

Title: Kinesthetic Knowing: Reconfiguring Perception in Underwater Ecosomatic Screendance

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Yiyun Li is an artist-researcher, choreographer, dancer, and screendance maker currently pursuing a PhD in Dance at the University of Plymouth. Her research and creative practice are grounded in an eco-somatic approach, integrating site-specific dance, screendance, phenomenology, and ethnographic fieldwork to explore the interrelations between body, environment, and culture.

Her work focuses on the interaction and resonance between body and environment, weaving together academic inquiry and artistic experimentation. She understands dance as a way of co-existing with the world and as a mode of sensing, perceiving, thinking, and knowing through movement.

Her practice spans stage, site, and screen, combining formal dance training with eco-somatic improvisation, site-specific performance, and screendance. Selected works include *The Flowing Shore Within* (2025), *With the Boat* (2025), and *Co-being* (2024).

Kinesthetic Knowing: Reconfiguring Perception in Underwater Ecosomatic Screendance

Abstract

This paper examines how underwater movement practice reconfigures perception and generates kinesthetic knowing through ecosomatic interaction with water. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Astrida Neimanis' hydrofeminism, and ecosomatic theory, the paper argues that underwater environments function as material-specific perceptual systems that redistribute sensory attention away from visual dominance towards proprioception and kinesthesia. Through practice-as-research developed in the screendance work *Co-being* (2024), the study reveals how underwater ecosomatic movement improvisation facilitates a material and experiential realisation of hydrofeminist embodiment. Rather than approaching water metaphorically, the project situates the body within an actual aquatic system, where buoyancy, pressure, resistance, and flow continuously reshape movement and perception. Within this context, choreography emerges relationally through the reciprocal interaction between body and water. The paper further argues that screendance functions as a "second site of choreography" that extends underwater sensing beyond the immediate and ephemeral moment of performance. Through editing, framing, and temporal reconstruction, the screen reorganises movement, perception, and embodied temporality, generating new ways of experiencing and understanding the body-water relationship. By positioning underwater movement practice as a form of kinesthetic epistemology, this paper contributes to ecosomatic discourse, underwater dance research, phenomenological approaches to embodiment, and screendance studies. It proposes that underwater movement improvisation enables a material and experiential reconfiguration of perception through which knowing emerges from the ongoing interplay between body, movement, and watery environments.

Keywords: Underwater Dance, Kinesthetic Knowing, Ecosomatic Movement, Screendance, Hydrofeminism, Phenomenology

It is highly recommended to view the work before reading this reflection. Access it via the link: <https://youtu.be/jwAARezRdRg>

Alternatively, it can be accessed via Yiyun Li's Artist-researcher website, if you are also interested in the author's other works:

<https://yiyunliac.wixsite.com/yiyunscreendancelab>

1. Introduction

This paper examines how underwater movement practice and screendance generate alternative forms of embodied knowledge through kinesthetic engagement with water. It traces a theoretical trajectory from critiques of visual dominance in Western epistemology and phenomenological accounts of embodied perception, through ecosomatic and kinesthetic understandings of movement-based knowing, to hydrofeminist conceptions of watery embodiment, and further towards site-specific and practice-based performance approaches that engage water as an active material environment. It also draws on screendance scholarship that understands choreography as extending beyond the moving body into cinematic processes of framing, editing, and temporal construction. While phenomenology, ecosomatics, hydrofeminism, site-specific aquatic performance, and screendance studies have each examined embodiment, movement, and environmental relations, little attention has been paid to how complete underwater immersion reconfigures perception as a kinesthetic mode of knowing, or how such embodied experience can be further transformed through screendance.

Building on this interdisciplinary framework, the paper develops a practice-as-research investigation through Co-being (2024), an underwater screendance work produced through underwater ecosomatic movement improvisation and subsequent choreographic editing. The project investigates how these perceptual transformations emerge through underwater movement improvisation and how they can subsequently be reconfigured through screendance.

This paper asks:

- (1) How can underwater movement practice extend phenomenological, ecosomatic, and hydrofeminist understandings of embodiment by situating the body within an actual aquatic environment?
- (2) How does complete underwater immersion reconfigure sensory hierarchies and generate new choreographic possibilities through the material conditions of water?
- (3) How can screendance function as a secondary choreographic site through which embodied underwater experience is translated, reconstructed, and transmitted?

