

## Editorial: Somaesthetic Practices – Interviews with Artists and Somatic Practitioners

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Somaesthetics is a philosophical discipline that expands the concept of philosophy to include aesthetic practice. Practice here is understood as any activity that develops through the repetition of interconnected actions, requiring and refining distinct skills. A practice is a culturally significant activity that engages many people either collaboratively or in solitude. Examples include yoga, Tai Chi, various meditation and mindfulness rituals, social dance, all forms of art and their practices of creating and perceiving artworks, body-based design, experimental music, dance, and other body-centered disciplines.

This issue places special emphasis on interviews with artists and practitioners engaged in somatic work, including those in visual arts, experimental arts, music, dance, performance, and other embodied creative practices. These fields offer unique insights into how the human body-mind functions as a site of creation, expression, and transformation. Whether through the movements of dance, the precision of choreographed performance, the body techniques of actors, the improvisational nature of sound and movement, or the ways in which physical disciplines such as martial arts, somatic therapies, or ritual practices engage the body, this issue seeks to highlight the profound connections between somaesthetic practices and aesthetic experience. Similarly, artists working in visual and experimental arts explore embodiment through materiality, process, and interactive engagement, expanding the scope of somaesthetics in contemporary culture.

This collection of interviews brings together diverse practitioners, artists, philosophers, and educators whose work converges around a shared concern central to the *Journal of Somaesthetics*: how embodied experience functions as a site of knowledge, practice, and ethical orientation. While each dialogue addresses somaesthetics from a distinct disciplinary, cultural, and methodological position, taken together they articulate a coherent field of inquiry grounded in lived experience, cultivated perception, and the relational conditions of bodily awareness. These conversations collectively demonstrate how somaesthetics operates as a mode of inquiry that moves across art, philosophy, pedagogy, and design while remaining attentive to difference, context, and practice.

“The Ethics of Somaesthetics: Lex Shcherbakov’s Inclusive Somatic Practices,” conducted by Liza Futerman, situates somaesthetics within inclusive artistic and pedagogical practice. Shcherbakov’s reflections emphasize somatic attention as a relational and ethical mode of

engagement, particularly within mixed-ability and community-based contexts. Embodiment appears here as a shared field of sensitivity through which expression, agency, and care are co-constituted. This dialogue foregrounds somaesthetics as a practice of attunement that resists normative hierarchies of ability, virtuosity, and authorship. Shcherbakov's account underscores the importance of continuity, repetition, and trust in cultivating somatic awareness over time. Somaesthetic practice is presented as an ongoing process that unfolds through sustained engagement with others, environments, and materials. The interview also highlights the pedagogical implications of such an approach, showing how somatic practices can foster forms of learning that are grounded in presence, responsiveness, and mutual recognition. In this sense, the dialogue contributes to a broader understanding of somaesthetics as inseparable from ethical relations and inclusive social practices.

"Moving Bodies, Concepts, and Understanding" is a dialogue between artist-researchers Ruth Anderwald, Leonhard Grond, and cognitive scientist Stefan Schneider, who approach these questions through the lenses of their respective practices in art, somatics, and research, probing scholarly, visual, performative, and conceptual vocabularies. This article asks the question, how do bodies, concepts and epistemologies move? And how might we articulate the transition between artistic and philosophical thought – and the practices that give them shape? Situated at the intersection of artistic research, somatic practice, and cognitive science, the conversation explores how bodies, concepts, and epistemologies co-emerge through movement, perception, and shared inquiry. The dialogue foregrounds practices such as walking, Feldenkrais training, experimental filmmaking, and performative research as sites where thought is generated, tested, and transformed.

Within a somaesthetic framework, this dialogue offers a model of inquiry in which artistic, somatic, and scientific practices remain distinct yet deeply intertwined. By attending to movement, dizziness, disorientation, and environmental attunement, the authors demonstrate how embodied practices generate forms of understanding that cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge alone. The piece thus contributes to ongoing discussions in somaesthetics concerning embodied cognition, practice-based research, and the conditions under which thought becomes possible, shareable, and ethically responsive.

