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**Art performing places**

# 49 Lo sQuaderno



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# EDITORIAL

From the earliest Dada and Futurist experiences, the performative arts have colonized the most different places for more than a century. On a global scale, nowadays performances often leave the cultural institutions and the exclusively artistic language, to territorialize themselves in other public and private spaces, becoming a key element in urban spaces and taking on a new, as well a renewed, power as performative gesture in making the city.

The scholars involved in this issue of *lo Squaderno* were called to face with this power and role of the art while performing the/in the places.

Even if public spaces are the main hidden focus of this topic, we have almost programmatically avoided to shape this issue exclusively as an issue about the public art, since in some way it would have defined a bit restricted field for a discussion about the role that art takes on in the city transformation processes and about the role of urban space as a context of artistic actions.

Performance can be also interpreted as a focus-device to discuss the relational character of art, which activates processes where the place can structure and at the same time be itself structured by artistic action.

Putting on the stage some specific and more or less known performances, from different cultural, political and geographical contexts, it is therefore an issue that reflects on how those roles have changed over time, pointing out some themes that have been the center of the published papers: the public, the space and the performative act.

Scholars with different disciplinary background presented different interpretations of the performance. They move both from reading performances that act in space with different aims - planning, political and rhetoric, narrative, explorative, activist and critic - both as proper artistic device working in/with spaces and audience.

Gloria Bovio opens the issue with a deepening of the relationship between performance and public, analyzing some examples of artistic forms - in

between Public Art, Land Art, Performance and the New-participated Theater - where art creates spontaneous happenings, under new behavioral, physical and spatial rules, that modify the perception of the urban space.

Following the previous path about the relationship with the spectators, Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice explores some public art projects where the artist involve the interlocutors, favouring forms of shared authorship. Moreover, she points out how they tend to bring the plot of everyday life of a community to surface in shared space, to stimulate participation in wider forms of urban life and governance.

Gloria Pessina focus on the project Drive\_IN by Strasse collective in Milan to contribute to keep the memory of such a performance that leaves barely any trace in the urban space, but invites the public to tell stories about it, while reflecting on the nature and the perception of the crossed spaces, as well as on the chances to become an active part of the city.

Public Art and public space are then the key topics of the paper by Ricciarda Belgiojoso. She draws a kind of tale along fifty years, where she show - by exempla from Europe and United States - how public art has became the tool to interpret the space as a place of interaction, showing how some works have been realized toward being so site-specific to become the same environment, soliciting to reconceptualise the space and the public space in itself.

Annalisa Metta describes a project of landscape architecture she realized focusing on public space in a performative prospective. Opening a broader issue, she stated the idea of urban public space as a performative platform implies a dialogical status of design, when it is able to create conditions for a bodily response —collective as well individual— that in turn can new ethical and aesthetic content.

Piergiorgio Caserini introduces an other topic, discussing the performance in relationship to the notion of presence and subjectivity, by following Jean-Luc Nancy. In this perspective, he conceives the performative act of and in the city as "placemaking"

which reconstitutes presences through a “politics of taking place”, and according to this discuss the performative practices of some social movements.

Through a double focus on Belgrade and London, Ana Vilenica closes this issue critically discussing the performances and performative gestures as they are used in what she called processes of “reinventing” the city, in State and capital led anti-social(ist) urban transition, as well as in urban activism and arts.

Almost tautologically, we host a performative artist – Anton Mirto – who shared images from her work *The Army* which put in practices the interactions among body, audience and spaces, along London’s street.

C.M. & G.B.

# Il pubblico partecipante protagonista dello spazio

**Gloria Bovio**

Tra le numerose trasformazioni introdotte dall'arte contemporanea all'inizio del Novecento, modificazioni importanti riguardano il rapporto dell'arte con lo spazio e con il pubblico, che vengono declinati in modo diverso e secondo una nuova prospettiva, che influenzera' tutta la successiva produzione artistica.

Tra il 1946 ed il 1966 Marcel Duchamp realizza l'ultima sua opera, *Étant donnés*, una vera e propria installazione ambientale, una piccola stanza segreta costruita come un palcoscenico visibile solo attraverso due forellini praticati in una vecchia porta, che trasformano lo spettatore in un *voyeur* (Terraroli 2018): è una delle prime esperienze artistiche in cui l'arte costruisce una diversa relazione con lo spazio che accoglie l'opera, e con il pubblico, che smette di essere fruitore passivo per divenire curioso interprete. È lo stesso Duchamp a dichiarare che l'opera esiste nella sua interezza solo nel momento esatto in cui l'interazione con il pubblico avviene (Acton 2008), costituendo un riferimento per molte espressioni artistiche, dalle arti visive al teatro.

L'arte viene ad assumere caratteri sempre più concettuali, contestuali e relazionali accelerando il processo di evoluzione del concetto di spazio e del ruolo del pubblico trovando le sue più chiare esplicitazioni nell'*happening*, nella *performance* e nel *Nuovo Teatro* del secondo dopoguerra, che si nutrirà delle esperienze delle arti performative (De Marinis 2002). Il confine tra queste espressioni artistiche diventa sempre meno riconoscibile per alcune analogie: la volontà di contrapposizione all'industria dello spettacolo, l'avvicinamento alla vita vera, il superamento della mera riproduzione mimetica del reale. L'obiettivo comune è inoltre quello di riuscire a coinvolgere tutte le classi sociali, perfezionare il pubblico già esistente e reclutare quello che ancora non c'è.

Per capire la vicinanza tra teatro e *performance* basti pensare che Marina Abramović racconta quanto odiasse il teatro fino agli anni Settanta perché artificiale - non vero, distante dal pubblico - e prediligesse la *performance* dall'esito sconosciuto, sebbene poi si sia ella stessa (ri)avvicinata al teatro negli anni Ottanta, come piattaforma per guardare in modo nuovo la *performance* (Abramović 2002).

Ma quali sono le caratteristiche sostanziali che riguardano il rapporto tra il pubblico e lo spazio nelle espressioni artistiche contemporanee?

Gli artisti contemporanei - che siano *happeners*, *performers*, registi o attori - spesso portano l'arte al di fuori dei musei e dei teatri, esponendo e rappresentando le loro opere nelle piazze e nelle strade, sia come atto di trasgressione verso le istituzioni, sia come desiderio

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di relazione con la città e la sua comunità. Lo spazio dell'arte non è più unicamente uno spazio fisico museale dove presentare le opere, ma è soprattutto uno spazio di relazione con e tra le persone, dove artista e pubblico comunicano attraverso la realizzazione e la fruizione dell'opera, l'atto che ne determina il compimento assoluto (Bourriaud 2010). La città è via via diventata punto di riferimento alternativo di diverse forme d'arte e punto di riferimento assoluto dell'arte di relazione nelle sue varie forme. L'intenzione degli artisti è di restituire i luoghi alla collettività, che spesso soffre di un senso di privazione della propria qualità della vita in relazione agli spazi urbani in cui vive.

Se lo spazio pubblico urbano sta diventando nuovo luogo fisico istituzionale dell'arte, cosa sono diventati i nuovi pubblici?

Con la fine della società di massa e l'affermazione della società della comunicazione di rete si sono innescati processi come la fine dell'*audience* di massa, cioè di quel pubblico passivo in grado solo di ricevere e da cui non era né interessante né possibile avere un riscontro, in favore della formazione di un pubblico attivo, partecipante, estremamente comunicativo, ma anche caratterizzato da uno spiccatissimo protagonismo.

Non esistendo più una massa a rappresentare l'individuo, ognuno ha iniziato a rappresentare se stesso esprimendo il proprio parere attraverso i più diversi canali comunicativi, che oggi si riassumono nel mondo dei *social networks*, intervenendo in qualsiasi dibattito contemporaneo e cercando di rendersi protagonista della propria contemporaneità. Ma non è solo questo. Il seme del protagonismo va ricercato nel processo di scolarizzazione di massa di inizio Novecento e nella natura dell'uomo di avere la pretesa e tracotanza assolutamente legittime di poter fare di più rispetto a quello che crede di essere, principio da cui nasce il progresso umano come possibilità di andare oltre i limiti imposti dalla natura (Bordoni 2018). L'accesso alla cultura ha creato un pubblico più consapevole, e trasformato gli spettatori, che hanno via via preteso di diventare essi stessi scrittori, autori, artisti, attori. Il protagonismo del pubblico ha raggiunto livelli così elevati che il rapporto tra produzione e fruizione negli ultimi decenni sembra essere ribaltato,

ed è sufficiente chiedersi quante siano le persone che scattano fotografie e quante quelle che le guardano per capire la portata di questo fenomeno (Groys 2013).

*Quando l'opera d'arte in un luogo urbano genera un happening spontaneo, essa instaura una relazione con lo spazio e con lo spettatore e avvia un processo che offre una nuova consapevolezza alla collettività.*

Ma quali sono le forme artistiche partecipative che instaurano una stretta relazione con lo spazio?

È importante precisare che la semplice esposizione o rappresentazione di un'opera in uno spazio urbano non determina la relazione città-opera, né connota il carattere pubblico dell'opera. Allo stesso modo un'opera *site specific* in un luogo pubblico non necessariamente costruisce una relazione con il pubblico. Non sono quindi molte le opere che riescono a costruire un legame sia con lo spazio circostante sia con il pubblico. Tra queste sicuramente rientrano quelle che generano un happening collettivo e una partecipazione spontanea, che siano opere di *public art*, di *land art*, *performance* o del *Nuovo Teatro*. Il sorgere della cosiddetta *New Genre Public Art* è rappresentativo della attenzione alle forme di arte pubblica che superano il concetto di opera monumentale fine a se stessa e pongono l'accento sul processo di produzione artistica piuttosto che sull'oggetto artistico finale, con il preciso obiettivo di innescare processi relazionali, i cui effetti non vengono controllati dall'artista.

Un altro esempio sono le forme di teatro partecipato, dove si sperimentano con insistenza due concetti fondamentali: la definizione di teatro non come mero prodotto, ma come processo, che non si esaurisce nello spettacolo al quale si assiste; e la capacità di creare relazioni e socialità, non come componente accessoria e occasionale, ma parte integrante dell'opera e della sua modalità di consumo (Giacchè 1990).

