

# Architectural rehearsal: choreopolitical ecologies within a scripted world

Présentée le 22 mai 2024

Faculté de l'environnement naturel, architectural et construit  
Atelier de la conception de l'espace  
Programme doctoral en architecture et sciences de la ville

pour l'obtention du grade de Docteur ès Sciences

par

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# ARCHITECTURAL REHEARSAL

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Fig. 1 • Warner Jepson, A.A. Leath in Anna Halprin's *The Five Legged Stool*, Anna Halprin Digital Archive, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://annahalprindigitalarchive.omeka.net/items/show/315>.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I am grateful for all the encounters that allow me to transform myself, to open up to other movements and possibilities of world— making, for the better.*

To my support team. Lucía, the first reader, thank you for bringing your minor architectures into my journey as a young researcher. Thank you for instilling in me the confidence to contemplate, listen to, and narrate the architectures of rebel bodies. I owe many nuances of my thinking to you. To Dieter, thank you for your unwavering trust and support in my research for almost ten years. Thank you for passing on to me your faith in an architecture that is always, always, collectively imagined. To Yves, thank you for our conversations, the quality of listening you have shown, valuable advice, and the calm I have been able to bring from Paris to Geneva. Thank you for your incredible textual production that makes me laugh, think, and believe in our socialities. It has helped this research unfold throughout these years.

I am deeply grateful to Maria Auxiliadora Galvez Perez, Emma Bigé, Momoyo Kaijima, Yves Citton, Dieter Dietz for being members of my jury, and to Sarah Nichols for presiding over it. Thank you for agreeing to read and discuss this text, and thus interweaving your thoughts into this research.

I wholeheartedly thank my colleagues from the ALICE laboratory with whom I have spent these years of research and life: Dario, Julien, Agathe, Nagy, Estefania, Elena, Eloïse, Tiphaine, and Lucía. Together, we experienced the closure of our office, the challenging forms of intimacy and collaboration during lockdown, but we continued to build our thoughts, teach, draw, listen, and exorcised the pandemic through dance. Conversations with many other people in the laboratory also played a significant role for me, and I especially thank Camille, Aurèle, Lucas, Patricia, and Daniel. Thanks also to Jaime for the support throughout these years.

Thank you to Karen Kurczynski and Beth Weinstein for accepting my invitation to present their research during a seminar and for exploring the concept of choreopolitics with me at the beginning of my exploration of this concept. I was greatly encouraged by this conversation.

This research has also greatly benefited from the opportunity to travel to New York and, despite the pandemic, to travel virtually to Canada, following in the footsteps of dancer-architect-choreographers whose practices have inspired and enriched my re-

search. My thanks to the institutions and individuals who made these journeys possible: the Swiss National Fund through a mobility grant; Yale University and Keller Easterling for their hospitality on the other side of the ocean; the CCA in Montreal for a grant from the Doctoral Research Residency Program and for granting access to the archive of John Hejduk; and finally, the New York Public Library archives and their archivists for granting access to the Grand Union archives. During the residency at the CCA, I benefited from lectures, conversations, and support from a fantastic group of researchers from all over the world, as well as from the dedicated assistance of the CCA archivists. Special thanks to Rafico Ruiz and Shira Atkinson from the CCA for making this remote residency possible and exciting despite the context. In New York, I'd like to extend my warmest thanks to Chi and Natacha for welcoming me into their home, Miranda and Martin for the silent walks along the Gowanus Canal, and Movement Research for the dance, and for opening the doors of the Judson Church to me.

I extend my sincere thanks to the organizers of the diverse seminars, conferences, and other events where I've had the privilege to share specific aspects of this research. From Lausanne to Geneva, Brussels to Paris, and New York to Montreal and Ottawa, these exchanges have consistently contributed to enriching my perspectives.

During this research, I had the opportunity to co-found the *Architecture Land Initiative* cooperative, with which we conducted collective experiments in Geneva, as discussed in this text. Thank you to everyone, especially to Léonore, Dieter, Zoé, Julien, Manon, as well as the many people in Geneva who trusted us and engaged in this process with us.

Merci à mes amies de toujours, Elise, Kayla, Clarisse, Macha, et à tou-te-x-s les autres. À mon filleul Gabriel qui a surgi dans ma vie au cours de cette année. Je dois énormément au soutien de ma famille, Isabelle, Renaud, Romain, Camilla, Sylviane, Didier, qui ont écouté de nombreuses versions du résumé de ma recherche et semblent ne pas s'en lasser. Merci pour les fleurs, les mots, et tout simplement la vie à vos côtés.

Le plus grand des mercis à Zoé, pour avoir magnifiquement mis le rythme de ce texte en pages, et pour avoir été là de vingt-trois mille manières à la fois. — *No end to it.*







# ARCHITECTURAL REHEARSAL.

## Choreopolitical ecologies with— in a scripted world

Aurélie Dupuis, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)  
Under the direction of Prof. Dieter Dietz and Prof. Yves Citton —

For several decades, the fields of dance and performance have been exploring the interplay between movement, control, subjectivity and politics. If “choreopolice” helps describe a conditioning regime that operates through movement, “choreopolitics” describes the ways in which a collective gets mobilized, in which a minor movement circulates and asserts itself. Choreopolitical affirmations unfold through collective experimentation. They are expanded performatively through the capacity of bodies to articulate their imaginative refusals within the assemblages in which they participate. Today, this capacity is at risk. Moving bodies are tracked, mediated, anticipated, and conditioned to move in a certain way as part of a global logistical regime. Yet multiple bodies continue to resist and refuse to be deprived of the possible surrounding their existence. Collectively, they persist in inventing minor modes of being with the world that question neoliberal conditioning and its choreographies of conformity.

These minor practices, although scattered in time and space, are integral to an emerging form of spatial practice, conducted not only by architects, which I conceptualize as “architectural rehearsal”. New modes of threading and caring for shared worlds are being collectively rehearsed—revisited, retrieved, reassembled, reenacted—, transforming the way architecture works with other agents and practices in the transformation of our world.

After tracing the emergence of choreopolitical experimentations and theorization in the field of dance in the second half of the 20th century and up to the present day, as well as discussing questions of mediation and persistence of embodied know-hows and knowledge, I bring these choreopolitical questionings to the field of architecture. What links the politics of bodies, movement and co-presence to the production of spatialities? And how does it spread across the increasingly multiple scales and fields of practice in which shared futures of the living are currently being negotiated?

As a means of choreopolitical exploration, I draw on several minor practices in which architectural and movement techniques are engaged. First, architect John Hejduk’s texts, drawings and related collective experiments. Then, a process of co-designing a vision for the future of the international district in Geneva. Third, a series of performances and workshops by feminist activist artists from Latin America working around

the notion of *cuerpo-territorio-tierra*. And throughout, other performative and artistic practices of resistance and collective imagination. I define these unique, relational, and more-than-human forms of mobilization and choreopolitics as “choreopolitical ecologies,” understood as co-articulations of worldings and habitats away from policed conformity. I examine how these minor ecologies challenge the deeply linear, depoliticized and disembodied understandings of imagination, spatial practice, and climate action that continue to structure western architectural practice and theory until today.

At a time of global injunction to reorient our modes of existence, I flesh out how “architectural rehearsal” as an emerging spatial practice contributes to this endeavor. The choreopolitical ecologies that are engaged in this rehearsal allow for the study of the unequal ways in which capitalism and extractivism affect movements and the possibilities of life. They stand as a terrain for imagining, engendering, and affirming new forms of solidarity everywhere.

#### KEYWORDS

choreopolitics — choreography — minor architecture — collective practice — imagination — performativity — weathering — mobilization — unlearning — rehearsal.

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Depuis plusieurs décennies, les domaines de la danse et de la performance explorent l'interaction entre le mouvement, le contrôle, la subjectivité et la politique. Si la "choréopolice" permet de décrire un régime de conditionnement qui opère par le mouvement, la "choréopolitique" décrit les moyens par lesquels un collectif se mobilise, par lesquels un mouvement mineur circule et s'affirme. Les affirmations choréopolitiques se déploient à travers l'expérimentation collective. Elles se développent de manière performative grâce à la capacité des corps à articuler leurs refus imaginatifs au sein des assemblages auxquels ils participent. Aujourd'hui, cette capacité est menacée. Les corps en mouvement sont trackés, anticipés et conditionnés à se déplacer d'une certaine manière dans le cadre d'un régime logistique global. Pourtant, de multiples corps continuent de résister et refusent d'être privés du possible qui entoure leur existence. Collectivement, ils persistent à inventer des modes mineurs d'être avec le monde qui remettent en question le conditionnement néolibéral et ses chorégraphies de conformité.

Ces pratiques mineures, bien que dispersées dans le temps et l'espace, font partie intégrante d'une forme émergente de pratique spatiale, menée non seulement par les architectes, que je conceptualise comme "répétition architecturale." De nouveaux modes d'organisation et de soin des mondes partagés sont collectivement répétés - revisités, récupérés, réassemblés, rejoués -, transformant la manière dont l'architecture travaille avec d'autres agents et pratiques dans la transformation de notre monde.

Après avoir tracé l'émergence d'expérimentations et de théorisations choréopolitiques dans le domaine de la danse dans la seconde moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, ainsi que discuté des questions de médiation et de persistance des savoirs et des connaissances incarnés, je transpose ces questionnements choréopolitiques au domaine de l'architecture. Quels sont les liens entre la politique des corps, du mouvement et de la coprésence et la production de spatialités ? Et comment cette choréopolitique se propage-t-elle à travers les échelles et les champs de pratique de plus en plus multiples dans lesquels les futurs partagés de la vie sont actuellement négociés ?

Comme moyen d'exploration choréopolitique, je m'appuie sur plusieurs pratiques mineures dans lesquelles les techniques architecturales et du mouvement sont en-

gagées. Tout d'abord, les textes, dessins et expériences collectives de l'architecte John Hejduk. Ensuite, un processus de co-conception d'une vision pour l'avenir du quartier international de Genève. Troisièmement, une série de performances et d'ateliers d'artistes féministes activistes d'Amérique latine travaillant autour de la notion de *cuero-territorio-tierra*. Enfin, d'autres pratiques performatives et artistiques de résistance et d'imagination collective. Je définis ces formes uniques, relationnelles et plus qu'humaines de mobilisation et de chorégraphie comme des "écologies choréopolitiques", entendues comme des co-articulations de mondes et de modes d'habiter loin de la conformité policée. J'examine comment ces écologies mineures remettent en question les conceptions profondément linéaires, dépolitisées et désincarnées de l'imagination, de la pratique spatiale et de l'action climatique qui continuent à structurer la pratique et la théorie architecturales occidentales jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

À l'heure où nous sommes sommés de réorienter nos modes d'existence, je précise comment la «répétition architecturale», en tant que pratique spatiale émergente, contribue à cet effort. Les écologies choréopolitiques qui sont engagées dans cette répétition permettent d'étudier les manières inégales dont le capitalisme et l'extractivisme affectent les mouvements et les possibilités de vie. Elles constituent un terrain pour imaginer, engendrer et affirmer de nouvelles formes de solidarité partout dans le monde.

#### MOTS CLÉS

choreopolitics — choreography — minor architecture — collective practice — imagination — performativity — weathering — mobilization — unlearning — rehearsal.





Fig. 2 • Yvonne Rainer, Hand Movie, 1966. Film. 6 minutes and 7 seconds, seen at [https://ubu-mirror.ch/film/rainer\\_hand-movie.html](https://ubu-mirror.ch/film/rainer_hand-movie.html), accessed January 21, 2024. Part of Five Easy Pieces (1966-1969) Cinematographer: William Davis © 2024 Yvonne Rainer. Courtesy Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute of Chicago.







# SLOWING DOWN FOR A START.

## Exercises in non-destination lingering

### FOREWORD

In December 2022, we found ourselves in Lausanne, Switzerland, after participating in a two-day doctoral seminar. As often happens in such gatherings, these days proved intellectually stimulating yet incredibly busy, leaving us in a somewhat contemplative state. Our attempts to articulate our thoughts had often been cut short in premature efforts to consolidate and synthesize them. Nevertheless, perhaps due to the wintry backdrop, the upcoming holiday season, our shared interest in marginal and exposed territories, the organizer's genuine laughter, or a combination of these factors, we felt a strong inclination to extend our time together.

Leaving a nearly empty university campus on Christmas Eve, we found a roomy table in the heart of Lausanne. There, we came together to not only enjoy a meal but also exchange personal anecdotes, breaking free from the confines of academia. Amid the blend of languages spoken, light-hearted conversations and occasional miscommunications brought a sense of joy. Eventually, those of us living in the nearby city of Geneva, myself included, made the collective decision to embark on a train journey back home.

The details of this day don't matter in themselves, but they do matter in their *rhythmic* or *atmospheric* dimension. Their cumulative effect has brought me to a point where I've been willing to let my guard down, not needing to fully master a subject or a language, and allowing myself to be exposed to the opinions and company of others.

And I've enjoyed it. I'm in a playful mood.

By now, it's probably 9 p.m. or so. The three of us, Johan, Cyrus and I, are tumbling down the steep topography that leads us from the city center to the train station. Even with three of us, the inertia of the group made itself felt when it was time to leave, and we missed several of the trains we were aiming for. Our strategy shifted, and we're now heading to the station with the revised goal of catching "the next train." Once we arrive in the station hall, we check the departure board. The next train to Geneva won't be departing for another 18 minutes. In a joking tone, I slow down my pace dramatically, saying, "We have 18 minutes to get to the platform." At that moment, something starts to happen. Cyrus, who has a background in dance, follows suit with a more convincingly slowed-down gait than mine. I try to mimic him, and Johan joins us. Our little group

tightens slightly, and we continue through the main hall. In the blink of an eye, my weariness towards these minutes of waiting dissipates. The task engages me; I am focused. It now feels highly important to carry this movement through the station. Why, I couldn't exactly say. I feel that I've been granted the opportunity for this movement due to an alignment of micro-events, that this exhausting day allows me this moment, and it matters to me to make it happen.

Having crossed the hall, we enter the ramp leading to the underpass beneath the train tracks. A group of young people, seemingly there more for each other's company than to catch a train, notices us. They burst into laughter. They seem to like us, smiling and filming us for a moment before giving us a brief round of applause and returning to their activities. We're now in the underpass. Our steps are as slow as ever. Strides of barely two centimetres and slightly exaggerated sways. Some passers-by smile at us, others pass us by without even really looking up. A man begging against the wall looks at us, and then takes a few steps with us. He's dancing. We keep moving, and the man soon returns to his belongings, which have been left against the wall. Crawl back up, the train's here. It took us exactly 17 minutes to cover these few meters. We laugh, return to a more standard gait, and board the train.

In this brief moment, the individuals who engaged with us most directly were the most vulnerable ones, those for whom the station's rhythm and imposed directions are not the frame of reference anyway, those who are already and always excluded from it. The others, caught up in their daily choreographies, reacted little. For our part, we took pleasure in the difference. In the slowing down as a way of thickening sensations. In the opportunity to explore how to collectively adopt a rhythm that suited our desires and needs in that moment. I relished feeling the three different slopes of the ground beneath my feet and using them to enhance my swaying. Re-writing in my movement a space that I move through too regularly and without pleasure. Feeling that the fact that it could be otherwise is down to *a single step*. The *density* of that step. The *ecology* of that step. The fact that this step doesn't entirely belong to me. "Moving-moved: This is where dance places us, in movements that we make and that we are made of."<sup>1</sup>

The harmless and light-hearted nature of this moment should not prevent us from putting it into perspective. If the interventions of our three slow-moving bodies were met with a gentle reception, it's primarily due to the context in which the difference in rhythm we introduced was not seen as an obstruction, a significant disruption of the established order, or a threat. For us, adopting a different rhythm was more about desire and play than an obligation to operate at a different pace. The scope of the gesture's ecology allows us to understand that the possibility of this moment was made possible

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1 Romain Bigé, "How Do I Know When I Am Dancing?," in *Perception, Cognition and Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2019), 319–32.

and offered to us as much as we provoked it. The station wasn't crowded, and we didn't disrupt any urgent movements. Our bodies, being able-bodied and young, also played a smoothing role. Moreover, we were in one of the world's most privileged countries, where social tensions are kept to a minimum, social interactions in public spaces are generally distant and peaceful, and there is rarely a sense of threat. Difference and opposite flow are not automatically perceived as problematic or threatening there.

However, these days, on the sidelines of the dominant debates in the country, requests for bids are circulating more or less discreetly. The national railroad company is reportedly looking to acquire and install facial recognition devices in its stations. This news - which would not be made public without the efforts of committed journalists - has so far generated very little public debate.<sup>2</sup> Yet this technology is radically transforming the whole of the rather benevolent ecology just described. In the presence of a camera and its algorithmic intelligence, our bodies would have constituted an anomaly, a pattern which in many other cases of use of such devices is quickly associated with the idea of threat. In Swiss train stations, as elsewhere, movement is increasingly reduced to data meant to ensure *order*. But *what kind of order*, and *for whom*?

By infiltrating the realm of movement, the neoliberal regime has superimposed its own patterns on the movement of living. As we'll come to understand throughout this research, the contemporary technological advancements in modeling and computing movement represent the most recent manifestations of an investment in controlling movement that has deeper roots in Western dominance over the world, its desires, its rhythms, its architectures, and its knowledge. The social order that is maintained is not *order*, but *an order*. An order that protects certain bodies and favors certain rhythms: those of profit at the expense of bodies – rather than those of coexistence among bodies and within their living environments.

These remarks prompt us to immediately refine the initial interpretation that could be drawn from our momentary rambling. By slowing down, we train ourselves to refuse. Playfully, perhaps, without insisting enough that our actions take on an explicitly political dimension, undoubtedly. But this training in refusal nonetheless possesses a quiet, existential, vital dimension. It points to the ways in which bodies are thrown into movements they don't choose, and which exhaust them. It demands the possibility of something *else*. Of another architecture and other spatialities, too. It's not just the walls of the station that compel me to keep moving forward. It's the alliance of these walls with the entirety of the images, norms, choreographies integrated by bodies, and

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2 The railway company in question, SBB, was nevertheless obliged to react to the leaked news. Their website now features reassuring answers to a series of questions on the subject: <https://news.sbb.ch/fr/article/116081/le-point-sur-le-projet-de-nouveau-systeme-de-mesure-de-l-affluence>, accessed September 18, 2023. The associations most familiar with the complex implications of these new technologies, and the abuses already observed time and again following their implementation in other contexts, continue to sound the alarm as loudly as they can.

technological devices that make them accomplices in controlling movement and subjugating bodies. It could be said of the bodies that dance, then, that they are sometimes capable of extracting the walls from the patterns of reproduction of violence to which they contribute. It could also be said of these walls that, in such moments, they become supports for the bodies that invent other rhythms and spatialities with them. We've already arrived at something.

Our aim was to develop a collective practice that could intervene in a place increasingly under control of video surveillance, safety guards, police, etc. This space is also home to architectural means of control: benches turned into seats, so lying down is impossible, rooms kept bright and orderly so that dark spaces no longer exist. This regime of control is responsible for driving more and more people and all kinds of "deviant" behavior out of the place. [...] We wanted to find a way to bring back what the regime of control fears most: the invasion of gestures of deviant behavior - holding up your hand for begging, sitting down where it's not allowed and things like that - in an amount that supercedes control.<sup>3</sup>

Another station, other bodies, same questions. On May 5, 2002, Hamburg's main railway station becomes the site of what one might describe as a *choreographic interruption*. In the afternoon, many people arrive at the station while listening to the radio. Suddenly, these people stop in the middle of the station's daily commuters and, after a brief moment of hesitation, begin to perform certain movements: holding out a palm, raising an arm to the sky, sitting on a plastic bag brought along, listening to the trains on the ground, dancing club-style or waving a red scarf. The instructions are given over the radio by the *Ligna Group* to all those who, having received the information disseminated in the preceding weeks, have connected to the independent radio station FSK to follow the choreographic instructions.<sup>4</sup> The choreographers explain:

We found out that another much simpler aspect of radio was always neglected and even renounced in reflections on free radio: the distribution of a voice to many radio apparatuses; the fact that radio always creates an abstract constellation of listeners. This means that radio reception in any situation where the radio is switched on means an intervention: it brings in the abstract constellation of others. Our regular call-in radio show tries to make this constellation audible. What we were still looking for was a way to turn this constellation into an association of people. That is, a collective that can change a situation. The radioballett was an attempt to do exactly that.<sup>5</sup>

In the station concourse, the performers spread throughout the space oscillate between theatrical and more everyday gestures, exploring the audience's tolerance thresholds for a repertoire of gestures. They adopt gestures belonging to the register of wandering or begging, behaviors forbidden in this space. The collective activity derives its political

3 These statements from the Ligna Group about the idea of the play are taken from an interview available here: <http://arttorrents.blogspot.com/2007/08/ligna-radio-ballet-2003.html>, consulted by the author on September 5, 2023.

4 Information on this piece, called *Radioballett*, can be found on the Ligna company website: <https://www.ligna.org/2003/07/radioballett-uebung-in-nichtbestimmungsgemaessen-verweilen/>, consulted by the author on September 5, 2023.

5 <http://arttorrents.blogspot.com/2007/08/ligna-radio-ballet-2003.html>, consulted by the author on September 5, 2023.

potency from the central motif in theater and performance, the “*as if*.” It does not position itself in direct opposition to the established order, as a political protest might. Instead, the choreography acts *as if* something were genuinely disrupting the established order of the station. At the same time, the slow and self-contained dance aesthetics of the performance immediately contradicts the aspect of disruption, making any strong reaction from an audience “forced” into this role impossible.

While the gestures provoke an embarrassment quite similar to that which they would cause in any other context, the dimension of *performance*, visible and assumed, protects the performers from being directly considered according to the policing regime valid in the station, while at the same time referring to it. Through this setup, the audience cannot help but sense and think about all the almost similar gestures that are monitored, prevented, and punished every day. Without attacking anyone directly, the performance reveals, by introducing a difference into the collective movement, how everyone takes part in it, whether they like it or not. It then raises the question of the reception of gestures: What difference does it make if the gesture has an assumed artistic dimension? At what point is a gesture considered disturbing or threatening? What norms make me say that this gesture disturbs me? Which bodies have the right to perform which gestures? Or even, what should I do with my own responsibility regarding the perceived ability to support or not support the sharing of certain movements?

The ban on assembly, another ban that applies to the whole of the station, is also subverted by this sudden dispersed assembly. Here, the precarious assembly doesn't need to (re)assemble to exist. It is constituted as an assembly by the *shared gesture*. By maintaining a form on the verge of decomposition at all times, it escapes the category of assembly as defined by the regulations while retaining its shared energy and scope.<sup>6</sup> The art form of collective performance thus becomes a means of enabling and protecting the possibility of questioning the established order through the exploration of dissensual gesture. Through its form, performance gives a sense of all that is inconceivable, all the rhythms, gestures and vocabularies that are absent from mental representations and the embodied habits of bodies in the station, or those that are forbidden or repressed. It makes visible the shared responsibilities involved in making certain gestures possible or not. It allows us to think about and feel the possibilities that these other gestures open up. It demands that these possibilities be considered, now. That certain rhythms and bodies get the recognition they don't have.

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6 This performance took place at several stations in Germany. In the case of the performance at Hamburg's main station, the German rail company took the case to court. The organizers of the performance won. The court followed their justification that the ballet was not an assembly but a dispersal of radio listeners, which is not forbidden.

[EXCERPT]

## RADIO INSTRUCTIONS

**GOOD-BYE:** Take the red sheet with your right hand out of your right pocket ... Wave goodbye to the imaginary train of the revolution ...

**LOCOMOTIVE:** Pull an imaginary emergency brake with your right hand...Lower your arm ...

**LISTEN:** Bend your left leg, bend your right leg ... Crouch down: Bend the upper part of your body ... Lower your head and lay your ear on the floor-tile ... Listen to what is underneath ... Do you hear the locomotive of mankind coming? ... The French King Louis Philippe paved the streets of Paris with wood to prevent people from building barricades ... The tightly assembled panels couldn't be torn out of the ground and used for alien purposes ...

**STANDING UP:** Stand up ... **DANCE:** Dance a little unselfconscious dance ...

Fig. 3 • Transcript of the radio inscription for LIGNA, *Radioballet - Zerstreute Öffentlichkeit / Radio Ballet - Dispersed Public Sphere*,» documentary footage, 2003, 14minutes and 51 seconds. Accessed on October 12, 2023, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpT-wb3TPXk>. Video: Zalewski von Wedemeyer, © LIGNA, 2004.



RADIOBALLET  
ZERSTREUTE  
ÖFFENTLICHKEIT  
2002

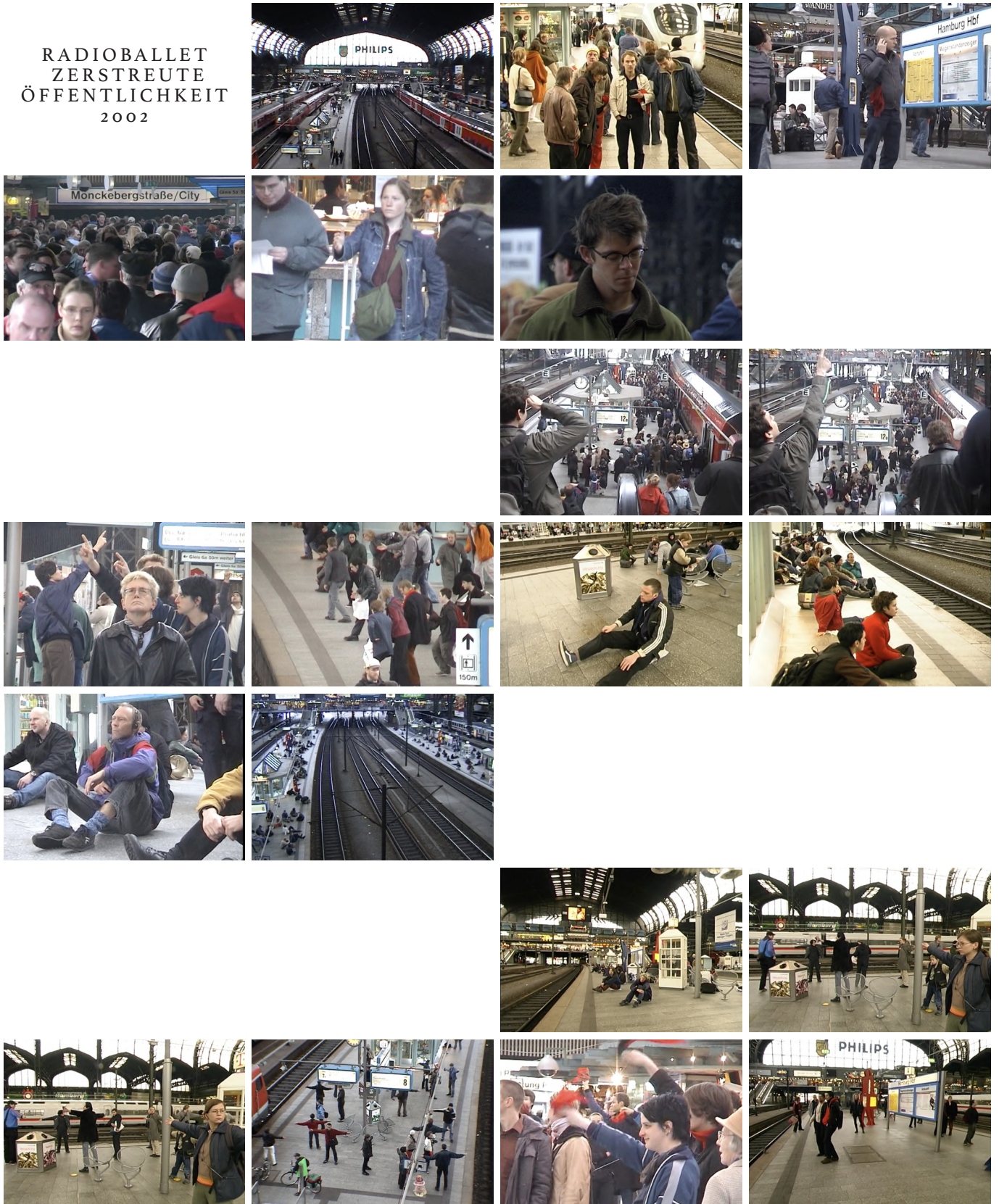


Fig. 4 • Screenshots of LIGNA, *Radioballet - Zerstreute Öffentlichkeit / Radio Ballet - Dispersed Public Sphere*, documentary footage, 2002, 12 minutes and 30 seconds, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://vimeo.com/221993144>. Video: Maren Grimm, Olaf Sobczak, and Christina Witz, © LIGNA, 2003.

In this way, this fleeting assembly reveals the terrain of gestures and rhythms in which bodies interact with each other and with the places hosting their encounters as the terrain of the political: a terrain of control, subversion, imagination, and transformation of a social fabric constantly in the process of re-configuring itself. Dance defines a politics of movement - a *choreopolitics*. This choreopolitics goes something like this: “Today, everything is movement, and these movements often alienate us in our relationships rather than sustain us. What we need are movements that connect us, movements that bring us together and help us make sense of the world collectively. We want to learn to embrace movements *that matter*. And to do that, we start with our own bodies, which are already and always in motion.”

And because bodies are always in motion, they have to *rehearse* other movements, undo those that are imposed and learn to embrace others. Here, performance is seen not just as a political terrain, but as a speculative and projective one. The space-time of performance becomes “*a kind of training ground for collective subjects (or subjectifications) of action.*”<sup>7</sup> It’s not just the performers, but all the actors and forces at play who find themselves involved in this test, this simulation, this *rehearsal*. Performance here activates a different kind of politics from that more traditionally associated with the term: it is not a question of affirming clearly defined collective claims, or replacing one model or framework of values with another. It is about revealing what mobilizes the social, and transforming it by examining this mobilization in movement. Politics is placed in the hands (or bodies) of each individual, but simultaneously, in the hands of all. It is placed in the hands of movement. And its expression is linked to a collective modulation by means of the insistent repetition of gestures that connect bodies together, and a process of differentiation inherent in those bodies.

The “as if” can then be understood as an orientation of differentiation: “Maybe it’s really about getting *better*, technically speaking, at certain performatives, whose enhancement is not arranged for by our society’s improvement routines of life-long learning.”<sup>8</sup> Here, performance allows those taking part to explore a way of being and moving together that is not based on individual performance, but on the pleasure of sharing the rhythms of a dispersed community; the pleasure of individually and collectively drawing lines of differentiation from the dominant modalities of presence in the station, and from social frameworks more broadly.<sup>9</sup> Here, the station is more than just a

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7 Kai Van Eikels, “This Side of the Gathering The Movement of Acting Collectively: Ligna’s *Radioballett*,” *Performance Research* 13, no. 1 (March 2008): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528160802465599>.

8 Van Eikels, 94.

9 On the radio, in addition to the instructions for the movements to be performed, the choreographers share with



building or a volume. It serves as a device for regulating movement, which functions through the accumulation of images of a station in all bodies that know that a station today is above all a node for moving, ever faster and ever further. In this sense, the station is mainly a powerful agent of social order, a speed regulator, a flow organizer. The police, who also watch over the station's flows, are but the emerging part of a station as a *choreographic* architectural device, and as such, performatively political. The station organizes practices, proximities and socialities. It favors some over others. In turn, it is constantly redefined by the ways in which its image and effects are rewritten in the gestures of the bodies that come into contact with it. The permanence of the station is constantly reaffirmed and subverted at the same time, in the image of bodies' capacity for differentiation. In this sense, the station is also always a station-image, a station-horizon. It is the limit of what a station is and what a station does in the world of movement and relationships in which it is embedded. Its architecture is defined at the crossroads of constantly intertwining dynamics of individuation.

I won't linger any longer on these specific train station stories. They are here merely a way of getting on board. To take the leap and invite my readers to join me in my attempt to embrace alternative ways of thinking and speaking about the architectures that are woven into the ways in which bodies share their movements and thereby transform places and possibilities. Important terms have been introduced without much ado. In the remainder of this work, I'll keep coming back to the notions of *choreopolitics* and *rehearsal*, while adding companion terms. These terms have guided and oriented me in a search that has taken me far from the well-trodden paths and knowledge recognized by the discipline in which I have been evolving for several years.

During these years of research, I've lost myself in philosophical and dance lands that have welcomed me into their pages, their arms and their rhythms. The terms I've encountered along the way are trans-disciplinary bridges that enable me to consider what, in the flows of bodies and dance, in their insistence, in their inventions, but also in the materiality of terms and concepts that arise from thinking with bodies and movement, contributes or could contribute to the claiming and writing of more diverse and less violent spatialities. These spatialities are increasingly under attack today, not only

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the participants remarks designed to clarify the politics of the movement being written in the moment. Here's an extract from these remarks, quoted in Van Eikels' article: "The leisure zones monitored by CCTV exclude the unexpected as an unpleasant situation. This control does not only erect boundaries around buildings such as the main station, but also creates boundaries between the gestures of the bodies moving in public space ... Idleness is a forbidden practice in a society that capitalizes all gestures. Control, which is now on the verge of becoming normality, excludes divergent behavior. Boredom is divergent behavior ... The participants of *Radioballett* exercise boredom." Van Eikels, 94.

in their existence but in their possibilities of formulation. While there is an urgent need to support them, they remain profoundly difficult to think in the terms of a choreophobic Western modernity and those of an architectural discipline that has adopted some of its most toxic paradigms. The disciplinary re-orientation implied begins here as my own re-orientation, a vulnerable yet voluntary adoption of other vocabularies, movements and forms of knowledge. *Let's go.*





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Fig. 5 • Regina José Galindo, *Piedra* (2013), performance, Hemisférico, Universidade de São Paulo.









# CHOREOPOLICE, CHOREOPOLITICS, CHOREOPOLITICAL ECOLOGIES. — In the folds of architecture

## INTRODUCTION

An architectural fuzziness to begin with — Architectural rehearsals — Minor architectures — Choreoplice: scripted bodies, scripted architectures — Choreopolitics — Choreopolitical ecologies — Describing the dancing terrains of the minor architect



# CHOREOPOLICE, CHOREOPOLITICS, CHOREOPOLITICAL ECOLOGIES. — In the folds of architecture

## INTRODUCTION

Piles of debris everywhere may be the most visible marks of the triumph of progress, but the destruction of a shared world—what people can and should care for together—is its less visible but no less worrying manifestation.

— Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History*, p. 37

### An architectural fuzziness to begin with

Much like the binary logics that characterize Western thought, the architectural discipline adheres to a categorization where things are either deemed architectural or not, with little room for debate regarding the imagery associated with this distinction. Despite the ongoing transformation of the urban environment, advancing techniques, and the proliferation of relations and data across scales, the fundamental focus of the discipline remains largely unchallenged :

“An orientation towards architecture is usually taken on frontally, with the architectural object in view, looming forward from an indistinct background, claiming its formal autonomy. The celebrated forms of architecture, their iconic status and their contribution to the identity formation of global cities, together with the signature architects who author world-significant projects, are generally what is assumed to properly represent architecture. An orthodox approach to architecture demands that the object that is architecture is kept in focus, and that space, form, program, typology and material distribution are prioritized.”<sup>10</sup>

This focus on the visible, identifiable, and locatable aspects of a situation is not neutral. Instead, it directly aligns with Western concepts of space and the urban. American architect, urban planner and cultural activist V. Mitch McEwen describes it as “architecture’s overwhelming dedication to a euro-centred mapping of knowledge and technical notions of the planetary”, and notes how it forms “a protective buffer against scholarship or activism informed by Black feminism.”<sup>11</sup> This oriented focus defines many relational aspects as non-architectural, along with the actors whose actions and knowledge production occur within registers that are often little or not visible.<sup>12</sup> Today, this focus is

10 H el ene Frichot, *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architecture* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 7.

11 Mitch McEwen, “A Brief Architectural History of Intersectionality,” in *Working at the Intersection: Architecture After the Anthropocene*, 1st Edition (London: RIBA Publishing, 2022), 1.

12 ‘Epistemic violence’ describes one of the central mechanisms by which the invisibilization of certain ways of making, living and inhabiting is reproduced. This notion, which describes the dynamics of imposing a single type of knowledge and discrediting others, while excluding these same voices from the dominant processes of knowledge production, was popularized in particular by literary theorist and author Gayatri Spivak and subaltern studies. In line with this approach, various researches on the consideration of decolonial and anti-racist issues and struggles in the field of architecture today point to the need to rethink not only the content and focus of architectural theory and history, but also the type of practices and knowledge considered architectural. On the forms of epistemic violence and resistance to this violence in the American context seen through the prism

proving to be profoundly inhibiting when it comes to engaging in a dialogue with spatialities produced according to other categories. It is increasingly evident that Western architectural paradigms and expertise are facing challenges in directing architectural efforts toward addressing the advanced destruction of living environments in response to global challenges.

“[Western] culture is good at pointing to things and calling their names but not so good at describing the relationships between things or the repertoires they enact,” notes American architect and researcher Keller Easterling.<sup>13</sup> The disciplinary language and its universalized Western paradigms face profound challenges when it comes to describing and understanding how, through spatial practices, identities, modes of interaction, and priorities are renegotiated within communities confronted by challenges that are both global and hyper-situated. In the context of the social, ecological, and climatic crises, the disciplinary focus on the built environment as something quantifiable, isolable and controllable is reproduced through the dominant response strategies it generates, whether it pertains to issues of carbon or the preservation of nature and ecosystems. Nevertheless, many voices are currently engaged in a more structural questioning of the limits of Western disciplinary expertise when confronted with the depleted worlds that are our own. These efforts aim to chart alternative pathways, each in its own way, to blur overly distinct boundaries, challenge certainties, reflexes, and norms, promote alternative forms of practice, and redefine what matters within the discipline.

Architectural philosopher and theorist H el ene Frichot writes that for a whole emerging generation, “there is no ‘core of architecture’, there is rather architecture conceived as a multiplicity of diverse concerns in engagement with local environment-worlds at the threshold of exhaustion.” She continues:

“This is architecture in the midst of things, undergoing continuous variation, emerging from the contingency of events across complex social, political, economic, ecological, technological, material and conceptual fields. I approach architecture from the seething milieu that is the environment to better get at its ecologies of creative practice and its furious activity of making-worlds.”<sup>14</sup>

Sharing Frichot’s view that it’s essential to consider architecture within its relational dynamics, Keller Easterling has long been working on writing, conceptualizing, and engaging in the practice of architecture – a term she herself almost no longer uses – as

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of architecture, see in particular Gooden, Mario. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity*. New York, New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2016, Cheng, Irene, Charles L. Davis, Mabel Wilson, Jiat-Hwee Chang, Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, Adedoyin Teriba, and Lisa Uddin, eds. *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present. Culture, Politics, and the Built Environment*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020, or Anderson, Sean, Mabel Wilson, and Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), eds. *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*. New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 2021.

13 Keller Easterling, *Medium Design: Knowing How to Work on the World* (London: Verso, 2021), 3.

14 Frichot, *Creative Ecologies*, 8.

“medium design.” She writes:

“Rather than only declarations, right answers, objects and determinations, you can detect and manipulate the medium or the matrix in which they are suspended and in which they change over time.”<sup>15</sup>

For Easterling, architecture becomes the art of comprehending and manipulating *codes*, *nodes*, and *switches*, as well as managing potentials and relationships among objects. In conjunction with the notion of “medium design,” she formulates a vocabulary that can effectively support this idea. Terms like “indeterminacy,” “discrepancy,” “temperament,” and “latency,” typically associated with living beings, there serve to characterize the dynamic potentialities, tendencies, and qualities of a built situation. Easterling describes situations as having what she terms a “disposition.” This disposition is defined as “the potentials of a situation as they are associated with factors including geometry and position among many other things.”<sup>16</sup> For her, design becomes a means of engaging with these latent potentialities, which are only revealed through the unfolding of relationships. Consequently, design, as an endeavor, involves thinking the means that alter the organization and reveal new possible inflections and tendencies.

Yet these two seminal authors are not alone in emphasizing the dynamic and environmental aspects of architecture in their architectural thinking. Within a long-standing, multiple, and persistent feminist and intersectional tradition, architecture as an object has always been just one facet among many within this expansive discipline. Together, researchers, activists, historians, designers, and theorists continuously advocate for a shift in focus, directing attention towards a flourishing architectural activity that has been overlooked in dominant architectural discourses for too long:

“What if that mess was the starting point? What if ideas, drawings, and buildings emerged through a feedback loop that involves social engagement, historical research, projective drawing, and material experimentation? What if authorship were relational, collaborative, and expansive?”<sup>17</sup>

For these feminist thinkers, it is now clear that feminist history has a dual mission: the reconstruction of the evidence demonstrating women’s contributions throughout history, concurrently with the simultaneous destruction of the dominant discourses and practices of history.<sup>18</sup> This second aspect is fundamental and raises a whole series of questions: How can we avoid reproducing dominant paradigms? How can we transform the very principles of enunciation? What other frameworks and practices already exist, and what radical transformations of dominant paradigms are provoked by taking

15 Easterling, *Medium Design*, 6.

16 Keller Easterling, “Disposition,” in *Cognitive Architecture: From Biopolitics to Noopolitics; Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication and Information*, Warren Neidich (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010), 251.

17 Bryony Roberts, “Expanding Modes of Practice,” *Log* 48 (2020): 9–14.

18 Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art*, 1st publ. in Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2006).



them seriously?

Today, feminists of the “fourth wave,” characterized notably by their consideration of intersectional demands and methodologies, are working precisely to determine *alternative values* rather than deviations from the norms and expectations attached with masculinity. At the same time, they continue the work of dialogue and expanding history by insistently raising the question of who, and what, is left behind.<sup>19</sup> In the field of architecture, the demand for alternative focuses, techniques, histories, and relational approaches that is emerging today in many ways across the globe is part of this epistemological de-positioning and repositioning:

“For decades, architecture has refused to acknowledge its contributions to social and environmental injustices, instead blithely perpetuating exploitative practices in the name of high art. But now, alternative practices and theorists across the world are refusing to comply, [...] critiquing a wide range of past canons and patterns that include privileging colonial ruling classes, exploiting labour, privatising public space and excluding other species.”<sup>20</sup>

Researchers Andrew Herscher and Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, who focus particularly on the relationship between architecture and migration, emphasize the highly specific architectural forms that this process should assume. They write:

“‘Spatial violence’ would offer itself as another name for ‘architecture’, a name that would open onto the manifold forms of harm mediated through built environments. ‘Spatial violence’, in this reading, may be understood not as something inflicted on architecture from the outside, but something that architecture inflicts even as it follows its own practices and protocols.”<sup>21</sup>

The two authors encourage us to explore the spatial dimensions of violence, as one of the distinctive ways through which it structures relationships at a global scale. Their argument should be understood as a response to the fact that, even though architecture’s complicity with control and oppression dynamics has been recognized for a long time, this recognition alone is largely insufficient to effectively combat the multiple forms this complicity has assumed and continues to take over time. Their approach is aligned with many contemporary attempts aimed at initiating a substantial transformation, not only in discourse but also in practices and frameworks across all levels, encompassing both their explicit and more implicit aspects.

Other architects and authors echo this urgent need for precision in reassessing the discipline’s frameworks and orientations:

“The symptoms persist generation to generation because the field is not addressing root

19 Hilde Heynen and Lucía Pérez-Moreno, “Narrating Women Architects’ Histories. Paradigms, Dilemmas, and Challenges,” *Arq.Urb*, no. 35 (December 14, 2022): 110–22, <https://doi.org/10.37916/arq.urb.vi35.635>.

20 Jill Stoner and Ozayr Saloojee, eds., *Architectures of Refusal*, vol. 92, Architectural Design 6 (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 8.

21 Andrew Herscher and Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, “Spatial Violence,” *Architectural Theory Review* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2014.1037538>.

causes. Large-scale systemic conditions that historically produced inequities throughout society also guide the practice of architecture. Global systems of colonial, patriarchal capitalism have shaped architectural institutions and canons, but there are also subtle, indirect ways that architecture forms its own hierarchies.”<sup>22</sup>

While the biases are relatively easy to recognize, dismantling them represents a far more complex challenge. The discipline is permeable to numerous global dynamics that, in the operational modalities of the discipline, assume forms that appear to be intrinsically associated with it: “Inherited cultural histories can’t be shed like clothing, they are intertwined with the ways of thinking about the self, about knowledge, about collectivity,” writes architect Bryony Roberts.<sup>23</sup>

What types of research and practice should be pursued to “undress” architecture without losing touch with the full potential of architectural knowledge? How can one avoid simply “moving on,” resisting the allure of “new practices,” “new goals,” or “new fields”? How can we combat the fervent tendency of the new to swiftly erase the stories and subjects that are more fragile, more vulnerable, and more invisible? Where would “new beginnings” take us? How can action continue without the feeling that the responses provided in urgency likely reproduce violence that, always, demands time to be addressed?

### Architectural rehearsals

When the history of a discipline is so deeply intertwined with the histories of the vast and discontinuous geographies where modernity assembled itself, these questions matter. They demand a thick threshold where the present, past, and future maintain non-linear relations as a space-time for the emergence of elements of response. This threshold is produced by the sustained efforts of those who commit themselves to unlearning linearity and the violence it generates in their bodies, actions, practices and relational modalities. The most explicit conceptualization of this thick threshold-space-time that I have encountered is the one developed by the author, artist, and visual culture theorist Ariella Azoulay. She has written extensively about the pivotal moment that our present represents for Western disciplines, approaching it from her own field of practice, photography. In her book titled *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, she returns at length to the relationship between photography and imperialism. Just as imperialist logics have permeated the operational methods of architecture and shaped them, they have done the same for photography. Azoulay writes:

“Imagine that the origins of photography are not to be found somewhere around the beginning of the nineteenth century - when European white males enjoyed a certain cultural, political, and technological wealth and could dream of recognition as glamorous inventors if and when they succeeded in developing further ways to fragment, dissect,

22 Roberts, “Expanding Modes of Practice,” 9.

23 Roberts, 9.

and exploit others' worlds to enrich their own culture. Imagine instead that those origins go back to 1492. What could this mean? To answer this question we have to unlearn the expert knowledge that calls upon us to account for photography as having its own origins, histories, practices, or futures and to explore it as part of the imperial world in which it emerged."<sup>24</sup>

In the following pages, Azoulay defines the moment when the camera's shutter closes as the operation that, in each of its occurrences, consecrates this relationship between photography and imperialism, while also naturalizing it as a purely photographic operation. She emphasizes how, from the early uses of photography and in the discourses surrounding the birth of this technology, the right to dissect and study people's worlds is taken for granted. The right to photograph is then directly and indirectly granted to a certain class, at the expense of others. Instead of making the world more visible to all, photography accelerates the process of making others and their worlds available to a minority. It thus develops as an imperial technology, legitimizing the deconstruction and reconstruction of the world according to certain terms.

As a theorist of photography, Azoulay is interested in unraveling this assemblage and unlearning it, with those two movements going hand in hand. She asserts that every time the shutter closes and opens, proclaiming a new state of affairs, a new institution, or a new border, some people refuse to see this new state of affairs as truly instituted. Or that some individuals manage to sometimes reclaim the objects that photography has stolen from them. She insists that, despite the power of the shutter, withdrawal or refusal always remain integral to the operation of the shutter as a whole. They are also constitutive of it. The unlearning she outlines is as follows:

"Imagine now that you are able to consider all of these occurrences as constitutive of the operation of the shutter; imagine, then, that when you recognize the operation the operation of the shutter independently of such occurrences, you risk effecting their disappearance. Imagine you can grasp and describe this shutter's operation, follow the events that it violently generates, and do so without using the shutter's dividing lines to describe them. Imagine that you refuse to naturalize the dividing lines and do not accept them as having always already been there. [...] This is what unlearning imperialism looks like."<sup>25</sup>

Azoulay acknowledges that this unlearning is a collective and ongoing process with no real end. However, it is not impossible to imagine or concretely engage with it at all levels where imperial violence recurrently surfaces. She refers to this engagement as "rehearsal." The term should be considered in the plural, encompassing all the efforts of avoidance, abstention, non-action, stepping back, and losing ground necessary to reject the rhythms, separations, chronologies, and authority imposed by the shutter:

"One should engage with others, with people and objects across the shutter's divides, as part of an encounter to be simultaneously resumed, regenerated, retrieved, and re-

24 Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019), 21–22.

25 Azoulay, 26.

invented.”<sup>26</sup>

While Azoulay’s focus lies in photography as her own field of action and thought, her conceptualization of “rehearsal” directly resonates with the efforts of the feminist architects and theorists mentioned earlier. The multiple ways in which different researchers, practitioners, theorists, and activists seek to address the violence related to the recurrent reaffirmation of normalized configurations in architecture can be seen as a set of architectural rehearsals. By revisiting practices, archives, and histories with a focus on the legitimization operations they still participate in, these actors gradually make normalized configurations perceptible and legible:

“This can hardly be imagined without rehearsals, since our daily habits are so entangled in the operation of imperial technologies. Such rehearsals in nonimperial political thinking and archival practice are not undertaken in preparation for an imminent day of reckoning, but rather as a mode of being with others differently.”<sup>27</sup>

These rehearsals are a way to address the reality of the involvement of architectural activities and their actors in institutionalized violence, but also to invent and rediscover other modes of operation and other ways of making and thinking about architecture, which have not ceased to exist when they were made invisible. The rehearsals collectively enable us to assess the profound changes that are required. While they do indeed pose radical questions and reactivate certain processes, they also serve as relatively clear and productive guides for immediate action, and can even be directly transformative. When the operational methods of violence are exposed, entire worlds re-emerge, along with ways of being with one another, acting reciprocally, and not merely conforming to assigned roles meant to keep things and beings in place.

These rehearsals can draw upon the multiple forms of refusal that have taken shape, as well as the ways of doing and being differently that have survived, even if sometimes only in the form of repressed desires or whispers. To reiterate, it is about finding companions, those who, for much longer, have experienced the difficulties and violence that are becoming increasingly widespread in the era of globalized neoliberalism. It is about forging partnerships with all those who, in their lives or writings, have embraced non-imperial modes of existence. Rehearsing is a direct challenge to the race for novelty and progress. It is an invitation to collectively delineate instead these non-linear temporalities that have never ceased to exist and that are the terrain for the unfolding of the rehearsal.

Architecture is a field in which the authority gained over the centuries through the notions of “progress” and “newness” is evident. In the name of the new, worlds, their ways of caring and sharing, are quite literally destroyed every day. The “destruction to build,” visible everywhere at all times, becomes the most explicit materialization of this

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26 Azoulay, 27.

27 Azoulay, 29.

linear logic and is prompting the discipline to question its relationship with this dynamic. Today, some architects are even going so far as to propose a moratorium on construction to give this debate and change in perspective the necessary scope.<sup>28</sup> However, the moment of construction can also be seen as the manifestation of a violence that is written well in advance, through a series of “cuts” in which the dominant ways of doing and thinking in architecture organize linear time, separate, declare, legitimize, and orient, establishing certain worlds as the world and certain architectures as architecture.

What are the “shutters” of architecture? What are the precise micro-seconds in which dominant modes of operation contribute to the destruction of certain worlds? What rehearsals can be initiated to identify and deactivate them? And what “architectures of refusal”<sup>29</sup> asserting alternative worlds, do these rehearsals make visible? These are the questions that the concept of *architectural rehearsal* helps to raise.

### Minor architectures

In the laboratory where I conducted this research, several researchers, including myself, share the desire to help articulate some answers to these questions. As a research team, we develop a shared approach that translates into a focus on how the role of the body, embodiment, and tacit knowledge are envisioned within the discipline. Numerous research, particularly phenomenological approaches, concentrate on how a focus on embodied knowledge can enrich existing architectural vocabularies and practices by re-emphasizing the experiential dimension. But, as pointed out by Julien Lafontaine Carboni, a member of our research team, “such interests in the embodied experience and imaginaries of space only marginally help one to reconsider architectural historiography and the production of architectures through embodied means.”<sup>30</sup>

When the discipline of architecture works with these concepts, it still argely continues to consider an undifferentiated, archetypal body, one that is “able to sense the opening up of an experience.”<sup>31</sup> Through our respective researches, we predominantly share the endeavor of exploring how specific embodied knowledge is repeatedly marginalized by the discipline’s practices while still existing, evolving, and inventing itself in modalities *not recognized as architectural*.

In this vein, our shared research effort is dedicated to a specific *rehearsal*, which aims

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28 Architect Charlotte Maltherres-Barthes leads the project “A Global Moratorium on New Construction”, which envisages enforcing the suspension of new building activity <https://www.charlottemalterrebarthes.com/practice/research-practice/a-global-moratorium-on-new-construction/>, accessed April 27, 2023.

29 “Architecture of Refusal” is the title of a book edited by Jill Stoner and Ozayr Saloojee that reveals “how designers, practitioners, scholars and architects are participating in dismantling the major canons of Western architecture.

30 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.,” 25.

31 Lafontaine Carboni, 25.

to identify the moments, mechanisms, and dynamics of subjectification that lead to the dismissal of embodied knowledge and practices from architecture. It also strives to rediscover and rehabilitate architectures that have been rendered invisible, along with the worlds they produce. The architectures that intrigue us are what we might call *minor architectures*. These architectures are piercing established definitions and norms with their diagonal force.<sup>32</sup> The *minor* mode always operates in relation to a *major* one.<sup>33</sup> The major is a homogenous and constant system that the minor pierces through. The minor doesn't focus on actuality but on the *puissance* of things. It is thus attentive to dynamics, dispositions, agencies. Media archaeologist Yves Citton succinctly captures its power, when he states:

“If the grand gestures of a macropolitics more easily summarize the changes produced to alter the field, it is the minority trends that initiate the subtle shifts that have created the conditions for these changes, and for all change.”<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, Citton speaks of a “fidelity to the minor”<sup>35</sup>, that aims to always preserve the possibility for this surplus to unfold within major mechanisms, which are essential for any organizational functioning.

Puissance and movement are connected through the idea of *differential movement*, that is, the movement of immanence, productive, creative. It is precisely this capacity of alteration that is key to the movement we consider. Our common research on embodied minor architectures precisely seeks to support their altering force, beginning with an understanding of their forms, operational modalities, and how they question the dominant organization within the discipline. This research places us in a different position from that which aims is only to invent new tools or develop technologies to renew experimentation with bodily engagement in space, even though there may be some overlap. Instead, we believe that embodied architectural knowledge has been and continues to be continually developed, enacted, and invented.

However, this type of knowledge is consistently set aside, denied, and delegitimized, driven by both global and internal logics and dynamics. Our common effort involves tracing the motif of embodied knowledge in architecture and its tumultuous relations with the established order and disciplinary discourses.<sup>36</sup> The reason these forms of

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32 The expression “minor architecture” was formulated on the basis of the work of Deleuze and Guattari by architect and teacher Jill Stoner. For her, dismantling the discipline’s focus on the activity of building requires dissecting and revisiting the disciplinary obsessions and paradigms that have led to this focus, notably the Western obsession with interiority, the autonomy of the building-object, the figure of the architect and the idea of nature as opposed to the built environment.

33 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

34 Yves Citton, *Faire avec: conflits, coalitions, contagions*, Collection Trans (Paris: Éditions les Liens qui libèrent, 2021), 80.

35 Citton, 82.

36 This focus led my colleague Julien Lafontaine Carboni to work for his thesis on oral and embodied modes of architectural production, particularly in the context of Sahrawi culture, in which architectural histories, knowl-



knowledge are silenced and pushed aside is because they tirelessly challenge the established order and bring to life possibilities for alternative ways of living and dwelling. Bodies bifurcate, record, react, remember, affect, and desire. What we've come to think of as embodied minor architectures is directly linked to the power of bodies that are becoming, and it is constructed and expressed in an ever-situated way. Minor architectures can be defined as "an open set of spatial practices and know-hows based on the immanent differentiating agency of bodies (or their inexhaustible power of variation)."<sup>37</sup> These minor architectures "manage to bring forth *affective amplitude*: they enlarge the world through forms of plural material entanglement, contemplating how every actual is always surrounded by a fog of virtual images, interfering, changing and reacting on the former."<sup>38</sup>

In contexts where one or more forms of control continue to organize relations between beings and their environment, bodies expand the repertoire of spatial practices and, through them, weave new possibilities. As my colleague Lucía Jálón Oyarzún points out, these can be minor architectures designed by women who use the inscription of their bodies and gestures in space to claim and enact possibilities denied to them. She writes:

"To survive, women needed to see otherwise, to acknowledge and work through the entanglement of self and world by other means. The window operated as both gravitating point within the ecology of the house, and as the optimal place to be part of an outside that was unreachable otherwise."<sup>39</sup>

At the window, the woman operates in the minor register, ensuring the possibility of acting and weaving her own existence both inside and outside despite the limitations in place. By positioning herself directly on the boundary, she actively redefines that boundary through her minor architectural practice. The boundary becomes blurred, the possibility of "disobedience" more tangible, and the space for other modes of existence gradually unfolds with each occurrence.

This minor architecture needs a certain kind of attention to be unfolded, to be told and to be transmitted. In the cases discussed by Jálón Oyarzún, it transcends time through texts written by female authors who are particularly attentive to bearing witness to these entanglements that escape entirely from the dominant vocabulary of the discipline, making literature the accomplice of these minor architectures that the discipline

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edge and theories are created, preserved and transmitted solely through orality. A second colleague, Lucía Jálón Oyarzún, completed her thesis on the minor spatialities invented by rebel bodies deploying a spectrum of practices and knowledge attached to their own corporealities in a series of historical situations between the 17e and 21e centuries.

37 Lucía Jálón Oyarzún, "Windowish Practices, Unreadable Backgrounds and Raw Semiotics. Tracing Minor Architectures and Ecologies of Signs in Women's Writing," *ZARCH*, no. 18 (September 2, 2022): 211, [https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs\\_zarch/zarch.2022186216](https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2022186216).

38 Jálón Oyarzún, 211.

39 Jálón Oyarzún, 213.



of architecture renders invisible.

Another reading of the presence of these minor architectures is offered by Lafontaine Carboni in the context of his research on Sahrawi spatialities.<sup>40</sup> He describes how, when the entirety of spatial practices of this nomadic people is undermined due to forced sedentarization, the circulation of nomadic knowledge - of minor architectural knowledge - continues through oral and embodied practices of transmission. Recognizing and naming these “undrawn architectures” allows him to envision other types of architectural practices and histories in a context where a focus on written traces silences many forms of resistance, creativity, and Sahrawi nomadic culture. In these different situations, specific spatial practices correspond to the materialization of modes of being in the world and the production of a minor type of architectural knowledge.

The minor architectures of women at the window or forcibly sedentarized Sahrawi populations directly correspond to ways of maintaining worlds, structures of meaning, and the inscription of bodies in an environment when the expression of this inscription through movement is greatly directed. In this sense, the embodied minor architectures described so far are always linked to what can be described as the exercise of *free movement*, where movement is understood in its power to bring forth difference: “Architecture here is understood as the expression of an embodied agency to produce worlds, establish relations and thread the commons grounding a habitat.”<sup>41</sup> These minor architectures make clear that this movement is never a given but that it is *rehearsed*, affirmed, and worked according to what, always, predetermines it to a large extent. They correspond to the expansion of a repertoire of free movement as a capacity for relationship, as a capacity for being-becoming in its articulation with a capacity to make a world with others and with an environment:

“The concept of ‘minor architecture’ articulates that architecture and architectural technicity exist before the so-called ‘architectural. Organizing spaces and times is a potentiality of the body negotiating and inventing its environment, individuating its milieu.”<sup>42</sup>

### Choreopolice: scripted bodies, scripted architectures

A focus on minor embodied architectures reveals how closely architecture relates to the moving body in its potential to affirm modes of existence and of world-making. When movement is scripted, it restricts not only the present conditions of movement but also the possibilities for bodies to inscribe themselves in environments and make

40 Julien Lafontaine Carboni, “Undrawn Spatialities. The Architectural Archives in the Light of the History of the Sahrawi Refugee Camps,” *Architecture and Culture* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 505–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2021.1894063>.

41 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Digital Doubles: The Major Agency of Minor Bits,” *Architectural Design* 92, no. 6 (November 2022): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2871>.

42 Lafontaine Carboni, “Undrawn Spatialities. The Architectural Archives in the Light of the History of the Sahrawi Refugee Camps,” 508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2021.1894063>.

sense of their existences in relation to other beings and entities:

“The body revolts because it refuses the excision of the possible from its existence; the possible being an expression of the minor existences surrounding us, a fog of images, beginnings, potentialities, emergent qualities awaiting to be intensified, realized by an embodied and undisciplined architectural or world-making impulse.”<sup>43</sup>

The conditioning of movement thus becomes an *architectural* affair. Today, this conditioning of movement constitutes a global reality that more or less affects each moving entity on the planet. While movement has always been partially conditioned, technological advancements now allow for tracking, analyzing, predicting, and directing an ever-increasing quantity and variety of movements, simultaneously increasing the capacity of regimes of control to operate through the conditioning of movement. This condition in which the entirety of movement is conditioned and organized through new technologies has been termed “logisticality” by researchers and activists Fred Moten and Stefano Harney.<sup>44</sup> This term allows them to describe how subjects and objects are now compelled to move within the channels of capitalism. The conditioning of movement has become the primary aspect of this regime of power that has massively expanded globally:

“In the 1960s, the logistical regime began establishing a new regime of choreographic power based on the continuously adaptive rhythms of production and delivery. Changes in supply and demand as well as the costs of production were permanently evaluated and created a constant re-adaptation of the circulation of movement. Shipping routes were changed in real-time alongside shifts in the location of production in order to create a perfect (seamless) circulation of flow. Movement was constantly in the process of auto-correcting itself, creating and at the same time being created by an ever-changing factor of process-oriented optimization.”<sup>45</sup>

Bodies, like goods, undergo this injunction to movement, this “agitation imposed by the ideal of consumption and extraction.”<sup>46</sup> There, bodies are addressed in both their infra- and actual condition. Their puissance and affects are as much part of the scripting process as their flesh. Through new technologies, the logistical regime is capable of maintaining the illusion of the possibility of free movement by dynamically controlling the entire flow and modulating it. This form control of movement through introjection, performance theorist André Lepecki calls it “choreopolice.”<sup>47</sup> Choreopolice does not prevent but produces conformity and normality. It aligns with movements as perfectly as possible, reacting to every micro-emergence that risks challenging the invisibiliza-

43 Jalón Oyarzun, “Digital Doubles,” 33.

44 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe New York Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013).

45 Gerko Egert, “Operational Choreography: Dance and Logistical Capitalism,” *Performance Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (April 22, 2022): 99, <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2022.71305>.

46 Emma Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, SH/Terrains philosophiques (Paris: La Découverte, 2023), 138.

47 André Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 13–27.

tions produced by the collective movements of beings and goods.

Choreopolice is “whatever system that enforces the fiction forming the path that precedes the subject. Such precedence helps shape subjectivity thanks to a confined or impoverished experiencing of mobility within the social space.”<sup>48</sup> The concept of choreopolice describes how minor architectures, such as practices of free movement, are now controlled by technological devices capable of predicting and absorbing the effects of their real-time deployment, all while maintaining the illusion of free movement: “A minor discourse has always existed, what has changed is the extent of the noise and concealment performed by the dominant one, and as such, the tools, instruments and scales on which it relies.”<sup>49</sup>

This choreopolice, as real-time movement management, represents a new condition for minor architectures struggling to resist globalization and the branching out of control devices. Lucía Jalón Oyarzún writes about this:

“If major architecture has been traditionally defined by the old disciplinary posts of academia, journals and other authorial figures of architectural myth and stardom today it has computation and its gendered, racist and capitalist roots at its core.”<sup>50</sup>

Today, global movement regulation devices are part of the vocabulary of major architecture. They have a significant impact on the ways in which worlds are woven or impeded. By scripting the movements of bodies, the logistical regime also scripts the potential architectures associated with the ways these bodies move, engage in networks of relationships, and produce worlds. Faced with these developments, minor architectures must continue to evolve as well. Bodies must explore, discover, and invent new ways of moving and world-making. Minor architecture becomes a practice of dissenting movements across scales and dynamics of control.

### Choreopolitics

The practice of dissent through movement is precisely what Lepecki, mirroring the concept of choreopolice, names “choreopolitics”:

“Choreopolitics would be the planning of such activation of movement away from pre-established paths. Choreopolitics is predicated on a gathering and activation of that urgently necessary (but so often curtailed, censored, or controlled) capacity to make plans for alternative collective modes of existence, away from conformity, sad affects, tamed bodies, prescribed routes, which define choreopolicing. [...] In this mutual rearticulated reconfiguration, the main energy, impetus, and motions are whatever is needed to break free from the neoliberal agitation of permanently controlled circulation and from the contemporary microfascist formations of individualistic, intra- and interpoliced collec-

48 André Lepecki, “The Choreopolitical,” in *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2015), 47.

49 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.,” 76.

50 Jalón Oyarzun, “Digital Doubles,” 36.

tives.”<sup>51</sup>

In contemporary societies of control, politics operates and unfolds as choreopolitics, as dissident movement. Lepecki writes that politics becomes the

“micropolitical daily labor of carefully re-orienting life, art, affect, desire, the corporeal, the incorporeal, the gestural, the linguistic, movements, actions and voice towards ever more emancipatory, joyful, ethical, and co-responsive modes of living-individually and collectively.”<sup>52</sup>

This definition, which could just as well apply to minor architectures, Lepecki articulates from his field of research—performance—with images of dancers and performers in mind, collectively working to explore and invent dissident movements. In his own research, he says he is interested in “assessing the different ways some very specific works in experimental dance performance created by artists [...] both express *and* critique the fundamental elements that define the (irrational) rationality sustaining our age of neoliberal, neocolonialist capitalism.”<sup>53</sup>

But, as is evident in the definition of politics just cited, Lepecki constantly works to amplify the political power of the works he analyzes and their relevance on the scale of a society where all movements are now governed by neoliberal conditioning:

“Dance has a unique capacity within the arts to address, directly and acutely, the ‘peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence’ of our times: ‘neoliberal rationality’. In this sense, dance in the age of performance already expresses its singularity: to generate charged and vital problematic fields on which pressing and urgent political, corporeal, affective, and social problems are made visible and gather - not to find a solution, but to further the movement of problematization.”<sup>54</sup>

If Lepecki sees a ‘danced’ potential, as well as a ‘political’ and ‘social’ one in formulating the concept of choreopolitics, I see there also a profound architectural potential. What choreographic practices and their theorization contribute to reveal is the never-ending collective effort it takes to resist the normalization and conformity produced and maintained by control societies; it’s the effort involved in developing sensitivity to others and relationships of co-responsibility. And this, across ecologies. Because the scripting of movement, from the logistical to the choreopolice, happens through the *milieu*. Thus, this demands that we consider other ways and means to spatially address the milieu. The working hypothesis of this research posits that, as concepts, both choreopolice and the choreopolitical shed light on the mutual dynamics at play between major and mi-

51 Lepecki, “The Choreopolitical,” 47.

52 Lepecki, 46.

53 André Lepecki, *Singularities*, 1 edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 5.

54 Lepecki, 8.

nor architectures.

### Choreopolitical ecologies

These questions lead me to contemplate and describe what I call *choreopolitical ecologies*. Through this movement, I seek to highlight and consider the increasingly diverse scales, assemblages, and fields of practice in which shared futures are negotiated:

“If the domains of the ethical and the political, the personal and the public, the domestic and the global, have collapsed into each other, they also reach across the unthinkable scale of the anthropocene as climate change, ocean acidification, extinction, and the production of xenobiotic chemicals make the location of each person’s ethics and politics extend through vast geographical and temporal expanses, affecting countless species.”<sup>55</sup>

In this research, I argue that we urgently need to consider that there are distributed forms and choreopolitical potentialities, produced within the context of more-than-human socialities. We can think of *choreopolitical ecologies* in the affirmation and materialization of which human and more-than-human entities, natural and constructed, as well as the infrastructures underpinning their relationships, each play a role.

While the notion of choreopolitics stems from a field where the focus has historically been largely on the body as a signifying agent and as a matrix of social and political resistance, choreographic attention has progressively expanded to consider today the entanglements between human and more-than-human movements:

“Somatic and choreographic practices have contributed to this refinement of sensibilities to living others, by showing human beings capable of lending themselves to other entities’ ways of moving by systematically undoing the privilege of an upright posture, studying the agile ways of weighing, falling, sliding, conflating with other movements, with tenderness, with attention, with care. Numerous dances demonstrate that there are other motives for movement than human sociality and its decorum. Through these motor dissidences, dances that could be called “compost-humanist” become a space for unlearning assumptions about “what moves” in us, terrestrial mammals inhabiting Terra. They contribute to opening ethological and geological windows through which communication and sympathy flow towards other living beings and other earthly movements.”<sup>56</sup>

This broadening of choreographic practices and interests can be directly linked to the evolution of the ways in which movement is controlled. The shift from preventing movement to constantly reorganizing flows alters the choreopolitical terrain. The devices that police and govern movement operate not only directly on bodies but especially at the level of their potential relationships with a milieu and the co-mobilizations they could make possible. Control becomes container, atmospheric. The natural and built envi-

55 Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 10.

56 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 5–6.

ronment, communication infrastructures, and the various mediations through which human and non-human bodies interfere and affect each other—all these elements are enlisted in the service of a diffuse control of movement. The diffuse and overarching infrastructure serving choreopolice thus guides the dance between choreopolice and choreopolitics onto new terrains. Now, choreopolitics are experimented with and developed on the scale of what could be termed *ecologies of control* and *counter-ecologies* of free movement—or choreopolitical ecologies. These involve transformations, reformulations, attempts, collective imagination, and new capabilities at all levels also involved in the diffuse control and conditioning of movement.

Ecologies, like human movements, are also characterized by a crystallization over time of their movements. Yves Citton writes on this matter:

“The logic of *oikos*, which lies at the heart of *ecology*, suggests that our living environments, as long as they have sustained existence over a certain duration of time, have established interdependent relationships that exceed our capacities for intellection, and therefore our certainties of judgment.”<sup>57</sup>

Ecologies and the interrelationships they comprise unfold on spatial and temporal scales that far exceed human comprehension. Citton emphasizes that ecologies cannot be analyzed, counted, or predicted. For this reason, the reorientation of ecologies that seems necessary and urgent today is by no means self-evident: “Such an enemy in a one-off battle may prove to be an irreplaceable ally in a conflict of an entirely different order.”<sup>58</sup> In this context, the reorientation of ecologies, viewed as a process rather than a final objective, is defined as a constant play of adjustments. In this dynamic, conflicts and tensions that arise are addressed through the transformation of the alliances constitutive of these ecologies. This transformation is experienced collectively. Ecologies have their shadowy areas, tendencies, and inherent resistances, acquired in the course of unique historical trajectories.

These “anthropocene ecologies” can be described as “historically specific biotechnological assemblages of interacting terraformers” that we are only marginally capable of apprehending:

“People in late Capitalism are ill-equipped with the mental, emotional and imaginary repertoires for dealing with the spatiotemporal scales of these phenomena.”<sup>59</sup>

In this sense, the moving and moved dimension of ecologies, the ways in which human

57 Citton, *Faire avec*, 42.

58 Citton, 42.

59 Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer et al., “Anthropocene Ecologies: Biotechnical Relationalities in Late Capitalism,” *COST Action IS1307 New Materialism*, 2015, <https://newmaterialism.eu/content/5-working-groups/2-working-group-2/position-papers/anthropocene-ecologies-15.12.pdf>.

and more-than-human bodies collaborate, move together, and can learn to move differently, become a crucial field of exploration:

“Ecologies are expressed via habits, habitat, habituation and inhabitation, all of which can be bundled together in terms of the conceptual and material lessons they offer. Inhabitation concerns habituation, and how well maintained you keep your habitat, based on what kinds of daily habits and existential refrains you entertain. This then draws us into the disciplinary domain of practices. Depending on what you do amidst your ecology and what your ecology does to you, you might contract a good or a bad habit, make a mess of things or else ameliorate your environment-world.”<sup>60</sup>

For philosopher H el ene Frichot, engaging in the collective reorientation of ecologies means delving into ecologies of practices. Drawing on the words of philosopher of techniques Isabelle Stengers, Frichot insists that no practice should be considered similar to another, just as no living entity is identical to another. Practices articulate the ways in which techniques, tools, bodies and situations interact and mutually affect each other. Frichot writes: “Practices, such as physics, and here we can also think of architecture, require a habitat, upon which they rely for their survival and ongoing dissemination.”<sup>61</sup> The transformation of techniques in relation to the habitats in which they are deployed is a crucial aspect of the reorientation of ecologies. When techniques are called upon, resisting the habits that accompany them should be simultaneously involved.

Here, *ecology* is not a naturalizing metaphor but an opportunity to seize upon practices, think with them, slow down, and immerse ourselves in environments. Stengers, quoted by Frichot, writes:

“We do not know what a practice is able to become; what we know instead is that the very way we define, or address, a practice is part of the surroundings which produces its ethos.”<sup>62</sup>

This formulation is not without recalling Spinoza’s ideas on the infinite potentialities of bodies. Practices, like bodies, come into being in relation to their milieu:

“The milieu and its associated problem are entangled, and the problem should not be extracted from its milieu without the risk of obscuring its condition of emergent possibility.”<sup>63</sup>

This approach aligns with what some have termed a “minor approach” to ecologies, where the term precisely describes the dialogue between practices and milieus: “*Minor-*

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60 Frichot, *Creative Ecologies*, 58.

61 Frichot, 60.

62 Isabelle Stengers, “Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices,” *Cultural Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (2005): 195.

63 Frichot, *Creative Ecologies*, 61.



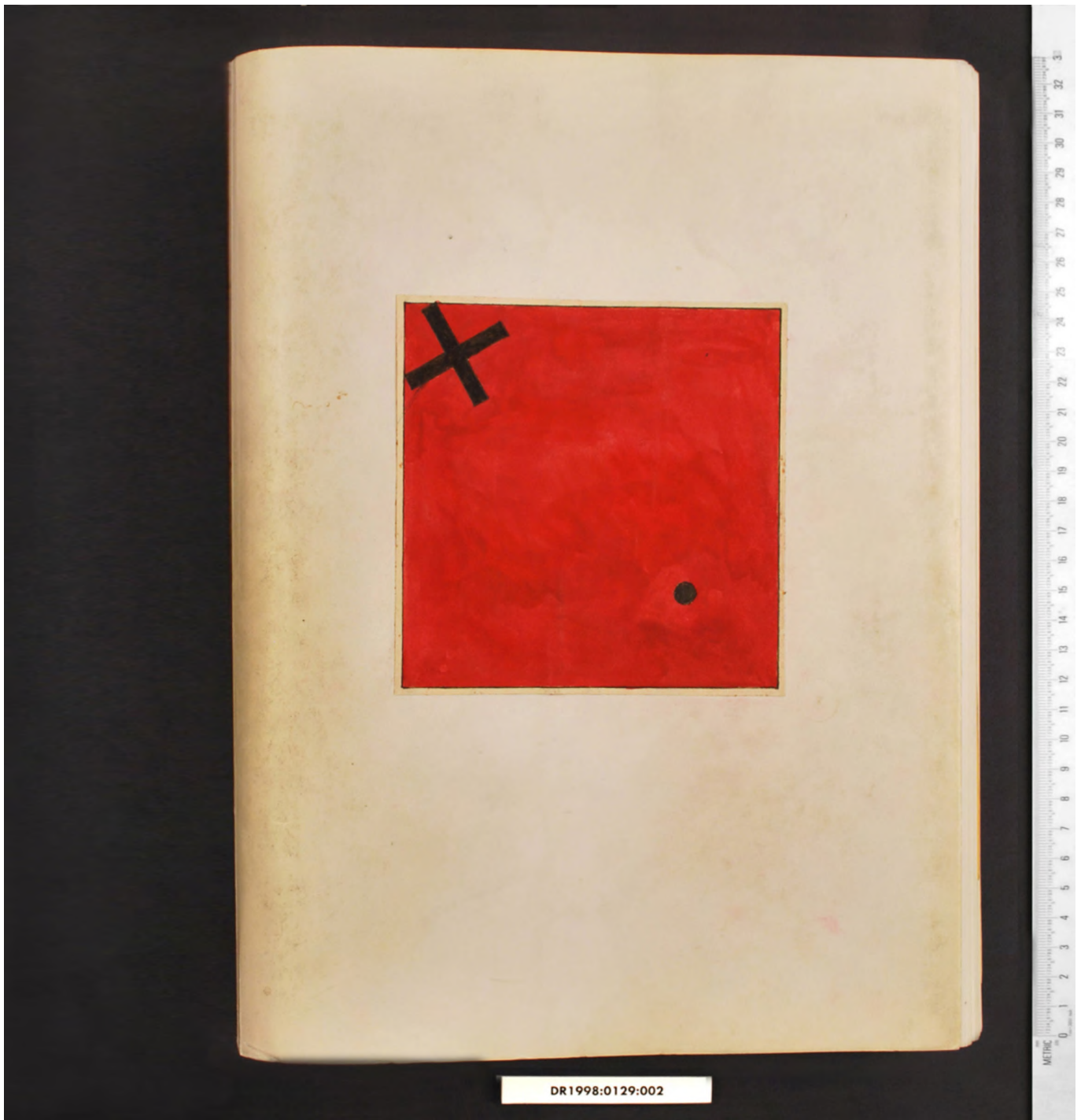


Fig. 6 • John Hejduk, Soundings: Sketchbook, 1991. Graphite, ink, coloured pencil, watercolour and paper collage on paper and reprographic copies, 31 × 24 × 6cm. DR1998:0129:002, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

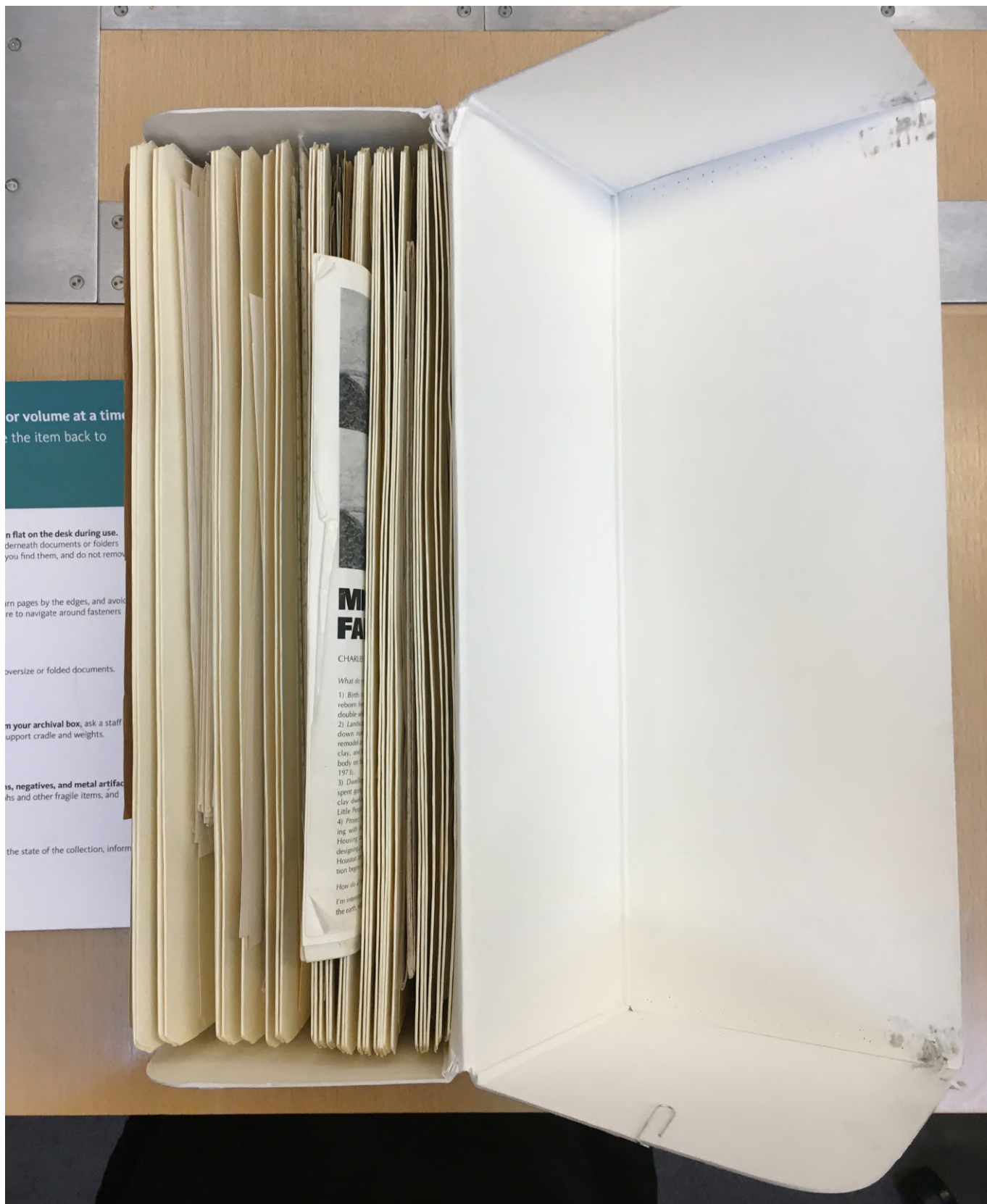


Fig. 7 • Archives of the Grand Union records, bulk 1972-1978, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.  
The Grand Union records are arranged in five series: Office files, Press Materials, Performers, Performances, Photographs.

*itarian ecology* refers to shared conversations and practices of worlding in accountability and responsibility with/in the ‘pluriverse’.<sup>64</sup>

Choreopolitical ecologies are part of this minor current. Drawing on a conceptualization of choreopolitics as encompassing all experiments that allow learning and exploring, over and over again, how to move politically, it becomes possible to describe choreopolitical ecologies more precisely. These minor ecologies are affirmed through the experimentation of their moving and moved dimensions. Through their potential for affirmation, bodies explore and reinvent ways of moving with their milieus, dwelling in ways that diverge from the normative models increasingly imposed on them.

As a field of architectural practice, choreopolitical ecologies become increasingly urgent to engage with in response to the diffuse and introjective forms of control of movement as world-making take today. As architect Andrés Jaque puts it,

“it is there, in those expanded, multiple, transmaterial bodies, where at this time all the great political issues are discussed, where the debates of the polis are embodied. And this is why I believe that we are going to live, or we are already living, in an era where architecture will start and end its discussions mainly in the bodies rather than in the city. For me, the city has even lost its existence. I don’t believe that cities exist anymore.”<sup>65</sup>

Today, movement is incessantly redirected by diffuse forms of control, and the spatialities woven by bodies are constantly reconfigured. Yet, in the shadows created or masked by the evolving forms of control, bodies consistently detect opportunities to produce new ways of moving, along with new affective and spatial formulations. Achieving this also demands new uses of the many techniques through which bodies enrich their connection with the world. To think, discover, and legitimize these practices and ecologies of free movement requires architects to bestow upon them a deeper attention—an attention that this research, among others, dedicates to them. As my colleague Lucía Jalon Oyarzún wrote in the introduction to her own thesis:

“The practice of the acrobat [of the body seizing the political opportunities offered by its milieu at a specific moment] cannot be summarized in a manual because its know-how is not discursive in nature, and it is precisely for this reason that it has too often been overlooked as unworthy of interest. Theirs gestures, power, and knowledge must be experienced from a body whose mobile center of gravity recomposes its own spatiality with every step. The only way to approach this question through writing is to proceed with meticulous description, paying attention to every sign and effect, recognizing the importance of each detail.”<sup>66</sup>

64 <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/e/ecology-minoritarian.html>

65 Gonzalo Carrasco Purull, “Andrés Jaque: The Body Is the Future of Architecture. An Interview with Andrés Jaque,” *Materia Arquitectura* 19 (2020): 26.

66 Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor,” 14.



## Describing the dancing terrains of the minor architect

Reflecting the need to pay attention to the inflections and reconfigurations at play in each of our movements, this research can be thought of as an attempt to describe the dancing terrains of the minor architect. The figure of the *minor architect*, in this context, encompasses all those bodies that, in their search for new forms of free movement, broaden the potential of spatialities and the repertoire of world-making practices. In this sense, the minor architect is not necessarily an “architect” in the traditional sense but rather exercises the power to invent and unfold spatialities as a body.

The discipline of architecture has the responsibility to engage with these bodies and minor spatialities. Today, in the face of the ever-subtle control of movement, minor spatialities increasingly risk not even taking shape, being silenced in their potential to manifest. André Lepecki, quoting Hannah Arendt, writes:

“For her, what is at stake is nothing less than the most extreme danger: if we do not learn how to move politically, ‘the risk is that *the political* vanishes completely from the world.’”<sup>67</sup>

The disappearance of the political would be equivalent to the simultaneous disappearance of minor architectures, which always need to be reaffirmed. This affirmation involves not only inventing but also re-discovering, re-connecting, *re-hearsing*, and re-thinking. It entails not only practicing other attentions but also observing how minor architectures are silenced, halted, and pushed aside. In this sense, the “dancing terrains” are those of negotiation, transformation, and reframing of what the major can achieve, as enabled by the minor.

As an architect, I consider this research as an attempt, both on my part and within my discipline, to open up to the architectural knowledge and practices of bodies. Additionally, it is an approach in which I occupy a position that allows me to comprehend, think, and experiment at the level of their friction with the field of architecture, its discourses, practices, and mechanisms of legitimation of knowledge. Free movement as a minor architecture is invented in a dance with spatialities as they are produced and reproduced, organized and limited today, especially through architectural tools and processes. These processes could work otherwise and embrace and support the pluralizing activity of the minor. *Choreopolitical ecologies*, for me, represent the site of this friction—the moment where architectural knowledge and know-how are exposed and questioned by bodies, their movements, and their practices. What *minor ecologies* emerge then? What novel alliances and modes of living together do they outline? The research is structured in a way to provoke, experiment, and think about this friction.

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67 Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 14.



Fig. 8 • A very slow march in SoHo to protest the war, in 1970, led by the choreographer Yvonne Rainer, front left, whose "Trio A" was a lingua franca for dancers meeting on SoHo street corners. Photo: John Sotomayor/The New York Times



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# CHOREOPOLITICAL STUBBORNNESS. — Practices, spatialities and knowledge of moving freely

CHAPTER I



# CHOREOPOLITICAL STUBBORNNESS. — Practices, spatialities and knowledge of moving freely

## CHAPTER I

Freedom is transversal to humans: it passes through human experience, but is not defined by it.

— Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, p.25

In this first chapter, the focus is on spending time with the concept of *choreopolitics*, which refers to politically-informed movement knowledge, as well as the practices that continuously contribute to rewriting the forms that this movement takes to remain political. Author and curator André Lepecki uses this term, which brings *choreography* and *politics* together in a single movement, to emphasize the centrality of the relationship between these two terms, particularly in a contemporary context. If choreopolitics matters, it's because the movement of beings and things is increasingly regulated, and this regulation hinders and bypasses the possibilities of affirming free movement, which consequently needs to be constantly re-worked, and re-invented.

For Lepecki, free movement is therefore that which is capable of branching off from pre-established, controlled patterns. It is not just any movement that one might feel “free” to do or not to do at any given moment. It is a movement that takes the form of an affirmative dissensus, a dissensus that

“provokes the rupture of habits and behaviors, and thus leads to the dispersion of all kinds of clichés: sensory, of desires, of values, of behaviors, clichés that impoverish life and its affects.”<sup>68</sup>

Currently, the forms of control of movement and the potential forms of free movement are constantly shaping each other in a frictional dance that drastically reduces and fragments the possibilities of free movement. The precariousness that characterizes the conditions of existence of this movement makes experimentation with free movement both central and necessary. The notion of choreopolitics, this rapprochement between the practice of movement and (the practice of) politics, insists on this *precariousness* of politics, which must be practiced in order to take shape and see its existence constantly reaffirmed. Or, in the words of philosopher Jacques Rancière:

“ A political demonstration is [...] always on the moment and its subjects are always precarious. A political difference is always on the shore of its own disappearance.”<sup>69</sup>

68 André Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia,” *Ilha Revista de Antropologia* 13, no. 1,2 (December 28, 2011): 43–44, <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2011v13n1-2p41>.

69 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London ; New York: Continuum, 2010), 39.

The expression “spending time with a concept” helps to describes an attempt to approach and appropriate a concept without aiming for a description that would enclose it in a completely defined and fixed meaning. The expression then suggests an attempt to get close enough to feel the effects of this concept on what we thought we knew, thought and felt. This gesture becomes a way of taking the time to be touched, and becoming capable of apprehending a concept without bending it to a pre-established project. It represents an attempt to leave the necessary space for *contact*. This slow contact could be likened to that between two dancers seeking to connect not from the territories they inhabit and the habits attached to them but “from the future-that-comes,” to borrow Emma Bigé’s beautiful words describing an encounter in *Contact Improvisation*.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, if the act of “spending time” in recent years with written, danced, performed, and thought experimental and collective practices has taught me anything, it is that words and concepts are just as hungry for attention and room to breathe as individuals are. They, too, need space, time and attention in order to continue to “make contact” with the world in a way that opens up possibilities.

In the context of this research, spending time with *choreopolitics* means, in essence, cultivating relationships and a sense of intimacy with the conceptual field and the experimental practices that surround this notion, both delineating and simultaneously supporting its existence. In this chapter, I contemplate what *choreopolitics* can teach us about politics in a regime of diffuse and introjected control of movement; about mobilization and de-mobilization; and about the conditions that allow for *rehearsing* and affirming free movement in the ever-evolving forms it takes. The aim of this first chapter is to approach the concept of choreopolitics, while simultaneously shifting it towards fields in which it starts to resonate with spatial, architectural and environmental concerns. This movement is achieved through a three-part chapter structure, the first being theoretical, the second drawing on an emblematic historical case of choreopolitics in the field of dance while outlining its spatial dimensions, and the third tracing the echoes of this case to discuss the potentialities and important nuances to consider when working further with the concept today.

The theoretical discussion of the concept aims to shed light on different facets of the term and the set of notions and practices that affect it and are affected by it. I begin by discussing the relationship between *choreopolitics* and *choreopolice* as a system of control of movement. I explore the idea of politics as mobilization and how *choreography* then becomes a compositional plane of heterogeneous elements. From there, I turn to the “more-than” of dance and choreography. With this term, borrowed from the philoso-

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70 Emma Bigé and Myriam Rabah-Konaté, “Ce Qui Nous Retient de Nous Toucher,” in *La Perspective de La Pomme. Histoires, Politiques et Pratiques Du Contact Improvisation*, Piretti Editore, 2021, 199. *Contact Improvisation* is a type of experimental dance practice, traditionally performed in duo, in which the dancers remain in contact as much as possible and make themselves available to each other to explore aspects such as gravity, friction and inertia. Continuous weight transfer movements form the core of this practice. Contact is constantly negotiated and modulated by the dynamic ensemble of the two bodies and the potentialities of the encounter.

pher Erin Manning, I describe the textures of what emerges in an encounter between current forms of control which operate through the milieu and *choreography* as a support for experimentation and the emergence of choreopolitics. This initial approach to the notion of choreopolitics leads me to question the relationship between the *operative dimensions* of the choreopolitical and the *situated expressions* of the choreopolitical. Lepecki himself touches on this situated dimension of the choreopolitical when he asserts that:

“In this infinite dialectic, a co-constitutive correspondence is established between dances and their places; and between places and their dances.”<sup>71</sup>

Despite this mention of “places,” Lepecki’s attention continues to focus primarily on the movements of bodies. Yet places, better described as *mi-lieus*, also vibrate with potentialities and tendencies. In this research, I argue that the potential of choreopolitics, and the ways it takes shape, lies in the encounter between the choreographic framework and the situated particularities of a given situation, whose historical dimension manifests itself in the way bodies and grounds co-transform and support each other. This argument opens up the possibility of an architectural approach to choreopolitics.

In a second step, I engage in a retrospective journey to what today constitutes one of the most emblematic experimental practices in the Western history of dance – that of the New York avant-garde scene in the 1960s-1970s. I discuss the experimentations of the *Judson Dance Theater* and *Grand Union*, where choreopolitics were extensively explored, with a focus on the *situated* and *spatial* dimensions of these explorations. The discussion turns to such questions: What choreopolitics take shape within the realm of these collective practices? What are their diagrammatic and operational dimensions, and what are their situated dimensions? How does choreography intersect with an environment that both transforms it and is transformed by it? What do these practices teach us about the affirmation of free movement? And most importantly for this research, about the supporting role of an environment or *milieu* in the formation of choreopolitics?

By emphasizing the *situated* dimension of such explorations, I make visible that what has been discussed primarily in the field of dance as choreopolitics can also be envisaged as *choreopolitical ecologies*, involving the geographies, materialities, spatialities and histories of places as well as the relationships that bodies maintain with them. This perspective highlights the situated dimension of such experiments in space and time, and crucially, their limits in terms of the articulation of politics and knowledge. In this sense, it becomes possible to make this reading an act of constructive criticism of the existing tendency in the Western linear historical discourses to give these practices universal significance.

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71 Lepecki, 47.

Following this path, in a third section, I explore the tension between these situated choreopolitics and their afterlives. As mentioned above, these experimental practices and the choreopolitics they assert need to be understood in their situated dimensions. Yet even today, they are continually cited in ways that set them apart from the ecologies in which they were embedded. These linear narratives are deeply problematic in terms of our shared responsibility to affirm and support plural histories and modes of being. In contrast to this dynamic, I turn to several recent practices that maintain a less linear and more active relationship with the experiments from the 1960-70s. Thinking with these practices, I ask what *persists*, what is *transformed* and what is re-activated. If politics, as Rancière asserts, is “always on the moment”, is the choreopolitical constantly to be invented? Or can it be, in part, transmitted? Are there conditions or practices conducive to its re-deployment?

The question of how choreopolitical knowledge is passed on and actualized informs the ways we can think about the unfolding of choreopolitical ecologies across scales and times. Through the cases analyzed, it becomes clear that choreopolitical ecologies require a constant collective effort if they are to continue to exist. The framework of *choreopolitical ecologies* constitutes a new perspective for thinking about the dance between bodies and their environments over time. Similar to the transmission of embodied knowledge, the transmission of choreopolitical knowledge is marked by discontinuities. Choreopolitical know-how, repertoires and operations find new forms in their activation and encounters with new milieus, yet are profoundly linked to those to which they refer and that existed before them. Bodies and their environments are both the limit and the ground for the invention of plural relations, stories and worlds.

Through this reading, choreopolitical techniques, operations and repertoires are thus made visible as resources for the present, enabling us to envisage the importance of interconnections between choreopolitical formations that are a priori separated in space and time. This approach supports a better understanding of how minor architectures can unfold, how they proliferate and transform, and how they occasionally become strong enough to transform and subvert dominant architectural and urban frameworks. Based on the above, I argue that the understanding offered by the notions of *rehearsal* and *choreopolitical ecologies* as grounds and practices for the transformation of relations between bodies and their milieus are crucial to contemporary architectural practices and theories. This understanding nourishes and expands our capacity to question introjected forms of control of our movements.

All this leads us to the title of this first chapter, “choreopolitical stubbornness.” For Lepecki, the choreopolitical is linked to the exercise of ‘free’ movement. Lepecki insists that this ‘free’ movement is not that which would be directly possible without hindrance, but rather that which asserts possibilities of existence beyond those traced by dominant norms and systems. Yet, historically, the notion of freedom remains deeply



intertwined with that of slavery, and it remains delicate to imagine bringing together under this banner all the practices and efforts contributing to the writing of choreopolitics. In contrast, the idea of “choreopolitical stubbornness” insists on a movement that is constantly renewed and connected to the affirmation of life itself.



# I.I Choreoplice/choreopolitics. — Scripted tendencies and the practice of movement as freedom

PART I

Action/Politics /Kinetics — Choreopolitics of soil —  
Choreoplice: when regimes of control script our movements —  
Choreopliced from within: algorithms and the short-circuiting of  
sensibilities — Affected body affecting — Normative Proximities  
and Reorientations — Choreopolitics: movement as freedom — Soft  
choreographies — Choreography of the more-than



# I.I Choreopolice/choreopolitics. — Scripted tendencies and the practice of movement as freedom

## PART I

### Action/Politics / Kinetics

In “No longer and not yet”, philosopher and political scientist Hannah Arendt describes how our lives are articulated through suspended moments between what is no longer and what is not yet.<sup>72</sup> Arendt observes that sometimes what comes next is not experienced as the gradual unfolding of what came before, but rather as a rupture and the beginning of something new. It is question of a beginning that is neither completely attached to nor completely independent of what precedes it, but in any case, radically unpredictable:

“The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable...”<sup>73</sup>

Here, Arendt identifies a certain type of action, an action as *beginning*. She argues that this reconfiguring action, which operates transversely to the laws of statistics and probability, is distinct from hope. In the face of a closed and violent system, in the face of a condition that seems unsurpassable, it becomes for Arendt not so much a matter of hoping as of acting. Hope, she argues, distracts us from the world unfolding before our eyes, while action places responsibility on each individual to act and unfold the potential inherent in beings.

This action is not, however, the work of an isolated individual, but always that of individuals embedded in a network of relationships:

“This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness.”<sup>74</sup>

For Arendt, the ‘not yet’ as suspended time calls for action as a beginning. This action is of a particular nature. It is not that all action is capable of radically opening up the possible, of “performing what is infinitely improbable.” Arendt seems to connect the unfolding of this potential to a certain form of being in contact with the *more-than* offered in the encounter, which colors “action” and hints at the depth Arendt puts into this term. *Action* exists in its reconfiguring power in the way it encounters the world:

72 Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007).

73 Arendt, 178.

74 Arendt, 180.

“Action [...] is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act.”<sup>75</sup> The ‘not yet’ as horizon expresses the reconfiguring power of action in a web of relationships:

“Action, moreover, no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries.”<sup>76</sup>

But the ‘not yet’ also expresses the fact that the meaning that action takes on in this web of relationships is only revealed after the fact. In this sense, the meaning of action depends not on who does it, but on how the action encounters the world and comes to make sense. Making sense of action is intrinsically shared, and requires proximity and practice, without which it cannot happen.

Decades later, this ‘not yet’ is echoed in the reflections of curator and author André Lepecki. He focuses on Arendt’s diagnosis that “we do not know—at least not *yet-how* to move politically.”<sup>77</sup> For Lepecki, the ‘not yet’ is hopeful. It means that, when the prospect of the future as a continuation of the present de-mobilizes bodies, it is always possible for the breach of an otherwise to open up, and that exploring the political potential of movement is part of this opening. The ‘not yet’ asserts that, one day, *we might know how to move politically*. This political movement can be likened to action, precisely to action as beginning. And, as mentioned earlier, this action cannot become, or take on meaning, without the proximity of the beings through whom and for whom it takes shape and meaning.

Lepecki’s subsequent ‘movement’ thus directly embraces the relational depth of Arendt’s action. Like action, this movement is the one without which politics cannot take shape. Lepecki makes this relationship between movement and politics central to his reading of Arendt:

“This “political,” this entity or thing Arendt calls freedom, is nowhere inscribed as that which defines, or centers, or founds humanity. The adjectival “political” defined as the movement of freedom is a difficult, ever-evolving commitment. It is less predicated on a subject than on a *movement (bewegung)*, defined by intersubjective *action*, that, moreover must be learned, rehearsed, nurtured, and above all experimented with, practiced, and experienced. Again and again, and again and again, and in every repetition, through every repetition, renewed.”<sup>78</sup>

For Lepecki, Arendt’s ‘not yet’ becomes both a challenge and an invitation. If the political depends at all times on a renewed capacity to move politically, then, we have a

75 Arendt, 188.

76 Arendt, 190.

77 André Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 14. Lepecki draws this quotation from a posthumous publication of an unfinished text by Arendt written in August 1950: Arendt, Hannah. *Was Ist Politik? Fragmente Aus Dem Nachlass*. München: Piper, 1993.

78 Lepecki, 14–15.



duty to explore how this political movement unfolds, and thus ensure that the political continues to exist. We have a duty to *rehearse* the forms of what binds us together, or perhaps rather, what sets us free together. For Lepecki, Arendt's late reflection provides an opportunity to question the relationship between politics and kinetics:

“And what is the practice that needs to be practiced in order to ensure that the political does not vanish from the world? Precisely that thing called freedom. The vanishing of the political thing from the world is the vanishing of the experience and practice of movement as freedom.”<sup>79</sup>

For Lepecki, there is no expression of the political - “redefined as a *general orientation towards freedom*”<sup>80</sup> - if there is no movement. But this does not mean that all movement is political. Rather, in movement there is a political possibility, a possibility for the political to circulate and take shape.

### Choreopolitics of the ground

To be able to read the appearance of this movement as political in choreography and dance, “choreography must not be understood as an image, allegory or metaphor of the political and the social.”<sup>81</sup> Rather, we should develop an attention to the modes by which choreographies are put into practice:

“In realizing itself, in entering into the concreteness of the world and of human relations, choreography activates a plurality of different virtual domains-social, political, economic, linguistic, somatic, racial, aesthetic, gendered-and interweaves them all in its very particular plane of composition, always on the verge of disappearance and always creating a becoming.”<sup>82</sup>

Here, choreography and dance are the object of a highly specific understanding, which will be discussed throughout this work: an understanding of dance as *choreopolitics*. This understanding translates into a focus on how dances encounter supports in the world and assume their political dimension. It translates to an attention to

“dance's immanent capacity to theorize the social context in which it emerges, to challenge it, and to reveal the lines of force that distribute the (energetic, political) possibilities of mobilization, participation, activation, as well as passivity.”<sup>83</sup>

Choreopolitics reveals how free movement unfolds with a milieu, when choreography “determines the ways in which dances take root in the grounds that support them, and how different grounds transform dances, while transforming themselves in the pro-

79 Lepecki, 15.

80 Lepecki, 14.

81 Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia,” 46.

82 Lepecki, 46.

83 Lepecki, 45.

cess.”<sup>84</sup>

This theoretical framework directly challenges the representation of the milieu as a space of circulation in which subjects move ‘freely.’ It also questions the *neutrality* of the ground, in which the ground would always be there ‘before’, and would equally support all dances and movements. Lepecki again draws on Arendt, who, in her reading of the Greek polis, focuses on the fact that the notion of a pre-existing space in which political activity can take place is itself a construction. In this approach to the polis as a given framework for political action, the primacy of architecture over political action (understood here as legislative activity) directly separates architecture from the imagination of a future through political and reconfiguring action.

The choreopolitics we embark on in this research has the conceptual and critical strength to bring this division back into the forefront of architectural and spatial concerns. Understood in terms of its co-constitutions, the relationship between dance and their milieus can be seen as an ever-renewed co-invention of free movement. This approach aims to take Lepecki’s words seriously when he writes:

“Can dance and the city remake the space of circulation in a choreopolitics that asserts a movement towards another life, more joyful, more powerful, more humanized and less reproductive of an unbearably tiring, though agitated and certainly, spectacular kinetics?”<sup>85</sup>

### Choreopolice: when regimes of control script our movements

Lepecki’s remarks suggests that architecture is not destined to embody a control apparatus for movement. This status is conferred upon it by a flat, definitive, self-contained understanding that predates architectural movement and has a long tradition behind it, as analyzed by Arendt. On the contrary, this research is conceived as an opportunity to ask the question: Can choreography interrupt the appropriation of the milieu as a device of control, as “an amalgam of constructions and laws created with the aim of controlling more and more totally the spaces of circulation (of bodies, desires, ideals, affects)”<sup>86</sup>?

To be able to imagine choreographing other relationships between bodies, dances and their milieus, we first need to understand everything that interferes with, controls and overdetermines these relationships. While built architecture is in itself a device for controlling movement, it is today by no means the sole performer of this control. Societies for whom the exercise of free movement as action, as a beginning, and as politics represents a threat have continually refined their control capacities. This shared histo-

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84 Lepecki, 47.

85 Lepecki, 49.

86 Lepecki, 49.

ry forces us to ask such questions as: What are the more precise relationships between governability and movement? And how did they transform until today?

In so-called disciplinary societies, the sources of control were directly identifiable and locatable. Whether they were figures in society such as the guard, the teacher, the doctor, or mechanisms of confinement like school, prison, or asylums, the relationship between the possibility of free movement and its repression was relatively legible. Both architecture and representatives of order interrupted overflow, impromptu movement, or divergent movement. However, the expression of the political and the control of the political, while remaining connected to movement, have evolved in their form. In what Deleuze theorizes as the transition from disciplinary societies to control societies, the exercise of controlling movement takes new, more diffuse, and elusive channels.<sup>87</sup> There is no longer a direct opposition to movement but rather a continuous control that confines bodies by maintaining a certain type of movement. A movement previously deprived of its political potential, a *consensual movement*.

Foucault, while using other terms, was also interested in this evolution of forms of control. Through the notion of *biopower*, he sought to describe how societies transitioned from the sovereign's right to *take or let live* to the biopolitical operation of *making live and letting die*.<sup>88</sup> We find here the motive of supporting *a certain* way of life, a certain movement, rather than preventing the most dissident of them. Biopower can be described as

“an invasion that does not seek to slow down, hinder, bend, or destroy the forces that exist in this life, but rather, it will deploy the greatest care in their arrangement and administration in order to multiply them, intensify them, and make them grow.”<sup>89</sup>

This mode of soft governance through regulation diminishes and blurs the type of resistance that can be opposed to it. It takes the form of a choreography “which does not focus any longer on the mere repression of dissensus but promotes as well a production of consensus.”<sup>90</sup> Increasingly, this control operates at a level that escapes direct attention. It is capable of maintaining the illusion of freedom of movement while conditioning it in an almost absolute manner. The techniques of power shift from regulation by limiting processes to regulation by immanent techniques based on the logic of the processes themselves.<sup>91</sup> Henceforth, control devices track movements, analyze them, predict them, and, thanks to continuous injunctions, suggest certain channels for circula-

87 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972 - 1990* (New York Chichester: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995).

88 Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey, 1st ed (New York: Picador, 2003), 241.

89 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor.” (Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2017), 86.

90 Marc Villanueva Mir, “Police: Choreographing Demobilisation,” *Performance Research* 27, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2022.2091845>.

91 Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Duke University Press, 2015), 212–16, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375197>.

tion rather than others. This short-circuiting, the introjection of these channels, means that they become the only appropriate and imaginable ones for bodies in motion.

Faced with this ever-improving system, it becomes crucial to distinguish between movement as an expression of the political and movement as a product of a globalized control of movement. As we have just seen, this distinction cannot be established once and for all. The dividing line shifts as the forms of control and expression of movement as politics evolve. Lepecki proposes two terms to identify this dance between control and politics: *choreopolice* and *choreopolitics*. Let's start with the first one. *Choreopolice* is initially defined by Lepecki as

“whatever system that enforces the fiction forming the path that precedes the subject. Such precedence helps shape subjectivity thanks to a confined or impoverished experiencing of mobility within the social space.”<sup>92</sup>

In another text, we can read that the police is “a figure whose kinetic spectacle consists in appropriating the monopoly of the determination of what constitutes, in the urban, a space of circulation.”<sup>93</sup> These definitions, which may initially appear very vague, such as when terms like “whatever system” or “figure” appear, should actually be understood precisely as Lepecki's attempt to conceptualize the multiple forms that *choreopolice* takes.

Marc Villanueva Mir, a performance scholar working with these two notions, describes the different aspects of the police, which he classifies into three types. The police is an institution, an “order-keeping type of force that is committed to law policing and law enforcement on behalf of the state.” It is also a practice of bodies: “The bodily performance of the police is the result of a foregrounded, acquired movement technique”. Ultimately, the police is also a logic of distribution. In this latter approach, the police “represents, most of all, an order of what can be seen, said and be socially recognized.”<sup>94</sup> Police, then, is all the elements that contribute to establishing ways of being, doing and saying. The police produces conformity and normality. And Mir adds:

“If the police order is largely uncontested as such, that is because it presents itself as a political order. [...] What the state offers is a compromise with some degrees of ‘realizable’ freedom and a mode of participation that ensures that no one's path is going to be disturbed.”<sup>95</sup>

These categories closely echo the image of the police portrayed by Lepecki, in which police movements, and the internalization of tolerated or non-tolerated movements, function as policing, often in superposition. For Lepecki, the police is already and al-

92 André Lepecki, “The Choreopolitical,” in *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2015), 47.

93 Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia,” 51.

94 Mir, “Police,” 19.

95 Mir, 20.

ways present as self-control. He develops his argument by drawing on a performance by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera that took place at the Tate Modern in London. In this piece called *Tatlin Whisper #5*, Bruguera explores the choreographic dynamics between police and the public in a society of control. Two mounted police officers perform crowd control in front of the audience moving through the Tate's grand Turbine Hall. Faced with the insistent police officers, the crowd resists a little and eventually moves to the designated areas. In this oscillation, according to Lepecki, it is not so much the official police, because it is in a museum and does not have the same authority as in another context, but rather the pre-conditioned behavior of the public, this internalization that has taught us to conform to orders, that is revealed:

“The work, approached as an experiment in social choreography, reveals how the question of freedom, even in so-called ‘open democracies’, remains one not merely of policing, but above all, of self-policing.”<sup>96</sup>

In a society of control, the question of freedom of movement is worked on by identifying everything that obstructs, directs, diverts, and precondition our movements – this obstructive force that Lepecki, following the philosopher Jacques Rancière, calls the *police*. Rancière's definition of the police is part of a broader argument in his work about the *partition of the sensible*. This partition corresponds to a division of the world that separates and excludes as much as it allows participation and negotiation of what appears on the *stage of the sensible*. For Rancière,

“the essence of the police lies in a partition of the sensible that is characterized by the absence of void and of supplement: society here is made up of groups tied to specific modes of doing, to places in which these occupations are exercised, and to modes of being corresponding to these occupations and these places. In this matching of functions, places and ways of being, there is no place for any void.”<sup>97</sup>

The police divides the sensible in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of imagining what should be affirmed. For Lepecki, following Rancière, the police becomes “a *generalized function of power*, an abstract machine holding in place the social order, actually defining the social order as nothing other than a policed thing. In other words, the police is a function of power which is the very opposite of the political.”<sup>98</sup> The police actively choreographs, which is its most operational and diffuse way of exerting control. It carefully maintains a movement that generates widespread conformity. It smoothes relationships and criminalizes anything that disrupts the flow. It is

“a tangible reality, a construction that can be likened to architecture because it is primarily the agent that ensures the reproduction and permanence of predetermined modes of individual and collective circulation. [...] It ensures that as long as everyone moves and circulates as instructed (openly or subtly, verbally or spatially, out of habit or by force),

96 Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 18.

97 Rancière, *Dissensus*, 36.

98 Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 19.

and moves according to the consensual plan of movement, any movement in the city, no matter how agitated, will produce nothing more than a mere spectacle of movement that, above all, must be blind to what makes it move.”<sup>99</sup>

Choreopolice does much more than directly restrict movements. It impoverishes individuals’ capacities and potential to formulate and express the political, to mobilize together to bring forth on the *stage of the sensible* what does not appear there. If we return to the aforementioned image of choreopolitics as a politics of the ground, we can say that choreopolice constantly works not only to involve everyone in a grand consensus dance, but also to rewrite the ground of cities as belonging to this capture apparatus.

As noted by Mir in his text on the police, it is important to consider that the police itself generates movements and, therefore, articulates possibilities for world-making by predetermining the type of encounters with the ground that bodies in motion can have. The police thus operates *environmentally*, preempting choreopolitics of the ground before they become possible. For example, during a protest, it’s not just the movement of the protest itself that is repressed, but a set of relationships that are made impossible:

“The movement that police force on protesters aims to produce an outbreak of cues-loud-speakers, people screaming, bodies spinning, running, pushing and so on—and thus a destabilization of the environment as it is perceived or claimed by the protesters and the eventual cancellation of their space of appearance.”<sup>100</sup>

Choreopolice prevents the milieu and dance from meeting. It prevents the milieu from becoming ground for other types of movements. The kinetic dimension of the police not only results in a paucity of movements but also an impoverishment of spatial practices—practices that can continually unfold the political potential of a milieu welcoming and supporting the practice of free movement.

### Choreopoliced from within: algorithms and the short-circuiting of sensibilities

In her research on *the exception and the rebel body*, Lucía Jalón Oyarzun also analyzes the mechanisms used to reduce the ability of bodies to make worlds differently. She highlights the dynamic nature of the exception, but also its tendency to move ever closer to bodies, precisely as a means of turning “environmental” control into a second skin. She writes:

“Increasingly, the exception abandons traditional divisions to move closer to the body, acting on it by configuring its spatiality while circulating it in an interior under its control.”<sup>101</sup>

Today, every one of our movements, interactions, inclinations, and attentions is sub-

99 Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia,” 54.