The paper makes three principal contributions. First, it extends phenomenological, ecosomatic, and hydrofeminist understandings of embodiment by demonstrating how underwater movement practice enables a lived and kinesthetic experience of watery relationality. Through complete immersion, hydrofeminist notions of porous embodiment are realised not only as conceptual propositions but also as material and sensory experiences, revealing how embodiment emerges through ongoing exchanges among body, movement, and water. Second, the paper contributes to site-specific performance and ecosomatic discourse by shifting attention from site-specific to material-specific inquiry. Rather than treating water primarily as a location for performance, it argues that the material properties of water, including buoyancy, pressure, resistance, and flow, actively reconfigure sensory hierarchies, disrupt visual dominance, and generate new choreographic possibilities through the relational interaction between body and environment. Third, it contributes to screendance studies by proposing the screen as a secondary choreographic site through which embodied underwater experience is translated, reconstructed, and transformed. Within this framework, screendance functions not merely as a mode of documentation but as a process of kinesthetic transmission that reconfigures embodied perception through cinematic editing, framing, and temporality.

2. Theoretical Genealogy

2.1 Ocularcentrism, Phenomenology, and Embodied Perception

Western epistemological traditions have long privileged vision as the dominant pathway to knowledge and understanding. Martin Jay (1993) describes this tendency as ocularcentrism, arguing that Western intellectual history has consistently elevated sight above other sensory modalities as the primary means through which truth, objectivity, and rationality are established. Within this visual paradigm, the world is frequently approached through observation, distance, and

classification, positioning the perceiving subject as separate from that which is perceived. Rachel Devorah's (2017) *Ocularcentrism, Androcentrism* further critiques ocularcentrism as a perceptual regime that privileges detachment, mastery, and objectification, reinforcing binary distinctions between subject and object, self and environment, and human and nonhuman. As Devorah (2017, p. 305) argues, "there is androcentrism embedded within ocularcentrism" insofar as dominant discourse has historically coded seeing as masculine. Visual dominance thus becomes not merely a sensory preference but part of a broader epistemological framework that privileges separation over relationality.

Phenomenology offers an alternative understanding of perception by shifting attention from detached observation to lived bodily experience. Rather than conceiving perception as the passive reception of external information, Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is fundamentally embodied, situated, and enacted through the body's engagement with the world. In *Phenomenology of Perception*¹, he describes the body as the "vehicle of being in the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 84), suggesting that knowledge emerges through corporeal participation rather than abstract cognition. Perception is therefore not something that happens to the body but something accomplished through it. This emphasis on embodied experience foregrounds the importance of movement, sensation, and bodily awareness as modes of engaging with and knowing the world. In his later work, particularly *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty (1968) develops the concept of flesh, understood as a shared ontological fabric through which body and world are fundamentally intertwined. Rather than existing as separate entities, body and environment emerge through a shared field of relations and mutual involvement. This understanding of embodiment as relational, interconnected, and co-constitutive provides an important foundation for later ecological and posthumanist approaches that seek to move beyond fixed boundaries between self and world.

2.2 Ecosomatic Movement and Kinesthetic Knowing

While phenomenology establishes the body as the primary site of perception and experience, it offers less detailed consideration of how movement itself functions as a mode of knowledge production. Building upon phenomenological accounts of embodied perception,

¹ *Phenomenology of Perception* was originally published in 1945. Citations in this paper refer to the 2013 English translation by Donald A. Landes (2013).

ecosomatic approaches shift attention towards the dynamic relations between body, movement, and environment, emphasising kinesthetic experience as a form of situated knowing.

Ecosomatic theory provides a kinetic epistemological framework for understanding how knowledge emerges through bodily movement and environmental entanglement. Rather than positioning the body as a fixed entity that perceives the world, ecosomatic thinking foregrounds movement, sensation, and relational attunement as primary conditions of knowing.

Thomas Hanna (1988, p. 20) conceives somatics as "the body experienced from within", shifting attention from externally observable form to internal, lived bodily awareness. In this sense, knowledge is not imposed upon the body from outside, but arises through proprioceptive and sensory experience of movement itself. Sandra Reeve extends this understanding by proposing the ecological body as inherently relational, constituted through ongoing environmental interaction rather than isolated individuality (Reeve, 2011). From this perspective, embodiment is not contained within the skin as a closed boundary, but continuously produced through exchanges between body and environment.

