, p.3), are passages from his text that “speak directly” to people who specialise precisely in the search for these aesthetic niches, where aesthetics and *aesthèsis* merge with the pleasure of the “doing in action”. This sensual, sensorial joy of transindividual mobilisation moving is operation at work. In MEOT, Simondon states that the operative functioning presupposes at its base, a condition of possibility, an act of invention, and “Invention is not just an adaptive and defensive reaction; it is a mental operation, a mental functioning that is of the same order as scientific knowledge” (Simondon, 2020, pp. 358-9).

When equipped with instruments, gestures create a unique sensory experience based on how the body interacts with various tools. This relationship is not merely defined by the agent’s intention or the end result of the finished object (Duhem, 2019, p.5). It is a feedback loop relation of joy. Thus, there is an “endless purpose”, a “more-than” of the body in

1 In “Práticas de Atenção: Ensaios de Desterritorialização e Performance Coreográfica” we suggest a possible definition of “choreographic thinking” that we relate here to “techno-aesthetics” (Coelho, 2018).

movement with—whether associated with tools or not—which reveals a techno-aesthetic content beyond contemplation and functionality. (Duhem, 2019, p.5)

This “more than” is extensively explored, for instance, in Erin Manning's *Always More Than One* (2012), where Manning suggests “technicity” as “the process that stretches out from technique” as “the art of the event”, “the field where movement begins to dance”. “Technicity is a craft—it is how the field of techniques touches its potential” (Manning, 2016, p.187).

Simondon adds to technicity the anthropological side of aesthetic appreciation and action, “the *aesthèsis*, the fundamental perceptive intuition, is part of a culture. It acts like a pre-selector, separating the acceptable and the unacceptable, and determining whether one will accept or refuse.” (Simondon, 2012, p.4).

Within the performing arts, we can also distinguish various cultures, and it is from ours, a specific 20th-century cultural lineage of choreographic arts—known as Euro-American Modern Dance and Postmodern Dance—that we speak of techno-aesthetic possibilities of “choreographic thinking” (Coelho, 2018, p. 46).

One of this proposal's main goals is to explore several techno-aesthetic aspects of choreographic thinking in the future. This can be done by drawing parallels with various examples, such as the machinery of factory assembly lines and the synchronised bodies of musical theatre choruses. Similar ideas have been previously discussed in works like *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Hewitt, 2005) or *Social Choreography and Its Perspectives in the Face of Order and Disorder* (Cvejić, 2024a). Additionally, the mechanics of cinematic movement encourage an aesthetic appreciation that we would like to describe as “techno-aesthetic.”

“On techno-aesthetics” encourages us to engage with students and share complex ideas, prompting them to reflect on mysterious statements, such as, “Knowledge cannot be found online unless there is already an embodied technical predisposition for reading and writing.” This perspective illustrates how we can trace the development of technical thinking related to reading and writing. It allows us to draw parallels with other techniques, such as simply standing, walking, or using our attention, which support living as we know it. Subsequently, it is possible to work on the transindividual phases where tasks as complex as dancing in a group are carried out.

### **3. IS CHOREOGRAPHIC THINKING TECHNO-AESTHETIC? IF SO, HOW?**

While considering our own movement capacities, we can explore and develop choreographic hypotheses, considering the mechanical implications we experience as individuals, such as jumping over a gate.

Hypothesis 1- We can easily jump over a gate. 2- We jump over the gate and use the acceleration momentum to continue running or rolling on the ground. 3- We are filmed jumping over a gate, and we look “as if” we are taking advantage of the acceleration dynamics to continue running or rolling on the ground. In several takes, that will eventually be edited in a moving image sequence. The jump is part of a cinematic ensemble that can grow in technical complexity and make the spectator think of overcoming gravity. It is like magic!

When we see ourselves as technical beings or components of mechanical systems, we stop perceiving our bodily parts—like hands and feet—as mere physical tools for movement, such as levers for jumping. Instead, these parts become integrated into a larger framework, akin to an “obstacle course” or a character’s escape in a Buster Keaton movie. Human bodies can engage and connect with the Cinema machine and constitute an ensemble. Here is an example, beautifully illustrated by Ben Model’s analysis of Buster Keaton’s “Cops—real-time speed (reel 2)” (Model, 2012, 7’). The appreciation of Model highlights Keaton’s technique of making his choreographic speed [as an actor and stuntman] match the speed of a car while filming at different speeds, creating the illusion of Keaton’s character catching a moving car—as if flying.

