

# 'ISOLATED TOGETHER'

## FLOOR SIGNAGE IN THE TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND PARTITIONING OF OUR COMMON SPACES

**Pauline Chevalier**

Université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté

Institut national d'histoire de l'art

[pauline.chevalier@inha.fr](mailto:pauline.chevalier@inha.fr)

## ESSAY 50/03

FLOOR SIGNAGE  
VISUALIZATION  
DANCE NOTATION  
FENCING  
KINESPHERE

The current pandemic has seen the need to adorn public spaces with varied signage, sometimes almost spontaneous or, on the contrary, very elaborate, inviting us to respect distances and spaces specific to each person: what might seem obvious to us, however, refers to a long history of the notation of movement, on the ground or on the page.

By comparing a few elements of current signage with a corpus of fencing and dance manuals, or even military treatises, the aim is to grasp the stakes of the visualization of this grid, intermediate and mediator of our relations, which isolates us together in a progressive process of incorporation of images and signs.

## INTRODUCTION

Circles, squares, aligned, staggered; lines, arrows and waymarked paths; soles and footprints, fixed or moving: the floors of train stations, streets, shops, have been adorned for several months with more or less respected signage, seeking to visualize the necessary physical distance in times of pandemic. The apparent obviousness of these signs, which are sometimes compared to industrial floor markings, sometimes to Olivier Mosset's paintings (particularly for the circles on the floor of most French train stations) (Figures 1-2), is however part of an ancient history of the standardization of movements and their notation<sup>1</sup>. From the military treatises of the 16th century to the social dance manuals of the 1920s, taken up by Andy Warhol, from Machiavelli (Figure 3) to the Foxtrot, the iconography of displacement borrows a scientific objectivity that tends to make us forget its lack of neutrality and proceeds from the same desire to visualize a partitioned space and calculated proximities that are so striking today. Can these new signs of public space at the time of Covid-19 be interpreted in the light of a history of the notation of movement and dance? How do physical distancing and online proximity give rise to the observation of a partition of space familiar to dancers and choreographers, and whose modes of representation for several centuries now inform our relationships with each other? If we do not intend here to take up a history of movement notations, contemporary signage linked to the pandemic invites us to think about the visual matrix of our real and virtual behaviors, another form of proximity born of distance, and of the consciousness, through its visualization, of the sharing of a common space.

## KINESPHERE AND FRAME EFFECTS

The signage that occupies us and that a certain familiarity now leads us to ignore, gives, without imposing, frames

to our daily relations, like a spatialized score or 'partition'. The physical distancing visualized on the floor offers as much a framework for each person's space as the various virtual meeting supports: a grid that is both chessboard and *mise au carreau*. So many squares, lines, arrows, points and circles that govern our ways of doing things and our ways of being: a grid that will undoubtedly leave a strong imprint on contemporary images and bodies.

However, let us distinguish two different aspects to these framing effects: while the screen that multiplies faces and boxes—and gives one a certain intimacy common to everyone—is a 'picture', and reminds us of the effects of a painting or framing, as the visualization of a partitioned space in the streets or in our common public spaces proceeds from a transposition of a somatic perception to its literal inscription on the ground. It is precisely this translation of the somatic experience, and thus a certain awareness of this experience, that interests us here. What proximity or distance are we talking about? A circle or a square on the ground shows us where to position ourselves in a

**Fig. 1** Gare Montparnasse, 2020.  
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waiting space, a line shows us the limit not to be exceeded, several lines on the ground impel rhythm and distance to our gait. Each sign materializes the range of our gestures, the invisible limits of our body well beyond the silhouette, up to the range of our own breath. This signage is as much that of stasis as that of movement.

The signage proposed in many French train stations presents this subtlety to which we will return: a vectorial system of movement that takes up the signage of waiting and of zones delimited for each in spaces of circulation, like the traces of a quadrille<sup>2</sup> in the absence of its dancers. It is literally a framework, of which only a fragment would be visible, even tangible, that encourages us to keep our distances and to envisage a problematic proximity. This frame, this 'aura' of the body, is also one with which the dancers are familiar.

During the 1920s, Rudolf Laban theorized the kinesphere (Figure 4) in the form of an icosahedron that corresponds to the maximum deployment of our limbs and the construction of the personal sphere through movement, this "living architecture" (Laban, 2003, p. 77)<sup>3</sup>: "Whether the body stands still or moves, it occupies space and space surrounds it. We must distinguish between general space and the space that the body can reach. To distinguish the latter from the general space, we will call it personal space or the 'kinesphere'. The kinesphere is the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by the limbs easily stretched out without the body on one foot moving from the point of support.