Building on these somatic and ecological approaches, Sheets-Johnstone argues that movement is not secondary to thought but foundational to consciousness itself. She suggests that "we are animate forms" whose understanding of the world emerges through movement experience (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 452). In this sense, kinesthesia is not merely a sensory modality but a primary epistemological condition through which meaning and awareness are generated.

Taken together, these perspectives position ecosomatic practice as a form of kinetic epistemology in which knowing emerges through movement, relational embodiment, and lived corporeal experience. Within this framework, kinesthetic awareness is not a supplementary perception but the very condition through which body-world relations are experienced and understood.

This ecosomatic understanding is crucial for this research as it provides a conceptual basis for approaching underwater movement in Co-being not as representation but as embodied, first-person practice. It supports the

methodological decision to work through movement, perception, and sensation within water itself, where knowing emerges through kinaesthetic engagement rather than external observation.

2.3 Hydrofeminism and Watery Embodiment

While ecosomatic theory foregrounds movement and environmental attunement as conditions of embodied knowing, it leaves open the question of how particular material environments shape embodied experience. Hydrofeminism addresses this question by positioning water as a fundamental medium through which bodies, perceptions, and relations are continuously formed and transformed.

Building on phenomenological and ecosomatic approaches to embodiment, recent posthumanist and ecological theories extend the question of relational perception beyond the human subject. Within this context, Astrida Neimanis' hydrofeminism conceptualises bodies as "bodies of water", foregrounding material interdependence and the constitutive entanglement between human and more-than-human worlds (Neimanis, 2012; 2019). Importantly, water in Neimanis' formulation is not understood as a metaphor for fluidity or relationality, but as the very material condition through which embodiment is produced and sustained. In this sense, bodies are not self-contained entities bounded by skin. Rather, they are continuously exchanging assemblages shaped through what might be understood as a membrane logic, a concept that describes the body as a dynamic interface regulating selective permeability between inside and outside rather than a fixed boundary. This reconceptualisation shifts attention from the idea of autonomous individuality towards processes of circulation, transformation, and co-becoming. Within this framework, bodies are always already implicated in wider ecological and hydrological systems.

Crucially, Neimanis' work also foregrounds the question of how such watery entanglements can be sensed, described, and made perceptible. In her talk *How to think (as) a body of water: Access! Amplify! Describe!* (2022), she states, "I consider a kind of practice-based philosophy" (2:00–2:04), positioning thinking not as detached conceptualisation but as embodied and situated engagement. This emphasis on practice reframes embodiment as something enacted rather than

merely theorised, suggesting that watery relationality must be approached through modes of doing, sensing, and creative engagement rather than abstract reflection alone. From this perspective, embodiment is inseparable from practice, opening towards artistic and practice-based methodologies that work with, rather than simply represent, watery environments. These include embodied and sensory approaches that engage movement, perception, and affect as ways of thinking-through-embodiment. This methodological orientation provides a direct entry point for the present research, which explores how underwater screendance can function as a site of kinesthetic and material engagement with watery embodiment.

2.4 From Watery Embodiment to Site-Specific Aquatic Performance

This hydrofeminist understanding of embodiment has increasingly informed site-specific performance and practice-as-research approaches that seek to engage water not as a representational theme but as an active participant in knowledge production. Rather than treating water as a backdrop for performance, artist-researchers such as Sarah Blissett (2024) and Victoria Hunter (2021) explore how embodied encounters with aquatic environments can generate situated forms of perception, movement, and understanding.

In *Marking Tidetime: Mudlarking as Intertidal Performance*, Blissett (2024) recounts an encounter with a piece of charred driftwood discovered along the Thames foreshore. Using the charcoal residue to draw a line across her forearm, she raises her arm to align with the visible tideline of the river. Through this simple gesture, the body becomes a site for registering and responding to environmental change. The charcoal mark mirrors the shifting boundary of the tide below, transforming the body from an external observer into a participant in the river's temporal rhythms. Rather than documenting the environment from a distance, Blissett's practice demonstrates how ecological knowledge can emerge through embodied encounter and bodily inscription. In this sense, the body does not merely perceive the environment but becomes implicated within its ongoing processes.