Considerando che buona parte degli studi sociologici sull'arte individuano sostanzialmente due tipi di pubblico, quello esperto che apprezza e comprende l'arte contemporanea e il pubblico di profani che non la comprendono affatto e la rifiutano (Bordoni 2008, Bourdieu 1983, Dorfles 1970, Heinich 1998, Ortega 1925), è interessante rilevare come le forme artistiche partecipative nello spazio pubblico siano accettate da entrambi i pubblici. La partecipazione attiva elimina infatti la distanza che porta lo spettatore ad un giudizio più severo e distaccato e supera il problema della riconoscibilità e della comprensione, che determina il rifiuto dell'opera (Groys 2013). È altrettanto interessante notare anche come le opere partecipative esplicitino la teoria di Walter Benjamin sulla tendenza alla ricezione distratta della collettività di un certo tipo di produzione artistica. Questo tipo di fruizione, che non esige né contemplazione né una particolare concentrazione ed è tipica ad esempio dell'architettura, arte che più di ogni altra viene fruita sul piano dell'abitudine e degli sguardi occasionali (Benjamin 1935), è quella a cui sono soggette anche le opere fortemente partecipative. Indipendentemente dal tipo di pubblico e di ricezione, nel momento in cui l'opera d'arte in un luogo urbano viene a generare un happening spontaneo, instaura una relazione con lo spazio e con lo spettatore e avvia un processo che offre, solo come conseguenza, una nuova consapevolezza e attenzione alla collettività. Il fine dell'opera partecipativa infatti non è la partecipazione del pubblico fine a se stessa, ma la costruzione di una relazione con se stessi, con la collettività e con lo spazio che accoglie l'opera, costruzione che concorre a costituire il vero valore (Pioselli 2015 - Giacchè 1990).

In questa prospettiva vengono di seguito presentati tre casi particolarmente significativi che rivelano come la generazione di reazioni spontanee e persino l'emergere del carattere ludico dell'opera incidano fortemente sul rapporto con lo spazio sociale.

Il primo è quello di Franco Mazzucchelli, che dall'inizio degli anni Settanta inscena in luoghi urbani alterazioni spaziali con volumi gonfiabili realizzati in polietilene, con il preciso intento di interagire con il pubblico. Mazzucchelli interviene dapprima in spazi industriali, fabbriche, parcheggi e successivamente in piazze e centri storici, con i suoi corpi plastici, volutamente imbarazzanti nelle dimensioni e apparentemente inutili, creando scenografie sorprendenti. Questi oggetti a forma di sfera, ciambella o spirale, che Mazzucchelli battezza *A.T.O.A., Art To Abandon*, vengono letteralmente abbandonati dall'artista in punti precisi della città, con l'intenzione di modificarne la percezione, aprire una via di fuga dalla routine quotidiana e suggerire uno sguardo inedito sullo spazio circostante. Mazzucchelli si appropria di un luogo urbano per offrirlo alla collettività, ridefinirlo attraverso la socializzazione spontanea e riscoprirne una funzione. Scrive nel 1969 di volersi lasciare alle spalle il problema della forma per interessarsi alle reazioni del pubblico in relazione con le sue opere, portate nei luoghi periferici delle città non come elementi estetici, ma per acquisire definitivamente un valore relazionale e sociale (Saporito, Di Fazio 2016).

Il secondo caso esemplare è *The Floating Piers*, l'installazione che Christo realizza nel 2016 sul lago d'Iseo in tessuto giallo-arancione, sostenuta da un sistema modulare di pontili galleggianti che creano un percorso pedonale provvisorio lungo circa quattro chilometri. Nei sedici giorni in cui il pubblico ha potuto fruire dell'opera, oltre un milione di visitatori

ha compiuto l'intero percorso, dando vita a una serie di happening spontanei generati dalla relazione dell'opera con il contesto. I fruitori dell'opera hanno camminato, ma anche danzato, cantato, preso il sole, improvvisato picnic, oltre che, ovviamente, scattato migliaia di selfie, sentendosi parte di un rito. L'opera si è attivata e si è compiuta nel suo significato quando il pubblico l'ha percorsa realizzando una performance estemporanea, in cui gli spettatori sono entrati in sintonia con il luogo e lo spazio fisico è diventato esperienza e spazio di socialità. Al di là dell'appartenenza di *The Floating Piers* alla *Land Art*, all'Arte Pubblica o alla *performance* è importante rilevarne gli effetti di condizionamento sulla normalità quotidiana, seppur per un periodo limitato di tempo, e capire come le sue ragioni risiedano nella pratica dei visitatori che la calpestano (Filippini 2016). *The Floating Piers* è un'opera che esprime bene, inoltre, la smania di protagonismo del pubblico contemporaneo, che si è riversato copioso in quei giorni sulle rive del lago d'Iseo, per poter prendere parte ad un evento effimero ed irripetibile, e forse anche per poter dire «io c'ero».

Nell'ambito del teatro partecipato un esempio significativo viene offerto dalla compagnia teatrale barcellonese *FFF (The Friendly Face of Fascism)*, diretta da Roger Bernat, che nel 2009 mette in scena lo spettacolo *Domini Públic*, segnando una vera e propria svolta nella storia del teatro partecipativo spagnolo. Gli spettatori attraversano la piazza ascoltando una voce che pone loro una serie di domande e istruzioni in cuffia e che li invita a fare delle scelte, da cui dipende la formazione di gruppi e sottogruppi con la relativa assegnazione di ruoli (prigionieri, guardie e rappresentanti della Croce Rossa). Lo spettatore è protagonista di un gioco di ruolo che si basa sulla statistica e che allo stesso tempo somiglia a un esperimento antropologico, sociologico, politico e ontologico. La parte principale dello spettacolo si svolge nello spazio pubblico della città a cui la sceneggiatura del pezzo è espressamente adattata. Il pubblico con le cuffie può mescolarsi con i passanti occasionali senza compromettere la leggibilità dell'opera.

Bernat considera il pubblico non solo come elemento da coinvolgere nelle dinamiche spettacolari, ma come fattore indispensabile ai fini della realizzazione scenica e della costruzione dello spazio (Pedullà 2015). Il pubblico diventa spett-attore, a metà strada tra spettatore e interprete, responsabile di quanto sta sperimentando poiché immerso nel pieno compimento della creazione scenica. È lui che la compone, la interpreta, la tratta e si interroga al riguardo.

L'artista offre al pubblico la possibilità di agire in uno spazio dove le regole vengono volontariamente modificate per innescare reazioni e comportamenti per lo più aleatori.

L'aspetto interessante del lavoro di Mazzuchelli, per esempio, non è il gonfiabile in sé, ma è la rottura delle regole che normano le azioni quotidiane. Una delle sue installazioni più memorabili in questo senso è quella del 1971 all'ingresso dell'Alfa Romeo, in piazzale Accursio a Milano. Gli operai, inizialmente imbarazzati e un po' a disagio (tanto che alcuni di loro tentano di buttare i gonfiabili nella spazzatura) finiscono per giocare con quesrti dispositivi, come in un happening improvvisato, invadendo la strada e bloccando completamente il traffico stradale.

Allo stesso modo Christo sospende le regole normali della fisica, delle geografia e della percezione dello spazio, permettendo alle persone di camminare sull'acqua, togliendo a un'isola il suo statuto di isolamento, provocando reazioni estemporanee molto festose di aggregazione sociale.

In *Domini Públic* gli spettatori diventano protagonisti di un gioco rivelatore che gli fa percepire come le regole derivino dalle scelte. L'esperienza inizialmente è qualcosa di puramente

giocoso, ma si trasforma rapidamente in una forma di esplorazione attiva della coesione sociale e in una sorta di esame di coscienza, che mette in discussione non solo il modo in cui guardiamo gli altri, ma anche noi stessi e l'immagine che vogliamo dare di noi stessi nella società.

L'arte offre così al pubblico un palcoscenico nuovo, un tempo (effimero) in cui le regole sono sospese, permettendo ciò che normalmente non sarebbe possibile o difficilmente potrebbe accadere e il pubblico risponde facendosi interprete di una partecipazione attiva, senza bisogno di un copione da interpretare, che sovverte le regole dello spazio sociale e collettivo, dimostrando la capacità (e la necessità) dell'arte di offrire nuove regole di percezione degli spazi della vita.

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# Participation Matters. Forms of Activism in Public Art

**Silvia Mazzucotelli  
Salice**

## **Urbanity and the Participatory Turn**

Nowadays the gathering force of public space seems to be in crisis: crossed by a growing symbolic devaluation, public spaces seem condemned to become areas of transit or consumption. The roots of this ongoing deprivation of meaning of public space go back to modernity: the extension of the metropolitan area and the urban sprawling pushed the population out of the historic city centres – the most significant in the collective imagery – affecting the progressive devaluation of their symbolic potential (Jacobs 1961); social life in parallel has begun to express itself in private collective spaces and in controlled access areas (Habermas 1962), determining a reduction in the symbolic value of the collective space that progressively lost its function as meeting place and generator of synecism.

It should however be noted that the crisis of the symbolic power of public space does not correspond to a loss of values, but rather to the need to renegotiate the meaning of traditional spaces with a collective function. The cities of the past seemed to have a self-regulating capacity and a direct connection between the transformations of their forms and the societies that inhabited them (Mumford 1961). A connection that made the physical city interdependent with its “spiritual” life, stimulating one’s transformations of the other (Simmel 1903). Contemporary cities, in comparison, continually show cracks and weaknesses: the complexity of today’s urban life seems to hinder the ability of public space to carry out collective projects and to ensure valuable social relations between different populations (see among others Mazzette 1991, 2003; Nuvolati 2002; Mela 2014).

In such a context, as documented by various studies (Mazzette 2011; Hoffman 2014; Huybrechts 2014; Musarò and Iannelli 2017), several participatory processes and tools have been developed to stimulate citizens’ development of their own planning skills, to use their own knowledge and expertise about the places involved, to take care of the territories, to understand their own needs and interests, and to propose how the spaces should be reorganized in order to meet these needs and interests .

## **Art and Territorial Governance**

Among the most sensitive figures to urban transformations and the most attentive to the languages of collective planning, are the artists. From the nineteenth-century novels related to the first discomfort of urban life, through the futuristic avant-gardes that read in the movement the distinctive character of urban life, till the land-art that takes the landscape as its field of reflection, the artists have increasingly measured themselves with urban space

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mixing practices and languages of art and urban design.

Over the last two decades, relational, connective, and dialogical artistic performances have been developed in diverse socio-cultural and political-economic contexts, through both independent actions and institutionally commissioned projects, which invite citizens to participate in decisions around the transformation of the everyday territories of societal life. It's the "new genre public art" (Lacy, 1995).

The artists who recognize themselves as part of this movement are motivated by the desire to activate and incorporate a demand for quality of life and the ability to redesign life spaces, rather than to represent them; their projects stem from the relationship with a place, or a context to which they return with different formal outcomes - a sculpture, a performance, a fresco an architectural project - generally far from those ones of the traditional artistic-monumental intervention, and tend to let emerge in the shared space the elements of meaning of everyday life, but also its contradictions and conflicts.

Through a vast array of artistic languages (from theatre to graffiti, urban knitting to the handcraft production of street furniture, etc.), contemporary participatory public art explores urban problems, challenges the dominant representations of emerging issues, proposes to citizens and policy-makers new ways of thinking about territory renewal, and aims to reorient the decisions taken in territorial governance, either denouncing them or supporting their improvement.