We call this point of support 'the reference position'. We can draw the limits of this imaginary sphere with our feet as well as with our hands. In this way any part of the kinesphere can be reached. Beyond the kinesphere lies the rest of the space, which can only be approached by leaving the reference position. When we move outside the limits of our initial kinesphere, we create a new reference position and transport the kinesphere to a new location. Of course

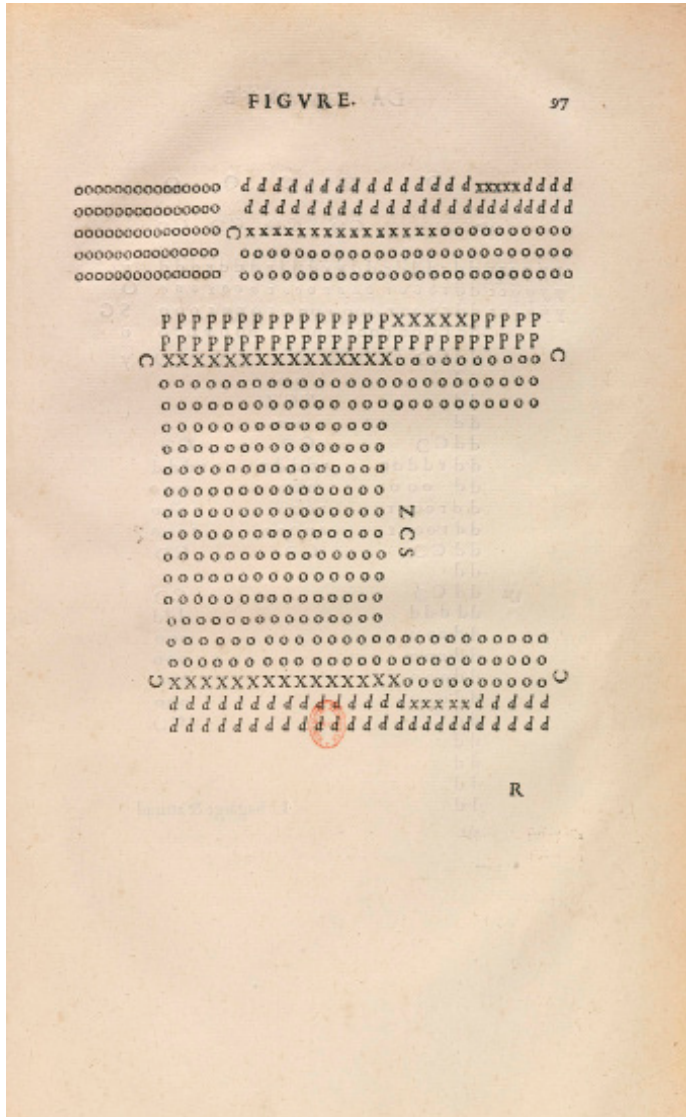
we never leave our sphere of movement, on the contrary we always carry it with us like an aura” (Laban, 2003, pp. 82-83). This signage that partitions the space sometimes functions as a visualization of this aura: the breath itself can be seen since it is also what is important to us.

Remaining out of reach of the other’s breath, defining a proximity that preserves the personal space of each one. This awareness, necessary in times of pandemic, is one of the essential learnings of the dancer, whatever the dance. Let us recall that famous, anecdotal, yet accurate scene from *Dirty Dancing* (1987). Johnny (Patrick Swayze) teaches Frances (Jennifer Grey) how to dance by insisting on the need to conserve space, everyone’s dance ‘frame’: “Look, spaghetti arms. This is my dance space. This is your dance space. I don’t go into yours, you don’t go into mine.

**Fig. 2** Gare de Lyon, Paris (photos from the author).



**Fig. 3** Nicolas Machiavel, *L'art de la guerre*, édition de 1546. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Source: Gallica/BnF.



You gotta hold the frame". The learning consists in jointly visualizing and incorporating our own space. Now dance, and other bodily practices, will have recourse to the representation of this space, on the page, on the floor: treatises, manuals, even pictorial representations of dance, show a particular attention to the visualization of the kinesphere before and after its theorization by Laban.

## VISUALIZATIONS

The return on a few examples of our deployed corporality's inscription in space should allow us to grasp the stakes of such a visualization, a tool for the normalization of gestures and figures, and an instrument for the embodiment of mechanisms of displacement and distancing, mediation of this paradoxical proximity in the sharing of space. Even before the invention of forms of choreographic notation, fencing treatises deployed several strategies of representation of the space of movements, thus contributing to define the frameworks of a discipline by the image<sup>4</sup>.