A similar concern with embodied environmental knowing can be found in Victoria Hunter's (2021) chapter *Watery Bodies and Watery Sites: Immersion and Porosity*. Drawing on site-based movement practice in rivers, canals, and estuarine

environments, Hunter argues that understanding water requires more than observation. Rather than remaining on the riverbank as a spectator, the practitioner enters the water, allowing bodily movement to become immersed within its flows, temperatures, densities, and rhythms. Reflecting on her movement exploration in an estuary, Hunter writes:

"I entered the water ... Through my immersion into the estuarine waters, I came to know some of its patterns, flows, temperature and material make-up by inserting my material moving body within its body of water" (Hunter, 2021, p. 256).

For Hunter, immersion is not simply a physical act but a methodological one. Knowledge is generated through movement, sensation, and corporeal engagement with environmental processes, producing what she describes as "a form of knowing from within". Choreography is therefore understood not as the organisation of predetermined dance movements but as a process of corporeal attunement to the dynamic forces of the aquatic environment. Patterns of flow, acceleration, resistance, and rhythm become shared between human and more-than-human bodies, allowing movement to emerge relationally through ongoing exchanges between body and site. Rather than thinking about water as an external object, the practitioner comes to know with water from within.

This understanding is particularly significant for the present research. Like Hunter, I approached water not merely as a setting for choreography but as a material environment through which perception, movement, and knowledge could emerge. The development of *Co-being* therefore began with the simple yet methodologically significant act of entering the water.

2.5 Screendance, Choreography, and Kinesthetic Transmission

Screendance scholarship provides an important framework for understanding how embodied movement can be reconfigured through cinematic processes. Rather than treating the screen as a neutral medium for recording dance, theorists have argued that choreography extends beyond bodily movement into the construction of the

image itself. In a chapter published in Victoria Hunter's edited collection *Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance* (2015), Rosenberg proposes the screen as a choreographic site in its own right, extending the notion of "site", beyond physical location into mediated and digital space. He argues that video space constitutes a distinct environment in which movement is organised and experienced through framing, camera movement, editing, and screen composition. The notion of site is therefore expanded from geographical place to include cinematic and digital environments.

Rosenberg (2012) also states that screendance produces an "impossible body", reconstituting movement through cinematic manipulation of space and time. Through editing and compositional strategies, movement can exceed the physical limitations of live performance, generating forms of embodiment that are unattainable within ordinary corporeal experience. The screen therefore does not simply represent movement but actively participates in the production of choreographic meaning and embodied perception. This concept is particularly relevant to the present research because underwater movement practice is fundamentally constrained by breath-holding, duration, and bodily limitation. The ways in which screendance reconstructs these constraints through cinematic continuity will be examined in Section 5.

This expanded understanding of choreography resonates with Brannigan's (2022) conception of choreography as a compositional practice. Rather than defining choreography solely as the arrangement of bodily movement, she understands it as the organisation of relations, temporal structures, and perceptual experiences. Choreography thus becomes a process of creating conditions through which movement and meaning emerge. Similarly, Kappenberg (2009) argues that screendance should not be understood simply as the documentation of dance. Revisiting Amy Greenfield's (1983) proposition that screendance may not necessarily look like dance while still producing a kinaesthetic experience of dance, she suggests that choreography can operate through cinematic organisation as much as through bodily action. Camera movement, framing, duration, and editing therefore function as choreographic devices capable of generating kinaesthetic meaning.

Particularly relevant to this research is Kappenberg's distinction between the body as tool and the body as site. Rather than functioning solely as an instrument for executing movement, the body becomes a site of lived experience and embodied knowledge. This perspective aligns with the phenomenological, ecosomatic, and hydrofeminist approaches discussed earlier in this chapter, in which embodiment emerges through relational engagement with environment.

Together, these perspectives provide a framework for understanding screendance as a secondary choreographic site through which underwater experience can be translated, reconstructed, and transmitted. Rather than documenting movement, screendance actively reshapes embodied experience through cinematic composition, extending choreography beyond the aquatic environment itself.

