

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2023 CONFERENCE

(2025)

PERFORMANCE & SPACE II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2024 CONFERENCE



PERFORMANCE & SPACE II

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PERFORMING SPACE 2024 CONFERENCE

Edited by

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University of the Peloponnese

2025

Embodiment of Landscape

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doi: [10.12681/ps2023.8383](https://doi.org/10.12681/ps2023.8383)

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Embodiment of Landscape**Cristiana Minasi**

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the actor-spectator relationship outside the ordinary theatrical context, questioning the tension that is established between the extra-daily practices of the theatre and the space of reality. This is a theatre model that ignores any technical input (light/audio) and which considers the landscape as an interpretative representation of the territory, in a relationship equivalent to that which exists between show and text.

The spatial dramaturgy of the artistic direction of Festival in nature – a paradigmatic example is the Stromboli Eco Logical Theatre Festival in Messina - is capable of promoting a poetic practice of scaling and orientation according to the precepts of scenic practice and, in particular, of improvisation so that the human being can recognize himself as part of a living world.

The hypothesis I will attempt to demonstrate is that if the theatrical is first and foremost a relational fact - as such total and circular - any anatomical analysis of its parts must be overcome by the centrifugal force, of synthesis and assembly, that results in *landscape*.

Reflection on the Theatre Festival in Nature also becomes the potential key to returning to question the constitutive reasons of certain movements which, at regular intervals, continue to focus attention on the combination of theatre and space.

The recognition of the environment, and its intrinsic potential, becomes the obvious prerequisite for returning to action, to regain the prerequisites of the creative gesture and its vital space.

Keywords: theatre, nature, landscape, everyday-extraday, ecology.

Embodiment of Landscape

The perception of the landscape is the only situation that physically creates, without intermediaries, the awareness of being poised between two worlds, the outside and the inside, without really knowing where one ends and the other begins (Taviani, 2002, p. 80)

This paper aims to explore the actor-spectator relationship outside of the ordinary theatrical context, questioning the tension that is established between the extra-daily practices of theatre and the space of reality. This analysis intends to take on a unitary and systemic perspective, with the desire to recognise the barycentre of all attention in the dynamic relational conjuncture that takes place in the triangulation between the stage device, the human being and the environment.

“The connecting structure is a metastructure. It is a structure of structures. It is this metastructure that defines the general assertion that it is indeed the structures that connect” (Bateson, 1984, p. 25). Theatre is perceived as an organised composition of the many parts of a complex system, in line with today's most modern visions of an ecological nature that intends “to reknit the concepts of Nature and Culture that had become divided in the Enlightenment idea that saw the two notions as distant and opposed” (Giacobbe Borrelli, 2015, p. 41).

Out of any automatism of the everyday life, often heterodirected and homologated, I try to demonstrate the inclusion of the landscape in the corporeal and motor paradigm, outside of “purposive rationality” (Bateson, 1976, p.181). If the theatrical is first and foremost a relational phenomenon, as such total and circular, any anatomical analysis of its parts must be overcome by the centrifugal force, of synthesis and assemblage, that translates into landscape.

Landscape is, therefore, defined as a totality of perception that is constructed and realised in the concrete and symbolic interaction between man and the environment, in a form of understanding, on the part of the human being, of the “complexity of the levels of which it is composed and in which it is immersed” (Sofia, 2013, p. 33). This generates the effect of repositioning the human being not at the centre but within, as a whole among the wholes, in the renewed acquisition of consciousness of being part of (responsible for) a living world.

Art (...) performs a positive function in maintaining what I have called “wisdom”, that is, in correcting an overly finalistic view of life and in making that view more in keeping with the notion of a system (...) by creating or contemplating this work of art, what improvements in the direction of wisdom would be realised? (Bateson, 1976, p.182).

If in the epistemological praxis of extra-daily theatrical practices, it is usual to speak of the *actor's dilated body*, here there is the need to restore meaning and value to the *dilated space*, which is followed by the amplification of the perception of what exists. A reversal of perspective in which it is not the actor but the context - already filled with memory and reality - that becomes an active protagonist, an organic generator of resonances, of new reading potentialities. The actor fishing for synchronicities activates real operations of spatial hermeneutics that become paradigm and lemma of knowledge, poetic praxis of orientation, outside any non-integrated and merely anthropocentric dynamic.

Undergoing criticism is the widespread habit of understanding the landscape and the environment as something that is out there, surrounding the life of individuals and the species. The overcoming of the idea of man alone living around nature and looking at the landscape is achieved by distancing oneself from the scientific dualism that over time has separated body and mind, subject and object, inside and outside: there is never a landscape on one side and a perception of a subject on the other. The emergence of an integrated perspective centres, instead, on an idea of a relational mind, embedded, situated in a culture (Cepollaro, 2011, p.8).

Landscape has always been the subject of transversal studies ranging from philosophy to aesthetics, from architecture to anthropology, from sociology to cognitive sciences. The methodologies of investigation hitherto conducted on the subject have all tended to be unrelated to theatre studies. Theatre realised outside its ordinary context, within which the landscape has found the opportunity to be enjoyed, has only been studied as a genre, as a declination, as a possible tradition in the making, but has rarely been evaluated as a tool through which the landscape could find the opportunity to be assumed, embodied and incorporated, and thus truly perceived as a *cultural image in motion*.

Theatre, on the other hand, can demonstrate with absolute clarity that it is a turning point and convergence, a perspective capable of considering the incorporated landscape as evidence of transmission and acquisition of knowledge. All this can happen if the theatre once again confirms itself as a connective device between people and environments, a living experience that opens the way to a biological approach to understanding: the subject "with his cognitive action incessantly restructures himself as well as the reality in which he lives" (Maturana-Varela, 1992, p. 31).

Given these premises, I consider it desirable to consider the landscape as a potential vertical weld of the triangulation that is established between theatre, cognitive sciences and the environment in order to reconstruct the presuppositions of knowledge and "develop and increase the (...) potentialities of relationship with the world" (Gallese-Morelli, 2024, p. 103).

The landscape called into question by the theatre is a physical and mental relationship at the same time, capable of generating the activation of new habits of everyday living, outside the supremacy of the oculocentric dimension. The reference is therefore to the theories of aesthetic philosophy that restore “development to perception as a form in which one's own corporeity is presented” and takes into account “the fact that one is affectively involved by the perceived object (...) Perception must therefore be conceived as an affective situation, meaning the fact of feeling in which environment one finds oneself” (Bohme, 2010, p. 64).

There is landscape when I feel and at the same time perceive from within and, at the same time, from outside myself, and the barrier that keeps me as an independent subject blur. Or to put it in more categorical terms, and this is my new definition of landscape: there is landscape when the perceptive reveals itself at the same time as the affective' (Jullien, 2017, p. 59).

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