From 1560, Joachim Meyer (1570/2006), German weapon master, worked on the publication of a treatise accompanied by many plates (Figure 5), remarkable in their treatment of the space of the gestures. Contrary to an iconography such as the one presented in the *Three dialogues of the sieur Archangelo Tuccaro in the Art of Jumping and Voltiger en l'air*, slightly later (1599), where the movement is often visualized in its curves and its lines which one will find at Laban's, Meyer uses the floor and the drawings of the paving to represent the frame of each fencer and the lines of force of the movements, without adopting a uniform mode which one finds today on the floor of the fencing rooms. The originality of such a representation lies in the use of a classical perspective motif to associate to the scientific representation of combat a didactic dimension of the lines of movement. If an illustration shows several fights, the pavement will be different for the three couples, which can be seen perfectly well on plate C of the long sword fights. Different colors, textures and lines to indicate the differences in space. Plate A has discs and squares on the floor which seem to indicate to each fencer where he can lean. In addition, Plate K presents directly on the floor the movement guidelines emphasizing the play of false symmetry between each individual<sup>5</sup>.

The fencer who seems to dominate the bout has his arm protruding into the space of his partner who has retreated



to the point where he leaves the main square. The lines of the floor thus provide keys to reading while suggesting to the apprentices the possibility of inscribing on the floor the frames of each one or rather to visualize a personal space from the floor, we will come back to this.

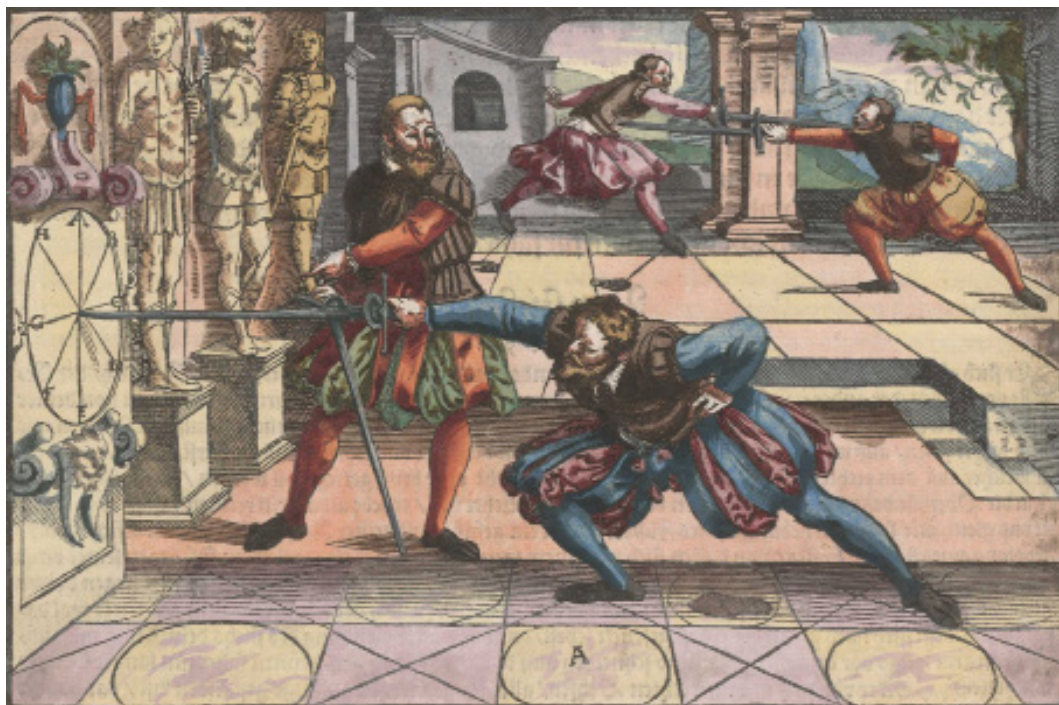
For the moment, it should be noted that this use of the floor is not without echoes of certain figure dances of the early 17th century for which the floor sometimes had to include some scenic indications, as described by Flavia Pappacena (2019): “The realization of these figures was not to be very easy. The manuscript *Il Corago o vero alcune osservazioni per mettere bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, composed between 1628 and 1637 and attributed to Pierfrancesco Rinuccini, advised to trace a sign on the floor of the stage. Angelo Ingegneri, for his part—for the staging of the tragedy *Edipo Tiranno* by Orsatto Giustiniani at the Olympic Theater of Vincenza in 1585—planned a stage floor made of marble of different colors, so that each character would have a precise point of reference in his movements and during breaks” (p. 73). The pavement of the theater of Vincenza is contemporary to Meyer’s treatise and provides, in both of them, a “geometry of enunciation” (Damisch, 1987/2012, p. 458)<sup>6</sup>.