3. Methodology: Developing *Co-being* Through Underwater Practice-as-Research

3.1 From Tanka Fieldwork to Underwater Studio

The development of *Co-being* emerged from fieldwork conducted in Lingshui, Hainan, China during May 2024. The Tanka have long maintained close relationships with aquatic environments through fishing, swimming, boating, and water-based forms of habitation. Observations of these everyday practices drew attention to water not simply as a setting for human activity but as a material condition that continually shapes bodily experience, movement, and perception.

Initially, the project was conceived as an underwater screendance to be developed and filmed within the coastal waters associated with the fieldwork site. However, preliminary risk assessments identified significant safety concerns relating to underwater currents, visibility, and environmental conditions. In response, the practical component of the research was relocated to a controlled underwater studio environment.

While this relocation altered the geographical context of the project, it also clarified the focus of the investigation. Rather than examining choreography in relation to a

specific site, the research became increasingly concerned with water itself as a material medium. This shift transformed the project from a site-specific inquiry into a material-specific investigation of water and its role in shaping movement, perception, and embodied experience.

3.2 Underwater Movement Improvisation

The practical research was undertaken through a series of underwater movement improvisations informed by practice-as-research and ecosomatic approaches. Rather than working from predetermined choreography, movement material emerged through exploratory engagement with underwater conditions. The studio environment provided a space in which movement could be developed through direct sensory interaction with buoyancy, resistance, pressure, suspension, and flow.

Improvisation functioned as both a creative and investigative method. Sessions focused on attending to bodily sensations and environmental forces as they unfolded in the moment, allowing movement to arise through ongoing negotiation between body and water. In this respect, the practice shares affinities with Hunter's (2021) notion of corporeal attunement, in which choreography emerges through responsive engagement with environmental dynamics rather than through the execution of predetermined movement sequences.

Throughout the process, attention was directed towards how underwater conditions altered bodily orientation, balance, effort, and spatial awareness. Written reflections, movement notes, and video documentation were used to record observations and support subsequent analysis. Following each underwater session, reflective notes were recorded and compared with video documentation. These reflections informed subsequent improvisations, creating an iterative cycle through which kinaesthetic observations gradually became conceptual insights.

3.3 Filming and Choreographic Editing

The movement improvisations were filmed in an underwater studio using a fixed digital video camera positioned outside the water tank behind a glass viewing panel. Due to safety considerations and equipment limitations, the camera used for filming was not waterproof and therefore remained mounted on a tripod throughout the

recording process. Consequently, camera movement did not form part of the filming methodology, and visual framing was established through the fixed perspective of the underwater studio environment. The filming was undertaken by Yuanzhou, who served as cinematographer for the project.



Figure 1: Documentation of the filming of Co-being (2024). Photograph by Yuanzhou.

Due to the physical constraints of breath-holding, filming occurred through multiple short takes separated by periods of recovery and repetition. Movement material therefore developed through an iterative process of improvisation, filming, reflection, and re-filming, allowing bodily responses to the aquatic environment to emerge gradually through repeated engagement.

Following the practical phase, the recorded footage was edited into the final screendance work *Co-being* (2024). As both performer and editor, I undertook the entire editing process, selecting, arranging, and composing movement sequences into a coherent screendance work. Editing involved decisions relating to pacing, duration, continuity, and the temporal organisation of movement material. In this sense, the role of choreographer extended beyond the underwater performance itself into the construction of the screen-based work. The editing process therefore functioned not simply as post-production but as a form of screendance choreography through which embodied underwater experience was translated and reconfigured for the screen.

The resulting screendance constitutes the primary practice-based outcome of the research and serves as the principal material through which the following analysis is developed.

4. Underwater Environments and the Reconfiguration of Sensory Hierarchies

4.1 Destabilising Terrestrial Movement Logic

Underwater environments fundamentally reorganise terrestrial movement systems. On land, bodily movement is structured through gravity, weight distribution, and stable ground relations. Underwater, buoyancy destabilises these gravitational norms, generating alternative choreographic conditions in which floating, suspension, and drifting replace terrestrial stability.

Practices such as WATSU similarly explore how aquatic environments transform bodily movement and perception through buoyancy and weightlessness. WATSU practitioners describe water as enabling movements "impossible on land", where the spine unloads and the body enters wave-like, spiral, and pendular forms of motion (Dull, 2004). Rather than enforcing muscular control against gravity, water allows movement to emerge through yielding, suspension, and responsive adaptation.

