

Le corps en question(s)/The Body in Question(s)

A catalogue/essay collection

An interdisciplinary and interactive web creation

TWO WORKS BY CHOREOGRAPHER ISABELLE VAN GRIMDE AND GUESTS

involving 21 artists, 9 scientists

The catalogue/essay collection

Edited by: Cristian Berco-Sean Caulfield-Isabelle Van Grimde.

Published by: Department of Art & Design, University of Alberta and Van Grimde Corps Secrets.

The web creation

Artistic direction: Isabelle Van Grimde.

Interactive web design: Jérôme Delapierre.

Programming: Ingenisoft Inc.

Editorial committee: Dr Cristian Berco, Dr Sean Caulfield, Paul Cassar and Isabelle Van Grimde.

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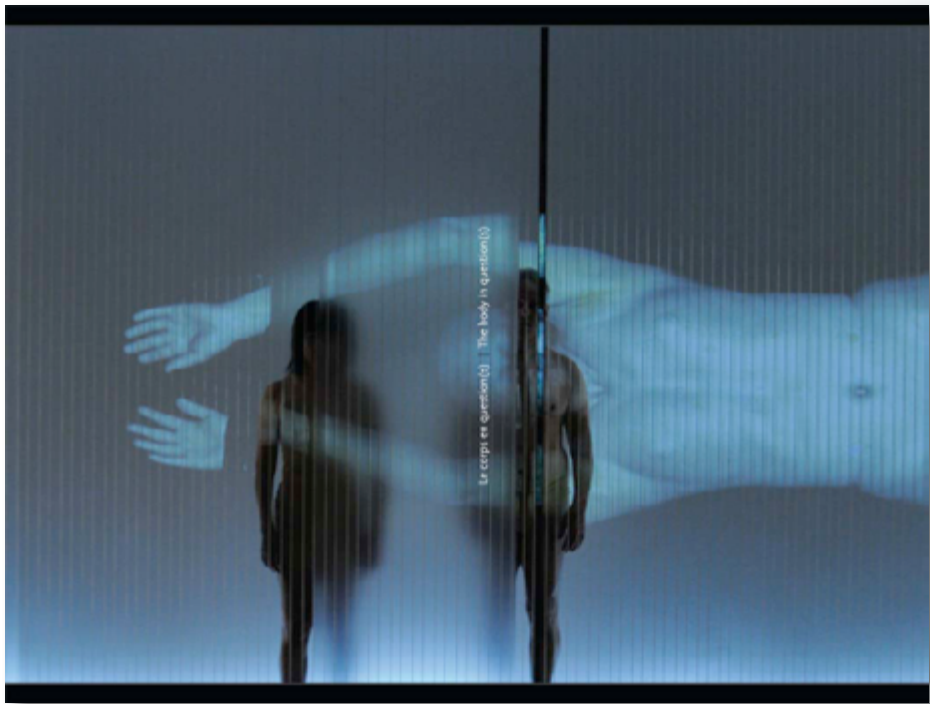


PRESENTATION OF WORKS

The perception of the body is one of the themes underlying the artistic approach and theoretical research of choreographer Isabelle Van Grimde. After interviewing various specialists throughout the world, she resolved to share her findings with other artists and researchers. In 2012, she thus brought together eight visual and media artists, five dancers and two theoreticians to consider how the profound social, cultural and technological changes in modern societies are affecting the way we conceptualize and interpret the body. Offering a kaleidoscopic view of the body, [the creation-exhibition *Le corps en question\(s\)/The Body in Question\(s\)*](#) was presented in its world premiere at the Festival TransAmériques at the Galerie de l'UQAM. Two years later, this hybrid work has spawned two other eponymous works, equally hybrid: an exhibition catalogue containing essays by scientists, historians and theoreticians, which pursue and extend the themes of the creation-exhibition; and an interactive web creation in which Internet users can immerse themselves in some twenty scenes based on the original work, and access all texts from the publication, as well as behind-the-scenes documents related to the creative process (texts, photographs, audio-visual material).