Real or imagined, the inscription of the kinesphere in space for the purposes of memorization or for strategic purposes in fencing, also says much of this recourse to the sign as a tool for the incorporation of space. The learning of fencing and the movement of the body starting from a point of anchoring require to integrate the range of one’s gesture, to control perfectly the calculation of the distances and a proximity thus mediatized by the paving on the ground. The complexity of Meyer’s images, however, lies in their very construction. As we mentioned before, Joachim Meyer takes care to distinguish between the floors of the various combatants, thus insisting on the composite, unrealistic, and didactic character of the image. The inscription of distances in the body, passes through the page and the

**Fig. 4** Rudolph von Laban, *Raum und Körper (espace et corps)*, 1915, Crayon de couleur sur papier, 25,2x20,4cm, Zurich. Kunsthau Zürich, Graphische Sammlung.



book: a mental process of projection, and back and forth movement between the ground and the page is then imposed. Antonella Fenech Kroke (2018) analyzes the iconography of the sports practices of the first modernity and the “learning process of gestures by the body of the reader-spectator”. “They do not only transmit information and knowledge but are efficient because they produce norms relating to corporal and social practices in individual and collective life. [...] The images of these playful techniques play on visibility and establish a communication regime that accompanies and/or replaces that of the text. Thus they are the expression of a normativity that cannot be simply understood as the visual translation of the rules of a game. They do not only transmit information and knowledge, but they are efficient because they produce norms



**Fig. 5** Joachim Meyer, *Gründtliche Beschreibung der Kunst des Fechtens*, Strasbourg, 1570. Gravure sur bois colorée, Bibliothèque de l'université de Leipzig.

relating to corporal and social practices in individual and collective life” (Fenech Kroke, 2018, p. 119). The production of these standards is mediatized by the book, the vector of the incorporation of signs and images reproduced in real space. So far we have seen how the lines on the ground, the circles and squares that organize physical distancing, recall historical devices of transmission and normalization of steps, visual expression of the body frame and the kinesphere, subtle mediation of an impossible proximity.

This visualized and then incorporated framework is sometimes complemented by more coercive signage: feet on the ground indicating precisely our anchorage point and not a distance that can be transposed in a vectorial way. Certain fencing manuals of the 16th century precisely had recourse to this representation of the footprints: the body of the fencer requires transfers of weight from one foot to the other and a precise dynamics in the position of the legs which is not always satisfied with the lines of ground.

Meyer once used this type of signs, but it is especially the treatise of Henry de Saint-Didier (Figure 6) which is the most complete on this point<sup>7</sup>.

The woodcut plates show the silhouettes of the feet, the 'soles', with a numbering on the print itself. Sometimes a few lines emphasize the movement followed by the legs of the Lieutenant and the Prevost. The text completes the image by describing the arm and shoulder movements associated with those of the legs. The originality of these plates (the first ten figures) lies not only in the presence of the numbered soles, but also in the representation of the stopped gestures: a leg raised, a foot about to take its place on one of the numbers indicated. How to interpret the mediation of such a sign on the page or on the ground itself?

#### NORMALIZATION, RATIONALIZATION

The drawing of the steps on ground, as on the page, invites to follow a sequence of movements, a dynamic that does not imply to internalize the distances but to conform to a succession of steps. The mechanism of incorporation or assimilation of an authorized proximity works quite differently. Reading and observing the social dance textbooks of the years 1910-1920 allows us to better understand the functioning and stakes of signage in the time of Covid-19, notably through the analysis of the complexity of a context that seeks to establish a scientificity of notation.

Social dance manuals (Figure 7) were exponentially successful between the two world wars, but make no mistake, their purpose was not to allow everyone to learn to dance from home.

Sophie Jacotot (2013) shows how these books are above all tools for standardizing dances and imposing copyright on dancing practices that are more liberated than those offered in the textbooks. It should be noted that the strategies deployed in the distribution of these works also stem

from a desire to create an object of mass distribution associated with the success of social dance classes.

The analysis of the mechanistic iconography proposed in these textbooks testifies precisely to the development of a dance industry. While it is true that dance diagrams are not easy to read, that the lack of information remains considerable, the intentions are elsewhere: first, quite simply, in controlling dancers' distances and morality, and second, in participating in a broader visual culture, that of the rational organization of gestures and work in American society between the wars.