In this work, the techniques of cinema and choreography come together in a techno-aesthetic ode. They are presented as sequences that allow the audience to feel and engage with a narrative and, even in the absence of a conventional plot, to experience the choreographic integration of people, cars, and cinematic machinery ensemble.

The enjoyment these challenges provide closely aligns with the technical aspects of our relationship with physics: experiencing weightlessness or overcoming gravity and acting quickly without allowing reflective thought to interfere, even momentarily. This connection clearly links aesthetics to technical thinking. Aesthetics often involves a certain memory or desire for a mechanical relationship.

We are familiar with the scenic devices and technical illusions used in the theatre that create various spaces, states, and moments of flight. For instance, dancers in pointe shoes can glide through scenic fog that represents a swamp instead of simply walking [e.g., *La Sylphide* Filippo Taglioni (1832), August Bournonville (1836)]. Similarly, theatre characters fly and vanish through an imagined window or above, through the “sky”, traversing the scenic web. These representations challenge our beliefs and engage in a dialogue with the aesthetic desires of different cultures.

In cinema, Charles Chaplin (e.g., *Modern Times*, 1936), Buster Keaton, and Jacques Tati (e.g., *Playtime*, 1967) captivate us empathetically by portraying their characters’ journeys. They showcase the surprising interplay between body mechanics and the cinematic landscape’s technical and magical possibilities. These ideas or images work on the micro-scale of our affordance relations if we want to relate techno-aesthetics to the “theory of affordances” (Gibson, 1979, p. 119)<sup>2</sup>.

To connect techno-aesthetics with the “theory of affordances,” we should consider concepts and images operating at the micro-level of

<sup>2</sup> “The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb to afford is found in the dictionary, but the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.” (Gibson, 1979, p.119)

these relationships. Step by step, who or what invites a relationship? Does a hole invite an index finger? Does an index finger invite pressing a doorbell? For instance, when reflecting on affordance, one might think of some persons' irresistible urge to insert their index finger into an electrical socket. This action is often performed by those unaware of the potential dangers involved. This scenario brings up important cultural considerations. Individuals unfamiliar with the power of electricity—such as children or people from communities that have not encountered electrical systems (a rarity in today's world)—may insert their fingers into an electrical socket without hesitation. The body seems to be asking for specific fittings. However, we wonder if it is “the body” or if it is a human individual in his individuation process with technique. These inclinations towards physical fittings or dangers raise the question of whether they stem from an instinctive response of the body or from the process of technical individuation (considering the milieu, the ensembles, and the knowledge brought by successive technical transductions and collective individuations).

In one of the few visible connections between his two works—MEOT and ILFI—Simondon states at the conclusion of the book MEOT that “the technical object, insofar as it has been invented, thought about, loved, assumed by a human subject, becomes the support and symbol of that relationship which we would like to call “transindividual”” (Rodríguez, 2020, p. 20). In the pre-individual reside the singularities which, precisely because they are so, cannot form a definable whole. Human beings, between the collective and the psychic, follow the path from the pre-individual to the transindividual. (Rodríguez, 2020, p. 18).

Concerning the joy one feels when moving between new constructions that he considers to be both ethical and aesthetic, Simondon says, “The techno-aesthetic feeling seems to be a category that is more primitive than the aesthetic feeling alone or than the technical aspect considered from the angle of functionality alone (which is an impoverishing perspective)” (2012, p.6).

We feel that the joy of technique as an aesthetic is important to focus on and develop these days since there is an acceleration that shortens the possibility of someone enjoying a technical relationship in the making.

It seems that Simondon's proposal for formulating and teaching a techno-aesthetic also suggests that the techno-aesthetic human is very ignorant of his own technique and does not allow himself to pay concerted and reciprocal attention to it. There is little concern with the techno-aesthetic human being in his ensemble and inside of the techno-nature. To develop a true ecological concern, we ought to be able to enjoy technical thought, acknowledge and play it better, and listen to it as it is produced to be related to the human in reciprocal ensembles.

Using GPS imagery while moving is an example of how tools involve a technological culture and history that comprehends how things look from above, such as in maps and cartography, in a broad way. The idea

of flying and observing from an aerial perspective is deeply embedded in the culture of GPS navigation. Choreographic thinking encompasses embodied technological and aesthetic elements; our historical understanding of technology and aesthetic preferences influence this perspective. They influence our movement choices.