### **Art in the Public Interest**

This artistic participatory turn in territorial governance is documented by a wide range of "new genre public art" projects. The latter can be considered examples of participatory governance as far as: a) they represent tools and strategies that artists activate to enable citizens' engagement in the transformation of urban spaces; b) they bring artists into direct engagement with audiences to deal with compelling societal issues.

Unlike "private" art, all public art promotes associationism, but only in the "new genre public art" the public has become the starting point for the construction of the artwork. To better understand the meaning of this statement, it is worthy to go back to 2016 when the Bulgarian-American artist Christo realized on the Brescia side of Lake Iseo The Floating Piers, a temporary project consisting of a series of floating walkways, which allowed visitors to walk just above the surface of the lake water from Sulzano, on the mainland, up to the islands of Monte Isola and San Paolo. The final project involved the installation of approximately three kilometres of floating walkways covered with 100,000 square meters of bright yellow fabric. The installation required the intervention of five hundred workers who were progressively joined by teams of volunteers and took on the typical characteristics of a happening in a public and shared urban space. The stake was not only the artwork, but the action and the performance that gave meaning to it: The Floating Piers built an audience starting from the mass of individual visitors who came to experience it, creating a deep bond between all the participants and demonstrating how art is not simply the artistic product but its gestation, history, audience that recalls the performance, the reactions it evokes and also the memories it leaves.

If the audience participates in the construction of the artwork, then the relationship between the community and the artwork itself is not detached, reverential and contemplative as in traditional public art, but becomes participatory so that the presence of the public fulfills the artwork.

The works of the American artist Jack Mackie are particularly exemplary in this sense. *The First Avenue Project*, realized in Seattle in collaboration with Buster Simpson, Paul and Deborah Rhinehart, foresaw for example the periodic rehash of a portion of sidewalk in the central area of Seattle, through the creation of flower beds, benches or street furniture placed at the centre of the path so as to force the passer-by to change their path and create opportunities for encounter among the city inhabitants. The underlying objective was to undermine the design of city planners through raids on open construction sites by using the materials left in storage for the creation of unexpected street furniture. As in the case of the piece of cement: neither the artists nor the urban planner labelled it as a bench; it is rather its daily use by the inhabitants that defined that portion of concrete as a bench.

In this example, however, participation remained minimal: the inhabitants were mostly unaware of the political meaning of their uses of the street furniture; and all final decisions regarding the destiny of the artistic interventions were taken by experts and representatives, merely following dominant interests and values. In contrast, in other public art projects participation plays a more substantial and continuous role and the decision-making process appears more decentralized and

less limited to the 'mere' action of representatives or experts. In the United States, for example, there is a long tradition of artistic programs in the suburbs that have to do with the creation of networks in which artists

work side by side with local communities for the creation of works of art that can honour the history of a neighbourhood or improve its daily experience (Hein 2006; Knight 2008).

In Italy an example in this sense is the project *Nuovi Committenti*<sup>1</sup> realized in the southern suburbs of Turin. The program envisaged the creation of four artistic interventions to be allocated within public space of the Mirafiori district. In this project the artists were called to work side by side with the citizens of the neighbourhood who played the role of patrons (Bartolino et. al. 2008).

*Nuovi Committenti* proposes a diverse method to revitalize the democratic decision-making processes of territory governance: the artistes were called to link citizens and institutions around decisions on the contested and abandoned industrial areas of the Mirafiori district; to pay attention to issues such as identity, participation, quality of living, community building and social exclusion; to share more than to represent, to produce experiences, to activate synergies and development mechanisms.

In all the examples mentioned so far it is important to outline that in their operational practice the artists assumed methods and tools typical of vast array of disciplines - from historical and sociological research, to architecture, urban planning, landscape and urban design - and combined them with the instances of art. Such artistic practices, in fact, tend to construct new planning languages for the public space. In particular, the contemporary artistic interventions known as "new genre public art" try to reconstruct a new relationship between artist and inhabitant and between inhabitant and public space; they also propose

*Unlike "private" art, all public art promotes associationism, but only in the "new genre public art" the public has become the starting point for the artwork.*

<sup>1</sup> *Nuovi Committenti* is a program for the production of public art works. Originally born in France in 1991 from an idea of the artist François Hers and known as *Nouveaux Comanditaires*, it is now widespread all over Europe. In Italy it has been promoted by the Adriano Olivetti Foundation since 2001. The experience realized in Turin and mentioned above is the first project completed in this Country.

the involvement of residents in the regeneration of their living areas and, in particular, promote the participatory planning of the built environment. As we have understood from the above examples, these practices are able to “revitalize” models of urban governance in which participation often is decoded as a mere consultative process. The “new genre of public art” represents a new way in which citizenship is practiced: artists ask the audience to become co-actors in the construction of their works, taking in charge problems/conflicts related to urban spaces, intercepting needs and experiences of people who live in these spaces, and activating citizens’ awareness of their role in the transformation of urban spaces.

## **Conclusion: Public Art and Activism**

The “new genre public art”, as we have seen, does not indicate an artistic movement nor a style. It is rather an address that crosses contemporary art in all its and which: shows an artist involved socially and far from the bohemian model, whose typical unruliness stems from a situation of inner conflict and aversion to society (Hein 1996; 2006); embraces the ideal of a real democratization of art that is realized in its potential accessibility to anyone, regardless of social extraction or cultural and symbolic capital (Miles 1997; Cartiere, Willis 2008); and, most importantly, fosters people to participate in decisions about the spaces of their own societal life , making the unseen and the marginalized visible, building a sense of being an empowered and effective political agent and, also, constructing a sense of belonging to political communities.

On the one hand, citizens’ participation within the sphere of public art may render more inclusive the processes and tools adopted in the formal sphere of institutionalized politics in order to take decisions regarding the territory. They may render more substantial the “participatory turn” of contemporary territorial governance, which is urged on by national and international recommendations, but often reduced to consultation with experts, stakeholders, and local representatives. On other hand these projects may enhance the democratic character of contemporary societies by empowering citizens’ participation. In the political sphere of public art, in fact, citizens are invited to participate in decisions regarding the representation of the territory they live: during the realization of the work of art people meet, work together, exchange information, clash with difficulties and problems, discover common affinities and interests, verify their differences and sometimes overcome them; they gain mutual trust and establish relationships that can last over time. These enhanced interactions apply to citizens, but also to institutions: public art, in essence, can improve horizontal relations between residents, but also vertical ones, between residents and administrations.

The combination of these unexpected relational effects is basically what matters in public art: participatory artworks can increase the social capital available to a community allowing the sharing of stories, identities, needs and aspirations; furthermore, public art request us to re-imagine the concept of citizenship, discarding its conception as a mere formal status and embracing the idea that it has become a performative character.

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# Osservare la città da una camera-car. L'esperienza di Strasse a Milano

**Gloria Pessina**

Raccontando di uno degli artisti contemporanei che ha fatto dell'esplorazione urbana la propria cifra stilistica, David Pinder scrive che l'idea iniziale dei progetti di Francis Alÿs spesso nasce da una camminata attraverso spazi della vita quotidiana delle città (Pinder, 2011). Durante il cammino avrebbe luogo una «strana reazione chimica» che porterebbe l'artista a sentire il bisogno di reagire agli stimoli della città attraverso la reinterpretazione dei medesimi spazi e la ricerca di uno sguardo diverso da quello abitudinario (*ibidem*). Il tentativo dell'artista non sarebbe tanto di aggiungere qualcosa alla città, ma di «assorbire quello che c'è già, di lavorare con i residui, o con gli spazi in negativo e interstiziali» (traduzione dell'autrice da: Alÿs, 2005). L'intento non è quindi quello di creare un'opera duratura e riconoscibile nello spazio, ma piuttosto di dare vita a una storia, di creare quasi «un atto clandestino, furtivo» (traduzione dell'autrice da: Pinder, 2011).

A partire dalla pratica dell'attraversamento, unita alla riflessione critica sulla città, Alÿs ha dato vita a opere performative in varie parti del mondo che sono state filmate in modo da conservare una testimonianza dell'azione, quali ad esempio *The green line* a Gerusalemme (2004), *Guards e The nightwatch* a Londra (2005) o ancora *Don't cross the river before you get to the bridge* presso lo stretto di Gibilterra (2008). In queste opere, il gesto stesso dell'attraversare, o far attraversare a soggetti scelti e spesso inaspettati, determinati spazi urbani, museali o di frontiera rappresenterebbe non solo una pratica estetica, ma anche una presa di posizione politica e di denuncia nei confronti di eccessive forme di controllo di questi luoghi (Alÿs, 2007).

Alÿs può essere considerato uno dei riferimenti più recenti e ormai consolidati sulla scena artistica internazionale nell'ambito delle opere performative che hanno luogo negli spazi urbani, oltre che uno dei punti di arrivo di una lunga tradizione di esplorazioni artistiche che ebbero inizio con le derive dei Situazionisti, seguite da alcune forme di *land art* sviluppate soprattutto negli Stati Uniti e nel Regno Unito a partire dagli anni Sessanta, fino ai più recenti progetti di "psicogeografia" ispirati alle pratiche situazioniste e diffusi nell'ultimo decennio nelle città europee (Careri, 2006; Pinder, 2011). Alcuni dei tratti del lavoro di Alÿs possono fornire utili chiavi di lettura per interpretare l'opera di artisti più giovani ed attualmente emergenti, impegnati in esplorazioni urbane e territoriali in chiave performativa.

In ambito italiano la compagnia Strasse, fondata nel 2009 a Milano, sembra essere una delle più promettenti. Come scrivono le fondatrici Francesca De Isabella e Sara Leghissa, Strasse «lavora sul linguaggio performativo legato all'espressione del corpo in relazione al paesaggio urbano, e sul linguaggio cinematografico come filtro di osservazione della realtà. Strasse

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nasce dal desiderio di spostare il linguaggio teatrale e quello cinematografico negli spazi della città, attingendo e lasciandosi influenzare dai suoi ambienti, dalle temperature e dai segni, senza riqualificare o sconvolgere questi luoghi nel loro significato, ma sottraendoli al flusso del quotidiano e trasportandoli, per un momento, altrove»<sup>1</sup>. Inizialmente legata ad uno spazio fisico delimitato (Casa Strasse), la compagnia a partire già dal 2010 si è mossa all'interno della città nel suo complesso, ospitata temporaneamente in luoghi occupati, all'interno di festival teatrali e soprattutto nello spazio pubblico, considerato da Strasse, così come da Alÿs, come una delle principali fonti di ispirazione artistica. Come per l'artista belga, anche per la compagnia milanese lo scopo principale della propria arte è di fornire allo spettatore la possibilità di «trasformare il suo punto di vista, permettendogli di vedere con un'attenzione diversa ciò che già esiste» (ibidem). Se l'approccio allo spazio urbano ha delle assonanze con l'arte di altri autori come quello richiamato in apertura, le modalità di attraversamento e di restituzione delle esplorazioni presentano però alcune differenze significative, come è evidente ad esempio nel progetto Drive\_IN, giunto alla decima edizione nel 2017.