100 Mir, “Police,” 25.

101 Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor,” 9.



jected to conditioning. This conditioning propels bodies straight into the channels of neoliberalism. Since it “ensures the flow of goods, the continuity of exchange and the endurance of control and security mechanisms”, movement also becomes a currency, and the neoliberal capitalist regime cannot do without it.<sup>102</sup>

Logics of movement and market logics align, fueled by police injunctions that choreograph the circulation of subjects and goods. Not only does the conditioning become omnipresent, continuous, and reactive, but it tends to surpass the bodies’ capacity to perceive it as such and, consequently, their ability to resist or transgress it:

“We are, as always, as everyone, everywhere and anytime, being conditioned. However, the rationality that orientates the neoliberal condition of overall conditioning, the (il) logic that makes it all have not only some kind of sense, but that makes the conditions of contemporary conditioning gain real hegemonic sense, real normative sense, real neo-colonialist, neo-racist sense, that (il)logic is governing conduct as if it were granting liberty. That’s how it permeates our actions with renewed intensity.”<sup>103</sup>

The destructive values of diversity and life that guide the neoliberal regime’s logics of control continue to be reaffirmed while disappearing from view, while evading the ability to fully apprehend them for what they are. The fact that we continue to think, organize, name and describe the world within a system that preconditions our practices, our types of relationships and movements, only continues this movement of infiltration of choreopolice within bodies and relationships:

“In permeating our actions, neoliberal conditioning shows how it has already captured subjectivity. Having captured subjectivity, it permeates the making of art and the making of discourses about art. The conditioning becomes our shared nervous system. Including art’s and theory’s nervous systems. Through them, we sense and make sense, we en flesh. Bodies fibrillating with and against the rhythms of our era.”<sup>104</sup>

This apprehension of control reveals the intertwined trajectories of colonialism and capitalism, expressing how techniques of exploitation and servitude are also technologies of subjectivation that condition how life and values are thought and experienced. The forms of control that overlap and intertwine never completely replace the previous ones but rather absorb, disguise, or normalize them.

Progress in technology supports this increasing intertwining of movements, ideologies, and control modalities. Data and profiling have become tools of choreopolice. This shift in power is “quiet and without apparent pain.”<sup>105</sup> It relies on the intensification of the contemporary phenomenon of systematic recording and digitization of life itself, to which not only institutions contribute, but also individuals themselves, who spon-

102 Mir, “Police,” 23.

103 André Lepecki, *Singularities*, 1 edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 3.

104 Lepecki, 3.

105 Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns, “Le nouveau pouvoir statistique,” *Multitudes* n° 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 88.

taneously, voluntarily or not, keep, publish and multiply their digital traces. Control becomes more dynamic, more “intelligent.” The power of algorithms is harnessed to anticipate the capabilities of bodies, in order to continuously thwart any emerging motive that might be capable of challenging the established order.

This anticipatory capacity is central to what researchers and authors Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns refer to as “algorithmic governmentality.” They write:

“The strength of algorithmic government, the reasons why it encounters few if any obstacles and very little recalcitrance, lies in the unprecedented relationships it forges with temporality (aiming to govern the potential, the virtual rather than the actual), with subjects (whom it addresses only very indirectly, and to whom it therefore seems inoffensive), and with the ‘real’, from which it governs, and from which it seems to emanate spontaneously.”<sup>106</sup>

The fact that the logic of the algorithm itself departs from modern rationality to become purely statistical diverges radically from what was previously considered as a knowledge about behaviors. The profiling resulting from statistical analysis is completely detached from the scale of the individual in all its complexity, focusing instead on profiles associated with certain tendencies, which are in turn linked to individuals. This mode of governance thus seems to disregard the complexity of individual assessment in the data extraction and analysis phase, but it still directly affects bodies. Profiling operates

“the structuring of the possible field of action of bodies, the control, ideally at a preconscious stage, of what bodies can do. A strategic shift of focus occurs here from the topological axis of the actuality of the body to the temporal axis of the possible, the probable, the virtual.”<sup>107</sup>

What is now controlled is not only the current dimension but also the virtual dimension of bodies, thus preventing the deployment of the possibilities associated with them. This control becomes so intrusive that it almost no longer has the characteristics of control:

“While the aim remains to *ultimately produce* regular, i.e. predictable, behavior, the tools of this governmental rationality no longer aim to directly *incite* unified, rational individuals to obey the law, but rather to *affect* them, at a preconscious stage if possible by anticipating what they might be or do as a function not of their history or will, but of those partial shimmers, individual and digitized shards that are what algorithmic government is all about.”<sup>108</sup>

With these different elements, it becomes possible to envision more clearly the idea that the algorithmic form of choreopolice does not impact the movement of the individual but affects the preconscious aspect of movement, guiding it at a level that escapes the conscious will of individuals and their sensitivities:

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106 Rouvroy and Berns, 90.

107 Rouvroy and Berns, 93.

108 Rouvroy and Berns, 94.

“[The alerts] are not addressed to the cognition of subjects, but rather to the irritability of bodies. Perceptual signals are used to activate bodies’ sensitivities directly, rather than to reproduce a form or convey a defined content.”<sup>109</sup>

Thus, bodies are moved according to constant impulses, keeping them in trajectories that do not correspond to socially established categorizations but are rather heterogeneous categories constantly evolving, making any collective mobilization against these devices difficult to envision within frameworks and formats of action based on the formulation of clearly identified objects of contention.

The goal is not to delve further into the analysis of this new algorithmic reality, which in itself constitutes a field of exploration and one of the most essential today. My interest here lies in what this focus on the short-circuiting of movement and the possibilities connected to it reveals about the ways in which the relationships between movement and ground, movement and the milieu, are laden and saturated with history, affects, and constantly tamed political potentialities.

In this context, the absolutely central connections that exist between movement, the re-writing of grounds, and the assertion of the political can no longer be considered in their architectural or spatial dimensions as they are traditionally conceived. In order to work on a choreopolitics of the ground, it becomes necessary to short-circuit the short-circuits, to seek out the breaches and the possibilities of new affective interweavings between bodies and grounds. Following what has been said earlier, we have seen that bodies and their movements have the power to rewrite the ground, and that grounds can support other types of movements. But we have also seen that none of this has ever been more subject to control. The invention of new spatialities depends on the power of bodies, on their capacity for subversion and assertion, and they are increasingly diminished. In this research, I argue that there is an architectural and spatial urgency to better understand this architectural potential of bodies and the ways in which it is silenced, or supported.

#### A f f e c t e d - a f f e c t i n g b o d y

The reality addressed and produced by statistical governance and choreopolice consists of statistical bodies. Although it increasingly sticks to the skin, to movement, it retains a distant dimension with the body which, in its relations, both persists and changes, reaffirms or diverges, mixes planes and reconfigures them. In contrast to the statistical body, we can oppose the ‘living body,’ if by ‘living body’ we mean a body “consisting beyond the mere aggregation of elements, of a consistency that signifies both that this body holds together and that it is susceptible to events.”<sup>110</sup>

This body susceptible to events owes one of its most productive formulations to the

109 Brian Massumi, “Peur, dit le spectre,” *Multitudes* 23, no. 4 (2005): 137, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.023.0135>.

110 Rouvroy and Berns, “Le nouveau pouvoir statistique,” 96.

philosopher Baruch Spinoza in his *Ethics*: “We don’t know what a body can do.” This formula, cited many times since, is also a fundamental assertion for the entire development of his philosophy. For Spinoza, the body, any body, is defined by what it can do, that is, by its power to affect and be affected. From this idea, it becomes possible to think of the body and its power as irreducible to a completely known, identifiable, quantifiable, and manageable operation. These dynamics make it impossible to apprehend the body completely and definitively: “One cannot predict merely from the form of a body all the relations and affects of which it is capable.”<sup>111</sup>

However, the multiplication of relations in itself does not guarantee the deployment of bodies in a way that suits them—that strengthens their power to act. Spinoza’s philosophy also emphasizes that not all relationships are equal. Spinoza describes how it is possible to distinguish between “good” and “bad” encounters by reference to their relationship to the power of the bodies in question. He defines that it is possible to evaluate them based on how these encounters and the affects they generate are useful or harmful to the preservation of being, i.e., whether they decrease or increase, promote or repress the power to act of the bodies involved:

“The good increases my power (it produces an affect of joy), disposes my body in such a way that it can affect and be affected in many more ways and maintains the relationship that characterizes me, while the bad, by diminishing my power, because it produces an affection of sadness, makes me less apt for affection and, consequently, reduces my world and by extension, my knowledge of it, and can also alter the relationship that defines me to the point of causing death.”<sup>112</sup>

Each body is exposed in its equilibrium, and each encounter is a temporary re-articulation of balances within a whole that is not itself closed off. *Good encounters* become those that strengthen the relational power of bodies and their ability to build a strategy and articulate proximities and distances. Unlike an approach that would celebrate relationality as such, this understanding of good affects helps to make visible the structuring fields of force and the already present attachments that might be sidelined within an approach focused on relationality and the relational fabric as an end in itself.

In an article inspired by the notion of *lyannaj* developed by Antillean poets and intellectuals, Yves Citton also notes the need to consider the vertical dimension in relational approaches:<sup>113</sup>

111 Moira Gatens, “Feminism as ‘Password’: Re-Thinking the ‘Possible’ with Spinoza and Deleuze,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 2 (2000): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2000.tb00314.x>.

112 Reading the question of affects and encounter in Spinoza by Jalón Oyarzun, Lucía. Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor,” 111.

113 *Lyannaj* is described by poets Ernest Breleur, Patrick Chamoiseau, Serge Domi, Gérard Delver, Édouard Glissant, Guillaume Pigéard de Gurbert, Olivier Portecop, Olivier Pulvar, Jean-Claude William, in the text “Manifeste pour les ‘produits’ de haute nécessité” published in 2009. It describes the activity of connecting everything that had become disassociated. According to Citton, *lyannaj* invites us to conceive of links (weak or strong) under the analogy of lianas, which are characterized not only by their extremely rapid growth (they don’t need to form a trunk), but above all by their formidable interweaving power, by their ability to weave networks of lines.

“It’s not absurd to imagine that the world has flattened out with the intensification of information communications and capital flows between continents. But it is essential to restore the thickness of the stacking that makes up our multiple connections in its verticality. It is from such verticality that we can rethink the respective ‘strength’ or ‘weakness’ of the links that bind us together.”<sup>114</sup>

In the continuation of his text, Citton strives to name different registers that already induce certain relational dynamics: solidarities of care, networks of solicitations, organization networks, resonance networks, and needs-based solidarities exert significant force on all new relations. These registers already strongly bind us to each other, to the point where we are all reduced to “functioning” within systems that reproduce social bonds according to the rules of their program.<sup>115</sup> The challenge then becomes gaining depth, verticality, and resisting the horizontal flows that constantly traverse us. How can we become capable of articulating “something that does not simply perform the predefined functions that devices program through us?”

Spinoza’s invitation to consider good encounters as those that enhance power calls for attention to what an encounter does to the collective bodies involved, but more importantly, to the capacity of bodies to explore and redefine what suits them. “What can this body do? What are its typical relations with other bodies and what are its typical powers? What makes it weaker? What makes it stronger?”<sup>116</sup> Many thinkers are still helping to unfold Spinoza’s thought, repeatedly demonstrating the relevance of the question of “what a body can do”, or of “what *this* body can do”.

Perhaps the relevance of Spinoza’s thought also lies in what it demands as a type of attention, and as a type of thinking by those who take hold of it. Spinoza’s assertion persists. It establishes a fundamental and radical openness from which to observe and think the world, without freezing it. It demands attention to reality in all its tensions, virtualities and actualizations. Deleuze describes this infinite demand as follows:

“Bodies are not defined by their genus or species, by their organs and functions, but by what they can do, by what the affects of which they are capable-in passion as well as in action. You have not defined an animal until you have listed its affects.”<sup>117</sup>

In the ways it orients thought and attention, in the ways it offers itself as a ground, Spinoza’s philosophy continues on its way, accompanying bodies, their singularity and their power, so that we never cease to think about them. Feminist philosopher Moira Gatens turns to Spinozist thought precisely to contemplate the limitations imposed on the female body in their *molecular dynamics* of (de)construction. “Spinoza understands

114 Yves Citton, “Cartographies Lyannajistes et Politiques Monadistes,” in *Le Pouvoir Des Liens Faibles*, ed. Alexandre Gefen and Sandra Laugier (Paris: CNRS Edition, 2020), 3–4.

115 Citton, 11.

116 Gatens, “Feminism as ‘Password,’” 64.

117 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1987), 60.

the body as a nexus of variable interconnections, a multiplicity,” writes Gatens.<sup>118</sup> This multiplicity is what enables a body to tear itself away from certain attachments and find new ones. For Gatens, following Spinoza, bodies are amalgams of components held together and prone to unpredictable reconfigurations:

“Sex, gender, race, and class distinctions appear as coagulations of molecular combinations, strata of more or less stable configurations that are held in place by a complex variety of practices that are at once discursive, normative, and subjectifying. A theory of power developed from this perspective will concern itself with relations between bodies, their habitual configurations within specific assemblages, and the dynamic of the inter-relations between their typical affects.”<sup>119</sup>

In Gatens’ perspective, the vocabulary descriptive of the feminine and its relationship to the masculine affects female bodies in their tendencies, propensities and capacities for movement. By working, experimenting with the vocabulary, not *as a vocabulary*, but as a body that affects their bodies, by exploring other vocabularies and the opportunities they offer to their movements, and by investigating what their defense mechanism invents as new terms, women can open up possibilities:

“Resisting feminine speech, on the view I have presented here, *is* a tactic of self-defense—there are not two transformations here (one in speech, the other “physical”), but one that is expressed in double.”<sup>120</sup>

Here, Gatens expresses a form of resistance, not to violence, but to the enclosure of worlds and possibilities. An affirmation of the possibility of less violent relationships, of relationships that are no longer conditioned to be experienced in a certain way. Affects, infra-corporeal and trans-corporeal realities involving human-bodies and word-bodies, and resistance to the conditioning of experience are experimented with simultaneously. While certain words seem to delimit the sphere of possible relations between men and women, while “the materialization of men as aggressors and of women as victims is, in part, achieved through language and those assemblages which support some utterances while disqualifying others”, women’s experimentation and resistance at the level of vocabulary is capable of reopening bodies to their potentialities denied by language:

“A micropolitical feminism is able to imagine alternative possible forms of sociability. This power of imagining things otherwise, in concert with the imaginings of compatible others, has the creative power to decompose and recompose the social field, bit by bit, molecule by molecule.”<sup>121</sup>

Resistance takes the form of a process of actualization and differentiation, i.e., the deployment of the virtual, made possible by experimenting with and questioning the

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118 Gatens, “Feminism as ‘Password,’” 61.

119 Gatens, 65.

120 Gatens, 72.

121 Gatens, 72.



limits of what bodies can do. The circuit between the virtual and the actual enhances the reality of bodies, thickens their relationship with the world, and enables them to reframe the world imposed upon them as one possibility among others. The body that begins to take shape here has little to do with dominant Western models of the body, which are seen as the “substance-residue of the humanist division between consciousness and matter.”<sup>122</sup> Continuing to understand the body as a pivot in the articulation of other possibles means rather putting behind this term a series of “corporealities”, of “ways of being bodies” that make it possible to account for the plurality of infra- and transcorporeal realities weaving existences.<sup>123</sup>

### Normative Proximities and Reorientations

Through Gatens’ description, we sense how Spinozist thought creates attention to these molecular dynamics and the ways in which the bodies involved rearrange themselves. This attention is necessary to understand the processes of subversion and reconfiguration of the structuring forces that condition relationships :

“The body as thought by Spinoza always leads us to a differential. It functions as a driving force for action, as it prevents him from taking anything for granted or considering a line as immovable, while at the same time making him feel, in his own flesh, his involvement in a movement of constant creativity that far exceeds his own body.”<sup>124</sup>

writes Jalón Oyarzun. For the researcher and architect, the body’s power to affect and be affected is always situated. The body “recognizes the importance of the exteriority with which it plays. It doesn’t seek to define it, but to experience it, learn from it and navigate it. In its practice, it actualizes the power of the political by producing a shared reality in a permanent state of renewal, a common.” In this process, the body reevaluates the balances, proximities, and tendencies maintained by various normative structuring forces, which also have a situated reality in how they maintain these proximities and tendencies.

Drawing on the words of philosopher Sara Ahmed, philosopher Emma Bigé describes how racism is not so much a matter of similarity, but rather one of contact and contiguity. It is because certain bodies come into contact with each other more than others, depending on how their movements are organized, notably by a choreopolice involved in racial production, that they end up participating in the identity of the other. It is precisely the contiguity between certain individuals rather than others “that makes them appear as similar, weaving them together like the same skin, the same epidermis, the same pigment, excluding the proximity of other lighter or darker pigments, fol-

122 Emma Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, SH/Terrains philosophiques (Paris: La Découverte, 2023), 7.

123 Bigé, 19.

124 Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor.” 178.

lowing a coloristic distribution of contacts.”<sup>125</sup> Choreoplice precisely organizes contingencies that produce *semblances* of affinities, which stiffen and mutually reinforce each other until they constitute a significant part of the bodies’ equilibrium. Together, they then continue to render each body incapable of extending their power, while maintaining the illusion of freedom of movement and relationship. These tendencies that come to constitute bodies are, by extension, collective tendencies.

Philosopher Sara Ahmed devotes a book to bringing phenomenology and queer studies together around the notion of orientation. From phenomenology, she extends the idea that bodies become oriented in response to the worlds around them, and these orientations become stratified as bodily tendencies. But the central argument of her book is that “the body gets directed in some ways more than others.”<sup>126</sup> She describes the resulting phenomenon of mutual confirmation of tendencies as follows:

“What if direction, as the way we face as well as move, is organized rather than casual? We might speak then of collective direction: of ways in which nations or other imagined communities might be “going in a certain direction,” or facing the same way, such that only some things “get our attention.” Becoming a member of such a community, then, might also mean following this direction, which could be described as the political requirement that we turn some ways and not others. We follow the line that is followed by others: the repetition of the act of following makes the line disappear from view as the point from which “we” emerge.”<sup>127</sup>

Following Ahmed’s thinking, we can say that bodies are not only directed, but also, as bodies with their own tendencies, take on the form of this direction. By evoking these repetitions and stratified tendencies, Ahmed allows us to consider choreoplice in its dialogue with historically constituted bodily tendencies. In choreoplice, the immediacy of continuously adapted injunctions is not in contradiction with these long-term established tendencies, but builds on them. Both aspects are intimately intertwined. Choreoplice adeptly appropriates established lines and tendencies, orchestrating the movement of bodies along these predefined paths, steadfastly resisting the inherent potential for divergence that emerges when these trajectories are set into motion. Ahmed writes:

“Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way and we know which direction we face only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view.”<sup>128</sup>

Choreoplice seizes on the performativity of lines to affirm and limit them. We are

125 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 203.

126 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 15.

127 Ahmed, 15.

128 Ahmed, 16.

pressed into lines. It is precisely the tendencies of bodies, carrying with them the history of the world, that are constantly readjusted by injunctions. It is these tendencies, already adopted and incorporated, that maintain the illusion that movement “comes from the body itself” and is “free”. Moving freely, for Ahmed, implies resisting how choreopolice seizes the lines to make them the only possible lines:

“For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one’s futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. A queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return.”<sup>129</sup>

Ahmed’s words make it very clear how each walked line is also a way of committing and defining oneself. In this sense, walking other lines, branching off, going back, whether by force or choice, always provokes deeply disorienting effects. Ahmed’s interest in orientation is, really, an interest in how the perspective of orientation allows us to sense the need of embracing and supporting experiences of disorientation in what they have to teach us:

“If we think with and through orientation we might allow the moments of disorientation to gather, almost as if they are bodies around a different table. We might, in the gathering, face a different way.”<sup>130</sup>

Lepecki also stresses the need of considering this dimension of the long-term temporal conditioning of bodies when discussing the possibility of free movement. In an article entitled “Stumble dance”, he spends some time with Heidegger and his formulation of presence as “oscillation”. For Heidegger, according to Lepecki,

“What is” can no longer be conceived as that which occupies just happens to be there, presenting itself in the presencing of the moment. Rather, what is, the essent, only becomes present once infused with a minimum amount of movement. [...] The imbrication of movement into ontology is choreographically specific. It is not just any movement that allows being to gain presence. Only a very particular movement-quality guarantees the full emerging of being as presence: a wavering, an oscillation, vibration.”<sup>131</sup>

So what is, is not what is seen. Reducing the former to the latter results in “an unbearable arrest of being—a hurried halting of ‘what is’ into form-as-presence. This rushed fixing puts being under house arrest, where it remains confined and domesticated by a rigidity of thought that does not allow ‘what is’ to be revealed in all its many, immanent potentialities, its oscillations.”<sup>132</sup>

The proposal of immanent oscillation, on the other hand, allows us to think of what is not in terms of its fixity, but as instability, as an ever-renewed predisposition to fall.

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129 Ahmed, 21.

130 Ahmed, 24.

131 André Lepecki, “Stumble Dance,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 14, no. 1 (January 2004): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407700408571440>.

132 Lepecki, 49.

Lepecki then returns to his politics of the ground. If the becoming of *what is* happens through encounters and the disturbance of the oscillations they provoke, Western dance, by isolating the dancer and placing them on flat, neutral ground, renders them incapable of grasping it. In contrast to this isolated body, other bodies have had no choice but to see their oscillations transformed. Lepecki focuses on anti-colonial thinker Frantz Fanon's description of his own movements after being called a "negro" for the first time in his life. Fanon loses his footing, and his coming back into presence occurs on the racist ground defined for him. For Lepecki, bringing Fanon and Heidegger together enables us to think of the radical imbrication of presence as oscillation with the racialized terrain it encounters:

"One could say that for Fanon, being is also not just that which happens to be there. For, in Fanon, every being-there already happens in a politically and racially charged field, where the violence of the optical-linguistic apparatus literally transforms the coming into presence. [...] As with Heidegger, quivering also guarantees the coming into presence of being. Only, this time, it is a very specific quivering, laced with a dynamic of fear and violence, announcing the general climate of colonialist racism."<sup>133</sup>

Can one create a dance that is not the representation of this fall, but unfolds the critical and scandalous disturbance associated with its existence? How can we conceive of free movement that takes into account what it tells us about racialized grounds?

Despite their different trajectories, there is a quite similar operation in the ways in which Ahmed and Lepecki engage in a dialogue and friction between general theories of presence and orientation with perspectives that integrate gender and race. Through their respective attempts to seriously consider specific bodies and perspectives and their implications, both researchers reveal the profound inadequacy of the Western concepts they consider and question. This inadequacy relates in particular to the failure to take account of uneven ground and historically constructed body orientations in the apprehension of movement. What movements are produced by those who navigate as best they can the limited environments they are given? And what spatialities do these movements produce? How do they make visible the uneven ground on which we move? And how do we share, learn from and connect our experiences of disorientation?

Choreopolice constantly reaffirms trends that de-mobilize bodies in their political potential. It closes bodies and lines carrying the weight of history in on themselves, isolating and freezing them. Choreopolice is "the implementation of a senseless and insensitive movement that predetermines a kinetics of the citizen where the relations between movement and place, or politics and ground, are only authorized if they remain reified, incontestable, immutable relations."<sup>134</sup>

Acknowledging the realities and shifting forms of choreopolice is a first step towards

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133 Lepecki, 56.

134 Lepecki, "Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia," 55.

addressing this violence. But it is also important not to let it have a monopoly, not to let it engulf us with its ever-evolving forms. Parallel to this violence, or rather, transversally to it, practices of resistance to the joint impulse of choreopolice and racialized and gendered grounds are unfolding at every moment. In the face of choreopolice, we need new concepts and new attentions to these practices of resistance. We must describe, think, and learn from the specific movements of bodies and the reconfigurations of grounds they trace. What unique responses are given to the question “How to move freely, here and now?” And what knowledge do these mobilizations outline?

### Choreopolitics: movement as freedom

“Even if what we “do do” affects what we “can do,” other things remain possible. For instance, bodies can take up spaces that do not extend their shape, which can in turn work to ‘reorientate’ bodies and space,” writes Ahmed.<sup>135</sup> The combined forces of choreopolice and history, “precisely because they attempt to control the uncontrollable—the power of bodies—generate cracks, contested or out-of-reach zones, in which the body discovers opportunities to produce new affective and spatial formulations.”<sup>136</sup> Bodies use lines and thresholds to construct their being-in-the-world. They operate in complex spatial assemblages of limits and possibilities to assert their freedom—their free movement. The web of connections that binds bodies to each other and to their grounds is able to resist, or to change. This interlacing is both potentially conditioning and supporting. This dual aspect is tested in the spatializations woven by bodies. Through certain practices, they train themselves to extend and multiply connections, to infuse movement into those that freeze, and to manage breaks, whether chosen or not. They then actualize their power to entangle themselves with others and compose a common spatiality.

Lepecki has coined the term *choreopolitics* to describe the range of movement practices that contribute to sketching emerging responses to these questions. If *choreopolice* determines continuous trajectories, *choreopolitics* are rebellious, imaginative and shared mobilizations that implement meaningful movements. Lepecki offers this description:

“Choreopolitics would be the planning of such activation of movement away from pre-established paths. Choreopolitics is predicated on a gathering and activation of that urgently necessary (but so often curtailed, censored, or controlled) capacity to make plans for alternative collective modes of existence, away from conformity, sad affects, tamed bodies, prescribed routes, which define choreopolicing. [...] In this mutual rearticulated reconfiguration, the main energy, impetus, and motions are whatever is needed to break free from the neoliberal agitation of permanently controlled circulation and from the contemporary microfascist formations of individualistic, intra- and interpoliced collectives.”<sup>137</sup>

135 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 61.

136 Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor,” 9.

137 Lepecki, “The Choreopolitical,” 47.

Reimagining the political as *choreopolitical* allows for a fuller understanding of the limits and capacities of political agency in contemporary control societies. As already described, regimes of control today operate according to algorithmic logics that no longer fully correspond to the political categories that traditionally mobilize mobilizations. They short-circuit individuality and operate at the level of motor tendencies and affects—a pre-conditioning of movement:

“We can say that choreopolitics requires a redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and senses through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense is the experimental exercise of freedom.”<sup>138</sup>

Taken broadly, choreopolitics embraces everything that enables us to learn to move politically. Strikes, seatings, collective experimentation and the practice of dance within a more specific framework can all be considered from the angle of a dissident politics of movement. In all of these moments, the choreopolitical perspective invites us, as Bigé points out, to

“detect (beneath major movements, beneath movements classically considered political) what philosopher Erin Manning might call ‘minor gestures’: gestures that seem insignificant, gestures of sitting (at the front of a bus, at a restaurant counter), gestures of dancing (on the roof of a nuclear power plant), gestures of lying down (with blood-covered white coats), gestures of inhabiting (a grove destined to be an airport), gestures of raising a fist with closed eyes, gestures of kissing, spitting, sleeping, staying.”<sup>139</sup>

Yet these minor gestures signals a capacity to produce alternative movement that dancers are particularly driven to explore:

“Dancers are hackers of gesture: in the studio, they study not only motor conditions but also perceptual and affective conditions, as well as conceptual and political conditions, to be able to produce the movements they need.”<sup>140</sup>

For Lepecki as well, it is the dancers who, in the most controlled spaces, manage to activate “the highly mobile *political thing*.”<sup>141</sup> In his article on the choreopoliice/choreopolitics couple, Lepecki calls on a filmed performance entitled *TURF FEINZ RIP RichD Dancing in the Rain Oakland Street* filmed by Yoram Savion, to support his point about choreopolitics. The film documents the occupation of an Oakland street by two performers, *No Noize* and *Man*. The presence of a police car at the start of the sequence announces that the movement is being monitored. As soon as the car leaves the frame, the dancers move from the space of the sidewalk to the space of the street. They perform dance movements, “passing” movement to each other and gradually blending into the traffic. The movement flows continuously from one body to another, and the video ed-

138 Lepecki, “Choreopoliice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 20.

139 Emma Bigé, “Danses, agitations, soulèvements,” *AOC*, 2023.

140 Bigé.

141 Lepecki, “Choreopoliice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 20.



iting itself contributes to this movement through its cuts, slow-motion effects, and other techniques that expand the scene:

“And because this circulation takes place against the proper predisposition of the city’s regulations for “moving along,” because it goes against the no-loitering and curfew-for-minors laws targeting so many African American and Latino neighborhoods, because it erupts literally against the police presence in the neighborhood, because it is a circulation in dissensus, we must call this particular movement: *political*.”<sup>142</sup>

In this performance, the dancers redraw the ground of the city through their movements. By exercising their power of dissenting, by evoking both explicit and tacit surveillance and body conduct, they reveal the city’s ground as racialized and choreopoliced, interrupting the fantasy of empty and available space and “free” movement. They expose the predetermined paths offered to moving bodies. But they also reveal that *this* ground can become the support for other movements:

“The crack is already the ground, already the place, and with its complicity, we can act out the desire for another life, another city, another politics – another thing because art and politics, in their co-constitutive fusion, remind us that there is still everything to see, yes; there is still everything to perceive, yes; everything is still to be danced.”<sup>143</sup>

The performance reveals a form of dissent that escapes “the choreopoliced images of what ‘protest’ must be in the urban circuit.”<sup>144</sup> It’s not spontaneity that characterizes choreopolitics, but rather insistence, persistence, willpower and technique that enable the exploration and activation of movement’s *bifurcating*, affirmative, political potential. The political is constructed, affirmed and deployed collectively—including with the city’s ground. This aspect of non-spontaneity, of work, of repetition, of oscillation between the most anchored, repetitive and standardized aspects of movement and its most inventive aspects is a crucial element that the concept of choreopolitics helps highlight. If “free” movement isn’t the first thing that comes to mind, if moving freely is something that needs to be learned and asserted, then *we need to take care of it*. The concept serves to gather under the same banner – a banner that is always temporary and open to questioning – a series of practices that experiment around and support the emergence and circulation of the political.

### Soft choreographies

But how do choreopolitics take shape? Historically, choreography was invented as a command system to which bodies willingly submitted, falling into the choreographic apparatus of capture. Allsopp and Lepecki note “how a dancers have to subjugate themselves to the commands of all sorts of choreographic and para-choreographic imperatives - from dieting to gender roles; from strict physical discipline to the precise

142 Lepecki, 22.

143 Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia,” 57.

144 Lepecki, 57.

enactment of positions, attitudes, steps, gestures, but also words, all for the sake of exact repetition.”<sup>145</sup> From a choreopolitical perspective, *choreography* becomes something radically different from a system of command that produces obedient bodies.

Through the work of several choreographers and dancers, choreography transforms into an experimental framework for exploring conditioning, its demands on bodies and its potential for subversion. Choreography initiates resistance, counter-movements and bifurcations. It provides an opportunity to take time and learn how, by surrendering to movement requirements and incorporating them, choreography also offers the possibility of “excorporations” to be invented. Here, choreography is no longer equivalent to a command and organization device for movement but rather a technology that organizes the threshold, enabling negotiation and invention of movements of freedom in a context where all movement is, a priori, choreographed:

“Choreography as a planned, dissensual, and nonpoliced disposition of motions and bodies becomes the condition of possibility for the political to emerge.”<sup>146</sup>

For many contemporary choreographers, choreography is no longer a fixed framework. Rather, it becomes soft. This *softness* has nothing to do with the way it manifests itself. The command can remain deeply demanding, even violent. Softness has to do with the ways in which choreographers open up the command to its subversion – or its destruction. Choreography seeks its excorporations. It is the performative and physical force that reorganizes the political at the level of bodily power.

This “soft choreography” goes hand in hand with what might be called “soft obedience”. Gestures are not made and unmade without effort. In these practices, dancers trust the framework offered to lead them to encounter variations, nuances in their movements, and the potential for resistance, individuation, bifurcation, and excorporation that is associated with it. The possibility of the political lies in the dancers’ persistence in spending time with the choreographic framework as a proposition, enduring the way in which this framework affects their movements but also, how the movements affect the choreographic framework in return.

### Choreography of the more-than

The threshold of choreographic-political experimentation also interests the philosopher, artist, and researcher Erin Manning. For Manning, the real interest in collective experimentation lies in the way established conditions of participation are exceeded by the event they give rise to. In other words, we find the idea of a subversive movement at work. In Manning’s terms, the choreographic, as experimentation, primarily serves to make the collective and more-than-human nature, the “more-than,” of movement

145 Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki, “Editorial: On Choreography,” *Performance Research* 13, no. 1 (March 2008): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528160802465409>.

146 Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 22.

palpable.

The choreographic framework allows testing the potential for the *more-than* residing within the forms proposed by choreography. When the experiment works, the choreographic framework is not felt as a form but as the force of that form, which is already surpassing and deconstructing the structure established for experimentation. The choreographic form is subverted and rewritten. The sense of the more-than, the sense of the form's potential to become something else, is precisely what choreography offers as a tool for revealing and working with the conditioning of bodies and movement:

“It’s not the *form* of the work that stays with you, it’s the how of its capacity to dislodge the you that you thought you were. It’s the how of the work’s capacity to shift the very ground that continues to move you.”<sup>147</sup>

Manning, like Lepecki, is careful to consider the gestural force that opens experience to its potential variation not in a universalist manner, but in all its nuances. However, she is interested in ensuring that these nuances themselves do not directly limit the thinking of the choreographic framework. Rather, when she conceives of such frameworks, Manning thinks about the fact that all movements are conditioned by a large number of injunctions simultaneously, and that these injunctions tend to control life as an expression of diversity, and reduce worlds and possibilities. For her, it is important to address all of them simultaneously. The motif that best expresses the reduction of worlds and possibilities as globally proposed today is that of *neurotypicality*, which she defines as

“the widespread belief that there is an independence of being and thinking attributable above all to the human, a character-better-than-relative to our neurology. Neurology, as a central but generally unspoken identity politics, shapes our assessment of which lives are worth fighting for, which lives are worth educating, which lives are worth living, which lives are worth saving.”<sup>148</sup>

This term allows her to consider various forms of oppression as they manifest as “framings of existence.” Manning emphasizes “the mutual indebtedness of the neurotypicality narrative and the framing of certain bodies and forms of life as less valuable.”<sup>149</sup> Neurotypicality is the opposite of generative, unpredictable, rhythmic, insurgent life. In opposition, Manning suggests considering neurodiversity as “a platform for political change that fundamentally alters how life is defined, and valued.”<sup>150</sup>

The primary value of the notion of neurodiversity is to highlight the great multiplicity of normativities that operate concurrently with the conditioning of lives. It makes complex forms of interdependence and modes of encountering difference the terrain

147 Erin Manning, “Choreography as Mobile Architecture,” *Performance Paradigm* 9 (2013): 4.

148 Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, Thought in the Act (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

149 Manning, 14.

150 Manning, 15–16.

of politics. But far from being “not specific enough”, it allows for generous choreographic frameworks for the “more-than,” frameworks that take the risk that nothing will emerge, rather than preconditioning the results of experimentation.

Manning trusts intuition, or rather, she makes the manifestation of this intuition the vector that orients the experiment towards its more-than. She describes this intuition as “the fascination, in the event, of the forces that surge and activate the shift of experience towards its more-than.” Here, choreography becomes a means for intuitive bodies to seize and actualize what they are given to feel. And what choreography gives us to feel is precisely “a memory of the future”, an “affective attunement, in the event, to futurity understood not as succession but as rhythm, a “recursive experience, in the event, of what is on its way. Already felt.”<sup>151</sup> Intuition, then, is what connects movement to its more-than, to the more-than-human, to the forces that run through the event. The event, in turn, becomes the true inventor of new possibilities for life.

In both Manning and Lepecki, there’s a strong desire to open up choreography to its future and its relevance as a conceptual tool for identifying the political potential of this more-than feeling, and of the movements and proposals that emerge from it. Each in their own way, the two authors perform “the *tour de force* of using dance as a key to reading, or as a mirror, of thoughts about the body, movement and, more generally, being-together, as expressed not only in choreographic artworks, but in the societies that house them.”<sup>152</sup> For Manning, choreography “is about generating modes of movement that make sense of the complex ecology of incipient movement [...] It’s about composing techniques to experience the ‘more than’ of form.”<sup>153</sup> For Lepecki, “dance and choreography, as knowledge formations on the conditions of mobility, self-mobility, and generalized mobilization, become critical to address and counter the kinetic impetus in neoliberalism.”<sup>154</sup> In both cases, the choreographic becomes a means of working in the register of the in-between, in the movement of individual and collective co-individualization that experimentation enables.

This dimension of the choreographic and its connections with the political is now increasingly explicit and explored by many artists and researchers. But for it to emerge as a tool, a motive and a knowledge, it has needed insistent practices: danced practices, collaborative practices, thinking and writing practices, legitimizing practices, listening practices, many of them. As Lepecki reiterated following Arendt, the political could disappear. It requires constant practice, repetition and affirmation. It requires “choreopolitical stubbornness”.

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151 Manning, 85.

152 Romain Bigé, “Le partage du mouvement: une philosophie des gestes avec le contact improvisation” (Paris, Paris sciences et lettres, 2017), 54.

153 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 193.

154 Lepecki, *Singularities*, 5.

In Western culture, the urgency of using the body and its engagement in experience to reopen possibilities became evident in the 1960s and the widespread mobilization of society that it represented. In the following part of this text, I am interested in understanding and delineating this “choreopolitical stubbornness”, as it took shape in those years through a multitude of practices. I trace its affirmation through the practices of the *Judson Dance Theater* and *Grand Union*, now emblematic collectives in the history of dance.

These two collective practices, which share several members, are profoundly representative of the growing complexity of the relationship between control and the possibility of movement, and of the transformation of the role of choreographic dispositifs in response to it. It is then possible to explore these questions: How did these experimental practices manifest the emergence of a choreopolitical concern? How were dancers able to explore the increasingly complex interweaving of conditioned and free movement that characterized their era? How was choreography subverted? What kind of attention and audiences were needed to feel, put into words and expand these experiments? What grounds did these practices rewrite, and how were they sometimes limited by them?

The hindsight afforded by the decades that separate us from these experiments, and the conceptualization of the choreopolitical that has since been formulated, enable us to approach them through different perspectives. We can think in terms of the precise and situated choreopolitics to which these practices contributed. But we can also understand them as (stubborn) choreopolitical attempts, consisting of practices, operations and techniques that remain inspiring today, raising questions about their traces and transmission, their communities, geographies and places. Finally, we can read these practices in their historical dimension, revealing the persistence of dominant Western logics, the inclusion of certain bodies and knowledge, and the exclusion of others. Together, all these layers suggest the ways in which this then-emerging choreopolitical stubbornness can be activated and transformed today. These last questions will be addressed in the following section. For now, let us journey back to the 1960s.





## 1.2 Choreopolitical matters. — Operations, techniques, and politics in 1960s New York

PART II

The rise of logistics — A time for collectives: Judson Dance Theater and Grand Union — Anarchist Choreopolitics — Operational Choreopolitics — Choreopolitics of the more-than — Choreopolitical ecologies of the more-than



## 1.2 Choreopolitical matters. — Operations, techniques, and politics in 1960s New York

### PART II

#### The rise of logistics

Rather than starting by looking and thinking directly alongside the dancers, with the ever-present risk of reproducing in our attentions an act of identification and isolation of certain entities for which we are over-trained, we will begin here by paying attention to the movement that increasingly agitates bodies and relationships – and paradoxically, demobilizes them. Researchers Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call this globalized choreography “logistics.”<sup>155</sup> In the 1960s, logistics organized the circulation of bodies and goods, “shipping” containers and bodies through the channels of capitalism. But logistics didn’t begin in the 1960s, and it is not merely about organizing circulation.

To understand its operations and tensions and comprehend what truly drives it, Harney and Moten connect logistics to the act of imprisoning African bodies in ship holds:

“Where did logistics get this ambition to connect bodies, objects, affects, information, without subjects, without the formality of subjects, as if it could reign sovereign over the informal, the concrete and generative indeterminacy of material life? The truth is, modern logistics was born that way. Or more precisely it was born in resistance to, given as the acquisition of, this ambition, this desire and this practice of the informal.”<sup>156</sup>

Logistics thus emerges of an act of reducing what it transports to nothing. For the two researchers, logistics is only interested in individualities in what it knows about them, enabling predictions and management strategies:

“Logistics wants to dispense with the subject altogether. This is the dream of this newly dominant capitalist science. This is the drive of logistics and the algorithms that power that dream.”<sup>157</sup>

However, it is condemned in its own existence because this operation is never truly possible. In the process of “reducing to nothing, reducing to nobody”, logistics comes up against what becomes a kind of ghost at the very heart of the system:

“Every attempt by logistics to dispel strategy, to banish human time, to connect without going through the subject, to subject without handling things, resists something that was already resisting it, namely the resistance that founds modern logistics. Concerned to

155 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe New York Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013), 87–92.

156 Harney and Moten, 92.

157 Harney and Moten, 87–88.

move objects and move through objects, logistics removes itself from the informality that founds its objects and itself. There is some/thing logistics is always after.”<sup>158</sup>

At the heart of logistics, therefore, lies *informality*, the capacity of bodies to weave from where they are, rebelling against the reduction of their world. Moten and Harney’s words resonate with the Spinozist body when they write: “Logistics somehow knows that it is not true that we do not yet know what flesh can do.”<sup>159</sup> This capacity of the body haunts logistics. It finds itself condemned to embrace the reality of a capacity for resistance within its system. It organizes it, it channels it. Logistics channels are therefore anything but neutral. Through its operations, logistics limits the power connected to movement. It drives

“movements that change nothing [which] are also movements that reach no one. They only happen to categories, most often binary: man/woman, collaborator/manager, n/n+1, black/white, adult/child, handicapped/disabled, cis/trans, homo/hetero, young/old, categories that allow you to algorithmically describe your gestures without having to understand them, and that organize difference in such a way that it divides rather than allows alliance, that is, that it immobilizes rather than allows mobilization.”<sup>160</sup>

By seizing upon categories, including those that could play a unifying role in democratic politics, logistics operates along and transversally to politics’ traditional motives for mobilization. In this sense, and as Citton writes in his reading of Harney and Moten’s work,

“taking sides for or against such and such a policy, fighting for the recognition of one’s interests, engaging in democratic combat: all this, which we identify with political activity, of course has its own merits and its own necessity. But it also leads, according to Moten and Harney, to the management of our self-management.”<sup>161</sup>

The mental operation that Harney and Moten describe can be understood as an inversion at the heart of what we imagine as trajectories of struggle. These trajectories are no longer about fighting for commons and reorganizing their management, no longer about developing new frameworks for the future. Faced with logistics’ appropriation of all categories, including their transformations and reorganizations, the two authors encourage us to embrace this ghost that escapes it, what is not them, the incalculable, what bodies can do together:

“There are flights of fantasy in the hold of the ship.”<sup>162</sup> And for both authors, this resource for countering logistics suddenly takes on a form related to touch and movement: “To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others.”<sup>163</sup>

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158 Harney and Moten, 87–88.

159 Harney and Moten, 93.

160 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecolitiques de la danse*, 137.

161 Yves Citton, “Les Undercommons de Stefano Harney et Fred Moten,” *Revue du Crieur*, no. 15 (2020): 145.

162 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 94.

163 Harney and Moten, 98.

What haunts logistics, what it dances with in a forced dance, is this capacity to share our *incompleteness* and turn it into a resource. Harney and Moten call this capacity *hapticality*:

“Hapticality, the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feeling of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem.”<sup>164</sup>

We find in this thought the idea of something that, in the encounter between bodies, in their abandonment to one another, escapes channeling and affirms a common multiplicity. The entity capable of resisting logistics and choreopolice most fundamentally, most radically, is the entity that is open, the entity that is never “one”:

“The most precious experiences are not about self-mastery, but about practices of “dispossession of ourselves, where we agree to be possessed in other ways, where we consent to not being one, in moments that also let people act on us and through us, without our having to constantly seek to re-constitute ourselves.”<sup>165</sup>

Practices of resistance to logisticality are those in which doing-together is the condition for being free. Consequently, freedom is in motion, and this movement comes as much, if not more, from others than from oneself. This reading of a movement that agitates society to control it and the motives of resistance that appear in contrast, suggests, like Lepecki’s work on choreopolice and choreopolitics, that the political resides in the movement that teaches us *to be for one another*.

### A time for collectives: Judson Dance Theater and Grand Union

In New York in the 1960s, the arts converged with great fervor, opening up the realm of dance to something greater than itself. Between 1962 and 1964 in New York, the *Judson Dance Theater*, a loosely-knit transdisciplinary collective, explored the relationship between dance and movement. The group rejected the conventional movements of dance and the idea of representation that goes with it, in favor of a broader exploration of movement-as-doing and the relationship between dance, movement and what is at play politically in the fact of being-and-moving-together. In 1968, choreographer and dancer Yvonne Rainer, one of the key figures of this group, looked back on the practice of the Judson with these words:

“The alternatives that were explored now are obvious: stand, walk, run, eat, carry bricks, show movies, or move or be moved by some *thing* rather than oneself.”<sup>166</sup>

164 Harney and Moten, 98.

165 Citton, “Les Undercommons de Stefano Harney et Fred Moten,” 146.

166 Yvonne Rainer, *A Woman Who--: Essays, Interviews, Scripts*, PAJ Books (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 33. The article in question was first published in the book Battcock, Gregory. 1968. *Minimal art; a critical anthology*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

The experimental motif of “being moved”, which would occupy the Judson dancers, marked a pivotal shift not only within the realm of modern dance and choreography but also resonates strongly with ulterior reflections on choreopolitics and logistics. In retrospect, then, it’s possible to approach the Judson’s work as a micro-political experimentation and as a choreopolitics. The aim here is to bring these experiments into dialogue with concepts that go beyond the framework of dance itself, while insisting on the fact that the complexity of world-building takes place at the level of bodies and how they move together and with their milieus.

Some basic elements of approach are necessary to acquaint ourselves with the artists who will accompany us in the following pages.<sup>167</sup> In 1962, three choreographers – Ruth Emerson, Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer – auditioned in front of Al Carmines, then in charge of cultural programming at the *Judson Memorial Church* in Greenwich Village, and were given the opportunity to perform there. This marked the beginning of several years of collective experimentation. From then on, weekly performances were organized at the Judson Memorial Church, and their content chosen collectively. Around the choreographers and the church, other venues and other artists were also important: the course given by choreographer and composer Robert Ellis Dunn, inspired by John Cage’s ideas and methods of improvisation, in which the three artists participated with other musicians, visual artists and dancers;<sup>168</sup> the events and lecture-performances in which they were invited to take part on numerous occasions; the transdisciplinary workshops organized every summer on the West Coast by choreographer Anna Halprin, experienced by several Judson members; the constellation of photographers, critics and more or less informed audiences who gravitated around the Judson;<sup>169</sup> among others.

Beyond the places and individuals, some major trends representative of the American and global social context of that time also found a unique articulation at Judson: a rejection of certain values that saw American youth breaking away from their families and coming to New York with a burning desire to experiment;<sup>170</sup> a general inclination to engage the body in social and artistic domains, working with the material of the present moment; and a quest for collective and horizontal experimentation and improvisation frameworks driven by democratic values.

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167 For a cross-disciplinary introduction to the context in which Judson was formed, see Rossella Mazzaglia, “La Contact Improvisation: genèse et développement d’une danse démocratique,” in *La perspective de la pomme: histoire, politiques et pratiques du Contact improvisation* (Bologna: Piretti editore, 2021), 43–64.

168 These include Simone Forti, David Gordon, Steve Paxton, Meredith Monk, Lucinda Childs, Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown.

169 The *Village Voice* newspaper, written by Jill Johnston, provides an attentive and enthusiastic press account of this period. A collection of articles was published in *Marmalade me* in 1971.

170 We can refer in particular to Trisha Brown’s testimony in Goldberg, Marianne, *Reconstructing Trisha Brown. Dances and Performances Pieces 1960-1975*, New York University, 1990, pp. 34-35, and the autobiographical writings of Yvonne Rainer. This generation was looking for values, motives and experiences other than those offered by the capitalist model.



The intense years of the Judson were followed by years of looser collaborations. Finding cheap places to live and practice collectively was proving increasingly difficult for Lower Manhattan artists. One of the crucial impulses then came from Lithuanian immigrant artist (and trained architect) George Maciunas. Inspired by European collectives like the Bauhaus but also agrarian communities, he organized an artist colony in SoHo, an industrial district next to Greenwich Village. Maciunas's offer, taking advantage of the exodus from small warehouses in New York, was immediately seized upon by artist communities that moved in, worked, and explored this industrial context.<sup>171</sup> At the same time, other artist groups held interdisciplinary hubs in the same neighborhood, while galleries and institutions contributed to a renewed artistic effervescence. It is in this context that between 1970 and 1976, several participants from the Judson came together in a new collective format that became *Grand Union*:

“These places were so cheap and it was so much fun and so interactive. Grand Union was sort of an extension of this kind of familiarity and intimacy of artists of that time,”

declared later the dancer Douglas Dunn, one of its members.<sup>172</sup>

Grand Union took shape in the wake of Yvonne Rainer's practice as a choreographer. In 1970, she worked with a group of performers on a performance called *Continuous Project-Altered Daily*, with the idea of integrating the dimension of choreography-in-the-making into the performance. Following this project, there was a de-hierarchization of work in which Yvonne Rainer relinquished her position of choreographer of a group of dancers, and everyone became both choreographer and performer. The group of Grand Union consisted of seven active participants.<sup>173</sup> It was collectively decided that the group would not rehearse together, but would give performances based on the ability of the individual artists to react and compose together. Over fifty performances, as well as other formats such as workshops, were given during the group's six-year shared trajectory.

In 1972, Yvonne Rainer left the group to make films, inaugurating a new phase of her research. In 1976, tensions within the group made it impossible to maintain the complicity on which the performances primarily relied. The remaining artists put an end to Grand Union and pursued their own projects and trajectories, inaugurating diverse approaches that were often profoundly transdisciplinary.

These few lines now allow us to delve more deeply into certain moments and aspects of the work of these groups. In the following paragraphs, we aim to give a sense

171 Trisha Brown's pieces are probably among the most emblematic of this approach.

172 Quoted in Perron, Wendy. Wendy Perron, *The Grand Union: Accidental Anarchists of Downtown Dance, 1970-1976* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2020), 56.

173 The group's core members are dance artists Trisha Brown, Barbara Dilley, Douglas Dunn, David Gordon, Nancy Lewis, Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer. Other artists who have occasionally rehearsed and performed with the group include Becky Arnold, Vicky Ruane, Valda Setterfield and Lincoln Brown.

of and qualify the choreopolitics that were written through these practices. How did dance enabled th dancers to explore and think about the structuring dynamics of an era on a bodily scale? But, also, what was the role of the milieus in these choreopolitics? And what does it bring to our understanding of choreopolitics for architecture to consider these dances and choreopolitics as *situated*?

### Anarchist Choreopolitics

A number of contemporary authors have already addressed the micro-political dimension of Judson's work. In an article entitled "Dancing Anarchy", Emma Bigé identifies the specific choreopolitical characteristics of the experimental practices of Judson, Grand Union and Contact Improvisation.<sup>174</sup> In these three practices, whose key participants largely overlap, she traces traits that, she argues, align these practices more with anarchism than with liberal democracy. Anarchist thought represents a challenge to centralized forms of power, and an invitation to subvert established orders and values. Examining aesthetic operations from an anarchist angle highlights the capacity of certain artistic practices to resist normative tendencies, and affirms "the creative counter-value of the confused."<sup>175</sup>

Bigé notes that Judson and Grand Union have more often been associated with democracy than with anarchy.<sup>176</sup> For her, anarchy is more apt to describe what's at stake in these experiments:

"Democracy is power or, more precisely, force (*cratos*) placed in the hands of the people (*demos*). The fact that such power is vested in the people does not imply equality or the absence of hierarchy: as evidenced by the slavery that underpins Athenian democracy and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few in contemporary democracies, democracy is perfectly compatible with the most diverse forms of domination. If we were to be consistent, in dance studies, one should not speak of democratization in relation to the mentioned operations: one should speak of anarchy."<sup>177</sup>

This anarchist effort does not lie in the inscription of these practices in 'anarchist movements,' but rather in choices on the scale of personal actions:

"Subjective disagreement was not motivated by a Cause with a capital 'c', but [...] each had their own 'cause', that is to say, a personal motivation that disregarded both political ideologies and activism, and that translated instead into alternative lifestyle choices to the model inherited from the 1950s."<sup>178</sup>

As the argument of the article shows, anarchy is invested directly in relationships, bod-

174 Romain Bigé, "Danser l'Anarchie: Théories et Pratiques Anarchistes Dans Le Judson Dance Theater, Grand Union et Le Contact Improvisation," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Da Presença* 10, no. 1 (2020): e89064, <https://doi.org/10.1590/2237-266089064>.

175 Bigé, 3.

176 One of the well-known books written about the Judson Dance Theater is entitled *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964*. It was written by Sally Banes and published in 1983.

177 Bigé, "Danser l'Anarchie," 4.

178 Mazzaglia, "La Contact Improvisation: genèse et développement d'une danse démocratique," 47.

ies and movements. It becomes a structuring dimension and a guide for the dancers among themselves. Together, they explore these questions: How can we move towards equality and the absence of hierarchy? What elements resist or directly reintroduce inequality? What choreographies and practices are needed to thwart and re-think the hierarchies that structure the environment of interaction between our bodies?

As I have already discussed at length, choreopolitics is defined as the set of experimental practices that explore and invent how to move politically. In this context, the collective practices of the New York avant-garde can be defined as *anarchist choreopolitics*, since they are time-spaces for learning, rehearsing and developing an anarchist endeavor: “It is about *trying anarchism* and observing the consequences.<sup>179</sup> Through their practices, dancers constantly train themselves to be *powerless*, seeing this as a constant project rather than something attainable once and for all.

The refusal of normativities and the affirmation of other possibilities articulated in movement experimentation take several successive forms over the years. In her article, Bigé lists three anarchist nuances, which she links respectively to the experimental practices of the successive practices of the Judson, Grand Union and Contact Improvisation: the anti-institutional anarchism of the Judson Dance Theater, which works to resist the social, bodily and technical hierarchies that characterized the dance field at the time; the improvisational anarchism of Grand Union, in which the dancers’ work aims to detach each action, each moment, from higher organizing principles; and finally, the mutualist anarchism of Contact Improvisation, in which the absence of domination is organized in the relationship rather than on the scale of the individual, in the effort to place oneself at the service of the other.

Bigé’s analysis of anarchist choreopolitics is consciously positioned at the level of dancers’ practices. Her intention as a researcher is always to speak from the perspective of dance and with it. Her words show how, in their movements, dancers find resources to overcome injunctions to a certain type of dance, a certain type of hierarchy between choreographers and dancers, and a certain type of individuality. But the dancers’ anarchist research is never “purely” danced. As we saw when Lepecki stated that the dance sequence in the street he described was choreopolitical *precisely because of the way in which* traffic was regulated there, and how this regulation was reminiscent of so many others, many elements are part of the dances we consider here.

In the same way, anarchist choreopolitics were written at the level of the body, while at the same time calling into their writing the ground and environment in and with which they were performed, which they questioned and reconfigured. For such a non-power-laden movement to be made possible, the dancers needed places to spend time together without financial pressure, they needed an informed public to contribute

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179 Bigé, “Danser l’Anarchie,” 6.

to the transformation of dance and the reclamation of its critical and political capacity, and they needed to share a certain knowledge of the structuring dynamics of power they were trying to circumvent or transform together. Through dance, what was written was not just the possibility of a non-hierarchical relationship between two bodies. It was the possibility of this non-hierarchical relationship, *including* the transformation of the environment that this transformation implied.

The different nuances in the search for an anarchist choreopolitics can thus be seen as a demonstration of the fact that a non-hierarchical relationship, and free movement, can only exist in the here and now that *these* bodies and milieus write. At the same time, the body of knowledge produced by specific bodies and milieus is able to resonate towards dynamics and worlds far beyond these bodies. Through their research, the Judson and Grand Union dancers not only activated an anarchist choreopolitics in the here and now of their own milieu, but also participated in making visible and developing what a choreopolitics can do. Their research remains crucial for the present context and our capacity to deal with a controlling regime which, as already mentioned, makes the optimization of flows and movements the central tool for maintaining order and distributing profit.

### Operational Choreopolitics

The way in which the work of the New York avant-garde participated to reveal the regime of control and the politics of that time is also the subject of the reading offered by dance and media scholar Gerko Egert. Although he doesn't directly use the term *choreopolitics*, this dimension is at the heart of his interpretation. For Egert, these dancers' practices allow us to identify a choreopolitical work that responded to and resisted the then exponential development of real-time activation and management of movement – precisely what Moten and Harney call logistics. The 1960s were characterized as much by a boom in movement and increased visibility of certain bodies, driven by the social movements of the time, as by a boom in technological capabilities and their use to track and regulate movement. It was a period of general intensification of the importance of movement in society, in which movement became more deeply intertwined with modalities of control and regulation.

What Egert calls “choreopower” describes the dominant exercise of power over and through movement. This exercise of power is characterized in the 1960s, as already discussed in the context of choreopolicing, by a logic of operations. Bodies and processes are then not so much subjects to external as internal regulation, based on their own logic and adapted over time. Egert refers to this system as “operational politics”, and underlines the way in which movement becomes its vehicle:

“In regard to movement, operational politics started to gain hold in the field of logistics in the 1960s. Over the last decades, these operational choreographies proliferated into all

realms of society, creating a logistical regime that comprises modes of thinking as much as modes of existence and action. It governs the movements of economic production as much as the way we perceive, live, and move.”<sup>180</sup>

The experiments of the New York avant-garde take hold of the ways of operating and interfering with these new forms of control. Building on Egert’s analysis, speaking of *operational choreopolitics* allows us to highlight how the dancers’ research, even though conducted at the level of bodies, was in constant relation to changes in society. Dance allowed for an intimate understanding of the power mechanisms at play. In their work, dancers adopted operational logics while finding ways to take them elsewhere than towards the dominant exercise of power. Research through dance then provided a unique form of critique, in ways that are specific to the dynamics of *gesture*: a gesture is adopted and learned at the same time as it opens itself up to the possibility of its transformation.

In the practice of Judson and Grand Union, dance was a part of the logistical regime in which things and beings were led to move in a certain way. Within this system, dance and choreography, as a practice in which new modes of thinking and moving were physically explored, held a dual position. It was both the expression and the deepening of this movement, as well as the revelation and reframing of its operations. This dual aspect also interests Lepecki, when he exposes the concept of choreopolitics:

“The book’s main purpose is to assess the different ways some very specific works in experimental dance performance [...] both express *and* critique the fundamental elements that define the (irrational) rationality sustaining or rage of neoliberal, neocolonialist capitalism.”<sup>181</sup>

The perspective of an operational choreopolitics enables this dual reading of the dancers’ and choreographers’ efforts. For example, the Judson’s effort to integrate everyday movements can be understood as a desire to explore the operations at play in these movements, to deconstruct them and reconfigure them. Choreography becomes an operational technique for modulating rather than expressing modes of collectivity and individuation:

“First, dance explores the potential of operational modes of choreography to produce forms of practice, collectivity, and individuation that challenge the capitalist logic of operations at work in logistics. Second, the performative work of the choreographers becomes itself an investigation into the operational politics of the logistical regime, studying its logic on a bodily level.”<sup>182</sup>

Drawing on the research of philosopher Brian Massumi, Egert details the workings of the operative logic. He points out that it is based on a double logic of operations. On the one hand, there is flow production, characterized in the case of logistics by the con-

180 Gerko Egert, “Operational Choreography: Dance and Logistical Capitalism,” *Performance Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (April 22, 2022): 98, <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2022.71305>.

181 Lepecki, *Singularities*, 5.

182 Egert, “Operational Choreography,” 98.

struction and optimization of a global infrastructure for circulation. The second side of operations is that of the labor system created by the logistical regime, a system that controls the workforce, the daily rhythm of workers, and maintains precarious conditions. These two aspects feed into each other, contradict each other and work together. They are the driving force behind the operative logic. If the entire “logistical machine” were optimized, there would be no more friction, no more consistency, no more unfulfilled needs: “Smoothness is the immanent outside of the logistical operation.”<sup>183</sup>

The logistical regime takes on the task of synthesizing movement and imbuing it with causality to generate value for the logistical regime. It continuously reduces movement to a goal-oriented action, depriving it of the manifold potentialities associated with it. On the contrary, the dancers explored the logic of operations and its potentials, seeking to question this logistical regime. They observed what operations produce when a causality is not immediately attached to them, when the product of these operations is not directly captured by the logistical regime:

“The existing structure of a rehearsal process, with its linear set of goal-oriented techniques designed to create a virtuous performance and a public presentation of that achievement was replaced by an open structure of continuous experimentation and alteration. [...] Every “performance,” if this is still the correct term, was the continuation of the collective process itself, embedded in techniques of learning, experimenting, rehearsing, and teaching.”<sup>184</sup>

By studying the operations of the logistical regime at the level of movement, the dancers experimented, developed and became able to formulate operational choreopolitics that addressed the ways in which logistics was becoming part of the rhythms of work, bodies and daily life, regulating their flow.

At the level of dance, focusing on the logistical regime shifts the attention from the body as the source of movement to a body entangled in interrelations and the modulation of flows. In the work of Judson and Grand Union, this shift had implications at all levels of practice and thinking. Choreopolitics, then, was about the ability to dissociate movement from the chains of operations in which it was constantly caught up. This ability was built both on the scale of the movement itself and on the scale of what supported it: a body, a place, a gaze, a relationship. Transforming a movement could mean changing its location, sharing it differently, superimposing it randomly, removing it from its logistically dedicated space-time. Experimentations served to interrupt the capture of movement and create the space-time necessary for the deployment of potentialities denied in real-time by the logistical regime.

As already noted by Bigé, the concerns of the collectives evolved between Judson and Grand Union. During Judson performances, the dancers were inspired by the cho-

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183 Egert, 101.

184 Egert, 102–3.



reographic system of *tasks* that many of them had experimented with during workshops led by choreographer Anna Halprin. The task allowed everyday movement to be transformed into choreographed movement, thus prompting reconsideration of its meaning. This movement was fragmented, stretched over time, repeated or superimposed. The aim was to re-discover the potentialities of movement that the logistical regime short-circuited. Nevertheless, what was presented as a performance was only bearing witness to what was found in the rehearsals. The dances themselves were clear and organized, leaving it to the body to insert a certain texture.

In the work of Grand Union, the *choreographic* work itself was presented. The dancers were now all choreographers. This new attitude can be read as an attempt to bring the representation even closer to everyday life, to position performance at the threshold, to make it a “rehearsal” of the everyday at the level of the operations that constitute it. The responsibility for invention, for bifurcation, no longer rested on the dancer’s shoulders, but on choreography as a modulation of movement that circulated between bodies. Choreography became a collective and transmission technique. Choreographic tasks still existed, but they were now emerging in the course of the performance. In this way, what was made visible was choreography’s ability to operate live based on the takes and ongoing movements directed towards it. Grand Union’s artists used choreographic techniques explored earlier in their careers to put them to the test collectively and in the moment, thus moving closer to the logistical regime’s tendency to operate continuously.

From the 1960s onwards, the practices of these artists showed the extent to which choreopolitics are not written on the scale of a body with clearly identified contours, but always *transversally*, at the level of an ecology of movements, techniques and environments. In this sense, the choreographic techniques explored by Judson and Grand Union resonate with the analysis of techniques developed in the same period by the philosopher Gilbert Simondon. Simondon’s thinking on technique, which we won’t go into further here, is based on the relationship between a technique and its associated environment. Each individual is produced by his or her environment, just as the environment itself is produced by the act of individuation. None of these processes precede the other, and techniques are to be understood within this relationship of constant modulation. “The technical gesture does not exhaust itself in its utility as means; it leads to an immediate result, but also provokes a transformation in the environment, which rebounds onto living species, man included,”<sup>185</sup> writes Simondon. Or in Egert’s words:

“No technique is just performed or incorporated by or even directed towards an individual body; techniques are transversal operations at work in the very collectivity that is the choreographic process of the “rehearsal.” They are “choreographies of tensions” in

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185 Gilbert Simondon, “Culture and Technics,” trans. Olivia Lucca Fraser, *Radical Philosophy*, no. 189 (2015): 19.

| which the smallest operation can immediately re-compose everything.”<sup>186</sup>

In Grand Union’s practice, every gesture, every invitation, every choreographic take proposed by one of the dancer-choreographers immediately encountered the other ongoing movements and the virtualities attached to the presence of bodies and relationships at that precise moment. Choreographic techniques made it possible to open up, test and reconfigure in real time. Bodies and choreography were intensely offered to this operational experimentation.

In such practices, bifurcation and free movement were never guaranteed. Choreography as an operation opened up possibilities, but demanded constant attention to what was being proposed, often leaving the dancers exhausted at the end of the performance. The fate of the performance itself was linked to a collective ability to circulate and reconfigure relationships, which made Grand Union both a wildly complicit collective and, at the same time, vulnerable. The quality of relationships, both during performances and the rest of the time, was constantly subject to the tornado of choreographic proposals that renewed it, but also sometimes exhausted it. Grand Union is contemporary with the experience of a relational and operational intensification which, as we know today, is double-edged:

| “Which effects and modes of individuation the politics of operation bring forward and how they address the future’s potential was not pre-scripted. Do they render this future uncertainty operational and calculable in the present (as in logistical capitalism), or can they fold the future into the present while keeping its openness?”<sup>187</sup>

Grand Union’s work stood precisely on the brink of this emerging condition. It explored, reflected upon and challenged it. Through this collective research, choreography was revealed as a potentially powerful tool for inventing new modes of collective individuation. It was even asserted as a near necessity in the invention of these modes of individuation, profoundly threatened by the development of the logistical regime. Performance became the space-time in which this collective affirmation worked, always, to find new breaths, new forms of free movement, new forms of trans-individuation.

### Choreopolitics of the more-than

Beyond revealing and taking hold of the logic of operations, the experimental practices of Judson and Grand Union revealed how the logistical regime exposed and still exposes beings to an impoverishment of relationships that operates not at the level of individuals, but at the level of their capacity to claim an environment in which certain injunctions are collectively suspended and reexamined. Free movement is always acquired through a game of rebound with the environment and a capacity for elasticity. One needs to learn to be sensitive to the ways gesture pass through the environment

186 Egert, “Operational Choreography,” 104.

187 Egert, 105.

and returns to the bodies. The circulation of gesture becomes a way of inviting that which, in bodies, surpasses them – a “more-than”. What can be *rehearsed* in such collective practices is also the feeling of existing through, of existing-with. So, if the choreopolitics invented by these collectives were anarchist, if they were operational, we can say that they were also opening up a path towards a choreopolitics of the *more-than*.

If there was a *need* for a choreopolitics of the more-than, it is because there was a choreopolice that ceaselessly worked to deny this more-than and its political potential. This choreopolice operated through interruption and cutting. It was

“a seemingly innocent force of social fragmentation, fostered by liberal thought and complexified by neoliberal rationality, where each subject is called to see itself and act as the independent proprietor of its life.”<sup>188</sup>

This choreopolice nurtured the perception that each entity can be apprehended in its totality independently of the others. It operated to reduce both the actual and virtual field of interdependencies, not only reducing the possibilities of productive interdependencies in the present, but also the potentially productive operations of such interdependencies in the future, by making their potential felt in the present.

Contrary to this choreopolice, the techniques implemented by the two New York collectives helped to open up the present to certain possibilities, by creating a more flexible and responsive milieu. In this choreopolitics, the capacity of each individual to affect and be affected was at play in the constant reorientations that this capacity implied. Bigé interprets Contact Improvisation’s mutualist anarchist choreopolitics as “a plea to take into account a forgotten factor of evolution: cooperation.”<sup>189</sup> She particularly mentions the words of Steve Paxton, one of the key figures in these two collective practices, according to whom this practice demands “mutual freedom with mutual reliance.”<sup>190</sup>

For Paxton, collective dance improvisation had the power to challenge the univocity of those moments when life takes on the aspects of individuation, separation, competition and aggression. In this research, movement became more connected to the event itself than to one or other of the bodies. Nonetheless, it was also an opportunity for each body to receive feedback on what was happening, and thus to articulate, on a micro-political scale, another idea of action and the subject. The technique of “doing as”, the activity of “trying out” as described earlier, thus became productive in terms of future coexistences and the forms they may take.

For Egert, the work of Yvonne Rainer and Grand Union questioned the potential of

188 Giovanni Marmont, “Nanopoetics of Use. Kinetic Prefiguration and Dispossessed Sociality in the Undercommons” (Brighton, University of Brighton, 2019), 3.

189 Bigé, “Danser l’Anarchie,” 18.

190 Steve Paxton, “D’un Pied Sur l’autre (1972-1975),” *Recherches En Danse*, June 16, 2017, 12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/danse.1235>.

a mode of being-together through improvisation and asked:

“How can collectivity be practiced pragmatically, without the act of theatrical presentation and without an already defined form? That is, how to practice collectivity with and into the future?” This experimentation “renders choreographic techniques transindividual, producing operational collectivities as much as, ecological modes of subjectivities.”<sup>191</sup>

These experimentations were a way of asserting the crucial role that the environment plays in the possibility of free movement, insofar as it was fully part of the shared and individual becoming of bodies. They made visible how the production of collective forms of individuation depends on this possibility of rebound, redundancy and repetition. This involved the rehearsal of a logic of collective speculation in which coexistence itself was made speculative, elastic, rather than predefined -- an invitation made to the more-than of dance.

One of the most profound explorations of the notion of the more-than in dance is today developed by the philosopher Erin Manning, both through her research laboratory, the Sense Lab, and in her collaboration with Brian Massumi.<sup>192</sup> In an evocatively titled text, “The Elasticity of the Almost”, Manning describes the quality of the interval that comes to be felt between dancers as “elastic”: “Moving the relation moves not a person but the elasticity of relation. We move-with the togetherness of a curving that fields metastable equilibriums.”<sup>193</sup> In Manning’s words, the dance of dancers attuned to each other and to the dance allows them to come to feel the elastic quality of the interval created in shared dance. And this quality is neither separable from nor reducible to the bodies that activate it:

“The labyrinth of folds virtually active in the interval are becoming-bodies of movement. They are not steps, nor can they be translated as such. They are potential directions, potential elasticities, potential preaccelerations. Separating them out is impossible. Their indivisibility is what gives the interval its intensity.”<sup>194</sup>

The choreopolitics of the more-than is formulated in this reorientation of intention within dance. It involves making oneself available to feel the possible world-makings attached to each of the bodies that animate it. As Manning points out, we are not speaking here about moving differently, dancing differently, aiming for a different dance or movement. Rather, the idea is about becoming attentive to the micro-seconds and micro-openings in which the more-than comes to be felt in movement:

“Moving relationally we sense not the step per se (though we do step it, otherwise we would not walk)-we sense the intensity of an opening, the gathering up of forces toward

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191 Egert, “Operational Choreography,” 105.

192 Manning, 32.

193 Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*, 1. MIT paperback ed, Technologies of Lived Abstraction (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 32–33.

194 Manning, 33.

| the creation of space-times of experience into which we move.”<sup>195</sup>

Manning’s attention to the more-than is expressed in her insistence on not assuming what bodies can do. She insists on the sensation of the living, this shared and already present pulsation, rather than on the search for new possibilities for the human alone:

“The event is where experience actualizes. Experience here is in the tense of life-living, not human life per se, but the more-than human. [...] It is urgent to turn away from the notion that it is the human agent, the intentional, volitional subject, who determines what comes to be.”<sup>196</sup>

Manning’s more-than is directly linked to the establishment of porosities between the human and the more-than-human within each movement. The technique that makes the more-than palpable is the same one that underscores the inseparability of beings in relation and as being part of the more-than-human, the more-than, to which every body should be able to open up. In Manning’s work, the micropolitics of movement, the choreopolitics of the more-than and the very possibility of life-living are one and the same story. Manning’s effort and research are at the service of life-living. Since this movement can only be sustained in the difference and tension between beings, her effort is an engagement with “the cleaving of experience,” a “calling into question the centrality of neurotypicality as grounding structure for existence as we practice it,” aiming to “open up the event to its potential for a collectivity alive with difference.”<sup>197</sup> The operation she proposes then corresponds to a work of activating a choreopolitics of the more-than capable of opening up participants and the event to the sense of potentiality that the event conceals.

As we’ve seen earlier, neurodiversity constitutes, for Manning, a struggle that intersects with many others, each more specific. As a notion, neurodiversity is a way of creating porosities between different struggles waged by defined communities, but above all, it is a means of placing life and the living in their indeterminacy at the center of the struggle, rather than making any predefined goal an absolute endpoint of the struggle. Then, just as neurodiversity embraces and intersects with many other trajectories of collective emancipation, we can imagine that the choreopolitics of the “more-than” encounters more targeted choreopolitics. But the perspective of the choreopolitics of the more-than makes it possible to link together choreographic and dance practices which, beyond their specific registers, participate in the formulation of a shared choreopolitics supporting life-living. The choreopolitics of the more-than takes on a specific form in each practice, but the recurring motive is the refusal to reduce reality and individuals to what is known, predictable, or quantifiable: “In the effort to celebrate those instances when we stop acting and feeling as individuals, such practices attend to and indeed

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195 Manning, 34.

196 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 3.

197 Manning, *Relationescapes*, 6.

cultivate ways in which we are experientially indebted to one another.”<sup>198</sup>

Architect and scholar Giovanni Marmont’s research into new forms of the common, strongly inspired by Harney and Moten’s undercommons, also emphasizes the importance of practicing alternative forms of sociality. He insists precisely on their capacity to develop alternatives to the myth of the sovereign individual constantly re-injected into modes of relationship:

“The type of social life that will be put forward here is akin to an insurgent mode of friendship. Which is to say, a practice of complicity emerging in-between singular bodies, underneath the common, and effacing the illusory independence of the individual by operating through what will be defined as a reciprocal ‘dispossession’.”<sup>199</sup>

Following Marmont’s lead, we can situate the choreopolitics of the more-than and the dance practices that underpin them within the spectrum of these practices of alternative forms of sociality. The idea of a choreopolitics of the more-than brings to the foreground such questions: How can dance practices become “a haptic mode of growing indebted to one another; a practice of recognizing, cultivating and circulating a sense of mutual indebtedness through an enacted consent not to be “one” - not to be an individual”<sup>200</sup> ? What choreographic techniques are capable of supporting the emergence of the more-than within the event? What elements contribute to the event’s ability to transcend its own framework and bring forth the “more-than”? Attempting to productively address these questions means extending choreopolitical attention and interpretation to encompass movements that may not be immediately associated with dance, but are part of its surrounding ecology of affects.

### Choreopolitical ecologies of the more-than

On grand evenings, the choreographer-dancers of Grand Union managed to connect with a movement that transcended them, a collective movement that took them somewhere beyond the parts they knew of themselves. This is perhaps the main reason why, despite the sometimes exhausting human intensity, despite the tensions between individual careers and the collective project, despite financial or organizational difficulties, Grand Union members maintained this practice for several years.

Traces of these evenings remain in the form of testimonials, journalistic reviews, and interviews, sometimes conducted by the artists themselves in the decades following the dissolution of the group. These traces testify to the fact that the movement found and experimented with by Grand Union, along with the very possibility of such a profoundly liberated and horizontal movement, benefited from both the prior experience of each artist, their partly shared background and the gradual development of

198 Marmont, “Nanopoetics of Use. Kinetic Prefiguration and Dispossessed Sociality in the Undercommons,” 15.

199 Marmont, 17.

200 Marmont, 29.



an audience receptive to this kind of experimentation. Grand Union's movement was simultaneously characterized by pure improvisation and the constant presence of the choreographic, material, and social ground that supported it within every moment of the movements. What constituted the entities within these *choreopolitical ecologies*, and how did they "enter the dance"?

For the most part, what made the intensity of Grand Union possible was an ecology of collective practice developed during the experience of Judson and in the practices shared by some of its members in the years that separate the two groups experience. The remarkable elasticity experienced by those who attended Grand Union events was built upon the groundwork laid during the Judson years. At this point, dancers began to position themselves in relation to the field of dance and the kinds of ideals, values and practices that constituted it. Part of this positioning involved a marked refusal to perpetuate certain hierarchical and disciplinary aspects, of which Yvonne Rainer's *No Manifesto* has become an emblem.<sup>201</sup>

At the same time, however, the positioning of the dancers was already geared towards the more-than of dance and its possible future. A review published in the press following Judson's first public performances serves as evidence of this. There, we can read:

"These concerts [were] initiated at the church... with the aim of periodically presenting the work of dancers, composers, and various non-dancers working with ideas related to dance. It is hoped that the contents of this series will not so much reflect a single point of view as convey a spirit of inquiry into the nature of new possibilities."<sup>202</sup>

The exploration primarily took place at a disciplinary level, working towards an elasticity of the definition of dance. The performances were referred to as "concerts," and the dancers were also described as "various non-dancers." The disciplinary tool of choreography was similarly extended and made elastic. The imperative command associated with choreography was both rejected and, at the same time, subverted and used to disturb and reinvent the interval, the relational space. In his writings, Lepecki underlines precisely this ambiguous aspect of the choreographic, in which the choreographic imperative can be received as a command or, alternatively, as a framework to which we temporarily submit in order to collectively explore the possible:

"The imperative demands: "Jump!" or "Jetée, followed by fouetée six," or "Stand and urinate in place, then walk upstage," or "Stand still center stage as other dancers throw

201 The manifesto was published in 1965 as a paragraph in a larger article, before subsequently circulating independently. Yvonne Rainer, "Some Retrospective Notes on a Dance for 10 People and 12 Mattresses Called 'Parts of Some Sextets,' Performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965," *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (1965): 168–78, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1125242>. It was also reworked by Rainer, who several decades later returned with irony to this celebrated text. Yvonne Rainer, "A Manifesto Reconsidered," *A Pamphlet for the Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon*, 2008.

202 Press-release following a July concert of the Judson, cited in Ana Janevski et al., *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018), 15.

tomatoes at you. This is the transcendent, godly, sovereign-magic or choreographic-sovereign function of the imperative. [...] But on the other hand, the imperative can also be *ethical*. It reminds one of what truly matters in the act and passion of committing oneself to bringing into the world a difficult, collective task. For instance, the commitment to dancing so that a work-event may come into the world through shared labor. All it takes to get to that other side of the imperative is to treat the same illocution (“Jump” or “Stand up and walk”) no longer as a command but as a verb in the *infinitive*. This small difference (from imperative to infinitive) enacts a radical, indeed political alteration of the verb function.”<sup>203</sup>

This nuance within the act itself was extensively tested by the Judson dancers. It constituted for their subsequent trajectory, a kind of internal capacity to immediately connect with the fact that a choreographic demand that arises can be promptly seized as a support for exploration rather than as an obligation:

“Politically speaking, the question then is to deviate from blind obedience to a personal commanding voice towards a *commitment to an impersonal force called the work-event*.”<sup>204</sup>

One can argue that in the course of their practice, the dancers continually rewrote their relationship with the choreographic. They persistently reconfigured the ground that dance offered and imposed on them. After a few years of collective experimentation, the dancers had arrived to the point of in-corporating choreography, making it disappear as an obligation. In *Grand Union*, there was no more choreography in the classical sense of the term, only choreographic propositions taking different forms that the dancers navigated and actively engaged with.<sup>205</sup>

#### The affective work of the audience

Another support for *Grand Union*’s movement was the formation of an audience willing to offer its attention to the process and its micro-politics rather than to the form of the gesture or the dancers’ bodies. An audience that ended up participating in the movement not by throwing itself on stage, but by contributing to an atmosphere of threshold between dance and everyday life, circulating attentively between these two worlds, deciding what aspects of dance could resonate more widely. An audience that supported the reconfiguring potential of movement in the event.

Dance scholar Susanne Foellmer dedicates an article to the question of when the political dimension of a movement comes to circulate more widely than within a restricted circle of dancers. Drawing on several examples of artistic movement practice, she analyzes how the spheres of the artistic, the everyday, and the political sometimes overlap. She points to the temporary possibility of “loose coupling” between these different fields as *transference*. She writes: “This happens especially, I think, in situations

203 Lepecki, “The Choreopolitical,” 50.

204 Lepecki, 50.

205 Despite all efforts to make choreography horizontal and shared, the imperative dimension of choreography is never far away, and some of the choreographic proposals brought by *Grand Union* members will be criticized or experienced with violence by other members.

in which the marginal conditions are shifted or unclear.”<sup>206</sup> In some of the examples she gives, the artistic is embodied in the artist, the everyday in the citizen and the political in a strike, for example. But this literal and explicit superimposition of the three dimensions is not the only way in which this threshold can be created.

To nuance her point, Foellmer draws on dance scholar Randy Martin’s well-known theorization of the threshold, in which he insists on the triangle of dance, choreography and participation as the terrain for thinking about mobilization:

“Martin gives the audience an active position not only in the sense of a physical and atmospheric presence, but rather as a temporary authority that takes on authorship of the ending and therefore draws the distinction between dance and no-longer-dance.”<sup>207</sup>

The audience here is not a defined audience, but rather *becomes* an audience. It is, in Martin’s words, an *unstable* audience that contributes to the shift in mobilization between dance and politics, in one direction or the other. In this way, the micro-politics at play in dance as mobilization can be felt as much by the dancers as by a becoming-audience that participates in reading the event in its oscillations and, sometimes, like the dancers, actualizes some of its political potential.

Within the context of Judson, one can observe, from the very first performances, the enthusiasm of a particular audience for witnessing what the dancers presented. Far from conveying a fixed message or purpose about the new dance they were developing together, the dancers provided the opportunity for an audience to constitute itself as an audience and thus proposed a collective experience on the threshold of dance, everyday life and politics. Critic Jill Johnston, who would become one of the most fervent supporters of the explorations of the New York avant-garde, wrote about Rainer’s work after a performance:

“We are not accustomed to looking at this kind of dance. Not being accustomed to looking at this sort of dance you might be inclined at first to cast it off and out as another theme-and-development thing. But “Satie for Two” is really much simpler than that. The phrases do not go any place; there is no connecting material, no climaxes, etc. It’s a static dance and the phrases are repeated in whole or in fragments and new material occasionally appears that you see once and never again.”<sup>208</sup>

In Rainer’s choreographic assemblage, there was a significant attention to the way in which the work was seen. Today, Rainer is notably famous for her piece “Trio A,” in which the performer never makes eye contact with the audience, actively turning their head away when facing them. In this choreographic work, this strategy was by no means a negation of gaze as a negation of the relational dimension between the audience and

206 Susanne Foellmer, “Choreography as a Medium of Protest,” *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 3 (December 2016): 62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000395>.

207 Foellmer, 65.

208 Jill Johnston, *Marmalade Me* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1971), 89–90. The text was first published in March 1962, directly after the performance.



Fig. 9 • Yvonne Rainer performs *Trio A*, (*The Mind is a Muscle, Part I*), a choreography from 1966, on August 14, 1978. The performance, lasting 10 minutes and 21 seconds, was accessed on January 10, 2024, <https://vimeo.com/221993144>, with the video being credited to cinematographer Robert Alexander. Copyright © Yvonne Rainer.





the performer. Instead, it represented a double invitation. It was both an invitation to revisit the power dynamics at play in the gaze, to learn to look without appropriation, and at the same time, an invitation for the audience to broaden the channels through which they actively related to the performer. Rather than appropriating the gesture or evaluating it, the audience was invited to develop a fuller awareness of the various dimensions of movement as a world-making process. In this sense, Rainer's choreographic focus on a low intensity of movement without climaxes or strong expressiveness, as described by Johnston, was not opposed to giving something to look at, but invited the audience to become attentive to the way in which it was possible to perceive a connection to the everyday that occurred more in the "work" of being seen than in the "performance" itself. Or, in Rainer's words:

"The execution of each movement conveys a sense of unhurried control. The body is weighty without being completely relaxed. What is seen is a control that seems geared to the *actual* time it takes the *actual* weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions, rather than an adherence to an imposed ordering of time. In other words, the demands made on the body's (actual) energy resources *appear* to be commensurate with the task - be it getting up from the floor, raising an arm, tilting the pelvis, etc.-much as one would get out of a chair, reach for a high shelf, or walk down stairs when one is not in a hurry. The movements are not mimetic, so they do not remind one of such actions, but I like to think that in their manner of execution they have the factual quality of such actions."<sup>209</sup>

In the reading of Rainer we detect a great attention to what is given to be felt and therefore, the role of the audience, but this role was clearly reorganized by the choreographer who appealed to the intimate perceptions of each spectator as the common ground that the dance directly addressed:

"There was no moment of transcendent justice intended when Rainer presented jogging, moving a mattress, or leaning on a traffic blockade-no triumph of the little body. There was only what she called "the implicit... emotionality of the human body," and this was hard to make truly, spontaneously available."<sup>210</sup>

Rainer showed her own body at work, in movements that shared an intensity with those of everyday life, but which at the same time were clearly the movements of a dancer undergoing choreography. In this sense, she showed a body that was both active and passive, a body that was danced and that danced, that was moved and that moved.<sup>211</sup> It exposed the choreographic tension of a body that *was moved*, without this preventing that same body from seizing these movements:

"In Rainer's work, the vulnerability in passivity-in the body giving into gravity, in giving

209 Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," in *Work 1961-73*, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Halifax: Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2020), 270.

210 Elise Archias, "The Body as an Everyday Material in the 1960s: Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton," *Wreck* 3, no. 1 (2010): 4.

211 Yvonne Rainer, *Moving and Being Moved*, Roma Publications 292 (Arnhem: Roma Publications, 2017).



off signs of spontaneous thought, in its not knowing and controlling at every moment exactly what it was doing—was not foremost, per se, but it was made available as a positive, as something significantly true about the ordinary body. The elements that signaled passivity were inextricably tied to the actions themselves. The task contained the vulnerability.”<sup>212</sup>

In her work, Rainer exposed choreography’s ability to bring out the simultaneity of the moved and the moving, and the ways in which the body constantly navigates this dual condition that connects it to the world. She brought into focus the critical political power of the choreographic and dance through her exploration of the ways a performance could evoke the everyday through gestures of equal intensity. The threshold between everyday life, dance, and politics took on a singular thickness here, one that might be described as operating at “low-frequency,” demanding a certain amount of attention but having the potential to resonate strongly with an audience.

Rainer’s work, even as a soloist, even as a performer in front of an audience, insisted on the dimension of the collective potential of each movement. Her intimate exploration was turned towards the other and toward what organized or not the possibility of shared existences. Her search for free movement was always considered in its collective and political dimension.<sup>213</sup> Looking at the performances Rainer and the Judson, the audience in Lower Manhattan trained themselves. They learned to observe and relate these micro-politics to what was going on *outside*, in a daily life that itself was not without its own movements and agitation. Protests against the Vietnam War, the economic crisis and its impact on industrial activity and the urban fabric, and mobilizations against infrastructure projects – dissenting bodies were also present in the streets. In this context, the similarity of the affects involved in these different types of movement and the porosity between them became profoundly graspable for both the performers and their audience.

With *Grand Union*, the audience in Lower Manhattan was thus ready for these transfers. They had learned to read and grasp the micro-politics of dance, to become each evening the audience that the event needed:

“Each new art has to find its audience, and in the case of *Grand Union*, it was the other artists of SoHo. It was also the audiences in places like Oberlin College in Ohio and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, where the group had time to cultivate familiarity.”<sup>214</sup>

writes dance scholar Wendy Perron. Accounts from witnesses of the dance events of *Grand Union* convey the image of an attentive and passionate audience:

“*Grand Union* was kind of like a rock band but on a smaller economic scale: a leaderless

212 Archias, “The Body as an Everyday Material in the 1960s: Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton,” 4.

213 Later in her career, according to Rainer herself, the move to film enabled her to do away with the direct relationship with her own body that remained present in dance. Among other things, occupying the position of director placed her as a spectator alongside others in a shared experience.

214 Perron, 23.



Fig. 10 • Judson Dance Theater, Lower Manhattan venues, Map of downtown New York. Image courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art, © 2024. Seen at <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/53/779>, accessed January 21, 2024

Fig. 11 • The action in SoHo: Trisha Brown and Carol Goodden performing Brown's «Leaning Duet» on Wooster Street in a 1970 photo: Peter Moore. © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA at ARS, NY; via Paula Cooper Gallery

Fig. 12 • A very slow march in SoHo to protest the war, in 1970, led by the choreographer Yvonne Rainer, front left, whose «Trio A» was a lingua franca for dancers meeting on SoHo street corners. John Sotomayor/The New York Times

Choreopolitical stubbornness.





Fig. 13 • Gordon Matta-Clark, *Open house*, 98-112 Greene Street Gallery/Workshop, New York, May 19-21, 1972

Fig. 14 • Charles Ross, "Qui a mangé le baboon", 1963. Presentado en el "Concert of Dance #13", Judson Memorial Church, NY, 20 de noviembre, 1963. © Barbara Moore/VAGA, NY. Cortesía de Paula Cooper Gallery, NY. Photo: Peter Moore

Fig. 15 • Demonstrators protest charges against activist & author Jane Jacobs (not pictured), New York, New York, May 8, 1968. The then 51-year-old Jacobs had been arrested and charged with inciting riot at a protest of the proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway. Photo: Fred McDarrah.



Fig. 16-19 • Babette Mangolte. *Concert on Greene Street #1, #2, #3 and #4* from the series *Yvonne Rainer: Grand Union*. Black and white photograph, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1972-1975. Photo © Babette Mangolte.



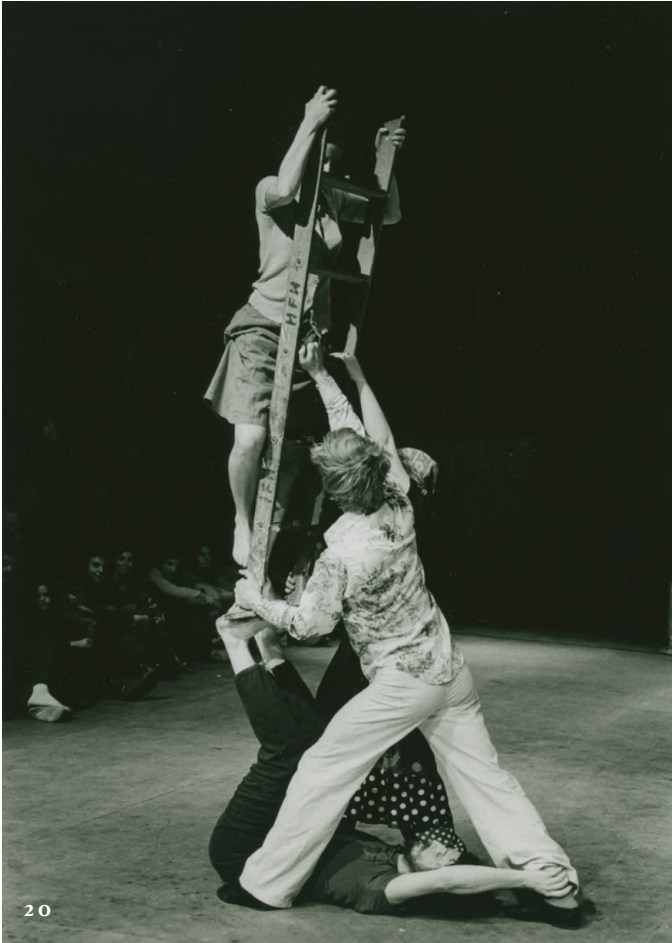
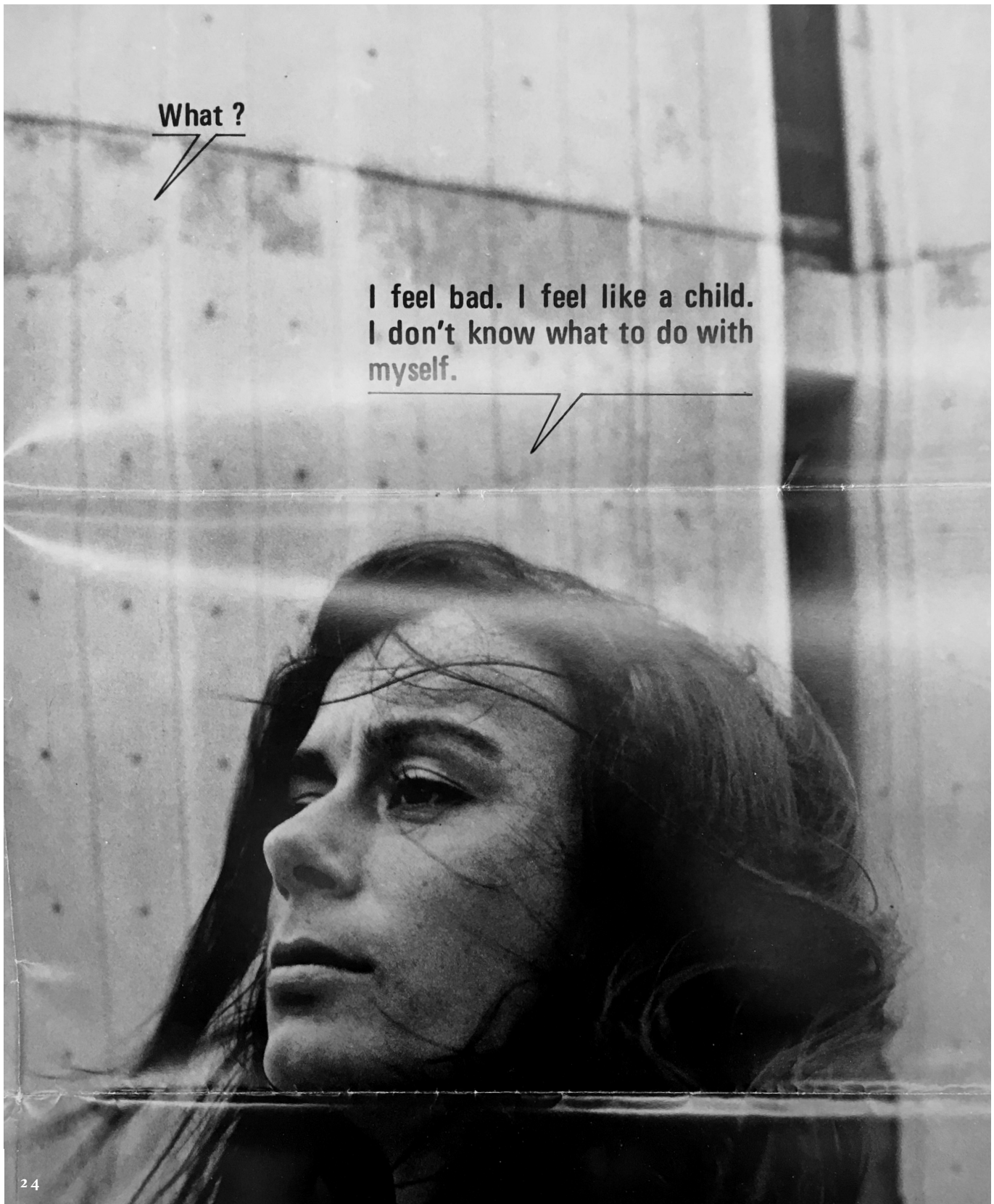


Fig. 20-23 • Babette Mangolte. *Concert on La Mamma* #5, #4, #2, #3 from the series *Yvonne Rainer: Grand Union*. Black and white photograph, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1972-1975. Photo © Babette Mangolte.



**Fig. 24** • Yvonne Rainer and John Erdman • *FESTIVAL D'AUTOMNE À PARIS*, 1972. References: b. 1 f. 26, Yvonne Rainer, Pacific Coast tour 1973. Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



ALL PERFORMANCES 2.50 CONTRIBUTION  
 TEN TRIP TICKET 20.00 EXACT SCHEDULE PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE VILLAGE VOICE.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
GRAND UNION 8:30	DICKIE LANDRY 8:30	JACK THIBEAU 8:30	THE COLLECTOR WORKS 8:30	MAROL NINES 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30
GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	CARMEL REUCHAI 8:30	MOTHER MALLARD'S OUTRAGEOUS PASTORFACE 8:30	Bob TELSON 8:30
GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	TINA GIRARD 8:30	CHARLENE PALESTINE 8:30	Cherilynne ALBINO 8:30
GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	NANCY GORDON & RICHARD PECK 8:30	PENELOPE 8:30	DAVID GORDON 8:30
COLLABORATIVE ENSEMBLE FROM DENNINGTON 8:30	ALEX HAY 8:30	DICKIE LANDRY 8:30	SIMONE FORTI & CHARLENE PALESTINE 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30		COLLABORATIVE ENSEMBLE FROM DENNINGTON 8:30

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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GRAND UNION 8:30	CLASS #1 DEBORAH HAY FREE 6:00-7:00P	CLASS #2 DEBORAH HAY FREE 8:00-9:00	CLASS #3+4 DEBORAH HAY FREE 6:00-7:00	CLASS #5 DEBORAH HAY FREE 8:00-9:00	MOTHER MALLARD'S OUTRAGEOUS PASTORFACE CO. 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30
GRAND UNION 8:30	CLASS #6+7 DEBORAH HAY FREE 6:00-7:00	CLASS #8 DEBORAH HAY FREE 6:00-7:00	CLASS #9 DEBORAH HAY FREE 8:00-9:00	CLASS #10 DEBORAH HAY FREE 8:00-9:00	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30
GRAND UNION 8:30	JULIE FINCH 8:30	MIMI & BOB 8:30	THE COLLECTED WORDS 8:30	JULIE FINCH 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30	GRAND UNION 8:30
CONTACT IMPROVATION 8:30	STEVIE PAXTON 8:30					

**APRIL**  
 Grand Union Offers Unstructured Dance Experience

Grand Union offers an unstructured dance experience... The Grand Union is a group of performers who have chosen to work together to create a unique dance experience... The company is a loose association of professionals who have chosen to work together to create a unique dance experience... The company is a loose association of professionals who have chosen to work together to create a unique dance experience... The company is a loose association of professionals who have chosen to work together to create a unique dance experience...

Fig. 25-26 • Press Materials, PERFORMANCES AT THE DANCE GALLERY, Program information. References: b. 1 f. 16 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



Fig. 27 • Photographs, Performances. Photographers include Cosmos, Babette Mantolte, Peter Moore, and Susan Horwitz. References: b. 2 f. 51, Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Fig. 28 • Performances, University of Iowa, Iowa City (Mar. 7-8, 1974). References: b. 2 f. 45, Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Fig. 29 • Performances, New York University Teaching Program, New York. (Spring 1972). References: b. 2 f. 37 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



Fig. 30-33 • Photographs, Performances. Photographers include Cosmos, Tom Berthiaume. References: b. 2 f. 51, Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



group with a special energy that excited fans. Sometimes people would declare their favorites, as in, “who is your favorite Beatle?” As with the Beatles, each member was essential to the whole.”<sup>215</sup>

Perron, who had the opportunity to attend several Grand Union events, wrote a review in 1976 following one of these events, fragments of which selected here testify to this *affective labor* of the audience:

“These dancers are such colorful characters that we are drawn to their performances again and again, as though to a new installment of a soap opera. We follow their triumphs, disappointments, dares, and frustrations almost too keenly to be bearable. We feel the challenge of spontaneity, the chaotic assortment of possibilities as we do in our own lives. *We know that there is no plan.* We witness the trust that allows them to bring their personal doubts into play.” And further on “‘Instincts’ can also mean learned abilities. The instinct that improvising requires includes knowing when to let go of an action and when to forge ahead, when to claim the focus and when to give it up, and what proportion of personal wishes and fears to lay bare. Needless to say, these are the same issues we face in everyday living. Perhaps that’s why I leave a Grand Union performance not with a declaration of good or bad, but with an emotional fullness, similar to the effect of a highly charged event in my own life.”<sup>216</sup>

There are also radically different and far more critical accounts of Grand Union’s work and the experience that was offered to the audience. Grand Union’s micro-politics didn’t distill through every channel, not every night, and not for everyone. Boredom or incomprehension were often the order of the day. Sometimes, the personal affects between the dancers seemed to be too present in the performance for it to be truly experienced as such. But the various accounts should not be taken as evidence of any inconsistency in the performers’ work. As the story that has been told so far should have already made clear, these accounts testify rather to the positioning of Grand Union’s research on the threshold of the everyday, and to the difficulty of occupying this liminal position.

In this sense, it is appropriated to affirm that Wendy Perron’s testimony among others reveals a reconfiguring possibility of dance and its micro-politics and beyond dance itself. For many members of the audience, the experience of these dance evenings inaugurated a desire and a possibility for trusting movement in its *collective* dimension. Journalist Deborah Jewitt wrote humorously:

“I spend two evenings at La Mama... and come away absurdly comforted-thinking that if I stuck my head out the window and yelled to the streets below, ‘catch me,’ maybe, just maybe, someone would.”<sup>217</sup>

Beyond its light-hearted tone, this testimonial among others is capable, when taken seriously, of expressing the quality of affect explored and conveyed by Grand Union. What emerges from all the testimonials from this period is a capacity for open bodies,

215 Perron, 14.

216 Perron, 142–43.

217 Quoted in Perron, 278.

whose ability to be in movement with others was profoundly reinforced.

The audience's attention operated not only in determining what remained after the dance but also what mattered during the performances. For the Grand Union dancers, this attention was crucial and allowed them to feel how their own movements came to life and gained intensity through the ecology of affect they were embedded in. Barbara Dilley, one of the members of Grand Union, recounts:

“People witness us through their own eyes and through their own experience. And they interpret it. But it's not necessarily our reality. It is what we're projecting. And it works as theater because it's broad enough to be witnessed in a lot of different ways. But man, I hear that feedback coming in and everybody's seeing it a little differently. The vistas are just broad enough ... that if you are honest and genuine with one very simple thing, it can be mythic to anybody. I mean, you can become everyone sort of, a little bit. That's the most ancient aspect of performance. You really surrender yourself to that. Because the audience, when they begin to feel that happening, they're giving you the roles to play.... And in the Grand Union performances where this occurs-it doesn't happen in all of them-there's the distinct feeling that we are making choices to represent certain energies or certain personalities or certain characters because the audience is responding. So you yield to that energy.... The implications are coming to us through the vibrations of the people watching.”<sup>218</sup>

The threshold between everyday life, performance and politics took on a *vibratory* texture in Grand Union's practice. Each person present, dancer and non-dancer alike, contributed through their presence and attention to others to the modulation of a movement that was also a political potentiality. By actively inscribing the artists' gestures into broader movements, resonating with them, and giving them multiple meanings, the audience's attention belonged to this choreopolitical ecology of the more-than.

### SoHo's choreopolitical ecologies

The significance of this singular audience leads us to consider how these choreopolitical ecologies were sustained not only by the audience's presences, but also, by the built environment that was theirs. This consideration of the built environment and its influence on the movement and politics articulated by the dance collectives has to be understood, in line with the previous paragraphs, as an insistent attempt to make feel the vibratory nature of the relationship between bodies and environments, their respective tensions, and their co-movements. This approach seeks to be attentive to the ways in which the substance of the built environment is itself not static, but agitated, active, *moved and moving*. It aims to foreground the ways built environment participates in a dance with bodies in which alternative political possibilities are being written. There, movement is considered in its textured, charged and affected dimensions. These non-quantifiable, elusive dimensions of movement are those on which the political rests. In this sense, it is highly crucial to understand them, and the framework of *choreopolitical ecologies* proposes itself as such an attempt.

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218 Quoted in Perron, 288.

The dances of Judson and Grand Union, were far from taking shape in a neutral space open to the infinite construction of bodies. On the contrary, a specific ground continually made the work of these collectives possible. The dancers found meaning in their ability to work with and explore the potentialities of the grounds of SoHo, to let it pass through their bodies and gestures in order to potentially re-write it. In giving importance to their environment in their dances, the artists revealed this non-neutral ground and the ways in which it moved their and others bodies, imposed rhythms on them, and supported them all at once. Through their work, they transformed their environment and created other alternative rhythms with it.

Historian Pauline Chevalier devotes a book to the intense dialogue between artistic practices and the geographies and materialities of the Soho district, where Grand Union practice took place. She notes how a dominant one-way reading of this relationship continues to cast the artists of the 1960s as precursors of gentrification in the neighborhoods where they worked and lived, which would only intensify later on. She demonstrates, on the contrary, the existence of numerous and multiple reciprocities between the spaces, uses, materialities, topography, history of the neighborhoods and the artistic practices of that time. The artists were by no means just actors in gentrification, nor did they control this dynamic. A close reading reveals the ways in which their work rather reflected urban and social dynamics, making it retrospectively graspable in its full complexity.

Greenwich, the neighborhood where Judson's concerts took place between 1962 and 1964, belongs to the lower Manhattan neighborhoods whose geometry escapes the rigor of the New York grid. Even before the dancers, these streets attracted non-conformist minds. Poets, writers, artists and filmmakers settled there "away from an overly rational utopia, that of the homogeneous, isotropic grid".<sup>219</sup>

Thus, an ecosystem was formed in which the irregular ground composed by Downtown's urban fabric was rapidly superimposed with ideas of independence and existed in tension with the rest of the city. Greenwich, with its defined perspectives, folds and interstices, supported a neighborhood experience and the feeling of a shared geography by its inhabitants. Downtown became a ground that helped highlighting the non-neutrality of the social order and paradigms of efficiency and rationality that organized the rest of the city:

"One could see it as the confrontation of two utopias, that of a homogeneous and egalitarian society, the one of the grid championed by Robert Moses, the urban planner who transformed the face of the city, and that of a free community whose regional and local differences cannot be erased by planned and centralized urbanism."<sup>220</sup>

219 Pauline Chevalier, *Une Histoire Des Espaces Alternatifs à New York: De SoHo Au South Bronx (1969-1985)*, Œuvres En Sociétés (Dijon: Presses du réel, 2017), 27.

220 Chevalier, 28.



SoHo, to the south of Greenwich, offered a different but just as specific architecture. It was the product of a focus on industrial craftsmanship expressed through architecture. The neighborhood was built in the wake of the industrial boom. Its buildings were designed to highlight the technical prowess of the iron industry through the production of spectacular cast-iron structures and a luminous architecture.<sup>221</sup> SoHo's abandonment as an industrial district was as rapid as its growth:

“As modern industry came to require a different type of structure — a more spacious one-story building with large loading zones for long tractor-trailers — the verticality of the SoHo buildings proved to be inefficient for moving goods. And as electrical lighting became less expensive, the large windows of the cast-iron buildings no longer offered the same advantage.”<sup>222</sup>

Deindustrialization in the late 1960s provided artists with truly unique places for living, rehearsing, performing and exhibiting. SoHo became the ground for movements that wove themselves into its buildings, spatial qualities and materialities, transforming the decaying neighborhood into a support for the invention of alternative modes of moving and existing. Numerous accounts refer to composer Philippe Glass's plumbing skills to underscore how actively the artists engaged with the materiality of their environment. But the entanglement But the imbrication went much deeper than that, and complex dynamics of trans-individuation were at play. The artistic community was shaped by its environment and shaped it in return.

In his writings on choreopolitics, Lepecki questions whether choreography can take account of the rugged terrain of the polis and its histories. He dreams of a “topo-choreopolitics” that wouldn't flatten the ground (as Western dance culture has done) but would inscribe itself in the ground, in a new ethics of place, reorienting movement and reinventing a new social choreography.<sup>223</sup> The inhabitation of SoHo by a community of artists who lived there, exchanged, worked and danced revealed the capacity of the dancers' practice to contribute to this rewriting of grounds and spatialities as politics.

The artists' takeover of SoHo at that time happened on the edge of legality. But what posed a challenge also served as a source of cohesion:

“SoHo was dance spilling out into life. It was a grimy laboratory of the future. It was the stage set for the life I was after. In SoHo you could get a turnip soup with an asymmetrical bread chunk at an exotically rustic cafeteria named Food. You could climb leaning stairways to see free-form jazz men riffing in lofts. And you could meet other dancers on

221 Today, SoHo is also known as the Cast-Iron Historic District, as it was designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in August 1973. There are approximately 250 cast iron buildings in New York City, most of them in SoHo and mostly dating from the mid to late-1800's. See SoHo Memory Project: <https://sohomemory.org/a-history-of-soho-from-the-1700s-through-the-present/>

222 These memories of the SoHo atmosphere are shared by Elizabeth Kendall. At the time, she attended dance workshops with Steve Paxton and Barbara Dilley and frequented the streets of SoHo. She later became a dance critic and historian. Wendy Perron, *The Grand Union: Accidental Anarchists of Downtown Dance, 1970-1976* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2020), 56., <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/arts/dance/dance-boom-1970s-new-york-city.html> accessed September 17, 2023.

223 Lepecki, “Coreo-Política e Coreo-Polícia.”

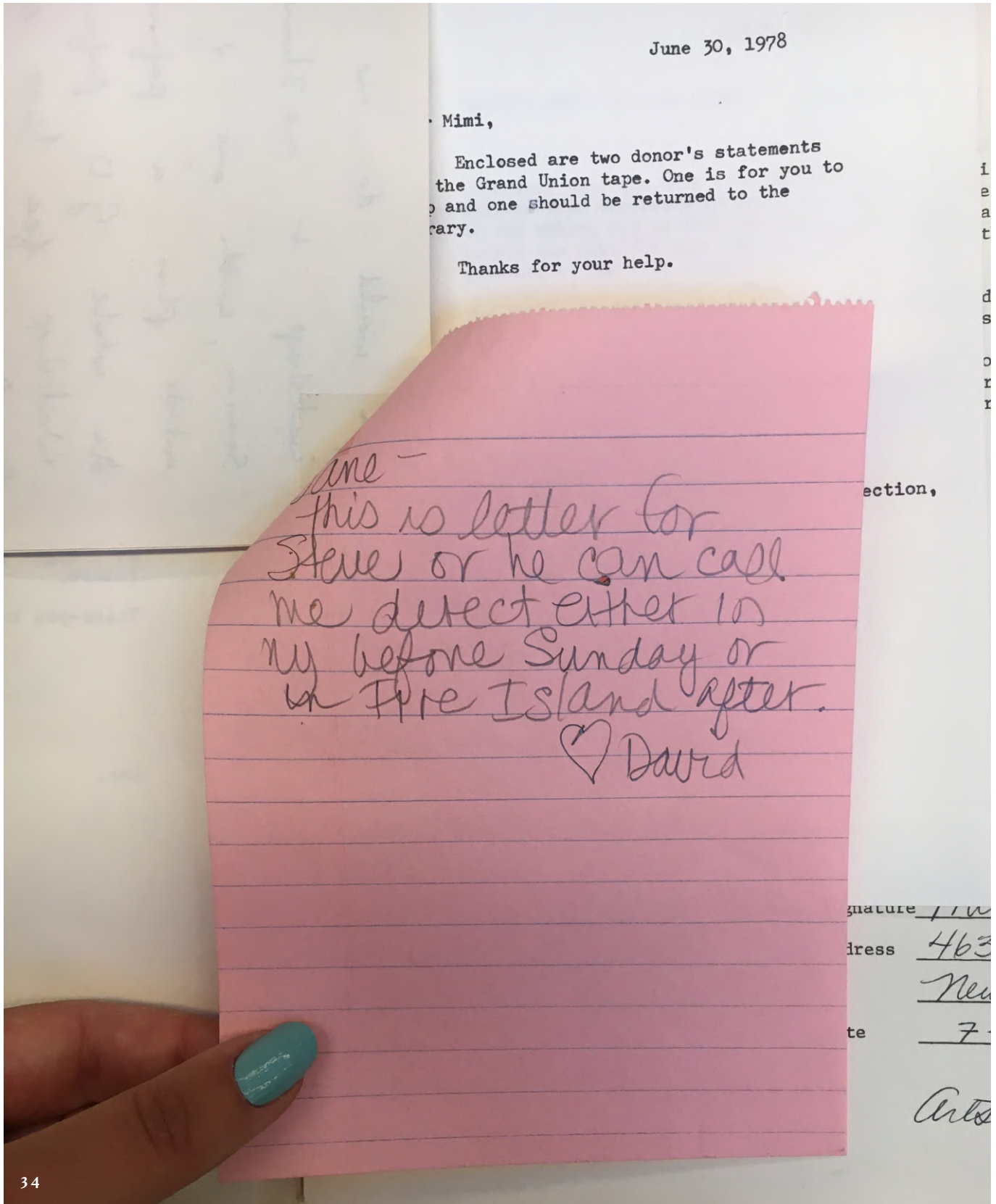


Fig. 34 • Office files, Correspondence 1972-1978, undated. References: b. 1 f. 1. Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



**CEAREL, Inc.**  
National Educational Laboratory

*what's your response to  
this? narye*

1 September 1973

Dear Grand Union --

I am a writer, 23 years old, who has been doing theatre and studying dance in Chicago for five years. I am under contract to write a book on contemporary dance; my publisher is Chicago Review Press.

