



The Art of Preservation: The Continuity and Fading of Time and Life in Dance

Manfang Lv

¹University of Arts and Culture (MUAC), Mexico City 04510, Mexico.

²Tianjin College of Media & Arts, Tianjin 301901, China.

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***Corresponding author:** Manfang Lv, University of Arts and Culture (MUAC), Mexico City 04510, Mexico; Tianjin College of Media & Arts, Tianjin 301901, China.

Abstract

This paper explores the multidimensionality of the concept of 'freshness' in choreography, with a particular focus on the complex relationship between body, material, and time. By using plastic film as a choreographic material, the researcher aims to reveal the fragility and resilience that humans experience in the face of ageing and passing. The article first analyses the relationship between preservation and the body, emphasizing the body's experience of the passage of time and its impact on emotion and identity. Secondly, it discusses the importance of materials in dance, in particular, how plastic film can stimulate reflection on fragility and facilitate a deeper interaction between the body and materials. In addition, the paper explores the philosophical significance of preservation, analyzing the relationship between time, death, and existence, and how deep reflection on these themes can be expressed through dance. The results of the research not only enrich the understanding of dance creation but also provide new perspectives for exploring human reflection on the nature of life. Through in-depth analyses of dance practice, this paper hopes to provide a useful contribution to theoretical studies of the art of dance, revealing how, in an ever-changing world, human beings seek the possibility of preservation and continuity through art.

Keywords

Preservation; Choreography; Time and Mortality; Dance and Materiality; Plastic Film

1. Introduction

The concept of "preserving freshness" encapsulates a profound exploration of the human experience in relation to time, mortality, and the materiality of existence. As individuals navigate the complexities of aging and the inevitable decline of the body, the desire to maintain vitality becomes a central theme in contemporary discourse. This paper examines the interplay between preservation and the lived experience of the body, particularly within the context of dance.

In the realm of artistic expression, dance serves as a dynamic medium through which the tensions surrounding preservation and decay can be articulated. The choice to utilize plastic cling film as a primary material in the choreography of *Preserving Freshness* is both intentional and symbolic. While this ordinary household item may appear trivial, it embodies the paradox of preservation—the struggle to maintain vitality while acknowledging the ephemeral nature of life. By integrating cling film into the dance process, I aim to evoke a sense of fragility and resilience, inviting reflection on the ways in which humans confront the passage of time.

This study draws on existing scholarship that addresses the relationship between the body and its environment, emphasizing the importance of materiality in dance. It engages with theoretical perspectives on preservation, as

articulated by scholars such as (Pakes, 2012) and (Stinson, 2006) who explore the complexities of bodily experience in the face of time. Additionally, the philosophical implications of preservation will be examined, particularly concerning how dance can serve as a means of grappling with themes of existence, mortality, and the desire for continuity.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the creative process involved in *Preserving Freshness*, focusing on how the concept of preservation shapes both the choreography and the performative experience. By examining the interaction between the body and cling film, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how dance can articulate the human struggle against the transient nature of existence.

2. Choreographic Process and Analysis

In this choreography, the theme of 'freshness' has become the core concept of my choreographic process. By exploring how to express my thoughts on time, decline, and existence in the dance, I gradually developed my understanding of movement design. Plastic film was chosen as the main material because of its symbolic significance as well as its ability to physically reflect the complex relationship between humans and the environment.

This conceptual framework is deeply rooted in the discussion of the temporal relationship between the body and time (Pakes, 2012). Pakes argues that the body, far from being a static entity, acts as a site of confrontation with time, encapsulating the ongoing processes of change, decay, and transformation that characterize human existence. Dance, in this sense, becomes a powerful medium through which we can explore not just the physicality of the body, but the metaphysical dimensions of life itself—the tension between vitality and transience, the longing for permanence amidst the inevitability of decay. Pakes highlights that the temporality of the body is not merely chronological but experiential, whereby each moment of motion captures a fleeting intersection of presence and disappearance, reflecting the broader existential concerns of time and mortality.