Danielle Robinson (2010) has endeavored to understand the mechanisms of appropriation of black social dances by a white community, wealthy and curious about novelties, but also about 'moralized' dances. The opposition, also analyzed by Sophie Jacotot, between the dances practiced in the dancing and the description of them in textbooks is striking. "A spirit of invention pervaded ragtime during this period, empowering dancers to make up their own steps and christen them with playful names" (Robinson 2010, p. 180). Invention and play between partners are constitutive of dances such as the Foxtrot. "In contrast, modern dancing valued control, containment, organization, rules and inhibition. Couples danced in a united way, as a single unit and with the rhythmic structure of the music. Together, dancers governed their collaborative bodily movement in service to smooth, graceful lines of the body and through space. Their variations were brief and few and therefore did little to disturb the self-control they exuded. [...] Ragtime freed the torso and limbs to express sexual pleasure and desire; while, modern dancing's aesthetic of restraint inhibited the torso and suppressed sexuality" (Robinson, 2010, p. 183).

The author then develops the way in which the normativity of dance manuals expresses a negation of individuality in favor of a conformity of gestures and practices<sup>8</sup>.

The teacher watches over and controls this conformity,

**Fig. 6** Henry de Saint-Didier, *Traicté contenant les secrets du premier livre sur l'espée seule...*, Paris, 1573. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Source: Gallica/BnF.

TRAICTE DE  
Premier coup & suite du quatriangle, pour  
le Lieutenant & Preuost.



ET pour le bien faire, est besoin pour le premier coup que le Lieutenant, ayât fait vn desdits desgainements demeure sur le pied gauche, qui est sur la semelle cotté en chiffre, 1, & pour executer ce coup faut que cedit Lieutenant aduance le pied droit sur la semelle ou est cotté en chiffre, 2, & tirer vn roide estoc d'hault, tenant la main que tient l'espée les ongles en haut, & la main gauche sur son giron droit, comme est môstré cy dessus à la pourtraiture, cotté en chiffre au derriere du chapeau, 71.

Voila comment il faut que ledit Lieutenant commence à faire ce coup, en maniere de quatriangle, le feignât ainsi estre en terre.

as Frank Leslie Clendenen states in his 1914 textbook: "Control is the greatest point to consider in all our new dances" (Clendenen, 1914, p. 8). But if you look at the diagrams, only the steps are represented on the ground.

Some manuals indicate the lines of the shoulders, but the representation of the soles and footprints, accompanied by guidelines and sometimes confusing numbering, say almost nothing about the movements of the bust, hips and a body somewhat rigidified in the moralization of the dances. Visualization of the steps then not only highlights the movement sequences but also controls the proximity, and thus the morality, of the dancers. We return, *mutatis mutandis*, to the 'dance frame' from *Dirty Dancing*, certainly more liberated than the Fox Trot described in Charles Coll's manuals. However, a comparison with current signage requires going further: these dance diagrams seem to us today relatively obvious in their aesthetic and semiotic choices. The mechanistic nature of the images encourages a certain caution in the interpretation of this evidence, which is common to that of today's signage.

Indeed, the development of dance textbooks in the inter-war period also owes much to the emergence of a new iconography relating to the scientific organization of work. Danielle Robinson analyzes the sales strategies of these textbooks in a context of the emergence of mass consumption and Taylorism.

Let's go a little further by pausing for a moment on this visual culture of Taylorism in which certain social dance textbooks participate. The optimization of work passes by the suppression of useless and unsuitable movements and gestures, it is thus necessary to study these movements, to codify, standardize and control them. Visualization then plays a major role in these processes. Sharon Corwin (2003) studied American precisionist painting and its interpretation in the same context of the development of rational work organization. Her analyses shed particular light on these manuals of the 1920s, as well as on the contemporary

**Fig. 7** Charles Désiré, *Toutes les danses modernes et leurs théories complètes*, Tome II, 1ère édition avec 37 figures de pas, Paris, Bornemann, 1929. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Source: Gallica/BnF.

— 1 temps : assembler le gauche au droit ; — 2 temps : porter le droit en avant ;

(Fig. 5). — 2 temps : demi-tour sur le pied droit en posant le gauche en arrière ; — 1 temps : porter le droit en arrière ; — 1 temps : assembler le gauche au droit ; — 2 temps : porter le droit en avant, reprendre la marche du gauche en avant.