I am planning to come to New York in October to talk with dancers and choreographers and groups, to take classes, to see performances, to take photos. The content of the book will have to depend on who feels like being interviewed, photographed, seen, and written about by me. It will also depend on my getting into classes and performances for little or no money, since my advance is miniscule.

Right now I am thinking about a book that would trace briefly the history of modern dance up to Judson Church; then to study in depth developments since then, mostly in New York; I am particularly interested in groups of dancers/choreographers and how you/they work, as groups.

So it would be a great help to me if you could answer a few questions prior to my arrival in NY, hopefully as soon as possible: Would you be interested in and willing to participate in the making of my book? Will you be in New York in October? the rest of the year? What does your work schedule look like for the year (rehearsals? workshops? performances?)? Do you give dance classes? What are the schedules? rates? Do you take dance classes with other people? Who? Do you know of any other dance collectives or other kinds of groups who would be interested in this? If so, would you send me their names and addresses or else ask them to write me and give me the above information? Actually I'd like to hear from anyone, groups and/or individuals.

*Not sure*

*Should be a member on the offer - our Dad call me whenever you.*

*Benn. vt.  
802 374  
Rowland vt  
(home) 802*

*Thank*

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Fig. 35 • Office files, Correspondence 1972-1978, undated. References: b. 1 f. 1. Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.





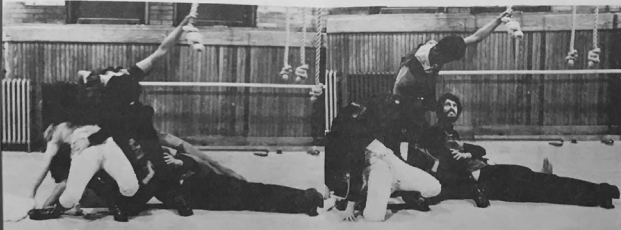
**Steve Paxton –**

Co-founded the Judson Dance Theater in New York, performed with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, participated in the 9 Evenings of Theater and Engineering, produced Theater Rally, has toured extensively in the US and Europe. In 1971 he traveled and studied in India on grants from E.A.T. and J.D.R. III Fund. He is a co-member of the Grand Union.

**Performances: January 1972**

- 7 Friday Grand Union Do (free) 8:30 p.m.  
Warner Main Gym
- 14 Friday Grand Union Do (\$2.50, \$1 students) 8:30 p.m.  
Warner Main Gym
- 18 Tuesday Dong – open workshop (\$1.50) 8:00 p.m.  
Warner Main Gym
- 19 Wednesday Dance Hootenanny (50¢) 8:00 p.m.  
Warner Main Gym
- 21 Friday Gordon and Rainer (\$2.50, \$1 students) 8:30 p.m.  
With the Oberlin Dancers  
Hall Auditorium
- 22 Saturday Grand Union (\$2.50, \$1 students) 8:30 p.m.  
Hall Auditorium

Oberlin College  
774-1221 extension 4156 for information.  
Additional performances will occur.



**Yvonne Rainer –**

Has been dancing since 1959 and choreographing since 1960. She studied with Merce Cunningham for six years. She has made works for herself as well as hordes of people, performed on stages and in spaces throughout the world. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She is currently interested in the problem of transposing certain of her interests to film.

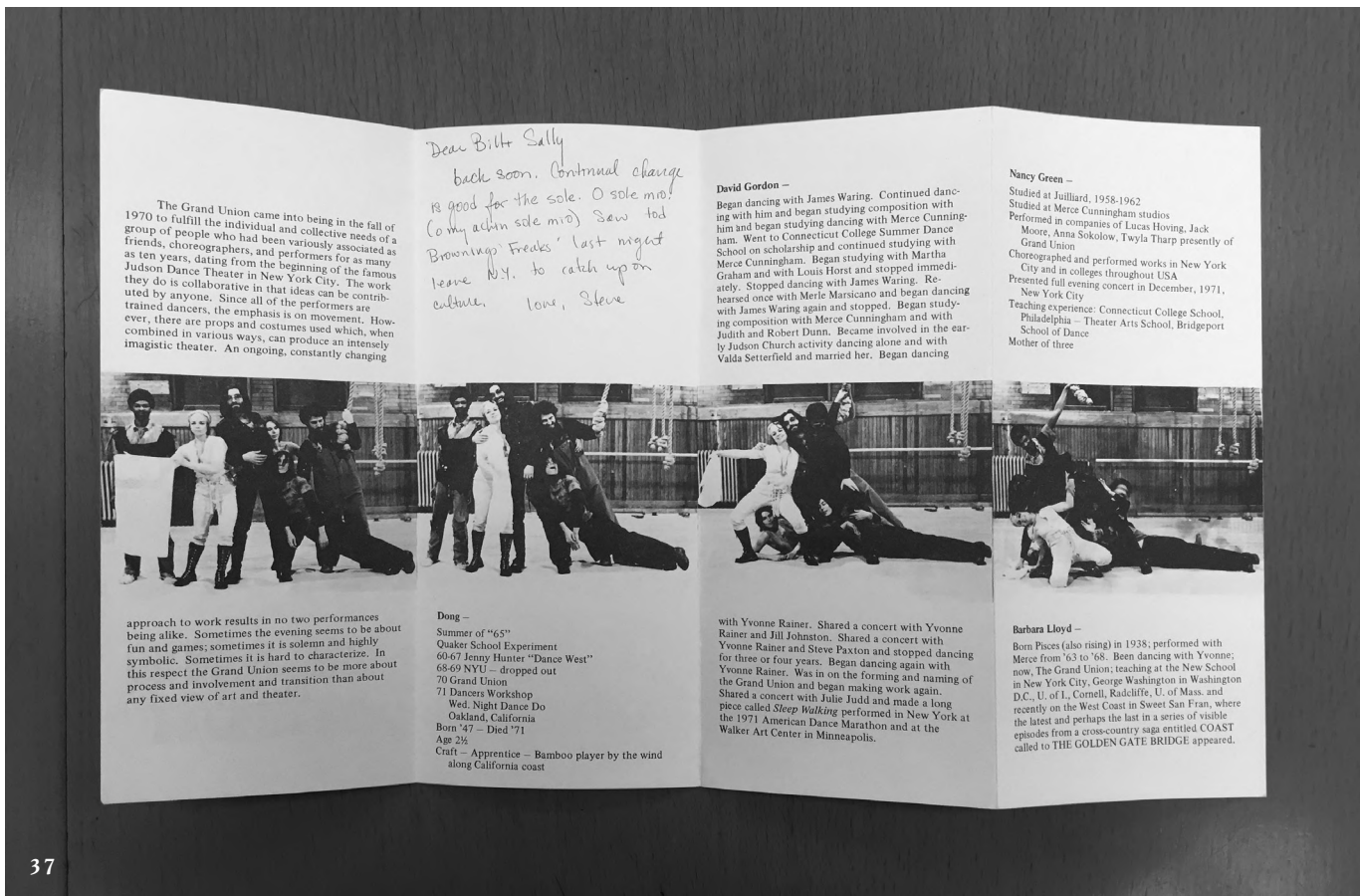
This attraction is made possible with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ohio Arts Council. The Council provides a wide variety of programs and services in the performing, visual, and literary arts, available to community groups and organizations throughout the State. For further information on how this agency can contribute to the cultural growth of your community, write to: The Ohio Arts Council, 50 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Recycle this tree.

Recycle this tree.

**GRAND  
UNION**

36



The Grand Union came into being in the fall of 1970 to fulfill the individual and collective needs of a group of people who had been variously associated as friends, choreographers, and performers for as many as ten years, dating from the beginning of the famous Judson Dance Theater in New York City. The work they do is collaborative in that ideas can be contributed by anyone. Since all of the performers are trained dancers, the emphasis is on movement. However, there are props and costumes used which, when combined in various ways, can produce an intensely imagistic theater. An ongoing, constantly changing



approach to work results in no two performances being alike. Sometimes the evening seems to be about fun and games; sometimes it is solemn and highly symbolic. Sometimes it is hard to characterize. In this respect the Grand Union seems to be more about process and involvement and transition than about any fixed view of art and theater.

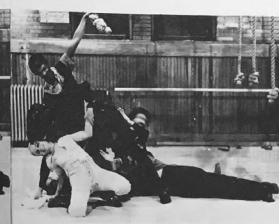
**Dong –**  
Summer of "65"  
Quaker School Experiment  
60-67 Jenny Hunter "Dance West"  
68-69 NYU – dropped out  
70 Grand Union  
71 Dancers Workshop  
Wed. Night Dance Do  
Oakland, California  
Born '47 – Died '71  
Age 2½  
Craft – Apprentice – Bamboo player by the wind  
along California coast

**David Gordon –**  
Began dancing with James Waring. Continued dancing with him and began studying composition with him and began studying dancing with Merce Cunningham. Went to Connecticut College Summer Dance School on scholarship and continued studying with Merce Cunningham. Began studying with Martha Graham and with Louis Horst and stopped immediately. Stopped dancing with James Waring. Rehearsed once with Merle Marsicano and began dancing with James Waring again and stopped. Began studying composition with Merce Cunningham and with Judith and Robert Dunn. Became involved in the early Judson Church activity dancing alone and with Valda Seterfield and married her. Began dancing



with Yvonne Rainer. Shared a concert with Yvonne Rainer and Jill Johnston. Shared a concert with Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton and stopped dancing for three or four years. Began dancing again with Yvonne Rainer. Was in on the forming and naming of the Grand Union and began making work again. Shared a concert with Julie Judd and made a long piece called *Sleep Walking* performed in New York at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

**Nancy Green –**  
Studied at Juilliard, 1958-1962  
Studied at Merce Cunningham studios  
Performed in companies of Lucas Hoving, Jack Moore, Anna Sokolow, Tayla Tharp presently of Grand Union  
Choreographed and performed works in New York City and in colleges throughout USA  
Presented full evening concert in December, 1971, New York City  
Teaching experience: Connecticut College School, Philadelphia – Theater Arts School, Bridgeport School of Dance  
Mother of three



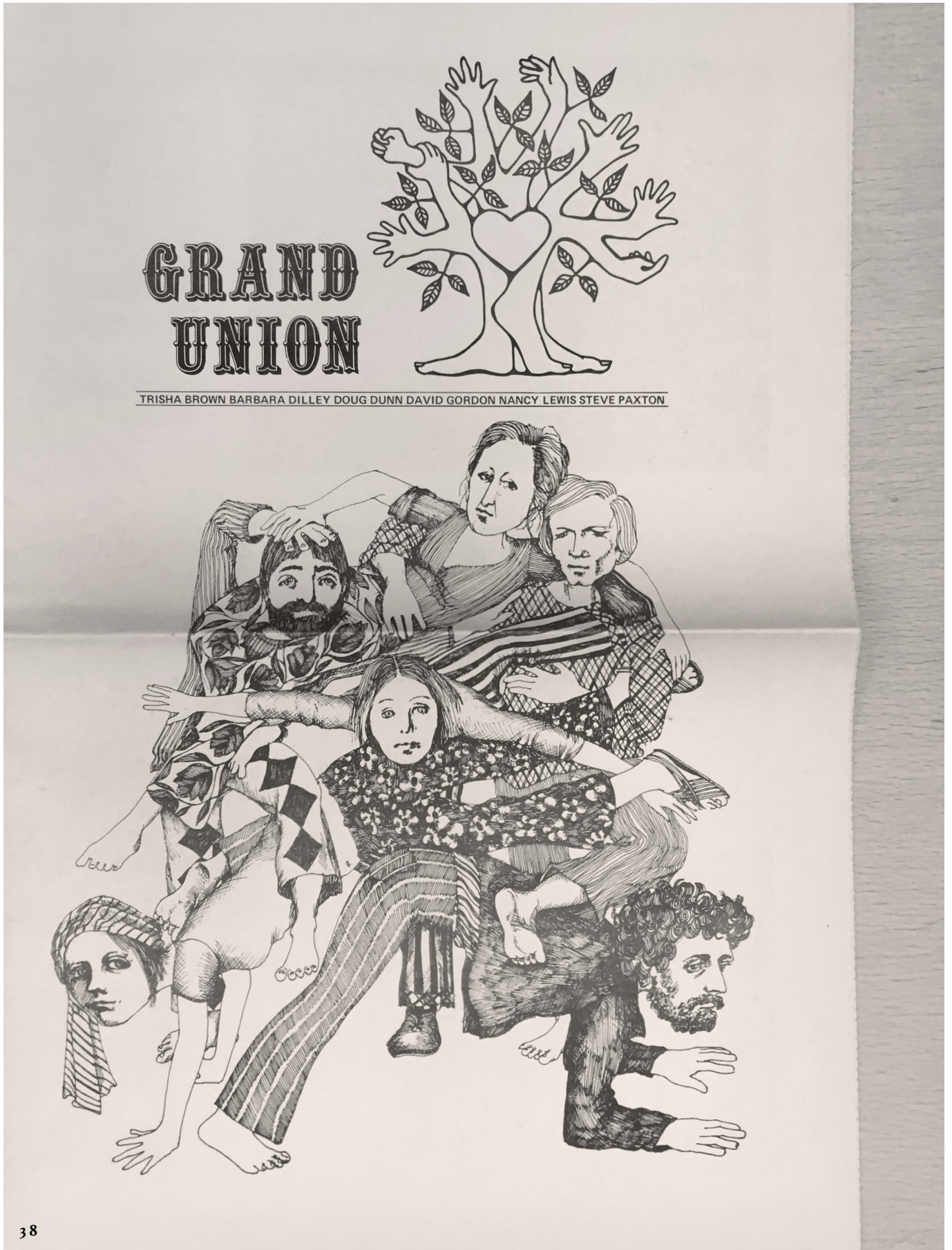
**Barbara Lloyd –**  
Born Pices (also rising) in 1938, performed with Merce from '63 to '68. Been dancing with Yvonne; now, The Grand Union; teaching at the New School in New York City, George Washington in Washington D.C., U. of I., Cornell, Radcliffe, U. of Mass. and recently on the West Coast in Sweet San Fran, where the latest and perhaps the last in a series of visible episodes from a cross-country saga entitled COAST called to THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE appeared.

37

Fig. 36-37 • Office files, Correspondence 1972-1978, undated. References: b. 1 f. 1. Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.





38

Fig. 38 • Press Materials, Grand Union's drawing. Programs, flyers, posters 1971-1976, undated. References: b. 1 f. 17 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



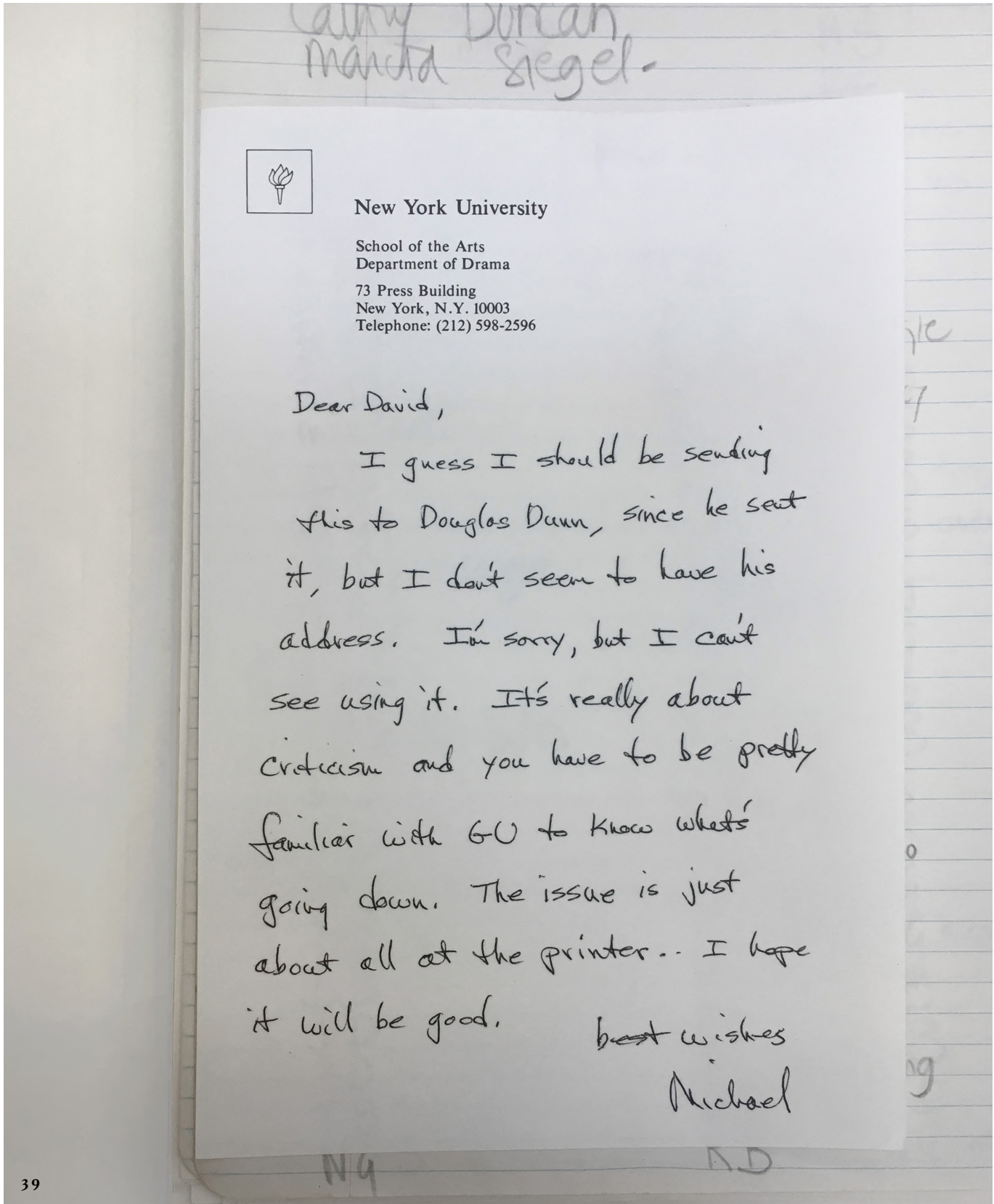


Fig. 39 • Press Materials, Grand Union talks to the critics, 1976. References: b. 1 f. 5. Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



THE NEW YORK TIMES  
4/25/76  
**Grand Union's Skits  
Now More Formula  
Than Improvisation**

Since its inception seven years ago, the Grand Union has changed a bit in personnel, but little in basic orientation. It started as a sophisticated playground for choreographers who regularly presented concerts of their own work separately, while convening the old gang for occasional evenings of improvisation. Friday evening at the La Mama Annex, Barbara Dilly, Douglas Dunn, David Gordon, Nancy Lewis and Valda Setterfield gave a concert with touches of fun but left this viewer feeling that perhaps he had been to the same party too often with the same companions.

Words, movement and music whirled about as members reacted to one another in movement or verbal commentary. Mr. Gordon's role as the genial, witty master of ceremonies seems assured, as is Miss Lewis's as the daffy dame. In the final skit she began to confess and Mr. Gordon tied her to a cross for her trouble. Mr. Dunn, the all-American boy, tossed her an orange segment, which she caught with all the aplomb of Sharkey the seal.

Miss Dilly's role as the self-possessed outsider, tooting along sketching movement designs and waiting for something of consequence to happen remained much the same. Mr. Dunn, playing the hick from the sticks, followed her for a while with his suitcase firmly in hand and, at another point, Miss Lewis flashed past on a skate board to create a momentary stir. Miss Setterfield added a Buster Keatonish element to the group as she persevered in her simple course no matter what the obstacles. The novelty of the Grand Union approach is past though and is being replaced by formula.

DON McDONAGH

NEW YORK TIMES  
APRIL 3 1973  
DON McDONAGH

**Grand Union Offers Unstructured Dance Experience**

Collectively, the Grand Union knows everything about performing except when to stop. After two and three-quarter intermissionless hours at the Dance Gallery Sunday evening, it released a limp and soggy audience.

The company, a loose association of professionals who have chosen to work together in creative encounter sessions, can call upon any skill, including tap dancing in rubber boots, to make its varied points. This month and next the group will be performing a dozen times, and individual members like Steve Paxton and Barbara Lloyd will also be presenting concerts of their own works.

The tone of the Grand Union's first evening was by turns humorous, dull, en-

crossing, puzzling, boring, exciting and several emotional states in between. There is, of course, no set format but the performers, Barbara Lloyd, Nancy Green, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, David Gordon and, as an unexpected attraction, Yvonne Rainer doing a stripper's bump and grind with wit and nerve, bounce off one another's psyches to create dance incidents.

All of the dancers have years of performing experience and can improvise a routine as easily as nightclub comedians can create skits out of chance phrases. It is a considerable skill and, I suspect, one that will engross only those who do not demand a set format from an evening of dancing but are willing to endure the inevitable length of such a nondirected performing situation. Personally I would find an evening without Mr. Gordon and Miss Green hard going.

Among the more vivid incidents was an encounter between Miss Green and a tangled microphone cord and a sickbed scene in which Steve Paxton and David Gordon switched doctor and patient roles. There is no telling whether either of these will be seen again, but they surely do work well. For serious relief one could watch Trisha Brown bouncing a ball. The company will be seen again Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

THE OBERLIN REVIEW

Friday, January 21, 1972

**Ongoing story of a Grand Union:  
interaction and trust in dance**

Peter Klein and Felicity Brock

In 1961 began the association which culminated nine years later in The Grand Union. There are nine parts to the Union, six of whom are in Oberlin working on technique and composition with the members of the Winter Term Dance Project. While all the members have choreographed at some time, improvisation constitutes the dance experience in which the Union is currently involved.

Essential for improvisational work is the close interrelation and collaboration that engenders trust. The Grand Union project could not have taken place without a sense of shared history. According to Steve Paxton, "Trust is the only thing fast enough for the speed of interaction which may occur in performance."

Despite an underlying unity, the group does not frequently find itself completely assembled, tending to rely upon "a kind of supported chaos as a way of combatting the dissolution of organization." As individuals who work and travel independently, they are often at some distance from one another. Then, "at various times," as Barbara Lloyd explains, "we all just sort of stop and haul into the woodwork for a while."

Oberlin is the woodwork now; they have to work with students but also to be able to work with each other. All but one Union member have studied extensively with Merce Cunningham. Yvonne Rainer fragments and manipulates story elements in a process which at times approaches film editing technique. This non-narrative drama evolves in part from the Cunningham and Cage tradition which accepts the coherence of multiplicity, an indifference to development and climax, and the introduction of chance determination of performance material. Her current work with Oberlin students uses their contributions as a partial basis for selection of factors and interactions in the piece.

For Barbara Lloyd, work with Cunningham marked the point at which she considered herself a dancer. At this stage in her development she views dance as a ritualistic expression. Aside from teaching technique and her version of Adoration of the Sun, she has brought Oberlin students a structure entitled "The Figure" which is part of a multidimensional work *Cost*.

*Cost* is as its name implies, a "cross-country saga," last performed at the Golden Gate Bridge. Oberlin participants rehearsed *The Figure* in the Field House for eight hours so that they might establish a "shared history" in relation to it.

Steve Paxton, who has also performed with Cunningham was a co-founder of the Judson Dance Theater, and was involved with Evenings of Theater and Engineering. Regarding the Grand Union's future, he firmly believes that they will avoid what he terms the "failure-consciousness" of modern dance. Innovation and public appreciation need not be mutually or economically exclusive.

Dong has been interested in both dance and drama. Though he does not consider himself fully a dancer, he is definitely a co-member of the Grand Union.

Nancy Green strives for immediate and direct communication through movement, a goal evident in her technique class's recent evolutions. She has worked with Lucas Hoving, Jack Moore, Anna Sokolow, and Twyla Tharp.

Although David Gordon has danced and choreographed for over ten years, he only recently settled upon being a dancer. He will present *Sleep Walking* at 3 p.m. in Warner Gym for free Saturday, January 22.

The *Sleep Walking* he will present at Oberlin is this work's third realization. The dance originated in studies concerning leaning and angularity, and became a virtuoso solo task for a mass of individual dancers. Although performers and audience spaces, costumes, and properties have changed radically with each production, resulting in the inevitable plethora of subjective (audience) responses, the dance remains the same—a select series of mechanical movements and sounds.

**GRAND UNION PERFORMS**

GRAND UNION DANCE SCHEDULE

GRAND UNION 00 Jan. 14 8:00 p.m. Warner Gym Cost \$1

DONG (Open Workshop) Jan. 18 8:00 p.m. Warner Gym Cost \$1.50

DANCE HOOTENANNY Jan. 19 8:00 p.m. Warner Gym Cost \$6

GORDON & RAINER (local cast) Jan. 21 8:30 p.m. Hall Cost \$1

GRAND UNION FINAL PERFORMANCE Jan. 22 8:30 Hall \$1

DAVID GORDON'S SLEEPWALKING Jan. 22 8:30 Warner Gym

41

Fig. 40 • Press Materials, *The New York Times*. Miscellaneous reviews 1971-1976, undated. References: b. 1 f. 9 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

Fig. 41 • Press Materials, *The Oberlin Review*. Miscellaneous reviews 1971-1976, undated. References: b. 1 f. 9 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

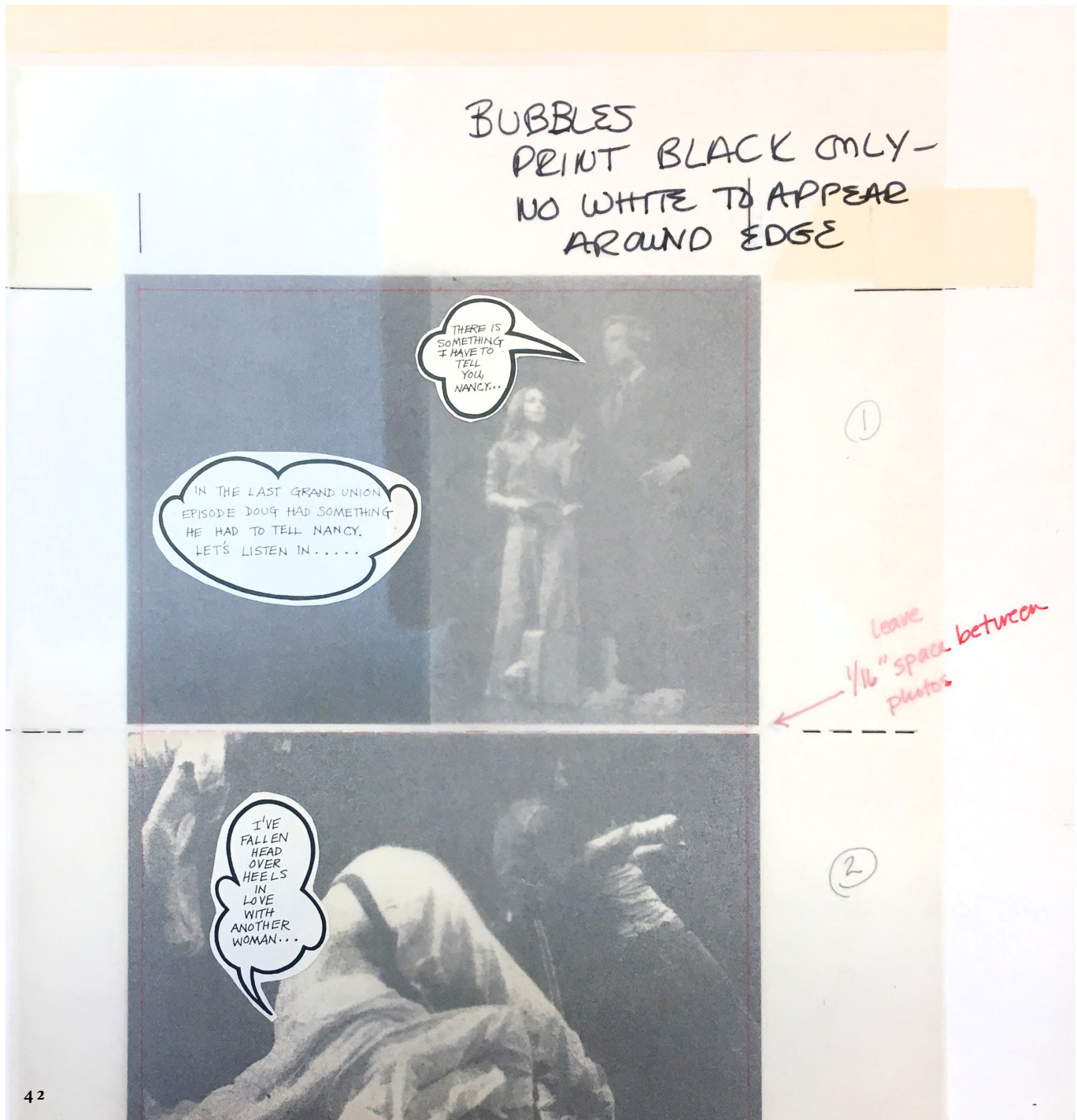


Fig. 42 • Press Materials, *BUBBLES* PRINT BLACK ONLY-NO WHITE TO APPEAR AROUND EDGE. Mockups 1973-1974, undated. References: b. 1 f. 12 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.



Minneapolis Star

Sat., May 29, 1971



Minneapolis Star Photo by Larry Schreiber

**DANCING IN THE PARK**—The Grand Union, New York dance company which has been in residence this week in Minneapolis under the sponsorship of Walker Art Center, presented a performance in the Walker Auditorium Friday and a lecture-demonstration there Wednesday. The group devoted most of its time in the

city, however, to preparing events involving local volunteers at outdoor sites around town. Kite-flying in the Armory Gardens, "encounters" in the Loring Park horseshoe pit, and (above) chain-processions near Metropolitan State Junior College were among the happenings created.

Fig. 43 • Press Materials, *Dancing in the Park*. Miscellaneous reviews 1971-1976, undated. References: b. 1 f. 9 Grand Union records, (S) \*MGZMD 132. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Photo: The Author. Accessed August 26, 2022.

street corners and converse with them in the deadpan physical vernacular of Rainer's 'Trio A.' Somebody would start those opening arm swings of the sloppy-tidy, faux-plebeian dance, and somebody else would cross the street and join in with the next move."<sup>224</sup>

At that time, the factories were abruptly abandoned and SoHo was a freeze-frame of what globalization was capable of producing in terms of change and violence on both human lives and environments. The abandoned machines and equipment remained as sole witnesses to the movements, lives and knowledge that had been woven there only a short time before. These machines and equipment left behind were re-invested and re-invented in the movement experimentations led there by Grand Union and many others. In turn, these possibilities were felt by the artists and dancers who realized what this neighborhood did for their art and lives. Increasingly, what was once a form of opportunity for cheap rents and living became part of the artistic practice of the SoHo community. As a result, many of them engaged in associations to protect this ecology, developing what Chevalier aptly calls "a militant topophilia."<sup>225</sup>

Chevalier also notes how the spatial condition offered by SoHo accommodated the questions posed by the dancers in their dances:

"The conditioning of the dancing body, a space like that of 112 Greene Street, devoid of artifice, is both a neutral stage and 'outside' of reality, yet it is also a living space anchored in the daily lives of the artists. This dual quality of the places [...] constitutes the inspiration for the dances and works born within the walls of 112 Greene Street."<sup>226</sup>

Rather than merely serving as "inspiration", the ground of SoHo acted and took part in the invention of a choreopolitics of the more-than in which a multiple community articulated orientations, aesthetics and minor modes of existence:

"As works and performances take as their object the community itself, the environment and the social and urban material, the alternative space becomes the reflexive framework of a mirror aesthetic, where creative techniques, improvisation, daily rehearsals and creative processes are reflected."<sup>227</sup>

The mirror mentioned by Chevalier was, in reality, a ground in the making. The minor architectures invented in the dances of Grand Union would not have existed separately from the dances that stood alongside it. The experiments with the principle of gravity that took hold of the façades, the ropes and the piles of materials present turned what New York politicians used to call a wasted wasteland into a terrain for inventing what these specific grounds could do to dance. In turn, these grounds themselves were affirmed in their richness and singularity, in contrast to the controlled and standardized

224 SoHo Memory Project: <https://sohomemory.org/a-history-of-soho-from-the-1700s-through-the-present/>

225 Beyond "pure" artistic practice, there were many occasions when artists defended the neighborhood as a way of life. One example is the *Artists Against the Expressway* association, of which Yvonne Rainer was a member, which opposed the city's plan to build an expressway, defending both the neighborhood's specific architecture and the accessible and cheap opportunities it offered artists.

226 Chevalier, *Une Histoire Des Espaces Alternatifs à New York*, 160.

227 Chevalier, 163.

architectures developed in the rest of the city. The spaces of SoHo became partners and allies in the invention of minor architectures and modes of existence in relation and in resistance to the dynamics and architectures of neoliberal globalization.

By becoming part of the Grand Union dances, Soho's grounds lead the dancers towards a certain kind of attention and movement. What was at the time of the first encounter an open exploration became, over the years, a more fixed co-becoming. Claiming and protecting the neighborhood has also led SoHo's artists-inhabitants to a certain isolation from the rest of the city and from certain social, political and artistic dynamics. For example, Chevalier links the fact that the growing role of new media in society was struggling to find its way directly into downtown's artistic practices precisely to this evolution. While several other New York art collectives took up the subject directly at the time, this aspect didn't find its way into the artistic practice of some Grand Union members until a decade later, after the collective had come to an end and its members had moved on to other places. Beyond this specific case, SoHo's isolation had a great influence in terms of the type of communities involved in the choreopolitics being written there, and in particular, their social and racial diversity.<sup>228</sup>

A trend toward formalization also threatened the choreopolitical ecologies of SoHo. The way artists interacted with the built environment and invested SoHo's architecture became copied and formalized. But the standardization dynamic was not so much supported by the artists themselves as by a political recuperation aimed at regaining control over the freedom found in these experimental forms of dwelling. The "alternative space" of the loft invented in SoHo transitioned into a recognized model thanks to the support of public authorities. City's public policies supported the practice while at the same time introducing heightened administrative rigidity.

In this way, the subversive dimensions associated with creating greater porosities between inside and outside, living according to singular rhythms and in composite family, professional, sexual and romantic configurations - all these dimensions again became controlled by the system in place. At the same time, by maintaining the spatial possibility of the loft, the same system maintained the illusion of freedom advocated by the artists. These operations to recuperate movements involved in affirming alternative lifestyles are precisely characteristic of the choreopolitical dynamic discussed in the first part of this text. They testify to the constant dance of negotiation between choreopolice and choreopolitics, as well as to the logic of operations adopted by choreopolice.

It was a specific convergence of forces that enabled the writing of a choreopolitics of the more-than in SoHo. There, artists discovered methods for collectively re-orienting the dynamics of their encounters and exploring the potentialities opened by the act

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228 This dimension is specifically discussed in the last part of this first chapter. Today, a number of artists and historians are highlighting this aspect and the importance of taking it into account in accounts of Judosn and Grand Union in the history of art and dance.



of dancing with the grounds offered to them. Portraying Grand Union's experiences through the lens of these choreopolitical ecologies contributes to a description of the event as it unfolded within its milieu, within the set of forces that conditioned it. This endeavor seeks to keep these dance experiences remaining with their milieu, rather than extracting them from it. The aim is to transform the reorientation brought about by choreopolitics into a question of invention that transcends the *human* dimension, instead of limiting it solely to the human capabilities of the dancers to invent other movements :

“Dance is an atmospheric phenomenon in the sense that it is not attributable to one single being but to the relation that weaves beings together. Again, it is difficult to think of such an event because Greek- and Latin-derived languages and ontologies have that irresistible slope of attributing actions to subjects and enclosing potentials in beings, rather than in-between-beings. The persistence of that scheme, as many have shown, dramatically impedes the possibilities of thinking about living movements, that are, by essence, woven,”

writes Bigé.<sup>229</sup> This inclination to attach invention to the individual or its movement rather than to inflections in the knot of the event, overlooks the transformative nature of a choreopolitics of the more-than.

The evolution of Yvonne Rainer's perception of the political power of her own work illustrates this movement from a focus on the dancer's capacity for invention to a focus on the capacity for invention of an *ecology*. For example, her work *Trio A* featured a body that aimed to be expressive in itself rather than expressing anything else. Rainer first aimed to work around the idea of a *neutral* performer. By the 1970s, Yvonne Rainer sensed she had reached the limits of this exploration, knowing that the performer's body is simultaneously a body conditioned by social norms, a body whose (non)expressivity does not depend on pure mass in its relationship with gravity. *Trio A* primarily implied a rejection of the dance establishment itself and the expectations placed on the dancer's body. The *neutrality* that the work aimed to invent must therefore be understood as co-constructed within an ecology rather than by the performer's body alone. Today, Rainer consciously associates the subversive dimension of a dance work not only with the performance of the dancer but *with its milieu*.

Choreopolitics are therefore always situated, and cannot retain their power automatically in time and space. This situated dimension questions the spatial and temporal scope of choreopolitics. These remarks invite questions: Is the choreopolitical power of Judson's and Grand Union's experiments doomed to disappear completely once the choreographies have been taken out of their milieu? Today, do these dance experiments represent nothing more than a pivotal moment in the history of dance? Or is it still possible to connect with their choreopolitical power and actualize it in a different way?

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229 Bigé, “How Do I Know When I Am Dancing?,” 319–30.

Since the 2000s, the field of dance has sought new articulations to the question of *what endures* in a dance, its modalities of knowledge production and transmission. Dance and performance scholars and artists have also been actively thinking about the less linear relationship with history offered by performance in its capacity to merge different planes and re-activate potentialities in the present. In this final section, I briefly examine these questions as they have been addressed in dance and performance studies. There, the notions of archive, repertoire and reenactment take on a crucial role to express *what remains* beyond the inherent ephemerality that is quite directly attached to performance.

From this perspective, I return to the question of choreopolitics and the knowledge formulated by the Judson collective. I describe three instances in which attempts to extend the political power of these dance experiments gave rise to new dances and a re-activation of certain dimensions of their ecologies. These different processes and trajectories give me the opportunity to show how, through the activation of an encounter with Judson's practices and their virtualities, we can outline a *choreopolitical persistence*, even though, as these practices make evident, it necessitates a *choreopolitical stubbornness*—an obstinacy to continue exploring free movement.



## 1.3 Oblique re-activations. — Complicating the choreopolitics of the 1960s

PART III

Making contact — Yvonne Rainer is coming of age — Paris is Burning at the Judson Church — Movement Research is dancing with the collective dance memory — Whose stubbornness ?





## 1.3 Oblique re-activations. — Complicating the choreopolitics of the 1960s

### PART III

#### Making contact

In Western culture, dance and performance have traditionally been directly associated with the idea of ephemerality, presence and disappearance. In the 1960-70, the discourses that accompany these forms of art point to their ability to resist the ever-increasing pressure of market logics on the production of works of art. A dance work challenges the status of the object and eludes the “economy of reproduction.”<sup>230</sup> It becomes in disappearance. Today, however, a number of scholars are identifying profound limitations in privileging an understanding of dance and performance as that which does not remain – or which remains for history only if documented and archived.

In her seminal article *Performance Remains*, performance theorist Rebecca Schneider links this reading of the performance/disappearance pair to Western, patriarchal logics, for which only locatable, organizable, assignable material traces are authoritative as traces.<sup>231</sup> The logic of the archive is then the one that scripts performance as disappearance. If performance isn’t archived, if it doesn’t leave a trace, then it doesn’t remain. Schneider draws a distinction between the persistence of the archive and other forms of persistence, which are linked to oral traditions, recitation, repeated gestures transmitted from body to body, rituals. Isn’t there a form of knowledge, movement and history that are inscribed and continue to persist, albeit through different means?

Schneider interprets these different practices as ways of storing memory, writing and recounting history through direct body-to-body transmission. The “remains” of a performance do not align with those of the archive but rather “the set of acts and spectral meanings which haunt material in constant collective interaction, in constellation.”<sup>232</sup> This knowledge cannot be simply confined to the archive, and its process of making-history involves repeated practices. Performance, beyond its disappearance, also becomes a medium for reappearance. It becomes a method of reestablishing a zone of contact with knowledge that eludes the archive but persists through alternative means. Instead of anchoring the past works in their original singularity, as documentation may tend to do, the performances that engage in contact with these works “open

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230 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

231 Rebecca Schneider, “Performance Remains,” *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (January 2001): 100–108, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2001.10871792>.

232 Schneider, 104.

them up, untie them, activate the fields of possibilities or virtualities they carry within them.”<sup>233</sup> What reappears in performance is never pure presence, but rather, “the missed encounter - the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten.”<sup>234</sup> Understood in this way, performance participates in the affirmation of movements that do not begin with it, but run through it and surface within it. It evolves into an archival performative format that enables the production of counter-histories, offering a space for the reinvention and rewriting of works.

Diana Taylor, another prominent theorist in this field, calls the performative space in which performance enables transmission the “repertoire”:

“The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning.”<sup>235</sup>

Taylor is careful not to reproduce counterproductive binarisms. She notes that the archive and the repertoire as modes of transmission exist in parallel and sometimes in dialogue. They co-exist as sources of information, each with its own limitations. For example, a performance as such cannot become an archive. A filmed performance, on the other hand, belongs to the register of the repertoire as a performance, while the video of this performance can, as a video, belong to the archive. Similarly, she underscores that it’s not a matter of making the archive the primary means for conveying dominant history, and the repertoire the primary means for conveying subaltern narratives.

Performance-based modes of knowledge transmission are as much about maintaining a repressive social order as they are about subverting it. In a similar vein, researcher Anne Bénichou stresses that performative practices, to be constructive, must not only produce a difference, but also contribute to thinking about the renegotiations of historical narratives and their complexity. She cites, for example, how role reversal today can make visible “whiteness as a social, political and cultural hegemony”, or how uchrony “enables us to envisage the past as a set of ‘confiscated possibilities’, in the sense of what did not happen, and to reinvent it.”<sup>236</sup>

Scholar Olivia Michiko Gagnon also returns to the notions of reenactment and repertoire. She points out that these two terms have become key analytical concepts in the field of performance studies, but that the practices linked to a history-based approach with which they have been associated puts many performers and choreographers at a distance from the two terms. She herself relates these terms to such a tendency. Con-

233 Anne Bénichou, *Rejouer le vivant: les reenactments, des pratiques culturelles et artistiques (in)actuelles* (Dijon: les Presses du réel, 2020), 46.

234 Schneider, “Performance Remains,” 104.

235 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

236 Bénichou, *Rejouer le vivant*, 47.

sequently, she describes how, in some performances, working with historical material past can be done in a way that goes beyond these two terms. Sometimes, performance is “in fact, less a reenactment, less a repetition with a difference, than it is a dynamic *dancing-with* through which movement is shared from body to body.” The nuance Gagnon sees in these situations is that, in such cases,

“these modes of performed historical accompaniment are not grounded in domination-to force the past to move in this way or that-but rather in a kind of co-presence and mutual acting upon which the unexpected fruits of transtemporal collaboration might spring forth. Not only *what can I do with the past*, but *what might dancing with the past do to me?*”<sup>237</sup>

Similarly, Gagnon discusses how some artists explore not only a repertoire, but “a larger and more chaotic array of elements than the repertoire usually enfolds.” Gagnon calls this frictional practice “doing (minoritarian) history as a surprising ecology” and notes that it provides “a way forward and of living in which kinship can be found with (often animate) objects, transmission happens in the strangest of places, and belonging might be forged amongst the eclectic, the fragmented, the forgotten, and the discarded.”

Following these remarks, I propose to consider the way in which the act of working with material from the past is, in itself, a dance and potentially a choreopolitics of the “more-than.” This signifies that the process isn’t solely an imagined effort to illuminate a facet of the past but rather a genuine endeavor to establish trans-temporal contact, to circulate affects and movements in a manner that offers the “infinitely improbable” a chance.

Since the 2000s, the question of performative modalities for generating knowledge, memory and history has been increasingly explored by historians, theorists and artists alike. There is a wide spectrum of practices and an equally wide spectrum of intentions behind them. Sometimes, they aim to illuminate or question an aspect ignored by the dominant narratives. At other times, they aim more openly to establish a trans-temporal contact zone, potentially leading to the formation of unexpected ecologies. Here, I argue that these different practices have the quality of enabling the exploration of discontinuous and fluctuating dynamics and temporalities, and of enabling a process of negotiation that “does not aim for consensus, but seeks on the contrary to unlock the heterogeneous and contradictory interpretations, interests and affects they carry.”<sup>238</sup>

Today the practices of the Judson and Grand Union -with Judson’s perhaps to an even greater extent- are still objects of fascination in the arts. They embody a collaborative, horizontal avant-garde that opened up the field of dance to questioning and collaboration as never before. Yet these practices clearly bear the imprint of the times

237 Olivia Michiko Gagnon, “Moving through Crisis in Mariana Valencia’s *Solo B*,” *Text and Performance Quarterly*, March 16, 2023, 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2023.2181387>.

238 Bénichou, *Rejouer le vivant*, 59.

they lived in, and of an economic, political and social context that was immediately shaken up in the years that followed. These two aspects require those who maintain an interest in them today to adopt an approach that complicates this history and material, rather than forcing its linearities. In the context of this research, such questions come in mind: What remains of the choreopolitics of Judson and Grand Union? By delving into their history not as historical narratives but as events, with their emerging forces and unresolved issues, can we be affected by them and learn from them?

In the following paragraphs, I return to several performative practices that, in the decades following the end of these collectives, sought to establish contact with them. In this process, they aimed to question their legacy as well as the knowledge and orientations produced at the time. Archive and repertoire, body-to-body transmission, discontinuities, virtualities, minor gestures, re-orientations, thus become a necessary and powerful set of theoretical tools to account for these practices and the textures and registers they engaged. In the following pages, I argue that, together, these practices outline the ways in which choreopolitical ecologies survive and actualize themselves.

#### Yvonne Rainer is coming of age

The first actualizing process discussed here is Rainer's own. While seeking to make contact with one's own practice may seem something strange or uninteresting, in Rainer's case it has become profoundly central to his own artistic and political practice over the last few decades. The complexity explored by the artist through such approaches sheds light on the way in which choreopolitics exist as ecologies requiring constant and, above all, *renewed* commitment from the bodies taking part in them.

In 1972, shortly after the formation of Grand Union, Yvonne Rainer chose to orient her practice towards film rather than dance. However, this change in medium coincided with several other significant upheavals in her life. As a fervent believer in autobiography—even if it's always more about opening up the self than recounting the past—Rainer herself describes this period as one marked by a series of transformative events. In justifying this transition, she cites, among other things, the receipt of a substantial grant that gave her financial independence, or her meeting with cinematographer Babette Mangolte. But what really pushed her to make this move was her intense “discovery” of feminism. She writes:

“It was the return of the women's movement itself-coinciding with the devastation of my love life and enraged near demise and recovery—that ultimately catalyzed my transition from moving body to moving image.”

And a little further on:

“Busy with ‘my brilliant career,’ I had hardly taken notice of the gathering tumult of feminist voices. [...] Hot stuff! I extracted what I needed to fuel my nascent feminist fury. [...]

| In a sense, I began to come of age reading this stuff.”<sup>239</sup>

Film allowed Rainer to experiment with a kind of first attempt to “make contact” with Judson and Grand Union practices. For even though she was a member of these events, Rainer’s approach to these moments assumed discontinuities and oversights, while playing with the fact that the same body connected moments in time.

Regarding her transition to cinema, Rainer gives a reason that may seem paradoxical at first glance. She felt that her desire to examine her own experience in greater detail, and to express her emotions, would find in this other field broader possibilities than those offered by dance at the time. But this can be explained. Despite the many nuances in the practices of the dancers classified under this label, postmodern dance did indeed find itself attached to minimalism and a un-emotional aesthetic and image. That, ultimately, made the body once again, albeit differently than in modern dance, an object of contemplation closed in on itself. Rainer’s formal dance explorations have on the contrary always been about questioning emotions, relationships, language and the more-than of everything. With film, she felt that her work, as if “rid” of her own body at the center of the work, would make more perceptible that ever-fragmentary, oscillating mode of existence that interested her.

In her exploration of the medium of film, Rainer didn’t truly abandon the motifs present in her work as a choreographer. Instead, she overlapped them with a renewed interest in the registers of emotion and language. This renewed interest was closely tied to her feminist “awakening” and a transformative trip to India, where she encountered narrative structures that profoundly affected her. She developed strategies and tools for superimposing and reactivating old material:

| “Rainer [...] has always re-contextualized old material by putting it into new media and new semantic environments. In this way, Rainer’s work is always about the act of interpretation, both as practiced by the audience, and as acknowledgement of herself (the *auteur*) equally subject to the conditions of (re)interpretation”,

writes filmmaker and scholar Yelena Gluzman in an overview of the artist’s career.<sup>240</sup> The medium of film thus enabled Rainer to develop strategies of modular material use, fragmentation and superposition. In relation to her work from the 1960s, this enabled her to revisit choreography and make it feel like something other than an abstract, austere dance. As Rainer herself wrote about the Judson era,

| “while we aspired to the lofty and cerebral plane of a quotidian materiality, our unconscious lives unraveled with an intensity and melodrama that inversely matched their absence in the boxes, beams, jogging, and standing still of our austere sculptural and choreographic creations.”<sup>241</sup>

239 Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are facts: a life*, Paperback Ed (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Univ. Press, 2013), 387.

240 Yelena Gluzman, “On Yvonne Rainer” (Program Essay, Tokyo: Yotsuya Art Studium, October 20, 2010), 9.

241 Rainer, *Feelings are facts*, 391.





Fig. 44-46 • Babette Mangolte. *Duet #1, #2, #3, #4* from the series *Yvonne Rainer: Live of Performers*. Black and white photograph, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1972. Photo © Babette Mangolte.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



Fig. 48-50 • Babette Mangolte. *Walk she said #1, #2, #3* from the series *Yvonne Rainer: Live of Performers*. Black and white photograph, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1972. Photo © Babette Mangolte.

Fig. 51-53 • Babette Mangolte. *Dancers in the box #1, #2, #3* from the series *Yvonne Rainer: Live of Performers*. Black and white photograph, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1972. Photo © Babette Mangolte.



Rainer's film work returned to these tensions and the way they were rendered invisible. Rainer notes that the "refusal of narrative and fixed meanings" characteristic of Judson's practice can also be seen in retrospect as "a refusal to differentiate events, thus running the risk of trapping the spectator in a chain of unlimited interchangeability."<sup>242</sup>

Rainer's first film was titled *Lives of Performers*. The film consists of three performers' rehearsal of a performance, which they repeat until the final scene. Rather than focusing on the performance itself, the focus shifts to explore intimate relationships, emotions, narrative and psychological tensions. Sound recordings and voice-overs, images and didascalic text continually disrupt the narrative. Performance photos from Grand Union and others from the Babette Mangolte family archives are also incorporated into the film. The film thus becomes a description and gives a sense of an *atmosphere*, including the loft, its light, mattresses and cushions, extensively captured on film :

"The spatial and temporal contiguity of performer and texts created a unity, but would, hopefully, produce not a verisimilitude of character and history, but something in that vicinity, something provisional and surprising, even unsettling, perhaps something that might call into question what narrative traditionally accomplishes."

Materiality and emotion are interwoven in a work of discontinuous continuity that demands the viewer's imagination. Sitting on the edge of narrative, the film attempts to convey the forces, dynamics and taking shape of performance and narrative, while refusing the coherence and closure "of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary."<sup>243</sup>

These early forays into filmmaking reveal both the development of Rainer's language, which was becoming more politicized and specific, and the way in which she did not discard her past experiences in this new research, but always used them to reveal overlooked facets and continue to think about them. Rainer followed a trajectory that saw her searching again and again for ways to be both the (female) author of her works, while at the same time focusing the work not on her own person, but on the dynamics conditioning relationships - the questions of gender, race and class that increasingly occupy space in artistic and social reflections.

Since the 1970s and her first films, Rainer has engaged in transformative contact with the dances of her own past. She made visible how a focus (of audiences, but mostly of dominant discourses and attentions) on the most formal aspects of these dances was obliterating other facets. Simultaneously, through her filmic reworking, she more fully acknowledged that the pursuit of a "neutral" body is to be understood in relation to feminist issues rather than being purely formal research. Just as the medium of film affected Rainer's choreographic research, her dance and attention to body and movement affected the films she did in return. Art critic Johanna Renard notes that Rainer's

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242 Rainer, 398.

243 Rainer, 407.

body, juxtaposed with images and involved in mundane, minimalist activities, imposed a corporeal representation of reality. The porosity between filmed and danced practice itself became a way of proclaiming a non-linear time and trajectory of knowledge formation.

In 1999, Yvonne Rainer made a return to dance and choreography with her best-known work, *Trio A*, during an event at the Judson Memorial Church titled *Trio A Pressured*. The evening not only showcased a variation of *Trio A* and its evolution over time but also steered away from an attempt to reconstruct the original version. The performance included one rendition performed by a close friend of Rainer, with Rainer herself simultaneously reading texts overhead. Following this, a duet version was performed by two dancers, succeeded by a trio version featuring Rainer, Paxton, and Dunn, all of whom were members of Grand Union at the time. Finally, Paxton and Dunn performed another duet version. Then, a new iteration of the piece was presented as Rainer collaborated with filmmaker Colin Beatty.

Notably, the choreography is renowned for its avoidance of eye contact between the audience and the performer, but Beatty took on the unique role of maintaining constant eye contact with Rainer throughout the performance.

“With a fine sense of comic timing he would lie down and look up with nerdish intensity from just the spot on which she was about to look down. Then, picking himself up and circling rapidly round her in one direction while she herself turned in the other, he would again stop and once more meet her gaze. Even when she stared up at the ceiling, he was there, jumping up in front of her.”<sup>244</sup>

Beatty’s action served as a kind of danced commentary on the piece, blending irony and a profound corporeality, as is characteristic of Rainer’s work in general.

“Whereas Rainer in the 1960s had said no to seduction of the spectator by the whiles of the performer, in this new duet it was as if we were acknowledging the extent to which we cannot escape being seduced by Rainer’s presence, however much she tries to avoid seducing us. This is because dancers and audiences are always already implicated in the power they may seek to oppose.”<sup>245</sup>

This “commented” version gains even more interest when considering the echoes it creates with the other versions of *Trio A* performed that evening. Together, the reiterations of *Trio A* offer a sense of a repertoire that persists, bearing meaning while encountering possibilities of transformation in the different bodies that performed it and in the transforming historical contexts in which it was performed. The evening imparted a different power to *Trio A*, detaching it from an original version to embrace its multiple becoming, while also cultivating an awareness of the evolutions in meaning that this provoked.

244 Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), 198.

245 Burt, 198.



Fig. 54-55 • View of the performance: “Yvonne Rainer: The Concept of Dust, or How do you look when there’s nothing left to move?” June 9, 10, 13, 14, 2015. IN2329.1. Photo: Julieta Cervantes.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



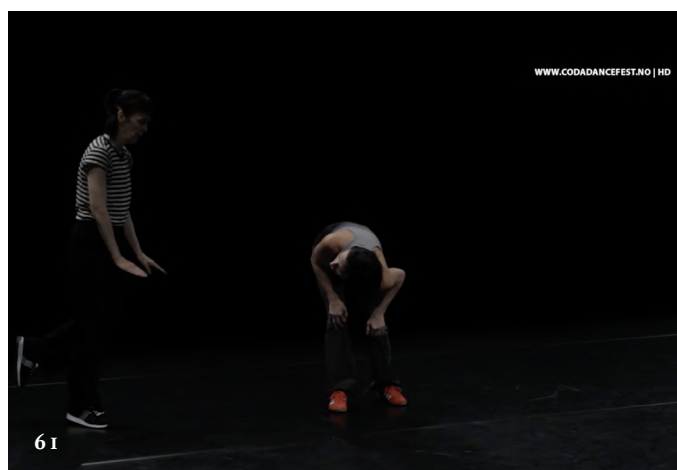
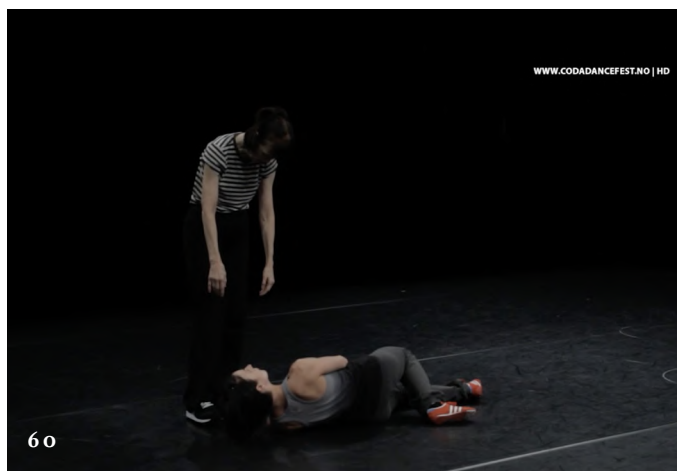
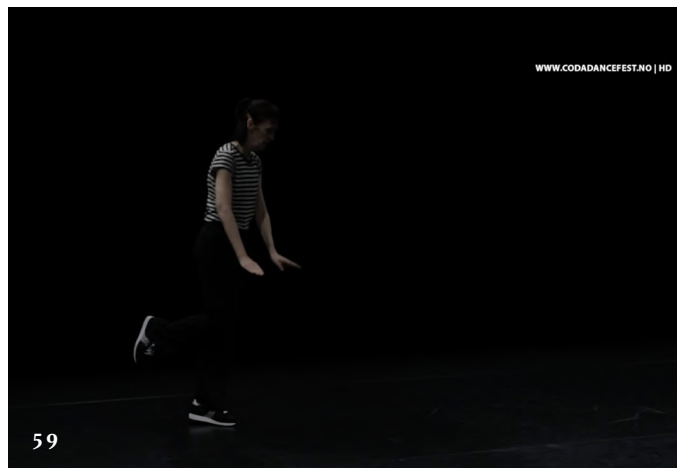
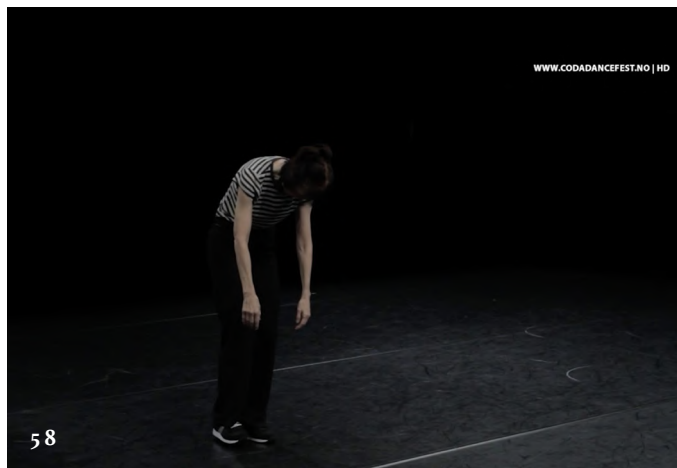
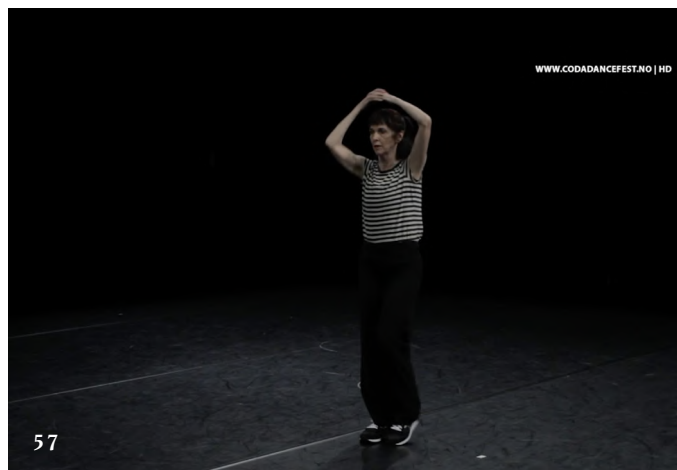
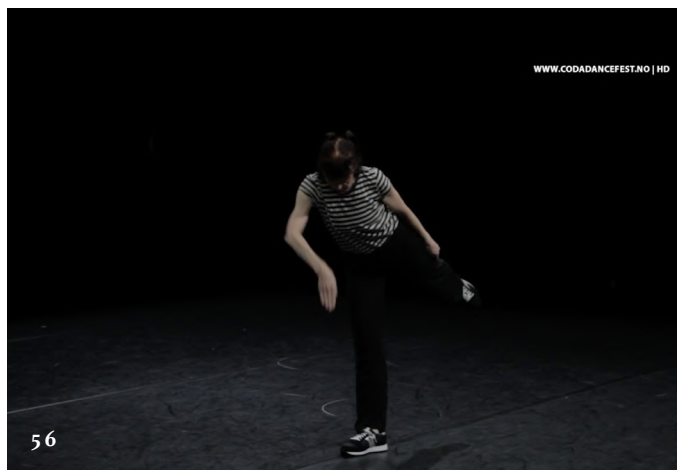


Fig. 56-61 • Pat Catterson with Gry Bech Hansen performs *Trio A Pressured* (1966-2011) a choreography from 1966, on August 14, 1978. The performance, lasting 10 minutes and 21 seconds, was accessed on January 10, 2024, <https://vimeo.com/221993144>, with the video being credited to cinematograher Robert Alexander. Copyright © Yvonne Rainer.

In that same year, ballet dancer and choreographer Mikhail Baryshnikov contacted Rainer and asked if she would be interested in creating a new choreography for his *White Oak Dance Project*. Rainer agreed and approached the choreography in a manner akin to her approach to the film

“I raided my icebox, pored over old notebooks and vintage photos, choreographed some new material, added death-bed pronouncements of famous and not-so-famous people, to be uttered by the dancers, and came up with a thirty-five minute *mélange* that I called *after Many a Summer Dies the Swan*.”<sup>246</sup>

Returning to choreography allowed Rainer to overtly address a “missing” facet of the staged body in the 1960s: the aging body. In this piece, Baryshnikov himself danced alongside the younger members of his company. Rainer was also on stage, passing a microphone to the dancers, whose comments playfully engaged with this question, demonstrating both insolence and humor. Beyond the presence of aging bodies on stage, Rainer notes that the reference to 1960s choreography and imagery also revealed the persistence of a (closed) imaginary of that period and what its aesthetics. For instance, the simple directive to have the dancers wear “street clothes” resulted in vastly different stage outfits in the year 2000 compared to those in 1960. Some critics voiced their reservations about the newer production, as the dancers appear too polished and glamorous, deviating from the iconic 1960 imagery etched in their minds.

This piece marked Rainer’s return to choreography while deepening her interest in the theme of the aging body in dance. In her subsequent choreographies, Rainer consistently revisited and continues to revisit familiar motifs, continually displacing, cutting up, and juxtaposing them. This work combines the archive and the repertoire. In the last years, Rainer engaged in a teaching practice with four women who join her in her new choreographies. Simultaneously, Rainer and one of the dancers regularly work in Rainer’s archives, selecting visual and textual material for re-activation. In her pieces, Rainer now collaborates with dancers ranging from “thirty-eight to sixty-six years old.” She continues her exploration of the aging body in dance, all the while refusing to make it the sole motif of her works.

In her words, “once posed, the matter of aging is out in the open and can even encompass material that may have nothing to do with it,” as she expressed in 2014 after the completion of several new choreographies. She also reflects on the evolution of her own role on stage:

“In these recent dances I have given myself roles other than that of a dancer. Mainly through the reading of texts (authored by others), I variously enact a carnival barker, a historian, a social critic, a political analyst, master of ceremonies, and narrator of my brother’s cognitive decline. My preferred mode of self-presentation is “existence. I love to exist on stage.”<sup>247</sup>

246 Rainer, *Feelings are facts*, 462.

247 Yvonne Rainer, “The Aching Body in Dance,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 36, no. 1 (2014): 5.

Today, Rainer continues to work on the motif of “existence on stage”, a lifelong preoccupation for her, with the idea that this form of existence can take on diverse forms, rather than depending on the state of a body “doomed to deterioration and decline.”

Through these operations and constant back and forth, Rainer obliquely reexamines the practices of the 1960s, not as such, but in terms of their as yet unexplored potential. She considers the entire choreopolitical ecology of the 1960s, including the places, people, grounds, gestures, and forces that directed these elements towards each other. By going back to this vibrating assemblage, she revisits the directions taken and those that might have been taken, ultimately creating new works that dance with the old and extend their choreopolitics:

“Silence, noise, walking, running, detritus—all undermined prevailing standards of monumentality, beauty, grace, professionalism, and the heroic. It is high time to admit the aging body of the dancer into this by now fully recognized and respected universe.”<sup>248</sup>

### Paris is Burning at the Judson Church

While Rainer employs her aging body to question the neutrality of the postmodern body, other artists have similarly endeavored to question the limits of inclusivity within Judson’s choreopolitics through their performances. In 2009, African-American choreographer Trajal Harrell choreographed *Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church*. The choreography was inspired by the question, “What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmodernists at Judson Church?” The question, as it becomes evident in the work itself, was posed not so much for a direct answer but rather to initiate a realm of choreographic work centered on the concept of invisibilization. This exploration notably addressed the exclusion of the racial question in postmodern dance and envisions a potential encounter between ball communities and Judson artists. For Harrell, it was less a question of inventing a historical fiction than of creating and exploring an imaginative third way between *voguing* and *postmodern dance*.

Harrell himself, born in 1973, inherited postmodern dance and its imaginary world. Among others, he trained with Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer, both members of Judson.<sup>249</sup> Harrell did not belong to the voguing scene, which he discovered in 1999 following Jennie Livingston’s film *Paris is Burning*. The film itself faced immediate criticism for cultural appropriation, prompting Harrell to carefully explore the aesthetics of voguing as a means to question his own artistic culture. *Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church* comprises a series of seven performances, ranging in size from S to XL. Harrell’s choice of names for these pieces, in his own words, reflects an attention to how audiences and the choreographer’s available tools to address this question could

248 Rainer, 5–6.

249 In an interview, Harrell himself recounts how Steve Paxton, another Judson member, reproached the dancers of that generation for “never rebelling against them.”



Fig. 62 • Screenshots of Trajal Harrell, *Antigone Jr - Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning* at The Judson Church (September 17, 2014) at the Kitchen, New York, 2014. Video: Iki Nakagawa. <https://vimeo.com/113526193>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.





Fig. 63 • Trajal Harrell, *Antigone Sr./Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church (L)*, 2012. The all-male cast includes from left, Stephen Thompson, Thibault Lac and Rob Fordeyn. Photo: Casper Hedberg.

Fig. 64 • Trajal Harrell, *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (S)*, 2009. Mr. Ford-eyn, far left, and Mr. Thompson. Performance at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009 & 2010. Photo: Casper Hedberg.





Fig. 65 • Trajal Harrell, *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (S)*, 2009. Performance at Bard College as part of the exhibition «Anti-Establishment,» CCS Bard Galleries, 2012. Photo: Karl Rabe

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



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**Fig. 66** • Trajal Harrell, *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (S)*, 2009. Performance at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009 & 2010. Photo: Miana Jun

**Fig. 67** • Trajal Harrell, *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (S)*, 2009. Performance at Bard College as part of the exhibition «Anti-Establishment,» CCS Bard Galleries, 2012. Photo: Karl Rabe

evolve. The multiplication of performances underscores Harrell's approach, which shares similarities with Rainer's. Activating dance's heritage through dance requires a process of back-and-forth, slow friction, incorporations, and excorporations.

To bridge the worlds of Judson and voguing, Harrell used Rainer's emblematic text *No Manifesto* with the idea of transforming "no's" into "maybe's" through the prism of voguing. Harrell explored the possibility of creating a dialogue. One prominent example is the motif of walking, which previously brought modern dance closer to everyday movements and also took a central role in Harrell's work. But there, it has been put through the prism of voguing:

"Harrell would come and go in different clothes, with a variety of approaches, in front of a small, close audience. He reinjected into walking the seduction, desire, eroticism, eccentricity, intensity and exacerbation of balls."<sup>250</sup>

Similarly, in the group pieces, constrained trajectories, as seen on a fashion catwalk, set the dancers on linear trajectories, offering them to the audience's gaze, in contrast to Rainer's approach. Through several shifts, a cross-fertilization occurred between walking that reduces the body to a moving object, walking that solicits the gaze, and walking that produces a space for self-presentation.

Another working strategy was to place this possibility of contact at the level of the "realness" of voguing and that of postmodern dance. Indeed, both dances share a certain seriousness when it comes to the question of showing a certain authenticity, allowing this seriousness to become a common thread across times and practices. For Harrell, Judson's conception of the 'neutral body' remained constructed, artificial, and attached to a privileged cultural standpoint. Voguing's realism, on the other hand, suggested something else, recognizing the artificial associated with the constructions of gender, race, and class: "The audience watches on as the performers prepare themselves, change, apply makeup, all of which critiques what "realness" means and reminds us of the constructed nature of the image."<sup>251</sup>

*Twenty Looks* thus became a dense ensemble teeming with attempts to make contact. Harrell assumes that this attempt involved heterogeneous and contradictory materials, and that his approach was not of a historiographical or archival nature, but instead sought to engage with the present. Harrell's approach, therefore, aligns with the "broadening" of the notion of reenactment mentioned earlier, in which the focus lies in creating co-presence and mutual acting upon between the present and the past, rather than imposing a new direction upon the past. In this context, fiction doesn't manifest as a new narrative but becomes an opportunity to explore contaminations that were once impossible and are suddenly achievable. Calling on fiction becomes the means for the

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250 Bénichou, *Rejouer le vivant*, 124.

251 Madison Moore, "Walk for Me," *Theater* 44, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01610775-2370746>.

choreographer to infuse movement and affection into the past, to build the space to imagine images that have become too fixed, and which also constitute the choreographer's own artistic legacy. Harrell's body, like those of the other performers in the series, became a gateway to these contaminations. Friction was explored at the level of the dance itself.

The subject of voguing and its recuperation remains a sensitive one today, raising the questions about the political dimension of Harrell's work.<sup>252</sup> Some critics and scholars criticize Harrell for straying too far from the political realm. Clearly, Harrell's project is motivated by political awareness. But the choreographer fully reclaims the artistic field and aesthetics as his domain of action. These criticisms inevitably circle us back to the question of choreopolitics as micro-politics. What is at stake in dance is a micro-choreopolitics that operates through inflections, the forces of bodies moving towards each other, and a collaborative learning process of moving-together.

This micro-politics can sometimes seem completely out of step with the violence of identity politics as expressed on a global level. Yet this choreopolitics contains a dimension of potential invention of other modes of sociability and movement. It looks for the more-than, the free movement that, at any given moment, temporarily extricates bodies in relation to one another from the near-total conditioning of movement. Bigé describes this tension between the micro-political and the political:

“Of course, these inventions are micrological and they do not last longer than the time of the dance and they sometimes only consist in a smile that we exchange, or a very small variation of a gesture that I have repeated a thousand times. But if I am given the opportunity to observe my experience of dancing close enough, I can use those micrological negotiations as a laboratory for political questions.”<sup>253</sup>

Harrell's work explores precisely these micro-politics, these micro-inflections that enable us to move differently. At the same time, these 'findings' and hybridizations are clearly framed by Harrell's approach as current political possibilities, which were once political impossibilities in the past. In doing so, they serve as a clear reframing of Judson's choreopolitics, once considered emancipatory for only a select few. This reframing also addresses the distinctions between Downtown and Uptown as two different and differently supportive grounds conditions for different bodies.

In this regards, Harrell's approach echoes the analyses proposed by dance scholar Rebecca Chaleff. In a text on the persistence of whiteness in American dance, Chaleff analyzes how

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252 As I write these lines (July 2023), the news in the USA bears witness to the enduring political dimension of voguing. O'Shae Sibley, an African-American dancer and choreographer, has just been killed. At the time of his death, he was voguing with friends at a gas station in Brooklyn. Before stabbing him, his assailants hurled homophobic abuse. A memorial ball protest, "Vogue as an Act of Resistance", took place a few days later at the gas station, to ask the same question again and again, "How can L..G.B.T.Q. people move through the world with ease, and dance through it?"

253 Bigé, "How Do I Know When I Am Dancing?," 330.



“the aesthetics of US American postmodern dance preserved and perpetuated the whiteness of high modernism by twisting the trope of racial exclusion from a focus on trained bodies to a focus on ordinary bodies. The ideological, corporeal, and affective formations of ordinariness afforded by the unmarked whiteness of postmodern artists in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s fundamentally excluded implicitly racialized “extraordinary” and “spectacular” bodies from their movement(s). Although the exclusion of people of color from the mainstream of postmodernism was likely not the intention of the white artists that populated this arena, the notable whiteness of this artistic movement nevertheless indicates the unconscious cultural and choreographic absorption of state racism normalized by the biopolitical regulation of bodies.”<sup>254</sup>

Chaleff’s analysis clearly articulates how Judson’s work still perpetuated exclusion and how the discourse that lauds these practices as representations of ‘the ordinary’ further perpetuates this dynamic. Harrell’s work precisely reveals this motif, all the while refusing to “throw it all away,” instead opting to “dance with” this history and its influence in the field of dance. This approach allows Harrell, in some manner, to move beyond it and imagine something else.

Harrell responds to a binary opposition of worlds by blurring dance across time and by asserting operations of deterritorialization, decentering, defamiliarization, and disidentification. His approach clearly embodies an open “more-than,” rather than the pursuit and affirmation of a distinctly defined emancipatory trajectory. This openness implies a certain slowness, a certain attention, a demand for the vibratory qualities of the work and the choreopolitics it affirms. This quality is different from that required by discourse on the “political scene”.

The impossibility of a more direct rapprochement sometimes questions and irritates. For example, cultural critic Madison Moore writes:

“What’s missing from Harrell’s oeuvre is exactly what he set out to do: he wanted to use the language of voguing and house ball culture to interrogate the parameters of dance, sure, but without being a member of the voguing community and without participating in the culture. What was he to gain by presenting his works in high-powered art institutions rather than on house ball floors or in nightclubs? Why does he use trained dancers rather than actual voguers? Wouldn’t the connection between trained dancers and street voguers make his important hypothetical question even more urgent? And why are his fellow dancers usually white men, when voguers are almost always black or Latino? All told, it was an aesthetic choice, because Harrell has been taught by voguers and has his own private connections to the community. But that is precisely what’s missing from Harrell’s unique performance oeuvre: an even closer relationship between his ideas and the real ballroom community.”<sup>255</sup>

These questions are indeed legitimate and demand to be continually posed and reposed today. However, an alternative interpretation of Harrell’s work sees his artistic adoption of voguing as a search for the ‘more than’ within postmodern dance and voguing, beyond the communities that have produced these movements. In choosing to work with white dancers, Harrell aims to signify an endorsement of taking voguing

254 Rebecca Chaleff, “Activating Whiteness: Racializing the Ordinary in US American Postmodern Dance,” *Dance Research Journal* 50, no. 3 (December 2018): 72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767718000372>.

255 Moore, “Walk for Me,” 21–22.



towards its “more than” and a rejection of the idea that we already know what voguing is and what it can do. For him, as he describes it, this is not an act of appropriation, but one of *métissage*—an affirmation that the emancipatory potential of movements is re-asserted only when it circulates.

It could be argued that, similar to Manning, Harrell positions himself within a choreopolitics of the more-than, continually fighting against the predetermined definitions of the elements and bodies that participate in a movement, in order to open them up to their becoming-others. The radical scope of Harrell’s approach is also underlined by Lepecki, who attributes to it

“the effect of revealing official history and historiography as a systemic mismanagement of memory and experience, as a careful repression of potentiality. [...] Thus, the necessity not only to look (repeatedly, 20 times at least) at Judson and Harlem-but to bind them in particularly improbable conjunctions, in many different instantiations, in order to produce, through speculative-kinesthetic experimentation, as many counter-memories as those times the piece is danced-and in as many presents as the versions of the piece require.”<sup>256</sup>

### Movement Research is dancing with the collective dance memory

Today, a “return to Judson” remains a frequent gesture in Western dance circles. In this manner, Judson’s influence endures, shaping and influencing the image, practice, and politics of dance. Dance scholar Rebecca Chaleff, previously cited for her analysis of the ordinary body as an implicit motif of segregation in postmodern dance, regards this reaffirmation of the myth with an extremely critical eye. She writes that the “open, temporal landscape of reperformance corresponds with the biopolitical power of the ordinary.” And again, that

“the continuous co-constitution of American postmodernism’s whiteness and aesthetics remains cause for concern, as performances of ordinary, unremarkable bodies persist in re-forming racialized spaces of segregation without being remarked upon.”<sup>257</sup>

In this sense, the last attempt of ‘making contact’ with Judson discussed here departs from the way certain practices return to Judson’s gestures and choreography. Instead, it explores a more oblique way of returning, which takes the form of a return to the place itself: the Judson memorial Church. This alternative form of contact opens up the potential for a distinct and deeply productive dialogue with the legacy of Judson.

In 1978, a group of dancer-choreographer-teachers, largely influenced by the experimental collective practices of the previous decade, decided to found an organization to support each other’s teaching endeavors. Initially quite informal, *Movement Research* focused on gathering and disseminating information about the various courses taught

256 André Lepecki, “The Politics of Speculative Imagination in Contemporary Choreography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 161.

257 Chaleff, “Activating Whiteness,” 80.

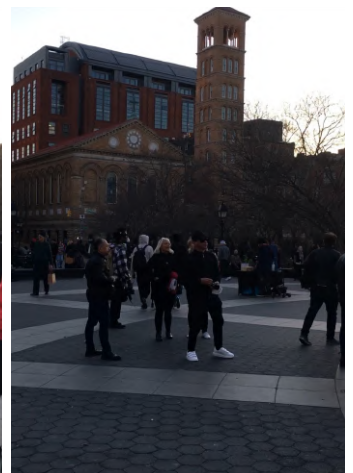
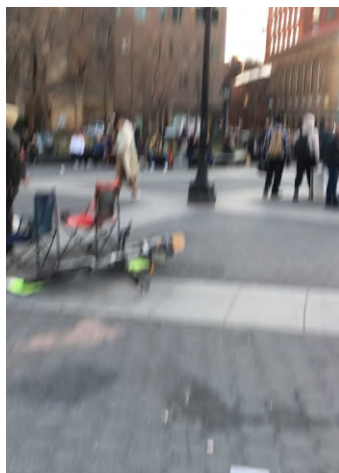
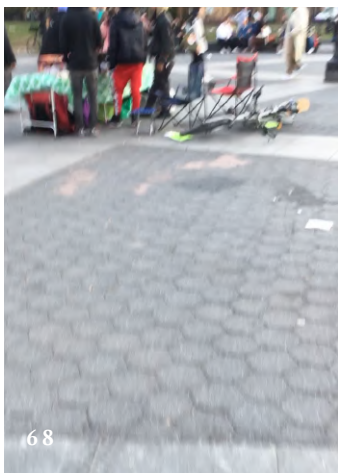


Fig. 68 • Judson Memorial Baptist Church, arriving by Washington Square Park Photo: the Author. Accessed March 21, 2022. 18:45

Choreopolitical stubbornness.



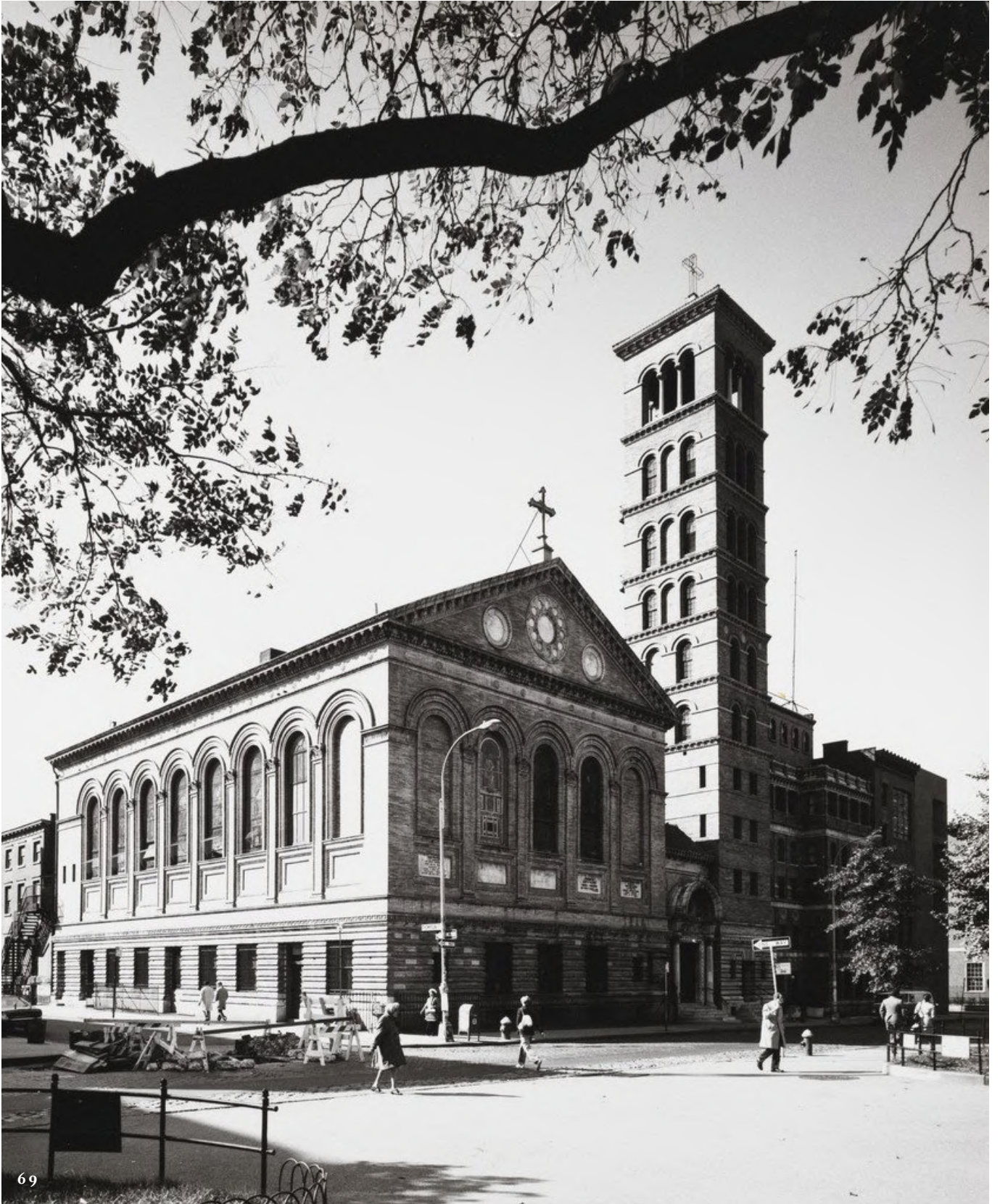


Fig. 69 • Edmund Vincent Gillon, Judson Memorial Baptist Church, photo, ca. 1975

by its members. Although diverse, these teachings shared a common sensibility, as described in the first brochure: “We all work directly with the experience of physical sensation, and with improvisation as both exploration and as performance.”<sup>258</sup>

During that time, the improvisation-based approach remained relatively underrepresented in college dance departments, and there was no centralized place in New York for students interested in studying the practices that had emerged in the wake of the Judson experiments. In line with Judson’s work, Movement Research classes aimed to fill this gap. These classes adopted a more workshop-like character than traditional lessons, and, in doing so, Movement Research became a part of a broader movement with the goal of defining post-Judson dance.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, dancers with an interest in avant-garde practices were negotiating the methods through which they could engage with the dance forms these practices had unlocked. A certain degree of recognition and stability allowed them to reflect on the means of practice. “What did happen in the 1990s was a shift in what dancers prioritized in their practice - and it was *practice* that they would prioritize.”<sup>259</sup> Here, the legacy of postmodern dance took a form that wasn’t centered on the dances and gestures themselves as mere forms, but rather, as a set of values and practices that organized the relation between dance and community, while also addressing these core issues within the dance field. Dancers contemplated their actions on stage and engaged in discussions regarding their performances, viewing them as both a form of dance, a commitment, and as a practice within a community.

In his research on downtown dance in the 1990s, choreographer and dance scholar Buck Wanner describes this shift in practice:

“In the 1990s, one was valued as a dancer not because of what one produced, but on the basis of how one conducted one’s practice. The story I see in the 1990s emphasizes the contribution of individuals to sustaining a community of practice, rather than personal artistic creation as something separate or outstanding from that community. [...] It is a story of being a dancer in the downtown community of the 1990s.”<sup>260</sup>

At Movement Research, in the 1990s, the transmission of gestures, values and stories took place through body-to-body engagement, via the repertoire rather than through the narrative from the Judson archive. Two Judson dancers joined the organization’s board. Most importantly, dancers from various generations danced alongside and with one another. The events produced a dialogue between many, which was constantly developed, transformed and reiterated. More than ever, dance became something to participate in, to immerse oneself in, and to practice, rather than something to produce. As for the dance community, it was not entirely harmonious but underwent constant

258 Buck Wanner, “Between Precarity and Vitality: Downtown Dance in the 1990s” (Columbia University, 2021), 33.

259 Wanner, 10.

260 Wanner, 18.

transformation over the decades of experimentation, that have been integrated into dance.

The choreopolitics of the “more-than” of the Judson was both transmitted and actualized during Movement Research events. The experiments that enabled different bodies and communities to move together and to delve into the ‘more-than’, as well as the politics of dance, were continuously reaffirmed and refined through events designed to serve their community. These events included classes, workshops, residencies, work-in-progress showings, discussions, interactions with the public, and publications. The organization adopted the experimental ethos developed by Judson dancers. By offering a multitude of formats, it contributed to the ongoing expansion of what was considered the ‘study’ of dance. In a gentle yet persistent manner, Movement Research allowed this inquiry to inhabit the bodies and minds of the community it united.

In 1991, Movement Research initiated a new format: the *Movement Research at the Judson Church* series. The program introduced a series of free events held at the Judson Memorial Church, offering a new alternative for presenting performances in a process-oriented context, as described in the program. After several decades, dance had returned to the same walls that once hosted Judson’s most renowned events. However, this return went beyond a mere homage to the practices of the 1960s.

Through the steps taken by the organization in the years between the church’s two moments of occupation (between the 1960s and the 1990s), Judson’s values and gestures had been transmitted, worked on, transformed, incorporated and expropriated. Now, a community with a shared capacity for reflection actively re-engaged with Judson. The series allowed Movement Research to gain visibility and connect downtown dancers and dances with Judson’s history. Part of this excitement, of course, can be attributed to the quality of the events themselves. Still, the connection with the history of Judson, represented by dancing in the church, also contributed to this success. Critics used a vocabulary that alludes to a perceived spatiotemporal depth/thickness. Phrases like ‘good vibes’ and ‘the importance of the moment’ underscore the resonance with Judson practices that added depth to the series of events.

However, the ability to resonate with an emblematic moment in history, rather than being caught by it, is generally not something easy to attain. In the case of Movement Research at the Judson Church, it was the result of years of practice, exchange, the institutionalization of certain values, and the construction of a disciplinary discourse that contributed to the productive dimension of this connection. In 1991, the emphasis on the collective, community, and the creative process, along with the distribution of power, were consolidated and strengthened through the efforts and dynamics initiated or facilitated by Movement Research as an organization. Since the mid-1980s, the platform had also become a reference point for foreign student-dancers, who made up a third of the participants and introduced an element of otherness to the postmodern



tradition. The organization itself was highly innovative in terms of governance, ensuring that artists were represented at all levels. “Movement research viewed dance expansively, and in that expansiveness, its administrators should be seen as shaping dance; not by authoring it, but by creating the means for its existence,”<sup>261</sup> describes Wanner.

The social context surrounding dance practice also changed significantly between the 1960s and 1990s, prompting reactions within the dance community. While the founders of Movement Research still viewed their efforts as a continuation of the opportunities opened by Judson, successive directorships steered the organization toward engaging with the political dimensions of dance practice more directly. The AIDS epidemic, which hit communities hard in the 1980s and exacerbated the ties between the body, politics, and discrimination, played a significant role in shaping this trend.<sup>262</sup>

Movement Research became more politicized, reflecting the values of its time. Contemporary politics were viewed as deeply connected to the experimental dance practices of the organization. All these transformations culminated in an ‘encounter’ with the church space that didn’t seem like a return to basics but rather a heightened collective ability within the dance community to articulate the effects of social and political tensions on bodies and movement: a heightened choreopolitical capacity. From 1991 onwards, Movement Research’s *Move to Heal* program also took place at Judson Church. These movement classes were offered to AIDS sufferers and their supporters, with the aim of applying downtown dance’s knowledge for the benefit of this community.

The Movement Research at the Judson Church series has been running since 1991, taking place every Monday. Today, embracing the church’s conditions, these events continue to exist and are still free of charge. Each week, two to four artists present their works in progress at various stages of development. Performers have access to the space for rehearsal only once, earlier in the day. The venue does not offer theatrical lighting; it relies solely on the church’s ambient lighting. These modest conditions make the venue itself, with its high ceilings, sculptures and windows, all the more important. The warmth that the audience can radiate becomes crucial to the atmosphere of these Monday evenings.

The space is a large continuous floor, with audience chairs freely placed at performer level. The lighting evenly illuminates the church space, including the audience, and the performers often mingle with the audience after their performance. The space and all the bodies present become part of the same co-constitutive experience. For everyone, the church’s solemnity is layered upon the collective memory of the events that took place there in the 1960s. The evidence of the venue’s influence to the atmosphere of the evenings is evident. Following these beginnings, the series has not only been repeated

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261 Wanner, 32.

262 The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was founded in March 1987, and has contributed to the full visibility of the connections between AIDS and queer issues.

annually, but many other Movement Research activities have also taken place there.

The *Performance Journal*, another major project of the organization, was devoted to examining the memory and history of downtown dance and its relevance to the present in 1993, 1997, and 1998.<sup>263</sup> Through publications, events, the dances performed, and the public's appreciation of these events at this venue, the possibility arises to celebrate the collective dance's memory and its potency in relation to a community that defines itself through it.

Returning to the Judson site, and the multiplication of practices over a duration far exceeding its initial occupation by dance, provides the opportunity for the collective dance practices repertoire to be reiterated and transformed. Without directly opposing the narrative that sees the Judson grouping as a founding event, the dynamics initiated by Movement Research enable this past to be reconfigured. The aim is not to celebrate individuals or specific choreographies. Instead, the accumulation of references and links/ties to the past celebrates how Judson, along with its walls (physical space), enabled a dance community to assert itself and collectively explore the invention of new ways of moving in a decentralized manner.

By celebrating the Judson era primarily as one that broadened the definition of dance practice, the iterations of Movement Research partly avoid the risk of perpetuating a cult-like reverence and enshrining the Judson name in history through the isolation of heroes or the detachment of dances from their original ecologies of emergence. The motif of dance community and the valorization of experimentation endure, while gestures, choreographies, relationships, and porosities to broader social issues and tensions continue to evolve.

Through this contact with the past, facilitated by the walls of Judson and the integration of the downtown dance community into this historical context, an entire community can benefit from the effects and echos it offers. Henceforth, collective and experimental dance can be considered within a multi-decade spectrum and engage in a genuine dialogue with some of the social movements that have run through society, from feminist struggles to those concerning AIDS in particular. In this dance with the past, which includes the grounds and walls of Judson as partners, Movement Research inherits a participant in its choreopolitics.

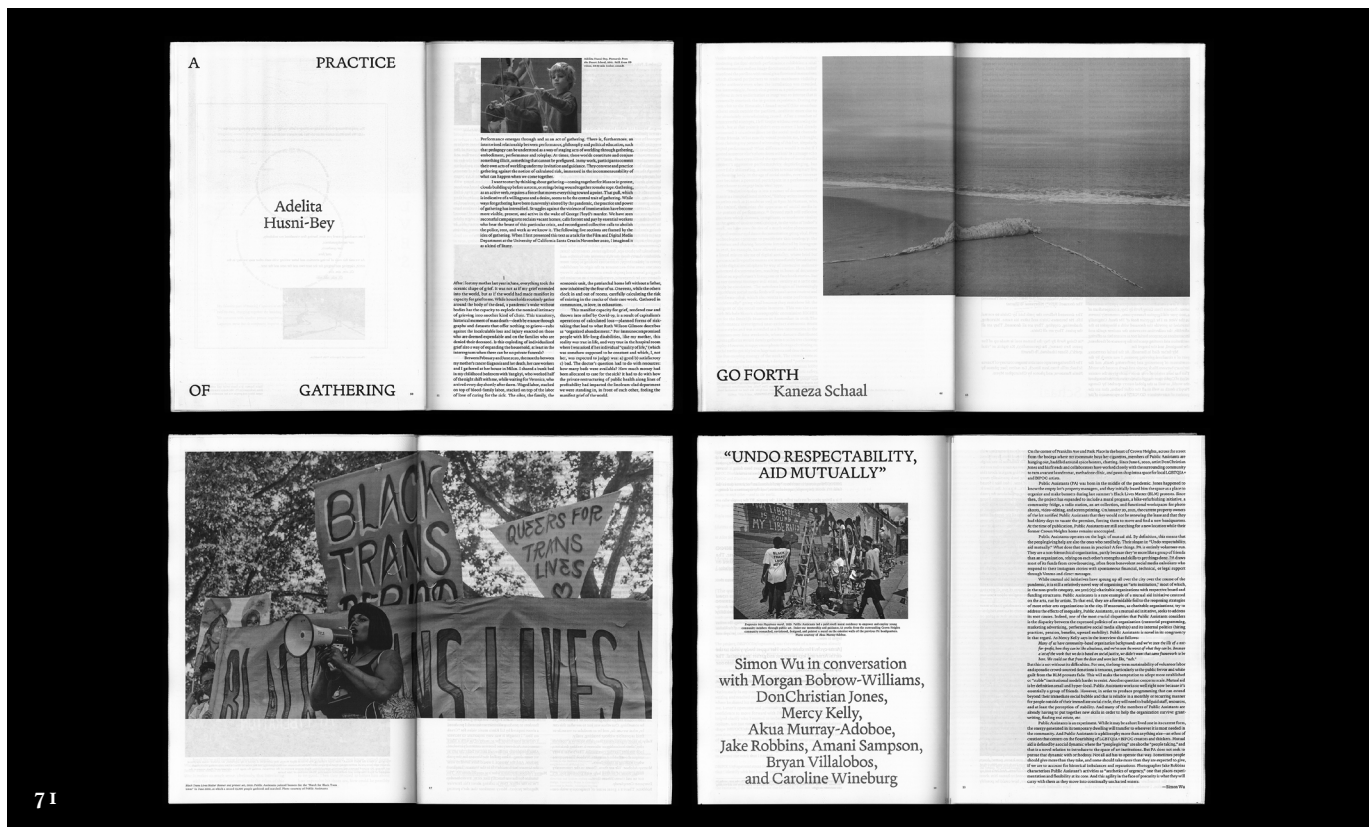
The Judson Memorial Church is experienced by the majority of the community as a space that enables them to inscribe themselves in an open and progressive history of movement exploration and its interweaving with emotional, social and political issues. However, this perception within the community is not the same as the one that prevails

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263 Performance Journal was launched in 1990. Since then, it has been distributed twice a year to a large community. Issues are also available on a table at the entrance to each event. Over the years, the journal has become a tool for the ongoing articulation of the philosophical and ideological standpoint of the organization. The journal as a medium has participated in the manifestation of downtown dance's past, present and future.



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Fig. 70-71 • Movement Research Performance Journal, Issue 55 (Summer 2021). Joshua Lubin-Levy & mayfield brooks (Editors-in-Chief). This issue is the first in a two-part project titled “no before no after,” conceived by the journal’s new co-Editors-in-Chief. Photo: Yotam Hadar 2021.

Choreopolitical stubbornness.





Fig. 72 • Screenshots of Emma Rose Brown, *Temporary Frames, Part 1*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By4g6lrir-E>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 73 • Screenshots of Leonard Cruz, *Moon Warrior of Miracles*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz2g9iEMkIA>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 74 • Screenshots of Jesi Cook, *Scoria*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m43GGCyfNg>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 75 • Screenshots of Rosy Simas, *Yödoishëndahgwa'geh (a place for rest)*. May 23, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGNmL-rRasI8>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 76 • Screenshots of Emily Johnson, *Being Future Being(s)*. May 23, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBKf6G1pp6I>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

from the outside. The isolation of downtown dance behind church walls, decade after decade, does not help in questioning its relationship to the geographies and privileged environments in which it is embedded.<sup>264</sup> As Wanner points out, exchanges between the religious community and the organization's activities are virtually non-existent, even though the church has always been distinctive for its integration into the neighborhood and its work with various marginalized groups.

A number of eyewitness accounts recount how, at the beginning of the 2000s, the audience and performers who gathered each week within the church's walls remained predominantly white, despite the advocated inclusivity and openness. Thus, the choreopolitics of the more-than drawn up by downtown's artistic communities still came up against the ground of modern and postmodern dance: a flattened, abstract, universalized ground. The co-formation of dances and grounds continued to be more of a dance about grounds, perpetuating an invisibility of the different ways in which dances might co-compose with their grounds and environments. Yet voices were being heard in the questionnaires circulated by the organization: "More non-white artists." This demand, articulated from the perspective of absent bodies, could also be interpreted as an invitation to reconsider the grounds, geographies, and milieus in which the community's activities took place and to more fully acknowledge the tensions associated with its situated dimension.

Twenty years later, Movement Research endures. The organization continues to support experimentation in dance through the multiplicity of formats developed over the years. Courses, workshops, a journal, presentations of choreographic works in progress, critical exchanges, Movement Research at the Judson Church, and other activities are still actively developed. This enduring movement laboratory, persisting over the long term, continues to present a distinct facet of the evolving relationship between modern and postmodern dance and the environments in which it is inscribed. The venue, as a method for remaining connected to a specific history of collective dance practice, still enables and necessitates the reconfiguration of this history.

In the spring of 2022, it was my turn to step through the doors of the Judson Memorial Church on a Monday evening to witness a presentation of the works-in-progress by several dance artists. I had just arrived in New York, drawn by its dances too.<sup>265</sup> The eve-

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264 Scholar Veronica Dittman Stanich even goes so far as to write that the geographical and cultural isolation that accompanied the Judson Dance Theater still has repercussions today in the reception of contemporary dance. She links the cultural isolation of contemporary dance from the general public today to the fact that the theoretical dimensions of Judson's innovations, considered structuring by the dance community, have never been truly apprehended by the general public and prevent an informed appreciation of current artistic developments.

265 When I arrive in New York in 2022, I have in mind both contemporary critical discourses on dance politics and choreopolitics, and the black-and-white images of postmodern practices, whose (over)documentation allows a certain contact to be made from a distance. For me, however, there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to how to bring together these elements that have so far appealed to me, without forcing a linearity that would only be an artificial and very limiting construction of the levels at which they have the capacity to resonate together. Joining the Movement Research evenings is a way of immersing myself in the plural relational dynamics that reconfigure the interweaving past, present and future of dance downtown on a daily basis.



nings I attended allowed me to sense the ways in which recent dance trends engaged in a dialogue, one not devoid of friction, with the legacy of modern and postmodern dance.

In recent years, dance has shown a growing concern for more-than-human issues, aligning with growing global climate concerns:

“These dances, which could be called “compost-humanist” (in the sense that they no longer have the humanist vocation of celebrating the victory of the human over the forces of gravity or animality, but on the contrary of worsening, so to speak, the earthly condition, the living condition of human movements) are a place for unlearning presuppositions about “what moves” in us, terrestrial mammals inhabiting Terra. They help to open up the ethological and geological windows through which communication with other living creatures and other earthly movements takes place.”<sup>266</sup>

Within the walls of the Judson, I witnessed the potency of the ground on dance and the movements it elicited in its dominant history. Softer geographies than those of Downtown were affirmed. Dance began in the ways we arrived. The current director of the event series greeted us in Spanish, her native tongue, underscoring the interweaving of geographies, intonations, rhythms, and migrations right from the outset of this shared moment. This choice also redefined the space in a distinctive manner. New York is home to communities that share languages and gestures that must be radically accommodated. On the second evening I attended, the Movement Research team was on the street bordering both Washington Square Park and the church. They occupied the few steps leading up to the church. The doors were wide open, and the ritual of this shared evening began on the threshold.

Calmly and earnestly, but without further prompting, several women handed out long, thin strips of cloth to those entering the building. The object received “outside” entered “inside” with each of us. With a certain literalness—we all hold threads—we wove a threshold. The dances presented all continued to honor this relationality. They told the story of a ground that, before it was New York, was called Lenapehoking.<sup>267</sup> Choreographies that danced indigenous worlds brought forth into the shared space-time of the evening not only the geological rhythms associated with these cultures but also the violence of dispossession and the vital commitment to perpetuating indigenous knowledge and world-ness.<sup>268</sup>

During these evenings, dance was both shared and, at the same time, retained its

266 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Eopolitiques de la danse*, 6.

267 Lenapehoking” is the Lenape name for the Lenape homeland, which spans from Western Connecticut to Eastern Pennsylvania, and the Hudson Valley to Delaware, with New York City at its center.

268 Curatorial Statement: STaRWaLKeR is an evening of performances featuring Rosy Simas and Emily Johnson gathered in the homelands of Lenni Lenape in Lenapehoking, New York City. This program features new works in progress that look beyond skyscrapers and beneath subways to embody long-standing Native cosmologies connected to the stars, land, and history on Turtle Island today. The title *STaRWaLKeR* takes its name from a Buffy Saint Marie song for its “incredible energy” and as a tribute to the generations of Native Americans connected throughout history to the present day and those yet to come. Burt, *Judson Dance Theater*, 198.org/event/16706, accessed April 24, 2023.

independence and its stories, evoking them without disclosing them.

“Its intention is not to further settler understanding of what “ Indigenous dance ” is and how it fits into Eurocentric aesthetic/political frameworks or how it can save all of humanity on a planet in crisis (even if it can),”

writes dance scholar Jaqueline Shea Murphy about the practices of indigenous dance artists in an artistic context that remains determined by the economies of capitalism and the structures of white ownership that accompany it. Today, performing within the walls of the Judson Church is a conscious choice for these choreographers, a more-than of their practice. Often, these artists work rooted in territories, and their dances are accompanied by those of rivers, stones, and soils. This “chosen company” is an integral part of their artistic proposals.

Nonetheless, this absolute focus on relationality also leads these artists to believe in the contact zone between their dances and the Western history of modern and post-modern dance:

“Within (some of) the structures of what is called modern/postmodern/contemporary dance, Indigenous dance artists are enacting otherwise ways of being and understanding beyond this coloniality and, in the process, are activating this dance genealogy otherwise.”<sup>269</sup>

The dance practices I observed at the Judson Church reconfigured the dances that occurred there in the 1960s, raising their universalizing dimensions and the ongoing continuum of violence in which they are inscribed. In this sense, the church served as a gateway, not merely “for the valorization of indigenous practices” but as a platform for the active examination and reconfiguration of Western dance history and its choreopolitics. This possibility hinges on a common effort by the dancers and, most importantly, the audience.

As a member of the audience, initially drawn to these walls through my encounter with the avant-garde practices of the 1960s, I received these practices as both a gift for deeper contemplation and a strong warning about how easily one can reproduce structures of domination and logics of dispossession within the narratives in which I too play a part. As dance scholar Arabella Stanger clearly writes in her book *Dancing on Violent Ground*, in any reference to the practices of this avant-garde today, it is crucial to consider “how the corporeal forms of harmony and freedom promised in Euro-American theater dance depend on and conceal material conditions of imperial, colonial, and racial subjection.”<sup>270</sup>

269 Jaqueline Shea Murphy, *Dancing Indigenous Worlds: Choreographies of Relation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 16.

270 Arabella Stanger, *Dancing on Violent Ground: Utopia as Dispossession in Euro-American Theater Dance*, Performance Works (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2021), 3.

## Whose stubbornness ?

“I propose the notion of the choreopolitical as the formation of collective plans emerging at the edges between open creativity, daring initiative, and a persistent-even stubborn-iteration of the desire to live away from policed conformity,”

writes Lepecki.<sup>271</sup> In this opening chapter, my focus lies in following the traces and exposing the manifestations of this “choreopolitical stubbornness.” Coupled with the concepts of choreopolitics/choreopolice, it underscores the ongoing process of moving politically, continually evolving in response to changing forms of control of our movements. In contemporary societies, this control has expanded its presence and adaptability, directing its influence towards the very act of movement rather than merely preventing it. It channels, orients, animates, and diminishes the movement’s political potency, reducing its capacity to create alternative configurations, which are often dynamically maintained for the benefit of the privileged few, and limiting the potential to imagine alternative futures.

Against this backdrop, many dance artists are embracing choreography as a means to explore the sharing and reconfiguration of movement. With stubbornness, they repeatedly delve into the ways experimentation through dance allows us to find the cracks, become attuned to what eludes control, and imagine and make coexistence happen. This is notably exemplified by the Judson and Grand Union collectives. In the 1960s and 70s, characterized by the acceleration of the logistical regime, they positioned dance at the threshold of everyday life, transforming it into an artistic and (choreo)political laboratory. Through their choreographies and dances, these collectives explored various ways of moving and being moved, engage in the shared experience of movement in common, and continually redefined their connection to a spatial, social, and political context. The dancers performed and brought into being other possibilities, among themselves and with their environment.

In the 1970s, Downtown became the territory of their dances and the one with which they co-constructed possibilities: choreopolitical ecologies. In New York, Downtown served as both the nurturing ground and the one that defined boundaries. Contemplating this ecology unveils the movements excluded from it or those participating while remaining invisible. This reading challenges the tendency to isolate these experiments from their context and to universalize them, an operation that aligns with prevailing Western traditions. It responds to the current necessity of examining choreopolitics within their specific territories and considering, on multiple scales, the effects of the realities they produce and upon which they rely. Stanger, in her book delving into the ‘violent grounds’ that underpin Euro-American dance, argues that we must develop a keen awareness of the “material conditions of struggle, conflict, and domination that make possible the utopianisms of these choreographic cultures but are dissimulated

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271 Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” 23.

by them.”<sup>272</sup> Euro-American stubbornness embodies deeply ambivalent traits in this context. It propels dances that simultaneously create transformative spaces for some bodies and contribute to the social conditions that keep others in their existing places.

From the 1970s to the present day, various critical and artistic approaches have worked to bring this ambivalence to the surface. In this context, my focus is on approaches to re-orienting through performance. These approaches do not solely emphasize the limitations of 1960s choreopolitics but seek to make oblique contact with them, creating impossible co-presences, reverse superimpositions of linear time, and triggering potentialities as “unexpected fruits of transtemporal collaboration.”<sup>273</sup> Through these approaches, the artists assume a friction in gestures, insisting on defusing the construction of a neutral ground and a neutral body dancing together as the sole legacy of postmodern dance. They counter this notion with aging bodies, hybrid aesthetics, enduring forms of community practice, and attentiveness to the non-human, which has always constituted the margins and hollows of these postmodern choreopolitics.

This other stubbornness, these others movements, are introduced in a state of friction, body-to-body, with the intention of reshaping the act of dance-making and of world-making that postmodern dance has set in place. The reconfiguration proposed by contemporary artists involves an operation of reading, listening, and grounding. It entails acknowledging the choreopolitical ecologies that co-produce worlds, whether enabling or constraining them. It is at this level of negotiation that co-possibilities are drawn, re-negotiated, imagined and claimed.

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272 Stanger, *Dancing on Violent Ground*, 3.

273 Gagnon, “Moving through Crisis in Mariana Valencia’s *Solo B*,” 6.





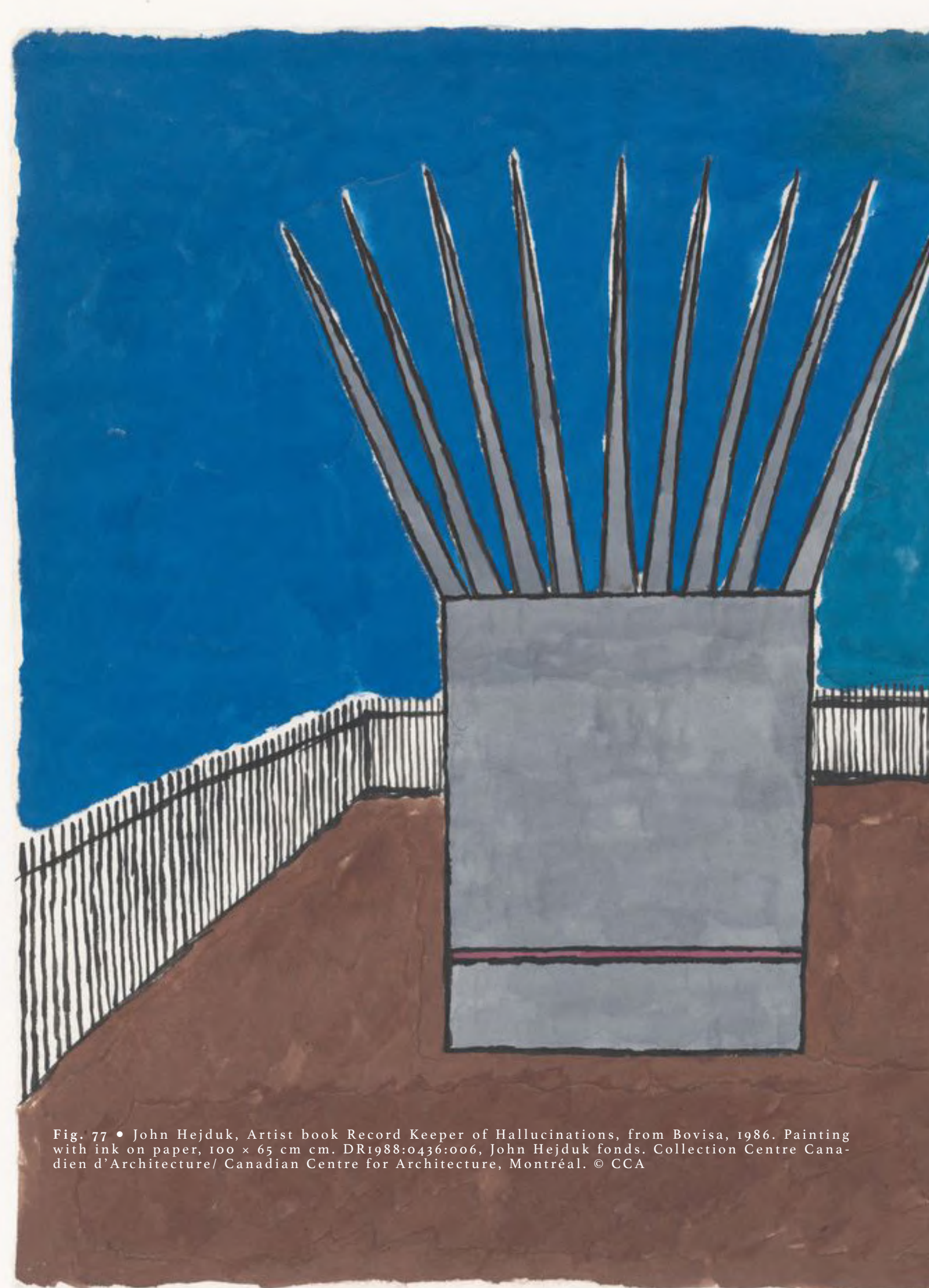


Fig. 77 • John Hejduk, Artist book Record Keeper of Hallucinations, from Bovisa, 1986. Painting with ink on paper, 100 × 65 cm. DR1988:0436:006, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA







# COUNTER-IMAGININGS.

— Transindividual and performative architectural inquiries into the thickness of the real

## CHAPTER II





# COUNTER-IMAGININGS.

## — Transindividual and performative architectural inquiries into the thickness of the real

### CHAPTER II

Joy is not transmitted from the knowledgeable to the ignorant, but in a mode that itself produces equality, the joy of thinking and imagining together, with others, thanks to others.

— Isabelle Stengers, *In catastrophic times: resisting the coming barbarism*, 2015

The conceptual framework of choreopolitical ecologies developed so far has illuminated the dynamics of co-production between grounds and bodies. Thinking within this framework aims to underscore the power of world-making that unfolds in encounters, in the co-production that happens and invents itself. An insistence on tracking the frequencies, forces, and registers of a minor work of reconfiguration, opening up to possibilities in the encounter. This power of world-making differently can also be read as imagination, when imagination is understood as “the radical capacity to envisage things differently and construct alternative political projects.”<sup>274</sup> When, in their encounter, bodies find possibilities not to exactly reiterate what is proposed to them, when they follow lines of flight that were not visible until then, bodies imagine. Or rather, they co-imagine. Here, imagination is always a matter of renewed encounter with the world.

