

# /// INFORMAL DANCING VALUATIONS ///

## BACKGROUND

Dance practice appears to be marginal in official statistics; however, these statistics do not consider “ordinary” or “informal” practices of dance (in private spaces, parties, nightclubs, concerts, ballrooms...) in which practices of dance are very diverse (solitary or collective, exceptional or included in everyday life, codified or spontaneous, linked to specific musical or choreographic aesthetics or totally free and improvised...). Most of these dances are considered as “participation dances”, in opposition with “performance dances”, understood as “artistic creation” or “choreographic art” according to an aesthetic legitimacy hierarchy. What are the grammars of valuation of these practices? How do these valuations vary according to contexts, contents, and social trajectories?

## METHODOLOGY

This case investigates valuations by “lambda” individuals whose practice is autonomous, neither professional nor part of structured frameworks, but whose levels of emotional and intellectual commitment are variable - ranging from a detachment and non-knowledge, to the “fan” or “lover” posture, understood as “attachment to objects that matter” and as a “posture of reflexivity” in cultural practice and taste.

The survey was carried out through long semi-structured interviews with individuals having various degrees of intellectual and emotional commitment in dance practice; whose dance practices cover a wide range of dance types and aesthetics, and three main contexts: at home, alone; in private parties, bars, concerts, nightclubs, with friends or unknown people; and in two dedicated settings (an informal amateur group and a folk ballroom).

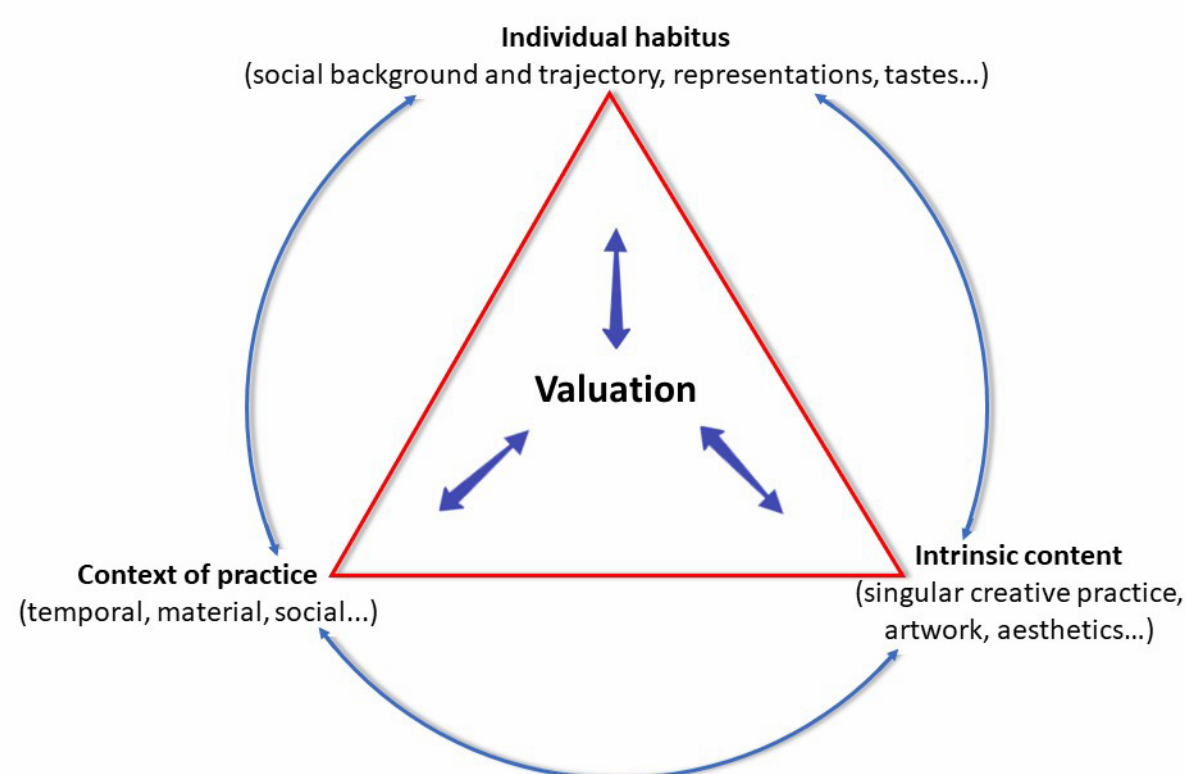
## VALUATION GRAMMARS

Different grammars of valuation are associated to informal dancing, through “qualifications” (judgements, feelings, emotions, appreciations, assessments, virtues...), referring to implicit or explicit principles of values, that can be classified into 2 major categories : **well-being, relational, aesthetic, and creative.**

## VALUATION VARIATIONS

Individuals have a dynamic repertoire of values; their valuations, in practice, are the result of a meeting between three central variables :

- **Individual habitus and trajectories** : valuations evolve with life trajectories; the “disciplining of bodies”, the internalization of the gaze, and the learning and the capacity to deploy movements take different forms according to age, gender and social or ethnic origin. Gender socialisation seems determining, revealing capacities to stage bodies, but also exposures to gender normativity. Ethnic, regional or social origins also imply socialization to certain forms of dance and impacts their valuations.
- **Contexts of practice** : temporality, space, atmosphere, social composition, music, material setting... are determining in valuation processes. Among these contextual elements, the “music that makes you dance” seems primordial, as is the individual disposition to exposure or exchange, and the conditions, social configurations and relationships offered by collective dance settings.
- **Intrinsic contents** : several oppositions exist in the valuation of “free” VS “codified” dances and between solo, couple and collective dances. Certain values are contingent to individual freedom and improvisation ; others, to the experience of constructed, collective or coordinated choreographies.



## VALUATION TENSIONS

Aesthetic values may be in conflict with values of freedom, expression, sensation or well-being. The will to be “beautiful” “graceful”, to please, or be “validated” aesthetically by others can imply self-censorship, and consequently affect physical and emotional valuations linked to the freedom of movement.

Within aesthetic values, we observe a conflict between “aesthetics for oneself” and “aesthetics for others” valuations; beyond social representation, aesthetics can be enjoyed “for its own sake”, as a pleasure of “being beautiful” as an individual or as a group, as an issue of self-representation.

Types of dances involving a strongly gendered distribution of roles involve conflicts of values, especially when “the man has to lead, the woman to follow” ; as do forms of “eroticization of dance” and “commodification of desire”. These norms are denounced in the name of political values, but also in the name of well-being and creativity values.



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