"Unearthing AfrOist Body Governance (ABGs)", a conversation between yaTande Whitney V. Hunter and Orlando Zane Hunter-Valentine advances a culturally grounded and explicitly decolonial articulation of somatic practice. In contrast to dominant Western somatic frameworks, this conversation situates bodily awareness within African diasporic epistemologies that integrate breath, spirit, ancestry, and communal responsibility. Distinguishing wellness from healing and emphasizing culturally situated bodily governance, the interlocutors press somaesthetics to confront its own genealogies and exclusions, expanding the field toward plural and spiritually attuned modes of embodiment. The ABGs dialogue reframes somatic practice as inseparable from cosmology, history, and collective memory. Bodily awareness is treated as a culturally mediated orientation shaped by inherited practices and lived conditions. This perspective challenges somaesthetics to account for the ways in which bodies are governed, disciplined, and sustained within specific social worlds. By foregrounding African diasporic concepts of breath, balance, and relationality, the interview contributes a critical framework for understanding somaesthetics as both culturally situated and politically consequential.

Jiyun Bae's "Life-Size Dance: Improvisation, Somaesthetics, and the Practice of Toru Iwashita," presents Toru Iwashita's explorative work with (Butoh) dance improvisation as a form of empathetic communication—with oneself, others, and the world. His "life-size" dance is based on everyday movements rooted in his own experience of overcoming a mental health

crisis by reconnecting with his body.

Xueting Luo's contribution "Body Rhythm and Martial Roots: A Somaesthetic Return in Chinese Classical Dance" presents a comparative interview study with Xin Li, a leading educator in Chinese Classical Dance at the Beijing Dance Academy, and Wenlong Li, a martial arts practitioner in the Tai Chi and Bajiquan lineages. Through their reflections, it explores how principles of Shenyun (Body Rhythm) and martial practice illuminate the linkage between inner awareness and outward expression and how this should not only be understood as aesthetic training but also contributes to resilience, presence, and well-being in contemporary life.

"Personalized Somaesthetics: An Actress' Explorations for the Stage and Life" is an interview with actress Roberta Carreri conducted by Falk Heinrich. It explores the interplay between professional actor training and personal life. Carreri reflects on the transformative power of physical training, intercultural techniques, and lifelong artistic discipline—framing them as both professional necessity and a form of self-cultivation. Her experiences reveal how somatic practices shape identity, resilience, and a philosophy of living.

In "Landscape as dance partner: a somaesthetic exploration," Flavia Devonas Hoffmann interviews the Prague-based dancer and choreographer Zden Brungot Svítková on her artistic research during a 2024 residency in Ilulissat, Greenland. Through Svítková's explorations of movements in dialogue with "rock bodies," she encounters the landscape as an active partner, akin to a dance partner. The article explores how somatic and improvisational practices with geological formations reframe, disrupt, and reconfigure habitual bodily patterns and perceptions. Svítková's engagement with rocks, terrain, air, and atmosphere exemplifies somatic practice as relational responsiveness, in which perception expands, and the body becomes extended into its environment.

"*Mētis* and Somaesthetics in Polish Craft Practice: The NÓW Initiative" by Monika Favara-Kurkowski and Mateusz Salwa examines, through a phenomenological interview, the ceramic practice of Olga Milczyńska, a member of NÓW—a Polish initiative dedicated to revitalizing traditional artisanal techniques through contemporary methods. Milczyńska's practice exemplifies this orientation through attentiveness to material behaviour and manual engagement resulting in a situated, corporeal mode of knowledge. The article argues that this form of bodily intelligence aligns with the notion of *mētis* (Klekot 2018). By establishing a conceptual link between *mētis* and somaesthetic theory, the article challenges the dominant framing of craft as primarily technical and rule-governed (*technē*).

"Artroversion: Crafting Rest Through Creation" is an analysis of an interview with Alexander Clinthorne by Kei Graves. Clinthorne is a ceramic sculptor and community college faculty who introduces the notion of *artroversion*, a somatic practice of rejuvenation cultivated through meaningful creation. Clinthorne explains how working with clay fosters somatic intimacy, patience, focus, and tactile engagement, enabling embodied ways of knowing through the creative process.