In this second part, I seek to contemplate the connections between choreopolitical dynamics of the co-constitution of politics and worlds and architectural imagination. I position myself at the threshold of a discipline whose knowledge has been developed to think the world, to world-make; but more importantly, to make a *certain world*. The one who regulates, who accompanies the flows participating in the logistical regime, who materializes certain visions of the present, the past, and the future rather than others. Building on the contributions of many researchers prompting us to critically examine the connections between architecture, narratives, and dominant powers, I aim to explore the concept of *minor architectural imaginations* or *counter-imaginings*. How has the discipline celebrated certain images, certain (major) imaginations, certain modes of operation at the expense of others? What relationships to dominant social imaginaries have thus been encouraged or hindered? What architectural images and imaginations are produced in the margins of what is considered by the discipline, and how do such images question its dominant paradigms?

In what follows, I aim to re-open the notions of architectural image and imagination in their minor dimensions. This entails an attempt to understand the transindividual,

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274 Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, eds., *The Politics of Imagination*, First issued in paperback (Abingdon, Oxon: Birkbeck Law Press, 2012), 1.

performative, and co-produced dimensions of imagination in architecture, along with a consideration of the practices that give substance to it. The adopted choreopolitical perspective allows us to question the dominant understandings of architectural imagination. The co-imaginings of bodies and grounds, their dance, are here considered as *another* architectural way of imagining. The imaginings produced by these dances are insolent, political, subversive. They can be so because they do not presuppose what a body and its environment can be, but emerge in parallel with ever-renewed responses to this question. So far, movement has been considered as a means to discuss the ways in which bodies are produced by and produce their milieus and architectures. It now also becomes a means to discuss the processes of imagination at play when bodies and grounds dance other dances.

These initial remarks invite us to approach the imagination through the plural and situated responses that continue to unfold in contact with the complexity of the present. They prompt us to consider how architectural imagination is written from the real—in all its thickness and virtualities. They ask that we become more attentive to the ways in which grounds, often considered as fixed by architecture, are, in reality, teeming with life. This involves observing how these grounds are invited to transform in the practices of bodies that come into contact with them.

“No event occurs in a vacuum—event and milieu are always cogenerative. This means that the milieu cannot be understood in spatial terms. It is an affective attunement more than a space, a field more than a form,”

writes Erin Manning.<sup>275</sup> Following this observation of the philosopher, known for her radical attention to what is unfolding, asks that we stop to reduce space to fixities and become attentive to the dynamic affective attunements continually inscribed by bodies inhabiting the world inhabiting bodies.<sup>276</sup>

Contemporary architectural discourses have addressed this impossibility of reducing the milieu to the geometric abstract space. Some authors have introduced a relational approach to re-infuse movement into dominant approaches of architectural imagination and the ways in which the discipline contributes to nurturing imaginaries of the future. The author Paul Dobraszczyk expresses enthusiasm for the potential directly offered by such an approach in considering the multiple nature of milieus for architectural imagination, as he writes:

“Perhaps it is time to recognize more widely that architecture does not exist in the self-referential world it so often seems to. Buildings - and the cities buildings sit in - are always much more than the sum of their parts. Rather than simply being material objects, build-

275 Erin Manning, *Always More than One: Individuation's Dance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 54.

276 Of course, we could argue against the philosopher's reductive use of the notion of space, which seems to reduce it to its Cartesian, abstract definition. For architects, for whom “space” is a matter of work and concern, another trajectory is not to “replace” the term space with the term environment, but to claim that space is always already a weaving of material, affective, actual and virtual dimensions, and that it is historically constituted. In all cases, the ambition is to make room for a plurality of dimensions and tonalities in our apprehension of the world.

ings are in reality a whole series of connections - between makers and users; between spaces and forms; between materials and mind; and between flows of all kinds - people, non-human things, facilities, information, time and so on. In thinking of buildings and cities as primarily about connections, we can open our minds to an almost infinite array of possible futures for them - futures that will be defined by how we connect up all manner of things, both material and immaterial, in the here and now.<sup>277</sup>

Dobraszczyk's enthusiastic remarks, however, may inadvertently echo certain paradigms of architectural imagination that are precisely under scrutiny—such as the notion of a *tabula rasa* implied by the belief in limitless possibilities, or the archetype of the architect-author-choreographer orchestrating relationships among easily manipulable entities. When the author refers to “an almost infinite array of possible futures”, he alluringly presents the prospect of the possibility of all possibilities for all and at all times, disregarding the multiple pre-determined, radically differentiated, and unequal orientations that unequivocally define the field of possibilities today. Contrarily, Manning underscores the density of the present as a field of forces that radically co-generates possibilities.

Secondly, when Dobraszczyk asserts that “futures [...] will be defined by how we connect up all manner of things, both material and immaterial, in the here and now”, the author adopts a vocabulary that still reflects the primacy of objects (of all kinds) and actions of connection made by subjects, rather than a vocabulary that would reflect mutual influences and ongoing processes of individualization. Things and processes themselves are de-agentialized in the ways assemblages come to be. Against this backdrop, Manning's understanding of the milieu or the architectural ground we aim to highlight implies recognizing the agencies and forces of the different actors within it, thereby necessitating a pluralizing political practice.

In light of these remarks, the perspective of choreopolitical ecologies aims to capture the dense, mobile, saturated matter in which bodies and their milieus co-compose their dances as a primary, pre-existing terrain. Not only is this terrain *oriented* and *orienting* but it also serves as the source from which minor architectural imaginations emerge as co-imaginings:

“The fog of minor existences surrounding us also expresses a material fuzziness, an entangled continuity of the world in which we discover ourselves necessarily inscribed. Nothing and no one can remain unaffected or untouched by the world. Material fuzziness asks from us an active disposition, for we must interpret the unfinished and imagine the yet unseen to realise possibilities. The world involves us through the noise it produces, inviting us to ‘conspire’ with it,”

writes Lucía Jalón Oyarzun.<sup>278</sup> Deliberately employed here, the verb ‘conspire’ (*conspirare* meaning ‘to breathe together’) can be directly linked to the “incorporations” and

277 Paul Dobraszczyk, *Future Cities: Architecture and the Imagination* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2019), 15.

278 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Digital Doubles: The Major Agency of Minor Bits,” *Architectural Design* 92, no. 6 (November 2022): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2871>.

“excorporations” discussed in connection with choreography in the first part of this research. This concept involves not only breathing with the world but also transforming our incorporations into opportunities for secret plans and our excorporations into the actualization of new worlds.

Imagination is key when it comes to choreopolitical ecologies working with this dense architectural ground or milieu. The act of composing with its movements, attributing meaning to it, and weaving worlds with it is not about creating ‘new’ relationships and ‘new’ imaginations. Instead, it demands an exploration of what, within our movements, bears witness to the co-constitution of bodies and worlds, making this co-constitution apprehensible. At every moment, these co-constitutive dynamics are indeed controlled, regulated, and modulated by control regimes, depriving bodies of their ability to (re)orient themselves (in) their dances:

“The body defining spatial production today is a flattened informational pattern, its breathing [with the world] mere numbers of oxygen values on a smart-watch screen.”<sup>279</sup>

Emma Bigé, too, insists on this double aspect of profusion of movements and the difficulty of seizing them to invent other worlds:

“There is an incessance of sound that fills us and constantly fills the spaces we inhabit. Similarly, we are inescapably immersed in incessant dynamism: we have no moving eyelids that would give us the possibility to disconnect from our motor experience. Yet, it remains difficult to see, and it seems that I must continually remind myself that there is movement in and around me, in order to see and name it.”<sup>280</sup>

It could be put this way: bodies are deprived of their improvisational capacity with the world. And it is precisely this capacity that provides valid lines of escape and possibilities to truly extricate oneself from a conditioned present – minor architectural imaginations.

The framework of choreopolitical ecologies underscores and invites consideration of the vulnerability inherent in these minor architectural imaginations. For a choreopolitical ecology to take shape, experimental dances between bodies and their milieus must be facilitated. Bodies must become capable of paying attention to the ways in which they are moved by their milieus and to the ways in which these movements can be embraced, transformed, or subverted. We must “bend our languages and our practices.”<sup>281</sup> A minor architectural imagination conceived from the bodies thus implies incessant practices and attentiveness to the movements of the world, as well as an awareness of how our sensitivities to these movements are oriented, silenced, standardized, divided, imposed.

279 Jalón Oyarzun, 35.

280 Emma Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, SH/Terrains philosophiques (Paris: La Découverte, 2023), 21.

281 Bigé, 21.

The dominant imaginaries, strongly present when thinking about the urban condition, play a key role. They are part of a multi-headed choreopolice apparatus that not only impacts the ways we move and inhabit but also how we can imagine-with the world and its movements. Lepecki has also explored the relationship between choreopolitics and imagination.<sup>282</sup> He has identified in certain contemporary practices an attempt to re-legislate the ways in which dances come into the world. By drawing on images from the past, the future, and improbable associations, choreographers address the conditioning of imagination and movement simultaneously, while also acknowledging the links between movement, imagination, and the production of bifurcating futures. “The concept of ‘re-legislate’ appears relevant to consider, in a world where the capacities to imagine, in the profoundly political sense of the term, are being tested.

In this chapter, I focus on the possibility of an architectural imagination conceived through the prism of sensitivities to the textures of the movements of bodies and their milieus, as well as the forces attempting to exhaust, dominate, and control them. My exploration begins with the concepts of imagination, the politics of imagination, and architectural imagination. Firstly, I aim to gather approaches to imagination capable of supporting my exploration of the connections between choreopolitical ecologies and architectural imagination. The focus is on highlighting the dynamic, relational, and co-produced dimensions of imagination, and comprehending the links between movement, image, and imagination.

I depart from the philosopher Gilbert Simondon. Primarily known for his thinking on technique, Simondon also delivered a course on imagination in which he theorizes it as a cycle of image transformation, including a mental stage of the image. This stage, as a part of external reality injected into our bodies, becomes “an app we host in order to relate to our world better, and as a map we use to orient ourselves in.”<sup>283</sup> Then, I consider the work of the philosopher Chiara Bottici, who proposes the term “imaginal”, which she positions between “the imaginary”, attached to a social context, and “the imagination”, attached to the individual. By the term “imaginal”, Bottici seeks to designate “that which is made of images and can therefore be the product both of an individual faculty and of the social context, as well as of a complex interaction between the two that escapes any simple opposition between them.”<sup>284</sup>

These approaches on imagination enable me to critically approach the production of images in architecture and the central ‘representational’ dimension in the history of the discipline. My aim is to conceive architectural images and imagination as being

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282 André Lepecki, “The Politics of Speculative Imagination in Contemporary Choreography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

283 Yves Citton, “Could Deep Fakes Uncover the Deeper Truth of an Ontology of the Networked Images?,” *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 30, no. 61–62 (July 2, 2021): 58, <https://doi.org/10.7146/nja.v30i61-62.127858>.

284 Chiara Bottici, “Imagination, Imaginary, Imaginal: Towards a New Social Ontology?,” *Social Epistemology* 33, no. 5 (September 3, 2019): 436, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2019.1652861>.



crafted from the textures of the real, movement, and the possible. Approached from this perspective, architectural imagination allows us to think of architectural drawing not as mere representation but as supports for performative inquiries. As Lafontaine Carboni argues,

“One can also analyze architectural documents [...] not for what they represent, but in exploring how they provoke new driving forces, new gestures and landscapes of affordances, performative spatialities and potential images. Architectural documents are thus considered not as representing a future state but as a non-human body in the world, with its own agencies, leading to invention and new gestures.”<sup>285</sup>

In this approach, the architectural document can be a drawing, a text, an image, a gesture, a performance. All these documents are indeed capable of participating in a cycle of imagination in which both movements and images play a part.

In a second phase, I explore the practice of an American architect, John Hejduk, whose consistently experimental approach reflects a profound architectural attention to the ways in which beings and things participate in each other’s movements. The 1970s and 1980s, during which he was active, witnessed a proliferation of experimentation around architectural drawing. These experiments not only questioned architectural drawing as a medium but also prompted a re-evaluation of architecture in relation to image, imagination, and approaches to the possible and the virtual. The architect and researcher Jordan Kauffman, who has dedicated significant research to this period and phenomenon, describes it as the time when, for the first time, “architectural drawings became more than an instrument for building.”<sup>286</sup>

Hejduk’s practice, spanning from the 1950s to the 1990s, is emblematic of this period while remaining completely singular. His early years of teaching and practice involved collaborations with architects who continue to more directly embody this trend today. But, in the later part of his career, Hejduk developed a distinctive form of architecture known as the “masques”. These masques take the form of books filled with drawings, lists, and poems, as well as scripts for “performances,” and are always linked to a specific city. Each masque addresses the notions of forgetting, memory, and transformation. The masques are conceived as an activation of the imagination in places marked by history. They ask: From deindustrialization to wars, how can we celebrate and transform, how can we co-imagine, the aftermath?

“For Hejduk, urbanistic visions are utopias based on an ideal of permanence, and are doomed to obsolescence. In response, Hejduk proposes the creation of non-static realities, such as radical nomadic objects, which generate ambiguities in the traditional object-context relationship of architecture,”<sup>287</sup>

285 Julien Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.” (Lausanne, EPFL, 2022), 117.

286 Jordan Kauffman, “Drawings on Architecture: The Socioaesthetics of Architectural Drawings, 1970-1990” (Boston, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015), 5.

287 Marina Pedroso Correia, “Volume em Miniatura: John Hejduk e Veneza” (São Paulo, Universidade de São

writes architect and researcher Marina Pedroso Correia, who devoted her thesis to Hejduk's work.

The practice and archives that have come down to us from Hejduk's work reveal an architectural approach that seizes the tactile dimensions of storytelling to fill places with other gestures. This, in turn, opens up avenues for other dances of bodies and milieus. From drawn fragments to books, collective worksite to performances, the multiple ways in which Hejduk's architecture dialogues with its time testify to a powerful desire to invent an 'architecture' for its era—one that resists both disciplinary authoritarianism and the alienating logics of neoliberalism, which were then significantly impacting the discipline in its definition and practices.

The different forms of traces and archives left by the architect and his practice, the discourses that have surrounded him and continue to do so until today, and the different "implementations" that Hejduk's projects have undergone until recently also help understand how the apprehension of Hejduk's "architecture" and its variations over time more broadly reflect disciplinary and extra-disciplinary preoccupations on this matter. Theoretical and disciplinary archival reflexes have largely contributed to isolating the work of an architect whose practice was nevertheless, I argue, always oriented towards the other within his discipline.

Hejduk's projects reveal an understanding of the profoundly transindividual nature of imagination and outline an architectural approach to support it. This requires comprehension and engagement by those who participate in it. In my interpretation, Hejduk's projects constitute fertile ground for further reflection on the role of the architect in shared design and imagination processes, especially in the connections between imaginaries, drawing, performance, and the performative dimensions of spatialities. They reveal a singular attempt by an architect to support, through his own approach, possible collective minor imaginations that go beyond his own proposals. Here, the architect sets the ground in motion, opening it to new choreopolitics that he does not pre-determine but accompanies in their formation. The masques present themselves as an architectural posture of doing-with, questioning-with others the narratives of places and alternative ways of world-making when worlds freeze and close in.

As in the previous chapter, I end this chapter on imagination in the company of several contemporary practices. These practices allow me to juxtapose aspects of Hejduk's work with the ways in which worlds freeze and close in today. Today, the mass of circulating images has reached an unprecedented level. Images ask for our attentions, and group us according to logics determined by those who know how to harness the capacities of images to stir bodies. In this context, architects are no longer solely concerned with considering their own production of images. An imaginative-political

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Paulo, 2018), 139.

practice of architecture requires not only taking into account the co-production of subjectivities, spatialities, imagination, and movement but also ensuring engagement in counter-practices against the reproduction of individualism, ethnocentrism, and destructive hierarchies attached to universalized Western imaginaries. Against those dynamics, several minor architectural practices work to articulate minor choreopolitical ecologies, in which places, imaginaries, bodies, and temporalities are interwoven differently to claim the possibility of collective counter-imaginings.







## 2.1 Imagining-with. — Toward a transindividual architectural imagination

PART I

A crisis of the imagination? — Minor imaginations amidst images and dominant imaginaries — Somatic Minor Imaginations and Images — Imaginal: Recovering the transindividual dimension — The cycle of imagination: imagining-with a milieu — Co-produced Imaginations: political and ethical stakes — A disciplinary taming of architectural imagination — What counts as an architectural image? — Imaginal spatialities of dance — (Un)Drawing worlds



## 2.1 Imagining-with. — Toward a transindividual architectural imagination

### PART I

#### A crisis of the imagination?

The global climate and social crisis has been distilled by some into a “crisis of imagination”. This idea is notably expounded by the writer Amitav Ghosh in his book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, published in 2016.<sup>288</sup> For Ghosh, we are incapable of imagining the true scale and violence of climate change, as evidenced by its absence or differential treatment in several fields of collective thought, and in particular by the absence of this motif in literature. The idea of a crisis of imagination would then help make sense of the apparent discrepancy between the advanced state of deterioration of the planet and biodiversity and the lack of climate action as a deficiency in collective imaginative practices.

The act of appending the term ‘imagination’ to that of crisis has the merit of initiating a work of connection, a process of contamination between two terms that discourses focused on either of them operate on less frequently: the climate crisis on one side and imagination on the other. In this operation, the term ‘imagination’ immediately recovers a certain collective and political dimension, while the term ‘crisis’ gains depth in its social and historical context. For the notion of imagination that interests me in this chapter, the idea of a crisis of imagination contributes to taking a first step by directly excluding the notion of imagination as a purely individual faculty. On the contrary, it places imagination at the center of our collective capacities to approach the world, make sense of it, and imagine alternative world-making.

This idea restores importance to a field—that of imagination—which other ‘crisis’ discourses often ignore or scorn in the name of an urgency for rationality. At the same time, it is important to note that currently, the term ‘*crisis*’ is rarely productive in itself.

As Yves Citton points out,

“for more than half a century, we have been perpetually entering new ‘crises’-without ever having emerged from the previous one. This perfectly perennial regime thus hollows the notion of ‘crisis’ of any substantial content, by virtue of its permanent nature. Crisis is not the result of a certain situation - by definition exceptional and singular: decisive-but of a certain rhetoric.”<sup>289</sup>

As with all the other crises we continually identify, it is important to question what mentioning this crisis accomplishes. Viewing it as an additional product of an alarmist

288 Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, First published in Allen Lane by Penguin Books India 2016 (Haryana, India: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2016).

289 Yves Citton, “Collapsology as the Horizon,” *Electra* 9 (2020): 89.

rheterical tendency that more often operates as a smokescreen than as a genuine reorientation of our attentions. In the case of imagination, as well as in the case of climate, temporality is not so much that of a momentary crisis but rather that of dynamics working over the long term to impoverish modes of imagining and bind them to destructive, unjust, and violent dynamics. The crisis of imagination is, in truth, the crisis of certain ways of imagining—ways that rhyme with control, prediction, and quantification.

The mention of this crisis is welcome if it can contribute to re-politicizing the terrain of imagination. But, it is important that it does not primarily lead us to seek new forms of imagination that do not yet exist—forms that would be more directly related to the “unimaginable” scales of the climate crisis. These imaginations already exist and always have. If there is a crisis of imagination, it does not take the form of an inability to imagine but rather an incapacity to envisage the extended and diffuse spectrum of imaginative practices already collectively outlined daily in the transdisciplinary, experimental, and decolonial margins of this world. An incapacity to evolve the notion of imagination to maintain its power and political relevance within a world saturated with images. This incapacity can be partially linked to the meanings and forms that imagination has assumed within Western culture and the disciplines that constitute it.

“Let’s see what works in silence, when it works, and let’s cherish its proper functioning—instead of letting ourselves be hijacked by those who cry wolf (often only to sell wolf traps). Let’s readjust our speed to a sustainable present, instead of letting future emergencies panic and crush our agency,”

writes Citton.<sup>290</sup> Following these remarks, such questions come into mind: What forms of minor imaginations, arguably architectural, exist, and what practices underpin them? How do these imaginations consistently enable bodies to inscribe their movements in the world without the need for control? How do these imaginations already outline a plurality of action modalities and modes of existence in the present of crises?

The notion of rehearsal that guides the entirety of this research says exactly this: there exist, everywhere, at all times, minor practices that assert a plurality of worlds, a plurality of modes of imagining. These practices persist alongside those that are named, perceived, and valued. They occupy the margins, they are transmitted, they leave traces:

“Rehearsals consist in repeating and reactivating what others have already said, established, performed, or written at different conjunctures before us, when they were subjected to different modalities of imperial violence. Thus, rehearsals of disengagement are crucial in avoiding the imperial temporality that asks us to seek new solutions for a better future.”<sup>291</sup>

If the crisis of imagination is to benefit us, it is by telling this: we are in a historical

<sup>290</sup> Citton, 89.

<sup>291</sup> Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019), 61.

moment where it is imperative to be attentive to other modes of imagining—minor imaginations that coalesce with the world, intertwining with it, capable of formulating themselves within the flow of things and time, rather than seeking to immobilize, control, or predict them. These ways of imagining imply other images, but, more importantly, other types of images, different image-making processes, and alternative modes of engaging with the multiplicity of the real. As philosopher Isabelle Stengers writes, the emphasis is on embracing a multiplicity of practices, with no assurance other than the fact that within this multiplicity lie the ferments of coexistence:

“Learning to compose will need many names, not a global one, the voices of many peoples, knowledges, and earthly practices. It belongs to a process of multifold creation, the terrible difficulty of which it would be foolish and dangerous to underestimate *but which it would be suicidal to think of as impossible*. There will be no response other than the barbaric if we do not learn to couple together multiple, divergent struggles and engagements in this process of creation, as hesitant and stammering as it may be.”<sup>292</sup>

### Minor imaginations amidst images and dominant imaginaries

Minor imagination is defined in relation to dominant imaginaries, in which its minor forms challenge symbolism, form, and form-making. Counter-imagination practices don't aim to replace dominant imaginaries. They expose the violence attached to these imaginaries, their generalizations, simplifications, orientations, and silences. Much like a politics based on a renewed sharing of the sensible, a *politics of imagination* operates not frontally but transversely. It exposes the violence inherent in dominant imaginaries and modes of imagination for those who do not benefit from them, yet it does not confine itself to formulating alternatives. Instead, it reexamines and transforms all the imaginaries at play. As architect and researcher María Auxiliadora Gálvez Pérez writes,

“Imagination is not something banal, naive or romantic. It is the main instigator of the political and urban alternatives that we can implement and that enable us to face up to today's challenges. Imagining around/beyond reality to find possibilities for transformation that do not depend on crises; imagining bodies and ecologies; enabling us to engage in practices other than those programmed by dominant powers; investigating the positions of the margins and allowing their proposals to flourish.”<sup>293</sup>

In Gálvez Pérez's remarks, imagination is that transversal force that allows us to “find possibilities for transformation that do not depend on crises,” enabling us to extract ourselves from a given present that appears homogeneous in its vision and feeling.

The dominant imaginaries have the characteristic of no longer being questionable or stackable. The imaginary surrounding the climate crisis explicitly demonstrates

292 Isabelle Stengers, *In catastrophic times: resisting the coming barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey, Critical climate change (Lüneburg: Open Humanities Press/Meson Press, 2015), 55.

293 These terms are part of the *Real Imaginaries: The Somatic Revolution* project run by PSAPP: <http://psaap.com/en/real-imaginaries-the-somatic-revolution-2/>, accessed August 25, 2023.



how a narrative seemingly serves the majority while perpetuating the domination of all by a minority. This imaginary construct is deliberately cultivated and affirmed in such a way as to maintain certain orientations, those that suit neoliberal-colonial-extractivist logics. It is invested by multiple actors who know how to wield its (de)mobilizing power, and how to enforce this imaginary as *the only* way to depict a present that, in reality, is significantly more plural (and consequently requires plural responses and practices). Thus, the proliferation of alternative vocabularies and imaginative efforts to designate the present condition can be read as a way of participating in an initial movement of refusal towards the dominant imaginary of “the crisis”.

When Citton suggest to describe this condition as “the intensive weaving of the constitutive relations of the Eurocene”, he brings back into the imagination of the present condition the possibility of a nuanced approach that the term crisis never ceases to invisibilize.<sup>294</sup> For Citton, and for all those battling the perpetuation of ecocidal logics within the formulations of the contemporary condition and its envisioned responses, describing this crisis in a plural manner is an absolute necessity. The term “weaving” allows for the evocation of the multiple forms of manifestation of the present crisis and the intertwined temporalities that correspond to how the present, past, and future act towards each other. The weaving also alludes to the intertwinement of the possibilities for bodies to act with what holds them back.

This image stands in opposition to the global trend of separating imagination and the production of alternatives from the interconnected mechanisms that produce this condition in the first place:

“Ecocide, feminicide, and epistemicide work together to diminish the planet’s biodiversity. Yet we continue to universalize the “Anthropocene” and to imagine that there is one way to address and represent all of the uneven and unequal ways capitalism eradicates local social and biological life and its complexity. How we study this violence matters. How we study, not just to dismantle, but to intervene into extractive capitalism by imagining otherwise matters even more,”

writes the decolonial scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris.<sup>295</sup> Every description, every method of questioning the frameworks and social imaginaries not only orient the potential changes that can be envisioned but also influences the ways in which a politics of imagination is enacted. Words can serve as a means to crack the homogeneity of the present and reactivating nuances. Minor imaginations, in this context, borrow vocabularies and operational methods from dominant imaginaries, repurposing them to subvert the closure of the real upon itself.

The collective practices of minor imagination currently operate amidst a prolifera-

294 Yves Citton, *Faire avec: conflits, coalitions, contagions*, Collection Trans (Paris: Éditions les Liens qui lièrent, 2021), 14.

295 Macarena Gómez-Barris, “A Dialogue on The Extractive Zone : Resistant Sensoriums,” *Cultural Dynamics* 31, no. 1–2 (February 2019): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374019838888>.

tion of images that consistently reaffirm certain imaginaries. These closed and homogeneous imaginaries, imposed by a minority, are asserted as the sole possibilities. They articulate our orientations with one another and our milieus in a toxic and destructive manner, undermining the possibilities for co-existence.

“How do we account for the paradox of a world full of images, but deprived of imagination? Have images themselves saturated our political imagination?” asks philosopher Chiara Bottici at the opening of one of her books on the politics of imagination.<sup>296</sup> In a milieu saturated with images, the questions regarding our capacity to imagine (alternatives to the current order of things) and the ways in which imagination incapacitates us (to collectively weave worlds addressing violence and facilitating the development of different ways of life) are posed in a renewed way.

Citton analyzes the transformation of how images operate in society through the lens of *deep fakes*. Going beyond controversies about the content of these images, a focus on deep fakes allow us to comprehend a broader shift in our relations to all kinds of images. They are the most symptomatic manifestation that images do not solely operate at the level of symbolism and representation conveyed by their content when these are considered as *true*, but rather when these contents are able to resonate with “the current affective states of the multitudes.”<sup>297</sup>

In the current context of proliferation of images,

“the question of the adequacy between the representative image and what it claims to represent is subordinated to the question of the relational role played by the image in the processes of individuation. Fake news or deep fakes, when they circulate, are far from being pure negativities (untruth, unactual fictions). They provide, trigger, comfort, nourish actual affects in the bodies through which they travel.”<sup>298</sup>

For Citton, it is important not to view the most toxic circulating deep fakes today as the only expressions of an image dynamism that reminds us of the profound influence images hold over our relations. On the contrary, within his analysis, the mass of dynamic images that connect us becomes an open and profoundly political terrain. Therefore, a politics of imagination implies our capacity to navigate the proliferation of images and the orientations they reproduce within and between us.

### Somatic Minor Imaginations and Images

“If you’re not aware of the imaginations that animate you, someone else crafts them for you without you being able to question them” writes Gálvez Pérez.<sup>299</sup> We are grouped,

296 Chiara Bottici, *Imaginal Politics: Images beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3.

297 Citton, “Could Deep Fakes Uncover the Deeper Truth of an Ontology of the Networked Images?,” 50.

298 Citton, 53.

299 These terms are part of the *Real Imaginaries: The Somatic Revolution* project run by PSAPP: <http://psaap.com/en/real-imaginaries-the-somatic-revolution-2/>, accessed August 25, 2023.

scattered, by a proliferation of images whose central mode of operation is to provoke certain agglutinations while destroying others. In the current era of proliferation of images, a politics of imagination emerges in tension with the ways dominant imaginaries are imposed in the relations among bodies and with the world. This transformation of the modes of operation through which dominant imaginaries are imposed and reproduced echoes significantly the choreopolitical questions that were addressed in the first part of this text.

Here, the logistical regime also works as an imposition of dominant imaginaries operating through the dynamic, corporeal, and affective dimensions of our relations with images and the world. The dominant imaginaries that affect us involve not only our minds but also our movements, tendencies, and attentions—all these things that could serve us in imagining better *with the world*. These new terrains are now the site of the imposition of dominant imaginaries but also the grounds in which a different kind of politics of imagination can be played out:

“Who knows if relational bodily movements and hapticality may not be more significant and empowering than iconic representations? Moving-with may bring deeper truth, and steer stronger believing-with, than merely looking at indexical screens.”<sup>300</sup>

For Gálvez Pérez, who currently leads the *Platform for Somatics Applied to Architecture and Landscape*, there is no doubt about the relevance of an experimental field such as the one mentioned by Citton. The architect insists on the need to think of collective practices for reconfiguring imaginaries starting from bodies, or rather, from *somatic experimentation*:

“The somatic revolution uses awareness of the imaginaries that animate us and transforms them according to the possibilities of thinking together - the various forms of life - with our multiplicity of interspecies flesh.”<sup>301</sup>

Here, imagination is never thought of as detached from the “imaginaries that animate us,” but it becomes a “somatic revolution,” precisely as a renewed awareness of how movement, minor imaginations, and normative frameworks of social imaginaries interact and intertwine/knot together in the practices of bodies in the world.

The “somatic” motif allows us to shift away from a focus on “the body” that reproduces humanist separatism, and concentrate instead on a “body-living-being” as a place of “knowing-feeling” that is always in the process of being constituted.<sup>302</sup> In her

300 Citton, “Could Deep Fakes Uncover the Deeper Truth of an Ontology of the Networked Images?,” 61.

301 These terms are part of the *Real Imaginaries: The Somatic Revolution* project run by PSAPP: <http://psaap.com/en/real-imaginaries-the-somatic-revolution-2/>, accessed August 25, 2023.

302 The term “somatic” is also used by anthropologist Thomas Csordas, who developed the notion of “somatic modes of attention”. This concept enables Csordas to describe historically constituted modes of attention and the cultural elaboration of our sensory engagement. For Csordas, attention is deeply connected to the ways in which it is anchored in bodies by different cultures: “Neither attending to nor attending with the body can be taken for granted, but must be formulated as culturally constituted somatic modes of attention.” Csordas, Thomas J. “Somatic Modes of Attention.” *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (1993): 140.

book *Mouvementements*, Emma Bigé aligns her writings with the lineage of “ecosomatics” as developed by several other researchers interested in reading in the movements of bodies the Earth with which these bodies live and co-compose. The term “somatics” is used alongside “ecology”—which primarily denotes relational dynamics—to enable the consideration of the reciprocal porosity between bodies and milieus.<sup>303</sup>

Bringing together imagination and somatics performs a rather similar operation. In proposing the idea of minor somatic imaginations, I aim to envision the field of questions and experimentation that arises when these two terms are mentioned together. What occurs when imagination is no longer perceived solely as a mental activity but as a practice involving the breath of bodies and the world, where dominant imaginaries are reconfigured? What types of images emerge from these practices?

The formation of minor somatic imaginations implies that bodies can come to understand what drives them individually and collectively, offering a renewed apprehension of imagination in an age of image profusion and logistical regime. But, this process of imagination also implies that bodies can explore and formulate desirable counter-imaginaries for their mobilizations. The choreopolitics of grounds and milieus, explored in the first part of this text, offers ways to start disengaging from dominant imaginaries, whose effects are felt in movements. But what is the nature of the minor images and imaginations that contribute to and emerge from such practices? How are desirable counter-imaginaries formulated? The imaginations formulated in minor somatic practices may not take the most anticipated or explicit forms as *imaginations* or *images*. They challenge the dominant senses of these terms that are hindering a complete grasp of their strengths and forms.

In the paragraphs that follow, I delve into the nuanced definitions of imagination put forth by different philosophers. Each, in their own way, has noted a tendency to reduce this concept to certain aspects, neglecting others, which their efforts aim to re-integrate into our thinking of image and imagination. Next, I juxtapose this enriched vision on imagination with the historical meanings, practices, and forms attributed to the term in the field of architecture. There, the aim is to re-open the architectural imagination to a trans-individual dimension and to collective forms and practices.

### Imaginal: Recovering the transindividual dimension

The different meanings of a term throughout history are also profoundly political. They depict how terms become a part of debates, how communities use them for their own purposes, and how they consistently redraw not just the meanings but also the power of these terms. As a term as broad and inspiring as “imagination”, its contours

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303 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 17. The ecosomatic thinking to which Bigé refers is developed in: Bardet, Marie, Joanne Clavel, and Isabelle Ginot. *Écosomatiques: penser l'écologie depuis le geste*. Montpellier: Éditions Deuxième époque, 2019.

are highly subject to being redrawn by the evolution of associated terms and the contexts in which it deploys/unfolds. And this is precisely what has occurred.

Philosopher and author Chiara Bottici has written several books on the politics of imagination. Within them, she observes how, across history, imagination has witnessed its meaning being clarified while also being reduced and impoverished. She identifies two crucial historical moments in which imagination has witnessed its use and meaning transformed within the Western philosophical tradition. The first moment marks the transition from the Greek word *phantasia* to the modern term imagination. *Phantasia* denoted the capacity to produce images in the broadest sense, without a systematic association with the idea of the absence of what was imagined.

Bottici references Aristotle, who described the capacity to imagine the sky and stars as a *phantasia* of the sky. In the seventeenth century, when imagination faced severe criticism as a source of disruption to the work of reason, *phantasia* and *imaginatio* became systematically associated with the representation of what is not there, and with the emerging field of aesthetics. As Bottici notes, imagination becomes pre-determined by this distinction between absence and presence:

“However, to associate ‘imagination’ with the absence of the object of representation or even with the ‘unreal’ means assuming from the beginning what is real and what is not, what is absence and what is presence.”<sup>304</sup>

The second movement she identifies is the shift from imagination to the imaginary. As imagination becomes attached to a philosophy of the subject perceived as limiting, the concept of the imaginary is introduced to capture the social dimension of the capacity to imagine: “In short, if imagination is an individual faculty that we possess, the social imaginary is, by contrast, what possesses us.”<sup>305</sup> The concept of the imaginary thus underlines how the socialization of human beings depends on their ability to adopt socially recognized imaginary significations. Imaginaries are conceived as “deep-seated modes of understanding that provide largely ‘pre-reflexive parameters’ within which people imagine their existence.”<sup>306</sup>

While these different movements have a precise purpose at the time of their emergence, they result in making it difficult to apprehend the imagination in a way that combines its social and individual dimensions dynamically and productively. To overcome this opposition, the author notably draws on Cornelius Castoriadis’ theory of the imaginary. For Castoriadis, the acts that establish and maintain a society cannot be conceived outside of a symbolic network, whether these acts are themselves symbolic or not. Imaginary meanings serve to give sense to what is presented, yet elements that

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304 Bottici, “Imagination, Imaginary, Imaginal,” 434.

305 Bottici, 434.

306 Bottici, 434.



collide with this imaginary can, in turn, become subjects of symbolic processing. For Bottici, the value of Castoriadis' approach lies in the fact that the *instituting* social imaginary is always at the same time *instituted*. This allows Bottici to draw two important conclusions from her reading of Castoriadis. The first pertains to the idea that imagination precedes the distinction between the real and the fictitious, constituting more a capacity to produce images in a broad sense. The second pertains to the capacity of this approach to problematize imagination as an individual faculty. For Castoriadis, there isn't a clear separation between the thinking individual and the reality of an objective world. Instead, the transition from imagination to the imaginary reflects a shift from a subject-oriented to a context-oriented approach. Reality, in turn, consistently depends on the instituting and instituted aspects of the imaginary. It is not something that comes *before*.

On this basis, and to overcome a certain opposition between the individual and society that occasionally emerges in Castoriadis' approach, Bottici develops a theory of the imaginal. Her goal is to overcome both the opposition between the social and the individual, as well as the methodological individualism that it presupposes. The substance of this "imaginal" is enriched by the constant interactions between emerging entities in formation – images, individuals, social:

"In contrast to both 'imagination' and 'the imaginary', 'imaginal' means simply that which is made of images and can therefore be the product both of an individual faculty and of the social context, as well as of a complex interaction between the two that escapes any simple opposition between them."<sup>307</sup>

In this approach, images form a true starting point: without images, there's no world for humans who engage through imagination with social imaginaries they (re)produce. The imaginal thus insists on the centrality of image production, rather than on the faculty or the context that produces them. The notion avoids the need to make assumptions about the individual or social dimension of the capacity to imagine, as well as about the absence or presence of its content. Images can be representations just as they can be presences. They can also pertain to the unconscious. In this manner, they precede language, which falls short in capturing their content. The imaginal evokes the abundance of the capacity to generate images, a fundamental capacity within collective practices of making-society and making-world. Finally, by underlining this capacity, the imaginal describes a capacity not inherently tied to an absence or a lack that compels us to imagine what is not there, but rather as a sign of abundance—the abundance of the capacity to produce images.

The imaginal constructs an interpretation of the individual involved in processes of image production that both depend on and transcend them. The individual is continually composed and decomposed by other entities and the images they come into

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307 Bottici, 436.

contact with. They represent a process, a web of affective and imaginal relations. Bottici sees a correspondence between the imaginal and the processes of transindividuation.<sup>308</sup> This term precisely describes how each individual is constantly composed and decomposed in their process of individuation through the contacts they establish. It involves individual, inter-individual, and supra-individual levels.

For Bottici, drawing from Balibar, this underlines why individuality is best understood in all its dimensions as transindividuality. Transindividuality emphasizes the milieu facilitating encounters and that there isn't a rigidly defined individual at the core of the individuation process, but rather an individual continuously made and unmade, constantly both social and individual at once. Rather than thinking of imagination, its capacities and limitations on the scale of the individual, the imaginal and transindividuation together reveal the importance of the complex dynamics of imaginary identification:

“We constantly meet and recognize or misrecognize ourselves in certain body images, which include images that we have of our bodies and of other bodies, as well as images that others have of them and which become constitutive of our own being.”<sup>309</sup>

The imaginal allows for conceptualizing the capacity to imagine, not exclusively tied to either the individual or a social context, but rather to bodies always understood as transindividual processes.

#### The cycle of imagination: imagining-with a milieu

This approach to imagination, framing it as a process with radically trans-individual dimensions, is also developed by the philosopher Gilbert Simondon. Transindividuality characterizes the entirety of the philosopher's thought. According to Simondon, no individual is isolatable; instead, each individual must be comprehended through the processes of individuation that occur between the individual and their milieu.

As Citton notes, while enumerating the ways in which Simondon's thought can resonate with current challenges, one of the primary resonances lies in Simondon's capacity to position his entire philosophy beyond individualism:

“Simondon guides us to recognize that there are no ready-made, in-divisible, atomic individuals from which societies or markets would be constructed; there are only *individuation processes*, always rooted in a pre-individual substrate and entailing transindividual dynamics.”<sup>310</sup>

308 Bottici refers in particular to transindividuation as formulated by the philosopher Etienne Balibar in his analysis of Spinoza, an analysis in which he appeals to the notion of transindividuation particularly in connection with Simondon's theories. Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*, Mededelingen Vanwege Het Spinozahuis 71 (Delft: Eburon, 1997), 27.

309 Bottici, “Imagination, Imaginary, Imaginal,” 439.

310 Yves Citton, “Sept résonances de Simondon,” *Multitudes* 18, no. 4 (2004): 27, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.018.0025>.

For Simondon, the individual exists and is defined solely through these relations and individuation processes. Separating the individual from its milieu, whether in practice or interpretation, is equivalent to directly abolishing the individual. With imagination in mind, one could argue that attempting to develop a theory of image and imagination tied to the individual, rather than understood through the prism of individuation processes, amounts to abolishing the imagining individual. On the contrary, Simondon's theory seeks to assign significant importance to the different forms of the image, their dynamism, and how they interact with the individual and their own processes. This anchors imagination in pre-individual matter and tran-sindividual dynamics, rather than attaching it to the subject.

During the course he gave at the Sorbonne between 1965 and 1966, Simondon elaborates a theory of imagination in the form of a description of an image cycle, with imagination and invention linked to it. Right at the beginning of his course, Simondon offers a sort of summary of the image cycle that he later unfolds. He writes:

“The mental image functions as a relatively independent subset within the living subject; at birth, the image represents a bundle of motor tendencies—a long-term anticipation of the object's experience; through the interaction between the organism and the milieu, it transforms into a system that receives incidental signals, enabling the unfoldment of perceptual-motor activity in a progressive mode. Upon the subject's reparation from the object, the image, enriched by cognitive contributions and infused with the affective-emotional resonance of the experience, becomes a symbol. From this internally organized universe of symbols, tending towards saturation, invention can arise, which is the activation of a more powerful dimensional system, capable of integrating more complete images according to the mode of synergic compatibility. After invention, the fourth phase in the becoming of images, the cycle begins again, with a new anticipation of the encounter with the object, which may be its production.”<sup>311</sup>

What follows from this description is a radical broadening of what is traditionally considered an image. As Simondon himself notes, “the same word ‘image’ seems to be applied to different, unrelated realities; it should be said, depending on the case, ‘symbol’, or ‘perception’, or ‘desire’...”<sup>312</sup>

In his approach, the philosopher is careful not to define from the outset precisely what he means by “image”, but proposes an operation of enlargement that directly integrates several states of the image:

“What characterizes the image is that it is a local, endogenous activity, but this activity exists as much in the presence of the object (in perception) as before the experience, as anticipation, or afterwards, as symbol-memory.”<sup>313</sup>

This leads the philosopher to a second shift away from the traditional approach to the image as designating a mental content of which we are aware. With Simondon, on the

311 Gilbert Simondon, *Imagination et invention: 1965-1966* (Paris: PUF, 2014), 3.

312 Simondon, 4.

313 Simondon, 4.

contrary, the image also undergoes crucial formative moments in which its reality exceeds the consciousness one has of it. Simondon even goes so far as to say that the least rare situation is one in which images escape consciousness, and that “the conscious aspects of local activity are almost exceptional cases of outcrop that are attached to a continuous weft.”<sup>314</sup> The theory of Simondon, and the strength he attributes to images, aims to consider not only the image’s capacity to explicitly deliver itself to consciousness, but also, the other registers in which it operates in the cycle of imagination, that is, of the

“characters by which an image resists free will, refuses to allow itself to be directed by the subject’s will, and presents itself of its own accord according to its own forces, inhabiting consciousness like an intruder who comes to disturb the order of a house to which it is not invited.”<sup>315</sup>

The theory distinguishes itself in the way it integrates how the image works on the organizational patterns of the individual from its own opacity. This foundation allows for considering that beyond the relations with the materialized, present image, there are forms of image *a priori* and *a posteriori* that also play a decisive role in how an individual perceives, orients, and maintains relations with the world.

Returning to the different phases of the image cycle evoked by Simondon allows for a clearer understanding of how these ideas manifest in daily life. The initial stage of the image is that of the image as a motor/driving tendency. In the relationship between the organism and the milieu, “reactions” (behaviors in the presence of an object) are preceded by motor spontaneities that exist before the reception of signals characteristic of an object.<sup>316</sup> In other words, the organism already has motor tendencies that do not respond to perception, but precede it. It is this source, the fact that tendencies exist within individuals, “a capacity of the nervous system to perpetually give rise to movement outlines that are not responses to stimuli,” that fuels the image cycle.<sup>317</sup>

These anticipations and tendencies are *a priori* images that demonstrate the capacity of bodies to premeditate what they need to survive within an environment. They are inherent action patterns that exist within the living being as an anticipation of possible behaviors: getting up, attacking, hiding, fleeing, facing up, can be elicited by the being at any moment. The being inherits images that take the form of these forces.

In the second stage, an exchange occurs through contact between the body and an object, leading the being to reorganize its perceptions and responses. During this interaction, the image of the object is defined, transforming into an intra-perceptive image:

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314 Simondon, 4.

315 Simondon, 7.

316 Simondon, 29.

317 Simondon, 31.

“Depending on the development of each individual, elementary intra-perceptive images emerge successively, enabling the perception of realities with a defined meaning. [...] This is not a question of overall perceptual or intellectual development, but of the ability to perceptually grasp the meaning of a situation.”<sup>318</sup>

The image comes to accumulate the possible states of a body, of an object, like so many nuances that co-exist in the image. These images retain a true bodily dimension: they clarify the activity of anticipation, serving as a background for perception. Finally, the third stage is that of *a posteriori* images, symbols. Here, the image reaches a significant degree of determination and influence, even when the object is absent: “These are complete images that are introduced into the elementary psyche and serve as models for the subject’s subsequent choices and reactions.”<sup>319</sup> The symbol functions as a filter between the milieu and living beings, “it marks (and sometimes scars) our body with the imprint of certain encounters, and insofar as it binds us to certain relations and obligations.”<sup>320</sup> These symbols are not just human images: “They encompass the dynamism of relations and interactions that is perception.”<sup>321</sup>

Even in this advanced stage of image formation and the imagination cycle, the image is far from isolated or static. On the contrary, Simondon emphasizes its relational and dynamic dimensions. As Citton notes, he frequently refers to the “recruiting” power of the image:

“Images are recruiting tools, thanks to which we manage to draft external objects to serve our logistic needs. But they are just as often recruiting devices through which our milieus draft us to perform certain actions needed by *their* processes of individuation.”<sup>322</sup>

The phase of invention marks the fourth stage in the imagination cycle. For Simondon, invention is related to a certain saturation or incompatibility that requires a reorganization of a set of images:

“From the internally organized universe of symbols, tending toward saturation, invention can arise, which is the bringing into play of a more powerful dimensional system, capable of integrating more complete images according to the mode of synergic compatibility.”<sup>323</sup>

As it confronts an incompatibility, invention often takes a detour or mediation, which can manifest in the form of an object or tool. But invention itself should not be solely understood as the object. On the contrary, invention pertains to the entire transformation of the relation between a being and its milieu:

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318 Simondon, 69.

319 Simondon, 96.

320 Citton, “Could Deep Fakes Uncover the Deeper Truth of an Ontology of the Networked Images?,” 58.

321 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.,” 116.

322 Citton, “Could Deep Fakes Uncover the Deeper Truth of an Ontology of the Networked Images?,” 58.

323 Simondon, *Imagination et invention*, 3.



A created object is not an image materialized and arbitrarily placed in the world as an object among objects, to overload nature with an additional artifice; it is, by its origin, and remains, by its function, a system of coupling between the living being and its milieu, a double point in which the subjective world and the objective world communicate.”

And Simondon adds: “In social species, this point is a triple point, for it becomes a channel of relationship between individuals, organizing their reciprocal functions.”<sup>324</sup>

For Simondon, invention really consists in this new coupling. It takes the form of a new relationship with the milieu. It is therefore a new image as a new driving force, inaugurating a new cycle of imagination. Invention is the mark of a genuine transformation in the relationship with the milieu, a reorientation that owes as much to the reality of the milieu as to its integration into the cycle of imagination. In invention, “virtual images that existed in a minor way in the milieu are made real as potentials and become driving forces.”<sup>325</sup>

Simondon’s theory offers a profoundly non-anthropo-centric way of conceiving imagination, placing the dynamism of images and the texture transformations they undergo at the center of the discussion regarding the cycle of imagination. By radically expanding the definition of the image to include these driving force and recruiting stages, Simondon’s thinking accommodates the largely overlooked phases of imagination in which images manifest as forces rather than representations. This theory also allows for the profusion of images that inhabit the world in one form or another.

Sometimes, these images are purely mental, while at other times, they take on more tangible forms. Simondon observes how images can be deposited in fashion, art, technical objects, drawings, and more. Faced with this profusion of images, understanding imagination solely as the activity of producing images would not be meaningful. Here, imagination is, above all, the mode of embracing images in all their forms. It entails their rediscovery and re-inscription through the cycle of imagination:

“Every genuine and complete discovery of meaning is simultaneously a reinstallation and recuperation, an effective reincorporation into the world; awareness alone is not enough, as organisms not only have a recognizable structure but also tend/stretch and develop. It is a philosophical, psychological, and social task to *rescue phenomena* by re-installing them in becoming, by placing them back into invention, through the deepening of the image they conceal.”<sup>326</sup>

Understanding and harnessing the power of images involves working on the possibility for unfolding their potentialities. Imagination is neither purely reproductive nor purely creative; instead, it stems from a profusion of images, forming the basis for the emergence of new aggregations. Viewed in this way, images embody a genuine reserve of

324 Simondon, 186.

325 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.” 116.

326 Simondon, *Imagination et invention*, 14.

possibilities, and their incorporation into the cycle of imagination actively contributes to their unfolding. This incorporation-excorporation of the image, (notably through invention as a new relation to the milieu that manifests at the scale of bodies), is far from an understanding of the image solely as representation. On the contrary, the theory of the imagination cycle allows us to consider how the image infiltrates and co-develops with the ways in which bodies perceive and move in the world by imagining.

Even when images are given to “seen,” the dynamic dimension of the image remains crucial. For instance, Simondon refers to what he calls “scientific fiction” as a way for the image to reclaim/recover its “power of the future.” He criticizes overly reductionist forms of foresight, considering them primarily as extrapolations, not inventions. In contrast, the image enables true anticipation, not just as deduction in advance, but as a cognitive and emotive foresight: “To foresee, it is not only a matter of seeing but of inventing and living: true foresight is, to some extent, *praxis*, a tendency toward the development of the act already underway.”<sup>327</sup>

### Co-produced Imaginations: political and ethical stakes

The description of imagination and image in relation to bodies, movement, milieus, and potentialities, as outlined so far, has underscored the benefits of considering imagination in its trans-individual dimensions. When the activity of imagination is seen as a collective production engaging shared futures, as in the context of collective fictions that require individual and collective imaginative efforts, it becomes imperative to question the possibility for comprehending the political and ethical dimension of the effects brought about by imagination and the intricate weavings it creates.

Jalón Oyarzun, in her exploration of the spatialities of the rebellious/rebel body, precisely focuses on this aspect through Spinoza’s conception of imagination. As previously mentioned, according to Spinoza, bodies are constantly affected and influencing others, and positive encounters are those that enhance the power of the body to act. Similarly, speculations about the possible related to the activity of imagination also need to be thought of as encounters. The body is affected in its encounter with the image. This affection can be understood as either good or bad only if it is possible to comprehend the ways in which this new encounter transforms the body at the level of its tendencies.

his prompts Jalón Oyarzun to stress the importance of the awareness of the “as if”. A fiction can only be understood and assessed in its effects if it is not directly conflated with the actual:

“The error does not come from our capacity to imagine (and fictionalize), but from the fact that there is no simultaneous idea that ‘excludes the existence’ of what the individual imagines to be present, i.e., the error appears when the idea of ‘as if’ disappears.”

327 Simondon, 17.

As long as there is no idea excluding the existence of the imagined thing, the imagining body will be affected by this image as if the thing were actually present.”<sup>328</sup> Jalón Oyarzun thus locates the difference between consensual and rebel fiction in their relation to the real:

“Whereas the fictions of post-politics or populism operate by silencing their own fictional quality, the liberating force of a fiction will always reside in its own recognition as fiction, for, thus experienced, it will only expand the world of the one who experiences it.”<sup>329</sup>

When fiction serves to explore new territories, broaden the understanding of the real, and enhance the capacity of bodies to be affected, it is considered “good” fiction. In contrast, “bad” fiction is that which makes the body less capable of being affected and affecting, freezing the dynamics of the expansion of the real:

“When consensual fiction establishes the actuality as the only possible world, invisibilizing/obscuring the immanent vibration of the real behind the high-resolution clarity of its absolute accountability, or when populist fiction turns the possible into closed and exclusive blocks, denying in the same way the always unfinished, almost ghostly condition of every image, they block, each in their own way, the movement of the virtual and the possibility of its irruption.”<sup>330</sup>

Politics as an activity - thought of alongside Rancière and Lepecki in particular, precisely involves preserving and supporting the possibility of irruption—the possibility of the appearance on the stage of the sensible of that which was absent. Lepecki articulates the direct link between politics and imagination when he writes:

“In opposition to police, ‘politics’ for Rancière is the affirmation of the necessary production and expression of *dissensus*, vital disagreements, breaks in the assignation of specific functions (social, biological, aesthetic) to specific types of bodies and their proper occupations. Politics is the realm of heterological corporeal-perceptual-aesthetic experiences. This is why it is tied to “speculative-pragmatic” experiments and actions. This is why not only is politics aesthetic, but in being so, it requires the activation of imagination.”<sup>331</sup>

In this perspective, the discussion of “good” and “bad” fiction can be understood in its political dimension. Good fiction is that which, by reinforcing the capacity of bodies to affect and be affected, maintains the possibility open for the power of differentiation among bodies and for the emergence of new entities on the stage of the sensible. Good fiction supports the political as an ongoing movement of defining and weaving a common world.

The philosopher Moira Gatens sees in this approach to imagination the potential for ethical considerations. Gatens is particularly interested in artistic images and the prospect of exploring the ethical dimension of the process involved in creating these

328 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor.” (Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2017), 38.

329 Jalón Oyarzun, 39.

330 Jalón Oyarzun, 39.

331 Lepecki, “The Politics of Speculative Imagination in Contemporary Choreography,” 157.

images, based on how they operate in the world. The strength of an artistic image lies not merely in what it literally portrays but in its ability to actively engage in everyday life, unveiling the intricacies of relations between beings and the motifs that weave together the past and the present. It is interesting when it “triggers recollection, engages emotion and provides fresh insight into the subtle interconnections between self, others and the world.”<sup>332</sup>

For Gatens, the ethical dimension of art is written within these dynamics:

“The artist must have the capacity to bond his vision, or insight, to everyday life in a manner that provides trustworthy knowledge about the self, others and the world.”<sup>333</sup>

Building on Spinoza’s idea, Gatens asserts that the beauty of art relies on its capacity to enhance the capacity of bodies to endure in their existence in relation with other beings and forces:

“In this way, the essential relationship that art sometimes is thought to have to beauty is here displaced onto the ethical. It is the *conatus* that links art and ethics because the striving to understand ourselves and our passions, our likes and dislikes, things which increase or deplete our power, all are elements in our ethical endeavour to persevere in our being.”<sup>334</sup>

Good fictions are those that operate towards a reconfiguration of our understanding of the world, facilitating the unfolding of beings. Ethical questions are positioned in relation to a practice of imagination anchored and situated in reality, responding to the ways in which beings and things weave plural worlds.

Citton, without directly speaking of ethics, also notes the re-orienting value that common narrative development approaches can assume. He emphasizes the fundamental role of fiction in shaping “facts” that establish common foundations for organizing co-existences:

“Isolated facts only hold existential meaning for us humans when inserted within more or less simple causal patterns that we call *stories*. It is by telling ourselves stories (always partial, and therefore more or less biased/partial) that we position ourselves in what we are led (by the media at our disposal) to consider as “our world”. And since stories, like facts, don’t simply fall from the trees of truth, the crafting of a story always runs the risk of including a certain amount of fiction.”<sup>335</sup>

Based on these remarks, it is crucial not to dismiss the entirety of the profusion of collective counter-narratives that characterizes the contemporary context, often labeled as conspiracy theories. On the contrary, while this conspiracy mindset can have detrimen-

332 Moira Gatens, “Compelling Fictions: Spinoza and George Eliot on Imagination and Belief: Compelling Fictions,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (March 2012): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2012.00513.x>.

333 Gatens, 84.

334 Gatens, 85.

335 Yves Citton, “Boîte à Outils Pour l’étude Des Conspirationnismes:,” *Multitudes* n° 91, no. 2 (June 19, 2023): 63–64, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.091.0061>.

tal effects on establishing facts, it also serves as a mechanism to adopt alternative points of view, freeing ourselves from the impacts of certain facts that perpetuate conditions of a *status quo* rife with inequalities. Additionally, it allows for the re-objectification of knowledge when deemed necessary. Imagination can be seen as a re-tuning of what constitutes “our facts”, performed by communities that imagine together and elaborate “minor forms of flexible oppositional sociability, centered around lived beliefs and practices rather than a corpus of dogmas or abstract principles.”<sup>336</sup>

This ‘conspiratory’ imagination opposes the stability promised by dominant narratives, but it also opposes a conspiracism that would turn every story into a framework worthy of guiding our actions. Imagination, as a conspiracy *with the world*, becomes a way of listening to the lines of force that appear to lean towards a more just, inclusive, and diverse world. It also helps keep these rationalities vibrant, not taking them *absolutely* seriously, translating them into occasionally surprising present practices, and keeping them open to potential contradictions. Imagining, in this context, is a collective exercise aimed at addressing our rigidities and scrutinizing the rationalities-in-construction that guide us towards more preferable assemblages.

These approaches to “conspiracism from below” can be read as necessary counter-practices to the “conspiracism from above”—namely, the grand dominant narratives that underpin a destructive global governance persistently reaffirming the legitimacy of the knowledge that serves it. While “experimenting within society has become the privilege of neoliberal activism, which has not hesitated to bypass scientific predictions and empirical data collection to ‘(counter-)reform’ our institutions,” these practices reclaim imagination as a speculative political practice capable of reconfiguring a real that is closing in on itself. Numerous minor practices of collective imagination, therefore, merit description for their subversive impact on established facts, challenging them not directly but by radically amplifying the real.

Researchers Michelle Caswell and Anne J. Gilliland, for instance, have examined the phenomenon of “imagined records”, a concept they use to describe how

“collective imaginings about the absent or unattainable archive and its content” can play a crucial role in society, particularly in the context of non-existent archives related to communities “whose history and memory have been obliterated through colonialism and Western information practices.”<sup>337</sup>

Collective imagination then operates as a means of reorienting bodies by creating in the imagination “impossible archival imaginaries”, capable of affecting bodies in the present and charting/opening up new trajectories toward the future.<sup>338</sup> Here, it is the

336 Citton, 68.

337 Anne J. Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, “Records and Their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined,” *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (March 2016): 62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9259-z>.

338 Several works document the existence of such counter-practices of imagination in contexts of oppression of



imagined pasts that enable the cracking open of the present as it is perceived, allowing the imagination to unfold towards futures otherwise inaccessible and unimaginable directly.

These approaches can be implemented in diverse contexts, and their effects can be either oppressive or emancipatory. However, when undertaken by marginalized communities, they harbor substantial potential:

“Because of their predominantly affective nature, imagined records can potentially be initiators of powerful and often spontaneous impulses and aspirations that are deployed in situations where the legal, administrative or historical records and their interpretations are deemed by the imager to be erroneous or to have failed and justice has not been served.”<sup>339</sup>

### A disciplinary taming of architectural imagination

While we are exposed to the destructive effects of dominant facts and narratives that have found new operative modalities in technological developments to demarcate movements, modes of existence, and imaginaries, architecture as a discipline still seems little capable of considering the multitude of ways in which a minor architectural imagination can be practiced and asserted. This difficulty is largely explained by the history of the discipline and the establishment of its operational modes. Architecture as a discipline has contributed to defining highly restrictive boundaries for what is considered image and imagination in architecture. These boundaries continue to predominantly impede the development of architectural practices and theories that can support minor imaginations.

Examining the integration of oral and embodied knowledge in the field of architecture, Lafontaine Carboni traces how different operations have historically contributed to concealing and denying the plurality of forms of architectural imagination, seeking to better control and subject them to the desires of colonialism-capitalism. This potential history of knowledge and imagination in the discipline is articulated around the notion of “architectural hylomorphism”.<sup>340</sup> This notion helps delineate the mecha-

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bodies, narratives and modes of existence. Sometimes, as Kirsten Thorpe recounts for aboriginal communities, a community’s speculation about what a state has archived of their lives has a real effect on the existences of community members, until access to the archives concerning them is made possible and calms fears. In another sense, many feminist researchers have long sought to answer Saidiya Hartman’s question, a scholar of English literature: “...how does one tell impossible stories?” by proposing narrative as a way of reintegrating subaltern voices into imaginaries, or by “listening” to what absences in the archive do to us in order to become truly affected by those absences.

339 Gilliland and Caswell, “Records and Their Imaginaries,” 71–72.

340 Lafontaine Carboni considers the term “hylomorphism” in the light of the theorizations and uses of the term proposed by the philosophers Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* and Gilbert Simondon in his *Theory of Operations*. According to Aristotle, hylomorphism is the theory that all being is constituted by two complementary principles: matter and form. Simondon analyzes the ways in which the hylomorphic scheme invisibilizes the dynamics of social stratification at work between the one who orders and the one who carries out the transformation of matter into form: between the forced body and the citizen. For Lafontaine Carboni, the invisibilization of bodies, gestures and manual operations is repeated in the ways in which architecture is constituted as a discipline and knowledge from the Renaissance onwards.

nisms through which, since the Renaissance, architects and theorists positioned themselves as superior to workers by devaluing their oral and embodied knowledge.

This division and delimitation have persistently been reaffirmed in the evolution of the dominant architectural discourse from the Renaissance to today, continuing to shape practices. During the Renaissance, the term “architect” becomes established as the planner, in contrast to those who execute the buildings. Social stratification is thus inscribed in how the discipline defines its contours, while the oral and embodied knowledge of professional leagues existing until then is appropriated by architects through the circulation of the first printed books. At the level of architectural imagery, architects increasingly rely on drawing as a communication tool:

“The architectural image became quite literally an external order, easily communicable, grounding an idealist perspective and a strong opposition between form and matter, which [...] reflects a city that contains citizens as opposed to slaves.”<sup>341</sup>

In establishing their profession, architects make drawing as architectural imagery the vehicle for class disdain. In the 18th century, architecture becomes one of the policing mechanisms aimed at organizing and controlling populations. The performativity of symbolic architectural hylomorphism contributes to aligning architecture with the side of knowledge and order, making it complicit in the exercise of discipline and the indirect control of behaviors:

“The architectural image reproduces the systematic exclusion and segregation of knowledge introduced by architectural hylomorphism.”<sup>342</sup>

Similarly, the linear history of architecture organized by treaties and drawings dismisses the issue of race and, instead, constructs a linear history of technological progress in which the discipline depoliticizes, and race becomes a ghost.<sup>343</sup> The knowledge hierarchies that contribute to establishing disciplinary architectural knowledge in relation to other forms of architectural and spatial knowledge are extensive, creating a *gap* that contemporary architectural practices and theories still need to address.

### What counts as an architectural image?

The approach to imagination developed so far invites us to consider and integrate within architectural practice and theory a range of images that are not usually deemed “architectural images”. Alongside drawings, buildings, or models, numerous other images are also produced and brought into spatial practices and the imaginative prac-

341 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.” 69.

342 Lafontaine Carboni, 72.

343 Irene Cheng et al., eds., *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, Culture, Politics, and the Built Environment (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020). Culture, Politics, and the Built Environment (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020)

tices of bodies that inhabit and transform their worlds. These historically overlooked images manifest as mental images, motor tendencies, affections, symbols. Architects and activists Cruz Garcia and Nathalie Frankowski, known for their professional and political commitment to the links/connections between architecture and racism, advocate moving away from viewing buildings as autonomous artifacts. Instead, they urge consideration of the array of images that contribute to how buildings integrate into the world and affect it:

“Buildings. Buildings are never just buildings. Buildings respond to the political foundations of the institutions that fund, envision and desire them. Buildings are manifestations of the ideologies they serve. Although a naively detached or romantic position may be able to render buildings as semi-autonomous artifacts capable of sheltering or enveloping space, this depoliticized attitude overlooks their historical and material relationship to regimes of violence and terror.”<sup>344</sup>

To imagine alongside the world, to imagine alongside these architectures, demands an awareness that goes beyond the building-image, delving into images expressed in other affective textures, all the while being deeply constitutive of imaginable trajectories towards the future. This design vision implies a radical transformation of imagination in architecture, where imagination is not a neutral process but is rooted in singular social, political, and ecological dynamics. For architect Bryony Roberts, it is necessary to

“imagine invention as a compromised but still valuable endeavor—one achieved by wading knee-deep through one’s own contextual limitations, reaching for commonalities and solidarities with others who are themselves mired in their own biases. The assumption that we are all compromised, all limited, all entangled is an invaluable starting point for alternative epistemologies and practices.”<sup>345</sup>

The act of imagination is therefore always to be pondered in the dialogue between bodies, their milieus, and the multitude of images that hover within and around them. It entails going beyond a focus on representation to be attentive to other types of images that float among bodies and their milieus. The theory of the imaginal suggests that images are always both a product of a social imaginary and individual dynamics of imagination. “These images are constantly reinscribed in cycles through their interaction with bodies capable of “saving the phenomena”, writes Simondon. “Their meanings and symbolism merge from individual and collective experience, [...] experience of a transindividual milieu of images.”<sup>346</sup>

Describing these types of images, their nature, their effects, and the ways in which they are involved in the imagination and production of spatialities constitute a first step in the process of reclaiming space for a greater diversity of architectural images. This

344 García and Frankowski, “(Des)Haciendo La Arquitectura. Manifiesto de Arquitectura Antirracista,” 144.

345 Bryony Roberts, “RE: Theorizing Vulnerability,” *Ardeth* 07, no. 2 (2020): 197, <https://doi.org/10.17454/AR-DETH07.13>.

346 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.,” 109.

involves broadening the spectrum of images considered as architectural and identifying knowledge and dynamics that completely escape a practice and theory in which representation and its analysis monopolize thought and debate.

The discipline of architecture is becoming more aware of the necessity to shift its theoretical production and practices away from a visually-centric regime. Approaches to image in architecture are now starting to emerge in the thoughts and practices at the margins of the discipline. Frequently, these approaches to describe alternative images and architectural imaginations draw from other fields' modes of description and mediation, which have historically developed a greater sensitivity to the affective textures of images and their inscriptions in cycles of imagination.

In the following paragraphs, I mention certain approaches aiming to expand our understanding of the types of images involved in imaginative processes that weave spatialities and trajectories different from those proposed by dominant imaginaries. Through these examples, I seek to make tangible the image-saturated nature and emerging images that characterize the contemporary condition, as well as the possibilities of imagining spatialities and worlds based on the experience of the real.

In the exploration of oral and embodied knowledge in architecture, Lafontaine Carboni identifies "figurations" as a type of architectural image that is never "drawn" but rather takes shape and is transmitted solely from body to body:

"figurations refers to a set of spatial practices that relates to the body, perceptual systems, and diverse forms of memories, but that is beyond the level of the individual and collective; figurations are understood as spatial images that are produced by and through experience and practice, and that exceeds the limits of visibility and representation."<sup>347</sup>

Figurations, culturally constituted and transmitted as gestures, turn the milieu into a landscape of possibilities and meanings; they regulate the relations between bodies:

"Figurations are an operative knowledge that enact the performance of spatialities by outlining the dialogical process of imagination in space, between the landscape's potential images and the individual's driving forces and gestures."<sup>348</sup>

As pointed out by Lafontaine Carboni, these minor images are especially crucial to consider in social and spatial situations where the use of writing or architectural representation as a tool is limited. In Western cultures where writing has taken precedence, this mode of transmission doesn't vanish; it simply ceases being considered as a modality of knowledge production and transmission. However, figurations constitute one of the grounds from which the power of differentiation and imagination of bodies is exercised. While representations correspond to an asserted state of images, figurations correspond to more mobile stages of the image. Representations and figurations

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347 Lafontaine Carboni, 109.

348 Lafontaine Carboni, 116.

are not in opposition but correspond to different realities of the image and interact with each other.

For Jalón Oyarzun, literature is also a fertile ground where affective architectural images are formulated and transmitted. In literature, one can read “temporal/spatial enactments that lie outside the conventions of architectural representation.”<sup>349</sup> Some texts are brimming with affective architectural images. In contrast to a codified representation, the images discussed here do not deny their dynamic and incomplete nature. They are there to evoke the real in all its vibrations. They encompass superpositions, contradictions:

“These affective images contemplate the real as both actual and virtual, meaning that localized and fixed entities always coexist with a surrounding fog of minor existences -memories, ghosts, futurities, potentials...”<sup>350</sup>

These minor architectural images in literature convey the thickness of reality and how each present is inherently charged with potentialities. They go beyond merely presenting the overlapping possibilities among which one must choose. Instead, they transmit the vitality of the real, the plurality of the present, offering actualization and imagination. As images containing plurality, literary images can engage in the imaginative dynamics of their readers. This type of image possesses a material efficacy that diverges significantly from the semiotic efficiency of a codified image analyzed for its content. And this efficacy is deeply architectural: it orients the body and its capacity to make-world. It evokes the entangled continuum of a world in the making and the capacity of bodies to write themselves in this world.

These figurations and affective images in literature help open up our readings of architectural images and imagination. In both cases, the architectural image unfolds within an experiential understanding of the world that encompasses its thicknesses and folds, its dynamics, and virtualities. The world-making power of bodies engages with intricate milieus and images to which they hold on. Through imagination, bodies potentially become attuned to other registers of the real, exercising their capacity to be affected and to affect and to exist in contact with a plurality of images and worlds.

### Imaginal spatialities of dance

Dances always unfold in a milieu filled with images. These images are connected not only to the space-time of the dance’s present but also to the multiple mental images within the dancers and the audience. They include the invoked images-gestures in the dance, the figurations mediating encounters, and the images constituting the imaginary

349 Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012), 11–12.

350 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Windowish Practices, Unreadable Backgrounds and Raw Semiotics. Tracing Minor Architectures and Ecologies of Signs in Women’s Writing,” *ZARCH*, no. 18 (September 2, 2022): 211, [https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs\\_zarch/zarch.2022186216](https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2022186216).



of a place. Echoing these reflections and the first part of this text, we can affirm that the dancing body is also actively imagining and expanding its affective repertoire. It does so by embracing a profusion of images of all kinds and exploring the body's capacity to weave worlds within this profusion. Confronted with the diversity of images already socially and individually constituted, the notion of the "imaginal" is crucial to understanding the operations of imagination in dance. By not a priori distinguishing social imagination from individual imagination, the imaginal emphasizes the transindividual dimension of imagination, always at once incorporation and excorporation. What difference does it make to understand dance in its constant relation to the imaginal?

A very concrete answer to this question can be found, for example, in the growing interest in the field of dance in considering and formulating the collective dimension of the dance solo. This movement, driven by both artists and theorists of dance and performance, seeks to highlight the way in which the solo is, always and above all, a reception of images that opens the body to multiple temporalities and presences, rather than a solitary act. In an article with a manifesto-like title "Solo Solo Solo", performance theorist Rebecca Schneider explores the proliferation of solos in American postmodern art and how the history of the solo remains connected to the figure of the author:

"Time and again we are told (in a reverberating echo from Alan Kaprow) that the American Action Artist Jackson Pollock was responsible for the supremely masculine act of liberating art from the canvas and setting the entire performance-based art of the latter half of the twentieth century into motion. All other possibilities become as if relegated to a footnote."<sup>351</sup>

On the contrary, Schneider underlines how the solo is often appropriated by the avant-garde of that era to crack the image of a unitary subjectivity:

"Often a 'solo' artist performs *as if* alone or singled out, only to perform a kind of echo palette of others, a map of citations and a subjectivity so multiply connected as to be collective."<sup>352</sup>

However, this ability to inscribe the solo more in the perspective of a "call and response" than as an object of art tied to its author is one that has been primarily developed by largely performance-based African American cultures, which are porous between different artistic genres that interconnect. Continuing to construct lineages of solos, citing and identifying "solo artists" as "their authors", the history of the solo that Schneider challenges perpetuates an invisibilization. It invisibilizes the performers' act of imagination (incorporation and excorporation), as well as the milieu and images that enabled such solos: a "white appropriation of black" source "material *without name* and without acknowledgment of source."<sup>353</sup>

351 Rebecca Schneider, "Solo Solo Solo," in *After Criticism*, ed. Gavin Butt, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2005), 36, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774243.ch1>.

352 Schneider, 36.

353 Schneider, 38.

Honoring the solo as a dance of the body and the imaginal allows us to interpret every performance as an act of inscription that may involve dimensions of appropriation or, conversely, solidarity. The solo draws support from its milieu, and the trajectories it outlines are ways of connecting the present, past, and future. When the solo (or the ways in which it is received and transmitted) denies the imaginal operations it performs, these possibilities become inaccessible for other collective narratives of the present and the future.

On the contrary, when the solo is understood and engaged precisely as an imaginal act, it excavates the possible and assumes a speculative dimension, shaping collective trajectories, tracing “a history of the present, one that subtends as-of-yet unrealized futures where it might be possible not only to live but to thrive.”<sup>354</sup> For Gagnon, another performance scholar, what matters here is the attention brought by certain dance works to the embodiedness of history – that is, “how we become historical (and transtemporally relational) through the ways in which we learn (and are taught) to move, dance, pose, *use* our bodies.”<sup>355</sup>

Gagnon cites a work in which the dancer, in one sequence among many others, assumes numerous sculptural poses, resembling a narrative invocation of idealized classical sculptures. Incorporating and exorporating literally these body representations inherited from history, the dancer actively brings back these figures into the present, including issues of racialized body representation. The act of investing in the terrain of the imaginal is made explicit while remaining open, respecting the rhythm and non-control inherent in the dance of past and present. At every moment, the work manifests a refusal of dominance and control over a narrative of the future, deeply engaging the inherently collective material that is the imaginal. The solo is, consciously and explicitly, an act of collective imagining. The dance claims the terrain of the imaginal as the space where social and individual trajectories and images intersect. This claim is significant, revealing how each act of imagination is rooted in both social imaginaries and the capacity of bodies to inaugurate assemblages and open up trajectories.

Here, imagination takes on a distinctly political character; it aligns with a minor political project. Dance becomes a means to actively expand worlds by questioning the impact of dominant imaginaries on movement. Dance, as a form of insistence or choreopolitical stubbornness, is intricately connected to the possibility of imagining alongside the world, conspiring with it. While reality is saturated with images given as fixed, insistence contributes to infusing them with movement by incorporating them. Insistence in movement “is also movement-building, movement as an insistence on change, or [...], a revolution. This is movement as in figuring out how to build, un- and re-learn,

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354 Olivia Michiko Gagnon, “Moving through Crisis in Mariana Valencia’s *Solo B*,” *Text and Performance Quarterly*, March 16, 2023, 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2023.2181387>.

355 Gagnon, 5.

map new ways forward -together.”<sup>356</sup> In dance, the dancer doesn’t just produce movement. It becomes the site of movement: “Moving-moved: This is where dance places us, in movements that we make and that we are made of.”<sup>357</sup>

To dance is to undergo an experience of dispossession that both strengthens and animates, learning to dance with a milieu. As Bigé writes,

“dancing, for numerous peoples, is to let oneself be inhabited by extra-human forces and can only be practiced in magical places (at the edge of a wood, in a clearing, at the top of a mountain or in a temple) where dancers can be visited.”<sup>358</sup>

Dance seen as *mouvementement*, as experimentation with what moves us, explicitly embodies what occurs, albeit to a lesser extent, in everyday experiences. Maurice Merleau-Ponty elucidates how, when we observe, when we listen, we are suddenly captivated by the sensible. The body, or a part of it, is yielded to a way of perceiving and vibrating in the experience of the sensible. Bigé draws a connection between this description and that of dance when she writes: “The aesthetic involvement with the world, the receiving of sensory information from the outside, already contains, *in nucleo*, this experience of dispossession that we observed in dancing.”<sup>359</sup> The movement shifts from the status of personal impulse to that of a shared, common motif, as long as it is possible to embrace the plurality of what, in each movement of the body, is in motion:

I know that I dance precisely when I sense that it is not only I that moves, that is, when I sense that others than I are, *along with me*, the subjects of my movement. [...] This possibility of encountering is also a political possibility: In dance, I can unite or join beings other than human, I can form new “us” constituted of livings and non-livings, humans and non-humans, with whom I become the co-subject of shared movements.”<sup>360</sup>

And if we consider that imagination is always already at work in perception, dance becomes not only an experimentation to move better-with but also an experimentation to imagine better-with. This joint imaginative production of bodies and environments gives rise to what I propose to designate as “imaginal spatialities of dance.” These spatialities are a unique expression of how bodies open to experiences of (micro-)dispossession *inhabit* a reality that is full, material, virtual, symbolic, shared, and moving. They represent an arc connecting the experience of dance to the production of new architectural images and minor spatialities.

The researcher, anthropologist, and artist Damiana Bregalda explores the idea of movement-images at the scale of the territory to discuss how dances create diverse grounds and worlds. Through the exploration of several dance practices, Bregalda re-

356 Gagnon, 8.

357 Romain Bigé, “How Do I Know When I Am Dancing?,” in *Perception, Cognition and Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2019), 328.

358 Bigé, 325.

359 Bigé, 326.

360 Bigé, 330.

veals how situated dances embody politics as a “choreographic operation of rupture with the fantasy of public space as empty or devoid of topographical accidents,”<sup>361</sup> a formulation that strongly resonates with the choreopolitics of the ground discussed in this research.

By employing the idea of movement-images, Bregalda emphasizes, however, that this expression of the political is always also a re-formulation of images that articulate the relationships/relations between bodies and environments. In the Amazonian context, Bregalda identifies several forms of movement-images: traditional narratives of the settlement of territories are now invoked and transformed in rituals; the burst of a dam, releasing pollutants, acts as a withdrawal of the river from the networks of life it sustained; and the motif of dodging present in traditional dances is activated today in danced opposition to road-building. Through these examples, Bregalda articulates the co-constitution of images, movements, and worlds that weave imaginal spatialities.

Crucially, acknowledging these imaginal spatialities of dance, rather than solely focusing on the “spatialities of dance,” transforms our understanding of the common ground between dance and architecture. The “detour” through the cycle of imagination and the imaginal avoids a reductionist formulation of dance’s contribution to the imagination of spatialities. Dance is not confined to a “bodily” understanding of “movement” merely serving to “animate” an otherwise static space. On the contrary, imaginal spatialities recognize the paramount role of the image in all its forms within dance. They attest to a common material between dance and minor architecture, one that is crafted through the incorporation and excorporation of images.

This cycle corresponds to continuous reconfigurations of how bodies and other entities share their movements. The dancing bodies contribute to the formulation of minor architectural imaginations that resist dominant imaginaries and the ways in which they condition practices of dwelling and world-making.

### (Un)Drawing worlds

Can architectural drawing engage in a dialogue with the types of affective and non-figurative architectural images just described, or is it doomed to invisibilize them from the top/ the perspective of its norms and authority? Contemporary calls for increased attention and practices involving other senses and registers in architecture may tend to pit visual representation against other modes of perceiving, documenting and imagining territories and architectures, capable of accounting for certain dimensions and textures of spatialities that drawing cannot directly convey. Contrary to this, the transindividual approach to architectural imagination developed so far aims to avoid directly perpetuating this binary in the deconstruction of the architectural focus on

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361 Damiana Bregalda, “Cosmocoreografias: Políticas Do Mover e Aldear o Chão,” *FIAR* 16, no. 1 (2023): 14.

representation and the visual. Instead of fostering a clear-cut dichotomy, the focus is on considering a spectrum of images at different stages and in different forms. The aim is to explore how drawing is inscribed in the transindividual dynamics influencing the imagination of living milieus, as it unfolds among bodies, their milieus, and the clouds of images that participate in determining the textures and potentials of spatialities.

This approach seeks to shift from a single focus on representation, while still acknowledging the role played by these image-representations in formulating new minor architectural imaginations, understood in their dynamic, affective, and performative dimensions. The essence is to collectively explore and align practices not confined by their affiliation with a discipline but by their capacity to comprehend the virtual, thicken the experience of the real, of pasts, presents, and futures. This entails recognizing the multiplicity of levels at which these experiences are written and asserted. “As gestures or words, the architectural drawing enacts or prepares new spatialities to come, as an embodied practice of imagination and reconfiguration,”<sup>362</sup> writes Lafontaine Carboni. Architectural drawing, despite being a codified and standardized medium, surpasses mere representation. It goes beyond its content, becoming an integral part of the world, resonating with its material and virtual qualities, as well as other forms of minor images and practices.

The central importance given to a representational reading of drawing in the discipline plays a crucial role in resisting the establishment of relational and collaborative theories and practices of imagination in architecture—practices of imagination conspiring with the world. The medium of drawing, central to the discipline’s self-definition operations, has become the epitome of architectural knowledge: that which can be preserved, which is not subject to appropriation, and upon which the architect can claim complete authority. Yet, this perception of the medium invisibilizes the uses of drawing that adeptly leverage the productivity of its internal tensions, as well as those that define its operational mode in the world.

Art historian Karen Kurczynski uses the term “antimediam” to describe how certain artists today engage with drawing, playing on historical associations of the medium. In the context of contemporary art, the perspective from which she thinks, drawing has come to represent the un-finished and, above all, spontaneity. The artists that Kurczynski is interested in play with this association of drawing as an expression of spontaneity, and they make use of it to “reframe the common understanding of personal expression for an age of unprecedented technological mediation.”<sup>363</sup> Due to its unique history, drawing emerges as the ideal medium to critique the limitations inherent in the idea

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362 Julien Lafontaine Carboni, “Undrawn Spatialities. The Architectural Archives in the Light of the History of the Sahrawi Refugee Camps,” *Architecture and Culture* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 509, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2021.1894063>.

363 Karen Kurczynski, “Drawing Is the New Painting,” *Art Journal* 70, no. 1 (March 2011): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2011.10791065>.



of spontaneity and freedom of expression, as present in the rhetoric of a broader social discourse. The drawing practices examined by the historian simultaneously question the idea of a “free” human imagination while reaffirming its political importance as a counter-imagination.

Given its thorough inscription into the history of the discipline, drawing, as a standardized medium, can also be seen as an “anti-medium.” There’s the possibility to draw, as well as the possibility to un-draw—meaning, to engage with the history of architectural drawing to undo, address operations of invisibilization, denounce the authority it embodies, and reconsider its impacts. I argue that it is possible to un-learn and re-learn how to draw—and how to touch the world through drawing. Drawing can indeed be seen as making-contact, as caregiving/caring, as tactile reading, as interweaving. It is also a field of experimentation to reassess what moves us through the overlay of spatial and temporal scales it is capable of inviting. It is also a space of materialization, uncertainty, the circulation of affects and images, an operation of bringing closer together:

“Spatialities are emergent and brought into being by a drawing understood not as a representation of a future state to be realized, but as an active agent in the world, as a communication between orders of magnitude enacting new gestures and operations.”<sup>364</sup>

Drawing is a medium that contributes to the thought and activation of imaginal spatialities when it doesn’t act upon the world as control but in proximity, solidarity, and affective registers. In this sense, the drawing capable of dialoguing with the rest of the affective images of this world is not so much the one that draws worlds (and presents them as representations) but the one that un-draws worlds. It uses its history and the forces it circulates to reintroduce movement to frozen and normalized images of the present, past, and future.

In the 1970s, the field of architectural drawing is in full effervescence. The medium of drawing, intimately linked to the dimension of imagination in architecture, undergoes a significant phase of experimentation and redefinition. Multiple factors, ranging from a financial crisis that leaves many architects without building commissions, to a transformation in the role of images in the social sphere leading to other receptions of architectural drawing, to an intense debate on the city and the imaginaries it materializes or hinders, contribute to the heightened significance of the question of architectural drawing:

“The role and perception of drawing fell between and among aesthetic, artistic, architectural, commercial, conceptual, cultural, and historical understandings. It was this shifting that drove questioning during this period of nearly all facets of architecture.”<sup>365</sup>

If we were to swiftly and necessarily oversimplify the outcomes of this transforma-

364 Lafontaine Carboni, “From the Repertoire: An Architectural Theory of Operations. Oral and Embodied Knowledge in Architectural and Spatial Practices.,” 94–95.

365 Kauffman, “Drawings on Architecture: The Socioaesthetics of Architectural Drawings, 1970-1990,” 5.

tion— which we will delve into later— we could state that drawing gains autonomy, evolving beyond its traditional role as a means of construction in architecture. It becomes a full-fledged expression of architectural thought.

The transformations of this period have manifold impacts on the discipline. But, for the notion of imagination that interests us here, the fact that drawing gains both theoretical and experimental significance has direct effects. Drawing enters into a dialogue with other arts and with political and urban questions, concurrent with the notion of the diagram achieving great success in both theory and practice. Experimentation with the medium spread through schools, galleries, and takes a prominent place in the theoretical concerns of architects. New York, once again, becomes a major epicenter in the development of discourses that will exert a major influence on the discipline up to the present day.

In the following section, I delve into the question of architectural drawings as part of the production of minor imaginal spatialities, centering on the work of a pivotal architect in the explorations of this era/period, John Hejduk. Hejduk lived his entire life in New York, practicing there, and notably serving as the dean of one of its most renowned architecture schools, the Cooper Union School of Architecture, for over twenty years. Furthermore, he was recognized as a member of several groups that contributed to the theoretical discourse of the 1970s-80s before veering in an entirely different personal direction in his production.

His later works can be seen as a critical architectural meditation on the trajectories of demobilization from the social question visible in the discipline. Hejduk's unique body of drawn work has inspired many other architects to contemplate and write about it. His work serves as an ideal entry point to untangle how all these voices, drawings, and debates redefine imagination in architecture between the 1970s and 2000, which delineate Hejduk's activity. The guiding hypothesis in this exploration is that some of the experimental aspects of this periode continue to constitute valid alternatives to the dominant directions later taken in how architecture seizes the dynamics of imagination in its practices and theories.

The experiments of that time were not immune to recuperation/appropriation by a booming neoliberal-capitalist regime. The practices themselves were not necessarily in contact with or in service to communities and their emancipatory dynamics. On another side, the self-centered and self-referential discourses of the discipline tended to close these drawings and images in on themselves, rather than considering them as singular modalities of operating in the world. In this regard, revisiting certain aspects of the production from that period today allows us to consider what this surge of drawings can still teach us.

Simultaneously, it addresses the consequences of the over-emphasis on this medium and its autonomy in relation to questions of imagination. The final part of this chapter

on imagination then opens up to contemporary minor practices that bring drawing into direct contact with the world and actively engage the transindividual and co-produced dimension of imagination.



## 2.2 Drawing spatial-affective amplitude. — John Hejduk. Performative drawing of the imaginal

### PART II

Drawings as drawings: The rise of an architectural medium — Potential of the late avant-garde's architectural meditation — A multiplicity of architectural textures: Hejduk's early works, encounters, and teaching — Mood and atmosphere: the political tactility of architectural images — Masqu-ing cities : Atmospheric architectural storybooks for the imagination — Fumbling image : An elliptical approach to the frozen history of places — When the masque is performed/built : Collective imaginings — Architecture as learning, architecture as breathing — Critical articulations of the potential of Hejduk's work





## 2.2 Drawing spatial-affective amplitude. — John Hejduk. Performative drawing of the imaginal

### PART II

#### Drawings as drawings : The rise of an architectural medium

The period of the 1970s-1980s represents for architectural drawing a significant period of (re)definition and development. The architectural historian Jordan Kauffman, whose research focuses specifically on these years, writes:

“For the first time, architectural drawings became more than an instrument for building. Prior to this period, except for scattered instances, buildings were considered to be the goal of architectural practice; architectural drawings were viewed simply as a means to an end. The consideration of architectural drawings for their use can be traced at least as far back as Alberti, who in 1452 first made the distinction between design and building. This understanding continued into the twentieth century.”<sup>366</sup>

This account cannot be seen as fully capturing the diversity inherent in architectural drawing practices. Nevertheless, without characterizing the 1970s as a “first time” on all levels, it is still appropriate to see them as a period of practical and theoretical effervescence in professional and educational architectural circles, both in Europe and North America.

The primary reasons for this transformation, traditionally identified, are both economic and structural. In the post-war decades, reconstruction and economic development were central to an intense architectural activity, extensively engaging its practices and efforts. In the 1970s, there was, on one hand, a recession and a scarcity of construction opportunities. On the other hand, there was a shift in discourse towards the product most directly associated with architects’ activity—the architectural drawing, rather than the building itself. A third reason, more recently mentioned, concerns the rise of architectural publications, wherein drawings take on a new role, that of explaining buildings.

Nevertheless, Kauffman discerns in these various reasons a tendency to attribute the responsibility for this transformation solely to architects. In his research, he asserts that “attributing the shift to these causes oversimplifies the situation and recovering this period’s forgotten history reveals a rich and complex tapestry.” By broadening the spectrum of actors and discourses involved in this transformation, it is possible to identify “a group of interrelated individuals, galleries, institutions, and events outside of

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366 Jordan Kauffman, “Drawings on Architecture: The Socioaesthetics of Architectural Drawings, 1970-1990” (Boston, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015), 19.

practice that impacted the perception of architectural drawings during this period.”<sup>367</sup>

Building on these remarks, Kauffman directs his efforts on the notion that architectural drawings became standalone collector’s items during this time. In the context of this research, the key takeaway from Kauffman’s analysis is the importance of considering the rise of architectural drawing in relation to dynamics that transcend the disciplinary framework, placing it at the core of broader societal debates and wider social transformations. Architectural drawing becomes published, observed, exhibited, and discussed independently of the construction processes to which it was previously almost always attached.<sup>368</sup> Kauffman’s research contributes to highlighting the range of other possibilities and relationalities that emerge when the drawing is exposed to forces, practices, and rhythms other than those of construction. However, his focus on institutions that play a role in transforming the position and form of the medium leaves little room for an analysis of the transformation of the drawing’s agency itself in this new context.<sup>369</sup>

Reflecting the transformations in the status of the architectural discipline itself, drawing comes to characterize an architectural activity that is no longer primarily dedicated to the construction process but rather to the articulation of “new entanglements between matter, space, and media.”<sup>370</sup> Architecture, as embodied by the practice of drawing, becomes a fully-fledged intellectual endeavor. Architect Javier Fernandez Contreras states that during this period, the fact that “architecture could mobilize discourse through its own display became clear.” He mentions several events that exemplify this new reality:

“The 1976 IUAS exhibition *Idea as Model* (a new way to understand architectural scale and objecthood); the discussions leading to the celebration of the first Venice Architecture Biennial in 1980 (a new way to display and curate space); and the emergence of new architecture museums, namely the Canadian Center for Architecture in 1979, and the numerous peers that followed in the 1980s (a new way to understand architecture as an intellectual and cultural construct).”<sup>371</sup>

These new institutions attest to the richness of architectural intellectual production, supporting and disseminating it. In this process, architectural drawing becomes the

367 Kauffman, 21.

368 This transformation finds its resonance in a recognition of the medium of drawing more broadly in artistic circles, where drawing comes to exist in its own right rather than as a preparatory stage in a process. The exhibition *Drawing Now, 1955-1975*, which took place in 1975 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Bernice Rose, is often cited as a pivotal moment in articulating a new recognition of drawing and as one of the first to celebrate drawings as such.

369 For a critique of Kauffman’s book that articulates such a perspective, see especially: Owen Hopkins, “Drawing on Architecture: The Object of Lines, 1970–1990: Jordan Kauffman MIT Press, 2018,” *The Journal of Architecture* 24, no. 5 (July 4, 2019): 384, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2019.1671083>.

370 Javier Fernandez Contreras, “Architectural Metamorphosis: Space, Matter, and Media from the 1970s to the Second Digital Turn,” in *Chrysalide: Le Rêve Du Papillon* (Genève: Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève, 2023), 132.

371 Fernandez Contreras, 132.

central medium.

In connection with the earlier reflections on imagination, this period positions drawing at the center of a new ecology of practices in which the medium is no longer subjected to a logic of dependency on construction but, more importantly, in which its role is liberated from a representational or linear logic. Henceforth, architectural drawing becomes a field of exploration for architectural expression, encompassing not only what is “represented” but also what the drawing invites, evokes, and articulates. Drawing is a way of making contact and working with an architectural condition composed of a reality /real that is both present and virtual. In this context, it’s important to note that the “drawings as drawings” appearing during these years do not imply the isolation of drawing. Architectural theorist Stan Allen articulates this risk when he writes:

“The nominally conservative position that would look exclusively to the built form for affirmation of architecture’s stability, and the “experimental” position that would locate architectural practice exclusively on the more slippery ground of representation, share a notion of drawing as pure abstraction, disconnected from reality.”<sup>372</sup>

For him, on the contrary, “architectural drawing is in some basic way impure, and unclassifiable. Its link to reality it designates is complex and changeable.”<sup>373</sup> The notion of a “rise of drawing” does not suggest that architectural drawing becomes an object but rather that it undergoes a significant expansion in the ways it is embedded in the world, rendering it capable of affecting the real.

Allen uses the term “notation” to draw a parallel between this expansion and what other arts, such as dance or music, were undergoing at that time:

“Notations are “abstract machines” capable of producing new configurations out of given materials. They work across gaps of time and space, but they are not universal. [...] Each notational system articulates a specific interpretive community, a loosely bounded collective domain. The abstraction of notation is instrumental, and not an end in itself.”<sup>374</sup>

Drawings are in the world, a world that is undergoing significant transformation, in which technologies of communication, information exchange, a war, along with the economies of multinational capitalism and global community exchange, have produced a condition in which the urban site is no longer simply geographic.<sup>375</sup>

The experimentation also extends to modes of observation and attention to what is present but is not directly related to the spatial domain. Drawing becomes a plan of articulation in dialogue with many aspects of the real, a method of engaging with the real and contributing to its narrative.

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372 Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique + Representation*, Expanded 2. ed (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 31.

373 Allen, 32.

374 Allen, *Practice*, 32.

375 Allen, 37.

Or rather, *ways* of participating in its narrative: “An open-ended series of strategies to use within the indeterminate field of the contemporary city.”<sup>376</sup> The plurality of experiments during this period fundamentally reveals that there can be no ways to work with the indeterminacy of the urban condition other than by being in contact with it, in “conspiracy” with it, and not in the representation of this complexity and the attempt to freeze it.

### Potential of the late avant-garde’s architectural meditation

During the decades in question, the fervor for experimental architectural discourses and practices is largely seen by other disciplinary circles, as well as broader circles, as a failure of the discipline to evolve. It is seen as a narrow persistence in relying on its own memory and vocabularies, rather than embracing those of another reality that appears to differ radically in its temporalities, frameworks, rhythms, and relationship to images.<sup>377</sup> This inclination toward self-reference is also later mentioned as the root cause of the dissociation and loss of interest in collaborating with architects demonstrated by the field of psychology in the 1980s. It gradually shifts towards environmental sciences after collaborating with institutions and researchers in architecture and urban design in the 1960s.<sup>378</sup>

Architectural historian K. Michael Hays, one of the most recognized thinkers of this period in the discipline, published a work in 2010 that seeks to distinguish in the activity of the “late avant-garde” a critical and political potency/power that the previously mentioned receptions completely overlook. For him, the most emblematic drawing practices of this period contribute to an intellectual production that takes the form of a “search for the most basic units of architecture and their combinatory logics.”<sup>379</sup> He perceives an activity of unique intensity that contributes to the transformation of how the discipline conceives itself.

Hay is interested in how certain architects are deeply committed to developing “fundamental architectural entities and events that could not be reduced or translated into other modes of experience or knowledge.”<sup>380</sup> According to him, in the practices of the “late avant-garde” in the 1970s, the withdrawal from a modernist and social commit-

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376 Allen, 44.

377 Kauffman cites several testimonies from the time that marvel at the technical level of the drawings and the know-how they embody, while lamenting that these know-hows not at all utilized for ‘solving real-world problems’ or ‘dealing with sociological needs or understanding culture’ (34).

378 Emina Petrović, Brenda Vale, and Bruno Marques, “On the Rise and Apparent Fall of Architectural Psychology in the 1960s, 1970s and Early 1980s,” in *SAHANZ 2015: Architecture, Institutions and Change : Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand Vol. 32*, ed. Judith O’Callaghan and Paul Hogben (Sydney: SAHANZ, 2015), 480–87.

379 K. Michael Hays, *Architecture’s Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde*, Writing Architecture Series (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2010), 2.

380 Hays, 2.



ment “should be understood not as a cop-out, but as a self-conscious positioning in late capitalism and the aftermath of modernism’s failure in the face of late capitalism.”<sup>381</sup>

The architecture of Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, and Bernard Tschumi—key practices of that time on which he bases his argument—somehow consciously encodes the radical change in the status of a practice that no longer embodies the trajectory of modernism but inherits its forms. For Hays, it would be a mistake to oppose the drawing-based exploration of these architects—which can be interpreted as a retreat into drawing when all reference points are transforming—to the discipline’s capacity to embrace the societal transformations at play. Hays does not deny the profound transformations at play or the questions they pose to how architecture defines itself and its practice:

“The perception of architectural surfaces began to overtake the experience of urban space in the traditional sense. Image consumption began to replace object production, and the sheer heterogeneity of images exploded any single, stable typology of the city. Public meaning was now to be found in the signs and perceptual habits forged in a pluralist, consumerist, suburban culture. Consequently a split was felt to have opened up between the European tectonic-typological tradition and the everyday world of the American popular environment, a split that was fundamental to theoretical debates of the 1970s.”<sup>382</sup>

But, for him, the apparent celebration of forms by the mentioned architects can also be seen as an architectural reflection on the power of these forms, their evocative force once their association with closed answers to social questions has been abandoned. It then involves memory, melancholy, the abandonment of grand narratives. The forms and geometries encode the memory of what architecture has been and will no longer be:

“This architecture has already internalized that which the critics intend to confront it: that is, architecture has already incorporated the annulment of its own necessity (both its functional and representational vocations) and consequently *recoded* the object as the symbolic realization of just that situation. This architecture is a reflection on the foundations and limits of architecture itself.”<sup>383</sup>

Hays’s interpretation of the drawing production of the late avant-garde positions it as a reservoir of architectural expertise for a practice that is not about reproducing reality but about the architectural exercise of apprehending its thickness: “The [architectural] object becomes a medium for a Real that it does not simply reproduce, but necessarily both reveals and conceals, manifests and represses.”<sup>384</sup> Freed from its associations with

381 Peggy Deamer, “Architecture’s Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde,” *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 1 (February 2012): 151, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2012.659917>.

382 Hays, *Architecture’s Desire*, 9.

383 Hays, 11.

384 Hays, 13.

embodying a solution or an ideal, the medium of drawing becomes a means to persist in imagining that includes and incorporates this impossibility:

“The architectural object as such is disenfranchised (though not necessarily destroyed), annulled as an immediate thing and reconceived as a mediating material and process. The object-in-itself becomes an object-different-from-itself, a signifier directed toward the very disciplinary codes and conventions that authorize all architectural objects.”<sup>385</sup>

Architect and researcher Marina Pedroso Correia writes that these conceptions and theoretical investigations, “despite their plural nature, have ultimately been treated in architectural historiography as post-modern.” For this reason, “this historical moment reaches contemporaneity in a not very conclusive manner.”<sup>386</sup> The retrospective reading by Hays allows us to see something more than a nostalgic post-modernity in this period and suggests the possibility for reframing the efforts of this period for relevance to our time.

However, Hays only begins to explore this possibility in ways that are, in many aspects, insufficient. Thus, upon the publication of Hays’s work, his reasoning is received by some critics as a way of extending a trend within the discipline to self-analyze and self-rescue rather than actively working to open up to voices and practices that would involve a more profound questioning of its most problematic paradigms. The architect and theorist Peggy Deamer writes in her critique of the book,

“One can wonder about contemporary architecture’s obsession with defining itself vis-a-vis the ‘masters’ and these authors [including Hays] for an obsession with ‘autonomy’ which, in precluding overtly socially engaged architecture in deference to dialectically engaged architecture, invites no women or people of colour to the table.”<sup>387</sup>

From these various remarks, we can conclude that the experimental practices of the 1970s-80s belong to an ambiguous period. This ambiguity persists in the current reception of both that era/period and its practices, extending even the reception of the readings that can be made from it. Moreover, the intellectual and quasi-meditative dimension of the research during that time did not elevate it to a central resource for the following decades, during which technological progress took center stage. Joan Ockman, another architectural historian, highlights that “theoretical concerns in architecture during the 1990s and 2000s, focusing on the integration of new technologies and the process of cultural globalization, have overshadowed certain debates presented in the 1970s.”<sup>388</sup>

Today, the practice and theory in architecture continue to grapple with problem-

385 Hays, 13.

386 Marina Pedroso Correia, “Volume em Miniatura: John Hejduk e Veneza” (São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), 12.

387 Deamer, “Architecture’s Desire,” 154.

388 Pedroso Correia, “Volume em Miniatura: John Hejduk e Veneza,” 22.

atic associations involving certain dynamics of violence reproduction, particularly through the mediums they employ and how they employ them. As expounded upon in the preceding discussion on architectural imagination and drawing, the inherent problematic nature persists in how architectural drawings are perceived and operates in the world. These modalities perpetuate invisibilities and divisions that impede the involvement of the medium in productive ecologies of new imaginative spatialities. In this context, and similarly to several other contemporary researchers, I argue that a reevaluation or a renewed “contact-making” with the practices of the 1970s makes sense today. In the 1970s, “the discipline incorporated a series of experiences, which have challenged its field of action, critical dimension and social function.”<sup>389</sup>

Marina Pedrosa Correia writes about the practices of this period: “They configured a moment of inflexion in relation to the postulates that conducted the Modern Movement during the first half of the 20th century.” For her, some of these projects still have the precise capability today to contribute to the expansion of our understanding of non-hegemonic disciplinary practices:

“The critical dimension of some projects that followed this [modern] period reveal design strategies and concepts that could be considered alternative to post-critical thinking, a predominant framework attributed to the architectural production of the last decades of the 20th century.”<sup>390</sup>

In her own research, Pedrosa Correia discerns in Hejduk’s work pioneering architectural strategies that anticipate the rearticulation of the modernist legacy.<sup>391</sup> In the subsequent research section, I delve into the work of this architect to understand the dynamics at play during this time in the redefinition of image and imagination in architecture. By exploring Hejduk’s work, its ramifications, and the receptions it has garnered, I aim to consider how this moment and these inflections inform, condition, and could continue to inform the current state of imagination in architecture. Hejduk’s practice mirrors the hesitations of his time, both ambiguous and fertile. Revisiting his work and research today seeks to comprehend how present-day challenges unveil new insights into a body of work with one of its most potent qualities being the multiplicity of possible interpretations.

#### A multiplicity of architectural textures: Hejduk’s early work, encounters and teaching

John Hejduk’s career spans several decades, marked by continuities and discontinuities, enduring obsessions, and ruptures that usher in new phases of work and research.

389 Pedrosa Correia, 8.

390 Pedrosa Correia, 8.

391 Pedrosa Correia establishes a field of tension between Hejduk’s projects and contemporary discourses and inquiries, based on three points of entry: geography, identity, and simplicity. These different dimensions allow Correia to trace in Hejduk’s projects unique strategies of architectural design ‘based on the interpretation of modes of action and interactions between objects, buildings, and inhabitants, from the individual scale to the collective scale.’

Hejduk, an architect, poet, and educator, intricately intertwines these various facets throughout his life. He studied at Cooper Union, Cincinnati, and later at Harvard. Subsequently, he worked in different offices, undergoing experiences that would transform and enrich his understanding of architectural practice. In 1954, as a Fulbright scholar, he spent a transformative year in Rome. Upon his return, he began teaching at the University of Texas in Austin—a role he continued thereafter. In 1963, he returned to Cooper Union as a teacher, eventually becoming its dean from 1975 to 2000. Concurrently, Hejduk developed several architectural projects, which, in the latter half of his career, took the form of books merging architectural drawings and poetry—the *masques*. Through this distinctive format, the architect contributes to developing a unique form of architectural imagination, where a myriad of architectural images of various kinds is woven and rearticulated into new imaginal constellations involving spatial structures, sounds, narratives, memories, objects, subjects, gestures, and performances.

Several elements in the architect's journey contribute to leading him to his proposal of the *masques*. His early years as a student at Cooper Union are part of it, as Hejduk himself recounts in an interview given in 1977:

“In 1947, I was accepted to Cooper Union. Previous to that time, I really did not know that there was a Manhattan. I came down to this strange place. [...] Thus began an illicit affair with Cooper Union which would profoundly affect how I would do things in the future. [...] I went to Cooper Union from 1947 to 1950. Looking back I can see the influences on me.”<sup>392</sup>

In the terms chosen by Hejduk to evoke Cooper Union, we perceive an attachment to what, beyond being an institution, is primarily a place, a geography at the heart of Manhattan. Hejduk was living in the Bronx, north of the city, at that time. This seemingly trivial narrative detail reflects Hejduk's approach to apprehending, thinking, and expressing architecture: every building is also a story, a moving body that people approach and depart from, memories of those who have passed through, an urban atmosphere enveloping both buildings and individuals.

For Hejduk, Cooper Union is also synonymous with a series of encounters with professors and students.<sup>393</sup> Drawing, sculpture, design: the student navigates the richness of proposals and experimentation characteristic of the institution's teaching. The image is always composite. Architectural drawing maintains intimate relationships with other types of representation and practices. The question of what lies at the core of architectural activity is raised without an immediately preconceived answer. In that same interview, Hejduk also alludes to concurrently working during his studies at his uncle's

392 The full transcript of the interview conducted by the architect Peter Eisenman is available at this address : Allen, *Practice*, 32., accessed on November 6, 2023.

393 Hejduk notably mentions the drawing teacher Robert Gwathmey, the sculpture teacher George Kratina, and the dimensional design teacher Henrietta Schutz. He then cites his two main friends in the student body, the sculptor Emil Antonucci and the graphic designer Gloria Surma. Beyond personal stories, this list, and the pleasure Hejduk takes in associating a specific activity with each of the names he mentions, reflect the permeability between different disciplines characteristic of the Cooper Union and Hejduk's later approaches and interests.

architectural firm, where he participated in the production of over a hundred “track houses.” In Hejduk’s mind, the production of plans and construction details for this quintessential product of North American architecture is in no way opposed to the art courses received at Cooper Union. This non-hierarchy of knowledge becomes evident later in the architect’s navigation of language registers, particularly in the masques.

### Lockhart, Texas

After returning from Italy, Hejduk is invited to teach at the University of Texas. This marks the beginning of what he himself refers to as “the second phase of my architecture.”<sup>394</sup> This phase leads Hejduk to teach in various institutions, to encounter major figures in architectural theory of that time, and to gradually develop his distinctive operative architectural approach.<sup>395</sup>

Several elements developed during this period are later incorporated into the architectural images created by the architect. In 1957, Hejduk writes an essay with the historian Colin Rowe focusing on the city of Lockhart.<sup>396</sup> In this text, the two writers describe the architecture of small towns in Texas, with a specific focus on Lockhart. Through their description, they explore the “feeling of inextinguishable antiquity” that characterizes these small towns.

To depict the atmosphere of these places, the text oscillates between analyzing the structuring architectural and urban elements and posing ironic questions about the quality of this architecture and the ambitions that drove its development. The architects’ narrative is encapsulated in the phrase:

“How much of the present susceptibility to these towns is merely nostalgic, how much is pure hallucination, and how much corresponds to a reality, it is difficult to judge.”<sup>397</sup> With accompanying photos, the text takes us on a stroll through Lockhart, and with each gaze cast upon the city, it extends the ambiguity noted in this remark. The city is “too bizarre to prove a point. One recognizes in the buildings a peculiar combination of good sense and outrage, of force and naivety.”<sup>398</sup>

The facades of the courthouse and churches, as well as their placement/positioning in relation to the streets, exhibit a curious decorum that is sufficient to impose a sense of order despite their modest construction.

394 <http://archtalks.com/archtalks-home/2010/6/11/john-hejduk-interview-with-peter-eisenman.html>, accessed on November 6, 2023.

395 One of the key encounters is with the historian and architectural theorist Colin Rowe, famous at the time for his non-chronological approach to history, his comparative analysis of spatial typologies from different historical periods, and his demonstration of the ‘presence of the past’ in modernist works. Rowe’s approach can be more broadly connected in the history of art and images to the research approach of the historian Aby Warburg and that of Rudolf Wittkower, who supervised Rowe’s doctoral work in London.

396 Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, “Lockhart, Texas,” *Architectural Record* 121, no. 3 (1957): 201–6.

397 Rowe and Hejduk, 202.

398 Rowe and Hejduk, 202.



These architectures claim, they embody, and they collectively produce an effect that none of the structures alone could generate: the atmosphere of a city. This atmosphere is situated between the structures, the images to which they refer, and those present in the mind that perceives them:

“Urbanistic phenomena [these towns] palpably are, but they are also emblems of a political theory. A purely architectural experience of their squares is therefore never possible. Within these enclosures the observer can never disentangle his aesthetic response from his reaction as a social animal.”<sup>399</sup>

The ambiguity of the structures is emphasized multiple times. The architecture of these small towns becomes “a form of emotional complement to the interminable terrain” while the towns themselves have “something of the unqualified decisiveness, the diagrammatic coherence of architectural models.” Their geometric regularity doesn’t so much define their “architectural” dimension as it highlights their strangeness, to the point that “they appear, almost more than real towns, to be small cities in primitive paintings.” The text is a sort of architectural exercise in itself, in which the architects and authors lead us to feel a textured depth in the peculiar architecture of these Texas towns that is not traditionally attributed to them:

“In all of these places, as a common denominator of experience, there will be felt a dislocation of the sense of time. The buildings by which one is surrounded will appear to be ageless.”<sup>400</sup>

### The Nine-Square Grid

Teaching at the University of Texas is also an opportunity to collaborate on the significance of historical references in architecture with Rowe and the other members of the newly formed teaching team.<sup>401</sup> This team collectively develops the exercise of the *Nine-Square grid*. The framework of this exercise comprises a grid of nine equal cubes, arranged in three rows and three columns. It serves as the foundation for a three-dimensional design problem, presenting itself as a device by which

“to discover and understand the fundamental elements of architecture; to learn to draw and understand the meaning of a plan, an elevation, a section, and an axonometric view; and to learn to use the model and drawings as working tools interactively to research a design problem – that is, by switching continuously between drawing and model during the design process.”<sup>402</sup>

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399 Rowe and Hejduk, 203.

400 Rowe and Hejduk, 203.

401 This team is composed of Colin Rowe, the architect Bernhard Hoesli, who had previously worked for Le Corbusier, the artists Robert Slutzky and Lee Hirsche, who studied with Bauhaus painter Josef Albers, and John Hejduk. Collectively, the group, later nicknamed the *Texas Rangers*, develops a completely new architectural curriculum that benefits from the contributions of different schools of thought and fields of practice embodied by the various members of the group.

402 Wouter Van Acker, “The Nine-Square Grid: The Surviving Image of an Architecture without Content,” *Joelho Revista de Cultura Arquitectonica*, no. 13 (March 10, 2022): 121, [https://doi.org/10.14195/1647-8681\\_13\\_7](https://doi.org/10.14195/1647-8681_13_7).

In this continuous back-and-forth process between drawing and construction methods, neither drawing nor the model is taught as intended to be representations of a lived space:

“The student is not allowed to defend design decisions on the basis of how bodily movement is projected into the interior space. Instead, it is the mobility, interaction, and complementarity between viewpoints that is of interest.”<sup>403</sup>

Each drawing is an independent architectural reality, a complete composition in itself. The various acts of drawing and construction serve as means to engage with the imagination of a reality: sensitivity to rhythms, compositions, colors, and gravity. It’s not about representing a spatial condition; rather, it’s about apprehending it, imagining it, and telling its story. And in this profoundly *architectural* approach, the profusion of perspectives and the connections forged between different drawings, through the narratives of students’ spatial design intentions, collectively contribute to producing a constellation rich in meaning and depth. No drawing takes precedence, no viewpoint corresponds to a future reality, but reality is made up of tensions between different planes, between plastic, narrative, and pictorial realities. As architect and educator Kevin J. Story writes, “the success of the grid propositions lay in the connectivity the work has with the viewer-occupant.”<sup>404</sup>

### Texas Houses

In the same years, Hejduk also uses this three-dimensional grid as a framework for his own explorations, particularly in the *Texas Houses series*. In this approach more directly linked to the practice of the profession, Hejduk aims to materialize the three-dimensional framework and transform it into a logical construction structure. He realizes that beyond construction instincts acquired during his studies and early years of practice, he lacks knowledge that would enable him to make construction itself a vehicle for his thoughts. He reflects on his state at the beginning of this series:

“Then, my utter despair of detail. Utter despair. That I was not really competent enough in understanding architectural detail. So the Texas Houses were started with these problems in mind: to re-inform myself about construction at a conceptual level, at a real level; detail, the methodologic development of construction conditions: columns, piers, walls, beams, edges, and so forth.”<sup>405</sup>

This constructive operation simultaneously involves another dimension. Hejduk writes that through this process of materialization, he aims to move beyond notions of style and, instead, preserve from the history of architecture a knowledge that reappears in the process. The nine-square grid is directly linked to the typology of the Palladian

403 Van Acker, 123.

404 J. Kevin Story, *The Complexities of Hohn Hejduk’s Work: Exorcising Outlines, Apparitions and Angels*, Routledge Research in Architecture (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2020), 23.