*Il gesto poetico sembra in grado di assumere una valenza politica, non tanto per il desiderio di intervenire fisicamente sulla città, per la capacità di risvegliare uno sguardo attivo.*

Nelle parole delle artiste di Strasse, lo spazio urbano è uno «spazio interessante da poter agire, luogo da abitare» (Uovo Project, 2013). Dal fascino suscitato da alcuni luoghi della città difficili da interpretare e abitare sarebbe nata l'esigenza di creare il progetto Drive\_IN. Nato nel 2011 a Milano, «Drive\_IN è una performance site-specific commissionata da diverse istituzioni culturali e

progettato di volta in volta in luoghi differenti [...]. Drive\_IN è la prima sintesi di una ricerca che indaga il paesaggio urbano, visualizzandolo come uno spazio scenico, contenitore e produttore di segni e di tempi possibili, e in cui il piano performativo e quello cinematografico si incontrano nella ricerca di un linguaggio comune. È un viaggio in macchina attraverso la città, una regia mobile, una proiezione in movimento per un solo spettatore alla volta»<sup>2</sup>.

Una delle peculiarità di Drive\_IN consiste proprio nel mezzo scelto per l'attraversamento: un'automobile viene guidata da una delle artiste, conducendo lo spettatore, seduto al suo fianco, attraverso il paesaggio urbano in parte abitato e utilizzato come palcoscenico da altri artisti della compagnia. Come racconta Francesca De Isabella, una delle autrici, la definizione delle modalità dell'azione artistica non è stata immediata, ma è stata l'esito di un processo di sperimentazione: «Drive\_IN è nato [...] in Barona, una zona periferica di Milano, poi è arrivato a Gallarate, poi Santarcangelo, Terni [...]. Inizialmente è partito tutto dall'idea di fare un video e quindi giravamo praticamente con una macchina e con la telecamera fissata sull'esterno della macchina, facevamo un camera-car soprattutto in questa zona di Barona e mentre io guidavo [...], Sara, Lele e altre persone fuori facevano delle azioni, praticamente una specie di improvvisazione tra il movimento della macchina e il loro movimento all'esterno. Poi a un certo punto abbiamo pensato che forse la telecamera potevamo toglierla e far salire una persona. Da lì abbiamo iniziato a lavorare proprio con questo metodo e su quest'idea. Quindi noi di solito quando costruiamo il Drive\_IN facciamo un momento iniziale di creazione in cui io giro con la macchina e altre 4 o 5 persone, i performer, stanno fuori. Sara, Lele, Daria e Elena. Quindi facciamo dei giri in alcune zone della città, facciamo un po' di movimenti e iniziamo a capire che cosa ci porta il luogo nel quale siamo, dopo di che cominciamo a capire quale può essere il percorso effettivo che ci può interessare e io

1 dal sito [www.casastrasse.org](http://www.casastrasse.org).

2 dal sito [www.casastrasse.org](http://www.casastrasse.org).

comincio a lavorare sulle musiche. Faccio un montaggio con dei pezzi di musica soprattutto strumentale» (Uovo Project, 2013).

La scelta di usare l'automobile come se fosse una telecamera, senza realizzare un video del percorso come nelle fasi iniziali del progetto, ma lasciando che sia lo sguardo dello spettatore-passeggero a registrare le immagini dei luoghi traversati e delle azioni che si svolgono al loro interno, crea una forte cesura rispetto ad altre esperienze artistiche contemporanee.

Se si volesse giudicare la performance dal punto di vista del suo prodotto tangibile, la si potrebbe considerare estremamente effimera. Gli effetti sugli spettatori sembrano però duraturi e per nulla scontati. Il viaggio in automobile attraverso spazi spesso ai margini della città e interstiziali, nei quali avvengono alcune azioni ad opera dei performer che si confondono con gli abitanti, è enfatizzato dalla musica e dal silenzio rigoroso dell'autista, che non fornisce allo spettatore/passeggero nessuno strumento per distinguere la realtà dalla finzione. Il viaggio, che dura appena 30 minuti, sortisce in molti degli spettatori un iniziale effetto di spaesamento, seguito da un progressivo innalzamento dell'attenzione verso ciò che lo circonda. Come scrive il critico Renato Palazzi a commento della quinta edizione di Drive\_IN, «è evidente che l'uso dell'auto non è un gioco estemporaneo, ma un fondamentale elemento di linguaggio. L'auto è l'equivalente della cinepresa [...]. È l'auto che accelerando o rallentando determina il ritmo degli eventi, è l'auto che avvicinandosi o allontanandosi passa dai primi piani ai "campi lunghi" e viceversa. Drive\_IN #5 è notevole anche perché resta tutto in sospeso, sfumato: le due autrici potrebbero forzare i toni del racconto, renderlo più accessibile, più esplicito. Invece si limitano a evocare delle vicende possibili, lasciando che sia chi osserva a figurarsene ipotetici sviluppi. La percezione di una trama – di qualunque trama narrativa? – è una costruzione soggettiva, legata a impressioni personali. Per questo viene imposto un coinvolgimento rigorosamente solitario» (Palazzi, 2013).

In più punti del percorso in automobile, che si è svolto in contesti urbani molto differenti, per molti degli spettatori è stato difficile distinguere la realtà dalla finzione. A molti è capitato di concludere l'esperienza interrogandosi sull'autenticità degli spazi urbani abitati e praticati usualmente (Pessina, 2017).

La capacità di creare stupore e di modificare profondamente lo sguardo di chi prende parte all'atto performativo di Strasse, richiama esperienze artistiche come quella di Alÿs brevemente illustrata in apertura, seppur con modalità e metodi differenti. Anche nel caso di Strasse il gesto poetico sembra in grado di assumere una valenza politica, non tanto per il desiderio di intervenire fisicamente sulla città, rigenerandone alcune parti, né di far conoscere luoghi potenzialmente ignorati e giudicati periferici dallo spettatore, quanto piuttosto per la capacità di risvegliare in lui uno sguardo attivo e una riflessione sul senso della propria appartenenza alla città, sul ruolo recitato e sul potere della propria visione.

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*“to stand on my feet, to challenge my behaviour,  
to breathe, to hurt, to fight, to be for or against an idea, to be stronger than I think I am...”*  
**The Army**

*Conceived as a desire to stand up, stay awake and survive The Army is an ongoing call to be brave in an age that promotes fear; a march against apathy, for healing, purpose and power.*

*In London, 2016, Mirto began exploring the choreographic language of marching drills, warrior rituals and breath as a means to practice fearlessness, presence, unity and strength.*

*“I wanted to see & hear people moving past my window, expressing a new free logic on my street, resounding & awake, instilling curiosity, renewed purpose, hope, commitment & strength”*

*(A. Mirto)*

*This generated The Army outdoor concept: impromptu synchronised ‘marching’ and breathing sounds in the public realm to express an esprit-de-corps. See <https://vimeo.com/198278104>*

*“An empowering practice as much as a performance... I now stand a little straighter, speak a little louder; take up a little more space”*

*(Participant/ Performer)*

*Across two years the marching rituals have challenged ad hoc / accidental audiences across London in 33 public outdoor spaces.*



*These have included ordinary streets and squares, gardens, graveyards, the grounds of housing estates and the financial district (at least twice). Marching in different spaces & at different times in an ever shifting socio-political landscape, have offered new poignant readings & meanings to the work & to situations that may ordinarily appear static and stable.*

*Training and recruitment is ongoing & The Army will next march in October 2018, exact time & London location to be confirmed.*

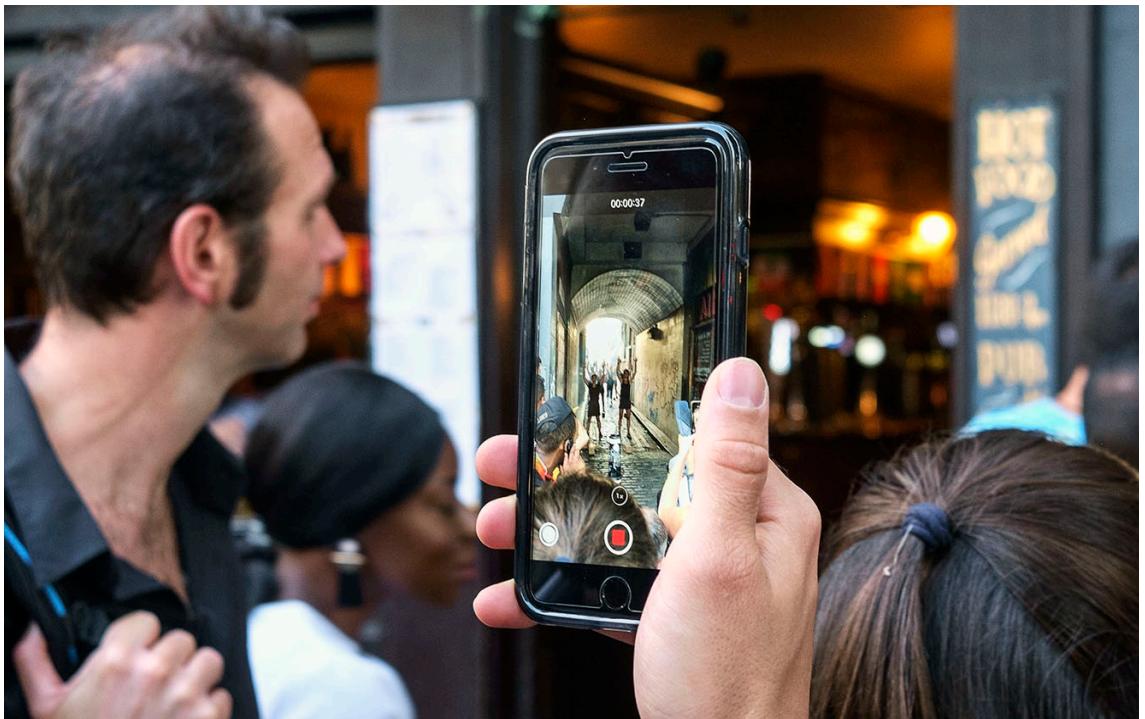
*The images provided for this issue are from the Aug 2nd 2018 action in Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX. The outdoor march preceded a new commissioned indoor version for the WhiteChapel Gallery.*

*Participant: Performers were Camilla Canocchi, Dyana Gravina, Markella Koniordou Ashley-Louise McNaughton, Holly Rush, Anna Spink, Eleftheria Tzamtzi, Lou Wong. Produced by Bean*

*photocredits: Alberto Duman (front cover, p.18, 26); Marco Berardi (back cover, p. 2, 4, 12, 24-25, 47); Pietro Menzione Giordano (p. 23, 30, 40, 48-49)*

