

## Thinking with the (Dancing) Body

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## Marking in Dance

- Creating an external structure connected to a thought – whether that external structure be a gesture, dance form, or linguistic structure – is part of an interactive strategy of bootstrapping thought by providing an anchor for mental projection.
- Marking a phrase provides the scaffold to mentally project more detailed structure than could otherwise be held in mind.

### Hand Marking



Fig 1a



Fig 1b

## Three functions of marking

1. *Marking-for-self*: dancers use their body to encode an aspect of a phrase for themselves. This may be for reinforcing memory, reflecting on sequence, or for scrutiny of spatial relations, among other reasons.
2. *Marking-for-others*, dancers use their bodies to encode an aspect of a phrase that others can focus attention on. For example, before a new performance, choreographer, choreographic assistant, and lighting manager review all phrases on stage for space.
3. *Joint-marking*: two or more dancers run through a phrase as a tightly coupled team, verifying timing and grips jointly for each other.

### Small vs. Large Marking



Fig 2a



Fig 2b



Fig 2c.

### Idiosyncratic vs. Conventional Marking



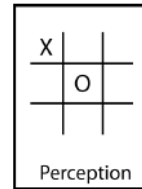
3a.



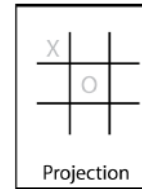
3b.

## Two cognitive benefits

1. Marking is a way of *anchoring projection* to a target. By providing a marked version of a target, a dancer can project a better representation of the target than imagination unaided. Marking, therefore, is a causally important way of augmenting thought. It is a component of a *distributed vehicle of thought*, consisting of an inner part and an outer part, which enables clearer thoughts. (cf. Hutchins 05)
2. Marking is a way of *priming* the neural system of a dancer, thereby enhancing imagination (or projection) by activating cortical elements that would be involved in the full-out movement. Marking is a way of enhancing the vividness and detail of imagination.



Perception



Projection



Imagination