Continuing the theme of artists discussing somaesthetics, the conversation between Stelarc and Richard Shusterman offers a sustained philosophical and performative interrogation of the body as an unstable and technologically entangled construct. Their exchange examines embodiment through performance art, prosthetics, persona, and technological mediation, while maintaining a shared rejection of Cartesian dualism. Stelarc's conception of the body as historically and materially reconfigured intersects productively with Shusterman's notion of the soma as embodied subjectivity that is both lived and cultivated. Discomfort, vulnerability, and ambivalence emerge here as epistemically productive conditions, linking somaesthetics

to questions of agency, mortality, and the limits of enhancement. Stelarc and Shusterman probe the tension between autonomy and dependency that arises in technologically mediated embodiment. Through discussions of avatars, performative personae, and bodily extensions, the conversation reveals how agency is distributed across bodies, technologies, and collaborators. This challenges simplistic narratives of enhancement or control, emphasizing instead the fragility and contingency of embodied action. Within a somaesthetic framework, these reflections underscore the importance of attending to limits, risk, and discomfort as conditions through which new forms of perception and understanding can emerge.

“A Conversation with Rachel Gadsden” extends the journal’s engagement with somaesthetics by foregrounding embodiment as lived vulnerability, environmental attunement, and collective survival. Drawing on her background in theatre, visual and performance art, and her lifelong experience of chronic illness and progressive sight loss, Gadsden articulates a somaesthetic practice rooted in phenomenological immediacy, visceral sensation, and ethical responsiveness. Her reflections complicate any separation between body as subject and body as object, emphasizing instead their inseparability within artistic creation, performative presence, and everyday survival. Central to the dialogue is her sustained attention to atmosphere, psychogeography, and site-specific practice, where buildings, landscapes, and communities function as living, breathing participants in embodied meaning-making. Through her discussion of body mapping, community-based work in South Africa, and the aesthetics of accessibility, Gadsden challenges individualistic interpretations of somatic practice and reframes somaesthetics as a relational, communal, and environmentally embedded mode of inquiry. The interview thus contributes a critical perspective on disability, care, and interdependence, demonstrating how somaesthetic reflection can draw audiences into difficult narratives of pain, fragility, and survival without alienation, cultivating attentiveness, shared responsibility, and renewed awareness of the precarity and value of embodied life.

Finally, “*Reflections on the Somatic Core of Ideation*,” a dialogue among Veronika Mayerböck, Kristina Höök, and Alé Duarte, brings somaesthetics into direct conversation with design education, interaction design, and trauma-informed pedagogy. This exchange foregrounds the role of bodily awareness in ideation, learning, and sense-making across age groups and professional contexts. Practices of defamiliarization, play, witnessing, and social resonance are shown to support creative ownership and ethical engagement. The dialogue demonstrates how somaesthetic cultivation underpins design processes that seek to balance technological mediation with bodily sensitivity and human values. The conversation articulates ideation as a fundamentally embodied and relational process rather than a purely cognitive act. By tracing how ideas emerge through movement, sensation, social feedback, and reflection, the interview situates creativity within cycles of bodily readiness, experimentation, and integration. The participants also highlight the pedagogical significance of articulation and shared reflection, showing how somaesthetic practices enable individuals to recognize, claim, and develop their ideas responsibly. They offer a model for somaesthetics as a foundational resource for education, design, and creative practice.

Read together, these interviews reveal somaesthetics as a plural, evolving field shaped by diverse practices, cultural contexts, and ethical commitments. Across differences in emphasis and approach, each dialogue affirms embodiment as a condition of inquiry rather than an object of analysis alone. By placing these conversations in relation, this issue underscores the *Journal of Somaesthetics*’ commitment to fostering dialogue across disciplines and traditions while maintaining a shared focus on the lived, cultivated, and relational dimensions of bodily experience.