# MANUAL OF THE CITY WARRIOR
By Anne Nguyen

BREAK

My dance transgresses movement. My feet are sucked up by the concrete. The cement blocks around me try to mould me in their image. I'm submerged by the crowd, it engulfs and steers me along the streets.

Drifting with the linear tide, I take control of my center of gravity. I dive to the tarmac, beneath the surface where other people move around. My freedom awaits me in the space built for legs and feet. I fold myself up and climb inside, to finally shake off the laws that govern the surface.

Close to the asphalt, where I live, my body's my own at last. My energy is channeled into a tighter spot, and the power of my moves is magnified. My body becomes a compact ball, which I bounce against the concrete. Now, with no bottom or top, no hands or feet, I cannot fall any more. Falling becomes a controllable mode of locomotion.

I tap my energy from under the surface; I can re-emerge in the current without being swept away.
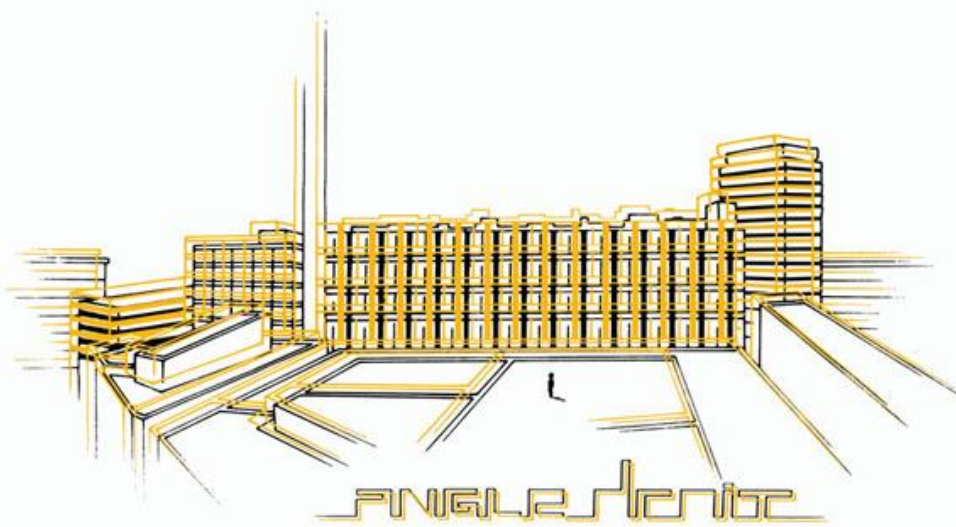
RIGHT ANGLES

I was spawned by a box. The box is still there, partly open, in its place with the rest. I stand up on other boxes, watching it from on top. I cannot destroy it, so I try to describe it.

I copy the city and the cubes that compose it to make them more my own. I dress my curve-like body in straight-cut clothes. I build my dance out of angles, with edges that cut razor-sharp. I describe my memory of my box and my fight to break free.

In the laws of architecture, freezes hold easiest when they are shaped in right angles. I spin best on my head with my feet flexed. My body is made of pulleys and cables that I must tighten and tauten. I make my footworks draw circles that pass through points of definition. I often switch my focal point, so I am never confined. The only reason I build boxes is to be able to get out.

My parallel world is also perpendicular.

HALO

The flows of concrete embracing the earth sever the ties between me and my original Element. Having trod the tracks traveled by fast vehicles, I feel excluded, ill-equipped. Each extra layer between my body and the ground pushes me up and away from my Mother Earth.

To fight the enforced separation between the only two earthly things that stay always within my reach, I try to dance my way into the floor. Hitting on beat, each top rock and each down rock sends ripples deep down. Surrendering my full weight to the ground, I now have the whole support of the earth behind me, and draw the strength to execute some regal moves.

Top rocking ready to commune with the ground, I then descend into my kingdom to perform the ritual. For the final act, I bow down to the floor, tracing the circumference of my head and creating my halo.

Now that I have won my ground, no promised reward can ever rule me, for my crown always lies at my feet.

CHAIR FREEZE

The most criminal acts are committed on chairs.

The system's connectics beckon me into the structure. Taking up my seat involves inserting my digestive tube exit into the seat-like receptacle awaiting fertilization. I am enthroned like an organ poised for procreation of the supporting organism.

Sitting down makes my center of gravity shift from inside my body to the seat outside. Versed in the act of submission to the equipment, I reject animal postures to embrace civilization. In my mind, positions of discomfort are points of elevation.

To escape alienation, I spring away from seated power. On my metro seat, I refuse to cross my legs. I move to the front and plant my feet into the ground, legs apart, ready to leap. I disregard the realities of the seated stance by opting for a squatting dance.

My freezes are chairs. I set them down to show I have my own props between me and the floor.

CIRCLE

All circular things must submit to the Great Operation before entering the structure. For while circles roll, squares can be placed and stashed with optimum density of stackability. But my architectural, object-driven mind is drawn to the storage concept, keeping circles only for mechanical or thermodynamical transformation: wheels, disks and ball pen points undo miles, data and ink; pipes, hobs rings and light bulbs echo in shape the physical reactions unfolding within. To build my civilized world, inert circles are carved into squares, and those reproducing the living are boxed into the entity.

At a time when the cube-shaped tree is shut out from the class of the living, I use my moves' dynamics to break away from the list of objects waiting to be formatted. With my square built not within me but around me, I rotate freely in the orbit that binds me to nature's cycle.

But I refuse to be confined to mere rotation. To break the bounds of my encasement and tear my cage away from the translation, I dance in a circle, to complete the natural revolution.

STREET DANCE

The street is our living-room. Our buildings are our rooms, our bunk beds, but the street is our common space. We must go through the street in order to go and stock up goods from super-refrigerators, to go and look for distraction or company, to go and maintain our buying power. In the street, where cufflinks brush against tracksuit sleeves, some fragments of our lives, spent locked up in air boxes, mix.

Hip-hop dancing is a ballroom dance.

URBAN DANCE*

In the turbulent mass of peripheral glances, I receive and send out signals with no address. Permeated by the flows of communication between mute bodies, I am lulled by the customary hubbub.

A salute, a call, an order, a gesture of the hand, the arm, the head. An inclination, a stature, a modeling of the figure and of its movements. A perception of time, the adoption of a pace. An emotion, a state, an assortment of muscular contractions. As through everyday expression I am limited to a fragment of the collective corporal vocabulary, I am bubbling with interiorized signs.

I celebrate harmony with the city by shaking up my memories of its inhabitants in one single concentrated and noisy move. Here is my dance: welcome to my city.

*urban dance: refers to all non-academic dances, such as hip-hop dances, Ndombolo…