

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2023 CONFERENCE

(2025)

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



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Edited by

Pablo Berzal Cruz, Athena Stourna, Tyrone Grima, Alba Balmaseda Domínguez



University of the Peloponnese

2025



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**University of the Peloponnese**

**2025**



# PERFORMANCE & SPACE II

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2024 CONFERENCE 3 - 6 July, 2024, Nafplio, Greece

Edited by

Pablo Berzal Cruz, Athena Stourna, Tyrone Grima, Alba Balmaseda

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Organised by

Department of Theatre Studies  
Department of Performing and Digital Arts



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Directed by Pablo Berzal Cruz

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# PERFORMING SPACE 2024

## Conference Programme

### Wednesday, 3 July

9:00 Registration

9:15 Welcome address

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Session. Spatial Performativity

Chair: PhD(C) Alba Balmaseda Domínguez

9:30 Dr Dragana Konstantinović.  
*Architecture Plays! Spatial Narratives in Architectural Documentary.*

9:38 Gosia Miernik  
*The Spatial Performativity: Unveiling the Dialogue between Space and Human Experience through Embodied Imagery.*

9:46 Dr Miljana Zeković.  
*The Liminal Revival: Towards the Non-extractive Spatial Practice.*

9:54 Dr María del Pilar Pastor Altaba.  
*It's not Just Another Pile of Old Stones.*

10:04 PhD(C) Damaskini Bogri.  
*Medical Performance in the Asklepion of Epidaurus.*

10:12 Discussion

10:22 Break

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Session. Performative Space

Chair: Dr Athena Stourna

10:40 Prof Dorita Hannah.  
*Towards a Theory of Performative Spacing.*

10:55 Dr Tyrone Grima.  
*Performative Spaces and Queerness in Malta: 1973-1990.*

11:10 Dr Kathrine Sandys.  
*Margins, Edges, Borders and Botany.*

11:25 Andreas Skourtis.  
*Performing Architectures: Space as Protagonist in Performance Design and Embodied Scenographies – Methods and Practices.*

11:40 Prof Olav Harsløf.  
*The Body in the Theatre - The Body on the Operating Table. Super Hospital with Performative Entertainment.*

11:55 Discussion

12:15 Break

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Session. Spatial Embodiment

Chair: Dr Pablo Berzal Cruz

12:25 Dr Maria Konomi.  
*Performing Objects in Public Space: Material Agencies and Performance Pedagogies.*

- 12:40 Dr Adonis Volanakis.  
*A Space for Prophecies.*
- 12:55 Dr Rafik Patel.  
*Circumambulating the Kaaba: Drawing the Space of the Heart.*
- 13:10 PhD(C) Niya B.  
*Emplacement, Myth, and the Performing Body: Exploring Trans Ecologies in the North-East Peloponnese.*
- 13:25 Dr Gina Giotaki.  
*Embodying the Site: Architectural Structure, Tridimensionality and Soundscape.*
- 13:40 Discussion
- 14:00 Lunch

### **16:00 – 20:00 Workshops**

- Dr Adonis Volanakis.  
*The Body Image Workshop*
- Prof. Dorita Hannah.  
*Mediterranean Spacing Workshop*
- Prof. Alberto Morell, Dr KIMVI Nguyen and Dr Gina Giotaki.  
*Space-Consciousness Workshop*

### **Thursday, 4 July**

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Session. On the Collective**

Chair: Dr Philip Hager

- 9:00 PhD(C) Howl Yuan.  
*Artists Home Swap: A Practical Examination of Artist Residency as an Embodied Space for Cultural Exchange.*
- 9:08 Dr Andrés Garcés Alzamor & Ingrid Skåland Lia.  
*Kinesis: Intangible Geometry Between Body and Place.*
- 9:16 Dr Prokopios Orfanos  
*Performance, Social Space and Hospitality: Sociological Investigation of Participatory Art.*
- 9:24 Dr Christina Vasileiou.  
*Spaces of Care: Exploring the Performance of Caring as a Teacher with a Doll's House.*
- 9:32 Discussion
- 9:40 Break

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Session. Memory and Belonging**

Chair: Dr Bill Psarras

- 9:48 Eleni Tsantali, Dr Sofia Almpanti & PhD(C) Georgia-Konstantina Atzampou. *Exploring Collective Memory and Trauma Through a Site-Specific Performance at Lazaretta.*
- 9:56 Dr Eftihia Mihelakis & Dr Lucille Toth. *Performing DNA Spacing: Technopoiesi, Posthumanist Feminism, and Dissonant Genealogies.*
- 10:04 Zoe Drakopoulou. *"As strangers". From the Collective to the Personal. Awakening Memory and Trauma in the Streets of Kalamata.*
- 10:12 PhD(C) Frida Robles Ponce. *Buhlebezwe Siwani: Sangoma Practices Towards the African Land.*
- 10:20 Discussion
- 10:28 Break

## **6<sup>th</sup> Session. Liminal Territories**

Chair: Dr Maria Mikedaki

10:40 Dr Dimitri Szuter & Rennie Tang.  
*Exploring Performative Liminality.*

10:55 Dr Eirini Koumparouli.  
*Approaching Threshold Spatialities: The Example of the Theatrical Workshop "I Want to Fly" of Eleonas Refugee Camp.*

11:10 PhD(C) Lucy Petchell.  
*Becoming a City-Body: Embodying Space in Urban Environments.*

11:25 Dr Bill Psarras.  
*Performing Between Terra and Aqua: Reflections on Edge, Boundaries and Drifting.*

11:40 Dr Gretel Taylor.  
*Revealing and Reckoning: Curating Place-Responsive Performance on Country.*

11:55 Discussion

12:15 Break

## **7<sup>th</sup> Session. The Politics of Space**

Chair: Dr Gina Giotaki

12:25 Dr Tony McCaffrey.  
*Renegotiating Theatrical Space Through Learning Disabled Theatre.*

12:40 Dr Philip Hager.  
*Performing Dissent in the Streets of Globalisation: The Right to the City.*

12:55 Dr Marta Ostajewska.  
*Indigenous Artistic Collectives as a Radical Place of Resistance (R.I.S.E, Winter Count, Postcommodity and yəhaw).*

13:10 Dr Ece Canlı  
*Captive Performativities: Art and Body in the Carceral Context.*

13:25 Prof Jon McKenzie.  
*DASEIN DESIGN. Platform Performativity and Making Cures.*

13:40 Discussion

14:00 Lunch break

## **16:00 – 20:00 Workshops**

Prof Dorita Hannah. *Mediterranean Spacing Workshop*

Prof Alberto Morell, Dr KIMVI Nguyen and Dr Gina Giotaki. *Space-Consciousness Workshop*

## **Friday, 5 July**

## **8<sup>th</sup> Session. Women's Space**

Chair: PhD (C) Alba Balmaseda Domínguez

9:00 PhD(C) D'Arcy Newberry-Dupé.  
*Hosting: Home Truths*

9:08 Dr Ufuk Soyöz & PhD(C) Aycan Kızılkaya.  
*Bathing in the Ghost Hamam of Nafplio: Remembering Greece's Ottoman Heritage.*

9:16 Hanadi Al-Samman.  
*Inscribing Muslim Women's Body Spaces.*

9:24 Discussion

9:32 Break

### **9<sup>th</sup> Session. Walking in the City**

Chair: Prof Alberto Morell Sixto

- 9:40 Dr Višnja Žugić.  
*Co-Performing City: An Urban-Topographic Rotation as an Act of Reclaiming Public Spaces.*
- 9:48 Irini Kalogeropoulou.  
*Cityphonic Walks: Unveiling the Sonic Performativity of Everyday Life in the Urban Landscape.*
- 9:56 Katerina Katakis.  
*Familiarizing the City.*
- 10:04 PhD(C) Daniel Dilliplane.  
*Walking Tour Performance as Reparative History: Aya Shabu's Black Wall Street of Durham, NC.*
- 10:12 Discussion
- 10:20 Break

### **10<sup>th</sup> Session. Performing the Stage and the Environment**

Chair: Dr Christina Zoniou

- 10:40 Dr Andrea Moneta & Dr Maurizio Crocco.  
*Performing Architecture: Realising Sustainable Environments Through the Hybridisation of Theatre and Architecture Practice.*
- 10:55 Dr Rafaël Magrou.  
*Moving Spectators in Performing Spaces: The Auditorium Dislocated into the Stage, or Vice Versa.*
- 11:10 Aristotelis Kaleris.  
*In Search of Lost Landscapes: Mt. Agchesmos in Athens and the Shift from Performative Perception to Official Cartography.*
- 11:25 PhD(C) Alessandro Di Egidio.  
*The Enabling Conditions: The Emergence of Performance from the Halprin Fountain to the Bridges of Venice.*
- 11:40 PhD(C) Manuela Ciangola.  
*Space as Event. From Lina Bo Bardi's Oficina Theatre to Giancarlo Mazzanti's Santa Fé Hospital.*
- 11:55 Discussion
- 12:15 Break

### **11<sup>th</sup> Session. Performing Architecture**

Chair: Prof Dorita Hannah

- 12:25 Dr Stavros Alifragkis & Dr Kalliopi Chourmouziadou.  
*Pavillon Relancé: Re-Tracing Leisure Modalities – Inhabiting the Archive.*
- 12:40 Dr Rodrigo Tisi.  
*Rethinking Performance and Space: A Seven-Factor Methodology to Design Alternative Worlds.*
- 12:55 Dr José Vela Castillo, PhD(C) Óscar Valero Sáez, Elena Pérez Garrigues & Juan Cabello Arribas.  
*Performative Spaces of the Quotidian.*
- 13:10 PhD(C) Alba Balmaseda Domínguez.  
*Performing Water. Bathing in Public Space.*
- 13:25 Dr Pablo Berzal Cruz.  
*Architects Do it Better, or They Should. Understanding the Environment through Performance.*
- 13:40 Discussion
- 14:00 Lunch break



## **16:00 – 20:00 Workshops**

Prof. Dorita Hannah.

*Mediterranean Spacing Workshop*

Prof. Alberto Morell, Dr KIMVI Nguyen and Dr Gina Giotaki.

*Space-Consciousness Workshop*

## **Saturday, 6 July**

### **12<sup>th</sup> Session. Activating the Senses**

Chair: Dr Tyrone Grima

- 9:00 PhD(C) Türküler Topal.  
*Another Stage is Possible: Theatre Venues Outside the Theatre Buildings.*
- 9:08 PhD(C) Ioanna Markela Chalkia.  
*Phycology of Visual Perception: Exploring How Theatrical Space Influences Emotion and Perception. The Dual Role of the Ancient Theatre of Pleuron.*
- 9:16 Sofia Alexiadou.  
*Light as Invisible Architecture: The Case of Ritsos' Moon Sonata at the Athens Festival.*
- 9:24 Ermina Apostolaki.  
*Singing, Space, Focus: Live Singing as a Concentration Tool and a Definition Factor for Spatial Conditions in Site-Based Performances.*
- 9:32 Katarzhina Zakharova.  
*Scenography and Common Concerns of Humankind: Performance Design as a Source of Implicating the Audience.*
- 9:40 Discussion
- 9:50 Break

### **13<sup>th</sup> Session. Site-Specific**

Chair: Dr Athena Stourna

- 9:58 Dr Despina Zacharopoulou.  
*Re-thinking Site-Specificity Via Long Durational Performance Art.*
- 10:06 PhD(C) Camille Tolila Mercier.  
*Theatre Site-Specific and Sociology of Chicago.*
- 10:14 PhD(C) Ilias Sapountzakis.  
*Theatre of Dionysus: A Performance and Reflexive Space.*
- 10:22 Dr Eleni Gkini & Areti Petropoulou.  
*Literature as the Occasion and Content of Site-Specific Performance.*
- 10:30 Mat Diafos Sweeney & Sebastian Peters-Lazaro.  
*Four Larks' Katabasis: Imagining Ancient Mystery Rites as Promenade Opera in Los Angeles.*
- 10:38 PhD(C) Cristiana Minasi.  
*Embodiment of Landscape.*
- 10:46 Discussion
- 10:54 Break

### **14<sup>th</sup> Session. Reflections on Performance Space**

Chair: Dr Christina Zoniou

- 11:05 PhD(C) Stella Christofi.  
*Enacting Image (Denkraum) by the Wind: Movement Depicted in Mavroidis' Landscapes, Fassianos' Figure and Gyparakis' Breath Installation.*

- 11:20 PhD(C) Mark Turner.  
*Directing Tempest Masque: Orchestrating the Classical and the Carnavalesque Chorus in Shakespeare's The Tempest.*
- 11:35 PhD(C) Attila Antal.  
*Corporeality of Space vs. Spatiality of Bodies: Site-Specific Dance on Film.*
- 11:50 Prof Liviu Dospinescu.  
*Spatial Settings and their Performative Function: Enhancing the Spectator's Experience.*
- 12:05 Discussion
- 12:20 Break

### **15<sup>th</sup> Session. Cyberspace**

Chair: Dr Andrea Moneta

- 12:30 Dr Katerina El Raheb, Dr Anastasios Theodoropoulos & Panagiotis Papadopoulos.  
*Extending the Performing Space Through Virtual Reality.*
- 12:45 Dr Miral Mahgoub al-Tahawy.  
*Anonymity in Virtual Space: Exploring the Representation of Female Body Through Virtual Identities in Contemporary Saudi Women's Writing.*
- 13:00 Dr Elina Roinioti.  
*Let's Get Phygital? Playformance and Spatiality.*
- 13:15 PhD(C) Khairul Kamsani.  
*Embodied Cybernetic Actor Training.*
- 13:30 Dr Emmanouela Vogiatzaki Krukowski.  
*Cyborgism as a Method of Transforming the Body into a Performing Space: Actions, Interactions and Interpretations Discussion*
- 13:45 Discussion
- 14:00 Conclusion
- 14:15 Lunch break

### **16:00 – 20:00 Workshops**

Prof. Dorita Hannah.  
*Mediterranean Spacing Workshop*

Prof. Alberto Morell, Dr KIMVI Nguyen and Dr Gina Giotaki.  
*Space-Consciousness Workshop*

# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	.....	i
<b>Flash Talks</b>		
<b>1. Dragana Konstantinović</b>	.....	3
Architecture Plays! New Spatial Narratives in Novi Sad in Architectural Narrative		
<b>2. Malgorzata (Gosia) Miernik</b>	.....	9
The Spatial Performativity: Unveiling the Dialogue between Space and Human Experience through Embodied Imagery		
<b>3. Miljana Zeković</b>	.....	14
On Liminality: Towards the Non-Extractive Spatial Practice		
<b>4. María del Pilar Pastor Altaba</b>	.....	18
Might not Be Just Another Pile of Old Stones		
<b>5. Damaskini Bogri</b>	.....	23
Medical Performance in the Asklepieion of Epidaurus		
<b>6. Andres Garcés Alzamora &amp; Ingrid Skåland Lia</b>	.....	27
Kinesis: Intangible Geometry Between Body and Place		
<b>7. Christina Vasileiou</b>	.....	33
Spaces of Care: Exploring the Performance of Caring as a Teacher with a Doll's House		
<b>8. Prokopios Orfanos</b>	.....	38
Performance, Social Space, and Hospitality: Sociological Investigation of Participatory Art		
<b>9. Eleni Tsantali, Sofia Almpani &amp; Georgia-Konstantina Antzampou</b>	.....	43
Exploring Collective Memory and Trauma through a Site-Specific Performance in Lazaretta		
<b>10. Eftihia Mihelakis &amp; Lucille Toth</b>	.....	48
Performing DNA Spacing: Omogeneia and Dissonant Genealogies		
<b>11. Frida Robles Ponce</b>	.....	53
The Baby Returned to its Mother		
<b>12. Zoe Drakopoulou</b>	.....	56
As Strangers. From the Collective to the Personal. Awaking Memory and Trauma in the Streets of Kalamata		
<b>13. Višnja Žugić</b>	.....	61
Co-performing City: An Urban-Topographic Rotation as an Act of Reclaiming Public Spaces		
<b>14. Irini Kalogeropoulou</b>	.....	65
Cityphonic Walks. Unveiling the Sonic Performativity of Everyday Life in the Urban Landscape		
<b>15. Katerina Kataki</b>	.....	72
Familiarizing the City		
<b>16. Daniel Dilliplane</b>	.....	78
Walking Tour Performance as Reparative History: Aya Shabu's Black Wall Street of Durham, NC		

<b>17. D'Arcy Newberry-Dupé</b>	82
Hosting: Home Truths	
<b>18. Ufuk Soyöz &amp; Aycan Kızılkaya</b>	87
Greece's Ottoman Heritage. Bathing in the Ghost Hammam of Napflio	
<b>19. Türküler Topal</b>	92
Another Stage is Possible: Theatre Venues outside the Theatre Buildings	
<b>20. Ioanna Markela Chalkia</b>	96
Psychology of Visual Perception: Exploring how Theatrical Space Influences Emotion and Perception. The Dual Role of the Ancient Theatre of Pleuron	
<b>21. Sofia Alexiadou</b>	100
Light as Invisible Architecture: The Case of Ritsos' Moon Sonata at the Athens Festival	
<b>22. Ermina Apostolaki</b>	107
Singing, Space, Focus Live. Singing as a Concentration Tool and a Definition Factor for Spatial Conditions in Site-Based Performances	
<b>23. Ilias Sapountzakis</b>	110
Theatre of Dionysus. A Performative and Reflexive Space	
<b>24. Matthew Diafos Sweeney</b>	113
Four Larks' Katabasis: Imagining Ancient Mystery Rites as Promenade Opera in Los Angeles	
<b>25. Cristiana Minasi</b>	118
Embodiment of Landscape	
<b>Regular Presentations</b>	
<b>26. Dorita Hannah</b>	125
MEDITERRANEAN SPACING. Those We Carry with Us Carry Us	
<b>27. Kathrine Sandys</b>	135
Margins, Edges, Borders and Botany	
<b>28. Andreas Skourtis</b>	150
Performing Architectures: A Performative Approach to Space and Design	
<b>29. Olav Harsløf</b>	159
The Body in the Theatre -The Body on the Operating Table. Super Hospital with Performative Entertainment	
<b>30. Rafik Patel</b>	168
Circumambulating the <i>Kaaba</i> . Drawing the Space of the Heart	
<b>31. Niya B</b>	178
Emplacement, Myth, and the Performing Body. Exploring Trans Ecologies in the North-East Peloponnese	
<b>32. Dimitri Szuter &amp; Rennie Tang</b>	185
Exploring Performative Liminality	
<b>33. Eirini Koumparouli</b>	191
Approaching Threshold Spatialities: The Example of the Theatrical Workshop <i>I Want to fly</i> of Eleonas Refugee Camp	
<b>34. Lucy Petchell</b>	197
Becoming a City Body: Embodying Space in Urban Environments	

<b>35. Bill Psarras</b>	202
Performing Between Terra and Aqua. Reflections on Edge, Boundaries and Drifting	
<b>36. Gretel Taylor</b>	208
Revealing and Reckoning: Curating Place-responsive Performance on Country	
<b>37. Tony McCaffrey</b>	215
Renegotiating Theatrical Space through Learning-Disabled Theatre	
<b>38. Philip Hager</b>	221
Performing Dissent in the Streets of Globalisation: The Right to the City	
<b>39. Marta Ostajewska</b>	226
Indigenous Artistic Collectives as a Radical Place of Resistance (R.I.S.E, Winter Count, Postcommodity i yəhaw)	
<b>40. Ece Canlı</b>	233
Captive Performativities: Art and Body in the Carceral Context	
<b>41. Jon McKenzie</b>	240
Dasein Design: Eco-anxiety, Platform Performativity, and Making Cures	
<b>42. Rafaël Magrou</b>	246
Moving Spectators in Performing Spaces: The Auditorium Dislocated into the Stage, or Vice Versa	
<b>43. Kaleris Aristotelis</b>	255
In Search of Lost Landscapes: Mt. Anchesmos in Athens and the Shift from Performative Perception to Official Cartography	
<b>44. Alessandro Di Egidio</b>	263
The Enabling Conditions. The Emergence of Performance from the Halprin Fountain to the Bridges of Venice	
<b>45. Manuela Ciangola</b>	270
Space as an Event. From Lina Bo Bardi's Teatro Oficina to Giancarlo Mazzanti's Santa Fè Hospital	
<b>46. Stavros Alifragkis, Kalliopi Chourmouziadou, Natalia Chrysikou, Konstantinos Sakantamis &amp; Dimosthenis Sakkos</b>	277
Pavillon Relancé: Re-Tracing Leisure Modalities – Inhabiting the Archive	
<b>47. Rodrigo Tisi</b>	284
Rethinking Performance and Space: Generosity in a Seven-Factor Methodology to Design Alternative Worlds	
<b>48. José Vela Castillo, Elena Pérez Garrigues, Óscar Valero Sáez &amp; Juan Cabello Arribas</b>	291
Performative Spaces of the Everyday	
<b>49. Alba Balmaseda Domínguez</b>	300
Performing Water: Experiments at the Intersection of Bodies, Cities, and Water	
<b>50. Pablo Berzal Cruz</b>	309
Understanding the Environment through Performance	
<b>51. Stella Christofi</b>	319
Enacting Image (Denkraum) by the Wind: Movement Depicted in Mavroidis' Landscapes, Fassianos' Figure and Gyparakis' Breath Installation	



<b>52. Mark Turner</b>	.....	325
Classical and Carnavalesque Use of Performance Space		
<b>53. Attila Antal</b>	.....	331
Corporeality of Space vs. Spatiality of Bodies: Site-Specific Dance on Film		
<b>54. Katerina El Raheb, Anastasios Theodoropoulos, Panagiotis Papadopoulos, Chrysanthi Badeka, Kostadis Mizaras Christos Stathopoulos &amp; Manos Detorakis</b>	.....	338
Extending the Performing Space through Virtual Reality		
<b>55. Miral Mahgoub al-Tahawy</b>	.....	345
Anonymity in Virtual Space: Exploring the Representation of the Female Body through Virtual Identities in Contemporary Saudi Women's Writing		
<b>56. Elina Roinioti</b>	.....	349
Let's Get Phygital? Playformance and Spatiality		
<b>57. Liviu Dospinescu</b>	.....	356
Performing Space and Performativity: Two Case Studies from the Epidaurus Festival		

## Performing Space 2024

**Pablo Berzal Cruz**

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*Performing Space* is a research project that explores the relationship between performance and the built environment, taking into account the different perspectives of disciplines that study human activity and space, such as anthropology, archaeology, architecture, economics, law, philosophy, sociology, or theatre studies. The project understands “performance” as “all activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (Goffman, 1956, pp. 8-9). Following this definition, any activity that people carry out with the conscious or (usually) unconscious intention of “influencing” their social and spatial environment could be considered a ‘performance’. Catherine Bell (1992) and other authors argue that our performances influence our environment by transforming it; at the same time, the environment influences our behaviours and mental states. The title of this project, *Performing Space*, refers to this circular process of environmental transformation through our performances and the influence of the environment on our performances, as well as to the space in which performances take place: the built environment.

In *Performing Space*, we emphasise that our bodies are the instruments through which we perceive our environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and also the instrument through which we understand how space affects our behaviours or our mental states. As early as the 1980s, during the initial days of performance studies, Victor Turner (1982) realised, through his collaboration with Richard Schechner, that in order to study “human reality”, anthropologists had to become performers. In other words, to understand different human cultures, anthropologists must immerse themselves in a society, carrying out its rituals and customs and becoming part of it. Similarly, professionals and academics from disciplines

that study the built environment must also become performers to understand the relationship between human activity and space. We can only truly understand our environment through our instrument of spatial knowledge: the body. By consciously activating the body and performing everyday activities such as walking, resting or observing, as well as highly formal actions such as rituals or artistic performances, we can understand how our actions shape our environment and, consequently, how our environment shapes us.

Traditionally, the relationship between performance and space has been studied within the performing arts. However, only in recent decades have other disciplines, such as philosophy, anthropology, archaeology, cognitive sciences and architecture, become interested in this relationship. Typically, this interest has been isolated, ignoring the work of other disciplines and, above all, the resources that the performing arts can offer to investigate this relationship as pedagogical tools. The relationship between performance and space can only be studied in a transdisciplinary way. However, to date, no institution has examined this relationship in such a broad way, meaning collaboration between different disciplines in this field is rare and complicated. As Tim Ingold (2011, p. xi) suggests, “perhaps there is a discipline waiting to be defined and named where these fields meet”, or perhaps we are witnessing the beginning of a new approach to studying reality that could be termed “post-disciplinary.”

The first objective we set for Performing Space was to establish a platform for presenting, experimenting with and debating studies from different disciplines on performance and its environment. In other words, we wanted to generate an international network to discuss and disseminate the performative vision of space, which is essential for understanding and developing our environment. We chose to hold an international conference containing papers based on artistic or academic research, as well as workshops in which to experiment with different research techniques relating to the rapport between space and performance. The first conference was held in Nafplio, Greece, in 2022, as part of Pablo Berzal Cruz's postdoctoral research project between the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the University of the Peloponnese. The proceedings presented here are the result of the third edition of the event, Performing Space 2024.

## **The 2024 Edition**

The third edition of the Performing Space project, in the form of the Performing Space 2024 Conference and Workshops, took place in Nafplio, Greece, from 3 to 6 July 2024. Organised by the University of the Peloponnese's Departments of Theatre Studies, and Performing and Digital Arts, together with the Polytechnic University of Madrid, this edition was hosted by the University of the Peloponnese and brought together nearly 70 presentations and 40

workshop participants from over 20 countries. The number of participants practically doubled compared to the previous edition, reflecting the growing international and interdisciplinary interest in this project.

The conference was divided into 15 sessions, which brought together the different areas of work presented: Spatial Performativity (1); Performative Space (2); Spatial Embodiment (3); On the Collective (4); Memory and Belonging (5); Liminal Territories (6); The Politics of Space (7); Women's Space (8); Walking in the City (9); Performing the Stage and the Environment (10); Performing Architecture (11); Activating the Senses (12); Site-Specific (13); Reflections on Performance Space (14); and Cyberspace (15). Three workshops took place alongside the conference in this edition: The 4-day workshop *Mediterranean Spacing*, led by Professor Dorita Hannah; also lasting 4 days, *Space-Consciousness*, led by Professor Alberto Morell Sixto, Dr Kimvi Nguyen and Dr Gina Giotaki; and the 1-day workshop *The Body Image*, led by Dr Andonis Volanakis.

During the 2024 conference, many presentations reinforced several lines of work present in previous editions. These included questions about site-specific performance as an instrument of artistic research on the environment, more specifically on the place, with valuable contributions from different angles. The line of research on the use of performance in research and pedagogical methods on the built and natural environment was also reinforced. Essential questions of this project were explored in depth, such as spatial performativity – understood as the capacity of the environment to influence the behaviour and mental states of its occupants – and the performative qualities of space – whether scenic or urban. In addition, works on virtual space or augmented reality were also present in this edition.

As examples of new contributions to previously explored lines of research, we can highlight questions of belonging or the memory of place and the collective, in which studies were conducted on rituals associated with a place, as well as works such as site-specific performances and documentary theatre, which delved into these questions. Another line of work that was strongly introduced in this edition was the embodiment of space, particularly the role of the senses in this cognitive process. It is also worth accentuating the presentations on the politics of space, which in this edition were linked to the perspective of theatre studies. However, it would be desirable for future contributions to be broadened to include philosophical, economic, legislative and sociological perspectives.

The workshops in this edition focused primarily on the embodiment of space and on how the body expresses itself in space. In the *Space-Consciousness* workshop, participants created an interesting site-specific performance in Akronafplia, the upper part of Nafplio, where remains of Classical Greek, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman architecture can be found, exploring how the body expresses itself in response to the space it inhabits, both individually and collectively. Participants in the *Mediterranean Spacing* workshop explored

memory through sensory experiences of coastal liminal spaces — spaces of farewell, waiting and welcome. The workshop culminated in a beautiful and moving performance at sunset by the participants and many members of the Performing Space community at Karathona Beach near Nafplio. Lastly, *The Body Image* workshop took place in the Vouleftikon, an ancient mosque which served as the first parliament of the modern Greek state. The workshop explored the expression and representation of the body through painting, with astonishing results.

### Figure 1

*Image of the final performance of the Space- Consciousness workshop, led by Alberto Morell Sixto, Kimvi Nguyen and Gina Giotaki. Performing Space 2024. (Photo by Pablo Berzal).*



Performing Space 2024 exceeded all of the organisation's expectations in terms of the number of participants and the high quality of its presentations. But the most important thing for the members of the organisation was the feeling of community that was generated among the participants during the event, creating bonds of friendship, as well as artistic and academic collaborations, that are still growing one year later. Proof of this can be seen in the next edition, Performing Space 2025, in which many participants of the 2024 conference will return, and many newcomers were attracted to participate through their connections with former participants. As mentioned earlier, our first objective was to create a community around the study of the relationship between performance and space: the Performing Space 2024 experience reveals and affirms that this community exists and grows every year.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the people, institutions and sponsors who have made this project possible once again. We would especially like to thank the participants for their trust in this initiative and for their valuable contributions.



## Figure 2

Image of the final performance of the *Mediterranea Spacing* workshop, led by Dorita Hannah. *Performing Space* 2024. (Photo by Spyros Kousouris).



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**PERFORMING SPACE 2024**  
**FLASH TALKS**



## 1

## **Architecture Plays! New Spatial Narratives of Novi Sad in Architectural Documentaries**

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### **Abstract**

Architectural documentary film has become one of the primary tools for archiving, recording, and representing the performance and changes in architectural spaces. In the city of Novi Sad, the specially established production house Neoplanta Film adopted the modernisation of urban space in the second half of the 20th century in the short documentary footage. Through this project, an avant-garde film group of young directors, cinematographers, and screenwriters emerged. The fragmentary digitised archival material from this project records the process of radical urban transformations of the city.

This work deals with creating and re-creating new urban narratives that promote the modern history of Novi Sad and redefine its monolithic identity image (Konstantinović & Zeković, 2023-2). By observing the city as a system of different architectural layers and associated urban narratives, architectural documentary film's importance in revitalising forgotten urban narratives, which has been suppressed due to unsatisfactory ideological connotations, is explored. In these processes, whether based on re-editing and re-assembling film archives or creating new film material, the role of architecture and architectural space is crucial for understanding the history, atmosphere, sentiment, and context of new urban stories.

The work raises key questions about the conceptualisation of such projects: Is it possible to recreate urban narratives through documentary film? What is the role of architecture and architectural space in this? How are spatial narratives created? Can space preserve memory? Following the two projects of the research group BAZA—a spatial praxis platform—approaches will be presented on how architecture and architectural space become vital embodiments of time and how they can be employed in the storytelling of urban history.

*Keywords:* Architecture, Urban Space, Urban Narrative, Urban History, Architectural documentary, Performativity of architectural space



### **Modernisation Recorded: *Neoplanta Film Novi Sad***

The documentary film became a vital medium within the architectural domain in the second half of the 20th century. This period saw a significant transformation in urban spaces, driven by the ambition to establish new social orders (Konstantinović & Zeković, 2023-1). Architecture and urban planning were not just functional but symbolic, representing progress, modernity, and the future (Zeković & Konstantinović, 2022). In the city of Novi Sad, the specially established production house Neoplanta Film was created following the economic development of the Province of Vojvodina. For a group of young filmmakers and professionals, this was more than just documenting construction sites—it was about witnessing and narrating the radical changes in the urban landscape as symbols of a new socialist life. Their films captured the process of modernisation, documenting the progression from old to new, the reconstruction of the city, the building of new neighbourhoods, and the new rituals of urban life.

Through this project, an avant-garde film group of young directors, cinematographers, and screenwriters emerged. Their early work's legacy—the evidence of the emergence of the first film-making professionals in the province—lies still unsorted and in 8,000 film cans, waiting to be archived appropriately.

### **Spaces & Documents: Toward the Creation of the (New) Narrative**

The rare fragments of digitised archives of the Neoplanta film incited the idea of using this archive material to explore the urban history and contemporality of Novi Sad. In this context, architectural documentary films are not merely historical records; they are tools for re-examining and revitalising urban narratives, especially those suppressed due to ideological reasons.

In the project *Modernisation in Six Stories*, the Neoplanta film archive is used to create vertical cut-outs and diptychs, constructing the visual narratives of urban history (Figure 1). These re-edited film segments offer a compelling storytelling method, supported by a new audio narrative. Architecture and architectural space are crucial for understanding the time, atmosphere, sentiment, and changes in the urban environment.

Six stories follow the major topics of urban transformation: 'Birth of a Modern City' shows the creation of Novi Sad, which seemed 'destined' to become a city from its establishment. 'Long live the Industry!' deals with the massive infrastructural projects that relocated the production and railways to the north, marking the shift in urban expansion towards the Danube River. 'Novi Sad Boulevards: Life In-between' highlights how the city was reshaped by modern urban planning and the creation of new boulevards, while 'City on the Sand' delves into the construction of large residential areas. The segment 'Life of the City' shows

the improvement of living standards in the city, while ‘Mišeluk: Epilogue of Yugoslav Optimism’ is about planning the Mišeluk settlement—one of the last ambitious urban projects of the Yugoslav era (Jović, et.al., 2023). This reimagined footage was presented as a video installation in February 2022 under the project *Novi Sad – Modern City*, within the Novi Sad European Capital of Culture programme (Figure 2).

**Figure 1**

*Frames from diptychs based on re-edited Neoplanta film archive, © 2022 by BAZA – Spatial Praxis Platform*



### Urban Ghosts: *Novkabel ERA*

The second project, a contemporary architectural documentary *Novkabel ERA*, examines the Novkabel headquarters building (Figure 3). This imposing structure, located in the industrial outskirts of Novi Sad, stood abandoned for years, becoming a ghostly presence in the urban landscape. The documentary reconstructs the history of this building and the industrial complex surrounding it, utilising architectural photography to capture the eerie atmosphere of the now-empty administrative tower and its ruined halls.

It is not just a story about a physical structure but also about the lives, aspirations, and challenges of those who occupied these spaces. The history of Novkabel and the city of Novi Sad is intertwined, and the documentary highlights how this once-successful factory was a crucial player in the city's industrial and technological development. The routines of

the former employees, and their interactions with the space accompany the major storyline—the story about the factory, the city, and the people.

The ERA Novkabel building was designed and built in 1983 as a production and administrative building of a unique program within the Novi Sad cable factory, which was involved in developing electronics, computers and automation. The decision to start such an ambitious program, from which the first computers ERA20 and ERA60 emerged, was a logical step in the development of this successful work organisation, recognised by the AVNOJ award in 1982 for the most successful work organisation in the SFRY. Following the contemporaries of this project and the "ghosts" at the location of Novkabel, the film reconstructs the urban and social history of Novi Sad, the context and space where the IT industry of Novi Sad was born (Figure 4).

**Figure 2**

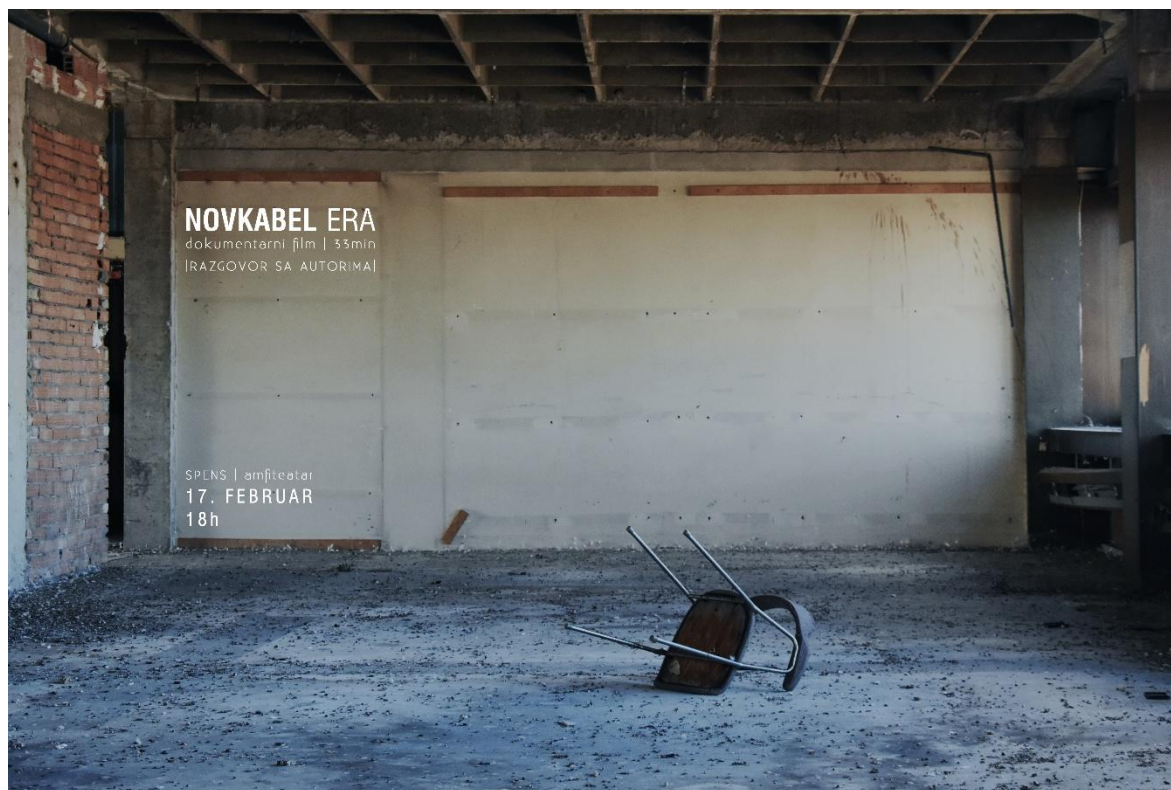
*'Modernisation in Six Stories', video installation/pavilion, Photo by Igor Đokić; © 2022 by BAZA – Spatial Praxis Platform*





**Figure 3**

*Novkabel ERA, the front cover of the documentary, Photo by Aleksandar Dadić © 2022 by BAZA – Spatial Praxis Platform*



### **Reimagining the City: Creating New Spatial Narratives**

Architecture and architectural space are essential evidence of urban history in physical realms. In a situation when the physical and social realms are contested, cinematic images and supporting stories could be the tools for re-creating new urban narratives and redefining the current monolithic identity image. These forms rely firmly on the strategies of employing the spaces in the storytelling of urban history as an unequivocal embodiment of time, beliefs and societal values. Architecture becomes a stage for a story, but also a performative framework for interaction with people, creating, through the lens of camera, a different set of meanings and values. In this way, a documentary becomes a tool for a permanent change of existing conceptions about the past through a more open and diverse comprehension of our urban history, essential for building an inclusive future.

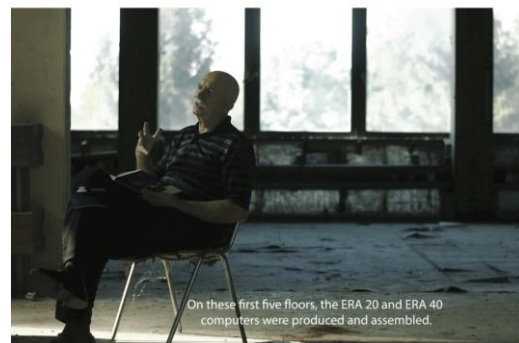
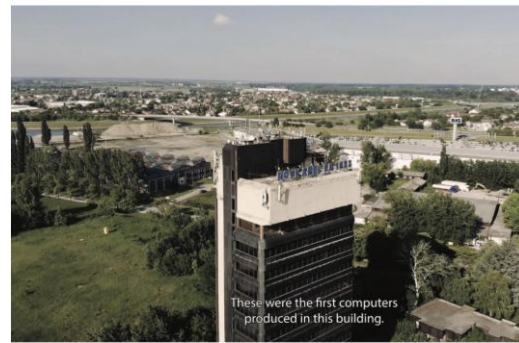
### **Acknowledgement**

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of Researchers in Teaching and Associate Positions at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad 2025” (No. 01-50/295).

#### Figure 4

*Scenes from the documentary Novkabel ERA (2020), © 2022 by BAZA – Spatial Praxis Platform*



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## 2

# **The Spatial Performativity: Unveiling the Dialogue between Space and Human Experience through Embodied Imagery**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the complex relationship between Spatial Performativity and human experience, focusing on the transformative power of charcoal-based embodied imagery. The research examines the intersection of art, psychotherapy, and Spatial Performativity, emphasising interdisciplinary approaches to understanding human experience within environments. The objective is to contribute to understanding how creative practices can illuminate the complex relationships between individuals and the spatial environment. The research provides insights into transformative experiences and enhanced self-awareness through artistic expression.

The research was conducted through narrative inquiry and autoethnographic reflections. Key theories applied include Merleau-Ponty's (1962) concept of the "lived body," Gallagher's (2005) work on embodied cognition, and Parlett's (1997) concept of a 'unified field.' The other practitioners considered in this research are Olsen (2014), Newman and de Zegher (2003), and Schaverien (2008).

The study concludes that embodied imagery has significant transformative potential in self-exploration, evoking visceral responses and connecting viewers with shared human experiences. The findings highlight that artistic expression can externalise internal processes, create alternative meanings, and foster greater self-awareness within one's environment. This study contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of art in personal transformation and environmental interaction and offers potential applications in fields such as art, psychotherapy, and spatial performativity.

*Keywords:* Spatial Performativity, Embodied Imagery, Autoethnography, Artistic Expression, Personal Transformation, Charcoal Drawings

## **The Spatial Performativity**

Spatial performativity serves as a vital conceptual lens in exploring the complex relationship between human experience and inhabited spaces. This framework illuminates how human actions dynamically interact with and shape environments, examining the creation, experience, and transformation of space through performances, actions, and behaviours (Thrift, 2003). Drawing from diverse fields such as performance studies, psychotherapy and architecture, spatial performativity offers a multidisciplinary approach to understanding human-environmental interactions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of spatial performativity aligns with several interconnected theoretical perspectives. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological concept of the "lived body" and Gallagher's (2005) work on embodied cognition emphasise the crucial role of bodily experiences in shaping environmental perception and interaction, while Parlett's (1997) notion of a 'unified field' underscores the interdependence between individuals and their environment, echoing the sociocultural dimension of spatial performativity. Further enriching this theoretical framework, Olsen's (2014) exploration of bodily awareness in creative expression, and Newman as well as de Zegher's (2003) work on performative drawing provide insights into the embodied nature of artistic practices. Schaverien's (2008) concept of the 'embodied image' connects with the transformative potential of spatial performativity, suggesting how imaginative endeavours can externalise internal processes and lead to profound changes.

### **Research Focus and Research Questions**

The research explores embodied imagery as a powerful medium for transforming relationships with the environment, highlighting the interconnections between body, space, psyche, and artistic expression (Massey, 2005).

The following research questions guide this study:

1. *How does creating embodied imagery using charcoal reveal the dynamic dialogue between spatial performativity and human experiences?*
2. *In what ways does the transformative nature of such images enhance the understanding of ourselves and the surrounding environment?*

## Methodology and Ethics

In this study, I employ an autoethnographic research methodology complemented by narrative inquiry approaches. Autoethnography, characterised as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research [that] displays multiple layers of consciousness" (Ellis, 2004, p. 37), allows for a deep exploration of personal experiences in relation to broader cultural contexts. This approach facilitates a fluid movement between external and internal worlds, enabling a rich, reflective investigation.

My research process involved immersive contemplation, weaving together personal experiences, reflections from counselling encounters, and insights gained through the creation of embodied imagery.

The creative process itself formed a crucial part of the methodology. It involved free-flowing movements where gestural marks and strokes became extensions of the body, fostering an ongoing dialogue between self, physicality, and the surrounding space. This process enabled a deep exploration of the interconnections between personal and spatial environments.

Additionally, I incorporated narrative inquiry methodologies, as Clandinin (2018) outlined. This approach recognises that all experience is embodied, personal, social, and context-based. It involves a keen interest in the stories we live and tell, acknowledging their often messy, unfolding nature shaped by intention and context. As a counsellor, I firmly focused on ethical responsibilities, recognising the impact of others' stories on self-reflection and meaning-making processes.

This multifaceted methodology allowed me to explore spatial performativity and embodied imagery comprehensively, providing rich insights into the transformative potential of artistic processes and their role in shaping our understanding of self and environment.

## Findings and Discussion

The research revealed significant insights into the transformative potential of embodied imagery and its role in uncovering the dynamic dialogue between spatial performativity and human experiences. The process of creating charcoal artworks emerged as a powerful medium for engaging deeply felt emotions and experiences, evoking visceral responses and fostering connections with shared human experiences.

Throughout my artistic process, I experienced a continuous dialogue between self, body, and the surrounding space, mediating between internal and external worlds. This interplay highlighted the fluid nature of human experience, challenging fixed notions of form,



states, and identity. I observed that the artworks underwent continuous metamorphosis and evolution, reflecting the capacity for change and growth inherent in human experience.

Themes of vulnerability, resilience, and adaptability emerged prominently in the artistic process, mirroring human experiences and highlighting the potential for transformation within the environment. These themes resonated strongly with viewers during the research's exhibition component, confirming the embodied imagery's transformative impact.

This process illuminated the intricate interconnections between space, embodiment, and narrative within the framework of spatial performativity. It emphasised how artistic expression can profoundly shape our understanding of self and the spaces we inhabit, offering a unique lens through which to explore the human experience.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the profound potential of embodied imagery in facilitating personal transformation and deepening our understanding of the self in relation to the environment. The research highlights the dynamic and interconnected nature of human experience, artistic expression, and spatial context, contributing significantly to broader academic discussions about the intersection of art, psychotherapy, and spatial performativity.

This holistic approach opens up new avenues for research and practice, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individuals and their surroundings. It demonstrates how this dialogue can foster personal growth, creative expression, and a deeper understanding of our shared human experience. As such, this research not only advances our understanding of the transformative power of art but also offers valuable insights into the complex relationships between individuals, their creative processes, and the spaces they inhabit.

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## 3

**On Liminality: Towards the Non-Extractive Spatial Practice****Miljana Zeković**

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**Abstract**

This essay aims to advance creative research within architectural and artistic discourse, with a particular focus on the significance of site-specific practice. In light of contemporary trends in architectural sustainability and ecological discourse — especially the notion that everything is already built — this study explores and interprets key spatial phenomena, including liminality, sensitivity, and ephemerality. Through the lens of an urban ruin, it examines how these transient qualities manifest within the built environment, offering critical insights into the evolving relationship between architecture, temporality, and ecological consciousness.

Contemporary architectural theory increasingly gravitates toward the radical reinvention of the existing built environment, emphasizing the necessity of adaptive reuse and sustainability. Scholars such as Hertweck, Topalovic, Nehmer, and Krieger advocate for “repair as a social practice” (Zambeletti, 2024, para. 1), while Malterre-Barthes envisions “a non-extractive future, made of what we have” (Malterre-Barthes, 2024). These perspectives challenge us to rethink our engagement with the built world, urging a paradigm shift from expansion to reinterpretation. This raises a fundamental question: How can we creatively reimagine the existing in ways that generate novel, unexpected, and dynamic futures? This essay argues that such an approach is intrinsically linked to the immersive potential of “found spaces” and must be grounded in a site-specific methodology to foster further meaningful interventions.

*Keywords:* liminality, liminal space, non-extractive practice, ephemeral space, site-specific

## ***Somewhere***

"Nothing can happen without happening somewhere," writes Meta Hočevár in her small but powerful book (Hočevár, 2003, p. 10). This "somewhere" carries the promise of space, and the belief in space, whether real or imagined, tangible or intangible. Despite its occasional appearance as a relic of a bygone era, the phenomenological consideration of spatial frameworks is a crucial aspect of study. It guides us towards the mental development of the idea of space – towards what Adrian Forty aptly describes as "a mental construct through which the mind comprehends the world" (Forty, 2000, p. 256). By analysing these constructs, we uncover spatial potentials. The discovery of these new potentials not only leads us to further necessary creative explorations and interpretations of space but also inspires and motivates us to do so.

## **Liminal Space**

We recognize liminality as a quality of urban space in those niches where certain unextracted, thus far unisolated potentials, exist. Unmined, unexploited, undivided, they have endured through time and have been shaped by contextual conditions. These potentials remain sufficiently vague by extraction and unconfined by definition; unrefined and unpurified; and just porous enough for new readings. Shaped by these aspects, the liminal phenomena of the city are carriers of indeterminacy. Entirely between one and another meaning, they belong neither here nor there to any of the polarised dichotomies. They are elusive spaces of the urban experiential threshold (Zeković, 2024).

We cross one of these thresholds when we enter an urban ruin. Not necessarily entirely dilapidated, the ruin has, over time and through shifting circumstances, lost its utilitarian function – its original purpose. As an open and fragile structure, it offers space and layers of its memory as an invitation to a dialogue. By embracing urban ruin as the primary spatial framework and introducing action within it, we create the conditions for a liminal space for the spectators, as experience itself also demands a spatial realization. This liminal or "threshold space" is an active, dynamic, uneven, and unstable space that arises from the synergy between the primary space, the event unfolding within it, and the observer's ability to translate all these into experience (Zeković, 2015, p. 37). Moreover, we must understand its authentic nature to capture it more subtly from a phenomenological perspective.

## **Sensitive Space**

This space is inherently a sensitive space. Emanuele Coccia says, "...what we call space (is) an enormous sensorium – that does not wait for our senses to open and translate the world into experience" (Coccia, 2020). And he is right. We are not needed for such a space

to live deeply and gracefully on its own. On the other hand, we are necessary to harness the liminal potentials of such spatial phenomena and consider the next steps towards a less aggressive urban future, inevitably tied to what has already been built. A radical reassessment and reinvention of the entire existing built environment will be required from us to survive on the edge of sustainability. In this regard, deconstructing the potential of the city's liminal phenomena is a crucial process that will bring forth new narratives and ways of reimagining the city.

## **Ephemeral Space**

This space is, by its nature, an ephemeral one. As Bernard Tschumi famously asserts, architecture is the space itself and the events unfolding within it (Tschumi, 2012). Despite the transience of the boundary spaces this synergy creates, they remain an enduring possibility, subtly denying that permanence, in a spatial sense, is of any real significance. Short-lived in execution and long-lived in consequences, these spaces are determined by an intrinsic intention. They are the embodied promises of an experience that will inevitably move the dream of permanency farther from the actual physical space into the memory of a person who walks away with it.

An urban ruin encloses all this and, through its vulnerable existence, challenges us to reconsider a site-specific urban alternative. The responsibility of architects and designers as “agents of transformation” (*Non-extractive Architecture(S), a Directory of Design Without Depletion*, n.d.) must prevail in favour of enabling new experiences through non-extractive practice. Working with what we have rather than tearing it down and erecting it anew helps us contain the contextual histories in our future cities. Furthermore, by intentionally facilitating reuse in our architectural and artistic endeavours, we leave porous layers for a space to breathe, enabling an active engagement of that space with the events and actions happening within. In the sense of performance, this type of space is always ready to embrace it and evolve with it.

To gain a deeper understanding of the city and its possible liveable future, it is crucial to explore the layers of in-between space, ephemeral space, sensitive space, unextracted space, boundary space, and all of its branches. These concepts offer a framework for rethinking urban environments, guiding us towards new interpretations and possibilities that embrace the fluidity and complexity of the spaces we inhabit.

## **Acknowledgement**

This research has been supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (Contract No. 451-03-137/2025-03/200156) and the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad through the project “Scientific and Artistic Research Work

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## 4

## Might not Just Be Another Pile of Old Stones

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### Abstract

This contribution examines the challenges of understanding an archaeological site and explores how various factors impact the public's ability to comprehend the original use of a spatial configuration that no longer exists. It focuses on the remains of the Arch of Titus at the Circus Maximus in Rome and analyses how the lack of adequate explanations obscures the original context of the site, despite its historical significance; the dispersion of scattered stone fragments, along with several modern and contemporary interventions, further complicate the perception of the arch's original structure.

This situation creates an incomplete experience for the visitor, who is confronted with a landscape full of remnants but with a fragmented understanding of their historical and architectural value.

In today's highly technological world, it would be possible to create a performative activity at the Circus, such as a modern chariot race, incorporating virtual and augmented reality systems to enhance the experience with historical information, allowing diverse audiences to engage with the archaeological site in a way that closely mirrors its original use.

*Keywords:* Performing Heritage, virtual space, augmented reality

### Might not Just Be Another Pile of Old Stones

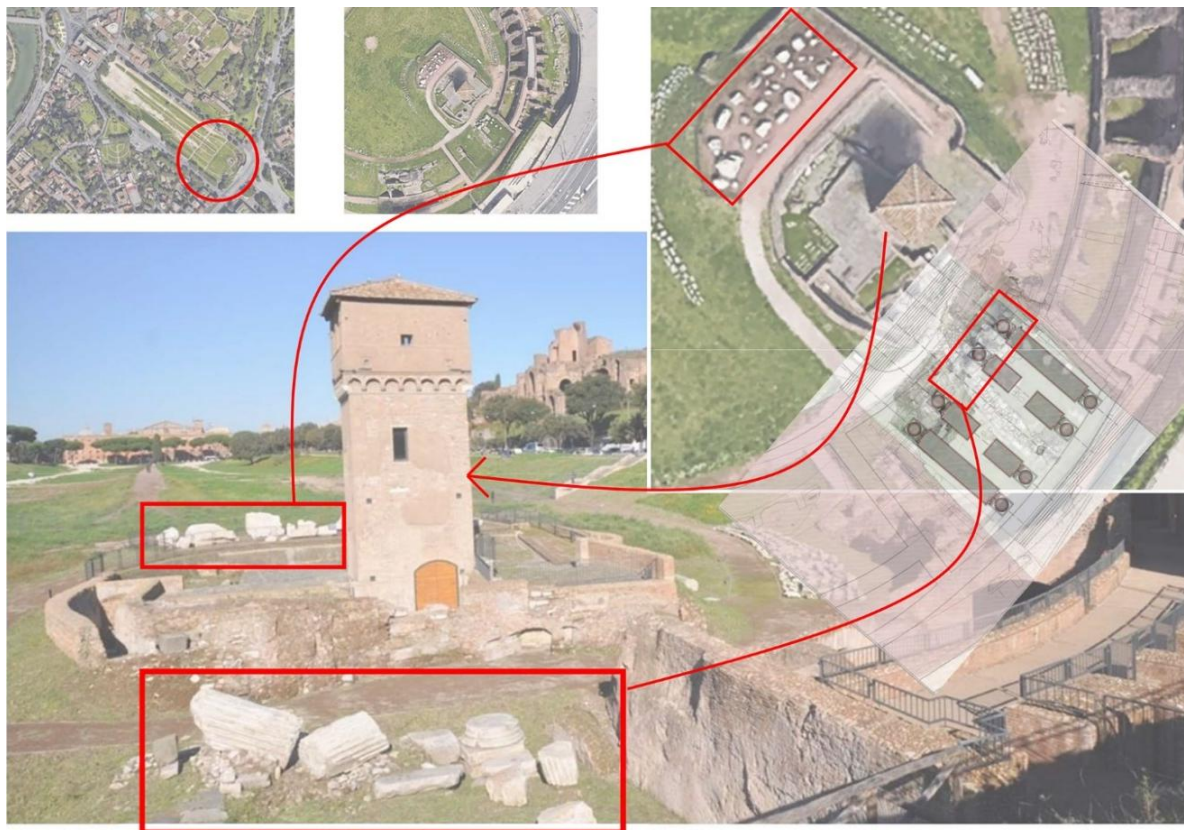
The starting point of this contribution is the limited perception of an archaeological site. The complexity of the monument or the site needs be observed in the complexity of its original state. This contribution also focuses on how the divulgation of cultural heritage could be improved or adapted; to ease the way a person could perceive not only a monument, but a spatial configuration that no longer exists.

In this context, it can be said that, understanding the archaeological site of Circus Maximus, without a deep prior knowledge of the monument and its historical context,

remains quite complicated. In particular, it is difficult to understand how and where the Arch of Titus was and stood. Neither the route that the museography of the site provides, nor the placement of the remaining fragments are helpful in this matter. Some of them are arranged according to catalogue order, laying on the floor without any other criteria, such as their original orientation or their belonging to one architectural element or another. The sole aim was to create an image of effect, which has little didactic or informative value. The only ones that are directly related to their position in their original configuration in the monument are a series of bleachers, which are arranged following what would have been the footprint of the space occupied at the time by the stands. Its understanding is thus limited to those scholars who are familiar with, and who have studied the monument in advance.

**Figure 1**

*Current state of Circo Massimo archaeological site.*



In Figure 1 you can see an image of the archaeological site, with the superimposition of the hypothesized complete graphical bidimensional reconstruction of the arch, based on the fragments found in situ during the relative archaeological campaigns.<sup>1</sup> In this image it can be observed that the arrangement of the fragments found has no relation to the original

<sup>1</sup> The archaeological campaigns took place from 2012 to 2016 and all the discoveries and work done in this matter have been published in 2017 (see Coletta 2017).



position of the arch which they belong to. The medieval Moletta tower stands between the column bases found in situ and some other fragments of the arch, neatly arranged, and there is no evidence of how this place was when it was in function. Hence, it becomes difficult to imagine how it was used at the time.

## Heritage Enhancement

The collective imaginary of how such spaces were used is primarily shaped by films, but it is challenging to directly connect what is perceived in these visually enhanced portrayals with the reality found at the archaeological sites.

In this matter, in the recent years, some initiatives have been developed aimed at enhancing heritage by using innovative approaches. In fact, since May 2019, after the above-mentioned research project was finished and published, a project of virtual reality has been developed, giving a new perspective to the visit of the archaeological site of Circo Maximo. The enhancement project uses interactive visualisation technologies such as immersive visors and stereo headsets which, in some way, help visitors to immerse themselves in some of the different historical phases through which this building-monument-open-air space has been through<sup>2</sup>. Although a virtual reconstruction of the original Circus Maximus can be seen when using the display made available to the user when visiting the archaeological site, there is not a real superimposition of images that would make it possible to evidence a direct relationship between the current reality and the images in the video on display. A real temporal reconstruction in situ, such as a film set, could help a better interpretation and interaction between the user and the archaeological site. (Figure 2).

This virtual reality experience is not the only initiative showcased in Rome in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Technological advancements have led to highly realistic digital tri-dimensional reconstructions, that allow an overall view of space as it once was but, as they all recreate an unreal situation and are reproduced on screens or digital displays, the use and interaction

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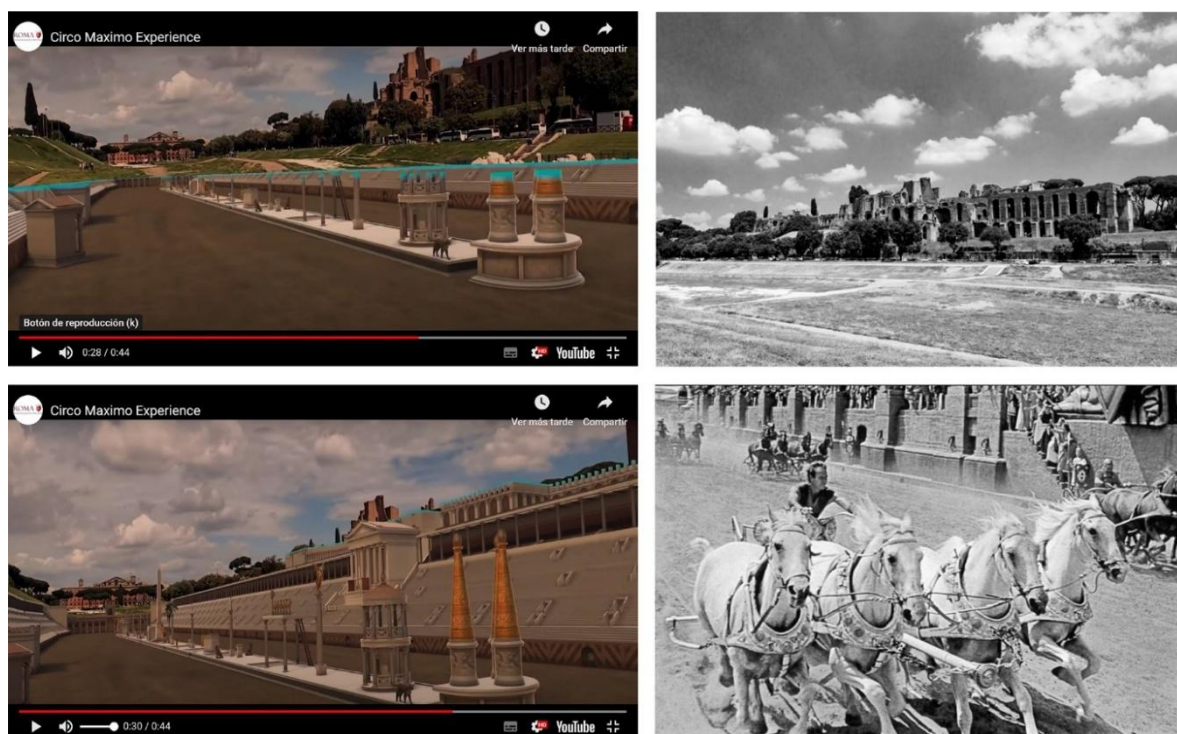
<sup>2</sup> Circo Maximo Experience. *La nuova prospettiva del passato. La storia attraverso la realtà aumentata e virtuale* (<https://www.circomaximoexperience.it/en/>). The new perspective of the past. History through augmented and virtual reality. The eight historical phases of this initiative include: the Valley and the Origins of the Circus; the Circus from Julius Caesar to Trajan; the Circus in the Imperial Age; the *Cavea*, the Arch of Titus; the *Botteghe (tabernae)*; the Circus in the Medieval and Modern Age; and finally A Day at the Circus.

<sup>3</sup> Some of these initiatives displayed in Rome are: L'Ara com'era (<https://www.arapacis.it/es/>). (The Ara (Pacis) as it was). An augmented reality history of the Museum of the Ara Pacis (14 October 2016 -30 Dicembre 2019; Viaggio nei Fori (<https://www.viaggioneifori.it/>), (Journey through the Forums), a seasonal experience on the forums of Caesar and Trajan still active since 2017 every summer to this day; also, since the end of 2017, Caracalla IV Dimensione (<https://corporate.coopculture.it/en/article/case-history-caracalla-fourth-dimension-project/>), Using a virtual reality viewer, you can see the spa environments as they once were.

with those spaces remains limited. Immersiveness is not really achieved and the role of the spectator is always limited to that of a mere observer.

## Figure 2

*Circo Maximo experience. Fiction, virtual reconstruction, and reality?*



## Performing Heritage

One way to achieve this direct association between the archaeological site and the way it was used would be to adapt the performative display from films or virtual three-dimensional reproductions to the real space and combine both of them with actions in the space itself.

The appropriation of heritage for theatrical performance and performative archaeological recovery is not a new concept and the examples of the Athens and Epidaurus Festival (<https://aefestival.gr/>) or the International Roman Theatre Festival of Mérida (<https://www.festivaldemerida.es/>) are just two of the most obvious and immediate classical examples that can be mentioned. If one is looking for more specific examples of representation and recreation of historical moments with an immersive approach to the spectator, one can also include the experience of Puy du Fou<sup>4</sup> (<https://www.puydufou.com>).

In today's highly technological world, it would be very easy to develop a performative activity at the Circus<sup>5</sup>, combining some of these concepts, and maybe recreate a modern

<sup>4</sup> Tist is a theme and show park in France, comprising a strong theatrical and scenic component, which recreates different historical events using actors, special effects and sound. It also includes augmented reality and other technological advances. For more information, see the references.

<sup>5</sup> Lots of concerts and events take place at this archaeological site nowadays.

chariot race, on site, as a thematic attraction, with the incorporation of systems of virtual and augmented reality that would add and combine historical information to the real experience. In this way, it would offer audiences the experience of the archaeological site in a similar way to how the original space was originally used.

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## 5

# Medical Performance in the Asklepieion of Epidaurus

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### Abstract

During ancient times, when there was nothing else available for a physician or a doctor in order to heal the patient and when there was no hope left, the last available option was the Asklepieion. The sanctuary dedicated to the god Asklepius was a place of healing where patients could pray, offer sacrifices to the gods and perform the healing ritual '*enkoimesis*', through which the god healed the sick. In addition to ritual and religious practices, evidence such as surgical instruments have been found at Asklepieion, proving that medical and surgical practices also took place there. This article examines ritual and medical practices and the places where they may have taken place within the Asklepieion.

*Keywords: surgical tools, surgical operations, patients, ritual, sanctuary of Asklepios*

### Asklepieion of Epidaurus

The Asklepieion at Epidaurus comprises two sanctuaries dedicated to two healing gods: the earlier sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas on Mountain Kynortion and the later sanctuary of Asklepius in the plain (Psychogiou, 2012). The sanctuary, named after the god Asklepius, was a place of healing where patients could pray, make offerings to the gods and participate in healing rituals.

Taking care of health and well-being in general are the main attributes of Asclepius. Lambrinoudakis (2020) argues that the god not only cured diseases, but also improved difficult situations in life that tormented people. The god acted mainly through two rituals: *theoxenias* and *enkoimesis*. The *theoxenias* consisted of sacrificing an animal to the god, offering part of the sacrifice and eating the rest in a communal feast. The sacrifice and the offering to the god took place in the altar, while the communal feast after the sacrifice took place in the *estiatorio*, a large building on the edge of the *temenos* of the sanctuary. The second ritual, *enkoimesis*, was the most characteristic of those performed in the sanctuaries

dedicated to Asklepius. “Enkoimesis” is a Greek word meaning 'sleeping in the temple' (Askitopoulou et al., 2000), a ritual in which patients were put to sleep and, while asleep, Asclepius appeared to them and cured them or revealed to them the therapy they should follow (Lambrinoudakis, 2020). This ritual took place in a building within the temenos sanctuary called “Abaton”.

## **Evidence of Medical Practices in Epidaurus**

Asklepieion is the earliest sanatorium in existence and is nearly connected with the early stages of medical practice. Findings in the Asklepieion provide evidence of the period when people stopped believing in divine healing and started using the science of medicine. The Sanctuary of Apollo and Asklepius was developed into the single most important therapeutic center of the ancient world and these practices were subsequently spread to the rest of the Greco-Roman world. The Sanctuary thus became the cradle of medicine.

The practice of surgery in the sanctuaries of Asklepius is directly or indirectly documented throughout Greece. According to Lambrinoudakis (2019), surgical practice is attested by ancient stories of the god's miracles and healings according to his orders given in dreams; associated medical tools and utensils; ancient depictions of related interventions; and associated votive offerings of healed human limbs found in sanctuaries. It should be noted, however, that experience with surgical operations in Greece is attested long before the emergence of the cult of Asklepius, as evidenced by the medical instruments found in a 15th-century BC tomb at Nafplio, not far from Epidaurus. Some of the medical instruments and utensils found included forceps, knives, chisels, catheters, scissors with dilators and scrapers (Deilaki, 1973).

In terms of the types of ailments treated at the Asklepieion at Epidaurus, three large tablets dating from around 350 BC have survived, containing the names, medical histories and treatments of around 70 patients. Treatment focused on the blind, the deaf, the paralysed and the broad group of those suffering from neurophytic problems (Lambrinoudakis, 2011). Several of the therapies described were performed during the *enkoimesis* ritual, i.e. with the patient asleep, such as the opening of an abdominal abscess and the removal of traumatic foreign bodies from the jaw, thorax and eyelid. The descriptions are technically simple and realistic enough to have taken place, but they were undoubtedly aided by soporifics, most likely opium, given to the patients before the act of *enkoimesis*. Basically, it was a form of dream healing consisting of three therapeutic themes: the snake, the god and a drug (Majno, 1991). While the patients were in this induced state of sleep, the god appeared to them in dreams to heal them or provide them with therapy, which the priests then interpreted and explained to the patients.

Some medical procedures were easy to perform. However, others, although technically simple, could not have been performed without the administration of soporific or narcotic substances to the patients prior to the *enkoimesis* process, as they were in great pain and suffering. According to Askitopoulou et al. (2002), an interesting archaeological find that supports this claim is the coffered ceilings decorated with poppy flowers that adorn the Tholos, a circular white marble building within the sanctuary. This particular circular building may have been used as an antechamber for the ritual of preparing the patients to sleep by administering an opiate before entering the Avaton, the place where the patients was put to sleep.

The Avaton is a long stoa-shaped building with an opening in the direction of the south, towards the Tholos. Both buildings are located to the west of the Temple of Asclepius (Błaśkiewicz, 2014). At the Avaton, the patient would fall asleep waiting for divine intervention, as all medical actions depended on the god. The crowds that flocked to the temples of Asklepios probably believed that there would be no scalpel or cauterisation (Majno, 1991). We have no written sources of what happened in the Avaton during the patients' sleep, as the priests (or doctors) were obliged to keep the ritual secret as part of the mysteries of the god. The god even punished anyone who tried to find out (Lambrinoudakis, 2019). In the hundreds of inscriptions and votive reliefs preserved in the Asklepieion at Epidaurus and other Asklepieia in Greece, which recount individual healings, only the results of the ritual are described (Aravadinou, 1907). However, the performance of surgical operations at the Asklepieion at Epidaurus is indirectly documented by these accounts. Faith undoubtedly played a role in healing, but human action by the priest-doctors in the name of or with the blessing of the god was, at least in the most serious cases, an essential part of the treatment. Ritual sleep was undoubtedly essential for complicated surgical procedures, but possibly for any intervention. Research concludes that the priest-doctors must have used anesthetics and hypnotics.

## Conclusion

Surgical practices were carried out at the Asklepieion in Epidaurus, as evidenced by medical instruments found at the Avaton (Kamarinou, 2016) dating back to the 4th century BC, such as knives, forceps and even a sandfly. Patients sought divine intervention through prayer, sacrifice and ritual. However, medicine itself was also practised there, with human intervention being necessary for the full treatment of patients.

The Asklepieia laid the foundations of medicine: it was one of the first steps in the development of surgery and pharmacology that led to medicine as we know it today. In particular, archaeological evidence suggests that Epidaurus provides a unique example of a concept of healing that considers the body, mind and spirit as an indivisible unit. Activities such as music, theatre, exercise, nature experiences and faith, along with medicine, diet, surgery

and possibly hypnosis and dream healing, may have influenced the healing process and healthy lifestyles of patients. The success of the treatments at the Asklepieion in Epidaurus contributed to its fame and longevity until the end of antiquity in the 5th century BC:

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## 6

### **Kinesis: Intangible Geometry between Body and Place**

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Amereida Group - Open City. Chile.

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The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway.

#### **Abstract**

This workshop explores the interactions between body, movement, space, light, and sound in three distinct phases. It begins with bodily expression, where participants engage in poetic movements in diverse environments, both indoors and outdoors, natural and constructed. Subsequently, the properties of light and colour are investigated, delving into chromatic relationships and complementarities among primary, secondary, and tertiary colours.

In the following phase, strips are introduced, painted in an orderly and sequential manner, while incorporating Ingrid Skåland Lia's improvised music, generating a second poetic act aimed at connecting bodies with places and the sound of the environment. These processional experiences evoke rituals, festive movements, and games with passersby.

The workshop progresses towards an exploration of the geometric body, an intangible and internal geometry that emerges from the perception of the body within its environment. The integration of all these elements is directed towards the creation of a final scene where body, space, sound, light, and colour converge, with a spatial choreography.

From the outset, participants demonstrate total commitment, immersing themselves in the experience and allowing themselves to be carried away by sensory experiences. The workshop's approach moves away from purely methodological aspects to immerse itself in direct experience, allowing students to experiment, receive, assimilate, and synthesize experiences from their own bodies and in relation to the surrounding space.

*Keywords:* Body movement and space, radical pedagogies, perception, human events



## Part 1

The School of Architecture and Urbanism, of the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso, Chile, was founded 74 years ago by a group of Latin American architects, artists and poets. This school has a way of thinking about architecture based on three concepts: the observation of human events, the act of inhabiting, and the architectural form that accommodates these acts of inhabiting. Fifty-nine years ago, in 1965, the founders of the school embarked on an artistic and poetic journey across the continent, questioning the social and political issues of America, starting with the question of "What does it mean to be American?" and performing poetic acts, installations and performances as they travelled from Patagonia in the south, to Bolivia in the north.

### Figure 1

(From left to right and from top to bottom). A. Outings to draw in Valparaíso, with the students of the school; B. Inverted maps of America from the *Poema de Amereida*; C. First crossing of 1965 in Patagonia; D. Crossing of the students of the school in the Andes Mountain range.



From this trip, a poem called *Amereida* emerged, which is the founding poem of the group and of all its work to this day, incorporating the practice of travel in all the workshops of the School of Architecture and Design of the PUCV for the last 40 years, including more than 300 trips.