On a macro scale, the geo-strategy of war<sup>3</sup>—such as remaining invisible in strategically placed trenches or developing GPS imagery on the move—aligns with the goals of any mammal capable of creatively and ingeniously advancing with technology. Human animals perceive places on the run; they run, hide, and avoid or seek others even if they do not know the place around them.

If we can incorporate all these examples into choreographic thinking in its broadest sense, where does aesthetics fit in? How can we explore the relationship between machinery and choreographic thinking within the arts? And how, in turn, are experiments on the arts able to infuse the world at large, with which it is deeply entangled, with a more conscious, liberating, and plural relationship with the technological dimensions of our daily lives? Choreographic techno-aesthetic explorations can involve mediation that leads to experiences of surprise and magic or simply fascination.

Rather than looking at the human animal as a machine, we are approaching Simondon's desire to show us that technical objects are individuals with the characteristics of beings that have a life system and context that is always more than what is visible in the material object. They have a history. Objects evolve with their surroundings, are part of the landscape to which we belong and die of obsolescence or lack of affordance. Therefore, technical objects have their poetics and a life. They "live" with us in transindividual relations.

Paraphrasing Rodríguez on Simondon, we can say that the genesis of the individual can only emerge if we get rid of the very notion of the individual, "otherwise, we are looking for what we already knew we would find. (...) There is no beginning, but a process of individuation (...) and the thought that tries to capture it must know that it is, in turn, individuating itself." (Rodríguez, 2020, p.17).

This joy of having a life of technical objects is also what we observed when we chose the image of Robert Rauschenberg in *Pelican* (1963)—the choreographic piece in which he travels on speed skates—for our call for papers. We also thought of Rauschenberg's joy while interacting with the plastic materials he was working with during the same period when he was involved in the construction of moving materials with various choreographers, like Merce Cunningham, and with engineers, for example, at E.A.T—Experiments in Art and Technologies. E.A.T. is a culmination of technical and aesthetic experiences originally and literally proposed that way and produced many failures that were "future successes."

<sup>3</sup> Talking of war brings to mind the proposals in the manifestos of the futurist Marinetti, an advocate of a regime we reject. Simondon does mention Marinetti in *On Techno-Aesthetics*, but he does not develop a full critique of his texts.



Figure 1. Robert Rauschenberg in his *Pelican* (1965) © Robert J. Moore.

Due to its ethical rigour, its relationship with physics, and the concept of falling, contact improvisation also evokes an idea of techno-aesthetics. *Fall After Newton* (Paxton, 1987) is a documentary in which Steve Paxton narrates the evolution of contact improvisation work where several dancers play the roles of falling and colliding bodies. How did this practice and ethic evolve into an aesthetic and even to social dance forms? Is the observation of weight, contact, dynamics, and acceleration a manifestation of techno-aesthetics? Returning to the ideas of weight and flying, how do pointe shoes work as small machines for ballerinas to play with weight? Could the use of fans in the hands of characters in dance and opera pieces, like *Carmen*, be considered percussion instruments? Are these objects still used to punctuate speech with rhythms and pauses in social situations in Spain?

We do perceive objects through their expressiveness in action. Consider the use of blackboard chalk by artists on stage. Various types of tape—such as Scotch tape, paper tape, plastic tape, and scenery paper—also play a significant role in performance art. The visual and sound presence of these materials resonates deeply with our emotions.

Aesthetic sensibility can be used to build a machine, and the construction or use of a machine can create a new aesthetic trend. Technicised landscapes, such as the ones quoted by Simondon, “metal forests” or the “aesthetics of water reservoirs”, can mark an era. For example, when we talk about water tanks, we cannot help but think of the ones that “decorate” the rooftops of New York and appear in the photographs of Trisha Brown’s iconic piece *Roof Piece* (1971).

### 3. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ARTICLES

*On Techno-Aesthetics and Performance: Movement, Dance, Cinema and Everyday Life* hosts five articles, one, already mentioned at the

beginning of this article, by Ludovic Duhem, building on Simondon's proposal on opening the field of studies of techno-aesthetics. *Hic et Nunc: Critical Elements for a Techno-Aesthetics of Performance* (Duhem 2024, pp. 24-39) extends this field to the art of performance. All the other articles responded to our call for contributions. They are very varied and completely fulfil our desire to meet with peers, which was the origin of the call text.