405 John Hejduk and Kim Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa: Works, 1947-1983* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 34.



## LOCKHART, TEXAS

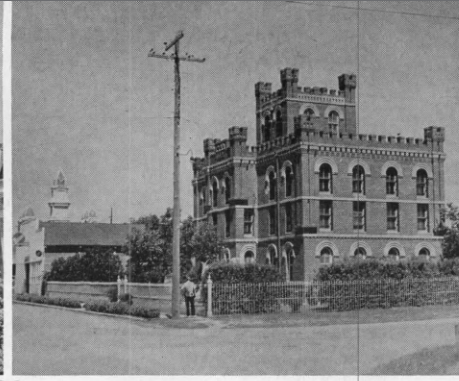
By COLIN ROWE and JOHN HEJDUK

SOMEWHERE OR OTHER Gertrude Stein says that certainly America is the oldest country in the world, and if it may be supposed that she was simply straining a paradox, there is a perceptiveness in her remark which travelers in the United States sooner or later come to recognize, although the observation itself is perhaps one which could only have been made by an American expatriate returning to the American West. Certainly it is there, where the strata of historical activity are so few and where time has contrived to erode so little of the little past that exists, that there will sometimes be experienced a feeling of inextinguishable antiquity.

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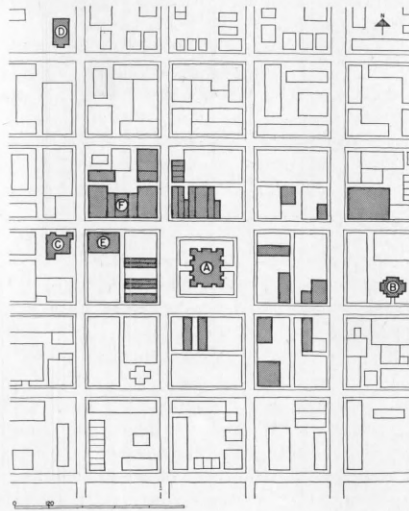
Fig. 78-79 • Pages of Colin Rowe and John Hejduk. "Lockhart, Texas." *Architectural Record* 121, no. 3 (1957): 201-6.





2 3

4



- A. Courthouse (Figures 1, 2)  
 B. Jail (Figure 3)  
 C. First Christian Church (Figure 7)  
 D. St. Mary's Church (Figures 8-10)  
 E. Vogel Block (Figures 11, 12)  
 F. Masur Block (Figures 12-18)

This is a quality which evades any immediate definition; but often in the sharp light and the vacant landscape of the West architectural detail will seem to achieve an almost archaic clarity, so that the most tawdry saloon or incrustated false façade may acquire a portentous distinction, while whole towns founded no earlier than the 'sixties can exude an Italian evidence of age. For these reasons, for the sympathetic traveler Utah will evoke memories of Tuscany; Virginia City, Nevada, will appear a 19th-century Urbino; while such mining cities as Leadville, Colorado, Carson City, Nevada, or Globe, Arizona, will seem as unquestionably as Gubbio or Siena to have always occupied the land. Like the cities of Umbria they are potent symbols of urbanity; and like these they become more definite, more surprisingly crystalline to the mind, by reason of the emptiness through which they are approached.

How much of the present susceptibility to these towns is merely nostalgic, how much is pure hallucination, and how much corresponds to a reality, it is difficult to judge. Their buildings are scarcely inhibited by either taste or culture, were improvised apparently without thought, seem to be the embodiment of a popular architectural consciousness, and present themselves to the eyes of the present day as the final and the comprehensive monuments of an heroic age. But although it is by qualities such as these that Miss Stein's proposition is given substance, one hesitates to exemplify it by them alone. These western mining settlements are after all too bizarre to prove a point. One recognizes in their buildings a peculiar combination of good sense and outrage, of force and naïveté; but one really demands that these characteristics be embodied in a more completely typical situation.

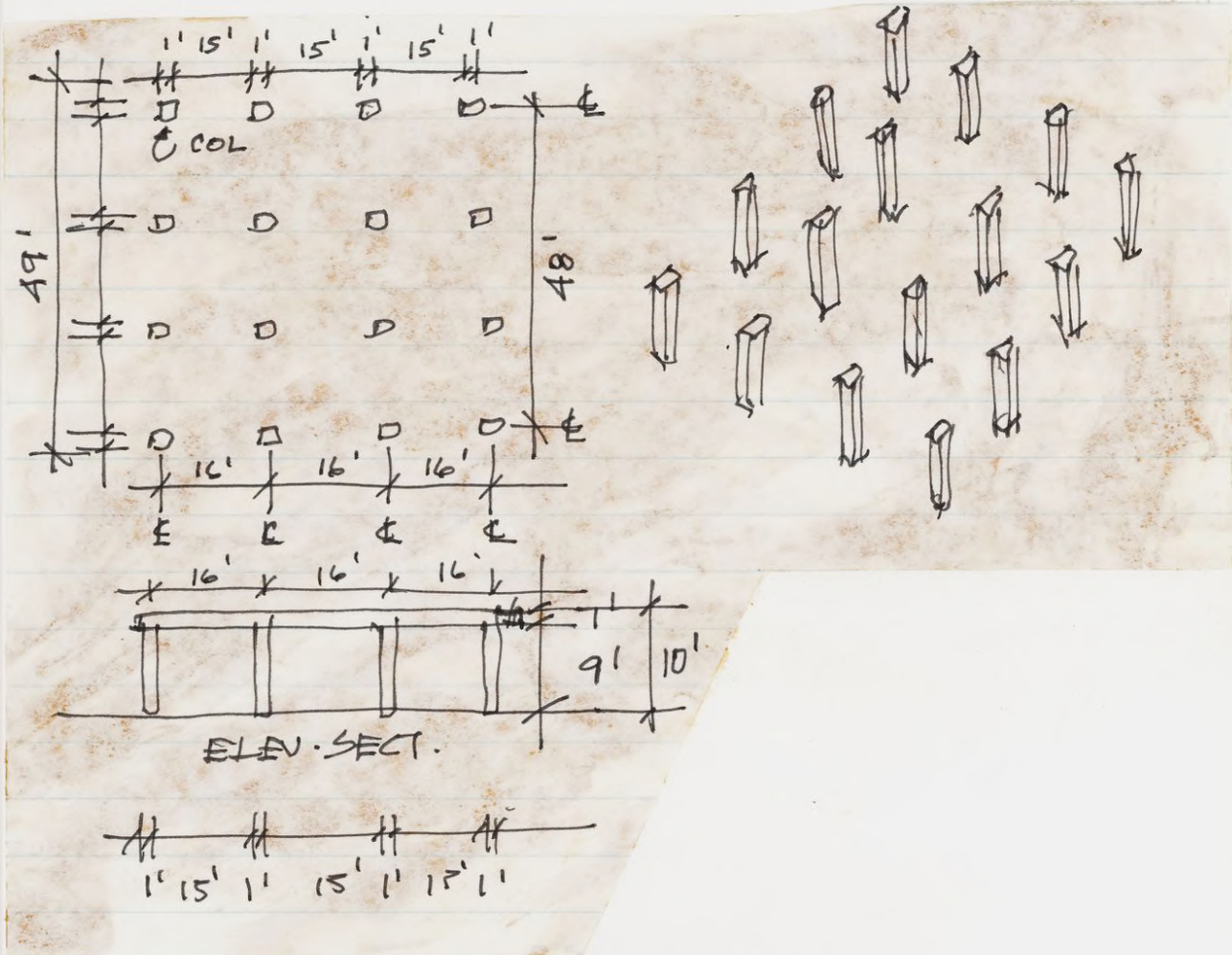
It is here that, as a quite stereotyped urban pattern, the American courthouse town might be introduced as a more representative illustration. A completely normal and widely distributed type, scattered throughout the northern states, consistently recurring throughout the South, it is scarcely the product of any deliberately expressed taste — and yet one assumes its repetition was inspired by more than mere habit. For patently this is a town dedicated to an idea, and its scheme is neither fortuitous nor whimsical. The theme of centralized courthouse in central square is — or should be — a banal one. And it is in fact one of great

Frame 2

1954-1963

## THE NINE SQUARE PROBLEM

Build a model at  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0$  scale of the following: make a 30 / 60 isometric drawing in pencil on tracing vellum of the following: The constructed model and the drawing will be the basic working tools for the research and study of the 9 Square problem.



Columns-white, base board-black, panels-gray.

One grid 15' divided into 5's & 3's. One grid 16' divided into 1's & 2's.

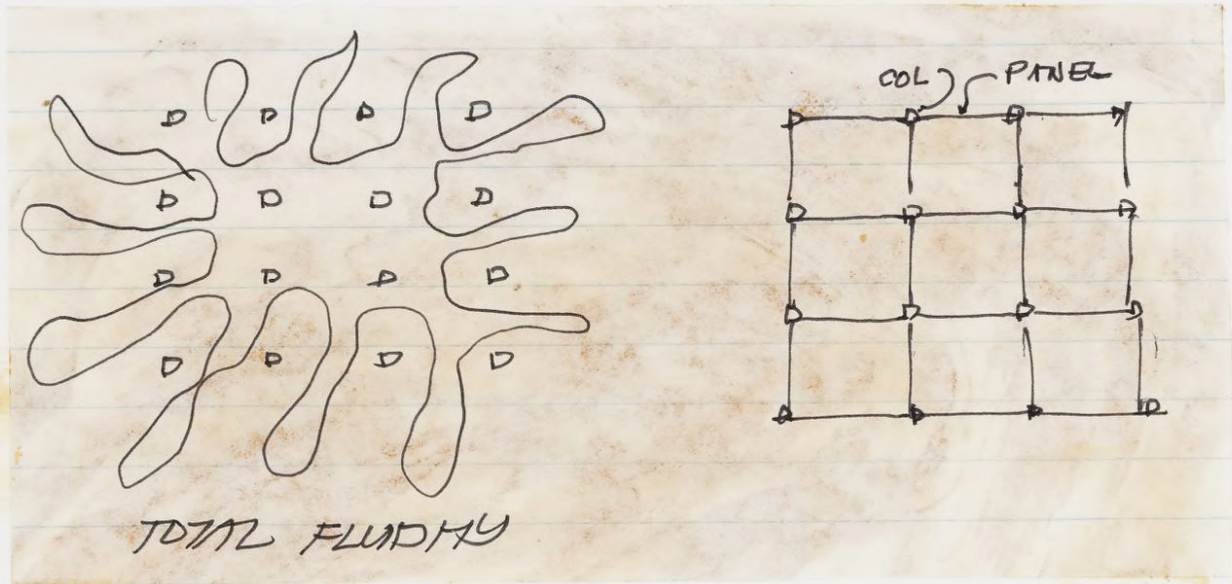
Fig. 80 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawing with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:002, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



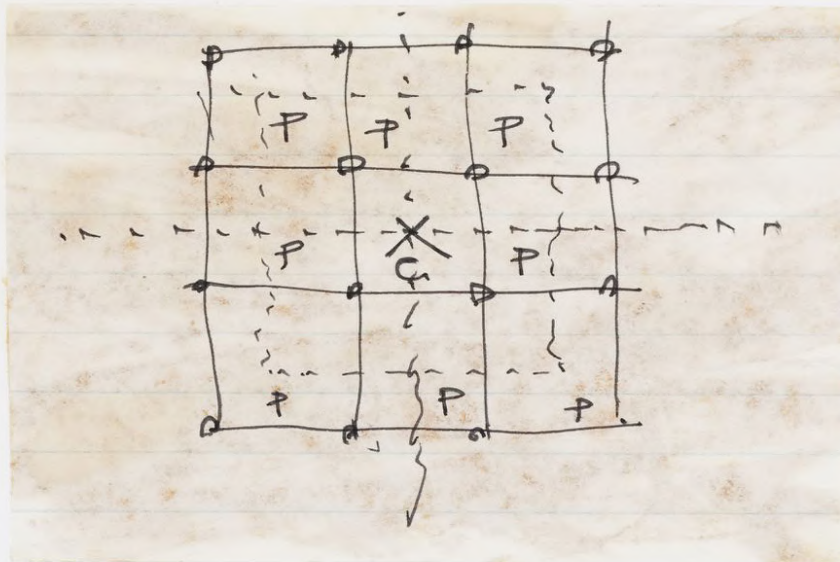
Frame 2

1954-1963

The nine square falls between two poles, one of complete fluidity and one of complete containment.

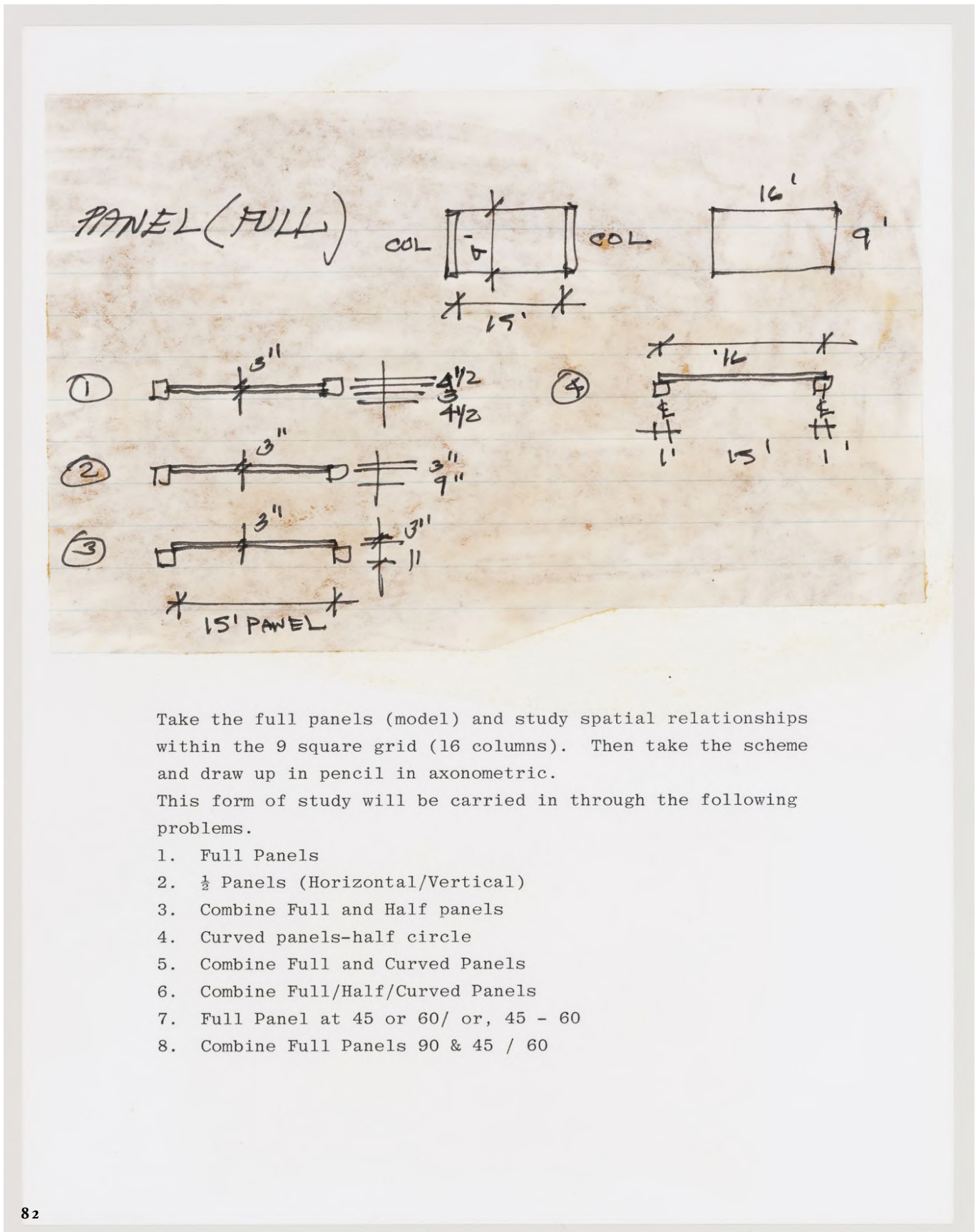


The idea of The Center and of the periphery. 1 center cell and 8 peripheral cells.



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Fig. 81 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawings with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:003, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



Take the full panels (model) and study spatial relationships within the 9 square grid (16 columns). Then take the scheme and draw up in pencil in axonometric.

This form of study will be carried in through the following problems.

1. Full Panels
2.  $\frac{1}{2}$  Panels (Horizontal/Vertical)
3. Combine Full and Half panels
4. Curved panels-half circle
5. Combine Full and Curved Panels
6. Combine Full/Half/Curved Panels
7. Full Panel at 45 or 60/ or, 45 - 60
8. Combine Full Panels 90 & 45 / 60

Fig. 82 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawing with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:004, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



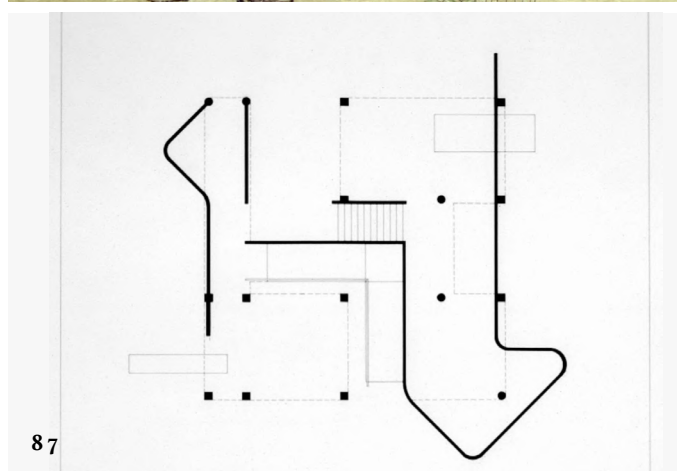
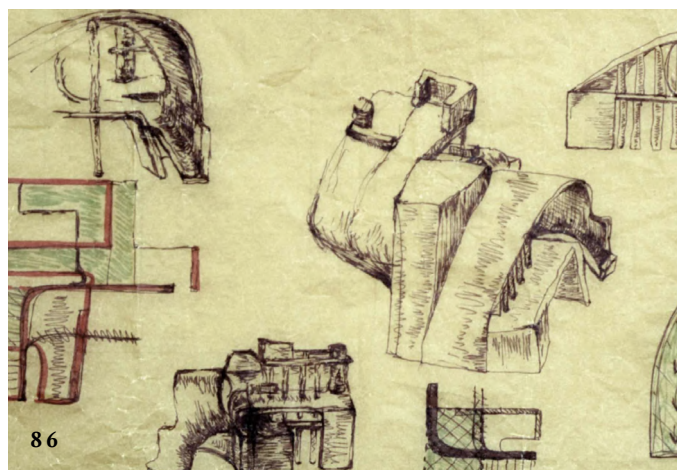
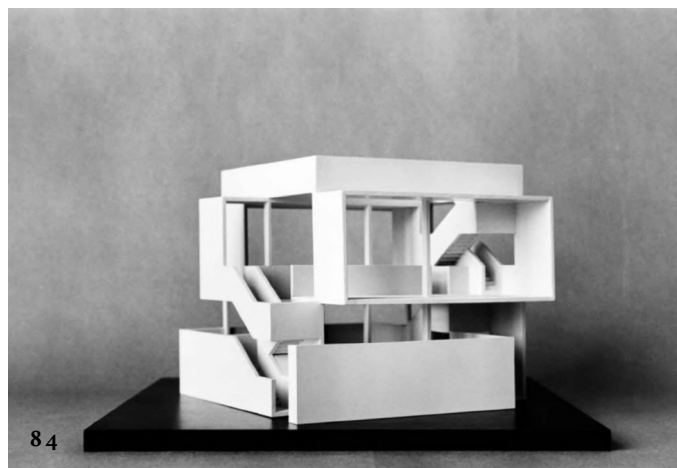
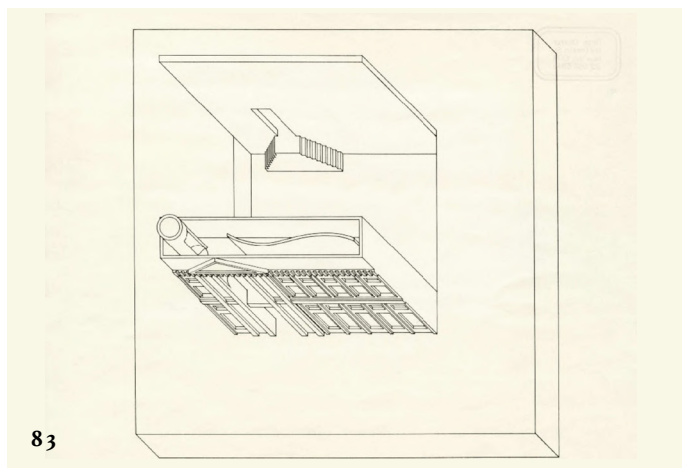


Fig. 83 • Margaret Deamer, Axonometric, *Inside/Outside*. Nine Square Grid, final project: 1st Year, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Fig. 84 • Daniel Kowler, Model, elevation view. Nine Square Grid, Architectonics, 1971-2. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 85 • Joanna Hickey, Model. Nine Square Grid, Architectonics, 1965. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 86 • Maxine Rosenberg, Sketches, Nine Square Grid, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 87 • Wesley Salley, Plan, Nine Square Grid, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved

villa, as analyzed by Rowe. For Hejduk, subjecting this geometry to a new materialization allows him to retain its memory without reducing it to mere visuality. Hejduk states that through these developments, “he “was getting Italy out of the system. Not getting rid of the place aspect, but getting rid of the classicizing aspect, by *working it out*.”<sup>406</sup>

Through the research related to the Texas House series, the architect finds ways to infuse meaning into the geometric negotiations he undertakes. It involves the relationships between Europe and America, bi- and tri-dimensionality, the connection to painting, classicism, and modernity.<sup>407</sup> This approach extends to the relationship of the structures to the site in which they are implanted:

“As the site plans progress from house to house they also challenge the accepted pragmatic notions typically associated with site design. Resolution of issues such as site access, security, landscape and site amenity development are redefined by Hejduk to be phenomenological components with multiple meanings beyond the typical uses.”

### Diamond Houses

Later on, Hejduk continues his research through other series, with each inauguration corresponding to an operation that is both geometric and metaphysical. The Diamond Houses series is developed by rotating the square plan by forty-five degrees:

“Rotating a square plan 45-degrees (while maintaining the internal right-angled plan geometries) implies an infinite spatial field that is cut at the edge of the plan drawing. This has two formal consequences : it distributes the compositional energy evenly, rather than a cubist tension between centre and periphery; and it activates the edge, where the two geometries intersect.”<sup>408</sup>

The conceptual strength/power of this operation becomes apparent when considering what this plan becomes when developed in axonometry:

“If the power of the axonometric is to combine in one drawing the measurability of orthographic projection with the pictorial, descriptive character of perspective, the 90-degree axonometric complicates and challenges the descriptive character of the axonometric. It produces an oddly flattened figure on the page. [...] Part of the attraction is the slightly awkward, even naïve quality of these drawings, something almost childlike, or com-

406 Hejduk and Shkapich, 35.

407 Hejduk describes the series in these terms in an interview transcribed in *The Mask of Medusa*: “The first one is an Italian garden situation. Symmetrical, the house is below entry eye-level, Tivoli, any of those kind of places, that’s the Italian Garden. The second house is even more classicizing, more rigid, in an Italianate plan and I’m not talking about Palladio. The third one is a syncopation. It appears to refer to Mondrian. So there was the conflict between the Italian form and Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie*. There was the conflict between two worlds: the modernist world, so called, and the classicizing world; America and Europe. It was already there in the verandah. Verandahs are *American*; loggias are *European*. Then the Fifth House was closest to Leger. Just a *block*. The Fifth House was a Mies exercise. The Sixth House was like the Fourth, with another storey added. The Seventh House dealt with an inversion of scale – Renaissance scale, where the sill of the window was above your head.” (Medusa, 36)

408 Allen, Stan. ‘John Hejduk’s Axonometric degree zero’. *Drawing Matter*, (23 September 2019). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-axonometric-degree-zero/>

ing from somewhere other than the western canon of visual representation.”<sup>409</sup>

This ambiguity between bi- and tridimensionality allows Hejduk to assert that “the isometric projections of the diamond are cubist projections in architecture, therefore completing the formal relationships between cubist projection in painting and cubist projection in architecture.”<sup>410</sup> And the architect works from this discovery. He becomes intrigued by the phenomenon of the disappearance of certain lines and spaces induced by axonometry:

“He was preoccupied by the invisible rear faces that collapsed onto the visible front faces. [...] The simultaneity of front and back [...] for him implied a kind of deep space present in the compressed surface of the drawing,” architect Stan Allen reports from an exchange with Hejduk, who was his professor. For Allen, this geometric approach “suggests a different reading of transparency – not so much of layered space activated by a moving spectator and unfolding in time, but of flatness and depth simultaneously present.”<sup>411</sup>

### Wall Houses

The geometrically compressed space of the Diamond Houses fuels the subsequent movement, that of the Wall Houses. In these projects, a free-standing wall divides the houses in two. The wall is constantly crossed when occupying the house. Despite its two-dimensional appearance, the wall can be understood here as a materialization of the compressed space-time encountered in axonometry: “A wall is the quickest, the thinnest, the thing we’re always transgressing, and that is why I see it as the present, the most surface condition,” explains Hejduk.<sup>412</sup> The wall embodies the thickness of the present, and the spatial experience of the house transforms into an intense spatio-temporal experience:

“For Hejduk, it is his recognition of the “wall” as a representation of a neutral condition, a flattening of spatial perception, which separates space on one hand and unites space on the other. In Hejduk’s wall house investigations the *wall* exemplifies and embodies the ontological representation of the concept of *space-time*.”<sup>413</sup>

For the architect Lucas, this experience of the wall-compressed space-time can also be seen as an encounter with architecture itself: The idea is of an architecture that looks at you – it is upright and facing you. It has a gaze to counter the gaze of the people who might look at it – it returns the gaze.”<sup>414</sup> “Between past and future, between movement

409 Allen, Stan. ‘John Hejduk’s Axonometric degree zero’. *Drawing Matter*, (23 September 2019). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-axonometric-degree-zero/>

410 Hejduk cited in Allen, Stan. ‘John Hejduk’s Axonometric degree zero’. *Drawing Matter*, (23 September 2019). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-axonometric-degree-zero/>

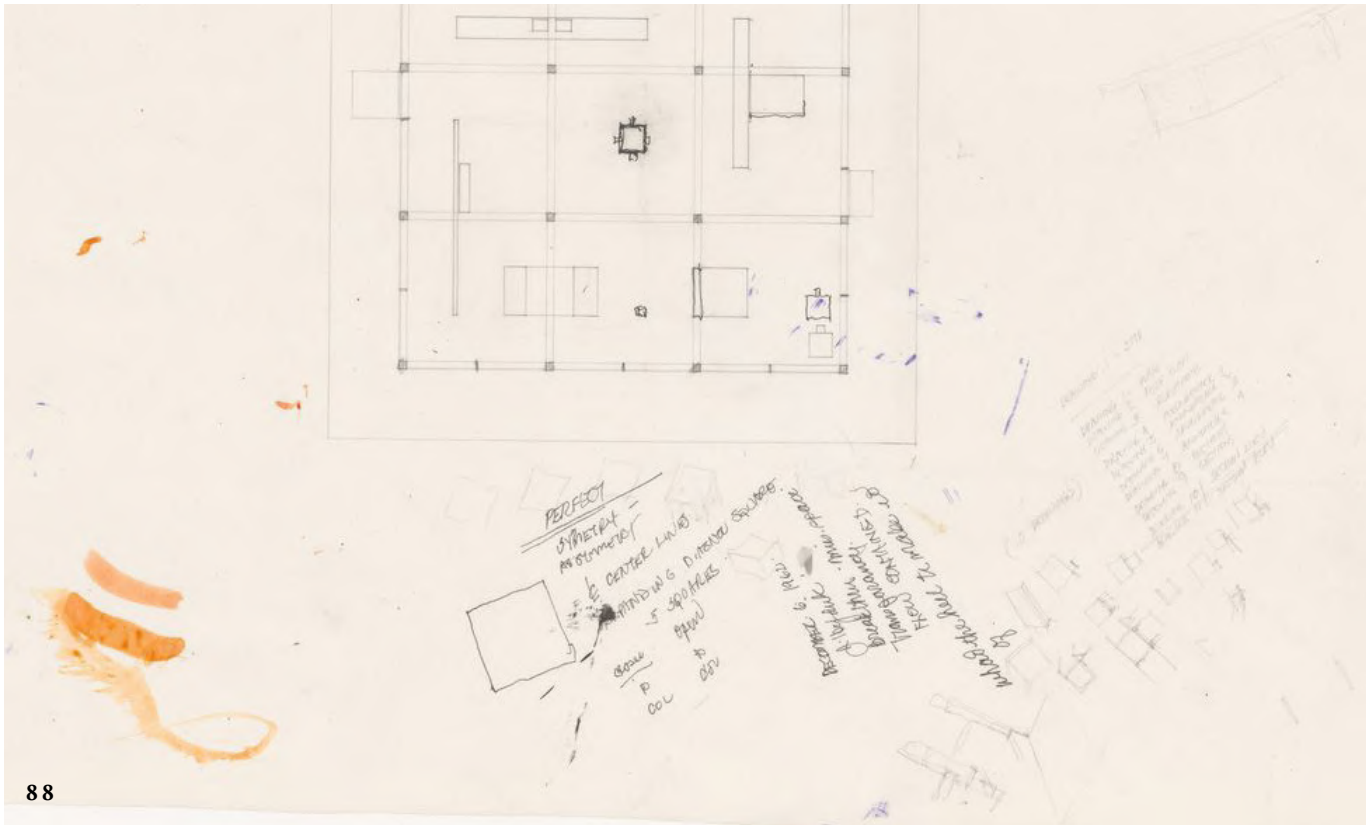
411 Allen, Stan. ‘John Hejduk’s Axonometric degree zero’. *Drawing Matter*, (23 September 2019). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-axonometric-degree-zero/>

412 Hejduk and Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa*, 67.

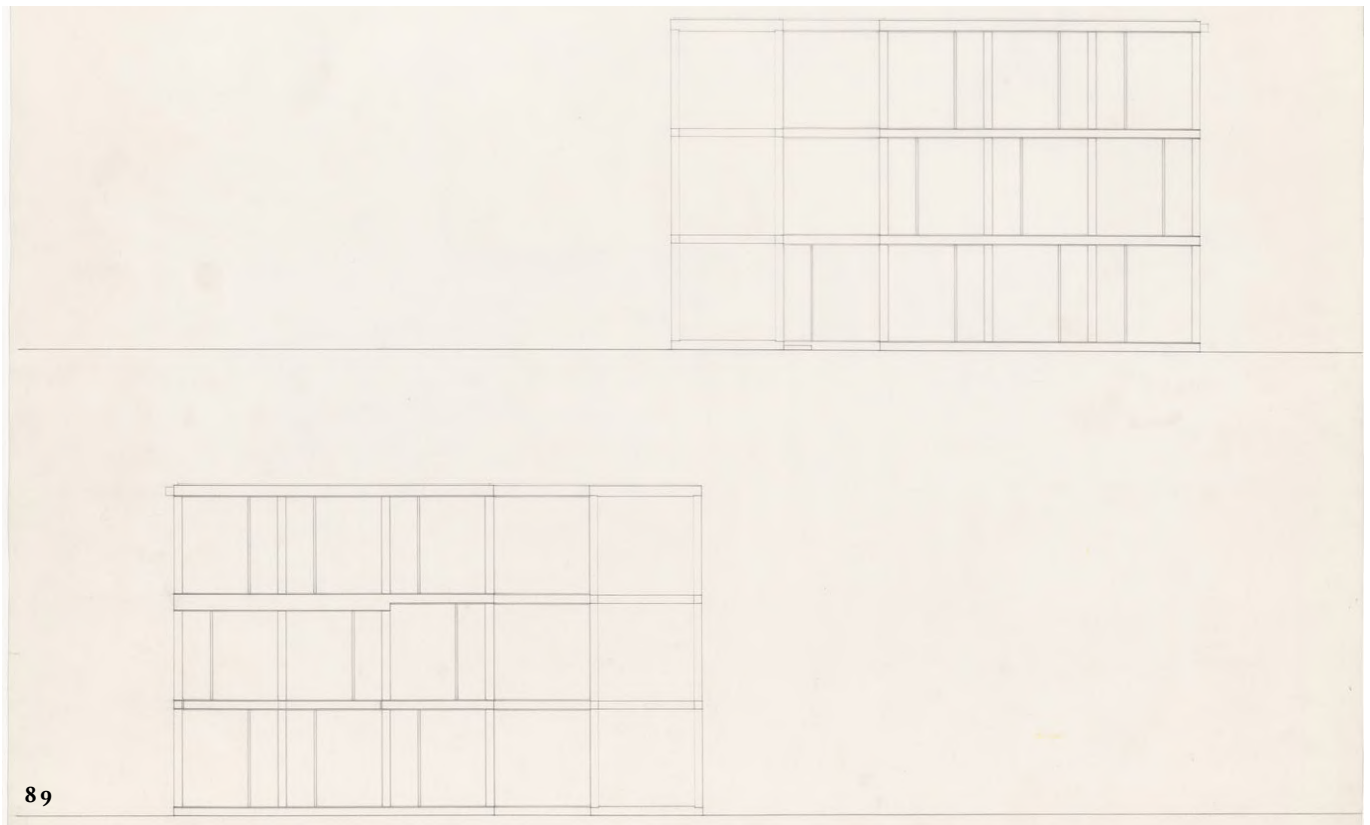
413 Story, *The Complexities of Hohn Hejduk’s Work*, 48.

414 Lucas, Ray. ‘Drawing Parallels: John Hejduk’s Wall House 1’. *Drawing Matter*, (6 December 2021). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduk-wall-house-1/>





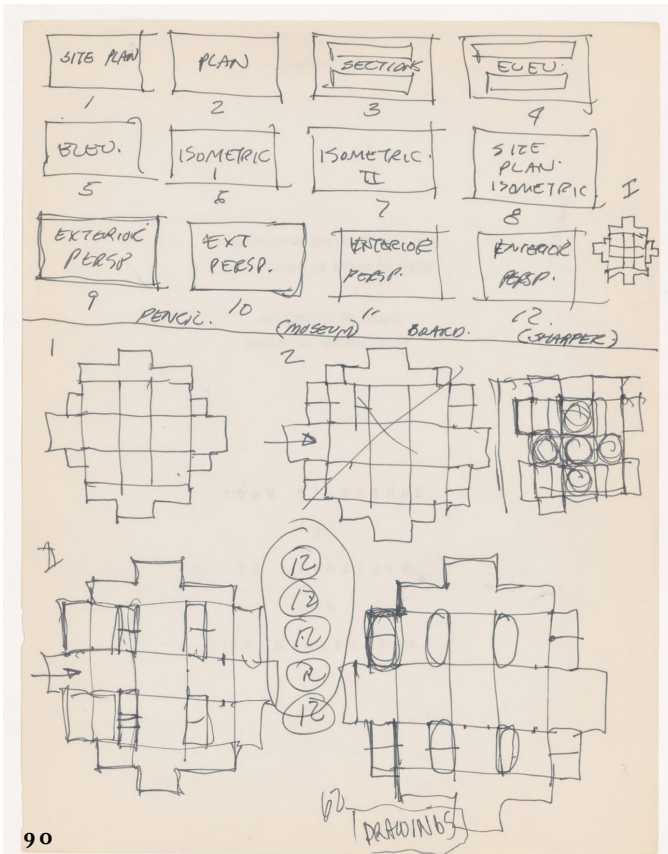
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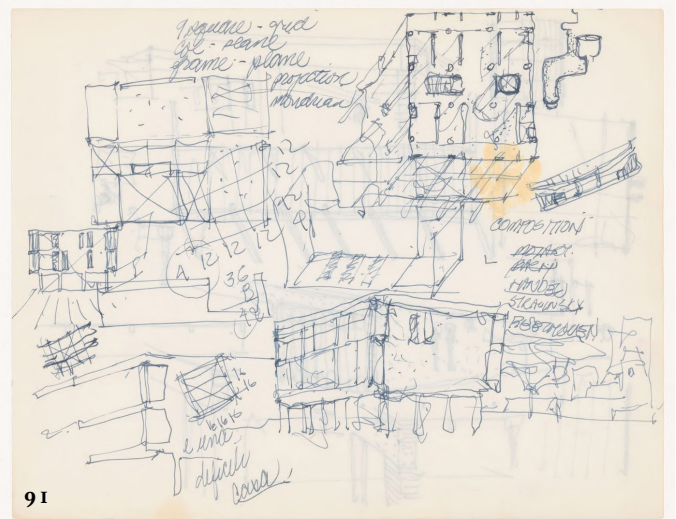
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Fig. 88 • Close-up of John Hedjuk's Plan with notes for Texas House 5, 1954-1963. DR1998:0051:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

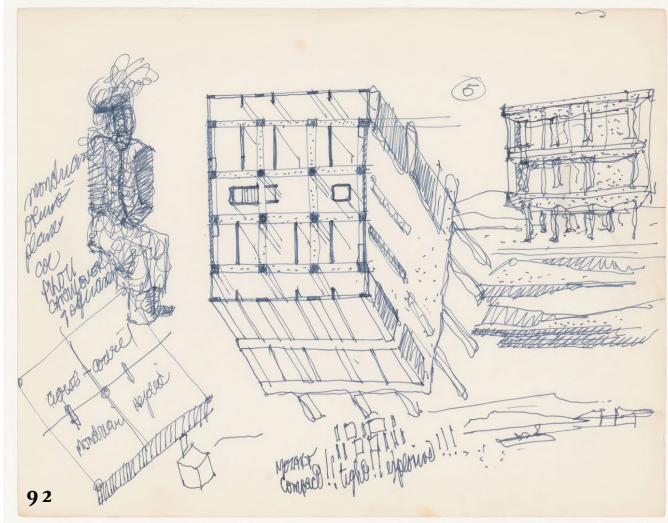
Fig. 89 • John Hedjuk, Elevations for Texas House 6, 1954-1963. DR1998:0052:034, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



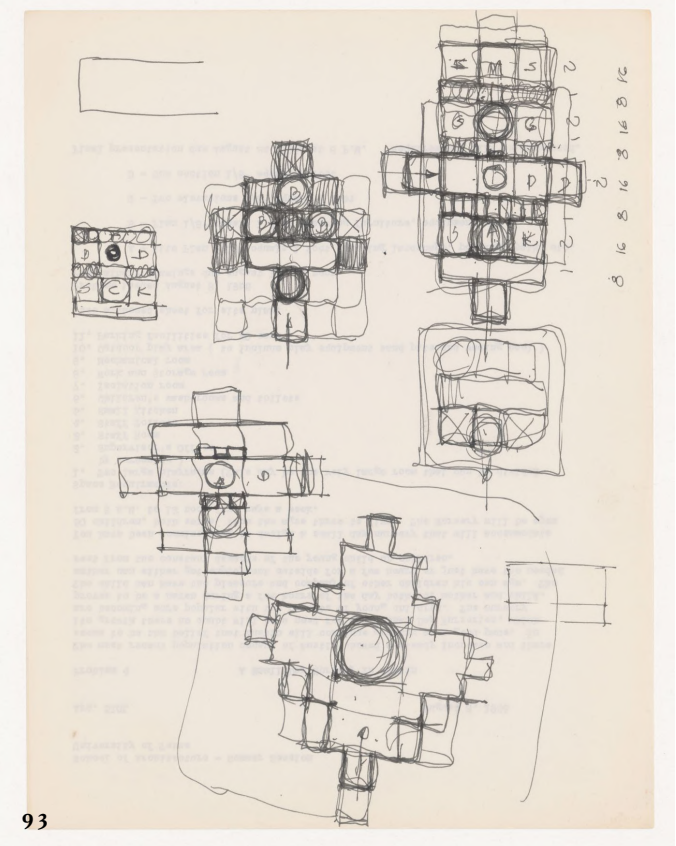
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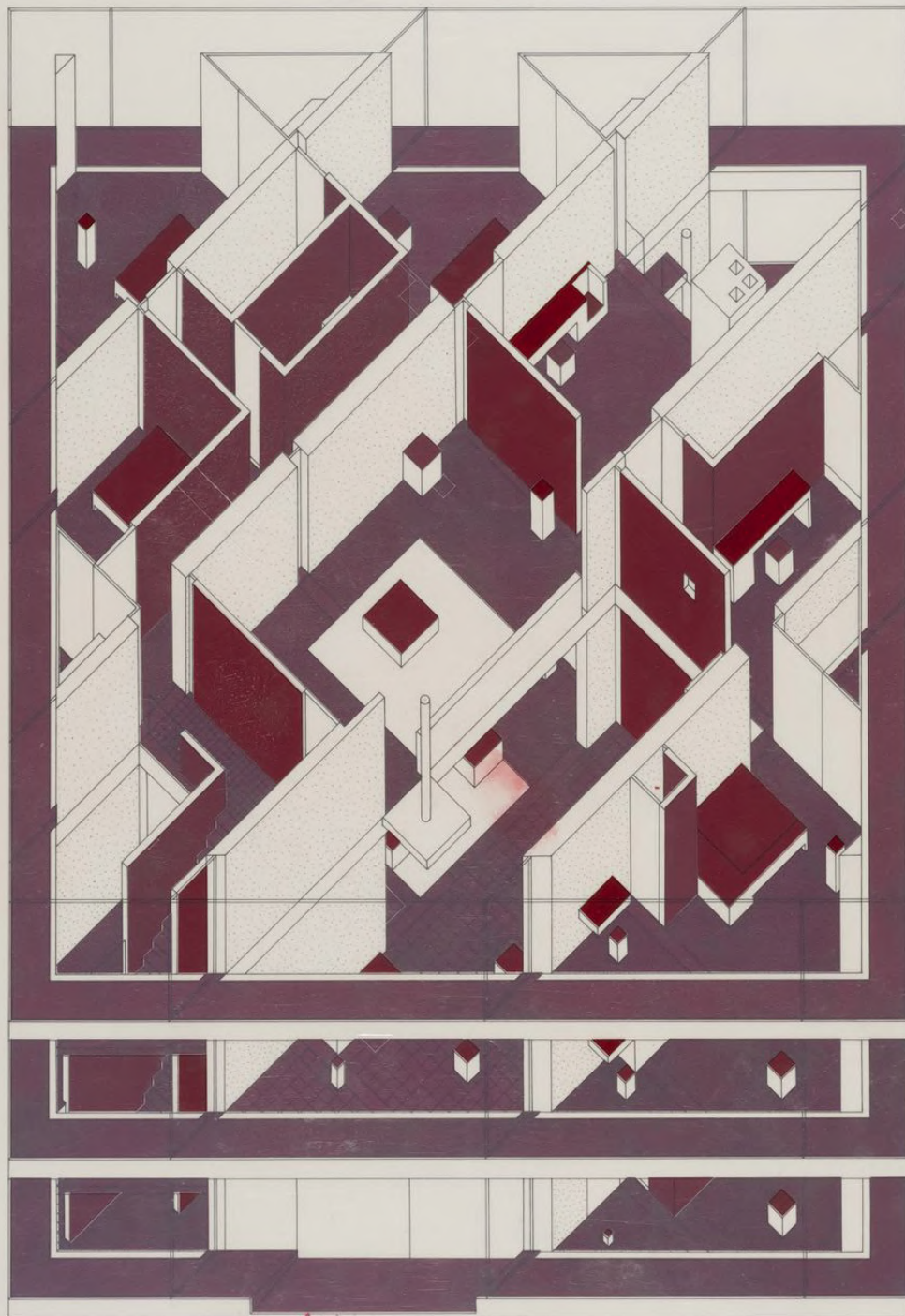
Fig. 90 • John Hedjuk, Notes and sketches for Texas House 1, 1954-1963. DR1998:0047:001:011, John Hedjuk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 91 • John Hedjuk, Sketches with annotations for Texas Houses, 1954-1963. DR1998:0054:012, John Hedjuk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 92 • John Hedjuk, Sketches and notes for Texas Houses, 1954-1963. DR1998:0054:011, John Hedjuk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

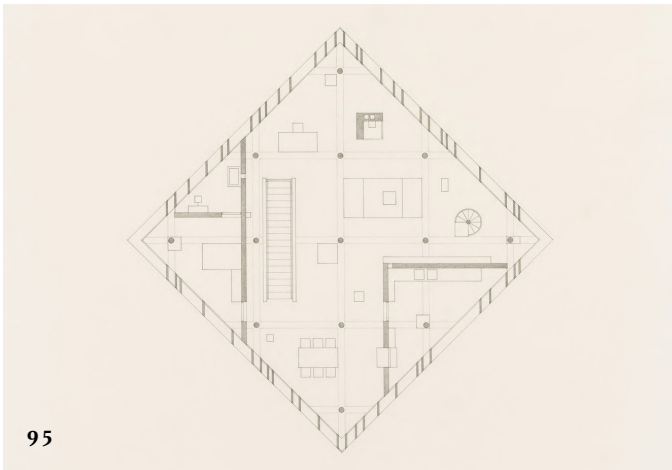
Fig. 93 • John Hedjuk, Sketch plans for Texas House 1, 1954-1963. DR1998:0047:001:014, John Hedjuk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



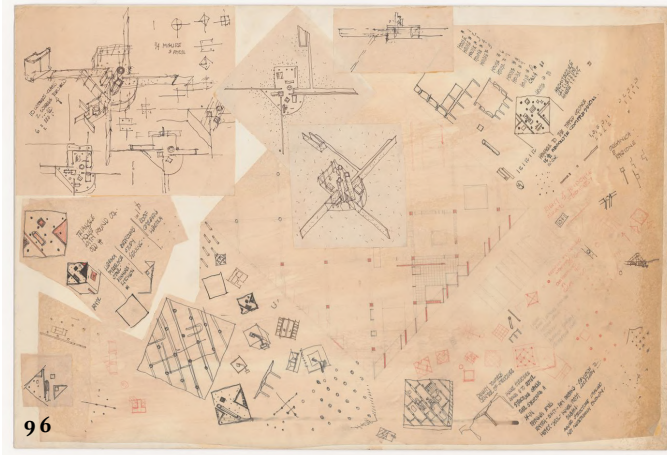


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Fig. 94 • John Hejduk, Axonometric for Diamond House B. 1963-1967. An axonometric with attached color separation positives. DR1998:0061:003:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



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Fig. 95 • John Hejduk, Plan for Diamond House A. 1963-1967. DR1998:0060:003:015, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 96 • John Hejduk, Collaged sketches with annotations for Diamond House. 1963-1967. DR198:0063:010, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 97 • John Hejduk, Collaged sketches with annotations for Diamond House. 1963-1967. DR1998:0063:009, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



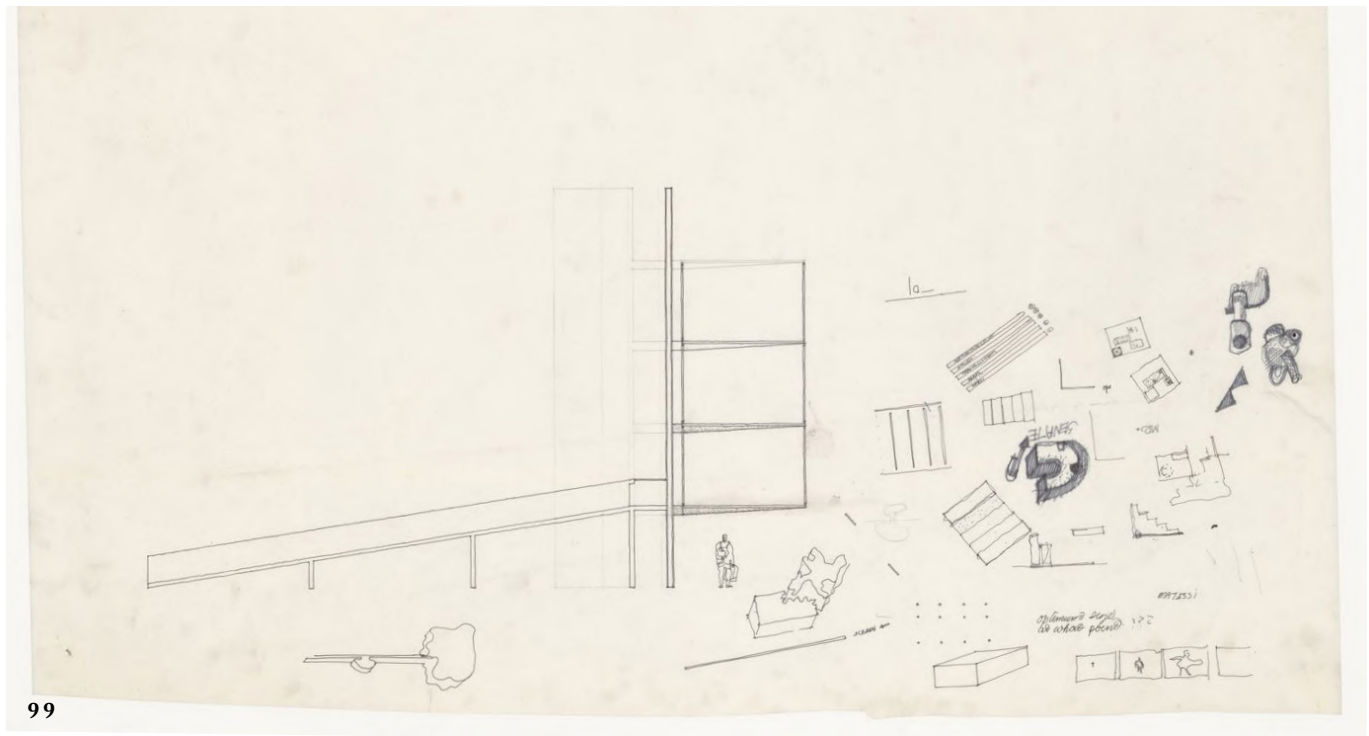
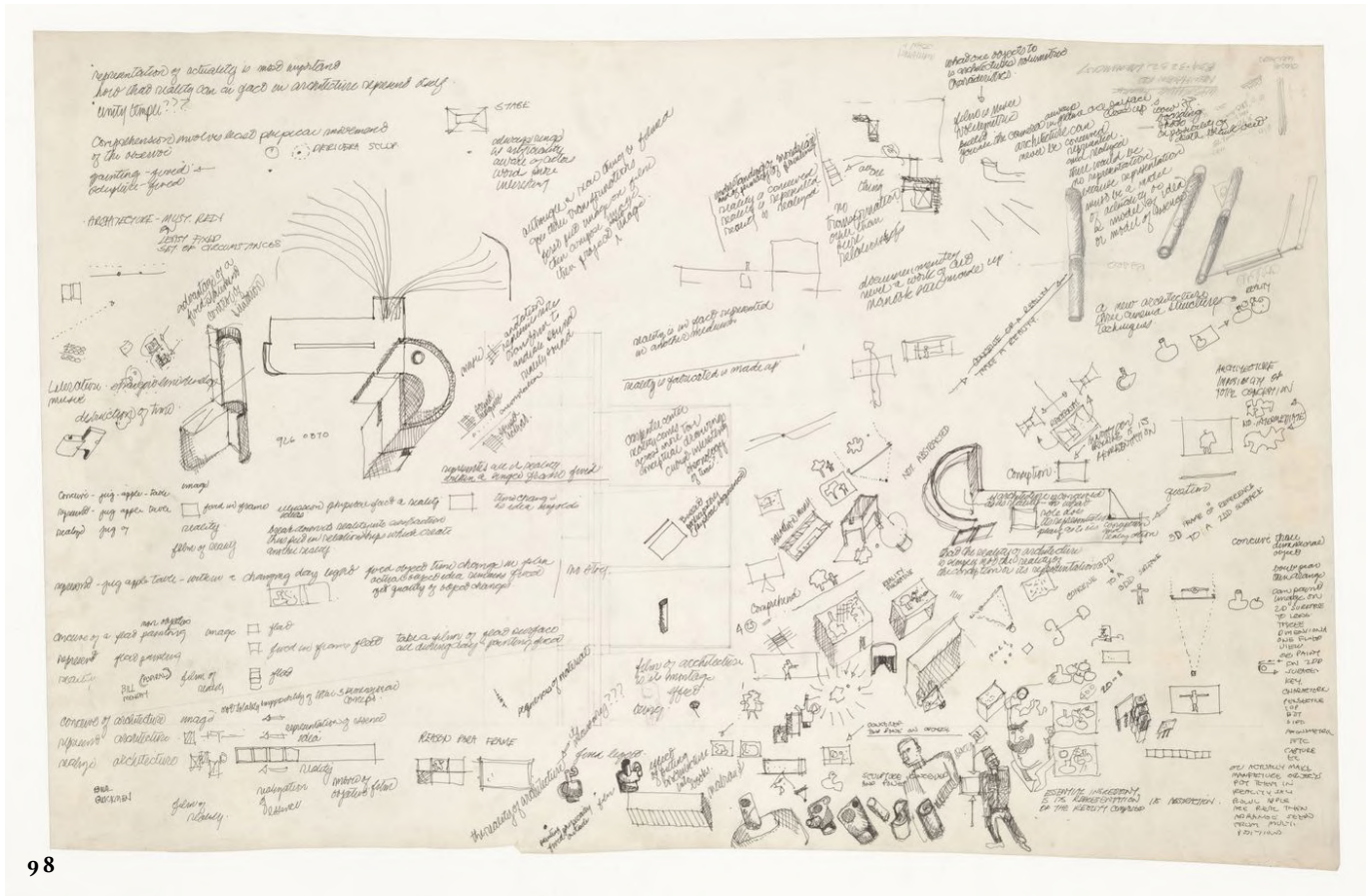
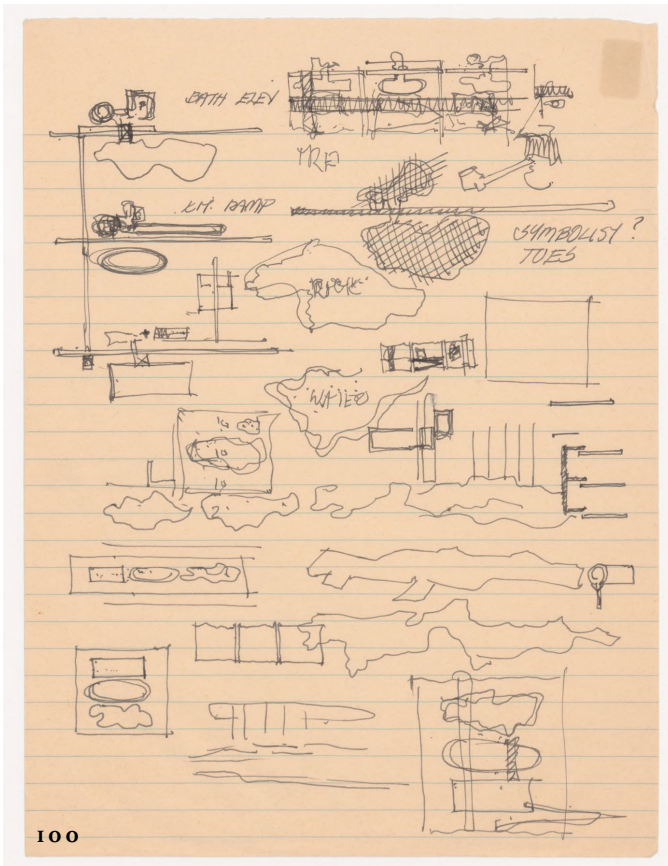


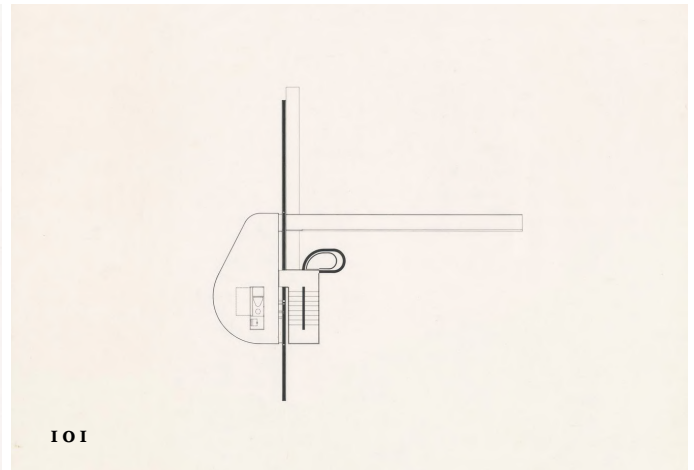
Fig. 98 • John Hejduk, Sketches and notes for Wall House 1. 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:030, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 99 • John Hejduk, Elevation with sketches for Wall House 1. 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:031, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

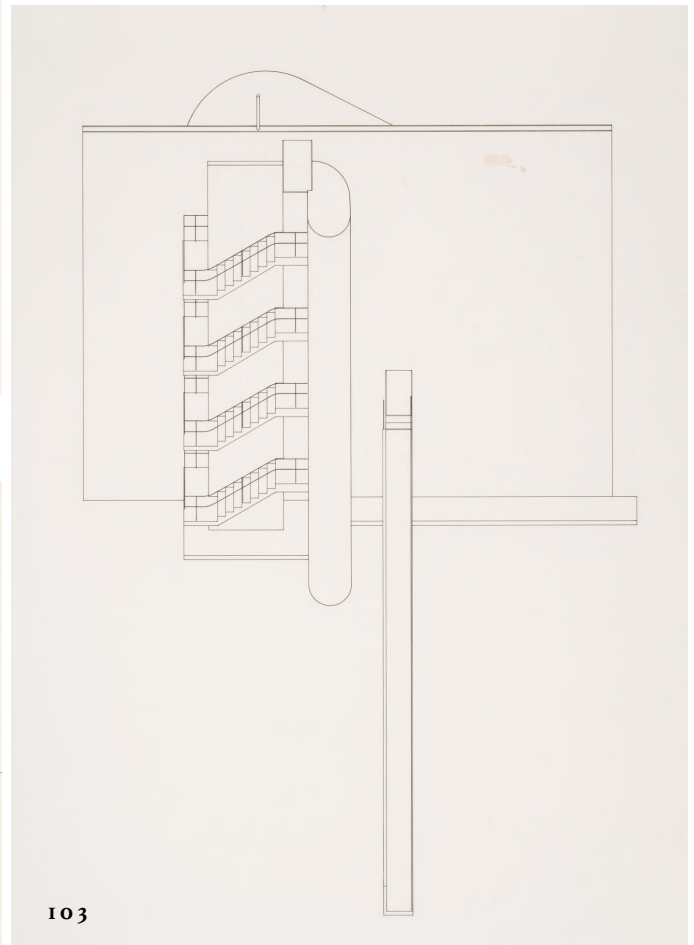




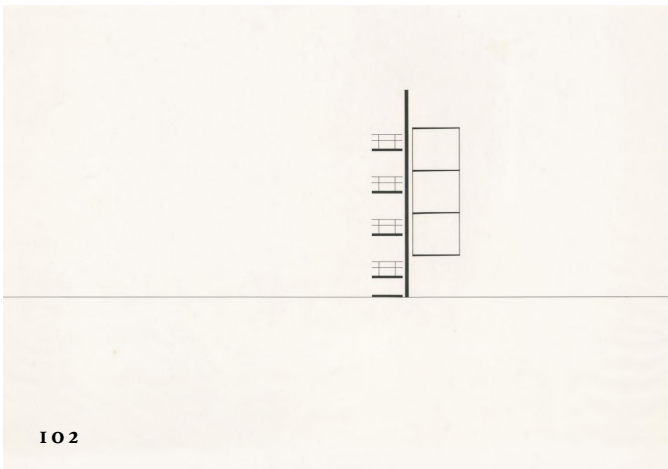
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Fig. 100 • John Hejduk. Sketches with annotations for Wall House, 1968-1974. DR1998:0081:031, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 101 • John Hejduk. Plan for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:003, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 102 • John Hejduk. Section for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:019, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 103 • John Hejduk. Elevation for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

and stasis, contemplation and action, and between body and mind”,<sup>415</sup> the experience of the wall as a threshold owes its intensity to the drawing’s capacity to grant us access to its history.

In this constantly evolving interplay between drawing and construction, between mental narrative and spatial experience, Hejduk develops his own architectural language while also creating a distance from architecture to his own language. The way he develops his projects is a continuous exploration of what the codes and processes of the discipline allow, but this thorough investigation allows him to subvert these codes on themselves. Lucas writes that in Hejduk’s drawings,

“we have marks which are suggested by their absence, lines we know are there, but which are not shown in order to communicate something of the underlying design intention – a space to be experienced a little at a time, experientially, and phenomenologically.”<sup>416</sup>

Throughout all these stages, Hejduk develops methods to subvert the traditions and codes of the discipline. “It is an intentional absorbing of all those past things, zooming it, compressing it.”<sup>417</sup> The geometric operations visible in the drawings of these series are to be understood as so many ways of making contact with history. Hejduk seeks to keep this history in motion through the fact that it continues to act in the drawing, without conditioning it. The architect emphasizes the need to “exorcise” the historical material he manipulates: “...absorbed the images, the organizations, into me as an organism, like blotting paper. Now I don’t have to look at them.”<sup>418</sup> These successive operations allow him to cultivate a distinct architectural poetics, which he later seeks to specifically employ in addressing the urban architectural challenges he deems crucial for understanding his era through architecture, and vice versa.

### Mood and atmosphere: the political tactility of architectural images

The 1970s represent a new pivotal moment in Hejduk’s practice, having returned to New York since 1964. The prevailing interpretation of this turning point tends to see it as a personal choice by the architect, who suddenly changes his drawing approach and embarks on a journey where questions of human condition, collective memory, and imaginaries will play an increased role: “Hejduk continues to examine these fissures between representation and architectural reality in the later projects, but moves from an answer reliant upon temporality to one which deals in spirituality and poetry,”

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[drawingmatter.org/drawing-parallels-john-hejduk-wall-house-1/](https://drawingmatter.org/drawing-parallels-john-hejduk-wall-house-1/)

415 Allen, Stan, and Marina Correia. ‘John Hejduk’s Bye House: An Object in the Landscape’. *Drawing Matter*, (29 June 2023). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-bye-house-an-object-in-the-landscape/>

416 Lucas, Ray. ‘Drawing Parallels: John Hejduk’s Wall House 1’. *Drawing Matter*, (6 December 2021). <https://drawingmatter.org/drawing-parallels-john-hejduk-wall-house-1/>

417 Hejduk and Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa*, 35.

418 Hejduk and Shkapich, 36.

writes Lucas, following numerous other architects and theorists discussing Hejduk's transition to a new type of drawing and project.<sup>419</sup>

Certainly, the works from these years mark a new juncture in how the architect employs the architectural poetics he had developed up to that point, presenting a powerful unfolding/expansion of this poetics on other levels. However, the new explorations that guide Hejduk in developing the architectural form of the mask take another dimension when viewed in the context of the transformation period already discussed in this text. During this period, architectural drawing takes on great importance, gaining audience, diffusion, and autonomy. It captivates a broader audience and starts being exhibited, entering into a new relationship with the dynamics of the art market. Architecture is notably displayed in the galleries of SoHo, precisely at a time when the performance practices discussed in the first part of this research are fragmenting, and SoHo is opening up to a much larger audience.

In this context, John Hejduk is initially quite active. At the beginning of the decade, he is part of a group of four other architects known as “the New York Five,” also sometimes referred to as “the Whites” due to the group's affinity with modernism.<sup>420</sup> Furthermore, he is in conversation with some of the gallery owners who are settling in New York at that time with the project of exhibiting architectural drawings.<sup>421</sup> However, quite rapidly, Hejduk is not among the most chosen by galleries for exhibition. He himself does not particularly identify with various disciplinary discourses related to postmodernism, nor even with the groups to which he is affiliated. In an interview conducted in 1979, Hejduk states regarding his “belonging” to *New York Five*: “To see the difference all you have to do is to look at the work.”<sup>422</sup>

During these years, Hejduk aimed to apply the expertise developed in Texas to address crucial urban issues. His appointment as the dean of the Cooper Union in 1975, where he had been teaching for ten years, and the new form taken by his mask archi-

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419 Lucas, Ray. ‘Drawing Parallels: John Hejduk’s Wall House 1’. *Drawing Matter*, (6 December 2021). <https://drawingmatter.org/drawing-parallels-john-hejduk-wall-house-1/>

420 This designation owes its existence to the release of the book *Five Architects* which provides significant visibility to the architects in question. The book follows a series of conversations initiated by the director of the MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design, Arthur Drexler, who publishes a volume in 1972 gathering the works of these different architects after these events. The term *The New York Five* has remained in the history of architecture as a marker of the articulation between modernism and postmodernism, notably due to the critical reception the book received. In 1973, a forum of responses titled “Five on Five” is organized with five other architects associated with the early stages of postmodernism. They are subsequently nicknamed “The Grey” in contrast to the first group, and the Grey/White debates embody the transformation of architectural discourse from that period until today.

421 Kauffman mentions weekly meetings between Hejduk, Eisenman, and Max Protech when the latter is setting up the Protech Gallery in New York in 1978. Jordan Kauffman, “Architecture in the Art Market: The Max Protech Gallery,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 70, no. 2 (July 2, 2016): 257–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2016.1197674>.

422 Transcript of an interview with John Hejduk (by Reima Pietila?), related to the publication: John Hejduk, *John Hejduk, 7 Houses: January 22 to February 16, 1980*, Catalogue - Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies ; 12 (New York, N.Y: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1979). Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.

tectures should be understood as an intersection of his poetic expression and intellectual trajectory with the social issues then shaking society globally, particularly in New York. Speaking about the evolution of his practice, Hejduk states, “I never touched city planning because I wasn’t ready for it. So, the first real shift in the work was political.”<sup>423</sup>

In this research, the aim is to take Hejduk’s statement and the full and rich meaning of the “political” that he develops in the last third of his career seriously. As Pedrosa Correia writes, “although Hejduk is often classified as postmodern, his work remains critical and aligns in no way with the so-called post-critical period,” associated with postmodernism.<sup>424</sup> In line with this remark, the discussion of the architectural form of the masque is considered here from its emergence at the intersection between a mature architectural practice and social inquiries that prompt this practice to reinvent itself in response to the urban issues of its time. This approach aims to highlight the contribution of the architectural device of the masqu to the thinking of image and architectural imagination in their political and transindividual dimension.

The geometric explorations capable of keeping forms in motion and vibration, studies focusing on the strangely evocative architecture of small Texas towns, and the teaching of architecture as an intensification process leading to the shaping of an intention. All the research conducted by Hejduk since the 1950s fundamentally aims to maintain the possibility of vibration and multiplicity in areas where everything might seem static evident, and easily identifiable. In the 1970s, this pursuit of vibration is invested at the urban scale.<sup>425</sup> It becomes the vehicle for an architecture capable of co-becoming in a complex and multiple present. The architectural imagination that interests Hejduk is not the one that imposes new images, but the one that contributes to other materializations and other takings of form. It involves the diverse materialities that co-compose the world and bring about different realities:

“The work I create is highly tactile. On the other hand it is not overly aggressive; it will not overwhelm the “sensible man”. It has some sense of neutrality so that a man can become part of it or it a part of a man. Dare I say that he can become part of an over-all composition or even thought? I do not wish to de-materialize man but wish to heighten his materiality that is, his senses. Consequently I am interested in “reality” but the question is always whose reality? through the quality of his imagination.”<sup>426</sup>

Hejduk’s explanations and formulations are deliberately elusive, but this way of dis-

423 John Hejduk and Kim Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa: Works, 1947-1983* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 36.

424 Marina Pedrosa Correia, “Volume em Miniatura: John Hejduk e Veneza” (São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), 20. The postmodernism in architecture takes on a specific meaning. It is associated with practices that approve the use of historical styles and images and emphasize the scenic and decorative properties of architecture in contrast to the social goals of the modern movement.

425 Other architects whose practice is considered close to Hejduk’s during the 1960s-70s will later pursue the exploration of vibration and modulation of forms through new technologies and the possibilities they offer for design. This is notably the case with architect Peter Eisenman, a member of the *New York Five* later associated with deconstructivism.

426 Transcript of an interview with John Hejduk (by Reima Pietila?), related to the publication of the exhibition catalogue Hejduk, *John Hejduk, 7 Houses*.

Discussing his work is part of the pursuit of an architectural stance that is porous and capable of transforming itself in response to the questions of others. In his responses to numerous interviews seeking to unravel the mystery of his architectural language, the architect tries to sidestep the forced rationalization of his work and redirect attention to how it reflects and addresses the major trends and questions of his time.<sup>427</sup>

“If the advent of mass communication and information technology has undermined the idea of the city as a place of architectural permanence, the social value of memory itself has been eroded by the series of catastrophic political events that have marked the twentieth century.”<sup>428</sup>

writes Allen to describe the challenges faced by architectural practices during this period. For Hejduk, who is also the dean of an architecture school, figuring out how to continue thinking about architecture and thinking with architecture becomes an urgent question, demanding the imagination of new forms of practice. Hejduk declares himself in search of an “architectural program for his time.”<sup>429</sup> He aims to imagine an architectural form that resists reproducing the solutionism of grand utopian narratives as much as the banality of postmodernist architectures. Instead, it should nourish collective imagination and be capable of co-becoming.

The way through which the architect tackles urban and social challenges without imposing his architecture as uniformity or a reductionist, simplistic, and violent solution is through the *atmosphere*. As Story writes in reaction to the “sterile rationalism offered by quantifiable programmatic and planning methods adopted by architects beginning in the 1970s,” Hejduk “sought to bring into the narrative of architectural discourse the *spirit, mood* and *undertone* in the making of space and place.<sup>430</sup> His approach becomes more explicitly a counter-design that manifests as an architectural counter-attitude and a counter-conception of what constitutes an *architectural program*.<sup>431</sup> “Hejduk works

427 The architect sometimes includes excerpts from interviews with him conducted by others in his own publications, as seen, for example, in the *Mask of Medusa*. This approach can be interpreted in several ways, but in light of the fragmentary structure of the respective works, the interview snippets seem to be part of the architecture as conceived by Hejduk, just like structures, poems, or drawings. In this sense, the dialogue and voices that are not directly Hejduk’s but contribute to shaping his thoughts are directly integrated into the core of what might otherwise be considered solely the *personal* work of an architect-author.

428 Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique + Representation*, Expanded 2. ed (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 37.

429 Hejduk and Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa*, 138.

430 J. Kevin Story, *The Complexities of Hohn Hejduk’s Work: Exorcising Outlines, Apparitions and Angels*, Routledge Research in Architecture (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2020), 67.

431 In the architectural tradition inherited by Hejduk, the program is a central tool for architecture and urban planning. Story writes about this: “The modern understanding and use of the architectural program, used by most modern architects delineated a rational analysis between the relationships of specific functional and spatial criteria, explored primarily through two-dimensional “bubble” relationship planning diagrams, a listing of spaces, known as a “space program” and a variety of matrices depicting any number of perceived programmatic interrelationships that could and should be documented. This *scientific* rational approach to architectural design was used to provide the architect with an analysis of data to find purpose and hierarchical interrelationships between various components that make up the complexities of a design problem. [...] The pragmatics of this analytical approach to design became, for most architects, a problem-solving technique to derive an objective functional solution to the design goals outlined by a given problem. This approach was widespread throughout architectural firms during the 1970s and this methodology and its derivatives are still widely used in the practice of architecture.” (Story, 67)



on that hidden heart of architecture, the architectural as the organizational power of the material, spatialities that escape fear and codification, and imply thinking and the unprevaluable antibodies of one,” writes Jalón Oyarzun.<sup>432</sup> Starting from the focus on atmosphere, Hejduk will reassess the architectural image and its operational modes.

Whenever he has the opportunity to discuss his approach to architecture, Hejduk asserts that it is primarily *tactile* or relies on the *sonic* register to describe how his work affects and is affected by reality. While the pursuit of image depth he describes owes much to the work of certain painters, the motif of atmosphere is more directly linked to the textures of the world experienced by beings, including Hejduk himself. The architect has left scattered elements that allow us to comprehend his understanding of this term, which he uses to describe the permeability of beings, places, structures, and memories to each other. On one hand, the atmosphere is profoundly embodied and connected to the experience of the sensible touching upon the significance of geographies and beings that surround us, change us, and strengthen us. Hejduk describes his encounter with Texas in these words:

“In 1954, after having studied in Italy, I returned to America, from the landscape of Italy to that of the hill country of central Texas. The remarkable light of Italy and that of Texas, so different yet each so mystical, produced within me a sense for precision and a thirst for detail. [...]

There is a magic moment in the fall after weeks of intense dry heat when the Blue Norther comes down across the northern plains. Temperatures drop fifty degrees within minutes and the air becomes cool and crystal clear; the shadows deepen. It is also a time when you can run after armadillos. [...]

You capture the knowledge that the slightest degree in change of temperature affects the softness and the hardness of lead and consequently the pressure and weight to be applied to a pencil and to a sheet of paper. Texas is for pruning and for cutting; and for polishing.

Now, to precisely polish internal thoughts an atmosphere of a particular kind is needed.

In my own case I was fortunate because I was with spirited students, solid friends, a special wife; and a specific landscape.

We caught the armadillo, but we let him go.”<sup>433</sup>

432 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor.” (Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2017), 163.

433 Hejduk and Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa*, 44.

On the other hand, the notion of *atmosphere* also resonates on the scale of societal structures. Its use in the field of architecture has direct and political consequences concerning the shift of architectural focus to relational and situated dimensions, as well as climate, social, memory-related, interdependence, and coexistence issues. In Hejduk's body of work, the atmospheric vocabulary developed and elaborated over the years contributes to affirming a transcalar approach and a refusal to delimit and assign architecture.<sup>434</sup> From the breath of bodies to the breaths of history, to those of geographies, poems, or paintings, maintaining a pulse or vibration becomes an architectural and political act. The emphasis on atmosphere aligns with the quest for a (temporary) position in a world accelerating on a global scale, fundamentally altering the capacities to be in touch with the vibrations of the world.

The author Jonathan Crary writes that the effects of capitalist development are felt as “shifting configurations of sleep and waking, illumination and darkness, justice and terror, and [...] forms of exposure, unprotectedness, and vulnerability.”<sup>435</sup> The specific form of vulnerability associated with these transformations is linked to the maintenance of a living environment that “has the semblance of a social world, but is actually a non-social model of machinic performance and a suspension of living that does not disclose the human cost required to sustain its effectiveness.”<sup>436</sup> In this context, the atmosphere as an image corresponds to the new relational terrains in which the dismantling and reclamation of social structures supporting collective experience and life are at stake.

By foregrounding this image, Hejduk sketches for himself, for his students, and those with whom he exchanges the possibility of turning this terrain into an architectural one. In the flashes of an overly illuminated world where the finest textures fade from perception, it becomes a matter of alluding to their absence, summoning them, and (re)imagining them to experience and resurrect them in the margins of the world's homogeneity. This terrain demands sensitivities, forms, mediums, and know-how that align with its moving textures and can uphold this movement.

### Masqu-ing cities : Atmospheric architectural storybooks for the imagination

Hejduk developed the masks between 1974 and 1989 as a form of architectural image supporting the experience of multiple atmospheres and textures of the real.<sup>437</sup> The

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434 The porosity to the atmosphere of cities is a recurring motif in all masks, especially in passages written in the form of personal notes by the architect, for example in *Mask of Medusa* : «Since 1974 Venice has preoccupied the nature of my work. It is a forum of my inner arguments. [...] I am in debt to Italy and to the City of Venice for provoking the impetus for my investigations.” (Medusa, 83)

435 Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Verso Books, 2013), 8.

436 Crary, 9.

437 Colin Rowe, with whom Hejduk collaborated in Texas, conducted a thesis on the work of Inigo Jones, who himself produced several masks. However, there is no evidence to assert that it was through this channel that Hejduk began to take an interest in this dramatic form.

term the architect uses to describe these projects places them in the lineage of other masks: the theatrical masks produced for the royal courts of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.<sup>438</sup> The dramatic form of the mask then encompasses poetry, dance, music, architecture, and theater. The performances, intended to honor and entertain the court, involve the creation of imposing sets and costumes by architects in collaboration with the writer producing the mask's text.<sup>439</sup> The format of the mask involves a consideration of the spaces of the court and their "staging" in service to the exploration of the purpose and poetics of the mask's text. The content itself also plays on the proximity between the social sphere for which the mask is produced and the one presented within the mask:

"The plot generally tells an allegorical story that establishes numerous analogies with the people to whom the performance was dedicated (sovereigns, mens of the court), or the occasion celebrated, thus narrating in parallel an idealistic life of the society and the city."<sup>440</sup>

Fragmentarily, Hejduk explains without explaining, as is his habit, his use of this dramatic form. In the midst of one of his texts, he mentions that this form is "fabulous," notably because the architect-directors were "interested in doing the masque but also what's behind the masque..." They were primarily constructing "systems, systems of thought."<sup>441</sup> Elsewhere, in response to remarks that see in this new architectural form a departure from the core of the practice, the architect seems to take pleasure in intertwining the terms *theater* and *high rise* to the maximum:

"In theater we can begin to undertake an investigation of the phenomena on which our present society rests. We can ask such questions as 'Is a hospital good, an acceptable instrument, as we conceive it today, by which the ends of society are reached?' 'Is a school acceptable?' 'Is a high rise?' Architecture is touched, transformed, by such study, thus inextricably connected to it."<sup>442</sup>

Beyond provocation, this collage of terms attests to the movement between scales, registers, and fields of knowledge that the architect consistently introduces into his own

438 Hejduk himself does not dwell on the connection between his projects and the reference to the Renaissance mask form. In one of the rare mentions of these works, Hejduk only highlights certain characteristics of this dramatic form, which serve as an indication of his interest and the transfer he makes: "Originating in England where they were first called "Mummers," masques generally lacked action, crisis or ending." (Medusa, 137)

439 Professional actors and musicians are hired for the spoken and dance parts. Masked individuals, who do not speak but dance, also participate in the performances. Often, these are members of the court who reveal their identity at the end of the performance by removing their masks. At the end of the play, the actors invite the audience to dance with them, blurring the boundaries of the play's framework. In the 17th-century English court, the most well-known masks were those produced by the poet and playwright Ben Jonson with sets designed by the architect Inigo Jones. Their two names are still the ones that come to mind directly when the mask is mentioned today. The history of masks remains somewhat unclear. The form that the mask took in the 17th century was hybrid, and it remains complex to imagine the exact contours of this festive form and the subtle layers of meaning it allowed.

440 Luca Cardani, "The City as a Theatre of Characters. John Hejduk's Masques," *I2 Innovación e Investigación En Arquitectura y Territorio* 9, no. 2 (July 15, 2021): 54, <https://doi.org/10.14198/I2.17415>.

441 John Hejduk and David Shapiro, "John Hejduk or the Architect Who Drew Angels," *A+U*, no. 244 (1991): 61.

442 Franz Schulze, *John Hejduk: Masques*, Chicago: Renaissance Society, Catalogue of an Exhibition by the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, 1981, 11.

practice. The intensification of this movement and the architectural *taking shape* it suggests are at the core of the architectural form of the masque. Researcher Amy Bragdon Gilley suggests that the mask becomes a way of engaging in architecture *while* questioning what constitutes appropriate architecture and architectural form in a given society and time. For Gilley, “Jonson’s masques played the game of glorifying the monarch while critiquing the monarch; Hejduk more directly questions the architect as a sort of Monarch.”<sup>443</sup> The reception of the work and the nuances discernible through an active approach are characteristic features of the masque, elements that Hejduk reproduces in his architectural masque:

“[Jonson’s] masques each contain subtle references and structure designed to both flatter the monarch, and for the keen observer, to question those values. These clever scripts, like many script films, rely heavily upon mage, leaving many opportunities for visual interpretation. Like the court masque, the poetry and diaries of Hejduk’s masques serve to ground the images.”<sup>444</sup>

For Hejduk, the masque takes the form of books, most of which are specifically linked to a city. Some are published as independent works, while others are featured in broader compilations that encompass multiple projects. In the introduction to the *Vladivostok* project, Hejduk suggests that his primary masques total nine, organized in a more or less obvious way into three trilogies or groupings. He describes a geographical and mental journey to establish invisible connections between all the masques:

“The journey I have been on for the past ten years followed an eastern route starting at Venice, then moving north to Berlin through Prague, then northeast to Riga, from Riga eastward to Lake Baikal and then on to Vladivostok. This has been, and is, a long journey.

Bodies of water mark the trek. Venice of the Adriatic, the lagoons, the Venetian canals, the river Vitava of Prague with its echoes of Rilke and Kafka, the waterways of Berlin, the Gulf of Riga, Lake Baikal, and the Sea of Japan of Vladivostok. The elements giving off their particular atmospheres and sounds impregnate my soul with the spirit of place, place actual... place imagined.

The works from this journey are named and form trilogies.

In Venice;

*The Cemetery of Ashes of Thought,*

*The Silent Witnesses,* and

*The 13 Watchtowers of Cannaregio.*

In Berlin;

*Berlin Masque,*

*Victims,* and

443 Amy Bragdon Gilley, “Drawing, Writing, Embodying: John Hejduk’s Masques of Architecture” (Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, 2010), 61.

444 Gilley, 62.

*Berlin Night.*

In Russia;

*Riga*

*Lake Baikal, and*

*Vladivostok.*"<sup>445</sup>

However, as with most lists compiled by the architect, this one is incomplete and is sometimes mentioned by Hejduk himself with variations. Here, the list should not be seen as part of the rigorous organization of documentation but rather as a new narrative thread connecting elements. In an approach similar to his house *series*, Hejduk establishes a constellation of these masques. He opens them up to each other, keeps them in motion, and places the itinerant dimension of his proposals at the heart of the project. The narrative of these narrative projects integrated into one of the narrative projects blurs the boundaries of each project. It allows the reader to feel this movement and approach the masks with an increased sensitivity to their vibrational dimension.

The books are all different, yet share common traits. They bring together diverse images, most of which borrow at least in part from the codes of architectural representation, while others may be considered more like paintings. The text holds an equal place to the drawings and takes the form of descriptions related to the construction and inhabitation of the depicted structures. The more one explores the mask, the more the fragments reveal their diversity:

"In addition to architectural drawings, other types of images appear, including numerous free-hand sketches, photographs, collages, and watercolours. With respect to the texts the situation is even more pronounced, with works that begin to weave together narrative fragments, historical footnotes, poems, literary excerpts, biographical portraits, and numerous references to works and artists from across the domains of art."<sup>446</sup>

The book delineates a collection of modest architectural structures, yet their constellation presents a compelling proposition on an urban scale, all the while resisting the inclination to become an all-encompassing representation. The multiplicity of image types is a key element in maintaining vibrancy and repeatedly defusing the architectural representation's inclination to declare itself as all-encompassing, while also avoiding being perceived as such. Hejduk's multiplicative approach demands effort from the reader. Numerous researchers who have delved into the masque device all attest to this concept of approach, effort, and acclimatization to the specific architectural frequency at which the masks communicate.

"Coming upon the *Masques* we find ourselves confronting works that do not appear to have an obvious precedent to which we can turn for guidance; or rather, they seem to

445 John Hejduk and Kim Shkapich, *Riga, Vladivostok, Lake Baikal: A Work* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 15.

446 Zubin K Singh, "Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk" (Montreal, McGill University, 2016), 4.



draw upon a variety of sources, none of which alone can serve as a model for how to approach and navigate them,”

writes scholar Zubin Singh.<sup>447</sup> And Jalón Oyarzún : “As we become familiar with the map-masque, these plans that seemed to be static acquire movement, epochs overlap and the (dis)encounters and paths between them multiply.”<sup>448</sup>

The essence of the architectural masque lies in the spaces between lines and between images. Architectural imagination is not dictated by a single mind – that of the architect. On the contrary, the masque continually asserts that its presence and form are temporary or point towards something else. The masque tells a story, yet lacks true action or intensity, concentrating attention on the relationship between form and content and the singular architectural poetics of the masque. The tone is one of vibration. The approach demands acclimatization and attention to the unspoken. Singh notes that the evocation of a lack, an absence, is a recurring strategy manifesting in various forms across different masks:

“Again, the text is marked by its brevity and density, which also instills the sense that behind each statement something profound has been left unsaid. [...] The sensation of there being something unvoiced [...] is primarily a function of the structure and tone of Hejduk’s language.”<sup>449</sup>

This narrative architectural form implies a dialogue and active collaboration with all those who engage with the proposals and feel involved. This participation differs from inhabitants merely occupying an architecture. Instead, it closely resembles the concept of an architectural audience essential to the unfolding of the architectural experience, similar to the unfolding of a theatrical or performative experience. In this sense, the masque is an architecture activating diverse imaginative dynamics. The device prompts the connection and activation of the imagination of all those who traverse it and experience places and atmospheres with the masque as a guide: “What is important is that there is an ambience or an atmosphere that can be extracted in drawing that will give the same sensory aspect as being there,” declares Hejduk.<sup>450</sup>

### Fumbling image : An elliptical approach to the frozen history of places

The series of houses that Hejduk developed early in his career mostly had no site other than the sheets of paper on which they were developed. In contrast, the masque device is developed in contact with the cities it engages with. Moreover, a number of masques are developed as responses to international architecture competitions. These elements are crucial to consider in understanding the device and the ambitions of

447 Singh, 5.

448 Jalón Oyarzún, “Excepción y cuerpo rebelde: lo político como generador de una arquitectónica menor,” 169.

449 Singh, “Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk,” 133.

450 Hejduk and Shkapich, *Mask of Medusa*, 58.

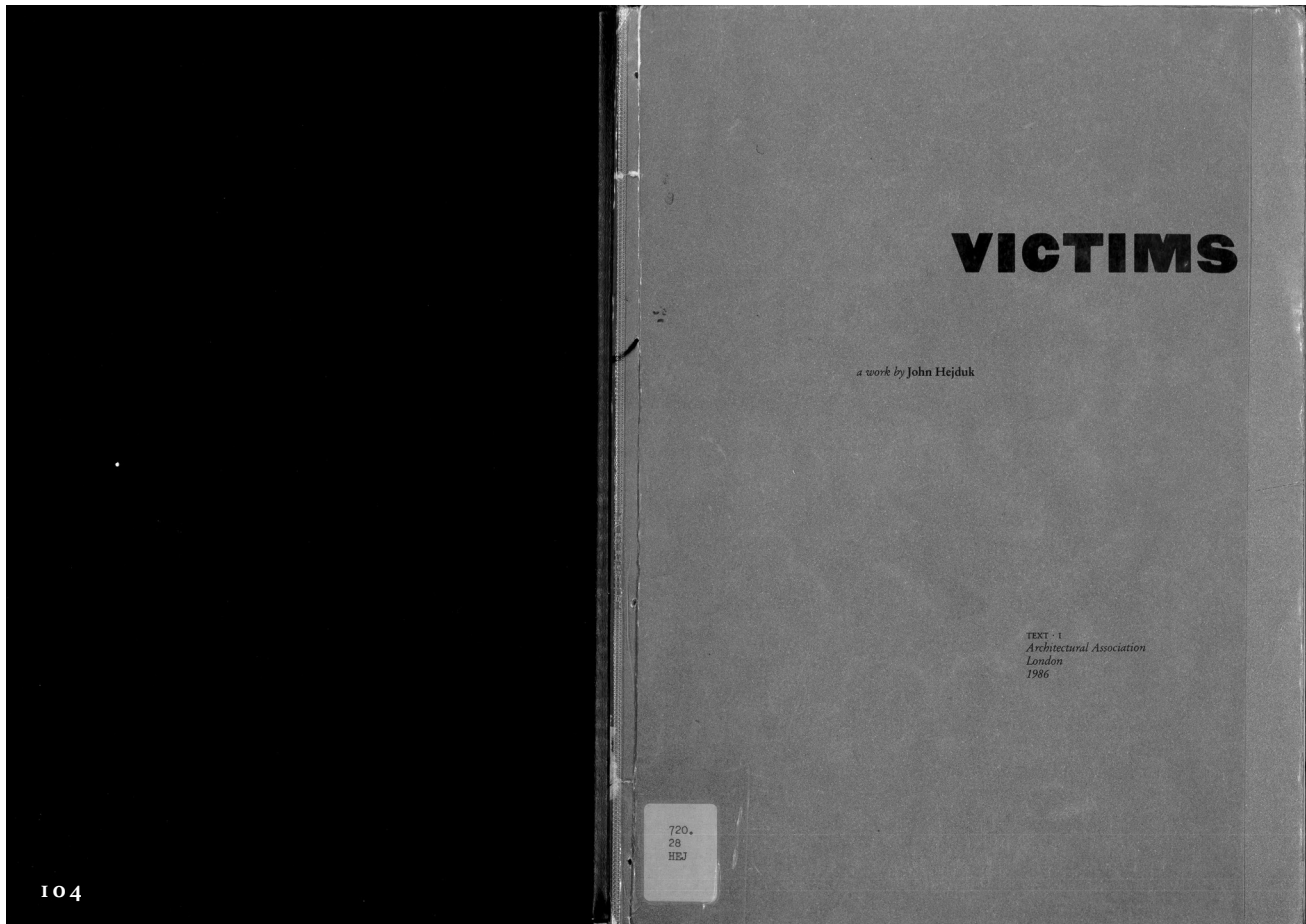


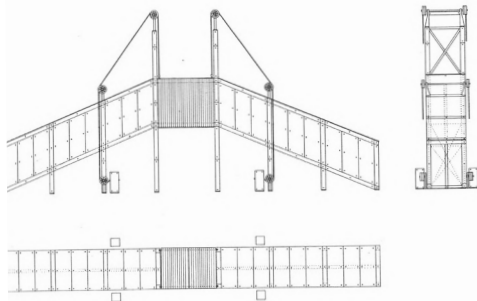
Fig. 104 • Cover of John Hejduk, *Victims*. Text / Architectural Association 1. London: Architectural Assoc, 1986.

Counter-Imaginings.

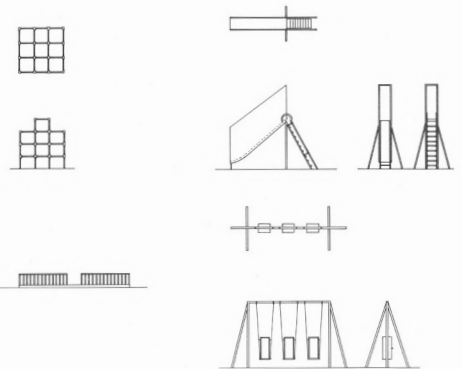
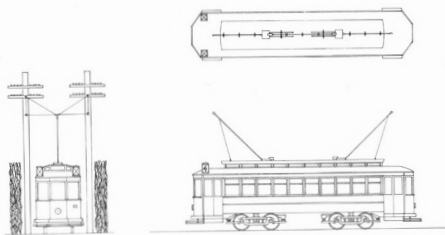
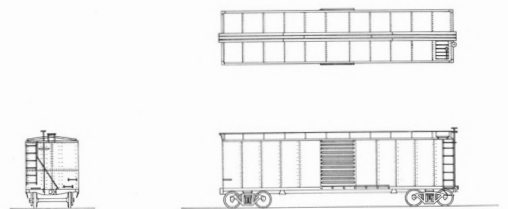


105

7 Drawbridge Man - Drawbridge



9 Mechanic - Box Car Parts



11 Children Jungle Jim

12 Children Sliding Pond

13 Children Sand-Box

14 Children Swings

106

8 Trolley Man - Trolley

Fig. 105-106 • Pages of John Hejduk, Victims. Text / Architectural Association 1. London: Architectural Assoc, 1986.

Drawing spatial-affective amplitude



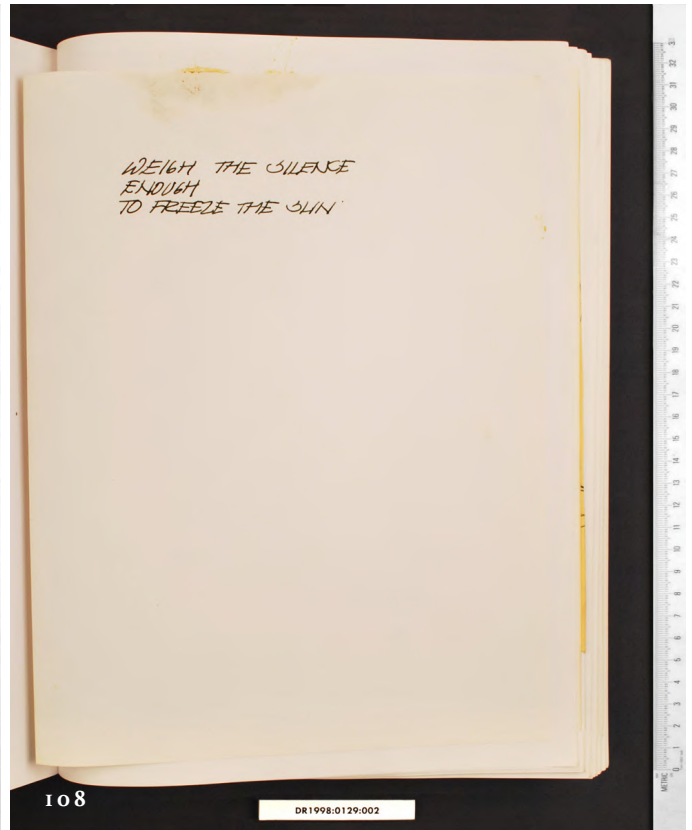
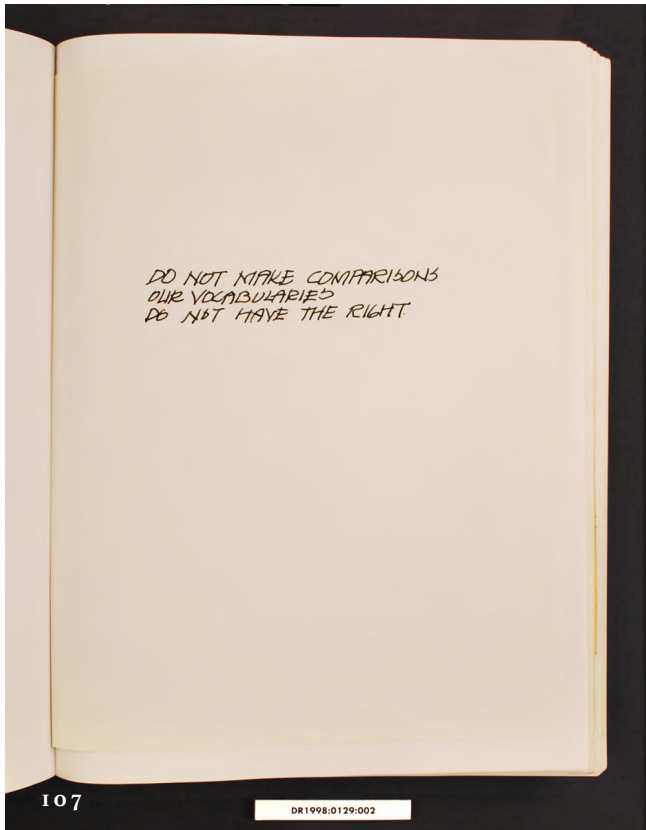
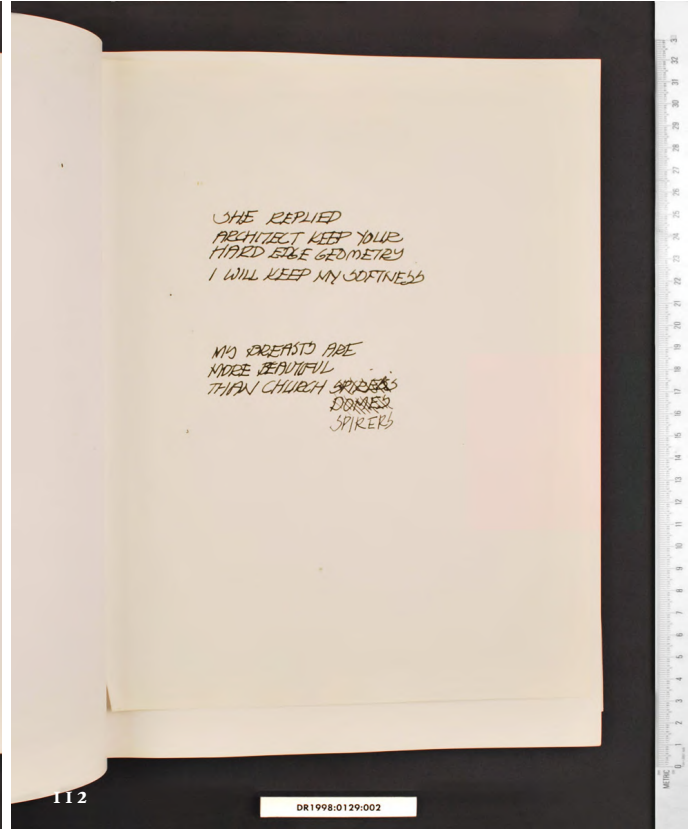


Fig. 107-14 • John Hejduk, Soundings: Sketchbook, 1991. Graphite, ink, coloured pencil, watercolour and paper collage on paper and reprographic copies, 31 x 24 x 6cm. DR1998:0129:002, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



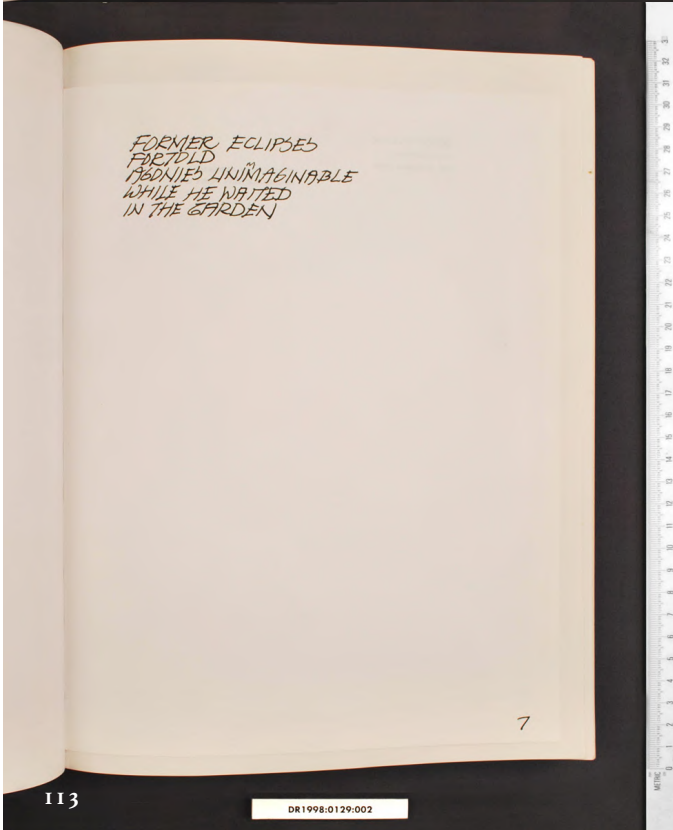
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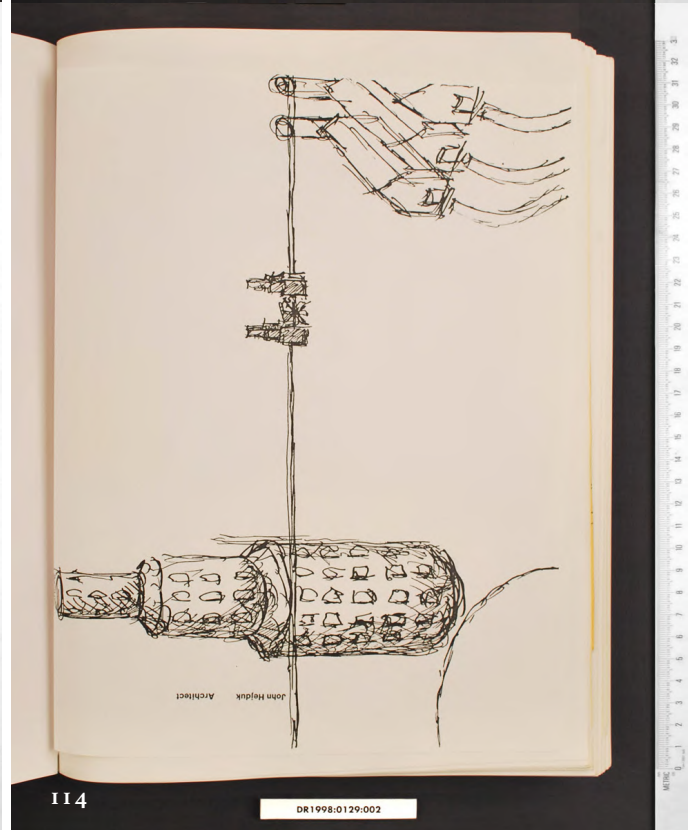
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John Hejduk Architect





Fig. 115-18 • John Hejduk, Artist book, Riga, 1985. Watercolour on paper, 21 x 27 x 2 cm. DR1998:0113, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA







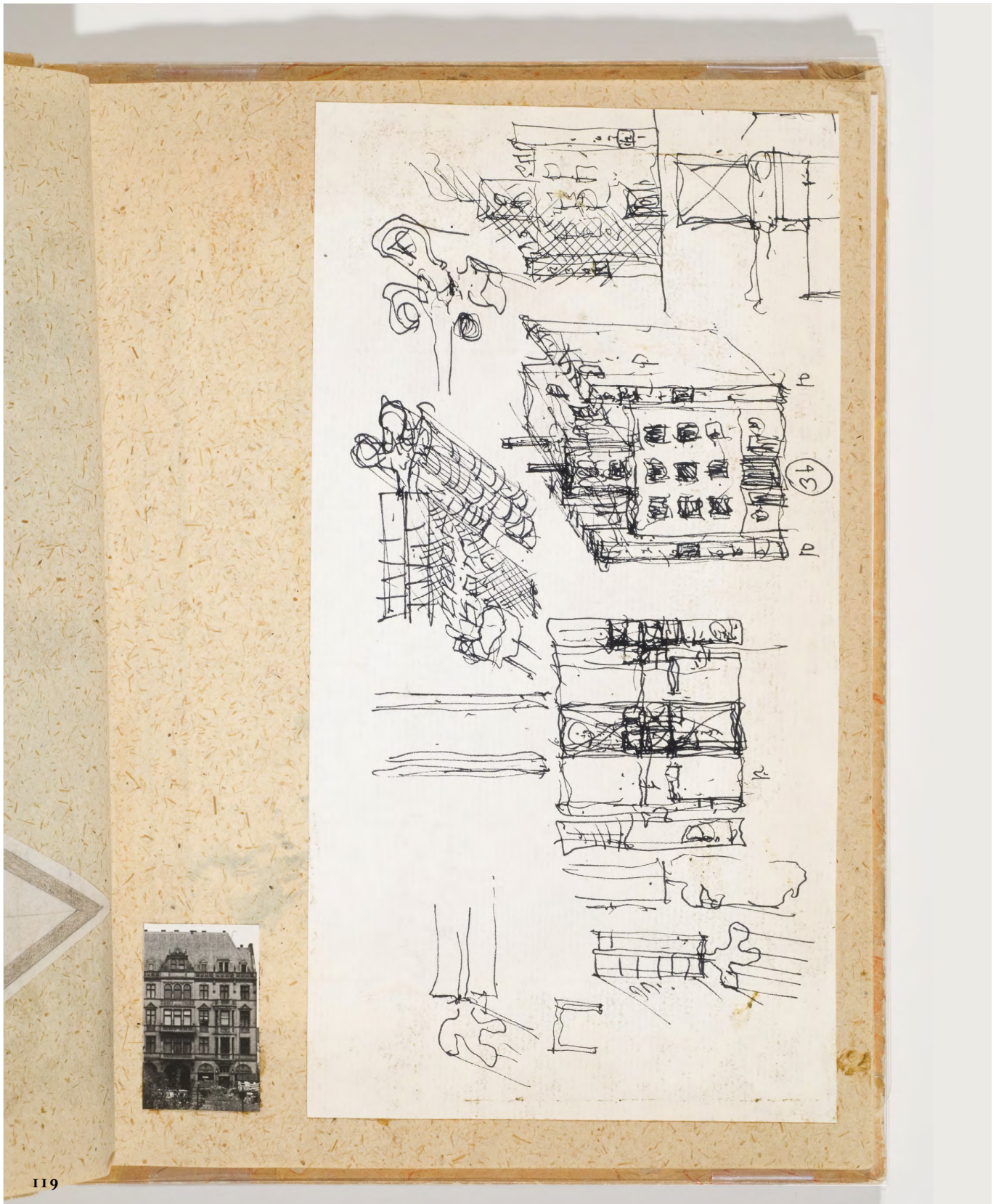
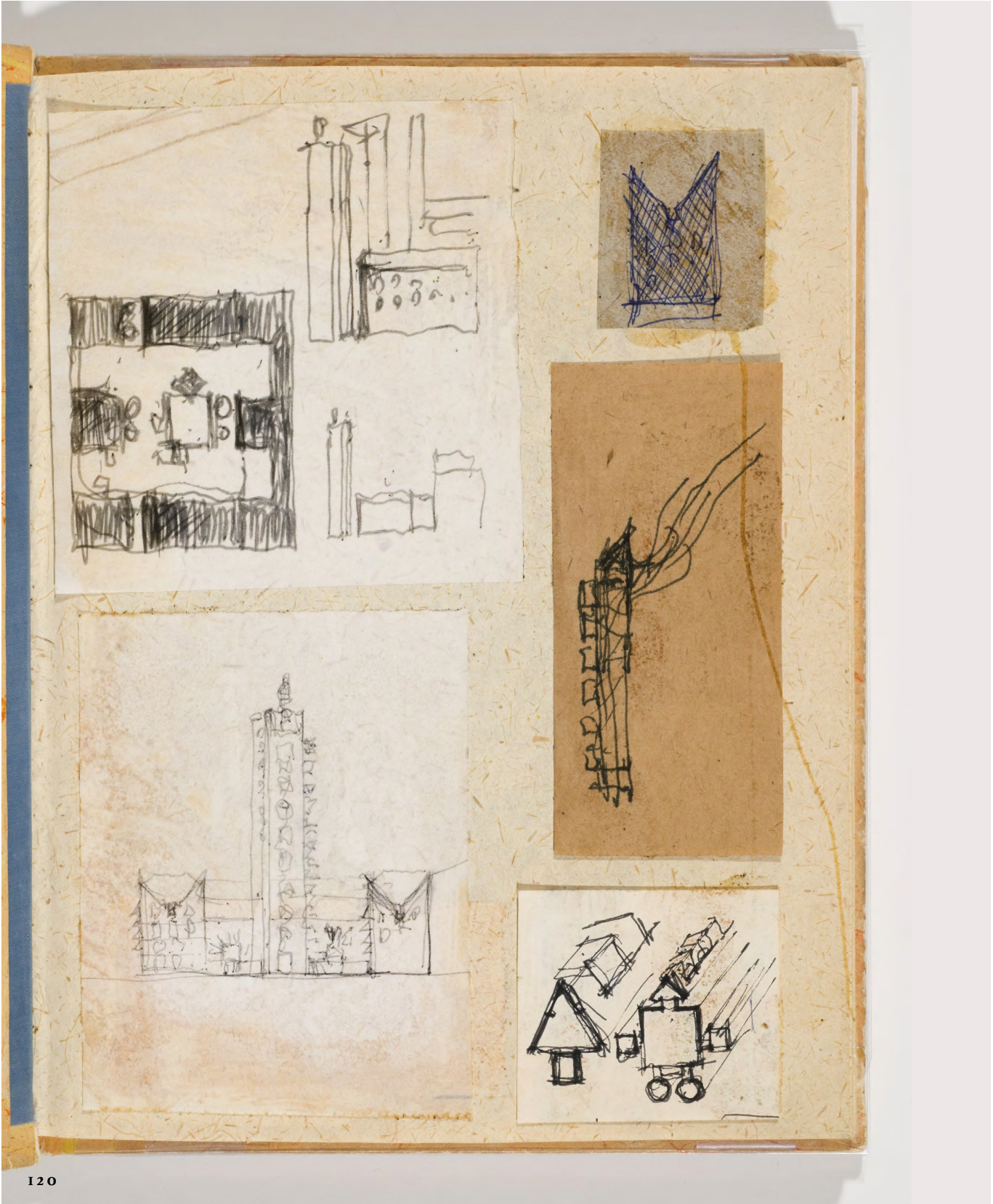


Fig. 119-20 • Sketchbook: plans, elevations, an axonometric, sketches, views of a model and buildings, portraits, typescripts of poems, typescript texts, postcards, clippings, and maps; drawings and sketches related to various projects by John Hejduk, including the Berlin Masque and the Lancaster/Hanover Masque. 1980-1983. DR1998:0098:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA.





its creator. For Hejduk, the masques are not books about architecture or cities. The masques are architectures; serious and committed architectures that speak to the contemporary condition and offer valid responses to the future of specific neighborhoods and their inhabitants. The form of the masque aims to address how social issues are inscribed in the fabric of cities and the experience derived from them.

Hejduk employs this new architectural form to scrutinize the hardened condition of certain places and atmospheres burdened and rendered static by the events of the twentieth century. In Venice, one of the projects, *Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*, was developed in 1975 as a response to an international competition to rethink the Molino Stucky building and its surroundings. The neo-Gothic building, a former flour and pasta mill located on the waterfront of the Giudecca island facing Venice, had been abandoned since 1955. The spatial dynamics of deindustrialization are again present in the work *Bovisa*, which focuses this time on a district of Milan with the same name. In Berlin, Hejduk also develops part of his proposals within the framework of an international competition to rethink “pieces of the city.”

The weight of history is omnipresent in the Berlin projects, particularly in the *Victims* project, which involves the transformation of the site of a former torture chamber from World War II and the development of a memorial park. Echoes with other crucial events of the twentieth century, including the nuclear bomb, are not lacking. In all these projects, there is a desire to address the profound consequences of these events in society without turning away, yet also without succumbing to the formulation of *solutions* that would be inadequate in addressing the affections caused by this suffering in reality. The key to achieving this right *tone* is to keep the project in motion and to make it a surface on which affections are inscribed—affections that are neither meant to be erased nor allowed to sweep everything away:

““Victims” is –”The Victims” is a—that book—let’s put it—it’s a book—but something else is—it’s the work I leave. I don’t know how to say that but that’s simply the work I leave addressing that problem—not problem. You can’t call it a problem—addressing that—you can only address it. It’s something else and the “Victims” book is my elliptical—that’s all I can say elliptical approach to horror.”<sup>451</sup>

The one who produces a work is not always the best person to talk about it, but in the case of the masque, reflections on the work seamlessly intertwine with the work itself. This blending of production and reading perspectives is executed differently in each mask: in the early masks, an interview with Hejduk, where he has the opportunity to clarify some of his ideas, is often transcribed, or there may be a note more evocative than explanatory from the author. In the later masques, the author’s comments on the form of his work are scattered, integrated into the drawings, lists, or poems themselves.<sup>452</sup> Re-

451 Hejduk and Shapiro, “John Hejduk or the Architect Who Drew Angels,” 60.

452 A detailed analysis of the evolution of the mask’s form and the ways in which different tones and registers of image and text are mobilized has been conducted by Zubin K. Singh in his thesis on Hejduk’s masks: Singh,



turning to *Victims*, the expression of an “elliptical approach” embraces the energy of the mask and articulates how it “settles” on Berlin without erasing its wounds. The movement implied by the elliptical approach *becomes* a constitutive element of the masque. This approach serves as an entry point into the world of nuanced movements of the masque. It acts as a warning: the masque demands a certain readiness for movement, as it is through this register that the architectural proposition operates.