These conditions profoundly shaped the improvisational processes within *Co-being*. Movement underwater could not rely upon terrestrial choreographic habits or stable floor-based support. Instead, the body was required to negotiate continuously with buoyancy, pressure, resistance, and shifting currents. Actions became slower, suspended, and multidirectional. Simple gestures expanded unpredictably as water displaced limbs beyond anticipated trajectories.

Underwater conditions also expanded choreographic possibilities by enabling prolonged suspension, multidirectional movement, and continuous transitions that would be difficult to achieve on land. Falling became floating, jumping became drifting, and vertical orientation lost its organising function. These altered movement

possibilities generated a choreographic language specific to the aquatic environment.

Importantly, movement underwater was not generated solely by the human body. Water itself participated actively within choreographic formation. The body pushed water, while water simultaneously redirected bodily motion. Agency therefore became distributed across body and environment rather than remaining located within an autonomous performer.

This relational movement dynamic became increasingly apparent during improvisation. During one improvisation session, I found myself unable to determine whether the rotation of my torso originated from muscular intention or from the delayed resistance of surrounding water. At such moments, it became difficult to distinguish whether movement was generated by bodily intention or aquatic force. As articulated within the project's performance text:

"I move, the water flows;
the water moves, I flow."

This reciprocal condition reflects what may be understood as inter-flow: a choreographic state in which movement emerges relationally through continuous negotiation between body and water. Rather than imposing predetermined movement vocabulary upon the environment, improvisation became an act of attunement and responsive sensing.





Figure 2–3. Selected video stills from Co-being (2024) with the author's superimposed text "let the water flow through the kinesthetic body", emphasising the reciprocal relation between movement and aquatic force.

Such practice aligns closely with Thomas Hanna's conception of somatics as "the body experienced from within" (Hanna, 1988, p. 20). Somatic awareness prioritises internal sensation, bodily responsiveness, and lived corporeal experience over externally imposed form. Sandra Reeve similarly proposes the ecological body as relationally constituted through environmental interaction rather than isolated individuality (Reeve, 2011). Within underwater ecosomatic improvisation, movement therefore becomes less an expression of subjective control than an emergent process of ecological co-composition.

4.2 From Visual Distance to Kinesthetic Proximity

The underwater environment also radically reconfigures sensory hierarchy. Vision, which ordinarily dominates human perception, becomes unstable and diminished underwater. Sound diffuses irregularly, speech disappears, and breathing becomes interrupted through breath-holding. Under these conditions, sensory attention shifts towards proprioception, tactile awareness, and kinesthesia. This sensory redistribution directly challenges what Colavita (1974) identifies as the "visual dominance effect", whereby perception prioritises visual information when multiple

sensory modalities are available. In terrestrial environments, vision frequently structures spatial orientation and bodily control. Underwater, however, visual certainty collapses. The body can no longer fully rely upon distance-based perception.

Merleau-Ponty's distinction between vision and touch becomes particularly significant here. In *Eye and Mind*, he argues that vision always operates through distance: "to see is to have at a distance" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 5). Vision establishes perspectival separation between observer and observed, reinforcing binary distinctions between subject and object. Touch, by contrast, requires proximity and contact. Through touch, the body becomes intertwined with the world rather than separated from it.

Underwater immersion intensifies this shift from visual distance towards tactile and kinesthetic proximity. During filming, vision frequently became blurred or partially obscured. My eyes often remained closed while moving, relying instead upon muscular sensation, balance, pressure, and directional awareness generated through bodily movement itself. Hearing became muted by water pressure, while breath suspension heightened awareness of bodily rhythm and limitation.

Within these conditions, proprioception and kinesthesia emerged as primary perceptual systems. Sheets-Johnstone (2011, p. 452) argues that movement constitutes a foundational dimension of consciousness itself, proposing that "we are animate forms" whose understanding of the world emerges through movement experience. Kinesthesia is therefore not supplementary sensation but an epistemological process through which bodily knowledge is generated.