**Anton Mirto**

<https://vimeo.com/a2company>



# Arte pubblica e spazio urbano

**Ricciarda Belgiojoso**

*Dimmi, poiché sei così sensibile agli effetti dell'architettura, non hai osservato, camminando nella città, come tra gli edifici che la popolano taluni siano muti, ed altri parlino, mentre altri ancora, che son più rari, cantano?*

Paul Valéry

Da ormai oltre cinquant'anni largamente presente in Europa, negli Stati Uniti e più recentemente anche nel resto del mondo, l'Arte Pubblica consiste nelle attività di commissione e nelle pratiche artistiche centrate sullo spazio pubblico. L'opera diventa lo strumento con cui interpretare lo spazio di tutti, uno spazio inteso oltre le sue misure e la sua topografia, come luogo di interazione. Luoghi di intervento privilegiati possono essere le stazioni, i nodi del sistema dei trasporti, strade, piazze, ospedali, ma in fondo l'arte pubblica può inserirsi in qualunque luogo naturale, urbano o persino virtuale, si appropria del territorio dell'architettura, della città, della società. Lo spazio espositivo si ridefinisce mentre l'arte esplora, fuori da musei e gallerie, il contesto sociale. Se hanno contribuito a costruire questa nuova sensibilità legata a una dimensione aperta e attiva espressioni artistiche come la Land Art, la Minimal Art, l'arte concettuale, l'anarchitettura, Fluxus e le performance, la relazione dell'opera con il contesto intende superare la logica della collocazione in un luogo dato: non si tratta di mostrare semplicemente una scultura, intenzione è costruire un rapporto intrinseco con il sito e mostrare modi diversi in cui può essere vissuto e percepito. L'artista esprime intenti pubblici, il pubblico è chiamato a partecipare, l'opera diventa site-specific fino a diventare essa stessa ambiente (per uno sguardo sulle pratiche di arte pubblica cfr. Perelli 2006). Emblematica *Tilted Arc* di Richard Serra, eretta nel 1981 nella Federal Plaza della città di New York su commissione del programma Arts-in-Architecture, che prevedeva di destinare lo 0,5% del costo di costruzione di un edificio federale a un'opera d'arte (costo dell'intervento 175.000 \$). Una lastra curva in acciaio di circa 36m per 3,6m di altezza divideva la piazza in due parti: per raggiungere gli edifici circostanti i passanti dovevano necessariamente aggirarla, modificando i loro percorsi abituali e allo stesso tempo acquisendo una certa consapevolezza dei loro spostamenti e dello spazio circostante. Da subito l'opera suscitò forti reazioni e ci fu chi chiese di rimuoverla, tanto che dopo qualche anno l'amministrazione aprì un dibattito pubblico per decidere il da farsi finché, nonostante i costi ingenti per lo smantellamento e la ricostruzione in altro luogo, a maggioranza si decise di rimuoverla. Evidenti le questioni naturalmente legate all'arte pubblica: quale sia il ruolo delle istituzioni, quale ruolo possa avere il pubblico nel determinare il valore di un'opera, quali diritti spettino all'artista riguardo all'opera, ecc.

Altro caso, *The people's choice* dei Group Material (1980): gli artisti stabiliscono un rapporto orizzontale di collaborazione con il pubblico, che è invitato a portare oggetti personali cui

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li lega un rapporto affettivo per metterli in mostra insieme a quelli degli altri. Il pubblico diventa soggetto attivo nel dare forma a una mostra collettiva.

Daniel Buren, invece, da sempre lavora su uno strumento visivo che sollecita il pubblico a porre l'attenzione sull'ambiente circostante, come un segnale per decifrare il contesto. Lo schema delle strisce verticali di 8,7 cm alternate bianco e colore, derivato dalle tende usate più comunemente in Francia, non ha velleità artistiche ma è inteso per attirare l'interesse della gente e svelare quegli aspetti della realtà che generalmente sfuggono a uno sguardo superficiale, serve a rileggere i luoghi per vedere qualcosa d'altro, eventualmente anche significati sociali o politici. Già in *Affichages Sauvages* (Parigi 1967-69), Buren ricopriva alcuni pannelli pubblicitari in strada con la sua carta rigata: non trasmettevano informazioni ma anzi rappresentavano un vuoto semantico rispetto alla esagerazione di significati dell'intorno, erano come una mancanza visibile che reagiva a una società consumista, uno schema neutro che rispondeva agli usi e consumi magnificati dalla Pop Art.

A Parigi, negli anni 1961-62, Christo e Jeanne-Claude avevano chiuso la rue Visconti, una stradina del 60 arrondissement in cui avevano vissuto uomini illustri come Racine, Delacroix e Balzac, erigendo *Wall of Oil Barrels - The Iron Curtain*, una barricata di oltre quattro metri per quattro con ottantanove barili di olio, bloccando un parte significativa del traffico in città. L'intervento rispondeva a due fatti politici di primo piano all'epoca: la costruzione del muro di Berlino e le proteste per la guerra d'Algeria.

Ciascuno con il proprio linguaggio, gli artisti sempre più si interessano alla dimensione pubblica, mentre i temi trattati interessano anche manifestazioni d'arte internazionali di rilievo, come Documenta e la Biennale di Venezia, fino agli anni più recenti in cui anche le fiere d'arte riservano sezioni speciali dedicate a interventi diffusi in città. Rimane riferimento di spicco *Skulptur Projekte Münster*, la manifestazione decennale dedicata all'arte pubblica avviata nel 1977, si diffondono parchi dedicati all'arte e numerose iniziative che coinvolgendo artisti di fama sono volte a diffondere l'arte contemporanea e insieme riqualificare la città, come ad esempio *Luci d'artista* a Torino e *Le stazioni dell'arte* della metropolitana di Napoli. In quest'ambito così orientato a instaurare una relazione attiva tra pubblico e ambiente indagando spazi sociali, concreti, vivi, pare interessante considerare gli interventi che trattano in particolare i fenomeni uditive. Ai confini tra musica e arte, sempre più le installazioni sonore alterano l'identità dei luoghi costruendo nuovi paesaggi sonori creando e trasformando esperienze pubbliche. C'è chi progetta strumenti per trasformare i rumori della città in musica armoniosa, chi inserisce nell'ambiente blocchi di suono che pur essendo invisibili ne stravolgono l'atmosfera, chi pensa a itinerari sonori da percorrere, perché il nostro orientamento nello spazio dipende in gran parte dall'esperienza uditive e lavorando sui suoni si può riconfigurare lo spazio (per un approccio multisensoriale all'architettura cfr. Pallasmaa 1996; per indagini più approfondite su interventi sonori in spazi pubblici Belgiojoso 2009).

L'opera diventa lo strumento con cui interpretare lo spazio oltre le sue misure e la sua topografia, come luogo di interazione.

Forse il caso più noto è *Times Square* di Max Neuhaus (1977-92, 2002-permanente), un intervento intangibile che consiste in un flusso di suono installato nel cuore di uno dei crocevia più caotici di New York, che ridisegnato con i suoni appare invece oasi tranquilla. Tra la quarantacinquesima e la quarantaseiesima strada, tra Broadway e la settima avenue, spazio pubblico per eccellenza accessibile ventiquattro ore al giorno, un grande speaker inserito nel sottosuolo, sotto la grata della metropolitana, diffonde verso l'alto suoni continui. Nel momento in cui ci imbattiamo nell'installazione non necessariamente ce ne accorgiamo-

mo: una texture sonora si modifica quasi impercettibilmente nel tempo e gradualmente l'uditore percepisce le trasformazioni intorno a lui. Se Neuhaus lavora con suoni di sintesi, composti in studio, il duo O+A (Bruce Odland e Sam Auinger) invece da sempre lavora sulla trasformazione di suoni reali, convertendo il rumore del traffico in musica. Un intervento del 1998 intitolato *Harmonic Bridge* riguarda un cavalcavia della città di North Adams, negli Stati Uniti. Un tubo lungo quasi 5 m, posto lungo la strada in prossimità del traffico, come un grande flauto risuona al passaggio delle automobili generando armonie e melodie. Microfoni posti all'interno del tubo registrano alcuni particolari suoni armonici, diffusi poi con due altoparlanti-cubo collocati sui due lati della strada sotto al cavalcavia, come sedute da cui godersi l'ascolto. È la zona di accesso dal centro della città di North Adams al MASS MoCA, museo di arte contemporanea: un luogo che per lungo tempo è stato considerato alienante ed eccessivamente rumoroso, barriera inaccessibile tra la città e il museo, diventa un portale di accesso al museo fatto di suoni. Trasformando i rumori in musica in tempo reale, O+A si rifanno agli studi sulla percezione uditiva di Oliver Sacks, e in particolare al fatto che rumore e armonia sarebbero decodificati da parti differenti del cervello: i suoni eufonici sarebbero colti da un emisfero, mentre gli stessi suoni prima di essere trasformati sarebbero colti dall'altro emisfero; il nostro comportamento, in uno stesso luogo, sarebbe influenzato diversamente a seconda della situazione sonora.

Per la risistemazione dell'area portuale della città di Zara, in Croazia, nel 2005, Nikola Bašić propose una scalinata in pietra locale con affaccio sul mare, con una nuova passeggiata lungo la costa che conduceva dal centro storico al mare fino a trovare un elemento di attrazione per cittadini e turisti. Bašić coinvolse nella progettazione il compositore Ivan Stamać per sfruttare le onde del mare a realizzare un vero e proprio organo marino. Le trentacinque canne dell'organo, che nell'insieme ha una larghezza di settanta metri, sono inserite nella scalinata in modo da risuonare al battere delle onde sul fronte: l'acqua spinge le colonne d'aria attraverso le aperture che si affacciano sul mare e il suono fuoriesce da una fila di fori disposta lungo la pavimentazione, riproducendo le armonie tipiche della tradizione musicale locale dei cori *klapa*. Uno spazio urbano marginale è diventato luogo di aggregazione, ritrovo per i cittadini e meta per il turismo.

Numerosi interventi di arte pubblica invitano a seguire un percorso. Nell'ambito della Sound Art sono molto attive in questo campo ad esempio artiste come Janet Cardiff, Susan Philipsz e Viv Corringham. Quest'ultima in genere esegue performance vocali, vocal strolls, improvvise girando per la città reagendo alle risposte acustiche dell'ambiente costruito, mentre voce e ambiente si rispondono vicendevolmente (per indagare il percorso come pratica estetica cfr. Careri 2006). Tornano alla mente le escursioni urbane dei dadaisti nella Parigi degli anni Venti, nei luoghi comuni, persino banali della città: il primo *readymade* urbano, in risposta alle visite guidate turistiche, che segna il primo tentativo di abbandonare gli spazi espositivi tradizionali per rivolgersi ai luoghi pubblici. Dopo la ruota di bicicletta, dopo gli oggetti architettonici come *The Woolworth Building as Readymade* di Duchamp (1916), ricordando le *flânerie* di Baudelaire si eleva ad opera d'arte uno spazio vuoto: lo spazio pubblico della città.