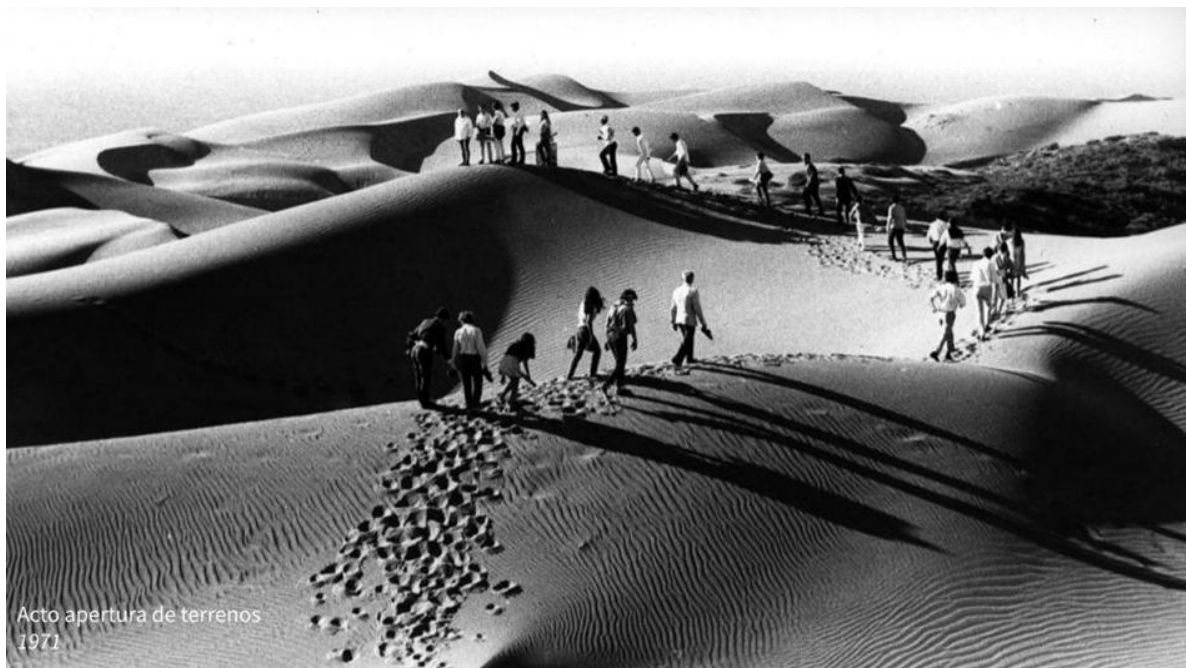
Later, in 1970, a group of professors and students founded *Ciudad Abierta*, as a way to fully embrace this way of thinking in relation to poetry. On the shores of the Pacific, several

members of the group moved with their families, beginning a process of constructing works inspired by Amereida poetry in conjunction with various disciplines.

Since then, for more than 50 years, in Ciudad Abierta we have carried out acts that allow us to organize our collective life and generate the works that we inhabit. We do this through poetic acts, tournaments, games and performances. Members of the community, visitors and national and international students participate in them. Here we live, without private property, sharing dinner every Wednesday and experiencing the poetic way of seeing life.

### Figure 2

*(From left to right and from top to bottom). A. Poetic act in the grounds of Ciudad Abierta; B. Hospedería del Errante; C. Lunch for the entire community in the Music Room in Ciudad Abierta.*



Poetic acts are a kind of game that intertwine the relationships that happen in the present between a place and the people involved. They usually culminate in the creation of a poem, which establishes a collective identity between all participants, not because it is the

work of a single artist, but of all those present collectively. It is a poetry made by all and not by one.

This way of living, thinking and making architecture has allowed the group to participate in international exhibitions, such as the Reina Sofía in Madrid 2010, the São Paulo Art Biennial in 2012, Documenta 14 in 2017 in Kassel and Athens, and the Bauhaus Festival in 2019 in Dessau. Today at this congress, we will present our ongoing project that arises from the ideas of the school and our community.

### Figure 3

(From left to right and from top to bottom). A. Amereida workshop held by A. Garces on the grounds (dune fields) for all the students of the school; B. Tournament, game invented by the architecture and design workshops; C. Poetic act with the first-year students.



Our proposal and exploration have aimed to bring architects closer to questions of the body, its own perception and its relationship with the collectively created space. This is what is maintained in the *Ciudad Teatro* workshop of the Valparaíso School, where choreographers, sound poets, musicians and actors are invited to lead processes of

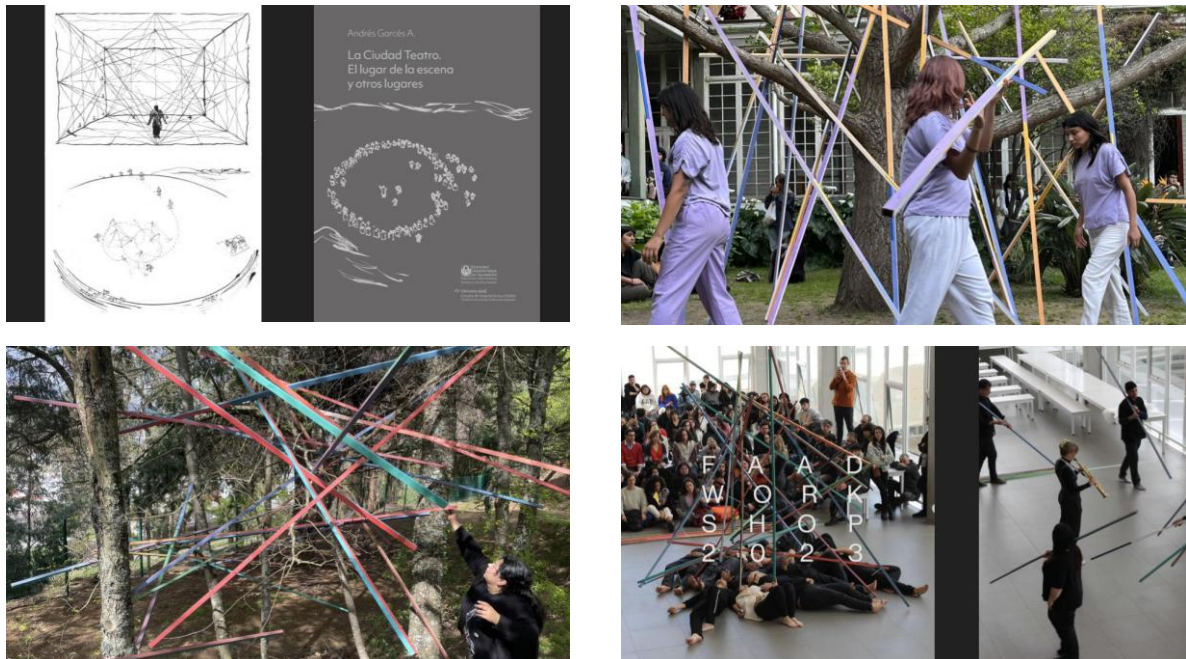


reflection and creation with students, which culminate in spatial choreographies and subsequent workshop projects.

It is a pre-formal process, prior to the project, which seeks to break with the syntax imposed by the Cartesian and Euclidean tradition of form. It positions the human being as an activator of the form in movement, moving through a place, perceiving and feeling what happens there. In a certain sense, we want to reveal the geometry underlying that intersection, which is not visible but which we believe exists in its intangible condition.

#### Figure 4

(From left to right and from top to bottom). A. Cover and drawings of the book: "The City of Theatre, the place of the scene and other places"; B. Performance "Intangible Geometry" presented in Valparaíso; C. Performance "Intangible Geometry" presented in the city of Temuco, south of Chile; D. Performance "Intangible Geometry" presented at a workshop at the Catholic University of Temuco.



Together with other artists and architecture students, we proposed this research and participated in three workshops held in 2023 in Temuco, in the south of Chile, in Valparaíso, and in events created in *Ciudad Abierta*.

These performances arise from a collective that co-creates a scenic space through four moments of perception and creation: matter-body; light-colour; time-sound; and scenic creation happening in real time, guided by music, which sets the rhythm and creates the sound atmosphere to build and dance.

We believe that by discovering the intangible geometry between body and place, people will be given a new way of thinking about space, which arises from this choreography of living.

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## 7

# **Spaces of Care: Exploring the Performance of Caring as a Teacher with a Doll's House**

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### **Abstract**

This flash talk presentation discusses my artistic research practice with a doll's house, part of a PhD research project which inquired into what it feels like to do care as a teacher. Coming from the perspective of a teacher and artist, the project proposed an intimately artistic way to examine the nuanced experience of performing care in teaching through methodologies of performance, spanning performance/live art, performative installations and participatory performance at schools. The practice unfolded in a ritualistic, private performance engaging with an old doll's house as a place of exploring the embodiment and temporality of care. This compressed space created caring meaningfully in the absurdity of an adult/teacher playing with a doll's house, claiming a space for the possibility of imagination for the teacher, ultimately in an embodied performance of an insistence to stay still, in the present. Staying still and silent with the doll's house eventually became an unsettling, hopeless performance, the performance of radical caring by the despaired teacher who insists on waiting instead of hoping, staying still in facing an also 'unmovable', uncertain future. The project contributed crucially to the newly established research area of care aesthetics by examining the lived experience of a group of professionals that has not been previously researched from a performance perspective. It argued for the sustainability of caring practices and experiences through an engagement with the notions of the spatial and temporal in the space and practice of performance.

*Keywords:* performance, care, care aesthetics, doll's house, hope, waiting

## Spaces of Care

The PaR *doll's house* (2021) (Figure 1) was a private artistic exploration of collection and recollection of mementos I had kept from my students and memorabilia from my teaching practice, unfolding inside an old doll's house that offered something like a getaway space in my short breaks from teaching long online hours during the pandemic. The practice, which resembled a performance improvisation with something ritualistic and liminal about it, became an autoethnographic tool and a space for self-reflection on my lived experience of caring for my students. In this account I want to suggest my insistence to stay in prolonged stillness, both spatial and temporal, next to and with the doll's house as a performance of the nuances of the temporality of care in teaching

### Figure 1

*Doll's House (Par 2021. Ongoing) Performative installation (30 X 50 X 120 cm). Image by Christina Vasileiou.*



A relation to the future, being able to hope, is not only an indication but also an ingredient of care as Sara Ruddick (1988) suggests. Hoping also suggests a certain orientation to time, what Rita Felski states as “a hopeful orientation to the future, or what we sometimes call belief in progress” (Felski, 2002, p. 22). This orientation is not unrelated to emotions of fulfilment and a positive disposition, or the well-known rewarding experience of caring. These are intricate orientations of care that we want to result into something, to produce something with it, to actualise a future, even if we may not be there to witness it, a sense of redemption (Felski 2002) and a fulfilment projected onto the future. On this basis, therefore, the duty of care could translate as a duty to hope, and although, I do not suggest that all



teachers are orientated towards visions of redemption, I do believe that a sense or amount of optimism is necessary for teaching to happen.

However, Sara Ahmed's (2010) critical feminist thinking on the notion of hope, suggests hope and the chasing of happiness as a conditioning that is failing us in recognising the causes of our unhappiness on a social, structural level. And that may not be far from what Jack Halberstam (2011) suggests as disciplinary correctness and conditioning, and relates to Foucault's (1977) technique of modern power. Indeed, teachers can experience hopelessness when social and economic injustices are sadly reflected in the classrooms, leading to painful realisations that there is little that they can do for some children, or when the teachers themselves, are broken. As such, the authors of *Dark Pedagogy* (2019) argue that "the darkness of our times is uncanny" (Lysgaard et al., 2019, p. 11). In this grief of bearing the knowledge of pain in the world, it is unclear if teachers are allowed to grieve without being seen as failing to embody future and hope. However, I want to suggest these as performances of caring subjectivities in struggle and ambivalence that illuminate how hard it is to care for others at the end of hope. And grief may indicate, not only the end of times, but the end of care, as we know it, signalling an urgent call for re-imagining what constitutes success in care and a call for a politics of hope.

## Figure 2

*Becoming a Memory (Par 2021). Image by Christina Vasileiou.*



The doll's house practice staged an idiosyncratic performance of hopelessness or failure to hope by showcasing an insistence to stay in the present, staying still, perhaps stuck. It



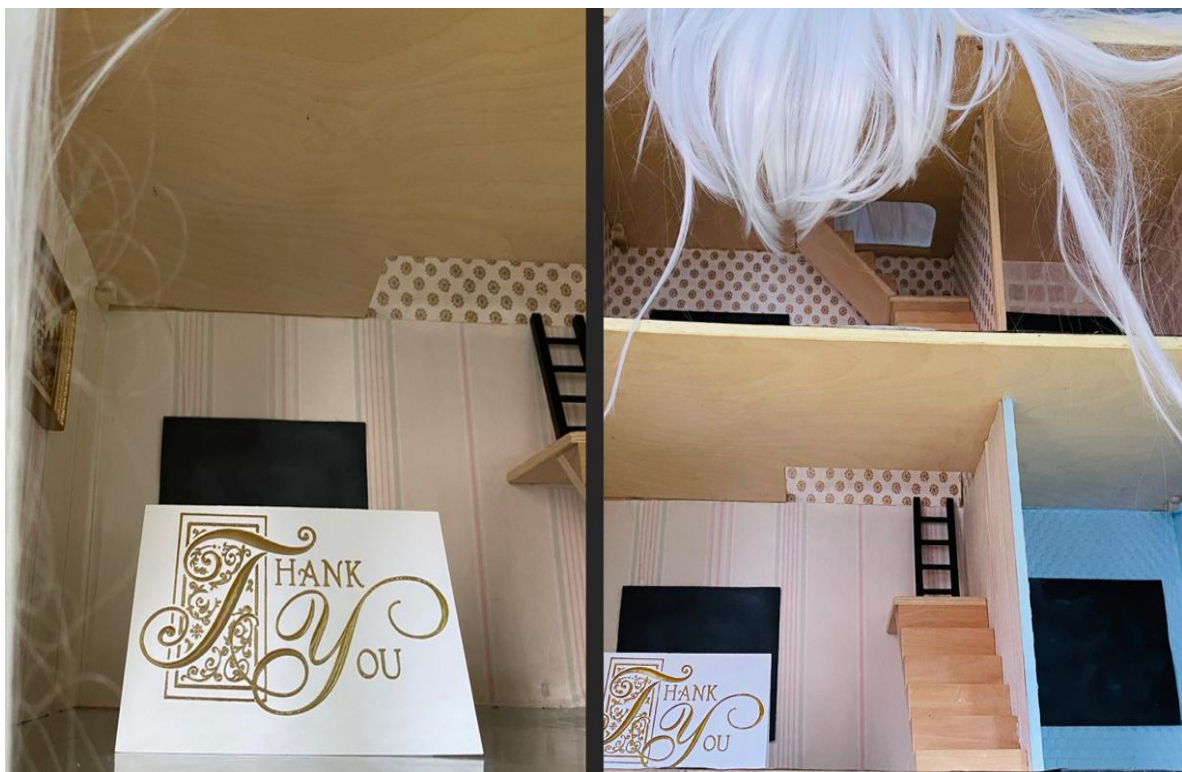
demonstrated a failure of progress as we know it in the affirmation of the nonsensical or the counterproductive in playing with a child's toy. The collection of re-collection as a practice of temporal resistance to forget – and be forgotten, suggested crucial questions about who we are before and after care. It suggested care as another performance event that ultimately actualises a future not because of hope but because of a strong caring present.

As I am turning to look at my reflection on the shiny material that I use for the renovation of the doll's house, I seem blurry, unclear, like a distant memory (Figure 2). If I am becoming a memory, how do I perform memory, what will be left of me and what will endure in time? How can I enclose myself in this dollhouse, and freeze all the care it carries?

My students' presents, the 'thank you' cards, their countless notes and drawings promise they will always remember me - and my care (Figure 3). A privilege to endure, to remain as a figure perhaps beyond human, a figure idealised, indeed everlasting, timeless. Yet, I know that I will still be fragmented in the relentless fragmentation of institutional time and space, but also fragmented in the relentless, merciless workings of time upon memory. The place where only fragments of the caring teacher remain in the memory of others, and gradually slip away, and a name or a trace of affect, or not even any of that, remain at the end.

### Figure 3

*Doll's House (PaR 2021.Ongoing) Performative installation (30 X 50 X 120 cm). Image by Christina Vasileiou.*



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## 8

## **Performance, Social Space, and Hospitality: Sociological Investigation of Participatory Art**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this text is to present narratives of artists and non-artists who participated in the platform *Blind Date*. *Blind Date* is a research and artistic platform that cultivates collaborative actions, with the cooperation of two different groups of people (artists/non-artists, visual artists/ poets, artists/refugees etc.), in connection with space and community. We will capture aspects of the discourse of the platform participants, who were investigated through in-depth interviews.

The research questions deal with issues of participation in the project: what is the relationship between the *Blind Date* experience and social space in each project? In what way is the artistic action connected with performativity? How do the participants perceive concepts such as cooperation, participation, and collectiveness in their practice? What is the connection between participation, hospitality, and performance in the narratives of the participants? What are their expectations from participating in *Blind Date*? How is the experience of participating in the project reflected? Did their participation in *Blind Date* influence their subsequent professional career?

The interview material was examined through discourse analysis and discursive psychology methodology (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). The research and analysis were carried out within a sociological framework. It was important to examine sociological theories on art creators that enlighten and strengthen our analysis (Bourdieu 1993, 1995; Becker 1982, 1974; Heinich 2004; Elias 1982). Further, sociological approaches to collaboration (Becker 1974; Sennett 2012, Goffman 1972) enhanced our approach to the importance of participation, action, and performance in community and social space.

The results of the interviews depict interesting perspectives of the participants that interconnect their interaction in the platform with matters and terms of 'social space' and 'time', with 'artistic practices'. The practices and actions include performative, bodily, and participatory aspects of the interaction process of the project. The terms mentioned above link the participants with the notions of performativity, social space/community, and hospitality.

*Keywords:* Sociology of art, art creators, participatory art, social space, hospitality

## Social Space

Durkheim refers to how space is socially constructed (Schroer, 2021) and to social space as geographical areas that are divided and inhabited by social groups (1960, pp. 27-28, 186). From this perspective, society can be seen as a collective entity and consists of the body (substratum) and the mind (social life) (1960, pp. 79-80, 82, 338-9).

Henri Lefebvre (1991, p. 33) analyses social space in three particular modes: Spatial practice, Representations of space, and Representational space. In the current unit we will move between Spatial practice (space perceived in daily routines and activities) and Representational space (subjective experience of space, accompanied by emotions, symbols, images).

The participants express their expectations by linking what happens in the local community with needs, actions, and demands. The sociologist Dépy Christakou (2014), who participated in “Ephemeral Habitus” in Patras,<sup>6</sup> refers to the city's issue with the non-use of the waterfront and its connection to *Blind Date*. According to Lydia Matthews, “A large swath of Patras’ urban coastline was now inaccessible to the public, and yet it seemed that no one recognized its historical or intrinsic value of this area that had once been a public space.” (Matthews, 2017). This issue is addressed by Christakou in the interviews conducted as part of the *Blind Date* research project, “...discussing since the previous [day], about whether there is a sea front in Patras, which there is no sea front, because this city is separated by the railway lines and I think that was the purpose of the initiative, a bit of the promotion of an issue through the voice of the citizens, beyond whether the character we mentioned can also have the artistic, political dimension it represents community.”

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<sup>6</sup> As Lydia Matthews mentioned about Adonis Volanakis *Blind Date* coordinator:

“Commissioned by the Greek port city of Patras’ Municipality Theatre in 2014, he gathered students from the local acting school, architects, a group of immigrants/refugees, as well as other interested residents to participate in an intensive workshop. Working together for three hours daily over a period of 2 months, they researched and responded to the city’s coastal zone, which had transformed radically since becoming privatized. (...) Working in small multidisciplinary groups, these “blind date” teams gathered local residents’ stories about the area, conducted library research and chose specific sites of interest that merited closer public scrutiny. They then shared what they had learned with each other and co-created the choreography of a six-hour, 5-kilometer participatory public walk that mapped key sites along the waterfront through site-specific performances.

This music and dance-filled walk began with 25 people, but as curious residents joined in and became actors themselves, the promenade grew to include over 500 people. Residents were free to join all or parts of the walk, and at various locations the scenarios unfolded: they enacted an imaginary official ribbon cutting ceremony that mimicked what it would look like to re-open the coastal gates, generating spontaneous applause by the locals” (Lydia Matthews, 2017).

In the interview excerpt above, social categories (citizens), beliefs (there is no seafront in the city, the purpose of the initiative), causal relationships (initiative - promotion of an issue), events (artistic action with a political/community dimension) appear. A heterogeneous group of people who share common values come together in a geographical location for a common face-to-face collaboration (Bublitz et al, 2019, p. 316).

## **Performance and Artistic Practices**

The participants mention performance, as well as artistic and social action in their narratives about their *Blind Date* experience. Gerasimos Giovanakis (2014) refers to “ephemeral habitus”, describing it as an invitation to citizens and an event of artistic pride in the city. He refers to the discussion and pre-work on the concept of performance by the coordinator Adonis Volanakis, which seems to have played a role here as well as in the execution of the action.

In the interview, participant Dépy Christakou refers to a march with students to the top, which turned into a carnival “in a very beautiful way, with music, percussion, and singing”. She felt like she was part of a team that had its rhythm. We can trace the passage from the games of active action, to the playful meeting of participation - gaming and the gaming encounter (Goffman, 1972, p. 33), as crystallized in the narrative of Dépy Christakou.

In relation to moments of social and political assertion, Lydia Matthews (2017) sets the tone: “These and other moments made strangers realize that it is possible to occupy and reclaim parts of a city by investigating its history and re-valuing what has been discarded or taken from them.”

## **Hospitality**

Hospitality is a unique and multifaceted concept that deserves to be redefined: “as an ordinary practice of accommodation, a mechanism, an ideology, an idea, and a normative principle” (Boudou, 2023). It is a term with a long history. According to Aristotle (1998, 1263a), a virtuous landlord should be practising hospitality, and also proprietorship should be welcoming.

As Lydia Matthews (2017) mentions, there are implicit aspects of politics in Blind Dates. In this project, trust and courage are cultivated in order to surpass xenophobia, “the fear of Other”, and incorporate philoxenia/hospitality. Using Derrida's dilemma “[b]etween an unconditional law or an absolute desire for hospitality on the one hand and, on the other, a law, a politics, a conditional ethics” (1996/ 2000, p. 147), Volanakis supports the passage from the second (law, conditional ethics) to the unconditional acceptance and fruitful interaction.

Poet Kathy Engel refers to the care that existed, knowing and deeply connecting with others, as well as the relationships sustained after the Blind Date. It was a process she loved and learned from.

In her interview, Pavlina Marvin, focusing on the processes of the project, refers to the non-directive method and the sense of freedom she experienced. At the same time, the collaboration developed in an intergenerational group, which was characterized by inclusion.

The refugees B. & G. in their interviews talk about a natural process that was very pleasant. B. was 12 years old and accepted what was happening as something natural. Something natural that is built within a friendly atmosphere involves both initiated and non-initiated individuals, strengthens the belief in art, and develops the method through experience.

## Epilogue

The research focuses on participants in the activities of the *Blind Date* platform, which adopts forms of participatory art.

It would be very interesting to include in the future, in the exploration of the creators of art and artworks, art-based research. In performance and space research it is important to use methods that investigate participants' discourse, representations, memories, and emotions.

The notions of social space, performance, and hospitality were important for the interaction and cooperation of participants in the project. We presented research material in brief, while there are more narratives mentioning these important terms of creation.

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## 9

## Exploring Collective Memory and Trauma through a Site-Specific Performance in Lazaretta

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### Abstract

The work presented revolves around a site-specific performance held at the public space of Lazaretta - a historic Sanatorium in Syros (Greece). The aim of this empirical research was to outline the embodied sense of collective trauma through isolation. The research suggests that the collective memory connected to specific historical places and approached through body and digital culture strengthens the social consciousness and the sense of self.

*Keywords:* collective memory, historical trauma, embodiment, movement, isolation

### Exploring Collective Memory and Trauma

This study explores the connection between embodied movement and collective trauma related to isolation (Audergon, 2004; Hirschberger, 2018) through a site-specific performance that took place in Syros, at the historical building of Lazaretta, as part of the Eye's Walk Digital Festival<sup>7</sup>. Lazaretto, originally an abandoned stone complex utilized as a cholera quarantine hospital, later served as a prison and mental asylum.

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<sup>7</sup> Site-specific choreography: Georgia-Konstantina Antzampou - Proastio Art Centre Dance research company. Performers/ co-creators: Sofia Almpani, Liana Giezou, Aphrodite Kalafati, Anna Ouzounidou, Eleni Tsantali. Music "Eros": Liana Giezou. Video installations: "Peripheral" - Katina Bitsicas, "Reach" - Alice Karveli, "Unravel Rois" - Andrew Duggan. Poem "therapeutic breathing": Petros Stefaneas



Our research hypothesis was based on a holistic perspective of the living body, building on previous studies such as the research conducted by Ehrsson (2007), Fraleigh (1987), Ionta et al. (2011), Schmalzl, Crane-Godreau, and Payne (2014), Sheets-Johnstone (2015), and Van der Kolk (1994). According to Hirschberger collective trauma is defined as “*the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society*” (Hirschberger, 2018, p.1). We use the term “*trauma*” to encapsulate the shared experiences intertwined with local history (Alexander, 2004; Maxwell, 2014; Sotero, 2006).

The key objectives are: 1) to examine the link between embodied movement and collective trauma; 2) to analyze how historical places influence collective memory and social consciousness; 3) to investigate the dancers' emotional and physical experiences through embodied interactions; and 4) to study how interdisciplinary collaboration and technological creativity express these elements.

## Methodology

Five dancers devised a walking performance from the Harbor to Lazaretta. The performers were instructed to explore the themes of love and death. These themes emerged from the sanatorium's history and the analysis from a song called “Strong as death is Love” (Rocha & Burton, 2017). The performance was enriched by original electronic music. Three video art installations were projected onto Lazaretta's facades, transforming the building and creating a space for large-scale artistic expression.

The dancers interacted with residents of Syros and global participants, and they reflected their experience by answering five open-ended questions. The questions were based on the practice of contact improvisation, mindfulness and reflective practice (Behnke, 2003; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009; Moon, 2013). The answers are presented below:

1. How did you feel about getting close to locals?
  - There was a desire to come close to them.
  - More comfortable than walking alone.
  - I felt like they wanted to show me what the building means to them.
  - I think they wanted me to do that.
  - I thought it would be stressful but it wasn't.
2. How easy was it for you to be physically isolated from the other dancers?
  - Actually, it was really difficult.
  - When I did it, I felt sad somehow.

- I was feeling that I needed to be close to someone in order to be safe.
  - It was not.
  - I think I was searching other bodies through my movement.
3. Were there any pictures related to isolation, love and death that emerged from this procedure?
- White color, paleness and pain.
  - Separation and pain.
  - Desperate faces and pain.
  - I thought of isolated people and the desire to live.
  - People being isolated from the outside world but together in a room.
3. How did you feel about your dance partners?
- Glad we were together.
  - Support.
  - Safety.
  - Creating together.
  - Gratitude.
5. Describe the whole experience with one sentence.
- A well-shared experience.
  - It was emotional.
  - Knowledge through senses.
  - I felt connected with the memory and the people.
  - I felt all the aspects of emotions.

## Findings

This site-specific synthesis illustrates how collective memories can be expressed and materialized through movement, embodied arguments, and augmented elements.

The performers experienced profound emotional proximity, intensified desire for physical closeness, and a shared historical awareness of confinement and pain. The involvement of residents and participants extended the sensory experience into a record of collective historical memory. In fact, embodied argumentation has been used as a collaborative, creative tool in other approaches (Garibaldi and Zmolek, 2015; Du et al., 2017; Barnard and deLahunta, 2017; Almpiani et al., 2023; 2024).

While the study provided valuable insights into the connection between embodied movement and collective trauma, several limitations remain. First, as a case study with a small number of participants, the findings cannot be generalized. Additionally, the perspectives of the local community on the experience were not explored. The study lacked

the use of standardized evaluation tools, with limited emphasis on the role of bodily senses. Future research could investigate how embodied dialogue contributes to trauma expression in groups with shared experiences, as well as the role of technology in them.

## Conclusion

The research indicated that collective memory tied to historical sites, when approached through embodied movement, plays a crucial role in enhancing both social consciousness and the sense of self.

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# 10

## **Performing DNA Spacing: Omogeneia and Dissonant Genealogies**

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### **Abstract**

In 2023, Dr. Eftihia Mihelakis and Dr. Lucille Toth discovered through a DNA test that the geographical and national spaces to which they thought they belonged did not actually match the story told by their DNA results. L. would be 72% Spanish, when she thought she had deep roots in Continental Europe (Hungary), and E. is 66% Eastern Mediterranean, but with significant roots in Northern Africa, Russia, and Norway. She was raised to believe she only had Greek roots. This dissonance between biodata and multi-generational family fantasies, between monocultural expectations and bio-mediated bodies who form part of a global pool of human DNA, made possible a (re)examination of identity.

Their performance-based flash talk combines Greek and Hungarian folk dances and posthumanist feminism (Braidotti, 2018). Examining their identity as bioliving matter, one that is constantly interacting with known and unknown environments, their dance-talk produces multiple ecologies of belonging that trouble the idea of loyalty and familiarity with/to the European/Continental/Mediterranean space. These preliminary findings form an affective postanthropocentric form of identification that troubles the tensions between “technophilic” (Braidotti, 2002) desires to belong, to matter, and their (dis)loyalty to phallic and paternal (humanistic) genealogies.

*Keywords:* DNA, Genealogy, Epigenetics, Performance, Dance, Omogeneia

*Facing each other, Lucille lifts Eftihia, who extends her legs to create a straight plank in the air.*<sup>8</sup>

**Lucille:**

I am French, but my last name is Hungarian. I have a Hungarian bone structure and a Hungarian vibe. So I was told. My mother's maiden name is Daffos. Sounds Greek.

*Lucille straightens her right leg in front of her and taps her foot three times.*

She looks Mediterranean. I look Mediterranean. We are Mediterranean.

*Eftihia holds Lucille's left hand as Lucille jumps, twisting her legs mid-air.*

So I was told.

**Eftihia:**

Omogeneia is a problematic ethno-nationalist concept.

Omo for the "same."

Geneia for "genetic."

As a child of the Greek diaspora, I was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

*Lucille straightens her right leg in front of her and taps her foot three times.*

We had two ways to sustain our Greek heritage: language and Greek dances.

*In one swift turn, Lucille moves toward Eftihia's left-hand side. They are both facing the audience.*

For second-, third- and fourth-generation children of the diaspora, linguistic and cultural competence is crumbling under its own contradictions.

**Lucille:**

According to a recent DNA test, my ancestry composition is 100% Western European.

75% Spanish with a splash of Northwestern Europe.

Zero Hungarian.

*Lucille and Eftihia bend their legs, then extend their left heel and slightly tap it on the ground. At the same time, they extend their arms in front of their body and cross them forming a box parallel to the ground. They do the same for their right side.*

Zero Eastern anything. I am more Irish than Hungarian.

Dissonant genealogy?

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<sup>8</sup> The movement descriptions are in italics.

**Eftihia:**

*Lucille does the previous move twice.*

Three years ago, my brother and I decided to get our DNA tested. Expecting to have this diasporic Greek “sameness” reflected in my DNA spacing, I opened the result and gasped for air. I am mostly of Norwegian, Slavic and North African descent.

Omogeneia, common ancestry?

Does this then mean that all Greeks are also Scandinavian, Slavic and from the Maghreb?

**Lucille:**

*With her arms stretched sideways, Eftihia begins to turn.*

Fun fact: Since women do not have a Y chromosome, DNA reports cannot directly provide women a Y-chromosome haplogroup (also known as a paternal haplogroup). Women have the option to connect the haplogroup assignment of a father or brother to their Paternal Haplogroup Report if they want to learn about their paternal DNA lineage. So there is actually still a possibility for me to know if my Hungarian lineage is simple dissonant genealogy or if I do belong.

**Eftihia:**

*Lucille begins to turn and jump among the audience, asking them to join.*

Last night I dreamt I was in Socrates’ prison giving my last lecture to an audience of students who only spoke Greek. I wanted to ask them: “What it is like being a Greek in the heart of Athens, the fortress of Western knowledge?”

Epigenetics is the study of mechanisms that modify gene expression. They are shared experiences of cultural trauma (Lehrner and Yehuda, 2018). They target a cultural or ethnic group and become part of the story the community tells about the world, about itself, and about its survival.

In the fields of psychology and psychiatry, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression following trauma are only applied to individuals. However, over the past decades, recent advances in molecular biology have facilitated investigations of the intergenerational transmission of trauma-related effects through epigenetic mechanisms (Lehrner and Yehuda, 2018). Converging evidence indicates that subtle adaptations at the molecular level may not be completely erased in gametes and at conception but may be conserved in offspring.

Diaspora denotes difference within a host nation and connection with a real or imaginary homeland elsewhere. For English-Canada, I am a first-generation Greek-Canadian; for Québec, I am second-generation because I was born in my host country. Connection and

difference operate through linguistic houses. My diasporic experience connotes a state of dissonance (Braidotti, 2012).

**Lucille:**

*Lucille is standing still, away from Eftihia.*

I don't know anything about my Hungarian heritage. I don't know the language. I don't know the people. I don't know the traditions. I don't know what dance movements make up their community. I had to learn on my own. And yet, I am contemplating the privilege of having a multi-generational family fantasy. The privilege of being able to trace my ancestry back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century if I choose to, just based on my name. I'm reflecting on what DNA results signify for individuals from diasporic communities or those who have been deported, or for former enslaved people. I am wondering what remains in the DNA when there are holes in intergenerational transmission.

**Eftihia:**

As a child of immigrant parents, formal education served as my good substitute mother. And so, unlike other Canadians, I have three mother tongues, depending on which national-juridical-political borders you are referring to. I can be in Montreal and be the Other-phone to the Franco-Québécois, but not belong to the historical Anglophone community, and elsewhere not sound like an Other-phone to English-Canadians. And so, everything lies in the name.

**Lucille:**

My Western cultural upbringing erases my Eastern diasporic roots. Does that mean that my DNA does not experience any intergenerational transmission? Does that mean that this lack of transmission of my paternal lineage prevents me from genetically developing? Did I peak genetically?

**Eftihia:**

I remember my dream again. I am back in my prison-campus where Monday is the day. I went to bed rather early and read a little before I slept: "A Forgotten Language": omogeneia, diaspora. In what other space can dissonant genealogies unfold if not in a web of creative digressions?

*In silence, they face each other as Lucille lifts Eftihia, who extends her legs to form a straight plank in the air. Side by side, they straighten their right legs and tap their right foot three times. Eftihia holds Lucille's left hand, bends her legs to create momentum as Lucille jumps, twisting her legs mid-air and tapping her feet with her right hand.*



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# 11

## The Baby Returned to its Mother

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### Abstract

This essay analyses the performative photographic series *iSana libuyele kuninai* by South African artist Buhlebezwe Siwani. The artwork is read as a representation of an artistic exploration that brings Sangoma practices – traditional African healing practices – to the forefront of the urban landscape of a South African township in order to question the still open wounds of Western colonialism and Apartheid regimes.

*Keywords:* Sangoma, colonialism, apartheid, South Africa, performance, land

### The Baby Returned to its Mother

A black woman standing in the middle of a paved street. Wearing a red and white dress, she is barefoot and holds a chicken with her left hand. It is not clear whether the chicken is dead or alive. The artist - the woman - is holding it by the feet; the chicken is upside down and one of its wings is almost open as if wanting to fly. She looks directly into the camera, defiant. Behind her is South Africa. The sky is cloudy, turbulent, filled with grey clouds, the mountains loom on the horizon. The street is bounded by an almost endless line of houses. Half-built houses, dilapidated houses, some covered by corrugated metal sheets, others with half-constructed walls built with rickety sticks. Light poles burdened with wires dangling perhaps a bit too low. There is no one on the street. Only a parked car. The artist stares defiantly at us. I again notice her bare feet. I notice the limbo between the chicken's life and death. "Every spirit lives in a liminal space, and I explore what it means to be a human being in-between world" (Lümen, 2021).

This is an image from the series of two photographs entitled "*iSana libuyele kunina*" (translated from Xhosa as "The Baby Returned to its Mother") by young South African artist Buhlebezwe Siwani. I repeat, the image depicts a barefoot woman standing in the middle of the street holding a half-dead chicken. A defiant black female body in what can be inferred

as a *township*<sup>9</sup> in a city of South Africa, potentially Cape Town. In this performative photographic series Siwani allures to the historical layers embedded in this particular urban landscape but also inscribed in her own body and her own gaze. “Spaces can [...] extend into bodies, just as bodies extend into space” (Ahmed, 2007, p.92). What does it mean then to hold a chicken amid a South African township in 2015? What of the colonial and apartheid structures are still present in the “free” post-apartheid South Africa and brought forth in this performative photograph? Artist and scholar Nomusa Makhubu refers to the ruins of apartheid and the processes of social ruination activated by colonial-racist-heteronormative-Christian structures; “The ‘rot’ and ‘decay’ may not be manifest on actual edifices, but it consumes certain bodies, ferments race and gender social relations, and decays the sense of belonging” (Makhubu, 2020, p.572).

Holding a chicken in the middle of a township street speaks to the colonial violence against native African spirituals beliefs, to the apartheid violence of land extraction and to the urban seclusion against the black indigenous population, to the oppressing desecralization of bodies and land. In a video interview published by *The Narrative*, Siwani explains that this piece, *iSana libuyele kunina*, was the pivotal moment of her body of work reflecting upon the interrelation between the violence perpetrated against bodies, land and belief systems. A continuous and fertile body of work that highlights, “How our religion was taken from us. Through religion our land was taken from us. Through land our dignity was taken from us” (The Narrative, 2021). And in which ways to heal; to heal this social, historical and land wounds.

Buhlebezwe Siwani is a traditional healer in the Southern African practice of Ubungoma, a Sangoma. She combines her artistic and sangoma practices to actively reflect and open spaces for social and historical healing. The second photograph of *iSana libuyele kunina*, portrays Siwani standing in front of a rickety Pentecostal church which reads: “Jesus is Lord. Uyesu Uyinkosi. Khayelitsha. Assembly of God”. The church, behind a white wooden fence is a warehouse type of structure painted in soft neon aqua colour; the gable roof is crowned by a dark red Christian cross “Jesus is Lord”: Uyesu Uyinkosi” is written in the same dark red colour. Siwani wears the same red and white dress like in the other photograph. This time she stands on a grassed area with plastic trash, with clear traces of people gathering in the area. A chicken is sitting on top of the artist’s head. In the Ubungoma tradition, chickens are placed on the head as a means to communicate with the ancestors, in order for its killing to be accepted as a ritual sacrifice, Siwani allures to the demonization and

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<sup>9</sup> The terms *township* and *location* usually refer to an under-developed, racially segregated urban area, that between the XIX century and the apartheid regime were reserved for non-whites, namely Black Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Townships were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities and present high levels of gun violence and shortage of services such as running water, or scarcity of electricity.

missionary violence that indigenous African spiritualism and religions have been subjected to and reaffirms their power, their relevance in contemporary South African society. Siwani further explains that the chicken is a cross in its own way: “I decided to put it in my head as a sacrifice on its own, as it is an intermediary between you and your ancestors” (The Narrative, 2021).

Both photographs can be seen as a bodily testimony of a myriad of political resistances. The resistance of the African spiritual beliefs, the defiant strength of a young black woman, the construction of houses despite the atrocious dispossession of the land, and the persistence of the mountains and the sky, speak loudly across the camera lens. Siwani’s artwork allows us to understand the performativity of space through the juxtaposition of social and historical references to defy an organization of the same, understanding sites as spiritual, historical and cognitive landscapes that can be used or can inform an aesthetic practice. “To cleanse is therefore to exorcise the omnipresent spirit of colonialism that pervades the social landscape in South Africa” (Makhubu, 2020, p.587).

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## 12

**As Strangers.  
From the Collective to the Personal.  
Awaking Memory and Trauma in the Streets of Kalamata**

**Zoe Drakopoulou**  
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**Abstract**

The subject of this paper is the civil war in the region of Kalamata and the relation between memory and trauma, both on a collective and personal level, as it is reflected through the research of the walking documentary performance *As Stranger*, which was presented for the first time in Kalamata, in October 2023. The main research issues that will concern us are, firstly the role of the performing arts - and more specifically the theatre of reality -, its relation to the collective trauma of societies that have experienced intense and traumatic situations and how this is a field of research in the dramaturgy, direction and visual aspect of the performance. Secondly, the use of research practices of ethnography and autoethnography and how this is reflected in the direction and dramaturgy. Finally, the emergence and use of public space through walking as an integral part of the performance: a space that is transformed into a place, with memory and trauma as its axis; with the audience being transformed from mere spectators to bearers of experience.

*Keywords:* theatre of reality, documentary theatre, ethnodrama, walking performance, site-specific, collective memory, collective trauma, ethnography, autoethnography,

**The Begging of the History and Micro-History**

In 2018, once again looking for a shelter in the streets of Kalamata, I found myself in the garden of a detached house at the junction of two main streets of the city. The owner of the house began to tell me a story about a "border" that existed in that part of the city, during the German occupation and the years of the Civil War. The "frontier" that separated the urban Kalamata from the area of Fytia, where Maniates, poor people and Communists lived.

I am writing in my diary in 2021:

Today we went to look at a house to rent. The landlord, when we sat in the garden, said to me, 'Here my girl it was all orange groves and there was a border. This was Fytia and during the Occupation and the Civil War, the upper Kalamata people didn't cross the border and the Fytians didn't go to upper Kalamata.

Four years later, after research, interviews, study of historical archives and many walks in the neighbourhood of Fytia, this first meeting served as the beginning of the walking show that ended up in this neighbourhood. A performance with a main theme, the city of Kalamata as a living landscape and a vector of memory. A memory that sometimes brings joy and sometimes the emergence of trauma. An itinerant performance, in the form of documentary theatre, that approached concepts such as collective memory; collective and personal trauma; truth and lies; and love and war, putting the concept of trauma and its relationship with memory at the basic core of research. "The past in documentary theatre is related to the present and answers questions concerning contemporary society" (Zoniou, 2017, p. 46).

### **The Traumatized Memory. A Walk into Time and Space**

The aim was for residents and visitors of Kalamata, wandering through the streets of the city, which they may walk every day, to take part in a theatrical experience that will make them reconnect with the place where they live and with the public space. The aesthetic space often turns into an emotional space. The aesthetic space which, as Boal mentions, "Is the theatrical/dramatic space that is characterized by particular qualities that make it capable of producing knowledge about the world and about the self: a space that is bifurcated, tele-microscopic, malleable". (Boal, 1994).

The main theme was the search for and the connection between the history of the Civil War in Kalamata and the present, and more specifically, the connection between personal history. How do we go from history to the micro-history of individuals and how do personal stories highlight social traumas? In order to explore this theme, techniques and tools from theatre of invention, documentary theatre, ethnodrama, site-specific techniques, walking techniques as a form of performativity, as well as the basic methodology of ethnography and autoethnography were used.

Autoethnography is useful research because through it the author connects his personal experience with something of interest to the community. It helps readers to learn about situations in other people's lives and to transfer some of those situations to their own personal circumstances. (Verdis, 2008, p. 792)

Central questions are: *How do you approach the concept of trauma through art in the public realm? How can the theatre of reality handle a traumatic event so as to awaken memory?*

Memory is the synthesis, creation, imagination and construction of the past. It is based on the retrospective processing of personal experience that reacts with other memories, such as family, cultural, national. Memory is a dialectical experience that regresses between past, present with future.” (Jodelet, 1992, pp. 239-256).

The differentiation of social, individual and historical memory has been the subject of study by many social scientists and is a field that is still being shaped today. As Anna Mantoglou (2008) says "Social memory is the reconstruction of the past by the average practical man, while historical memory is a scientific reconstruction of the past by the specialist".

### Figure 1

*Images from “As Strangers” performance, Kalamata, GR*



Based on Halbwachs' theory of collective memory and its connection with the individual, an attempt was made to highlight the subject of the Civil War through the personal memories of the individuals who took part in the project. and her own individual memory, reaching to use tools of autoethnography. Halbwachs thus links social memory to the notion of individual, group and social identity which are shaped and defined/determined by memory

or memories. Choosing as categories of analysis, memory, history, trauma; and placing them on two parallel axes capturing the collective and personal levels, I arrived at the following scheme. In place of the red continuous arrow that crosses all levels is the dramaturgy.

Memory and trauma, two definitions that are directly related. As Nikos Demertzis says:

For one and the same traumatic event, such as the Greek Civil War, there is, on the one hand, the demand 'to leave everything behind us' in the name of 'national reconciliation'; on the other hand, however, there is the exhortation 'to preserve our historical memory'. (Demertzis, 2015, p.97)

## Conclusion

The notion of trauma, collective memory and their connection to the personal level seems to be something that could be captured in the representation of trauma through the theatre of reality in public space. The function of the audience, as a free audience that can walk around to react to what is happening and perhaps also leave, was an important new element of dramaturgy for the future. Having performed only five performances in Kalamata, a key post-performance was set for the future to offer a wider perspective of research as new historical data emerges not only for Kalamata but also for other places that bore the *name Little Moscow* and played a key role in the Civil War period.

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## 13

## Co-performing City: An Urban-Topographic Rotation as an Act of Reclaiming Public Spaces

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### Abstract

In the summer of 2023, the creators of the immersive multimedia walking performance *Novi Sad, the Illusive Haven*, enacted an urban-topographic rotation between two public spaces of Novi Sad. This was inspired by Janez Kocijančič's conceptual artwork *Project 3p4a2k* (1971), in which several public spaces in Novi Sad rotate their positions and functions as a "creative-aesthetic act," otherwise impossible in reality.

The performance thematically focused on the loss of the social dimension of public spaces in cities undergoing transition, where commercial interests progressively reshape urban life in favour of private capital, rather than the needs of the people. Aiming to *reclaim public spaces* through socially engaged art, the action involved staging the city beach (Štrand) in the centrally located public square (Katolička porta). It was conceptualised as an occupation act, within the framework of filming a scene for a multimedia performance.

Drawing on the concept of *spatial co-performativity*, the paper analyses this specific scene of the performance, focusing on the role the public space acquires through its performative dialogue with the action. By introducing an unexpected activity of sunbathing, into the busy pedestrian zone of the city centre, where dancers, actors, and passersby took on the roles of beachgoers, the loosely staged action unfolded over four hours of filming. In the final performance, the video served as a fictional, surreal layer confronted with the everyday reality of the square, while the act of producing the video itself functioned as a *subversive performative rupture* within the everyday conventions of this public space, making it an integral and active protagonist of the overall performance.

**Keywords:** co-performative space; conceptual public art; immersive performance

## From Concept to Enactment: Revisiting the Urban-Topographic Rotation

The late 1960s and early '70s marked a vibrant era for avant-garde and conceptual art in Vojvodina, with the building of Youth Tribune<sup>10</sup> in Novi Sad playing a crucial role in establishing the movement. Many artists focused on public spaces as sources of inspiration, starting points, or key motifs in their work. As Sonja Jankov analyses, these practices “emphasise the public character of public spaces and return to them something that is often forgotten - that public spaces are at the core of the freedom of connecting, freedom of expression, freedom of movement” (Jankov, 2024, p.50). One such artwork—*Project 3p4a2k* (Kocijančić, 1971), subtitled the *Urban-topographic rotation + comprehensiveness of coloring*, explored the idea of moving and shifting the positions and functions of three public spaces in Novi Sad, one of which was the Youth Tribune and the adjacent Square Katolička porta. In describing the work, which was accompanied by a simple sketch depicting the rotation, Kocijančić states: “What is impossible according to spatio-temporal, geographical, physical, sociological and other laws become achievable only in the sphere of the project, as a type of creative-aesthetic act” (Kocijančić, 1971, p.14).

In 2023, a group of artists enacted the urban-topographic rotation,<sup>11</sup> relocating a city beach (Štrand) to the centrally located public square Katolička porta, which had featured in the original 1971 project.

### The Occupation Act

The context of this enactment was shaped by a multidisciplinary artistic project that addressed the diminishing social dimension of public spaces in transitioning cities,<sup>12</sup> where unregulated neoliberal capitalism increasingly prioritizes private capital over the communal needs of urban inhabitants, undermining the essence of public spaces. Katolička porta, a central square in Novi Sad, served as a paradigmatic example of this condition. In recent years, the city's most picturesque square has become devoid of public furniture, making way for the spread of privately owned cafes that occupy the space.

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<sup>10</sup> Serbian name of the institution: Tribina mladih

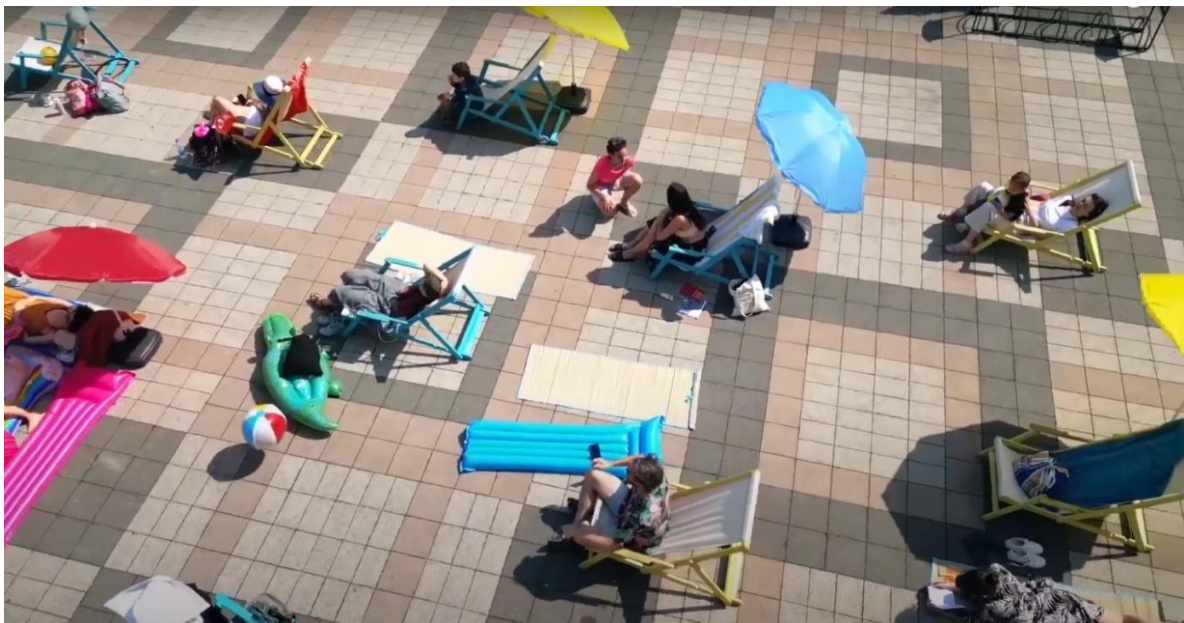
<sup>11</sup> This was done as part of the project SPA:RE—Public Spaces ReClaimed, led by INBOX Art Association from Novi Sad (Serbia), in collaboration with partners: University American College, School of Architecture and Design from Skopje (North Macedonia), Harabel Contemporary Art Center from Tirana (Albania) and Rimini Protokoll from Berlin (Germany).

<sup>12</sup> Novi Sad (Serbia), Tirana (Albania) and Skopje (North Macedonia)

The project explored the potential of socially engaged art as a means to disrupt this condition, even if only temporarily. The rotating action was realised within a multimedia immersive performance—an audio-guided collective walk featuring narratives, soundscapes, and video interventions. An open call invited the general public and passersby to join the artistic team in occupying Katolička porta and enacting the beachgoer activities (Figure 1). Over the course of four hours of filming, a spontaneous, loosely choreographed action unfolded in this public space.

### Figure 1

*Beachgoers occupying the square Katolička porta in Novi Sad – a still frame from the video intervention within the performance Novi Sad, the Illusive Haven, directed by Attila Antal, cinematography by Igor Đokić and Miljan Vuletić, Novi Sad, 2023.*



### What Does Space Do?

The analysis specifically focuses on urban space and its performative role within the act of occupation. Drawing a direct analogy with J. L. Austin's theory of *Speech Acts* (Austin, 1975) and his question *How to Do Things with Words*, it examines what space actually does as an active and productive entity within the performance. One approach to this question relies on the inherent textuality of spaces and the notion of performing arts, theoretically centering on the problem of *production and realisation of meanings* (Vujanović, 2004). Rather than merely reflecting pre-established narratives, performative spaces engage in an ephemeral, unstable and dynamic flow of meanings, unfolding in the moment and in direct correlation with the surrounding texts.

This semantic instability, as exemplified by the urban-topographic rotation enacted in Novi Sad, arises from the intertextual dialogue between the space enveloping the action and the bodies occupying the square. The resulting meanings emerge through the event unfolding in this specific location, or more precisely, in the creative and productive dialogue *with it*. This relationship generates a specific role of space: it *co-performs*.

### **Co-performative Spaces and the Subversive Rupture of the Everyday**

The co-performative function of Katolička porta unfolds through a dialogue between the body(ies) and the space. This quality marks a liminal state of *correlation*, developing a balanced, twofold interaction where both influence each other in the process of producing meanings and experiences within the performance. The bodies mark the space as a beach, while the space makes their actions unexpected and abrupt. The occupation act thus appears as a performative rupture of the everyday on two levels: as a repeatable video intervention experienced in the walking performance,<sup>13</sup> juxtaposing the everyday of the square with its surreal alternative, and as a temporary live act during the filming process itself, disrupting the increasingly commercialised reality of the square.

This urban-topographic rotation explores how socially engaged art can be employed as a tool to temporarily disrupt the dominance of neoliberal capitalism in public spaces, fostering a reimagining of their social functions.

### **Acknowledgements**

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<sup>13</sup> Observed through a smartphone, on the location where the video was filmed.

## 14

# Cityphonic Walks Unveiling the Sonic Performativity of Everyday Life in the Urban Landscape

**Irini Kalogeropoulou**

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### Abstract

The artistic research project *Cityphonic Walks* by Irini Kalogeropoulou, conducted during her artist residency at the Temporary Art Centre in Eindhoven, explores the “phonē” (voice) of a city, focusing on the sonic performativity of everyday life. It investigates how space performs itself through sound, the strategies that can be employed to intervene in it, and how listening can turn into a performative act.

The project sought ways to extend the voice of the city by tuning into the urban environment as one would tune into a symphony or an opera, exploring the interplay of sound, silence, conflict, and domesticity. Methods such as walking, listening, soundmaking, field recordings, soundscape composition, and the creation of verbal notation were employed to uncover underlying power structures and social dynamics. Although initially site-specific, they ultimately reflected broader social concerns.

Through solo and participatory soundwalks, as well as a solo exhibition, the project revealed the affective capacities of the soundscape and its ongoing role in shaping public spaces. It proposed experiential, physical, psychical, and imaginative interactions in everyday life within the urban environment, fostering a shared acoustic community that transcends language, embodiment, and spatiality.

**Keywords:** Soundwalk, sonic performativity, rhythmanalysis, everyday life, urban soundscape, public space, listening, acoustic community

### Cityphonic Walks

As Cage has insisted, “There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound” (Cage, 1961, p. 191). Similarly, there is no such thing as an empty space. As long as the human body is actively listening and being heard, there is always the

potential to create public spaces. The artistic research project *Cityphonic Walks*, which began during the Master's program *Performing Public Space* and was further developed during an artist residency at the Temporary Art Centre (TAC) in Eindhoven, aims to explore the “phone” (voice) of the city, focusing on the sonic performativity of everyday life (Certeau, 1984). The key objective was to shed light on the ordinary aspects of lived experience, making them visible and audible (Drever, 2009) offering a context for action and transformation, where life could be perceived as art and art as life (Kaprow, 1996).

### Figure 1

*Participants playing the city. Credit Ursa Prek*



### The Term *Cityphonic*

The term *Cityphonic* merges “city” with “phone” and “symphonic.” The project draws on Derrida’s concept of “phone” (voice) and Lefebvre’s notion of the “symphonic” from his *Rhythmanalysis*. Building on these concepts, the project examines the “phone” of the city as both presence and absence, forming a soundscape—a term Schafer (1994) defines as an environment of sound, perceived and understood by individuals or society.

### Main Questions

The project sought ways to situate listening within a broader relational context, where citizens could listen symphonically to urban soundscapes, engaging with the multiplicity of rhythms and voices embedded within the city. Beginning with the questions of how



*soundwalking* could be used as a strategy to reveal hidden sonic nuances in urban environments and how the auditory landscape shapes our embodied experience, formatting and transforming public spaces, the research unfolded through a series of solo and participatory soundwalks in Eindhoven as well as a solo exhibition titled *The whole universe wants to be touched! Listen with me!*

### Figure 2

*Participants performing the score Outside-Inside. Credit Ursa Prek.*



### Figure 3

*Performer Rianne Wilbers playing the sound of her heartbeat during the soundwalk. Credit Ursa Prek*





**Figure 4**

*Snapshot from the solo exhibition the whole universe wants to be touched! Listen with me!*  
 Credit Ursa Prek.

**Research Positioning**

My research positioning was related to the portrait of the rhythm analyst in public space (Lefebvre, 2004), a kind of sonic thinking that disrupts normative hierarchies and makes participants aware of what and who is heard, what remains invisible, and in what circumstances, fostering the creation of an acoustic community. Lefebvre describes the rhythm analyst as someone “who listens not only to words and noises but also to a house, a street, or a town as one listens to a symphony or opera, understanding how this music is composed, who plays it, and for whom” (1992, p. 89). Following Voegelin’s (2010) notion that sound’s political dimension lies in its possibilities, the project invited participants to hear and articulate words for what appears to be impossible, engaging with the city as a dynamic, participatory performance.

**Methodology**

The research unfolded through a score<sup>14</sup>-based method of walking, listening, soundmaking in the public space, as well as field recordings, soundscape composition, and the creation of verbal notation. Soundwalks formed the core of the practice, evolving from residential areas to the city center, exploring transitions from silence to noise. Inspired by McCartney’s

<sup>14</sup> The scores for the soundwalks can be assessed online at [https://issuu.com/eirenekal/docs/cityphonic\\_walks\\_irini\\_kalogeropoulou\\_verbal\\_score](https://issuu.com/eirenekal/docs/cityphonic_walks_irini_kalogeropoulou_verbal_score)

(2010) view of the sound environment as an improvisational activity, the project encouraged engagement with the ephemeral and fluid nature of sound through site-specific scores, reactivating the city and expanding its “phonē” while fostering awareness.

**Figure 5**

*Participants performing the score colourful boxes. Credit Ursa Prek.*



**Figure 6**

*Participants performing the score Tombs as Sounding Boards. Credit Ursa Prek.*





## Audible Citizenship

A city center soundwalk examined how audibility influences participation in public life. Through deep listening, participants reflected on spatial issues, developing “citizenship practices” and “world-making” strategies that expand the right to the public sphere (Biserna, 2022, p. 17). These practices highlighted the role of sound as a medium for reimagining public spaces and fostering an inclusive, shared urban environment. Through this approach, participants were encouraged to perceive themselves as both composers and listeners (McCartney, 2010), recognizing their agency in shaping the sonic fabric of public spaces.

### Figure 7

*A written word from a participant on the ground while performing the score *Beneath the Pavement, the Beach*. Credit Ursa Prek.*



The soundwalks culminated in a solo exhibition that synthesized the counter narratives that emerged from the soundwalks. This included soundscape compositions inviting visitors to explore the diverse ways of listening: musical, historical, political, evocative, and subjective (McCartney, 2014).

## Epilogue

Overall, understanding the sonic performativity of urban spaces highlighted the transformative potential of sound and its ability to evoke, connect, and challenge, opening up new possibilities for creating a shared acoustic cosmos!

**Figure 8**

*Snapshot from the solo exhibition. The whole universe wants to be touched! Listen with me!*  
 Credit Ursa Prek.

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## 15

**Familiarizing the City****Katerina Kataki**

Independent Artist &amp; Researcher

**Abstract**

In post-covid Athens, the collective experience of forbidden common spaces initiated lots of questions on our rights as citizens and the way we participate in our cities. The need to reconnect and interact with fellow citizens and the city emerged as a necessity in my artwork. Starting off this simple, yet fundamental quest, I created two durational, participatory performances, both unfolding in public space in order to explore building altered modes of urban interaction that are connected to active citizenship practices. In the first work titled *Δημόσια Ημερολόγια//Public Diaries*, a live installation of a collective diary was gradually built on the pavement of the public square gathering various notes of the artist and the passers-by. Through the public action of private writing and visual choices, the behavioural limits of the personal and the public spheres tended to blur, inviting new transparent actions and spaces for personalized participation and interaction in the city. The second work, *Οδοιπόροι\_City Steps*, was a walking participatory performance formed as a contemporary devised ritual through the actions of escorting, wandering, and gestural imprinting within the city. Through experiential structured processes, the performance highlighted a “New Contemporary City” that emerges by the embodied action of participation through our present steps and print choices -both symbolically and realistically- signifying the person-citizens and their identity as the unique and indispensable ingredient of this rejuvenated urban loci. Both of the performances aimed to function as socio-artistic experiences but also experiments that observe, document, and possibly recharge the urban fabric in terms of space and relations, inviting the possibilities of altered ways of living together and social building into our cities, aspiring to empower a sense of community and equal belonging as well as a call on public action of freedom and creativity.

**Keywords:** Performance Art, Public Space, Public Art, Socially Engaged Practise, Familiarity in Public Space

## Familiarizing the City

Focusing on the verbal roots of the Greek word for city, “polis,” we notice it includes three concepts. Apart from the geographic notion, it refers to the people who inhabit this geographical area, but also the life that is built through their habits. All these basic city components changed profoundly during Covid-19; Limiting social and artistic life to disembodied interaction while incidents of violence trespassed human rights and challenged democratic values,<sup>15</sup> led to the phenomenon of empty public spaces turning the city into estranged urban scapes.

Trying to re-approach Athens after Covid, multiple questions about the presence and interaction of humans in public urban spaces arose; *Who is the city now? Can the city become a “public safe place”? Can we familiarize cities by community actions?* Those fundamental quests inspired two durational performances as a response.

### Figure 1

*Δημόσια Ημερολόγια // Public Diaries. Photography Credits: Alexander Koromilas*



The performance titled *Public Diaries // Δημόσια Ημερολόγια* (Figure 1, 2) presented the artist at her private office in Syntagma Square, typewriting a personal-public diary gradually

<sup>15</sup> National Commission for Human Rights. Report on the effects of the pandemic and the wombs?? on dealing with human rights and threats to the State. May 2021.  
[https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/COVID/Ekthesi\\_Anaforas\\_Covid\\_19.pdf](https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/COVID/Ekthesi_Anaforas_Covid_19.pdf)



built as a live installation of personal-notes on the square's pavement after three hours. Any passer-by could leave their own handwritten notes, thus participating in this communal process. The work aimed to challenge, re-compose and highlight the combined realities of personal and public spheres that are interconnected, as Lefebvre (1991) points it out, and furthermore follow his statement on "altered sources of knowledge" (p. 73) and "fresh actions" (p.166) that both lie in social space. Each note framed in every pavement's plaque invited the passers-by to change their walking pace and lower their body in order to access it. Altered body postures emerged for the passers-by, joining the vertical with the horizontal axis generating new embodied interactions with the self, the others and the environment. A different experience of the square emerged; a temporary sense of belonging and encouragement for sharing and daring to act, as participants confirmed. If the action of speech becomes a means of transformation for the one who talks, according to Valery's (1980, pp. 63-64) thought, perhaps the action of public writing could function similarly, facilitating the personal transition of expression both of the writer but also of the viewer as a mirroring process, suggesting personal space into a public collective diary space.

## Figure 2

*Δημόσια Ημερολόγια // Public Diaries. Photography Credits: Alexander Koromilas.*



**Figure 3**

Οδοιπόροι \_City Steps. Photography Credits: Alexander Koromilas & Xenia Tsilochristou.



Similar issues were explored by the work *Οδοιπόροι\_City Steps* (Figure 3), a durational participatory walking performance. Aligned with Debord's (1997) statement on cultural construction as an experiment construction of reality,<sup>16</sup> the work created a devised *ritual of passage*, which signified the personal presence of participants within the city center. The artistic team<sup>17</sup> "inhabited" a small square locating the "*Liminal Cube*" (Figure 4) a transit place, where the participants listened to a sonic invitation to walk and experiment with the urban streets along with a performer. Later on, the participants became performers of their city by creating their own "pendent-stamp" and marking urban spots as a gestural personal-public act during their escorted stroll (Figure 5). The project applied protective characteristics met in rituals<sup>18</sup> and tried to facilitate a curated personal experience into public view and vice versa, steering both participants and passers-by towards creative embodied possibilities of

<sup>16</sup> "Situationists consider cultural activity, from the standpoint of totality, as an experimental method for constructing daily life, which can be permanently developed with the extension of leisure and the disappearance of the division of labor" (Debord, 1997, pp. 90-92).

<sup>17</sup> A facilitator, the visual artist and the performers disguised as spirits.

<sup>18</sup> Van Gennep's (2016, p. 253) analytical work on *Rituals of Passage* point out the importance of rituals as processes of protection of the society and the persons of it.



their “new city”. This new and democratic city is constantly rejuvenated by the uniqueness of persons-citizens, their participation and action of their steps, reminding Solnit’s comment on walking the city as a “vital beginning point to citizenship” (Solnit, 2001, p.176).

Both of the above durational performances took place in the city center of Athens. They aimed to function as artistic actions of altered participation that practice democratic values, while strengthening various spaces such as emotional, social, and embodied spaces. Summing the above, “Familiarizing the City” could be translated as an artistic participatory practice of re-acting the space through new curated rituals and common experiences that promote creative citizenship, feelings of inclusion and community belonging in public spaces. Perhaps a new contemporary city could arise applying what Melucci names as “society of persons” (2002, p. 138,152) and “a democracy of new spaces for negotiation” (p.267).

#### **Figure 4**

*Οδοιπόροι\_City Steps. Photography Credits: Alexander Koromilas & Xenia Tsilochristou.*



**Figure 5**

*Οδοιπόροι\_City Steps. Photography Credits: Alexander Koromilas & Xenia Tsilochristou.*



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## 16

## Walking Tour Performance as Reparative History: Aya Shabu's *Black Wall Street* of Durham, NC

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### Abstract

Blending the theatricality of oral history performance with the site-specificity of the historical walking tour, Aya Shabu's performance-based tour of the section of downtown Durham, North Carolina formerly known as *Black Wall Street* represents an innovative approach to the presentation of minoritarian histories. This essay examines Shabu's *Black Wall Street* tour, situating it within the recent resurgence of critical walking art and arguing that its sensory reconstruction of place constitutes a mode of reparative history.

*Keywords:* Black history, minoritarian performance, walking art

### Walking Tour Performance as Reparative History

Over the past decade, walking art has experienced a period of dramatic artistic and scholarly revival. The proliferation of immersive pedestrian performances—from sonic art walks to ecosophical trail hikes—reflects the historically critical orientation of the art form (Springgay and Truman, 2018; Morris, 2020). Using inventive artistic strategies to cognitively and affectively transform our social and ecological entanglements, many contemporary pieces invite us to reimagine dominant historical narratives through the incorporation of neglected minoritarian perspectives.

The work of Black ethnographer and movement artist Aya Shabu offers a potent example of this trend. She describes her technique—which combines the theatricality of oral history performance with the site-specificity of the historical walking tour—as “the performance of geography,” saying: “I’m an artist, and I’m using history as my paint. The canvas is the neighborhood” (Carter, 2022, 21:07). With support from the Hayti Heritage Center and the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice, Shabu’s Whistle Stop



Tours offers three unique performance-based walking tours animating the histories of historically Black neighbourhoods in Durham, North Carolina.

Drawing upon ethnographic and archival research, I explore the creative tools of Shabu's *Black Wall Street* tour. This 75-minute tour through downtown Durham marks historical sites of Black entrepreneurship, celebrating the community's economic successes. I argue that *Black Wall Street*'s innovative approach to walking art constitutes a mode of reparative history, countering the ongoing impacts of the region's racist legacies. Focussing on stories of resilience and financial achievement, Shabu highlights neglected parts of the city's history and provides sources of inspiration and aspiration for contemporary Black communities. Her application of a critical Black aesthetic to walking art offers invaluable insight into perambulatory approaches to activist art and the presentation of minoritarian histories.

**Figure 1**

*Photograph of Parrish Street in Durham, NC. (ca. 1912). Courtesy of Archives, Records, and History Center, North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC, USA.*



Starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, downtown Durham's four-block Parrish Street became a major locus of Black capital (Figure 1). In its heyday, it was home to a plethora of Black-owned businesses, including retail shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and powerful financial institutions like North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and Mechanics and Farmers Bank (Brown, 2008). Praised by W. E. B. Du Bois, it attained national recognition and earned the moniker of Durham's Black Wall Street. Unlike Tulsa, Oklahoma's Black Wall Street—which was infamously decimated in the violent white-supremacist massacre of

1921—Durham’s Black Wall Street persisted until the 1960s, when urban renewal efforts in combination with the racial desegregation of the city’s business districts resulted in its gradual dissolution.

Combining creative storytelling with dramatic, poetic, and choreographic performances, Shabu’s *Black Wall Street* brings the stories of this history of Black entrepreneurship to life. The piece begins in a repurposed vacant lot known colloquially as *Chickenbone Park*, a popular gathering spot for the city’s Black community situated at the centre of Parrish Street. A tour guide outlines the history and emancipatory potential of Black Wall Street, introducing John Merrick—a former slave who served as the first president of NC Mutual—as a major figure in its development. Shabu follows up this introduction with a choreopoem about Merrick’s standing in the Black community.

As the tour progresses toward the former NC Mutual building, the guide points out the recent resurgence of Black businesses along the street. Shabu performs a monologue inspired by the experiences of Black women working as office clerks at NC Mutual, such as Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, Viola Turner, and Susi Norfleet. As the tour loops back to its starting point along Ramseur Street, the guides indicate local sites along the skyline, describing the historically Black Hayti district on the south side of town. After a dramatic reading from Walter Weare’s (1993) *Black Business in the New South*, the tour concludes with a participatory call-and-response song called “I Ain’t A Movin’.” This song names places important to the local Black community and asserts, “I ain’t a moving from my home. This is my home.”

The reparative character of *Black Wall Street* lies in its intervention into Durham’s contemporary Black community’s perception of these urban spaces, and thereby its self-perception. Reparative history seeks to recover and disseminate marginalised histories of injustice—especially with respect to racism—in order to address their legacies and rectify their lingering impacts (Hall, 2018). Shabu argues that her goal with *Black Wall Street* is not only to counter historical erasure but also Black communities’ internalisation of lies and negative stereotypes perpetuated by dominant historical narratives. Confronting audiences with a minoritarian historical perspective on a sensory and somatic level, her work reflects Hwang’s (2019) observation that walking tours can (re)construct identity through “the formation of an imaginary landscape” in which spectators “rearrange and recreate the perception of their environment” (p. 8). Shabu’s tours enable Durham’s Black residents to experience these urban spaces—and thereby themselves—differently because of their familiarity with these histories of Black entrepreneurship.

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## 17

**Hosting: Home Truths****D'Arcy Newberry-Dupé**

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**Abstract**

Hosting: Home Truths, is a creative research project which considers contemporary spatial practices alongside archival materials, interrogating the legacies of labour and control that inform our domestic ecologies. In this work, hosting belies an entanglement of allegiances, and the research asks the question: *What is it to host?* Taking measure of the word's entomology, that tracks from person to place, ephemeral presence to bread, guest to enemy, stranger to victim, a negotiation with the presence of an ever-evolving host emerges.

This project works with an archive relating to a women's domestic college, and maps practices of hosting and housewifery in Australia from 1920s-70s, considering them as ongoing actors in the spatial manifestation of "home." Positioned as legitimate spatial practices, which contribute to the architecture they inhabit, it looks to understand how they inform the way home-worlds, both built and "felt," are maintained, held, and transformed through repeated action, habits and performances of labour and care.

The research methodology takes the archival artefact and performs a sequence of digestive "rituals" in its unpicking. It translates the past into a public event, creating a space to host an intermingling of gastronomic installations, video works and archival fragments.