CATALOGUE/ESSAY COLLECTION

The catalogue/essay collection, a co-publication of the Department of Art and Design of the University of Alberta and Van Grimde Corps Secrets, provides multiple perspectives on the body and on the creation-exhibition itself, with remarkable photographs and articles by twelve authors. It calls into question many preconceived notions about the body we inhabit but know so little about, exploring such subjects as the digital body as artistic material and the dancer-spectator experience, as well as presenting workshop notes and reflections on genetics and the implications of medical advances. Designed to accompany the exhibition and performances, it is also an interesting reference work on its own. It is on sale at the work's presentation sites and by mail. It can be ordered at info.vgcorpsscrets@gmail.com. The publication's essays are incorporated in another form in the web creation.



“It is as if we carry the burden of old Cartesian notions about bounded and clear bodies embedded in our cultural assumptions that so shape our daily interactions,” explain co-editors Isabelle Van Grimde, Sean Caulfield and Cristian Berco in the preface of the publication *Le corps en question(s)/The Body in Question(s)*. “As postmodern understandings about the malleability of the body take hold and slowly seep into learned behaviours and neural architectures, the task of breaking the hold of old, constraining assumptions and truly living our performative bodies acquires new urgency.

© Photo : Michael Slobodian / Design : Sue Colberg / Performers : Marie Brassard, Brian Webb

Given the confluence of shifting perspectives and inherited assumptions about the meaning and use of our bodies, questions remain. If bodies are, indeed, multiple, how do we manage the performances that shape these identitary iterations? How do we navigate the dangerous shoals between our physical and technological bodies, our material and constructed bodies? How do we square our imagined bodies with those shaped in everyday social encounters?

It was the interest in these questions that brought the editors of this collection together. [...]

Bringing together artists, performers, researchers, and the public, this exhibit and the accompanying collection of essays shapes a constructive dialogue that questions and destabilizes ingrained assumptions. Just as one body has given way to many, the methodological focus on interactive perspectives from fields not commonly associated with each other highlights the necessity of multiple, personal truths coming together to explore the body. In so doing, *The Body in Question(s)* emerges as a prism where shifting and varied perspectives on the body interact and converse to engage these questions of current concern.”

LIST OF WRITERS AND ESSAYS

- Mireille Perron, *The Body in Question(s): Being-in-common*
- Raphael Cuir, *What body?*
- Marilène Oliver, *The Digitized Body as an Artist’s Material*
- Paul Cassar, *The Cellular Era: Components of our body, and surrogates for Ourselves*
- Lianne McTavish, *The Body as an Ecosystem*
- Cristian Berco, *Reading the Other’s Body*
- Roland Huesca, *The Aesthetic Experience, or the Adventures of the Body Narrative*
- Fabienne Cabado, *Spectator at work*
- Brian Webb, *La danse, A Corporeal Experience*
- Monique Régimbald-Zeiber, *The extreme body: mariebandme (notes on the creative process)*
- Timothy Caulfield, *Risk, Research and Your Tissue*
- Dawna Gilchrist, *The God Spark: Are we more than the sum of our DNA?*