This shift fundamentally altered perceptual experience within *Co-being*. Water transformed touch from isolated points of contact into an immersive field surrounding the entire body simultaneously. The skin no longer functioned as a stable border but as a porous membrane through which pressure, resistance, and flow continuously moved. In this sense, underwater kinesthesia materially enacted Neimanis' hydrofeminist notion of porous embodiment.

While Neimanis conceptualises porous embodiment philosophically, underwater

movement practice revealed how such porosity is experienced kinaesthetically through pressure, buoyancy, resistance, and breath suspension. Rather than functioning as an abstract theoretical proposition, porosity emerged as a lived sensory condition in which the distinction between body and environment became increasingly difficult to maintain.

Importantly, this experience did not involve passive dissolution into the environment. The body remained actively responsive, continuously sensing and adapting to changing aquatic conditions. Through muscular tension, equilibrium adjustments, and breath management, bodily awareness intensified rather than disappeared. Perception became a process of reciprocal modulation between body and water.

Knowledge therefore emerged not through detached observation but through corporeal negotiation. Underwater improvisation generated what may be termed kinesthetic knowing: an embodied epistemology arising through movement, sensation, and environmental interaction. The body did not merely represent ecological entanglement conceptually; it experienced such entanglement materially through aquatic immersion.

5. Screendance as a Second Site of Kinesthetic Transmission

5.1 The Impossible Body

While underwater movement generated distinctive embodied experiences, these experiences were also shaped fundamentally through screendance processes. The filmed body differed significantly from the lived body performing underwater.

Douglas Rosenberg argues that screendance produces an "impossible body" through cinematic manipulation of space, time, and movement (Rosenberg, 2012). Editing allows movement to exceed the physical limitations of live performance by reconstructing continuity through cinematic composition.

This became particularly significant within Co-being because breath-holding necessarily interrupted underwater movement. It was physically impossible to

remain submerged continuously for extended durations. Filming therefore occurred through fragmented sequences separated by pauses for breathing and recovery.

However, through editing, these interruptions disappeared. The final screendance creates the illusion of continuous underwater immersion, as though the body moves seamlessly within water without respiratory limitation. Screendance thus constructs an impossible embodiment — a body capable of uninterrupted aquatic existence beyond ordinary human physiology.

The screen therefore functions as what may be termed a "second site". While the underwater studio constituted the primary site of bodily practice, screendance reconstructs this material through cinematic temporality. Editing extends movement across discontinuous moments, generating choreographic continuity impossible within lived experience.

This second site also transforms spectatorship. Audiences encounter underwater movement not as immediate live presence but through mediated framing, rhythm, and duration. Screendance therefore becomes not simply documentation but a distinct choreographic environment that reshapes perception itself.

5.2 Choreographic Editing

Importantly, editing within *Co-being* did not function merely as post-production assembly. Rather, editing became a choreographic process in its own right.

Screendance scholarship frequently emphasises that choreography extends beyond bodily movement into camera work, framing, rhythm, and montage. Rosenberg argues that screendance "re-inscribes" movement through cinematic processes (Rosenberg, 2012). Editing therefore operates as a second layer of choreography in which movement is reorganised temporally and spatially.

Within *Co-being*, the raw underwater footage functioned less as documentary evidence than as choreographic material. Through editing, movement fragments were arranged rhythmically to communicate embodied sensation and kinesthetic atmosphere rather than linear narrative. Slow pacing, lingering duration, and fluid

transitions attempted to transmit the bodily experience of suspension, pressure, and inter-flow.

In this sense, editing became a form of kinesthetic translation. The challenge was not simply to show underwater movement visually, but to communicate how underwater movement felt. Cinematic rhythm, temporal continuity, and image flow therefore became crucial choreographic strategies through which embodied perception could be transmitted to viewers.

The inclusion of objects such as the apple and branch further extended this choreographic ecology. These objects did not function merely as symbolic props but as more-than-human participants within aquatic movement relations. Floating, drifting, and colliding with the body, they generated additional movement pathways and environmental interactions.