Through discourse and display of these not-so-distant practices, women's work and "housewifery" are understood as primary devices of construction for home environments, through care and control in Australia's domestic interiors. These often-restrictive hierarchical practices, focussed on civility, are used as a counterpoint against which a contemporary culinary materialism and associated rituals might be developed. The aim is to transgress the strict boundaries in our inherited practices of eating, homing, and maintenance.

In the worlding of our domestic ecologies, this is one story of housing and homing in Australia, a story to start to tell other stories with (Haraway and Le Guin, 2019).

*Keywords:* Domesticity, Labour and Maintenance, Ritual, Architecture

## Hosted Agendas

The research is performed at an event-based exhibition for Melbourne Design Week, 2024. This event translates the archival research alongside edible installations by Kate Foster. The work interrogates the role of the Host – those who act as the curator, conductor and translator of domestic and public interiors, confronting the lurking presence of a curious, sometimes sinister mix of ideologies and spectres that occupy these spaces. Throughout each element of this hosting, expressed in the mediums of bread, text, and video (Figure 1), we ask the question: *Whose agenda do we host in our contemporary domestic ecologies?*

### Figure 1

*Hosting: Home Truths MDW24 Event. Photograph by Temitope Adesina.*



We understand the make-up of this domestic ecology in alignment with Busch (1999), who posits that the construction of the home is both a physical and psychological act reflecting not just how we live, but who we are and what we might become. The blurring of the physical and psychological aspects of “home” environments is furthered through the frameworks set out by Werner et al (2013) in *temporal homing theory*, where the house, inhabitants, and events are situated in a transactional and relational framework. The environment and people are understood to be inseparable and mutually defining, in a relationship that is played out through temporal forces “...a space conceived of as a dynamic confluence of people, places, and psychological processes” (Werner et al., 2013, p. 2).



Holding these theorists close, the project returns to the question of hosted agendas and seeks to unearth the spectral past of the Australian home environment. This past agenda is held in the archive and is crystallised in the Latin motto of the Emily McPherson College, UT DOMUM ITA PATRIAM, which translates: *As goes the home so goes the country*. In this assertion, the domestic becomes a generator of worlds and spaces beyond its container. To play out its significance within the ecology of “home,” we return to Werner et al’s (2013) assertion that the house, its inhabitants, objects and ritual events are situated in a relational framework, looping back and forward between the scales of *home-self-world*. Homemaking rituals, and specifically those of “hosting” are tasked as methods for holding this dynamic confluence in place, fixing it in the shape of “home.” The house becomes fluid and gooey, a container defined and influenced from the interior (Connor, 2004). This gooey interior, looping across scales, inevitably spills out across the threshold to determine our attitude and attendance to the suburb, city and landscape...and so goes the country.

## Figure 2

*Bread Installations. Photograph by Temitope Adesina.*



## Stories To Tell Other Stories

Returning to the event, the gallery becomes a home away from the house. The public is invited in to engage with the transformation, containment, and consumption of the body of research: leavened and otherwise, as loaves are held on plinths, and pinned amongst the archival fragments (Figure 1, 2). The performance is constructed in a nexus of mediums: bread, bodies, video, and text, a hosting negotiation that is traced in real time throughout the duration of the event, in the slow dismemberment and digestion of the installations, a collective story. (Figure 3).

### Figure 3

*Dismemberment and Digestion of Exhibition. Photograph by Temitope Adesina*



In considering this story, attention is turned back to the container of all this activity: the house. Enlisting Le Guin's (1998) *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, the house becomes the carrier bag for a story of hosting that dictates and enacts everyday worlding. This event and its accompanying research, positions itself as a story about the construction and design of this container, as both realised space and ideal. It argues that much of the making of domestic space has occurred, and continues to occur through the temporal actions, objects, rituals, rules, techniques and moral positioning set out by practices of housewifery and homemaking. In her introduction to Ursula Le Guin's parable, Haraway writes "It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what concepts we think to think other

concepts with" (Haraway and Le Guin., 2019, p. 10). It is the story of bread that is chosen to embody the domestic narrative within this work. Bread, this airy, fermenting, swelling, crusty body in the scales of this event and research represents a dual category as food and as a lesser body. A container, a symbiote of self, another host.

The arrival of the bread in the gallery space creates nervous tension (Figure 1, 2), and the whispered phrase *are we allowed to eat the bread?* dances across the crowd. The assumption that the stand-in-host, warm to the touch, might invite guests to partake intuitively, proves naïve as protocols and permissions of the gallery override the homely rituals. It is not until lead by example (I tear off a fluffy piece of brioche) that the tension is broken. Soon bread is torn apart, shared and digested alongside essay, video work, and installations, ripped from walls by eager hands and mouths, transgressing taboos of both gallery and dining (Figure 3).

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## 18

# Greece's Ottoman Heritage Bathing in the Ghost Hammam of Napflio

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### Abstract

This paper presents a video performance co-created with Aycan Kızılkaya at the Performing Space Conference 2023 workshop. Our video performance unfolds against the atmospheric backdrop of the Kapodistriou square in Napflio, featuring the ruinous Hammam and the fountain: iconic water monuments representing Ottoman cultural heritage.

The video engages with the architectural legacy of the Ottoman era through performance art, recalling the rituals of the Hammam, which can no longer be performed at its original location in Napflio. As visitors to the site and participants in the workshop from Turkey, we bring with us the embodied knowledge of these rituals, and through our performance, we aimed to breathe life into their memory. Therefore, the video also seeks to highlight Modern Greece and Turkey's shared architectural/cultural heritage, serving an educational function and a performative way of engaging with history.

The video commences at the Hammam building, adorned with a painting, "La Grande Piscine de Brousse," by Jean-Léon Gérôme. Evoking the Hammam's traditional function, the Orientalist painting imbues the site with a layer of fiction and fantasy, reminiscent of the Western perception of the "East," including nineteenth-century Greece. The ambience is further enriched with the sound of water, enhancing the illusion of an Orientalist hammam setting. Subsequently, the narrative transitions to an awkward bath scene at the Ottoman fountain, grounding the viewer in the contemporary urban landscape with its everyday sounds and sights. By staging a bath within this public space, we aim to bridge the two monuments and provoke discomfort in the viewer, prompting them to question the fountain's ordinary function. This performative intervention activates the square both as a historical locus and a realm of imagination, rendering visible the connection of the Hammam and the fountain as sites of memory.

*Keywords:* Ottoman Heritage, bathing, embodiment, performance, ritual

## Performative Encounters with Ottoman Heritage in Napflio

The Ottoman era heritage in the Balkans has long been viewed as unwanted heritage (Kiel, 2005; Pateraki 2023). In Greece, the development of national historiographies and related heritage regimes is tied to categorizing Ottoman-era structures as unwelcome artifacts. The making of cultural heritage expected to construct a demarcated, unified material and cultural space that would enclose the Greek state's power and function as a reference point for Greek identity. In this spirit, purifying the Hellenic landscape from material vestiges and discursive perceptions that connected it with the Ottoman Empire rose as a dominant strategy.

**Figure 1**

*The ruins of the Hammam in Napflio.*



This strategy seems to be at work at the ruins of the Turkish hammam at Kapodistriou Street in Napflio (Figure 1). The small building, which was once a hammam is not even labelled with an inscription identifying the building. Rather, the name of Ioannis Kapodistrias, a politician who worked for the independence of Greece, is inscribed on the building. The street that runs through the small square of Aghios Spyridon, where one can see Ottoman houses from the 18th and 19th centuries is named after him (Figure 2). There are also two



Ottoman fountains on the same street. These bear inscriptions in Ottoman script. The inscription on the fountain next to the hammam and across the church of Aghios Spiridonas tells us that the Turk, Aga Mahmoud, had this beautiful fountain built in 1734 to 1735 for horses to drink from. There is another Ottoman fountain at the other end of the square, which was the location of our film together with the hammam (Figure2).

**Figure 2**

*Ottoman fountain and houses at the square of Aghios Spyridon.*



The typology of the Ottoman water monuments in Napflío goes back to Roman times when Greece and Asia Minor were both dominated by the Roman Empire. It was the strong suit of Roman engineers to bring water to cities by aqueducts to gain public support. The water was served to the inhabitants through public fountains and occasionally by hammams, which were centres of public life in ancient Roman cities. The Roman rulers built water infrastructure and monuments like fountains and baths that offer water for public use. This tradition was taken over by Ottomans, and the monuments in Napflío, the ruinous hammam, or the fountains at Aghios Spyridon Square are remnants of this tradition.

**Figure 3**

*The screening of the film during the workshop at the Hammam in Napflio.*



The video commences at the Hammam building, superimposed by a painting, “La grande piscine de Brousse,” by Jean Louis Gérôme (Figure 3). The Orientalist painting evokes the Hamam’s traditional function and permeates the site with a layer of fantasy. The painting represents the Western perception of the “East,” which included nineteenth-century Greece. The sound of water contributes to the film’s ambiance, enhancing the illusion of a hammam setting. The painting also stands as a symbol of the intrusion of Western ways of perception between the Greek and Ottoman cultures. The Western eye categorizes modern Greeks as representatives of ancient Greek culture while Ottomans as the Eastern other. This way of seeing them concurrently leads to value systems that categorizes and values cultural heritage according to nationalistic agendas in both Greece and Turkey.

Subsequently, the narrative transitions to the bath scene at the Ottoman fountain, grounding the viewer in the contemporary urban landscape with its everyday sounds and sights (Figure 4). By staging a bath within this public space, we aim to bridge the history with contemporary reality and the two monuments, the fountain and Hammam. The video links both monuments as part of the same heritage, reminding the viewer their shared infrastructure that carried water to both structures. The bath scene at the fountain aims to provoke discomfort in the viewers, prompting them to question the fountain's ordinary function. This performative intervention activates the square as a historical locus and a realm of imagination, rendering visible the connection of the Hammam and the fountain.

#### Figure 4

*The scene from the movie, Ayca Kızılkaya bathing at the Ottoman fountain.*



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## 19

## Another Stage is Possible: Theatre Venues outside the Theatre Buildings

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### Abstract

Schechner's *6 Axioms for Environmental Theater*, published in *The Drama Review* in 1968, basically states the principles of the theatre genre in which the entire space that the performers and the audience are present is the space of the show. Today, examples of environmental theatre have been staged in Istanbul too. This paper delves into the use of space in performance, using Schechner's *6 Axioms for Environmental Theater* as a reference. The paper focuses on three plays, namely *Freak*, *The Teapot Left a White Trace on the Rosewood Table Inherited from My Mother*, and *Büyük Zarifi Apartment*, which were all staged in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul, Turkey. These plays were performed in spaces that were not originally intended as theatres but were re-functionalized and transformed into performance spaces, showcasing environmental theatre features.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how areas beyond traditional theatre venues have been converted into performance spaces and to investigate how historical spaces have been transformed into performance spaces. This research will determine if plays that use environmental theatre, with different areas used throughout the space, comply with Schechner's principles. If the plays do not conform to Schechner's principles, the research will identify new principles that should be developed.

All three plays take place in three historical locations in Beyoğlu. The play venues are Zarifi Apartment, an old Greek apartment building; Metrohan, the world's second oldest metro tunnel on the ground floor; and Hope Alkazar, the old cinema on Istiklal Street.

This paper uses a research method based on observation and experience of the plays. It aims to determine principles on the impact and transformation of space on performance.

**Keywords:** environmental theatre, theatre venues, 6 axioms, performing spaces, site-specific theatre.

## **Another Stage is Possible**

In his book *The Environmental Theater* (1973), Schechner states: "In traditional theater architecture, the dark auditorium is like a stomach, waiting to be filled by the pre-chewed experience offered from the brightly lit stage mouth (p.18)." Thus, after the second half of the twentieth century, there was a shift in theatre production towards staging plays in non-theatrical spaces such as garages, car parks, homes, and ateliers. Moreover, the themes explored became more critical, focusing on social issues, highlighting everyday life, and aiming to inspire the audience to action. To achieve this, the themes centred around social issues, leading to performances in more accessible, everyday spaces that brought theatre closer to the public, with theatre groups staging their works in ordinary, daily-life locations.

### **Schechner's 6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre**

Schechner, aimed to merge Western theatre with traditional forms, creating a ceremonial theatre that revived early human storytelling and rituals. He criticized the passive role of the audience in Western theatre and envisioned performances based on physical expression and active participation. Several factors influenced his approach to environmental theatre, including the rise of alternative theatres, politically oppositional groups challenging commercial theatre, shifting political freedoms, and the emergence of "happening" performances. These elements collectively positioned Schechner as a pioneer in environmental theatre.

In the spring of 1968, Schechner published his *Six Principles of Environmental Theater* in TDR, aiming to shift Western theatre toward a more performative style. He emphasised that the entire space shared by artists and audience should be viewed as the performance space. These principles reflected the styles of independent and alternative theatre groups and performance art forms. which Schechner (1971, p. 379) called "other theaters" Here are the principles of Environmental Theatre:

- 1.The Theatrical Event is a Set of Related Transactions
- 2.All the Space is used for Performance; All the Space is used for the Audience
- 3.The Theatrical Event Can Take Place Either in a Totally Transformed Space or in 'Found Space'
- 4.Focus is Flexible and Variable
- 5.All Production Elements Speak in their own Language
- 6.The Text need be neither the Starting Point nor the Goal of a Production. There May be No Text at All.

(Schechner, 1968, p.41-64)

**Figure 9**

*Relationship Between Space and Performance within the Scope of Environmental Theatre Principles Space. Source: Made by Author*

<b>6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre</b>	<b>Hope Alkazar /Freak</b>	<b>Büyük Zarifi Apartmanı /Büyük Zarifi Apartment</b>	<b>Metrohan / The Teapot Left...</b>
			
<b>1.The Theatrical Event is a Set of Related Transactions</b>	An Anatolian Tale	A Daily Story from Real Life	A Daily Story from Real Life
<b>2.All the Space is used for Performance; All the Space is used for the Audience</b>	Audience Positioned in a U-Shape, No Barrier Between Audience and Actor	Audience in a Single Row, No Barrier Between Audience and Actor	Audience Positioned in a U-Shape, No Barrier Between Audience and Actor
<b>3.The Theatrical Event Can Take Place Either in a Totally Transformed Space or in "Found Space"</b>	Transformed Space /Former Cinema	Found Space /Old Apartment	Found Space /Old Train Station
<b>4.Focus is Flexible and Variable</b>	Dual Focus (Actors and Visuals)	Dual Focus (Actors and Video)	Single Focus (Actors)
<b>5.All Production Elements Speak in their own Language</b>	Equally	Equally	Equally
<b>6.The Text need be neither the Starting Point nor the Goal of a Production. There May be No Text at All.</b>	Text Present /Story Told in a Linear Manner	Text Present /Story Told in a Linear Manner	Text Present /Story Told in an Episodic Manner

## Theatre Plays Beyond Traditional Theatres in Istanbul

The alternative theatre movement and the use of unconventional theatre spaces that increased in Turkey during the 1990s have inspired some contemporary alternative performances. These groups, often staging their plays in Istanbul, premiere their productions at international festivals and continue showing them throughout the season. A common feature of these plays is their use of non-theatrical spaces as performance areas, eliminating any physical boundary between the audience and the actors, thereby transforming the entire space into a stage. Thus, these performances are defined and promoted as forms of environmental theatre. This section will examine *Büyük Zarifi Apartmanı*, performed in an apartment on the second floor of the Zarifi Apartment, a 150-year-old Greek building; *Freak*, staged at the renovated venue Hope Alkazar, formerly the historic Alkazar Cinema; and *The Teapot Left a White Trace on the Rosewood Table Inherited from My Mother*, performed on the second floor of the old tunnel metro station. These plays will be analysed in terms of the relationship between space and performance within the scope of Schechner's environmental theatre principles.

## Conclusion

Today in Turkey, environmental theatre, even if it adheres to all of Schechner's principles, does not aim to mobilize the audiences or direct them toward social issues. Instead of being deeply integrated with the public, it is presented as a specialized form of environmental theatre, often with limited seating capacity and typically located in a special venue in the city. To offset the increased costs, private companies mostly sponsor these productions, which usually premiere at festivals.

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## 20

## **Psychology of Visual Perception: Exploring how Theatrical Space Influences Emotion and Perception. The Dual Role of the Ancient Theatre of Pleuron**

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### **Abstract**

Upon entering a building or a space, one does not instantly ponder on its emotional impact. Nevertheless, architecture consistently exerts a profound influence on one's emotional state and perception. A space is often intentionally designed to elicit distinct emotional responses: an office space may aim at energising those who work in it, while a museum may evoke feelings of calm and fascination. Such spaces outdo their role as mere physical structures, since by being uniquely designed to evoke specific emotional responses, each is transformed into a setting with an intrinsic psychological milieu. This research endeavours to delve into the intricate interplay between the architecture of theatrical space and perception, with a specific focus on the dual functionality observed in the ancient theatre of Pleuron. The primary objective is to understand the manner in which the design of this theatrical space incites perceptions that engender emotional responses, shedding light on certain aspects of its architecturally induced psychological impact. *Does the design of the space contribute to the emotional and perceptual experiences of the audience? And how does this happen in the ancient theatre of Pleuron?* This study employs a comprehensive methodology, integrating critical architectural analysis, and historical research. Specifically, this methodology will examine the spatial and architectural configuration of the ancient theatre of Pleuron through the lens of perceptual analysis. This theatre, originally built as a parliament building and later turned into a theatre, is interesting because of its peculiar spatial planning. Its stage structure abuts and forms part of the ancient city wall. The theatre space had a dual role depending on the needs of the society: artistic in times of peace and protective in times of war.

*Keywords:* visual perception, theatrical space, architecture, ancient theatre of Pleuron, performance space.

## Psychology of Visual Perception

Perception to the average person may be taken for granted as something that occurs to everyone automatically. However, "perception is not something self-evident, automatic and unmistakable but operates based on a series of principles and laws that have been investigated experimentally and which are likely to be subject to different interpretations depending on the theory used" (Potamianos, 2015, p. 7). Perception is an interdisciplinary field that requires the cooperation of many scientific fields in order to be investigated and understood. However, the result of this partnership is that there is not just one theory of visual perception but several theories with different starting points, assumptions, and goals. In the context of this work, the study of the double role of the ancient theatre of Pleuron it was considered more efficient to focus on the theory of Gestalt psychology.

The difference between "looking" and "seeing" is particularly crucial. The property of "looking" is equivalent to a camera that takes pictures and does not choose what to retain and what not to retain from an image. On the contrary, when someone "sees," their eyes work selectively, perceiving things differently and distinguishing images from the surrounding reality. And, of course, "seeing is equivalent to seeing something in relation to something else; and the relationships one may encounter in the senses are not simple" (Arnheim, 1969/2007, p.87).

Art, and especially theatre, should not be treated as objects but as an overall organised thought, since the whole is greater than the parts, the composition of things is more important than the parts that make it up, and the meaning is revealed in the whole, not in the details. This is an important principle of Gestalt psychology.

It is worth focusing on the German word "Gestalt" which means "shape" or "form." The basic idea of this theory, which focuses on sensory perception, is that the whole is greater than its parts. Moreover, "no object is perceived in isolation. To see something involves assigning it a place within the whole: a place in space, some degree on the scale of size, light intensity, or distance" (Potamianos, 2015, p. 24). To understand this, one can think about what happens when one sees a person's face. Synthesis is a natural process for a healthy perceptual system. It does not distinguish individual features, but a complex image of that person's face is formed in the mind.

In this light, this research endeavours to delve into the intricate interplay between the architecture of theatrical space and perception, with a specific focus on the dual functionality observed in the ancient theatre of Pleuron. The primary objective is to understand how the design of this theatrical space incites perceptions that evoke emotional responses, shedding light on certain aspects of its architecturally induced psychological impact.

## The Double Role of the Ancient Theatre of Pleuron

Looking at the ancient theatre of Pleuron, at first sight, it is a theatre originally built as a parliament building and later turned into a theatre. But if one tries to observe a little deeper, one will find a peculiar spatial planning. Its stage structure abuts and forms part of the ancient city wall.<sup>19</sup> The result of this particularity is that the dialogue that art and theatre have opened over the centuries in the context of society and the city («ἄστυ») – beyond the plays – is also visible in the theatre space itself. The social element here in the ancient theatre of Pleuron is even more intense, as the theatre space had a double role depending on the needs of the society: artistic in times of peace and fortification-protection in times of war.

This theatrical space, with its double role, embodies the essence of the Aristotelian definition of "reversal" («περιπέτεια»)<sup>20</sup>. When Aristotle speaks of "reversal", he refers to a movement, in which, conditions are reversed, and the balance is somewhat lost. He speaks of a conversion of a limbic transition from one state to another. It is, one might say, a transition from a state of complacency to a state of danger. Aristotle is essentially talking about adopting a different point of view that changes something in us and changes our perception of some situation, from which a new perception of the world emerges.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the ancient theatre of Pleuron had the double role of developing the critical ability and the intellectual side of a person alongside his emotional involvement, which can turn a person into a genuine "fortress" that protects the values he advocates both for his city and for himself. By unravelling this duality, the study contributes to a broader comprehension of the psychology of visual perception in a theatrical context. The findings not only enrich our understanding of ancient theatre architecture but also provide valuable insights into contemporary theatre design and its potential impact on emotional engagement.

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<sup>19</sup> "The theatre is in contact with the western side of the fortifications of Nea Pleuron (...) It is one of the most interesting theatres of Aetolia, both because of the unique view it offers towards the plain coastal zone to the west of Messolonghi, and due to an important structural peculiarity, that it presents. Specifically, its proscenium is arranged in front and in contact with the wall, the hollow faces west, while the functionality of the theatre stage is completed by Tower 3, which is in contact with it as well as the wings on either side of the wall. Tower 3, (...) should have been an auxiliary stage and backstage area, possibly actors' dressing rooms." (Kolonas, 2008,).

<sup>20</sup> "Reversal (Peripety) is, as aforesaid, a change from one state of affairs to its exact opposite, and this, too, as I say, should be in conformance with probability or necessity." (Aristotle, 1982, p. 56.).

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## 21

## Light as Invisible Architecture: The Case of Ritsos' *Moon Sonata* at the Athens Festival

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### Abstract

The current paper will explore the intangible quality of light to create space which is transient during the performance yet transforms the solidity of space into narrative and dramaturgy, giving the audience the opportunity to connect with the endless theme of loss. The author, drawn by her current practice as a lighting designer, will explore the notion of space and time in a performance in an industrial space which has strong links to the urban memory of Athens (Athens Festival venue in Pireos 260), and how light can transcend time and the space in which the performance is placed in. The paper will present the findings of the 2015 performance at the Athens Festival, directed by Nanouris, music by Xarchakos with Marinella on the lead role, and Alexiadou as light designer.

*Moonlight Sonata* (1956), the earliest of Ritsos' compositions from the *Fourth Dimension*, has a particular form and atmosphere and is the beginning of a new era that leaves room for light to inhabit a storytelling space with generosity and grace. Inspired by the poet's most personal life and creations, retrieved from the past experiences, anxieties and emotions, the work revisits the wider space of the Left, to which Ritsos is ideologically and politically included and, therefore, creates space for a "void scenography" in which light takes centre stage. The *Moonlight Sonata*, one of Ritsos' best-loved and best-known texts, is a stage monologue, a personal confession, an emotional plea for life and hope, through a flow of symbols that gracefully gives space to abstract interpretation for the lighting designer to create a non-space and time-based habitat for the audience to immerse themselves in the timeless themes of love, belonging, trust and loneliness.

*Keywords:* lighting design, light as invisible architecture, Ritsos, Athens Festival

## Light as Invisible Architecture

Invisible architecture has been a recent trend in the world of architects where the intention of the creator is to hide the building by using and accentuating four elements - air, heat, light, sound - as the art of “nothingness.” As a starting point for the design, we began by exploring this notion of invisible architecture i.e. the sensory elements that exist beyond a built environment but constitute content which in their own right can be distinct of the bigger container they exist in and yet support a narrative open to different interpretations. For example, the smell of a space; the sound from room to room; the natural light and how it changes throughout the day; artificial light and how it can make the walls it contains disappear. The sensory experience of spaces relies heavily on the fact that people come to the theatre with the special experience of the rest of their lives, - what Bachelard (1964) describes in *The Poetics of Space*, - that the rooms of a house may each have their own particular associations and emotional powers. Baugh (2005) argues “that the materials and mechanisms of scenography may have meanings in and of themselves and are not simple servants to the mechanistic needs of scenic representation they are an expression of a relationship with the world and reflect complex human values and beliefs” (p.8). The notion of using light to create memories and scenographic stimuli became the vehicle for the direction of the piece and the beginning of blocking the performance on paper, transforming an empty vast warehouse into smaller or larger emotional spaces open to interpretation by the audience. Our intention was to create an experience for the viewer that would go beyond the mere act of passively attending a performance but by the lack of any concrete and “visible” scenography this would give the audience the opportunity to have a kinaesthetic experience. As Gibson (1983) argues, the eyes should not be thought as cameras but as apparatus for detecting the variables of contour, texture, spectral composition and transformation in light, trying to experience the performance by seeing the sound and listening to the images.

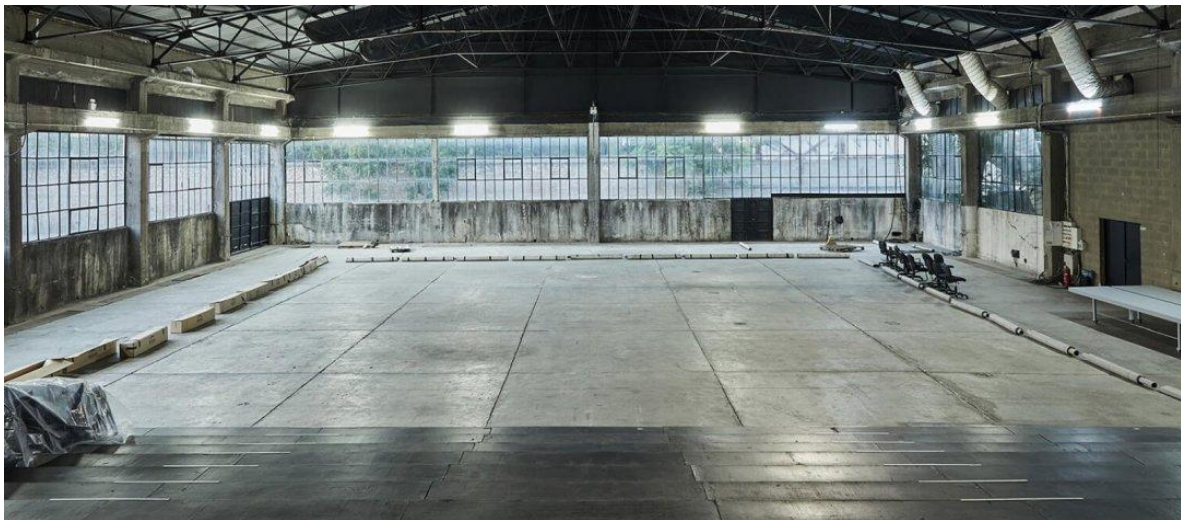
*Moonlight Sonata* (1956), the earliest of Greek poet Ritsos’ compositions from the *Fourth Dimension*, has a particular form and atmosphere and marks the beginning of a new era that leaves room for light to inhabit a storytelling space with generosity and grace. Inspired by the poet’s most personal life and creations, retrieved from past experiences, anxieties and emotions, the work revisits the wider space of the Left, to which Ritsos is ideologically and politically inclined and therefore creates space for a “void scenography” in which light takes centre stage. The *Moonlight Sonata*, one of Ritsos’ best-loved and best-known texts, is a stage monologue, a personal confession, an emotional plea for life and hope, through a flow of symbols that gracefully gives space to abstract interpretation for the

lighting designer to create a non-space and time-based habitat for the audience to immerse in the timeless themes of love, belonging, trust and loneliness.

The space at Pireos 260 in Athens where the Athens Festival takes place is a former factory (EBME Tsaousoglou) that in the mid-1950s made metal structures for furniture, including metal frames for theatre seats (Figure 1). The space, an empty container, led itself gracefully to the idea of liquid light that would create spaces for the story to come to life.

### Figure 1

*Athens Festival Pireos 260 Hall D, the Empty Hall in Daylight. © Greek Festival.*



The play is a monologue by a woman of a certain age who is looking back on her life. She begins by describing the beauty of the moonlight, a light that is forcefully entering from the glass windows at the back of the bare stage and becomes a co-star for the protagonist. Kampanellis (1967), another great Greek playwright, refers to the performances as “believable what ifs”. This solid wall of light at the back, sweet and fragile, will soon disappear, or more precisely, the protagonist will make it disappear with her words. The body of the protagonist, this vertical agony and pain, becomes an integral part of the scenography as its movement in space will transform, through light, the spatial relationship between the story and the performers (Figure 2). In this particular performance the protagonist presents and narrates her character instead of becoming it (Figure 3). In this way she occupies a “gestural space.” She defines the space and creates a dynamic dialogue between light and text (Figure 4).

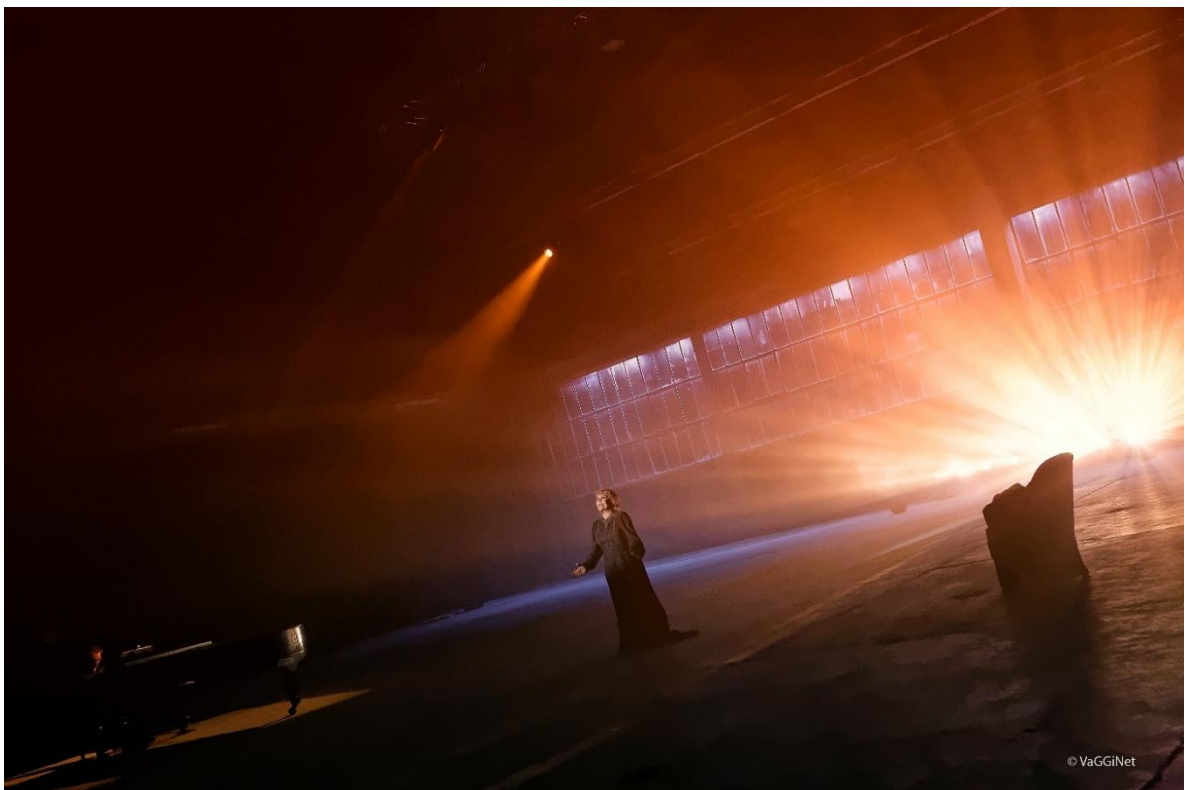
Light becomes a window or a skylight that does not exist. It reflects and it is reflected. It becomes time and memory. It becomes a companion and a protector, an arm around the shoulder, a lover and the harsh reality of loneliness (Figure 5).

**Figure 2**

*Lead Protagonist Marinella with Light Interpreting Pain. Image by Evaggelia Thomakou.*

**Figure 3**

*Lead Protagonist Marinella Emitting Light through ? her Body. Image by Evaggelia Thomakou.*



**Figure 4**

*Lead Protagonist Marinella in Conversation with the Light. Image by Evaggelia Thomakou.*

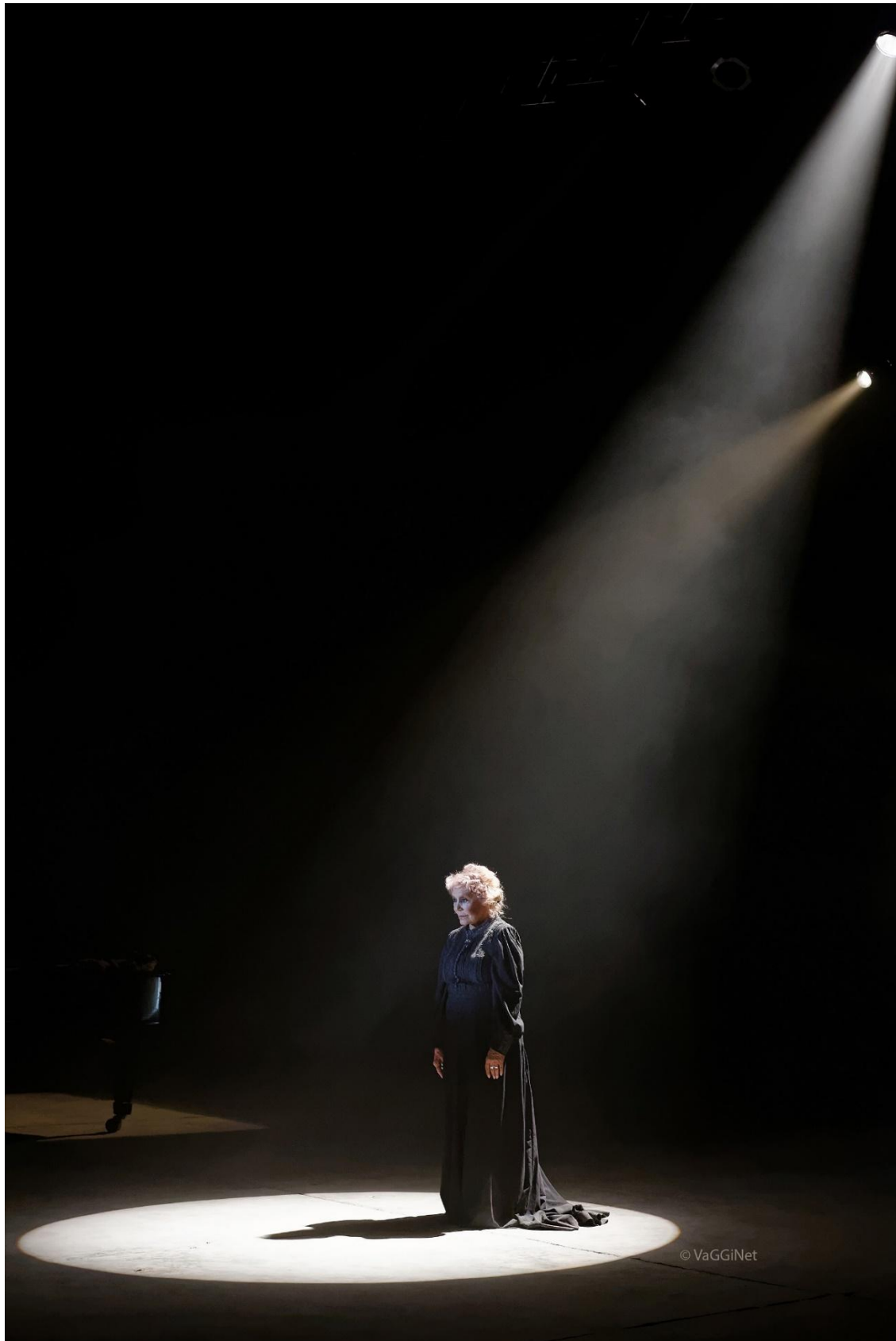


Moonlight Sonata gave us the opportunity to explore Newton's theory of *absolute space* (1962), in its own nature, without relation to anything external, always remaining similar and immovable. Relative space is some movable dimension or measure of the absolute space, which our senses determine by its position in relation to bodies. The bigger container that is the building itself proves to be an invaluable ally in experimenting with the fluid nature of the lighting design, and its flexibility of its form and its vastness into the space. It manages to create a kinesthetic experience for the audience in the absence of an immobile and descriptive scenography, adding another layer of free will in the interpretation of the theatrical practice from the audience's point of view.



**Figure 5**

*Lead Protagonist Marinella Embodying Loneliness through Light. Image by Evaggelia Thomako.*



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## 22

### **Singing, Space, Focus Live Singing as a Concentration Tool and a Definition Factor for Spatial Conditions in Site-Based Performances**

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#### **Abstract**

Singing and sound have long been essential tools in site-based performances, transforming spaces and enhancing emotional connections. This paper explores how singing shapes spatial experiences, focusing on its role in emotional engagement, thematic reinforcement, and atmosphere creation. Drawing on theories of space, memory, and sound, it discusses how soundscapes influence perceptions of space and community. Through case studies like *The MotherWound* and *Pleno*, I demonstrate how music activates spaces, creating immersive, resonant experiences for audiences.

*Keywords:* site-based performance, soundscapes, emotional engagement, thematic reinforcement

#### **Singing, Space, Focus Live**

Site-based performances often rely on sensory stimuli to create a memorable and immersive experience. In particular, sound—specifically live singing—can evoke powerful emotional responses, shaping the spatial experience for both performers and audiences. As Simon Emmerson (2008) states, “Space is not simply a geometric ‘thing out there’ (...). Space would not be perceptible without objects, textures, sounds.” This paper explores how singing contributes to the perception of space in performances by fostering emotional engagement, reinforcing thematic elements, and shaping the atmosphere.

#### **Space, Memory, and Sound**

Anthropological studies of space and place highlight the importance of sound in shaping cultural meaning and memory. Spaces are imbued with social meanings that can be

contested or reinforced through performances. Edward Schieffelin (1985) argues that performance constructs meanings in a social space, rather than a cognitive one. In the Kaluli healing seances, for example, singing fosters unity and emotional involvement. This idea aligns with R. Murray Schafer's (1994) concept of the *soundscape*, a framework through which sound shapes both aesthetic and cultural understanding of a space.

## Emotional Engagement through Singing

Singing in a performance can evoke specific emotions, creating a deeper connection between the audience and the environment. Musicologists such as Lazarus (1991) suggest that emotions are profoundly shaped by environmental factors, including sound. In the performances discussed below, music not only connected audiences to the narrative but also heightened their emotional involvement, reinforcing the sense of being present within the space.

### Case Study: *The MotherWound*

In the performance *The MotherWound*, I explored themes of trauma, memory, and motherhood by incorporating Greek songs associated with immigrant nostalgia. Set in an intimate, acoustically resonant space, I embroidered handkerchiefs while singing songs tied to Greek immigrants' experiences in Germany. The physical act of embroidering, traditionally considered a "female job," combined with live singing, resonated deeply with the audience, even when they did not share the cultural context. This demonstrates how sound can transcend linguistic barriers and evoke emotions rooted in personal or collective memories.

### Case Study: *Pleno*

*Pleno* was set in Thessaloniki, where I sang traditional and contemporary *laikó* songs<sup>21</sup> during a performance centred on the city's shifting identity. By incorporating soundscapes reflective of Thessaloniki's multi-ethnic history, the performance illustrated how space, sound, and memory intertwine. Through repetitive actions and familiar songs, the audience connected with the city's cultural narrative, despite its complexities. The combination of live singing and soundscapes evoked a sense of nostalgia and unity among the viewers, making the performance both a personal and collective experience.

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<sup>21</sup> *Laikó* (Greek: λαϊκό) is a genre of popular Greek music that evolved in the mid-20th century from earlier urban styles such as *rebetiko*. It is associated with working-class culture and typically combines traditional melodic structures with modern instrumentation, expressing themes of love, sorrow, and everyday life (Holst-Warhaft, 1975; Dawe, 2007).

## Conclusion

Incorporating songs into site-based performances enhances emotional engagement, reinforces thematic elements, and shapes the overall atmosphere. As demonstrated in *The MotherWound* and *Pleno*, singing can activate spaces in ways that resonate deeply with audiences, creating a multi-sensory experience. By blending sound with spatial and thematic elements, performers can craft immersive, emotionally charged environments that linger in the audience's memory long after the performance ends.

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## 23

## Theatre of Dionysus A Performative and Reflexive Space

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to look at the first theatre of the world, the Theatre of Dionysus, and how it was used both as a performance and as a reflexive space, and how some dramatic spaces appeared to the public, thanks to the existing theatre space. It should be remembered that the tetralogies performed the Theatre of Dionysus were only one stop of the whole route of the rituals of the Great Dionysia that started in the Asclepieion on the Acropolis hill, where they instigated the activities of different forms of sacrifice. Interestingly, the theatrical space as it was conceived at the time, included different parallel rituals that extended the boundaries of the theatre as a performance space. Turning to scholars such as Fischer-Lichte (2013), and Puchner (1985), masters of the semiotics of theatre, we examine how, in the above-mentioned theatre, the reflexive space appears as a folding of the existing performing space, setting an example for directors who have left their mark on our modern stage. For this research, we have selected Aeschylus as our guide to better understand the osmosis of the separate elements between the reflexive and the performance space, which absorbs the senses of the viewer, putting into practice his spiritual criteria for seeing the world. By sharing examples taken from his tragedies, we might benefit by reflecting on lesser examined issues as the goals of directing in this theatre, beyond what the dramatic space suggests. Looking back at Aeschylus' potential directorial choices, we might comprehend more of how the Theatre of Dionysus was used both as a performance space, like any theatre in the world, but also as a reflexive space, capable of offering an introspective experience and a deeper understanding of social dynamics.

*Keywords:* performance space, reflexive space, theatre of Dionysus, spatial signs.

## Theatre of Dionysus

Ancient drama was performed during festivities attended by the majority of the society, with one competing tetralogy following another, as a part of a larger cultural and religious ceremony. Therefore, as Puchner (1985) suggests in *The Semiotics of Theatre*, the place used for the performance is part of the hypercode, and it develops the thematic subtext. In fact, there were many thematic parallels to the rituals on the circle of life and death, enhancing the tragic element of the tetralogies. In addition, the Aeschylean satirical plays often took us to a period before the fate changed for the heroes involved in the trilogy, which reminds us of Kastoriadis' (1999) theory about the anthropogenic worldview of Aeschylus, the basis of which is that we belong to chaos and we will return to it (Puchner, 1985).

The audience's guide for diving into these dark mysteries is the chorus, as narrator and commentator of the action, helping the audience to see behind the blurred lines that separate the real world from the world of the play. In *Seven Against Thebes*, for instance, the statues in the background area of the Theatre of Dionysus were possibly used to represent the ones that guarded the seven gates of Thebes. Thus the Chorus probably was lamenting at that point. The structuring experience, in this case, covers the dimensions of the given space but also of our inner world. Think of the Oceanids hovering on the stage for over 100 verses, the "terrible" presence of the Furies, or the 50 Egyptians in *The Suppliants*, all of which ignite the spectator and make him confront the fears of his own fragile autonomy.

There is also a distinction that we should be aware of, and that is between the dramatic space and dramatic place in the imagination of the spectator. Think of the shocking moment in *The Persians* when the ghost of Darius faces the Parthenon in ruins, and how the glorious Sousa is presented in such a wounded space by a Chorus in the armour of the deceased. With Fischer-Lichte's theory (2013) of spatial signs in mind, we are aware of the geometrical possibilities of the stage area and the very use of spatial signals beyond the stage building. However, the stage area is ultimately shaped by human vision, as far as the eyes of the spectator can see. For example, *The Eumenides* is set in the nearby Areopagus.

As of now, we have also borrowed parts of Schechner's theory (2003) to examine space in a broader sense, including even the moment when the spectator leaves home to go to the theatre and what that person will encounter in the meantime such as the Asclepieion.

Thus, the reflexive space's goal is to use a theatrical material in the performance space that is a continuum of human actions, either taken from rituals or forms of entertainment, for the spectator to be healed. This could have been the case in *Prometheus Bound* with the Titan tied up to a rock, similar to the rock seats in the first row, with the hope that another hero would rise up in times of tyranny, and leave the effigy behind.

In a sense, as Wiles (2003) argues, the reflexivity of theatre is used by the audience to sharpen their own reflexive thinking and internal conversation about the issues that govern their lives. Wiles, of course, was heavily influenced by pragmatists such as Pierce (1996), and through their approach to semiotics of theatrical “hiding spaces”. What can one observe about the changing of stage spaces in *Achilleis* trilogy? We clearly find a change of location in the *Oresteia*, but it is also possible that the altar of Agamemnon becomes/hides the sanctuary of Delphi, or in the *Achilleis* synopsis, we have a clear shift from Achilles' tent to Priam's palace.

In conclusion, Aeschylus achieves, even through these symbolic alterations and/or expansions of space, the rupture of illusion through reflection by transporting the spectators into his fictional spaces. These spaces are, ultimately, used as parallels to restore mnemonic spaces, that are either real or creations of the imagination of the spectators that their contemporary culture has instilled in them.

Looking at works by Terzopoulos (such as *Persians*, 2003, in Hagia Irene Church in Istanbul or *Prometheiade*, 2010, in three historical locations) and Ariane Mnouchkine at Cartoucherie and site-specific events while on tour with Le Théâtre du Soleil, or at memorable site-specific productions such as Brook's *Orghast* (1971), Pearson's *Persians* (2010), or Scaife's *Happy Days* (2021), we further comprehend that the theatrical space, when it includes parallel rituals, expands the boundaries of the theatre as a performance space, and may bring us closer to the understanding of the goals of this art form as it once was.

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**24****Four Larks' *Katabasis*:  
Imagining Ancient Mystery Rites as Promenade Opera in  
Los Angeles****Matthew Diafos Sweeney**

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**Abstract**

Los Angeles-based transdisciplinary collaborative Four Larks created an immersive opera at the Getty Villa antiquities museum in tandem with the exhibition "Underworld: Imagining the Afterlife." The artists used the exhibited artifacts as source material for the text, design, musical score and choreography. The performance mapped the ancient underworld across the grounds and gardens of the museum, a facsimile of the Villa dei Papyri incongruously perched on the Californian coast. Audiences were led through a series of installations, featuring expansive costumes, large-scale puppets and masks, and custom-made musical instruments activated by performers. The peripatetic performance sought a contemporary analogue to ancient Greek religious rites in which participants would embody a ritualized death and journey through the afterlife.

This essay was adapted from a talk given at the Performing Space '24 conference which included videos and images from the performance, by the production's writer, director, and composer Matthew Diafos Sweeney, and designer and choreographer Sebastian Peters-Lazaro.

*Keywords:* live performance, promenade opera, mystery rites, site specific, theatre, archeology, museum.



### Four Larks' *Katabasis*

Four Larks works across disciplines to create hybrid live performance works and theatrical rituals. First initiated in Melbourne, and currently operating in Los Angeles, we have created and presented work in theatres, galleries, museums, alleyways, a barn, a brewery, an auto-body shop, our homes, and a variety of disused industrial spaces. We incorporate motifs and methodologies from postmodern dance, classical opera, experimental pop music, indigenous folk traditions, and installation-based performance art. For each project, we cultivate an ensemble of performers drawn from these diverse performance backgrounds. We refer to our projects as “junkyard operas” on account of the variety of sources collaged into the text and dramaturgy, and the repurposed materials that comprise both the scenography and the orchestration.

In 2018 the Getty Villa Antiquities Museum approached us to create a companion piece to their exhibition *Underworld: Imagining the Afterlife*, which featured objects from Greece and southern Italy including large funerary vessels painted with depictions of the underworld, gold plaques that were buried with the dead with instructions on how to navigate Hades, alongside funerary offerings, and grave monuments.

Conversations with lead curator David Saunders inspired an investigation of ancient mystery cults, whose secret multi-sensorial and peripatetic rites would be staged at sites like the *Villa dei Papyri* at Herculaneum, used as the architectural model for the museum. In this tradition, we set out to create our own death ritual that mapped the Greek underworld across the museum's grounds and gardens.

Working in consultation with the museum's specialists, we used the artefacts featured in the exhibition as source material. The objects served as graphic scores, as design prompts, and as choreographic inspiration (Figure 1), and their textual fragments and related poetry formed the foundation of our libretto. Through generative exercises with our ensemble of actors, dancers, and musicians, we reimagined these archaeological materials through a prism of contemporary and local anxieties and aesthetics.

We positioned our one-hundred-person audience as “initiates” in a secret ceremony that led them through a series of participatory musical installations. Using voices, movement, mobile props and scenic interventions, we devised parameters for the audience to move intuitively *en masse*. In the opening sequence, they were prompted to follow a mysterious figure carrying a glowing orb, later revealed to be Persephone (Figure 2).

We used the museum's architecture as our primary devising provocation - structuring the performance around its inherent spatial narratives. The geography of the museum dictated the map of our underworld and curated its characters. The museum's unique multi-level staircase inspired our titular katabasis (*'descent into the underworld'*). We situated

performers across the staircase reciting the instructional texts of the orphic tablets and waving laurel wreaths, guiding the audience's descent (Figure 3). Next, they gathered around a balcony, looking down on a lower-level courtyard to watch as the Fates prepared to cut the thread of life (Figure 4). We created a choreographic installation using red thread to be observed from above, with patterns mirrored in the musical orchestration (for the guzheng and string ensemble).

The series of rites continued as audiences were ceremonially led across the river Styx, and confronted with the three-headed dog Cerberus who guards the underworld from mortal trespassers (Figure 5). Once the beast was quelled, audiences were invited through a gate into the villa's outer peristyle to ceremonially drink from the river Lethe to purify them of their mortal memories.

**Figure 1**

*Costume and choreography*  
(Amico, 2018)



**Figure 2**

*Performer carrying a glowing orb*  
(Galiana, 2019)



**Figure 3**

*Performers guiding the audience's descent.*  
(Galiana, 2019)



**Figure 4**

*The Fates (Galiana, 2019)*



Audiences next passed through the museum's triclinium into the inner peristyle where they encountered the toiling sinners of Tartarus - from Tantalus eternally reaching for his grapes, to Sisyphus rolling his boulder up the mountain, and the Danaids, sisters cursed to try and fill a leaking bucket with water using only sieves (Figure 6).

After passing through the impluvium, the audience arrived back outside where they were faced with three towering figures, looming from the Villa's grand balcony (Figure 7). These judges were the final obstacle to the Elysian Garden, where Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, awaited.

### Figure 5

*Cerberus (Galiana, 2019)*



Persephone embodies both death and rebirth, returning briefly to the living world from Hades each spring. In the performance's final gesture, initiates were once again prompted to follow her as she ascended the staircase, completing the circular structure of both the narrative and the ritual. In following Persephone's cyclical journey, the performance offered a spatialised meditation on the simultaneously eternal and ephemeral nature of mortal life. With this performance we sought to create a platform for participants (artists and audiences alike) to process grief, mortality, and a relationship with the ancient past. As an epilogue, audiences were invited into the exhibition gallery, to view and discuss the materials that had inspired the performance alongside the artists and antiquities specialists.



**Figure 6**

*The Danaids* (Galiana, 2019).

**Figure 7**

*The three judges* (Galiana, 2019)

**Figure 8**

*Persephone in the Elysian Garden*  
(Galiana, 2019)



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## 25

**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 Festivalw 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*.

theatrical, cognitive and phenomenological approach which intends to examine the case of Stromboli as a paradigm of a theatre that acts as a metastructure of a complex system to be recovered as a way of operating for an awareness of everyday life outside of any automatism.

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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**PERFORMING SPACE 2024**  
**REGULAR PRESENTATIONS**



## 26

## MEDITERRANEAN SPACING

### *Those We Carry with Us Carry Us*

**Dorita Hannah**

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#### Abstract

July 2025. It is high summer on a beach in the eastern Peloponnese of mainland Greece, where twenty fully-clothed artists – performers, architects, landscapers and theatre-makers – stand next to white plastic chairs lining the shore, before unexpectedly taking them into the sea while locals are enjoying the last sunrays of the day. In this moment, site-responsive performance merges with everyday life, spontaneously assembling all those on the beach to communally witness the ensuing sunset. Such ‘taking place’ is an event of ‘Mediterranean Spacing’ formulated in a workshop for the *Performing Space* conference. Through action research, participants explored regional understandings of how communities assemble in order to debunk long-held assumptions on sites for cultural expression. It builds on notions of *Performance Space* and *Spatial Performativity*, to outline a theory of *Performative Spacing* as an active and activating means of shaping and experiencing events and environments within and beyond theatre architecture. This deliberately undermines architecture’s traditional role as a fixed, durable object designed to order space and those who inhabit it. Because spatiotemporal paradigms – i.e., how space performs and performance is spatialised – are culturally inflected, performative spacing provides a means of dismantling and decentring theatre architecture’s status quo in order to halt a continual deferral to conventional venues. This acknowledges epistemological diversity as foundational to local and indigenous spatial thought, encouraging design thinking that acknowledges and accommodates a multiplicity of worlds. Performance space is therefore approached as a pluriversal phenomenon in which interconnecting worlds coexist as spatiotemporal constructs – as spacings.

**Keywords:** Theatre architecture, performance space, site-specific performance, action research, spacing

### **Mediterranean Spacing: *Those We Carry with Us Carry Us***

Performance is action-in-space and site is space-in-action – together they cohere as *spacing*. However, our globalised worldview still tends to regard time and space as separable and absolute, generally oblivious to the spatiotemporal dynamics in our daily environments. In *Event-Space*, I maintain that, as a dynamic entity, “space precedes action—as action” (Hannah, 2018, p. xxi). This notion of spatial performativity – insisting that environments are inherently active and activating – requires a relational understanding of place that recognises the fluctuating relationships between objects, people and the environments they inhabit; all charged with meaning within the living territory of site, which is specific to sociocultural, political, historical and mythical understandings. Such relationality was explored in a collaborative workshop during the 2024 *Performing Space* conference in Nafplio, Greece (6-9 July). Over four afternoons of the conference, an interdisciplinary group of 20 participating artists from a range of creative and ethnic backgrounds utilised situated embodiment to consider ‘Mediterranean Spacing’ through site-responsive action, recognising location as an event in itself – resonating with environmental performativity at macro and micro scales.

The resulting Saturday evening event, *Those We Carry with Us Carry Us*, takes place before sunset on a popular local beach, the frontage of which the Municipality has slated for sale by to developers. Conference attendees are led along a dusty road by the artists who each convey a moulded white plastic chair – that ubiquitous global object we sat on, discussed and played with over the previous three afternoons – forming a caravan that alludes to both partygoers and refugees. They move onto the beach past locals sunning themselves in the depleting heat while others are immersed in the sea with children playing in its shallows. Each artist – asked to consider who they carried with them – places their chair on the shoreline facing distant mountains silhouetted in the lowering light. Each stands with their back to the sea, looking directly at those gathering on the sand before turning to lift their chairs into the water, borne as those they privately convey: some move out towards the horizon with a chair on their back; others toss it playfully or move it in the shallows; some stand on theirs, hold it high above their heads or try to buoy it up in front of them. All are silhouetted by the western light that sparkles and flashes off the wavering surface of a tideless sea. Returning chairs to the uniform lineup, performers reface the growing assembly before each approaches an onlooker, inviting them to sit in their chair and gaze towards the now fast-setting sun. Standing or sitting next to their guests, each speaks softly, describing who they have been carrying in their own languages or indistinctly muttering, a hand resting on a shoulder, back, ankle or knee. Humming rises and falls, forming into a shared song. *Sto Pa Kai Sto Ksanaleo* – “I told you and I’m telling you again” – is familiar to the locals.

Sung in Greek and Turkish, this chant shared by two historically conflictual cultures bordering the Mediterranean is a ballad of longing for those lost at sea; expressing a sense of urgency as it's intoned to the islands and fringes of the inland ocean. The song ends, and together, artists, their guests, local beachgoers, and conference attendees silently watch the sun lower and disappear behind the distant hills, darkening a beach soon accessible for paying tourists only.

**Figure 1**

*Images from the final performance of the Mediterranean Spacing workshop led by the author "Those We Carry with Us Carry Us", Karathona Beach, Nafplio, Greece, Performing Space 2024. (Photos by George Pramaggioulis)*







This sunset event was staged prior to a shared meal at the nearby beachfront taverna that concluded the conference proceedings. It was a situated exploration of *performative spacing* – an emergent term I introduced on the first day – formulated to inform *performance space* specifically and *spatial performativity* generally; impacting beyond theatre architecture to theoretically influence the design of landscapes, exhibitions, interiors, installations and urban environments, as well as politics, marketing, and worldbuilding in general. The triad of these three intersecting terms – ‘performance space’, ‘spatial performativity’ and ‘performative spacing’ – can be summed up as 1) the built and virtual environment where live and mediated events explicitly occur, 2) the active and activating qualities of all environments and 3) how they are both relationally designed and dynamically experienced. Considering all three enables artistic exploration, enactment and reception of regionally specific performance practices and spatiotemporal worldviews, in order to reimagine theatre's conventional house: encouraging the formation of decolonised, indigenised and relational community settings rather than commercial, public venues aligned with global capital and hegemonic regimes.

While ‘performance’ and ‘space’ are inherent to the separate yet interconnected disciplines of ‘theatre’ and ‘architecture’, any easy definition of either is ever-elusive, contested and therefore unstable. *Performance* as action – consciously presented and/or received – occurs at multiple sites and scales, while *space* as a four-dimensional continuum evades particularity, stasis and measurability. As nouns they reciprocally contain the characteristics of performativity and spatiality through their dynamic actions of ‘performing’ and ‘spacing’, which imply time, energy and engagement. Understanding *performative spacing* therefore requires the unpacking and articulation of the other two interplaying terms – *performance space* and *spatial performativity*. Entwining all three recognises expressive spatiotemporal practices beyond the singular event on a prescribed Eurowestern stage; illuminating a decolonial imperative to challenge conventional theatre's tendency to 1) homogenise spatial expression through internationalisation, and 2) deny embodied diversity and cultural specificities of the local.

### **Performance Space / Spatial Performativity / Performative Spatiality**

An increasing move towards site-sensitivity, responsivity and specificity in the new millennium – alongside digital virtuality – has extended what, when and where communal public actions take place. Moving away from its ‘proper’ place – bound to theatre's propriety and architecture's property – demonstrates how ‘*performance*’ necessarily engages with ‘*space*’ itself as an event. Presenced both materially and virtually, it takes up residence in globalscapes, landscapes and mindscapes, often inhabiting all three simultaneously. Far from empty, *Performance Space* incorporates the location itself as ‘actant’ – “source of



action” (Latour, 2017, p. 7) – playing a role in the narratives of both event and site. Recognising that environments are saturated with physical action and cultural meaning aligns with the pluriversal nature of our shared world as one containing many overlapping worlds. As *Spatial Performativity*, such situated spatiotemporal understandings can challenge the hegemony of imposed Eurocentric universalism. Found settings for performance – integrating climate, landscape and more-than-human life forms – render the chosen location a fragile performing thing within a larger spatial matrix. This requires a responsive and relational understanding of ‘place’; recognising fluctuating relationships – both immediate and remote – between entities and the environments they inhabit. Such engagements are charged with meaning within the geopolitical and sociocultural territories of a site and further distinguished by historical realities and mythopoetic understandings of place, requiring spatial attunement.

### Figure 3

*Images of initial workshop discussion from Mediterranean Spacing, led by the author “Those We Carry with Us Carry Us”, Performing Space 2024. (Photos by George Pramaggioulis).*

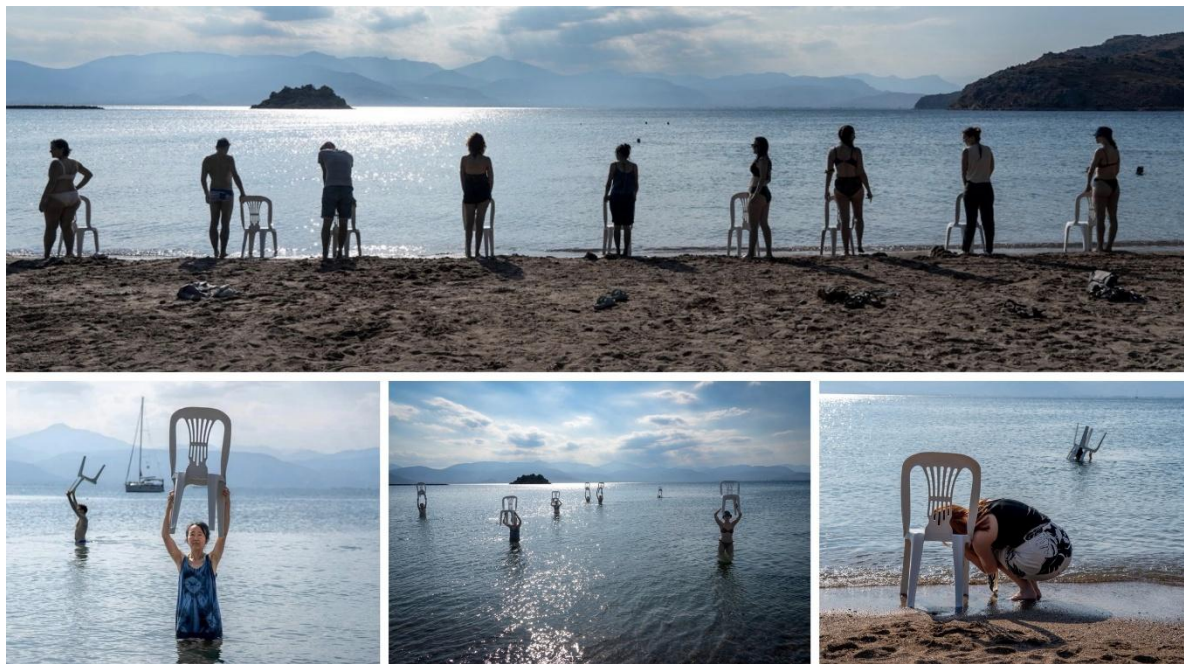


*Performative Spacing* therefore recognises and utilises multiple spatiotemporal conditions and conceptions within the environment, itself an event pre-existing any planned performances. This enables spacing as the speculative orchestration of, and active embodied participation within, environments that are, at once, material and virtual. Such acts of designing and experiencing place are necessarily informed by the spatiotemporal complexity of ‘here and there’, as well as ‘now and then’. The term *spacing* emerges from the fields of architecture – as design action configuring a three-dimensional matrix of material elements – and dance, which introduces temporality and embodiment by denoting

the action of performing bodies in relation to each other and the space they perform in. In “Spacing Events” my long-term collaborator, choreographer Carol Brown, articulates this action in relation to our “dance-architecture” events (Hannah and Brown, 2016) that chart “choreo-spatial dramaturgies” through “culturally attuned kinaesthetic remapping” (Brown, 2018, p. 76). What, therefore, happens when we perform in dialogue with more local understandings of spatial thought beyond the totalising universalism of Western hegemony?

#### Figure 4

*Images of seaside action research from Mediterranean Spacing workshop, led by the author “Those We Carry with Us Carry Us”, Performing Space 2024. (Photos by George Pramaggioulis).*



#### Figure 5

*Plan of the final performance route of the Mediterranean Spacing workshop led by the author “Those We Carry with Us Carry Us”, Karathona Beach, Nafplio, Greece, Performing Space 2024*



## Mediterranean Spacing

Embracing environmental specificity, ecological dynamism and spatiotemporal multiplicity, performative spacing is culturally and situationally informed. The *Mediterranean Spacing* workshop provided an opportunity to engage locally through collaborative dialogue, analysis and embodiment: focussing on “the specificities of cultural traditions, spatiotemporal principles and situated ideologies to propose alternative performance space models through ‘critical spatial praxis’ as participatory action” (Hannah, 2024). This refers to ‘critical spatial practice’, a concept introduced by Jane Rendell (2006) and developed further by Marcus Miessen (2017), where participatory action can highlight inequities and expose the strictures and strategies of power. It involves transdisciplinary engagement and “vital interaction with its situated context” (Miessen, 2017, p. 24) to expose the politics and processes of social space – as a “dynamic relational field of forces” (Weizman 2006).

As emplaced research *Mediterranean Spacing* explored the specificities of Nafplio’s Karathona Beach, a favourite swimming spot for local inhabitants. However, this ancient crescent bay, lined with palms and eucalyptus trees, is a ‘property’ for sale by the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF), looking for partners in “a development scenario” (Papakonstantinou, 2024). planned to transform the coastline’s “exploitable area” into an upmarket tourist resort with “Hotel - Leisure Resort & Second Home Residencies”. The resulting Saturday evening scene, *Those We Carry with Us Carry Us*, inevitably becomes a work of mourning for the impending loss of connection to an accessible landscape.

While still images of the workshop’s late afternoon in-situ rehearsals are captivating, they belie the necessary integration of local sun/sea bathers, whose unrehearsed actions were inherent to how the event was planned and experienced. Centring on an aquatic island-filled basin – ringed with the continental territories of North Africa, Southern Europe and the Levantine Middle East – the Mediterranean is a biologically diverse and culturally rich region, holding a maritime history of criss-crossing odysseys, trade, colonisation, conflict and migration. The mythic Mediterranean Sea of Odysseus, the Argonauts and Sirens – more recently associated with a flow of refugees, risking their lives to seek asylum far from untenable homelands – is also associated with the dangers of fishing, trafficking, displacement and warfare. This taints the touristic imaginary with loss, expressed in the lament, *Sto Pa Kai Sto Ksanaleo*: a repeated warning and phrase linked to themes of immigration and exile; a reiteration in the face of adversity. In this song the lover insists they will transform their body into a boat, their hands into oars, and their scarf into a sail in order to return to land. They’ll become the vessel carrying those who carried them. The performers convey chairs representing an absent other – parent, unborn child or distant friend – upon which they invite strangers to sit. One participating artist who has two sons, has carried the



daughter she never had: playing with her in the sea and now the artist's ghost supports her guest beside whom she crouches while singing with her fellow performers. Rather than a proscenium playhouse, black box stage, or even stone amphitheatre epitomised in the nearby Theatre of Epidauros, Karathona Beach is momentarily converted into an immersive auditorium of sand and sea where performative spacing of all participants – artists and public – cohere to host a shared experience infused with comedy and tragedy.

#### Figure 4

*Image of seaside action research from Mediterranean Spacing workshop, led by the author "Those We Carry with Us Carry Us", Performing Space 2024. (Photo by George Pramaggioulis).*



#### Workshop Credits

*Workshop participants:* Jess Applebaum, Ermina Apostolaki, Alessandro Di Egidio, Daniela Dispoto, Aycan Kizilkaya, Anthi Kougia, Tony McCaffrey, Rafik Patel, Elena Pérez Garrigues, Eliza Soroga, Dimitri Szuter, Rennie Tangç, Mark Turner, Katarzhina Zakharova, Athanasia Zei.

*Workshop Guide and τραγουδίστρια (tragoudistria) singer:* Stella Sofokleous.

*All photos by:* George Pramaggioulis.

*Leader:* Dorita Hannah.

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## 27

### **Margins, Edges, Borders and Botany**

**Kathrine Sandys**

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, UK

#### **Abstract**

This presentation outlines the development, process and aims of the Botanic Laboratory Garden [Bot] [Lab] at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. This performance and space for research hosts an ongoing programme of curated research projects exploring the relationship between the ecology of urban land use, landscape(ing), well-being spaces and plant species specifically grown for use and harvest in scenographic and performance practice – dyes, pigments, textiles, scent and sound.

I will focus on the slipperiness of plant species and the crossing of borders with what Jessica J. Lee describes as “out of place” species. This is defined through Latin taxonomy and how we can explore migration of plants as “native” and “invasive” species within a shifting global migration, geopolitical boundaries and environmental climate. I argue this curatorial approach operates in an open dramaturgical form, rather than a fixed and completed architectural space, with porous borders - a fluid and shifting programme of performance research, navigating the integration of botany, edaphology and scenography of landscape. The transience or ephemerality of scenography in a botanic laboratory, in its very nature as a research centre, can challenge intentions of landscaping and cultivation as a colonial, constructivist human intervention.

*Keywords:* Trans-scenographies, liminal geographic margins, biodiversity, naturalisation, urban land use, transformation.

#### **Margins, Edges, Borders and Botany**

I come from an estuary - a place of slipperiness, a liminal place not belonging to the bucolic seascape or the land of gentle river and streams. Often an industrial place of fishing, ship or boat building and shipping routes between land masses. It is a trans place, not defined, a bit mucky and a place with which I have the same slippery identity in my practice, through

the environments or performance spaces I lean naturally into – the undefined, ambiguous and uncontained.

It is this sensibility I hold in my DNA that has informed my practice over the arc of my career. It is the transgressing boundaries from one space to another, slipping between but also drawing together as a multiplicity of materials and sensations ... not a singular encounter but a rhizomatic one, if we consider Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizome to describe nonlinear, nonhierarchical and acentered networks. One that sits in an uncontained space of atmosphere, experience and affect. Translating this rhizomatic approach to curatorial strategy might suggest a focus on connectivity, where meaning is made through relationality and multiplicity. It is this curatorial strategy I want to outline when exploring the slippery scenography of land, landscape and botany. Rachel Hann refers to worlding or world making, as a shorthand for expanded contemporary thinking of scenographic practices. In her 2018 publication *Beyond Scenography*, she argues: "scenography isolates how an accumulation of material and technological methods 'score' ongoing processes of worlding" (Hann, 2018, p.2).

### Figure 1

*Essex estuary marshland (Sandys 2021).*



This emancipation of scenography as an activated space is not a new discovery (considering the rise of relational aesthetics and Bourriard's socially engaged practice with and for audiences), but Hann describes the temporal assemblage of things that forms a series of scenes, in a state of flux, rather than "set" (she deliberately plays a pun on set as a fixed entity and set as a set design). It is anything other than set, as we are afforded the

acknowledgement in the visual and sonic dramaturgy scenography to so many environments or “worlds” we create. “Scenography sustains a feeling of the beyond where the crafting of a ‘scene’ – inclusive of the orientating qualities of light and sound as well as costume and scenery – encompasses a range of distinct methods for atmospheric transformation” (Hann, 2018, p.2).

It is the slipperiness of these worlds, where my practice in landscape has settled in military, industrial and marine, but has never left the botanic land. The act of landscaping, planting and growing being the ultimate in transformation of space, or what could be considered slow design. Transformation is not just in the planting though, it exists in the ground, what the ground consists of, how it is managed and the edaphology: the study of science of soil for growth.

Figure 2 shows [Bot][Lab], or Botanic Laboratory Research Garden at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, a research space for slippery transformation and scenography at the centre of my research.

**Figure 2**

*[Bot] [Lab], ready for planting, at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London (Sandys, 2024).*



The ground is where we return to the slipperiness of the estuary as an artery for transportation, transition, travel. This ground is the seam of London clay that runs from the mouth of the river Thames, through, under and in London, with many of its 19<sup>th</sup> century brick houses built in the early industrial revolution from this clay – the unmistakable buff bricks of North London. I live at the other end of the estuary, near Beth Chatto Gardens, famous for harnessing the attributes of seemingly hostile growing environments in 1960.



**Figure 3**

*Beth Chatto Garden, Essex (Sandys 2023).*



Beth Chatto was practicing and documenting her thinking around horticulture planting for a changing climate, in the UK, before the Keeling curve or NATO establishing the conference of matters related to global warming. What Chatto explored in her ecological planting schemes was “right plant, right place.”

This philosophy of horticultural practice has become more than garden design, forming the necessity and backbone to every responsible horticulturalist, with sustainability in the agenda of public spaces and preservation of natural reserves. In February 2024 UK government legislation placed a mandatory measurement of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all new developments to ensure: “habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development” (GOV.UK, 2024)

The biodiverse farming across the island of Ibiza, this has evolved from self-sufficient farming of 1960’s eco-tourism to form a backbone of carefully specialised agriculture, using regenerative methods of rotation and companion planting.

This planting is highly curated, where Hann (2018. P.111) describes “scenographics result from the orientating qualities that the curation of a garden sustains and provokes.”

Returning to self-sufficiency and horticulture as the rhizomatic and relational, communal and political orientation were the motivators green spaces in the New York Lower East Side. Community gardens were created in derelict parts of a city for the benefit of the community. These spaces weren’t planned but became.