Building on this, Stinson (2006) emphasizes the psychological dimensions of bodily experience, particularly how individuals attempt to exert control over the body as a means of psychological stability in the face of physical decline. This sense of control, she argues, reflects an underlying fear of impermanence and the unknown. In dance, the choreography of movements that seek to 'preserve' the body can be seen as an artistic manifestation of this psychological tension. Preservation, then, is not merely about maintaining the outward state of the body but about capturing and communicating life's ephemeral moments—moments that, though fragile, are imbued with profound emotional and existential significance.

From a choreographic perspective, this framework has informed my design of the movement vocabulary in *Preserving Freshness*. I have sought to create a dialectic between the human body and materiality—specifically, the plastic cling film—emphasizing that preservation is an embodied act, where the body's interaction with material becomes a metaphor for the struggle against time. The use of soft, fluid extensions, juxtaposed with sharp contractions, is intended to illustrate this tension. The former symbolizes the desire for continuity, the effortless flow of life, while the latter represents moments of rupture, reflecting the sudden awareness of mortality and the fragility of the body. This dynamic interplay mirrors what Goulsh (2017) refers to as the "narrative capacity" of materials in dance, where the integration of non-human elements, such as cling film, can expand the expressive range of the body and deepen the emotional resonance of the performance.

Philosophically, this approach to choreography aligns with broader existential and phenomenological discourses on the body. In her analysis, Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes the body as not merely a physical object but as a "lived body," an entity through which we experience and interact with the world. Dance, as an embodied practice, thus becomes a means of exploring the ways in which human beings confront their temporality—not through abstract thought, but through the concrete, visceral medium of movement. The plastic film in *Preserving Freshness* represents both a barrier and a protective layer, simultaneously symbolizing our desire to shield ourselves from the ravages of time and our awareness of the impossibility of this endeavor.

Additionally, Badiou (2005) suggests that art, and specifically dance, provides a unique site for what he terms the "truth procedure," where the performance of movement allows for the articulation of truths about existence that cannot be captured by language alone. In this light, the interplay between the body and the material in *Preserving Freshness* is not just aesthetic but ontological, allowing the performers and the audience to engage with fundamental questions about life, death, and the human desire for preservation.

By refining the choreographic details with an emphasis on these philosophical and emotional dynamics, I aim to create a performance that is not only visually compelling but deeply resonant on an existential level. The movements evoke a sense of human fragility and resilience, underscoring the paradox of preservation: the simultaneous need to

hold on to life's fleeting moments, while recognizing that time will ultimately prevail. This nuanced approach to dance-making, where movement is informed by both material and metaphysical concerns, contributes to a broader understanding of how dance can serve as a vehicle for reflecting on the human condition.

3. Creative Exploration

The interaction with plastic film during the creative process proved fundamental in developing a distinct choreographic language. Plastic film, as both a restricting and enabling material, imposes physical constraints on movement while simultaneously fostering the dancers' creative responses to these limitations. As the dancers become encased in the film, they realize that every subtle shift or change in movement directly influences the tension and shape of the material. This dynamic relationship between the body and the film shapes a unique movement vocabulary that cannot be achieved without the physical presence of the material. This interaction closely mirrors (McLeod, 2020) examination of the body-material relationship, which highlights that when the body engages with external materials, it often sparks unforeseen creativity and deeper layers of expressive potential.

During the rehearsal process, I experimented with a variety of movement styles, ultimately forging a novel choreographic language through the dancers' engagement with plastic film. For instance, gentle twists and sharp extensions against the resistance of the film not only generate visually striking effects but also produce a tactile experience for the dancers, who simultaneously feel both the physical restraint of the material and the psychological depth of their engagement with it. These movements illustrate a heightened awareness of both body and material, where the dancers' relationship with the plastic film takes on symbolic significance, encapsulating themes of fragility, resistance, and preservation.

The interplay of environmental conditions, such as the introduction of cold air or warm lighting, further amplifies the body's response and emotional expression. These external stimuli modify the dancers' engagement with the plastic film, echoing (Hamilton, 2017) observation that the interaction between material and environmental context can enrich the bodily expression, allowing the choreography to develop greater emotional and symbolic depth in response to external changes. This expanded choreographic vocabulary, forged through the tension between material, body, and environment, challenges conventional notions of movement and expression, offering new perspectives on the role of materiality in dance.