CREDITS

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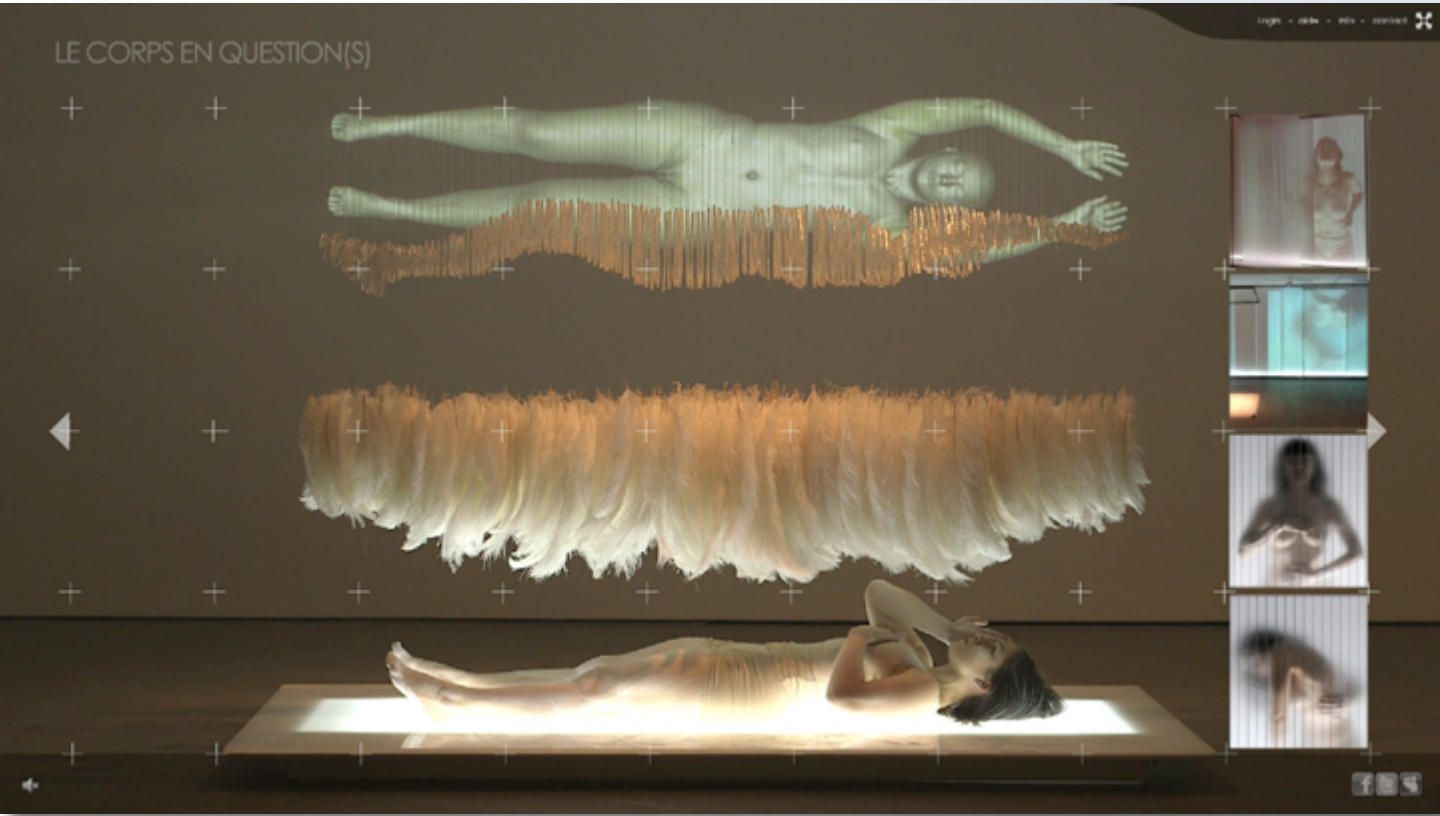
The catalog and collection of essays *Le corps en question(s) / The Body in Question(s)* is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

INTERACTIVE WEB CREATION

This digital platform is a web recreation of the eponymous multiform work conceived and piloted by Isabelle Van Grimde. Developed in conjunction with web artist Jérôme Delapierre and Ingenisoft Inc., the interactive work deconstructs the creation-exhibition, reinventing and underscoring new facets in its transposition within the space-time of the virtual sphere. It provides Internet users with an immersive artistic experience, allowing them to teleport themselves to various spaces, where montages of videos, photographs, drawings and texts reveal multiple dimensions of a work simultaneously, and where they may interact with the work. In the process, they will also be able to access unreleased material, texts from the publication, and documents related to the artistic approach (videos, photographs, sounds, texts) of the fifteen artists and researchers who collaborated on the creation-exhibition.

An evolving and upgradeable structure designed to retain and fuel the interest of Internet users, the web creation will be regularly enhanced with new documents by various partners, stimulating reflection on the themes explored. The platform also includes a private virtual forum for exchanges among the collaborators and research/creation partners of Van Grimde Corps Secrets.