**Figure 4**

*Dry Garden, Beth Chatto Garden, Essex (Sandys 2023).*



**Figure 5**

*Cas Gasi Biodiverse produce garden close up companion planting, Ibiza (Sandys 2024).*





**Figure 6**

*Cas Gasi biodiverse produce garden curated layout, Ibiza (Sandys 2024).*

**Figure 7**

*Cas Gasi biodiverse produce garden labelling system, Ibiza (Sandys 2024).*



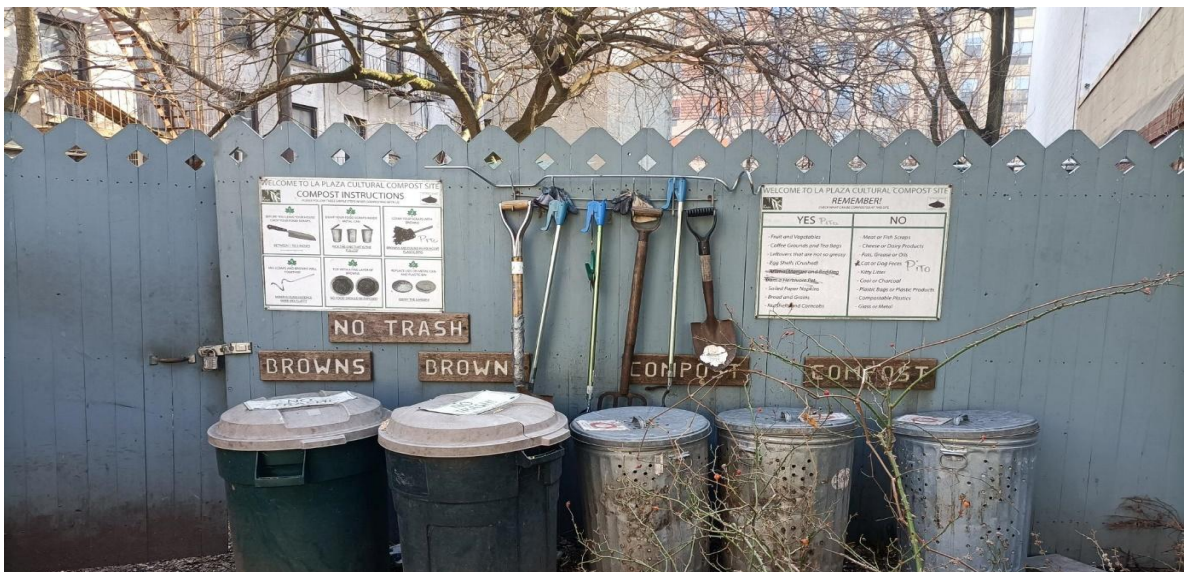


**Figure 8**

*New York City Community Gardens Compost Project, Lower East Side, NY (Sandys 2024).*

**Figure 9**

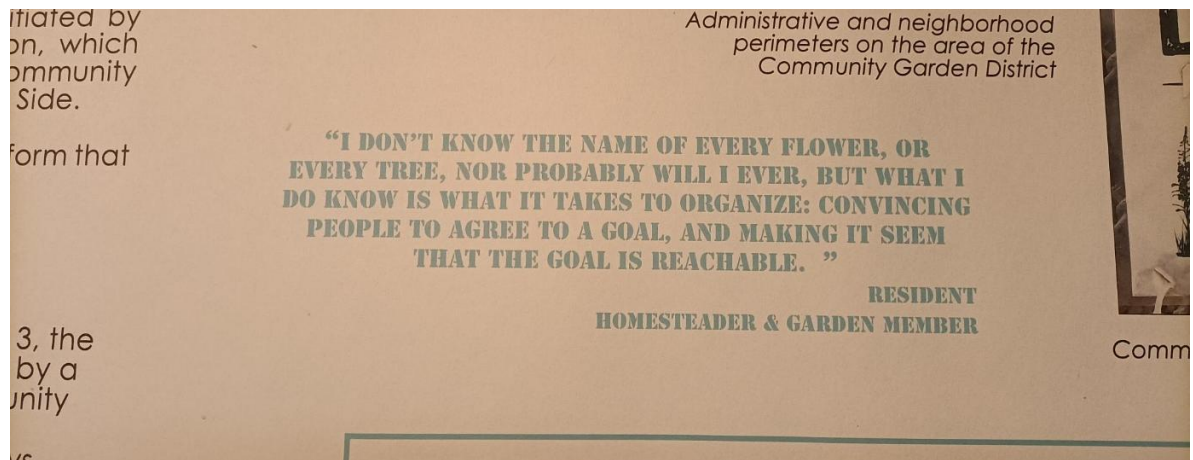
*Community compost site, Lower East Side (Sandys 2024).*





**Figure 10**

*Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space display board, New York (Sandys 2024).*

**Figure. 11**

*Community garden on Avenue B, Lower East Side, New York (Sandys 2024).*





Supported by the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space and subsequently the New York Mayor's office, these gardens in the lower east side grew out of activism from 1978, with the Green Guerillas protests against gentrification in the face of increasing homelessness. They have grown with and around the people and the community formed the identity of their residents, a borderless scenography in the community.

**Figure 12**

*Gordon Matta-Clark tribute in a Lower East Side community garden (Sandys 2024)*





This community of the lower east side has a history of activism forced by their need to push against oppression, as a predominant community of migration: German and Polish Jewish and Puerto-Rican diaspora. Echoing this, the language of migratory plants is commonly used in relation to the “out of place” plants, outside of the curated garden. We name them weeds. As Richard Mabey suggests in his 2012 publication: *Weeds: In Defence of Natures Most Unloved Plants*: “Weeds [are] those plants that obstruct our plans, or our tidy maps of the world.” (Mabey, 2012, p.1). This depends on what we mean by weeds. They are defined by their cultural history, where we use language such as “native” and “invasive” species.

### Figure 13

*Wild plants naturalising in unused railway line, Plaistow, London (Sandys 2024).*



They slip into places that naturalizes them through the conditions and environment suitable to which they thrive in, returning to Chatto’s philosophy and the arteries and estuaries through which plants self-propagate and evolve to survive their environment.

This was adopted with Piet Oudolf’s design of the *Highline* gardens along the stretch of disused railway line in Lower West Manhattan. Planted through Oudolf’s matrix style of planting (now renamed New Perennial Movement) with species naturally finding their new homes in the abandoned margins, forming their own ecology of nutritional support

In her 2024 publication – *Dispersals*, Jessica J Lee says: “Through religion and social institutions, we had a system for ordering the world, a symbolic order ... so when we label a plant a “weed” - or to use the term more deployed in ecology and conservation, “invasive” or “alien” – we are not just labelling that plant. We are implying a desired order for the world



at large” (Lee, 2024, p. 188). However, what are we suggesting around notions of nativity, when plants are roaming to suit their climate?

**Figure 14**

*Highline public gardens facing West across Manhattan, New York (Sandys 2024).*





**Figure 15**

*Highline public gardens, New York, showing new perennial planting structure (Sandys 2024).*



The plant collectors of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century curated their gardens based around the idea of the exotic as a spectacle or a souvenir to admire within the carefully managed formal gardens. This was supported by the Latin taxonomy of organisms categorized by appearance, origin and formation, created by Carl Linneaus in 1735, followed by Hewitt Cottrell Watson (1847), John Henslow, Alphonse de Candoline and Charles Elton (1958). Interest in Elton's book rose in the 1990's with a new discourse in biodiversity and language of "invasion ecology".

The purpose of [Bot] [Lab] is to consider the curatorial concept, adopting a plot of reclaimed land and how the landscaping and planting will reflect the political context of the environment we wish to foster. The research site hosts an ongoing programme of curated research projects exploring the relationship between the ecology of urban land use, landscape(ing), well-being spaces and plant species specifically grown for use and harvest in scenographic and performance practice – dyes, pigments, textiles, scent and sound.

In its incubation period of growing in nursery beds, for quick harvest, we will be looking to establish a rhizomatic approach to the curation of planting, activity, research and conscious actions in the space. In doing so the following needs to be considered in the consciousness of choices to preserve connectivity and multiplicity, decentering and interconnectedness, challenging ideas of linearity and hierarchy: "Curation is ... an explicit negotiation between discrete things, as well as the atmosphere that these assemblages maintain. Scenographic curation is representative of questions of intention that are typically assigned to the human agent" (Hann, 2018).



How to maintain the slipperiness and space in order the curation is not contained and held too tight. I'll hope the estuary blood is strong enough.

**Figure 16**

*Unmanaged plot of land in front of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama campus, London (Sandys 2021).*



**Figure 17**

*Plot landscaped for planting of the Botanic Laboratory Garden [Bot] [Lab] (Sandys 2023).*





**Figure 18**

*First planting and watering of [Bot] [Lab] specimens used for natural dyes (Sandys 2024).*

**Figure 19**

*Student verbatim performance in the [Bot] [Lab], working with community gardening group. (Sandys 2024).*



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## 28

## Performing Architectures A Performative Approach to Space and Design

**Andreas Skourtis**

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and Scenography, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of  
London

### Abstract

*Performing Architectures-Andreas Skourtis*<sup>1</sup> is a London-based studio blending architecture and performance design, led by a practitioner and academic (pracademic) whose work extends across urban and rural landscapes, from London's public spaces to an olive grove in Corinthia. Rooted in the practice of active scenography, this approach engages architecture as a live, performative medium, producing both structured and organic narratives. This paper presents select segments from the conference performance lecture, emphasizing its original fragmented, non-linear structure while adapting it to a written format. Through these fragments, the paper examines key projects that employ architectural space and scenographic elements to evoke embodied experiences and foster participation, culminating in a vision for the future of performance design that honours the body as a performative space.

*Keywords:* performance design, embodied scenography, scenography, embodied design, performing architectures, active design, active scenography

### Introduction to Performing Architectures

This paper is an adaptation of the presentation delivered in July 2024. While it presents a selection of concepts and projects from the full lecture, it intentionally retains the fragmented, non-linear nature of the original to allow for a reflective reading. Founded in 2014, Performing Architectures-Andreas Skourtis emerged from a desire to integrate purpose-built performance spaces with unconventional, site-specific environments, challenging traditional

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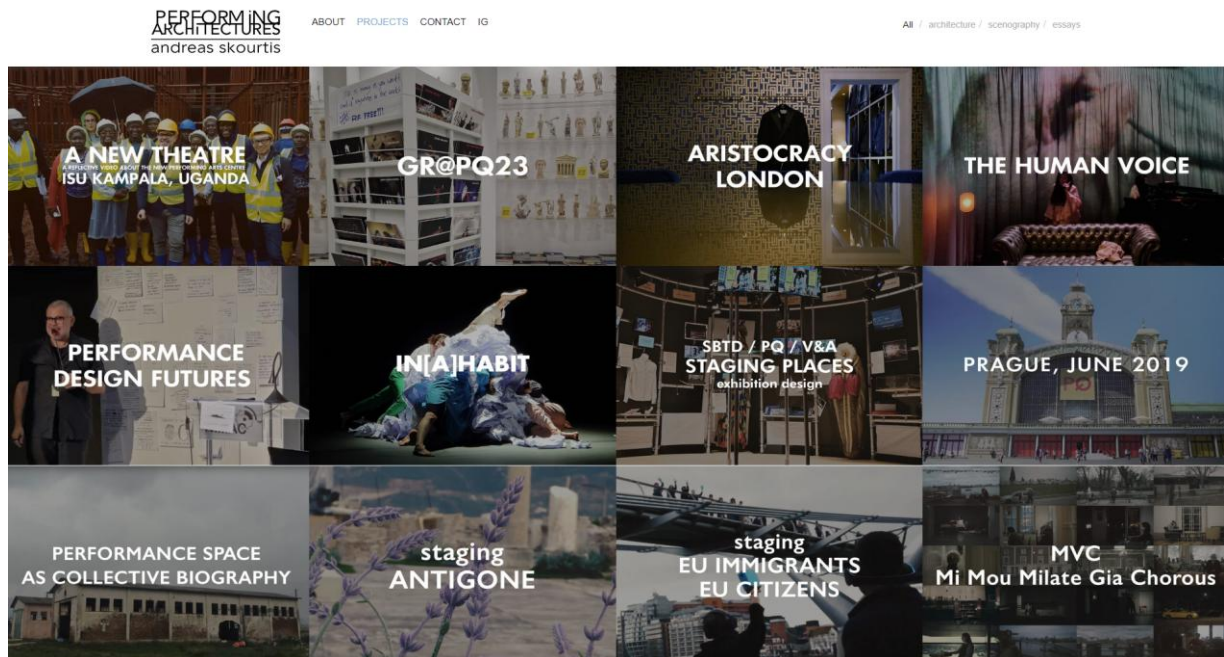
<sup>1</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/>



boundaries in scenography and the static concept of space as merely functional. Instead, the studio approaches space as an active participant, an element in constant dialogue with the scenographer, performer, and active participants (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Screenshot from the website [www.performingarchitectures.com](http://www.performingarchitectures.com), July 2024.*



The studio's evolution reflects the intersection of academic, personal, and spatial inquiries. This is evident in installations across landscapes, both urban and rural, and the physical dialogue between the designer's roots and adopted locations. The examples discussed—from installations in a Corinthian olive grove to projects on London's Millennium Bridge—demonstrate *Performing Architectures* as a laboratory for experiential, embodied scenography. Each project illustrates the studio's characteristic blending of physical and conceptual space, rendering architecture itself as a live, performative medium. This paper argues for performance design as an art form that extends beyond conventional theatre, offering narrative potential within any environment that inspires active engagement.

### Core Projects and their Spaces

The following projects have been selected to illustrate *Performing Architectures*' integration of diverse and unconventional spaces to cultivate meaning through site-responsive design. One example, *02-Academic-Staff: Communi-ty-cation* (2013)<sup>2</sup>, was conceived while the designer was in a Corinthian olive grove, a site that holds significant personal and cultural

<sup>2</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/portfolio/02-academic-staff-communi-ty-cation/>

value for the artist. This performance sought to bridge the spatial and emotional distance between London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and the artist's homeland. Through symbolic material, and sensory elements—such as the use of olive oil and the sounds of the site—the installation recreated a sense of place, memory, and embodied identity.

The installation first took place in the olive grove itself, inviting colleagues to connect with the designer's cultural roots. Later, the performance installation was staged in a London gallery<sup>3</sup>. In each location, natural sounds, images, and olive oil became material conduits, linking the landscapes. Symbols of belonging—the names of academic staff displayed on olive trees—created a link between colleagues and the artist's homeland, offering a sense of shared identity across geographies (Figures 2 and 3).

### Figure 2

*Photo from 02-Academic Staff: Communi-ty-cation, 2013*

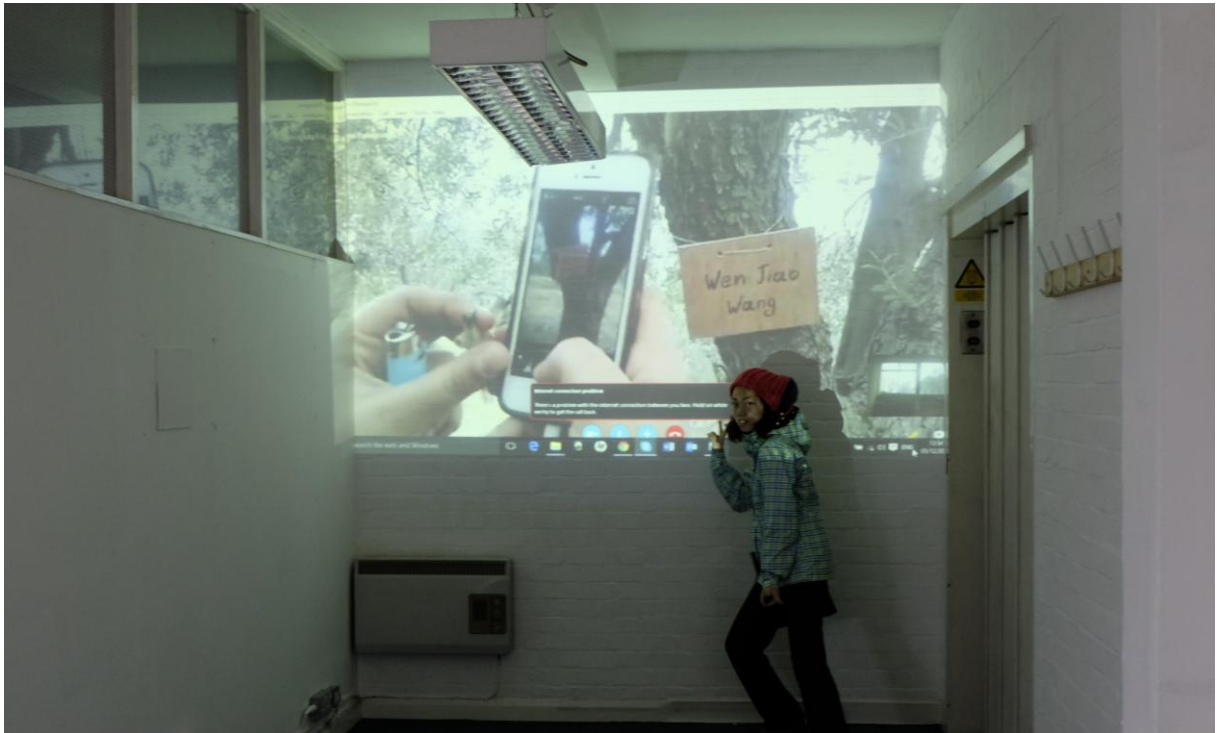


### Figure 3

*Photo from OLIVE GROVE SE1, 2015*

<sup>3</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/portfolio/reflecting-olive-grove-se1/>





In a different sociopolitical context, *EU IMMIGRANTS EU CITIZENS* (2016)<sup>4</sup> took shape in three iconic London settings: the Millennium Bridge, the ground floor of the Roundhouse, and a building in Bermondsey. This series of pre-Brexit performances probed themes of citizenship, belonging, and identity. Structured in three chapters, *EU IMMIGRANTS EU CITIZENS—A Bridge, A Space, A Building*—explored the emotional and political dimensions of immigration in the UK. Each chapter represented a unique facet of the immigrant experience, underscoring how scenographic metaphors within existing city spaces prompt reflection on identity in urban spaces.

Collaborating with a multidisciplinary team of EU-born, London-based artists, *Performing Architectures*-Andreas Skourtis layered participatory performance and scenographic techniques to create immersive experiences within each site. The Brexit vote, announced only days after the final performance, underscored the relevance of this artistic dialogue with immigration and identity.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/portfolio/staging-eu-immigrants-eu-citizens-london/>

## Micro-Manifesto: Space as Memory

The histories embedded within a space offer endless potential for exploration. In each project, *Performing Architectures-Andreas Skourtis* invites audiences to interact with space as a vessel of memory, affirming architecture as a mutable, performative partner (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

Photo from *EU IMMIGRANTS EU CITIZENS*, Chapter 1: A Bridge, 2016.



## Embodied Design and Active Scenography

The concept of *embodied design* lies at the core of *Performing Architectures-Andreas Skourtis*. This approach reflects a reciprocal relationship between the scenographer and space, where bodies—human, material, and architectural—interact to produce active scenographies. Here, the scenographer acts as both architect and performer, engaging their own physicality and movement within the design environment. The performance is not static but lives and breathes with each interaction, bending to the body's weight, touch, and sound.

In the *PaperRoll Scenography*<sup>5</sup> workshops, for example, plotter paper became a medium for spontaneous creation. By folding, draping, and expanding the paper in response to performer movements, this ephemeral material transformed into a flexible scenographic

<sup>5</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/portfolio/paperroll-scenography-volume-1/>

environment, mirroring the fluidity of live performance. The paper itself became an integral performer, adapting to the bodies around it and serving as both spatial boundary and temporal element, emphasizing the transient beauty of scenography.

*IN[a]HABIT* (2022)<sup>6</sup>, a later project, further explored the potential of scenography as a flexible, co-created design language. Over several months in Athens, dancers, choreographers, and artists worked together in a continually evolving performance space. This project demonstrated how minimal materials and open-ended design can facilitate the fluidity of live performance, as paper, human movement, and architectural boundaries blended seamlessly. Here, the scenographer and performers together created spatial metaphors, highlighting the relationship between body, material, and space, and reinforcing how physical presence is itself an act of design (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Photo from IN[a]HABIT, 2022*



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<sup>6</sup> <https://performingarchitectures.com/portfolio/inahabit/>

## Micro-Manifesto: The Scenographer as Performer

To perform is to embody space. To design is to recognize that one's body is always part of the environment. In embodied design, the scenographer's role transcends technicality; it demands presence, observation, and interaction as foundational acts of creation.

## Reflections and Micro-Manifestos

At the heart of *Performing Architectures*-Andreas Skourtis is the relationship between personal history and the spaces that inspire, shape, and preserve memory. The olive grove in Corinthia, a recurring theme in the practice, epitomizes space as both archive and active participant. Projects like *02-Academic-Staff: Communi-ty-cation* and *Olive Grove SE1* were grounded in the belief that each spatial interaction reaffirms a connection to place, cultivating continuity between the body and its surroundings. Here, the design process is both an expression of collective memory and a bridge linking past and present.

Through this methodology, the designer's own body acts as both creator and receptor of space. The performative engagement with architecture and design highlights the interdependence of spatial awareness, personal identity, and shared experience. This ethos affirms that our bodies inhabit and perform space on every level—from the structural to the sensorial, from the communal to the deeply personal (Figure 6).

### Figure 6

*Slide from the conference presentation, 2024*

**Spaces and bodies come together to create  
active scenographies, emphasising the  
symbiotic relationship between the physical  
environment and the scenographer-performer.**

### Micro-Manifesto: The Designer's Body as Archive

Our bodies archive space, recording light, temperature, materiality, and movement, which translate into lasting impressions that shape our perception of design. To design from the body is to honour the unseen narratives inscribed within us (Figure 7).

#### Figure 7

*Slide from the conference presentation, 2024*

**Embodied responses to experiencing and  
inhabiting spaces function as primary  
drivers for the performance design process.**

### Conclusion – Towards a Performative Future in Design

As *Performing Architectures*-Andreas Skourtis continues to evolve, so does its commitment to a design process that embodies both scenographic principles and architectural intent. By embracing non-traditional, site-specific work, the practice challenges conventional spatial boundaries, revealing the multiplicity of narratives that each site, material, and movement can bring to a performance. This approach encourages a future of performance design that integrates deeply with human experience, treating the body not as an external entity but as a vital, generative space.

In response to my question, “What do you want the future of Performance Design to be?” performance maker Giulio Blason offered a poignant reflection: “The future of performance design lies in the body... as the sole initiator and receptor of the event.” This insight underscores the potential of performance design to act as a bridge between the tangible and intangible, navigating the complexities of identity, memory, and physical presence. The future of performance design thus extends beyond fixed architectures to embrace fluid, evolving spaces, where the body itself is both creator and canvas (Figure 8).

#### Figure 8

*Slide from the conference presentation, 2024*



**Performance designers/scenographers  
extend their roles beyond traditional  
boundaries, acting as authors and initiators of  
the processes, thereby shaping the concept of  
*Active Scenographic Bodies.***

### **Micro-Manifesto: We Are Performing Spaces**

We inhabit, embody, and animate the spaces around us. As performers, we bring them to life. As designers, we shape them. And as beings, we leave imprints within them. In this interwoven exchange, we affirm that our bodies are not only in space but are, in fact, performing spaces (Figure 9).

#### **Figure 9**

*Slide from the conference presentation, 2024*

**We Are Performing Spaces.**

## 29

### **The Body in the Theatre-The Body on the Operating Table Super Hospital with Performative Entertainment**

**Olav Harsløf**

Professor of Performance Design, Roskilde University

#### **Abstract**

Epidaurus is world famous as a well-preserved ancient theatre with good acoustics. The daily tourists are informed that it was connected to the medical sanctuary behind it. In the museum below the theatre, you can clearly see that this 'sanctuary' was a highly specialized super hospital. The instruments on display document surgical expertise on joints, muscles, internal organs and the brain.

Epidaurus Medical Centre was from the 3rd century BC and a few hundred years later the Mediterranean world most specialized hospital. In addition to injuries from war, sports and old-age, medical and mental illnesses could also be treated here.

Outside the very large hospital and the hotel for the relatives, a space was set up with a theatre to entertain patients and relatives. The popular genres of music, dance and reprise theatre (4th century classical comedies and tragedies) were shown here. International music and sports competitions for the entire Greek-speaking Mediterranean world took place here too thanks to large and persistent sponsorships for the super hospital. At the same time, the medical understanding of 'recovery' at the time contained a series of aesthetic experiences of a visual, aural and rhythmic nature, which could be fully achieved within a theatre space: The operated or weakened body had during medical treatment to be exposed to the singing and dancing body to ensure safe healing and complete recovery.

Using the example of Epidaurus, my paper will analyse the relationship between the two bodies - the medical and the artistic - the latter's healthy function for the former. What scientific thinking and experience was behind it? In addition – attending a performance at Epidaurus you have at the same time the most beautiful view of the Greek Peloponnesian landscape. As an audience you can at the same time concentrate and relax, take the landscape in.

*Keywords:* Greek sanctuaries, performance spaces, collective spaces, festivals, healing space.

## **The Body in the Theatre-The Body on the Operating Table**

Epidaurus is world famous as well as a well-preserved ancient theatre with good acoustics. The daily tourists are informed that it was connected to the medical sanctuary behind it. In the museum below the theatre, you can clearly see that this 'sanctuary' was a highly specialized super hospital. The instruments on display document surgical expertise on joints, muscles, internal organs and the brain.

### **Figure 1**

*Epidaurus ruined Super Hospital*



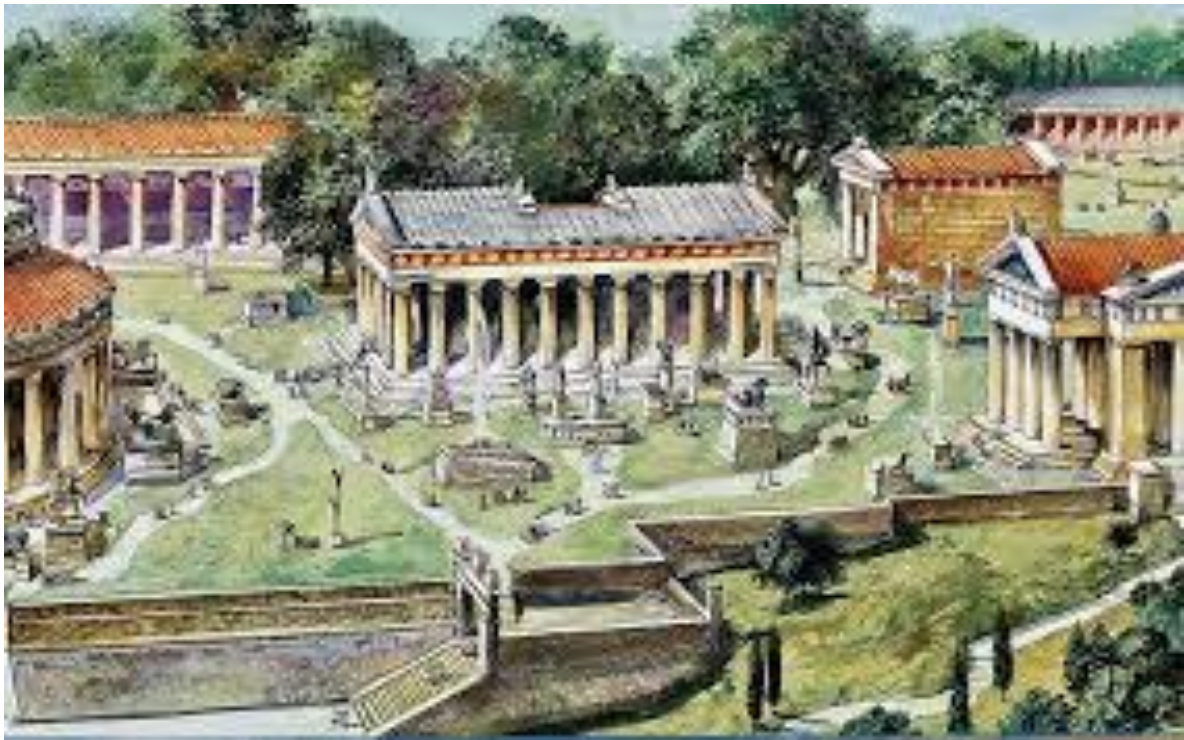
The Epidaurus Medical Center was from the 4th century BC and a few hundred years later the world's - and that is the Mediterranean world's - most specialized hospital. In addition to war injuries from war, sports and old-age medical and mental illnesses could also be treated here. The location of the hospital was not accidental. The area's many springs with mineral water made it an optimal health resort.

Outside the very large hospital and) the hotel for the relatives, a space was set up with at theatre to entertain patients and relatives. The popular genres of music, dance and revival theatre (i.e. 5th century classical comedies and tragedies) were shown here. International music and sports competitions for the entire Greek-speaking Mediterranean world took place here, too, thanks to large and persistent sponsorships for the super hospital. The excavation of the hospital and theatre took place at the end of the 19th century and, as was still

customary among archaeologists of the time with deep roots in the world of romantic ideas, the archaeological find was allowed to retain its ancient strategic brand: The Sanctuary of Asklepios, the sanctuary of the god of medicine. The super hospital bent in religious neon.

## Figure 2

*The heart of the Epidaurus sanctuary. The Tholos and the Abaton (left) and the Temple of Asclepius (center right). DeAgostin.*



The establishment had its heyday in the 4th century BC. With its location on the Peloponnese, it benefitted from the success of Sparta's victory over Athens in 404 and was then able to gain from Sparta's continued wars with the Persians and Macedonians, which ensured the hospital a stable patient base. Epidaurus' golden age coincides with Aristotle's lifetime. It is a cherished thought that he may have enriched his soul and restored his body several times as a spa guest here.

Of course, the theatre was built as entertainment for the patients (and their relatives), just as it functioned as an advertisement for "the good hospital stay". But at the same time, the medical understanding of 'recovery' at the time contained a series of aesthetic experiences of a visual, aural and rhythmic nature, which could be fully achieved within a theatre space: The operated or weakened body had, during medical treatment, to be exposed to the singing and dancing body to ensure safe healing and complete recovery.



**Figure 3***Epidauros Performance Space.*

Let's take a closer look at the relationship between the two bodies - the medical and the artistic - the latter's healthy function for the former. Which scientific thinking and experience was behind it? – Are we talking about regular therapy? - And as far as the offer from the stage is concerned: are we talking about art or entertainment?

In order to understand and answer these questions, we have to be very specific: What was shown from the stage and in the round front stage below, the orchestra? Which artistic genres? What content? What type of audience engagement and reaction?

Can we imagine the audience that in the 330s BC expectantly took the seats in the theatre? - Many spa guests but also medically and surgically treated patients supported by carers and relatives, or with crutches, canes or wheelchairs? - And how many? - hardly the 14.000 that there was actually room for. 'Full House' was only at theatre festivals, sports games and musical competitions where the audience flocked from all over the Greek mainland, the islands and abroad. Otherwise, the audience consisted of just a few hundred spa guests, patients, relatives, carers and other employees at the hospital. A thousand at most. It has been this audience that the performers met after their entrance on stage or in the orchestra.

So, what did the audience get to see? – What performance?



**Figure 4**

*Aulos player – playing double aulos (with two pipes), on a fragment of a red-figure amphora, c. 510 BC. Munich Archaeological Museum (photo: Wikipedia).*



Mostly music – played on the guitar and the aulos, the oboe-sounding reed instrument. The guitar was the male amateur's instrument and symbol of noble and bourgeois education, while the aulos was the professional musician's instrument and lead in all theatre performances. Educated upper-class women played the harp, and there must have been concerts with this instrument as well, paid for/sponsored by the convalescing husband or newly operated father straight from the lounge or hospital bed.

The music was not only instrumental. Most often, it was accompanied by singers who performed popular songs from the classical tragedies and comedies – typically Euripides' now fifty-year-old melodies that everyone knew from music school books. They were incredibly popular.

As is well known, music is a quick art form, meaning that the musicians do not need long to line up and then start playing. Nor do they need scenery or other aesthetic and physical facilities.

Another quick art form is the dance. It was probably the most successful entertainment in the hospital theatre: seeing the dancing bodies musically accompanied by shrill aulos playing and muted rhythmic phrasing on the snare drum has been both aesthetically and mentally healing for both the sick, healthy relatives and staff - and thus had the function we in performance terminology call 'communitas'.

**Figure 5**

*Relief plaque depicting women dancing. Beginning of 4th cent. BC. Acropolis Museum, Athens.*



We know that dance as an art form was popular from the thousands of vases and jars that depict dancing men and women in all imaginable positions – graceful as well as spectacular. The human body – biologically perfected according to the norm of the time, in position or moving, was the highest ideal of beauty and therefore the goal towards which all personal development strove. Hence it was a vision that was necessary and motivated the lame, the overweight and the operated body. If nothing else, for them it felt like a dream.

**Figure 6**

*Men dancing in padded costume. Black-figured kylix. 580BC-570BC. British Museum.*



The dance's physical signal to the patient in a muscular sense was emphasized by occasional displays of sports matches that focused on the well-developed and strong body. The large patient clientele of professional sportsmen who frequented the hospital due to fractures and injuries to joints, muscles and bones were catered for. Here, the original Olympic discipline, wrestling, the largest and most prestigious sport, was the most commonly practised at the Epidauros theatre's Orchestra – since javelin and discus throwing could be

a danger to the audience, and precisely because wrestling as a moving sculpture is probably the sport that most exhaustively exposes the body. The wrestlers were naked during the match. However, the hospital also had a running and throwing stadium.

Of course, theatre performances were also staged at the Epidaurus Theatre. This alone justifies the 14.000 seats. Annual theatre festivals and frequent revivals of the old masters from the 4th century: Aiscylos, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, who could be bought in writing right here in the 4th century BC. But probably mostly the last two: the musical master – the playwright, composer and choreographer Euripides and the satirist Aristophanes.

We must remember that the Sanctuary of Asklepios was not an Athenian institution. For 100 years the Greek world had been divided into an Athenian-led Delian Confederation and a Spartan Peloponnesian Confederation – a modern Nato-Warsaw construct. The Epidaurus Super hospital with a theatre space on the scale of the Athenian theatre of Dionysos was not only an aesthetic counterpart to (not to say a response to) Athens' annual Dionysos festival with theatre, sports and competitions comprising all genres, functions and disciplines. Epidaurus, with its medical-universal starting point and its aesthetic-humanist perspective, was an absolutely gifted counterpart. In the war they waged against each other, thousands of Athenians died of plague within the city walls during Sparta's siege, and eventually lost, while the victor could send his wounded for treatment and cure – including performances of music, song, dance, theatre, and sport – at the region's new and ultra-modern hospital.

Epidaurus Super Hospital is intellectually a scientific and performative product. In the 4th century, medical science is at its peak, supported by several ancillary sciences developed over the centuries – mathematics, physics, philosophy, and the basic science of music theory. The home for this was the first institution of knowledge and learning in classical antiquity, the conservatory. Here, music theory was developed on a scientific basis as well as in practice through the learning of instruments and singing.

In the 7th and 6th centuries BC conservatories spread throughout Greece, on the mainland as well as on the islands. Besides Sparta, Lesbos was also a musical and innovative powerhouse. The spread of conservatories and musical environments continues to the outermost colonies of southern Italy and Sicily.

Throughout the 6th century, music thus seems to have been the main instrument that brought together cohesively the Greek-speaking world. It has bound all ritual, political, communicative, sporting, entertaining, partying and erotic forms of behavior together. At the same time, with its countless music schools and their teachers, it has been able to demonstrate a far greater theoretical basis than other contemporary art forms (poetry, storytelling, architecture, visual arts, theatre).



Sparta based its military strength on the conservatories, but also developed a non-gendered schooling based on musical education. And thus, a super hospital with an in-house performance space.

### Figure 7

*New North Zealand Hospital, Hillerød, Denmark - Herzog & de Meuron / Vilhelm Lauritzen Arkitekter, 2013 (model).*



Did these music theorists, pedagogues, physicists and philosophers also develop a form of therapy that had a healing effect on patients and spa visitors?

As for the music: Yes. Both Plato and Aristotle state that the aulos instrument, with its high frequency of oscillation and the possibility of great timbre variations, could bring the listener into all emotional states from rage to emotion. Aristotle actually calls the aulos sound 'orgastic' and mentions it together with the drum in a cultic context - i.e. as *communitas*-creating. Music therapy is today a widely applied science. It was also so in ancient times.

The instruments are linked to a number of rituals and liminal states, Contemporary music theorists and educators have noted how "the auloi playing a melody for those who are mourning are the lighteners of their grief", or how the wedding is enlivened by the use of the auloi and guitar among the dancers.

And this is where body therapy comes in. The music promoted the dance, and the dance exposed the perfection of the body in movements that accentuated the body's ideal healthy and aesthetic expression.

The patient – the wounded officer, the injured sportsman, , the -wearied-out grain merchant, the architect, sculptor, philosopher and conservatory teacher or the many constipated spa visitors – all found themselves in a new and better state – stimulated,

encouraged, mentally strengthened, feeling validated, happy when, with difficulty or help from relatives and staff, moved their diseased body from the operating table, the lounge or the mineral springs and gently moved to one of the padded marble seats around the super hospital's performance space.

Here they felt in full symbiosis with the dancing bodies that artistically, and completely without embarrassment performed in front of their grateful eyes. A moving movement.

In Denmark, we are in the process of building 6 modern super hospitals distributed throughout the country (Figure 7). All with the same highly specialized functions as Epidaurus Super Hospital, and of course with fully digitized programming and medical operating techniques. How many of them do you think have marketed performance space on their designs for collective aesthetic and therapeutic entertainment of patients, relatives and staff?

### Figure 8

*This presentation's author as spa guest in Epidaurus Hospital Theatre anno 2023 AC.*



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## 30

## Circumambulating the *Kaaba* Drawing the Space of the Heart

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### Abstract

In the Islamic world, the *Kaaba* (black cube) in Mecca is considered the heart and centre of the world. As a sacred edifice where the Hajj pilgrimage is performed, the *Kaaba* acts as a ritual attractor that connects the transcendental world of God and the corporeal world. The philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240) argued that our own heart is also a *Kaaba*. Considering this, I explore the performativity of *drawing-out* an Islamic ontology of space and time that reflects a *heart-space* relationship. Following Ibn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysics and a legacy of spatiotemporal drawing, wherein geometry, philosophy and architecture find common ground, I have discovered that the creative practice of drawing cosmograms is *tahqīq* (witnessing and attestation). Therefore, my drawings move beyond the limits of representation and perform as autoethnographic material that bears witness and attests to lived experiences. My drawings are made up of love and loss, presence and absence, and life and death that connect the past, present, and future. In this essay, I reveal that drawing serves to diagram language, culture, memory, and emotions and conclude that drawing has become a way to perform *tawaf* (circumambulate the heart) and create a *makān* (space of being) to be encountered.

Keywords: *Kaaba*, *makān*, heart, circumambulate, drawing, space, being, witnessing and attestation, encountering

### Circumambulating the *Kaaba*

In this essay, I discuss the performativity of drawing and encountering, explored in my doctoral thesis *Kaaba: The Heart’s Centre - Kashf al-Makān/Unveiling Spaces of Being* (Patel, 2022). The research analysed the ontology of *wujūd* (being and existence) by Islamic philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165–1240). Through a creative practice of spatiotemporal

drawing and an exhibition *Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl (Being in a World of Images)*<sup>7</sup> (Figure 1), I created a cosmopoiesis that incorporated the corporeal and spiritual world. In response to the 2019 Mosque attacks in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, the act of drawing cosmograms is a mode of performing *tawaf* – a methodology to circumambulate the heart or *Kaaba*, to unveil the *heart-space of my being*. Furthermore, I will discuss how my drawings and exhibition move beyond the limits of representation and operate as spatial expositions that create a *makān* (space of being) to dwell in.

### Figure 1

*Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl*. (Photograph by Samuel Hartnett, 2022. Reprinted with permission).



### Kaaba

In the Islamic world, the *Kaaba* or black cube in Mecca is considered the heart and centre of the Earth. It is believed to be the primordial first house of worship, its form being a synthesis of cosmology and architecture (Akkach, 2012). Pilgrims circumambulate the *Kaaba* seven times during the Hajj pilgrimage and in any location in the world, prayers are

<sup>7</sup> *Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl* was held from August 8 to August 13, 2022, ST Paul Street Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.

orientated towards it. According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, our heart is also a *Kaaba* (Hirtenstein, 2010). Ibn al-‘Arabī, was born in Murcia, Spain and later settled in Damascus, Syria (1223), where he lived until his death (Corbin, 2014). In 1202 he travelled to Mecca to perform the Hajj pilgrimage in which he had a vision that would shape his philosophy (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 2019). Ibn al-‘Arabī testified that while performing the circumambulation around the *Kaaba*, an illuminated ‘being’ or ‘Youth’ appeared to him in the moonlight and revealed a sacred text that was etched on their body. This text led him to create his major work *Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah (The Meccan Revelations)* (Morris, 2004). Ibn al-‘Arabī’s position on the *Kaaba* is that it is the “heart of being ... a [t]hrone belonging to the heart as a bounded body” (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 2019, p. 153). He suggests that if we move away from being ‘self-centred’ to ‘heart-centred,’ we are open to witnessing a space around us towards one of remembrance. In this way, the interior of every Muslim’s heart is considered a reflection of the edifice described as the *heart-Kaaba* relationship (Hirtenstein, 2010). Ibn al-‘Arabī identifies there are seven gifts for performing *tawaf* of the *Kaaba*. These are: living, seeing, knowing, hearing, speaking, desiring and powering (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 2019). I argue that if one circumambulates one’s heart while drawing, these gifts are also received. In regard to circumambulation, Ibn al-‘Arabī (2019) states:

This returning is just as the arm of the draftsman’s compass returns, during the opening of the circle, after reaching the end of the circle’s being, to the beginning point. Thus the last matter is connected to the first, and its endlessness curves with kindliness into its timelessness, and there is nothing but ‘*being*’ (p. 142).

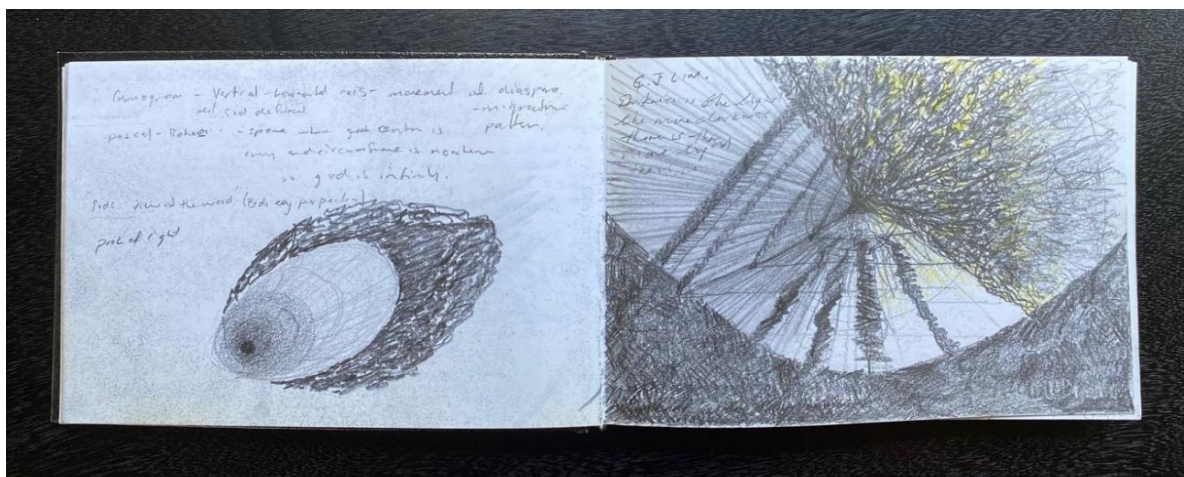
## **Cosmograms**

On March 15, 2019, the Al-Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch were the sites of the first terrorist attack on Muslim people in New Zealand, where fifty-one martyrs (*shuhada*) were killed, and forty people were wounded. The hearts and minds of New Zealanders quickly turned to Christchurch, which became the place of collective grieving – it became the centre for people to connect with Islam and its Muslim community in New Zealand. I made several visits to Christchurch, as a mourner and as an invited participant in the Royal Commission’s inquiry into the attack. With each trip, I had time to reflect, heal, deepen my experience, and ponder Ibn al-‘Arabī’s philosophy of ‘being.’ Compelled to confront the tragedy in Christchurch, and tapping into Ibn al-‘Arabī’s metaphysics, I used the practice of drawing as a methodology to *draw-out* an autoethnographic response as a form of *tahqīq* (witnessing and attestation) to face the image of trauma and mourning and create a spatial cosmopoiesis.

Sketching provided the basis for a beginning and a conviction to the project with no sign of an exit strategy. I consider the sketch to be a pivotal type of drawing because it quickly

maps the “synthesis of theme and motif” (Purini, 2017, p. 63) of a project. The sketchbook (Figure 2) is my immediate field notebook that contains collections of spontaneous and unpredictable traces, and an archive that is a “magic encyclopaedia” (Taussig, 2011, p. 47). As a portable companion, it records fleeting marks, notes and raw feelings. Hence, *drawing-out* from one’s experience is not just seeing – it is a witnessing that Taussig (2011) states is “holy writ: mysterious, complicated, powerful and necessary” (p. xii). This suggests that drawing as a mode of witnessing goes beyond what we see on the surface to a deeper level of what we know and believe. In this way, drawing becomes an archival turning that renders ontological turns and is distinct from creating a passive archive. Opening it, flicking between its pages, I travel back and forward in time, exposing and concealing, returning to moments that chart my process to circumambulate my thoughts and understanding. Therefore, the drawing archive is always open to ongoing work, mourning and interpretation.

**Figure 2**  
*Sketch Book.*



According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the cosmos is made up of three modalities or “worlds of being” (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 1911, p. 198). He explains the first world is our corporeal *dunyā*, then when we die, we are transmuted into the intermediate world of the *barzakh*, and from there we are further transmuted into the afterworld of *akhira* (Chittick, 1997) (Figure 3). Spatially, traces of each world manifest within the next, whether spatially confined or unbounded, with all forms, spirits and bodies are in perpetual movement between the three realms.

**Figure 3 (**

*Three Worlds of Being. (Photograph by Samuel Hartnett, 2022. Reprinted with permission).*



Developed from the preparatory studies in sketching, a series of cosmogram drawings were then carefully redefined and became unbounded into more extensive drawings on permatrace drafting film, laser etching on acrylic sheets, screen printing and intaglio prints on handmade wasli paper. As I drew, a transmutation occurred, new thoughts, new forms and new spaces arose. There was no signification of intent, nothing fixed or finite, but there was a conviction to light and darkness, and a willingness to examine the *worlds of being*. If we consider French philosopher Henry Corbin's idea of *presence* as the locus of spatial orientation (Corbin, 1994, p. 1), then space and time are fundamentally manifested when significant events are encountered and witnessed. Therefore, the drawings are more than just art, they are a "tracing of metaphysics of presence" (Frascari, 2007, p. 6) essential to



the production of an architectural image of being and belonging. A drawing not only has value in its aesthetic attributes, but also through its ability in the disclosure of ethics, time and space, and event. In this sense, a drawing operates as a projection that ontologically “illuminates the space of culture, of our individual and collective existence” (Pérez-Gómez, 2007, p. 13). In these cosmogram drawings, the line is one of delineating form, and the effects of light and shadow through various methods of mark-making illuminate the surface, memory, and event, articulating a method of *spatial exposition*, that “exhibit[s] the contents of the concept of space” (Refiti, 2013, p. 28). As a *spatial exposition*, the drawings trace an outline of a new cosmological mapping of *‘ālam al-mithāl* (a world of images) that produces a *makān* calling for viewers not just to gaze at the image itself, but also to look beyond the surface – beyond the material to the immaterial.

### **Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl**

The exhibition, *Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl (Being in a World of Images)*, held at Auckland University of Technology’s St Paul St Gallery, presented a series of cosmogram drawings/prints that were mounted on the walls of the gallery and installed in rotating devices titled *Re-turning Stations* (Figure 4). The space, a dark cosmos, conveys distance, and extension, voided by black walls at each end of the gallery. The prints, drawings and poems, were carefully lit and evenly spaced along the gallery’s rectilinear periphery, emphasising dispersal, separation, and joining. This created an edge condition to traverse along and dwell between the work, signifying that each piece is a *makān* within a *makān*, spaces of being within a space of being. The promotion of a haptic interaction between the human body and the *Re-turning Stations* (rotating devices) set up an anthropological encounter. Personal reflections expressed in poems were also discretely engraved on each base of the *Re-turning Station* (Figure 5). They demonstrate how something may be unveiled or revealed for different visitors – if one sees them, then one is expected to bend down or kneel to read them. If they are not noticed or read, they still exist. The inscriptions also offer a tactile invitation to touch the words engraved on the bases, as though one is touching braille; although unreadable from a distance, tracing over with fingertips helps with the reading and translation of their meanings.

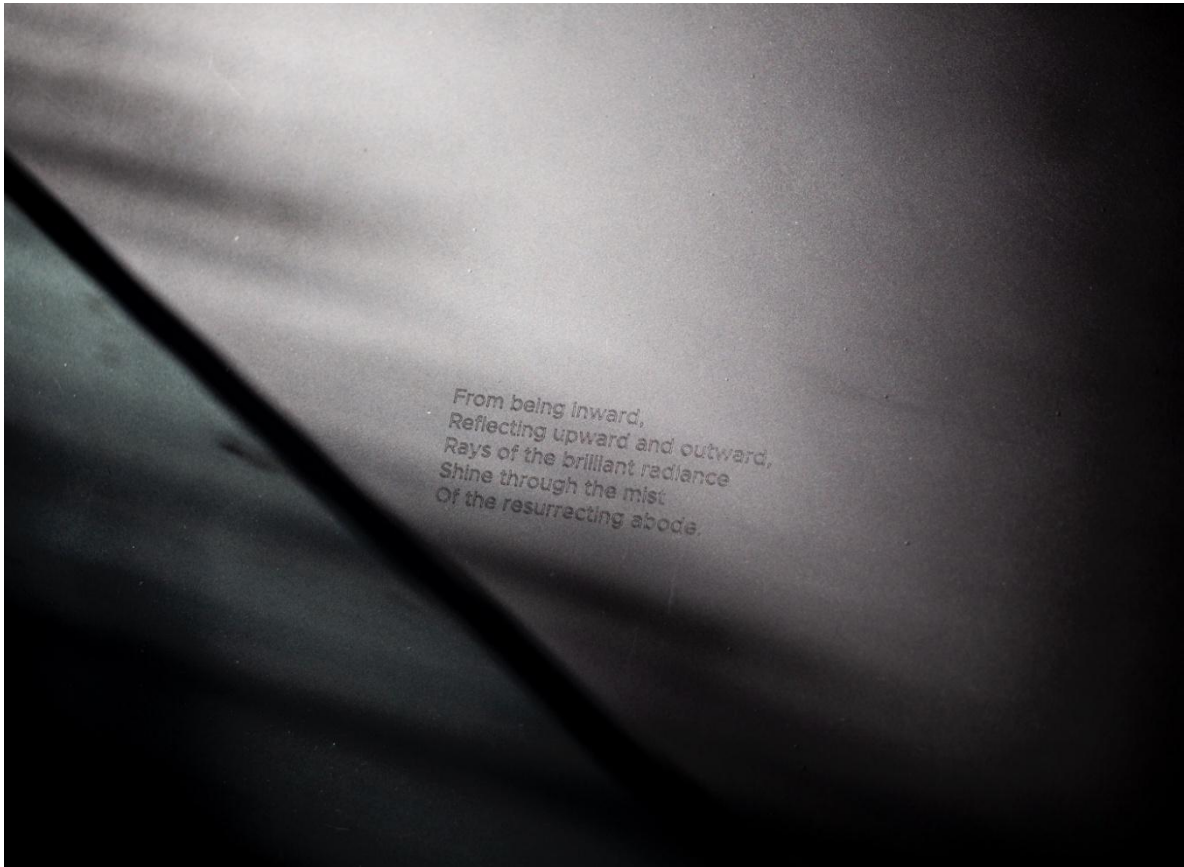
**Figure 4**

*Re-turning Stations. (Photograph by Samuel Hartnett, 2022. Reprinted with permission).*



**Figure 5**

*Returning Station Poem. (Poem engraved on the base of a Re-turning Station).*



## Conclusion

At their core, I have discovered that my drawings are made up of love and loss, presence and absence, and life and death. Through a methodology of drawing as witnessing and attestation, my reality is grounded. My analysis has revealed that drawing serves to diagram language, culture, memory, and emotions and manifests a space that incorporates both the event and the divine. In conclusion, I have discovered that cosmogram drawings offer a way to analyse, depict and manifest a cosmopoiesis. Therefore, drawing has become a way to perform the ritual of circumambulating the heart to find my *authentic being* and my exhibition *Wujūd fi Ālam al-Mithāl* invited an audience to encounter a *space of being* (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*Cosmopoiesis. (Photograph by Samuel Hartnett, 2022. Reprinted with permission).*



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## 31

## **Emplacement, Myth, and the Performing Body Exploring Trans Ecologies in the North-East Peloponnese**

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### **Abstract**

The emergence of Trans Ecologies as a scholarly field prompts an exploration into the intersection of gendered embodiments and ecology (Seymour, 2020). Such a development aligns with Keegan's (2020) notion that a trans practice may foreground the materiality of trans embodiment to generate new theories and meanings. Concurrently, the feminist concept of 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988) has long been embraced by trans scholars such as Wölfe Hazard (2022) who emphasizes the significance of ecological studies being firmly rooted to the land.

This paper responds to these calls by investigating how a 'situated' live art practice, grounded in embodiment and emplacement, can enrich the emergent field of trans ecology. Following the auto-ethnography methodologies of trans studies scholars (Stone, 1991; Stryker, 1994), I argue that an auto-ethnographical live art practice directly responds to place and location, engaging both bodies and land as performing agents. Through a case study set in the densely storied ecology of the North-East Peloponnese, I demonstrate the potential of emplacement, wherein the performing body constitutes a vital component within an evolving ecology of interconnected entities and their historicities (Pink, 2011).

In positioning my video performance 'Ekdysis' in dialogue with works by artists Cassils and Petra Kupperts, my study engages with Tiresias – an archetypal mythological character who underwent a gender-transformative experience on Mount Kyllini. Through an autoethnographic approach, I emplace the performing body within the landscapes of this region, imagining the Tiresian myth as a transecological retelling that foregrounds the marginalised human and nonhuman life.

In conclusion, I demonstrate how the emplacement of the performing body, attuned to the complexity of location, can generate intersectional knowledge that is contextually responsive to diverse ecologies and geo-political regions.

*Keywords:* Trans ecologies, emplacement, myth-making, Tiresias, performance

## The Encounter

*April 2017. I am driving to Athens to take my flight back to London after a brief visit to my family. It's raining heavily as I drive through the Argolis valley, in the North Eastern Peloponnese.*

*On the left, atop of the low hills, lies the acropolis of Ancient Tyrins and further ahead on top of a higher hill, the ancient castle of Argos. On the right, the Temple of Hera and hidden behind the hills, stands the Lion Gate of Mycenae.*

*This place is steeped in history: palaeolithic caves; major Bronze Age Mycenaean settlements; ancient Greek city-states; Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Frankish, Ottoman, and Venetian architecture.*

Parallel to the historical narrative, a nexus of interconnected, overlapping, contradicting and multiple-versioned myths weaves together the fates of humans, gods, deities and enchanted nonhumans in an entangled web, extending over the whole Eastern Mediterranean ancient world and beyond. The war of Troy, the Labours of Hercules, Arcadia, naiads, oreads, dryads, satyrs, river gods, ancient spirits and legendary creatures populate an endless tale of metamorphosis. The myths are told, retold, altered, erased, rediscovered, appropriated, translated, imagined, explained, politicised.

One month earlier, in March 2017, I came across the following story:

Tiresias comes across two snakes copulating on Mount Kyllini in Peloponnese. Somehow upset by the intercoiled snakes, Tiresias kills the female snake with his staff. Hera, the Goddess of women, marriage and fertility (...) turns Tiresias into a woman (...) as punishment. But the curse may have been a blessing in disguise. (...) Tiresias adjusts well to life as a woman. Tiresias marries, has three daughters, becomes a renowned prostitute and priestess. (Cavanagh, 2018, p. 38)

Until then, I knew Tiresias only as the old blind seer, unaware of the myth of metamorphosis – an unfamiliar story with a familiar character. Moreover, the myth allegedly takes place on Mount Kyllini, in the region where I was born and grew up – an unfamiliar event in a familiar setting. Enchanted by the uncanniness of the unfamiliar familiar, I felt the story could lead me to intriguing directions.<sup>8</sup>

Tiresias, a frequent character in Greek mythology, is a diviner who lives over seven generations, communicates with birds and crosses boundaries between male and female,

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<sup>8</sup> This version is narrated by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*. Other writers have also offered different versions (Brisson, 2002, pp. 116–119).

human and deity, mortality and immortality, the present and the future, young and old age, seeing and blindness, and the world and the underworld.

Tiresias appears in literature and performing arts across the centuries. More recently, North American transmasculine visual artist Cassils engaged with the mythological character in their durational performance '*Tiresias*' (Cassils, 2011). The artist stands naked behind a neoclassical Greek male torso, carved out of ice, which melts gradually as it comes in contact with the heat of their naked body. This endurance performance demonstrates the capacity of the body to elude capture in gender bifurcations and norms, highlighting the material instability evoked by the myth of Tiresias.

Cassils' perspective embodies the transgender subject as a producer of self-knowledge (Keegan, 2020, p. 67; Stone, 1991, p. 16), aligning with trans studies scholar Cael Keegan's suggestion that trans practice might "draw from the material experience of trans embodiment to reveal new meaning" and "recover previously unseen things" (2020, p. 73). While Cassils' re-telling demonstrates the critical capacity of the transgender performing body, the myth's locality calls for an engagement beyond a universal embodied interpretation. Following Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of "situated knowledges" as a feminist methodology and trans studies theorist Susan Stryker's auto-ethnographical model, I emplace myself as the performing body within the myth's locale to explore the relationship between embodied subject and material environment (Stryker, 2008, pp. 38–39). From this position, I ask: What other unseen things can be recovered beyond gender crossing? What stories lie beyond the human? How is the trans body implicated with the mountain's ecology?

Tiresias, as a true oracle, does not give "straight answers" (Kuppers, 2011, pp. 212 & 224), and I accepted the challenge. Over the past six years, I have explored the myth through an autoethnographic transecological lens in my project '*Ekdysis*' – through site performances for the camera, live art, installations, and a moving image work (Niya B, 2021).

## The Journey

I drive a rental car through the citrus orchards that cover the flat fertile land of the Argolis valley, much like the performance scholar and community artist Petra Kuppers did in the Arizona desert, in search of Tiresias (2011, p. 212). Kuppers' '*Tiresias Project*' included photography and writing workshops across the US, dance workshops, a community performance, a '*dancepoetryvideo*,' and an exhibition featuring photographic portraits of disability culture performers and writers. Her embodied creative writing delves deep into the complexity of Tiresias, patriarchy, the myth's settings, and non-human characters. She asks:

What were the snakes that Tiresias killed, setting in motion his own transformation?

(Kuppers, 2011, pp. 215–216)

Kuppers is fascinated by this question, and so am I. In her chapter *Tiresian Journeys* (2011, pp. 212–225), she explores the taxonomy of snakes, linguistic interpretations, and snake-related myths from diverse cultures, including Northern Arizona Hopi, Greek mythology, pagan England, and Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Unlike Cassils, who views Tiresias as an atemporal, non-located symbolic myth, Kuppers engages in a complex poetic exploration across terrain, time, cultural traditions, and world mythologies.

This dance is mesmerising, but I grow dizzy from hopping across places and continents. I need stable ground beneath my feet. Beyond Tiresias' gender crossings, bodily transformations, and symbolic encounters with deities and snakes, I reclaim the story's locale through an autoethnographic journey. I follow this familiar yet unfamiliar character as they tread on a specific land— a land I have stepped on before.

*Driving through the valley of Argolis, the scent of the flowering orange trees fills the air. Ahead in the distance, the Mount Kyllini emerges in its impressive volume, its top covered in snow. The mountain brings back stories and childhood memories: telling the weather by observing the moon and the flying patterns of birds, foraging wild herbs and fruit, the scent of rain on dry soil, the sweet taste of ripe fruit, and wild play in nature.*

As class, gender and local ecologies seep into my narrative, my gaze travels towards Mount Kyllini in the distance, and I recall the 'second day' of my ritual performance.

## **Body of Water**

*I am on Mount Kyllini, standing knee-deep in Lake Stymphalia. My feet are buried in the mud, in this multi-species archive of stories. Preserving and composting. Among the ancient ruins, bones, feathers, scales, organic matter and inorganic silt, a fish in a slippery dress sinks into the liminality of existence.*

Lake Stymphalia, one of Greece's rare mountainous lakes, dries up completely in summer, due to the misuse of water. Despite its precarity, it remains home to a small endemic fish, the Stymphalia minnow (*Pelasgus stymphalicus*) (Barbieri et al., 2015, p. 58), known locally as 'dáska'. Dáska survives the drought by sinking into the mud and forming a slippery envelope around its body (LIMNI STYMFALIA, n.d.).

I feel an affinity with the liminal state of this fish; its body transformation reflects my own changing body. Moreover, dáska's resilience to the fluctuating water levels of Lake Stymphalia speaks to the resilience of my trans body in volatile political and social environments.

**Figure 1**

*Still from moving image Ekdysis (Niya B, 2021).*



Emplacement entangles my trans embodiment with the ‘*naturecultures*’ (Bell, 2010, p. 143; Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, p. 269; Haraway, 2003, p. 2) of this multi-species ‘*storied-place*’ (van Dooren & Rose, 2012, p. 3). The performing body not only offers embodied knowledge, but is also a vital component within an evolving ecology of interconnected entities and their historicities (Pink, 2011). Van Dooren and Rose (quoting Edward Casey) argue that a living being is emplaced through its body: that places are formed between bodies and the terrains they inhabit” (2012, p. 2). They ask “who stories (...) these places? Whose stories come to matter in the emergence of a place?” (van Dooren & Rose, 2012, p. 3).

In what I call the ‘densely-storied place’ of NE Peloponnese, Greece and more broadly the Eastern Mediterranean region, shaped by history and mythology, I align with Lorna Hardwick (2017) who suggests:

Revisiting and re-imagining Greek myth (...) may help to retrieve the lost voices of the past [and] most notably (...) the lost voices of the more recent past and those of the present that we do not easily hear, or may not want to hear. (p. 22)

## **To Grow a Body**

Tiresias, as a familiar unfamiliar character, eludes capture in a simple narrative, leading me on multiple journeys through history, myth, science, and both human and nonhuman stories. In examining selected sections of my auto-ethnographic film ‘*Ekdysis*’, I demonstrate how the emplacement of my performing body within the locale of the Tiresian myth enables a



trans ecological reimagining. Here, marginalized and endangered human bodies, such as transgender individuals, and nonhuman bodies, such as fish, snakes, and the lake, converge to recover previously unseen things. This might be a good place where trans ecologies can be formulated.

*After a while the rain stops and a rainbow appears on top of Mount Kyllini.  
I smile. Tiresias is offering an oracle.*

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## 32

### Exploring Performative Liminality

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#### Abstract

In a quest for *Performative Urbanism*, we believe performativity can uncover new tools and processes for the urban regeneration of liminal spaces. Turner describes liminality as a fundamental characteristic of performance, as a field of “pure possibility” (Turner, 1967). Van Gennep’s performative rites of “passage” (Van Gennep, 1909) constitute the life of a human being, in which the “liminal rite” is an in-between stage marked by uncertainty and ambiguity. The liminality of the Los Angeles River (LA River) lies in its current transitional status, seeking to become a naturalized public amenity while maintaining its function as a flood control channel. We developed a pedagogical experiment along the Los Angeles River involving a site-specific performance as a liminal rite. Our collaborative research demonstrates that “performative liminality” can serve as a relational and transitional tool for activating spatial affordances (Gibson, 1979) and as a strategy for transforming liminal sites.

*Keywords:* Performative urbanism, Liminality and liminal spaces, Urban regeneration process, Los Angeles River, Pedagogical experiment.

#### Exploring Performative Liminality

From the *Performative Turn*, the borders between disciplines are not to be thought of in terms of limits, but rather as “transformative spaces”. These spaces are fertile, transitory environments where invention, hybridity, and metamorphosis can occur, thus creating the conditions for an emerging field called *Performative Urbanism*. In light of the *Performative Turn*, we believe performativity can uncover new tools and processes for the regeneration of “latent urban resources” (D’Arienzo, 2016, p.12), existing elements found within liminal environments such as neglected public spaces, endangered heritage sites, abandoned architectures and wastelands, or even underused urban infrastructures.

**Figure 1***Illuminate the night.*

Liminal is defined as a state, stage, or period of transition and derives from the Latin root *limen*, which means threshold. The *Performative Turn* has embraced the liminal and places disruptive thinking at its core, generating intersectional thinking as a revolutionary creative state of mind, a performative liminality. The concept of liminality was originally developed by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in the early 1900s in his book, “Les Rites de Passage” (1909) and was further developed by another anthropologist, Victor Turner, in the 1960s. Going further, “liminality refers to any 'betwixt and between' situation or object, any in between place or moment, a state of suspense, a moment of freedom between two structured world-views or institutional arrangements (...) liminality opens the door to a world of contingency where events and meanings - indeed 'reality' itself - can be molded and carried in different directions” (Thomassen, 2014, p. 3). In fact, Turner has described liminality in his book *The anthropology of performance* (1967) as a fundamental characteristic of performance, a field of “pure possibility.” Later on, the architect Tiphaine Abenia also used the concept of liminality to describe the ambiguous and elastic space-time that lies between the abandonment of a place and the moment of its reclassification (Abenia, 2019), be it demolition, conservation or transformation, a state of “pure potentiality.” Both authors are referring to Van Gennep’s “rites of passage” in which the “liminal rite” (also called transitional rite) is an in-between stage marked by uncertainty and ambiguity. Rooted in an anthropologic thinking of indigenous societies and based on the concept of liminality, the original “rites de passages” of Van Gennep describe *the life and evolution* of human beings:

- Pre-liminal Rite: *separation, abandonment, removal from the world.*
- Liminal Rite: *transition, metamorphosis, uncertainty and ambiguity.*
- Post-liminal Rite: *incorporation, reclassification, return to society (in a different light).*

Abenia re-used these three performative states to describe *the life and evolution* of architecture and, more specifically, large abandoned urban structures (Abenia, 2017). Both Turner and Abenia insist on the fact that this in-between stage, marked by uncertainty and ambiguity, ruptures the process preceding it, without yet prefiguring what will succeed it. This stage becomes then a “performative” space-time of re-invention and metamorphosis, of switching from one state to another, a moment of transformation. *Latent urban resources* would then be suspended into this liminal state, waiting for the liminal rite that will engage and perform its potential reclassification. By doing so, we can argue that *latent urban resources* are thus no longer to be thought of as figures of rejection or inert and inactive waste, but as “liminal” space-time where potentialities remain active - at their highest intensity. The question then becomes: *how do we identify and access those latent potentials that are suspended into the liminal state?*

### **Affordances X Performativity**

By coming back to the distinction made by Turner and Abenia on *possibility* and *potentiality*, we can explore a conceptual and experimental framework to articulate the role of performance-based tools as “vectors of potentialization” to initiate the regenerative processes of *latent urban resources*. Also relevant here is Gibson's theory of affordances, articulated in his essay on *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979) in which he defines affordance as “the totality of possibilities for actions and interactions of an object or environment” (p.29) which may be perceptible, concealed, or deceptive. He thus calls for us to renew our modes of attention and experimentation with the environment, so as to be able to capture its affordances – particularly those that are “hidden.” The affordance, as a set of possibilities for action and interaction, refers to philosopher Debaïse's “puissances passives” (Debaïse, 2005), the ability of the environment to absorb change. To initiate metamorphosis, the use of *active* “puissance,” the capacity to produce change, becomes necessary and this is where performative practices come into play. Performance, “marked by the double seal of action and becoming” (Carpigo, Diasio, 2018, online) embodies an *active* “puissance” of transformation that modifies reality by performing the liminality of a metamorphosis. By merging the “liminal” conditions of performance and places, we would be able to explore ways of using performative *actions, devices* and *processes*: (1) to explore and transcend latent potentialities; (2) to guide a metamorphosis; and (3) to perform the “liminal rite” of Van Genep. By doing so, we would be able to open up scenarios for the reclassification of the



*latent urban resources* and to engage in a post-liminal process of returning to society – in a different light *and for a different use*.

## The Los Angeles River

The 132-kilometer-long concrete channel that runs through the city of Los Angeles, known as the LA River, has been throughout its history a liminal space in the sense that it lies in a state of continuous transformation, contingency, and flux. Its liminality brings forth its character as a performative space that has captured the cultural imagination of artists, designers, historians, movie producers, and curious visitors. Prior to its channelization in the 1930s the river was a natural watercourse that behaved erratically and caused disastrous flooding. Today the river is not only a critical part of the city's storm water infrastructure but an extreme example of how *latent urban resources*, ranging from spontaneous ecologies to public recreation, thrive within the confines of its concrete surfaces. It is within this context that the river's liminality becomes evident, making it an ideal site for experimenting with its performative potentialities.

### Figure 2

*Exploring performative liminality*



## The Halprin Legacy and the Landscape Studio

To deepen our relationship with the channel's environment and explore its affordances, we used scores, as relational devices between performative bodies and places, exploring the potentialities of transformation. The use of “scores” in that particular intention finds its roots

in the collaborative work of choreographer Anna Halprin (1920-2021) and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009). In the late 60s, they developed a creative process based on scores, the RSVP cycles, dedicated to raise environmental awareness and engage communities in the design of their local built environment. Lawrence Halprin wanted to create his own system of “motation”, enabling him to “correlate scores for motion and environment together, where they could be mutually interrelated and affect each other” (Halprin, 1969, p. 71), a liminal process of creation based on the performativity of both bodies and places. By doing so, he developed a way of scoring that would encourage designing for motion, thus extending the performative liminality of the built environment, freeing people’s behavior and supporting natural ecosystems within the city.

As part of an undergraduate landscape design studio called *Designing with Scores*, we experimented with the Halprins’ methodologies. We conducted several workshops with students along a stretch of the river in the Elysian Valley where the channel becomes a “soft bottom” waterway with flowing water, vegetation and wildlife. These elements, along with the concrete slope, railing and lighting, became the *latent urban resources* which we sought to unleash through the creation of a site-specific performance. Meeting at the river for rehearsals became a weekly ritual which served as a liminal rite, a “performative” space-time of appropriation and transformation for instigating a process of urban regeneration. The performance itself took place as part of a larger scale liminal rite, the Frogtown Artwalk, an annual community event that celebrates local artists and musicians. Students used their performative experience along the river to inform their urban regeneration projects. Rather than designing masterplans, several teams of students proposed *post-liminal rites* in the form of community events ranging from magnet fishing, planting seeds and art making, using materials recycled from the river. The students’ desire to bring the community together points toward the enlightened mindset they had developed, akin to Van Gennepe’s post-liminal rite of “return[ing] to society in a different light” (Van Gennepe, 1981, p. 30) while signifying their full immersion in the experience of Performative Liminality.

### **Towards a Performative Urbanism**

Our collaborative research demonstrates that “performativity” can serve as relational and transitional tools for activating both spatial affordances and social empowerment as necessary for the transformation of liminal sites. Through this work, we engage with *Performative Liminality* as a process of ongoing creation, in which scores as methodological devices operate to reveal the ecological and cultural richness of latent urban resources. We believe that an extended performative approach, rooted in these experimentations, could be used to “perform” the liminal rite and bring about the potentiality of reclassification. By

developing a new operating model based on the richness of the liminal theory, we would be able to transcend the space-time of transition as a true metamorphosis, a collective and performative pre-figuration of the future of the site that would become inseparable from the project of reclassification.

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## 33

**Approaching Threshold Spatialities:  
The Example of the Theatrical Workshop *I Want to fly*  
of Eleonas Refugee Camp**

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**Abstract**

If space is not considered as an empty container in which the world of stage is constituted, but as a field that both shapes and is shaped by exposed identities, then identities-in-transition and the practices by which these identities inhabit the space produce possibilities for the emergence of liminal conditions and, therefore, new ways of the production of space. The performative practices of the theatrical process not only establish spatio-temporal conditions of the stage but also constitute multiple thresholds that capture passages between potential worlds and identities. More specifically, the research examines the example of the theatrical workshop *I want to fly*, which was organized in the "Safe Zone" of the Eleonas Refugee Camp from December 2020 to March 2021 with the participation of 15 unaccompanied minors. Through this example, the research examines the production of threshold spatiality through three different aspects: (1) through Turner's concept of the liminal practices in the inhabitation of identities and space (2) through the particular interaction embedded in the heterotopia of the Eleonas Refugee Camp (3) through the spaces of memory, experience, and imagination that emerged, within the context of the out-of-the-everyday condition that the workshop produced.