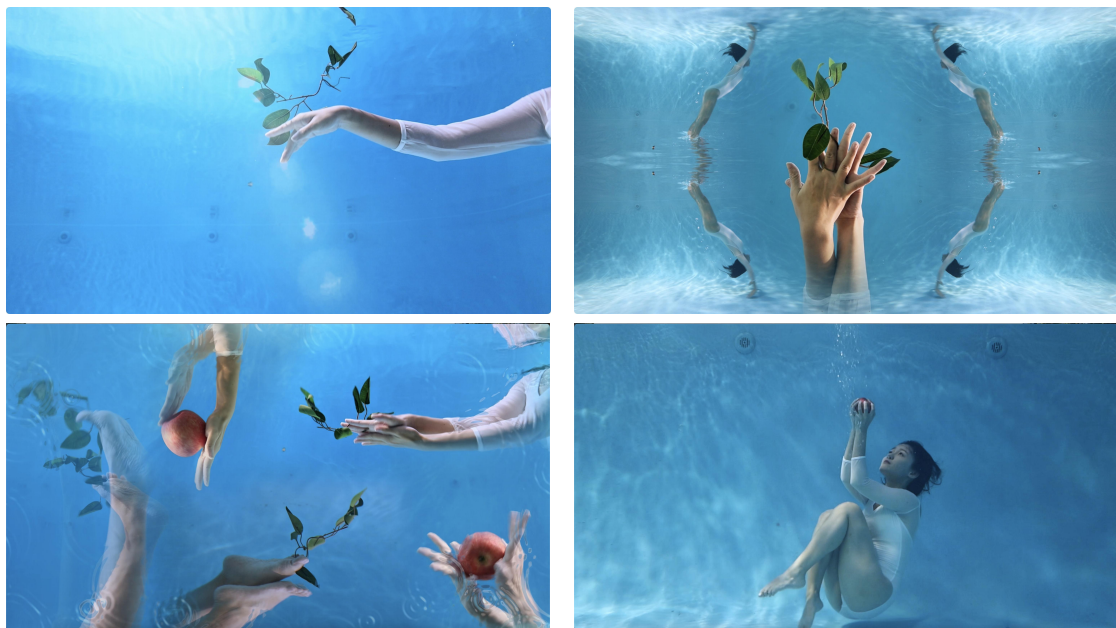


Figure 4–7. Selected video stills from the screendance work *Co-being* (2024)

Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action" is particularly relevant here. Barad argues that entities do not pre-exist relations but emerge through relational entanglement itself (Barad, 2007). Within *Co-being*, body, water, branch, apple, camera, and editing processes continuously co-produced movement and meaning together.

Choreography therefore emerged not through singular human authorship but through distributed ecological interaction.

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored how underwater screendance practice reconfigures perception and generates embodied forms of knowledge through kinesthetic engagement with aquatic environments. Drawing upon phenomenology, hydrofeminism, ecosomatic theory, and screendance scholarship, it has argued that underwater improvisation enables a material realisation of porous embodiment through the redistribution of sensory hierarchy away from visual dominance towards proprioceptive and kinesthetic awareness.

Within Co-being, water functioned not as passive setting but as an active choreographic collaborator that continuously reshaped bodily movement, perception, and spatial orientation. Underwater immersion destabilised terrestrial movement logic, generating relational forms of choreography emerging through reciprocal interaction between body and environment. Through this process, kinesthetic knowing emerged as an embodied epistemology grounded in movement, sensation, and ecological negotiation.

At the same time, screendance extended these embodied experiences through cinematic reconstruction. Editing generated impossible forms of continuity and duration, transforming fragmented underwater performance into fluid choreographic flow. The screen thus operated as a second site in which embodied perception could be reorganised and transmitted through audiovisual composition.

The project's methodological transition from site-specific to material-specific practice also raises important questions surrounding ethics, ecology, and artistic research. While inspired by the water-based living practices of Tanka communities in Lingshui, safety concerns surrounding underwater sea currents necessitated relocation to a controlled studio environment. Rather than diminishing the project, this shift foregrounded water itself as the central material condition shaping movement and perception.

While this study does not directly address environmental activism or climate politics, it suggests that underwater screendance may cultivate ecological awareness by foregrounding the body's material entanglement with aquatic environments. Underwater screendance therefore offers more than aesthetic experimentation. It proposes an ecological mode of sensing in which human embodiment is understood not as separate from the environment but as continuously entangled within dynamic aquatic systems. Through kinesthetic immersion, movement becomes a way of knowing ecological interdependence bodily, materially, and relationally.

Ethics Statement and Acknowledgements

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