#### Riferimenti

Lorenza Perelli, *Public Art. Arte, interazione e progetto urbano*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2006

Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Academy Group, Londra 1996

Ricciarda Belgiojoso, *Costruire con i suoni*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2009

Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*, Einaudi, Torino 2006



# People Bodies and Behaviors Activating Open Spaces.

## Fanoi, a One-night Fire Garden

**Annalisa Metta**

In *Flesh and Stone*, Richard Sennet describes urban history through people's bodily experience, outlining how «Western civilization has had persistent trouble in honoring the dignity of the body and diversity of human bodies» (Sennet, 1994:15). Our recent past –the 1900s– was a serious body-trouble spot: most of urban politics, at least in the so called 'Western countries', worked for the actual removal of people from the urban stage. It happened by apparently tiny but crucial actions, like unwinding fences everywhere, deleting common venues, banning shops on the streets in the newly designed districts, supporting hostile devices to deter people from spending time in the public realm, as the anti-sleep benches.

Public space design often only translates the local law and order regulations in a literal way, disabling the presence of what is not aligned with the current ideas of control and decency. Dividing, separating and detaching have come to be the key actions of any urban agenda; to avoid conflicts, the compulsory goal. Accordingly, public space —defined as the framework where every-day life, with all its imperfections and unpredictable downturns, produces urbanity— has been denied. It has come to be the product of 'embalming', which protects from decay and retains shape, but nevertheless devitalises and sanctions death.

Of course, there were some disproofs, mostly thanks to some well-known architects, urban planners and landscape architects. We can mention William Whyte's *Street Life Project*, a pioneering study of pedestrian behaviors and city dynamics, who dared to investigate the limits of obviousness, offering refined reading of banal, ordinary, mundane realm (Whyte, 1989). Lawrence and Anna Halprin, authors of celebrated public spaces where many human choreographies —set up as well unruly, harmonic as well muddled— coexist, easily and jauntily, are an unquestionable reference, as well (Metta, Di Donato, 2015). In Europe, soon after World War II, Aldo van Eyck reclaimed many bombed lots in Amsterdam as playgrounds and opened the long European peace through the physical re-appropriation of the urban space (Lingen, Kollarová, 2014).

In Rome, forty years ago, during the 'Years of Lead', Renato Nicolini brought people back into the streets, just with ephemeral design and art events: lingering together in public spaces, staking the right to bodily experience the city, battled fear and violence perhaps more effectively than any other safety measure (Fava, 2017). These references used very different tools in very different contexts, but they similarly made clear how people are able to realize situations that could be protests as well proposals, using nothing but their bodies.

They demonstrated that actually people bodies and behaviors are tools to know, activate and

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design urban open spaces.

Focusing on public space in a performative prospective means either that design can suggest or even induce behaviors and that it could allow people to release spontaneous and unpredictable actions. In both cases, the idea of urban public space as a performative platform implies a dialogical status of design, when it is able to create conditions for a bodily response —collective as well individual— that in turn can either confirm expectations or add surprising layers of ethical and aesthetic content. This statement moves public space design from the worn hub of language, or even style, and recognizes that living habits are the source and, at once, the ethical and aesthetic purposes of our work as open space designers. The question is how deeply the presence and the actions of people can give essence to urban space design: Can we assume that urban open space could sometimes be made of almost nothing but bodies, and even disappear when people disband? Can we consciously design places as 'architecture of behaviors'?

Fanoi was a one-night fire garden in an abandoned dairy plant, for the 2013 edition of Città delle Cento Scale Festival, an annual Urban Art Festival, conceived by Giuseppe Biscaglia and Francesco Scaringi, founders of the no-profit association Basilicata1799. The Festival has been held in Potenza every year since 2008, under the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities<sup>1</sup>.

We<sup>2</sup> were asked to realize a performative action able to give new value to the site, since decades abandoned and neglected, and bring it back into the imaginary of the local community. So we made a garden<sup>3</sup>.

Any garden is, by definition, a precious place, just because it's behind what is strictly necessary, in an utilitarian and productive perspective: it's a sort of luxury superstructure. Any garden is not less a place of care: it needs maintenance and affection to survive and flourish; if neglected, it perishes in a short time. For these reasons, turning a derelict farm into a garden is like giving it the status of a very valuable place.

This garden was not made of plants, but of fire: 4,000 green and white candles created a parterre, inspired by Villa Lante della Rovere a Bagnaia, in the province of Viterbo, in Center Italy, one of the gardens history most important icons ever, designed by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, Pirro Ligorio and Giambologna, about the middle of the XVI century. It was a way to honor a local and ancient tradition. In fact, from the oldest of times, in Potenza, as well in many other cities of Southern Italy, people celebrate joyful and laic rituals, lighting fires: big bonfires —named *laccare*— and smaller ones —the *Fanoi*, indeed— light up the public spaces and gather inhabitants around, to feast, dance and sing together. They are rituals of belonging, ephemeral collective actions of great incisiveness, for their symbolic meaning and for their configurative role, as well. For a night long, usual places are deeply transformed by the mild and unstable light of the fire, and its dancing shadows. Using fire, we wanted to translate a so meaningful ritual from the main public spaces of the city to a lost place, muddling the average idea of centrality and marginality, of quality and degradation.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cittacentoscale.it/>

<sup>2</sup> Luca Catalano, my partner in *Osa architettura e paesaggio*, is co-author of the project. Wop architettura e paesaggio, Volumezero architecture and landscape are coauthors too. Rusco Castiglia collaborated with us. After Fanoi in 2013, we designed and realized for the Città delle Cento Scale Festival the ephemeral public spaces: *Serpentone Reload*, 2014; *GiardiniInScala*, 2016; *Conservatico - l'altro ordine delle cose*, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> You can find here some pictures of the fire garden <https://osa-architettura-e-paesaggio.divisare.pro/projects/242388-festival-citta-delle-100-scale>

The patient work of six people for two full days was able to realize the garden, carefully ordering the thousands of candles in line, according to the set layout, based on symmetry and fixed proportions. Then, after the sunset, we finally opened the gate and visitors lit the candles in the ensemble, slowly rendering the shape of the Villa Lante's *Quadrato*, visible by night in the darkness. Everything seemed to be done and 'completed': the garden was there, so neat and orderly. But then people, children the first, started to move the candles, creating their own new arrangements. Other gardens began to appear, interlacing their geometries and colors.

Indeed, we used Villa Lante's pattern not only because it's one of most important sites in the history of landscape architecture, but also because it represents the icon of formal garden, that is static, still, just to be admired: it's a place of representation, not of interaction, never ever a place for real life and its many imperfections. Working on paradox, we considered the *Quadrato* a 'deliberately inexact structure' and allowed people to transform and redesign it through such a desecrating action: people's behaviors materialized as a form of creativity applied to the designer's work, as it happens between the performer and the composer of a piece of music or dance.

*Fanoi* admitted, even promoted, life and its unpredictable outcomes. Deliberately inexact structures are platforms for interaction and experimentation, involving the city as an active agent, surpassing the conventional paradigm of inhabitant as a customer, recipient of the final product. They are architectures for inventions and creative common life, because of stressing on performance rather than form, so expressing an adaptive, contextual and dialogical status, related to weak forms of rationality. They create forms of coexistence, able to host the gathering of different bodies and behaviors, through exchange, joining, inserting, and layering heterogeneous wills, activities and expressions, sometimes even incoherently.

This work belongs to a spreading and shared attitude to develop new tools for public space design, taking behaviours as universal joint. They launch some challenges. The first is to restore enchantment and ritualize, again, the city, beyond any anaesthesia of control: they work as serious jokes, able to strengthen or to question people awareness and work out solutions, with lightness, irony and perhaps a bit of poetry. The second is to conceive landscape architecture made of 'almost nothing', a sort of zero degree of design, nevertheless able to offer wide conditions for shared life, clearly expected as well totally unintentional, anyway valuable, legitimate and vital. Third, this kind of works also says that associating 'architecture of behaviours' with a lack of design is ruinous and misleading.

On the contrary, they stake-out the importance and necessity of design, open to welcome all the inventive ways of living that a healthy, supportive and free community should always be able to express, should always be asked to express. Design should reclaim its precise task and mission to create conditions for open and ongoing processes of belonging. In this perspective, the many forms of reshaping and adapting that people could operate just inhabiting places do not reveal weakness of design, but, on the contrary, an evidence of its success, effectiveness and longevity. And this is, perhaps, one of noblest and most fruitful form of participatory design we could work out, where inclusion and joining get out of abstraction

*Focusing on public space in a performative prospective means either that design can suggest or even induce behaviors and that it could allow people to release spontaneous and unpredictable actions.*

and actually embody in people's presence and behaviors, finally and literally in people's bodies.

Each of these challenges lead to imagine urban spaces as open platforms for invention, unforeseeable situations, changing communities and habits. This is exactly the mission of landscape architecture in all the fields and scales it works: involving life and its unpredictable expressions; working with time, trigger process and then leave things happen; giving up any anxiety about control, choosing on the contrary to accompany and help; dealing with eventuality, possibility, accident as form of creativity, through incremental adaptation.

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# Presences As Places. Performance and Cities as Processes of Taking Place

Piergiorgio  
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According to what Jean-Luc Nancy observed in his *Corps théâtre*, the phenomenon of representation needs a subject for taking place, for make itself a "presence". In other word, existence want to being put in scene. But the idea of mis-en-scene, of staging a – partially – fictional representation, is never being properly considered as a way in which subject intensify its own representation for taking presence, a temporary consistence. As well as the space, for which the couple subjectivity-presence could be thought as space-place, or scene.

Through the suggestions of Nancy related to bodies and theatre, the idea of presence in act could be used as a tool for understand the modalities in which happen the recognition of a place and its role inside the cities, passing through the conception of performance in art-theory – that could be well placed inside the thought of Nancy – as a way to act places.

Nowadays cities are bodies. Architecture has left its characterization as "third skin" of the human being, and becomes a full-functioned-organized machine, a prosthesis of the perceptible and perception. Similarly, the "ritualistic power" as capability of a man "thrown in the world" to order it in relation to him, for manage it, has reached the end. We had understand that the place of our being in the world is not outside, but inside. The body is as architecture, with his rituals, his limits, its own spaces and times, that let the world come to us as subject. In such way, we can conceive bodies only in the act of exhibit and representing itself, as a place in the space, searching a presence in its exposure.

During the 60's the statement of the art work and its author begun to being called into question. While the world and the cities were change, the big socio-economics mutation lead to the reformulation of the industries and their production, extending the work-time at the entire life. The time and its durations were changing, an ephemeral present were installed itself, moving forward a precarious future. The art-work and the objects of the past were dissolved into museums, whose narration was overwriting differences, articulating its own time. And in this scenario the concept of "time" as ephemeral durations, more similar to the idea of "event" was at the core of the performance art.