**Keywords:** Threshold spatiality, Otherness, Stage, Being in between, Liminal space, Heterotopia

## Approaching Threshold Spatialities

The view of architecture as practice links the study of space to the set of practices that shape it, that make it generic, that redefine its experiential boundaries, as well as its inherent meanings. In light of such a perspective, this research takes a critical approach to the study of space, questioning *subject-identity* and the production of space through *expressive behaviour*. The study of modes of *identity production*, as well as the ways in which this identity finds new boundaries within the realm of *otherness*, is essential to understanding how the subject – as a carrier of meaning – alters the meaning and the experience of space. The way in which new identities emerge simultaneously constitutes a new production of space.

### Threshold Spatiality: The Analytical Tool of the Stage

The condition of “being in between” is the pacing for the taming of the discontinuity of identities and space. Through “being in between”, the discontinuous assemblages of space are inhabited through the practices of identities exposed to it. Conversely, through space, discontinuous identities find a way to inhabit it among the dichotomous relations that produce them. The condition of “being in between” establishes a *spatio-temporal threshold* (Bourdieu 2006; Stavrides 1998, 2002, 2010), which achieves the contact of two different territories by uniting them while ensuring their separateness (Simmel, 1997). The analytical tool of the “stage” is understood as a spatio-temporal threshold condition and it is both a spatial affirmation and a performative practice (Schechner, 1985; Marvin, 2014).

### The Example of the Theatrical Workshop *I Want to Fly*<sup>9</sup>

This research examines the example of the theatrical workshop *I want to fly*, which was organised in the “Safe Zone”<sup>10</sup> of Eleonas Refugee Camp from December 2020 to March 2021. It was a period when schools were closed due to the pandemic. The group met in a container/ Eight unaccompanied minors participated in the project. The Greek Council for

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<sup>9</sup> The program is implemented in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and is financed by the European Commission and the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME).

<sup>10</sup> Safe Zones are accommodation facilities for unaccompanied minors aged 14-18, which operate within Open Accommodation Facilities for asylum applicants and vulnerable individuals. Each Safe Zone accommodates up to 30 teenagers, serving as a temporary housing solution until a more suitable, short-term accommodation facility is found. In 2019, the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) assumed responsibility for the management of the Safe Zone in Eleonas (Attica region) and Alexandria (Imathia region), thereby extending its interventions in the field of child protection. In the Safe Zones, care services are provided on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week. Minors are provided with personalized psychosocial, legal and educational support by a group of professionals, with the objective of facilitating their social integration in Greek society.



Refugees was in charge of the workshop. During the three months, fifteen young people from Afghanistan participated, four of them from the beginning to the end. The workshop was called *I want to fly* and the group was called *Cheili Chop Group*.<sup>11</sup>

A series of scenes were organized, devised by the children themselves, taken from their everyday life and reality. Modular scenes were created through improvisations, discussions, automatic writing techniques and suggestions from the children themselves (Figure 1). Once the scenes were crystallized, the adolescents assumed different roles each time, rotating through them all<sup>12</sup>. The spatio-temporal conditions selected by them as scenes were the house, the park, the police station.

### Figure 1

*Three consecutive phases of the workshop: From the generation of ideas to the creation of scenes and the rotating interpretation of the roles, until the reception of the project in its entirety.*



*Note. Three consecutive phases of the workshop. by E. Koumparouli, February 2021, Eleonas Refugee Camp.*

<sup>11</sup> The workshop was organised by the Greek Council for Refugees and coordinated by Vassiliki Katrivanou. Its animators were Giorgos Moschos and Eirini Koumbarouli, founding members of Initiative for Article 12 (InArt12). Kazem Ahmadi was the translator.

<sup>4</sup> Here is the sequence of scenes. Scene 1) A child waves goodbye to his mother and leaves to find his friends in the park. The mother, Farida (a name given by the children themselves), greets him warmly and with some concern, and announces that she will call him later on his mobile phone. The young man, fed up with his mother's nagging, greets her affectionately. Scene 2) A child is drawing in the park. Soon an older man meets him, notices him and rewards him for his work. Scene 3) The group of children from scene 1 are smoking in a corner of the park, making fun of another child who is trying to do acrobatics. Scene 4) The child from scene 1 meets the group and tries to persuade them to stop smoking. Scene 5) The police intervene and take them all to the police station. They wait for a long time in the detention room. Farida, the mother, calls her son and when she realises what has happened, she faints. Scene 6) The child who was drawing decides to ask the old man for help, who finally intervenes and vouches for the young men. The police release them.

<sup>12</sup> The only exception is the role of the mother, which the participants asked to be played consistently by the female youth instructor.

## **The Threshold Spatiality Exemplified by the Theatrical Workshop *I want to fly* at the Eleonas Refugee Camp**

According to the given example, the research captures the production of threshold spatiality through through different aspects:

### ***Through Turner's Concept of Liminal Space***

The period of stay of unaccompanied minors in the camp can be considered as a threshold, a passage. The concept of passage is primarily derived from Van Gennep's (1910,1960) analytical tripartite scheme (separation, transition, integration) of *Rites of passage* and from his intention to define passage in spatial terms. According to Van Gennep's ideas, the adolescent's stay in the camp is a *between and betwixt* period, during which they are neither children nor adults. It is a period of transition, a threshold, a liminal space in which the young people no longer carry their previous identity and have not yet inhabited the next social condition, that of adulthood. They test identities and inhabit both social phases or neither (Turner, 1974).

### ***The Condition of Heterotopia according to Foucault***

It is widely acknowledged that in contemporary international spatial politics the displacement of displaced populations is equivalent to the dissolution of territoriality, the necessity for human habitation, and the ambivalent role of borders (Agamben, 1998; Arendt, 1951). Spatial gestures of exclusion are based on dichotomies such as: citizen-foreigner, inside-outside, national-international (Soguk, 1999; Walker, 1993). Camps, therefore, function as other heterotopias (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), as places where the other resides.

The adolescents' stay and habitation in the camp intensified the need to fracture enclosures and inhabit the liminal as a threshold through performative practices. In this way, the expected habitation in conditions of displacement outside the social body is disrupted. Perhaps this is precisely the importance of such inhabitation: to render these spaces places of reference, which by virtue of their deviance, offer the measure for the social condition.

### ***The Spatio-Temporal Condition of Stage: Approaching Otherness***

Within the space-time condition of the theatrical workshop, a safe passage from the here-and-now to "the elsewhere and elsewhere" was constantly and framed. A superimposed condition of imagination or memory was produced whereby the young people were able to visit spatio-temporal spaces of memory (connecting with family or homeland), or spatio-temporal spaces of imagination (future dream moments). They could also perform the reverse: from an *elsewhere and other time* to a *here-and-now*. Their need to speak,-experience and enact their contemporary reality was also very strong. This continuous flying

in superimposed spacetimes constantly created the condition of the scene (Figure 2), i.e. the state of being in-between, hence the production of threshold conditions.

It can be observed that the spatio-temporal condition of the scene frames, spatially and temporally (Brook, 1970; Feral, 2002), an encounter with otherness. The concept of otherness, as outlined by Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 1988, 1994), is approached here as an internal and at the same time external dimension in the way identity is constituted. Through the co-presence of the participants (Fischer-Lichte, 2013), the repetition of the performative actions (Schechner, 1985), the continuous attempt to cover the distance between speech-voice-translation, within the context of the out-of-the-everyday condition that the workshop produced, a fragile but empowered space/place of negotiating with the Otherness was formed.

## Figure 2

*The production of the spatio-temporal condition of imagination and memory.*



*Note.* by E. Koumparouli, February 2021, Eleonas Refugee Camp.

## Conclusion

According to Stavros Stavrides, "*Thresholds are places that negotiate with otherness and at the same time are places that meet the otherness*" (Stavrides 2002, p.290). It is evident that the threshold is a place-scene where performed identities are exposed to the Other. Therefore, the passage of the threshold constitutes a passage to otherness and is understood as the scene in which the passage is enacted. Moreover, it can be observed that the threshold performs-connects-enacts the relationship between worlds that could not otherwise be related, without negating their distance or separation. As Boudrieu (1977) notes, this gesture of temporary connection is marked by the meeting but also the possibility of reversal of these worlds.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps this is where the power of the spatiality of the threshold lies: in its capacity to connect/reverse the elements that delimit these worlds.

<sup>13</sup> P. Bourdieu's anthropological study "*The Kabyle house or the World Reversed*". The article was first published in *Echanges et Commutations. Mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire*, Mouton, Paris-Hague, 1970, pp. 739-758.

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## 34

## Becoming a City Body Embodying Space in Urban Environments

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### Abstract

While urban environments are commonly characterised and studied as nodes in international networks of migration, economics, cultures, and policies, they are also sites for everyday embodied experience through which cultures and identities are performed and produced in dynamic ways. As such, they cannot be understood as fixed entities but as ever-unfolding spatial processes. This paper examines the role that embodied experience plays in this process, taking as its locus the question: *How are cities and city-bodies co-produced and performed by pedestrians?* Following the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1992) and Manuel DeLanda (2016), I argue that cities are assemblages of intersecting topographies, climates, cartographies, architectures, and bodies. These bodies both make and are made by urbanity, just as urbanity makes and is made by these bodies. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Lisbon, Portugal, I explore how a “Lisbon-body” is produced in the interaction between space and embodied walking practice in geographically and culturally-specific ways. Furthermore, I argue that the flows and frictions that result from moving through Lisbon complicate binary frameworks that are often used to study cities: global and local, past and present, human and non-human (and more). In doing so, I argue that cities are not just physical points of interconnection, but as an object of study, urban assemblages require research approaches and methodologies that challenge the boundaries of academic disciplinarity itself.

*Keywords:* interdisciplinarity, performance, space, city, embodiment, walking, assemblage



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

I would like to commence by paying my respects to the Gadigal people and to Elders past and present, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which I research. Now today, I am speaking about Lisbon and I am presenting in Nafplio, but I will speak about bodies: the place-spaces we move through live in our bodies as much as we live in them. And I live, study, and research on stolen land. Sovereignty was never ceded, and that land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

### **Into the Rabbit Warren: Assembling Space**

My acknowledgement here intertwines with another story that positions my body in the research I present today. In 1788, when the Southern Continent was invaded, settler-colonialists brought rabbits with them. While there is a plethora of research documenting the damage that this did to the ecosystem there (Mutze et al., 2016; Finlayson et al., 2021), I am interested in how the presence of rabbits in “Australia” has become a part of my body. When I was growing up, my godmother had a pet rabbit living in her house. It had burrowed into her sofa, hollowing it out underneath and lining it with fur, guarding the lounge like a tiny minotaur.

The room was forged in the dynamic interaction of human body and rabbit body, and their varied textures and movements within the architecture of that house. Her home was not just a structure, but a rabbit warren; a straw bed; the smell of droppings in the spare room. It was chewed chords and faulty electricals. It was the different embodiments that we adopted as human bodies in a more-than-human space – careful movements in the dark, a ginger approach to sofas. Thus, my godmother’s loungeroom was skin and fur, lounge and tooth, human feet tip-toeing, rabbit feet pelting the worn-down carpet.

This is how spaces are produced: in the interstices of their disparate parts as they move around, rub against, encounter and adapt to each other. And this is how spaces are embodied: in the performances that emerge from these adaptations that then, in turn, become part of that space. Following Grosz (1992), I see this process as an assemblage in which spaces and bodies are implicated in and co-produce each other. This is not just true of my godmother’s loungeroom; it is a process that can be observed on a wider scale in the intersections of bodies and infrastructures that produce urban environments more generally. If rabbit fur and careful movement is how that loungeroom and this loungeroom body was co-produced and performed, *what does this mean for other spaces and other bodies? What might this look like in the wider urban environment? How are cities and city-bodies co-produced and performed by pedestrians?*

## Assembling Lisbon

The next story I will tell begins 18,171 km from my godmother's coastal city on Awabakal and Worimi land in Lisbon, the coastal capital of Portugal. In 2022, I moved to Lisbon for one year of ethnographic fieldwork. When I arrived in Portugal, I was a body with two large backpacks, a yoga mat, Sydney-sider sensibilities for navigating traffic, a nervousness around sofas, and B1 level Portuguese. The city that my human body encountered was many things, including:

- A port city: Lisbon is situated on the Rio Tejo, and like most port cities, its riverside location is integral to the city (Hein, 2011). Its waterfront views are prime real estate, a tourist hotspot, and a historic site that acts both as a reminder of the tragic earthquake-fire-tsunami that took place in 1755 (Voltaire et al., 2006), and as marker of its colonial history, particularly for its role in centralising the wealth of the Portuguese empire in the 16th century (Vogt, 1973)
- An immigration hot spot, literally: its climate is a major motivator for those that move to the city, particularly the American population. It is often called the California of Europe (Arte TV, 2022)
- A mountainous landscape: its hills are famously steep and difficult to traverse. It has a metro system, unreliable buses, and most famously, trams and funiculars that are used to pass-by its mountainous terrain
- A vibrant skyline: populated with colourful buildings, terracotta rooftops, cathedral domes, and miradouros, which are viewpoints that look out over the city.

There are many other ways to describe this city, and each of these points offers a different way to move through Lisbon, to think and research Lisbon, and to imagine Lisbon. Even the city's slopes are more than just a topographical feature of this urban environment. These hills are also paved with limestone and basalt cobbles that are slippery in the sun and slipperier in the rain. Public opinion on these pathways differs. One inhabitant I spoke to had sent a complaint to their council about the inaccessibility of the area's footpaths; they received a response that detailed the patrimonial significance of these black and white cobbles, but ignored their concerns. Yet many roads in Lisbon were once paved similarly, and are now covered in bitumen; the topography of this city reveals who gets to move through Lisbon's space, and how. This is urban assemblage: heritage and urban identity, policy, climate, and topography coalescing in the narrow streets, alive in the bodies of Lisbon's inhabitants and in the habits that are their bodies. Cities producing city-bodies producing cities.

## Embodying Cities, Citying Bodies

These different facets of urban assemblage are always in the process of adjusting to each other as my jottings from an encounter I had with a group of tourists revealed:

I step off the footpath, a car looming in my peripherals. Anna is standing tensed on the gutter as the group trundles past, bumping her so that she teeters at the edge of the road. Her breath comes in gasps after the climb. I cannot stop walking, because to stop on these hills is too difficult to start again.

But the car does not stop either. The space between us is shrinking, and as we are about to pass each other –

“Ooh! Oooh! Ooooh!”

Anna flings her arm out, pulling me back to the curb. The car circles past where I had been walking, half a metre away. Anna’s mouth is still pulled into a tight ‘o’, releasing a high pitch squeal that reminds me of the sound a rabbit makes when caught by a predator.

This is not just a story about an encounter between people and traffic, but car, limestone, bitumen, city infrastructure, heritage, topography, and weather. It is a story about the process of encountering other bodies with their own geographically and culturally-produced understandings of how to move, and how to encounter. Anna, a friend from Australia, with her Sydney-turned-Canberra body, was accustomed to wide, flat footpaths and low population density. To my friend’s distress, I was emulating the modes of perambulation I saw around me: my Sydney-body was becoming Lisbon.

At the same time, these encounters between my Sydney-becoming-Lisbon body, my friend’s Canberra-body, and the other pedestrians’ bodies from their own cities, hint towards the networked simultaneity of space (Massey, 2002). We all embodied Elsewhere’s in the Here of Lisbon. This tiny moment reminds us that this assembled city exists in an assembled state in an assembled country on an assembled continent in an assembled world that, maybe, eventually, becomes part of “the grand cosmic assemblage, the plane of immanence, consistency, or exteriority” (DeLanda, 2016, p.7). Or, as I like to think of it, Lisbon itself becomes the small mammal living in the couch of our intertwined world.

## Assembling Urban Research

The question, then, is not just *how are cities and city-bodies co-produced and performed by pedestrians?*, but *how do we research and facilitate discussions about movement, bodies and embodied encounters that produce urban environments?* Or *what might cities offer for thinking about and researching space?*

Furthermore, I wonder how the research we produce shapes the spaces we live in and move through. Sarah Pink (2008) notes that ethnography, one of the methodologies I have drawn on here, is a generative act that continues to produce, reproduce and co-produce the place-spaces in which research is situated, even after the temporal event of that research is concluded. The stories I tell become enfolded within its assemblage. My godmother's home is human-rabbit co-habitation, but it is also the story I tell about this rabbit, the presentation I give today, my embodied performance of human-rabbit co-habitation in every encounter I have with a new lounge, and the imagined network of fragile tunnels and tiny minotaurs that every one of these sofas may contain.

Thus, Lisbon is the characteristics I described above, and the moment that unfolded in the street, and my friend's visceral reaction to my movements. But it is also the story I tell here in this interdisciplinary space. It is the conversation that unfolds now. In assembling a city, in assembling a story, in assembling research, we are intersecting with, adjusting to, and stumbling against each other; we are always in-process, always co-producing.

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## 35

## Performing Between Terra and Aqua Reflections on Edge, Boundaries and Drifting

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### Abstract

An array of artists with multimedia and ambulatory methodologies (flânerie, psychogeography, critical art practices) have approached space, place, location, boundaries and edges in various ways at the core of their practices, not to omit an ongoing interdisciplinary scholarship of geohumanities who has also explored emerging geo-poetics and politics in the fluid and often augmented spatial realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current paper explores the ideas of boundary and edge as creative spatial conditions/situations that often constitute the primal matter of contemporary art practices; ones which combine walking, drifting, site-intervention, technology. Walking and drifting in the city often have metaphorical implications of the urban space as sea, ocean with current and vortexes. Inspired by a shift in wider spatial/geo humanities towards considerations of the sea as an embodied and dynamic space – and also the author's shift in art practice from the terra to the aqua, the paper speaks both on territorial and liquid levels, identifying edge/boundary also in sea as a space of creative and immersive potential. Drifting entails a performative and spatial potential across streets and waves. There is an interesting site of creativity between city/sea, shifting the meaning of coastline into a liminal place. Reflections will be based on the author's selected series of artworks between site and sea which combine walking and sea-oriented performance, poetry and technologies; shifting the meaning of boundary and edge towards expanded spatial (media) poetics.

*Keywords:* drifting, edge, boundary, critical art practices, sea, performance art, media poetry



## Performing Between Terra and Aqua

The text focuses on the ideas of boundary, edge and liminality as creative spatial and embodied conditions across hybrid performative art practices that take place in-between land and the water, or into/across the sea, and which highlight a shift of geopoetics from a terrestrial to a watery milieu (also Psarras, 2024). Here, drifting shapes a critical methodological scheme of performance, poetry and technology, *into* and *with* the water.

### Performing Boundaries and Edges: Reflections on Coastlines, Boats and Drifting

One can think of the edge as an exterior limit of an area or surface, or a condition where we can observe a noticeable difference between two states. Derrida says, “everything will flourish at the edge” (1987, p. 81). The edge is a site of beginnings and endings understood both in mental and spatial terms. To consider the land and the sea as two different yet interconnected milieus for creation means to acknowledge the significance of the edge. Walking across a coast with our feet immersed into the seawater entails an in-between experience of a series of “edgeful intensities” (Casey, 2011, p. XX) that lead to an “augmentation of becoming” (p. 104): waves in repetition, rhythmic movements of water that instantly draw upon the sandy ground the presence of the water. This hypothetical image forms an example of how such -scapes “embody and exemplify such energies at the edge” (p. XX). Likewise, spatial thinkers like Malpas, among others, have also argued that one of the edge’s qualities is its bounding process which consequently creates an opening fissure. For him, “it is at the edge that space, room, and landscape first appear” (Malpas, 2018, p. 156). We can understand edges in various categories (i.e. thresholds, limens), yet the main ones can be identified as boundaries and borders. On the one hand, the boundary is a porous condition of flows and transmissions, which can be understood in spatial and temporal ways. Various interactions are key processes of such boundaries, rendering them as “eventmental” (Casey, 2007, p. 509) and highlight their spatio-temporal character. On the other hand, borders can be grasped as “restrictive and foreclosing [...], cartographic [...], designed to distinguish and keep apart” (p. 508). Borders tend to close the edges, they extend in a continuous way leaving no gaps - often encountered in international gates and borders. To think of where the land and the sea meet is to accept such intensified flows; a negotiation of natural forces which creates a vibrant site. Others have described it as *ecotone*, meaning the transitional site between two systems as in the porous case of the coastline. Krall describes ecotone as a zone where everything “intermingles in heightened richness” (1994, p. 3).

I argue that such sites of intermixed activity can shift the meaning and the process of site-specific performance art through mediated and embodied ways. While this text focuses on the “sea as a primal matter” (Psarras, 2021, p.1) in the artistic process through performative and technological ways, it is helpful to think of drifting boats and rafts as liquid boundaries of hybrid creation. One can think of various vessels, rafts, drifting materialities and boats upon the waters of the sea as different grounds that entail a liminal condition and a universal symbol of exploration into the unknown. Foucault described the boat as “a floating piece of space” (1986, p. 27) - it constitutes a material construction of humans’ intention to be on the surface; to survive. For others boats are a “mobile bridge between antagonistic parts of land and sea” (Westerdhal, 2005, p.3). The liminal ground of boats and rafts echoes how Turner defined liminality as the condition of being “betwixt and between” that alters the identity of the “liminal persona” (1967, p. 96). Both floating grounds and intertidal zones are liminal sites of human experience as the figure is “neither this nor that, and yet is both” (p. 99). What Hunter mentions as “a degree of uncertainty and opportunity” (2015, p. 301) seems to form one of the main ingredients of artistic creation in such contemporary mediated performances in the sea.

### **Shifting Milieu: Performance Art and Geopoetics *in and across Watery Context***

Humanities across the 19th and 20th centuries had considered the sea as an inaccessible vastness (Peters & Steinberg, 2014). This also echoes a “western terrestrial bias” (Jackson, 1995) rooted in the scientific and geo-humanitarian thought. Humans are deeply spatial in bodily and mental terms, and such a spatial turn has already been a central motif in literature and contemporary art, often known as geopoetics. Geopoetics refer to “a focus on embodied engagements with place and materiality expressed through poetics of multiple forms” (Magrane, 2020, p.11). However, can we argue for a critical reconsideration of the geo- on the geopoetics? Does it fall only into the bounded and land-based perspective or does it also consider the liquid surface and depths of the sea? This echoes what geographer Elden described as an “unearthing” of the *geo-* prefix (Peters & Steinberg, 2014, p. 124) which stems from *gaia*, meaning the ground. Nowadays this shift can be traced across academia as “blue humanities”, in other words “a combination of water with human ideas” (Mentz, 2024, p. 2). Thus, it is often the idea of the ground and the ways it impacts on our experience in bodily and psychological ways. This echoes Haraway’s concept of “situated knowledges” which argued for a knowledge dynamically defined through “an actor and an agent - not as a screen or a ground” (Haraway, 1988, p. 592), Jue argues for a “milieu-specific analysis” as a methodological scheme to understand how experience is deeply influenced by different contexts/environments or materials - as in the case of the sea and the water. She argues

that practices often seen in terrestrial environments can be different when being situated into, upon or across the waters.

**Figure 1**

*Objects in Odysseys (2020), still from the work. Image courtesy of Bill Psarras.*



The personal turn into the sea as a primal matter of my site-performances has shown emerging schemes of hybrid practice that include performance, poetry and media arts. I bring Jue's concept of milieu specificity into such sea-oriented works to critically reflect on drifting poetics (Psarras, 2024). In *Objects in Odysseys* (2020)<sup>14</sup> and *Islet* (2021)<sup>15</sup> I explore ways that the poetic text is performed through embodied, mediated and expanded ways through processes of drifting, floating and transmission. In *OiO* the performative gesture expands into a series of events between the artist, the poem and the sea - using different media such as video, GPS, poetic text, objects and boat. The idea of a poem that expands across human and non-human worlds, drifting as a sealed message upon real waves instead of printed pages, shows an intention to reconsider geopoetics through performative, watery, and technological ways. As described elsewhere, it is to pass "from a sea of waves towards a sea of possibilities" (Psarras, 2024, p. 239). Such objects-poems drew to the idea of "poetics as a continuation of poetry by other means" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 838) - a performance open to accept the fluidity of poetic experience across the waters. In *Islet* (2021), the performative and poetic gesture took place into a boat, across the sea, while the

<sup>14</sup> *Objects in Odysseys* (2020) - <https://vimeo.com/457668737>

<sup>15</sup> *Islet* (2021) - <https://vimeo.com/576266776>

poetic text shifts from written characters to dots and dashes of Morse Code transmission. The intention to perform the poem in a new floating ground of uncertainty and romanticism in the midst of the sea reminds us of the liminal character of the boat as a manifestation of the human fragility upon the waves, analysed in the previous section. In *Islet* (2021) the poetic gesture becomes a series of encoded light intervals which paradoxically awaited for decoding by potential receivers. In both performances, the use of different media, the body and the sea made apparent a need to question the idea of ground, of mediated poetic creation (Kac, 2007), of mediated/technological extensions as dynamic and aesthetic agents in-between grounded and sea contexts.

### Figure 2

*Islet (2021), still from the work. Image courtesy by Bill Psarras.*



### Conclusion: Gestures Made of Sea

The text tried to reflect on the creative potential of boundaries, edges and drifting process in-between terra and aqua or into/across the sea as a conceptual backbone for a methodological scheme in contemporary forms of site-performance that incorporate the live and dynamic aspect of the sea towards performative, mediated and watery forms of geopoetics. In other words, how boundaries and the “edgeful intensities” (Casey, 2011, p. 104) between coast and the sea, or between floating surfaces and the waters, can impact on contemporary critical art practices that celebrate the fluid and embodied aspect of the seas. These short reflections highlighted the ways geopoetics can shift from previous terrestrial terms towards watery and mediated constellations of practice.

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## 36

## Revealing and Reckoning: Curating Place-responsive Performance on Country

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### Abstract

From engaging in a practice of site-specific performance, the author has in recent years also branched into curating place-responsive performance events. This expansion of Taylor's practice has grown out of her seeking to represent more about the place than is possible to draw out in her own work, because places are inherently multi-layered, experienced through many different bodies and perspectives, and are continually being reconstrued by the people who inhabit them. To represent to some extent this multiplicity, Taylor invites diverse artists to respond to the site or place, which in Australia is always situated on Country.

Country is the way Australia's First Nations people conceive of land, sea and sky. It is only in recent years that Australians have collectively begun to conceive of a sense of place that is based upon Indigenous presence and culture. As a nation, Australia is still absorbing this reality, following two centuries of denial based on the British settler-colonial fallacy of *terra nullius* – the premise of an “empty land” upon which invasion was justified. Such paradigm altering requires much reckoning with place. This paper proposes that live site-responsive performance events might contribute to this reckoning.

Drawing upon the author's curatorial projects in Victoria, Australia, this paper discusses the effects of foregrounding relationships between place, body and identity in performance events on Country. Through their varied responses, curated artists bring audiences/participants' attention to sensory, historical, environmental and cultural qualities of the place. Through the haptic, kinaesthetic and conceptual engagement that the artists invite, audiences become more conscious of their individual and collective embodied presence in the place. Bringing together First Nations custodians, diverse contemporary artists and community groups, these curated events offer approaches to understanding and fostering a sense of place that is tangibly felt by the audience/participants.

*Keywords:* curation, Australian performance, site-specific performance, colonial history, Indigenous culture and Country.

## Country and Reckoning

Based in Naarm/Melbourne, as a non-Indigenous Australian artist, I have developed a site-specific dance and performance practice I call *locating* (Taylor, 2009). I have in recent years also branched into curating place-responsive performance events. Whenever I create or curate work in so-called Australia, it is always on Country.

Country is the way Australia's First Nations people conceive of land, sea and sky. Dharug Knowledge holder, Associate Professor Liz Cameron (2020) explained:

Country refers to the area of land of a certain Aboriginal Nation (*Dharug Country*, *Gunditjmara Country*, etc.); hence there are hundreds of 'Countries' within Australia. Country is also used to (...) refer to the environment or land including the interdependent relationships between animals, people, vegetation and spirits, the earth beneath the surface and the air above it, and the complex interactivity of all of these. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law, each person is entrusted with the cultural experience and responsibility to care for their Country. (p. 5)

Absurdly yet tragically, in Australia it is only in the last decade or two that we have collectively begun to realise a sense of place that is based upon - or even includes - Indigenous presence and culture (which holds Country at its core). As a nation we are still absorbing this "new" reality, following over two centuries of denial based on the fallacy of *terra nullius* – the premise of an "empty land". Australia's first Aboriginal law graduate, Professor Irene Watson articulates that the "mechanism of terra nullius provided the legitimacy which imperial Britain needed to 'lawfully settle' our lands and dispossess First Nations from our way of being in relation to the earth in the place now called Australia" (2014, p.508). Wiradjuri and Wailwan lawyer Teela Reid in 2020 challenged Australians to "embark on a reckoning with the truth of its past," instead of the notion of Reconciliation. But Reid (2020) warns:

... it will take a brave nation ... to grapple with the truth of its history and enact the structural change necessary to elevate the ancient voices of First Nations. (...) Reckoning requires everyday folks to bring about bold change, whereas reconciliation has developed a fraught application in the Australian context. (p. 1)

## Reckoning and Performance

Also calling for bold change, non-Indigenous theatre director Rachael Swain (2020) has proposed that in the context of dance and performance, we can no longer "feign to exist as unsituated subjectivities" (p. 10). Swain (2020) challenges:

(...) settler dance artists to understand that a subjectivity without an attachment to land in Australia should not be accepted as the status quo or something neutral. Instead, this can be understood as an active brutal stance, deeply informed by the white blindness and institutionalised national racism that sustain colonialism. (pp. 10-11.)

I agree with Swain that this engagement from the perspective of a settler artist cannot or should not be neutral or innocent. As I have argued elsewhere (Taylor, 2010), we are not “empty” bodies that can respond to place from a stance of impartial externality: we are implicated in the devastating effects colonisation has had on Indigenous peoples and their Country. I suggest that live, place-focused performance events can contribute to this reckoning.

Renowned Australian performance artist, Jill Orr stated: “Given that we (colonisers) have taken all the space, the least we can do is open up a space in our performance structures for Aboriginal people to tell their own story” (2009, p. 2). As a non-Indigenous curator, I need to work with, build and maintain strong relationships with First Nations artists and communities. I aim to create platforms within my projects for Indigenous knowledge holders to share what they are willing to share, because I deeply value their knowledge from millennia of living sustainably with Country and believe it is necessary for any project about place to centre First Nations’ perspectives.

## **Curating Performance on Country**

By offering experiences that are consciously situated not just in place, but on Country, I aim to foster in audiences a sense of place that engages with Indigenous relationships to Country, the complexities of settler colonialism, and the layers of cultural diversity that characterise the place known as Australia today.

*Dancing Place: Corhanwarrabul* was a site-responsive program of performances, workshops, public art and walks at Mount Dandenong, thirty kilometres east of Melbourne. The curatorial model began with its name: by using the barely known Indigenous place name, *Corhanwarrabul*, it aimed to encourage a sense of Country. The program foregrounded *Wurundjeri* dance alongside other performing artists’ responses to place, emphasising that Indigenous dance was indeed the first *site-specific* performance.

The Dandenong Ranges have long been characterised by quaint European-looking townships amongst the forest, where tourists (still to this day) visit from Melbourne for their weekend “Devonshire teas.” Signage along walking tracks refers to the pioneering

enterprises of early colonists in the 1800s, but there is little or no public signage<sup>16</sup> acknowledging the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri people, let alone mention of colonial processes of dispossession.

To open *Dancing Place: Corhanwarrabul* program, Wurundjeri ngurungaeta (senior elder), Murrundindi performed a Welcome to Country ceremony and guided us on a walk sharing his knowledge of bush foods and plant uses. Wurundjeri women's dance group Djirri Djirri performed cultural dances and led a workshop that all attendees participated in, dancing in a circle on top of the mountain, where it is thought corroborees (ceremonies) once took place (Figure 1). This was a profound, shared, embodied experience on Country for locals, visitors and Traditional Owners alike.

**Figure 1**

*Djirri Djirri Wurundjeri dance workshop (presided over by Murrundindi), Mt Corhanwarrabul, 2020. Image credit: Laki Sideris.*



<sup>16</sup> The lack of signage acknowledging First Nations presence is in a process of being rectified at the time of writing, with the implementation of ngurrak barring public art trail (formerly titled RidgeWalk), a project of Yarra Ranges Council.

Artists of Environmental Performance Authority (EPA) guided audiences along forest paths to witness site-responsive performances, and between performances EPA engaged audience-participants in sensory activities to deepen their experience of the surroundings. In uncanny contrast to these activities, EPA concluded the tour with a picnic of scones with jam and cream at the very location where Murrundindi had welcomed us to Country at the start of the event. Bustling in and covering the ground with white lacey tablecloths and picnic baskets, a performer with an English accent calling out “Welcome to the countryside!”, the picnic was an absurdist mirroring of how settlers had colonised the hills, with scant regard for the existing Country and culture. This uncomfortably comic scene gently implicated our mainly Anglo-Australian audience, exposing the colonists’ ignorance, entitlement and forced erasure of Indigenous peoples that typifies colonial habitation.

Many Anglo Australian artists are currently engaging with the injustice and violence of colonial histories in our work (see Spiers & Criddle, 2024). As I have also written about in more depth elsewhere (2025), some of us are realising that it is our task – a kind of transgenerational labour – to reckon with the present that we have inherited from our forebears and have created from that past. As site-responsive artists and curators in Australia, revealing and remembering these histories and inhabiting that discomfort with our audiences is one way of contributing to the national Truth-telling project (see M. Davis, 2022). I propose that inhabiting these complex realisations through performance – in situ – lends potency to their impact.

## **Revealing, Towards Belonging**

Ideally these projects, as well as curating professional artists, also involve local community groups. In 2017 I curated a screen dance project in Melbourne’s suburban far west, *Dancing Place: Wyndham*, with over seventy diverse community members across generational and cultural divides. Some of the groups were new immigrants, performing their cultural dances in sites of their choice in the area they now called home, to an audience that comprised their new community. They were “at once expressing locatedness, declaring presence, and in a process of thickening their experience of habitus” (Taylor, 2017, p. 8). If to “belong” means to fit in or be inter-related, I propose that dancing in a place can be a literal process of physicalising belonging.

I would like to extend that involvement towards phenomenological belonging to the audience-participants who attend live place-responsive events on Country. Bringing local people and visitors together and curating artists to reveal the place through their varied lenses can powerfully foster collective locational identity. Site-responsive performance can unveil or bring attention to layers of place, features or atmospheres that audiences may not otherwise



notice. Via the haptic, kinaesthetic, imaginative and conceptually interrogative engagement that the artists invite, audiences become more conscious of their individual and collective embodied presence in the place. Being there – immersed, amongst, involved – generates a personal, subjective relationship with the surrounding world that is felt through the body.

### **Locating, Towards Complex Presence**

In this time of urgent need for radical change to a relationship of care for the environments that we are part of, it is salient to take the lead from First Peoples whose philosophy and practice has always prioritised care and dialogic reciprocity with Country, towards becoming present in our bodies and places.

I have referred to my dance practice as *locating* – a mode of listening and responding through my body to the place, to acquaint with it, towards becoming present (2008). Locating acknowledges that this process is complex and ongoing, and that to be honestly present in Australia we need to face the truth of our colonial history.

Curating place-based events is a way of trying to share the locating dance in a broader sense. Through listening in the present and sensing-with the community-ecology of human and non-human components that collectively comprise the place: Country, we linger together in the necessary discomfort of reckoning with the past, learn and wonder from others' perspectives, and – hopefully – navigate ways forward.

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## 37

## Renegotiating Theatrical Space through Learning-Disabled Theatre

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### Abstract

This article considers how learning-disabled theatre, and disability more generally, can provoke a creative re-examination of what is meant by performing space. It does so by comparing the creative struggles and affordances of a disabled woman in a constrained space revealed in a documentary film made in Christchurch, New Zealand (2024) with the theatricalization of such creativity and constraint by renowned Australian learning-disabled theatre company Back to Back in *Super Discount* (2013). The article then goes on to trace the development of Back to Back Theatre's theatrical aesthetic of indeterminacy with particular reference to the spatial relationship between performance and audience, disabled and non-disabled. This includes the use of a site-specific reversal of audience and spectators in *small metal objects* (2005), the blurring of theatrical space in the Ganzfeld of *Food Court* (2009), the spatial coup de théâtre of *Lady Eats Apple* (2011), the confounding of *theatron* and agora in *The Shadow Whose Prey the Hunter Becomes* (2019) and the promise but ultimate foreclosure of a space called home for disabled performers in *Multiple Bad Things* (2024). This analysis of and response to spatiality in Back to Back's oeuvre is then put in the context of the author's twenty years of practical and theoretical research with learning-disabled collaborators of Different Light Theatre in Christchurch, New Zealand. A practical account is then given of some examples of working with the spatio-temporal distinctiveness of learning-disabled theatre artists, in terms of the *kairos* or good timing of theatrical performance and the physical "ownership" of the space by the performers. The meaning of performing space is then expanded to include the spaces of collaboration in which the company has more recently participated. The article concludes by affirming the social and creative benefits of including learning-disabled artists whilst emphasising the need to appreciate *both* the intransigence and potential for the beauty of disability in performing space.

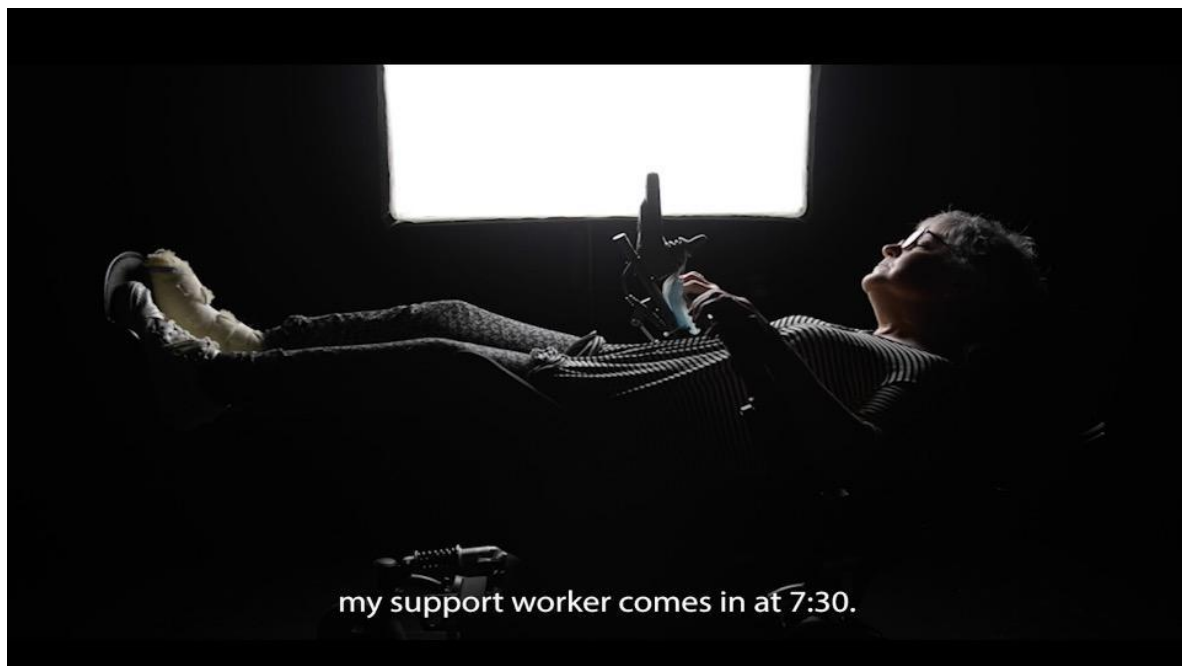
**Keywords:** Learning-disabled theatre, performing space, performance and audience

## Disability and the Imaginary Space of Performance

This is Mary Miller (Figure 1), a woman with cerebral palsy who uses a motorized wheelchair. She lives in the Alpine Village Retirement Home in Christchurch, New Zealand. She is also a member of the disability performance group Many Hats. The image is from the group's 2024 film, *A Few Minutes of Everyday Ordinary Life*. When asked what life event she wanted filmed, she chose getting out of bed. To do this she needs the assistance of a carer who arrives at 7.30am and helps move her legs. In the film we see her repeated, faltering efforts to get off the bed and into a walking frame. All the while Miller talks to the camera about her elaborate process. Miller's inhabiting of the world shrinks to her body's hard won but small victory in eventually raising herself onto a walking frame, and sitting in a chair.

### Figure 1

Mary Miller in *A Few Minutes of Everyday Ordinary Life* (2024). Image courtesy of Paul McCaffrey, Many Hats Films.



Her morning routine, like her life, is subject to what Dokumaci terms the “shrinkage” of chronic pain and debility, “the constraints, failures and losses” (Dokumaci, 2023 p.7) of impairment, the intransigence of her disability to cope in the spatio-temporal environment. And yet something else emerges in Miller's daily struggle. To cite Dokumaci: (2023)

As actors relate to the stage and its props within the imaginative layer of performance, they transform this materiality into an elsewhere and an else-when through their actions. I argue that the same transformation takes place in the everyday lives of disabled people, which are lived within a shrinking world of

possibilities...when the world's offerings become unreachable in states of extreme deprivation and debilitation, it is exactly the imaginary space of performance that opens up. (p.8)

The event-space of Miller's actions is subject to the constraints of shrinkage but provokes her creativity of movement within the confining space. This represents a choreography of affordances, improvised movement that allows disabled people creative ways of inhabiting a world not designed for them.

### **Back to Back Theatre: Staging Disability in the Theatrical Space**

Back to Back Theatre is a world renowned Australian learning-disabled theatre company. In *Super Discount* (2013), Sarah Mainwaring, a performer with an acquired brain injury whose voice and movements are characterised by tremors and palsy-like shaking performs a simple goal-oriented action similar to Miller's: putting a microphone back into a stand. We see her attempts toward the completion of this action and the involuntary movements that, despite herself, take her away from it. Her action calls attention to itself: pointing to her inability, but also to the theatricality of that inability. While Mary Miller performs creatively in spite of the shrinkage of her physical disabilities and a disabling environment, Back to Back bring "shrinkage" to the stage. Sarah Mainwaring's struggle in the small but agonisingly untraversable space between microphone and stand represents a theatricalization of the constrained event-space of disability.

Back to Back Theatre's unique deployment of spatiality is present throughout their oeuvre. This includes *Multiple Bad Things* (2024) in which members of the core ensemble inhabit a theatrical space that appears uniquely hostile to them. The set incorporates a jumble of scaffolding poles blocking their access to movement. The actors perform awkward, elaborate choreography to avoid the poles. They also struggle to assemble the scaffolding poles into some kind of structure. The intent of this strategy is revealed in a coup de théâtre at the end of the performance when the structure is flipped through 90 degrees to reveal the form of a house: roof, door, windows, picket fence. The production's narrative has consisted of arguments between the performers over their differences. These differences appear to be resolved in this construction of a space of inclusion. The frame of the house that rises up and appears before us is, however, revealed to be no more than the abstraction of a house, the mirage of a "normal" home. The production implies that however much the disabled performers struggle to access the domestic space it will never be hospitable to them.

The company has over many years questioned the spatiality of the performer/audience, disabled/non-disabled relationship. In *small metal objects* (2005) the audience is located in seats in the middle of a public space in which it becomes as much a spectacle as the



performers. The audience is atomized, each spectator provided with individual headsets, through which they hear the arrival of the performers before they see them. The performers enter the public space surrounded by people going about their business. Like many disabled people, they are at once highly visible - marked by the difference of their appearance or movement - and invisible – discounted in the daily rush of public space.

In *Food Court* (2009) the spatiality of the proscenium stage is rendered blurred, at times indiscernible, through the use of scrims and lighting. Figures appear hazy and indistinct in a theatricalization of Turrell's concept of the Ganzfeld (Grehan and Eckersall, 2013. p.242)

In *Ganesh versus the Third Reich* (2011) this aesthetic of indeterminacy is manifest in the switching between three levels of narrative – the mythical: the epic tale of Ganesh and the swastika; the historical: a narrative of Dr Mengele's fascination with twins, freaks, and abnormalities; and the self-reflexive narrative of the company "devising" and "rehearsing" the current performance text. The theatrical space is repeatedly deconstructed and reconstructed, never certain.

In *Lady Eats Apple* (2016) – a title referencing the mythical space of the Garden of Eden – the audience enters the theatre through a large plastic blow-up structure. The discomfiting of the audience culminates in a full-blown coup de théâtre when, later, the blow-up structure deflates to reveal the audience sitting on the stage of the theatre, the performers up in the gods.

In *The Shadow Whose Prey the Hunter Becomes* (2019) there is a confounding of the agora and the *theatron* in an unspecified "public meeting." The production radically undermines what is meant by public space and having a voice. The performers challenge the company's own use of captioning – language deferred in space and time: from mouth to back of the stage. They do not want to have the difference of their speech glossed over for the easy consumption of a non-disabled audience.

### **Different Light Theatre and Takiwatanga – to Each their own Space and Time**

My response to Back to Back's work is informed by my own 20 years of collaboration with the learning-disabled artists of Different Light Theatre in Christchurch, New Zealand. I have become aware of the difficulty for such performers accessing the conventional "kairos" or good timing of rhetoric, the unconventionality of the performers' ownership of the space, and the need to accommodate different temporalities and spatialities in performance. The Māori word for autism is *takiwatanga* – to each their own space and time. There is a need to let time take time – to accommodate what disabled scholars' term "crip time" and Margaret Price (2015) "crip space-time":

What then is crip space time? infusing the disruptive potential of disability into normative spaces and interactions. (Price, 2015, p. 269)

## Making Spaces for Learning-Disabled Theatre

Over 20 years, Different Light has moved from the practice of community theatre, dramatic and post-dramatic theatre into site-specific and immersive performances, in short, into different spaces. This has recently included academic space - an online presentation at the Performance Philosophy Problems conference at the University of the Arts, Helsinki. After the New Zealand lockdowns, the company performed in-person for the first time in three years at the University of Auckland. An account of the difficulties of this re-staging forms the basis of a jointly authored article in *Performance Philosophy Journal* (Gibson, J. et al, 2024). Different Light performers have also worked in collaboration with the degree students of NASDA (National Academy of Singing and Dramatic Art) on a production of *Faust.Us* (2023), loosely based on Marlowe's text. Disabled and non-disabled performers shared rehearsal, backstage, and communal meal spaces. In all of these projects different aesthetic, political and affective spaces opened up affirming the benefit of accommodating the creativity of learning-disabled artists.

Different Light are currently heading towards another difficult space with the project "*Ancient Greek Theatre and Intellectual Disability*" a proposed festival of learning-disabled theatre in Athens/Epidaurus in collaboration with Margarita VTC (Athens), Back to Back, Teatr 21 (Warsaw), Créahm (Brussels), Theatre HORA (Zurich) and Blue Apple and HiJinx (UK). We are all trying to find spaces of collaboration - in the texts, in learning about each other, in online dialogue, and in the many unforeseen felicities and epiphanies of these encounters. The paradox is that in seeking spatial expansion for learning disabled theatre in international collaboration there is still, crucially, a need to accommodate, acknowledge, and celebrate the difference of disability, including the "constraints, failures, and losses" (Dokumaci, 2024, p.7). From the daily struggles and scant victories of Mary Miller to the global collaborations of learning-disabled theatre we need to acknowledge *both* the intransigence and the hard-won beauty and dignity of disability in performance space.

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## 38

## Performing Dissent in the Streets of Globalisation: The Right to the City

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### Abstract

My interest in this essay lies with practices that appear to embody or to enact claims to the right of the global-urban fabric by protesting different facets of neoliberal capitalism's violence and its counterparts: patriarchy, colonialism, ecological destruction. The main example I will be looking at is the activist performance *Un Violador en tu Camino (A Rapist in your Path)* by Chilean collective LASTESIS that was first performed in Valparaíso (2019) and was subsequently repeated in many cities around the globe. As neoliberal urbanisation strengthens inequalities and proliferates experiences of precarity, this performance creates spaces for female bodies and femininities; spaces where particular kinds of violence might be resisted. I propose a reading of this performance framed by Wendy Brown's call for a re-invigoration of radical politics away from "Left Melancholy" which inhabits spaces "not in hopefulness but in its marginality and failure" (Brown, 1999, p. 26). In this context I ask: *how might the performance intervention launched by LASTESIS rehearse a renewed right to urban life and in so doing show us a way out of Left Melancholy? What kinds of geographies and ecologies do such dissenting practices produce and inhabit?*

**Keywords:** LASTESIS, public performance, protest, neoliberalism, patriarchy

### The Right to the City

In her 1999 essay *Resisting Left Melancholy*, Brown (1999) wonders "what is entailed in throwing off the melancholic and conservative habits of the Left to invigorate it with a radical (...) critical and visionary spirit again?" (p. 26). I begin with Brown's question as I am drawn to this idea of a re-invigoration of politics and the radical critical spirit this might include, but not as a way of shaking the "putative leftist" out of "a mournful (...) attachment to a feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike" (1999, p. 21-2). Rather, what

interests me here is the way it engages with Stuart Hall's proposition that a radical critique to the neoliberal project needs to be intersectional. Twenty-five years after it was first posed, I return to Brown's question in a context where Friedman's argument that free-market capitalism ensures "co-ordination [between social agents] without coercion" (2002, p. 13) has become common sense – in many ways having instituted what Fukuyama called the end of history (1989). Arguments that, as Harvey has shown, disregard the effects of capital accumulation that turn the idea of freedom "into a mere advocacy of free market enterprise" (2005, p. 37). Arguments, moreover, that enable what Bourdieu calls "*institutionalized precariousness*" and the violence that produces it to become the dominant forces in social relations (2003, p. 29).

My aim here is to trace practices mapping a dissenting ecology that unmasks the different facets of free-market capitalism's systemic violence; practices, moreover, that map an intersectional perspective and analysis. Such practices have emerged in response to the multi-faceted post-2008 crises and have, by and large, occurred beyond (or outside of) the institutionalised political project of the Left: the various local manifestations of the global wave of occupations of squares and other public spaces, for example, that took place between 2011-2013, but also more recent activist practices that seem to take shape around three different yet interrelated forms of violence exercised by globalised capitalism: patriarchal violence, colonisation and ecological destruction. Such practices claim their performers' rights to visibility, safety and participation in shaping our shared world – and they do so in public urban spaces. A central argument I will pursue, then, is that the practices shaping this ecology map globalization's discontents by claiming and re-invigorating the right to the (global-)city. The right to the city, Lefebvre writes, "is like a cry and demand" that "can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*" (1996, p. 158); or, as Harvey re-formulates it, as a cry for the "existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city" and a demand for a "less alienated, more meaningful and playful but (...) conflictual and dialectical" urban life (2012). This right is rehearsed through human needs, encounters and desires that do not rely on the political economies of neoliberal globalisation and their technocratic rationality.

In order to unpick certain aspects of this discussion I would like to focus on the public performance *Un Violador en tu Camino (A Rapist in your Path)* launched by Chilean collective LASTESIS in 2019.<sup>17</sup> I ask: *How might Un Violador en tu Camino rehearse a renewed right to urban life by devising and performing dissenting ways of inhabiting public*

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<sup>17</sup> Other examples that may be included in this ecology are the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol or the direct actions of Just Stop Oil activists that use vandalism as political tool.



*spaces again and anew? What “cries and demands” against globalisation’s violence does it stage? How might such practices rehearse aspects of a radical political project?*

### ***Un Violador en tu Camino* – LASTESIS**

Conceived and staged by Chilean feminist collective LASTESIS in 2019, *Un Violador en tu Camino* was a participatory performance that aimed to demonstrate that patriarchal violence is “structural and organized” (Pinzauti, 2023, p. 152), by way of a song whose opening lines proclaimed: “Patriarchy is our judge/That imprisons us at birth/And our punishment/Is the violence you DON’T see” (Serafini, 2020, p. 291). Moreover, to enable participation, the performance included a simple choreography, using gestures signifying (or pointing at) state institutions that reinforce patriarchal violence or referencing specific practices of the state institutions that violate the female body. Its first iteration in Plaza Sotomayor in Valparaíso on 20 November 2019 was part of an artistic event titled *Fuego: acciones en cemento* (*Fire: actions in cement*). As actor Katty Lopez – one of *Fuego*’s instigators – proposes,

(t)he idea was for the performing arts to go out from the theatres to the street, in the context of social protest (...): to cut, to stop, to shake, to illuminate, seeking to make things that are also more joyful as if to say that we are not afraid. (Pinzauti, 2023, p. 153)

Considering that this movement of art toward public spaces was occurring in the midst of a protest movement that became known as “estallido social” (social awakening) (Pinzauti, 2023, p. 148), one can understand this performance’s deep roots in the ongoing social unrest around injustice and inequality.

After its second iteration in front of the court of justice in Plaza des Armas in Santiago on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (November 25, 2019), a video recording of the performance went viral and many feminist collectivities around the globe re-staged it. *Un Violador en tu Camino* has, thus, acquired a life of its own and, as Pinzauti asserts, LASTESIS “think about [the performance] as a porous tool that lives on thanks to other women, queer people, and in general transfeminist collectives all over the world who readapt it to their local situation, speaking about their specific problems and struggles” (2023, p. 161). The global reach of *Un Violador en tu Camino* seems to mirror the movement of globalisation’s cultural products. In this case, however, not only the performance protested systemic injustices on a global scale but also its proliferation occurred outside globalisation’s institutional structures – or, as Liinason proposes, it created a “broad cartography of multiple violences with overlaps or connections as nodes across contexts emerged, and narratives linked violence against women and feminized bodies with police and state violence, dispossession, and extraction of value” (Liinason, 2024, p. 432).

Not only did it map, in other words, multiple instances of gendered violence across the globe illustrating differences and overlaps, it also articulated the connections between this kind of violence to other instances of globalised capitalism's systemic violence.

Finally, considering the settings where the various iterations of *Un Violador en tu Camino* were staged is equally important in further emphasising the connections that this performance articulated: the courthouse in Santiago, but also in New York while Weinstein's trial was happening inside; the Estadio Nacional in Santiago, which was used during Pinochet's dictatorship as a place of incarceration and torture; the Zocalo in Mexico City; the Eiffel Tower in Paris; and the parliament in Athens. These are a few of the places where it was performed – all symbolically significant in their respective contexts. Apart from the fact that such (monumental) sites offer greater visibility, I would like to propose that the re-enactment of *Un Violador en tu Camino* in sites deeply invested with institutional value and meaning, and more specifically invested with monumentality, lay claims on the meaning of monumentality – or even the very essence of capitalist urbanism as it is manifested in monumentality. If the monument, as per Lefebvre's analysis, "is the seat of an institution and colonises the space around it" (2003, p. 21), this performance claims the site as way of decolonising it. If, as Lefebvre continues, the monument controls and brings people together (2003), this performance sought to bring people together differently – beyond or against the institutional structures (of patriarchy) that create space as monumental. If, to put it differently, "monumental space makes power felt," as Nield suggests (2012, p. 225), this performance rehearses defiance to such affects of patriarchal power by willfully performing Other, repressed memories.

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion**

Ahmed writes that "[W]illfulness can be (...) a gift relayed between parts, a gift that allows noncompliant or resistant action to be carried out without intent" (2014, p. 175-6). The performing subjects in *Un Violador en tu Camino* assemble a global archive of willfulness in public: they are subjects who refuse to remain quiet or to stay out of sight and in so doing reverse the affects of power. Yet, there is little indication that LASTESIS had any intention of creating an archive of patriarchal violence or a performance of dissent on a global scale. They relayed a gift in which one can begin to recognise a wilful ecology, whose parts decolonise, even if temporarily, the global urban fabric from the logic of (patriarchal, colonial, industrial) monumentality and the kinds of violence it imposes: an ecology inhabited by willful subjects that perform renewed claims to urban life in the streets of globalization.

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## 39

## Indigenous Artistic Collectives as a Radical Place of Resistance (R.I.S.E, Winter Count, Postcommodity i yəhaw')

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### Abstract

The United States has 574 federally recognized ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse Indigenous communities. In the 2020 Census, 9.7 million people identified as American Indians (AI) or Alaska Native (AN). Recent years have shown that these communities are exposed to increasing economic, and political threats related to limited access to health care and education. In reaction to the hardships of everyday life more and more Indigenous artistic collectives are emerging, on one hand, building a community, and on the other becoming a radical space of resistance. Their art is combined with activism, aesthetic activities with political acts. Together, the creators have a greater impact and, thanks to relational-artistic, horizontal, non-hierarchical activities, they have the opportunity to introduce real changes to the social fabric. In my paper, I headline how the activities of several Indigenous collectives (R.I.S.E, Winter Count, Postcommodity i yəhaw'), and their site-specific art have become both a space of resistance and a place to build Indigenous identity. I refer to Indigenous methodologies (e.g. a methodology based on sounds and spatial structure—*CauseLines* which is a process based on studying the horizon line and landscape, and building scores and stories based on them) and the theories of Indigenous researchers concerning postcolonialism and decolonization issues. I consider how Indigenous art can become a place of resistance, transformation, and change, but also a healing space. I analyze the connections of the Indigenous body with the land of their ancestors, as well as the violence of artificially created borders and the exploitation of natural resources. I present different decolonized curatorial processes that are trying to fight the present and create another Indigenous future through art.

*Keywords: site-specific art, artistic collectives, place of resistance, Indigenous methodologies, R.I.S.E, Winter Count, Postcommodity, yəhaw', postcolonialism, decolonization*

## Indigenous Artistic Collectives

In the United States, there are 574 federally recognized diverse Indigenous communities. Recent years have shown that these communities are exposed to increasing threats, both economic, political and related to limited access to health care and education. In reaction to the hardships of everyday life more and more Indigenous artistic collectives are emerging, on one hand, building a community, and on the other becoming a radical space of resistance. Art is combined with activism, aesthetic activities with political acts. Together, the creators have a greater impact and, thanks to relational-artistic, horizontal, non-hierarchical activities, they have the opportunity to introduce real changes to the social fabric. As Krawczyk (2018) writes in the text *Human-inhuman: the collective as a research method and artistic practice*:

What in most cases connects the ideas and practice of this type of collectivity is an attempt to create a space or a specific event outside the systemic conditions, outside the mainstream modes of thinking and practicing culture. These initiatives are primarily focused on experimenting and implementing on a small, local scale of potential procedures for reactivating forms of social involvement (p. 143).

In this text, I will present the activities of several Indigenous collectives, whose art has become both a space of resistance and a place to build Indigenous identity on a local and global scale.

### Winter Count Collective

Winter Count is an artistic collective consisting of eight members: Ginger Dunnill, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Dylan McLaughlin, Merritt Johnson, Nicholas Galanin, Rob Lundberg, Demian Dinéyazhi, Laura Ortman. The collective is multi-racial, and its name comes from pictographic calendars, traditionally created on buffalo skins, commemorating the most important events of a given clan or tribe. According to contemporary researchers, it is also a unique archive for climate change (Bressan, 2017).

The collective's artistic work is saturated in the Indigenous philosophy that the earth is nobody's property, it is an independent existence, a space that we should care for. Their actions are not only political manifestos, but also poetic reflections on borders, violence and Indigenousness. Their goal is the real change.

The Winter Count has created its own research methodology based on sounds and spatial structure—Cause Lines. It is a process based on studying the horizon line and landscape, and building scores and stories based on them. The collective takes aerial photos of Indigenous places whose landscape is threatened by industry. The lines of rivers, trees, roads and pipelines create the sound score. In the video *We Are in Crisis* from 2016,



we can see images of the landscape next to the Oceti Sakowin camp destroyed by roads and oil rigs.

Another project created by the CauseLines methodology is the sound piece *Coherence/Interference* which emphasizes the interdependence between the Indigenous bodies and their soil. The audience/participants are the creative part of this performance—they are the ones who actively generate the sounds as a part of the installation.

## Postcommodity

The Indigenous collective Postcommodity was founded in 2007 and currently has two members: Cristóbal Martínez (Mestizo) and Kade L. Twist (Cherokee). Their installations were presented, among others, at the 18th Sydney Biennial in Australia (2012), at the Whitney Biennial in New York (2017), at Documenta 14, in Kassel, Germany and Athens, Greece (2017)

The collective's name refers to the “commodity era” of the Native American art trade at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Their work refers to the colonial act of partitioning the lands of the Americas, which took place without respecting traditional Indigenous trade routes.

In 2009, Postcommodity created the installation *Do You Remember When?* inside the Arizona State University Art Museum. The work consists of a cut-out concrete section of the museum floor that has been exposed and placed on a pedestal, revealing how the institution's foundations were built on Indigenous land. From this hole emerges the looping path of the Pee Posh Indigenous tribe. This installation is a symbolic portal, a space of Indigenous transformation, revealing the museum's colonial foundations.

In 2015, Postcommodity created the community project: *The Repellent Fence*. They arrived at Agua Prieta, Sonora (Mexico) and Douglas, Arizona (USA) in 2012. For three years they worked intensively with both of these border towns. The metaphorical cross-border city “Douglas / Agua Prieta” was created and prepared for a joint Indigenous ceremony, during which there was a symbolic reunion of this divided community. The created installation consisted of 26 balloons fixed to the ground which “stitches the peoples of the Americas together—symbolically demonstrating the interconnectedness of the Western Hemisphere by recognizing the land, Indigenous peoples, history, relationships, movement and communication” (Postcommodity, 2015). The most important result of the project was the transforming meeting, generating new threads of connections and relationships. The aim of this action was to create a safe, fuller and healthier living environment of the borderland.

In 2016, Postcommodity created the video installation *A Very Long Line*, presented at the Whitney Biennial in New York. The installation is built from four screens: each screen displays a fence, filmed in motion, and the video creates a claustrophobic feeling of being cornered and trapped. The image is accompanied by a disturbing noise, reminiscent of processed train sound w(Postcommodity, 2016).

### **R.I.S.E. (Radical Indigenous Survivance and Empowerment)**

R.I.S.E. (Radical Indigenous Survivance<sup>18</sup> and Empowerment) is an artistic Indigenous collective founded in 2010. The founder and one of the members of the R.I.S.E. is Demian DinéYazhi a transdisciplinary artist from the Tódích'íí'nii (Bitter Water) and Naasht'ézhí Tábaqhá (Water's Edge) clans from Diné (Navajo) (Broken Boxes Podcast, 2015).

The first individual exhibition of the R.I.S.E. collective: *A Nation is a Massacre* was presented in 2018 at Pioneer Works cultural center (Yassmin et al., 2019) in Red Hook, New York. It was created in response to the growing domination of white supremacy in the United States. The exhibition featured manifestos and slogans: "Your freedom is based on genocide and settler violence", "Homophobia Transphobia", "Details are macabre & American & as patriotic as gun violence & rape & mass murder". *A Nation is a Massacre* made the public aware of the centuries-long violence against Indigenous bodies. The next edition of the exhibition took place at the King Street station in cooperation with the yəhaw' collective. Visitors were asked to bring their own T-shirts, handbags, patches, flags to be printed on with the slogans from the exhibition. Thus, they became an extension of the activity of R.I.S.E.—walking billboards.

R.I.S.E. is not a typical art group, but rather a flexible network of artists. In the R.I.S.E. library there are numerous texts by women and queer authors, which shows the intersectional approach of the collective, emphasizing the need to include queer feminist critique of heteropatriarchy in the overall project of countering colonial oppression—the struggle of the discrimination of minorities (queer, women, Natives, Black, Brown etc.) by the colonial white heteropatriarchy.

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<sup>18</sup> "Survivance" names the conjunction between resistance and survival—calling attention to the fact that not only have Indigenous peoples survived the genocidal ambitions of settler colonialism, but have continued to enliven their cultures in fluid, critical and generative ways. The term thus resists the static overtones of "survival" and instead emphasises the ways in which Indigenous peoples have created counter-poses/positions to those that are marked out for them by the settler-state through stereotypes, popular culture and national mythology.  
<https://decolonialdictionary.wordpress.com/2021/04/15/survivance/>

## yəhaw'

In 2017 yəhaw'—an artistic Indigenous collective was founded by three artists: Tail (Cherokee Nation), Rector (Choctaw and Seminole) and Kahlon. The word yəhaw' comes from an Indigenous story that the Coast Salish tell about several neighboring villages where the inhabitants spoke different languages but shared the same land. This word defines a joint action, an activity based on cooperation beyond divisions (Hilbert, n.d.).

yəhaw's mission is to improve the mental and emotional health of Indigenous people by creating art, and building community. It is an artistic platform, on one hand, intended for creators of Indigenous origin, on the other, it is radically inclusive. It invites Urban Native peoples, Coast Salish artists and Afro-Indigenous artists, as well as Indigenous Latinos and Indigenous queers (LGBTQ+). yəhaw' applies a decolonized curatorial process. During the implementation of online exhibitions, all authors who apply for participation receive remuneration, which does not depend on whether the work is finally shown. Often the group accepts all submitted works.

yəhaw' has recently bought a land. The parcel includes over 500 trees, and it has access to Mapes Creek. It aims to create a “welcoming interdisciplinary hub where Indigenous creatives can connect with each other and the earth” (Hua, 2023) They want to take their time to really get to know the land, and to work on restoring the native ecology. “In Indigenous design methodology, co-creation is one of the key components. Being intentional, thoughtful, transparent, and inclusive; those are all Indigenous values in the design process” (Hua, 2023).

## Radical Support Space

The Indigenous art collectives presented above differ from each other, but share a few common features. These include radical inclusiveness, decolonization of the discourse around Indigenous identity, and horizontal cooperation. Groups exhibit together, while the number of their members is constantly changing. Neither group has a leader, and the collectives work on the basis of non-hierarchical cooperation.

All groups combine activism with art, but they do it in different ways. The first two: R.I.S.E. and yəhaw' focus on the political aspect of art—real change is important to them and art is one of the tools to build a healthy Indigenous community. Postcommodity and Winter Count also focus on creating a space of resistance (combating the climate or migration crisis, pointing out the creation of violent borders, destroying ancestral land, fighting for respect for the identity of Indigenous peoples regardless of their nationality), but they put more emphasis on the artistic form, avoiding simple, propaganda messages. , They create complex metaphors, performing objects or multi-level artistic activities. This

comparison is not intended to evaluate any of the methods chosen by the artists. It is to show their diversity: from propaganda directness, street activities, strong colors, slogans and performative actions in alternative gallery spaces, to complex, multi-level artistic works, combining various media, from performance to installation, video or sound compositions often performed in public museums, or during large artistic events, such as biennials.

All four collectives carry out activities related to the place, emphasizing the importance of the story and the connections of the Indigenous body with the land of their ancestors, as well as the violence of artificially created borders and the exploitation of natural resources. In the activities of the collectives, one can notice an emphasis on partnership relations with the land, protection of both the Indigenous bodies and the destroyed and exploited body of the Earth. As Martinez Luna, Zapotec anthropologist, in a conversation with the artist Abaroa says:

As a natural epistemology, communality understands the being as an element that derives from the land, from the people who inhabit this land, from what the people do on that land and of course, what they achieve through their natural movement; in other words, it is the result of everything that surrounds them. In this sense, human beings are just another species, not the owners of the land, nor its possessors, but a creature that derives from this reality. (Luna, 2021, p. 105)

In the activities of collectives, resilience and resistance intertwine, and groups present alternative forms of building relationships based on performative activities referring to the typical Native American worldview of continual emergence, becoming, constant change, transformation and manifestation, rather than defining, closing and creating a hermetic whole. They create street actions in urban spaces, build a community by creating relational seams in non-obvious places. They invite outsiders to participate and interact. The performativity of their actions is not revealed through the body, as the matter of art, but in the conviction that art not only describes reality, but changes it. It manifests itself in rituals, demonstrations, community activities and in the acts of repeating a given work or meeting. The performances of the collectives cross borders, disturb the existing order and are trying to create a new better reality.

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## 40

**Captive Performativities:  
Art and Body in the Carceral Context****Ece Canlı**

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**Abstract**

This presentation explores the intersection of performance art and carceral spaces, focusing on the role of the body and spatiality in addressing the criminal justice system and its contemporary global apparatuses, including policing, surveillance, and institutional punishment – a.k.a. incarceration. While punitive regimes have predominantly garnered attention from prison abolition activists, artists have also addressed issues like mass incarceration, socio-political identity divisions, and carceral capitalism, which disproportionately impact racial minorities, marginalized groups, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Drawing from personal practice and contemporary examples, this text examines how performance art critiques systemic surveillance, hypervisibility, and the invisibility of prisons and prisoners. It categorises artistic interventions into four approaches: *From Outside to Outside*, showcasing external narratives on incarceration (1); *From Inside to Outside*, amplifying the voices of incarcerated individuals (2); *From Outside to Inside*, reclaiming former prisons as sites of memory and justice-making (3); and *From/To Inside-out*, navigating blurred boundaries in occupied territories (4). By interrogating “penal spectatorship,” systemic power structures and “carceral aesthetics,” it positions performance art as a potent medium for disrupting the carceral continuum and fostering justice-oriented imaginaries. It argues that such art transforms confinement into an embodied critique, exposing the performative boundaries of power and amplifying abolitionist and anti-colonial calls for systemic change.

**Keywords:** penal spectatorship; performance art; carceral aesthetics; arts in prison



## Captive Performativities

It was about fifteen years ago in Sweden, as part of the queer feminist performance collective T.I.R. that I began examining the meaning of my staged body and performance as a simultaneous exercise of aesthetics and politics. I started considering the body as a main vessel for both re-enactment and undoing of identities and ground nto address the issue of justice in situ, vis-à-vis the onlooker – which is inherent in most performance art practices that challenge societal norms and shed light on what is “untold,” “overlooked,” and “underrepresented.”

### Figure 1

*Oubliette (2022), Ece Canlı, performance still*



One of the most “untold,” “overlooked,” and “underrepresented” spaces and people today are arguably prisons and prisoners – as the current subject matter of my research shows. Therefore, the question *How can performance art, with such a spatial and corporeal immediacy, address these invisible spaces and bodies?* has increasingly become of interest to me, especially considering the paradox of spectatorship in these realities: On the one hand, prisons are systematically hidden in urban peripheries, rendered “invisible” in the social and spatial fabric of cities, to the extent that the carceral space has become alien and almost fictional to those who are free and out (Frödén, 2021). Prisoners, already dehumanised, are further marginalised as they remain out of sight and mind. On the other

hand, techno-punitive apparatuses of social control including electronic monitoring, CCTV surveillance, location and biometric tracking, and DNA and risk analysis render marginalised communities, and eventually society at large, hypervisible to authorities, which expands the prison space to daily life, while turning us into penal spectators (Brown, 2009).

Penal spectatorship, coined by Brown (2009), refers to observing and perpetuating the ideologies and practices of punishment from a distance. It involves “free people” looking at the other’s entrapment and punishment while maintaining a sense of detachment, external authority and judgement. It is amplified particularly by popular visual representations through, for instance, true crime documentaries, TV series, films or guided tours of prisons museums. Such depictions, from which individuals derive pleasure and satisfaction by externalising “the criminal” from a safe distance, often fictionalise and even fetishize prison life, reinforcing power structures and binary thinking about good and evil, while obscuring the complexity of harm and flattening the multifaceted nature of harmdoing (Brown, 2009). These dynamics, hence, make alternative representations that would challenge conventional penal spectatorship even more necessary and urgent.

With these concerns and the global escalation of mass incarceration in mind, artists and activists increasingly seek aesthetic forms and sensibilities that reveal the complexity of confinement and justice-making, foregrounding both the body (prisoner and performer) and the space (prison and stage). Performance art steps in here with its directness and blatant potential. Below, I propose a categorisation of approaches – or HOWs – illustrated with contemporary examples, through which performance is being used in addressing carcerality.<sup>19</sup>

### **From Outside to Outside (1)**

Many artists outside prisons create works addressing incarceration for audiences outside. They often transform passive penal spectatorship into, what I call, an *active witnessing of justice-making* by bringing prison narratives, historical facts and even juridical documents to the public eye. My work falls into this category, including performances like *Up Your Ass* (2011-2012) (based on Valerie Solanas’ legendary *S.C.U.M Manifesto* and the stories of executed serial killer Aileen Wuornos), *oubliette* (2022) (Figure 1) and *INVAGUS* (2022) (inspired by Iranian poet Forough Farrokhzad and Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, arrested and murdered under police custody) (Figure 2).