As one progresses in the discovery of the masque, encounters with mobile structures or characters occur, whose repetitive actions retain a certain mystery. Everything is in motion, yet this movement is often relatively mysterious in terms of its specific objectives. The different elements perform a kind of slow dance, which the masque allows one to feel and join. Since the experience is always imaginative, the masque establishes the possibility of a collective dance-experience-imagination. In the case of *Victims*, the structures perform a dance in which they all touch each other at a single point, forming a long ribbon across the site while evoking the fragility of what holds us together. In *Berlin Night*, another mask for Berlin, the proposed movement to enter the masque is even slower and more ritualized. This time, it unfolds on the scale of the city in a procession of structures and characters. This ritualistic form is repeated in the arrangement of the book itself. Inconsistencies and omissions in numbering and references require multiple readings to grasp the whole:

“One repeatedly covers the same ground as it were, each time with an eye for a different connection. [...] It alters the way the work resolves: less the result of a direct focus and intent, here one’s familiarity is built up through peripheral vision, a diffuse recognition of something repeatedly seen, but through a gaze consistently directed elsewhere. Put another way, if it could be said that previous *Masques* opened out into a ‘garden of forking paths’, *Berlin Night* is more like a tangle of blind corners, dead ends, and switchbacks.”<sup>453</sup>

While Hejduk’s early masks often have a general plan that still maintains the sense of the possibility of synthesis, with *Berlin Night*, this possibility fades. In his later masques, movement becomes more procedural. In the book *Pewter Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils*, one of Hejduk’s latest works published a decade after the Berlin masques, the movement involves a slow ascent and descent sequenced by architectural encounters. These encounters seem laden with meaning, but the text provides no explanation. The dense atmosphere of the experience operates solely through cross-references and evocations. The ascent offers views of many pieces of landscape and structures encountered in other masks. At the end of this strange journey undertaken by two characters who arrive and depart from the site by train, the encounter with the ticket agent adds another layer of strangeness:

“While they are waiting for the train, the ticket agent asks, ‘Have you been to the woods?’ They reply no, they have not been to the woods. He says, ‘What a pity, for in the woods

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“Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk.”

is the House of the Archivist, which is interesting, and the Intermediate Court and the Judge's Wheel, which certainly should be seen, among other structures." He then asks if they have been to the Geometric Caves; again, they reply no. He does not ask them any more questions."<sup>454</sup>

Once again, the sense of insufficiency, the feeling that one cannot fully grasp a place without revisiting it multiple times, is seamlessly woven into the content of the dialogues. The humor in this final dialogue serves to diminish the emphasis on the ascent's movement as a pilgrimage. Despite the meticulous engagement to explore, touch, feel, and observe by the two characters, the notion of comprehending their experience as a possibility of total experience is never broached. As the two characters depart, their own ascent leaves an indelible mark on the place, seamlessly merging with the inherent vibration—a situated vibration, deeply rooted in the place itself, comprehended by humans only in successive fragments. The poetic dimension that emerges in the diversions, borrowings, hesitations, inconsistencies, repetitions, tactile images, and humorous traits is to be understood as a counter-architectural language. Through its oscillatory poetics, the masque denounces the authoritative dimension attached to architectural drawing and proposals in the discipline more broadly.

Omnipresent, movement is at the center of the understanding and operability of the masks. This movement is characterized by a low intensity, responding to the ways in which places are generally experienced and perceived in daily life through a *distracted* sensitivity. Benjamin had already identified the specificity of this sensitivity when distinguishing optical arts from tactile arts. As a tactile art, architecture is engaged with a 'background, environmental, and diffuse attention."<sup>455</sup>

Building upon Benjamin's description of this type of attention, Citton highlights the multiple virtues of distraction in our era of the "attention crisis". Distraction can signify a prioritization of something other than what initially captures attention. It then becomes a way of affirming "values whose relative importance is socially contested" and takes on an ethical and political coloration.<sup>456</sup> Citton also underscores the ecological and political coloration of distraction. It reflects an ability to divert attention from objects that already have our full focus to become attentive to what may need it more urgently. In the masque, the omnipresence of a vibrational movement contributes to constructing the possibility of a distracted experience of the mask itself and the experience of the urban atmosphere it presents. As Citton writes, such aesthetic experiences have the value of "clearing paths for alternative concentrations, which will progressively enrich the span and granularity of our perceptual dispositions."<sup>457</sup>

454 John Hejduk, *Pewter Wings, Golden Horns, Stone Veils: Wedding in a Dark Plum Room*, ed. Kim Shkapich (New York: Monacelli Press in cooperation with the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, 1997), 17.

455 Yves Citton, "Éloge écopolitique de la distraction à l'âge de l'effondrissement," in *Politiques de la distraction* (Dijon: Presses du réel/ArTeC, 2020), 37.

456 Citton, 38.

457 Citton, 40.

In the field of architecture, such a relationship with the image is rare, as attention is traditionally focused solely on the architectural object. In this regard, the masque differs radically from dominant practices in the discipline, which simultaneously isolate the architectural object and its image, turning architectural imagination into a purely individual act. Conversely, the masque articulates the inscription of architectural drawing into the world. In affectively charged contexts, where it operates, the masque *defers* the experience of the real and imbues it with a slow impulse that allows for adjustment.

This architecture reflects on how architecture takes place, makes room, and co-acts. Its value is most fully revealed in contexts marked by pain, which demand a strong mobilization of collective thought and imagination to become-other. It questions, opens up, and becomes the vehicle for exploring and transmission of the textures of the world and our shared ways of making sense of it: “The work’s eloquence rests on a recognition of the great void where all things begin, the infinite source of our most intense vibration.”<sup>458</sup>

#### When the masque is performed/built : Collective imaginings

On several occasions, some of the structures that populate the masques have been built.<sup>459</sup> Often, their construction, as well as their use, has generated collective spatial and performative practices that are also practices of co-imagination. The traces that remain from these events are relatively few and will be discussed later in this text. Nevertheless, there is at least one film, *The Collapse of Time*, and its corresponding book, along with another book, ‘John Hejduk: The Riga Project,’ documenting two specific moments during which structures were built and gave rise to collective celebrations.<sup>460</sup>

The film captures the assembly of a tower part of the structures designed by Hejduk for the *Victims* project. The tower, called *The Collapse of Time*, represents the final element in a series of 68 structures and marks Hejduk’s first built structure. The construction and activation performance of the tower took place within an exhibition of the project *Victims* at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London in 1986.<sup>461</sup> The book, on the other hand, chronicles the construction of two structures

458 Alberto Pérez Gómez, *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture* (Montreal, Canada: Rightangle International, 2016), 385.

459 The list of realized Masque installation (as cited in Cardani, 63) : “House for a Painter and House for a Musician”, IBA’84, Berlin, 1983; “The collapse of time”, AA Pavillon, London, 1986; “The Riga project”, Riga, 1987; “Security” Oslo, 1989; “House of the suicide and House of the mother of the suicide”, Atlanta, 1991 - Praha, 1992 - New York, 2016, Praha, 2017; “The Tower of Cards, The Tower of Letters, The Joker’s perch”, City Marking S08, Groningen, 1990; “La Mascara de la Medusa”, Buenos Aires, 1998.

460 The video is available for free access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z91hfQ-D6oI>, accessed on November 30, 2023. The two works are: John Hejduk and Architectural Association London, eds., *The Collapse of Time: And Other Diary Constructions; [John Hejduk]* (London, 1987). John Hejduk and The University of the Arts, eds., *John Hejduk : The Riga Project* (Berlin: Aedes, 1988).

461 Alvin Boyarsky, the chairman of the AA from 1971 until his death in 1990, was a close friend and thought partner for Hejduk. Boyarsky developed, advocated, and communicated an expansive vision of architecture, notably through series of publications and ambitious exhibitions, conducted in parallel with those proposed by

related to the *Riga mask – Object and Subject*. The two complementary structures were built at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia in 1987 and exhibited in the *Great Hall* of the University.

### A relational image

The two documented moments bear witness to a pivotal moment in which the masques find opportunities for materialization. However, it cannot be precisely stated that these constructions are the final culmination of the projects to which they are related. That would be an attempt to link the masques to a ‘becoming-architecture’ through their ‘becoming-construction.’ Indeed, the masques’ projects do not necessarily need to be built to exist as complete *architectures*, as Hejduk regularly takes the time to emphasize.

The events and constructions discussed here are, therefore, architectural materializations that differ from those commonly encountered in the discipline (from the production of an image to the materialization of what it describes). Here, the drawing does not function as a means of representation aiming to enable construction. As Singh notes in his descriptions of the masque projects, they completely abstract from some of the codes traditionally articulating the transition from drawing to realization, notably, the indication of a scale establishing the direct metric relationship between drawing and site:

“One consequence of this omission is that, rather than being able to refer to an external system of measurement, the size of the various structures must be determined by relating the scale of familiar elements to the rest of the drawing, and in cases where there is no such point of reference, by relating the structures to one another. Here, as elsewhere, we begin to comprehend the work through the relation of the elements to one another, rather than through an outside or objective order.”<sup>462</sup>

In this omission, the way the drawing affects the material reality in which it operates becomes relational. Instead of excluding bodies while subjecting them to the implementation of what is drawn, the drawing presents itself as an image that needs to be encountered. As an architectural device, the drawing engages and supports a process of co-materialization, which is also a process of co-imagination. For those who choose to imagine the structure, it involves exploring the dimensions it takes in their imagination and anchoring it to the body. The scale of the structure is the one that suits the individuals who invest in it, not one predetermined by the architect.

Similarly, the absence of a fixed scale allows the structures to travel from city to city. The structures respond to the sites in which they are built, and their movement be-

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Hejduk in New York. Through these formats directly engaging with generations of students of that time, the two men significantly contributed to highlighting the practice, thought, and transmission of architectural drawing as a means for the intersection of visual and spatial language with contemporary issues.

462 Zubin K Singh, “Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk” (Montreal, McGill University, 2016), 173.

tween cities gives them different dimensions. Thus, when looking at the drawing of *Subject* and *Object* at the beginning of the Riga book, one observes that the structures have a relatively large size compared to the surrounding buildings, defining the stage-like space they occupy.

Further into the same work, the constructed structures placed in the university hall are sized to have the same kind of ambiguous dimensional relationships with the surrounding built environment, rather than being sized based on what one might assume from the initial drawing. For those who have the mask's drawing in mind and then face the structures in the hall, there is a kind of merging phenomenon of places occurs: the different sides of the hall become the facades of the drawn square, and the structures bring Riga, its imagination, and its atmosphere with them.

In this inversion, the existing site and its built materiality almost transform into a backdrop, reminiscent of Renaissance masques where noble buildings were entirely reimagined to host masque representations. In the case of Hejduk's masks, the real almost becomes a backdrop and thus presents itself as a stage that could potentially be re-played, or re-heard, to initiate other uses, other social interactions, and accommodate other stories.

Even when constructed, the structures are only a temporary and situated materialization of the mask, and they do not relegate the masque's drawings to a secondary status. They coexist with it and accompany the masque's ability to function as an architectural image. In this sense, the becoming-construction of the masque reveals a non-linear architectural temporality in which the drawing does not fade away in favor of its realization. On the contrary, the imagined and constructed architectures intertwine and become active towards each other, forming an architectural image with multiple textures. The architectural image fully exists in the in-between of the possibilities created by the tension of different textures of this image, actualized in experience and practice. It takes shape in the bodies that navigate this thickness and actualize its potentialities.

The affective architectural image and the ways of encountering it are organized by the *written* dimension of the masques. For Hejduk, the two intertwined registers of writing and drawing are the ones that allow architecture to operate at the level of a place's atmosphere and the relationalities of which it is composed. Each masque is characterized by a different balance and correspondence of text and drawing, but in all cases, the device allows for the elaboration of an architectural image that is evoked repeatedly in various forms but never definitively revealed. The texts anchor the structures in relation to each other, and with the memory and narratives of a site as well as those of its potential futures.

Thanks to the text that connects them and suggests specific modes of habitation and encounter for these structures, they are already and always accompanied. They



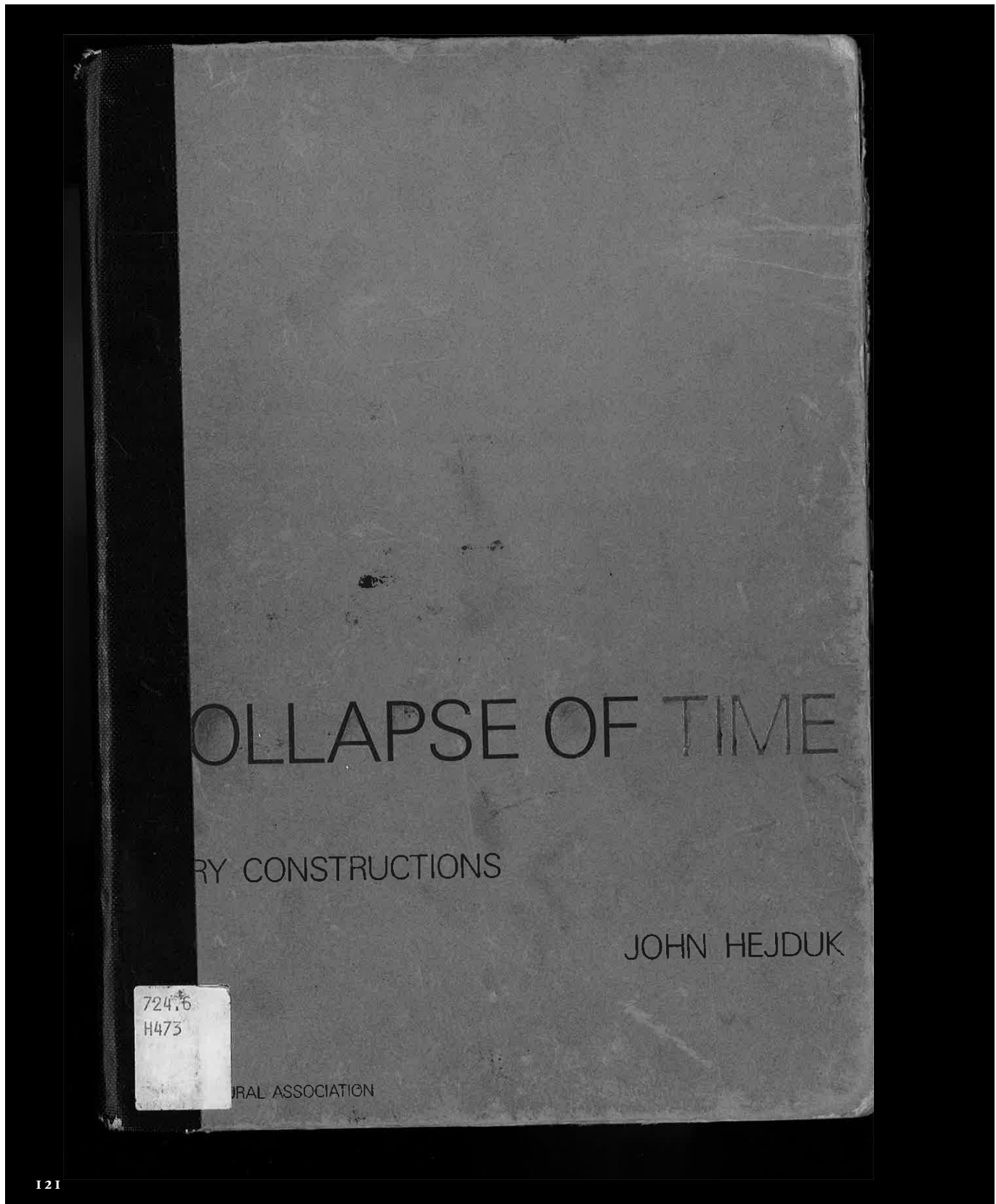
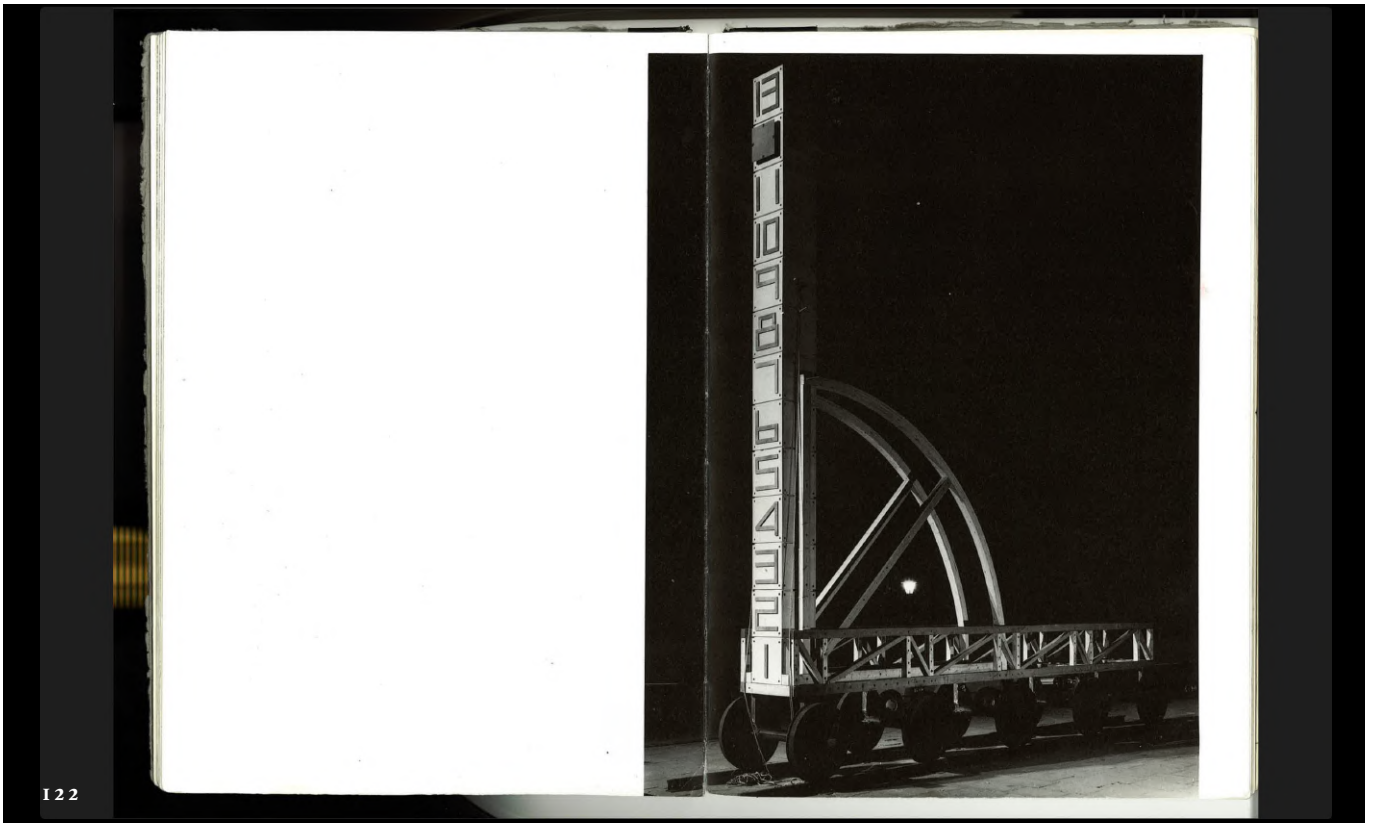
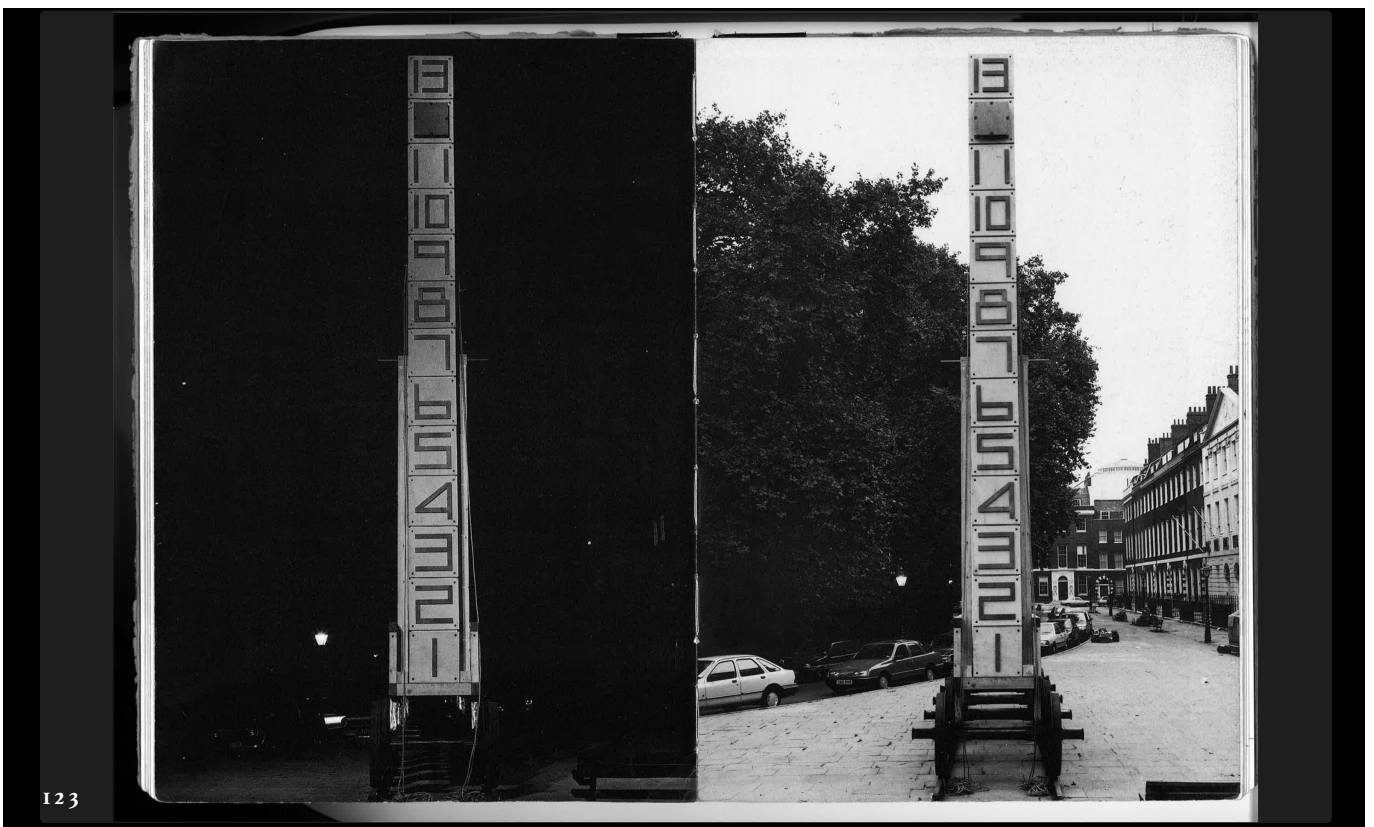


Fig. 121 • Cover of John Hejduk, *The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*. Exhibition “The Collapse of Time.” London: Architectural Association, 1987. The page presents the Clock-Structure designed by John Hejduk, titled ‘The Collapse of Time,’ which was erected outside the Architectural Association premises in Bedford Square in October 1986.



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123

Fig. 122-23 • Pages from John Hejduk, *The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*. Exhibition "The Collapse of Time." London: Architectural Association, 1987. The page presents the Clock-Structure designed by John Hejduk, titled 'The Collapse of Time,' which was erected outside the Architectural Association premises in Bedford Square in October 1986.





John Hejduk  
 Object/Subject, from the RIGA book  
 watercolor on paper, 1985  
 8 1/4" x 10 1/2"  
 Photo: Kim Shkapich

2

124

Fig. 124-25 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: watercolor on paper, 1985 8 1/4" x 10 1/2". Photo: Kim Shkapich. Right: John Hejduk, *The Hesitation Of Orpheus*, poem. 1953-1996.

THE HEBOTATION OF DRAPHELS

John Hejduk

AS THE SNOW  
DESCENDED  
IT TURNED TO  
BLOOD  
DURING THE NIGHT  
TRANSFORMING  
THE RIVER TO THE  
COLOR  
OF MAHOGANY  
THE OCEAN REMAINED  
PRUSSIAN BLUE  
WHEN THE STARFISH  
FLORATED UPWARD  
AS SOWLALAMENTS  
RELEASED  
FROM UNDERSEA  
VOLCANOS  
THE MOON BECAME  
AN ELLIPSE  
BEFORE COLLAPSE  
THE FLAMES OF THE SUN  
FROZE  
WHEN DRAPHELS  
BEGAN HIS TURN  
TO HIS HORROR  
EURYDICE  
CONTINUED HER JOURNEY  
TOWARDS HINT  
KISSING DEATH

A SHUDDER RAN THROUGH  
THE WINGS OF THE ANGEL  
CAUSING THE AIR TO CHILL.





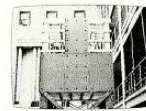
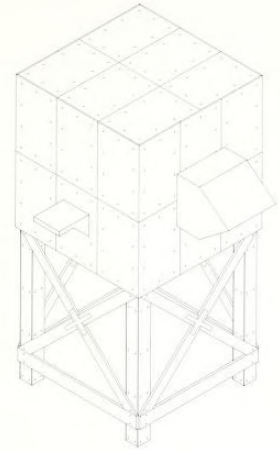
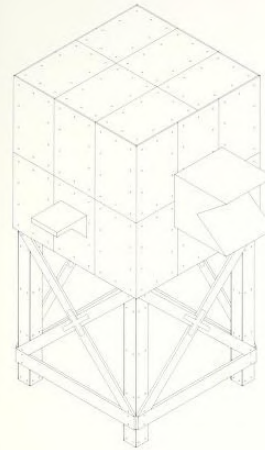
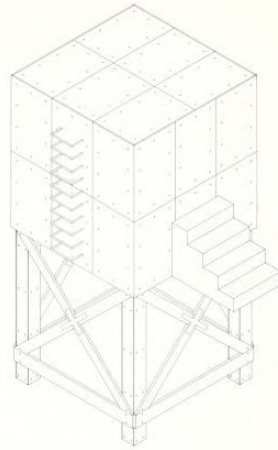
Fig. 126 • Page of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, watercolor on paper, 1985  
8¼"x10 ½". Photo: Kim Shkapich.



mixed noise of the struggle between wind and machine fill the vacuum around and inside us, seeing things that we could not trust

Now on the ground we search throughout the city in a frantic need to determine that what we saw from the sky can be seen on the streets of Riga. Our erratic walk takes us to the back of a building, a large one near the center of the old city. On the wall of the building there is a small poster: "The Riga Project—Subject Object." In a moment we are inside of a great skylighted hall looking at two tall structures. We have already seen them, but from another place and at another time.

To look and walk around these two tall structures on a quiet afternoon, brings us a complex mixture of emotions not so removed from the pilot's naturalness. This naturalness equals the quiet sensation of reaching a place where architecture is beyond its role of being only a physical shelter for man. These two structures belong to the complementary side of the role of architecture: the one that we always forget, to shelter our dreams and the mystery of our presence here. In looking at the two structures we are certain that inside there is a part of ourselves.



July 26

prime stars and noses  
sand stars and noses  
paint stars and noses  
drill 200 holes—panels  
paint 95 pieces

July 27

drill 354 holes—panels  
sand stars and noses  
paint stars and noses  
sand stars and noses  
paint 88 pieces

July 28

200 cuts  
200 screws drilled  
200 screws installed  
assemble braces on  
sculptures  
drill 48 holes  
drill 48 countersink

assemble 48 screws

weld 32 pieces  
cut 64 metal pieces  
grind 120 welds  
sand 2 pedestals

July 29

fill sand 4 pieces  
fill and sand 2 pieces  
fill and sand 2 pieces  
laminates 12 pieces  
paint 8 pieces  
fill and sand 8 pieces

July 30

60 cuts  
drill 60 holes  
sand 4 pieces

July 31

sand and grind 16 metal  
braces  
fill 16 metal braces  
grind 16 metal braces  
sand and fill 16 metal braces  
sand and fill 4 pieces  
sand and fill 2 sculptures  
drill 16 holes  
insert 8 anchors  
drill 8 holes  
insert 6 anchors  
fill 8 holes

August 1

prime 760 bolts  
paint 760 bolts  
paint 16 brackets x 2  
fill 16 brackets  
sand 16 brackets  
prime 16 brackets x 2  
paint 4 objects—  
noses and stars

sand 4 objects—  
noses and stars  
paint 2 objects—sculptures  
cut 60 pieces from  
copper pipe  
sand 60 pieces  
glue 40 joints  
prime 20 pieces  
paint 20 pieces  
sand 2 sculptures

paint 2 sculptures

fill 2 panels  
drill 40 holes  
drill 40 holes  
cut 16 pieces  
drill 40 holes  
glue 16 pieces

Fig. 127 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Work Schedule. Phase II: Final assembly of *Object/Subject* in The Great Hall. Drawings by Meton R. Gadelha.

possess a history, a memory, their own trajectory, inertia, and secrets. When they travel from Berlin to London or from Riga to Philadelphia, they arrive in these new places with their multi-textured power of evocation. According to Singh, the images crafted by Hejduk are “suffused with an anxiety about the failure of language, the unsettling possibility that there are events and experiences that exceed our capacity to articulate in words, and by extension, to speak, comprehend and share.” These images directly touch “with our ability to connect and identify with experiences which we have not shared, and so too with those who have endured them.”<sup>463</sup>

The deeper the knowledge of the masque, the deeper is the experience of the vibration of the real/reality that these image-structures are capable of provoking. Jalón Oyarzun writes about the ways in which this type of affective image enriches the relationship with the real/reality:

“The affective image is not static; it is transformed and enriched with each encounter, producing an affective amplitude that makes the world more extensive. Spinoza himself will describe how, the more we know, the greater our capacity to be affected, and therefore the greater our world and our power of action. The density of the traces and the capacity to trace and be traced is greater and consequently, the capacity of this corporal map or affective image to orient us, topologically mediating our encounter with the world, intensifies.”<sup>464</sup>

The fact that the constructions occur within the context of architecture schools and are associated with mask exhibitions contributes to transforming these construction sites into opportunities for delving into the dense affective essence of the masques. At certain moments in these processes, Hejduk is present. In the film, we see him pulling the rope to raise the tower alongside the students, and it is easy to envision him telling the stories of the tower they are constructing together. At another moment, we see him taking the time to engage with passersby.

Reading the projects of the masques and visiting the exhibitions also shapes encounters with the masque as an affective image and with the modest wooden structures that travel from city to city. Cardani notes how these structures become storytellers:

“Just as in theatre masks make the characters of society evident, architecture is entrusted with the task of manifesting the characters that build the city, and thus the narration of its meaning.”<sup>465</sup>

For some, the device is the source of a remarkable experience. In the Riga book, one can read these words, written by the architect in charge of the construction in Philadelphia:

463 Singh, 195.

464 Lucía Jalón Oyarzun, “El paisaje como imagen afectiva,” in *Ensamblajes: Paisaje contemporáneo y práctica patrimonial*, ed. Manuel Rodrigo De la O Cabrera and Francisco Arques Soler, 1st edition (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2023), 33–44.

465 Luca Cardani, “The City as a Theatre of Characters. John Hejduk’s Masques,” *I2 Innovación e Investigación En Arquitectura y Territorio* 9, no. 2 (July 15, 2021): 57, <https://doi.org/10.14198/I2.17415>.

“To look and walk around these two tall structures on a quiet afternoon, brings us a complex mixture of emotions. [...] The quiet sensation of reaching a place where architecture is beyond its role of being only a physical shelter for man. These two structures belong to the complementary side of the role of architecture, the one that we always forget, to shelter our dreams and the mystery of our presence here.”<sup>466</sup>

### Performing the more-than

In London as in Philadelphia, performative events take place in connection with the presence of the structures. In Philadelphia, during the inaugural evening, artist Connie Beckley presents the performance *Crooked Lightning*.<sup>467</sup> The performance takes its title from the poem that the poet David Shapiro, a close friend of Hejduk, dedicated to the Riga project. Throughout this performance, the audience is dispersed across the galleries of the hall at varying heights, thereby maintaining multiple connections with the structures. The performance unfolds around the sculptures, overlaying Connie Beckley’s performance with a televised image of Shapiro’s face as he reads his poems.

Beckley has a lamp attached to her chest, and its beam intersects with various subjects/objects present for the occasion. She unravels a fabric that, as it frays, becomes a trace of her movement. This apparatus, which radiates her actions and makes them highly visible, prompts consideration of all the other movements, possibilities, and invisible relationships in the space. The two impassive structures, equipped with receptive elements, become witnesses to this performance, but more importantly, to the affective texture of the space-time formed by the hall, the participants, and all the images summoned that evening.<sup>468</sup> In the Riga book, it is mentioned that on a second evening, students from the dance faculty performed in the space, offering yet another opportunity for gathering and exercising perception of the transformations induced by the presence of these two structures.

In London, it has been reported that the tower, representing time, was lowered twice by forty-five degrees, at noon on Fridays, October 10 and 24, 1986. The horizontal position thus achieved by the tower became “the collapse of time”.<sup>469</sup> “I am obsessed with time and have recently created time pieces... Clock towers. One of my recurring persistences is that present time cannot be seen... present time has an opacity... present time

466 Hejduk and The University of the Arts, *John Hejduk : The Riga Project*, 16.

467 The performance takes place on Thursday, November 19, 1987, at 8:00 PM in the university’s hall.

468 For a more detailed description of this performance and its implications, one can notably read: Barberá Pastor, Carlos. ‘Experiencias Sensitivas Entre \_Object/Subject\_ de John Hejduk, Una Performance de Connie Beckley y Un Poema de David Shapiro’. *Revista SOBRE 7* (15 June 2021): 18–28. <https://doi.org/10.30827/sobre.v7i.16494>.

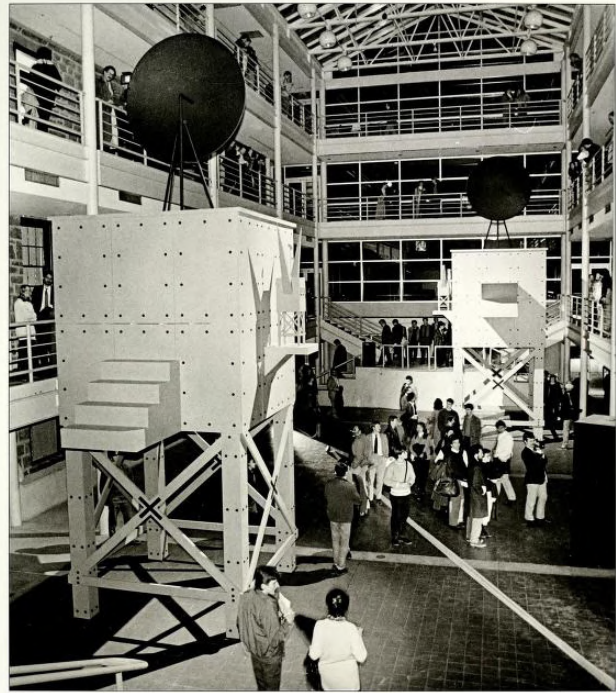
469 In Hejduk’s terms: “I envision a single clock tower that is mounted on a caisson. The tower moves from a vertical upright elevational position back down to a horizontal planimetric position... from a 90° upright position to a 0° horizontal position. The clock tower moves through spatial time, levational, flat time (90°)... then angular, isometric time (45°)... finally horizontal, perspective time (0°). The clock tower on the caisson can be moved from place to place... from place to place... from time to time... (the first entry into a constructional diary). The clock will be used in my conversation on time with the north of Italy.” John Hejduk, “Diary Constructions,” *Perspecta 23* (1987): 81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1567109>.



The public opening of The Riga Project on Thursday, November 19, 1987, began with a poetry reading by John Hejduk.



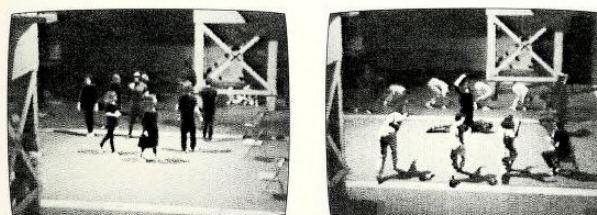
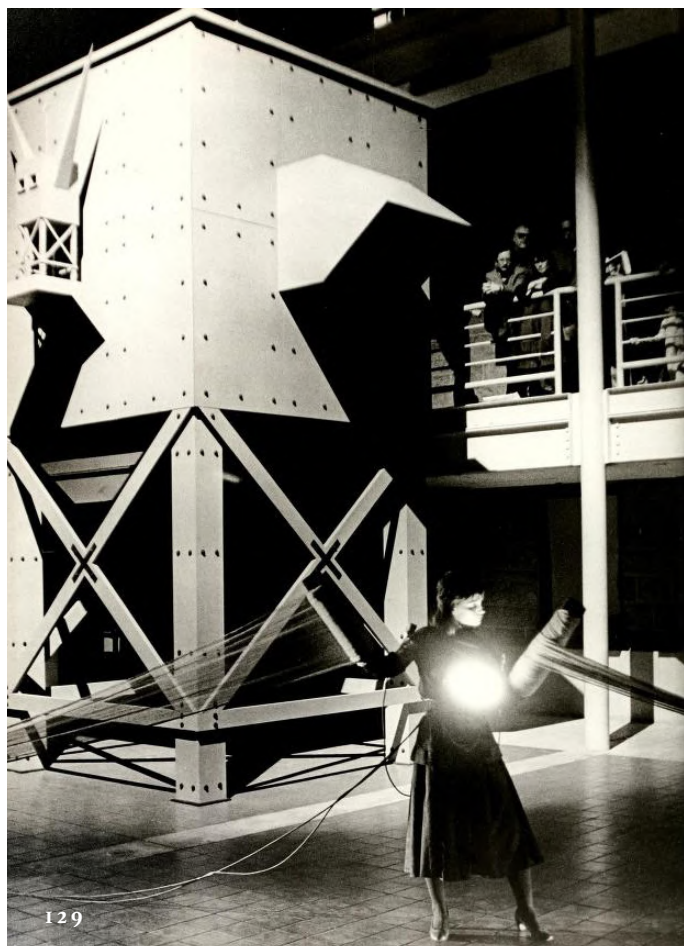
The Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, main gallery at The University of the Arts, presented the RIGA book in its entirety, and other works by John Hejduk including books VLADIVOSTOK and LAKE BAIKAL, drawings and models for earlier projects BERLIN MASQUE and LANCASTER/HANOVER.



A view of Object/Subject at The Great Hall on opening night, looking west.

Fig. 128 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: Public opening of The Riga Project on Thursday, November 19, 1987, began with a poetry reading by John Hejduk. Middle image: The Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, main gallery at The University of the Arts, presented the RIGA book in its entirety, and other works by John Hejduk including books *VLADIVOSTOK* and *LAKE BAIKAL*, drawings, and models for earlier projects *BERLIN MASQUE* and *LANCASTER/HANOVER*. Right image: A view of *Object/Subject* in The Great Hall on opening night, looking west.





In December 1987, students from The University of the Arts School of Dance performed *The Fall of Guilt*, a response to The Riga Project conceived and choreographed by Associate Professor Manfred Fischbeck. (above)

On opening night, Connie Beckley performed *Crooked Lightning*, named after one of David Shapiro's poems and dedicated to John Hejduk's Riga Project. (left)

Fig. 129 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: On opening night, Connie Beckley performed *Crooked Lightning*, named after one of David Shapiro's poems and dedicated to John Hejduk's Riga Project. Right image: In December 1987, students from The University of the Arts School of Dance performed *The Fall of Guilt*, a response to The Riga Project conceived and choreographed by Associate Professor Manfred Fischbeck.



OCTOBER 1986  
JOHN HEJDUK  
THE COLLAPSE OF  
TIME

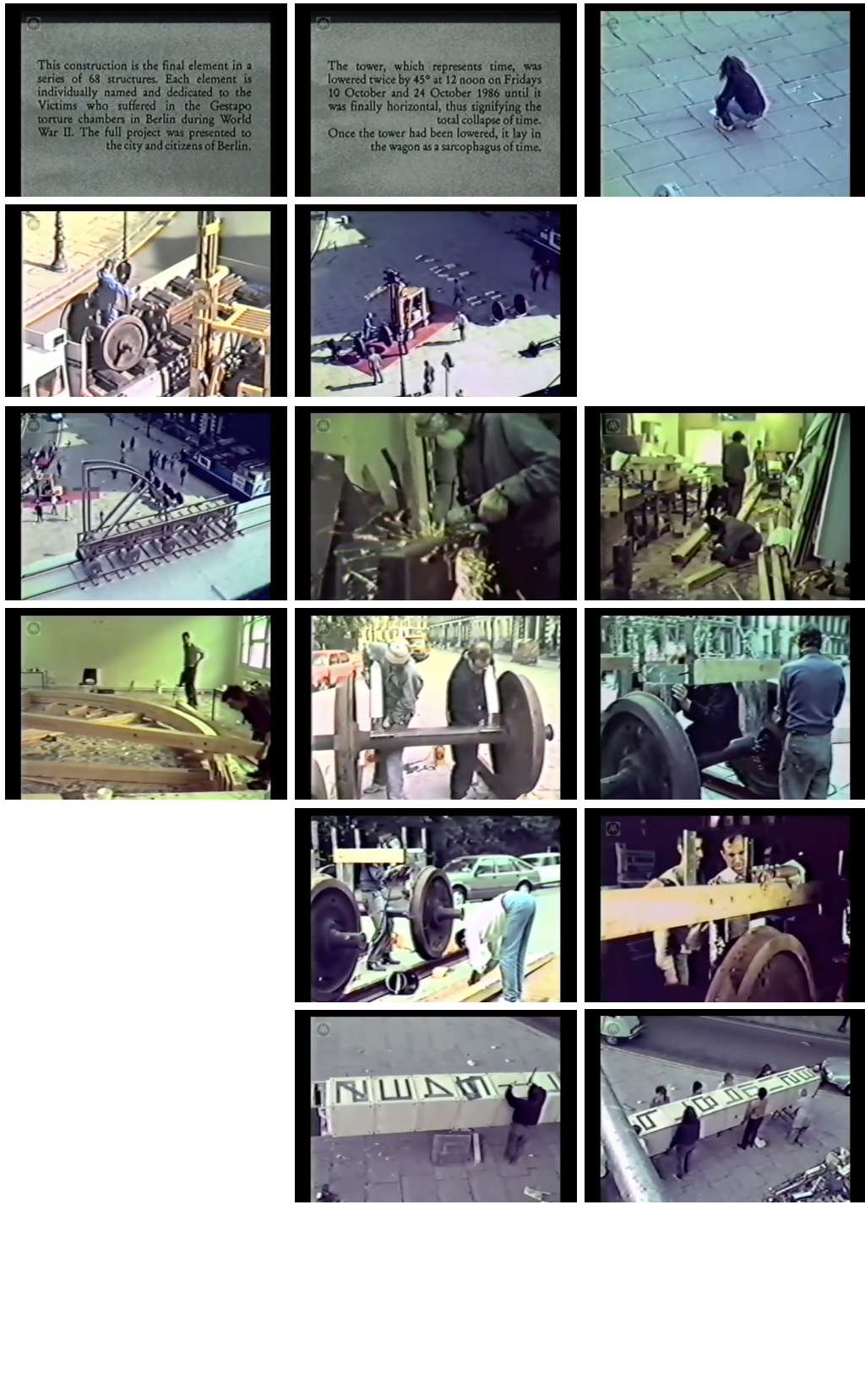


Fig. 130 • Footage of John Hejduk's *The Collapse of Time*, video still, 1986, 47 minutes and 59 seconds, seen at <https://youtu.be/z9ihfQ-D6oL>, accessed December 12, 2023. The structure construction was made to accompany the exhibition of Hejduk's project VICTIMS, shown at the AA in 1986. 'The Collapse of Time' is the final element in a series of 68 structures. The tower, which represents time, was lowered twice by 45° at noon on Fridays 10th and 24th October 1986 until it was completely horizontal, signifying the total collapse of time. The construction of 'The Collapse of Time' was undertaken by AA staff and students. The structural consultant for the project was Frank Newby.





is opaque... present time erases... blanks out time...," writes Hejduk in the book that will be published in connection with the exhibition and construction at the AA.<sup>470</sup>

Once again, the gathering and the act of taking the time to descend together from this clock tower point towards all that cannot be made visible but can be invoked, evoked. Behind the collectively embodied "geometric" gesture lies an invitation to the plurality of experiences and narratives of time, in contrast to the human obsession to quantify and control it. As poet David Shapiro later writes about this project, "a clock that removes the right time restores true time."<sup>471</sup> The structure activates a renewed perception of how bodies unfold time. While celebrating this malleability of time, the tower retains a certain coolness and inflexibility. It resists any clear resolution or formulation of renewal:

"Hejduk's masques are not part of the facile pluralism of American tolerance," Shapiro writes. "Hejduk's works are the mature speculations of [...] one who approaches the institution of architecture with a militant intransigence."<sup>472</sup>

### Bookish imaginal afterlives

Extending the non-linear and non-hierarchical relationship that exists between the masque project and the construction of structures, the images of the structures and events, in turn, find a new form of existence in other books, texts, and masques. Two books, *The Collapse of Time* and *The Riga Project*, although not masks themselves, adopt a meticulous approach to montage inspired by them and are created after the two events. In terms of architectural image, these works add in a distinctive manner to the constellation composed of masks and constructions.

In the introduction of the Riga book, it can be read that the book "is intended to commemorate to readers the full range of our [the people having participated to the construction and to the events connected to the presence of the structures in the hall] experiences."<sup>473</sup> The book opens with a color drawing of the *Sujet/Objet* of the Riga project facing a handwritten poem by Hejduk. It is through Riga that one enters the hall of Philadelphia, a montage that takes on the tendency toward movement of the masques. After Hejduk's construction drawings, the book transforms into a kind of construction site journal, in which the two structures "come to life" in a chronological axonometric drawing accompanied by photos and construction lists.

The blending of these different registers raises questions and leaves the reader free to imagine what this construction site means beyond the lists of screws and the accumulation/collective of efforts. The "why" remains unexplained, and the construction

470 Hejduk and Architectural Association London, *The Collapse of Time*. unpaginated

471 David Shapiro, 'The Clock of Deletion'. In Hejduk and Architectural Association London.

472 David Shapiro, 'The Clock of Deletion'. In Hejduk and Architectural Association London.

473 Hejduk and The University of the Arts, *John Hejduk : The Riga Project*, 11.

of the two increasingly anthropomorphic mute characters appears to rely on a ritual knowledge passed down orally to which the reader has not been initiated but is offered the chance to observe. The sequence of photos that follows captures a movement of proximity/distance, gauging these strangely dimensioned Subject/Object entities, while Shapiro's poems, recited during the performance, close the book to better open the project to its resonances.

The book following the construction of the tower in front of the AA is different. Titled *The Collapse of Time*, like the structure, the book allocates less space to the different voices involved in the project. Instead, it seems to serve the development of the project's architectural discourse, a direction likely influenced by Hejduk's intellectual and personal closeness to this institution. The book begins with an introduction by Shapiro, followed by a series of photos capturing the construction site, the tower in both its vertical and lowered positions. The photos portray the tower as a modest, temporary, dismountable, and almost fragile structure. What stands out in the images is the sense of movement, emphasized by a focus on the wooden arc that allows the tower to change position and the wheels on which the structure rests, appearing ready to traverse the world. The book concludes with a section by Hejduk, contributing to the narrative and architectural potency of the London event.

Hejduk proposes a poetic narrative in which he includes the clock tower in a more elaborate ritual than the one documented at the beginning of the book. This new storytelling also involves two other structures, *Security* and a *booth*. Mounted on wheels, these three elements travel from city to city, guided by the inhabitants of each city to the next. In each city, the ritual of geometrically lowering the tower takes place. A man is positioned on a mast on a chair, lowered using a system of pulleys parallel to the descent of the tower, facing the collapse of time. During the descent, which lasts twenty-four hours, a woman in the *booth* reads a poem. Before moving on, the two performers affix a booklet to the specific site where the performance took place, and then the structures are transported to the next city.

This text places the performance of the clock tower in London within an imaginary series that ritualizes and, once again, connects it to other possibilities and echoes. The text ensures that the events in London become part of a journey, preventing the construction and performance from closing in on themselves and inviting everyone to repeat such moments of collective time experience. Architectural drawings follow the London photos and the poetic text. These elevations depict the three mobile structures of the ritual. In sequence, we observe the gradual descent of the tower, and then, on the final three pages, men pull the structures towards their next destination. The book seamlessly transitions from one visual register to another— from photographs to poetic evocations to architectural drawings.

This flexibility in the use of different mediums encourages us to consider the multi-

ple textures of reality, its actualities, and virtualities, placing them in relation without pre-established hierarchy. The montage prompts reflection on the peculiar ritual and the journey of the structures across the world, along with all the images, rhythms, absences, and relationships they evoke, as a significant part of the real. “The scenes we encounter are implausible but not impossible to imagine,” writes Singh.<sup>474</sup>

The architectural image developed by Hejduk reaches its full poetic form through the imaginative co-deployment it both demands and enables. It stands as an affective image that resonates with the body, mediating and reconfiguring relationships with the real by allowing the apprehension of certain otherwise intangible virtual dimensions. This ability to summon the virtual aspects of a situation is fundamental to an architectural practice that honors the transindividual dimension of imagination.

The proposed architectural image is part of a production of multiple meanings co-created by all the voices and trajectories invited and encountered, as well as those yet to come. It corresponds to an architectural and spatial practice that, in the words of Jalon Oyarzun, “operates not from determination and limit but from the affective reaches of bodies (individual and multiple), as well as from the intensity of their encounters and exchanges.”<sup>475</sup> These architectural images, primarily operating on a poetic level, and take a political dimension by bringing forth a reality in which certain modalities, relationships, and voices find actualization. For Singh, they aim to achieve a “giving ‘life’, which for Hejduk carries with it an implicit and intrinsic moral dimension, a vitality bound up in human values and social obligations.”<sup>476</sup>

Beyond these two works, the development of such a co-imagination device that blends the realms of the poetic and the material to invoke potentialities also becomes central in some of Hejduk’s later masques. In the *Vladivostok* masque, Hejduk explicitly draws on masks that came before it. In the same way that he creates lists or reintroduces certain project structures from one project to another, Hejduk embeds *Vladivostok* within a complex relational web. However, this time, the approach is less opaque than in other masques, where uncovering the relationships is left to those familiar with the architect’s previous work.

Here, Hejduk’s introductory text makes this process of inscribing the masque into narratives and trajectories that surpass it the essence of an architectural approach of a new kind:

“I have established a repertoire of objects/subjects, and this troupe accompanies me from city to city, from place to place, to cities I have been to and to cities I have not visited. The cast presents itself to a city and its inhabitants. Some of the objects are built and remain in the city; some are built for a time, then are dismantled and disappear; some are built,

474 Singh, “Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk,” 139.

475 Jalón Oyarzun, “El paisaje como imagen afectiva,” 44.

476 Singh, “Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk,” 182.



dismantled, and move on to another city where they are reconstructed.

I believe that this method/practice is a new way of approaching the architecture of a city and of giving proper respect to a city's inhabitants.

It confronts a pathology head-on."<sup>477</sup>

In Vladivostok, one can discern Hejduk's intent to clarify the masque's device and affirm it as a way of practicing architecture. In this pursuit, it becomes valuable to draw upon the structures of previous masques and the moments in which some of these structures were constructed. Claiming construction is not a way to demonstrate that certain projects 'have been realized,' but rather that the projects evoke desire. What interests Hejduk is the desire for appropriation of the mechanisms he proposes and the intertwining of voices and trajectories capable of transforming the atmospheres of places. In an interview given in 1980, a few years before the first constructions of the masks, he responded to the question of why he built so little with the answer: "I haven't been asked. I would if asked."<sup>478</sup> Construction is an opportunity for encounter and only makes sense when it becomes an encounter.

Hejduk develops a practice of detour that recalls past encounters and revisits them. Amidst the drawings of the masque, which lacks any general plan and direct allusion to the geography of Vladivostok, photographs of Philadelphia and an overall plan of Berlin are inserted. Further into the masque, the device is repeated with the Tower of London and the buildings that were constructed in Berlin. Once again, this approach shapes the way in which the architectural image must be understood:

"The 'detours' begin to inflect and offset the ethereality of the vignettes, insinuating that, although what appears in much of them seem improbable, a connection to actuality remains."<sup>479</sup>

Singh notes that the journey of the Vladivostok mask is anything but smooth: it is interrupted, marked by shortened attempts, silent co-presences, and "cul-de-sac". Although the researcher confines himself to the book, it is possible to relate this structure to the city mentioned. At the time of the book's release, Vladivostok belonged to the "closed cities" of the USSR.<sup>480</sup> Beyond this specific condition potentially evoked, the masque is capable of resonating with the condition of fragmentation and isolation felt in many places around the world, all threatened to close in on themselves at certain moments in their history.

477 John Hejduk and Kim Shkapich, *Riga, Vladivostok, Lake Baikal: A Work* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 15.

478 Interview Reima Pietila- John Hejduk, *John Hejduk, 7 Houses: January 22 to February 16, 1980*, Catalogue - Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies ; 12 (New York, N.Y: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1979). John Hejduk fonds, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

479 Singh, "Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk," 250.

480 Vladivostok, like many other cities in the Soviet Union, remained closed to foreigners from 1958 to 1991. The city was then the military base for the Soviet Pacific Fleet.

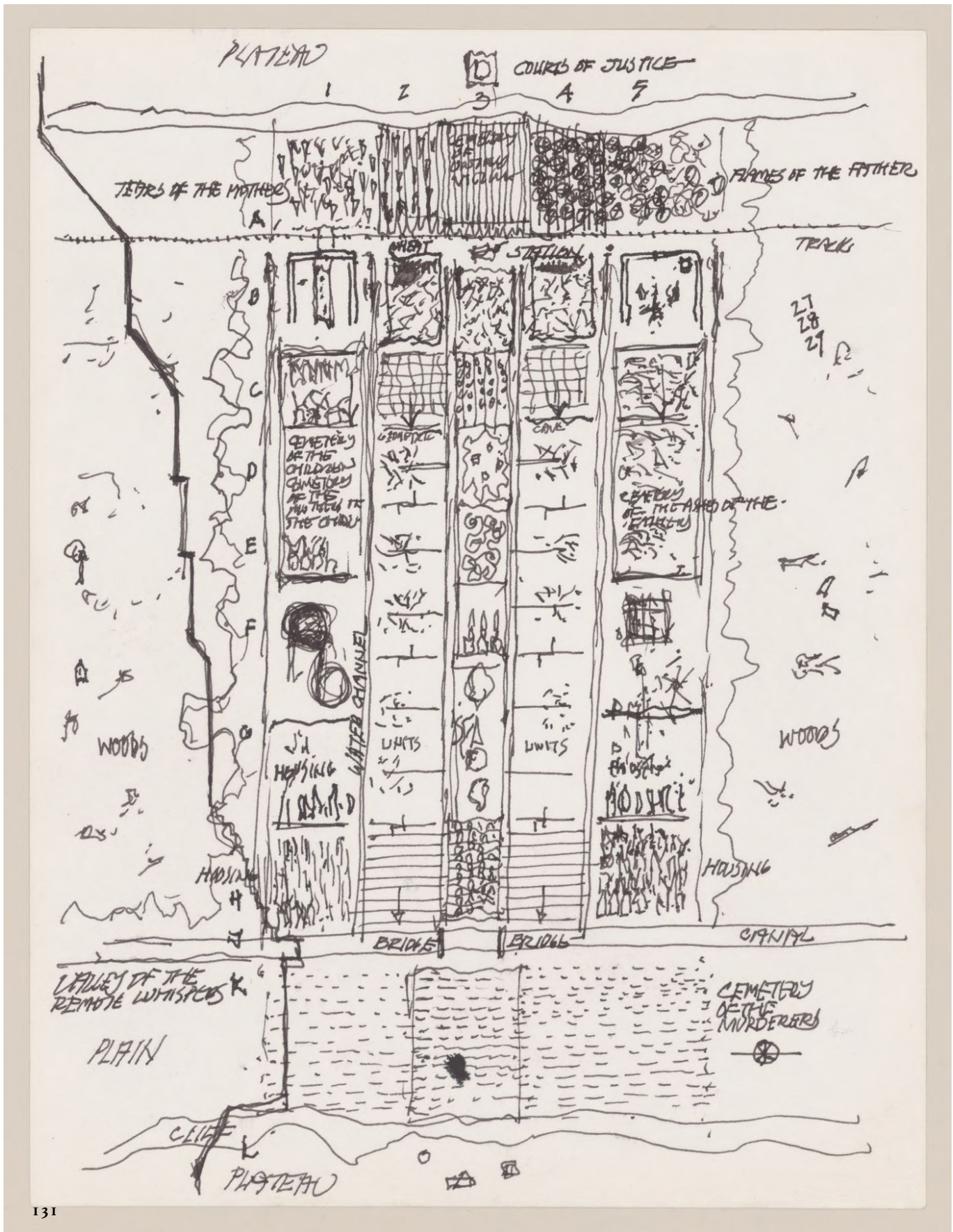
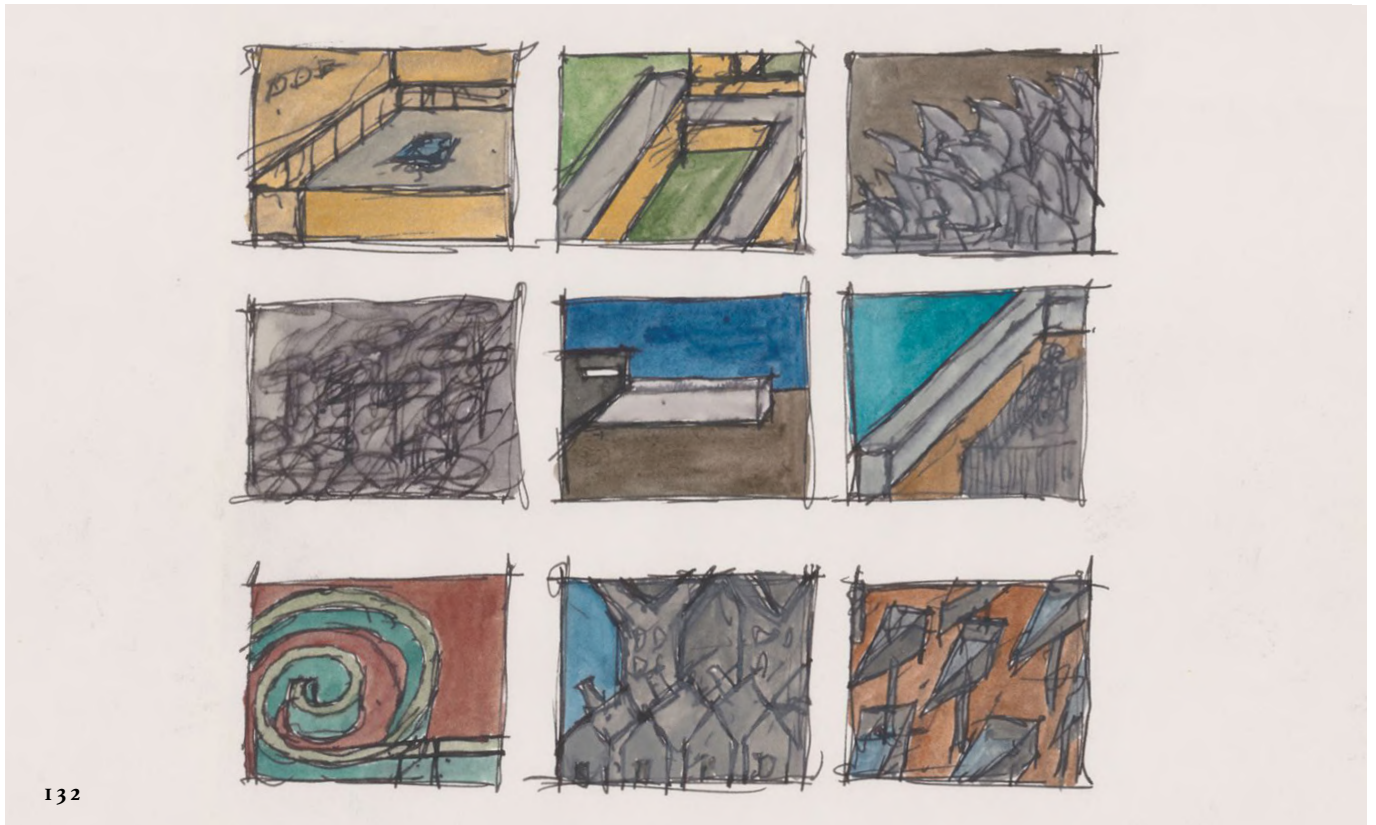
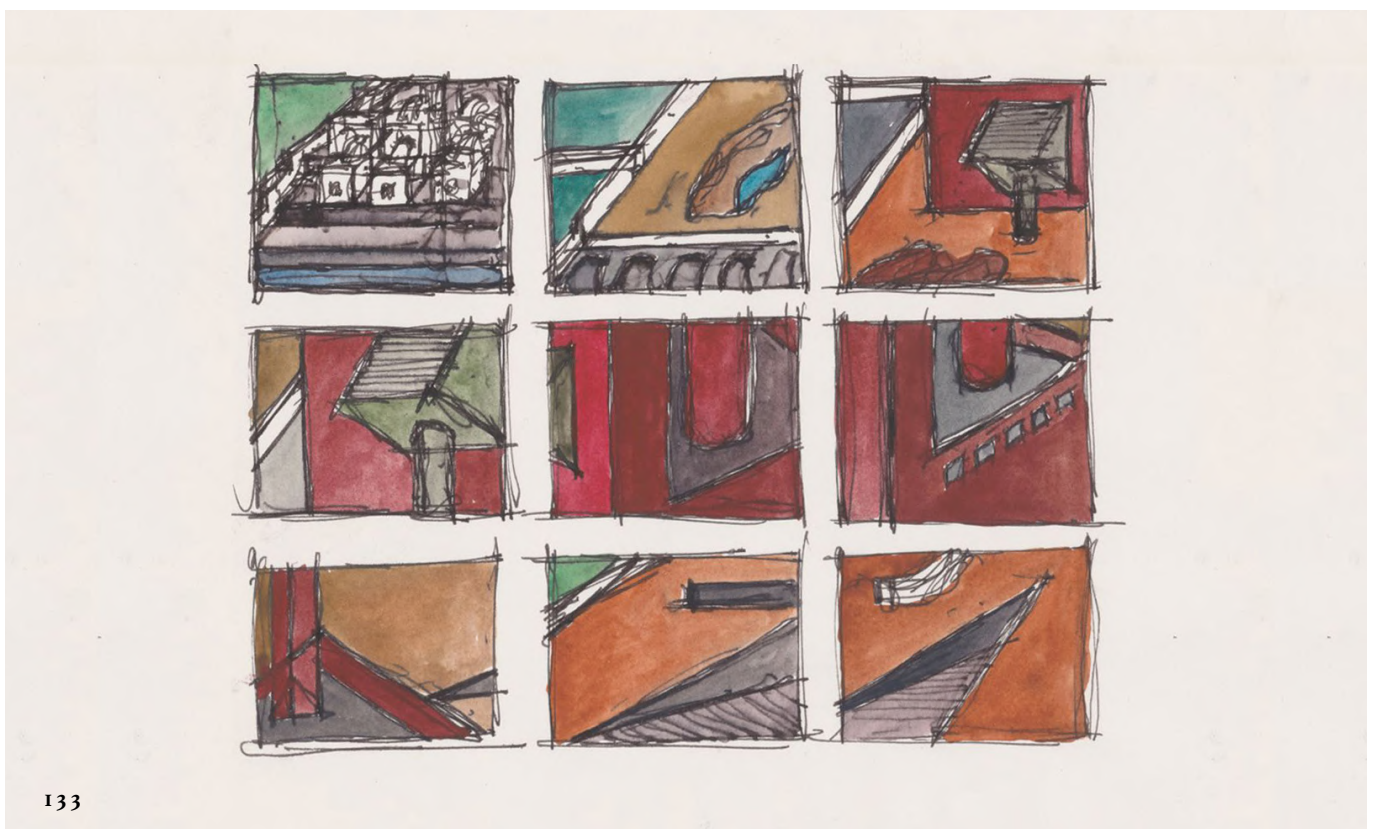


Fig. 131 • John Hejduk, sketch site plan for Victims II, 1993. Drawing in ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:004, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA





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Fig. 132 • John Hejduk, Sketch details for Victims II, 1993. Drawing in watercolour with ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:049, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 133 • John Hejduk, Sketch details for Victims II, 1993. Drawing in watercolour with ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:048, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Hejduk's latest works continue the project of the masques in certain modalities, such as the alternation of poems and drawings of structures, but also diverge from it. They no longer bear the names of cities but instead carry poetic titles that position the essence of these projects at a level less directly spatialized and more metaphysical. Works like *Soundings*, *Adjusting Foundations*, *Architectures in Love* or *Pewter Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils* - in all these titles, the assertion of a vibrant, sensual dimension deeply rooted in history is at play.

These pieces are "populated by [...] figures and apparitions, transporting us finally not to a physical place or into the space of a story but to an emotional state."<sup>481</sup> The formation of an architectural image radically transcends the visual register alone. The reader's experience of these books contributes to the meaning-making process and the production of the architectural image when a connection of elements is activated, conveying the dynamism of the proposition, its affinities with the virtual, and everything situated at the threshold of perceptual possibilities. These books bear witness to an architecture interested in atmospheres and the transformation of perceptual and imaginative frameworks. They outline the possibility of a co-produced architectural image and imagination.

#### Architecture as learning, architecture as breathing

Hejduk's ability to produce this type of image is to be considered in connection with the pedagogical practice he almost continuously exercised during the last forty years of his life. In 1996, Hejduk participated in the congress of the *International Union of Architects* in Barcelona, during which many renowned architecture professors were invited to share their thoughts on architecture pedagogy before thousands of students. In Hejduk's subsequent transcribed presentation, he discusses his years of education, including artistic education, and the fact that a broad education, partly shaped by influential female figures, led him "eventually to two life-sustaining disciplines, that is to architecture and to teaching."<sup>482</sup>

In this presentation, Hejduk navigates, as is his custom, seamlessly between different themes and projects without marked transitions. A sensitive/nuanced image is developed, much like in his masks, but here it specifically focuses on the nature of knowledge in architecture. Some anecdotes are highly personal, weaving together Hejduk's daily journey from the Bronx to the Cooper Union building and the landscapes of New York he traversed. They inscribe the structure of the Cooper Union building, renovated by Hejduk, into the history of rail and American expertise in metal structures. Everything is encounter, affection, transformation, suspension, translation. Hejduk evokes paint-

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481 Singh, "Inoculations : The Masques of John Hejduk," 262.

482 Bart Goldhoorn, John Hejduk, and Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, eds., *Schools of Architecture* (Rotterdam : New York: NAI Publishers ; Distributed Art Publishers, 1996), 8.

ers, musicians, artists. When he mentions famous architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, it's to playfully marvel that the student's model allowing him to "dissect" the building could never be reassembled: "Frank Lloyd Wright's building never came back together again. That was very odd."<sup>483</sup> The conclusions are left to the audience, but it's evident that such anecdotes disrupt a distancing from linear disciplinary narratives and the way most architectural knowledge is formulated and transmitted.

To further dismantle the image of architectural knowledge that would need to be identified, quantified, archived, "immobilized" to be recognized as such, taught, and transmitted, Hejduk employs various approaches. Similar to his poems in the masques, the visual register is largely replaced by references to touch and sound. Here, this plural attention to frequencies beyond the "foreground" explicitly becomes a way of making room for certain voices that have been silenced:

"I will tell you why I like the air I breathe, of course it keeps me alive, but there is a more important reason. It is because when I breathe the air in I breathe in all the sounds from all the voices since the beginning of time. All the voices that have placed thoughts into the air, that is, thoughts escaping from the soul through the voice into the air which I breathe in. Sound that I cannot hear—silent sounds filling the air that generations have spoken into. Consequently filling me with words that are an invisible text. An invisible sound text which mingles with my thoughts that are invisible."<sup>484</sup>

The importance of time in architecture and how it can be "touched" are also addressed through another narrative: the year when Cooper Union students worked with fruits. Hejduk describes this year as the most exciting of all his years within the institution because, in a certain way, time becomes an atmosphere:

"What they did is, they brought fruit into The Cooper Union building. And they cut it and they kept it, and they kept it and it dried, and all of a sudden for the first time in 30 years there was a different smell in the building. The whole school was filled with rotting fruit, the idea of rotting fruit, and then after the fruit the fruit-flies came. And then the school was filled with fruit flies. And after the fruit-flies, mice. [...] It was glorious."<sup>485</sup>

Through these different narratives, there emerges an emphasis on the necessity to develop a poetics specific to architecture that deconstructs dominant narratives of space, places, uses, cohabitations, and history through the transformation of experience. Whether this experience is initiated through reading (of the masques) or more directly performative contexts (especially during the construction of structures) is not considered fundamentally different. In all cases, the experience engages multiple senses and aims to expand and enrich the spectrum of connections with the world *and what bodies can do*. However, for Hejduk's proposals to be understood in this way, there is a need for the possibility of encountering them: circling around, taking the time not to identify or explain them without having *in-corporated* them. It is only under these conditions that

483 Goldhoorn, Hejduk, and Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, 17.

484 Goldhoorn, Hejduk, and Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, 21.

485 Goldhoorn, Hejduk, and Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, 21–22.



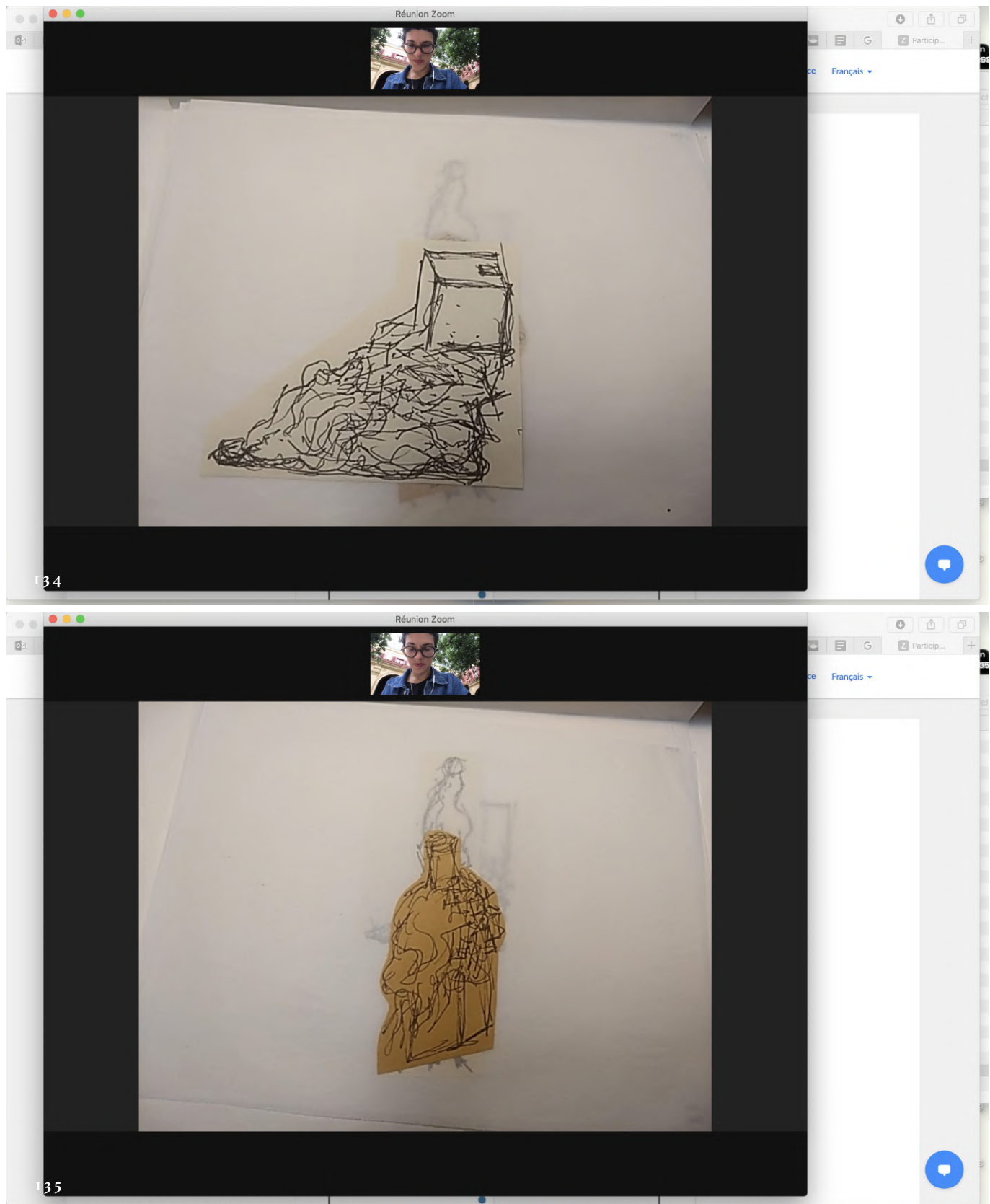
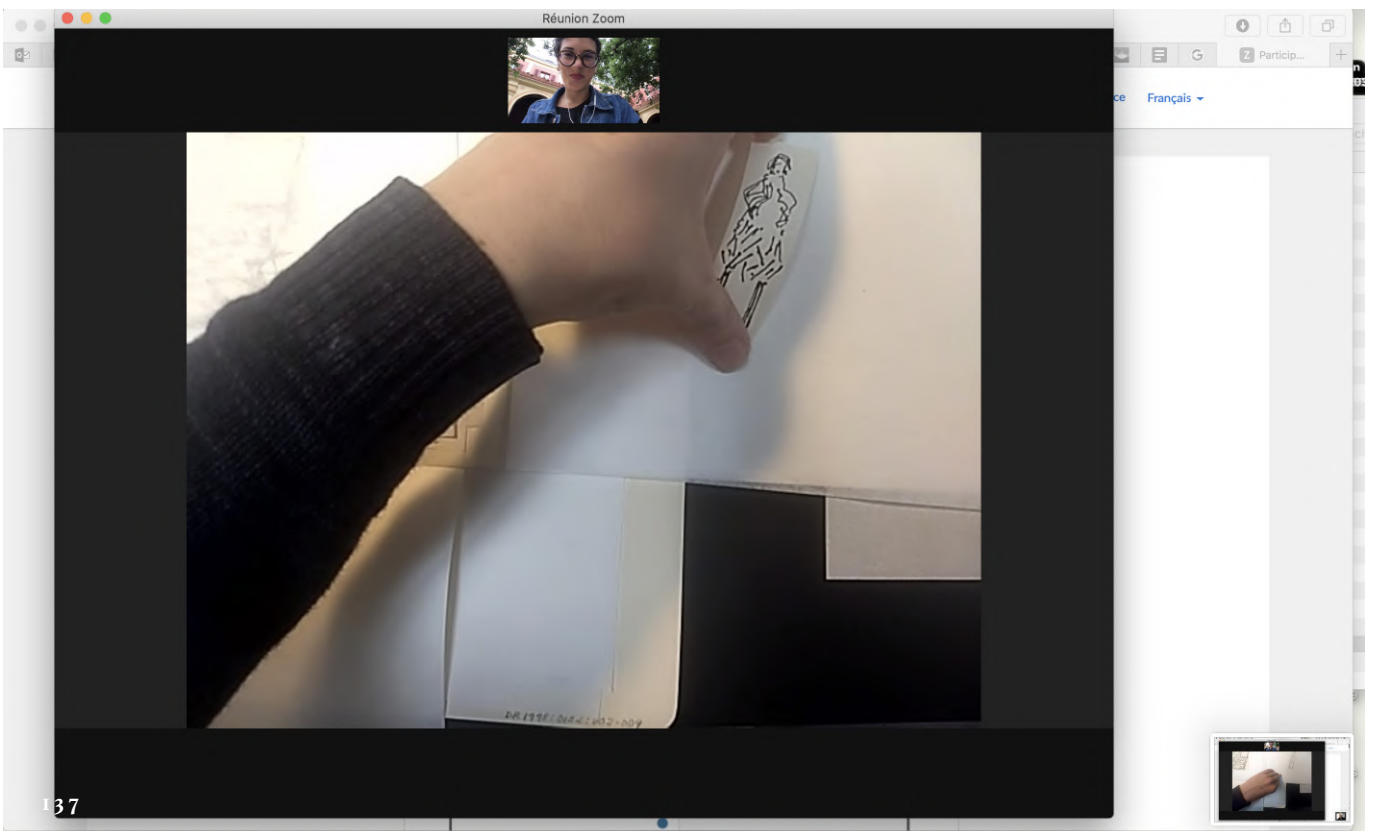
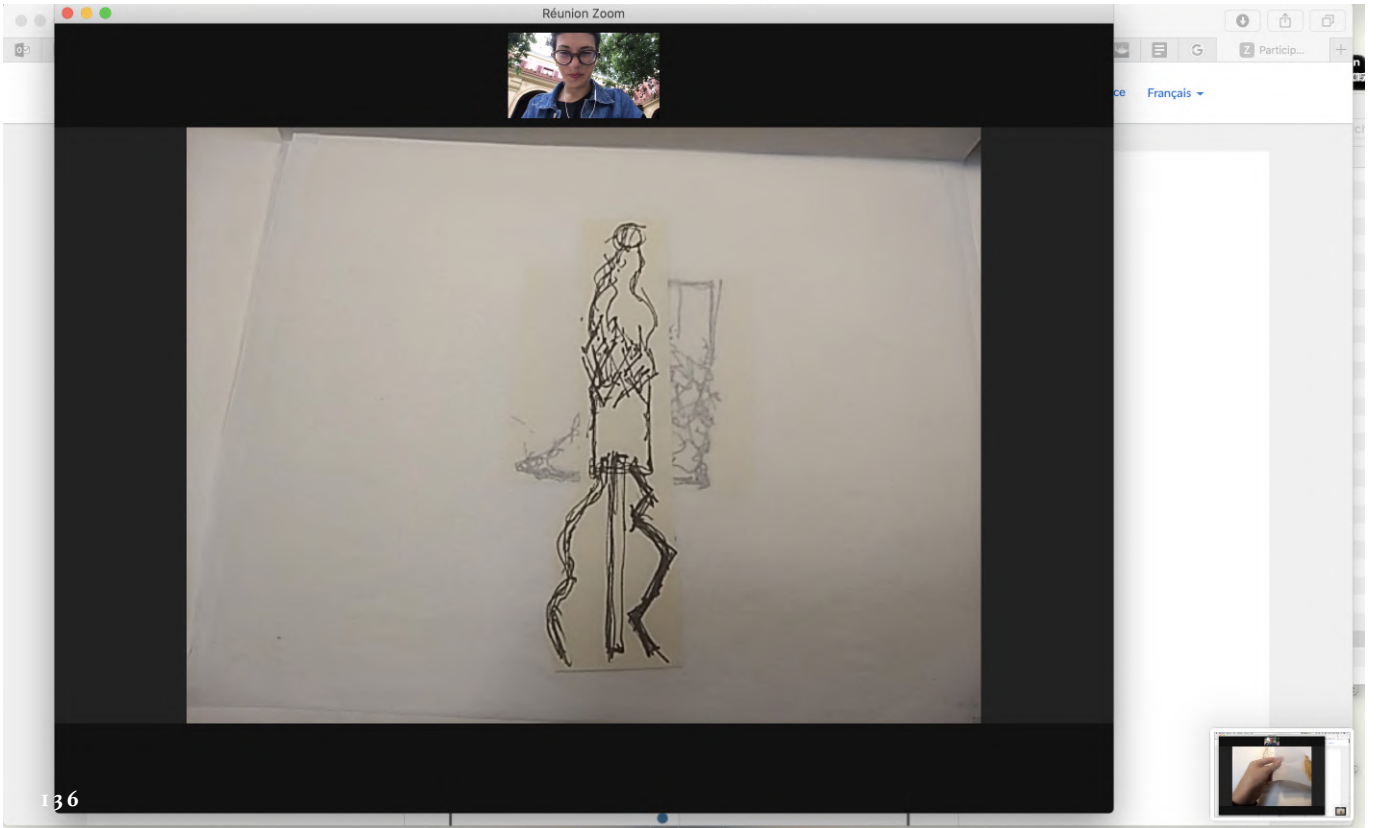


Fig. 134-37 • Virtual consultation of the sketchbook John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, Drawings and Artist Book, 1994. DR1998:0132:002-009, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA accessed via Zoom on June 30, 2021.



Hejduk's narratives, initially somewhat opaque, find a way to come into contact with other textures of reality in co-imagination.

With regard to the relationship between drawing and image in architecture, Hejduk's work explicitly demonstrates how drawing contributes to the formation of affective architectural images, without reducing them to mere drawings. To operate at the frequencies the masques engage with, drawing is never considered as an isolated medium, despite being central to the architectural language of the masques. On the contrary, the multiplicity of mediums and languages amalgamated in the masques continually situates drawing *in contact* with the world.

In Hejduk's practice, the plural assertion of this contact takes concrete forms: travels, discussions, exhibitions, and, most importantly, teaching, all serve to ground drawing in connection with the world and create spheres for reading and understanding the architectural proposals. Hejduk's drawings are literally porous to the world, exposed. They travel with the architect and are temporarily stored in the basements of the Cooper Union, where he spends the majority of his time. Hejduk writes:

"I believe one should look back, not just forward, at the work one has done. I saved everything, every drawing, every piece of work for thirty years. It was valuable to me, not in a historical sense. It was very important to keep all of my drawings. I am like a squirrel. I took them all over the world in a big tin box."<sup>486</sup>

In the archives of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, where the majority of Hejduk's work has been preserved since his death, the materialization of this *drawing in motion* takes the form of a box labeled by the archivist as *detached pieces*. In this box, numerous small drawings of characters are found, cut rather roughly. The characters appear ready to inhabit the pages of a future masque or slip into the next structure on wheels departing for a long journey.<sup>487</sup> The sight of these cut-out characters demands an understanding of the rest of the archive, as well as masks more generally, as fragile crystallizations of characters and poems always already in motion. This *pre-movement*, this agitation of the image seeking to become in encounter, contributes to an expanded understanding of the image and imagination in architecture, where drawings and affective images are produced to enrich and transform the sensory experience of the real.

### Critical articulations of the potential of Hejduk's work

Hejduk's architectural production has been the subject of numerous architectural analyses and theorizations. Many articles have delved into the symbolic and religious dimensions of the masques (particularly the prominent presence of angels in the later

486 John Hejduk, *John Hejduk, 7 Houses: January 22 to February 16, 1980*, Catalogue - Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies ; 12 (New York, N.Y: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1979)., consulted on November 6, 2023.

487 Architecture in love, 'Detached pieces' (DR1998:0132:002-009). John Hejduk fonds, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.

projects) or the implementation and influence of the *nine-square grid* exercise and series of geometric operations in the villa series in architectural pedagogy and theory up to the present day.<sup>488</sup> A significant portion seeks to connect the work to the figure of the architect and describes the masks as the culmination of a personal journey. Moments of collective construction have, in comparison, been minimally documented, archived, and commented upon.<sup>489</sup> The drawing often seems to embody the architectural image proposition on its own.<sup>490</sup> The built work, and more importantly, the realm of possibilities created in tension with the text and the places themselves, is highlighted to a much lesser extent. Similarly, dance performances are barely mentioned, rather than being considered for their specific contribution to the affective images developed in the masques.

From highlighting an individual author to focusing on material artifacts, isolating them from the relational milieu in which they gain meaning, various trends have significantly limited the possibilities of approaching, transmitting, and creating meaning from archival material. These characteristics, inherent in the Western tradition, have already been discussed in the chapter on choreopolitics and knowledge transmission in dance and performance. Here, it becomes evident that they also have consequences for imagination in architecture when it involves the creation and transmission of affective images that radically exceed the framework of representation.

Hejduk's work reveals the extent to which the anchoring of work and the articulation of its reception are integral to the development of an affective architectural image capable of reorienting the co-becomings of bodies, narratives, and places. Architecture historian Asra Akcan offers an interpretation of Hejduk's work that distances itself from dominant theoretical frameworks, emphasizing instead the co-production it facilitates. Akcan underscores the importance of a theatrical form, the masque, which she sees as a way to emphasize the significance of the reception and co-imagination dimensions:

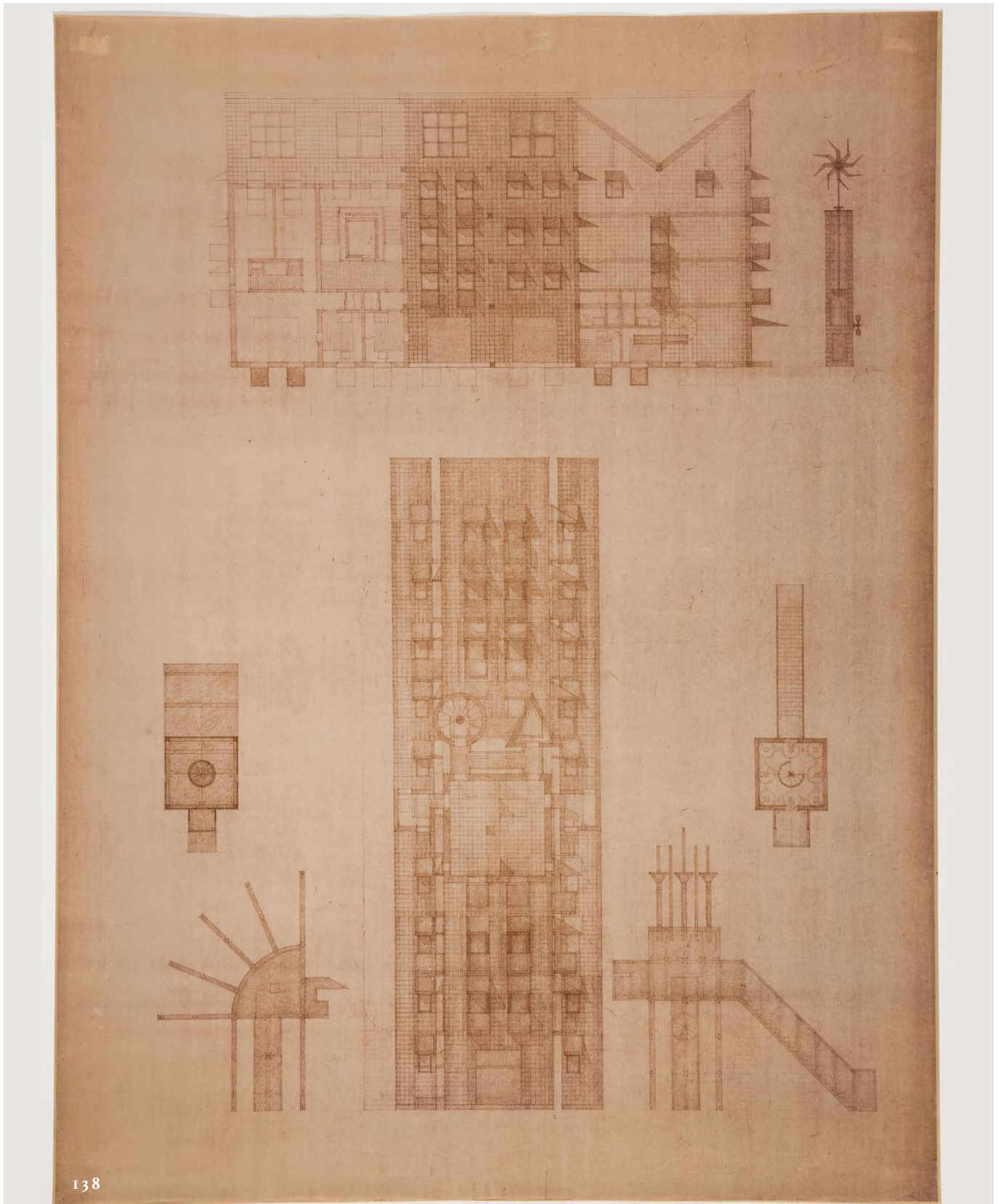
“The objects of Hejduk's projects are highly personal, enigmatic, impenetrable and uninterpretable with any level of certainty; but they are not musings of an isolated mind that denies others. Unlike classical stages that put the theatrical play in a separate frame in

488 The architect and theorist Stan Allen notably compares the axonometrics of Hejduk and Eisenmann to the recent uses of this representation technique by Atelier Bow Wow and MOS: “The balance has shifted, and the pictorial capacity of the axonometric comes to the foreground, now in a carefully poised interplay with the abstract, measurable character historically associated with the axonometric. [...] Here the function of axonometric projection is to shift the image into a schematic register that communicates immediacy. These images are not meant to be deciphered and unpacked; instead, they are immediately available to the viewer, scanned one after the other in sequence, with the intention of telling a story.” Allen, Stan. ‘John Hejduk's Axonometric degree zero’. *Drawing Matter*, (23 September 2019). <https://drawingmatter.org/john-hejduks-axonometric-degree-zero/>.

489 There are notably very few traces of the structure built in Buenos Aires and the events that took place in this context. In any case, whether in London, Riga, Buenos Aires, or elsewhere, no oral archive of the events has been conducted or is available. The Riga book is one of the few avenues to certain narratives from participants (even if they are generally the *construction managers*, etc.).

490 This trend is reflected in the CCA archive itself, where drawings are organized by project and completely isolated from the texts that always accompany them in the books. Hejduk's notebooks, in which this dual language is maintained at every moment, are much less emphasized and are mostly not freely accessible.





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Fig. 138 • John Hejduk, Berlin Tower: Elevations and plans Elevation drawing south facade tower with architectural play elements «the painter» and «the musician». 1985-1986, Reprographic copy on paper. John Hejduk fonds, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA





Fig. 139-44 • Kreuzberg Tower, Berlin, Charlottenstraße 96–98, Germany, designed by John Hejduk in collaboration with architect Moritz Müller, Block II, condition August 2023, Photo: Zoé Lefèvre.

front of the audience, Hejduk's objects invite audience participation in the theatre, just like the historical masques."<sup>491</sup>

Furthermore, Akcan writes: "The hidden meanings and secret codes in Hejduk's masques activate the meaning-construing spectator." She situates Hejduk's work within a broader context of artistic practices capable of "construct a communal space, a space of collective and political engagement."<sup>492</sup>

In her research, the historian later discusses Hejduk's most significant built project, a housing complex in Berlin. She explores how the inherent vibrancy of Hejduk's work and his drawings intersects with the life trajectories of the building's inhabitants. Through exchanges with them, she highlights the ability of this peculiar architecture to embrace their different habitation rituals. For Akcan, Hejduk's architecture reveals a co-imagination that operates on levels beyond the more readily conceivable notion of "participation." Instead, it is the richness and specificity of the architectural images proposed by Hejduk that allows the walls to be receptive and transformed by the inhabitants and the other narratives they bring with them.

Today, the omnipresence of images of all kinds leaves no room to avoid questioning the ways in which bodies are constantly guided in their movements, attentions, and imaginations by this profusion of images. Citton proposes to describe the hypermediated condition that constitutes our present as a *mediarchy*:

"We live in a mediarchy as soon as our communication devices structure our attentional dispositions, and thus our capacities for orientation, from within, by organizing our action environments in ways that always somewhat exceed our intentional control."<sup>493</sup>

In this sense, architectural practices aimed at producing images capable of orienting us differently in the world seem more urgent than ever to deploy. Therefore, what (new) types of architectural practices contribute to transmitting, producing, and (re)activating affective architectural images that take into account the contemporary hypermediated condition? How can we create opportunities to collectively explore the in-betweens and relational aspects related to these architectural images?

In the concluding section of this chapter dedicated to the image and imagination in architecture, I briefly explore several contemporary practices that, in distinctive ways, contribute to articulating vibrant architectural images. Additionally, these practices provide a context for experiencing, perceiving, and incorporating such images. These architects not only experiment with modes of representation and drawing production but also position architectural drawing alongside other images, placing it at the core

491 Esra Akcan, "Exit Implies Entries Lament: Open Architecture in John Hejduk's IBA-1984/87 Immigrant Housing," in *Global Perspectives on Critical Architecture: Praxis Reloaded*, ed. Gevork Hartoonian, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2015), 87.

492 Akcan, 89.

493 Yves Citton, *Médiarchie*, La Couleur Des Idées (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2017), 49.



1998  
LA MÁSCARA DE LA  
MEDUSA  
LA BOCA,  
BUENOS AIRES,  
ARGENTINA



Fig. 144 • John Hejduk, *The Mask of Medusa - La máscara de la medusa* in La Boca, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1998. A range of images depicting the structure, including images from its construction, the theater play presentation and preparatory drawings for the design. Photo: Daniel Casoy (construction), Sergio Penchansky (performing art).

of collective experiences to rethink our approaches to world-making and collectively imagine other possibilities. In doing so, they address the specific contemporary condition where our own movements are constantly reshaped by technologies infiltrating and touching beyond our skins, reaching into the mental images that animate our movements.

These practitioners consider the entanglements between drawing and images, both produced and circulated, but also mental images that nourish our movements and our imagination. Moreover, these practices serve as a pivot to address the questions of choreopolitical ecologies that occupy the core of the latter part of this research. The choreopolitical and co-imagination issues raised so far are rearticulated through the lens of ecological concerns and their materialization in an approach to collectively imagine a territorial vision. The experience of a vibrant world discussed in the first two parts is deemed a fundamental dimension in the articulation of minor choreopolitical ecologies, wherein places, imaginaries, bodies, and temporalities are intertwined differently.







## 2.3 Counter-images. — Minor architectural practices of the imaginal

PART III

Listening to frequencies of resistance — Listening as rehearsal —  
Performing invisibilities as architectural listening-imagining —  
Imagining-with the minor : Drawing out a kind of homeplace — Ar-  
chitectural Counter-imaginings



## 2.3 Counter-images. — Minor architectural practices of the imaginal

### PART III

#### Listening to frequencies of resistance

Describing the specific operations of drawing in its contact with the world, as opposed to mere representation where only the content matters, requires developing a vocabulary that breaks away from the visual and representational register. As already mentioned in this text, Hejduk was deeply engaged in this exploration. The vocabulary of the sonic and frequency—developed both in his poetry and in everyday conversations about his work—contributed to shifting the reception of his work to levels beyond the visual and symbolic content of the drawings he produced.

In recent decades, the approach of deliberately moving away from the visual has been claimed in activist circles for the articulation of minor narratives that are not just alternative stories, but narratives expressed through different means, and that require different forms of attention. In a book titled *Listening to Images*, culture and media scholar Tina Campt delves into this question in both theoretical and situated dimensions. She uses her encounter with an archive of identification photos of blacks in the diaspora to contemplate the forms of minor attention and knowledge production involved in this encounter.

Campt names her approach regarding the images she confronts, ‘listening’. This gesture differs from someone who would look at the photos for what they describe based on what the dominant frameworks organizing the archive suggest. To unravel dominant narratives and incorporate these images into stories of resistance, Campt *listens* to them. Through this act, she connects with the aspirations for dignity and futurity palpable behind the uniform format of the identification photos she is interested in:

“Listening attentively to these quiet photos give us access to the registers of fugitivity they simultaneously animate and suspend, as well as the creative strategies of refusal they at once reveal and conceal.”<sup>494</sup>

This practice of listening allows one to become attentive to the affective networks in which the images have been intertwined and continue to be in the present. In the context of identification photographs, Campt notes that the images can evoke the dreams of those preparing to emigrate, transnational transit circuits, connections mediated by states, family, or community. These documents speak to how states track the movements of citizens, regulate questions of belonging, and exert control over populations.

494 Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 9.

Listening to these images makes it possible to apprehend them as a technology of bio-power and understand them at the level of their operations in the world, rather than merely their visual content.

But listening attention also allows for extracting the photographs from the framework of the power that produced them by listening to the other narrative frequencies they activate. Campt highlights how the photographed individuals exploit the limits of the visibility frame offered to them to inhabit zones of transitory freedom. The photographs then bear witness to a “quiet insistence on forms of diasporic dwelling that demanded the right to come, to go, and to *stay*, as well as to arrive and return over and again.”<sup>495</sup> The practice of calm, repeated, and insistent refusal in which the individuals captured in the photographs engage transcends linear time to resurface in the present. It asserts that the categories established by dominant narratives have never been sufficient to describe the real.

Through the image-listening approach described by Campt, it becomes possible to weave affirmative solidarities that disrupt linear temporalities associated with dominant narratives. By paying attention to the frequencies at which minor voices are capable of subverting the organization of the visible that the image establishes, Campt extends the movement of affirmation that is written at a low frequency in the images:

“Listening requires an attunement to sonic frequencies of affect and impact. It is an ensemble of seeing, feeling, being affected, contacted, and moved beyond the distance of sight and observer.”<sup>496</sup>

The scholar Helena Grehan also theorizes such a practice under the term ‘slow listening.’ She emphasizes the possibility of dissent and nuance afforded by such an approach. Slow listening is open to what is being said but is capable of articulating contradictions and untruths “toward which the dissonance is calling our attention.”<sup>497</sup> Those who practice slow listening engage in an act of resistance against dominant modes, aspiring to cultivate sensitivity to what is said and the ways in which this utterance is performed. Grehan emphasizes how political this act is in the current context of an uninterrupted flow of communication. For her, it constitutes “a crucial step in refusing the covering over of differences – be they cultural, political, social or other, and in accepting formerly unacceptable utterances, views and attitudes.”<sup>498</sup>

### Listening as rehearsal

The listening approach described by these researchers and others resonates strong-

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495 Campt, 31.

496 Campt, 42.

497 Helena Grehan, “Slow Listening: The Ethics and Politics of Paying Attention, or Shut up and Listen,” *Performance Research* 24, no. 8 (November 17, 2019): 53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1718431>.

498 Grehan, 53.



ly with the questions raised by Azoulay in her discussion on unlearning history, where she develops the concept of “rehearsal.” The historian also notes how merely *looking* at documents and artifacts does not enable us to oppose the division of rights that these products naturalize. For her, rehearsals are necessary to identify the minor potentialities that persist behind the narrative and the organization of dominant knowledge.

These “rehearsals in nonimperial political thinking and archival practice are not undertaken in preparation for an imminent day of reckoning, but rather as a mode of being with others differently.”<sup>499</sup> In this sense, the practice of listening described by Campt can be directly considered as a rehearsal. It involves loosening the medium of photography from the operations of separation and assignment that are historically attached to it:

“Unlearning imperialism is unlearning the processes of destruction that became possible: the knowledge, norms, procedures, and routines through which worlds are destroyed in order for people to become citizens of a differentially ruled body politic.”<sup>500</sup>

In Azoulay’s research, the rehearsal takes various forms, which the researcher lists as “rehearsals with others.” They share commonalities: a dimension of insistence, of renewal, and the rejection of linearity, contributing to a project of global domination and uniformity. However, each rehearsal also corresponds to the pursuit of a specific and situated opening of thought and action in the face of specifically identified forms of violence. The rehearsals are cumulative, presenting themselves as various entry points into the commitment to resist the closure of possibilities.

One of the rehearsals developed by the researcher involves considering democracy in its relationships with totalitarianism, rather than as its opposite. The formation of democracies then needs to be understood as a process of erasure and destruction of other political, legal, and social traditions that posed obstacles. Another rehearsal involves considering a multiplicity of forms of sovereignty. For Azoulay, sovereignty understood as a form of being together by which a community is bound in a shared world does not need to be tied to a specific sovereign power. This idea leads her to consider the concept of “worldly sovereignty” which she defines as the set of formations that structurally undermine the authority and power to rule others. Such formations, based on a principle of care for the shared world, persist in the margins of models that are occupied with reigning. The entirety of the described rehearsals constructs the possibility of a “nonimperial worldly sovereignty” that must be constantly reaffirmed and reinvented.

The concept of rehearsal squarely raises the question of the countless micro-violences that manifest everywhere and at all times in relationships, aiming to collectively

499 Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019), 28.

500 Azoulay, 28.

create conditions that reframe the experience of reality and make individuals insensitive to violence and injustice. The rehearsal is the necessary space-time to collectively work on identifying what motivates us to “act as agents of progress” and to dismantle “what should have been cherished”. It compels us to inquire how we would act if our perception itself were not already always controlled and oriented in a certain way. How can beings, on the contrary, honor “their worlds and modes of being with others, their very capacity to be with others, to act and interact in reciprocity and not through the roles they were assigned to facilitate destruction?”<sup>501</sup> Azoulay concludes (temporarily) as follows:

“[It] cannot be countered with alternative data or memories, but rather with continuous processes of unlearning through which the very structures can be undone that articulate violence as firm data and fixed memory. Unlearning imperialism means unlearning what one’s ancestors inherited from their ancestors, and them from theirs, as solid facts and recognizable signposts.”<sup>502</sup>

As already extensively discussed in this text, representation in architecture also maintains dense connections with the exercise of power, which have only marginally been questioned in the history of the discipline. Today, architectural representation, as it fits into dominant modes of knowledge production and collaboration, significantly contributes to immobilizing possibilities and reproducing violence, necessitating efforts to “refuse all the calcifying, paralysing, limiting structures of patriarchal, colonial, binary spatial practices to which architecture has been held captive.”<sup>503</sup>

The refusal mentioned here corresponds to a form of architectural rehearsal, in which the medium of drawing is questioned in its ways of separating, asserting, making invisible, and freezing. This refusal involves practices of listening to question, always in a deeply situated manner, the ways in which architectural drawing inscribes itself in unique ecologies that contribute to defining the possible, either closing off or supporting potentialities for doing and being differently. Understanding, questioning, and reconfiguring the ways in which architectural drawing operates in the world is one of the urgent tasks to contribute to an architectural rehearsal enabling the reinscription of alternative ways of practicing architecture in the world. This research now briefly turns to several contemporary practices that are part of such an effort.

### Performing invisibilities as architectural listening-imagining

Architect and performer Beth Weinstein, based in Arizona, has extensively researched and written about collaborations between dancers and architects during

501 Azoulay, 28.

502 Azoulay, 28.

503 Jill Stoner and Ozayr Saloojee, eds., *Architectures of Refusal*, vol. 92, Architectural Design 6 (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 9.

the second half of the twentieth century. Although collaborations that raise questions about the connections between the two fields through the figures involved in projects remain areas of interest to this day, Weinstein has subsequently delved into more plural and hybrid aspects of the encounter between these fields. Over the last decade, she has developed her own research around what she now terms “spatial labor.” She places it within the lineage of “critical spatial practices” described by architectural historian Jane Rendell, which are those capable to “produce political critique [and call] into question the ideological apparatus that structures the terms and methods of specific disciplinary practices.” And Rendell continues: “The aim of such work is to question dominant processes that seek to control intellectual and creative production, and instead generate new resistant forms and modes of knowledge and understanding.”<sup>504</sup>

Under the term ‘spatial labor,’ Weinstein articulates a hybrid research-practice, drawing from the fields of architecture and performance to invent ways of incorporating tools developed in these fields into the creation of alternative worlds. In her thesis, the architect clearly states the objectives of her own practice:

“*Performing spatial labour* leverages the alternative economies, spatialities and temporalities of performance-installation in order to operate critically—both critical of what transpires within the disciplines and what is produced through the disciplines’ entanglement with matters of concern. This praxis interrogates and often inverts the normative performativity of architectural instruments by reinterpreting the effects that these instruments produce in the world.”<sup>505</sup>

In her projects, Weinstein creates porosities between her own performance—whether it involves being present at specific sites, researching archives, engaging in thought and reformulation efforts, or practicing drawing—and those necessary for the production of certain places, certain living conditions, and spatialities of exclusion.<sup>506</sup> Through her own performative journey, the researcher explores how intolerable conditions have been imagined and produced, while re-inscribing the tools of architecture into a critical process and imagination of alternatives.

The various situations addressed by Weinstein in recent years have been chosen for their ability to reveal the problematic role played by architects and the spaces they produce and imagine in maintaining and reproducing dynamics of exclusion and invisibilization. The work that the researcher undertakes in response to such situations is never uni-directional. On the contrary, the processes are designed to reveal both situated dynamics of invisibilization and the interweaving of architectural practices and tools in

504 Jane Rendell, “Critical Architecture: Between Criticism and Design,” in *Critical Architecture*, ed. Jane Rendell et al. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–2.

505 Beth Weinstein, “Performing Spatial Labour: Rendering Sensible (In)Visibilities around Architectures of Internment” (Hobart, University of Tasmania, 2020), 30.

506 Beth Weinstein lives and teaches in Tucson, Arizona. This region, near the border between the United States and Mexico, is directly exposed to the issue of the ongoing reinforcement of border control infrastructure and the intolerable spatial, political, and social conditions in place. This proximity has played a decisive role in Weinstein’s critical research trajectory.

such situations. By constantly intertwining these two aspects, Weinstein proves capable of infusing movement into the questions of visibility and invisibility at play in the chosen sites and their representations. Through her performative practice, these questions are never addressed solely through the prism of the visible register. The visible and the invisible are addressed as vibrational registers that condition bodies, minds, and collective possibilities for action and imagination. Weinstein herself declares “it is the performative nature of the explorations that is critical to revealing what the artefacts normally conceal.”<sup>507</sup>

The performative dimension of the architect’s work enables her to transform the question of visibility into a question of the possibility of sensory experience, rather than merely a matter of direct access to sight. In this sense, her work directly resonates with the issues of architectural rehearsal addressed earlier in this text. The way the question of visibility is approached encompasses the entirety of political and experiential aspects associated with it. Weinstein refuses to consider “making visible” alone as the reparative solution in the case of spatial, social, and political situations that are deeply intertwined. As she demonstrates repeatedly, these situations persistently allow new forms of micro-violence and invisibilization to emerge.<sup>508</sup> The (in)visibilization necessary to establish and imagine the possibilities of counter-narratives and counter-imaginings requires a sensitive and ethical commitment from all those involved, starting with Weinstein herself.

One of the actions through which Weinstein activates her spatial labor is the act of *erasing*. The researcher points out how little this act is recognized in architecture, even though it constitutes a significant part of the performance that leads to the realization of any drawing. She attributes this lack of attention, in part, to the fact that in traditional architectural structures, the long and laborious process of trying, transforming, and improving is often carried out by those positioned at the bottom of the hierarchical scale, in stark contrast to the singular sketch performed by the architect-artist.

Weinstein reclaims the act of erasing through the act of scraping a paper, historically used to rework architectural drawings. In a performance titled *Razing Manzanar II* Weinstein uses the architectural plan of an internment camp for people of Japanese descent on American soil during World War II. The existing plan of the camp is slowly scraped in front of a camera that reproduces the erasing act on the wall. The drawing

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507 Beth Weinstein, “Erasing, Obfuscating and Teasing out from the Shadows: Performing/Installing the Camps’ (in)Visibilities,” *Performance Research* 24, no. 7 (October 3, 2019): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1717861>.

508 In an article by researcher Nitin Bathla, stemming from an interview with architect Eyal Weizman, a key figure in a ‘forensic’ practice of architecture, Weizman also explains the importance of working at the levels of reception and amplification of work directly involving the tools and techniques of architecture. In the context of a case involving an explicit contradiction in the police scenario, Weizman explains: “Forensic Architecture not only helped unmask the cover-up, but also employed ‘tensions’ between the different forums allowing productive opportunities to challenge, expose, and reform them.” See Nitin Bathla, “Complexities and Contradictions in Forensic Architecture,” *Trans* 36, no. Spannung (20-02): 103–8.

becomes, in Weinstein's words, "not [...] an instrument of calling forth but one to perform otherwise, as a collaborator in a performed labour and contributor with its own unanticipated effects."<sup>509</sup>

Weinstein is interested in invoking the camp, of which practically no trace remains, as an environment of experience of violence made possible in part by architecture. The architect names the camp as a project a "governmental utterance", in the sense that it is produced by a government decree and in turn produces the condition of exception and decreed invisibility.<sup>510</sup> In Weinstein's work, as a document, the plan explicitly reveals the camps as a *project*. It is the trace of the multiple intentions and efforts that contributed to its existence, rather than an evocation of the volumes of the barracks themselves. This slowly disappearing plan thus invites participants in the performance to question what remains once the buildings are destroyed. The paper dust produced by the scraping accumulates in small piles, without further explanation. They can evoke both the presence of minute material traces in the territory and the reduction to dust of bodies and memories that such internment experiences cause.

In any case, the performance fails to erase everything:

"The ink resists total removal, leaving a palimpsest, a haunting. The sound of the scraping razor against the surface of the paper also lodges in the ear, lingering long after the action ends, as an insidious, high-pitched scratching."<sup>511</sup>

The sonic dimension of architecture as an affective condition resurfaces in the terms used by Weinstein. Through this lens, the architecture of the camp is made visible and experiential in a sensory manner, as the accumulation of layered and performative violence that the researcher seeks to examine and dismantle.

In a later version of the performance, named *Intern[ed]*, the erasing task is performed by several architects living in the region of the camp. The corpus of erased drawings includes plans of contemporary detention camps for immigrants in addition to those of internment camps from the 1940s. Re-situating the performance in the territory and professional environments directly involved in the reproduction of such conditions of exclusion allows the performance to gain direct critical strength regarding the responsibility of the discipline when it invests its efforts and *labour* in the production of such structures.

In both cases—whether the effort is focused on the collective need not to let the camps disappear in the territory and memories or on that of the discipline and the profession regarding similar processes today—the performance activates the ecology it

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509 Weinstein, "Erasing, Obfuscating and Teasing out from the Shadows," 26.

510 The term directly refers to the concept of *performative utterance* developed by the language philosopher John L. Austin in his theorization of performativity and speech act (1966), which has served as a framework for a line of thoughts on this theme in the decades that followed.

511 Weinstein, "Erasing, Obfuscating and Teasing out from the Shadows," 26.



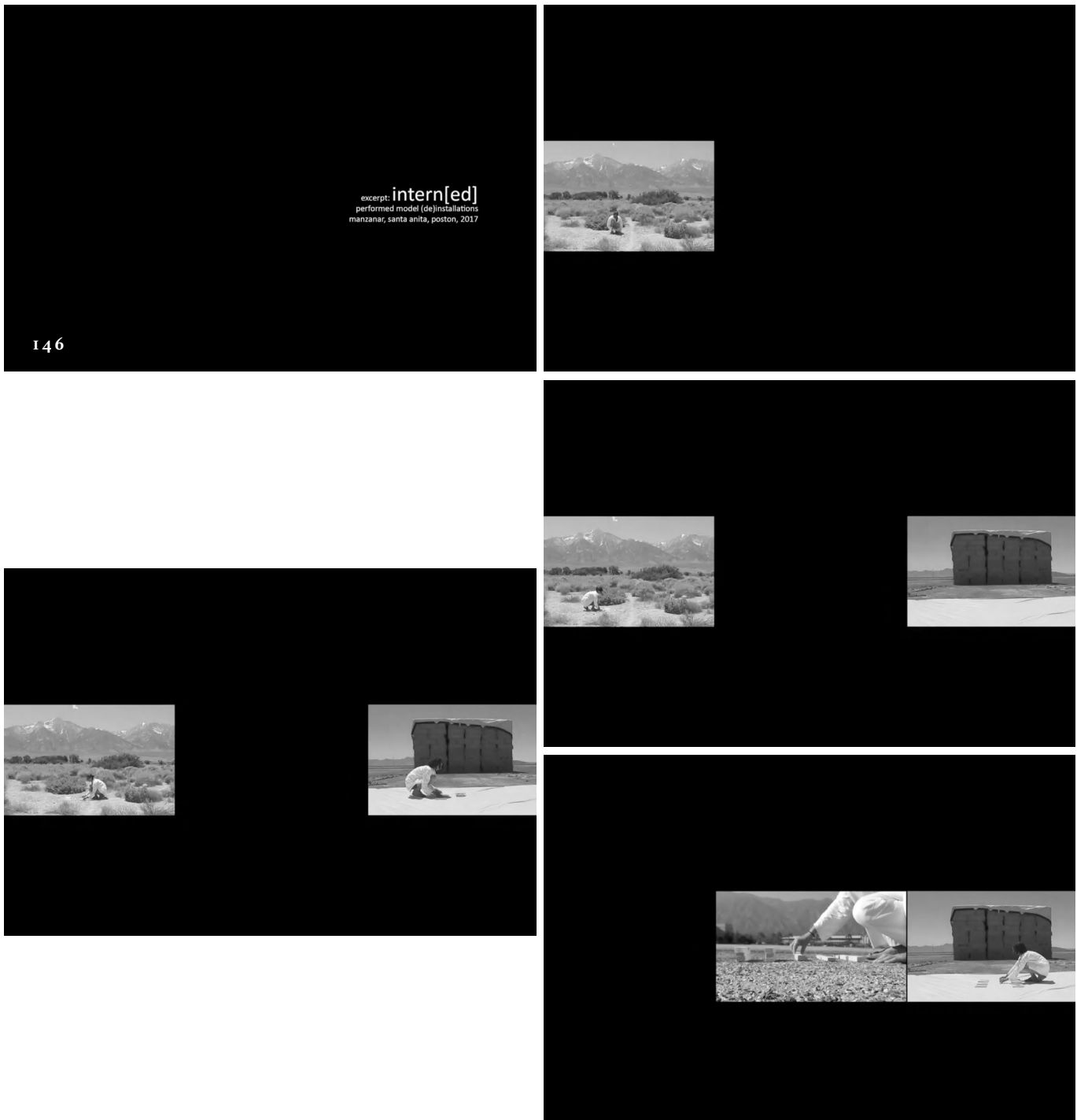
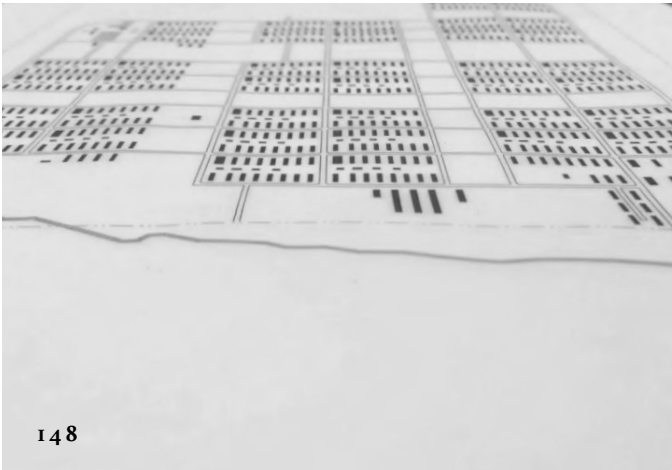


Fig. 146 • Beth Weinstein, *making | unmaking of the camps*, video still, 2017, 3 minutes and 23 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/228899291>, accessed October 23, 2023



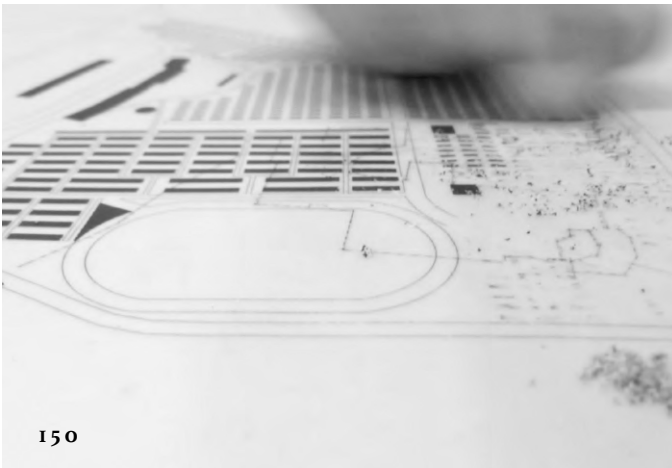
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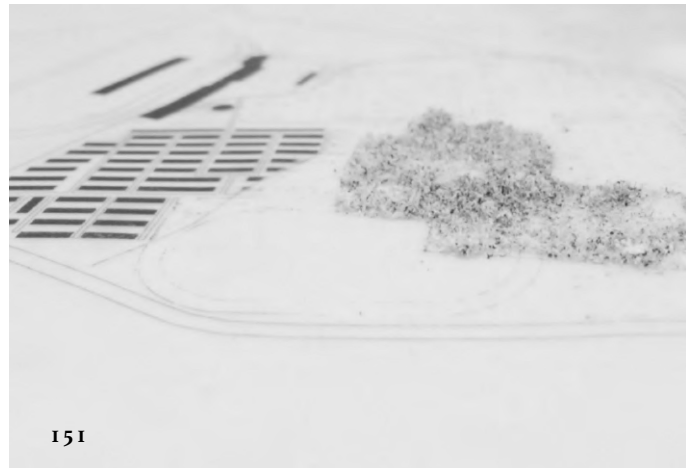
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Fig. 147 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II* (2019). Performing Spatial Labour: rendering sensible (in)visibilities around architectures of internment, exhibition at Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania, November 30 – December 8, 2019.