4. Performance Reflections

During the performance process, the body's experience and emotional response played a pivotal role in realizing the creative intent. The physical interaction with the plastic film not only shaped the external aesthetics of the dance but also ignited an internal contemplation on time, existence, and the fragility of life. Each contact with the film created an intimate yet precarious relationship between myself and the material, amplifying a sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability became more than a physical sensation—it carried emotional weight, turning every movement into a meditation on the transient nature of life. The fragility of the plastic film, which could tear with too much force yet shield with delicate care, mirrored the fragility of human life itself.

Through this material interaction, I realized that the plastic film acted as a metaphor for the protective yet impermanent barriers we create in our lives to stave off time and decay. My movements within this fragile medium began to reflect not only the struggle for preservation but also the inevitable realization that such attempts are, in the end, futile. This realization parallels (Fraleigh, 1987) assertion that dance, as an embodied practice, allows for a heightened awareness of the body's limits and its temporal existence, providing a space for existential reflection.

The feedback from the audience further reinforced these themes, highlighting how the unique use of plastic film resonated with viewers on a profound level. Many expressed that the dance effectively conveyed the tension between preservation and decay, drawing attention to the fragility of human existence. The audience frequently mentioned how the work evoked sensations of the "flow of time" and the "impermanence of life," validating the emotional and philosophical layers of my choreography. This sense of connection with the audience reaffirms what Lepecki (2006) describes as the communicative power of dance, where movement becomes a language that speaks to the universal human experience, transcending the physical realm to touch on deeper existential concerns.

In reflecting on the audience's response, I found that my creative objective—to reveal, through dance, how human beings seek preservation in the face of time—had been realized. The performance did not merely provide a visual spectacle but also opened a space for viewers to contemplate their own existence. As Foster (2011) notes, dance is

not just an expressive art form; it is a profound reflection on the nature of life itself. Through this work, I sought to provoke not only aesthetic appreciation but also existential reflection, inviting the audience to question their own relationship with time and mortality. In this sense, the dance became a shared meditation on the challenges of existence, affirming the capacity of art to explore the possibilities of preservation amid inevitable change.

5. Conclusion

In this exploration of *Preserving Freshness*, I have sought to illuminate the deep connections between the human body, time, and the materiality of existence, using dance as the medium for this reflection. The plastic cling film, with its dual nature of both fragility and strength, became a powerful symbol of the human struggle to preserve life in the face of inevitable decay. Through the interaction of the body with this material, the choreography revealed the paradoxes of preservation—where the desire to hold onto vitality is constantly challenged by the transient nature of existence.

The creative process not only shaped the aesthetic form of the dance but also deepened my own understanding of how movement can embody philosophical and emotional themes. The fragility of the plastic film mirrored the fragility of life, and each movement within the material became a meditation on the impermanence we face as humans. This tension between preservation and decay was further amplified in the performance, where the audience's responses validated the emotional and existential themes embedded in the work.

The audience's feedback reinforced that the dance had successfully communicated the complexity of preservation—not just as a physical concept, but as a metaphor for the human condition. Their reflections on the "flow of time" and the "fragility of life" affirmed that the performance resonated on a deep, personal level, inspiring contemplation about life, mortality, and the passage of time.

However, this study does have its limitations. The use of plastic film as a choreographic material, while symbolically powerful, may constrain the movement possibilities and interpretations to a narrow range. The emphasis on one material and its symbolic meaning could limit the exploration of other textures, materials, or even cultural perspectives that might offer additional layers of meaning to the concept of preservation. Furthermore, the audience's response, although largely positive, was based on a limited set of performances, and the findings would benefit from broader testing and more diverse feedback. Finally, while the philosophical and existential themes explored in the dance were effective, future research could delve deeper into the cultural or historical contexts of preservation and how they intersect with dance practices across different traditions.

In conclusion, *Preserving Freshness* stands as a testament to the capacity of dance to evoke profound reflections on the human experience. It not only offered a visually compelling performance but also invited both performers and audience members to engage with deeper existential questions. Despite its limitations, this exploration has solidified my belief that dance, as an art form, can transcend the physical and become a powerful means of contemplating life's most fundamental themes, such as preservation, time, and the fragility of existence.

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