Other examples include Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo’s performance at *Artpace, America’s Family Prison* (2008), which exposed the criminalisation of immigration and private prison companies like CAA. Using her \$8,000 residency funds, she built a gallery

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<sup>19</sup> In doing so, I will use “inside” to refer to prisons and “outside” as the so-called “free world.”

cell and lived in it with her family for 24 hours, turning incarceration into a visceral spectacle for visitors peering through a small window.<sup>20</sup>

## Figure 2

*INVAGUS (2022), Ece Canlı, performance still.*



Similarly, Nigerian artist Jelili Atiku's *Ewawo – The Prisoner* (2005) used “installation theatre,” or “gorilla tactics” as he calls it, to simulate Nigerian prison conditions, constructing a cell-like space from university materials. Ironically, he was arrested in 2017 for public disturbance after a street performance, highlighting the risks artists face when addressing carceral themes.<sup>21</sup>

## From Inside to Outside (2)

There has also been an increasing number of carceral projects worldwide bringing artworks from inside to outside. American curator Nicole Fleetwood (2020) calls this kind of work “carceral aesthetics” which refers to the genuine artistic representations of the prison system through the experiences of incarcerated individuals as first-hand narrators. This concept explores how artists behind bars challenge the prison-industrial complex (Davis, 2023),

<sup>20</sup> Retrieved June 10, 2024, <https://www.reginajosegalindo.com/en/americas-family-prison-2/>

<sup>21</sup> Retrieved June 10, 2024, <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/performative-practice-is-their-own-heritage/>

using their bodies as vessels to challenge policing and blur the line between the “invisibility” and “hypervisibility” of surveilled communities.

Most performance works coming from prisons serve as testimonies, including Kirsten Leenaars’ performance and music video work *Present Tense* (2019), made with *Circles & Ciphers*’ hip-hop-infused restorative justice practice. The video interweaves personal and communal stories with artist-made props and was developed through a multi-day community event, where members of *Circles & Ciphers* co-created the music video, providing the viewer with multiple points of connection and the lived effects of the current justice system.<sup>22</sup>

The opera *TRACTION* (2022), based on Homer’s *Odyssey*, also bridges this divide. Performed in Lisbon, Portugal, it involved four professional singers and sixteen amateur young prisoners aged from sixteen to twenty-one from Leiria’s “school prison.” The weeks-long co-creation process allowed incarcerated individuals to contribute their perspectives, disrupting opera’s elitist traditions and amplifying marginalised voices.<sup>23</sup>

### From Outside to Inside (3)

Some projects open ex-prisons’ doors to performance artists as a way of reactivating these once cruel spaces differently, commemorating past injustices and reclaiming narratives. *Artangel’s Inside: Artists and Writers at Reading Prison* (2016), for example, invited renowned artists to perform in the UK’s notorious *Reading Prison*, where Oscar Wilde also served two years in solitary confinement for his sexual orientation. *Artangel’s* initiative included live readings of Wilde’s texts by notable performers such as Patti Smith, connecting past and present struggles for justice.<sup>24</sup>

Dublin’s *Kilmainham Gaol* similarly opened as a performance space in 2016, featuring artists like Dr. Katherine Nolan, who explored women’s suffering in Ireland’s national struggle.<sup>25</sup> Globally, universities, NGOs and art collectives use performance arts in prisons as a way of fostering rehabilitation and community healing through well-known genres like “Theatre in Prison.” Artists and cultural workers visit prisons regularly, teach acting and guide prisoners in rehearsing and staging works, showcasing art’s transformative power in confinement.

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<sup>22</sup> Retrieved July 1, 2024, <https://www.kirstenleenaars.com/present-tense>

<sup>23</sup> Retrieved July 2, 2024, <https://www.traction-project.eu/opera-in-a-prison-with-traction-technology/>

<sup>24</sup> Retrieved June 24, 2024, <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/inside/>

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved July 1, 2024, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/kilmainham-gaol-opens-its-doors-to-performance-artists-1.2656470>

## From/To Inside-out (4)

This category addresses situations where the boundaries between inside and outside blur, as seen in occupied territories like Palestine, where entire cities function as open-air prisons (Chomsky, 2012; Kilgore, 2022). For Palestinian people, whether they are on their land or in the diaspora, the experience of being constantly surveilled and confined is a constant punishment; therefore, artworks dealing with such issues can be considered both besieged and freed simultaneously. In extreme conditions of occupation and displacement, where the body becomes the only currency, its performativity when expressed through art, transforms into a living manifestation rather than a symbolic act.

Palestinian artist Nidaa Badwan's *100 Days of Solitude* (2014-2016) exemplifies this overlap.<sup>26</sup> Having been sequestered both by the Israeli regime and arrested as well as treated violently by Hamas in 2013, Badwan confined herself to her nine-square-meter family home in Deir al-Balah, in the dark, and documented her self-imprisonment, as a psychological escapism from violence and uncertainty and as a way of finding a refuge to work, cook, live, and create safely as a female artist under occupation. Her daily documentation transformed her confinement into a powerful statement on autonomy and resilience.

In stark contrast, Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar went to the streets of Wall Street in New York City in 2018, with his performance protest *Blood for Sale*, to sell 50 units of 10-milliliter vials of his blood from a cooler tied around his neck. The prices were changing based on the stock values of America's fifteen most prominent defence contractors with direct connections to the 1948 Palestine War and the forced expulsion of two-thirds of the indigenous population in Palestine by Zionist militias.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

The examples proliferate but to conclude, the abolitionist and anti-colonial approach in performance art is, overall, to practice these uni- and bi-directions, aiming at the "upside down," while challenging the "carceral continuum" and penal spectatorship dynamics. As Jackie Wang (2018, p.41) notes in *Carceral Capitalism*, "invisible forms of power are circulating all around us, circumscribing and sorting us into invisible cells that confine us sometimes without our knowing." Performance art might, at the very least, make those cells discernible, demonstrating that the distinction between who is inside and who is outside is as performative as power itself.

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<sup>26</sup> Retrieved June 23, 2024, <https://www.postmastersart.com/archive/badwan16/badwan16.html>

<sup>27</sup> Retrieved June 30, 2024, <https://open-source-gallery.org/khaled-jarrar/>

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## 41

## Dasein Design: Eco-anxiety, Platform Performativity, and Making Cures

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### Abstract

Bodies exist *in medias res*. Platform performativity — cybernetic imperatives to perform or else — operates across the three ecologies of self, society, and environment through diverse sociotechnical systems, producing transmediated performances that extend yet challenge logocentric power forms of Platonic and disciplinary platforms (eg, the rules and roles of schools and theatres, classical and modern spacetimes). The content of platform performativity is eco-anxiety, trickle-down angst triggered by climate change, legitimization crises, and pandemic viruses cascading through bodies young and old, human and animal. Hence, experience design. Collaborative making cures combine direct communication of information and indirect evocation of transformational experiences among different stakeholder groups, including partners and designers. The form of platform performativity is *Gestell* or positionality of subjects and objects, while its poesis or making is *dasein design*, eccentric attunement beyond modern critique and human expression. Making cures cure perfumatively, as shamans cure with incense, beyond therapy. Wrangling site-specificity (*da*, there) and being thrown (ek-static *sein*), dasein design's detouring of positionality resonates with applied research in environmental theatre (Schechner), performance design (Harslov), event-space (Hannah), and notably, design for dasein (Wendt). Overlaying design thinking with a general theory of performance, StudioLab's dasein design unfolds through participatory action research and design projects that match media designers with community partners working in education, healthcare, and environmental and human rights. Co-designing with Health Access Connect in Uganda and its network of rural clinics, design teams negotiate messianic narratives, data storytelling, and KPIs (key performance indicators) while tapping a geology of morals whose restorations of behaviour run deep. At stake are transvaluations of efficacy, efficiency, effectiveness—and experience writ large. Between calls to adventure and action, responses vary. Conversion of performative eco-anxiety solicits perfumative lifedeath, making paranoia metanoia. Making doesn't always take — this (what?) may be rare — even as it gives.

*Keywords:* platform performativity, eco-anxiety, pluriversal design, social media, transmedia knowledge, participatory action research, community engagement, strategic storytelling, making cures, geology of morals

## Program

StudioLab's media design projects at Cornell grapple with performativity, eco-anxiety, and dasein design. Student teams work online with NGOs and nonprofits biweekly each semester. These community-based design projects are neither art nor critique yet are creative and critical and respond to traumatic situations in the United States and abroad. I report on these projects as *making cures* in a world challenged forth by platform performativity and eco-anxiety.

### Platform Performativity and Plato's Fight Club

Srnicek theorizes platform capitalism as a dominant mode of production (e.g., gig economy, attention economy) associated with social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, work platforms such as Zoom and Slack, and transaction platforms such as Uber and Airbnb (Srnicek 2017). I define platform performativity as our contemporary power-knowledge matrix, overlapping sociotechnical platforms built atop modern disciplinary institutions, themselves built atop colonized indigenous grounds worldwide. As Descartes updated Plato's interpretation of being as *eidos* as subjective *idea*, its mapping of the world by some 24,000 academies constitutes Descartography. Reality is Descartographic, both epistemologically and ontologically, a world composed of subjects and objects ruled by methods and schools that function as postmodern Plato's Fight Clubs (McKenzie, 2019; McKenzie 2017).

StudioLab focuses less on opposing modern alphabetic discipline and postmodern digital performativity and more on their spatial cohabitation and synchronic operations, as well as their incommensurabilities. Fragmenting and multiplying oral petite narratives and literate grand narratives globally, platform performativity is itself post-human, post-Western, aligned as much with difference and alterity as identity and sameness, drawing on knowledges of shaman and the Buddha as much as Plato and Descartes.

Zooming out, Platonism and its academies constitute Platformism 101, for logocentrism has for millennia transmediated the world into alphabetic platforms of books, archives, academies, and theatres—and now files, databases, social media, and mobile devices. Thus, in addition to conceptualizing platform performativity strategically by tracing its contours theoretically, we will also speculate in a more diagrammatic, less flat-footed fashion. Platform, Plato, plateau: all share *plat* — Greek for flat, broad. A thousand plateaus displace a thousand Platos via a thousand platforms, putting all in play.

What is the form of contemporary platform performativity? *Global positionality systems*, interactive sociotechnical platforms that include not just the Internet and social media but all media (oral, literate, digital). Positionality relies on dynamic categorization of social identities

and relationships generated, overcoded, and operationalized by systems optimization, second-level information, and debt-guilt systems that challenge us to perform or else according to roles, functions, and categories of identitarian difference. Theatres, classrooms, workplaces, apartments, villages — these are performative platforms, as well as social media, word processors, email, etc.

If positionality is the form of platform performativity, what is its content? Beside and inside sociotechnical systems are psychophysical systems — bodies robust and precarious, neurotic and schizo. While second level information is *info about info*, primary level info today is *user-based eco-anxiety*.

### **Eco-anxiety, Traumaturgy, and Making Cures of Dasein Design**

Scientists now study “eco-anxiety”, anxiety that cascades from the climate crisis through social institutions and into individual bodies (Vakoch & Mickey, 2023). Infused with pandemics, such eco-anxiety thus pervades Guattari’s three ecologies of self, society, and environment (Guattari, 2000), while viral patterns of eco-anxiety drive content creation of memes, profiles, avatars, as well as desiring-machines left, right, center and out-of-here. Among US youth, the crisis is so widespread it overwhelms our care systems: we lack enough couches and therapists to handle this traumaturgy, this working of pain into something else. Traumaturgy is the work that trauma entails and gives rise to, including suffering and curative work that responds with care and attention. Traumaturgy is both individual and shared, intimate and infrastructural.

Locating eco-anxiety in spacetime — or in multiple spacetimes — poses many challenges: it is everywhere and nowhere, triggering subjects, institutions, and worlds intermittently, all the time. Alongside talking cures made famous by psychoanalysis, StudioLab thus explores collaborative *making cures* as part of its dasein design process. Here (where?) dasein design unfolds at scale, with *mitsein* (being with), designing media with shared eco-anxieties. Making cures extends beyond patient-based storytelling to strategic storytelling and collaborative making through any media necessary. Wrangling site specificity (*da*, there) and being thrown (ek-static *sein*), dasein design’s detouring of positionality resonates with applied research of environmental theatre (Schechner), performance design (Harsløf), event space (Hannah), and notably, design for dasein (Wendt).

## Health Access Connect and Data Storytelling

A long-term StudioLab partner is Health Access Connect (HAC), a US-based NGO supporting remote Ugandan villagers' efforts for sustainability and equity by connecting them with public health services from Kampala. At stake here is chronic rather than acute trauma, policy action rather than political activism. Key to HAC's work is its network of monthly pop-up patient clinics, its staff and public healthcare workers, and taxi "medicycles" for connecting these urban resources to remote, off-grid villagers. Since 2015, HAC has run 1,169 clinics, distributing 44,329 services, including family planning and basic pediatrics. Long-term, HAC hopes to expand its process to other nations, and it documents its work using interviews, photography, data collection and visualization.

With HAC's patients living off-grid, StudioLab's design work focuses primarily on strategic storytelling for donors, specifically, institutional and individual donors who visit the HAC website or conference presentations. We call this work *data storytelling*, *storytelling up* (based on ethnographic "studying up" of elites), and thus *data storytelling up*. Significantly, HAC's success here now inform KPIs (key performance indicators) used by Uganda's Ministry of Health. HAC's staff — all in Uganda — are skilled visual storytellers, and our collaboration includes strategic storytelling, website analysis and testing, prototyping, creation of brochures and flyers, and two collaborative, online workshops on storytelling and data visualization.

Our on-going collaboration with Health Access Connect reveals the role participatory action research, strategic storytelling, and performance design can play in understanding and creating widespread delivery of healthcare services to remote, rural communities. The traumaturgy here involves chronic rather than acute situations, thousands of patients, a small, dedicated staff, policymakers and donors, and its making cures stretch across villages via roads and networks. Connecting platforms and spaces, HAC can also serve as a heuristic "tutor org" for other small organizations across a wide range of public and private sectors, as its growing ecology of stakeholders and strategic stories demonstrate how pluriversal design can help connect multiple worlds individuated in different ways in different places and thus navigate platform performativity.

Acutely, HAC's sensitivity to messianic narratives and its place in the history of global development reveals the complexities of designing across worlds and the value of both historical and mythic storytelling, of conceptual ideation and thought-action figuration, of universal and pluriversal design.

## Cosmography and the Geology of Morals

Let us approach performing space from the perspective of pluriversal design or *cosmography*, StudioLab's creation of shared worlds. Delivering healthcare to remote villages during COVID reveals different worlds composing HAC's work. For StudioLab, working with HAC has concretized *the geology of morals*, Deleuze and Guattari's metamodel in *A Thousand Plateaus* for the stratification of matters, bodies, and languages, the layering of worlds within worlds, bodies within bodies (McKenzie, 2019; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)

What is the geology of morals underlying Ugandan rural healthcare? For traumaturgical care — medical staff, vaccines, neonatal medicines — to reach villagers, it must pass through at least four strata:

- 1) a *global pharmaceutical industry*, regulated locally by
- 2) *Uganda's postcolonial national government*, itself built upon
- 3) complex, continuing *legacies of British colonialism and Christian and Muslim monotheisms*, all these strata layered atop
- 4) *Indigenous tribal animistic traditions* still shaping everyday lifedeath

Moreover: *individual villagers, HAC staff, and StudioLab designers all embody different geologies within themselves*, worlds composed of different layers of feelings, perceptions, habits, actions, and beliefs that come to the fore in different situations and environments— as patient, citizen, worker, villager, designer, etc. Cascading restorations of behavior unfold across different temporalities, producing intergenerational care and rhizomatic traumaturgy. Such geologies of morals are thus not limited to contemporary Uganda, but can be found globally, locally. Cornell University's geology of morals has similar colonial layers but with very different sediments and chronologies.

Elsewhere, in post-Soviet Buryatia, anthropologist Buck Quijada draws on Bakhtain's *chronotope* to describe how contemporary citizens there use ritual to inhabit multiple historic pasts — indigenous, Buddhist, Russian Orthodox, Soviet. Chronotopes can help us *dasein* design between strata by demarcating moral faultlines, sites where configurations of word, image, and act break up and recombine. These chronotopes resonate with Schechner's restored behaviors, yet the geology of morals harbors different performing spaces within individual and collective bodies, *broken hegemonies* of thought and action that cannot only be activated but, more subtly and overwhelmingly, activate us with different calls to action (Schurmann, 2003).

We answer less to a call of being than *multiple call centers* ringing us up from different worlds with different interpolations, dreams, and nightmares. StudioLab's PAR&D, its

community work with civic storytelling, legal storytelling, and data storytelling up likewise draws on different cosmograms, different pluriversal designs.

### Coda

Turning back to the traumaturgy of Indigenous grounds and our 24,000 academies. In our age of platform performativity, if there is any institution in need of pluriversal making cures — of converting its trauma to care, its paranoia to metanoia — it is the Academy.

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## 42

## Moving Spectators in Performing Spaces: The Auditorium Dislocated into the Stage, or Vice Versa

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### Abstract

In theatres, in most of cases, the audience is assigned to its seat, in a separate area from the stage; but many experiments in spectatorship suggest that it can be mobile, with the possible aim to make it active. Sometimes it follows a relevant composition, sometimes less convincing, questioning the space and the conventional separation between the auditorium and the stage. It often creates configurations that break with the constructions imposed by the theatres. Directors and stage designers are rearchitecting the venue or importing their own architecture that incorporates the audience into the scenography, following Artaud's vision in *Le Théâtre et son double* (1938). Theatre architecture rarely offers such a morphological freedom between spectators and performers excepting 1960s and 1970s experiments. Depending on the context, *what are the limits (or excesses) of the audience's appropriation of the stage? How do they integrate the performance, and how is this anticipated? What resonance do actual experiments have with theatrical architecture? May they lead to a renewal of the current stage space?* Beginning with major examples of theatrical situations outside conventional venues, I explore, through some recent examples, how scenography meets architecture and how designers develop scenic devices that modify the audience's situation by inviting them to become part of the set. Finally, by means of comparative analysis and perspective, I will attempt to identify the ins and outs of these experiments to glimpse the extent to which today's theatres allow the development of these relational forms between spectators and performers.

**Keywords:** theatre architecture, set design, "scenographic architectures", stage-hall relationship, theatrical morphologies.

## Moving Spectators in Performing Spaces

In 1938, in *Le Théâtre et son double*, Artaud expressed his revolutionary ideas, calling for the total transformation of the partitioning of spectators and actors on both sides.

We are removing the stage and the auditorium, replacing them by a kind of unique place, without partitions, no barriers of any kind, and which will become the very theatre of the action. Direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the performance, between the actor and the spectator, because the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is enveloped by the action. (...) This envelopment comes from the very configuration of the auditorium. (1938, p.148).

In the history of performing arts, we generally consider architecture as the structure of the organisation of the space, in which the auditorium and the stage are two separated parts. *But is this architectural heritage enough to testify to the diversity of relationship between the auditorium and the stage?* As we know through experiments, all creations do not expect the spectators to stay seated and to have one only single point of view on the performance. Through drama history, there have been – and are still – many experiments in spectatorship suggesting or imposing that it can be mobile.active, Although some compositions are relevant , nevertheless some of them are less convincing. Some examples re-organize theatre architectures, breaking with the constructions imposed by theatre architecture – generally auditorium and stage face to face. Directors and stage designers are *rearchitecturing* the venue or importing their own disposal to incorporate the audience into the scenography.

## Questioning Theatrical Relationship between Hall and Stage

In France, in the 1970s, Le Théâtre du Soleil occupation and *re-architecturation* of the old gunpowder factory nearby Paris, led to the creation diverse amenities and even landscapes, such as *1789*, *1793* or *L'Âge d'Or*. To the question why bring the audience into your shows, Mnouchkine (Théâtre du Soleil co-founder) answered: “The desire for togetherness, communion, dreams, and collective projects that corresponded to an era. Today I’ve come to realise that the public’s inner journeys can take place even when they are seated...” (Mnouchkine, 2024). In the same period (1970s), Brook transformed the abandoned Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (built 1862), creating an Elizabethan semi-circle seats parterre, keeping the Italian balconies, changing radically this relationship between audience and players. In *Avec Grotowski* (2009), the British director commented: “ According to Artaud, the actor is on a stake from which he desperately emits signs through the flames. For [Jerzy] Grotowski, the actor is also a martyr, and the spectator can only be a respectful witness to his sacrifice

and the courage he shows by exposing himself". Indeed, the polish director with his partner stage designer Gurawski experimented in the 1960s with several space organizations for their plays including the audience breaking the face-to-face illusion box.

As theatre architecture rarely offers such a morphological freedom between spectators and performers, excepting some experiments illustrated before, these blurring out the frontiers between spectators and actors. Nowadays, depending on the context, there are sometimes no limits of the audience's appropriation of the stage. Some directors are integrating them into the performance, with the possible aim to create interactions, even if this is sometimes questionable. *Can/should this be a free or guided occupation? Is imagination activated the same way when the spectator stays seated at a distance from the performers, or when standing among them in the same space? What resonance do these experiments have with or on theatrical architecture?*

### **A Classification of Situations Considering Recent Shows**

Through some recent examples I have been personally experienced, I propose to share how scenography meets architecture, to analyse how designers develop scenic devices modifying the audience's situation by inviting spectators to become part of the set. These are several situations which can be classified as following:

- shows in which the spectators' journey is strongly induced or supervised,
- others in which they are relatively guided,
- and still others where spectators move randomly.

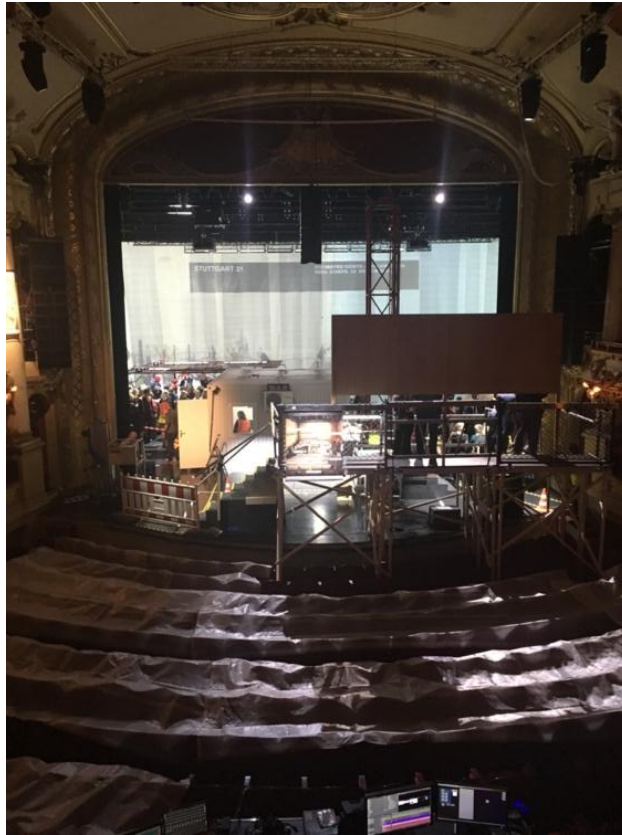
#### ***Spectators Journey is Strongly Induced or Supervised***

Rimini Protokoll' *Society under construction* (2014) is an installation dedicated to the different aspects of architectural commissioning consisting in several characters: the architect, the lawyer, the estate agent, the worker, etc. Participative spectators are dispatched in groups relating to scenarios placing them in this different participation of the construction process. A stopwatch indicates each change, leading spectators to execute actions, with pauses to help them develop a critical approach of the system established.

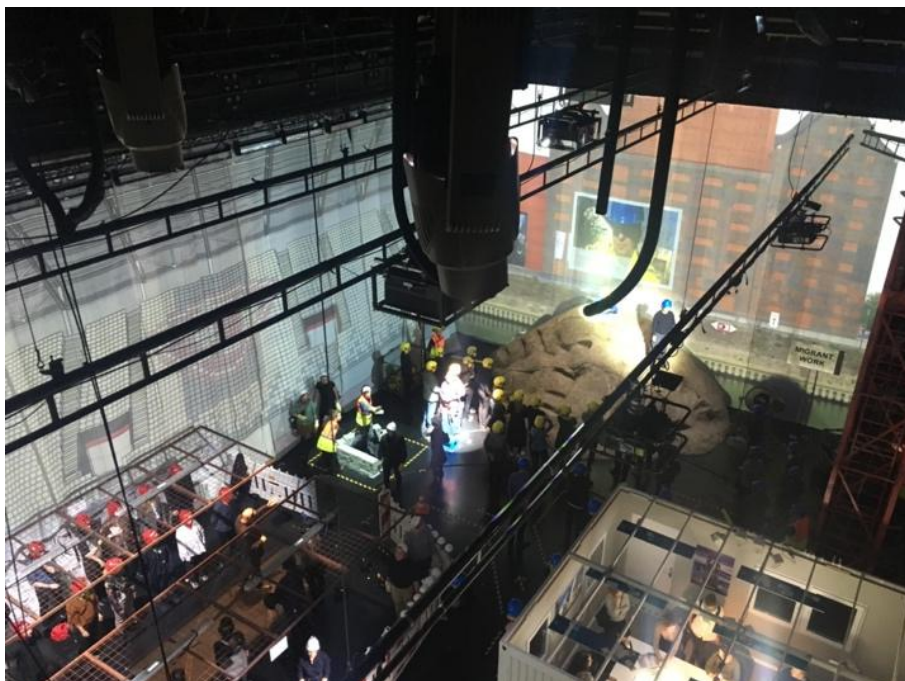
In a different way, in *Roman Tragedies* (2008), Ivo van Hove invited spectators to join the actors on stage and to sit on sofas next to them. Excepting some forbidden areas and periods of the show, they could move from hall to stage and even drink and eat on stage. Filmed and projected on large screens, they were part of the "image," creating an unsettling situation as spectators' behaviours were disturbing, as they are not extras.

**Figure 1**

*Rimini Protokoll, Society under construction, from hall, Oslo National Theatre 26 September 2019 © R. Magrou.*

**Figure 2**

*Rimini Protokoll, Society under construction, from the flying tower, Oslo National Theatre 26 September 2019, © R. Magrou*



**Figure 3**

*Ivo van Hove, Roman Tragedies, from the hall, Paris Théâtre de Chaillot, 29 June 2018, © R. Magrou.*

**Figure 4**

*Ivo van Hove, Roman Tragedies, from the stage, Paris Théâtre de Chaillot, 29 June 2018, © R. Magrou.*





### ***An Audience Guided or Relatively Free***

Created in 2017, the opera *Sun and Sea (Marina)* of Lapelité and Grainyité set by Barzdzrukaité was composed of a central stage set with sand. The singers in summer clothes were equipped with microphones while the music was played through loudspeakers. This “beach” was surrounded by the public standing on overhanging passageways. There was no physical contact between the two groups, as they were on different levels. The spectators were free to move around to catch different angles and to approach some situations, but surprisingly, each of them kept to their positions.

#### **Figure 5**

*Lapelité & Grainyité, Sun and sea, Paris La Villette, 16 September 2023, © R. Magrou.*



Another experience is illustrated in the Saire's *Black out* (2011), with a tighter stage. There was a distance between spectators and actors, no physical contact and a balustrade to create the limits between stage and “hall.” The director controlled the lights. The results was once again that the spectators remained glued to their position but, here, the stage diaphragm was for everything to be seen.



**Figure 6**

*Lapellité & Grainyité, Sun and sea, Paris La Villette, 16 September 2023, © R. Magrou.*



### ***Performances Where the Spectators can move randomly***

In *re-Paradise now* (2018), French director Morin recreated the Living Theatre former *Paradise now* show audience dynamics as strongly inspired by Artaud's ideas. Actors were soliciting spectators to be part of the play, without the powerful provocation it had in the 1968 Avignon Theatre Festival. Some spectators joined the group and participated in this choreography, as some did in the Brazilian experimental Celson show at the Bo Bardi Teatro Oficina, at São Paulo.

More recently, Kennedy and Selg created *Einstein on the beach* (2023) following the musical score of Glass. In this performance, a mix of temple and rocks were fabricated on a stage spinner, while the musicians were in the orchestra pit. The spectators were totally free to move around or to sit on stage, and to get in and out of the auditorium. The laxism made the show a bit chaotic and interfered with the images the artists created.

Directors of these productions are breaking the rules of the sacred area that is the stage, blurring the limits between stage and hall, creating other relationships with the audience,

with the conscious or unconscious risk of disturbing the reception of the play. There are other experiments that illustrate this trend or will to requestion the theatrical organization, with varied levels of success.

**Figure 7**

*Kennedy & Selg, Einstein on the beach, on stage, Paris La Villette, 28 September 2023, © R. Magrou.*



**Figure 8**

*Kennedy & Selg, Einstein on the beach, from hall, Paris La Villette, 28 September 2023, © R. Magrou.*



## Towards a History of Scenographic Architectures Morphological Variations

Body and space relationship could of course be a vector of proposing other models to add to the diagrams or schemes of theatrical architecture. The main idea of this observation is to take account of these space organizations in theatre architecture representation, such as Jouvet in the Sabbattini reprint introduction of the *Pratique pour fabriquer scènes et machines de théâtre* (1637-1942)<sup>28</sup>, Izenour' (1977) *Theater design*. In fact, the stage sets ephemeral disposals are never taken account in this panel of morphologies and hall-stage relationship. This leads to the following question: instead of separating theatre architecture and stage organization and experimentation, wouldn't it be more holistic to approach design from a crossed framework of models? The aim would be to compose a *history of "scenographic architectures"*<sup>29</sup> *morphologic variations*, to better link space and time, content and container.

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<sup>28</sup> Sabbattini Nicola (1637), *Pratique pour fabriquer scènes et machines de théâtre*, reprint (1942) introduction by Louis Jouvet, Neufchâtel, Ides et Calendes.

<sup>29</sup> Assembled words formulation inspired by Gaulme (1985)

## 43

**In Search of Lost Landscapes:  
Mt. Anchesmos in Athens and the Shift from Performative  
Perception to Official Cartography**

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**Abstract**

The paper studies the shifts in the perception of spatiality resulting from the gradual institutionalization of *Official Cartography* as the dominant medium for describing landscapes and cities in modernity. Using Mt. Anchesmos as a case study—an ancient mountain identified by geographers in the landscape of Attica, whose exact location remains unclear today—the paper highlights how this ambiguity reveals two ontologically distinct modes of landscape articulation: one rooted in performative relations and the other in abstract, supposedly objective representations conveyed by maps. The study explores how the landscape of Athens was perceived and articulated in antiquity, prior to its representation within a continuous mapped space. It then provides a brief analysis of historical maps from the 18th century onward, documenting the agency of mapping in shaping our perception of space. Drawing on Karen Barad's concept of *apparatus*, the paper challenges the assumed predominance and objectivity of certain mapping practices since purposive questioning and focusing on aspects of interest are inevitable in any representation. Instead, it proposes perceiving every map as the *performing space* where the world re-presents itself in diverse, dynamic and equally robust ways.

**Keywords:** Map, Performative mapping, Representation, Conventions, Apparatus, Athens, Anchesmos



## The First Articulation of Landscape: From Myths and Rituals to Names

In antiquity, long before the landscape was depicted within a continuous mapped space, the hills to the north of the city of Athens gained significance through their association with weather events. Due to the predominance of north and northwest winds, rain clouds would often appear over this landscape as they approached the City. The Athenians believed that Zeus, the god of weather and sky, stood upon these hills when unleashing his thunderbolts, sending rain to the City. So, they erected sanctuaries atop these high points—simple structures with low, oval, or circular walls enclosing an altar—and, during periods of drought, conducted processions and rituals to pray for rain (Langdon, 1976; Camp 1979; Lauter, 1985).

These dynamic relationships—between myths, rituals, and everyday life practices on one hand, and landscape and environmental phenomena on the other—highlighted certain territories and articulated distinct entities within the otherwise continuous terrain. Pausanias, in his book *Attica* writes about the sanctuaries of “Rainy Zeus” near Athens: The shrines of Rainy Zeus [...] are on Mount Parnes where there is a bronze statue of Zeus Parnethios and the altar of Zeus Semelaios [...] Also, the small mountain Anchesmos has the statue of Zeus Anchesmios<sup>30</sup> (Pausanias, 1989, p. 75). Strabo in his book *Geography* writes about the northern landscape of Attica: Of the mountains those which are most famous are Hymettus, Brilessus, and Lycabettus; and also, Parnes and Corydallus (Strabo, 1924, p. 275).

Of the locations mentioned in these texts, the only one whose name has not been preserved today is *Anchesmos*. The section of the landscape referred to by the Athenians as Anchesmos remains a subject of debate, with scholars proposing various theories linking the name to hills known today—primarily Strefi Hill, Lycabettus, or Tourkovounia (Lauter, 1985; Μπίρης, 2005). Others have suggested that in antiquity the name Anchesmos, but also the name Lycabettus, referred to all these hills collectively as a single undivided entity (Σουρμελής, 1846; Παγκαβής, 1888). This theory is based on the observation that the names Lycabettus and Anchesmos never appear simultaneously in any text from antiquity, as if they refer to two distinct mountains. Moreover, the dynamic articulation of landscape through everyday performances suggests that place names may overlap, as the world is perceived and imbued with meaning through diverse experiential and cultural perspectives.<sup>31</sup>

In the case of Anchesmos and Lycabettus, the etymology of both names reveals a topological relationship, pointing to the same section of the landscape. Anchesmos (Αγχεσμός), is a compound word derived from “Anchi” (Αγχί = adjacent) and “Esmos” (Εσμός = outbreaks) and it can be interpreted as the adjacent cluster of hills. Lycabettus comes from

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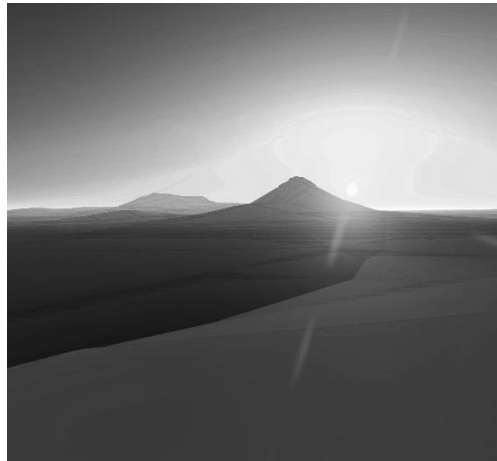
<sup>30</sup> Translated from the original Greek by the author.

<sup>31</sup> A well-known example is the planet Venus, which was called *Avgerinos* (Αυγερινός) when visible at dawn and *Esperinos* (Εσπερινός) or *Aposperitis* (Αποσπερίτης) when visible at dusk.

“Lyke” (Λύκη = morning light) and “Veno” (Βαίνω = progressing). The name refers to the direction where the sun rises. Indeed, the hills—now known as Strefi Hill, Lycabettus, and Tourkovounia—form a cluster of massifs near Athens, behind which the morning light emerges when viewed from the City (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*View North from the Acropolis of Athens, 21 June 6:27 AM, 430 BCE. 3D rendered image by the author, for the purposes of this study.*



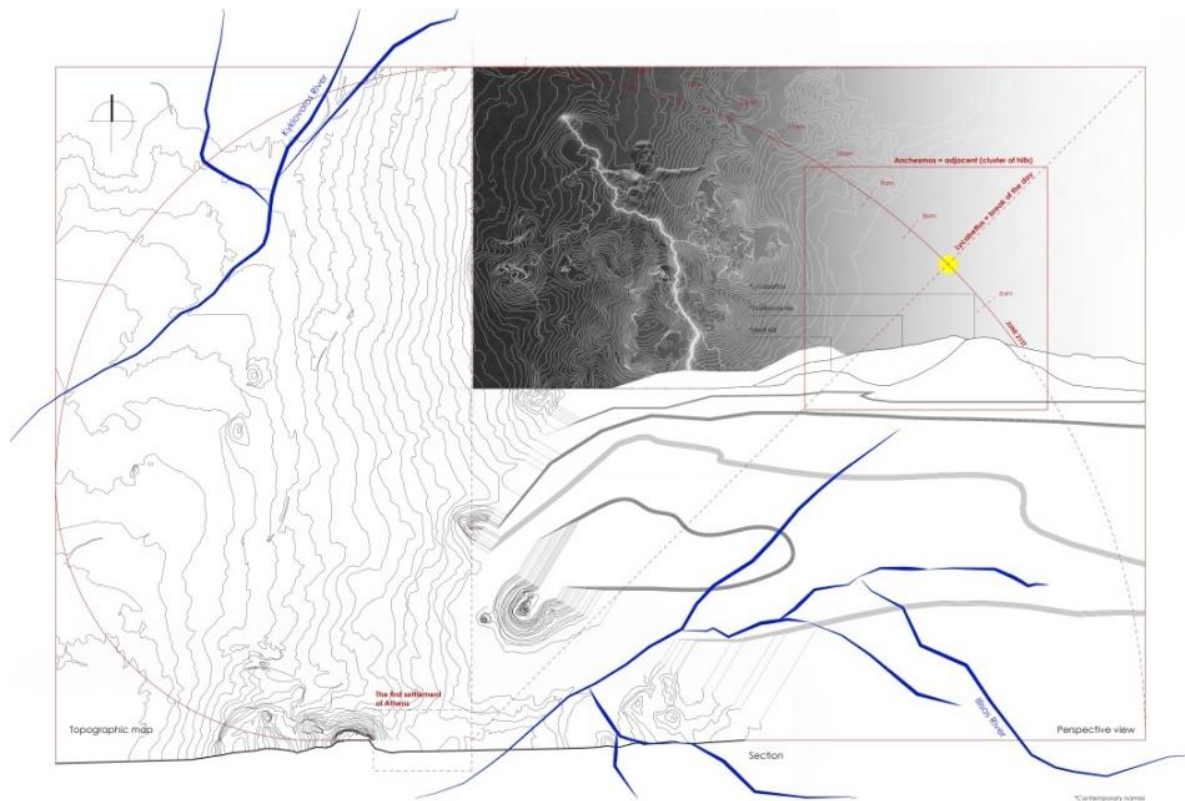
Regardless of the historical legitimacy of this theory, it is important to recognize that this primal articulation of the landscape does not conform to modern conceptions of accuracy and precision of the semantic reference to objects. It emerged from dynamic interactions between the material environment and lived experience, where everyday activities continuously shaped or reshaped spatial perception, making it inherently open-ended. Space was not conceived as stable or conclusively articulated, as we often perceive it today through clear-cut, objective boundaries.

For that reason, it is impossible to reconstruct or represent such an articulation of the landscape as its presence was dynamically intertwined with lived experience. If we want to attempt to draw a “map” that adheres to such perceptions of space, we must transcend conventional concepts of mapping that prioritize clear and well-defined outcomes. We ought to simultaneously consider perspectival, planar, and sectional relationships and address not only the visible but also the invisible aspects that structure our experience. Such mapping could never be definitive and complete: it is inherently open-ended, reflecting the continuous and dynamic interplay between culture and nature. Ontologically, it comes closer to a *work of art*, open to multiple interpretations, as its elements bear manifold meanings rather than fixed references (Figure 2).



**Figure 2**

*The First Articulation: An Open-Ended Map. Drawing by the author (Kaleris, 2023, p. 47).*



## The Second Articulation of Landscape: From Maps to Parcels

The division of Anchesmos into three distinct hills we know today as Strefi Hill, Tourkovounia, and Lycabettus will be linked to the practices of modern cartography that established a new way of articulating the landscape. While the contemporary urban fabric makes this division obvious (Figure 3), it was the maps used for the design and planning of the urban expansion of the 19th and 20th century that implied it.

The institutionalization of mapping has its roots in 16th and 17th century Western Europe. Kagan and Schmidt use the term *Official Cartography* and suggest that its origins relate with “the concept of territorial sovereignty: the idea of the state as a precisely defined and delimited geopolitical unit” (Kagan & Schmidt, 2007 p. 662) and “contributed to what has been called the ‘geometrization’ of space, the view that land could be measured and described in precise, mathematical terms” (Kagan & Schmidt, 2007 p. 663). During the same period, the idea of land property was pronounced as a right by philosophers such as John Locke (1689). These advancements aided the revival of cadastral mapping, which had perished since the fall of the Roman Empire, progressively establishing the geometric description of properties as an absolute system for articulating cities and landscapes.

**Figure 3**

*Antiquity vs. Modern-Day: North view from the Acropolis of Athens. 3D rendered image and photograph by the author for the purposes of this study.*

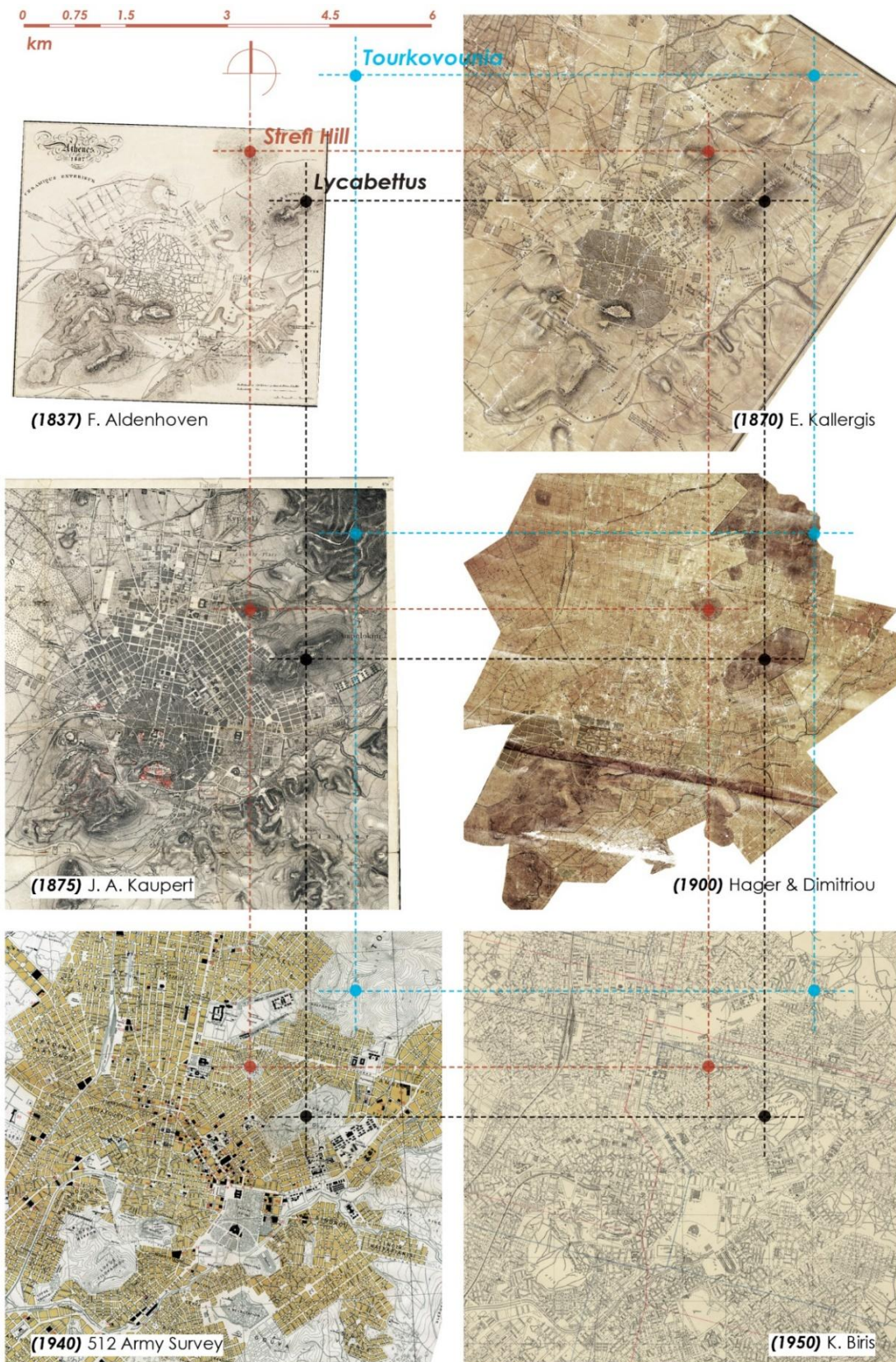


After Greece's independence in 1830, the hills surrounding Athens were valued as sites for material extraction and were granted to individuals and used as quarries. Aldenhoven's map from 1837 is one of the first to depict the territory referred to in antiquity as Anchesmos as two separate mountainous formations, noting active quarries on each. By analyzing a series of maps from the subsequent decades, we can observe the gradual formation and geometrization of distinct hills in this territory (Figure 4). The agency of maps in this process becomes clearer when compared to other forms of representation, such as painting or photographs from the same period, where the landscape retains its unity and continuity. The maps of that time created a geometric articulation of the landscape driven by their representational apparatus, prioritizing the depiction of the division of land into parcels—an entirely abstract and fictitious concept that did not reflect in any way the everyday experience.



**Figure 4**

*The “Invention” of Hills: Collage of Historical Maps of Athens. Collage drawing by the author (Kaleris, 2024, p. 190).*



## Maps as a Performing Space: Understanding the “Apparatus”

The aim of the analysis of the previous example was to demonstrate that maps are neither objective nor neutral: they are inherently fictitious and biased. Each map constructs its own version of the world. Our exposure to its representational remit compels us to analyze and interpret the world in a specific way. The widespread adoption of certain forms of mapping has trained us to see the world solely through their perspectives. However, they do not convey an objective truth; rather they have staged one.

This *performative* perception of the agency of mapping is rendered in the title *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theater of the World) given to one of the first modern atlases by Abraham Ortelius (1573). The title suggests that maps act as a theatrical stage where the world is presented. The problem is that, ever since, we have been confined to watching the same performance repeatedly. Despite the 20th-century’s criticism of modern cartography for its biases, colonial character, and power-centric nature, we are still struggling to accept alternative mappings as legitimate (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Corner, 1999; Kaleris, 2024).

To challenge the established status quo of maps, it is suggested to perceive every mapping attempt as an *apparatus*, in the way the term is used by Karen Barad (2007). Barad notes that “apparatuses are not passive observing instruments; on the contrary, they are productive of (and part of) phenomena” (Barad, 2007, p.142). In any apparatus, “certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded (...) different quantities become determinate using different apparatuses” (Barad, 2007, pp.19-20). Similarly, we must understand that the content presented in a map is neither something preexisting nor something definite. There is no inherent ontological distinction between types of mapping in terms of objectivity, as all maps are equally fictive and structured. We have simply been culturally trained to view the world through certain maps while disregarding infinite possible others.

The significance of such alternative conceptions of the world through noninstitutional mapping is crucial in the context of architecture, where maps serve as the substrate of design, shaping creative thinking and insinuating what, where, when, and how to build (Kaleris, 2024). As maps become increasingly standardized and institutionalized, so does architecture. The theorization of mapping through the notion of the apparatus opens up a methodology that embraces the shift between different apparatuses, revealing the plurality of ways we can perceive our spatial reality. This encourages architects to explore alternative conceptions of space that reflect the diversity of lived experiences, rather than imposing a singular, authoritative vision embedded in conventional maps. This way, we can explore opportunities for novel conceptions of our cities and landscapes and open new creative domains for space-making (Kaleris, 2023).

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## 44

## The Enabling Conditions. The Emergence of Performance from the Halprin Fountain to the Bridges of Venice

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### Abstract

Theatre is where architecture happens. Since the dawn of history, humans have identified those specific conformations that characterise performance spaces.

One can read the definition of performance space ambiguously: performance can be understood as arising at times from the capacity of the place to activate human action and interaction, at times from human action activating the characteristics of the place.

In accordance with Gibson's theory of affordances, the complementarity of the human being with the environment is recognised: specific spatial characteristics, duly interpreted, can constitute the proper circumstances for transforming a common environment into a performative space.

This contribution aims to investigate the conditions enabling performance both in spaces conceived to generate instinctive choreographies and in spaces that human interpretation has made into stages.

Halprin's Keller Fountain or Thomas Saraceno's aerial installations are architectures designed to provoke sensory stimulation: the flow of water, the differences in altitude, the winding paths of the former, the sensation of vertigo and instability of the latter, lead the body to move, explore and perform in space.

Nonetheless, even the common space of a bridge can become a stage: in 17th century Venice, the *war of the fists* took place on a bridge that had the characteristic of not having parapets: the very absence of this element, which can be interpreted as a spatial idiosyncrasy, created the enabling condition for the inhabitants of the two islands divided by the canal to challenge each other from September to December, in a battle where the faction that would throw the most opponents off the bridge would be the winner. For the event, the surrounding palaces, bridges, canals became stalls and galleries from which to observe the warrior-actors. The street was transformed into a stage, the city became a theatre, the space recovered its original concept of *chora*.

*Keywords:* chora, affordances, score, collective ritual, spatial performativity



### From the Chora to the Theatre

Before Plato's definition of space given in the *Timaeus*, space was linked to the mythological figures of Hestia, who embodied domesticity, earth, darkness, centrality, stability, and Hermes, who was mobile, identified with the threshold, light, sky, openness, and changing states (Plato, trad. 1965). These two figures represented *Being* (Hestia) and *Becoming* (Hermes). Between the two concepts, Plato inserted the idea of Chora, the substance where everything, both Being and Becoming, happened. Plato defines Chora as the receptacle of every action and transformation, the primordial element constituting both humans and nature, where fire, earth, water, and air were qualities of Chora and not elements. In other words, Chora was the space that hosted everybody and every event.

Similarly, Chora was the space where the rituals that led to tragedy and comedy took place. The dithyrambs, rituals dedicated to Dionysus, occurred in April, when life returned to earth. As Perez-Gomez et al. (1994) observe,

The word dithyramb meant a leaping, an inspired dance, and its original form was an actual bringing back of life, a rising up, a calling up that took the form of dromena, actual «things done», such as song and dance (p.14).

During these rituals, *katharsis* and *mimesis* were experienced: a purification or reconciliation between personal destiny and the divinity (*katharsis*), and the expression of feelings through movements (*mimesis*).

The concept of Chora from mythology flowed into culture (from dromena to drama) and shaped the structure of ancient theatre: the performance took place in the space of the orchestra rather than on the stage. Following Gomez's reflections, "The focus of the event was the circular dance platform often named after the chorus itself, a chorus that originally signified a group dance and eventually took its name from *orchesis*, which also means dance" (Perez-Gomez et al., 1994, p.14). Then theatre evolved, the stage became the space to act and the *cavea* was the space for witnessing the act, splitting the participants into two separate entities, the performers and the spectators, definitively switching from the space of a collective ritual to that of a contemplative show.

## Rehabilitating the Elements of Performativity

Today we can exasperate the evolution of theatre from a place of acting to a place of watching. With our world swiftly moving into virtual space—and, less evidently, with virtual space translating its characteristics into the physical world—we are increasingly losing the ability to connect and get in touch with the space, becoming more and more unable to experience mimesis and katharsis.

The aim of this study, then, is to identify the physical elements that still make or can make a space performative, beyond the theatre intended properly as the space of the performance.

To do that, we need to consider the theory of affordances introduced by psychologist Gibson in the seventies. The theory is about the ability to understand the perceptual dynamics of the subject in the environment, in other words, the capacity of the subject to read the space in which he is and the broadness of the variety of interpretations of the elements that surround him (Gibson, 1979).

The ready-made technique clearly manifests what is intended by the theory of affordances, that places the subject and the environment in multiple relations.

Gibson defined affordances as something “that refers both to the environment and the animal. It implies the complementarity of the animal with the environment” (Gibson, 1979, p.58). Furthermore, the variety of readings that one can have of an environment is linked to one's mental openness and fantasy, which are developed by the experience of the environment itself: a lack of experience brings a lack of imagination and this leads to the incapacity to use the space.

Another element to consider is the score, the actual trigger, the instructions, the track.

A Bach music sheet is a score. It is a fixed score because it determines only one type of performance. Then there is an interpretable score, such as that of *Serenade II*, which Wentworth compared to the fixed score. (Halprin, 1970)

The score is a set of signs from which, through a more or less rigid interpretation, an action is derived.

From the concepts of affordances and score, we can distinguish three conditions of “spatial performativity” (Berzal Cruz, 2022, p.81): the condition of rituals, following a given and generally fixed score (1); a second condition where space is designed to facilitate performativity (2); and the last condition, where space is not intended to be but can be interpreted as performable (3). This study delves deeper into the latter two, which have an open score, where the action is not fixed but can be invented and manipulated following the characteristics of the space.

## Choreography as a Design Tool and Design as Choreography

In the spaces created by Mr and Mrs Halprin, the score is not explicitly given. Nevertheless, people are involved in the space, and they act within it. Behind the design of the space lies a prevision of the choreography based on the elements and their positions in the space. This outcome is linked to the couple's experiments to discover everyone's limits and possibilities, to put everyone in a position to understand how to interpret the environment to create their own choreography, returning to the rituals of the dithyrambs we discussed earlier, returning to the theatre before fixed space and given scores.

Talking about the work of Mr and Mrs Halprin, Metta et al. (2014, p.51) affirm: "space does not contain dance; it itself becomes choreographic material." In the introduction of the volume, the authors reflect that space "is conceived as a medium for interaction and invention, involving the citizen as an active agent and overcoming the conventional paradigm of the inhabitant as a customer recipient of the final product" (Di Donato & Metta, 2014, p.35)

The spontaneous and dynamic life that characterizes the spaces designed by Halprin stands as evidence that the aspiration guiding the designer's hand has been fully realized

I hoped that what we built would stimulate interactions between people and their environment, that they would enter into it and participate in it and with it. I hoped that they would use the water, climb the cascade, wade in the pool, listen to the sounds, and use the entire composition as a giant play sculpture which would heighten and enrich the normal everyday life-activity in the neighbourhood (Halprin, 1970, p.58).

Spaces conceived through a choreographic approach are those designed by Saraceno, dealing with the idea of *Aerocene*. He creates hanging or inflated structures, going beyond Euclidean space: environments that force you to play while crossing them.

## A Theatre Where It Is Not Expected

The third type of space is one that is not designed to host a ritual or enhance performativity, but whose own elements, or the absence of some, lead the space to be recognized as performative. That is the case of Ponte dei Pugn in Venice (Figure 1), literally, the *Bridge of the Fists*.

The bridge still exists today, as a normal bridge in the city, even though it has lost the characteristic that made it famous. What made this simple bridge the stage of some particular moments of Venetian life was the lack of a specific and expected element. The bridge was not provided with a balustrade: it had no railings to protect people from falling into the water. In this 1922 drawing by Antonio Carbonati (Figure 2), we still see people

walking without the protection that divides them from the water. It is as if the water was calling the passersby to do something more than just cross the bridge.

This conformation created the enabling condition for the bridge to be used as the stage for the fight between the inhabitants of the two islands the bridge links. Until 1700, from September to December, the bridge hosted the rumble of the Nicolotti against the Castellani. The faction that pulled the most opponents into the water became the winner of that year, and so on every year. To make it possible to use the bridge, the inhabitants would fix the structure and clean the canal before September to avoid injuries.

What happened on the bridge made all the surroundings a spontaneous theatre. Houses were even rented to see the fight on the bridge (Figure 3). The streets were full of people, and many poems were written narrating the battle.<sup>32</sup> So from September to December, the city changed radically, the space being recognized as performative and the ritual returned to an unexpected stage. All of this made possible by the capacity and imagination to see the conditions that made a theatre where it was not expected.

### Figure 1

*Ponte dei Pugni ' s Today and Yesterday (2024). Collage combining a photo of the author with the print Lotta sul Ponte dei Pugni by Pietro Liberi (year of creation needed), created by the author. Retrieved from Ministero della Cultura - Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali under a Creative Commons license.*



<sup>32</sup> The poem which describes better what the bridge meant for the city is Poemetto Bernesco by Camilo Nalin  
[https://play.google.com/store/books/details/La\\_festa\\_veneziana\\_dei\\_pugni\\_fra\\_Castelani\\_e\\_Nicolotti?id=jNdoAAAAcAAJ&hl=en-US&pli=1](https://play.google.com/store/books/details/La_festa_veneziana_dei_pugni_fra_Castelani_e_Nicolotti?id=jNdoAAAAcAAJ&hl=en-US&pli=1) [25/10/2024]

**Figure 2**

*Il Ponte dei Pugni (1922) by Antonio Carbonati. Retrieved from Ministero della Cultura - Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali under a Creative Commons license.*

**Figure 3**

*A Theatre Where It Was Not Expected. Wettstreit auf der Ponte de' Pugni in Venedig (1673) by Joseph Heintz II Giovane. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons under a Creative Commons license.*





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## 45

## Space as an Event. From Lina Bo Bardi's Teatro Oficina to Giancarlo Mazzanti's Santa Fè Hospital

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### Abstract

Over time, the term performance has acquired a negative connotation, linked to contemporary pressures towards excellence. However, a deeper analysis of the concept reveals its potential as a tool for activating and promoting human action.

The principle extends to architecture, in which the design actions of subverting, grafting, hybridising, central to a performative work, can determine a process aimed at action. An emblematic example is Bo Bardi's Teatro Oficina in São Paulo in which the traditional theatrical prototype is altered by favouring a visual continuity between city and stage.

Such performative devices trigger a higher degree of interaction when they are placed in places with greater spatial rigidity, such as places of care. In Mazzanti's project for the Santa Fè hospital in Bogotá, the actions aim at subverting the isolation of environments. Interior gardens and permeable facades encourage interaction and well-being, transforming the healthcare experience from a closed context to one of sharing and openness. The work, both theatrical and architectural, through performative devices can become an activator of experiences and meanings, stimulating new relational dynamics.

*Keywords:* Oficina, action, dislocation, alter, Mazzanti

### A Multiform Concept

The term performance has taken on a negative meaning referring to the performance practices that contemporary times force us to adopt. The semantic analysis of this concept reveals certain nuances that pose deeper and more central considerations that will be deployed in this study. The noun performance, from the late Latin *performare*, can be described as “to give form.” (Treccani, n.d.). In Italian, English and French this word is the ancestor of the modern word performance.

In addition, the English term inserts a further sense: from per + form one arrives at the meaning to continue, to promote. The latter verb, from the Latin *promotus*, past participle of pro-movere, can be translated as “to go forward, to advance” (Etymology dictionary, n.d.) and this passage becomes pivotal in expanding further the meaning of the term in question.

Performance transforms itself from an aversive element into a mechanism that can work for and on the actions of human beings by promoting the active component of individuals' experiences. The performing arts, including theatre and music, constitute, according to the German philosopher Gadamer, the reference model for analysing any other art form. And it is precisely in the theatre that this profound metamorphosis from a contemplative, performance-based scene to a performative arrangement of both space and actors manifests itself. (Figure 1)

### Figure 1

*The Great Show, freely interpreted by choreographer Daniele Toti, 2023. Photograph by studio Unlimited.Limited.*



The conformation of theatre makes it possible to explore forms of interaction and learning, as Fischer-Lichte (2014) also points out, who introduces the concept of feedback in her book *Aesthetics of Performance. A Theory of Theatre and Art*.

The spectator stops being a passive figure, and in this regard Fischer-Lichte emphasises the reunion of two antithetical points of the performative structure: the

aesthetics of production and the aesthetics of reception through the co-presence of actors and spectators.

How do the actions and behaviour of actors and spectators act reciprocally during the performance? What are the conditions on which this interaction is based? What are the factors on which its course and outcome depend from time to time? (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, p. 70).

### **The Oficina Theatre and the Actions of Performance**

A similar interaction is visible in architecture, which fits into this context due to the relationship between its spatial paradigms and the gestural action of individuals. Bodies, in turn, can activate space, modelling it, and likewise space can suggest behaviour to the body in accordance with geometric, phenomenological orientations, determining an active or passive relationship between the parts.

In Oficina Theatre in São Paulo, Bo Bardi adopts design actions of a performative essence that can be enclosed in various operations given the spatial anomaly that cannot be traced back to a theatrical prototype, the alteration of the interior/exterior relationship and the prolusive dynamics of the stage.

The building was redesigned in the 1990s by the Italian architect Bo Bardi together with Elito. The renovation involves the demolition of the existing internal partition, which is replaced by a metal structure that gives a new visual continuity between the different parts. This sequence breaks up the theatrical space in an unprecedented way, making it an extension of the city: the street-walkway is activated in relation to the performance and the design actions do not respond to a canonicity of the theatrical prototype. The scenic space, in fact, becomes unitary and the absence of a pre-established orientation makes it possible to choose continuous points of view that in turn shape the scene (Figure 2).

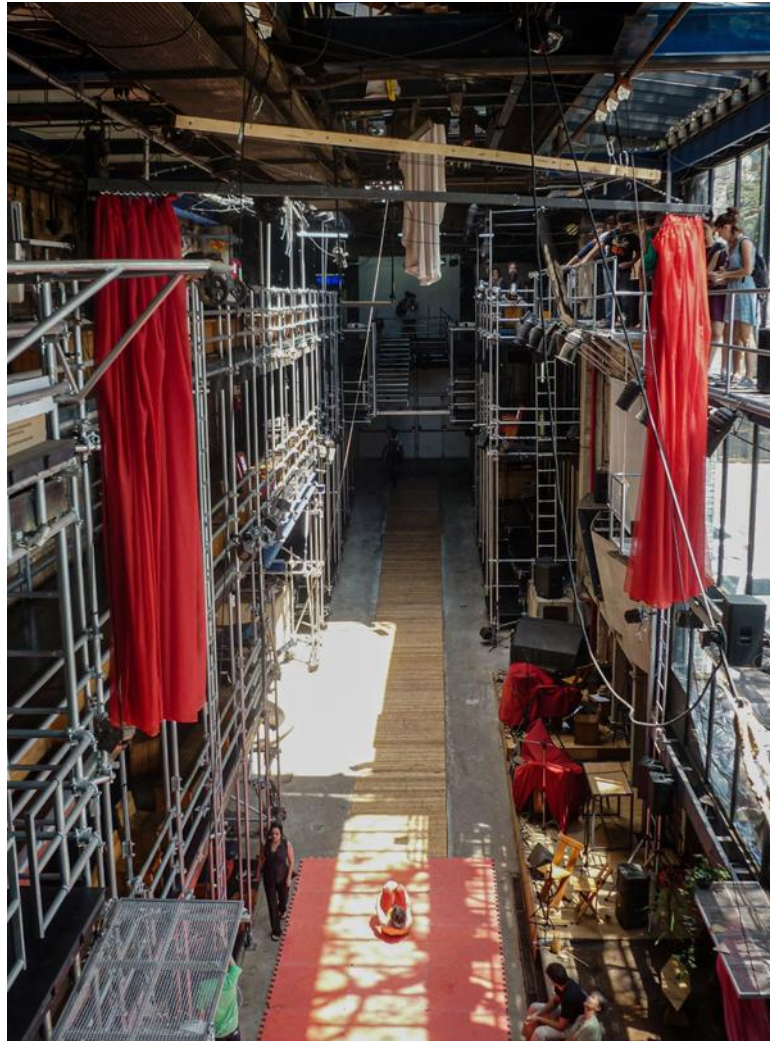
Yet another twist of meaning lies in the alteration between inside and outside. The closed and introverted container of the stage is shattered through a total permeability between the Brazilian landscape and that of the performance. The glass surface that runs along the longest side of the perimeter thus becomes a connecting device that transmits light and vegetation into the interior atmosphere.

The performative design actions are co-adjutant to the performance itself, not only because of a changing scene, but also because of the political and cultural value it communicates under the surface. The Oficina Theatre has become a point of social and political resistance to the military regime since its inception with the Uzyna-Uzona Theatre founded by a group of students in 1961. The transparency of the façade, the only façade that contrasts the materiality of the other surfaces, declares the active opposition to the

regime's censorship actions in the Bela vista district. The same transparency becomes for Bo Bardi a device to try to reduce the distance between art and community (Figure 3). The horizontal and democratic fruition of performances becomes a leitmotiv in the architect's projects, as in the theatre of the SESC Pompeia.

**Figure 2**

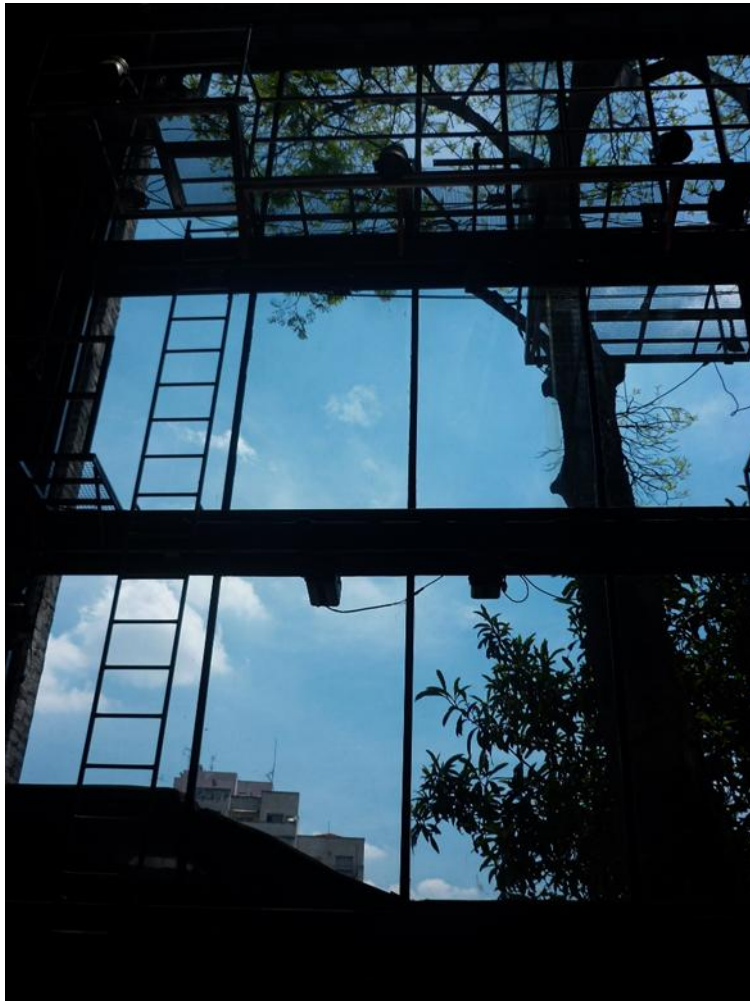
*The stage space of the Oficina Theatre observed from the balconies, 2013. Photograph by arch. Giorgia Lisi.*



Other elements are introduced into the environment that are not typically related to the performance space, but come from the echoes of the surrounding landscape: natural bodies such as plants, waterfalls accompany and enrich the auditory and visual aspect of the interior. The strong hybridisation between architectural and urban space sets off a playful and discovery dynamic in the performance. These characteristics of anomaly, grafting, variation become spatial devices that in turn are derived from design actions: subvert, graft, hybridise.

**Figure 3**

*The Permeability Between Inside and Outside in the Work of Lina Bo Bardi, 2013.*  
*Photograph. Arch. Giorgia Lisi.*



### **An Application of Dislocation. The Santa Fè Hospital**

Mazzanti, founder of the Equipo Mazzanti studio in Colombia, considers these characteristics essential when designing spaces for the community. The design actions, typical of a performative and theatrical practice anticipated earlier, are translated into an apparently distant field, into spaces that are, in reality, highly rigid in their layout.

The expansion of the Santa Fè hospital, in Bogotá, is an example of such an approach. Hospitals are frequently perceived as closed spaces, characterised by significant isolation between patients, family members and doctors. Mazzanti's project elides this separation: the core of the building is occupied by a large circular space that accommodates a multitude of plant elements that define a true hanging garden. The overthrow of a space, from isolation to a place of interaction, alters the canonical form by expanding its possibilities. This green



space simultaneously takes on different meanings: it is a cathartic and healing place; it can absorb noise from adjacent areas; it can become a secular and meditative space

Another aspect that is introduced by architect Mazzanti is accomplished in the design action of hybridisation. The distinction between interior and exterior is processed as a gradient and the hospital façade is configured as a boundary that can be crossed. This emphasises the entry of natural light and urban atmosphere through a porous texture of brick elements. This innovative approach challenges the traditional conception of healthcare facilities as segregated spaces, and promotes instead, an environment that encourages connection. Architecture becomes performative as a spatial activator of unexpected phenomena that see the active participation of the actors involved.

#### Figure 4

*The hanging garden of the Santa Fé Hospital designed by architect Mazzanti, 2016. Courtesy of @sitioestudio.co, photograph by Alejandro Arango Escoba.*



### Conclusions

The performative work, whether architectural or theatrical, does not act in a static manner, but can become a tool for knowledge and exploration. In these environments, actions become *reaction objects*,<sup>33</sup> objects capable of producing a creative process in spatial articulation. Just as the theatrical performative aesthetic, highlighted by Fischer-Lichte, allows an overlap between a productive and a receptive doing, the image of a performative

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<sup>33</sup> It was those seemingly ordinary elements such as stones, metal objects, shells that for the architect Le Corbusier could, in reality through a new, deep and attentive look, take on an extraordinary and creative value



architecture acquires new characters. Porosity, permeability and transience become part of the new codes for a reading of space that divert attention from an architectural practice tied to fixity, sectoriality and a cumbersome authorial identity. Architecture accepts the event in a calculated unpredictability given both by human action but also by the circumstances to which it is subjected. Choreographer Sieni approaches this thought in the various points of the Academy's manifesto 111 on the art of gesture: "To form oneself to spaces means to frequent them, not to occupy them, carefully tracing the clues of mutual trust by constructing continuous modalities and implementations that renew the sense of dwelling" (Sieni, 2020, p. 6).

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## 46

***Pavillon Relancé:***  
**Re-Tracing Leisure Modalities – Inhabiting the Archive**

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**Abstract**

This paper critically discusses the preliminary findings of our research on high-impact experiential learning practices, aimed at enhancing traditional classroom teaching. Our research focuses on interdisciplinary, participatory learning experiences designed to foster environmentally conscious approaches. Drawing on our experience of designing and running two week-long workshops for architects, engineers, and artists at the abandoned tourist pavilion of Mycenae, under the auspices of *Fichti Art - Pavillon Abandonné* (2022) and *Pavillon Relancé* (2023) - this paper considers the potential for pensive reflection, dynamic exploration, and creative experimentation as crucial educational elements of in-situ, hands-on and active learning practices. Furthermore, it discusses oral history and its interviewing techniques as potent methodological tools for immersing participants in the local social and cultural landscape: a fundamental prerequisite for environmentally sensitive planning and design. Our paper concludes with an in-depth analysis of *Pavillon Relancé's* closing learning activity - an impromptu performance at the abandoned pavilion involving students, tutors, and guests - as propeller of effective teaching. This approach combines historical and theoretical knowledge with practice-based research, imaginatively enhancing the potential for improved learning outcomes, compared to the traditional classroom experience. This nocturnal happening aimed at infusing the temporary installations, designed and constructed by workshop participants, with site-specific meaning, inspired by oral testimonies and relevant archival material. Hence, bodily movement as reenactment of now-lost spatial functions (i.e. leisure) became a medium for communicating both the past and the future (i.e. potential futures) of the tourist pavilion.

*Keywords:* education, workshop, tourism, environmental design

## Re-Tracing Leisure Modalities – Inhabiting the Archive

Recent shifts in formal architectural education and training acknowledge the growing need for specialised scientific knowledge and critical thinking in environmentally conscious design. Numerous undergraduate and graduate courses offer studio-based experiences that sharpen the analytical skills for an evidence-based design approach that combines intuitive creativity with informed decision making. Furthermore, environmental awareness describes a novel brand of architectural competence that is deeply rooted in trans-disciplinarity, as historical, cultural, and socio-economic aspects are combined with features of the natural environment into a holistic design approach for sustainable living. Thus, environmental design promotes in-situ quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation, alongside various ex-situ methods. To this end, educational, intensive, interdisciplinary, hands-on workshops, specifically designed to foster experiential learning, have emerged as an experimental field for the creative application of effective teaching strategies outside the classroom (Kolb & Fry, 1975).

This paper summarises the initial pedagogical findings of two such workshops - *Pavillon Abandonné* and *Pavillon Relancé* - that took place in the summers of 2022 and 2023 respectively, at the abandoned tourist pavilion of Mycenae, under the auspices of *Fichti Art festival*,<sup>34</sup> attended by a diverse group of students, from different educational backgrounds (art, architecture, environmental sciences etc.). The overall aim was to outline potential strategies for the creative re-activation of the abandoned pavilion in the local socio-economic context with both long-term goals (e.g. restoration and adaptive reuse of the early modernist building) and short-term, reversible interventions (e.g. art installations, performances, and other happenings). As discussed below, the workshops were designed to complete Kolb and Fry's experiential learning cycle, starting with the concrete experience of the place and reflective observation in 2022, while moving to abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation in 2023.