The art-work had to embrace the temporality of the action, made itself of the same matter of time, of events; practically it had to reflect an "advent", an happening. Only in that way there would be the recalibration of both positions, the one of the public and those of the art-work. The last one would become something thought as the same of the world, impossible to document exactly, impossible to during in time, because it's time; the processes of creation and its results were adjust themselves to the immanence of the action and the happen.

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The idea of the performance was literally try to "take presence". As Nancy notices, presence is a temporal "intensity" expressed through bodies representation, that is their actions and affective moves; it means "incarnate" an action for obtained a specific body as concretion of subjectivity. Is in this way that bodies are theatre, and perform the self as representation.

The historical urgency for which arose a need for a different time-theory in art, is strictly related to big change that cities and society were facing. Together with the diffusion of the advertisement as cities-images, to the labour change followed the reformulation of the relational structures as family, community, distribution of knowledge... what was a "restricted world" close between the assumptions of family and labour, with all the relation and its subjectivization processes, moves outside in the city and started to be conceived as a governance "tool", as a way to organize social structures. That's was what philosophers like Simondon called "externalization of the individuation processes", that is the way in which the self "pinpoint" itself in different planes around him, in relation to the loss of the productive actions and the incapability of develop a "constitutive" tangle of relations.

*In those years social relations were change places, while cities were absorb their functions in order to make this relations "take place" as a dispositif of subdue.*

Why is important this conception of the externalization concerning the idea of presence? Because was the structure of the cities that assumed the externalized functions,

producing places for integrates relations and subjectivization processes inside itself. And the most appropriate space was the one dedicated to the advertisements. Social functions and relations "taking place" in the definition of cities-images, usually inside the emerging globalization.

In those years social relations were change places, while cities were absorb their functions in order to make this relations "take place" as a dispositif of subdue. The subject of citizen were moving into the character of the consumer/audience.

As the art-work and the artist search for an unrepeatable event with its own finitude, capable to affect audience through a physical relation that regard in first place the occupied space, the cities starting to produce events, happenings, all under the sign of its own reiteration inside the economics and political framework. It was searching for the same mechanics of presence, producing places for contain and order relations. City performs itself in what could be called a "politic of taking place".

This definition allows to specify a difference concerning space and place: if the space is what determine measures, proxemics, positions, place is what comes after that a presence exhibit itself as a result of actions and relations.

So, when we talk about performances, the main process that characterize them is the act that body do, namely a performative act. It's mean to not referring only to art performances, but especially to what "happen" in the place, and how places and bodies take their presences.

At this point, we could consider the act of performing not only referred to persons, but also deeply implicated in the definition of a place. We could say that there is a *performing of becoming human*<sup>1</sup> as like a *performing of becoming place*. And they depends one on each other.

Allowing to set a specific presence, the act of perform claim and let to play a recognition.

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<sup>1</sup> *The performance of becoming human* is a collection of poem written by Daniel Bortzusky in which he performs a "new political poetry" in which the "becoming human" is strictly related to a speech act.

In this sense it's a matter of exhibit and expose. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, exhibit is something that cannot be displaced from existence, neither from life. Exhibit means create a scene through action, so that an incorporeal subjectivity could be able to incarnate itself in a tangible body, and acting its own relationship as the scene. Taking place means perform a scene in order to act as bodies. The notion of subjectivity cannot disregard the place, that assume its own capability of "having" presence, since the definition of place could be read as the "presence's intake" of an "Universe of values"<sup>2</sup> that presuppose the put a stake of a time in which the power's relations change their balance, finding a temporary stability. In order to this, is possible think that, as the Invisible Committee wrote, "Space is not neutral. Things and beings don't occupy a geometric position, but affect it and are affected by it. Place are irreducibly loaded – with stories, impressions, emotions. A commune engages the world from its own place. Neither an administrative entity nor a simple geometric unit of space, it expresses rather a certain degree of shared experience inscribed territorially".<sup>3</sup>

As others have specified, the act of perform is thoroughly rooted in the social movements – as also minorities – as strategy of exposure, in which bodies are exhibited as chorality of subjectivity, acting and exacerbating their roles. In those situations, not only the bodies are implied in the intensification of presence, but also the locations sometimes are capable to being co-implicated in a social re-organization of time and space.

In the last years, some remarkable events have demonstrated how the definition of places can be impacted through a collective act that recall and involve the conception of the performance as exhibition and display, concerning a defined "presence" as a "place".

Movement and occupations such as those happened in Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul, 15M in Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Occupy, and also the NoTav fights, can be read as an action that perform cities and spaces through choral acts, making emerge a place in an exhibition of presences.

In this sense Gezi Park was a particular *mis-en-scene*.

For about two weeks during 2013, between May and June, people's occupied Gezi Park, building a sort of sub-city made by tents, organizing services as libraries, lessons, free-kitchen, debates, workshops. The huge participation to the protest bring there peoples with different background, recreating an heterogeneous "net" of knowledges and practices.

A "set" were design by peoples and architects, together with artists and activist, studying a different definition of activities and practices. A set for action that allows and opens a different engagement between citizens and city, in which the architectural models were the starting point of discussion. They wrote: "We need new definitions for architecture in situations when architecture is removed from architects"<sup>4</sup>

The park was taking, workshop groups designed barricades and printed pamphlets for share the building practice.

Starting from the government's statement to remove the historical park and replace it with the umpteenth building addressed to commercial activities – after a long tail of social and political troubles –, the protest start to "perform" a "commune".

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2 I'm referring specifically to the meaning as well as was used by Félix Guattari in *Caosmosi*, conceiving the "Universe of values" as a concretion of the chaotic flood of meanings in which could emerge the possibility of a temporary sense.

3 Invisible Committee, *To our friends*, Semiotext(e), South Pasadena, 2015, p.201.

4 Yelta Köm, #occupygezi architecture, <http://occupygeziarchitecture.tumblr.com/>

The space was taken, and a place was installed. A set in which the meaning of the park and of the daily acts as cooking, building (etc.) exhibit themselves with a different presence. Performing the place, they were performing as well labours, relationships, affections, a different temporary of inhabit.

Often such practices of self-organized spaces are called “placemaking”, that Deborah Mills defines as “turning public spaces into public places; places which engage those who inhabit them, places through which people do not merely pass, but have reason to stop and become involved; places which offer rich experience and a sense of belonging; places in short which have meaning, which evoke pleasure or contemplation, or reflection and, most importantly, an appreciation of cultural and environmental diversity”<sup>5</sup>.

These facts highlight how a practice of performing space as a place is a matter of happenings. When an event becomes “set”, the happened is capable to prolong its time, to move forward its finitude.

As a way to represent in “scene”, places are defined by what could be called “time of appearance”. So that places are not only space, but most of all a concretion of time. In this sense performing space as a place means literally change or suspend the time of the space, curving it in a different place.

Following to Jean-Luc Nancy, a place cannot be distinguish from a presence, since presence is a tangible expression of a subjectivity in a temporal representation – as a body – that exhibit itself in actions. In this way the definition of “place” is a temporary crystallization of meanings and functions that led specifics presences to emerge and act as if it were a “different script for the same set”.

Inevitably these events reminds the “Temporary Autonomous Zone” thought by Hakim Bey, that have a lot in common with the place’s performance practices, used as statement and often “manifesto” for the techno movement around Europe.

But at the end, placemaking is not only about inhabiting and neither we could talk about it only referring to an extended duration of a local event. Is for this reason that maybe is better talk about a “politic of taking place”. Effectively, a place is set also in a single action, as well as in a “molecular” or choral act.

Movement as the one in Usa that is pushing for remove the southerner statues are playing a role in changing the perception of history as a memory rooted in places, revealing a specific time in which the places are inscribed, and from which they depends.

Similar to this, years ago, the South Africa movement against the memory of Jason Rhodes, one of the great English colonialist, whose name was give at the first scholar-fellowship – after the conquest of the modern Zimbabwe, indeed called Rhodesia – and whose statue was in many Universities. The same for Desmonumentar Julio Argentino Roca, in Argentina, where the real story of the “conquest of the desert”, the extension of the boundaries at the end of the XIX century, reveal the colonialist-genocide character of the general.

Peoples were trying to reconstruct and rewrite histories through redefinition of places, occupying them, work on them, collectively or alone, but in every example, in every event of such substance, is possible see the emerge of a presence that turn up a place for a different conception of the city.

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<sup>5</sup> Deborah Mills, The necessity of art: claiming our right to be human, just communities: [http://www.cultural-development.org.au/downloads/DebMills\\_paper2.pdf](http://www.cultural-development.org.au/downloads/DebMills_paper2.pdf)

Such actions, conceived as performances, cannot be other than political actions. The act of exhibit is always political, because it orients a specific direction of views, a way of seen and to be seen, highlighting how cities could be inhabited. In this perspective, is effectively possible think the cities and its spaces as a continuous process of "taking place" of subjectivity and their presences, in order to understand which presences are exhibited and expose, and in which way that representation open or close acts of individuation that reconnect cities to peoples.

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# (Out)Performing Anti-Social(ist) Urban Transition

**Ana Vilenica**

## Introduction

Crucial part of the neoliberal spatial production both in the East and in the West, has been the process of the anti-social(ist) urban transition (Vilenica, 2018a). For many decades, this process has been hidden underneath the euphemisms of post-socialism and naturalising transitional narratives which promised a better future in capitalist democracy. Today it has become clear that what was at stake is society itself. The alternative concept of anti-social(ist) urban transition claims transition to be an unfinished war against the external and internal spectre of social(ism). The main obstacles to be removed in the process of production of the neoliberal city in transition, have been 'state socialism' resources and the resources that emerged from the welfare compromise. In this endeavour, the new neoliberal urban development has been actively negating, distorting, relativizing and de-politicising the shadows of the past. In parallel, new militant narratives and practices have been pushed against the anti-social(ist) urban transition in public protest, in articles, public discussions, in institutions, but also in particular performing art practices.

In this article<sup>1</sup>, I would like to discuss the performances and performative gestures used in the processes of reinventing the city, in State and capital led anti-social(ist) urban transition, as well as in urban activism and arts. By using the examples from Belgrade and from London, I will show how these gestures have been used in struggles for the city as, on the one side, the tool of spatializing historical revisionisms and muzeumization of history, and on the other, a tool in counter hegemonic struggles and collective prefigurative practices of society to come. This article will ask questions such as how the State performs anti-social(ist) urban transition, how mainstream production of urban narratives works, what the role of public institutions is in these processes, what kind of gestures and narratives they perform and who the main actors of their shows are. Furthermore, I will ask how counter narratives are constructed and performed in these urban wars, who the subjects of knowledge in this production are and what their potential in producing new ways of life and sociability are.

