

Performance *And or Or*

The vocabulary and tools of crowd simulation software gives an insight into how a computational body, a mathematically organised crowd – by algorithms and AI – impacts how a simulation is created and the identity of the resulting simulated crowd.



Figure 25 - Image of performance *And or Or*.

In the performance *And or Or* four professional dancers (Rebecca Chentinell, Pär Andersson, Andrea Svensson, Sybrig Dokter) moved around the gallery space/white cube according to the logic of the digital crowd simulation. Their choreography and body language meticulously performed according to the vocabulary of the CS software, specifically the default agents of three different programs: Crowd FX, Houdini and Massive. The professional skill of the dancers used for the performances and films enabled an in-depth and knowledgeable corporal understanding of the default agents' limited behavioural capacity, as well as spatial comprehension.

When planning for the performance *And or Or* a thorough study was made on several default agents from different software on how they move, their posture and available choreographic vocabulary, consolidating them into a choreographic score, featuring how they are programmed to operate the environment and other agents. The limited behavioural vocabulary of the default agent included a few gestures and postures which were applied in the performance such as: Stand Idle, Walking, Running, Sitting, T-pose, Walking Slowly, Stand Idle Tilted, Sitting Hands on Lap, Stand Twisting. Not only the gestures were of importance but how the body postured itself—the elevated shoulders and a movement lacking gravity. Mute as without a mouth and eyes that do not see.

The contrast in behaviour between the human and the default agents became evident as the performing agents have no empathic behaviours and the gestures limited to the minimum necessary. They embody a passive numbness and alongside the limited features impersonate the abstractions of the standardised crowd agent.

They are primarily programmed to avoid collision, avoid objects and other agents. As the agents do not have a developed intelligence the avoidance of an object or another agent is the same.



Figure 26 - Beginning of performance *And or Or*, featuring the T-Pose.

At the beginning of the performance the four dancers entered the room as themselves and then took the T-pose (as mentioned earlier). The posture of the agent before being programmed. This initial posture is of importance as when it is performed by the human organic body in space it translates clearly how the body of the digital agent is open to be programmed. A body yielding to command.

And or Or was performed in the exhibition space among the other works in the solo exhibition *Default Characters*. It was also scripted in space through physical elements imprinted by paint on the floor and projected coloured lights, indicating trigger and target areas as according to the behavioural programming of the crowd simulation software. These indications transformed the space into an activated space translating the logic of the program into physical space involving the performers but also the audience.

Hence the audience became part of the logic of the program and when the dancers evolved among the audience in the room confronted the programmed defaulted body with the visitors.

When the default character was translated into the human body which was acting according to the given restrictions and grammar of mobility, the agent's silence, muteness and non-communicability became flagrant, the limited gestures robotlike. A magnified observation of body intelligence and characteristics which revealed an automated and secluded behaviour which mimics the atomised behaviour which emerged with the virtual bubble in which we operate when glued to our mobile devices moving about in public space. An atomised crowd online as well as in the streets. A phenomenon which has been intensified during the pandemic where keeping distance has been the mantra. That distance becomes, from the perspective of our online lives, a metaphor of how we have become distanced from one another when using our phones in the urban realm. Like the virus repelling us from each other, the distance established by the mobile devices is technical and mental

yet has the same antisocial effect. The robotic aspect of the agent's movements, when enacted by the dancers, divulge the minimised and abstracted gestural grammar of the software. This revealed the aesthetics of a programmed body where the default modes reinforce this abstraction and numbness as they extract the human from the infrastructure of the technology, controlling them from a distance, rather than being an integral part of the machinery. The body is not necessary as a muscular part of the machine but as a biometrical and behavioural data source. The simplified corporal and social language of the agents is favouring a homogenous aesthetic of the crowd as a whole. At the same time the harvested data digitally augments the predictability of the collective body and behaviour which in turn is modelled to fit the given economic/market or political system.