By offering three types of experiences—immersive, informative and creative—this platform is a source of discoveries, a meeting-place, and an incubator for reflections on the body, on dance, on interdisciplinary collaboration, and on the possible connections between the arts and sciences.



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ABOUT THE WORKS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL CREATION

From diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, the artists and theoreticians involved in this creation-exhibition each offer a powerful and singular vision of the body, in its most primal and futurist dimensions. While Derek Besant makes the body an island in *Perpetual Night*, a work that enwraps the façade of the exhibition site, Sean Caulfield, Royden Mills and Blair Brennan evoke the body in an subtle mix of technologies and complex and imaginary biological processes in *Of the Named Substances*. Monique Régimbald-Zeiber juxtaposes a painting of her skin against the genomic information of a performer appearing on mobile supports in *Le corps extrême : mariebandme*. Marilène Oliver’s sculpture *Dreamcatcher* combines concrete and symbolic images of the body in the interactive piece Melanix. Execute uses medical imaging to provide an inner view, while geneticist Dawna Gilchrist questions the supremacy of humans over animals in *The Godspark: Are We More Than the Sum of our DNA?*

The web creation also features excerpts from Isabelle Van Grimde’s *Présences chorégraphiques* filmed from various angles, as well as her *Synapses* videos made with the artists of Foumalade, which explore a world in which the computer allows us to be everywhere at once, eliminating the need for a physical presence in our social relations and blurring the boundaries between our primal, archaic body and future body. *Darkness Separates Us*, a media work by Nadia Myre, deconstructs the choreographer’s gestural vocabulary to evoke the memory of the body, while in *Reading the Other’s Body*, historian Cristian Berco analyzes the wearing of veils in terms of the social body and identity. *Delicate Issue*, a video by the late artist Kate Craig, illustrates how our distance from a subject influences our perception.

“In providing theoretical and choreographic elements as a source to create original works rooted in their individual experiences, my aim was to elicit multiple echoes of my own questioning and offer a multifaceted experience that could lead viewers to renew their perception of the body,” explains choreographer Isabelle Van Grimde, the project’s curator and artistic director. “Some of the exhibited artists examine the future by placing the living body in dialogue with its genome, with its digital transposition, or its dreamlike dimension. Others resist the technological shift, staging the human being in timeless labour, using tools to extend the physical self—this is the original cyborg. Today’s cyborg extends the mind through its links to computers, enables self-projection into different spaces, and shapes new images of the body. What is the role, indeed the fate, of the physical body in an age where technology allows us to alter it and virtual reality transforms the way we relate to the world? In response to these questions, the artists explore new ways of presenting the body, adding poignancy to the fleeting traces and feeling presence of the dancers in the exhibition.”

The sets were designed by architect Anick La Bissonnière, assisted by Éric O. Lacroix, and the sound environment was created by Thom Gossage. A detailed description of the exhibited works is available [here](#) (pages 8 to 12).

BIOGRAPHIES

PRINCIPAL DESIGNERS

ISABELLE VAN GRIMDE – *Choreographer, exhibition curator, artistic director of works and co-editor of the catalogue/essay collection*

A dancer-choreographer and the founder and artistic director of the Montreal company Van Grimde Corps Secrets, Isabelle Van Grimde has some thirty choreographies and several publications on dance to her credit. Her international career has featured interdisciplinary collaborations that expand the horizons of contemporary dance, opening up a wide range of possible perceptions of the body and the work. Her artistic approach, which renews the dialogue between dance and music, is fuelled by her involvement in the creation of digital instruments. Authors, scientists, visual and media artists, architects and theatrical artists are among those she integrates into her creative process, as reflected in *The Body in Question(s)*.

An artist and researcher, she has endeavoured to build bridges between the arts and sciences since 2005; it was then that she began delving into the question of bodily perception through interviews conducted in five countries with figures from the artistic, scientific and intellectual communities. Enjoying close ties with various university research groups in Quebec, she is regularly invited to discuss her research and interdisciplinary experiences at international scientific conferences. In 2011, the Canada Council for the Arts awarded her the Jacqueline Lemieux Prize in recognition of her outstanding contributions to dance in Canada and abroad.