### Pavillon Abandonné (2022)

The main objective of the 2022 workshop was to tackle aspects of resilience, adaptation and sustainable development, in relation to the management of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in vulnerable economic and social environments of the Greek periphery, where tourism has always been the driving force of the local economy. In particular, our workshop addressed key issues of local, sustainable development, improved quality of life and social well-being, through culture and its multiple manifestations in space, such as in recurrent,

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<sup>34</sup> *Fichti Art*, <https://fichtiart.com/en> (accessed June 21, 2024)

temporary or semi-temporary events or happenings with a strong spatial imprint (e.g. festivals).

The workshop examined two neighbouring communities in Argolis - Fichti and Mycenae - as distinct but interconnected “ecosystems” and, in particular, the potential for the development of a dynamic framework of focused cultural activities, centred around an abandoned, historical building, namely the tourist pavilion of Mycenae, with a view to spill over to adjacent, unclaimed sites, such as the late-19th century, decommissioned train station in Fichti, bringing the two communities together.

The long-abandoned tourist pavilion of Mycenae is a typical example of the early post-WWII efforts of the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) to update Greece’s run-down tourism infrastructure, a vehicle for ushering Greece’s remote communities to modernity (Alifragkis & Athanassiou, 2013). It was completed in 1951 according to the designs of modernist architect Kimon Laskaris, in order to serve refreshments and light snacks to the visitors of the nearby prehistoric site of Mycenae. It served as a crucial node of an integrated local network of modern tourism facilities, built on sites of outstanding natural beauty and close or inside archaeological sites (Figure 1).<sup>35</sup>

The tourist pavilion of Mycenae, located south of the prehistoric site, on a natural hill with unobstructed views of the plain of Argolis, is a discreet, single-storey construction of square plan, with a small semi-underground space that hosted auxiliary uses. It accommodates a ‘T’ shaped restaurant that extends across the building, leading to a front porch to the south and to an elevated, due to the slope, atrium to the north, with subtle references to the typology of the Mycenaean megaron. The *pièce de resistance* of the restaurant’s decoration was a large-scale portable fresco by modernist painter Nikos Nikolaou, with prehistoric iconography rendered in an abstract style, hanging over the fireplace.<sup>36</sup>

Understanding the impact such infrastructure had on local communities highlights a niche area of research that has been minimally explored before, particularly from the viewpoint of an active investigation into the shared social and cultural elements that are embedded in the oral testimonies of locals who had experienced the pavilion in its prime. To this end, our students launched an appeal for personal memorabilia via a social media post, which, due to a shortage of time, was not particularly successful in itself. It did, however,

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<sup>35</sup> This included the tourist pavilion of Epidaurus (1950) and the conversion of the fortress of Bourtzi into a guesthouse (1951), both designed by Laskaris, the hotel *Xenia Amfitryon* (1951 & 1956) designed by Kleon Krantonellis, the hotel *Xenia Acronafplia* (1958) and the organised beach of Arvanitia (1962) designed by Ioannis Triantafyllidis and, later, the hotel *Nafplia Palace* (1970-1975) designed by Thymios Papagiannis.

<sup>36</sup> For additional information see: Sotiriou (2016).

trigger various responses from locals who had lived experiences of the pavilion and agreed to be recorded on camera discussing their memories of the place (Figure 2).

### Figure 1

*The abandoned tourist pavilion of Mycenae, completed in 1951 according to the designs of modernist architect Kimon Laskaris for the Greek National Tourism Organisation. South façade. © The Authors, 2022.*



These semi-structured interviews, conducted in the manner of an oral history project, formulated the initial core of what we hope will become a rich, dynamic, and diverse digital archive of the voices, personal commentaries and individual memories of the local community that, despite their potential fallibility, malleability or tendency to nostalgia (Ritchie, 2003), will convey a deeper understanding of the place in the local context and help us re-trace the different leisure modalities of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s from a bottom-up perspective.

### Figure 2

*Elias Kavvadias, former employee at the tourist pavilion, interviewed on July 28 2022. © The Authors, 2022.*



Alongside the mapping of individual memories, students were urged to map their own explorations of the site, with a view to document and visually interpret spatial elements, such as pathways, nodes, districts, boundaries and other spatial events or environmental elements (e.g. soundscapes), that register various experiences of crossing thresholds. The cognitive, multimodal and multimedia mental mapping of the experience of walking across the site provided us with additional reference material.

As the 2022 workshop came to a close, students were prompted to reflect on different forms of memory, the principles and dynamics of individual remembering, alone or in a group, and, most crucially, the reciprocity between individual and collective memory (Barnier & Sutton, 2008). As the underlying mechanisms that regulate the transmission and transformation of memories across individuals are further studied, it becomes clear that the spaces of colloquial interaction are not mere reflections of social and cultural norms but active agents of narratives that represent, reconstruct or reinterpret the past (Lampropoulou, 2016). The agency of space was further explored in the workshop that was held the following summer.

### **Pavillon Relancé (2023)**

The 2023 workshop capitalised on the findings of the previous year. The overarching guideline to inhabit the archival database created in the previous workshop was interpreted by the students both literally and metaphorically. Using archival material (i.e. archival photographs) and oral testimonies, students attempted to reimagine the atmosphere of the pavilion and reinterpret its identity through a series of discreet, site-specific art installations. The process involved, among other temporary spatial interventions, the *mise-en-scène* of diverse movable articles of varied ontological statuses: used tables and chairs borrowed from nearby businesses; decaying pieces of furniture recovered from the site; and silhouettes of furniture traced on the floor with fluorescent tape, employing the metaphor of a real-life scale architectural blueprint and its related semantic content (e.g. dimensions, orientation etc.). The culminating event of the workshop was a non-scripted, semi-structured nocturnal performance that involved students, tutors and guests in a ritualistic procession across the site and inside the pavilion.

The interaction between people, places, and situated art practices lies at the very heart of site-specificity (Kaye, 2000). The locative function of site-responsive art describes a potent and dynamic pedagogical situation, whereby students gain a heightened awareness of the surrounding cultural landscape, while developing skills and practices that, in spatial terms, materialise the intangible network of relations that weave together the local social fabric. Our workshop experimented with site-generated art installations that engaged with the spirit of the place through the reconceptualization of three overlapping systems: (1) deep



history (i.e. prehistoric Mycenae); (2) political public sphere (i.e. the revitalisation of decommissioned tourism infrastructure); and (3) individual and collective memories (i.e. activating unofficial histories of the place). Our students 'mined' the local archive for memorabilia and personal narratives, with a view to render palpable the intangible materialities of the past and challenge the uncontested identities of the present. Within the broad framework of site-specificity, environmental and site-adaptive participatory walking events offer ways for experimenting through space with bodily movement as a medium for generating meaning.<sup>37</sup> These immersive, contemplative and performative practices are capable of composing meta-narratives about the place, its history, and the people who inhabit it. Driven by a non-hierarchical creative process, our students' experiential mapping of the pavilion led to an impromptu, nocturnal, audience-interactive experience, whose unsystematic choreography reconstructed the familiar but long-absent cultural geography of the place (Figure 3).

### Figure 3

*Closing event: an impromptu, nocturnal interactive performance at the tourist pavilion. © The Authors, 2023.*



<sup>37</sup> See the work of performer and researcher Anna Tzakou. Available at: <https://annatzakou-geopoetics.com/> (last accessed: July 2024).

## In Lieu of Conclusions

The two workshops offered valuable opportunities for critical reflection on several overlapping levels: (a) they tackled current epistemological questions of cultural resilience, local identity and social engagement; (b) they sharpened research tools and methodologies that were tested locally but may be scaled-up and replicated elsewhere; and (c) they provided an open platform for exchanges between an interdisciplinary group of students, the local community and various local stakeholders (e.g. the local authorities, the local ephorate of antiquities, local arts and culture societies etc.), in the framework of a week-long series of educational and cultural events, organised around the temporary, paradigmatic reuse of the tourist pavilion of Mycenae and its experimental integration in the local network of existing sites and routes.

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## 47

## Rethinking Performance and Space: Generosity in a Seven-Factor Methodology to Design Alternative Worlds

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### Abstract

As architects and designers of the environments we live in and considering that we live in a world increasingly full of different crises, climate change and social needs, it is urgent that those shaping common spaces consider new methodologies to stimulate design processes with new perspectives on integration and awareness. This challenge to performance designers and architects leads to ambitious intersections with other fields of knowledge to promote stronger research and more expansive speculation.

Performance designers can benefit from this methodology because it proposes new forms of engagement with others and the environment within the process of design itself. The efficient project equation and methodology proposed here develops an analytical approach that is incremental and more comprehensive than the traditional forms of design. The issues addressed underscore the pressing need to re-evaluate design processes and their outcomes around efficiency and efficacy, particularly in our current time of crisis and rapid technological advancements. Seven factors inform the thinking process proposed by this methodology. In this study, the arguments focus on one: generosity.

This paper expands on a methodology already developed in previous iterations, offering a design process that employs performance and performance design concerns to devise efficient projects. The methodology proposes different initiation points to the design thinking process and can propel different types of collaboration. As argued here, if performance refers, on one hand, to the design of a certain efficiency, it refers on the other hand to the construction of cultural and social meanings that activate social interactions. This second dimension can lead to designing aspects of experience, participation and social cohesion in ways that help us think about alternative worlds, different from the ones that we have designed and that already exist. This world might be collapsing as scientific research attests.

*Keywords:* performance, performance design, architecture, commons, design methodology

## Factors to Develop Efficient Projects

The research behind this methodology has been developed over several years, in different workshops and in the contexts of different schools of architecture and design.<sup>38</sup> The work explored with students was aimed at developing a design methodology for an “efficient” project by looking at concerns that are crucial for framing different kinds of performance relevant to architecture and design: body, surface, material, programme, place and time (Tisi, 2008).<sup>39</sup> These design concerns became the incremental associative factors for the methodology that evolved later and that is presented here. It served to devise different steps for confronting each of the challenges that inform the design thinking process.

This methodology is narrow and open at the same time.<sup>40</sup> It is narrow because it is organized under the factors that inform an equation to be resolved, open because each factor of the equation constitutes an opportunity to explore design in broad ways and

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<sup>38</sup> This study is an evolution of the initial research that was conducted within different studios. In the first one, a 2005 advanced workshop titled *Spaces of/for Performance* realized at Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, Chile, I presented six factors as initial considerations for projecting performance. Later, these became the core methodological issues of the equation proposed. See: Tisi (2006).

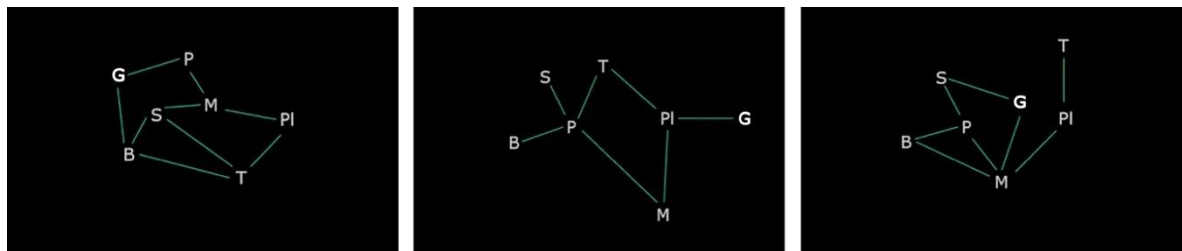
<sup>39</sup> Each of these concerns became a factor in re-imagining the design process. “BODY (B)” can be understood as a cultural construct that responds to specific conditions of site, but also as a dynamic entity capable of changing and subverting existing conditions and producing new spatial situations. Artifacts can also be understood as bodies that have a presence in space. “SURFACE (S)” concerns the way experiences are shaped by the understanding of spatial limits. These limits give form to spatial situations, negotiated by material boundaries which at the same time locate place and action. Surfaces constitute interfaces between us and the surrounding world, providing different possibilities of spatial communication and interaction. “MATERIAL (M)” serves not only to shape tangible forms but also to produce certain effects. Material assemblies construct different spatial situations and engender alternative spatial narratives. The adoption of novel and unconventional materials can create new possibilities of spatial interaction and behaviour. “PROGRAM (P)” is not only established through objective data and functions, but also shaped by cultural practices, social interactions, and temporal experiences. Rather than a static set of prescribed actions, program fluctuates: it questions situated activities in a contemporary world characterized by constant flux and rapid technological obsolescence. “TIME (T),” understood as a relative phenomenon, is, along with generosity, one of the most challenging dimensions of this equation for design for those interested in performance complexities. The configurations of different spatial forms slowly materialize perception and therefore architecture; meanwhile, architecture tends to perform even more gradually. Architects and designers can work with time to accommodate life customs but also to change them. “PLACE (PI)” can be explored within specific constraints of time and location. Perhaps this is also one of the most relevant factors for architects and performance designers who want to challenge conventions or space normativity. Place is understood as a fixed location but can be also understood as the evidence and result of time, allowing a richer set of variables than the obvious parameters of contextuality.

<sup>40</sup> In the article *B+S+P+T+PL+M: Six ways to approach architecture through the lens of performance*, (Tisi, 2008), I initiated a process that informed experiments conducted in the following years. This article was part of the research conducted for a doctoral thesis defended at the New York University department of Performance Studies; consequently, it informed the methodology. Different steps of this research and methodology have been published previously in different formats, including a book (can this book be referenced?). All are part of an ongoing exploration into a methodology for considering different phenomena relevant to projecting performance not only from the perspective of architecture but also from the lens of art, the social and the humanities. The factor of generosity was added after defending the doctoral thesis at NYU back in 2011.

represent a world of themed possibilities. These factors are posed as design questions that can lead to different answers and different design approaches, depending on the interests and intuitions of the designer. Each of these factors constitute a space for the exploration of design methods that can respond to the challenges of performance that are not only within the scope of the project but also related to those around it, in the context where the design solution is proposed or will be situated.

**Figure 1**

*“Measurable” dimensions of efficient projects. Diagrams by the author.*



*Note: Each diagram represents a different way to associate the factors. The design thinking process and the challenges of design scope guide the incremental methodology to consider all of them (7). Generosity is highlighted as the crucial factor of the equation, given currentday social and environmental challenges. The associative process propels the factors to complete a more comprehensive project.*

The elaboration of design variables constitutes an opportunity for those of us who must constantly confront ambitious ideas while making decisions between different challenges that should, somehow, be measurable. Is it possible to measure design ambitions? The aim here is to encourage a design practice that can contribute in some way to the context where the performance (of any sort) will install a space. Perhaps the approach offered here can help space designers to think how to improve the damaged and suffering world that we inhabit. And it is from this angle that I think generosity, understood as a selfless concern to promote the commons, can play an important role.

With these ambitious concerns in mind, what might “efficiency” mean? Or how might we calibrate the effectiveness of a design solution when projecting ambitions that cannot be measured?<sup>41</sup> The seventh factor for this equation, generosity, was added to the initial set to complete the thematic methodology proposed.<sup>42</sup> This dimension is crucial in defining an

<sup>41</sup> Publications authored and edited by Branko Kolarevic, Ali M. Malkawi, Yasha Jacob Grobman, Michell Hensel or David Leatherbarrow, among many others, also address concerns of design and architecture practices. Like this article, they all relate efficiency concerns to more subjective issues connected to the ideas of experience and being (with others) while navigating designed spaces. The contribution of this study then adds to those views of the similar problem, incorporating a relative issue that might contribute to the social fabric (generosity).

<sup>42</sup> Back in 2011, I defended a doctoral thesis, in this instance, this seventh factor was titled “Love,” inspired by Alberto Pérez-Gómez’s book *Built upon Love: architectural longing after ethics and aesthetics*. In following explorations this factor was re-framed as Generosity. For more information

“efficient” project because it problematises the idea of judging design performance with the commonly used, measurable dimensions of efficient projects (Figure 1).

## Generosity (G)

Generosity is normally understood as an action of sharing or giving selflessly, without expecting anything in return. For this equation, a generous gesture can become an act of resistance to conventional forms of production, consumption, and individuality. This factor could be understood as the more challenging concern of the equation because there is an intrinsic paradox of how it might be measured to be designed. Is generosity made visible in the number of free square metres given for participation? Or is it measurable as extra green areas added to public projects? How can generosity be measured when designing and spacing the commons? How can a design project incorporate this variable when economic concerns and politics are seldom aligned with issues of empathy and dignity?

In a world full of events and social dramas, as well as political and economic forces, it is normal to understand “efficiency” under certain parameters of performance. This approach complicates things, because normally when the concept is used in other fields different from humanities, such as engineering—where things are numerically measured to account for optimal responses or solutions, ideas of generosity do not quite fit because they might be understood as more subjective (Several reports consider issues about this phenomena). Performance project ambitions could serve as an engine to design social cohesion, although from this angle the measurability of efficiency remains unclear when thinking about possible generous gestures. Yet we understand the value of generosity as a human dimension that is crucial for social well-being (Figure 2). Should it not therefore be a fundamental aspect of city design, architecture, and landscape design? Public spaces and the commons in Santiago should be reimagined as urban inequality grows. The privileges of quality and generous spaces remain only in some parts of the city (as is for certain groups of individuals). An efficient project would thereby become an opportunity to perform generosity, to install it, changing the reality of some civic public spaces that should be available to everyone. This paper argues that a project can only be truly efficient if generosity is incorporated in the process and becomes part of the result of the project. But how can we measure that aspect?

Several authors have called for new approaches to urban design and architectural design, promoting new perspectives on the design of civic space. The tone of these thinkers challenges us to ideate new practices in the design of our social environments. Other authors suggest that commonly used conventional practices are contributing to the collapse

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see the doctoral thesis: *Architecture as Performance: the construction of display* by Rodrigo Tisi (2011).



of our environment (Jover & Wall 2019)—preoccupations that have also been addressed by scientific research.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, it is not a surprise to hear news of social degradation and failure caused by inequality, environmental damage, social crisis, and climate change. These pressing challenges demand new ways of thinking about the future and certainly new kinds of design processes to repair the commons and care for what we have and share. Another interesting approach to think about performance and mindful objects or designs is defined by the category of performative objects which propel social interaction.<sup>44</sup>

## Figure 2

*Public manifestation in Santiago de Chile. Plaza Italia was a principal public space in contemporary Chile for promoting social cohesion as well as national identification, whether celebrating or addressing national concerns. Image by Álvaro Díaz. <https://www.theclinic.cl/2010/06/21/fiesta-y-resaca-en-plaza-italia/>*



Equitable commons are a crucial goal and therefore must guide decisions for the conception of spaces that serve as platforms for social interactions.<sup>45</sup> These basic ways to

<sup>43</sup> Several studies and conferences, including “17 Sustainable Development Goals” and The Conference of the Parties for Climate Change (COP) organized by the United Nations, addressing urban and environmental concerns, have taken place over the last few decades, testifying to the urgency of current challenges. Although evidence of environmental damage is available, human action is not enough. Scientific research seems not to be enough.

<sup>44</sup> See the approach of Kristina Niedderer on her article “Designing mindful interaction: the category of performative object (2007).”

<sup>45</sup> The book *Architecture from Public to Commons* presents different issues around the concept of commons. The texts elaborate different plans for a more optimistic and coherent development of social grounds with wider perspectives of the social. The book contributes to thinking on the challenges of social needs, participation and cohesion that somehow should be considered when

space different lifestyles are inherently caring and human, and they are what performance design combined with architecture, social concerns and engineering can do to re-imagine and create the new spaces and environments that societies need. The combination of those practices with politics and economics, coordinated along with social and environmental sciences, can contribute to our future material culture and the way that we incorporate it and deal with it in our daily life. Generosity is central to this challenge. The design project framed under these concerns and including the factor of generosity (plus the six others) should focus on enabling positive performances of environmental repair and collective social good (Fig. 3).

With the above, I argue that an efficient project also means to grow and expand the concerns into a new set of variables related to participation, empathy, and cohesion. These variables might complicate the question of efficiency, as they can be understood as more intangible or subjective, and therefore difficult to account for via statistics and measurements. In addition, current social events of environmental and social dramas complicate the norms by which we can interpret optimum performances of design. This is what the humanities can contribute to the equation. The challenges described above demand a radically different and more ambitious understanding of the “efficient,” in order to develop a truly generous project.

The hypothesis behind this equation sustains that there is an interdependence between the seven factors. It is not possible to consider one without the other. Yet generosity should be considered as the main crucial factor to interconnect the challenges and fulfil ambitious scopes of the project. With this methodology, performance design then becomes an opportunity to understand different project concerns as intertwined challenges of empathy, which should be solved in a way that integrates various objective but also subjective relationships. Each of the seven factors constitute a starting point to the project and from there, each following factor will add complexity to the next one through the natural development of the project. Each layer adds a new set of concerns and therefore a new layer of complexity to be designed (Tisi, 2023). This design thinking method might help to establish new challenges and thought procedures for the ways we see and understand collaboration when projecting the future. At the end, all these dimensions require an integrated and ambitious way of working with different disciplines and knowledges. Technology helps in these processes and challenges new forms of thinking under the umbrella of performance design understood in a broad integrational sense (architects,

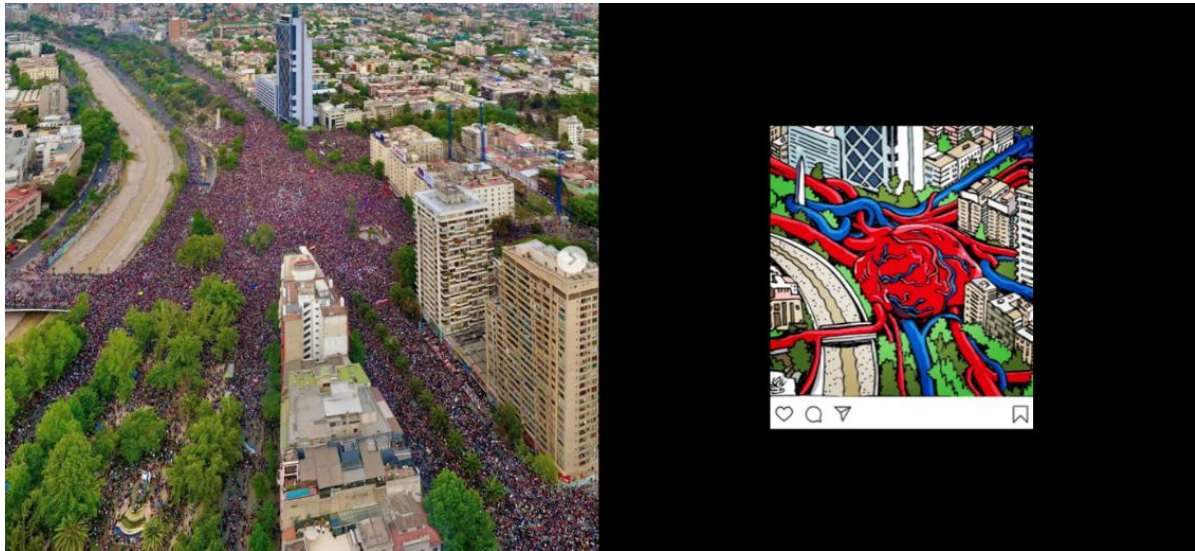
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thinking and projecting architecture (Lopez-Dinardi, 2024). Another contribution that contributes to this perspective, *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*, highlights the need for new design considerations when thinking about economy, social ecology, and city projects (Fitz & Krasny 2019). In this book, Tronto argues that “using care as a critical concept will require a fundamental reorientation of the disciplines of architecture and urban planning.” This seems crucial to the performance design methodology offered here, as it points to challenges in improving society, social cohesion, and the surrounding environment that we now face. Ambitious projects should consider these dimensions if we are truly thinking to have more sustainable (alternative) futures.

urbanists, engineers, market entrepreneurs, landscapers and politicians are some dimensions to introduce in the process of this expanded methodology by means of generosity).

### Figure 3

*Left: March for Dignity in Santiago, Chile, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Performed by 1.5 million. This major public protest called for radical changes and led to a social outbreak of large proportion. Image by Carlos Molina. Right: Beating heart at the centre of Chile. Meme found on Instagram after the march. Several images were displayed on public digital networks highlighting concerns about empathy, generosity, and state care.*



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## 48

**Performative Spaces of the Everyday**

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**Abstract**

For medieval builders, drawing was not the visual projection of an idea already fashioned in the intellect – as implied by the synonymy of drawing and design in *disegno* – but a craft of weaving with lines. (Ingold, 2013, p. 66)

This paper presents the conceptual foundations of the work developed by the students of the Design Studio 1 course, in the first semester of the first year, reading for a Bachelor's degree in Architectural Studies at the IE School of Architecture and Design (Segovia and Madrid, Spain). The course is framed as an anthropology of the everyday oriented studio, under the title: *Reimagi(ni)ng the Domestic Space*

The studio begins with the students actively turning their senses to the minimal acts of everyday life, both in relation to the objects that populate it and to the body that inhabits it. Beginning with a domestic object chosen in relation to their memories and desires, and through an extensive hands-on process based on the performative interaction between the object and their bodies, the students reenact this interaction in movement to construct an intimate space through drawing and model making. In a sequence that moves from a simple domestic object, to the body that perceives and manipulates it, to the embodied actions that result from this relationship to the object, to the interactions with the other inhabitants of the domestic environment, the complex spatial network of relationships thus created ultimately builds a rich and multilayered architectural space from within.

**Keywords:** architecture, performativity, domestic space, everyday life, imagination

### Performative Spaces of the Everyday<sup>46</sup>

The course is framed as an anthropology of the everyday oriented studio, under the title *Reimagi(ni)ng the Domestic Space*. The course develops through a hands-on performative approach in which the students begin their process of understanding what architecture is, how it relates to the human body, space, and the world, what architectural meaning is and how it is constructed, and what it means to design, precisely by designing. The goal is to allow students to begin the process of design as a process of discovery in a very intuitive way. Instead of providing them with a definition of what architecture is and, above all, creating an authoritative voice by showing what architecture looks like, the point is to start with the minimal acts that constitute the spatial engagement between humans and the world, in order to arrive at architecture as a built object at the end. Without a formal preconception of what architecture is, the semester is structured as a process of discovery in which hand drawing and model making are the tools that allow the student to bridge the (in fact inexistent) gap between outside and inside, body and mind.

Students begin their exploration by actively turning the senses to the minimal acts of everyday life, precisely as acts, as constant processes of configuration and reconfiguration of a network of spatial relations that are usually taken for granted, but that are now problematised as actions that need to be recorded in drawn form. The immersion in an environment that the students know (or they think they know) in a very intimate and detailed way, the domestic environment and the meaning of what domesticity is, will allow them to design from the first moment of the studio practice. Thus, the studio proposes a sequence that moves from a simple object of daily use, to the body that perceives, manipulates and gives meaning to it, to the embodied actions that result from this relationship with the object, to the spatial relations and definition of space that result from this entangled relationship.

The key to this is to examine how objects, bodies, and space interact through movement to perform (rather than create) architectural space and meaning.

As is well known, space is not (or not only) a homogeneous continuum that can be described geometrically and mathematically. Beyond the mechanistic definition, space is also, or even primarily, both defined and influenced by the way we humans perceive it and by the bodies and objects we interact with and by the relations that are created between these different actors. Space is embodied space.

Space is not a pre-existing framework in which things, bodies and people are simply there, as if contained in a neutral box which they do not affect and which does not affect

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<sup>46</sup> This paper presents the work developed in the first-year design studio course 2023-2024 at the IE School of Architecture and Design, taught by professors Juan Cabello Arribas, Elena Pérez Garrigues and Óscar Valero Sáez and coordinated by José Vela Castillo.

them, but rather a complex and constant co-creation of a network of relations mediated by bodily perception and movement. Space is performed space.

The students start by selecting a simple everyday object, an object that resonates with either their memories, their present state, or their desires, and that is placed in an environment that they recognise as emotionally close to them. Building upon some literary descriptions from selected narrative texts by, among others, Ózlü (2023) or Yasunari (1986), they create their own narrative space in which the object triggers specific meaningful actions that are not mechanically produced but mediated by the emotional intentionality provided by that the narrative frame.

Let us take for example a toothbrush (or a comb, or a pan, or a book, or a jewel, or a pair of trousers, or even a mobile phone) in a specific context, such as the one the students remember using when in summer holidays visiting their grandparents house. Then they map through extensive drawing the object itself and how this object establishes different types of relationships with the space in which it is 'placed' through their manipulation of it as an everyday object and its related movements when in use.

In purely geometric/mathematical terms, its shape, construction and position can be defined by a reference coordinate system as a set of points in abstract space and represented in standard orthographic projections. Thus, there are mathematical relations between the object and space in general that can be objectively measured and that the student accurately represents, depending basically on the visual perception. Let us call it a scientific kind of knowledge. But following these objective drawings, the students are asked to draw additional sets of drawings in which what should be explored and drafted is the movement of the body and the object when in action (performing its everyday task), the psychological attachment they feel with it, the aural or haptic sensations they have when manipulating it, the personal memories or intuitions that they spark in them, or the coordinated interaction with other objects, individuals and spaces. In this sense, the students perform the object, and by recording this performance in drawings (and models), they begin to build a lived space that will later evolve into a series of spaces that will produce an architectural configuration.

In this way they are expected to start realising that we humans do not perceive space (and the world) at first instance through our mind in mathematical terms, but through our senses, all the senses together. The senses are embedded in a body configuration that determines how these senses work, and that produces a specifically human set of spatial boundaries or relations. Perception is always embodied perception, because we perceive the world through our bodies. Therefore, space is always embodied space, and the knowledge that results from this embodied perception is always situated, has a location, a place, and a moment in time in which it occurs.



“Embodied space,” according to anthropologist Low (2003, p. 10), “is the place where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form.” This means that instead of a purely abstract space, we encounter a much richer and more complex understanding of space, one that links material, body, and culture (in the broadest sense) into a unified perception. Embodied space links body, space and culture in a way that moves from the simple experiential and material aspects of objects and bodies to the symbolic and the broader social, cultural, political, economic forces in which that body is placed or situated at any given moment.

Considering this is key to understanding how we design architecture, because what architecture is essentially a complex manipulation or articulation of space into built structures in which people live. Therefore, knowing what space is, how it is limited and experienced, and how it can be manipulated, is key.

To emphasise the performative and physical nature of the studio, all of the drawings (and models) produced by the students are made by hand. According to the opening quote, drawing is understood as a craft and a weaving of lines. The intimate connection between body, hand, pencil or pen and paper, and the continuous tracing and retracing of physical marks on physical paper is thus considered a key element in the training of future architects.

In summary, the studio helps students to navigate the architectural experience of space as embodied space, and of architecture as performed space, delving into its multi-layered complexity. By differentiating and reconfiguring the geometric/mathematical (objectively quantifiable), the experiential/sensual (embodied), and the social/cultural (symbolic) in the experience of the domestic environment, students will design a complex architectural space from within rather than from without as a continuous performance.

The studio is framed by a set of theoretical references that help to understand the conceptual underpinnings of the work. At its core is the long tradition of phenomenology, and in particular the phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1978), which has been applied to architecture in various ways, from the seminal work of Norberg-Schulz (1980) to the more recent work of Pallasmaa (2005). The approach to architecture as an experience, as presented in the book *Understanding Architecture* by MacCarter and Pallasmaa (2013), is another related area. So is the concept of “embodied space” developed by Low and others. “Situated knowledge” as proposed by Haraway (1988) and interpreted by Rendell (2011) as situated practice in the field of architecture, as well as Butler's (2006) work on performance and the performative, both coming from feminist approaches to the production of knowledge, should also be mentioned here.

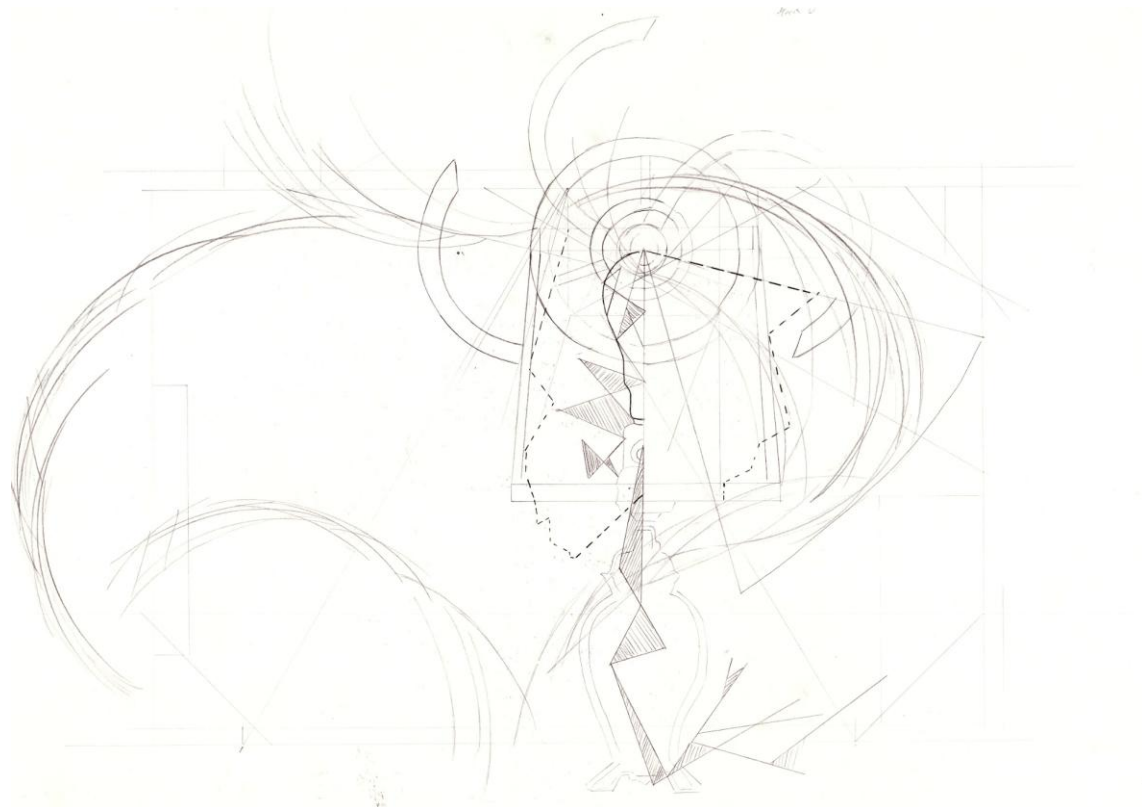
There is also a foundational approach that comes from anthropology, as developed in the work of Ingold (2013), who specifically proposes the relevance of anthropology to architectural design. Anthropology is a different but closely related field to ethnography, from

which this studio also benefits, as in the proposals of "architectural ethnography" by Kajima of Atelier Bow-Wow and others.

Finally, a clear inspiration for this design studio comes from the writings of Perec (1974), especially his text *Species of Spaces* (*Espèces d'espaces*), a quotation from which opens the course and concludes this paper: "To live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself" (p. 6).

**Figure 1**

*Extended vision. The lamp. Student's work: María Urrutia.*



**Figure 2**

*Performing violin. Student's work: Trinidad Badía.*

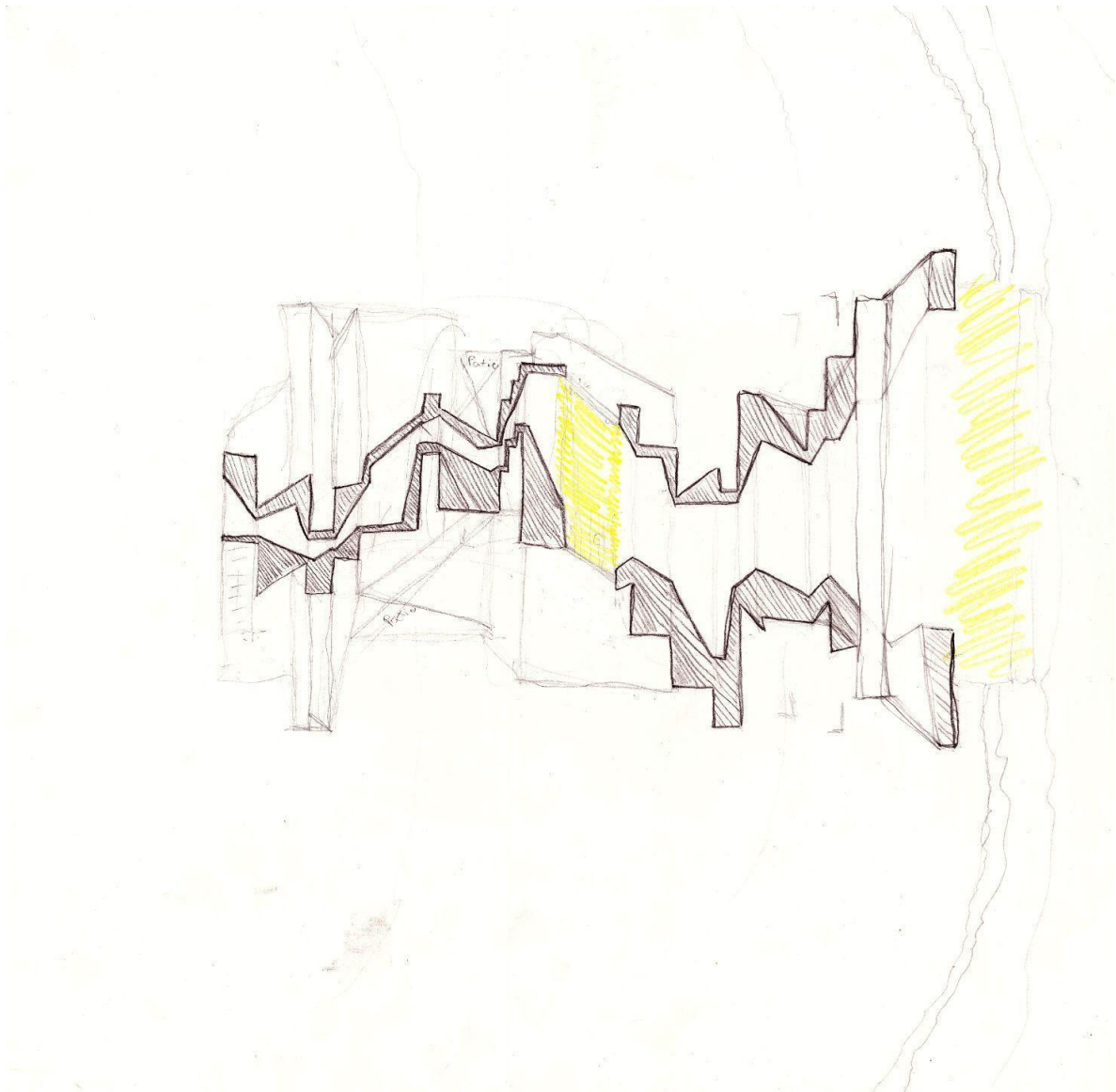
**Figure 3**

*Mapping the performance. Student's work: Maria Nikolova.*



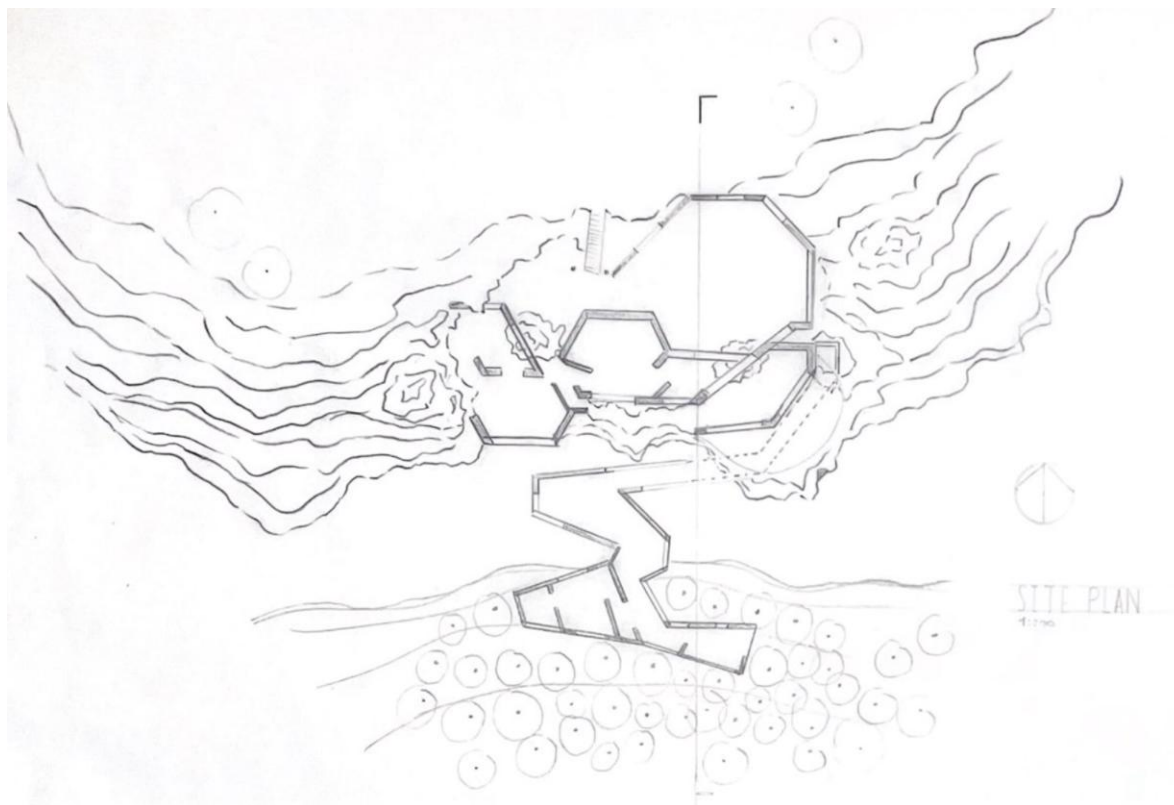
**Figure 4**

*Claustrophobic space. Student's work: Gerardo Santamarta Sestelo.*

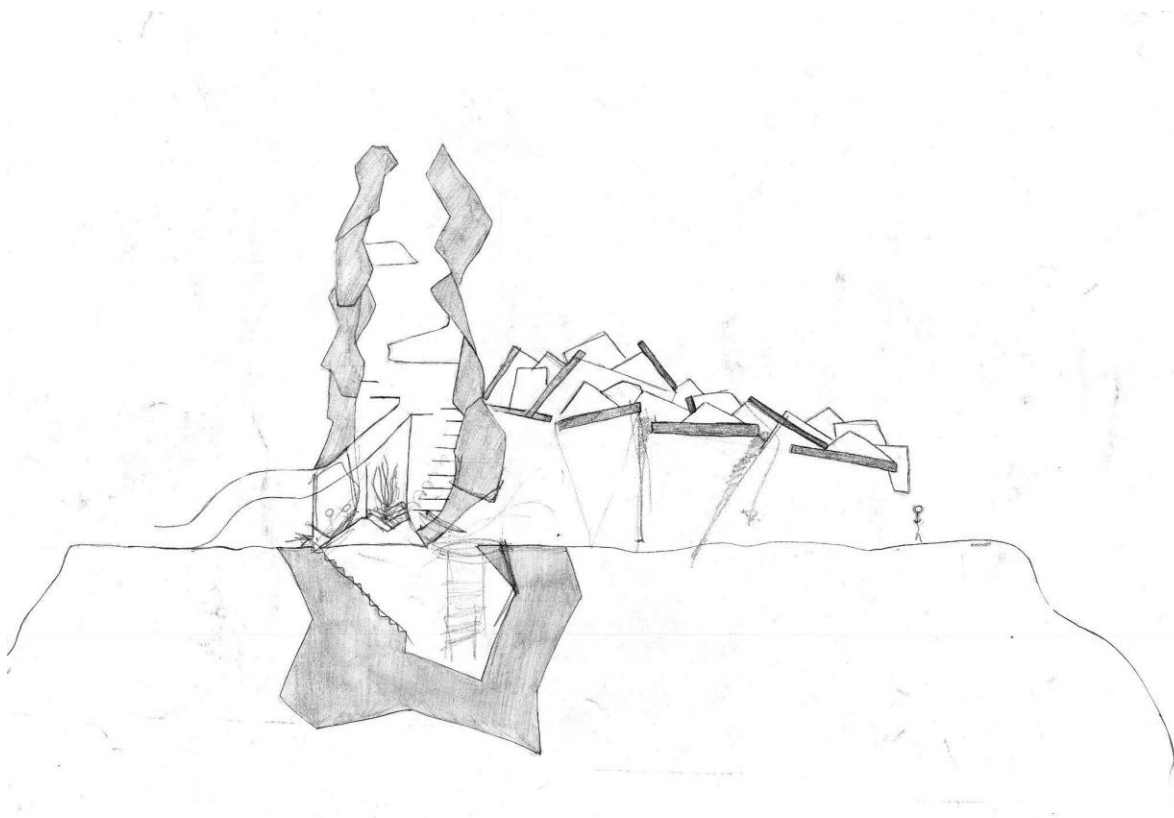


**Figure 5**

*Taking place. The cliff. Student's work: Maria Urrutia.*

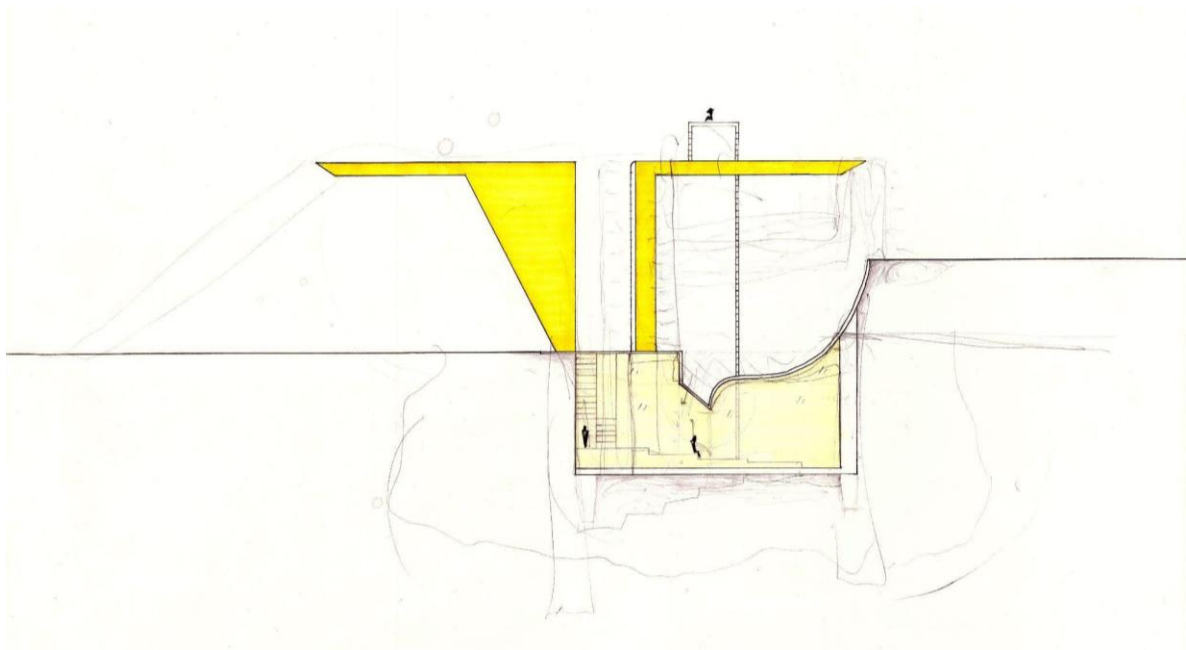
**Figure 6**

*Taking place. The infinite. Student's work: Malak Kamel.*



**Figure 7**

*Taking place. The cave. Student's work: Nour Iskander.*



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## 49

## Performing Water: Experiments at the Intersection of Bodies, Cities, and Water

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### Abstract

This contribution is based on my doctoral thesis entitled *Cities, Bodies, and Water: Urban Bathing as a Spatial Practice*, completed at the University of Roma Tre in January 2025. The study's engagement with the spatial practices of bathing, and thus with the embodied experience of space, led to a parallel investigation into the performativity of water. This curiosity gave rise to a series of *experiments* at the intersection of the three central foci of the research: cities, bodies and water. In these investigations, *Performing Water* emerged as an embodied method for understanding the *hydrological* body (Neimanis, 2017) as part of a larger *environmental* body (Halprin; Ingold, 2000). Drawing on and being inspired by works such as Humphrey's *Water Study* (1923), Niemczyk's *Bath in the Fountain* (1960), Halprin's *The Bath* (1967) or *Experiments in Environment* (1967-1971), Chirico's *Mysterious Bath Fountain* (1973), and Huan's *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond* (1997), a series of site-specific, body-based actions have been developed and co-developed. The selected experiments presented here not only served as forms of embodied research but also as platforms for embodied pedagogy. Through this process, four conceptual frameworks have emerged as tools for future experimentation and engagement with water: *Embodying Water* (1), *Bathing Fantasies* (2), *Reviving Bathing Spaces* (3), and *Making Water Visible* (4). Together, these pedagogical structures provide a foundation for continued exploration and collaborative research.

*Keywords:* cities, bodies, water, performance, pedagogy

## Experiments at the Intersection of Cities, Bodies, and Water

We are all part of a bigger body, and that bigger body is nature herself. We are water, metal, earth and air. (...) By connecting with this larger body, we can find a life-giving support that is often neglected and denied in our industrialized culture. (Halprin, 2000, p.119)

Placed within situated actions within academic contexts, where performance became both research and pedagogy, these *experiments* explore the intersection of cities, bodies, and water. They unfolded within specific spatial and social conditions, using the body as a tool to generate experiential knowledge and awareness related to water (Figure 1). From public thermal baths to ancient archaeological remains, from fountains in Rome to ephemeral gestures with the earth, these explorations respond to both the physical and symbolic absence or presence of water. What follows is a brief account of these performative moments, each of which attempts to reimagine the role of water in shaping our *spatial practices* (Dodd, 2019) and *hydrosocial cycles* (Linton, 2010).

### Figure 1

*Bathing Caracalla, 2022. Image by Alfonso Salamone.*

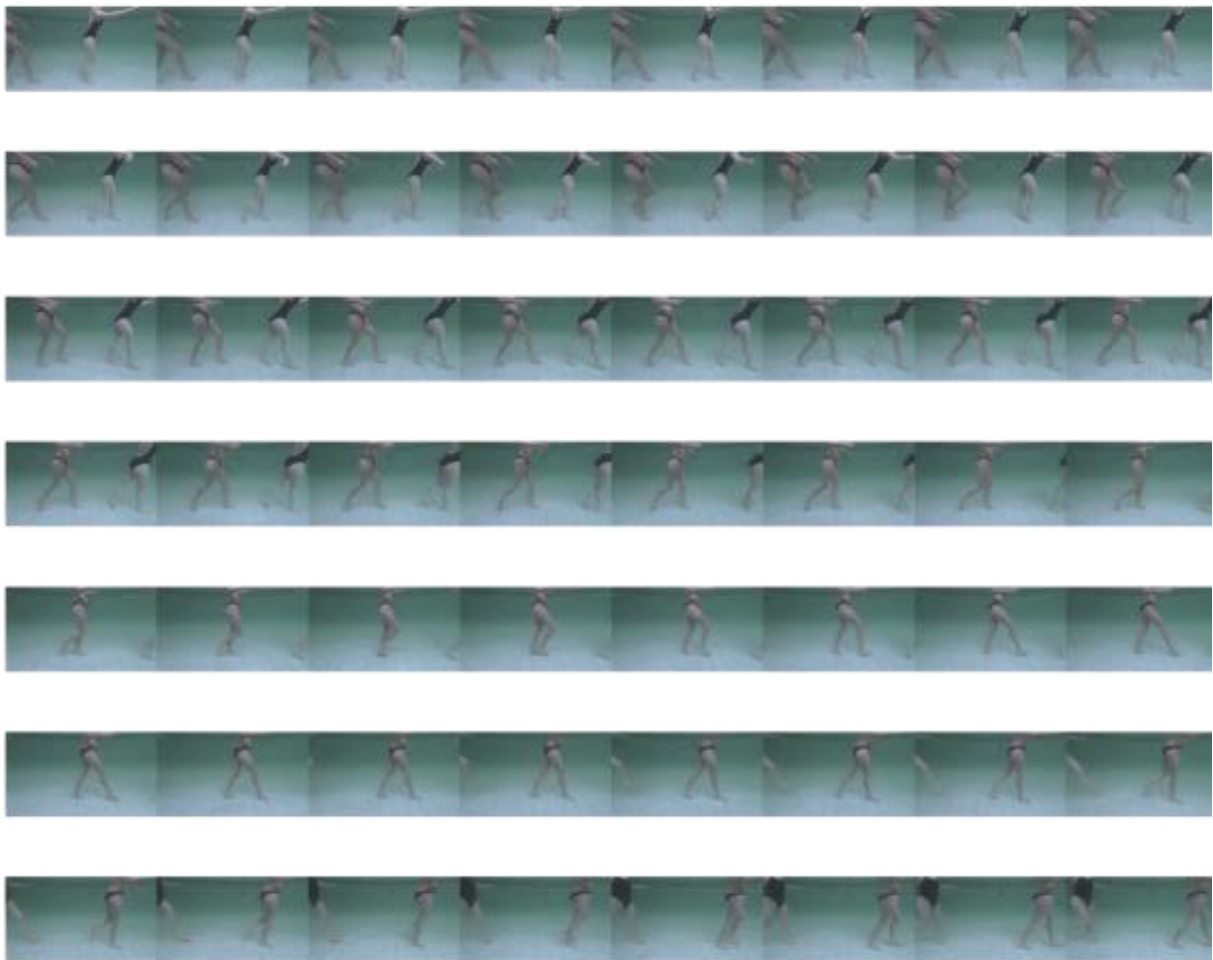


### **(1) Seminar *Stadt-Körper-Wasser*, University of Stuttgart, 2022**

The first two *experiments* took place in the Seminar *Stadt-Körper-Wasser*<sup>47</sup> at the Chair of Stadtplanung und Entwerfen (SuE), directed by Prof. Baum at the University of Stuttgart. Conceived by the author and Malzahn, the seminar reflected on the interrelations between cities, bodies and water. The first experiment was carried out in a public thermal bath, Mineralbad Berg in Stuttgart, which draws its water from a natural thermal spring. During the session, students explored the inhabitation of water, how the body moves in water, how temperature is perceived, and how materials affect the sensory experience.

#### **Figure 2**

*Experiment in Mineralbad Berg, Stuttgart, 2022. Image by the author.*



<sup>47</sup> More information available at: <https://www.sue-uni-stuttgart.de/lehrformate/ss-2022-stadt-koerper-wasser/>

The second *experiment* took place at the Heisse Brunnen in Baden, an example of urban bathing that come out from a grassroots initiative called Bagno Popolare.<sup>48</sup> This experiment explored the experience of bathing in an open public space, and how architecture plays a fundamental role in negotiating the seemingly contradictory act of performing an intimate practice in public. The size of the pool allowed a small group of people to interact comfortably, since the height of the walls, the relationship to the bodies and the immediate surroundings, the material, the texture, and the temperature provided adequate conditions for them to discuss while bathing.

### Figure 3

*Experiment in Heisse Brunnen, Baden, 2022. Image by Mike Stricker.*



The seminar ended with an exhibition of the student's reflections on topics such as *phenomenology*, by capturing soundscapes or identifying feelings linked with urban waters; *coexistence*, by studying the cohabitation in liquid spaces; *connectedness*, by exploring dependencies; *utopia*, by imagining urban spaces for bathing; *contradictions*, of private/public, healing/danger, pleasure/need; and *visibility*, by mapping or unveiling urban waters.

<sup>48</sup> Bagno Popolare is a community-driven initiative based in Baden, Switzerland, dedicated to reviving the city's historic thermal bathing culture. Established in 2017, the collective has been instrumental in reintroducing public bathing through projects such as *Heisse Brunnen* or *Bad zum Raben*, in Baden and Ennetbaden. See: <https://bagnopopolare.ch>

## **(2) Master's degree in Environmental Humanities, University of Roma Tre, 2023**

As part of the Master's Degree in Environmental Humanities, directed by Prof. Careri and Prof. Angelucci, a joint activity on water was organised in collaboration with the collectives Ati Suffix<sup>49</sup> and Hotel Regina.<sup>50</sup> The project developed with the students was titled *Confluvium* (meaning confluence, place where streams of water/air meet). In Rome, while it is forbidden to bathe in the city's fountains, it is permitted to collect their water for drinking. The performance consisted of collectively gathering water from several historical fountains - Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi, Fontana delle Tartarughe, the twin fountains in Piazza Farnese, and Fontana dell'Acqua Paola - and transporting it in a canister from one site to another. The action culminated in a collective bath using the gathered water, symbolically creating a shared immersion in all the Roman fountains.

## **(3) Conference Performing Space, University of the Peloponnese, 2023**

Since 2022, my participation in the organisation of the annual international conference *Performing Space*,<sup>51</sup> coordinated by Berzal-Cruz and hosted by the Department of Theatre at the University of the Peloponnese, has offered opportunities to share and expand research on the relationship between performance and water. In the 2022 and 2023 editions, a series of workshops were conducted, involving various *experiments*, some specifically addressing cities, bodies and water. One example was the exploration of the sunken city of Epidaurus (2022), where participants embodied the submerged archaeological remains. Other examples include an exercise on Arvanitia Beach (2023), where participants entered the water dressed and floated towards the shore while reflecting on migration and displacement (Figure 4), and a student-led re-enactment of the city's abandoned hammam (2023), reviving its historical significance.

An additional example, developed in collaboration with the *Friends of the 750 Mineral Springs of Greece*,<sup>52</sup> focused on revaluating lost historic springs. The performance centred

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<sup>49</sup> ATi Suffix is an interdisciplinary collective based in Rome, established in 2013. The group adopts the Italian grammatical suffix "-ATI" to emphasize reciprocal and transformative actions. See: <https://www.atisuffix.net>

<sup>50</sup> Kollektiv Hotel Regina is a Basel-based art and design collective, founded in 2016. Its practice spans art, design, and performance, characterized by a diverse use of media and a focus on participatory, site-specific interventions. See: <https://kollektiv.hotelregina.org>

<sup>51</sup> Performing Space is an international research project exploring the relationship between performance and the built environment. The project brings together scholars and practitioners from diverse disciplines to investigate how bodies and spaces interact. See: <https://www.performingspace.org>

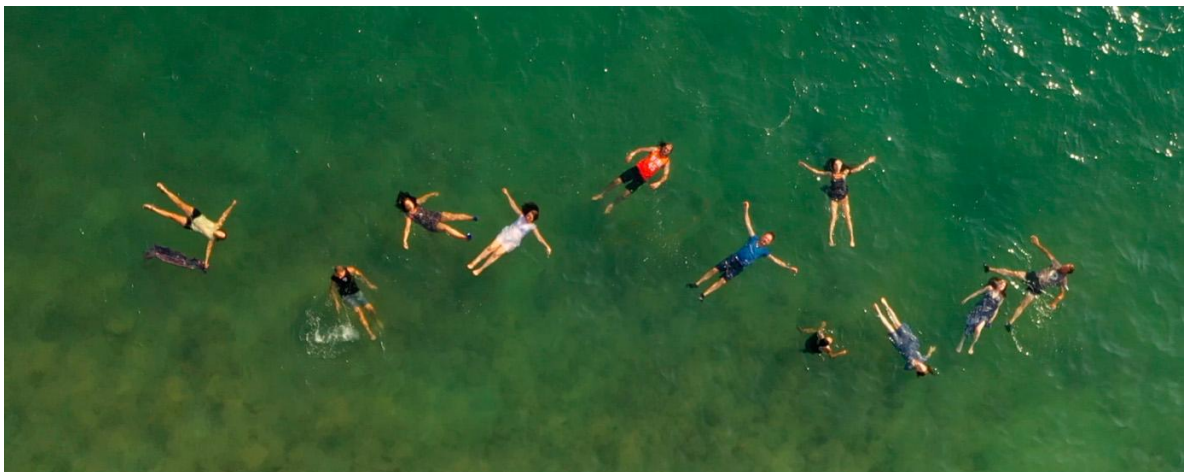
<sup>52</sup> Friends of the 750 Mineral Springs of Greece is a research project inspired by Nikolaos Lekkas's 1938 publication of the same name aiming to document, explore, and reimagine Greece's neglected network of thermal and mineral springs. See: <https://www.750mineralsprings.gr>



on the search for a spring that once supplied the sanctuary of Asclepius in Epidauros, described in Nikolaos Lekkas's guide (1938) as Ακρατοπηγή (meaning uncontainable, wild, free). The term sparked the exploration, and when the path to the source was found to be blocked, the group decided to perform on site with the available water, embodying the difficulty of access to water and culminating in a collective bath with the wet earth. (Figures 5,6).

**Figure 4**

*Experiment in Arvanitia Beach, Napflio, 2023. Image by Giorgos Charalampakis.*



**Figure 5,6**

*Experiment in the sanctuary of Asclepius, Epidauros, 2023. Images by the author.*



**(4) Summer School Blue Paths, University of Stuttgart, TH Nuremberg, Academy of Fine Arts Palermo, 2024**

Organised by the University of Stuttgart, TH Nuremberg, and the Academy of Fine Arts of Palermo, the *Blue Paths* Summer School brought together students and teachers in the Sicilian villages of Sclafani Bagni and Petralia Sottana. The transdisciplinary programme



combined embodied research/pedagogy (Figure 7), and community engagement to address the revitalisation of healing water sites. Participants developed five site-specific actions linked by a collective journey called the “Blue Path,” which included a public bathing performance at a village fountain, a tea ceremony, the construction of a changing room, and participatory installations at an abandoned thermal bath and a disused public pool. These embodied experiments emphasised sensory experience, local knowledge, and communal rituals around water, reimagining the practice of bathing. The Summer School concluded with an exhibition at Bad zum Raben in Baden, Switzerland, which translated the Sicilian experience into a new spatial and historical context through performative and multimedia installations.

**Figure 7**

*Experiment in the thermal spring, Sclafani Bagni, 2024. Image by the author.*



## Conclusion

Through a series of performative experiments, this research explored how the human body navigates through the presence and absence of water in the built environment. These actions highlighted the social, cultural, and ecological significance of water (Linton, 2010) and positioned urban bathing as a critical tool for regeneration (Gideon, 1948), *jouissance* (Lefevre, 2014), and connectedness (Neimanis, 2017).

Four conceptual frameworks emerged from these *experiments* at the intersection between cities, bodies and water: *embodying water* (1), *bathing fantasies* (2), *reviving bathing spaces* (3), and *making water visible* (4).

The idea of *embodying water* appeared in the *experiments* at Mineralbad Berg and Heisse Brunnen, where the body was approached as a porous medium fluid, responsive, and shaped by its environment (Halprin, 2000; Ingold, 2000). *Bathing fantasies* explored the symbolic and psychological dimensions of water (Bachelard, 1994; Illich, 1986), as in the ritualised gathering of fountain water in Rome or the fountain bathing in Sclafani Bagni. *Reviving bathing spaces* took shape through site-specific actions in the abandoned hammam in Nafplio, and the abandoned bathhouse in Sclafani Bagni, reactivating overlooked spaces of care and community. *Making water visible* became essential in a context where water is often hidden or abstracted (Gandy, 2004; Linton, 2010; Chen, MacLeod, & Neimanis, 2013). Through mapping, immersion, or interaction with wet earth, water was reintroduced as a relational and ecosocial practice.

In searching for the lost spring of Epidaurus, the performers reflected on the scarcity of water, the intimacy of shared bathing, and the embodied urgency of reconnecting with our environment. As one participant noted, “we became water in a way” (personal communication, 2023)

With this reflection, the paper concludes by proposing a framework for future embodied research and pedagogical inquiry - *Performing Water* - which calls for transdisciplinary collaboration to explore new methods to engage with water.

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## 50

### Understanding the Environment through Performance

**Pablo Berzal Cruz**

Independent researcher

#### Abstract

The increasing presence of digital devices in our daily lives seems to be causing us to disconnect from our environment. It appears that the real world is no longer attractive enough to capture our attention. This is due to a basic cognitive function present in all species, whereby attention is directed towards the most intense stimuli in the environment. This function has been fundamental to the development of our cognition, societies, and the construction of our environment. However, the stimuli produced in the real environment can hardly compete with the intense, brilliant visuals and sounds of digital devices. This physical and mental disconnection from our environment is causing disturbances to our cognition, particularly among the younger generations who have grown up immersed in digital media. Furthermore, the process of environment construction has changed, producing spaces that increasingly resemble video games and dehumanising our habitat.

To regain our connection with the real environment without abandoning the advantages offered by digital devices, we propose using performance as a tool for understanding the environment, based on a special form of conscious action. Applying performance to teaching, research, our professions and even our daily lives can help us reorient our attention towards our real environment. It can also broaden our understanding of human relationships with the environment.

For the past 15 years, we have been exploring the use of performance as a tool for analysing and understanding our environment in various contexts. In this presentation, we will share some of our experiences in the fields of university teaching and academic research at the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the University of the Peloponnese. From these experiences, we saw the need to create a broader project that would encompass all disciplines studying the relationship between human activity and the environment, which was the origin of Performing Space.

*Keywords:* Real environment, performance, embodiment of space.

## Understanding the Environment through Performance

*I can only really perceive time and space if I am aware here and now of my own body and the space it occupies.*

We tend to live in a kind of dream, disconnected from our environment, while our environment unconsciously conditions our thoughts, moods and behaviour. We are not masters of ourselves, but subjects of circumstances. Our tendency to live in a state of semi-sleep has been exacerbated by the use of digital devices in recent decades, which have made us addicted to visual stimulation. The bright, intense visual stimuli produced by digital screens capture our attention more than the stimuli in our real environment. As a result, we live increasingly immersed in a virtual environment and disconnected from the real environment, without embodying the space we inhabit, which is causing serious problems in the cognitive development of the new generations.<sup>53</sup>

In experiments on the behaviour of laughing gulls, Nobel and Lehrman (1940) demonstrated that, when false eggs were introduced into their nests, the gulls preferred to incubate them rather than their natural eggs. This type of behaviour has since been observed in all vertebrate species; it is a common biological rule that attention is focused on stimuli of higher intensity — what Tinbergen (1951) termed 'supernormal stimuli' — and we lose interest in those of lower intensity. Our addiction to digital devices is largely caused by supernormal stimuli capturing our attention. However, this dynamic has been fundamental to the cognitive and social development of our species, as well as to the construction of our environment. As demonstrated by McCauley and Lawson (2002) through their study of the use of supernormal stimuli as one of the fundamental mechanisms in the most important rituals of all societies, and, as we studied (Berzal Cruz, 2025), the importance of supernormal stimuli in navigating the territory and the assignment of meanings in the construction of the environment (Berzal Cruz, 2025).

*“It is sometimes possible to offer stimulus that are even more effective than the natural situations” (Tinbergen, 1951, p. 44).*

We have built our societies and our environment by learning to use supernormal stimuli. However, in recent decades, this knowledge has caused us to become disconnected from our environment, resulting in our losing the ability to interact with it in a way that maintains a balance between human activity and space. We live in a disembodied world, disconnected from the senses, except for the stimuli produced by digital devices that do not belong to the real environment.

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<sup>53</sup> We mention among other works on the possible negative consequences of the use of digital devices: on our cognitive processes, Jean Healy (1999); on social relations, Rodolfo R. Llinás (2002); or on the perception and construction of the environment, Harry F. Mallgrave (2013).

This phenomenon is also affecting architects, who are one of the most important agents in the construction of the environment. New architects in particular have increasingly connected with their surroundings primarily through digital tools. Their relationship with space is disembodied; they have trained as architects using only their retinas. We only have to observe the architectural production of recent decades to see that something has broken, that our environment is increasingly dehumanised.

*“We belong to space and time; our bodies combine with them and include them” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p. 162).*

How can we reverse this process? How can we become part of space and time again? How do we embody our knowledge of the environment again?

Within architecture, some authors have approached the perception of space from a phenomenological or neuroscientific point of view.<sup>54</sup> However, in order to recover embodied knowledge of space we need to include an essential tool in the study: performance. As anthropologist Victor Turner (1982) warned in his study of human reality, to understand the cognitive processes that occur in the interaction between space and the body-mind, it is necessary “to become performers ourselves, and bring to human, existential fulfilment what have hitherto been only mentalistic protocols”. Therefore, in order to understand the construction of our environment, in order to understand deeply the relations between body-mind and space, we must use performance as a tool of knowledge, of research.

But how can we introduce performance into the study, teaching and practice of architecture, archaeology, art history or any other discipline that studies or works with space and its use? In the performing arts, of course, the answer is simple: they already do it. But what about the rest? To find answers and put them into practice, we have set up the Performing Space project. A meeting point for all disciplines that study the relationship between human and their environment, together with the performing arts. However, prior to the creation of the Performing Space project, I developed several pedagogical and academic research experiences that could be used as a basis for reincorporating the embodiment of space into teaching, professional practice and everyday life. A few of these are listed below.

## **Embodying Space Again**

The Master's in Ephemeral Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Madrid was the best context in which to obtain the best results. From 2011 to 2024, I directed the Performance Workshop for this programme, which gradually became one of its core components. The reason for its centrality is simple: it combines work on performance and space, incorporating all possible approaches to architecture. The method used in the workshop is essentially as follows:

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<sup>54</sup> See Berzal Cruz (2024)



1. A small training of the participants in the techniques of focused attention, in order to be able to observe the reactions of the body-mind to the performativity of the space they are in.
2. They are shown examples of how artists have used performance to reflect on space.
3. They are asked to create a site-specific performance that will help them to better understand a particular space and its dynamics.
4. They are asked to describe and document the experience, the results and their conclusions.

### Figure 1

*The Body as Part of the Space. "La estatua" by AnnaGiulia Saggese 2022. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*



Certain dynamics recur in the proposals of the participants, such as the use of the body as part of the space, the re-contextualisation or de-contextualisation of the space, the sensory exploration or the emotional exploration of the space.

The use of the body as part of the space has been presented in many different ways, such as measuring the space with the body, or linking the plasticity of the body to certain architectural elements (Figures 1, 2). The dynamic of re-contextualisation consists in introducing a series of sensory stimuli and/or a specific action that transforms the space and transports the occupants to another place (Figure 3). De-contextualisation consists of introducing an activity into a place that is completely different from the usual use of that space, thus revealing spatial qualities or a kind of spatial performativity that is hidden in the

usual use of the place (Figure 4). Perhaps the most popular dynamic among participants was sensory exploration of space, which involved depriving themselves of one or more senses (including kinaesthesia) in order to focus their attention on a particular spatial quality (Figure 5). Emotional exploration focuses on the emotions associated with, or evoked by, a place. Participants can map a place by tracking certain emotions that arise during exploration, by entering an action (Figure 6).

### Figure 2

*The Body as Part of the Space. "Cuerpo en espacio muerto" by Juan Pedro Checa Noguera 2022. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*



### Figure 3

*De-Contextualisation. "Encuentro" by Benjamín Ruiz de Esparza, 2022. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*





**Figure 4**

*Re-Contextualisation. "Sumérgete", 2017. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*

**Figure 5**

*Sensory Exploration. "Cadenas", by Sandra Pizarro Cantarer, 2019. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*



**Figure 6**

*Emotional Exploration. “Recuerda y siente”, by Rocío Avilés Tovar, 2018. Máster Arquitecturas Efímeras, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. (Photo by the author).*



The results of the workshop so far have been truly excellent, with participants enthusiastically discovering our ability to embody space, to understand on a much deeper level its qualities, its dynamics and the spatial performativity that operates within it.

One of the most eye-opening experiences for me was the workshop that I developed together with Maria Mikedaki and Christina Zoniou in 2018 at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese, where we worked for four months on the relationship between spectators and space in ancient Greek theatre, from the classical period to the present day. At that time, I was very interested in how we can consciously create cognitive maps in our exploration of space. Using the techniques of devised theatre, in particular the documentary theatre in which the workshop was immersed, and based on focused attention, we were able to conduct experiments with the participants to achieve our goal, with amazing results (Figure 7).

More recently, again at the University of the Peloponnese, in this case at the Department of Performative and Digital Arts. In 2022, I continued my research alongside Athena Stourna in the workshop she led, titled *Listen, Watch and Be Silent*. The workshop examined Nafplio's history of incarceration, with participants developing a performance at sites where prisons once stood. We examined the ability to consciously experience the spatial performativity of a particular location, encouraging participants to explore the sites by moving through them. The results were again excellent (Figure 8).