## Historical revisionism in the theatre of urban development

Belgrade Waterfront mega project was publicly announced in 2014, as a promise of a new European future for Serbia, as an improvement of economy and the solution for unemploy-

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ment. Situated on the profitable land on the banks of river Sava, this project, worth billions of euros, was plotted in public private partnership by Serbian Government and the investor Eagle Hills from the UAE. On 950 acres of land, the project includes luxury hotels, business spaces, elite housing, and the biggest shopping mall in the Balkans. Together with this optimist vision, Serbia got the deregulation of planning procedures in favour of investors, a huge public cost for preparatory work, violent and illegal state led demolitions, financialization of housing, occupation of public land, displacement of main railroad and bus stations, evictions and compulsory purchase orders.

Soon after the project has been announced, the building of Geozavod (Geological institute) became a main performer in a piece directed by the Serbian government. This performance has been set in place in order to confirm the new capitalist urban future by establishing a lost continuity with the glorious pre-WWII past, and distorting, in parallel, the memory about socialist modernisation. Almost overnight, previous tenant of Geozavod got evicted, as a shadow of the past in which public building had a public use. In this omnipresent game of changing the historical consciousness layers, the period of Yugoslav socialism that brought industrialisation to this neighbourhood has been presented as a dark age that has turned this building into a scene from a 'horror movie' (24Sata, 13.3.2014.). In a few months, the dilapidated building has been restored with the money coming from the investor as an 'act of generosity'. The decrepit 'old lady' got a new face and the new content. It was turned into the promotional gallery of the project, showing the grandiose model of the masterplan, sample apartments and shops. The choice of the main actor for this performance was not accidental. Built in 1907, as a house of Belgrade Cooperative, it functioned as a joint-stock company for banking and insurance business, giving loans mainly to middle-class residents. In the public narratives, it has been constructed as a place where history of capitalist Serbia has been made in the pre-WWII period. The fact that during this 'golden age' large majority of the population lived in extreme poverty always stays miraculously hidden.

On April 27th, Geozavod has shined once again in the performance of signing joint venture agreement for Belgrade Waterfront. While the contract had been signed in the building, two groups of people gathered outside Geozavod. On the one side, right in front of the building there was a smaller group of so called 'Bots', supporters of prime minister Vucic blackmailed into blind obedience, and on the other, pushed by police in the small street opposite the venue, the newly emerged urban movement Don't let Belgrade Drown chanting against mega development and showing the big yellow duck (hoax) towards Geozavod. Few moments before officials and the investor left the building, two trams suddenly stopped in front of Geozavod, obstructing the view to the dissatisfied citizens.

### **Museumization of social(ist) urban past**

Robin Hood Gardens estate in London was built between 1968-72 on the wave of the welfare compromise in the UK. It was designed by the architects Alison and Peter Smithson who were strongly committed to social(ist) ideals in housing. During and after the Thatcher era, anti-social(ist) transition started crawling in, bringing council housing to signify moral, aesthetic and economic failure. Despite years of campaigning and attempts to get this building listed as architectural heritage, in 2017, on the wave of the brutal social cleansing by regeneration and 'social mixing' in central parts of London, the building was assigned for demolition by the developer Swan Housing Association with the backing of Tower Hamlets council. It will be replaced by new development with largely un-affordable housing.

Before the yellow crane broke through its structure, Robin Hood Gardens became a performer in a play directed by Victoria and Albert museum. The museum managed to acquire a large section of this East London estate for their collection in order to preserve this 'Brutalist masterpiece' for future generations. Covering three storeys, the section includes a walkaway, back and front facades and two entire maisonette apartments. In 2018, part of this section was shipped to *La Biennale di Venezia* as a part of V&A's Ruin in Revers exhibition. This performance has to be seen as a part of a broader tendency to museumize traces of social fabric of the city, from material building artefacts to images and stories of the people who are about to disappear from the neighbourhoods undergoing regeneration. In the case of Robin Hood Gardens gesture of museumization, as group of activist stated in their pamphlet, becomes a performative gesture of turning social housing into a monument to the social cleansing of London (Vile&Arogance, 2018). This gesture claims to celebrate Brutalist architecture by offering it for aesthetic contemplation, nevertheless it strips the estate from its primary ethical essence that Smithson's themselves underlined.

On May 24 on the day of the opening of the *La Biennale di Venezia* and

V&A's installation, activists in London and in Venice organized a coordinated action. In London, a group of activists came in front of the V&A determined to take a chunk of the museum and bring it to East London in the same manner as V&A did with a chunk of the Robin Hood Gardens.

*Those practices that manage to overcome the domination of 'monological subject of orthodox critique' have a potential to start practicing negative critique by constructing new affirmative thought.*

### **Brings the history back into (her)story**

Kamendin is a social housing ghetto for so called vulnerable groups that started emerging in 2003 as a part of anti-social(ist) transitional housing solution for those in need. In 2015 with 622 units it made in total 80% of all social housing stock that city of Belgrade constructed in the last 10 years (Damjanovic, 2015). Those lucky ones who were chosen to move in, most of them coming from informal settlements, container housing of collective accommodations, had a high hope for their lives in the brand new flats. But very soon problems started to emerge. It turned out that the State had provided them with flats whose standardized maintenance they couldn't afford. They started to accumulated debt which resulted in the eviction notice. Media narratives indicated the cause of the debt to be the irresponsibility and laziness of tenants. The situation in Kamendin exploded in 2013 with the outburst of racism against Roma tenants. Residents of nearby buildings started demanding the eviction of Roma residents after the rumours spread that an epidemic of mange had appeared among school children in the local primary school. The State had been using this situation to speed up the eviction process.

A year and a half after these events two activist working in KC Rex in Belgrade started the project Kamendynamics in order to understand better the actual social relations behind the spectacularised narratives produced in the media. During their research, as a response to a survey, tenant Zlatija Kostic stated that she wanted to 'sue herself' because she had put herself in this hopeless situation. This statement inspired a theatre play that was written partly by Zlatia Kostic and partly by the activists. The play resembles recording from a court trial in which Zlatija launches against herself, turning the blade of guilt and condemnation for the difficult living conditions (Workshop etc., 2018). Zlatija's perspective is contextualised within the analytical comments delivered by the barrister and expert witness that brought in the

historical materialist perspective on housing in Yugoslavia and in transition. In this way, the individual guilt is shown as a result of systemic problems. The text was publicly presented in KC Rex in September 2016. Following the reading session, the audience got to play jury members, in the Forum theatre like ending of the performance.

The performance *In what way is fascism (dis)continued? I Sued Myself*, brings the history back into (her)story, in order to fight the symbolic violence based on reshaping of the past to make it fit in the new capitalist reality. In this play, the life choices of Zlatija Kostic have been situated in the framework of the contradictions of socialism and brutal individualisation of responsibility for one's own survival in 'transition'. Nevertheless, to the very end of the play it seems that Zlatija Kostic cannot understand even her own accusations, leaving her imprisoned in the general social climate<sup>2</sup>.

### We make our own herstory

On 21 September 2014, a low-rise block on the Carpenters Estate, neighbouring to the sight for the 2012 Olympics, was occupied by the Focus E15 Mothers campaign, making the estate into the symbol of housing crises in London. Mums were evicted from the youth homelessness centre due to austerity measures, while the Carpenters was sitting empty for years in an inconclusive process of regeneration. During the political occupation activist established a cultural centre where they organised public discussions, film screenings and workshops, they cooked together and took care of their children together. The occupation forced Newham's Mayor to publicly apologise and offer better housing solutions to the mothers.

A year after, all women theatre collective 'You Should See the Other Guy' came together in order to work on the verbatim piece and celebrate the struggle of Mums and the Occupation. Most of the group members and the initial cast met during the Occupation. The performance *The Land of Three Towers*, far from the abject figure of working class single mothers constructed in the media, mirrored the image of the mothers as a symbol of resistance. Based on the transcript of the video notes from the occupation, the performance tells of the personal experience of motherhood in austerity Britain, of the degradation of social housing and regeneration of London as a mechanism for social cleansing.

Their theatre became a rehearsal sight for writing the movements own herstory. Unlike history, herstory is based on realities of those who have been denied knowing subjectivity, it works with a storytelling as a method but it doesn't stop at the symbolical level of resignifying and rehistoricising. The theatre practice of 'You Should See the Other Guy' opens up the space for different intergenerational model of leaving together based on mutual care, solidarity and sharing. Children are welcome on the rehearsal and during performance itself, feelings and wellbeing of those around are a priority. The performance is usually followed by tool-sharing workshops, made to connect different campaigns and communities to share their experience and tools.

### Concluding remarks

Oleg Golubchikov, who developed the concept of transitional urbanism, argues the history to be one of the main obstacles to be removed in order to establish the new neoliberal narratives and spatial constellations (Golubchikov, 2016). In this process the history has been twisted and distorted, structures have been emptied out of their political and ethical content

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<sup>2</sup>see: workshop and public reading of the play by Zlatija Kostic: In what way is fascism (dis)continued? I sued myself', in *Art and Housing Struggles: Between Art and Political Organising*, May 31st – Jun 1st 2018, London South Bank University.

in order to leave space; for new pasts of imposed allegedly inevitable future. As I have shown, the State performance in the East has been staged in order to establish continuity with 'the golden age' and perform ritual of exorcism of the mare idea of socialism, including, self-management, socialist modernisation, industrialisation, brotherhood, unity and equality. In the West, social housing still warm from the bodies of those who use to call it home in the performative gesture have been turning into museum artefacts for aesthetic contemplation. Homes are becoming heritage that bring the past into the present with a twist, there is no more people in them. Historical amnesia and historical revisionism, that work in tune, are set in place in order to hide the reality and true effects of the future that has been announced: financialization, evictions, displacement, social cleansing, racism, gender discrimination. Thus, the city ceases to be a place of, even nominal, equality, and becomes a space of new social and economic tension and wars.

Nevertheless, transition is not an irreversible and unchangeable process. Tensions and struggles in the cities are multiplying, spreading and getting stronger. Besides activists performative symbolical gestures in public space, like ones mentioned in this article, that have pointed to the arrogance of social housing museumisation and to the big hoax of our times, there have been several attempts to address these issues by means of theatre performance. I have chosen performances *In what way is fascism (dis)continued? I Sued Myself* and *The Land of Three Towers* in order to point to two major tendencies that I have identified: practicing 'orthodox critique' and practicing new affirmative thought. As I have shown, the best examples of practices based on 'orthodox critique' manage to point to lost class consciousness but nevertheless they stay trapped in the relations that victimise and patronise. As Sara Motta suggested, these practices demand decolonialisation in order to be able to open up for new group imagination of futures. Those practices that manage to overcome the domination of 'monological subject of orthodox critique' (Motta, 2016) have a potential to start practicing negative critique by constructing new affirmative thought. By unlearning of oppressive and exploitative social relations they could lead to production of different embodied knowledge to which sentiment, tenderness and joy are not the opposites.

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