Bojana Cvejić's essay *To Perform: Listening, Transindividually*, engages in a dialogue with two art performances and explores the ideas of philosophers who are also bridging the gap with the field of techno-aesthetics, such as Bernard Stiegler. It also examines the perception of action and the intertwined, embodied vision of coexistence articulated by Alva Noë. This work brings the Simondonian concept of transindividuation to the forefront of the discussion, highlighting the perceptual experience of listening as an embodied action. It intertwines bodily, historical, and imaginary movements, distinguishing between an individualist mode of perception and a transindividual one.

What kind of comprehension of our being in the world is allowed when we understand our perception through this perspective? Other than the linear heir of the divide of subject and object relationship between individual and collective, transindividuality allows us to understand "the relations in which subjects co-individuate in an action of performing listening together or by engaging with an artefact or a technical object which transmits cultural memory and repotentializes its use" as well as the intricated modes through which "the individual and the collective reciprocally co-evolve" (Cvejić, 2024b, p.40).

Transindividuality allows us to understand our existence as co-dependent and co-determined beings and contexts as potencies for sensitive, historical and social agency: "The transindividual becomes that place, event, situation, technology, practice or collective operation in which the histories and the potentials that individuals bring in their mutual relations are put to work and repotentialized toward future" (Cvejić, 2024b, p. 40).

The individual is understood here as a knot or an "operation" within a system of relations and not an ontologically separated existence. The transitional character of listening is presented here as the action that allows us to better understand this process because, contrary to vision, "hearing cannot be reflected in an acoustic mirror, the way our gaze meets us. Our hearing only finds its reflection in another, in the eyes of another, so to speak." (Cvejić, 2024b, p. 44).

Filipe Martins' *On the Haptic Dimension of Cinema: the Role of Absence*, having a phenomenological starting point, addresses the embodied experience of experiencing a movie, dealing with the haptic dimension but looking for equilibrium, reminding us that cinema involves mostly seeing and listening. Filipe Martins's essay offers an important account of how the absence of direct stimulus in other senses is what holds the potentiality for the haptic experience. Stating the positions that advocate for cinema as a haptic experience and its critics, Martins

underlines a distance between the filmic image and the actual body. This distance impeaches an immersive experience but nurtures other levels of embodied relationship where the senses are activated: “The haptic dimension produces participatory, performative, co-authorial sensations” (Martins, 2024, p. 66) and enacts presence. In his words, “absence is transformed into virtuality”, the potential for the performance, participation and activation of the senses. The next essay also addresses the potential and the virtuality of images, or to be more precise, of diagrams, towards embodied experience and performance.

In *Becoming-body: embodiment and affect experience*, Ana Ramos appeals to the practice of an ancestral body technique, yoga, analysing *tadasana*, the “mountain pose” as a diagram, from which we can be conscious of our embodied existence as a “perceptive-event” affecting and being affected by the environment in relation with it emerges— “Perceptive-events perform a self-organisation of the virtual tendencies present in the relational field” —and a “site of pulsation of immanent movements” (Ramos, 2024, p. 74).

Standing as a mountain is more than a simple pose; it is a durational “directing force” for becoming a body. The diagram, as Ramos presented it, “refers to the incorporeal materiality that moves the body. In other words, this incorporeal materiality is the body as it moves” (Ramos, 2024, p. 75) in its virtuality and potentiality, allowing one to seize the body before its corporeal appearance and allowing one to experience the mutual affection between body, consciousness, and environment. Having as thought companions the works of William James, Gilles Deleuze, and the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and Brian Massumi, even if not using directly Techno-Aesthetics, the way Ramos overcomes the split between subject and object through aesthetic research, as well as her emphasis on relations, allow us to dialogue with this essay in the context of the open field initiated by Simondon’s letter.

Agustina Arrarás takes from the call that both Derrida and Simondon did on orientating their work towards aesthetic and performative programme, a philosophical research in a close relationship with the practice of arts, inquiring if “techno-aesthetics has been both addressed and understood in this programme of practical, performative explorations” (Arrarás, 2024, p. 93), and arguing that both can contribute to the actual debates on performative studies. In her essay, titled *A Performative Reading of a Postcard Never Sent. Simondon, Derrida and Performance*, Arrarás dives into the text of Simondon as a performative event in itself, addressing and interpretatively opening—we can call it like that—the textual materiality of Simondon’s letter, including the fact that it was never sent to its addressee and it is destiny as a “public affair.”