**Le Balancé de profil** - (fig. 6).

— 2 temps : porter le pied gauche en avant en déboîté et un peu face à gauche ; — 1 temps : porter le pied droit à droite en revenant face en avant ; — 1 temps : porter le gauche de côté, en tournant d'un quart de tour à droite ; — 2 temps : croiser le pied droit devant le gauche ;

— 1 temps : décroiser le gauche ; — 1 temps : croiser le droit ; — 2 temps : décroiser le gauche ; — 2 temps : balancer sur le droit ; — 2 temps : balancer sur

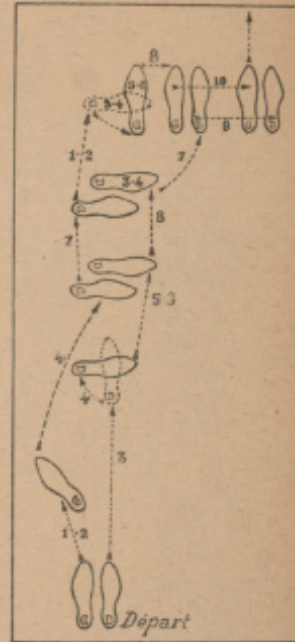


Fig. 6

signs that occupy us in these pages. In studying the 'visual effects of Taylorism', Corwin insists on the sharing of the same visual vocabulary by artists and engineers.

She also notes an imagery that erases any presence of reified bodies, notably in Gilbreth's work on the efficient gesture: "the visualization of efficiency in the Gilbreths' time-motion studies necessitated the erasure of the body



of the worker and the standardization and abstraction of the act of labor” (Corwin, 2003, pp. 139-165)<sup>9</sup>. Frank Bunker Gilbreth<sup>10</sup> observed fencers, golfers, workers and theorizes what he calls “The One Best Way”, the efficient gesture resulting from a photographic analysis of movements and technical activities according to practices and trades.

The images shut out the presence of the body as a common negation of the origin of the gesture and individualities. Gilbreth defends visualization –and thus the ability to represent– as the major tool for rational work organization. The principle of visualization is associated with those of reduction and abstraction, while including a hierarchical dimension emphasized by Scott Curtis (2009, pp. 85-100): “Visualization was absolutely crucial to the Gilbreth program, but it also replicated the manager-worker hierarchy. According to the Gilbreths, to visualize is to plan, to imagine a future solution based on observation of present details. But not everyone is equipped to observe and to visualize; only the trained eye could be expected to do both. In fact, the ability to observe and to visualize is precisely what distinguishes a manager from a worker or, more broadly, an expert from a layman”. The author then quotes Lilian Gilbreth in *The Psychology of Management* (1914/1973): “The best planner is the one who –other things being equal– is the most ingenious, the most experienced and the best observer. It is an art to observe; it requires persistent attention. The longer and the more the observer observes, the more details, and variables affecting details, he observes. The untrained observer could not expect to compete with one of special natural talent who has also been trained. It is not every man who is fitted by nature to observe closely, hence to plan. To observe is a condition precedent to visualizing. Practice in visualizing makes for increasing the faculty of constructive imagination. He with the best constructive imagination is the master planner” (pp. 76-77).

Bernd Stiegler (2017), who has analyzed Gilbreth's iconographic documentation, clearly states the objectives

of such an analysis: “it is a question of developing automatisms that can be accomplished without any kind of intellectual disturbance ever interrupting them” (pp. 150-165).

If ‘visualization’ represents the first stage of the process, the ‘incorporation’ of gestures and movements that have become automatisms constitutes the second fundamental stage. These two aspects legitimize the publication of numerous dance manuals that play with this back and forth between image and gesture. This brings us to the last stage of our analysis. What seems obvious to us today, however, carries within itself a singular history: that of the control of movements and gestures in a context of rationalization and optimization.

The fencing manuals of the first modernity as well as the social dance manuals of the inter-war period share a common will to integrate practices in a scientific and technical context dominated by rationality.

Based on these historical comparisons, how can we envisage the scope of current signage in times of pandemic and the modalities of its incorporation?