Fig. 148-51 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II*, video still, 2017, 4 minutes and 9 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/279969528>, accessed October 20, 2023.



Fig. 152 • Beth Weinstein. *Othering (Collected)* (2017). Spatial Labor: Manifesting the Hidden in Architectural (Un/Re-) Making. Performance and exhibition at 191 East Tool Avenue, Tucson, Arizona, September 30, 2017.



LABOR'S VIEW,  
"STATES OF EXCEPTION"  
(2018)



Fig. 153 • Beth Weinstein, Performed drawing-erasure, 'States of Exception' (2018). This performance documentation captures spatial labour gestures across the façade of the Cité Internationale des Arts, aiming to expose entanglements between the architectural, political, and (in)visible. Paris, 2018. Photo: Anna McGrath, Rana Taha, Anne Barnard, Julie Parmentier.

aims to reconfigure. The drawing is never a representation but a mediation that allows the invocation, transmission, and sharing of a situated and sensory experience of what is visible as well as what is not:

“The making sensible occurs not through literally making visible but through the performative affect of cycling, oscillating, and fleeting movements between myriad forms of (in)visibility.”<sup>512</sup>

The non-linearity of processes and the non-hierarchy between types of experience, mediums, and knowledge discussed in Hejduk’s work are found, albeit in a different way, in Weinstein’s work. The performance described earlier, with two variations mentioned, is part of a series of performances carried out by Weinstein, some of which took place in the territory under investigation, while others were performed in cultural venues. The motif of the camp plans has been retraced, studied, transposed, erased, printed, exhibited, and hidden in turn. These multiple forms of transposing the plan contribute to refusing its performative authority and to multiplying possible points of detachment to counter the reproduction of such spatialities of exclusion. This refusal is collectively and affectively articulated by a heterogeneous group of participants, each concerned to some extent with the reality of camp spatialities. As Weinstein herself writes, the act of re-performing architectural labor while refusing to make it impermeable to the affective ecologies in which it is produced and performs collectively forces us to question the position we occupy as witnesses or co-producers of the conditions generated.

Erasing is just one of the forms used by Weinstein to inscribe architectural drawing into collective forms of experience and knowledge construction involving an architectural dimension. Over the years, the architect-performer has experimented with several other gestures, sometimes inspired by contemporary artistic practices, sometimes linked to the history and techniques of drawing in architecture. Obfuscating, redacting, whitening out, whitewashing, erasing, scarring: these actions become a performative architectural vocabulary that counters the linearity and reproduction of violence associated with narratives carried by places and architectural documents.

The way to counter these effects is itself multi-sensorial and performative, rather than directly affirming new narratives. The shifts in ratios or distributions of senses that Weinstein proposes through her work also perform.<sup>513</sup> As written by Lepecki and dance scholar Sally Banes, “[As] the senses shift in relation to social and cultural changes, what they also change are the political conditions of possibility for entities, substances, bodies and elements to come into a being-apparent.”<sup>514</sup> Through her trajectories of

512 Weinstein, “Performing Spatial Labour: Rendering Sensible (In)Visibilities around Architectures of Internment,” 74.

513 Beth Weinstein, “Performing Choreographies of Spatial Labor as Critical Spatial Practice,” in *Critical Practices in Architecture: The Unexamined* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 251–72.

514 Sally Banes and André Lepecki, eds., *The Senses in Performance*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2012), 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513758.2012.700000>.



experimentation with the medium of drawing, Weinstein sketches a possibility for the medium to be in contact with the world and to be active within diverse ecologies without imposing its authority, but by offering itself as a mediation attentive to the power relations that traverse it. The future that such mobilization of architectural drawing allows to open and imagine is not contained in what is shown *in* the drawing. There exists in the unlimited capacity of bodies that come into contact with the drawing in a vibratory and sonic mode, the ability to be affected by memories and places, and to bring forth other relations and spatialities:

“Thinking performatively, architectural drawings become erasures, shifting scales, sites and materials. Model-making becomes unmaking. Studio practices become building maintenance labour. Labour produces space and space instigates choreographies to be performed.”<sup>515</sup>

Weinstein’s profound knowledge of collaborations between dance, performance, and architecture that have punctuated the twentieth century allows her to consistently articulate architectural and performative elements by actively opening them to the other field, so that *a movement* resists, traverses, and that listening and description are always also imagination.

#### Imagining-with the minor: Drawing out a kind of home-place

Like Beth Weinstein, architectural researcher Huda Tayob has been working for over a decade to transform and rethink how architectural drawing can be used to engage with the world without imposing the violence that the history of the medium seems to condemn it to reproduce. However, Tayob’s research takes a completely different form. Huda Tayob is a South African architectural historian and theorist, and this positioning is reflected at all times in her work, where she draws on postcolonial, subaltern, and black studies to study African architectures and histories. It is a matter, as she writes herself, of “remaining cognizant of the power dynamics at work in the process of researching subaltern spaces.”<sup>516</sup> The researcher’s moving personal geographies, trained in South Africa and now based in England, reflect the issues of her research, which seeks to address African geographies both in their singularity and their belonging to a global history. In this sense, the use of the drawing medium, whether it is the drawings she studies or those she produces, is always inscribed in Tayob’s thinking about the relationships between the African continent and the rest of the world and the nature of the forms of invisibilization and violence that it has allowed.

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[org/10.4324/9780203965924](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965924).

515 Weinstein, “Performing Spatial Labour: Rendering Sensible (In)Visibilities around Architectures of Internment,” 223.

516 Huda Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing ‘Tell’ a Different Story?,” *Architecture and Culture* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2017.1417071>.

In her research in the 2010s, Tayob focused on the architectural typology of markets in South Africa and their occupation by refugees and migrants from various parts of the African continent. With the choice of this focus, the architectural historian found herself directly confronted with the question of the architectural archive. Indeed, these typologies are both under-studied and spatially undocumented by the field of architecture, and politically charged, making access to the study and documentation of their spatialities challenging.

In this context, Tayob sought to explore the potential of drawing as “a means to study the often overlooked an unseen spatial practices of refugee markets.”<sup>517</sup> This ambition places at the heart of the research work a tension that can be directly related to the idea of an architectural rehearsal: how to re-enact, re-think, and re-imagine the inscription of the drawing medium in dynamics of collective knowledge production, at the core of environments saturated with power relations? The title of one of the articles produced by Tayob during her research, “Subaltern Architecture: Can Drawing “Tell” a Different Story?”, describes this challenge.<sup>518</sup> Is drawing, the quintessential tool for the production of architectural knowledge, suitable for understanding and narrating the minor spatialities of markets? What kind of knowledge does it produce, and for whom is it intended?

In her field research in the markets of Cape Town, Tayob immediately confronted the ethical questions raised by her approach in places of profound vulnerability. The narratives of the residents who agreed to share pieces of their journey were marked by the violence associated with constant displacement and the destruction of their successive living spaces. Through numerous conversations, Tayob literally *listened* to the precarious architectures of the markets. These conversations allowed her to tune in to the frequencies at which the minor subaltern architectures of these places are written. The different stories mentioned by Tayob in her later writings bear witness to home-making practices that are always profoundly fragile but nevertheless contribute to expanding the relational and life possibilities of those who implement them. Behind the initial readings that historically constituted tools, vocabularies, and concepts of architecture invite to produce, other architectural knowledges are invented and transmitted. They allow these communities to inhabit the world while protecting themselves to some extent from its daily and multidimensional violence.

These minor architectures, as Tayob points out, need to be read in all directions,

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517 Tayob, 203.

518 The title of this article places it in the lineage of reflections from the Subaltern Studies and the renowned text by postcolonial feminist literary theorist Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In this text, Spivak highlights the dynamics surrounding the possibility for the subalterns to make themselves heard. According to Spivak, even when the subalterns speak, their voice is neither heard nor recognized. This discourse is deprived of the acknowledgment that would truly qualify it as speech, while those whose speech is recognized continue to speak on their behalf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 66–111.

relationships, and simultaneities of violence and care they involve. In one of her texts, Tayob relies on a discussion she had with Fatima, a resident of the markets of Cape Town, to describe an architecture that is both oriented in response to violent memories of the past and, at the same time, enables visits from friends and family, food preparation, and childcare. This space “constructed, serviced and labored on”, is then designated as “a kind of homeplace.”<sup>519</sup> In another text, written based on her conversation with Haseena, also a resident of the markets in Cape Town, Tayob writes:

“Speaking to her in her small shop in Bellville revealed this informal market as a site of refuge and care within a highly contested urban realm. In our conversations, she articulated the importance of the space of her shop, the market and the site of Bellville. Yet in describing her displacements, she also described South Africa as a space of possibility. Her narrative pointed to the post-Apartheid promises enshrined in the constitution as a space for education, freedom of movement and access to the continent and globe; for her, these promises were realized form her small space in the informal market.”<sup>520</sup>

Documenting these specific spatialities as an architectural historian has led Tayob to question her own methods of approach, listening, and document production. The researcher has sought to build a co-production of knowledge capable of countering the epistemic violence associated with acknowledging and imagining these subaltern places and architectures within the field of architecture. Photography, initially intended for use, proved largely unwelcome on site, and drawing, from which she sought to distance herself, reappeared in the form of sketches and note-taking. These adjustments are crucial to the co-production of knowledge in situations of profound power asymmetry and have been extensively discussed in postcolonial studies.<sup>521</sup>

In response to the mistrust experienced on-site and these ethical considerations, Tayob sought to develop a slow, attentive, and careful ethnographic drawing capable of engaging in dialogue with these marginal spatialities.<sup>522</sup> Her drawings are explicitly drawings *in dialogue*, maintaining the *tone* of a personal note-taking, avoiding any claim to comprehensiveness that would overlook the one who traces them and her situated posture: “The adoption of drawing and hand-writing as primary methods positioned me as active within the field and research, as opposed to being an “invisible” author.”<sup>523</sup>

519 Huda Tayob, “Fatima’s Shop: A Kind of Homeplace,” in *Architecture and Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 266.

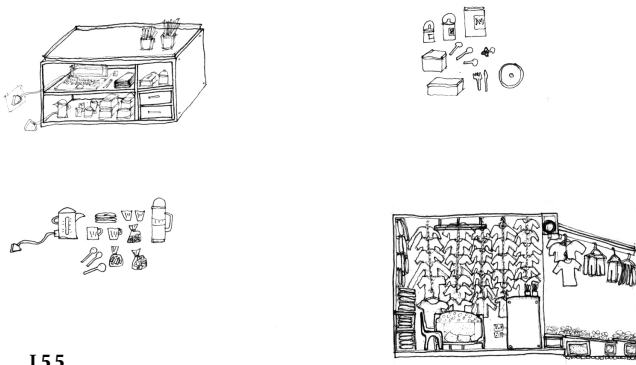
520 Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures,” 206.

521 One can refer here specifically to the writings of Spivak already mentioned, but also to those of Edward Said and the numerous studies that have developed certain aspects of the thought of these two key figures.

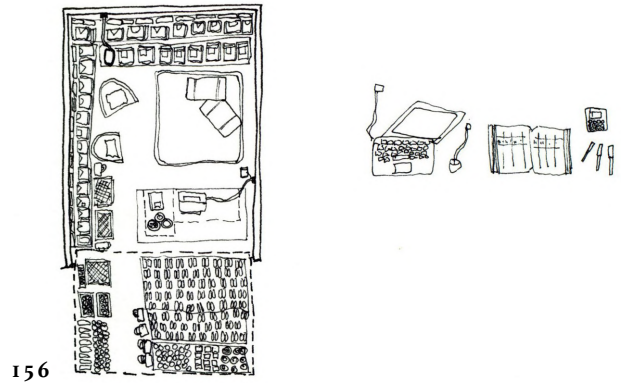
522 The architect and educator Momoyo Kaijima has significantly contributed to the formulation of what she designates as ‘architectural ethnography’ and to bringing visibility to a set of practices that constitute this form of inquiry. Kaijima initially formulated this idea in connection with the practices of various Japanese architects who engaged in significant ethnographic studies focusing on lifestyles in relation to architecture. This term also illuminates her own approaches over the past decades with *Atelier Bow-Wow*. In 2018, an exhibition titled *Architectural Ethnography* in the Japan Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia gives this notion a more global visibility and resonates with a number of practices worldwide around this idea. In his writings, Tayob acknowledges the legacy of this ethnographic thinking in architecture while seeking to remain attentive to power dynamics associated with this concept.

523 Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures,” 209.

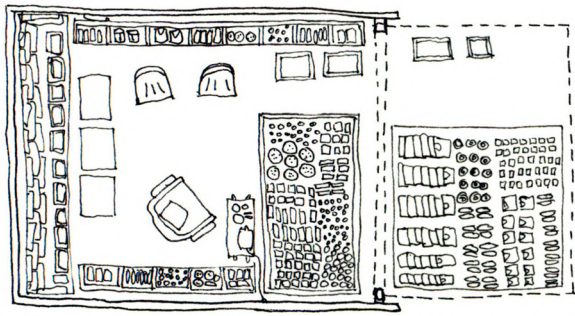




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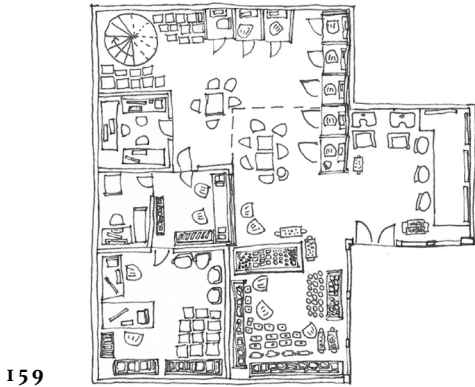
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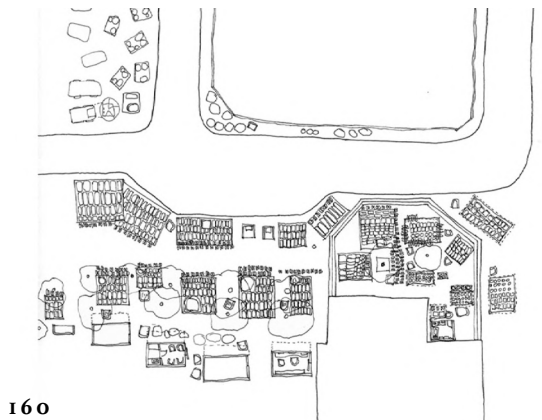
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Fig. 155-6 • Huda Tayob, Fatima's Shop, Bellstat Junction, Cape Town. Drawing by Huda Tayob, 2014-2015. ©Huda Tayob

Fig. 157-8 • Huda Tayob, Hanaan's shop, Bellstat Junction, Cape Town. Drawing by Huda Tayob, 2014-2015. ©Huda Tayob

Fig. 159-60 • Huda Tayob, Annotated sketch of Nyanga Junction market on the left with the final drawing of the market on the right.



In this context, drawing takes on a profoundly tactile dimension. It emerges as a practice of possible proximities in a context of great precariousness. The fragility and tension inherent in drawing become a way to anchor within the drawing itself a sort of counter-indication to the authority or “definitive” form that others might want it to assume. A strong emphasis on the performative dimensions of drawing is present, involving the recognition of the tendency to isolate documents from the environment in which they were produced. In the drawing practice she develops, the researcher organizes and articulates the reception field of her drawings. She specifies:

“In the drawings, any particular details that pointed to individuals was omitted in response to the understanding, following both [Edward] Said and experiences in the field, that academic institutions are not neutral and that the dissemination of the research which included personal details of individuals could have real very real consequences for those involved. Instead and in response, the drawings are based on a combination of site sketches and written notes.”<sup>524</sup>

It would be simplistic to assert that Tayob’s practice can be likened to Hejduk’s solely based on a shared tendency to articulate text and drawing. The explored registers and pursued objectives differ profoundly. Nevertheless, it is possible to attribute to both researches a desire not to let drawings be perceived solely as visual representations but as documents animated by a vibration that one must train oneself to perceive. In this project, the confrontation between text and drawing allows for an essential tension. Each of the two mediums contributes to reminding us that mediation and reception are part of what is conveyed, and these processes are by no means neutral.

Through her research, Tayob seeks to speak with the subalterns rather than speak on their behalf, echoing Spivak’s warnings. However, this speaking-with is not limited to the figure of the researcher, the places, and the people encountered. The power relations that Tayob aims to address are always simultaneously hyper-situated and global. Drawing is one of the mediums the researcher uses to open trajectories of deployment and alliances for the minor architectures and imaginations she has taken the time to encounter and understand in the markets of Cape Town. These markets allow forms of life to unfold, and these forms of life are valid in the care they offer. To lend them a certain legitimacy without freezing them, Tayob skillfully plays with the status of drawing, constantly oscillating between a barely sketched trace and a codified and official document. The researcher herself uses the term “mimicry” to describe this play.<sup>525</sup> “The use of conventions lends the drawings an apparent authority as they mimic precision and rationality.”<sup>526</sup> This tactic allows her to seek to empower the minor architectures she studies in several spheres at once, without ever forgetting the fragile realities of the

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524 Tayob, 210.

525 Tayob borrows the concept of ‘mimicry’ from the scholar Homi K. Bhabha, in whose work this term is associated with certain tactics employed by subaltern populations in colonial India to subvert the tools of colonial power.

526 Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures,” 211.

urban racialized violence she investigates.

At the level of architectural knowledge production, such drawings, through their approximate adherence to certain conventions, retain the possibility of a comparative reading and comparisons with other migration architectures worldwide. In this way, they constitute a vibrant interface that inaugurates the possibility for such spatialities to be recognized as authentic minor architectural imaginations, where rich forms of relationships between beings and their environments are inscribed. The act of producing such drawings is thus described by Tayob as an act that leans towards both the past and the future. As documents, the drawings nonetheless maintain a partial dimension, making them a unique type of archive. They seem *to demand* a reading that is more sonic than visual, as described by Campt earlier. The futures they point to can only be discerned by once again granting them the care of encounter.

Tayob's research has led her to study the types of approaches necessary to understand, think, and support the minor architectures she engages with. These explorations have led her to work in an increasingly horizontal and porous manner between various types of media, traces, and images with the aim of better understanding and describing the dimensions of care and futures imagined in these margins ignored by dominant architectural thought. In the porosities she establishes through the trajectories she chooses and the resources she mobilizes, bodies, images, and geographies re-gain vibrational intensity, negotiate their assignments, and co-produce counter-architectural images. Tayob's efforts, among those of many other researchers, contribute to a discussion on the forms of documents, archives, and practices of co-producing narratives and knowledge that must be invented, *repeated*, and affirmed to develop architectural practices and images in contact with the vibrations of the world-in-the-making.

In the research conducted in the markets of Cape Town, the focus on a subversive movement that challenges the overly static frames of thought, reveals their limitations, and demands the consideration of other forms of knowledge played a central role. The forced movement of migrant people served this function. It imposed transnational geographies, required the consideration of migration narratives, their textures, specific temporalities, and socialities. This movement also demanded a research stance and architectural tools capable of engaging with it. It is from the demand of these encounters that Tayob was able to develop tools capable of telling what matters to the people involved, namely, the recognition of spatialities that "extend beyond the limitations of camp space and have the potential for social and physical mobility, and the imaginary of an alternative future".<sup>527</sup>

In Tayob's current projects, this focus on a subversive movement persists but takes on a different nature. The *Index of Edges* project aligns with those of watery bodies,

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527 Huda Tayob, "Trans-National Homes: From Nairobi to Cape Town," in *Making Home(s) in Displacement: Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022), 352.





Fig. 161 • Huda Tayob, *Watery Drawings* from the *All the islands of the world wear ashes of illusion* series, exhibited at the *Index of Edges: Watery Stories* exhibition during the Biennale Architettura 2023, Venice, 2023. Photo: Huda Tayob, 2023.





Fig. 162 • Huda Tayob, *Index of Edges: Watery Stories* exhibition, the Biennale Architettura 2023, Venice, 2023. Photo: Naadira Patel.

Fig. 163-66 • Huda Tayob, *Index of Edges: Watery Stories* exhibition, snapshot of the film 'The Mouth is the House of All Words' video installation (36') exhibited at the Biennale Architettura 2023, Venice, 2023. Photo: Naadira Patel.

affecting many other movements, imaginaries, and possibilities on Earth.<sup>528</sup> By constructing and connecting watery archives, watery drawings, watery stories, and a sonic index of music informed by life with waters along African coasts, the project strives to describe the knowledge and spatialities related to living with and along seas. In this collaborative and transdisciplinary project, the architectural drawings produced are in contact with other forms of archives, narratives, and images that collectively point to alternative coastal futures. The drawings themselves are partly re-drawings of different constructions and descriptions of African coasts through the ages. Drawn with a pen on cotton and partially embroidered, the drawings re-introduce, through architectural labour, shifting temporalities and overlays to cartographic representations that declared these oceanic terrains as small and strategic, available for dispossession.

The collection of these drawings resonates as a series of ways of living with watery intimacies, negotiating this singular condition: This index traces the accumulation of embodied detritus of layered pasts through an excess of specificities which collates stories of site and temporality, archival and present. This is work towards a relational, situated, and material axis where precarity and possibility meet at the shore,” declares the project’s statement of intent.<sup>529</sup> Like in Weinstein’s work, the plans and maps that have enabled the establishment of precarious conditions are reworked as an architectural refusal, so that the minor architectures that have always asserted other realities can be perceived. While the drawings in this project engage territorial scales different from the initial ethnographic sketches, the architectural gesture remains similar: it is about inviting into and through the drawing the vibrational frequencies at which minor architectures are written, involving here the watery geographies.

### Architectural Counter-imaginings

In the first part of this research, the importance of the concept of choreopolice to describe a contemporary condition in which movements that matter for our shared futures are made invisible by a dominant globalized movement has been explained. Various choreopolitical practices enable awareness of the movements imposed upon us and reveal other movements that they obscure. In dance, numerous practices can be considered as *counter-practices*, enabling other forms of movement and co-existence to unfold. These co-existences involve both the human and the non-human. The ground and architectures are also constantly affected and reconfigured through the ways in which they co-become with moving bodies. Inviting different grounds and architectures into our movements becomes a way to bring forth minor architectures that defuse the extractive relational logics in which we are constantly re-entangled.

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528 The project *Index of Edges: Watery Stories and Archives* led by Tayob was presented as part of the Biennale Architettura in 2023. An overview of the various aspects of the project is available on the website <https://indexofedges.net>, accessed by the author on January 2, 2024.

529 <https://indexofedges.net>, accessed by the author on January 2, 2024.



In this second part, the aim was to approach the question of image and imagination in architecture from the perspective of choreopolitics. Indeed, the lens through which choreopolitics operates today is largely linked to the hyper-mediated condition in which we are all immersed. Our embodied capacities to negotiate with other bodies that inhabit the same spaces as ourselves are constantly being reshaped and standardized by the myriad of images touching our bodies and shaping our gestures and practices. This choreopolitics short-circuits our sensitivities and limits our experiences of the world. In this sense, a choreopolitical architecture is an architecture that works to bring forth counter-imaginations and counter-images in opposition to those that impose destructive dances on bodies, architectures, and grounds.

In this perspective, it is useful to revisit the notion of imagination to better understand the nature of the counter-images and counter-imaginations at hand. This is what I sought to do in the first part of this second chapter, drawing notably on the reflections of philosophers Simondon and Bottici. For them, imagination is a profoundly transindividual process that unfolds through the relations of bodies to images and the world in experience. In their reflections, images can take various forms, always in a state of becoming, and can result from both individual imagination and social context or interactions between them. Such an approach helps understand the crucial role of images in choreopolice and choreopolitics – understood as the reconfiguration of our relationships with the world in experience. The idea of *architectural image* that emerges goes beyond the idea of representation and requires considering how new architectural images emerge within the imaginative textures of reality. There are thus multiple kinds of architectural images, produced in the encounters of bodies and materialities of the world, that escape a more traditional definition of architectural image but are the fields in which counter-architectural images can still be produced today.

To work at the heart of this imaginative reality, some architects have developed types of architectural drawing practices that emphasize its vibrational dimension and its inscription in transindividual dynamics of imagination. This is notably the case with John Hejduk, who, in his projects of architectural masques—understood here as drawings, but also as books, performances, encounters, and exhibitions—finds a way to set in motion new architectural images for places that the violence of his century has destroyed in their built and imaginative materials. Today, the ways in which we are mobilized by imaginaries that do violence to our shared world-making are increasingly visible, and the production of counter-architectural images appears in all its urgency. Some architects manage to trace trajectories transversal to the imaginative matter that stirs us and to connect with the minor architectures that oppose it. These architects are attentive to the bodies that inhabit, vibrate, weave other possibilities, and try to co-construct with them collective counter-imaginations.

For Beth Weinstein, who stages her own practice of architectural drawing to co-pro-

duce other images with the rest of the participants, “performing spatial labour is a means to remember, through bodies, what forms of space to resist.”<sup>530</sup> The gestures of collecting, listening, narrating, and drawing that nourish Huda Tayob’s practice also rearticulate the past, present, and future of human, architectural, political, and geological bodies: “Sites and stories of deep and near futures are drawn into adjacency.”<sup>531</sup>

These practices constitute two forms of architectural counter-imaginings against the choreopolitics that destroy the diversity of world-makings necessary for our coexistences. The way these architects collectively approach ways of dwelling, perceiving, listening, narrating, moving, and imagining points to the necessity of collective, hybrid, contradictory, and porous architectural practices that engage with how bodies, images, and milieus co-produce in their dances. In the porosities created by their own trajectories, they seek to support the formation of minor choreopolitical ecologies that have the potential to undermine dominant world-making practices and enrich our capacities to relate and to care for one another. They address the need for a more sustained relational engagement at the different scales of “intra- and interactions” and carve an active place for more practices to come in an entangled web of life and matter.<sup>532</sup>

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530 Weinstein, “Performing Spatial Labour: Rendering Sensible (In)Visibilities around Architectures of Internment,” 229.

531 <https://indexofedges.net>, accessed by the author on January 2, 2024.

532 Regarding the concept of intra-action, see Karen Michelle Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 33.





Fig. 167 • Carolina Caycedo, *Beyond Control*, documentation of action at MAMM Medellín, 2019. © Carolina Caycedo, 2019.







# CHOREOPOLITICAL ECOLOGIES. — Mobilizations toward other worldings.

## CHAPTER III





# CHOREOPOLITICAL ECOLOGIES. — Mobilizations toward other worldings.

## CHAPTER III

*If you can think of dance as the rhythmic phenomena of the human being reacting to the environment. If the audience accepted this definition, then I'd say, yes, it's dance.*

— Ann Halprin, “Yvonne Rainer Interviews Ann Halprin.” *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, 1965.

“The question of the nonhuman or the more-than-human is of central importance as regards what a body can do. A bodying begins and returns to the midst, to the relational field that is more-than human. A focus on the middling of experience leads us toward a modality of thinking the becoming- body in a directly ecological sense in terms of an ecology of practices that *includes* the human but is not limited to the human,”<sup>533</sup>

writes the philosopher Erin Manning. In the trajectory followed so far by this research, various human, non-human, social, imaginal, or watery bodies have been mentioned, and their co-productions of worlds and minor architectures have been made visible. At times, the concept of *choreopolitical ecologies* has emerged to designate an emergent assemblage of some of these bodies, *rehearsing* and asserting a possibility of co-movement and minor co-existence, and revealing the violence of dominant social and spatial organizations. In this final section, the aim is to delve more deeply into the question of these choreopolitical ecologies and *their taking-shape*.

The significance of these choreopolitical ecologies is to be understood in connection with the existence of a plurality of ecologies in tension and conflict. Speaking of choreopolitical ecologies is an attempt to articulate the need to care for and sustain, through our practices, the emergence and unfolding of minor ecologies that acknowledge everyone's right to negotiate their affiliations and intertwinements in hybrid assemblages. Indeed, the concept of ecology alone does not suffice to guarantee the harmonious dimension of relationships between beings and the involved environments. This term, omnipresent in contemporary discourses, denotes relationships that can be both productive and profoundly deleterious. As Frichot writes:

“To call a practice ecological seems to suggest positive relations in a world, as though ‘ecology’ could be characterized as a general good. To ‘ecologize’ can even be identified as the new catch-call that replaces to ‘modernize’, but this is where we must maintain a tireless vigilance, and test again each time what we mean by ecologies. To assume that ecology demarcates a basic good is to overlook Bateson's reminder that there is an ecology of weeds, much as there is an ecology of bad ideas; ecologies flourish and ecologies produce the scent and scenes of death. Error can be propagated despite the best of our intentions.”<sup>534</sup>

533 Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, Thought in the Act (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 191.

534 Hélène Frichot, *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architecture* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 62.

Today, numerous individuals on Earth are left with no choice but to feel their inscription into environments that shape their existence as violence rather than opportunity. The various forms of degradation experienced by living environments on Earth forcefully remind many bodies each day of their porous nature to other bodies and the extent of their dependence. The touches, connections and affections involved in these dynamic interactions among bodies are determined by global extractivist logics, asserting their violence down to the molecular level.

In recent years, numerous researchers have underscored how intentional alterations to diverse environments indirectly impact the ability of certain already marginalized bodies to exist differently. The manipulation of the body's ability to regulate heat is an explicit demonstration. In prisons or at borders, in contexts of great vulnerability, the manipulation of the body's ability to regulate heat is exploited to the detriment of those who already suffer the most. The porous nature of beings in the world, which allows for life, is transformed into death.<sup>535</sup>

In this context, the act of aligning with other movements, merging with others, embodying better, with more tact, cannot be considered a possibility at all times and for everyone, but rather as a collective effort and absolutely necessary approach for the unfolding of other modes of coexistence.<sup>536</sup> Negotiating our inscriptions within the ecologies to which we belong necessitates a sustained effort of understanding, knowledge, advocacy, preparation, calmness, study, and struggle. In an interview with Stephen Shukaitis reproduced in their book on *the undercommons*, Harney and Moten recount the importance of collective effort leading to the possibility of experiencing *dispossession* as a productive state. In this pattern, they perceive an oblique trajectory that is neither that of state omnipotence nor that of an entirely individual quest for autonomy:

| “You need to elaborate the principle of autonomy in a way in which you become even

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535 The media scholar Nicole Starosielski talks about “thermal violence” to describe the manipulation of ecologies and systems in order to “alter the capacity of bodies to *emit* heat and maintain thermal states, which often increases their precarity to other phenomena.” She analyzes the ways in which climate change now allows for the reactualization of a form of violence used on prisoners, the sweatbox, based on the exploitation of existing vulnerabilities of the prisoners, while allowing a deferral of accountability. Nicole Starosielski, “Thermal Violence: Heat Rays, Sweatboxes and the Politics of Exposure,” *Culture Machine* 17 (2019): 1–27. The philosopher and anti-racist militant Hourya Bentouhami, “examines the forms of disobedience practices by migrants at the European border to circumvent biotechnological modes of surveillance and identification.” She observes the practices of *thanato-mimesis* that bodies resort to in order to prevent their vital heat exchange dynamics from betraying them at the border. Hourya Bentouhami, “The Life Strike,” *Critical Times* 4, no. 2 (August 1, 2021): 233–62, <https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-9092334> which are rooted in involuntary movements that can be used as evidence against migrants. What actually happens when bodily growth, heart rate, respiration, and body heat are integrated into technologies for the detection of life with a view to their measurement (biometrics).

536 Emma Bigé identifies a direct link between the absence of tact and the withdrawal from the relationship due to a lack of the possibility to maintain forms of contact that suit us: “When we no longer know at what distance to keep ourselves to avoid mutual contamination, we develop techniques not to withdraw from the world, but to withdraw from the equation of the reciprocity of contact: we seek individual immunity.” And she adds, “Some tact activists (sex workers, somatic practitioners, performers) were already talking, before the pandemic, about the necessity of inventing practices of de/immunization: forms of radical tenderness in public space, forms of decolonization of gestures, forms of nano-political attention to hypercharged and haptophobic existences constructed by technopatriarchy.” Emma Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, SH/Terrains philosophiques (Paris: La Découverte, 2023), 76.



less of yourself; or you overflow yourself more than what you're doing right now."<sup>537</sup> For the two researchers, this oblique path also outlines a specific response to the recurring question of *scale* that consistently comes to the forefront. Deepening autonomy through dispossession, connecting beings and things in intertwined and unexpected ways automatically generates powerful scale effects, which have nothing to do with an idea of scale "inseparable from the state."<sup>538</sup>

Choreopolitical ecologies are, therefore, environments in which a certain *play* is possible—where the possibility of deviation, of play exists. These ecologies are spaces and moments to *imagine*, in the sense of an imaginal production that relies on the possibility of experiencing another reality.

The sought-after crack in reality, the one that enables the "emergence of the improbable," as Lepecki likes to call it, depends on the processes and devices that are developed to experiment with other forms of being, intimacy, sociality, touch, and movement. Choreopolitical ecologies demand and bring into existence the possibility of circulating minor knowledges that have occurred and continue to occur in the margins, in response to the impoverishment of the lived experience imposed on bodies. They are the *space-times* that provide the opportunity to participate in imaginative processes that make sense and *future*.

The most valuable knowledge is that of bodies which have already acquired specific abilities to negotiate their inscriptions within plural and partially hostile ecologies: knowledge produced in resistance, but also, in *contrast* to the trajectories of future extractivists outlined by modernity/coloniality. As mentioned repeatedly in this research, forms of minor knowledge are often neglected or devalued precisely for their oblique and reconfiguring capacity in relation to the established order.

In this sense, choreopolitical ecologies are to be imagined as space-times of circulation and contamination by minor knowledges. As a philosopher-activist, Emma Bigé expresses a desire to align herself with somatic activists who are actively unlearning dominant ways of moving based on their own experiences. She is interested in circulating the knowledge and modes of existence enabled by "compost-humanist" dances that "contribute to opening ethological and geological windows through which communication and sympathy flow towards other living beings and other earthly movements."<sup>539</sup>

Similarly, the explorations of architect-researchers Weinstein and Tayob lead them to engage with communities and places that contribute to articulating minor narratives asserting a present other than the absolute precarity promised to them. The researchers are not only interested in narratives from the margins but also in the tones, atmospheres, affects, and frequencies associated with them. Aware of their position,

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537 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe New York Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013), 146.

538 Harney and Moten, 146.

539 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 6.



privileges, and the disciplinary biases they inherit, they allow their research to be guided towards a certain dispossession of the tools that are inherently theirs. This is done to develop other types of spatial practices that are more in solidarity with these minor narratives.

In these various remarks, the beginning of an articulation between choreopolitics, imagination, and minor ecologies begins to take shape, forming the subject of this final section. In the first part of this research, we observed that choreopolitics refers to a set of movement practices in tension with contemporary forms of control that involve channeling flows. Certain danced practices can then be understood as resistance practices that contribute to the development of alternative sensitivities and affective modes of being. As dance is produced and produces itself on the ground, these dances indeed have the power to renew the narratives of cities and modes of inhabiting. In the second part, we delved into the transindividual dimension of imagination, as well as certain practices of imagination and the production of new architectural images based on the ability of bodies to imagine, reconfigure their relationships with the world, and inaugurate possibilities. The studied architects have developed practices that intertwine architectural and performative tools to disseminate choreopolitical knowledge.

In the third part of this research, I aim to describe “choreopolitical ecologies” and their significance and relevance, as they support possibilities for *mobilization* to confront extractive choreographies that consume us. I conceive this description as a way to establish increased porosity between practices, reasonings, concepts, and human and non-human bodies, all of which contribute to the creation of space-times in which other world-making processes are *rehearsed*. By bringing together these two terms, I aim to resonate with the reflections conducted in the first two parts of this research and to discuss them in the context of territorial and urban transformation.

At first, I examine how a choreopolitical approach to climate issues resonates with a general claim for more robust conceptions of the ways climate violence affects bodies distinctly. Indeed, several fields seek to address the political, ethical, and practical challenges posed by a consideration of the non-human in our practices, thoughts, movements, and architectures. Bigé talks about “somatic political programs,” which could also be termed “ecosomatic” to describe the vast undertakings that unfold when one no longer prioritizes the human over the living, and instead seeks to develop forms of attention to the plurality of present worlds.<sup>540</sup>

In this context, a choreopolitical perspective provides a unique way to open these reflections to the futures that emerge and to practices that have the potential to invite these futures. As discussed in the first part of this research, choreopolitics encompasses the idea of choreography, but this choreography is of a specific nature, precisely de-

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540 Bigé, 76.

scribed by researchers working with this concept. It is not a framework designed to impose control at all levels, but rather a *minimal* framework that allows for spacing, breathing, and the necessary gap for experimentation.

This understanding can then be used to consider certain contemporary architectural practices as choreographies aimed at supporting the development of choreopolitical ecologies where world-making together takes on a different form. This action with movement and potentialities can also be seen as diagrammatic, a term more commonly used in the field of architecture. In a reflection on the concept of the diagram and its evolution, Frichot notes how the diagram, once considered a tool in architectural theory, seems to have lost some of its critical force as it has become omnipresent, now operating at levels that escape human control:

“In ‘societies of control’ the diagram silently organizes the movements and flows of ‘dividuals’ across cities and nation-states, seeking to encourage their encounters where this produces urban vibrancy and productivity, or else quietly refusing their passwords and passkeys where some characteristic of the ‘dividual’ in question is deemed to be a threat, or of negligible use to local development and growth.”<sup>541</sup>

But the philosopher also highlights the long history of diagram production in the field of architecture. She calls for deploying this tool in a renewed manner “as a means of questioning or countering those diagrams that seek to over-determine a population’s expressions of existence and modes of territorialization.” Whether choreographic or diagrammatic, architectural action would then be constructed through cunning, improvisation, solidarity in the face of a diagrammatic injunction toward separation, “less to create a consensual idiom than a slowing down of the work of diagrams through the creative noise of alternative diagrams.”<sup>542</sup> For Frichot, the era would require new (counter-)architectural diagrams that would let the human subject as a project dissipate but would oppose complete dissolution, supporting other processes of subjectification.

In a second step, I discuss a tentative response to this invitation to produce new types of architectural diagrams or choreographies. This attempt takes the form of a co-construction approach to a territorial vision developed within the framework of this research. The context for this approach is the *Jardin des Nations*, a part of the territory of Geneva, Switzerland, which, for several decades, has been almost entirely dedicated to hosting the activities of numerous international organizations based in Geneva. Over time, the neighborhood has become a kind of *international machine* where each piece of territory is assigned to an organization/nation. A choreopolic taking various forms keeps the neighborhood in a state of *frozen movement*, where new forms of minor interaction are rendered impossible. As a group of architect-researchers, we have conducted a two-year research aimed at understanding the choreographed policing in place, its

541 H el ene Frichot, “On the Becoming-Indiscernible of the Diagram in Societies of Control,” *The Journal of Space Syntax* 5, no. 1 (2014): 12.

542 Frichot, 13.

mechanisms, and the possibilities of hybridizing or subverting it. Simultaneously, this process has required imagining ways to encounter counter-knowledge, counter-movements, and counter-imaginings to this choreography. Therefore, the aim is to describe the form that architectural attempts have taken to connect with these forms of resistance and minor imagination, as well as the diagrams/choreographies that we have implemented to experiment with other ways of experiencing this territory. The different trajectories and formats we have explored are considered as *rehearsals*, aiming to decouple architectural mediations from power dynamics and dominant patterns they contribute to reproducing, especially in relation to the non-human. These experiments bring to light the plural nature of architectural choreopolice devices and other logics that, up to now, uphold and legitimize deeply problematic dynamics in this territory. They make possible the continuation of certain projects with logics that are detrimental to the possibilities of cohabitation.

In a third and final step, I draw on experiences, struggles, and concepts deployed in territories in South America directly impacted by the violence of coloniality/modernity, its choreopolice devices, and extractivist logics. This is done to make visible the powerful choreopolitical ecologies of resistance and imagination produced in these territories over the past decades. Faced with the impacts of land extraction and exploitation by international corporations, communities have been mobilizing for several decades across the continent around a concept, the *cuerpo-territorio*.<sup>543</sup> Behind this term, various drawing methods, forms of knowledge, and collaborative approaches come together, enabling the elaboration of coexistences within the folds of the daily experience of violence inflicted upon the land and bodies. Narrating some of these practices allows us to consider how situated choreopolitical ecologies are also capable of resonating and aligning over time and across geographies to enable the solidary empowerment of multiple minor worldings.

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543 Literally “body-territory”, which others also translate in the emerging Anglophone literature on the subject as “territorial bodies”. The concept, whose emergence is linked to collective practices and formulation within activist groups, owes its circulation in the research field notably to the Argentine researcher and activist Verónica Gago.





### 3.1 Climate choreopolitics. — More-than-human socialities and choreographies

PART I

Entangled subjugations — More-than-human witness collectivities — Representing nature/Nature representing itself — Affected — affecting climate collectivities — Climate choreopolitics — Participation and the choreopolitical —  
Choreographies of weathering



### 3.1 Climate choreopolitics. — More-than-human socialities and choreographies

#### PART I

##### Entangled subjugations

In a text that has become a reference on the question of the role played by the figure of Man in contemporary reflections, the Jamaican writer and cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter opens her text with these words:

“The argument proposes that the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves.”<sup>544</sup>

The writer also asserts the powerful connections linking this initial operation at the foundation of coloniality/modernity with other contemporary motifs of struggle:

“All our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment, global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the earth resources –these are all differing facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle.”<sup>545</sup>

The researcher places at the core of our collective capacities to mitigate violence at the global level, the question of the almost absolute domination of one mode of existence over others. According to Wynter, any attempt to subvert the coloniality of power must take the form of a parallel effort to subvert this overrepresentation, that of Man. The writer describes the 1960s and the beginning of a feminist and anticolonial uprising as a key moment in the struggle against this over-representation. Since then, the trajectories of open claims have continued to be pursued and rearticulated. The history and thought behind these subversive efforts today represent a fertile ground to continue unraveling the mechanisms through which a single mode of existence persists in imposing itself.

At the same time, Wynter observes the “vigorous discursive and institutional re-elaboration of the central over-representation” that allows the interests of the world of Man to be maintained.<sup>546</sup> The researcher underscores how symbolic and representational practices through which we “inscribe and auto-institute ourselves as human” have gradually come to include “those mechanisms of occultation by means of which we

544 Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015>.

545 Wynter, 260–61.

546 Wynter, 260–61.

have been able to make opaque to ourselves the fact that we so do.”<sup>547</sup> Currently, the redefinition of inhabiting and the practices of world-making demanded by the degradation of terrestrial living environments involve many of the practices that Wynter identifies as those through which “we institute ourselves as human.” Therefore, the targeted transformations cannot be addressed without simultaneously addressing the current tendency at all levels, (which is concurrently obscured) to redefine the mode of Man as the sole mode of human existence.

The relationship with nature is one of the ways through which the superiority of a *certain* mode of being and mode of knowledge is constantly reaffirmed. Shela Sheikh, a postcolonial scholar, notes how the reproduction of the over-representation identified by Wynter is now largely achieved through indirect violence, manifested in both the natural and built environment.

“Scorched-earth tactics, environmental remodelling, industrial-scale agriculture, the creation of enclosures, dispossession through land-grabbing, and so on”, lists Sheikh. These actions affect the most marginalized communities and render them culturally and politically “sacrifiable.”<sup>548</sup> However, the researcher also emphasizes how this distinction between humans extends even into the protection of nature. By treating nature as an object without its own voice, those in power assume the right to speak for it and become its sole legitimate representatives. The question of who has the right to speak for nature arises

“in the context of silencing and missingness, as well as constructed categories of active/passive, subject/object as these play out across race, nature, and shifting conceptions of the human.”<sup>549</sup>

### More-than-human witness collectivities

In this context of intertwined subjugations and subjectifications, the question of the ability to imagine and act arises in a renewed manner. The narrative of situations becomes in itself a stake and a way of regrouping differently. Sheikh argues that one of the crucial questions is that of *witnesses* capable of evoking the life of the planet and its degradation, and defines witnessing as “an ongoing process that entails the simultaneous registration (witnessing) of experiences and representation (bearing witness) to a public.”<sup>550</sup> By designating the responsibility of witnessing as an open question, Sheikh calls for experiments, processes, and struggles that are formulated both as environmental claims and as a redefinition of subjectivities. The act of witnessing thus involves

547 Wynter, 328.

548 Shela Sheikh, “The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics,” *Kronos* 44, no. 1 (2018): 145, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2018/v44a9>.

549 Sheikh, 146.

550 Sheikh, 147.

human and non-human communities in new forms of sociality that crucially allow the redefinition of subjectivities to be part of the collectively imagined response process. According to Sheikh, it is necessary for this act to become “both a practice of care for the other, *and* of political protest that contests contemporary (neoliberal, neo-colonial and extractivist) forms of governmentality.”<sup>551</sup> In these terms, the exploration of new socialities between humans and non-humans is also always a way of bearing witness to forms of violence related to dominant orders, and of forming *witnesses*, understood in the extended sense of the term developed by Sheikh.

The idea of a collective witness involves an important nuance compared to another way of emphasizing the importance of environmental degradation, which consists of giving a voice to nature by speaking “for it”, an approach that is also developing and raises several other questions.<sup>552</sup> Here, the idea of the collective witness emphasizes the *process of constituting* this witness rather than articulating a clear claim that would *then* be transmitted. It becomes possible to “stay with the trouble” of the act of witnessing and carefully consider the representation issues that inevitably emerge in this process. The establishment of a capacity for collective witnessing is contemplated as a process wherein it is possible to experiment with how caring for the *other*, and consequently forming a new entity with them, is also, at an individual level, a way of undergoing transformation, making sense, and more fully inscribing oneself in the world.

Calling for greater attention to how hybrid witnesses to environmental degradation and the subjugation of minor ways of life are formed allows, furthermore, the integration of the necessary long-term temporalities. This attunement is crucial for understanding genuine issues and forms of violence, often concealed. Environmental violence often takes the form of a slow destruction of life possibilities experienced by bodies more as the destruction of their future than as direct violence. This type of violence has been theorized in a book by the scholar Rob Nixon as “slow violence,” a term that has since been widely adopted in the field of environmental humanities to describe this phenomenon.<sup>553</sup> The concept developed by Nixon draws attention to

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551 Sheikh, 150.

552 For a discussion on the emergence of rights of nature and the notions of *collective personhood* or *environmental public*, which represent different ways of thinking about the various forms of alliances and “vocalization” of developing rights of nature, one can particularly refer to the following articles: Rafi Youatt, “Personhood and the Rights of Nature: The New Subjects of Contemporary Earth Politics,” *International Political Sociology* 11, no. 1 (March 2017): 39–54, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olw032>. And Green, “Ecology, Race, and the Making of Environmental Publics: A Dialogue with Silent Spring in South Africa,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.5250/resilience.1.2.002>.

553 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, First Harvard University Press paperback edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013). In 2019, a multidisciplinary team of researchers revisits the concept of slow violence to reformulate it in a context that, especially during the global pandemic, has witnessed the proliferation of emergency governance. The researchers then develop the concept of *slow emergencies*. The environmental and political geographer Thom Davies, on his part, proposes a critical reinterpretation of the concept of slow violence, emphasizing that violence is never completely invisible to those most exposed to it. The researcher thus partially contradicts Nixon’s definition and calls for the knowledge claims of those inhabiting toxic environments to be taken more seriously. Thom Davies, “Slow Violence and Toxic Geographies: ‘Out of Sight’ to Whom?,” *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 40, no. 2 (March 2022): 409–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654419841063>.no. 2 (March 2022)



forms of violence that are not punctual but unfold over the long term, making it nearly impossible to identify those responsible for this violence. This ‘elusive’ violence consequently becomes challenging to counter or oppose. The invisibility of violence raises issues of visibility and representation that Sheikh seeks to underline when she suggests becoming more attentive to the processes of constructing collective witnesses.

### Representing nature/Nature representing itself

As already mentioned in the context of the discussion on image and imagination, the idea of representation inherently carries the notion of an irreducible distance between what is represented and, precisely, its representation. As such, the notion of representation appears inappropriate when elaborating forms of visibility, advocacy, and collective imagination that do not speak *on behalf of* nature but rather bring it into existence. The cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis, working at the intersection of feminism and environmental change, addresses this question in a text that confronts the necessity of representation for visibility, titled “No Representation without Colonisation? (Or, Nature Represents Itself).”<sup>554</sup> There, Neimanis points out that in the human effort to protect non-human natures, whether they are represented by humans with arrogance or left in a lack of representation,

“in each case, technologies of representation trace a fine line between the much-needed redress of injustice done unto others, and the various violences that accompany speaking *for* them.”<sup>555</sup>

For Neimanis, the most enriching forms of response to this question are those in which “representations construct, rather than passively mirror, the real.”<sup>556</sup> The researcher aims to describe the possibility of representations. These representations, as they undergo elaboration and inscription into the world, find their existence tied to the necessity of certain claims, while simultaneously, maintaining an awareness of the risk of capture and appropriation. This dynamic results in a necessary representation—one that must not entail mastery. In this stance, humans who commit to representing nature must also ensure that the fact that it always exceeds its representations remains a present concept. The impossibility of a ‘true’ representation then becomes “a crucial part of a radical politics whose promise lies in its very unfinishedness.”<sup>557</sup>

The approach to representation proposed by Neimanis closely resonates with the

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A feminist critique of the concept emphasizes that slow violence has been present in feminist discussions for a long time and underscores the need to consider how invisibilization is not solely due to the nature of natural dynamics but also to the focus on the spectacular that characterizes gendered and raced epistemologies. Jenna Marie Christian and Lorraine Dowler, “Slow and Fast Violence: A Feminist Critique of Binaries,” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 18, no. 5 (2019): 1066–75.

554 Astrida Neimanis, “No Representation without Colonisation? (Or, Nature Represents Itself),” *Somatechnics* 5, no. 2 (September 2015): 135–53, <https://doi.org/10.3366/soma.2015.0158>.

555 Neimanis, 135.

556 Neimanis, 136.

557 Neimanis, 141.

practices of architectural drawing and the co-constitution of architectural images, as explored in the second part of this research. Within these practices, intentional ambiguity was maintained to offer both visibility and protection to the minor architectures at play. This approach further aligns with the notion of architectural rehearsal, wherein disciplinary techniques and practices gradually disentangle from the historical operations of subjugation to which they have traditionally been tethered.

The representation for Neimanis is indeed a vibrant image, wherein the diverse stages of co-composition are all crucial for elaborating possibilities in representing nature. In certain situations where one needs to confront existing legal and governance structures, the possibility of ‘representation’ retains its significance. But the examples from the previous chapter have shown that today, it is the performative nature of representation that matters, in a game with its ability to assert authority and contribute to legitimizing claims. The fixity of representation is then nothing but an illusion. On the contrary, it is in the play with different statuses, states, and forms of the image that it becomes possible to adopt a posture that is as ethical as possible in the approach of speaking *on behalf of nature*.<sup>558</sup>

The initial stages of elaborating images of nature are also to be considered in their performative dimension. Neimanis argues that representation does not presuppose that the described object exists before its representation. Rather, representation and the represented co-become and perform the supposedly represented reality, a dynamic also extensively described by the physicist and theorist Karen Barad. Drawing on the reasoning of the anthropologist Vicky Kirby, Neimanis emphasizes that it is also possible to extend this reflection to consider that there is no separation between nature and culture, but rather that all representations are forms of nature being written. Bodies, modes of expression and writing, movements of the earth and water, all these ways of world-making can be seen as different writings of nature.

However, this flattening of difference cannot be productive unless the risk of co-optation that comes with it is recognized. Once again, the important question becomes: “What does (this) representation do? [...] What bodies and knowledges come to matter?”<sup>559</sup> The task is then to pose these questions at every moment and to construct a multiplicity of ethically sound ways to answer them.

### Affected/affecting climate collectivities

The affective dimension is central to capturing the dynamics at play in emerging

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558 Neimanis notably cites an example of a decision made by the US Supreme Court in 1972 in which the protection of a forested area against urban development was denied. She notes that “their ruling did not focus on whether or not the development would cause damage, but rather on the question of standing—that is, of who has the authority to claim injury in a court of law. [...] Arguing *on behalf of* the valley’s non-human natures for the damage that would be incurred was ruled inadmissible.” (Neimanis, 143.) The act of forming communities and socialities that extend beyond the human realm, legitimizing them in relation to existing systems, even when not all entities are directly impacted in the same way, remains a significant challenge to this day.

559 Neimanis, “No Representation without Colonisation?,” 148.

communities engaged in witnessing collectivities or articulating architectural images *without mastery*. Indeed, it is a matter of processes and practices through which one can gain the ability to affect and be affected, to *be mobilized* and to *mobilize* amidst the complexity of environmental, climate, and social issues. It is not about extracting oneself from these issues to understand them, but rather about always getting closer to them.<sup>560</sup>

Affects then become the relational witness of what is set in motion and the trajectories that unfold in relationships. In Citton's words, affects are indeed "relational entities: they bear witness to certain relationships that weave between a certain individual (or a certain community) and their environment."<sup>561</sup> He insists on the richness of an approach attentive to affects when it comes to considering an emerging situation not only "objectively" but also taking into account "the imaginary categories through which cultures collectively represent and mediate their perception of the world."<sup>562</sup> In the more specific case of reflections on climate, the political ecology scholar Neera M. Singh notes that "the perspective of affects enables thinking about fostering careful or affective political ecology that is attuned to openness to being transformed by the world."<sup>563</sup>

These are precisely the aspects that lead media theorist Michael Richardson to consider the idea of an "affective witnessing framework" to describe processes that allow us to gauge the transformations of climate and ongoing violence based on how they affect us. For the researcher, in the context of discussions on the ability to transform our ways of living, from a climate action perspective, it is crucial to consider the affective dimension:

"Becoming responsible is not only discursive but affective. One must *feel* responsible for the climate changing for action to *feel* urgent enough to become political necessity."<sup>564</sup>

An "affective framework" does not separate attempts to describe climate issues from an affective reality nor from the construction of a capacity to act, but rather describes their overlapping deployment.

More specifically, Richardson argues that it is possible to develop an "affective witnessing of scale" in which it is the different scales of climate reality themselves and

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560 On this subject, one can refer notably to the widely cited text by the geographer Ben Anderson, "Affective Atmospheres," *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 2 (December 2009): 77–81, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.08.005>. Many researchers have delved into these questions, and the following two texts provide good overviews: NeeraM Singh, "Introduction: Affective Ecologies and Conservation," *Conservation and Society* 16, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs.18.33>, and Blanche Verlie, "'Climatic-Affective Atmospheres': A Conceptual Tool for Affective Scholarship in a Changing Climate," *Emotion, Space and Society* 33 (November 2019): 100623, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2019.100623>.

561 Yves Citton, "Une Pensée Politique Relevant Les Défis Du Dividualisme," in *L'économie Contre Elle-Même* (Montreal: Lux Editions, 2018), 14.

562 Citton, 14.

563 Singh, "Introduction," 2.

564 Michael Richardson, "Witnessing the Anthropocene: Affect and the Problem of Scale," *Parallax* 26, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2021.1883298>.

their incommensurability that are made to be felt. The framework he proposes

“offers an affective language for describing aesthetics as a mode of truth-telling alongside efforts at cognitive understanding that dominate much climate crisis communication, often driven by efforts at representation or data-led abstraction.”<sup>565</sup>

The researcher refers to numerous practices, particularly artistic ones, which allow for oscillations between scales, bodies, and imaginaries, expanding the ways of affecting and being affected. Through these intricate weavings, the “relations of scale are themselves intensive, forceful and embodied in the most radical sense of folding the human into the nonhuman spatialities of climate crisis.”<sup>566</sup>

The specific case of scale disruptions, bound up with the realities of climate change, is not the only one that requires affective interweaving to become *mobilizing* in the action strategies of communities that go beyond the human. Drawing on the works of several representatives of new materialism, such as Neimanis and Rachel Walker, scholars in gender and political studies, it becomes significant to consider climate from the perspective of mobilizations that extend beyond the human realm. In this context, affects are not only mobilized but also simultaneously bear witness to the unfolding trajectories. The term “weathering” is used by the two researchers to describe the dynamics through which humans and climate co-become in their reciprocal affections in what they call “mutual worlding.”<sup>567</sup> Promoting the concept of weathering contributes to recognizing and qualifying the effort required for imagination, setting in motion other ways of *climate-making* that mobilize other *affections*:

“Weathering, then, is a logic, a way of being/becoming, or a mode of affecting and differentiating that brings humans into relation with more-than-human weather.”<sup>568</sup>

This concept enables the two researchers to work on the abstract quality attributed to the climate in Western culture and develop a field of thought and action that recognize the trans-corporeality of human corporeality.<sup>569</sup> It also allows for considering the thick and non-linear *temporality* of climate-becoming. In contrast to the dominant linear temporal narrative of climate change, centered on finding solutions to *stop* climate change, Neimanis and Walker advocate for practices that train the capacity to perceive the present state of the climate and its possible futures through the ways in which this

565 Richardson, 341.

566 Richardson, 349.

567 Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker, “Weathering : Climate Change and the ‘Thick Time’ of Transcorporeality,” *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (2014): 560, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12064>.

568 Neimanis and Walker, 560.

569 The concept of transcorporeality has been developed notably by the writer and researcher Stacy Alaimo, who dedicated the book *Bodily Natures* to it. She writes: “Emphasizing the material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world—and, at the same time, acknowledging that material agency necessitates more capacious epistemologies—allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century realities in which “human” and “environment” can by no means be considered as separate.” Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.

climate *change us*. The bodily sensations become part of “climate change,” offering themselves as a gateway to trans-corporeal inflections and alliances.

### Climate choreopolitics

“Weather-worlds” and weatherings are, therefore, moving assemblages in which violence is exercised, and alliances are potentially invented to resist it. Egert devotes a text to the question of the manifestations of racism in weather-worlds, drawing on the different choreographies at work in the event represented by Hurricane Katrina. Egert proposes an interpretation in which these cannot be described as human or meteorological, but are always a composite. The racism that characterized the responses to the event takes on a meteorological form itself. He writes:

“Taking into account that racism is part of the weather-worlds, and that the weather-worlds are part of racism, does not result in racism’s relativization. Instead, this perspective points to different regimes of power and how they operate meteorologically.”<sup>570</sup>  
 Pour lui, il est nécessaire de faire une place dans nos pratiques, nos descriptions et nos imaginations aux manières dont “different regimes of power [...] operate meteorologically.”<sup>571</sup>

To outline ways of coexisting and inhabiting that contribute to greater equity and reduced destructiveness, it is essential to consider climate through a multiplicity of practices, mediations, and socialities. These factors contribute to reconfiguring the relationships between humans and non-humans, influencing their shared climate-making, whether they be violent or enriching.

As emphasized by all anti-colonial and feminist thoughts attentive to power dynamics, inequalities, and their reproduction in formulating “solutions” to contemporary challenges of coexistence, it is also crucial that the porosity and intensification of sought-after relationships be accompanied at every moment by attention to the risks of invisibilization that they create:

“Even as transcorporeality posits a relational ontology between human and nonhuman nature, it is also a *space of difference*. We are not all swept up into some amorphous gust of wind and water.”<sup>572</sup>

In this sense, a direct connection can be drawn between the notion of *weathering* and that of choreopolitics. Practices that contribute to climate-making and find forms of encounters and bodies—both human and non-human— that affect us in ways strengthening and mobilizing us into collectively meaningful alliances can be described as instances of *climate choreopolitics*. Lepecki and Bigé indeed describe choreopolitics as a set of experiments that allow us to “learn to recognize the emergence of a social fabric in

570 Gerko Egert, “Choreographing the Weather - Weathering Choreography,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 60, no. 2 (2016): 80.

571 Egert, 80.

572 Neimanis and Walker, “*Weathering*,” 564.



the process of remaking itself [and] learn to embrace the lines of this orientation.”<sup>573</sup> A climate choreopolitics consists precisely of such experiments, enabling us to enhance our individual and collective capacities to align with other lines of force, movements, and ways of honoring our transcorporealities. The sought-after affections are those that allow for climate-making and world-making while limiting the violence exerted on different bodies.

In this research, choreopolitics is always in tension with choreopolice and the demobilizing affections it continuously produces. Wherever an “adequate path” is indicated at the expense of multiplicity, wherever an injunction is articulated to dissociate future climate action from the daily experienced realities or the individual experience from its trans-individual dimension, choreopolice operates. The channels it creates and actualizes prevent us from collectively imagining less violent world-makings for both the human and the non-human.

### Participation and the choreopolitical

A *climate choreopolitics* requires a proliferation of collective and situated practices in which the human and the non-human are called upon to re-encounter each other. However, the appropriation of the production— spatial, affective, imaginal— of such practices by the logics of extractivist capitalism is never far away. Choreopolitics is widely present in the processes of image, imaginaries, and visions production for the climate adaptation of cities and territories, including *participatory* processes in which architects and other urban professionals are frequently involved today. The structures set up to collect, comment on, feed into, gather, and synthesize the feelings and ideas of residents for their territory are by no means exempt from the power relations and dynamics of control exerted over imaginaries, movements, and world-making.

Often, these participatory processes become true machines for reproducing choreopolice, rather than milieus in which choreopolitical ecologies could genuinely develop and become capable of truly enriching the transformation trajectories of cities. In an article on contemporary cultural participation, Citton argues that “participation deserves to be seen as a massive data pump” that capitalism exploits extensively.<sup>574</sup> Media theorist Shannon Mattern, on the other hand, references the insurgent students in 1968: “I Participate, You Participate, He Participates, We Participate, You all Participate, They Profit.”<sup>575</sup> Primarily, these mechanisms enable authorities or those in power to easily absorb all emerging forms of expression and to bypass the possibilities of new affections, curtailing the potentially mobilizing dimensions of such initiatives.

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573 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 135.

574 Yves Citton, “Participation Culturelle et Conversations Jurisgénératives,” *Hybrid*, no. 8 (April 21, 2022): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4000/hybrid.1465>.

575 Shannon Mattern, “Post-It Note City,” *Places : The Journal of Public Scholarship on Architecture, Landscape, and Urbanism*, February 2020, 2.

For Citton, in this context,

“if something deserves to appear as subversive within our current frenetic communication dynamics, it is no longer about saying (this or that), but about remaining silent (long enough to hear the emptiness of what is being said).”<sup>576</sup>

To remain silent, to refuse, to slow down, to listen, to bear witness—these verbs, which came up frequently throughout this research, are, on the contrary, rarely used and valued in the context of participation in urban projects. They indeed presuppose a radically different conception of participation, where the objective is to create a space-time to bring forth new affections and to find grounds and opportunities for sharing our movements that elude immediate co-optation by the choreopolice.

Bigé writes that it is urgent to

“become capable of entering into choreopolitics that are more-than-human, [...] choreopolitics through which, instead of referring to our pre-established identities, we could connect with each other by following the lines of flight of the movements that traverse us.”<sup>577</sup>

She adds that this approach would constitute “a response to oppose to the logistics that feeds on the management of our data.”<sup>578</sup>

Citton, on the other hand, draws on the reflections of Moten and Harney regarding the *study*. For a

“participatory” process to genuinely combat oppressions – or, one could say, the order maintained by the choreopolice – it is necessary that there be a study, meaning participants who “converge on a basis of equality of intelligences and share their incompleteness.”<sup>579</sup>

In the exchange, the various stakeholders

“accept that none of their selves is sovereign, that no one controls the exchanges, but that it is the considerations adjusted through their relational and argumentative trial and error that lead them together towards a necessarily shared higher intelligence.”<sup>580</sup>

The situation of collective improvisation must also be recognised as a legitimate source of knowledge production, and in Citton’s words, as a legitimate source of “jurisdiction.” Contributions to a collective approach should not be confined to merely sustaining and legitimizing predetermined frameworks. On the contrary, they should have the legitimacy to establish new ones. They must, above all, have the legitimacy to “question the very principles of tallies and accountings, rights and responsibilities, words and

576 Citton, “Participation Culturelle et Conversations Jurisgénératives,” 5.

577 Bigé, *Mouvementements. Ecopolitiques de la danse*, 138.

578 Bigé, 138.

579 Citton, “Participation Culturelle et Conversations Jurisgénératives,” 6.

580 Citton, 6.

silences.”<sup>581</sup>

These inquiries into the role of questioning in participatory processes already have a history. Geographers Kye Askins and Rachel Pain, who work on the nature of interaction spaces in the urban realm, noted in the 2010s that there were already numerous critical approaches that had developed their own accounts of participatory practice that acknowledge its complex relations to power while emphasising its *potential for* shifting these power relations. However, they recognized the importance of continuing to work on

“the wider deployment of ethics, politics, and relationships [...] to ensure that research progresses through dialogue and co-ownership rather than simply attractive methodological moments.”<sup>582</sup> The two researchers called for attention to the “contact zone” initiated by a participatory approach in which researchers “work with and through issues of voice, power, and desire *alongside* all participants in the process.”<sup>583</sup>

A decade later, it remains crucial to stress the challenges in establishing such attentions and spaces of transformation, given their continued absorption by dominant modes of operation. In a 2023 journal issue dedicated to addressing these issues, editors and urban studies researchers Jenny Lindblad and Nikhil Anand note that, in response to the demand for justice and investment in addressing the ways in which the history of urban planning has disproportionately exposed marginalized communities to suffering—an issue starkly highlighted by the global pandemic—the response has been the *planning* of new projects:

“Yet, if the events of the last three years revealed the violences of modern planning, they also provided the grounds for its reinscription.”<sup>584</sup>

In this reaffirmation of planning as a response to the initial claims raised by marginalized communities for structural transformations, the inherent ambiguity of urban transformation processes becomes more visible. However, this tension is not without potential. Lindblad and Anand point to the activating value of temporal horizons in planning, stressing their capacity to open up the possibility of bringing forth other futures by working in the present “on the debris of past plans and their contestations”. For them,

“it is by holding, withholding and wielding time, by holding spatiotemporal horizons close and still, that futures continue to be made in the present, not just by planners but also by other experts and urban residents.”<sup>585</sup>

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581 Citton, 6.

582 Kye Askins and Rachel Pain, “Contact Zones: Participation, Materiality, and the Messiness of Interaction,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 5 (October 2011): 806, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d11109>.

583 Askins and Pain, 806.

584 Jenny Lindblad and Nikhil Anand, “Cities after Planning,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 41, no. 4 (August 2023): 606, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758231202863>.

585 Lindblad and Anand, 611.

Rather than allowing the field of planning to unfold its own linear temporalities, it is possible to make it, as far as possible, a condition in which to operate collectively and insist on proliferating the possibilities through collective practices of experimentation. Here, we return to the idea of *choreopolitical stubbornness*, which the territories traversed since the beginning of this text now allow us to connect to the production of new architectural images and imaginations, as well as to the necessity of revisiting our ways of climate-making. As Erin Manning writes,

“procedures must be crafted that are capable not only of creating the conditions for an event that is perceptible to the human, that engages the human (within the scales and speeds of our own emergent bodyings), but that are also capable of fielding difference and creating openings in the continuously speciating arena of the more-than human.”<sup>586</sup>

### Choreographies of weathering

Revisiting our means for climate-making is a program that demands different frameworks and distinct forms of architectural and participatory support. This aim sets itself apart from a participatory approach solely focused on harvesting data, ready to be anonymized, fragmented, and recomposed according to logics that have little connection with the realities of the existences they were supposed to testify to in the first place.

Ideally, these weathering practices should truly correspond to nothing other than collective improvisation:

“The dream of solution must give to an ongoing engagement with a weather-world in flux: an engagement that must necessarily extend beyond our individualized “home” to the larger transcorporeal we share.”<sup>587</sup>

Yet in a world where all relationships are scripted, as stressed enough so far, coming to the other, whether human or non-human, and connecting with them through something other than what defined us and our relationships until then is one of the most delicate operations that exist. Articulating the possibility of coming to each other openly directly touches upon the *choreographic* aspects discussed in the first part of this research, in which a certain choreography, the nature of which can vary considerably, exists as a minimal framework opening up the possibility of renewed experiments in inter-dependencies and co-becomings.

Here, choreography is presented as a tool that supports new choreopolitics, offering an alternative to participatory frameworks relying on accumulation and consensus. It is a framework capable of being surpassed by the event-in-the-making, but one without which, in a deeply scripted world, it is almost impossible to imagine transforming our experiences of reality and our collective futures. As dance scholar Amanda Rogers reminds us, it is important to clarify this understanding of the term “choreography” as

586 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 94.

587 Neimanis and Walker, “*Weathering*,” 561.

soon as one imagines creating porosities between dance and the urban realm, where it traditionally resonates differently:

“Choreopolitics and choreopolicing exist in tension, with choreography conceptualized as a planned activity that produces alternative, affective modes of political being. Extant discussions of choreography in geography have risked being viewed as a domain of command but choreopolitics views choreography as enabling the practice of freedom and non-conformity such that experimental and experiential worlds can emerge.”<sup>588</sup>

In light of the different elements explored in the third part of this research, it would make sense to imagine *choreographies of weathering* that enable “climate action”, participation processes, and visions for territories to transcend the machine reproduction of identical dominant responses, imaginaries, and violence. We have seen the ways in which we define nature, how we render it passive to better ‘represent’ it, and how we separate the climate from the multiplicity of our climate sensings. All these dynamics hinder the proliferation of a multiplicity of modes of existence and modes of being human.

On the contrary, choreographies of weathering have the objective, even though they are always suspended in the potentialities of the encounter, of producing the conditions to be moved differently and feeling how this carries us towards other world-making. In the words of Manning, “choreography is a proposition *to* the event. It asks the event how its ecology might best generate and organize the force of movement-moving.”<sup>589</sup>

In the context of the choreographies of weathering, the choreography questions the event-that-comes in its capacity to bring into existence more-than-human collectivities in shared dances that escape extractivist logics. As Marmont writes in his cross-reading of the undercommons and the philosophy of Massumi and Manning:

“If neoliberal capitalism is governance *through* movement, requiring the separability of its units in order to ensure calculability and control over its smooth functioning at all time, one thing it cannot abide ought to be a form of motion that instead deliberately jumbles up individualising demarcations between singular bodies, their sensing capacities, their intentions and attentions.”<sup>590</sup>

Viewed in this way, the notion of choreography demands and allows a revisiting of the ways in which architectural practices and tools come into contact with movement, the emergent, and the differential in an attempt to co-produce architectural images and other weatherings. As Manning, herself an expert in the elaboration of such choreographic frameworks, points out, these frameworks are themselves concerned with attuning to the event:

588 Amanda Rogers, “Transforming the National Body: Choreopolitics and Disability in Contemporary Cambodian Dance,” *Cultural Geographies* 27, no. 4 (October 2020): 531, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474019892000>.

589 Erin Manning, *Always More than One: Individuation's Dance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 76.

590 Giovanni Marmont, “Nanopoetics of Use. Kinetic Prefiguration and Dispossessed Sociality in the Undercommons” (Brighton, University of Brighton, 2019), 221.



“World-constituting never means world-*constituted*. To craft a procedure that is world-constituting, the fine-tuning must occur *in the event*—it must be immanent to the event’s coming-into-itself.”<sup>591</sup>

In such processes, architect-choreographers must *rehearse* their proposals and frameworks in contact with the multiplicity of other bodies and active forces in the imagination and production of spatialities and worlds, and in contact with the *event* that constitutes the encounter. Manning goes as far as to write:

“The proposition is a lure. It is a force that cuts into the incipient event to alter its experiential vectorization.”<sup>592</sup>

From this choreographic perspective, what architectural lures can we imagine to produce other futures, but above all, to produce the future differently? With this question in mind, I now turn to a collective process of elaborating a vision for the International activities district in Geneva, where certain experiments along these lines have been conducted as part of this research.

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591 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 93.

592 Manning, 77.





## 3.2 Choreographies of weathering. — A (new) vision for Geneva's International district

PART II

A history of legal and spatial exceptions — A vision for the ecological transition — Disposition and articulation of the design process — Choreography of weathering  
— Emerging choreopolitical ecologies — Are choreopolitical ecologies a 'vision'?





## 3.2 Choreographies of weathering. — A (new) vision for Geneva's International district

### PART II

#### A history of legal and spatial exceptions

In 1919, the city of Geneva was chosen to host the headquarters of the *League of Nations*. This decision marked the “beginning” of a relationship between the Swiss city and multilateralism.<sup>593</sup> The establishment of the United Nations headquarters in 1946 after the Second World War confirmed Geneva as a center for diplomatic activities for peace. Gradually, a collection of international and non-governmental organizations settled in the Geneva territory, forming today the “International Geneva ecosystem,” a significant assembly of institutions grouped on the right bank of the lake, on the outskirts of the city center.<sup>594</sup>

In the process of constitution of this ecosystem, the historical, political, architectural, spatial, and territorial dimensions became intimately intertwined.<sup>595</sup> The lake landscape, dominated by the presence of the mountain peak of the *Mont-Blanc*, played a significant role in the League of Nations' decision to establish its headquarters in Geneva rather than Brussels, a city against which Geneva was competing as potential host at that time. During visits to Geneva prior to the decision, the City of Geneva proposed several potential sites to the League of Nations on both sides of the lake. The Secretariat of the League eventually chose to settle in a hotel facing the lake and the view, which had not been previously suggested. The authorities of Geneva then decided to gift the building to the League of Nations, going so far as to make legal adaptations to make it possible.<sup>596</sup> This installation and the accompanying donation can be considered as a prototype in a long series of legal exceptions that gradually materialized in the territory parallel to the development of international activity.<sup>597</sup>

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593 The foundation of the Red Cross in 1863 is sometimes also cited as an initial moment in the development of international activities in Geneva. In any case, these historical markers considered as a “beginning” are only the visible emergences of intertwined dynamics constructing the positioning of Geneva and Switzerland in relation to international activities for peace.

594 In 2024, this ecosystem is composed of 180 permanent missions representing different states at the UN, 38 international organizations, and 461 non-governmental organizations. <https://www.geneve-int.ch/fr/faits-et-chiffres>, consulted by the author on January 4, 2024.

595 A « Histoire de l'architecture de la Genève internationale » written by historian Joëlle Kuntz is available online: <https://www.geneve-int.ch/fr/lhistoire-du-domaine-bati-des-institutions-internationales-geneve>. A book by the same author presents a detailed version: Kuntz, Joëlle. “Genève internationale: 100 ans d'architecture.” Genève: Éditions Slatkine, 2017.

596 In September 1920, a legislative decree was issued “authorising the Council of State to exempt the League of Nations from the payment of transfer and transcription duties on the purchase of the Hôtel National”. The decree can be consulted in the UN archives in Geneva.

597 In the years following the creation of the League of Nations, Geneva donated a private estate that it had re-



Fig. 168-72 • The existing landscape heritage. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Julien Heil, Aurélie Dupuis © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.





Fig. 173-74 • The existing built heritage, locations: Château de Tournay, Domaine de la Pastorale now hosting the International Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI), Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, december 2021. Photo: Julien Heil, © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



After the Second World War, large-scale architectural projects multiplied. Several significant projects emerged in the midst of former private estates that had become the property of organizations. The WHO (World Health Organization), ILO (International Labour Organization), ITU (International Telecommunication Union), had buildings constructed by the most renowned architects and engineers of that time, capable of accommodating the activities of several thousand people for their respective headquarters.<sup>598</sup>

The installation of these massive projects not in the city center but in an area previously composed of fields, hedgerows, gardens, and a few villas exerted significant logistical pressure on the modest infrastructures that served the area. Significant infrastructure projects were thus implemented to connect the organizations with each other and with the central international entry point into the territory, the Geneva Airport. The government continued its efforts as the host country and invested heavily in the infrastructural development of this part of Geneva's territory henceforth dedicated to international activity. This gradually transformed all the logics and intensities of movement across the territory.

Over the last half-century, a significant portion of Geneva's territory has been transformed to accommodate international organizations and activities. Throughout this process, organizations have repeatedly threatened to relocate in order to obtain the facilities and infrastructure they desired.<sup>599</sup> Each time, the Geneva authorities chose to approve legal decisions and exceptions in favor of international organizations to respond to the competitive challenges Geneva faced with other cities. These choices were not always supported by the entire government, and even less so by the Geneva population when they were made aware of them.<sup>600</sup> In most cases, the argument that the population benefited massively, albeit indirectly, from the presence of international organizations has been wielded by the government as an absolute argument against all

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covered for tax arrears to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Other wealthy Geneva families, whose businesses benefited from the city's growing international influence, agreed to sell their lakeside estates to the organisations. In particular, the League of Nations bought the Moynier, Bartholoni and Perle du Lac estates.

598 These include the ILO headquarters building designed by architects Eugène Beaudouin, Pier Luigi Nervi and Alberto Camenzind, and the WHO building designed by Jean Tschumi. In addition to these two extremely imposing buildings on the Geneva hillside, other modernist buildings exploiting the curtain wall principle serve as headquarters for the ITU, WMO and WIPO, and are grouped together at the limit of the city center. All these projects have been the subject of international architectural competitions, which have sparked debate in terms of both image of the organizations for the Geneva population and urban and public space strategy. These various buildings played a major role in affirming the importance of international organizations in Geneva, while at the same time crystallizing a specific type of relationship of simultaneous dependence and distance between local and international actors of the city.

599 Historian Joëlle Kuntz quotes a note from the "Committee of Five" architects of the League of Nations to the Geneva authorities in September 1928, which reads: "If not the Ariana, you should know that Vienna is making offers!" The organization subsequently obtained permission to install the Palais des Nations on the property in question, prompting Geneva to make yet another legal adjustment, this time to the testamentary obligations of the Ariana's last owner and donor. <https://www.geneve-int.ch/fr/node/4150>, consulted by the author on January 4, 2024.

600 In the written press, there are traces of reactions to the legal exceptions from which the organizations have benefited. But the only ones that seem to have really succeeded are those that resonated with heritage and landscape protection concerns, when a tower was proposed as an extension to the Palais des Nations.

opposition.<sup>601</sup>

Today, this territory is becoming less and less accessible to the inhabitants of Geneva. The question of flow organization, accessibility and mobility, which already crystallized local issues, has now taken on a global and more frontal dimension, further complicating the issue of the types of movements and relationships that are possible or not in the neighborhood. In recent years, the specter of terrorism has also come to influence spatial decisions and justify security closure measures.<sup>602</sup> Faced with the evident deterioration of the spatial conditions in the neighborhood for the residents of Geneva, international organizations assert their responsibility to protect their employees and rely on the long tradition of legal and spatial exceptions to deploy their security measures. Citizen committees' objections against such developments continue to be dismissed based on the history of exception developed over the long term, which has come to prevail over existing legal frameworks.

### A vision for the ecological transition

From the 2010s onwards, climate issues have gained increasing importance in public discourse and land-use policies. The consideration of these issues has overturned planning logics by imposing new perspectives and priorities. In Geneva, within the territory where international organizations are located, the canton is aiming for an *ecological transition*, which involves the gradual updating of its main planning tools and urban project processes. In the neighborhood hosting the international activities, the new demands for collaboration, transdisciplinary processes and action arising from the consideration of this process have contributed to exposing a degraded situation of dialogue between the public authorities, residents, associations, and the international and non-governmental organizations.

They have also revealed the impossibility of relying solely on a legal framework to ensure the quality of dialogue. In the tense situation among the various stakeholders in the territory, it became clear that the *masterplan*—the legal document intended to ensure a certain overall vision in the decisions made for the urban development of the area—was largely insufficient to mobilize the different actors in common projects toward the ecological transition.<sup>603</sup> Moreover, the document itself contained no concep-

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601 Today, the same logic continues to be deployed. At a time when competition to host international activities has become global, organizations continue to strategically raise the specter of their departure in their relations with Geneva in order to obtain legal and property exceptions that will allow them to benefit from the highest quality settings for their activities.

602 The attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 triggered a process of securing all the organization's workplaces around the world in accordance with new security standards established by the organization. In Geneva, this meant the closure to the public of the different historic domains in which the organizations are based. The application of international security standards rather than national ones constitutes a new layer of legal exception superimposed on the previous ones. As the terrorist threat continues to grow, new projects to reinforce security perimeters are constantly being developed. In 2024, the area where the ILO headquarters are located will be completely fenced off and separated from the rest of the city.

603 The Jardin des Nations neighborhood master plan (PDQ) was adopted in 2005 by Geneva's cantonal and municipal authorities. To this day, it remains the legal framework of reference for the development of the district



tual or spatial guidelines for dealing collectively with the complexity of the climatic transformations underway.

Between 2015 and 2020, the Geneva authorities sought ways to deal with the significant deterioration of dialogue and conditions of project in this territory, and the outdated planning tools they had at their disposal. They gradually rallied around the idea of a participatory approach, led by a third-party actor, aimed at articulating a *vision* that could serve as a new foundation for dialogue to guide the climate action and ecological transition in this territory. In 2020, a consortium of public authorities, formed for this purpose, launched a call for tenders to find the third-party actor responsible for structuring such an approach.<sup>604</sup> The objectives of the mandate were to renew both the vision responsible for guiding the transformation of the territory, the documents accompanying this vision, and the modalities of dialogue among the various stakeholders in the territory.

Following an initial selection based on a dossier and an interview with all the contracting authorities, the mandate was won by a collective of architects, *Architecture Land Initiative*, of which I am one of the founding members.<sup>605</sup> For two years, between 2020 and 2022, the collective worked with diverse public, institutional and other actors to establish a *vision* capable of supporting a renewed dialogue on the possibilities of common climate action in the territory. The specific political and urban context and the mandate as it had been formulated proved to be a conducive framework for collectively exploring alternative ways to envision the concepts of *vision* and *climate action* in such a symbolically layered territory.

From the beginning of the process, it was clear to the various public actors initiating the approach that the nature of the *vision* itself was one of the questions to be raised in the research. It was also clear that no transformation would be possible without a parallel reformulation of the modalities of dialogue among different actors, the planning tools, and the spatial dynamics at play in the territory. This observation, articulated at the outset of the participatory process by those who initiated it, allowed for the collective exploration of ways of doing and thinking about urban planning processes, despite the institutional context from which the process emerged.

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in which the international organizations are located. Despite the colossal changes in outlook and priorities between 2005 and 2024, this document has not been updated or replaced. This document can be consulted online: [https://ge.ch/geodata/SIAMEN/PDL/PDQ\\_Jardin\\_des\\_Nations/29350A.pdf](https://ge.ch/geodata/SIAMEN/PDL/PDQ_Jardin_des_Nations/29350A.pdf), consulted by the author on January 4, 2024.

604 The consortium behind the mandate was made up of representatives of the canton of Geneva (Department of Territory and Department of Finance), the municipalities of Geneva, Pregny-Chambésy and Grand-Saconnex, the Swiss Mission (the Confederation's representative to international organisations) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

605 *Architecture Land Initiative* is a cooperative founded in 2020, which is a collective active at the intersection of architecture, territory and politics. Its members are based in Geneva, Zurich and Hong Kong, and work at the intersection of research and design: <https://architecturelandinitiative.org>. For the project discussed here, the team consisted of Dieter Dietz (co-lead), Aurélie Dupuis (co-lead), Léonore Nemeč (co-lead), Julien Heil, Zoé Lefèvre, Hibiki Masaki, and Manon Pinget.

Another, more latent aspect would gain visibility and become central to the approach later on. Over the past decades, non-human and climate issues were significant absentees from conversations in urban planning in general and specifically from those about that neighborhood. There, the emergence and recent gain in importance of these issues was suddenly calling into question the *legitimacy* of territorial compartmentalization and existing legal exceptions, and the type of dominant modes of existence that were thus re-affirmed.

These aspects of the approach directly resonate with other elements of this research on *choreopolitical ecologies* and with these questions: What are the ecologies of movement into which existing systems project human and non-human bodies? What quality, violence or silence do these movements produce, and what other movements could be explored collectively? What alternative politics can be formulated? Thus, it is from this perspective that certain aspects of this process are discussed in the following paragraphs. In what follows, I first provide a brief factual description of the context and structure of the process led by Architecture Land Initiative. Then, I rely on a fragmentary narrative to try to convey both the choreographic operations we developed and the emerging affective reconfigurations they sometimes allowed to generate.

#### Disposition and articulation of the design process

The process carried out in the Jardin des Nations lasted two years. An initial one-year mandate aimed to develop a vision to guide the neighborhood in its ecological transition. A second year's mandate, added after the first year of collaboration between the public authorities and Architecture Land Initiative, was aimed at implementing some of the elements of the vision and thinking about the governance capable of carrying it forward over time in dialogue with the public authorities. The public authorities represented the various political levels that exist in Switzerland: national, cantonal and communal.<sup>606</sup> They also came from various government departments, including planning, mobility, environment, culture, finance and international relations.

On our side, we were a team of four to five architects working closely together. We all worked part-time on the project. In the first year, three of us led the process of investigation, event organization and synthesis, and two additional architects helped us investigate the territory and produce drawings. During the second year, the team was reduced to three. I personally participated fully in the first year. I followed the second remotely during a mobility in the United States, but I was no longer working directly on the project. The elements discussed below are therefore mainly based on the work carried out during the first phase of the project.

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<sup>606</sup> The national dimension, which usually takes a back seat when it comes to planning issues other than heavy national infrastructures such as highways and railways, was involved here because of Switzerland's status as a host country for the international organizations.

During this first phase, together, we organized five public forums. The forums took place in February, March, May and July 2021. The first workshops, directly impacted by covid pandemic-related gathering restrictions, were held both online and outdoors, while the last was finally allowed to take place entirely in the territory concerned. The forums were designed to articulate a general movement from a knowledge-sharing phase to a project phase. Nevertheless, throughout the process, the dimensions of knowledge-sharing, speculation and collective imagination, and strategic planning were directly present and interwoven. This superposition was a first way of re-orienting the process more as a process of research and knowledge production than as an urban planning project understood in a very restrictive sense.

Each forum was attended by 25 during the first events to 60 people during the last ones. For the most part, the persons involved in the process stayed involved right up to the end, and suggested new contacts. The composition of the group, which at first consisted mainly of representatives of the public authorities and a handful of representatives of international Geneva, evolved organically. For us, this approach enabled us to gradually bring together a group interested in the type of process we were undertaking. This, rather than assuming that those present represented this or that organization and thus *had* to be there, or that the interest of the process for these people was taken for granted from the outset. On the contrary, finding meaning and desire for engagement in the process remained an aspect to be explored by both those organizing it and those joining it.

Between these events, we worked on the vision continuously as a collective. Our work was always plural in nature. We collected data on the territory and produced maps, researched the city's historical archives, conducted interviews and carried out numerous surveys of the area by walking. In this work, we assembled a large number and variety of information and images, which we connected and organized together so that the transmission and experience of this variety of elements could feed into the days of the forums. An important part of this data concerned the ecological, more-than-human dimension of this territory, which our work aimed to make much more present. By gathering extensive data on water, vegetation and soil, on their evolution and their interweaving with the social history of the area, we sought to make visible the extent to which these elements were vibrant and active in the ways we were speaking, thinking and moving in between ourselves and in the territory.

During the forums, all this material was made accessible through its spatialization in a digital workspace to which we were all connected. This spatialization, which was different for each forum, served as an imaginary, affective and relational base from which situated exchanges and collective acts of narration could take place. In these spaces, neither cartography nor words nor other types of image were isolated. The elements were sometimes contradictory, and the partiality of the knowledge constituted

by each type of medium and image was directly exposed by the dispositif itself. Cartographies, to which we traditionally tend to assign authority, were constructed as supports for the imagination of new relational assemblages rather than representations. The forums themselves took the form of small-group discussions, flexibly moderated by the various members of our team. The discussions found direct materialization in the annotations and rearrangements of material made simultaneously and freely by those present. Through the coupling of the digital space dispositif with collective walks in the territory and the porosity thus established between different forms of experience and knowledge-building, the images produced during these forums were *affective architectural images*. They were constructed both as image-symbols and as image-tendencies or individual and collective mental images.

The last two forums were important in articulating the implications of the mass of information circulated and the texture of the affective architectural images previously produced in terms of territorial vision. During the penultimate forum, we shifted discussions from a completely open modality to one focused on the formulation of parallel strategies. This change was reflected in the digital spaces, which moved from a central organization to a more oriented one. Nevertheless, the aim was to retain the plurality of images and affects, while beginning the work of grouping them around common motives for a mobilization toward the collective enactment of other ways of living within the territory. These three complementary strategies included the reactivation of existing potentials, the re-building of the ecological infrastructure and a shared transversal governance body.

At the last forum, we met in parallel in three locations directly concerned by the strategies explored at the previous forum. In each of these locations, we engaged in a kind of collective speculation exercise, projecting our bodies, movements and exchanges into the strategies. During this day spent acting as if the strategies were now our lines of action, we directly tested their mobilizing capacity. We have explored the consequences of these strategies on our affects, our discourses, our movements, and our individual and collective subjectifications.

These moments, which turned out to be affectively dense, enabled us to begin to understand how the strategies developed until there moved us and demanded readjustments from our assemblies that we could no longer ignore. This strategy of prefiguring strategies proved highly instructive, producing specific knowledge about the difficulties of transforming the way people live in a territory. These days were a direct revelation of the collective modulation work involved in the vision's strategies. As such, they inspired the second year of work, during which several other event formats were organized as prefigurations or collective speculations.

The vision finally produced at the end of this first year of work was of a hybrid nature in terms of image, like the process itself. The vision took the form of publications





Fig. 175-79 • Lake views, locations: Domaine de Penthes, Port du Reposoir, UN beach. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative



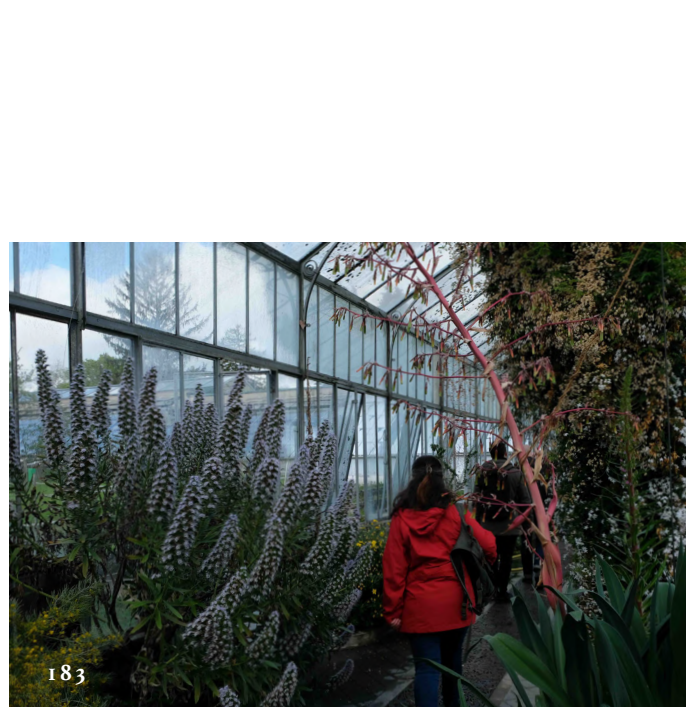


Fig. 180-85 • Walks during Forums, locations: Vengeron Beach, Chemin de l'Impératrice, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Serres de Pregny. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, March and Mai 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative



documenting the walks, the forums, the process, the strategies and their “nodes of potential”, which depended for the most part on a heightened capacity to collaborate. The vision needed to be activated first and foremost by those who were emotionally attached to it, after one year of sharing our experiences. In this sense, the many drawings of this territory that are part of the vision are, as in the practices discussed in the second chapter of this research, intended to remain in contact with the bodies and territories by and for which they were designed. These drawings contribute to making possible the experience of the rhythms, frequencies and vibratory qualities of a territory whose experience is otherwise constantly channeled by injunctions. Through the ways in which these drawings re-orient, it appears that the most visible relations of power between public authorities, inhabitants and international organizations, are just the consequences of global injunctions to move in certain ways.

This process was conducted relatively early in the present research timeframe. Its presence in the structure of the thesis was imagined and decided as a result of the covid pandemic suspending other aspects of the research. The opportunity to participate in this process presented itself as a valid alternative allowing the exploration of certain intuitions of the research. However, this case study that emerged along the way did not make it possible to develop a research protocol in which the main theoretical elements of this research were clearly and explicitly structuring of the collective process. Likewise, the nature of the collected traces itself would probably not have been realized in the same way today. The visual material produced was properly archived, but none of the conversations or moments of collective work and embodied exchange were documented other than through the annotations that the participants provided themselves in the digital workspaces. This focus on the drawn trace rather than the embodied or oral trace betrays a disciplinary tendency that it would have been richer to question for the discussion of choreopolitics.

These remarks justify the choices that guide the way of sharing and discussing this process in the paragraphs that follow. The collective and affective dynamics that hold choreopolitical ecologies together are central. In view of this aspect, and so that the discussion can resonate with the rest of the research, I chose to discuss the fragments of the process by restoring the textures and micro-reorientations through narration. This focus on affective traces leaves aside the discussion of the maps and urban strategies that were produced *as such*. It focuses on the inflections of the dynamics at work in the ecologies concerned and in approaching these through a choreopolitical perspective, consistent with the arguments of the research.

### Choreography of weathering

As mentioned earlier, the multiple environmental crises we face cannot be addressed without considering how the relationships between bodies and their environments contribute to the constant reaffirmation of a dominant mode of human existence, at

the expense of all others. Considering climate-related trajectories and actions without simultaneously addressing the overrepresentation of Man corresponds to allowing the perpetuation of a dominant mode of being human and its accompanying violence. This reaffirmation hinders the existence, imagination, exploration, and proliferation of a multiplicity of ways to coexist with the climatic realities to which we belong.

In the approach we organized and carried out with many other actors in the territory, the perspective of the non-human and the climate directly imposed itself. It served as an oblique way of questioning the mentioned reproduction dynamics by renewing the frameworks of exchange, attentions, and experiences of the territory and the concerned ecologies. Throughout the process, we have tried to offer approaches to climate issues, climate action, and a vision for the territory through a situated exploration of the different ways of climate-making in the present. During the entirety of the process, as architect-choreographers, we have sought to co-produce spatial textures that matter by carefully guiding the event-in-the-making. We accompanied the co-production of alternative architectural images based on the affective reconfigurations emerging in moments of shared experimentation. From our own position within existing and emerging ecologies, we also revisited our disciplinary stances and those of our tools.

To achieve this, we developed several choreographic frameworks, which can be seen as an attempt to establish a *choreography of weathering*. The theoretical reference to weathering emerged later in this research and was not directly used during the process, but it helps illuminate the potentialities of the approach that was adopted. As mentioned before, according to Neimanis and several other authors who have worked on this term,

“weathering attunes us to human embodiment and difference in a time of climate change, where ‘weather’ is not only meteorological, but the total atmospheres that bodies are made to bear.”<sup>607</sup>

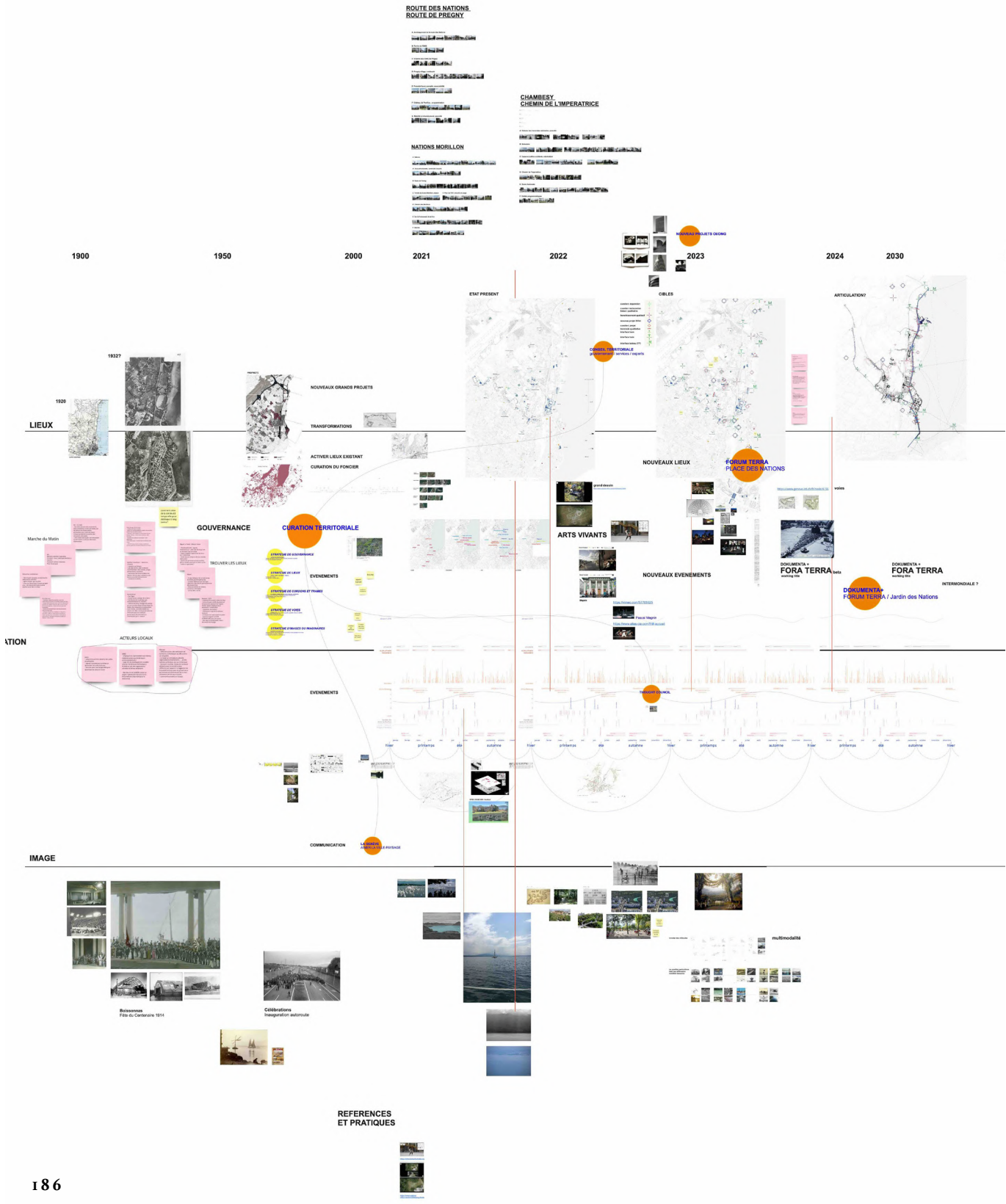
In an article dedicated to describing the ‘infrastructures of weathering,’ Neimanis and two other feminist researchers write that the infrastructures of weathering are the frameworks that make visible the embodied difference and the differential effects of weather. For them, the concept

“encourages an analysis of structural and systemic violence as essential to thinking through changing climates, and provides a lens to do so that resists the abstraction of climate change in order to focus on specific bodies, bodily difference and everyday life in the weather world.”<sup>608</sup>

The researchers note that, “to engage in ‘better weathering’ then, we must redistribute both vulnerability and shelter, and connect the banality of everyday, embodied weath-

607 Jennifer Mae Hamilton, Tessa Zettel, and Astrida Neimanis, “Feminist Infrastructure for Better Weathering,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 36, no. 109 (July 3, 2021): 237, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2021.1969639>.

608 Hamilton, Zettel, and Neimanis, 239.



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Fig. 186 • Snippet from the digital workspace for Forum III. The third Forum formulated strategic axes based on imaginaries in this case the Curation Strategy. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



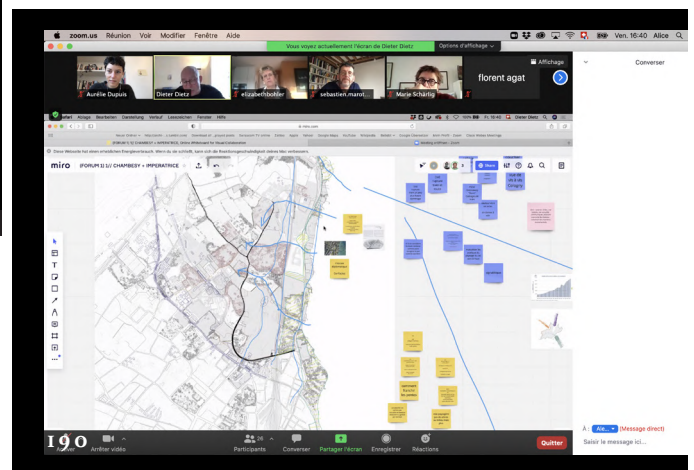
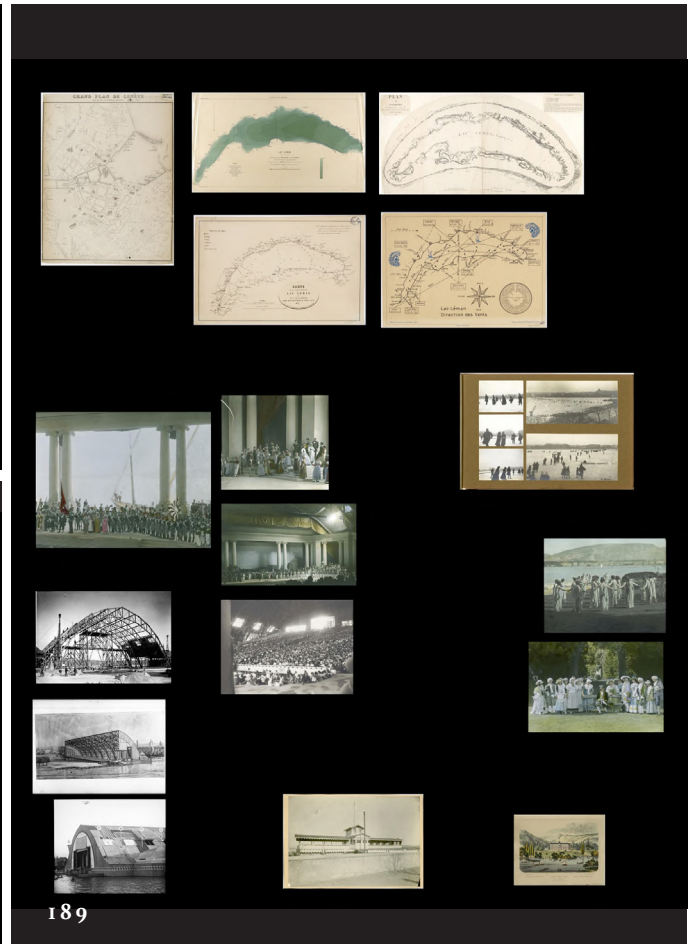
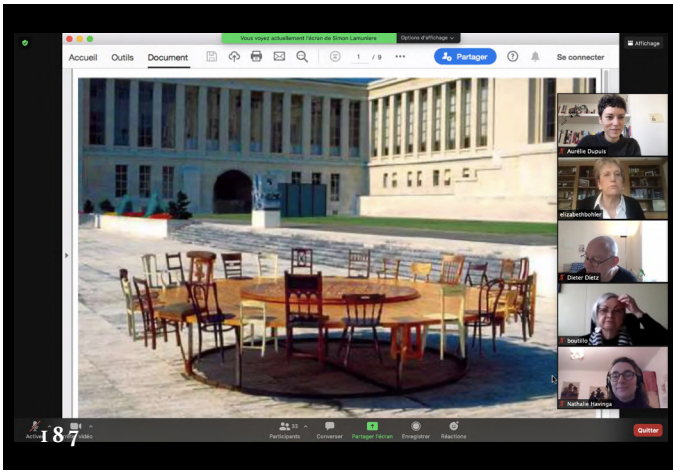


Fig. 187 • *Voyage Immobile - Immobile Journey* by Simon Lamunière, Swiss artist and curator. Opening intervention for Forum I. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 188 • *Versant - Catchment Area*, The watershed as a fertile, natural, and cultural terrain. Third forum / New images, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 189 • *Agora*, The lake as a social catalyst. Third forum / New images, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 190 • Screenshot from Forum I *Meta-themes*, which constrained by COVID-19, took place on-line, between Miro and Zoom. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



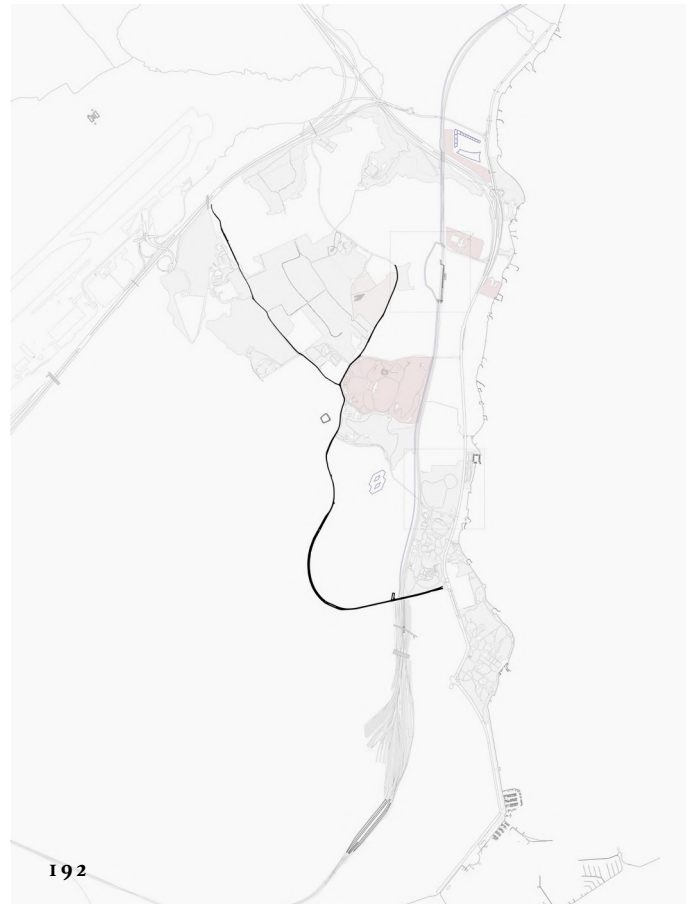


Fig. 191-93 • The territorial figures of (in order) *la Lisière-the Edge*, *la rive-the Shore*, and *la Crête - the Ridge*. “Territorial Figures”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



Fig. 194 • Compiled walks map. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.





Fig. 195-96 • Map and Zoom of Forum III Walk Map. The third Forum has formulated strategic axes grounded in the imaginaries of the Trames et Cordons Strategy. Vision: Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.