Analysing the examples of Simondon, Arrarás stresses the aesthetic experience as one of “sensory-motor pleasure” or the one that acknowledges the “pleasure of action.” This prompts her to write about an aesthetics of what is invisible, not of forms or disparate objects, but of

tensions, relations, interconnections, potentialities, virtualities, distances and atmospheres among them, inviting us to experience the overall intertwined field of experience from which forms, subjects and objects emerge. An aesthetics of the processes and of the flowing of times and beings, as is stated in her quotation of Simondon:

(...) a light is someone waiting, an intention, a desire, imminent news, a ringing telephone that one won't hear but that will resound far away in another house. Here, we witness the beauty found within the action; it is not simply instantaneous but is also made up of the rhythms of use in peak hours and evening hours. (Arrarás, 2024, p. 96).

This web of action includes affection: “is the affective state that implies being inserted in a relational network in the world” (Arrarás, 2024, p. 96). When addressing the effect of the smile of Mona Lisa, another example given by Simondon, in the lips of one who is in a relationship with this painting, Arrarás also points to the long and still pertinent debate that surrounds the philosophy of aesthetics about the subject of empathy (Coutinho, 2024)<sup>4</sup>. With the example of the horse that does not carry one with its utilitarian duties, Arrarás also raises the potential of relationships addressed through the angle of techno-aesthetics on going away from the human-centred interests in establishing relationships with non-humans—be it animals, for instance, or technical objects. In addition, analysing the performative examples of Derrida's in what concerns the embodied experience of painting, Arrarás shows how techno-aesthetics extends itself as a mode of comprehension of our relationship with more conventional works of art, understanding them as performances *per se*.

Finally, Catarina Patricio grants us with an audiovisual essay, which is part of an autonomous section of the call we launched but it is totally in line with the theme of this special issue.

#### 4. FINAL REFLECTION

The proposal of this special issue of JSTA on the pretext of Simondon's letter “on techno-aesthetics” was an important challenge for the editors. It allowed us to read and re-read some of the texts associated with it, having the privilege of receiving new and original insights from authors “thinking with” techno-aesthetics [as opposed to thinking about Simondon's techno-aesthetics].

As a closing note, we would like to emphasise that it is perhaps important to “acknowledge” our own “techno-aesthetic” abilities in order to have a concern or even a care for embodied technical thinking. A care that concerns us as a community and, at the same time, can allow us to produce rather than consume technical relationships. For example, it can help us opening up channels of discovery for “more than” the information that “logo-machines” exchange with each other<sup>5</sup>.

The stage of romantic ballet is a techno-aesthetic ensemble whose main expression of technicity is the sliding becoming of dancers in pointe shoes as ghosts of a transindividual imaginary of a specific ethnic group, culturally situated in space and time. Romantic ballet as a techno-aesthetic ensemble contributed to the invention of stage machinery and the technology of the pointe shoe in classical dance technique.

Talking about ballet pointe shoes without talking about a certain European romantic period always seems to be a conversation without the history of the technical object. Its invention is attributed to Marie Taglioni, and not mentioning the pre-individual ensemble that gives birth to this singular techno-aesthetic style is always an incomplete techno-aesthetic relation that we wish to nourish. This is a way of saying that we empathise with Simondon when he reinforces the importance of understanding humans in their evolution with techniques and incorporated objects. Aesthetic thought is techno-aesthetic because the human being is techno-aesthetic. In other words, no individual or group of human beings exists without technique, and the techniques produce its aesthetics.

We cannot conclude this text without first expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Carlos Natálio and Alexandra Balona, the directors of the journal, for inviting us to edit this issue of JSTA. We extend our thanks to Ludovic Duhem for updating his state-of-the-art piece on Techno-Aesthetics, to Nuno Cera for the photography in the cover, and to Filipe Martins, Bojana Cvejic, Agustina Arrarás, Ana Ramos, Catarina Patrício, finally to Steven Shaviro, Pedro Florêncio, Joana Martinho Bicacro, Ana Pais, Manuel Bogalheiro, Ricardo Canales, Ana Godinho Gil, and Davide Scarso. Engaging with insightful contributions in such a brief timeframe has been a tremendous privilege.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article was written with financial support from FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia – Portugal), reference: CEECIND/04322/2017/CP1463/CT0009, under the auspices of the research unit ICNOVA.

<https://sciproj.ptcris.pt/5097EEC>

Article received on 1/11/2024 and accepted on 10/12/2024.

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