## COLLECTIVE BODIES AND EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE

On June 8, 2020, the *Journal du Grand Paris*, a professional journal that analyzes and promotes major urban planning and development projects in the Paris metropolis, published a short article on the deconfinement signage designed by AREP design for SNCF railway stations, of which the following is an excerpt: “White marked trails on the ground, unmistakable. Pictograms and signs, stickers and lights, also positioned and cut so that they cannot be ignored, while taking care of their ‘friendly’, gentle, non-coercive character. These are the main principles of ‘augmented signage’, designed by Arep design teams for all stations in France and the Ile-de-France region. ‘It’s about daring to do things you wouldn’t have dared to do

before', sums up Isabelle Le Saux, director of Arep design. In this case, the Covid-19 accelerated the process. Before the health crisis, the interdisciplinary architecture firm undertook a vast project for SNCF Gares & connexions, on behalf of SNCF Gares & connexions, to harmonize the signage at the country's 3,000 stations and 380 stations in the Paris region. '[...] We wanted signage that was visible, but non-coercive, almost playful', stress its designers. The idea is to make people want to take the train, not the other way around. And it works. [...] The increased signage makes it possible to lead users to use a staircase hopper that has been neglected until now, because it is a little remote and 'non-intuitive' (Isabelle Saux). In the end, the distribution of passengers on narrow platforms has been improved; maintenance costs are also reduced, by avoiding concentrating passages and wear and tear on the same equipment<sup>11</sup>. The subtlety of this signage lies in its non-coercive character, and it is precisely here that the comparison between contemporary signage and its formal echoes in previous centuries is fully justified.

The signage of deconfinement, or rather of the current pandemic, implies a remarkable phenomenon of incorporation of the constraints visualized, it literally provides a matrix of our behaviors, for today and certainly for a little longer. Few users are waiting with both feet on one of the circles drawn on the ground and yet the daily perception of these signs permeates our actions and governs our automatisms. Let us certainly not neglect a bundle of other phenomena that encourage us to distance ourselves from one another, first and foremost the conscious fear of contamination, but the diachronic reading of these regularly perceived forms leads us to think more precisely about the mechanisms of incorporation of this new matrix of our movements. Let us note, moreover, that the ambitions evoked by the management of AREP design go far beyond the context of the pandemic: a partition of our daily ballets orchestrated and rationalized. Arrows accompany a series of circles, in waiting areas as well

as in transit zones. The circles on the floor of the traffic corridors question: they certainly do not invite people to wait there, but rather to move, at a distance from each other, like the *corps de ballet*, in lines or in staggered rows. No matter if the shapes drawn on the floor, squares, lines or circles are respected, the distances are visualized in their movement. This occurrence of current signage shows how much it is a question above all of creating automatism in the movements as well as in the distances: distances thus vectorized and even better internalized. The observation of these matrices inscribed on the ground also reminds us of the diagrams published in Machiavelli's *The Art of War* in 1520: the visualization of military formations reinforces the descriptions of the text and ensures an understanding by the eye—and the body—of the written theories.

The presence of diagrams in such works is still in its infancy and is part of the same culture that prompted Henry de Saint-Didier or Joachim Meyer to propose “a device necessary to lend the mind the assistance of the eye” (Hale, 1988, pp. 280-298)<sup>12</sup>.

Ancient military culture was revisited during the Renaissance, and diagrams made their way into the new editions (those of Aelian and Vegetius)<sup>13</sup>. Machiavelli's vision of military columns remains on the page as a theorization of the coordinated movements of the infantrymen. The comparison with the signage of Parisian train stations raises the question: should one see in them a power of abstraction of individuals coupled with a force of incorporation of distances? The comments collected in the *Journal du Grand Paris* point in this direction and suggest a desire to homogenize the flow of passengers and to control movements without overtly framing them. These signs on the floor then function as these dancers' memory aids, these signs on the pavement and these traces described in the first paragraphs of this paper. The materialization of a kinesphere, especially in traffic spaces, encourages us to be the agents of this homogenization of flows. If our point here is not to question the validity of physical dis-



**Fig. 8** Gare de Lyon, Paris (photos from the author).

tancing, on the contrary, it is rather a question of shedding light on the mechanisms of impregnation of such signage on our bodies beyond the pandemic. Negating *flânerie* and *dérive*—this “insubordination to the usual solicitations” (Debord, 1955/2006, p. 205)—new tools of a psycho-geography that is certainly more coercive<sup>14</sup> than it seems, this iconography of deconfinement offers a new echo to Debord’s<sup>15</sup> theories, of which paragraphs 165 to 178 of the *Société du spectacle*, devoted to urban planning, resonate particularly well here: “169. [...] Urban planning is this taking of possession of the natural and human environment by capitalism, which, developing logically in absolute domination, can and must now remake the totality of space as its own setting. 172 [...] the general movement of isolation, which is the reality of urbanism, must also contain a controlled reintegration of the workers, according

to the plannable necessities of production and consumption. Integration into the system must reintegrate the isolated individuals as isolated individuals together: factories like the houses of culture, vacation villages like the 'big estates', are specially organized for the purposes of this pseudo-collectivity which also accompanies the isolated individual in the family unit" (Debord, 1955/2006, pp. 837-838). Virtual contexts, like real and physical contexts, have shown in recent months an omnipresence of the framework and material delimitations of our intimate spaces, an intimacy that has become collective, and an isolation together, which the history of forms, images and signs can also invite us to deconstruct, to think and appreciate, not without vigilance.