Dr CRISTIAN BERCO – *Author-researcher and co-editor of the catalogue/essay collection*

Cristian Berco is an Associate Professor at Bishop’s University. He is the Canada Research Chair in Social and Cultural Difference, as well as Coordinator of the Crossing Borders Research Cluster. He has published extensively on the questions of genre, sexuality and illness in early modern Spain. His current research, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, explores the themes of genre and ethnicity during the Spanish Inquisition.

SEAN CAULFIELD – *Visual artist and co-editor of the catalogue/essay collection*

Sean Caulfield is a professor in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Alberta. His prints, drawings and book works have been presented throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Japan. Recent exhibitions include *Perceptions of Promise*, held at the Chelsea Art Museum in New York and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary; *The New World* at the Modern and Contemporary Art Centre in Debrecen, Hungary; and *Imagining Science* at the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton.

Caulfield has received numerous grants and awards for his work, including the Triennial Prize at the 2nd Bangkok Triennial International Print and Drawing Exhibition, the SSHRC Fine Arts Creation Grant, a Canada Council Travel Grant, and a Visual Arts Fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council. His work can be found in various public and private collections, including the Houghton Library of Harvard University, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, and the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas in Austin.

JÉRÔME DELAPIERRE – *Visual artist and interactive designer*

Jérôme Delapierre studied computation arts and interactive design at Concordia University, as well as contemporary art and new media at IMUS (Université de Savoie) in France. Currently the artistic director of Anartistic, he is also a freelance visual designer and researcher with Topological Media Lab. He has collaborated with various artists and researchers, including PK Langshaw, Sha Xin Wei, Michael Montanaro and Jean Derome, and his work has been presented at festivals and events in several countries. His research focuses on the relationship between humans and new technologies, as well as on non-linear interactivity, rooted in studies of urban social behaviour. He is also interested in new ways of creating visual sets and environments through eclectic interactive projection techniques. His work encompasses visual design, web design, video, interactive installations, performance and stage design.

INGENISOFT INC.

Formerly known as Artisan Informatique (2001-2011), Ingenisoft has been a leader in web design for twelve years. It oversees Internet projects from conception to marketing, and has developed web applications for such clients as TVA Films, Desjardins, Éditions Hurtubise, Théâtre Jankijou, Théâtre Sibyllines, and singers Marie-Pier Perreault and Louis-Philippe Robillard. Its digital platforms have been created by a team of individuals who are passionate about the Internet and new technologies: project manager Alexandre Perreault, artistic director Éric Robillard, graphic artist Annik Vachon, and programmer Dany Parent.

Biographies of those involved in the original work of the series *Le corps en question(s)/The Body in Question(s)* and of the authors of the catalogue/essay collection can be found [here](#).

CREDITS

A production of Van Grimde Corps Secrets.

Artistic direction: Isabelle Van Grimde.
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Van Grimde Corps Secrets is funded by the **Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec** for this project.

Web creation based on the contents of the creation-exhibit *Le corps en question(s) / The Body in Question(s)* presented in 2012 by the **Festival TransAmériques** with la **galerie de l'UQAM** in coproduction with the **Festival TransAmériques** (Montreal), the **CanDance Network** (Toronto), the **Canada Dance Festival** (Ottawa), the **Brian Webb Dance Company, the University of Alberta** (Edmonton), the **Centennial Theatre** (Lennoxville).

An interdisciplinary symposium, also titled *the Body in Question(s)*, predated the exhibit and featured some of the research findings presented in this platform. Held at Bishop's University in March 2012, the symposium was organized by Van Grimde Corps Secrets, Centennial Theater and the Crossing Borders Research Cluster and funded in part by Bishop's University Speakers Committee and the Canada Research Chairs Program.

Van Grimde Corps Secrets is funded by the **Canada Council for the Arts** (CAC), the **Conseil des arts de Montréal** (CAM) with additional funding, for its productions, by the **Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec** (CALQ).



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