**Figure 7**

*Cognitive Maps. "KoinoPoeisis", Ancient Epidaurus, 2018. Department of Theatre Studies, University of the Peloponnese (Photo by the author).*

**Figure 8**

*Spatial Performativity. "Listen, Watch and Be Silent", 2023. Department Digital and Performing Arts, University of the Peloponnese (Photo by the author).*



The last example I would like to mention is another important context in which I have been able to develop my work on how to introduce performance into the compression of space is the Department of Advanced Design at the Polytechnic University of Madrid. From 2013 to 2014, in collaboration with Alberto Morell Sixto's teaching group, we developed various activities designed to help students understand space through their bodies. These experiences emphasised the perception of the body as part of space, such as measuring space with bodies, or the sensory exploration of space through touch, hearing, and kinaesthesia. Through these experiences, we enabled students to embody the spaces we were studying. The results were excellent once again. As with our work on the Master's in Ephemeral Architecture, it was fundamental that we were able to develop the teaching techniques we used over time (Figures 9, 10).

**Figure 9**

*Measuring Space with the Body. Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Cairo, Egypt, 2023. Department of Advanced Design, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Photo by the author).*



Over the last 15 years, our work has shown us that using performance in different fields can help us regain the capacity to experience space corporally, despite the increasing pressure of electronic devices in our lives. These are just a few examples of performance's enormous potential in teaching, research and our daily lives. Reconnecting with our body-mind and experiencing our environment periodically may be essential for the next stage in human evolution and our environment.



**Figure 9**

*Measuring Space with the Body. Temple of Apollo in Didyma, Cairo, Turkey, 2014. Department of Advanced Design, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Photo by Eduardo Pérez Gómez).*

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## 51

## **Enacting Image (Denkraum) by the Wind: Movement Depicted in Mavroidis' Landscapes, Fassianos' Figure and Gyparakis' Breath Installation**

**Stella Christofi**

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### **Abstract**

This research is grounded in contemporary scholarly discourse on the representation of wind as the “pathosformel,” a concept which moves the space of image, called “Denkraum” and its epistemological implications. The study aims to contribute to the field of critical iconology by exploring how weather phenomena, specifically wind, “move” and shape the Greek image. The wind as an invisible force plays a central role in the shaping of space of the image, acting as a dynamic and unseen reality. This paper will examine how the motif of air in its metaphysical and material form has become a privileged symbol that significantly influenced Greek art as well as its subsequent reinterpretations in contemporary artistic practices.

This research traces the historical trajectory of the air motif in past, modern and contemporary art, analysing works by Greek artists such as Mavroidis, Fassianos, and Gyparakis. The focus is on how air as a natural and metaphysical force moves and animates the inanimate, altering the function of the image and engaging both visual and tactile senses. This study posits that air and wind are more than mere background elements; they actively transform the space of the image, leading to a new understanding of iconology where meaning emerges from the performative interaction between body, culture, and image.

*Keywords:* denkraum, pathosformel, image acts, wind, greek art, movement.

### **Wind as Pathosformel**

Warburg's concept of “pathosformel” refers to expressive gestures that capture intense emotional experiences. These “passion formulas” manifest bodily effects such as intoxication, ecstasy or pain, intensified to the extreme. Warburg's studies reveal how such effects are embedded in art across time (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a). Wind, similarly

occupies a dual position of being both physical and intangible - simultaneously material and spiritual. It is therefore unsurprising that wind has long been associated with spirit, breath, pneuma, divinity, and shadow. This family of related concepts informs both the ontology and epistemology of air in art (Low & Hsu, 2007).

As a recurring motif, pneuma has been privileged in modern art for its ability to signify a state of being that is inherently tied to visual perception. This research explores the ways in which wind and air function as dynamic agents in Greek art, engaging both the visual and tactile senses, and thus creating a living presence within the image (Ionescu, 2023).

This work presents some of the types of transformations that the image has undergone in Greek art. The aim of these structures is general, not intended to explain exhaustively all the historical sources in which the wind is a central motif, but to negotiate how the motif transforms the function of the image. The general trajectory of this motif thus traces the visual representation of the spirit as an image with its tactile and bodily presence, with the sense that the living body can feel wind and air in a sensitive environment (Ionescu, 2023).

## Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions: *How can wind be represented visually in art, given its invisible nature? How does air as a motif actively transform the spatial dynamics within the image (Denkraum)?*

## Methodology

The research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology and relates iconology to other fields within and beyond the humanities and the humanities, such as weather studies. It draws from Warburg's *Atlas Mnemosyne*, focusing on tracing formal patterns across time and space to understand the symbolic power of wind and air in art (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a).

## Movement

For Warburg, the most fundamental pathosformel involves movement. His analysis of Botticelli's work emphasises the decorative movement in objects such as hair and fabric blowing in the wind (Warburg, 1893/2010). These "mobile accessories" or "Bewegtes Beiwerk"- fluttering clothes, waving hair, curtains - generate an illusion of liveliness in still art. Such movements, which Warburg refers to as "dynamograms" draw us in, combining the emotional intensity of affecting and being affected (Schankweiler & Wüschner, 2019a).

## The Representation of the Wind in Greek Art (1980-2012)

Mavroidis' painting *Meltemi* (1980) serves as a key example of wind's representation in modern Greek art (Figure 1).

### Figure 1

*"Meltemi", 1980. Oil on canvas. 40 x 60 cm. Giorgos Mavroidis.*



The swirling brushstrokes in this painting capture the disorderly movement of the wind on an Aegean island, blurring the boundaries of houses and landscape, allowing the viewer to experience the force and chill of the Meltemi - a characteristic summer wind. We feel the fury of the wind and the chill that a Meltemi causes on our bodies, as we walk through the streets of an Aegean island. Here, the painter is an observer of this moment and invites the viewer to enter the image space and watch this scene. In this abstract way he visualises the wind, which we cannot see, but can imagine and feel. This breeze, the Meltemi, is a frequent summer phenomenon in the Aegean islands, where the images of wind-blown waves, rough seas and the roar of the wind change the environment into a cold scene that changes the summer.

Similarly, in Fasianos' *The Boatman* (1980) (Figure 2), the wind shapes the composition, driving the movement of hair, a shawl, and the boat itself. The force of the wind is visible in the tilted angles of life jackets and anchors, while clouds and fish swirl under its influence. Here, the wind is not just a background element but the primary agent moving the entire

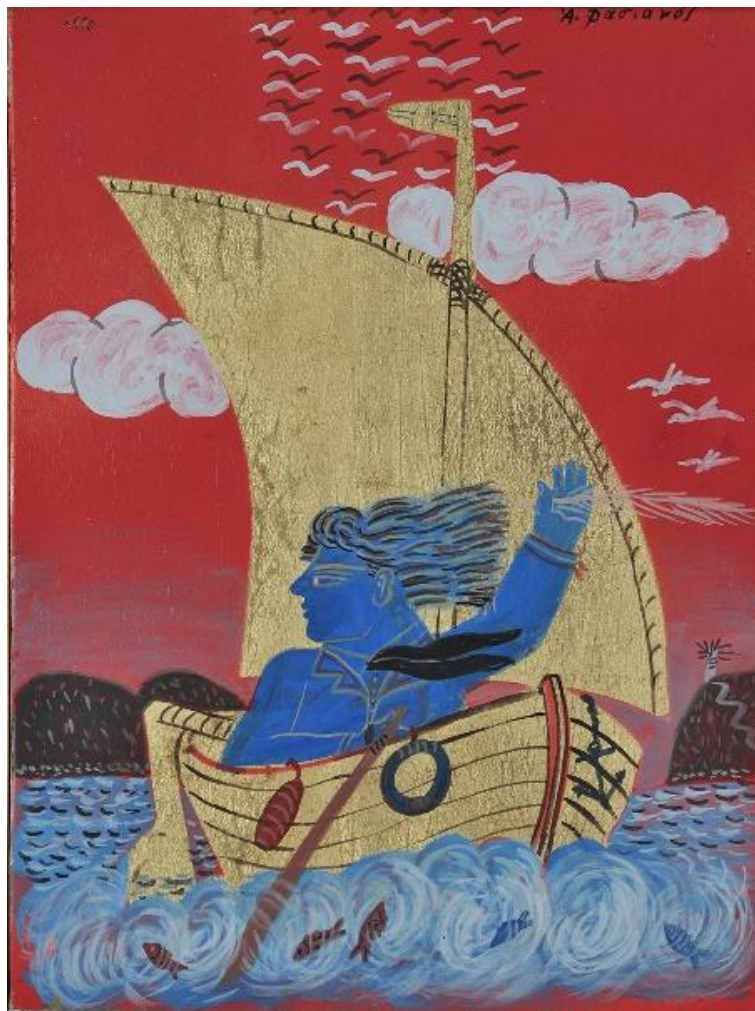


scene, as observed in the fluttering hair, shawl and feather held by the blue figure, as is the force exerted on the boat, shown in the right-facing angle. The waves in the sea are swirled by the gust of wind and the fishes swim in different directions, while the clouds in the sky and the birds move schematically in curved lines.

The sensory effects of wind are tactile, thermal, and occasionally auditory (Diaconu, 2013). The wind, while invisible, can transform our perception of an environment through its tangible impact on everything it touches. This movement often carries connotations of both vitality and destruction, evoking stories of shipwrecks and danger, as well as adventure and resilience (Velonis, 2022).

## Figure 2

*"The boatman", 1980. Oil on canvas. 44,4 x 33,5 cm. Alekos Fassianos.*



Breath and air go together (Velonis, 2022). Breathing creates and ensures the continuation of life and this has been consistently taken as evidence of divine presence, or the gift of life, by every kind of culture. Wind touches and is felt, from the inside out (Low & Hsu, 2007). Even our own body produces and inhales wind. Wind is related to the breath

that goes in and out of our bodies and even the gases that our organs emit (Baert, 2015). In the Greek philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 BC), the concept of spirit is central to both breath and pneuma. This vital energy is received at birth and is constantly renewed through breathing (Baert, 2015).

In Gyparakis' sculptural installation *The Thinker* (2012), breath and air become a central element (Figure 3). The artist's own breath animates the conch connected through a bronze funnel to his body, producing sound and linking the sculpture to the physical presence of the artist. This work exemplifies how air can be "captured" and transformed into a performative act, where the artist's body and the wind come together in the creation of sound and movement (Ionescu, 2023).

### Figure 3

*"The Thinker", 2012, Epoxy resin, marble, copper. Giorgos Gyparakis.*



The soul depends on the body as much as the perception of the wind depends on an instrument to "capture" its movement and translate it into music. Accordingly, the soul becomes like a body that circulates wind? within and can be released? in different ways: as continuous breathing, irregular breathing or taking air, as relaxed breathing or rapid breathing (Burchert, 2018). The artist is no longer limited to feeling the wind or observing its effects, but uses devices that mediate between the body and the wind (Diaconu, 2013).



## Conclusion

In each of these works, air and wind shape fundamentally artistic representation, highlighting the shifting relationship between body, culture and image. Mavroidis and Fasianos incorporate wind into their paintings as a material force, while Gyparakis takes this relationship further by engaging the viewer in a performative experience that bridges the tactile and visual senses. The motif of wind, as a natural force that transcends visibility, offers a powerful metaphor for the movement of images and their epistemological transformations. Ultimately, this study suggests that the iconological concept is not fixed but emerges through the interaction of body, culture and image.

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## 52

**Classical and Carnavalesque Use of Performance Space****Mark Turner**

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**Abstract**

This article is based on aspects of my recent research at the East 15 Acting School-University of Essex, UK, which focuses on the cartography of the performance space. This relates to my practical research into the actor's choric spontaneity within classical harmonic principles, carnivalesque chorus "invasions" into a classical stage configuration and applying comic and carnivalesque structured improvisation within and interspersed with the classical text. My historical research focuses on the Renaissance production of masques and plays at Whitehall Palace, England, through the lens of the ancient Greek theatre configuration of the *skene*, *proskenion* and *orkhestra*. In my recent practice as research, I applied the principles and cartography of the classical Greek theatre to help visualise the King's Men's transfer of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* between three early modern theatres and to aid and articulate my direction of *Tempest Masque* between contemporary theatres. I have been applying the tripartite scenography of *skene*, *proskenion* and *orkhestra* to my direction in a variety of performance spaces: end-on, three sides, or in the round, and with varying combinations in one performance. The spatial manifestation of Weimann's concept of *locus* and *platea* is given emphasis through height levels in addition to the depth of the *skene*, *proskenion* and *orkhestra* and can be summarised as the gods' appearances and descents from a heavenly realm from the upper *skene*; the protagonists/antagonists on the raised *proskenion/skene*; and the chorus or audience on the lower rounded *orkhestra*.

My methodology has included training actors to be adaptable to different configurations, structured improvisation, audience interaction and forming a chorus. My practice explores how this affects the resonance of the voice, maximum visibility, physical presence, and choric relationships. I query the classical orientation of the audience, and their playful disorientation through ludic, thematic, and narrative frameworks towards audience/actor integration and interaction.

**Keywords:** Masque, early modern theatre, Shakespeare, *kōmos*, *locus-platea*, the chorus, ancient Greek theatre.

## Classical and Carnavalesque Use of Performance Space

The spatial symbolism and performer trajectories of the classical Greek and early modern stage utilised height, depth and width. The ancient Greek plays and the early modern masques and plays depicted the entrance (and sometimes the descent) of the gods: the Greek theatre with the use of the upper *skene* and roof (and sometimes a crane); the masques with double-layered backdrop and shutter systems with cloud machines and platforms; and the playhouses with descents from the upper stage and trap. The Greek plays had chthonic forces (from Greek *khthōn*=earth) and the underworld; the masque could transform the whole stage from hell to a heavenly realm as in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609), and the playhouses had trapdoors from where hell and the supernatural could ascend in some form, often comic devils. Stephen Scully corroborates the comparison of the spatial symbolism of the early modern Globe Theatre to the fifth-century Theatre of Dionysus in Athens, "The three-tier order suggests a spatial and visual hierarchy, linking-but also separating-our collective humanity in the chorus, the individuals who shape the welfare of the community on stage, and the Olympians who oversee all from their imperious remove" (Scully, 1996, p. 62).

The English Renaissance masques presented a symbolic journey as the masquers (maskers), and sometimes the deities, traversed from the *skene* (representing a celestial or faraway place) through the *proskenion* and onto the *orkhestra* stage where the audience was acknowledged and invited to the *orkhestra* to dance. The masque genre featured antimasques where this journey was literally or symbolically reversed, bringing an "outside" subversive energy into the space, from the *platea*<sup>55</sup> (Weimann, 1978) to the *locus*<sup>56</sup> (Weimann, 1978). I link this with the ancient Greek *parados*<sup>57</sup> as the moving chorus singing an entrance or exit song and their entrance and exit points between (outside of) the theatre and the *orkhestra*. This also links to my direction of *The Tempest* through the lens of a masque, in which I envision the ancient Greek *kōmos* as a mobile carnivalesque chorus that is part of the festival atmosphere before, during, and after the play, invading the stage in between the acts and only accepted in the final act. A wedding *kōmos*, "visually suggesting

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<sup>55</sup> "[In Medieval Theatre]. An area before a raised stage, providing additional acting space or accommodation for the audience" (Dictionary, O. E. (2023b) 'Oxford English Dictionary', *platea*, *n*: Oxford University Press. Also, Platea- Greek πλατεῖα (*plateîa*, "street" or piazza or town square). Plateia-the audience, stalls in a theatre, the seats on the ground floor. Also, 'the pit'.

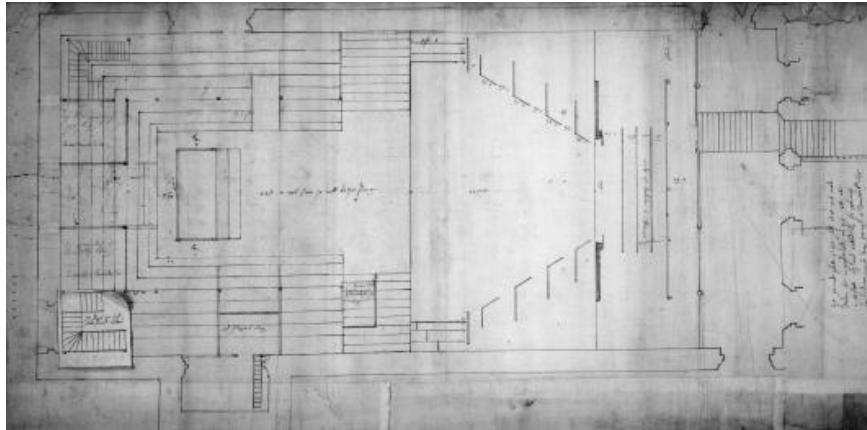
<sup>56</sup> "The place in which something is situated or occurs. In later use also: the effective or perceived location of something abstract" (Dictionary, O. E. (2023a) 'Oxford English Dictionary', *locus*, *n*.<sup>1</sup>: Oxford University Press.

<sup>57</sup> Giving the etymology for "a parade ground; a public square," "pomp, show display, ostentation," and "a muster or display of troops" (Dictionary, O. E. (2024) 'Oxford English Dictionary', *parado*, *n*: Oxford University Press.

the happy ending (komastic occasion) that the action will eventually produce” (Lape, 2006), invites a celebration of a promised marriage, thus fulfilling the ancient principle of comedy, applied to *The Tempest*, as a series of difficulties and near tragedies that are untangled and the resolve is signified with merriment and celebratory displays.

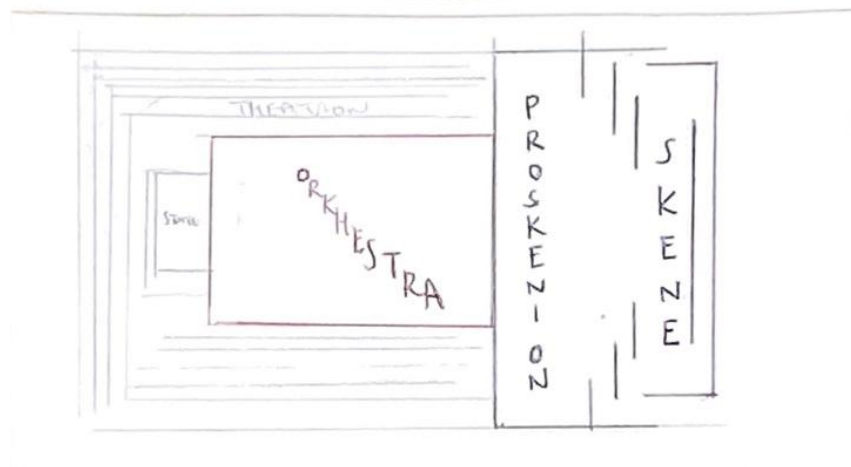
### Figure 1

*Floor plan of a temporary theatre in the hall at the third masque-like play, Florimène, by Inigo Jones (1635). British Library. Reproduced with permission.*



### Figure 2

*The skene, proskenenion, and orchestra stages. Plan of the hall at the third Banqueting House, based on Florimène (1635). Drawing by Mark Turner, adapted from Jones' design above.*



I find correspondence between the festive *kōmos* and the *revels*, the masque dances inspired by the exclusive carnival balls from the Italian states, into which groups of male maskers would gatecrash to dance with the ladies (aka *Romeo and Juliet*). The indoor carnival balls echoed the transition from outside to inside of the sixteenth-century English masques in which the moveable emblematic devices on floats or cars (such as the plough and the boat) (Anglo, 1968), traditionally used as outdoor, processional triumphs and

pageants, “in Stuart masques would metamorphose into the ‘set’” (Bishop, 2006, pp. 214,215). This was opposite to the sixteenth-century Italian *mascherata*, which “transferred into public space what had formerly been represented in the private sphere of the court” (Canguilhem, 2010, p. 470).

At Banqueting House, Whitehall, the masque performers (and possibly the theatre actors) utilised ‘the dancing space’ or *orkhestra* as there was no need to make more money by giving up stage space for the groundlings (Globe) or the higher-paying audience (Blackfriars). Both the masques and the plays echoed the ancient Greek comic chorus as interlocutors in their use of the *platea* as “a space produced by early modern actors at any time at which they acknowledged the actual event while performing in relation to a representational event” (Hopkins, 2013, p. 164). I have been encouraging the actors to “engage the audience, alternatively standing within the play, as a participant in the drama, and ‘outside’ the play as its commentator or presenter” (Mooney, 1990, p. 21). *The Tempest*, the most musical of Shakespeare's plays, features a non-speaking chorus, the rabble, prompting me to explore the Greek chorus as singing, dancing, chanting and challenging the audience and main characters. Actor training has involved more specific directions/locations than end-on stage terminology (upstage, downstage, etc.), including coordinates based on a compass or clock, and the inner circle and outer circle, like Gurr's definition “between centre stage and stage edge” (Gurr, 2017, p. 197).

Through actor interviews, Purcell clarifies the most powerful position at Shakespeare's Globe as directly in front of the *frons scenae* and underneath the Heavens trap,

better understood not as one that necessarily grants its *characters'* authority, but rather as the spot at which the performer can most easily command the whole space; a position on the perimeter, on the other hand, encourages actors to make appeals to specific sections of the audience, or even individual spectators, to the exclusion of others (Purcell, 2017, p. 112).

At Banqueting House, this actor's “authority spot” mirrored in height and depth the “king's seat” (the raised royal dais), the optimum audience position; both positions command an (almost) encompassing viewpoint to see and be seen. The centre of Shakespeare's Globe is at the meeting point of the *proskenion* (thrust/platform stage) and *orkhestra* (‘the yard’) and between the “authority spot” and “king's seat.” Here, the actor is at the centre of “this wooden O” and is within touching distance of the audience. This exact central spot connects to Ley's practical research on the classical Greek staging of *The Libation Bearers* and *The Eumenides* (Aeschylus) which established the *thymele*-base at the centre of the *orkhestra* as “the natural focus for spectators in any position in the Theatron” and “a focus of considerable theatrical power along a line drawn from the centre of the skene doors to

the thymele-base"<sup>58</sup> (Ley and Ewans, 1985, p.78). A mirrored trajectory from the "king's seat" establishes a meeting point in the centre of a classical theatre and the location of the altar in the Theatre of Dionysus.

The ancient Greek *agon* has formed a basis of much of my work, in which two actors (or one actor and a balancing chorus) rarely enter the centre of the stage during the challenge but rather play an ongoing "game" of balancing the stage. If we consider the acknowledgement of the king at a masque (or the acknowledgement of a priest or dignitary in the equivalent position in an ancient Greek theatre) in relation to the actor's "authority spot" as two chorus leader positions, then the *agon* is a means towards a more fully realised shared space of the whole theatre and offers an opportunity to involve the audience narratively and ludically. I have named this location as the *Locus Communis*, explored spatially as the central position within the theatre, located between the "king's seat" as the optimum audience location and the "authority spot" as the optimum actor location. This middle ground, like the *figurenposition* (Weimann, 1978) of the *locus-platea* conjunction, can also be applied to ludic and narrative strategies for audience participation.

If we consider the dimensions of length, width, and height, the actors can imagine themselves to be in the centre of a sphere, not just a circle and, therefore, effectively involve the audience situated at all dimensional levels. I argue that such preparation and consideration of space is essential for actors' training for multi-space performance and the imbuing of sculptural qualities to the performer's corporeal expression.

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<sup>58</sup> Ley is referring to the altar (usually sacred to Dionysus) in the centre of the orchestra.



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## 53

## Corporeality of Space vs. Spatiality of Bodies: Site-Specific Dance on Film

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### Abstract

In site-specific performances, architectural spaces play an important role, becoming performative entities rather than a passive backdrop for an action. However, the narratively rich and environmentally overpowering spaces that inspire site-specific dance interventions can easily overpower the action or the bodies, giving the impression that everything works because of the strong aesthetic presence of the space. As a direct consequence, from an initial intention to performatively engage the spaces into becoming an equal participant of an action, spaces may be reduced to an overwhelming backdrop – an aesthetically pleasing and visually dominant element of the performance, yet, lacking the essential dialogue between the space and the body/bodies. Exploring the corporeality of spaces through the presence and the actions of the bodies interacting with them, we infer that in an ideal performative setup, without the bodies, we cannot not experience the space, and without the space, we cannot not feel the presence of the bodies. Through the analysis of a short dance film, which is a part of the immersive multimedia performance, *Skopje, the Great Escape*, filmed in the burnt-out main hall of the Central Post Office in Skopje, North Macedonia, I discuss strategies of bodies as mediums through which we can strive to address this fragile equilibrium. Within the film, the spaces of this powerful sculptural architecture, which became even more visually engaging through the visible traces of the catastrophic event, had multiple roles: from inspiring the movements through the space by reacting performatively to its morphology, rhythms, shapes and levels, to the way the direction and the cinematography were conceptualised. Avoiding both the approach of an architectural film and the filming of choreography in space, the bodies and their movements function as a medium through which the audience can explore and get a tangible experience of the space.

**Keywords:** embodiment of space; contemporary dance; architecture ruin; site-specific choreography; dance film; discovering space through movement

## Corporeality of Space vs. Spatiality of Bodies

In site-specific performance, the relationship between bodies and architectural spaces should transcend mere aesthetics, evolving into a performative dialogue that shapes the action, the space and the audience's experience. Using the example of a dance film, which is the final sequence of the immersive performance, *Skopje, the Great Escape*,<sup>59</sup> I will focus on the *translation of the bodily experience*, exploring three possible levels of perception in this process. I will look into how the site-specific choreography interacts with the dilapidated space of a powerful architectural structure, abandoned and inaccessible for the general public, and how this interaction can be transferred into a bodily experience for the audience through the two-dimensional virtual reality of the screen. As one of the authors<sup>60</sup> of the aforementioned performance, I will give a more experience-based insight into these notions.

### Level One: Direct Interaction

In the process of translating of the bodily experience of the space, the main focus is on the interaction between the architectural structure of the space and the human body within it, where two interconnected artistic challenges are encountered.

#### ***Challenge #1: The Interaction between the Architecture and the Bodies in Action***

During the work on the choreographic intervention in this specific space, we had to be aware of two problems:

- how not to be overwhelmed by a narratively rich and environmentally strong architectural space, and
- how not to “abuse” the space with new, external narratives.

In the first case, we had to find the balance between the actions and movements of the bodies within the space that are “strong enough” to compete with the visual and emotional

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<sup>59</sup> The performance, *Skopje, the Great Escape* is a part of a series of immersive, site-specific multimedia performances developed and produced in three cities (Novi Sad, Skopje and Tirana) within the framework of the two-year international project *Spa:Re – Public Spaces Reclaimed*, developed by Attila Antal and Višnja Žugić. The main thematic focus was the reclaiming and revitalisation of public spaces through artistic interventions. In these post-socialist, neo-liberal societies, public spaces, understood as spaces where “we can do silly things together freely” (Daniel Wetzel, Rimini Protokoll, personal communication, 2022), are disappearing and becoming increasingly commercialised. Through these series of performances, the audience can re-experience familiar parts of their cities in a new light. This may lead to new ways of active engagement with the social fabric of these cities. Read more about the development and the results of the performances in the publications about the project on: <https://spa-re.info/brochure/> and <https://spa-re.info/strategy/>

<sup>60</sup> *Skopje, the Great Escape* (2023). Directed by Attila Antal. Conceived by Attila Antal and Višnja Žugić. Choreography by Ivana Balabanova. Cinematography and editing by Kiril Shentevski. Original music and soundscapes by Attila Antal. Text by Ljupčo Jovanov, Attila Antal, Višnja Žugić.

power of the space. In the second, we had to avoid using the site as a mere (albeit magnificent) backdrop for the choreographer's and director's visions. We had to find the equilibrium, where *without the bodies, we could not experience the space, and without the space, we could not feel the presence of the bodies.*

**Figure 1**

*The Central Hall of the Post Office Building. Still from the video; directed by Attila Antal, cinematography: Kiril Shentevski*



According to Merleau-Ponty (2012)<sup>61</sup>, our bodily experience shapes how we perceive our surroundings; thus, the corporeality of space is intrinsically linked to the corporeality of the body. The bodies acting within the space should bring life and immediacy to it, grounding the abstract qualities of the environment into a visceral experience. This interplay can extend beyond the superficial engagement with the space to invoke a deeper dialogue between the performers and their environment. This dialogue can encapsulate the subtleties of physical movement as a means through which dancers not only interact with but also reinterpret their surroundings. Throughout the duration of this interplay, the bodies and the space inform and shape each other in a pursuit of reaching a multi-layered experience. Through the concept of the “lived body,” Merleau-Ponty asserts that the body is not merely an object in the world but a primary means of relating to it. In our choreographic intervention in the abandoned

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<sup>61</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2012) posits that human perception is fundamentally embodied; it is through our physicality that we encounter the world. He proposes that consciousness is rooted in our bodily experiences. This theory extends to the perception of space, suggesting that our understanding of environments is deeply influenced by our bodily engagement with them.

central hall of the Post Office<sup>62</sup> building the dancers occupied and inhabited the architectural space with a physical presence and emotional intent. The architecture, with its scars from the past, became a participant in the performance, as visible traces of trauma and decay prompted responses from the dancers. Their movements echoed the emotional resonance of the space, creating an intimate relationship that transformed both the bodies and the environment they engaged with.

## Figure 2

*The Telephone Hall of the Post Office building with the dancers. Still from the video; directed by Attila Antal, cinematography: Kiril Shentevski.*



## **Challenge #2: The Translation of the Character of the Space into a Performative Action**

Dance mediates between the aesthetic of the architecture and the intimate portrayal of human emotion, creating a rich tapestry of experience. This mediation occurred between the dancers' bodies and the architectural structures; between the choreographer and the dancers; and between the director's overall concept and the choreographer. As highlighted by Benjamin (1969), environments can significantly influence the perception and reception of art, positing that a space imbued with historical and emotional resonance can actively

<sup>62</sup> The Main Post Office building in the centre of Skopje, North Macedonia, a Brutalist centrepiece in the city's post-earthquake urban landscape, was built in two phases in 1974 and 1982 (architect: Janko Konstantinov). The central hall burned down under dubious circumstances in 2013. Since then the general public does not have access to this part of the building, although the rest of it is still in function. Initiatives to reconstruct or use this part of the building (e.g. as a space for artistic interventions, performances, etc.) usually hits the walls of political power struggles.

shape a narrative. Site-specific dance embraces this notion, allowing the dancers' bodies to engage with their surroundings as equal partners. In our case the dilapidated architecture presented a backdrop steeped in historical trauma, which could easily overshadow the movement. The risk was that the expressive potential of the dance might be eclipsed by the visual dominance of the space. The work of the director and the choreographer was essential in avoiding this reductive outcome: they had to drive the dancers to probe deeper into the corporeal relationship, i.e. their bodily response to their environment.

### **Level Two: Two-Dimensional Space**

The embodied experience cultivated by the dancers allowed the viewers to resonate with the space's emotional and historical weight. The architecture was recontextualised from a static element into a dynamic participant that shaped and was shaped by the movements within it. The dance acted as a form of social commentary, a critique of the unfolding narratives represented by the architecture. By embodying the space, the dancers weaved together a story, prompting audiences to confront the emotional burden carried by the remnants of the past.

In our case this experience had to be confined to the two-dimensional space of the video format, where we had to choreograph the camera movements to capture the essence of the visceral interaction developed between the dancers' bodies and the elements of the space. The tools we used to convey the bodily experience into video format were: the interaction between the space; the dancers and the camera movements; the specific angles of the shots; the lengths of the action; the rhythm and the tempo of the editing; and the overall soundscape of the film. During this process, we had to be careful not to be overwhelmed either by the movements, the space or the technical interventions at our hands, and to create an audiovisual work that invites the audience to experience the space virtually.

### **Level Three: Virtual Spatial Experience**

Finally, as this dance film was an integral part of our immersive performance, we had to highlight the translation of the two-dimensional space of the screen into the bodily experience of the audience in the final segment of the performance. How is it possible transport the audience into a space that they cannot physically enter, in a way that makes them not only *stare into it* but also truly *experience it*? We had to make the audience feel as if they were immersed in the space together with the dancers through the eye of the camera. There were two levels of engagement : (1) the physical presence of the audience in front of the building itself, where they stopped and were instructed to find a spot where they could focus comfortably on the subsequent audio-visual experience; (2) the aural space of the video. Until this point, the audience walked around the city, experiencing its spaces through audio narrations



and soundscapes with the occasional video interventions, thus getting used to the additional aural layer of the walking experience. In this final segment, where we chose not to use field recordings, or actual sounds from the space, but only a very imposing musical score, the same aural space enveloped the dancers who experienced the space directly with their bodies, and the audience who were invited to watch them, thus creating a common aural space where this transportation into the exclusive space could happen on a personal, intimate level.

### Figure 3

*Bodies in Eternal Spatial Loops. Still from the video directed by Attila Antal, cinematography: Kiril Shentevski*



### Conclusion

Exploring the corporeality of spaces through the presence and the actions of the bodies interacting with them, we infer that in an ideal performative setup, without the bodies, we cannot experience the space, and without the space, we cannot feel the presence of the bodies.

A performance can foster an understanding that blurs the lines between space, body, history and memory, evoking a dialogue with? emotional meaning. The dancers' movements serve as catalysts for re-examining our relationships with environments defined by trauma, beauty, and resilience, ultimately deepening our awareness of how we inhabit and are shaped by the spaces in which we find ourselves.

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## 54

**Extending the Performing Space through Virtual Reality****Katerina El Raheb**

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**Abstract**

In this work we present the challenges and opportunities for using Virtual Reality (VR) technologies as a medium to expand the space and time of the performing stage and storyline through the experimental collaborative performance. This interdisciplinary artistic and experimental exploration took the form of a theatrical production and a hybrid telematic theatrical play which took place simultaneously in the digital space as well as in four European cities in four countries (Poland, Greece, Ukraine, and Georgia) called *Brave New World*. This VR theatrical performance was conceptualised and directed and direction by Garbaczewski, and developed by the Digital Performance Network.<sup>63</sup> The narrative of hybrid performance expands in both these four physical spaces and countries, and virtual worlds of the platform, enabling a constant interplay between different world extensions and mappings as well as multiplicities of roles, acting events, and perspectives of the heroes. This also activates a hybrid stage for live direction and real-time interactions. In this work, we focus on the technical and artistic solutions that we adopted for the creation of the performance for the Greek audience in the physical space both during the rehearsals and the performance.

**Keywords:** virtual reality, technology, hybrid theatre, teleperformance

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<sup>63</sup> <https://dreamadoptionsociety.com/digitalperformancenetwork/f/brave-new-world>

## Virtual Reality and Theatre

In this article, through presenting the case study in which Virtual Reality (VR) and SocialVR Social Gaming Platforms are/is applied, we discuss how this approach can extend the performance, providing simultaneously different viewpoints for the audience as well as for the actors that are immersed in the VR scene. The combination of VR, i.e., hardware and software that enables the immersion, and the interaction within an imaginative world that is displayed through 3D models and objects, and theatre have been used the last decade from different aspects such as human-computer interaction and artistic experimentation.

### About the BNW Performance

*Brave New World* is a hybrid VR theatre performance, conceptualised and directed by Garbaczewski, and developed by the Digital Performance Network, inspired by the book by Huxley (1932) with the same name. The project was co-created by the local theatre teams applying devised theatre, and functioning as synchronous, dislocated, satellite performances that were standalones and part of the main performance at the same time. The main idea driven by the director, developed around appropriating VRChat,<sup>64</sup> a VR Social platform for theatre making and expanding the narrative space of collaborative VR performance that was live simultaneously in four countries:

- Theatre Julius\_Osterwa w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim (Poland)
- Royal District Theatre (სამეფო უბნის თეატრი) in Tbilisi (Georgia)
- Lithografeion Theatre (Θέατρο Λιθογραφείον) in Patras (Greece)
- Regional Academic Theatre in Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine)

The following framework outlines the key components for composing such a performance, including the technical aspects of VR and its application, as well as other relevant technical elements.

### Setting, Hardware, and Software

To implement the VR component, an online virtual world platform like VR Chat is essential, as it allowed the creation of customised worlds and characters tailored for the performance's needs. VR Chat provides a SDK (Software Development-Kit) that supports the development of new environments using the Unity game engine.<sup>65</sup> The world-building process begins with a three-dimensional space where all the elements necessary for the requirements of the

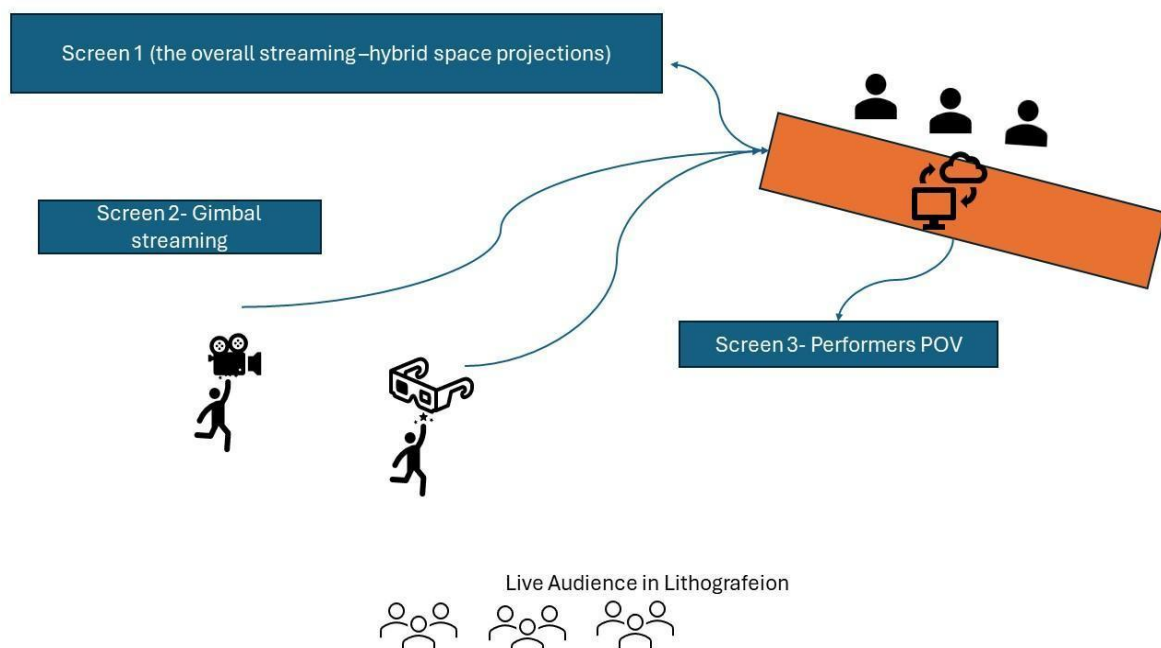
<sup>64</sup> VRChat online virtual world platform, <https://hello.vrchat.com/>, last accessed at 16/01/2025.

<sup>65</sup> Unity cross-platform game engine, <https://unity.com/>, last accessed at 16/01/2025.

performance's scenography are integrated. This space also facilitates the merging of video streams from the real world with those from the virtual world. By strategically incorporating green surfaces into the virtual environment, specific areas can be removed during post-processing to produce a final composite stream that seamlessly integrates both sources. Additionally, a virtual camera was added within the virtual environment to broadcast live streams of the events taking place. This technique can also be applied to combine live streams from both the virtual and real worlds, creating a cohesive viewing experience for the audience.

**Figure 1**

*Setting in Lithographeion Theare. Diagram by K.El Raheb.*



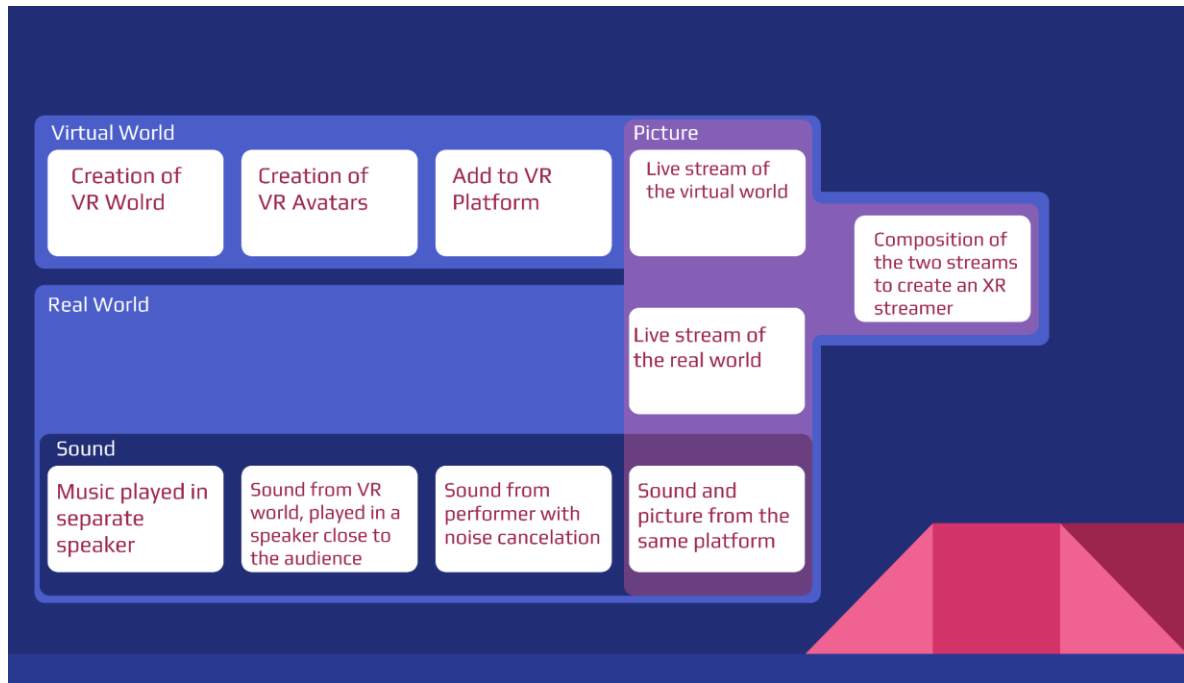
## Performance and Rehearsals in the eXtended Reality Space

This collaboration and production, within an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary team with exchanging roles, allowed to identify some of the challenges and opportunities in working with VR for the live performance stage which can be summarised as follows:

Interactive, dynamic direction was a necessity to connect the virtual and physical performing space. To do so, we were on stage, including the ones of us who had more technical roles, supporting the option of making the mechanisms and tools more visible to the audience. In fact, we chose to play with the terminology of games, and virtual worlds, creating a more transparent workflow. Most of the dramaturgical and technical choices were highly interconnected, manifesting and intriguing constant exchange or roles for the team.

**Figure 2**

*Description of the stages of preparing the different streams: the virtual world (digital display), the real world (stage) and the sound which combined both the live voice of the actor and the streaming. Diagram by P. Papadopoulos.*



## From Feelies to VR theatre

While one of our concerns was that the “wow effect” (i.e. the impressiveness of the high-end technologies and innovation) would dominate the dramaturgy and the whole theatrical experience, the narrative and texts of Aldous Huxley describing a technocratic dystopia where societies are dominated through the constant illusion of happiness not only justified the use of such technologies but Virtual Reality acted as a metaphor for the *Brave New World*. This presented a live, contemporary version of the “Feelies”, the sensory films that are described by Huxley and are considered by many to be an inspiration for VR theatre (Grossi 2023, Milz 2019). Another challenge was making the actors’ interactions with the virtual environment visible to the audience. In interactive or digital performances, it is common for live displays to be mistaken for videos or pre-recorded animations. To address this and make the interactions more visible, we invited the audience to try on the Virtual Reality headset and explore the virtual worlds of the performance both before and after the show, as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3**

*Preperformance experience. Image by the author's team.*



### Directing Multiple Spaces

The local team at Lithografeion Theatre had to direct and play a performance that was happening simultaneously in different spaces: (1) the physical theatrical stage, (2) the Virtual Networked Environment (VRChat Worlds), and (3) the Imaginary spaces of the storyline i.e. the places that are implied by the narrative. One of the main challenges was that these stages continuously interchange, creating multiple spatial body stage relationships that might be different in each space.

The use of VR allows provided the opportunity of seeing the same role played by different actors that are in different theatres and countries simultaneously. This multiplicity of the role gave the chance of embodying different aspects of the character's personality. As shown in Figure 5, the role of *Mustapha* was displayed simultaneously by two different digital avatars that corresponded to two different actors playing the role live in two different cities (Georgia and Greece) while the role of *Lenina* was displayed by an *avatar played by an actress in Poland in the same virtual space*. The movement and voice of the avatars corresponded to the live actions of the three actors in the corresponding live stages in each city.

### Conclusion

It is worth mentioning that the term “virtual reality” has been used by Artaud in 1938 in *The Theatre and its Double* to describe theatre as a technique of illusion that uses characters, objects, and images as symbols to project on them imaginary worlds and realities. VR technology in theatre is creating an emerging field of exploration on the border of computer science, cinematography, performing and digital arts with a large potential for future artistic explorations.

**Figure 4**

*Different spatial relationships in the same storyline moment: while the actor in Lithografeion is alone on stage, his avatar touches the hands of the avatar of the actress in Poland, while she plays with a real actor on the same stage. Image by the author's team.*

**Figure 5**

*Three avatars and two roles in the same scene played by three actors each one in a different physical space. Image is a screenshot from the virtual projected scene.*



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## 55

**Anonymity in Virtual Space: Exploring the Representation of the Female Body through Virtual Identities in Contemporary Saudi Women's Writing****Miral Mahgoub al-Tahawy**

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**Abstract**

Since its emergence over a quarter of a century ago, cyberspace has played a transformative role in Arab societies, serving as a powerful tool for dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment. Its revolutionary nature carried the potential to catalyze profound changes across the Arab world, extending beyond social and political spheres to influence literature, the publishing industry, and the marketing, distribution, and translation of books into various languages. While the sociopolitical implications of cyberspace have been widely studied, its impact on literature—particularly on the Arabic literary movement and the female literary scene—has received scant attention. This gap in scholarship is significant, as the internet has not only created new spaces for writing but has also fundamentally altered the form, language, and reception of literary texts, giving rise to what is now known as hypertext literature. These changes have reshaped both the perspectives of writers and the expectations of readers, fostering the emergence of a new kind of reader attuned to this new kind of text. Additionally, the processes of promoting and distributing literary works have been revolutionized, introducing marketing concepts previously unfamiliar in Arab culture, such as “best-seller lists,” “most popular fiction,” and “celebrity authors.”

Cyberspace has also given birth to new platforms for writing, including blogs, forums, and online literary clubs, which have evolved into distinct literary genres in their own right. The literary texts emerging from these digital spaces have not only influenced the form and language of contemporary Arabic literature but have also demonstrated their potential to reach vast audiences, encouraging writers to serialize their works—novels, short stories, and poetry—online. This practice has enabled writers to engage directly with readers, cultivate new audiences, and explore innovative markets.

*Keywords:* Female body, women's writing, sexual explicitness, female sexuality, censorship, taboos, nakedness writing.

### **Anonymity in Virtual Space**

I examine the phenomenon of explicit or sexual writing under pseudonyms or virtual identities by analyzing a number of works by female writers in Saudi Arabia, focusing particularly on those with direct sexual and erotic connotations published under virtual identities where the author remains anonymous. Further, I investigate how pseudonym techniques (referred to as the “electronic veil”) enable female writers to create multiple identities, using online spaces to symbolically expose the body while maintaining a virtual persona that allows them to practice explicit writing and avoid social and religious restrictions in their offline lives.

This study argues that the internet, particularly in the Arab Gulf region, has created new literary public spheres that are reshaping the tastes and expectations of mainstream readership. It further contends that cyberspace has been especially empowering for young female writers, providing them with unprecedented opportunities to participate in the literary field and challenging the long-standing male dominance of the publishing industry. The freedom provided by cyberspace has undermined one of the most enduring symbols of patriarchal society: censorship. By breaking down social restrictions and taboos, the internet has enabled women to express themselves in ways that were previously unimaginable, dismantling the “walls of silence” that have constrained Arab women for generations.

The study focuses on a selection of novels by a new generation of female writers from the Arab Gulf region who first gained recognition through cyberspace. It examines how the internet has provided a liberating platform for expression, particularly for women, and how this has allowed female writers to defy social, political, and religious taboos. Emphasis is placed on the interplay between traditional forms of censorship and the newfound ability of female writers to challenge these constraints through digital technology. The study also explores the evolution of literary themes and styles, reflecting broader socio-political changes, while shedding light on the creative dynamics of producing and receiving texts in this new digital space. Finally, it highlights the cultural shifts of the past three decades, driven by technological advancements and the rise of female-authored literature, which have collectively redefined the landscape of Arab literary expression.

I argue that the electronic veil, or “cloak of anonymity,” is a new mechanism that extends the historical model of women hiding under a mask, transforming their technique of concealment from a metaphorical practice to a digital one. Both approaches are deeply rooted in Arab women’s tradition of physical veiling and are intricately tied to socio-political contexts and the dynamics of power and sexuality in these cultures. The electronic veil enables women to escape social censorship and covertly expose their sexual identities in a

symbolic manner, affirming a new female discourse that reframes traditional perspectives on women's sexuality.

I further argue that writing behind the electronic veil is a phenomenon that not only connects to women's traditional use of pseudonyms to obscure their gender identity but also responds to modern global issues, linking the internet to the globalization of female sexuality and the creation of underground digital communities. In conclusion, cyberspace has helped create alternative forms of self-expression, enabling female narratives to break boundaries between public and private spheres. It has allowed women to explore and expose their sexuality through multiple identities, creating a new forum for liberating female literary production. Pseudonyms have become a defining feature of the electronic publishing phenomenon, offering women a means to bypass social censorship and reshape the narrative of women's sexuality in modern Arabic literature. Ultimately, the electronic veil has empowered women to renew and redefine their voices in a rapidly evolving literary and cultural landscape.

## **Key Points**

### ***Cyberspace as a Transformative Tool***

The internet has revolutionized the literary landscape in the Arab world, creating new spaces for writing and altering the form, language, and reception of literary texts. It has introduced new marketing concepts and platforms, such as blogs and online literary clubs, which have become distinct genres.

### ***Empowerment of Female Writers***

Cyberspace has been particularly empowering for young female writers in the Arab Gulf region, providing them with unprecedented opportunities to participate in the literary field and challenge the long-standing male dominance of the publishing industry. The freedom afforded by the internet has enabled women to express themselves in ways that were previously unimaginable, breaking down social restrictions and taboos.

### ***The Electronic Veil***

The use of pseudonyms or virtual identities, referred to as the "electronic veil," allows female writers to create multiple identities and engage in explicit writing while remaining shielded from offline repercussions. This practice is deeply rooted in the cultural tradition of physical veiling and reflects broader socio-political dynamics.



***Globalization of Female Sexuality***

Writing behind the electronic veil is not merely a continuation of historical practices of pseudonymity but also a response to contemporary global issues. It highlights the intersection of the internet, the globalization of female sexuality, and the formation of underground digital communities.

***Cultural Shifts***

The study highlights the cultural shifts of the past three decades, driven by technological advancements and the rise of female-authored literature, which have collectively redefined the landscape of Arab literary expression.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, cyberspace has played a pivotal role in transforming the literary landscape in the Arab world, particularly for female writers. The electronic veil has empowered women to navigate and subvert societal and religious restrictions, enabling them to express their sexual identities and participate in a global dialogue on gender and sexuality. This phenomenon not only challenges traditional perspectives on women's sexuality but also redefines the narrative of women's voices in modern Arabic literature. The internet has created a new forum for liberating female literary production, allowing women to bypass social censorship and reshape the narrative of their sexuality in a rapidly evolving cultural and literary landscape.

## 56

## Let's Get Phygital? Playformance and Spatiality

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### Abstract

This paper examines and seeks to define the emerging concept of *playformance*—a creative practice that merges performance art with video games in physical spaces. During the spring semester at the Department of Performing and Digital Arts, University of Peloponnese, we conducted creative experiments to explore the different forms this practice can take. Grounded in spatiality and audience engagement, our research identified three distinct forms: phygital experiences (where physical and digital spaces coexist); video games spilling into reality (where game mechanics structure live performances); and physical spaces integrating digital elements (where game essences are abstractly reimaged).

Our analysis differentiates playformance from related practices such as in-game performances, primarily through its emphasis on physical space and the audience's role as players. Based on the type of game experience being creatively evoked, we propose a further distinction between playformance and game performance. Rather than producing a strict categorization, this paper aims to design a framework that follows the open structure of both performance and games, revealing potential opportunities and limitations in both fields.

*Keywords:* Playformance, video games, spatiality, performance art, physical space

### Let's Get Phygital?

Blending Performance art and video games has long been explored and, paradoxically, at the same time, often misinterpreted in contemporary art culture. As artist and game designer Hejazi noted in a 2024 interview (Huuhka & Hejazi), both performance and games have historically existed on the periphery of the art world. Thus, experimenting with their intersection opens space for diverse and, at times, controversial analysis.

Video games span various genres, technologies, and experiences, from poetic walking simulations like *Dear Esther* (2012) to first-person shooters like *Call of Duty* (2003, 2024), while performance art has taken different forms from Kaprow's Happenings (1959) to Anderson's work to Blast Theory multimedia performances. Cornblatt's 2008 in-game performance *Grand Theft Auto IV: Crime-Free Law-Abider* subverted the violence inherent in *Grand Theft Auto IV* (Rockstar Games, 2008) by avoiding aggression, challenging the game's moral framework. Stern's works, such as *Runners* (1999) and *Tekken Torture Tournament* (2001), merge game mechanics with art, performance, digital/analogue elements, and even cooking (Quaranta et al., 2017), pushing the boundaries of game design. Triantafyllidis integrates mixed reality, video games, performance, and site-specific installations. While these works differ in creative approach, their artistic grammar varies as well, encompassing mixed-reality performance, machinima, and live game performances. This paper examines the emerging concept of playformance, aiming to define its framework by focusing on spatiality and player agency.

## Defining Playformance and Game Performance

The term *playformance* has been used in various contexts. Frasca (2007) describes it as the player's experience of navigating digital space through game mechanics. In performance studies, it refers to the ludic interplay between an artist and augmented technology during a performative act (Ghaderi, 2014). This paper takes as its starting point the term *playformance*, as loosely coined by indie curator and co-founder of the collective Sous les Néons, Bachelier. Bachelier seems to frame *playformance* as the live performance of a video game on stage, combined with personal narrative, though the term itself is not fully concrete. What is particularly compelling here though is that *playformance* suggests that video games can be distilled to their core, stripped of their digital elements, and still retain their aesthetics, gameplay, and overall experience.

## Backstory

In Spring 2024, an undergraduate course at the Department of Performing and Digital Arts, University of Peloponnese, explored *playformance* through experimental practices. We first analysed the intersection of performance and video game experiences, examining works like *The Inchcolm Project* (Bozdog & Galloway, 2016; Bozdog & Galloway, 2017) and *Future Dance of Nostalgia* (Xiao & Rodrigues, 2024,). In the second phase, we established key criteria: performances had to take place in the real world; retain the ephemeral nature of art; develop a concept conveyed through *playformance*; select a video game that supports this concept; and determine its integration into the performance. In the final phase, students

collaborated in groups to design and experiment with their own *playformance*. Through this procedure, three distinct types emerged, helping to define *playformance*'s framework.

### ***The Phygital Experience***

In this type of *playformance*, we observed the emergence of parallel spatialities, where the physical space of the live performance and the digital space of video games coexisted, creating a novel interactive experience.

**Figure 1**

*From left to right: The performer cooking, a screenshot from Sarah's Cooking Class game.*



During *Cooking for the Oppressed*, Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) provided a foundation for exploring gender identity in games. Integrated with the cooking simulation *Sarah's Cooking Class* (2012), students developed a mobile app that let participants issue live cooking instructions to the performer, who enacted them as an alternative Rosler. The app replaced the game's point-and-click mechanic, with players selecting actions like "stir" or "add eggs," announced via a pre-recorded voice. The performer, cooking live, responded at times with visible dissatisfaction and at other times with contentment. In this example, live performance and video games symbiotically coexisted, striking a balance between digital interactivity and physical embodiment. The audience assumed the role of players, the performer became a live avatar, and the experience unfolded entirely in the physical space.

A different approach to audience engagement was observed in the *Street Fighter playformance*. Here, the digital world of the iconic video game *Street Fighter* (1994) merged with the physical through a customized interface created by the students. The *playformance* explored themes of generational conflict and video game violence with humour, as two siblings accidentally entered the game and became street fighters themselves. The audience watched their "fight" in real-time, with the game menu and score projected on the wall, while video game conventions, such as character movements, music, and the arena-based combat style, were creatively integrated into the script. Unlike other *playformances*,

the audience remained passive spectators, not interacting with the performers. In this practice, the video game was stripped of its most fundamental element: interactivity. The question is whether this example fits within the concept of *playformance* and, consequently, whether player interactivity is a crucial factor. We will revisit this in the next section.

### ***The Video Game Spills over into Reality***

One of the most popular types of *playformances* among students was the “bring-a-video-game-into-reality” type. In this format, the structure, mechanics, and logic of a video game dominated, framing the live performance within the boundaries of an existing game. One such *playformance* took the form of an escape room titled *Can You Escape*, where each game level corresponded to a different life stage (infancy, adolescence, adulthood), and life challenges manifested as physical tasks, with the performers assuming the role of instructors.

Another example was a live re-enactment of *Buzz! Quiz World* (2009), the console party game, which served as a critical commentary on the contemporary educational system and the suppressive power of teachers. In this case, the game's structure, the animated movements of avatars, the abusive scripted dialogues, and the overall game setting were translated into the physical space. The *playformance* used the dominant power of the host, the vulgar language, and the unfair pointing feedback system, as a metaphor for a failure educational system. In both instances, the audience assumed the role of the player.

#### **Figure 2**

*From left to right: During the playformance, screenshot from the game Buzz! Quiz World.*



### ***The Physical Space Integrates Digital Playful Elements and Conventions***

In this category, the video game has been deconstructed into its core elements and reimagined in a new, playful manner. Rather than directly replicating aspects of a video game, its essence is woven into a live performance. This is arguably the most demanding form of *playformance*, as the designer-performer must remain faithful to the conventions of the game while ensuring they remain recognizable in their transformed state.

**Figure 3**

*From left to right: During the playformance, screenshot from the game Flower.*



In *Flower: Reimagined*, the aesthetics, flow, and central theme of *Flower* (2009)—being carried away into a state of calmness—were translated into an on-stage performance through movement, lighting, and sound (the game’s original soundtrack). Unlike other forms, the video game conventions in this *playformance* were abstract, making the audience not players in the traditional sense but still active participants. This engagement was realized at the end when the performer handed each audience member a flower and invited them to act, subtly extending the game’s themes into the physical realm.

### Defining a Novel Practice

The aforementioned types of *playformance* are not exhausting but build an interesting starting point of analysis. Spatiality helps differentiate *playformative* practices from other artistic expressions that merge performance and video games, such as in-game performances. When the performer operates solely within the digital game world—as seen in Cornblatt’s work—the performative act remains embedded in the game space, with the artist’s agency manifesting entirely within the digital realm. This has significant implications, including the recording of the performance within the game environment; the performer assuming the role of the player; and the absence of physical space. As Hejazi notes (Huuhka & Hejazi, 2024), the artist may also take on the roles of game designer; creating the game in which the performance unfolds; and director. This aligns with Huuhka’s (2020) concept of *gameplay as performance*, in which the game’s mechanics and rule-based system are used in contrast to its intended goals. Another important aspect is the absence of an audience-player role, which, in turn, leads to the disappearance of the concept of the game as an experience.

Even though these characteristics are not intrusive they signify a different approach than those manifested above. In the students’ experimental practices, emphasis is placed



on physical space, situating *playformance* within the context of live arts, while the video game world serves as the source code and creative input.

Within this framework, we can define the concept of performance to better accommodate these emerging practices:

*Playformance* is the practice of creatively blending performance art with the world of video games. Rooted in physical space, it manifests as a live performance that actively engages the audience through storytelling, open-ended game mechanics, and a creative make-believe rule-base system.

Furthermore, differentiating *playformance* from *game performance* through the theoretical lens of game studies—where game (or *ludus*) represents rule-based structures and play (or *paidia*) denotes free-form, expressive play (Caillois, 1958)—provides a valuable analytical framework. When video game conventions structure a performance through predetermined rules and systemic mechanics, as seen in escape room adaptations, the term *game performance* is more appropriate. Conversely, when video game elements manifest primarily as aesthetics, atmosphere, or improvisational engagement—such as in *Flower: Reimagined*—the term *playformance* better captures the essence of the experience.

## Discussion

Artistic practice is a dynamic, evolving process, particularly when intersecting with the vast and ever-changing field of video games. This intersection introduces new challenges but also provides opportunities for deeper understanding. Analysing this spectrum helps identify possibilities and clarify the limitations not only of what we define as *playformance* but also of two seemingly unrelated fields of research: performance and games. A key starting point for research and analysis lies in examining spatiality and audience engagement, as these elements influence the performative experience. What we can learn from this remains open for discussion, but from a game studies perspective, it is intriguing to observe how a video game can claim the physical realm.

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## 57

## Performing Space and Performativity: Two Case Studies from the Epidaurus Festival

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### Abstract

This paper explores the concept of “performing space,” emphasising its dynamic nature and its role as an active participant in the artistic process, rather than a passive backdrop. The term “performing” is unpacked through its connection to action and performativity, drawing on Austin’s theories of performative utterances, Peirce’s notion of the living sign, and Schechner’s environmental theatre. The discussion introduces a formalist definition of performance and its derivatives (performativity, perform, performing), refining the semantic field concerning the process of “producing a form.” Two case studies illustrate the transformative power of performing spaces: Marmarinos’ *Trackers* and Papaphilippou’s *Sacred Tales*, both presented at the 2021 Athens and Epidaurus Festival. Marmarinos’ production at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus is framed as a performative space that integrates music, movement, and dramaturgical elements to create an immersive environment that encourages audience interaction. The dynamic choreography, sound design, and spatial engagement dissolve the boundaries between performance and spectator, highlighting the interplay between narrative, space, and temporality. In contrast, Papaphilippou’s *Sacred Tales* uses an installation of interconnected strings in the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus to symbolise unity and interconnectivity between the audience and nature, framed within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This performance, grounded in environmental theatre principles, transcends the physical space of the theatre, fostering a sense of temporal and cosmic awareness. By engaging with the strings, spectators actively participate in the performance, experiencing a collective connection. Both examples underscore the notion that performing spaces are living entities, shaped by the interaction of performers, spectators, and the surrounding environment, offering new perspectives on the relationship between performance and space.

**Keywords:** Performing space, performativity, environmental theatre, living space, spatial dynamics, transformative performance, immersive theatre, interactive performance, embodied Experience, sensory engagement.

### ***Performing Space: Unpacking Semantic Layers Beyond the Backdrop***

Given the multiple meanings of the notion of “performing space,” I will define its specific interpretation as discussed in this paper before examining two study cases. I will start with a brief exploration of the term “performing,” which indicates that performing space embodies action, creating a dynamic environment influencing both those within it (performers) and those observing from a distance (spectators), instead of merely serving as a backdrop for action.

Additionally, the term “performing” connects to concepts such as performance art and the broader category of performing arts. For both, action is a fundamental aspect tied to the notion of doing something, shaping the actions and relationships among performers, viewers, and objects. The concept of performativity, as articulated by Austin (1962), supports this. His notion of “doing things with words” helps us understand the spatial dynamics under discussion. For example, “declaring war” or saying “I do” are performative utterances that do more than convey meaning; they enact the idea of declaring war or forming a marital bond. Performing space functions according to a similar pattern.

To clarify the terminology and its angle of approach, I will present my definition of performance, providing a formalist perspective on the process involved: “Performance (*per-* + *-formance*) can be understood as the process of ‘producing a form’ or as an action leading to a form. It is, therefore, about shaping specific qualities” (Dospinescu, 2013, p.XX, translation my own). The suffix *per-* indicates a vector of intentionality, directed towards the constitution of a form. The suffix *-ance* helps in “forming nouns of quality, state, or action.” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.)

Notably, performativity should not be equated with semiotic or aesthetic phenomena, as it focuses on giving form, which is distinct from concepts of beauty or style. It pertains more to a transitional state, reminiscent of a “living sign” (Peirce, 1994, p. 222), which I define here as one that has not yet fully established its meaning.<sup>66</sup> Thus, a performing space embodies the dynamics of action rather than serving merely as a canvas for projecting meaning. Often perceived as inert, performing space can be profoundly dynamic, impacting both the objects within its reach and the subjects (performers) or spectators observing it. This reflects upon the notion of environmental theatre, in which “[t]he audience does not sit in regularly arranged rows; there is one whole space rather than two opposing spaces. The environmental use of space is fundamentally *collaborative*. (...) Environmental theatre design is a reflection of the communal nature of this kind of theatre. The design encourages participation; it is also a reflection of the wish for participation” (Schechner 1973, p. 39).

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<sup>66</sup> In this respect, “[t]he living sign is a sign in a performative state, in the process of acquiring a form, which aspires to a culturally recognizable form, in the domain of the symbol and theatricality.” (Dospinescu, 2007, p. 416, translation my own).

## Marmarinos' *Trackers*: Weaving Narrative, Music, and Acting in a Transformative Space

Marmarinos' *Trackers* (Ιχνευτές), a highlight of the 2021 Athens and Epidaurus Festival, transformed the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus into a dynamic, living space. The production exemplified environmental theatre, engaging deeply with performativity through a narrative on "how Music first reached the ears of humans" (Konstantinos, 2021, XX). Various theatrical techniques created an immersive sensory experience,<sup>67</sup> enhancing the dramaturgy and aligning with the idea of a successful performative space as a "microcosm, with flow, contact, and interaction" (Schechner, 1973, p. 30). The artistic team succeeded in intertwining the story, space, and the relationship between the stage and audience, bringing Sophocles' unfinished text to life. In a metatheatrical moment, the chorus, humorously transformed into playful goats, acknowledged their limitations alongside the audience, thus breaking traditional boundaries. This interaction engaged spectators in a lively interaction filled with laughter and surprise, exemplifying dramaturgical choices that fostered audience participation.

As the premise revolves around Apollo's command to the Satyrs to retrieve his lost cattle, guided by the newly invented lyre, this narrative serves as a framework for the performance, woven into a magical *soundscape*<sup>68</sup>. Bultheel's music, interpreted by a skilled ensemble, became a fundamental component of the staging, reinforcing its immersive qualities. Brass instruments strategically placed around the theatre enveloped the audience in an enigmatic auditory experience. Katona's ethereal countertenor voice enriched this soundscape, bridging the fragmented text and live performance. The music transcended its role as a mere element of the *mise-en-scène*, becoming a quality of the performing space itself, contributing to its organic cohesion.

The interplay between music and movement further activated the performing space, with Karachalios' choreography mirroring the dramatic action. The stylised movements of the Satyrs captured the essence of their search, while the playful "goat step" and the sound of bells reinforced this physical connection, extending it to both space and the audience.

Marmarinos' vision expanded beyond the immediate performance, exploring spatiality as it relates to ancient Greek culture. The theatre's architecture informed the dramaturgy, merging space, time, and sound into a unified whole. As an immersive aspect, spectators

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<sup>67</sup> A photo gallery on the Athens and Epidaurus Festival's website can give a glimpse of these techniques. [https://aefestival.gr/festival\\_events/trackers/?lang=en#lightbox\[gallery\\_image\\_1\]/-1](https://aefestival.gr/festival_events/trackers/?lang=en#lightbox[gallery_image_1]/-1)

<sup>68</sup> A video presentation can offer a glimpse of the visual quality of the performance and the musical excerpt accompanying it offers an example of the aural quality of the performance's soundscape. [https://aefestival.gr/festival\\_events/trackers/?lang=en](https://aefestival.gr/festival_events/trackers/?lang=en)

transcended the present moment, connecting with ancient Greece's spectral past. The sound enveloped the arena, generating a sense of organicity, that transformed it into a living entity.

The integration of environmental elements—such as bells, footsteps, and even the *wind-swirling leaves across the stage*<sup>69</sup>—enhanced the performance's grounding in its physical space. These effects blurred the boundary between performance and environment, making the audience active participants in a shared experience resonating with echoes of the past and bridging ancient myths with contemporary sensibilities.

*Trackers* exemplifies performativity as a dynamic, evolving process. The engagement between performers and spectators became vital to the theatrical experience, reshaping the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus into an active performing space rather than a monumental relic. By blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction, *Trackers* transformed the theatre into an integral part of storytelling. This interaction between space and performance offered a deeper understanding of the ancient context while contemporising its themes.

Ultimately, *Trackers* celebrates the power of performativity and the transformative potential of performing space. Through the artistic team's creative contributions, Marmarinos' direction turns the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus into a vibrant canvas for exploration. The result honours the legacy of Greek theatre while inviting new interpretations, affirming the relevance of a theatrical vision that is organically integrated into the performance space. By innovatively engaging with sound, movement, and space, *Trackers* challenges conventional theatre, reinforcing the idea that performance and its space merge into a living, breathing entity born from the interactions of various elements.

### **Papaphilippou's *Sacred Tales*: Weaving Time and Space, a Collective Experience**

Papaphilippou's *Sacred Tales* also presented at the Athens and Epidaurus Festival in 2021, exemplifies the concept of performing space in the unique artistic context of the COVID pandemic: "The global experience of the pandemic as an oxymoron perceived in the coexistence of separation and connectivity. A piece with references to the paradoxical text *Sacred Tales (Hieroi Logoi)* by Aelius Aristides (117-181 AD), regarding healing by the god Asclepius and the attempt to express oneself." (Terezaki, 2021). The visual artist proposed an installation, envisioning a nexus of strings connecting individuals in the theatre, linking them to one another and nature. She emphasised the interconnectedness of *art* and *nature*, stressing the circular unity of the *whole* (Figure 1).

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<sup>69</sup> It happened happily and by accident during the performance I attended.



## Figure 1

*The koilon of the theatre. Sacred Tales by Aemilia Papaphilippou. Athens and Epidaurus Festival 2021. Image by A. Papaphilippou.*



The koilon of the theater,” she explains, “structures community, coherence, and dialectical relationships. Similarly, at an architectural/sculptural level, the solution, catharsis, is formed, which involves the acceptance of circularity and periodicity of phenomena. After all, the theater, as a mechanism, was part of Asklepieion’s therapy (Papaphilippou, 2021, pp. 7-8).

Initially designed and proposed as a static installation<sup>70</sup> (Figures 2-3), the project evolved into a one-time performance during its final days. Papaphilippou invited an audience, deepening the theme of interconnectivity by offering them to let themselves be tied up together within the web of strings (Figure 3). As she recited fragments of her *Sacred Tales* text,<sup>71</sup> this transformation animated the inanimate nexus, creating a vibrant network that fostered a sense of collective presence. Participants engaged with the strings, feeling connected to each other and the surrounding space.

Reflecting on Schechner’s environmental theatre, the movements of the spectators influenced each other in a shared experience. As an attendee, I can confirm the profound sense of unity among the audience, fostering a connection to both the physical space and the larger world. This experience transcended the moment, creating an awareness of *time* and a feeling of belonging to it. While anchored in the present, spectators were drawn into

<sup>70</sup> From August 13<sup>th</sup> until September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Called *The Rant*, this text is written by Papaphilippou after Aristides’ *Sacred Tales*; it includes fragments of but should not be confused with Aelios Aristides’ text.

a sense of primordial time, reminiscent of Mircea Eliade's "Great Time" (1967, p. 23) associated with creation myths.

**Figure 2**

*"Daughter, mother, nature," as the artist Papaphilippou calls this picture. Sacred Tales could be viewed at the Little Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, first as a fixed installation. Image by A. Papaphilippou, 2021.*



**Figure 3**

*The material web of strings merging with the lines of light on the stone steps, achieving a connectivity both with the theatre and with Nature. Image by A. Papaphilippou, 2021*



The performance transformed the theatre into a dynamic performing space, prompting spectators to interact with the environment through the strings (*Figure 4*). This interplay facilitated a psychophysical connection, where the strings became a metonymy for the



universe. Enveloped in this web, attendees experienced an expanded awareness of their connection to the *κόσμος*.

The web of strings extending beyond the theatre (*Figure 5*) represents this connection, suggesting the amphitheatre, as a site of Culture, projects, through the *koilon*'s opening, participants into the larger *κόσμος* of Nature. Papaphilippou's *Sacred Tales* embodied the essence of performing space, resonating with themes of connection, unity, and the shared human experience while infusing the audience with a purifying sense of catharsis.

#### Figure 4

*Visitors are gradually integrated into the web of strings. A. Papaphilippou, 2021.*



#### Figure 5

*Strings stretch all the way outside the theatre, connecting the spectators to the larger κόσμος... Photo: A. Papaphilippou, 2021.*



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