#### NOTES

**1** The potential comparisons are relatively numerous, one also thinks of church labyrinths whose form and modalities of their performativity share certain characteristics of the group of works that we will analyze here.

**2** The quadrille is a particularly popular form of dance under Napoleon I, thanks in particular to the creations of Jean-Etienne Despréaux, ballet master who invented many quadrilles, some with more than thirty dancers and sometimes taking the model of the chess game. The scores of these dances are partly preserved at the Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra in the Fonds André Jean Jacques Deshayes and are the subject of a study by Irène Feste. The quadrille was exported to Great Britain and found posterity in the American 'Square Dances', couple dances in squares and lines which also gave rise to a vast iconography and numerous teaching manuals.

**3** "The movement is, so to speak, a living architecture, alive with changes in position and cohesion. This architecture created by human movement is made up of paths tracing shapes in space, and we call these shapes *trace forms*" (Laban, 2003, p. 77).

**4** On the history of the treaties of fencing, see Anglo, S. (2011). *L'escrime, la danse et l'art de la guerre. Le livre et la représentation du mouvement*. Paris, FR: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

**5** Girard Thibault d'Anvers in the Académie de l'Espée will use this device of geometrical lines on the ground in an even more precise and detailed way. We are then at the dawn of the developments of the analytical geometry of Descartes who would have also written a treatise of fencing now lost.

**6** One also thinks of the use of the pavement in the ball scenes painted by Hieronymus Janssens.

**7** Henry de Saint-Didier, *Traicté contenant les secrets du premier livre sur l'espée seule, mère de toutes armes, qui sont espée, dague, cappe,*

targue, bouclier, rondelle, l'espée à deux mains et les deux espées (Saint-Didier, 1573).

**8** “Ragtime dancing needed to be radically changed in order to become saleable to more than a few consumers at a time. Moreover, for this experiment to work, its entire ethos had to be altered from one that valued individuality to one that insisted upon conformity” (Robinson, 2010, p.).

**9** “By the first decade of the twentieth century, the cult of efficiency had moved beyond laboratories and factories to infiltrate American culture at large, and its rhetoric often took on moral and national overtones” (Corwin, 2003, p.).

**10** Gilbreth advocates the use of mechanistic science in all aspects of everyday life, as a paradoxical liberation of our gestures by their efficiency: “Men and women everywhere are realising that the remot science is really the near at hand measurement; that life consists of motions and decisions; that satisfaction and interest, as well as efficiency, come from Thinking in terms of elements of motions; that the great waste of the world lies in the unnecessary fatigue; that ‘deadening monotony’ is eliminated through interest” chapitre Contrast Between Military and Scientific Management. Gilbreth in the chapter Contrast Between Military and Scientific Management, Applied Motion Study. A Collection of Papers on the Efficient Method to Industrial Preparedness (Gilbreth, 1917, pp. 185-186).

**11** Gestion des flux dans les gares et Covid-19: Arep dessine une ‘signalétique augmentée’, Le Journal du Grand Paris, 8 juin 2020.

**12** On the uses of the diagram in Renaissance military treatises, see: Hale, J. R. (1988). A humanistic visual aid. The military diagram in the Renaissance, *Renaissance Studies*, 2(2), 280-298. doi :10.1111/j.1477-4658.1988.tb00157.x.

**13** The context is also that of the developments of equestrian ballets and their notation by Jacques Callot or Stefano della Bella: figures in which riders and horses have been replaced by abstract dots and circles highlighting the symmetry and perfection of a social body united under the power of a sovereign. On the political significance of the abstract notation of equestrian ballets, see: Papiro, M. (2016). *Choreographie der Herrschaft: Stefano della Bellas Radierungen zu den Reiterfesten am Florentiner Hof 1637-1661*. Paderborn, DE: Wilhelm Fink.

**14** On this, see: Chamayou, G. (2015, September 21). Avant-popos sur les sociétés de ciblage. Une brève histoire des corps schématiques. *Jef Klak*. Retrieved Month Day, 2020 from <https://www.jefklak.org/avant-propos-sur-les-societes-de-ciblage/>.

**15** Debord was a great connoisseur of Machiavelli’s theories and of those military treatises which also fed his purpose here.

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