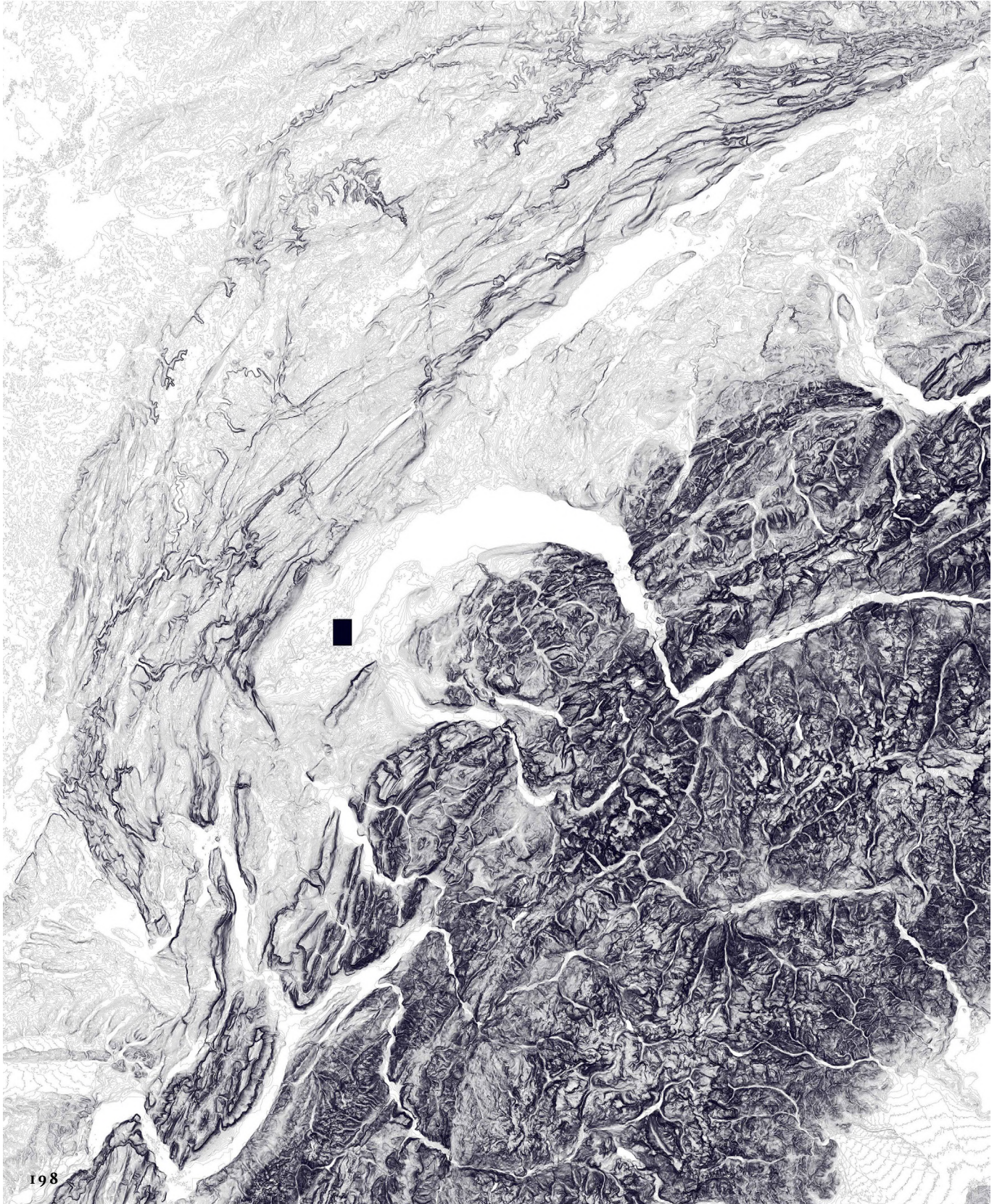


Fig. 198 • Contour lines every 50m. SITG data. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



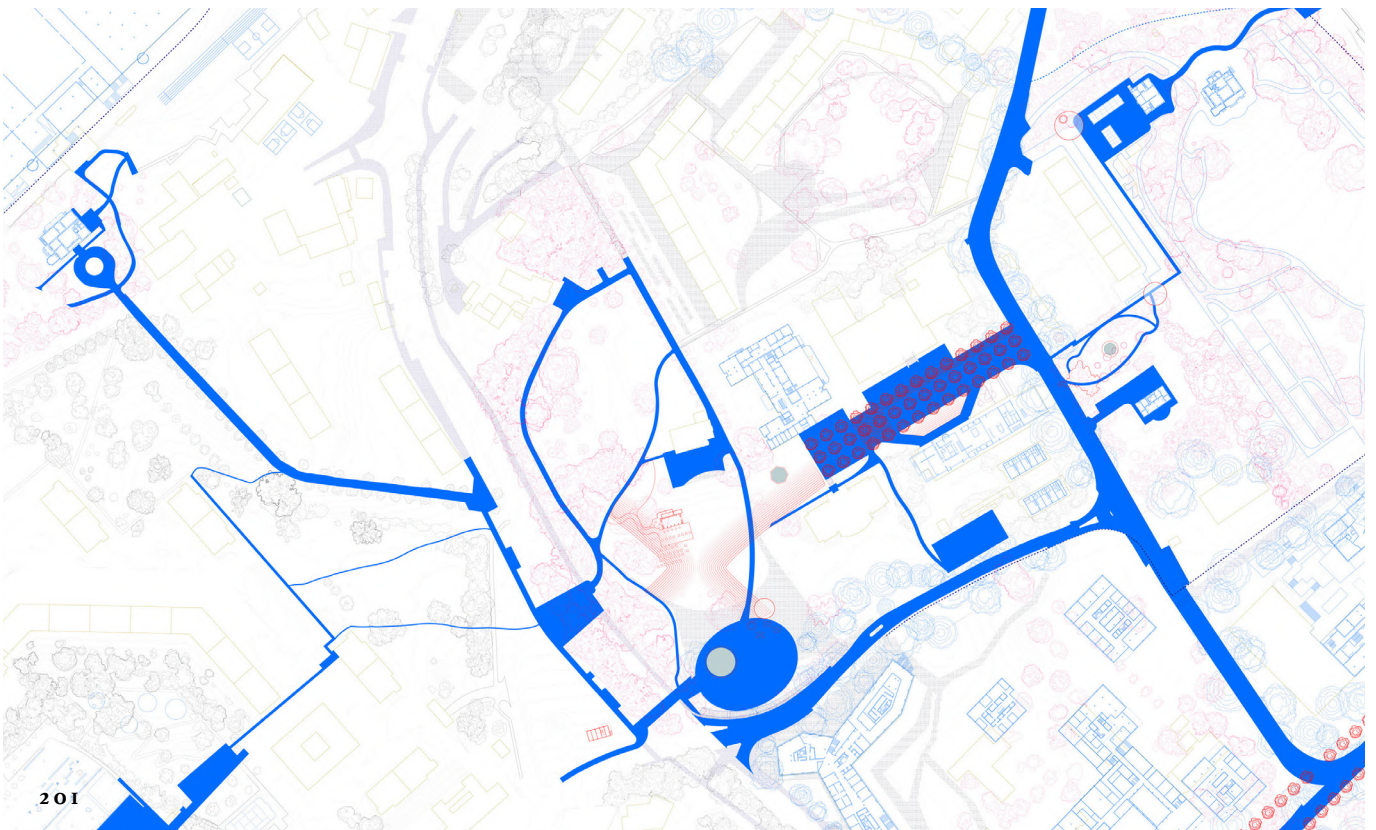
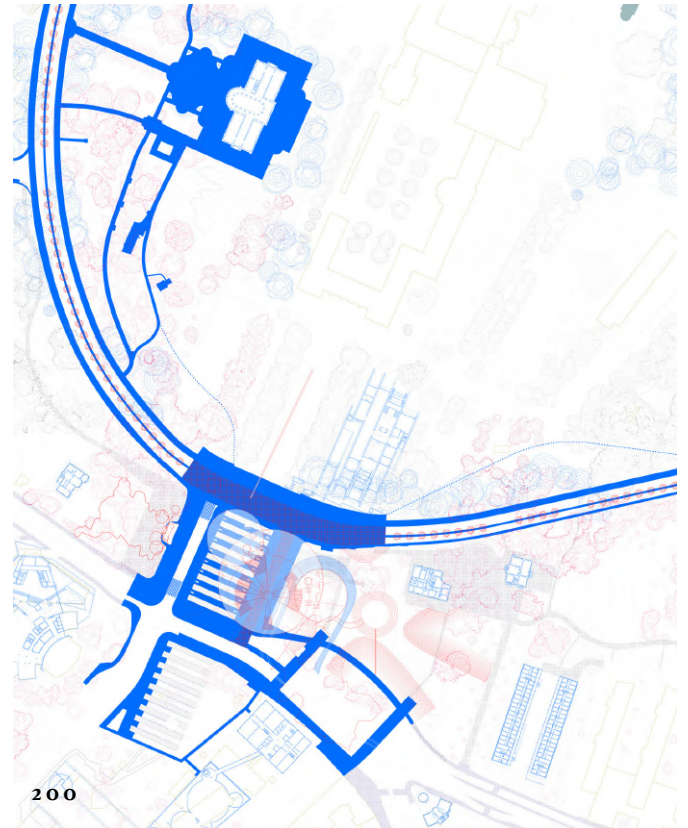
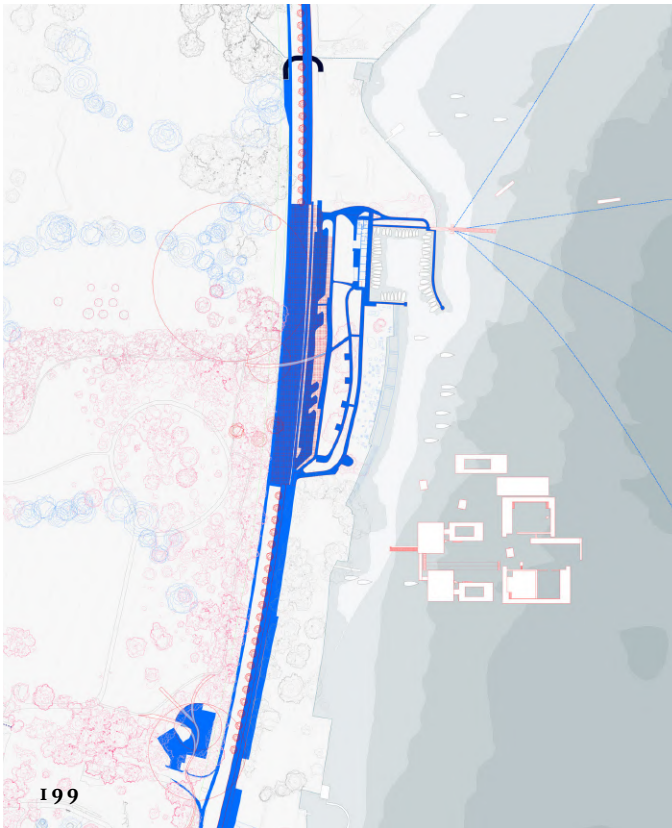


Fig. 199 • A. *Voies-Rive—Roads-Lakeshore*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 200 • B. *Nations-Forum Terra*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 201 • C. *Promenade de la Crête—The Ridge Walk*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

ering to larger sociopolitical structures.”<sup>609</sup>

In the project we were involved in, the choreography of weathering took various forms over the two years of the process. Successive choreographic frameworks were envisioned in contact with the process itself. The goal was to closely align with emerging trajectories and contribute to giving importance and recognition to the emerging climatic textures co-produced in the process, along with the systemic issues they brought to light. As Manning points out,

“a procedural architecture must [...] be capable of activating minor gestures that continuously direct incipency toward new modes of existence. Much tweaking is necessary to find the right balance between the static and the chaotic.”<sup>610</sup>

Certain frameworks, very flexible, were therefore established from the beginning of the process. Others, more precise and specific, were developed for specific moments in the process.

### Staying there: paying attention to our weatherings

The first choreographic proposition was that of a *shared stillness* or *staying there*. Devoting a certain time to not directly turning towards the future of the climate but remaining in the present aimed to make possible a phenomenon of attunement to the present of the climate. The goal was to explore ways of becoming attentive to our weatherings as what connects us to possibilities of climate action. As the social scientist specialized in climate change, Blanche Verlie, writes,

“if we are to adequately respond to climate change, we need to consider humans’ ability to feel climate as a serious and powerful mode of engagement.”<sup>611</sup>

In this perspective, the first framework we set was a shared space-time among the various human and non-human entities participating in the ecologies of the territory. We proposed the introduction of a fairly regular rhythm of *forums*, which numbered five in the first six months of the process. Each day was structured around a way of directing our attention to existing relationships and inaugurating ways of being together informed by the sharing of our different weatherings. The days were constructed to allow new people to leave or join the process, leading to a moderate organic growth of the mobilized ecology—which can be considered as an inherent attunement of the approach to the ecology in which it took place.<sup>612</sup>

609 Hamilton, Zettel, and Neimanis, 239.

610 Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, Thought in the Act (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 93.

611 Blanche Verlie, *Learning to Live with Climate Change: From Anxiety to Transformation*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367441265>.

612 The first forum brought together the people behind the mandate and a few people from the UN. Gradually, the group grew from around twenty to fifty participants. The composition of the group has diversified to include people from NGOs, IOs, people from the surrounding villages, artists, historians and gardeners, all of whom

The choreographic proposition of the forums as *staying there* can be seen as a first counter-movement to the rush towards solutions and the tendency to dissociate future and present climates. Verlie notes that despite the widely acknowledged responsibility of anthropocentrism in ecological crises, in theory, “it remains the philosophical foundation for almost all climate change engagement efforts.”<sup>613</sup> These engagements, especially those that isolate the dimension of carbon reduction from the rest of the ongoing dynamics and abstract from the ways in which we re-define ourselves through the responses to the climate crises we imagine, “perversely perpetuate deep seated extractivist understandings of humans as autonomous, entrepreneurial selves” and limit “our abilities to understand ourselves as part of climate, to engage with our embodied experiences of climate change, and to cultivate collective climate action.”<sup>614</sup>

In making the forums the very first proposition, we sought to modestly yet firmly invite the forum participants to envision the development process of the vision as occurring *through* the modulation of the constitutive relations of existing ecologies and weatherings. This approach diviates from a linear process involving analysis, synthesis, and a vision proposition (from which one could then always withdraw). This first proposition highlighted the relational nature of the vision we intended to work on with the various individuals involved in the process.

The format of the full-day sessions, relatively lengthy, declared in itself the importance accorded to *exposure to the other*, human and non-human, and to the dynamics of *attunement* to others, their languages, and the mediations that our team introduced during these days. It was not only about coming to give and gather information about one’s own vision of the territory or one’s own desires, but about refining one’s abilities to articulate with others, through different moments involving the development of listening skills and attention to frequencies other than those omnipresent in everyday life.

*Staying there* for an extended period of time allowed attention to be focused on ways of standing in the present-in-the-making. Many people participating in the process were, by virtue of their work, ‘affiliated’ with state institutions or international organizations. For them, considering talking about the climate, existing ecologies, or their visions was typically approached from their established positions, often as representatives of an institution. The ability to dismantle this entire stance and overlay it with a more fragmented mode of being and exchanging represented a central aspect of this moment. By directing attention to the present state of the forums, we sought to make them spaces-times, in which participants could feel the climate both as a common and different production for each individual. The moments of sharing the experience of the present began to be considered as valid contributions to a collective understanding of a

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have more or less close links with the area concerned and wish to take part in the forums for a variety of reasons.

613 Verlie, *Learning to Live with Climate Change*, 4.

614 Verlie, 5.



nanced, and unequal reality—to better envision collective responses.

We considered the experience of *staying there* as a modest attempt to begin “better attune to the intimate ways people are enmeshed with climate and cultivate the emotional capacities required for facing climate collapse.”<sup>615</sup> Establishing these spaces-times allowed for the consideration of conflict and resistance to begin. The forums revealed resistances, which, in themselves, are part of the elaboration of a collective vision, even when the resistance pertains precisely to participating. In the concerned territory, we also encountered the impossibility of accessing certain spaces, such as the refusal of certain individuals to interact.

Conflictual dynamics between certain organizations also continued to exist within the space of the forums. In the act of *staying there*, we attempted to recognize the ways in which the very existence of the forums helped to revealing systemic resistances to participating, making visible the differentiated ways in which we make climate and could make climate through the ways we relate to each others and to a territory. The forums began to *weigh* on the present and to crack the continuous reaffirmation of *certain* ways of climate-making corresponding to *certain* modes of being human. It was therefore possible to convey the choreopolitical inflections that such an approach generated with respect to deeply choreopoliticized existing ecologies, in which each being and entity in the territory has defined trajectories supported by regimes of control and inegalitarian logics.

#### Oscillating: variations at the limits of our selves

A second choreographic proposition consisted of proposing an *oscillation* in our contacts with the non-human and our ways of defining ourselves through these contacts. As in the idea of *staying there*, this *oscillation* can be considered a counter-movement. This time, our goal was to propose ways to resist the influence of dominant languages, images, representations, and narratives that shape our approach to the non-human, creating a distance and impoverishing the spectrum of contacts. By confining relationships and mediations to certain modalities, normative approaches to the non-human render nature and the non-human immobile, invisible, and passive, simultaneously re-affirming the dominance of a single mode of being human. Instead, the oscillation aimed to explore how to

“engage in other forms of being, and ones that do not draw self-enclosing boundaries around the individual human but consider the ‘self’ to be dispersed in-between and across, and constantly emerging with, its relations with others.”<sup>616</sup>

The oscillation can be understood as an attempt to thwart the ways in which the non-human is thus excluded from possible forms of co-becoming and co-imagination.

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615 Verlie, 2.

616 Verlie, 9.



By proposing the experience of an oscillation in contact, we sought to demonstrate that the proposed field of investigation was choreopolitical and that it should be understood as a claim for other possibilities based on the ability of bodies to be affected and to affect. It was not about better understanding the non-human to better transform or protect it. It was about exploring the ways in which we make ourselves available or not to the movements of the non-human, orienting our capacities to co-imagine modes of being human based on other relationships with the non-human and the climate. Yet, this experience is precisely the one that can allow new choreopolitical ecologies, in which the non-human co-produces trajectories, to emerge and thrive.

In the forums, this *oscillation* was brought about through several choreographic formats. We first sought to slow down the tendencies to represent and name, treating them as distancing operations constructing the possibility for extractivist logics to unfold. During the first two forums, we aim to work on giving space to the performative dimension of language and drawing, exploring the potential of certain words, certain images, to open up possibilities of being affected differently by the non-human. As widely discussed in this research, when *listened to*, words and images are capable of operating in frequencies and registers that are those of careful touch and contact, rather than assignment and possession. Together, we sought to *oscillate* using images and words capable of taking on plural meanings and leaving room for movements that we do not completely master to take place between us.

We introduced two frameworks. The first, in drawn form, showed *territorial figures*, that is, specific spatial conditions, chosen here for their relevance to both humans and non-human: the *ridge*, the *edge*, and the *shore*. On these three dis-orienting drawings, many usual landmarks were missing. This refusal to show a totality invited us to consider instead how the drawings acted on our own mental images. It served as an invitation to let oneself be affected by these ecological and spatial realities. To prevent these drawings, once approached and understood, from becoming directly vehicles for distant projection, we introduced in parallel a second framework of a linguistic and imaginary nature, the meta-themes: *cycle*, *affordance*, *network*, *horizon*. These words were used as a temporary common ground from which to talk about our experiences of the territory and activate resonances. They allowed for shifting descriptions from a vocabulary register where the body is a closed entity to a register where the body is moving-moved and inscribed within a set of relationships. In themselves, these terms quickly disappeared from the conversations, but they facilitated a different quality of listening and enunciation.

At the third forum, we built upon this emerging vibrational quality. Our goal was to collectively bring into existence *weathering images* that had emerged from previous conversations, deepening the experience both individually and collectively. We selected terms that, due to their poetic charge, seemed capable of becoming images (an image

understood in its multiple states, from the motor tendencies of bodies to its symbolic forms): *agora*, *versant* (catchment area), *dehors* (outside). These words had the characteristic of corresponding at the same time to a situated ecological reality and a specific way of weathering-with these realities.<sup>617</sup> We proposed them as flexible frameworks to enrich our weatherings. The forum day was divided into two.

The morning was devoted to group walks guided by these terms, during which we shared the experience of encountering the textures of the soil, vegetation, and water, while simultaneously facing the ubiquitous barriers in the territory. The interweaving of these human and non-human textures was central to the walks. As urban researcher Cecilie Sachs Olsen writes, it is crucial “not to assume that the nature and experience of the non-human are self-evident, in itself a guarantee of the non-human’s participation in co-imaginings of alternatives.” The walks in the traces of the non-human around us and within us were not conceived as an “an unmediated authentic relationship to the world, escaping the the limits and demands of the human-centered world.”<sup>618</sup>

On the contrary, the conditions under which an encounter could take place became an integral part of the weathering experience. The conditions under which we could walk in certain territories (on exceptional invitation from certain international organizations) reminded us that the rights to share movements and the rights to bear witness are themselves deeply political processes. Through the walks, the act of bearing witness to becoming legitimate in speaking about the ways our climate-making practices are limited and policed became, in itself, a practice of futuring and world-making from our bodies.

The afternoon began with an account from a member of the botanical garden, a keen connoisseur of the history of the concerned territory. Through his narrative, this researcher elucidated the intertwining of social status affirmation, botanical knowledge, and possession of nature, and how they materialized in this territory. He recounted the essences from around the world present on domains where exotic plantations were part of the knowledge-building and prestige construction efforts of bourgeois families in the 19th century. He led us to perceive the ambiguity of the gestures that have led to today’s socio-spatial constructions, between caring for and instrumentalising the non-human. This narrative allowed us to connect our feelings of this palpable ambiguity during our walks to a long history involving geographies, power dynamics, and temporalities distant from the present, yet perceived by our bodies.

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617 The *agora* described the lake as a public space at the center of the territory. The territory of the international organizations then found itself ‘relegated’ to the background and redefined through its capacity to maintain relations with this aquatic entity. The *versant* made it possible to consider the continuities of the catchment area as structuring flow forces and cross-border realities. The territory’s natural, steeply sloping topography was charged with water. The outdoors referred to the diversity of tree species present in the area, and the history of the hedgerows, vineyards, estates and all the gestures and architecture of caring for the outdoors, traces of which are still present in the area.

618 Cecilie Sachs Olsen, “Co-Creation Beyond Humans: The Arts of Multispecies Placemaking,” *Urban Planning* 7, no. 3 (June 20, 2022): 317, <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v7i3.5288>.

Following this narrative, we gathered around three new drawings related to the chosen images: *agora*, *versant*, *dehors*. At this stage, we had collectively developed a certain attention to the frequencies at which we sought to create images capable of mobilizing us collectively. It became possible to exchange ideas based on drawings that incorporated available climate and ecological data, without directly identifying development or action logics. The collective listening skills we had developed were used to make the exchange around these drawings an opportunity to invite ecological and climatic realities into our bodies. In this back-and-forth between the reality of these bodies and non-human movements and our own feelings, we continued to explore how our bodies were re-orienting. In terms of vision for this territory, these re-orientations raised questions of a different nature than those that existed before this process: What ecologies contribute to our weatherings? What forms of control are exerted on them? What do they tell us, and how can we collectively influence them?

In these discussions, it gradually became clearer to our research team that the images of our past, present, and possible weatherings, which we were telling each other, were a relevant way to address the question of co-producing a *vision* for this territory in the face of climate change. As Verlie points out, putting climate into narrative through the sharing of our weatherings is part of the “processes and approaches that can help reorient our collective efforts towards more compassionate and transformative responses to climate change.”<sup>619</sup>

Coming out of this forum, the images we collectively explored and modulated retained a dimension of oscillation that we sought to explore in our approaches to the climate question. In the flexibility they retained, these images became ways to repeat and regenerate existing social and spatial scripts. These image-narratives were starting to become mobilizing enough to generate new desires to spend time in this territory. In a completely fragmented territory, whose history is a long repetition of exceptions, privatizations, and exclusions that have rightly generated resentment and mistrust, the desire to be there together was itself quite a thing. In the continuation of the process, we tried to build on these emergences.

#### Occupying: emerging choreopolitical ecologies

A third, more direct choreographic proposition was to *occupy* certain fringes of the territory. Here, the occupation remains in the register of the quiet and low frequency, but with insistence. It is not a question of a militant occupation in direct opposition to the regime in place, but of an occupation which acts as if, an occupation which creates a threshold in which the distinction between the people and the movements supposed to be there and those not meant to be becomes less clear. This proposition aimed to collectively move away from the idea that the production of a vision only concerned the

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619 Verlie, *Learning to Live with Climate Change*, 14.





Fig. 202-06 • Opening, gain access to spaces not ordinarily accessible to the public. Locations: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Vengeron Beach. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative



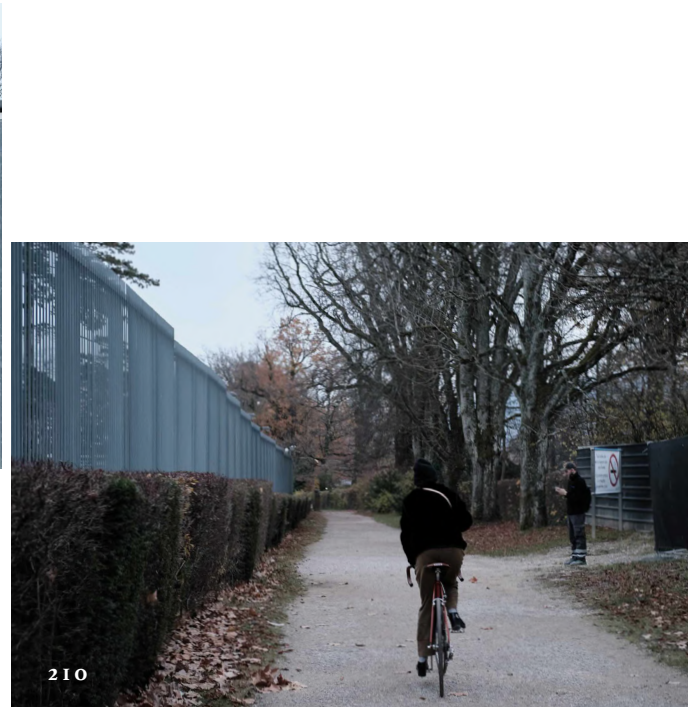


Fig. 207-12 • Security System, Protection, and Distance Management. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, december 2020. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2020.

“future.” On the contrary, the goal was to celebrate the micro-reorientations that were happening in the modulations of norms and affective repertoires that our shared approach was producing, and to give them the opportunity to begin resonating. We sought places woven with the non-human, but typically made inaccessible to the majority of the territory’s inhabitants. In envisioning this choreographic proposal, we wanted to make participants feel that the possibility of coming together in these places collectively for a day became possible through the power of the images, desires, demands, and inflections that we were beginning to collectively bring into existence.

We were hosted at three locations. These sites were located on properties owned by the State of Geneva and made available on a daily basis to various organizations: the garden of a lakeside villa, made available on a daily basis to a research institute attached to the University of Geneva; a set of greenhouses formerly attached to one of the 19th-century estates, made available to the Geneva Botanical Garden; and the living room of a villa located in a garden in the immediate vicinity of the UN headquarters. In all three cases, spending half a day placed the daily occupants of these places in an ambiguous position. They became hosts and shared with us the enjoyment of spaces of undeniable quality that they occupied daily, while sometimes trying to justify the impossibility of imagining that this coexistence could be reproduced more frequently.

We spent time in these places. We hung large printed drawings in the space to evoke the textures of the non-human that we had explored together in the previous months, set up chairs, and began to discuss together the possibilities of reproducing these moments, in the same place, with other people. By narrating these future occupations, by telling the story of them, we supported and trained each other to demand and bring about other possibilities. The act of telling stories became

“a dynamic social practice which works in multiple ways to influence what we think is possible, likely and desirable, and which emerges from and actively reconfigures more-than-human worlds.”<sup>620</sup>

By the gesture of peacefully occupying, but driven by our desire for more equitably distributed weatherings, we explored how exerting pressure through our presence, made certain tensions perceptible—to us and outward. These tensions were stirred by the affective images we were in the process of co-constructing.

These days were not devoid of discomfort. Despite the modest nature of the approach, they exposed that a future enabling more diverse ways of world-making and being human cannot come to fruition without questioning the system of exception and privilege that structures relationships in this territory and beyond. This discomfort was also directly linked to the fact that, through this process, we ourselves were moved and questioned in our modes of being human and in how we engage in certain hegemonic

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620 Verlie, 91.



meaning-making practices, through the types of relationships we favor and the gestures we consider appropriate or not in given situations. During these shared moments of *occupation*, we began to create the conditions for other types of spatialities and socialities to emerge. In this *taking-place*, the necessity of allowing a part of our sense of self and its boundaries to be questioned became tangible in our bodies.

The sense of loss of control and disturbance is not to be avoided, as Donna Haraway's famous phrase reminds us. It is important to be able to embrace this discomfort. It is part of a process that does not immediately re-center the (privileged) human and reassure them but cultivates an ethics of living with climate and climate change. In this, it becomes possible to project oneself without attaching this gesture to the need to control everything. For Verlie,

“affective transformation [...] is an ability to endure interpersonal reconfiguration, an openness to and capacity to abide emotional challenges, a reworking of our affective expectations, skills, repertoires, routines and relations.”<sup>621</sup>

The author Lauren Berlant develops the idea of “nonsovereign relationality” pour décrire “the foundational quality of being in common, seeing individuality as a genre carved from within dynamics of relation rather than a state prior to it or distinct from it.”<sup>622</sup> In this sense, these occupation exercises, experienced differently by everyone, were nonetheless moments of collective re-orientation and mobilization. The sense-making doesn't depend on everyone sharing the same experience but on a mobilizing and re-orienting force circulating. By simultaneously occupying three places that were not readily open to flexible and disinterested forms of occupation on a daily basis, the participants practiced re-inscribing themselves and re-inscribing these places in other interwoven collective futures.

### Emerging choreopolitical ecologies

Such practices of occupation have an insistent capacity for destabilizing dominant ways of inhabiting, being in relation, affecting each other, and thereby producing grounds and worlds. In this sense, they can be described as emerging *choreopolitical ecologies*, in which non-hegemonic forms of knowing how to be in common are invented and shared between the human and the non-human. Choreopolitical ecologies oppose the imaginative force of situated collective practices to the processes by which the world is reduced to spatialities and modes of existence scripted for the benefit of a minority. Their political power depends less on their scale or their capacity for direct confrontation than on an affective weaving that strengthens the ability to be together. This power can only be developed through the proliferation of such practices, which,

621 Verlie, 113.

622 Lauren Berlant, “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times\*,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (June 2016): 394, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775816645989>.





Fig. 213 • A. *Trames et Cordons* - Ecological Networks and Ecological Corridors “Strategic Maps” Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.



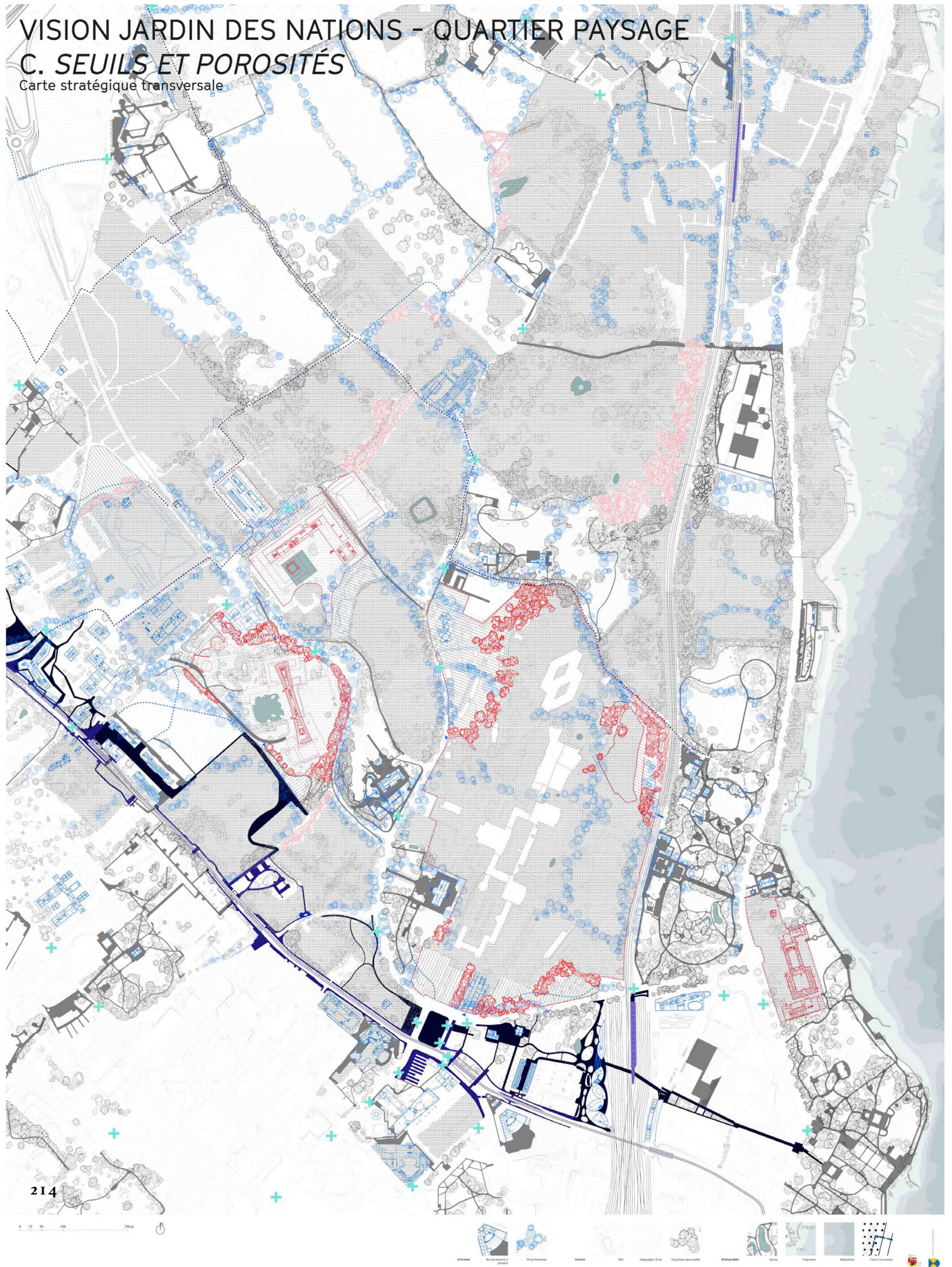


Fig. 214 • C. *Seuils et Porosités* - *Thresholds and Porosities*, “Strategic Maps” Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.





Fig. 215-16 • Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) as part of the Explore Geneva festival 2022, Performance Port du Reposoir, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, June 2022. Photo: Explore

Fig. 217 • Forum IV “Protoprojets”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, July 2021. Photo: Miguel Perez-La Plante © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 218-20 • Crossing the lake, followed by a performance by Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) as part of the Explore Geneva festival 2022. Photo: Explore





Fig. 221 • The Ariana Museum hosted the launch and vernissage of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations,” which took place from October 5 to 23, 2022, in the museum’s grand hall. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.

Fig. 222 • The recordings of Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) were showcased as part of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations, Photo: Nadine Schütz

Fig. 223 • Vernissage of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations,” Photo: Corentin Bonvallat © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.



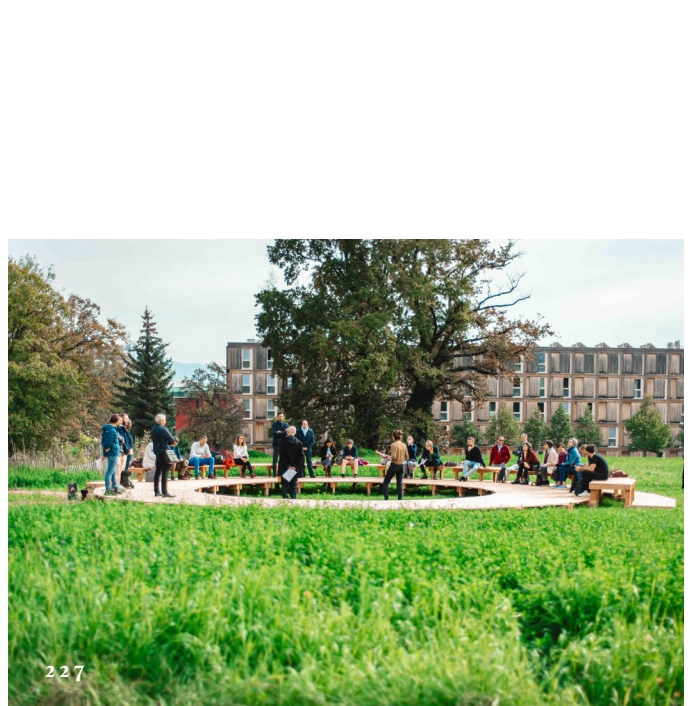


Fig. 224 • Orchard plantation, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, December 2022, Photo: Architecture Land Initiative

Fig. 225 • Bleachers Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Corentin Bonvallat

Fig. 226 • Construction of the Bleachers, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Léonore Nemec

Fig. 227 • Bleachers opening, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Rigot Park, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Corentin Bonvallat



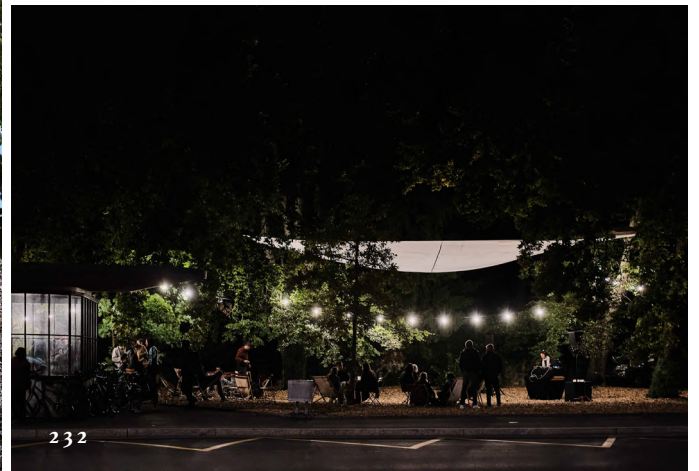
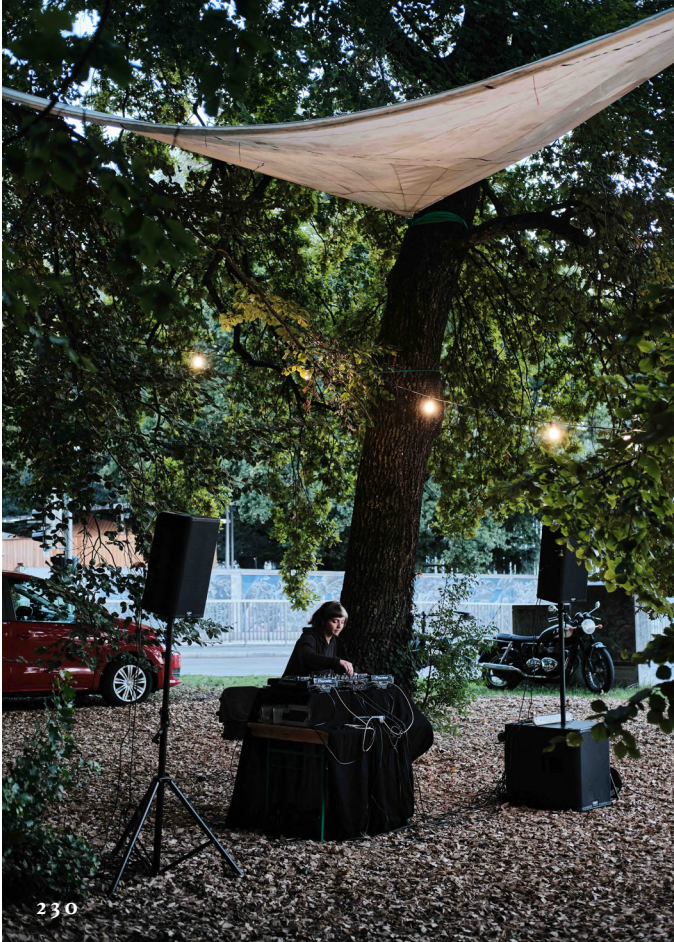


Fig. 228-32 • Three nights of music, with Bongo Joe Records and Canal 54, *Vision Jardin des Nations*, Architecture Land Initiative, Kiosk of the Nations, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.



in contemporary societies, must always create their spatial and affective possibility of existence. Hamilton, Zettel, and Neimanis emphasize the need to constantly re-create these opportunities:

“What is not desirable or conceivable in a neoliberal resilience framework is the sharing of unprofitable, slow and diverse vulnerabilities expressed between different strangers in a common space. Although we share a common world, there is in fact a dearth of opportunities in contemporary Western societies to explore what possibilities emerge by being in common space with others in non-transactional relation – such as communities might do in figuring out how to weather better, together, without the imposition of large-scale top-down infrastructure.”<sup>623</sup>

In the territory of the international organizations, the difficulty we had in putting together the three choreographic propositions described, reveals the intensity and diversity of the intertwined forms of choreopolice that condition both the present and practices of futuring. The “move along, there’s nothing to see here”, which according to Lepecki and Rancière characterizes choreopolice, is not only expressed in the ways the territory is divided and orchestrated by spatial control mechanisms for movement. Despite these divisions currently posing the main obstacle to climate action policies in this territory for urban planning and communities, the collective experimentation process we choreographed has initiated a shift of attention towards other equally structuring forms of choreopolice.

As Lepecki writes,

“the question of freedom, even in so-called “open democracies,” remains one not merely of policing, but above all, of self-policing. Which means that, on our way to freedom, we must first of all tackle that which blocks, directs, diverts, and (pre)conditions our movements [...]: the police.”<sup>624</sup>

In a world saturated with power dynamics, no body can ever “just happen to be present.”<sup>625</sup>

In Geneva, the non-accessibility of the territory undoubtedly belongs to the obstacles encountered in exploring ways to mobilize to address climate challenges and to live together differently. But control of the possible operates above all through the always *already normed and controlled* ways in which living within this territory is envisaged and enacted on a daily basis. The major ecology structuring this territory is the result of a long accumulation of exceptions that materialize both in the territory and in bodies and gestures. The imaginaries, dominant vocabularies, and the ‘foundational’ narrative of International Geneva have long found ways to be reproduced in the relationships of bodies among themselves and in their milieu. They contribute to normalizing current

623 Hamilton, Zettel, and Neimanis, “Feminist Infrastructure for Better Weathering,” 241.

624 André Lepecki, “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 18–19.

625 André Lepecki, “Stumble Dance,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 14, no. 1 (January 2004): 60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407700408571440>.

spatialities and preventing the formation of other images, narratives, and possibilities. Disciplinary and institutional constraints, in turn, reproduce an invisibilization of minor ecologies and forms of knowledge capable of informing these alternative narratives and ways of inhabiting this territory.

However, this normalization is never absolute, and when there is a breach, the choreopolitical can re-emerge, carried by minor ecologies capable of reconfiguring themselves. In Geneva, the fact that various stakeholders have come together to question their inability to collaborate and initiate a process of reflection can be considered as such a breakthrough. Climate change and the ways in which its magnitude challenges everything that seemed stable are undoubtedly one of them. These breaches exist, and it is possible that new choreopolitical ecologies may take advantage of them to proliferate and open up possibilities from within. The three choreographic propositions of *staying there*, *oscillating* and *quiet occupying* that we have developed have been means of apprehending these breaches and the emergences of potentialities they unleash. As a research team, we sought to create a space-time in which to circulate affects, give voice to the grounds and water in our movements and narratives, and explore how to collectively sketch out better weatherings.

Some minor rearrangements may have taken shape during the process, such as the explicit question of security perimeters, against which such processes can do little in principle. However, even in this case, the question of the reproduction of normativities, which choreographies are capable of addressing, actually plays a considerable role. Thus, feminist literature has extensively theorized how a reductionist definition of security continues to be reproduced through masculinist and military paradigms. This reproduction is reliant on the preservation of memories of threats and violence, and privileged versions of historical pasts often make certain security choices self-explanatory.<sup>626</sup> The range of what constitutes a “safe-space” is thus considerably reduced. The possibility of questioning who is safe is also removed from the construction of a discourse that focuses on security as a universal concept.

Through the developed choreographic frameworks, it was possible to rehearse other approaches to security. As a group and as researchers, we were able to open up several gardens, buildings, and domains. We were hosted by diplomatic staff who, having become hosts to our group, went to great lengths to allow us to explore the premises and gardens. The absurdity and inefficiency of certain security measures were also experienced collectively.<sup>627</sup> On the contrary, what asserted itself in these moments was the

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626 See for example Cecilia Åse and Maria Wendt, “Gendering the Military Past: Understanding Heritage and Security from a Feminist Perspective,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 56, no. 3 (September 2021): 286–308, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00108367211007871>, and in the specific case of Geneva: Juliet J. Fall and Julie de Dardel, “Safe Spaces in the City: Security, Scale and Masculinity during the Geneva Summit,” *Political Geography* 92 (January 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102484>.

627 For instance, we had to submit a list of attendees with the organizations well in advance of the walks. However, on the actual day, cases occurred where individuals who were not on the initial list appeared. In one situation,

fundamental role of trust among actors in guaranteeing common security. On their scale, these moments provided an opportunity to experience a way of collectively inhabiting the territory and sketching a form of security based on a constant renegotiation of thresholds. Later in the process, it was also discussed that this way of approaching security could lead to a number of significant adjustments, particularly for the staff for whom these measures have a massive impact on daily life. These remarks reinforce the idea that a more multiple and contradictory definition of security deserves to be developed, and that choreographic experiments are capable of contributing to supporting the processes at play.

Several other readjustments of sensitivities and frameworks of thinking became possible during the three choreographic experiments and the diverse events that punctuated the process we organized. Nevertheless, these minor affective readjustments still operate primarily in the gaps of what is most visible and affirmed. To gain strength, choreopolitical ecologies need time, care, and practice. Moreover, the way they “develop” is non-linear, attentive to the emergence of new forms of control as well as the ever-changing specific relationalities that suddenly present new opportunities for alliances. In this sense, the trajectories towards the future that these choreopolitical ecologies propose are themselves non-linear. These trajectories align more with a constant adjustment process and necessitate trust in the ability of choreopolitical stubbornness to open up to other possibilities. In this sense, the relationship between the process we had set up and the elaboration of a ‘vision’ arose several times for us during the process and in the dialogue with public authorities who had initially initiated it.

### Are choreopolitical ecologies a ‘vision’?

As already mentioned, the process we established aimed to re-examine the modes of interaction and relationships among the actors in the territory. It also sought to reconsider the process of ‘vision-making’ and the forms that support and frameworks should take for this vision to unfold in the territory. As a research team responsible for this process, we attempted to articulate responses to this question that maintain a certain fidelity to the types of experiments, frequencies, knowledge, desires, and emerging weath-erings that filled the process. At the same time, we aimed to resonate with discussions and dynamics taking place on larger spatial and temporal scales. Nevertheless, this was not an easy task either on our own level and in our exchanges with public authorities. The very act of articulating a vision *from*, rather than *in the midst of*, constituted in itself a gesture that contradicted the nature of the minor practices and forms of imagination discussed throughout the process.

We tried to make this question, without a direct answer possible, an opportunity for

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the person responsible for the gate checks readily allowed the extra individuals to pass without questioning. In another case, we had to affirm that we had spent the preceding hours with the concerned person, confirming their normal behavior and ensuring that they hadn’t stopped to open their backpack.



new experiments. One aspect of this effort focused on developing a format capable of becoming an archive of these experiments and opening them up to other becomings or alliances. Simultaneously, through the developed format, we have tried to safeguard this material from any extrapolations or problematic appropriations that we could anticipate. We produced two vision books. The first serves as a narrative of the walks, the various choreographic frameworks developed, the exchanges and experiences they made possible, and the issues and questions reformulated through this process. It aims to enable tracking the trace of a process, to discern between the lines the affective frequencies mobilized, and to understand the emergence of new questions from this abundance.

The second book consists of drawings depicting medium-term territorial weaving strategies. These strategies are designed as mobilizing images. They do not provide fixed solutions but allow for considering what a multiplicity of actions from various registers resonating with each other could produce in terms of possibilities for more equitably distributed weatherings.

These drawings embrace a temporal ambiguity by superimposing past, present, and imagined states of natural wefts or territorial infrastructures. Their trans-temporal, accumulative, and textured dimension makes them quite opaque at first glance, requiring a process of attunement to this internal resistance of the drawing. We saw this form of resistance as a way of affirming the need to consider these documents and their use in a relational manner. Indeed, strategic documents are still far too often isolated from their context and interpreted in a binary manner in the Western culture of urban planning. Here, the drawings are, on the contrary, envisioned as the co-production of an affective and mobilizing territorial image. As the urban scholars Vass, Cloutier, and Sylvia write in a beautiful text on the act of “drawing together with care”, it is

“through a commitment to drawing, performed *amidst* and *together with* heterogeneous and heterodox matters, [that] designers can partake in representing and composing existing and yet-to-come worlds.”<sup>628</sup>

The same second vision book also contains a drawing called ‘the cursors,’ developed in response to the tension, mentioned earlier, between choreographic experiments, emerging choreopolitical ecologies, and territorial vision. This drawing serves as a navigation tool designed to make one aware of certain possible actions or opportunities while remaining capable of absorbing a high degree of uncertainty. The ‘cursors’ point to potentials of all kinds in the territory, revealing each time a network of existing or conceivable relationships. Some sliders are relatively less evident immediately because they depend on large-scale structural changes, while others involve care or experimen-

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628 Lórin Vass, Roy Cloutier, and Nicole Sylvia, “Design as Commoning: Drawing Together with Care,” in *Design Commons*, ed. Gerhard Bruyns and Stavros Kousoulas, Design Research Foundations (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 274, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95057-6\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95057-6_14).

tation actions conceivable in the immediate future.<sup>629</sup> This tool is conceived as a contact zone between the kind of minor knowledge that has emerged from the choreographies of weathering and the structuring logics at the planetary level that continue to influence the dynamics of territorial transformation. Imperfect, it modestly aims to bring about contaminations between scales that are sorely lacking today.

Yves Citton discusses the tension that exists between minor practices of care and large-scale transformations. He underlines the discreet registers in which the minor is primarily written, negotiated “at the level of our daily acquaintances, concrete commitments, collective actions, working groups, and vicinities of cohabitation.”<sup>630</sup> He notes that fidelity to the minor, as manifested in these kinds of circles, requires each individual to make an effort of attention towards what is re-played in each of these relationships and, consequently, cannot suffice to confront the violence of present and future conflicts. In response, Citton envisions a less radical fidelity to the minor, one that is less demanding in terms of individual effort against the inertia of our legacies and deployable on a larger scale. He wonders: How can a shared fidelity to the minor enable coalitions aiming to initiate transformations at the planetary scale, without requiring the categorical tone and binary logics of the major?

Such a question invites staying in the ambiguity of the scale shifts implicated by the climate and multiplying the tentative ways of addressing the discontinuities they provoke. For territorial vision, in parallel with the attempt of the slider map, we sought to develop in collaboration with public authorities the idea of ‘territorial curation,’ also aiming to foster trans-scalar coalitions. This curation would have been tasked with caring for and ensuring the porosity and back-and-forths between the different temporal and spatial scales and the various registers through which an affective and mobilizing vision is truly drawn and imagined. It contributes to making possible other worldings.

For us, such a proposal had several objectives. At the level of the territory in question, it aimed to recognize the profound demobilization linked to the almost complete absence of situated practices productive of connection in this territory and the need to create space-times in which such practices could re-emerge. On a more structural level, this proposition aimed to make the elaboration of equitable *habitat* and relations in the present, the productive condition for fairr futures.<sup>631</sup> As Bigé points out, an increasing

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629 The following year, we returned to some of the places we had invested in during the first year of research, with those we had met and who saw meaning in it, to *rehearse* the choreographic proposals developed there, with others. We sought to enrich the mobilizing-mobilized ecologies that had emerged during the first year of the process. Architectural gestures of care were added to the choreographic gestures: refurbishment of a small kiosk for concert evenings under the trees, installation of an open wooden bleacher for everyone, and tree planting in the park along the UN. These various events and structures, partly present in the territory today, invite us to imagine a proliferation of choreographic proposals for these places.

630 Yves Citton, *Faire avec: conflits, coalitions, contagions*, Collection Trans (Paris: Éditions les Liens qui libèrent, 2021), 88.

631 Here, *habitat* is seen as “not [as] an ‘environment’ in the passive sense of a resource, but [as] a dynamic realm composed by and composing – or, following Haraway, *composting* – relations.” Vass, Cloutier, and Sylvia, “Design as Commoning,” 266–67.

number of collective activist practices today aim to “thwart the habit of sacrificing the present of the struggle in the name of the futures it is supposed to open up to.”<sup>632</sup>

Neimanis also emphasizes the importance of these practices involving a reconfiguration of the nature of climate action. For her,

‘feminist infrastructures’, involving practices of care and co-affection beyond the human, “facilitate new ways of figuring out what future forms of being social might be and can do so quickly, responsively and on small scales while thinking big.” These practices allow us to “be responsive to the different ways in which we, in our different embodied situations, are asked to weather these times.”

They “will not *solve* climate change, but they may provoke more just approaches to ‘managing the meanwhile’ on the way to collective solutions.”<sup>633</sup> In our situation, the territorial curation proposal was therefore also aimed at recognizing that, regardless of the nature of the vision guiding climate action and transformation in a territory, it cannot make sense without the effort to maintain this vision in resonance with the bodies and relational milieu that produce the conditions for a different climate-making and world-making.

However, it has not been possible so far to convince the politicians who could have made the implementation of such an experiment possible by directly supporting the establishment of a hybrid governance body.<sup>634</sup> The prospect of territorial curation also raises complex questions regarding the degree of autonomy of choreopolitical ecologies and contributing practices in relation to the State and existing power dynamics. This proposal implies profound changes in logic regarding how the production and implementation of territorial visions has been predominantly conceived by Western urban planners until today. The caring gestures it emphasizes are largely absent from the dominant disciplinary frameworks in which maintenance and transformation remain two radically distinct things. Also absent is the possibility of non-linear processes in which situated practices and planning inform and continually contaminate each other. On the contrary, an increasing number of researchers and activists are today advocating for porosities between daily care and urban planning:

“A ‘caring architecture’ would involve a change of focus from buildings as objects in space toward relations within habitats, among more than human inhabitants, and across time. [...] Each of these aspects have manifold refractions in design theory and practice, from the diverse and often conflicting needs of the more-than-human constituents of the built environment, to the labors involved in the processes of planning, construction and maintenance.”<sup>635</sup>

632 Emma Bigé, “Danses, agitations, soulèvements,” *AOC*, 2023.

633 Hamilton, Zettel, and Neimanis, “Feminist Infrastructure for Better Weathering,” 255.

634 The actors with whom we worked for two years were deeply motivated by this prospect, which they took up and presented collectively to the highest political authorities in the canton of Geneva. Nevertheless, this request was perceived as an additional expense with no guarantee of results by certain political authorities, who did not vote for the proposed budgets.

635 Vass, Cloutier, and Sylvia, “Design as Commoning,” 269. In this text, the authors draw on the most widely

To the question of whether choreopolitical ecologies can be considered a vision in themselves, it becomes possible to answer, albeit tentatively, several things. In a deeply scripted world, they are a necessity for considering the dynamics of reproducing inequalities and formulating more just climate-making and the multiple subjectivities that come with it. Their ability to contribute to collective territorial visions lies, on the one hand, in the possibilities of proliferation and contamination to which they are capable of opening.

This proliferation requires that different embodied experiences of climate-making and inhabiting be shared, listened to, circulated, and collectively narrated. It is linked to a collective capacity to establish practices in which the questioning of subjectivities inherent in such processes is not endured but accompanied. The attachments and affects explored in such approaches are crucial in the desire to continue and transmit such experiments. The ability of a multiplicity of choreopolitical ecologies to generate images and mobilizations strong enough to actualize and impose an alternative vision is revealed when the affective images produced over the long term by these choreopolitical ecologies come into contact (and conflict) with the structuring urban policies and extractive logics that condition life possibilities on a planetary scale. It is to such a situation that the last paragraphs of this research are dedicated.

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recognised theories of care in the context of urban production, formulated by Maria Puig della Bellacasa, Joan Tronto and Angelika Fritz and Elke Krasny.







### 3.3 Cuerpo-territorio. — Choreopolitical worldings across Latin America

PART III

From extractivism to global extractivism — Embodied practices beyond capitalist extractivism — Cuerpo-territorio : an idea-force — Cuerpo-territorio : assemblies, drawings, manifestos — Cuerpo-territorio : a proliferating choreopolitical ecology





### 3.3 Cuerpo-territorio. — Choreopolitical worldings across Latin America

#### PART III

#### From extractivism to global extractivism

Over the past decade, *extractivism* has become an important analytical framework for those seeking to address the multiple and intertwined forms of violence exerted on bodies and ecosystems on a global scale. The origins of the term lie in ‘extractivismo,’ a term used in the Spanish-speaking Latin American context to describe the depletion of natural resources and life possibilities in predominantly indigenous regions. Today, this term is defined as such by researchers from the *Helsinki Research Working Group on Global Extractivisms and Alternatives*:

“Extractivism as a concept forms a complex ensemble of self-reinforcing practices, mentalities, and power differentials underwriting and rationalizing socio-ecologically destructive modes of organizing life through subjugation, violence, depletion, and non-reciprocity.”<sup>636</sup>

The researchers from this group note that the term has therefore “morphed, travelled, and expanded beyond sectorial analysis of natural resource extraction, both theoretically and geographically.”<sup>637</sup> The fact that many circles of researchers and activists are beginning to use it demonstrates that it constitutes a powerful theoretical framework for thinking collectively and bringing together efforts to oppose it across disciplines and geographies. For authors working with this term, these efforts involve practices that prioritize stewardship, reciprocity, regeneration, and ensuring life for future generations. The concept of extractivism thus becomes “an effective tool for sharpening critiques of what constitutes the ‘sustainable’ in development practices, policies, and design (or ways of ‘world-making’).”<sup>638</sup>

The fact that this concept is gaining such popularity is to be understood in parallel with its use to describe increasingly complex and extended dynamics over time. In this sense, a seminal group of researchers on the subject suggests considering this development of the concept and the reality it describes as a transition from *extractivism* to *global extractivism*:

“Our [...] hypothesis is that extractivism, understood as an organizing concept and ac-

636 Christopher W. Chagnon et al., “From Extractivism to Global Extractivism: The Evolution of an Organizing Concept,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 49, no. 4 (June 7, 2022): 760, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2022.2069015>.

637 Chagnon et al., 761.

638 Chagnon et al., 762.

companied by an ensemble of other key and related concepts, denotes the emergence of global extractivism as a way of organizing life.”<sup>639</sup>

This new conceptual framework allows these authors to point out the planetary significance of the concept:

“Extractivism now conditions, constrains, and pressures the everyday lives of most humans and other-than humans everywhere, but in different degrees and ways for people in different societies and societal roles.”<sup>640</sup>

Global extractivism, which describes the infiltration and conditioning of daily realities for both humans and non-humans on a planetary scale, constitutes an appropriate conceptual framework for describing what *choreopolitical ecologies* seek to resist and overcome. Global extractivism can be understood as a choreopolice that directly and indirectly controls movements to maintain the possibility of extraction in service of wealth accumulation for a privileged few, at the expense of worlds based on other ways of world-making and relations with the non-human. As in the case of logistics, with which it is connected, global extractivism as control conditions the possible, but it does so with specifically violent effects on the ways in which the human and the non-human coexist.

### Embodied practices beyond capitalist extractivism

Although not directly using the term choreopolitics, the scholar in decolonial environmental studies, Macarena Gómez-Barris, precisely explores the terrain of the confrontation between choreopolitical ecologies and global extractivism. Gómez-Barris has devoted a book entitled *The extractive zone* to describe both the violence of extractive capitalism in different regions of South America and the plural forms of resistance to it (visual art, film, performance, social movements).<sup>641</sup> What was previously described as global extractivism becomes, in Gómez-Barris’ terms, ‘extractive capitalism.’ The researcher thus describes the two terms that she combines in her reflection:

“While racial capitalism refers to the processes that historically subordinated African and Indigenous populations, extractivism references the dramatic material change to social and ecological life that underpin this arrangement.”<sup>642</sup>

For her, speaking of ‘extractive capitalism’ allows holding the world accountable for the reality of extraction – the bodies that die every day in these geographies, through

639 Chagnon et al., 763.

640 Chagnon et al., 767.

641 The research is specifically linked to five geographies: the Bío Bío in Chile, the Sacred Valley in Peru, Potosí in Bolivia, Eastern Ecuador, and Southwestern Colombia. The researcher notes that, despite being located in different countries and cultures, these territories share the common characteristic of being *majority Indigenous territories*.

642 Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Dissident Acts (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2017), XVII.

exhaustion and in the struggle, the complete destruction of social and biological life — and the resistance that opposes it: “Extractive zones are not ‘over there,’ but everywhere”.<sup>643</sup> The coupling of these two terms does several things. On the one hand, it helps emphasize the connections that exist at all levels between geographies seemingly not directly affected by extraction and the absolute violence unfolding in extraction territories. That is why, writes Gómez-Barris, we should all be haunted, enough to take action.

On the other hand, this pairing of words allows us to consider that a multiplicity of struggles, seemingly different from each other, can find grounds for coalition on a planetary scale. In her research, Gómez-Barris precisely follows this path. Her account describes both the mechanisms of extractive capitalism and those of situated artistic efforts, nourished by local and ancestral cultures and attentiveness to local ecologies. Through this narrative, the author engages in the work of weaving solidarity among these practices, showing their ability to disentangle from extractive violence through imagination.

The weaving also concerns the researcher herself. Aware that she is also part of power dynamics (being based in the United States), she develops ways to participate in the struggle through writing and redirecting her own attention. She writes:

“This mode of engaging the world takes seriously the contributions of artists and grounded activism as ways to see life that is unbridled and finds forms of resisting and living alternatively. The materiality of *otro mundos* or other worlds that exist outside the logic of capitalist valuation is omnipresent in the visual texts I analyze by Indigenous and mestizx artists and activists. These organize a sensorium that is not bounded by Eurocentric questions, epistemes, or logics and instead wrestles with the devastation of localities wrought by a global economy that dates back to at least 1492. This decolonial sensorium is resistant. [...] We must center the unmooring of extractive capitalism by Indigenous art and critique and by those who have long lived otherwise.”<sup>644</sup>

The work of listening to other worlds written in the interstices of extractive capitalism is a decolonial way of establishing contact and producing knowledge.<sup>645</sup> For Gómez-Barris, the goal is to understand these worlds while constantly making the effort to “challenge the frames of disciplinary knowledge that would bury the subtlety and complexity of the life force of the worlds that lie within the extractive zone.”<sup>646</sup> By drawing on performative and activist practices and carefully describing their textures and frequencies, the researcher contributes to making visible not only the discourses of opposition and struggle, but also the social ecologies and material alternatives proposed, produced

643 Macarena Gómez-Barris, “A Dialogue on The Extractive Zone : Resistant Sensoriums,” *Cultural Dynamics* 31, no. 1–2 (February 2019): 153, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374019838888>.

644 Gómez-Barris, 153–54.

645 On this subject, there is a text on ‘extractivist epistemologies’, in which the author examines ‘the effect of colonialism and imperialism on practices of knowing’ and proposes ‘corrective epistemic norms’. Linda Martín Alcoff, “Extractivist Epistemologies,” *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* 5, no. 1 (December 31, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/25729861.2022.2127231>.

646 Gómez-Barris, “A Dialogue on *The Extractive Zone*,” XV.

and proliferated by these practices. She underlines

“the importance of epistemological autonomy and embodied knowledge as necessary to pushing away from a paradigm of mere resistance into the more layered terrain of potential, moving within and beyond the extractive zone.”<sup>647</sup>

The fact that we do not know *what a body can do* takes on its full strength here. Even subjected to extreme violence and the destruction of their living environments, cultures, pasts, futures, and presents, activist-artists find ways to weave other worlds than the one imposed upon them.

In the words of the researcher, one discerns an insistent attention to what can be termed here as *extractivist choreopolice*. Her analyses are never about abstract capitalist machinery, but rather about the ways in which

“the material and affective production of extractive capitalism crushes vernacular life and its embodiment, enclosing it within the leveling technologies of globalization.”<sup>648</sup>

In mirror image, anti-capitalist organizing takes the form of choreopolitical ecologies. Inhabitants-artists-activists *move* (and *are moved*) by forces other than those in which they are invited to remain, and die, by extractive capitalism. They *rehearse* other worlds, and the researcher, in turn, rehearses with them through writing, shedding disciplinary constraints and learning to move with them.

The framework of extractive capitalism thus calls for proliferating planetary solidarities, which require care and a sharing of the frequencies at which other worlds find ways to be written. Here, choreopolitical ecologies suddenly become *diffracted* by the term pair ‘extractive capitalism.’<sup>649</sup> If there is an extractivist choreopolice capable of exercising control at all levels where relationships between humans and non-human geographies unfold, then it is necessary to work towards affirming planetary choreopolitical ecologies. Through these ecologies, the fight against global violence, such as “the global loss of soils, depletion of groundwater, or the mass-extinction of other-than-human species” must find ways to ally against those that are written on an infra-corporeal scale, particularly addressing “pollution, toxicants, and micro-plastics which currently permeate practically all ecosystems and organisms”.<sup>650</sup>

These planetary choreopolitical ecologies encompass all practices, images, and mi-

647 Gómez-Barris, XV.

648 Gómez-Barris, XVIII.

649 The notion of diffraction has been developed notably by Karen Barad in the work *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. It enables us to consider how all elements, bodies, and concepts are part of an entangled *differencing*. *Diffraction*, then, allows for an examination of how differences are made differently: “Difference is active, alive and performative. Difference-making is distributed across a range of agencies that ‘we’ are entangled with. Difference is a collaborative practice that continually *diffracts*.” Annouchka Bayley, “Anthropocentric Wreckages: *Diffracting* Bodies That Haunt across Time,” *Performance Research* 24, no. 5 (July 4, 2019): 79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2019.1671722>.

650 Chagnon et al., “From Extractivism to Global Extractivism,” 769.



nor knowledges that mediate the ways in which these ecologies are co-produced by the human and the non-human. They involve a shared effort of movements and adjustments of intimacies on a planetary scale. However, in this weaving of solidarities, it is never a question of erasing difference in the name of a common fight or vision. The sharing of movements, struggles, and worlds is invented and organized through the ability of bodies to embrace other gestures and make them their own. The unfolding of alternative subjectivities is inseparable from the unfolding of resistances.

In this sense, it becomes possible to understand a research and writing effort like that of Gómez-Barris as a choreopolitical effort to become one with the movements towards other worlds that are woven at the heart of extraction geographies. Even if she does not directly share the daily reality of extraction territories, the care that the author takes to come into contact with the minor languages in which resistances and alternative imaginations are written, allows her to learn how to be affected by them. By being affected, the author starts weaving her own trajectory with that of the struggles and minor worlds she encounters.

#### Cuerpo-territorio : an idea-force

These reflections on the material and conceptual terrain opening up in the confrontation between extractive capitalism and choreographic ecologies outline a veritable field of entangled practices, research and struggles. As mentioned, Gómez-Barris's writing practice can be considered a way of joining this hybrid entanglement in view of engaging in the weaving-making of planetary choreopolitical ecologies. However, it is important once again to emphasize—as Gómez-Barris does, and as Azoulay also does in her description of the *rehearsal*—that the milieus in which alternative knowledge, responses, and worlds already exist are primarily those situated at the heart of extractive violence.

In terms of the impacts of extractivism, the concerned geographies are distributed across the globe, with a significant portion of them located in Latin America. As evidenced by Gómez-Barris's research work, among many others, artistic-activist practices are constantly producing counter-narratives and minor ecologies there, despite the immense difficulty it represents. One of the choreopolitical ecologies that has gained momentum and is now gradually gaining global visibility is the one organized around the notion of *cuerpo-territorio*. As the Argentine writer and activist Verónica Gago declares, it is not so much a concept in the general sense as attributed by Western culture, but rather an *idea-force*.<sup>651</sup> Indeed, this pair of words is deeply linked to a way of producing knowledge *in practice*, where what is valued as knowledge is that which extends the capacity of bodies to act.

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651 Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*, trans. Liz Mason-Deese (London New York: Verso, 2020), 83.

In Gago's terms, the body-territory is defined as

“a practical concept that demonstrates how the exploitation of common, community (be it urban, suburban, peasant, or Indigenous) territories involves the violation of the body of each person, as well as the collective body, through dispossession.”<sup>652</sup>

This idea-force thus asserts the impossibility of separating the human body from the collective body and the territory:

“‘Body-territory,’ compacted as a single word, de-liberalizes the notion of the body as individual property and specifies a political, productive, and epistemological continuity, of the body *as* territory. The body is thus revealed as a composition of affects, resources, and possibilities that are not ‘individual,’ but are made unique because they pass through the body of each person to the extent that no body is ever only ‘one,’ but always with others, and also with other nonhuman forces.”<sup>653</sup>

The researcher also points to another crucial aspect that this concept brings to the fore. For her, the continuity underlined by bringing together the two terms into one underscores that no one lacks a body or a territory. On the contrary, it is an operation of dispossession that underlies a world in which territories are then offered as possessions (to a few). In this sense, the body-territory places this initial expropriation at the center of the struggle. It proposes an idea of possession that has nothing to do with either the individual or private property.<sup>654</sup> The idea-force inherently demands that possession not be conceived from the perspective of the individual, and in doing so, it proves capable of supporting the affirmation of other subjectivities and modes of existence. Possession becomes a matter of use, and the common is what is dispossessed and exploited.

The inseparability of bodies and territory makes the body the primary territory from which to reaffirm these other modes of possession. The body itself is not a possession:

“One ‘has’ a body-territory in the sense that one *is part of* a body-territory, not in the sense of property or possession. ‘Being part of’ then implies a recognition of the ‘interdependence’ that shapes us, that makes life possible.”<sup>655</sup>

These bodies are thus active in the reproduction of life, and their ability to participate in the life-affirming movement implies concrete practices, spaces and combinations through which this life is made possible and dignified. The bodies involved in such practices, which also involve struggle, in turn see the body's territory expand and become “an expanded material, an extensive surface of affects, trajectories, resources, and memories.”<sup>656</sup>

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652 Gago, 83.

653 Gago, 83-84.

654 “We do not ask for ownership of the land; we are proposing another art of inhabiting the land,” said Moira Millán, one of the Mapuche leaders at the feminist assembly in the Argentinian city of El Bolsón in September 2017. Cited in Gago, 94.

655 Gago, *Feminist International*, 85.

656 Gago, 85.

The alliance between bodies, territories, and the non-human is therefore a necessity for bodies to extend their own power, which is always simultaneously *collective power*. This alliance equates to a form of collective perseverance or *stubbornness* in existence, written from the bodies. Through this collective movement, often compelled to defend water, earth, or life itself, forms of subjectivity and sociality are constantly invented:

“These are practices that defend and invent, that conserve and create, that protect and update, and, in that movement, produce value in a broad sense.”<sup>657</sup> These practices reveal that extraction operates both as the direct exploitation of bodies and territories and simultaneously, structurally, against social cooperation.<sup>658</sup>

They call for responses that are both collective and individual, in which these two parallel forms of exploitation are contested simultaneously.

### Cuerpo-territorio : assemblies, drawings, manifestos

As an idea-force, the *cuerpo-territorio* takes shape and circulates in a fluid, hybrid, and multiple manner, in contact with bodies as well as questions of structural and systemic violence that stir the territories through which it circulates. From the 2010s onwards, the notion began to be articulated through theoretical texts in Spanish (by authors who were also activists), but its fluid and emergent nature does not allow for a single origin to be attributed to it. On the contrary, the *cuerpo-territorio*, now used by feminist activist circles across Latin America, is directly rooted in much older currents of thought on the inseparability of the body and territory. This meaning has long been asserted by indigenous ontologies of space and decolonial understandings of the gendered body.<sup>659</sup> Through its use, the struggles for the protection of territories spanning the last five centuries are reformulated through the lens of feminist issues. The *cuerpo-territorio* then becomes a *binding element*. It weaves together multiple, non-linear temporalities that find new forms of articulation in contemporary claims.<sup>660</sup>

In every region of Latin America, these articulations are unique. However, the *cuerpo-territorio* does not depend on the legal limits that correspond with state power. On the contrary, it directly challenges them. Over the past two decades, solidarities and simultaneous uses of this idea have emerged and spread. This propagation has taken embodied forms, involving the transmission of knowledge from body-to-body. Simultaneously, it has operated through leaflets for small gatherings and larger mobiliza-

657 Gago, 85-86.

658 Gago, 93.

659 Sofia Zaragocin and Martina Angela Caretta, “*Cuerpo-Territorio* : A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Method for the Study of Embodiment,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111, no. 5 (July 29, 2021): 1504, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1812370>.

660 Gago points out that the *cuerpo-territorio* operates a displacement, from which a new idea of sovereignty emerges: “It is not the juridical principle of the state (the notion of sovereignty deployed to legitimize these extractive projects), but rather sovereignty over one’s own body (understood as body-territory).” Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*, trans. Liz Mason-Deese (London New York: Verso, 2020), 88.

tions and, more recently, on social networks. It has relied—and continues to rely—on a significant production of leaflets, manifestos, and gatherings that have contributed to “systematizing and updating approaches to various situations and conflicts” across different geographies.<sup>661</sup>

In this propagation, the idea-force has also become an image and a practice, to the extent that it now constitutes “a data gathering and analytical method consistently used in contemporary feminist circles in the region.”<sup>662</sup> In the perspective of collectively healing both the body and the territory, the *cuerpo-territorio* has been developed as a practice of body mapping. This can be undertaken individually, but it is most often practiced through collective workshop formats. This practice is

“aimed at spurring collective knowledge grounded in the participants’ lived experiences of contamination and oppression with the political purpose of denouncing state-sponsored extractive activities.”<sup>663</sup>

It is a form of feminist cartography practiced in the context of resistance to the gendered violence exerted by extractive capitalism. As noted by feminist scholars Sofia Zaragocin and Martina Angela Caretta, who attended several workshops of this kind in the course of their research, “*cuerpo-territorio* is not a set toolbox imposed on others but rather is generated through flexible, space-specific, and popular education techniques.”<sup>664</sup>

The most widespread practice of workshop around the idea of *cuerpo-territorio*, which has many variations, involves lying down and drawing the contours of the body on a large sheet of paper. From there, this body, which can be considered an individual or collective body, becomes a geography on which the territory is drawn to understand what is happening within the body. Generally, facilitators ask questions that are answered through mapping.<sup>665</sup> During this practice, the geographies of the body and the territory become intertwined through the correspondences established between parts of the body, the territory, and affections. The collective dimension is encouraged, and the drawings are gathered and discussed in terms of their commonalities and differences. The practice is always seen as an oscillation between individual affections and the (re)construction of a social fabric among women, directly contributing to the politicization of their affections.

The drawings produced in these workshops are always highly specific and situated. At the same time, by borrowing the general lines of this mapping practice, all these

661 Gago, 88.

662 Zaragocin and Caretta, “*Cuerpo-Territorio*,” 1504.

663 Zaragocin and Caretta, 1508.

664 Zaragocin and Caretta, 1509.

665 For example, it might involve drawing on the body the places where it is affected by mining activity. Or drawing the places linked to gender-based violence, or to certain emotions. In this way, the different registers and geographies are continually intertwined, literally revealing the body as the nexus for the re-articulation of these different registers and forces.



drawings come to constitute a set of images understood by everyone who share and adopts this practice. The collection of drawings becomes capable of giving voice to women in order to claim the body-territory and all the body-territories that compose it. This collective body built through sharing affections is composed of bodies affirming together a form of collectivity made up of multiple subjectivities. The collection of drawings thus forms an *affective image* of the body-territory.

This image is precise without being closed or fixed. It is constantly nuanced by the new variations brought to the fore by the drawing practice in workshops. At the same time, this image of the body-territory has become widely shared, simultaneously serving as a symbol and a tool for reclaiming and resisting. Zaragocin and Caretta, for example, recount an occasion where

“the body maps were printed into laminated signs, used in a protest march, and presented in front of the municipality and courthouse where a provincial decision was to be made on mining activity in their [the authors of the maps] territories.”<sup>666</sup>

In protests, on the streets, the drawings of the *cuervo-territorio* have now become widely represented entities. One could say here that the drawings invite the territory into the streets and into the struggle by making its image present in the streets. The bonds that unite human bodies, territories, and the drawn bodies are built on respect and intimacy, acquired through the collective practice of drawing and circulating affects. In connection with the issues of witnessing or *speaking for* discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the *cuervo-territorio* becomes a hybrid witnessing community in which the territory is not represented but made present.

Faced with the attacks of the industry, the *cuervo-territorio* is not just a symbol. It involves an attention to the material and biological realities of oppression. It allows and embodies an accumulation of data on the differentiated impacts of extraction on bodies through the back-and-forth and the attention given to affections during the workshops. In some cases, the *cuervo-territorio* as scientific image is coupled with other tools, such as transects of the territory based on water geographies. These tracings are then followed during walks and related to the various other drawings of body-territories.<sup>667</sup> The process then resembles approaches currently developed in the Western context around walking as a tool for understanding the complex geographies of watersheds (an approach that has also been explored in this research in Geneva). At the same time, the process described here goes beyond an understanding of the watershed *per se*. Indeed, the *cuervo-territorio* allows for a much better consideration of the

“immaterial, emotional, and embodied motives behind people’s engagement with the

666 Zaragocin and Caretta, “*Cuervo-Territorio*,” 1509.

667 Martina Angela Caretta et al., “Women’s Organizing against Extractivism: Towards a Decolonial Multi-Sited Analysis,” *Human Geography* 13, no. 1 (March 2020): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942778620910898>.

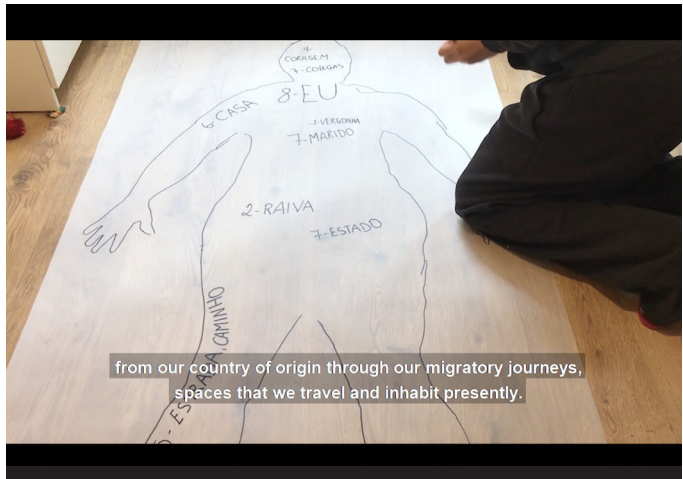
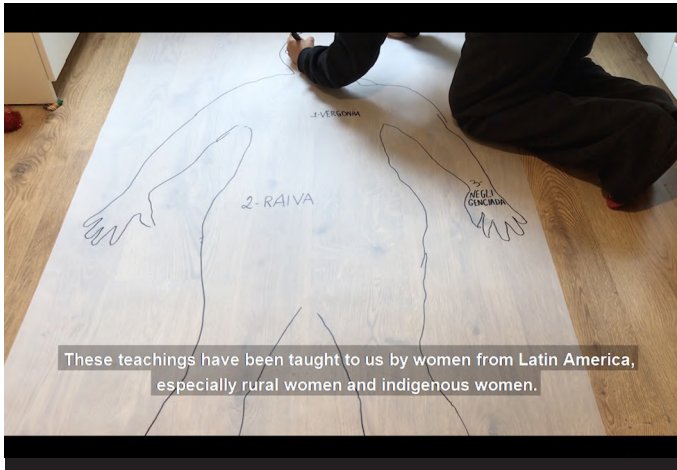
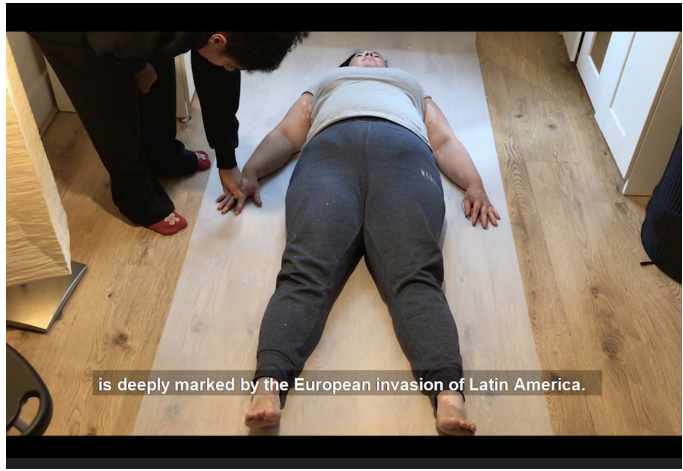
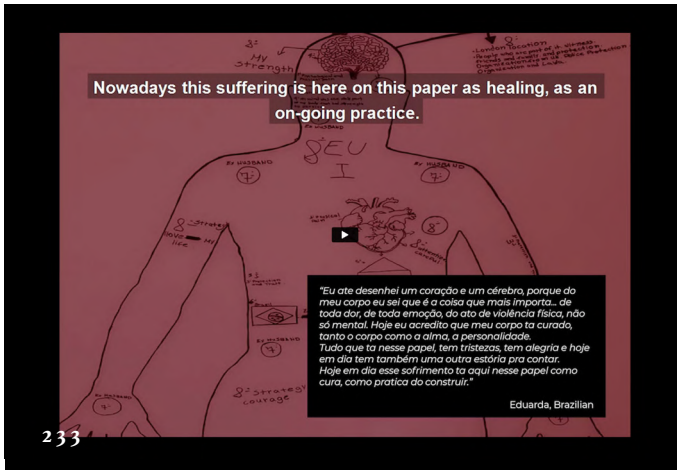
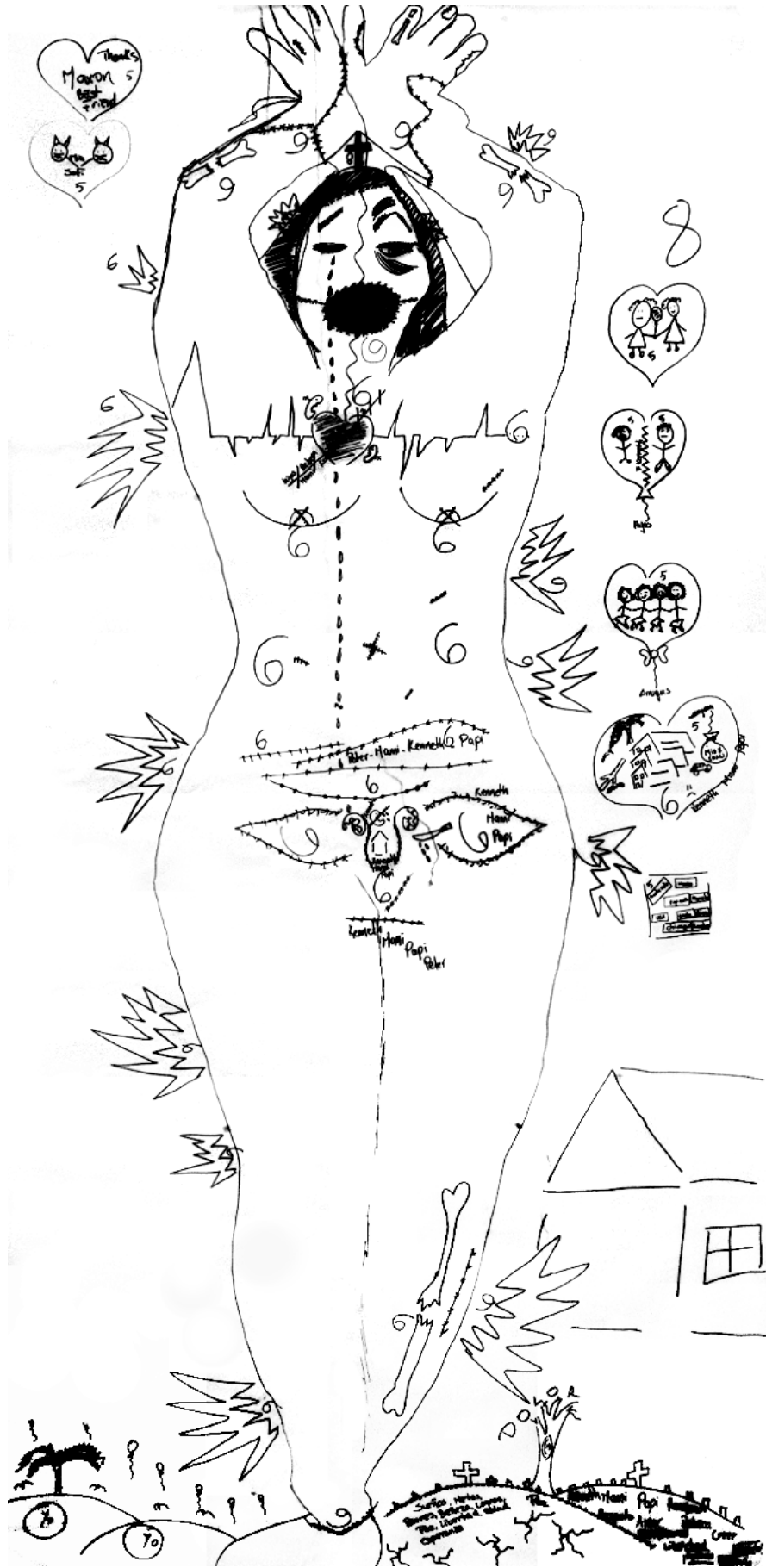


Fig. 233 • Rosa dos Ventos Lopes Heimer and Nina Franco. *Travelling Body-territories: A video-essay on survivors mapping coloniality, violence and resistance.* <https://vimeo.com/462689153> accessed January 24, 2024.



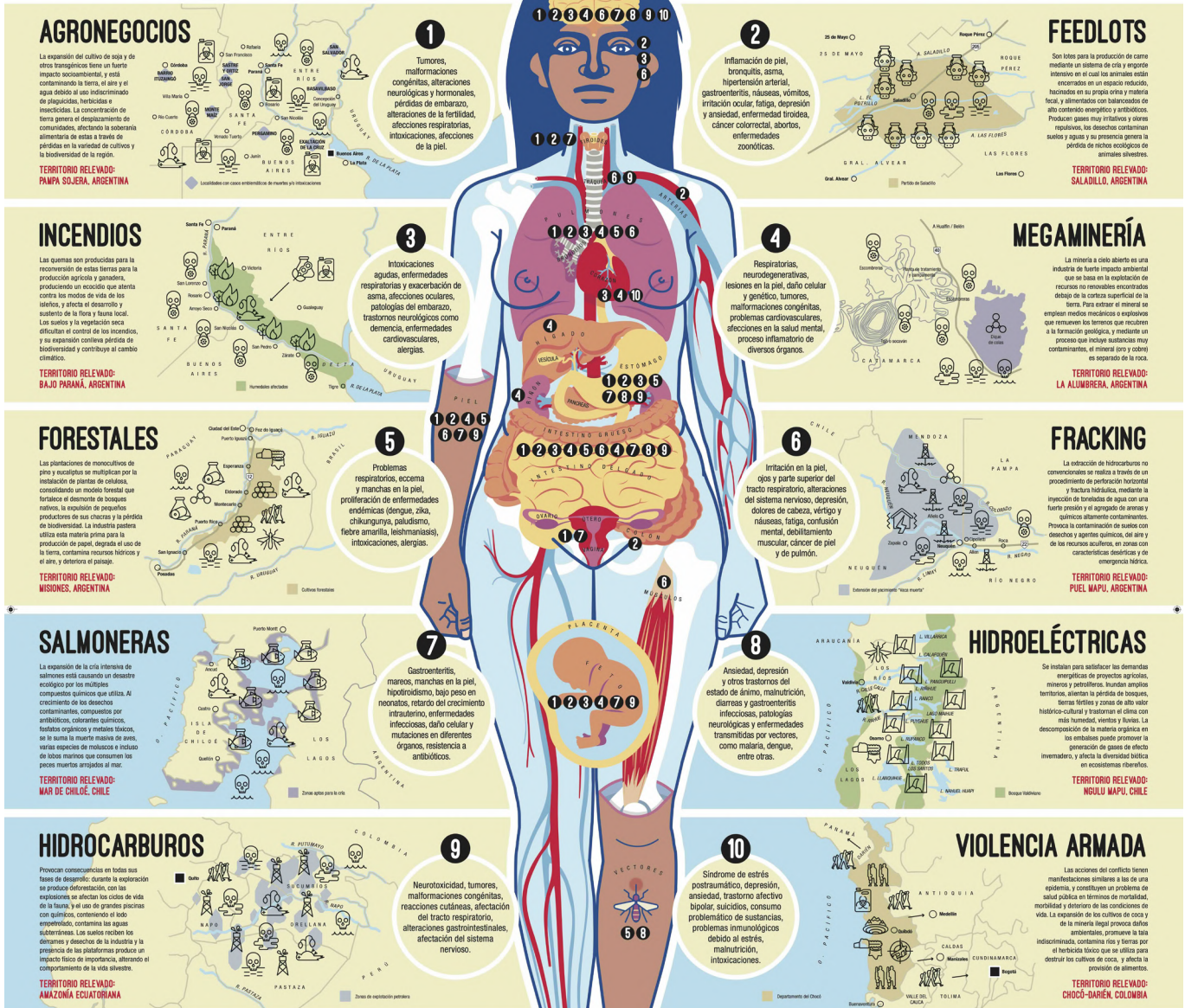
234

Fig. 234 • “This is the reflection of what it is to survive” – Amanda’s Cuerpo Territorio. Photo: Nina Franco, reproduced with the research participant’s permission.



10 PROBLEMÁTICAS SOCIOAMBIENTALES EN LA ARGENTINA Y SUDAMÉRICA, Y SUS GRAVES CONSECUENCIAS EN LA SALUD

# CUERPO-TERRITORIO



La explotación de los bienes comunes se asienta en una concepción utilitarista que concibe a la naturaleza como una fuente proveedora de materias primas, fomentando el saqueo, la privatización y contaminación de tierras comunales y recursos hídricos. El desarrollo de la industria extractiva afecta de manera directa o colateral a la salud y a las actividades cotidianas, degradando la calidad de vida de las comunidades. Las violencias históricas a las que han sido sometidos los pueblos colonizados de América Latina han golpeado tanto a los territorios ancestrales como al primer territorio, el cuerpo. Sobre él se imprimen las consecuencias generadas por el avance de la frontera extractiva, mostrando las dolencias, enfermedades y limitaciones que su expansión provoca.

## REFERENCIAS TERRITORIALES

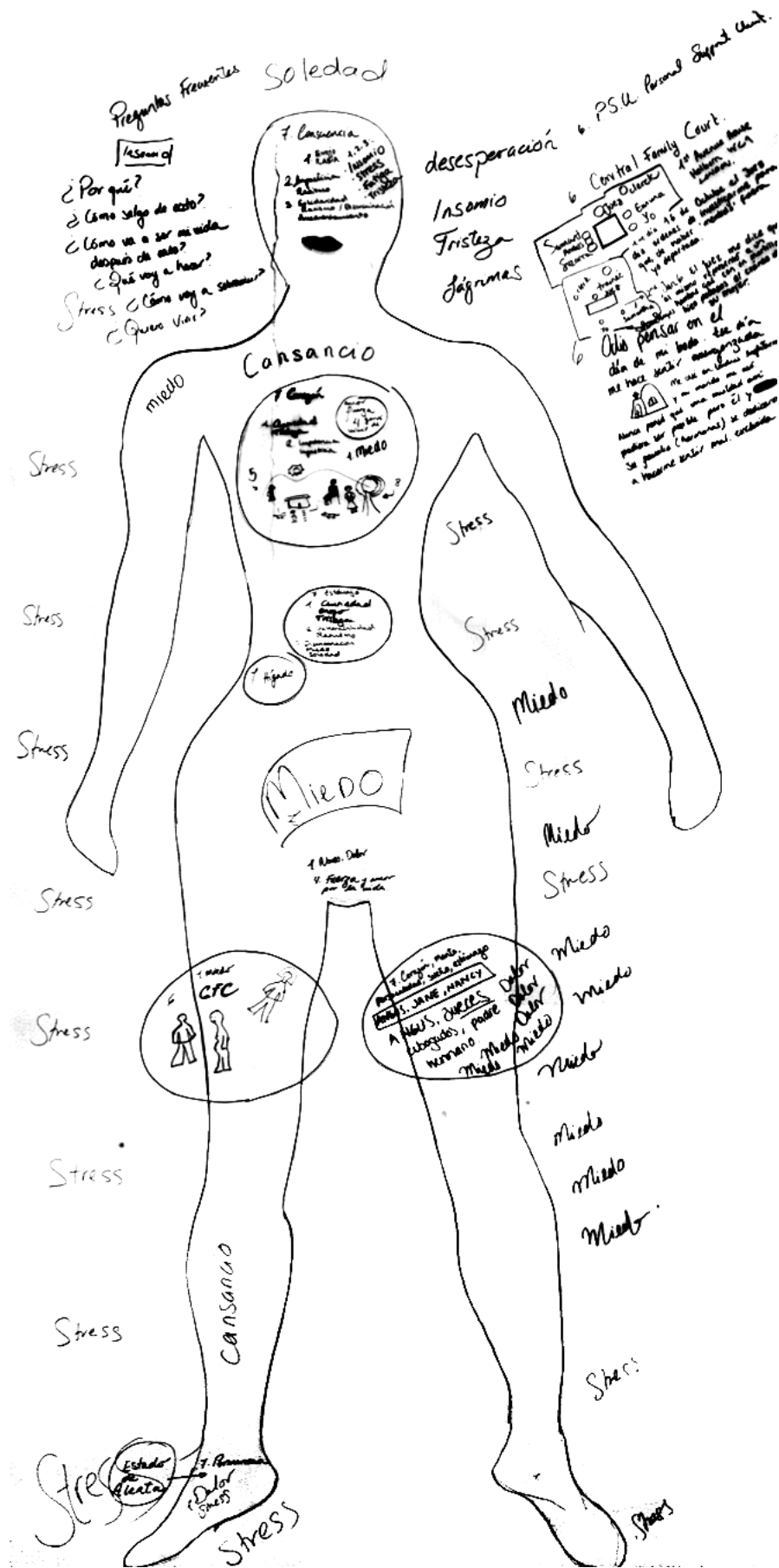
- Modelo de agronegocio de monocultivo sojero
- Gría intensiva de salmones
- Deforestación de bosques naturales
- Fumigaciones intensivas con defoliantes y herbicidas (glifosato)
- Extracción convencional de hidrocarburos
- Vectores epidémicos desplazados de su hábitat natural
- Feedlots, centros de cría intensiva de animales
- Fracturación hidráulica para extracción de hidrocarburos (fracking)
- Desaparición de la biodiversidad
- Incidios provocados por expansión de frontera de agronegocios
- Terremotos producidos por el fracking
- Contaminación del aire
- Minería a cielo abierto (oro, plata, hierro, etc.)
- Hidroeléctricas (energía para proyectos extractivos)
- Contaminación de ríos, lagos y mares
- Metalos pesados (plomo, mercurio, cadmio, arsénico, cromo, etc.)
- Militarización, paramilitarización, grupos armados
- Dermates de sustancias tóxicas
- Forestación intensiva para la fabricación de pulpa de pape
- Asesinatos de líderes sociales-ambientales
- Aculleros y rapas contaminadas
- Industria celulosa papetera
- Desplazamientos forzados de personas
- Desertificación

Este desplegable fue elaborado para uso informativo y didáctico. Surge del intercambio de iconoclasistas con docentes y participantes del curso "Análisis de los procesos de salud en contextos de extractivismo", organizado por el Instituto de Salud Socioambiental con el apoyo de Rosa Luxemburgo. Diseño y edición: iconoclasistas. Septiembre a noviembre de 2020, durante la pandemia del coronavirus.

Fig. 235 • "Introduction to the analysis of health processes in contexts of extractivism", organised by the Instituto de Salud Socioambiental with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Design and editing: Iconoclasistas. September to November 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Choreopolitical ecologies.





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Fig. 236 • “Everything takes its toll on the body” – Hermana’s Cuerpo Territorio. Photo: Nina Franco, reproduced with the research participant’s permission.

| preservation, restoration, and management of water.”<sup>668</sup>

In this case, the data collection takes on a relational, embodied, affective, and differentiated form, offering a “data collection that is aligned with local ontologies instead of [being grounded] on foreign scholarly concepts.”<sup>669</sup> The embodied and differentiated realities of the impact of capitalism are made present and audible. At the same time, the way these data are co-constructed prevents them from being directly reduced to quantitative and isolated data. On the contrary, these data and this knowledge *belong* to the struggle and action. They constitute a form of knowledge that is inseparable from the milieu in which it emerges. This knowledge *matters*, in the sense that it allows those most affected to claim for themselves, based on their feelings and affections, against multiscale structures of oppression.

As a result of these different aspects, the *cuero-territorio* has become a real bond, common enough to unite and open enough to be explored, adopted, and transformed. As an idea-force and as a mapping practice, it has circulated through manifestos and leaflets and has become widely spread. This affective image has enabled socialities, alliances, and the formulation of transformative claims. These are summarized by political scholar Lorenza Perini:

“Firstly, in many occasions, women’s struggles have resulted in the imposition of a ban to the entrance of multinational corporations in their territory or have determined the definitive or temporary interruption of exploitation processes. [...] Secondly, through the creation of autonomous spaces and the promotion of awareness-raising activities, women and feminist movements have stimulated solidarity and collective reflection about the brutal consequences of exploitative practices on lands and bodies, consequently strengthening communitarian resistance against capitalist forces and favouring the implementation of more democratic processes. [...] Third, women’s struggles have contributed to increasing women’s awareness about their civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights.”<sup>670</sup>

These findings are increasingly widely shared by research communities working in these territories and with activists. There, researchers contribute to describing, making visible, and affirming the importance and relevance of the *cuero-territorio* as a tool of resistance but also, and that is a crucial dimension, as an affirmation of other forms of knowledge and world-making. The image’s ability to function as data, as symbol, as narrative support, as mobilizing agent, as connector between scales, as a support for collective imagination, and as a witness, makes this image truly transindividual. The *cuero-territorio* exists at all stages of the cycle of the image described in the second chapter of this research.

Today, the mapping practice continues to be developed further in parallel and in

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668 Caretta et al., 51.

669 Zaragocin and Caretta, “*Cuero-Territorio*,” 1511.

670 Lorenza Perini, “Power and Resistance against Patriarchal Extractivism in Latin America,” *Scienze Del Territorio* Vol. 10, no. 1 (February 23, 2022): 88, <https://doi.org/10.13128/SDT-13111>.

contact with diverse social and community mobilizations. This vibrant image has the capacity to engage with numerous practices, affecting them and being affected in return. A number of artists and performers have notably integrated elements of this practice into their works, research, or approaches to collective processes. In geographical and social contexts where the practice of the *cuero-territorio* is now widespread and the audience is aware of this image, these artistic processes find a direct resonance. One example is the artist Regina José Galindo, a performer whose body frequently becomes territory in her work. In *Piedra*, the artist's body-territory, covered in coal, mistreated, occupying the center of an assembly, becomes the occasion for the constitution of a collective witness to the violence imposed on the territory and on women's bodies by the coal mines.<sup>671</sup>

In the work of artist Carolina Caycedo, the body-territory is the ever-present backdrop. Although the mediums through which Caycedo's works are expressed are diverse, ranging from participatory choreography to drawing, film, weaving, and sculpture, the artist's working ground is literally understood in the hyphen that inseparably links the two terms. In the video performance *Thanks For Hosting Us. We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies*, human bodies bathe in a river. They appear as *incomplete*, partially obscured by a large fabric that they share and dance with. These body fragments slowly seek to reconstruct a collective body. Through their sharing of human and aquatic movements that slowly come together, they become an image of the fragmentation and possible reconstruction of the body-water and its ecosystems.<sup>672</sup>

I won't delve deeper here into a description of the many ways in which certain artistic practices resonate directly with the *cuero-territorio*. These two examples aim to make explicit the ways in which the *cuero-territorio* articulates the constitution of choreopolitical ecologies in which the movements of rivers, bodies, collectives, but also pollution, pain, loss, are explored, honored, and their interweavings explored, grasped and reconfigured. Through their work, artists contribute to the choreopolitical ecology of the *cuero-territorio* by strengthening the communities' capacities to seize the tool-idea-force-image in a more complex and intertwined manner. Through the contributions of dancers and performers, the *cuero-territorio* gains depth and the capacity to support the imagination of alternative trajectories for life in these degraded territories.

### Cuero-territorio : a proliferating choreopolitical ecology

Over the past two decades, the *cuero-territorio* has thus become a structuring motif in the formation of choreopolitical ecologies that are both situated and networked.

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671 This performance took place within the framework of the 8th Hemispheric Encuentro of the Center for Art and Politics in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2013. Images are available on the artist's website: <https://www.reginajo-segalindo.com/piedra/>, accessed on January 20, 2024.

672 This video was produced in 2019. It is available online: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/9m3wr6e214flns7/HostingBrokenBodiesOCMA.mp4?dl=0>, accessed on January 20, 2024.





Fig. 237 • Regina José Galindo, *Stone (Piedra, 2013)*, performed in São Paulo, 2013. Documentary photograph. Photo: Marlene Ramírez-Cancio, courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani, Milan.

Choreopolitical ecologies.





Fig. 238 • Regina José Galindo, *Stone (Piedra, 2013)*, performed in São Paulo, 2013. Documentary photograph. Photo: Julio Pantoja, courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani, Milan





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Fig. 239-40 • Carolina Caycedo, Stills from *Thanks For Hosting Us. We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies/Gracias por hospedarnos. Estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos*, 2019, HD Video, color and sound, 11 min, photo courtesy of the artist.





Fig. 241 • Screenshots of Carolina Caycedo, *Thanks For Hosting Us. We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies/Gracias por hospedarnos. Estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos*, 2019. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/9m3wr6e214flns7/HostingBrokenBodiesOCMA.mp4?dl=0> accessed January 24, 2024.

These ecologies contribute to the articulation of a real trajectory of action and divergence from extractive capitalism:

“Women build new models of production and reproduction based on anti-capitalist, anti-hegemonic, anti-racist, and anti-colonial relations. They promote horizontal, participatory, and cooperative spaces, whose purpose is the protection of the community and the environment, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the fulfilment of self-determination.”<sup>673</sup>

This force of affirmation is not lost on researchers, activists and artists from diverse fields, some of whom are based in geographies other than those of extraction, but who are also *agitated* by the planetary destruction wrought by extractivist capitalism. Natália Maria Félix de Souza, a scholar in international relations, describes it as follows:

“The feminist movements emerging in the context of contemporary Latin American political struggles allow for a re-conceptualization of the political. [...] By politicising the role of the body in the political and ethical arena, these movements open our political imaginaries to the possibilities of new attachments, filiations and articulations that are not subsumed under abstract universal categories and values, nor limited to identitarian and thus legalistic affirmations of the political. [...] Contemporary feminist articulations in Latin America productively dispute the validity of the abstract, universal, modern ‘human’ to think alternative political futures.”<sup>674</sup>

This affirmative capacity resonates widely with other struggles and claims currently taking place around the world. As mentioned earlier in this text in reference to the work of Gómez-Barris, although minor world-making knowledge beyond extractivism exist and are invented in the heart of extraction territories, it is possible to initiate a work of weaving knowledge and solidarities. But, because of the tact it demands in the relationships it engages, this weaving is also a choreopolitical weaving. It needs to be practiced and *rehearsed* with others. Weaving itself must become an environment in which power relations are exposed and new solidarities are not created at the expense of those who do not have power.

Very recently, a number of attempts to co-production of knowledge and planetary solidarities of resistance starting from the motives and practices of *cuerpo-territorio* have begun to emerge in different parts of the world. Among the researchers behind these endeavors, the same care as in Gómez-Barris’s work is evident. *Cuerpo-territorio* is approached not as a concept but as an idea-force. That is, these researchers are looking for ways to be affected and moved by the fact of working around this notion while also bringing it to encounter new geographies, and thus, affecting it in return. In an article called “Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios: A decolonial feminist geographical methodology to conduct research *with* migrant women,” the geography researcher Rosa Dos Ventos Lopes Heimer discusses precisely this aspect. She argues that

673 Perini, “Power and Resistance against Patriarchal Extractivism in Latin America,” 89.

674 Natália Maria Félix De Souza, “When the Body Speaks (to) the Political: Feminist Activism in Latin America and the Quest for Alternative Democratic Futures,” *Contexto Internacional* 41, no. 1 (April 2019): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2019410100005>.



“*Cuerpo-Territorio* as a concept and as a geographical method carries a significant decolonial feminist *potential* [but that] the unlocking of such potential depends on the specific in which this method is deployed and/or combined.”

The researcher thus calls for a “contextualised, accountable and relational embodied research practice as this method is deployed and implemented.”<sup>675</sup>

In other such endeavors, the researchers – often embedded in parallel in feminist action networks and willing to question power relations in their work – also engage in unlearning and *rehearsing* the ways of producing knowledge that have been taught to them in contact with these alternative knowledge production practices. At the same time, they place at the core of their research the idea of not “taking” this knowledge but helping it *proliferate* by becoming capable of engaging in the movements of struggles against extractivism from their own standpoint. In terms of methodologies, with these aspects and aims in mind, the researchers favor partnerships between geographies and the co-production of texts. They often go to the territories where these practices are carried out, before eventually exploring the possibilities of reproducing them with care in other contexts.

Sometimes, it is not a matter of reproducing the workshops themselves, but rather of starting to articulate the violence of Western technologies through the lens of these practices.<sup>676</sup> Sometimes, there is a need to expand cartography techniques into traumatic contexts, where a heightened finesse in mapping proposals and evoking affections is required from those conducting these workshops.<sup>677</sup> Or to contribute through long-term analyses to an understanding of the ways in which the *cuerpo-territorio* has either facilitated or hindered solidarities between classes, with the aim of opening up new avenues. In this multitude of approaches, and depending on the spheres and positions specific to different researchers within the power dynamics in which they are situated, the *cuerpo-territorio* contributes to sharpening shared sensitivities that form the basis of planetary mobilizations.

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675 Rosa Dos Ventos Lopes Heimer, “*Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* : A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Methodology to Conduct Research with Migrant Women,” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 6, no. 4–6 (November 2, 2021): 295–296, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2022.2108130>.

676 Bjørn Sletto, Magdalena Novoa, and Raksha Vasudevan, “‘History Can’t Be Written without Us in the Center’: Colonial Trauma, the Cartographic Body, and Decolonizing Methodologies in Urban Planning,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 41, no. 1 (February 2023): 148–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758231153642>.

677 Valentina Glockner et al., “The *Cuerpo-Territorio* of Displacement: A Decolonial Feminist Geopolitics of Re-Existencia,” *Geopolitics*, June 26, 2023, 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2023.2213639>. and Rosa Dos Ventos Lopes Heimer, “*Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* : A Decolonial Feminist Geographical Methodology to Conduct Research with Migrant Women,” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 6, no. 4–6 (November 2, 2021): 290–319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2022.2108130>.



# ARCHITECTURAL REHEARSAL . — Choreopolitical ecologies within a scripted World

## CONCLUSION. OPENING

Centuries of capitalist discipline have gone a long way toward producing individuals who shrink from each other for fear of touch.

— Silvia Federici, *Beyond the periphery of the skin*, 2020

This research has revolved around the possibility of describing-imagining an architectural touch sensitive to the frequencies at which the world is scripted – and to those in which other worlds are invented. Such an intention directly implies an *architectural rehearsal*. By positing as an hypothesis that the world and the world-makings are scripted in a way that maintains the privileges and benefits of a minority at the expense of all others, and considering that the ways in which this scripting operates, largely escape the dominant forms of practices and knowledge in Western architectural culture (in which I have been trained), I also assumed that, due to this ignorance, the discipline contributed to this script and the reproduction of the violence associated with it. I was initiating a research that required (from me) an (un)learning, which was to be accomplished *with others*. For Ariella Azoulay, the rehearsal, understood as the rejection of a system conditioning relationships, can only be carried out in contact with those who can help us break free from the dynamics of invisibility and the reproduction of violence in which we are inscribed, and to imagine and embrace other trajectories.

The *others* from whom I felt I could learn something about the ways in which the world is scripted, and how that script is made to feel, were dancer-choreographers. Still, I needed to understand the why behind this intuition and what kind of research would allow me to pursue it. Indeed, the field of dance and that of architecture are not complete strangers to each other. There are many collaborations and shared fields of investigation: studies of gestures and possibilities of movement in space, notation systems, a shared exploration of flows, and even the embodied experience of built architectures. Movement is then central, ultra-visible, expressed, traced, imagined, celebrated, analyzed, optimized, perfected. Yet, the interest I had in movement was different. I was stirred by a question, namely, the nature or *texture* of the script, of control, that renders movement not possible, and not even *imaginable*, everywhere, at all times, and for everyone. This interest in movement was intricately linked to a certain *impossibility* of movement, or more precisely, to the threshold where the possibility of a different movement is woven. There was a question on the nature of the movements, in the sense that

they did not seem to be thought of from the idea of an individual in complete control and initiating their own movements. On the contrary, the movements that challenged me seemed to be an *appearance* with a *political* dimension that I was interested in better understanding and thinking about for/within architecture.

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The concept of *choreopolitics* offered itself as a conceptual entry point for this research. Through this prism, it became possible to better grasp the nature of the conditioning that certain dances enable us to *touch* and subvert, and to understand how movements and practices take shape, and suddenly find a space of freedom previously invisible to unfold. Choreopolitics primarily allows for understanding the *kinetic* dimension through which today's control of possibilities operates, as André Lepecki refers to it as "capitalism's kineticism," and as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney term it "logisticality." To the forms of movement control that imply its prevention, there is overlaid a form of control *within* the movement. Through the maintenance of tendencies and habits, bodies are kept in movements that do not question the established social order nor allow the emergence of the political as mobilization. The control operation short-circuits sensitivities. In this context, dance becomes a way of working to thwart control through bodies and movement reorienting themselves.

This aspect became visible and central in the collective experiments conducted by certain groups of dancers in New York in the 1960s-70s. The dancer-choreographers of *Judson* and *Grand Union* collectively invented ways to make dance the space-time in which to unlearn together what governs movements. At the same time, this invention depended on and provoked another, at the level of *choreography*. In these explorations, choreography became a more flexible, sometimes almost nonexistent framework, whose main reason for existence was to open up experimentation to its potentialities. As they responded to the increasing injunctions of logistics in the United States, specifically in New York during that period, these micro-political experiments simultaneously reveal the multiplicity of control dynamics at play in the milieus where the dancers operated. In this context, the struggles to continue occupying the then-neglected spaces of the SoHo district can be understood as an expression of the idea that the possibility of practicing free movement depended not only on bodies but on more complex ecologies of dwelling that contributed to the possibility of movement.

Nevertheless, the choreopolitical ecologies in which the dancer-choreographers of *Judson* and *Grand Union* found room to unfold their movements remained limited on several scales and aspects. In this sense, a number of dance approaches that have, in one way or another, resonated with these experiments have helped to demonstrate



the need to complicate choreopolitics, which are always situated in space and time. They elucidate the modalities of transmission, modulation, and questioning of choreopolitics over the long duration of the transformation of territories and socio-political frameworks. They demonstrate the transformative power of a *choreopolitical stubbornness* in asserting other possibilities, which is practiced and transmitted. However, in their ways of producing other movements and other world-making, choreopolitical ecologies assert themselves in friction with other worlds and ecologies. This dynamic, of which the collective awareness has grown, means that there must always be room for the question: *Whose stubbornness, whose worlds?*

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Through these initial explorations, it became clear that the choreopolitical ecologies activated by dance practices considered in their situated dimensions open up the possible and produce possibilities for world-making differently. They can be directly regarded as a form of *minor architectural imagination*, in which the relationships of bodies among themselves and with the ecologies in which they are capable of inscribing themselves are reconfigured. In this sense, these practices produce *affective architectural images* that re-organize the relationships of bodies to their milieus. However, this type of image is largely overlooked in the frameworks of thought and dominant Western architectural practice. The culture of representation imposes an entirely different relationship with *imagination*, in which the image is conceived to be seen rather than to operate within an ecology where control now operates primarily through the mobilizing register of *affect*. Against and beyond the workings of representation, the affective architectural image can contribute to the objective of this research, namely, the development of an *architectural touch* attuned to the frequencies at which conditioning and the invention of worlds operate.

Re-opening the question of the image and imagination in their transindividual dimension becomes, here, a means to create space for and value *affective images*. Without considering them, it becomes impossible to work *against* a script capable of envisioning the future in place of bodies and through them. Two aspects seem likely to contribute to this re-opening of the image and imagination. Firstly, we can consider that imagination, as something made of images, is the product of both an individual and a social capacity. The author of this proposal, Chiara Bottici, suggests calling it *imaginal* to distinguish it from an imagination that is too often directly linked to the individual. Secondly, it is important to remember that the image itself undergoes several *states*. It can be a mental image, a motor tendency in the body, or a more formed image. The image develops in the encounter of bodies and their milieus but follows its own cycle.

It is dynamic and *recruiting* to continue its own cycle. Through these definitions, the *architectural image*, traditionally conceived as representation or drawing, is enriched with affective textures and ways of operating within a scripted world as a *counter-image*.

This affective image has been the subject of a lifelong quest for the American architect, artist, and poet John Hejduk. Hejduk begins his explorations in a historical moment where architectural drawing gains autonomy from the construction process to which it was previously subjected. At that time, in the 1970s, the medium is explored for its ability to be an architectural proposition in itself. A wealth of explorations around architectural drawing is developing. However, outside the narrow disciplinary circles where these explorations take place, they are often perceived as actions of a discipline closing in on itself and locking itself up in its own language. Hejduk finds a way to not give up on this experimental dimension throughout his life, notably through his position as dean of one of the architecture schools in New York and his passionate commitment to teaching. Meanwhile, he develops a unique architectural language that, from the 1980s onward, takes the form of *masques*. The masques are books, composed of a combination of poems and architectural characters, which take the form of modest yet highly imaged structures. Over the course of the 1990s, a number of structures were built as if they had emerged from their books. In turn, the textures of these eventful-constructions found their way into the subsequent masque books. Through the format of the masque and the events, affective architectural images are developed, always open to becomings, in which drawing contributes to the activation of urban ecologies addressing memory, mourning, migration, the possibility of the collective—themes omnipresent in the second half of the 20th century.

Hejduk's capacity and insistence on working with the sonic and atmospheric dimensions of the architectural image make complete sense in contemporary minor architectural practices that address complex and traumatic ecologies, raising questions about the architects' commitment. In contexts where it is clear that architecture itself has played a significant role in oppressive mechanisms, such as camps or prisons, or in migration contexts where the very act of *dwelling* takes on a fluctuating meaning, the question arises about the integration of *architectural drawing* into the ecologies that are intended to be transformed. An increased focus on the performative dimensions at play in the act of drawing and co-imagining is necessary to engage with the narratives and minor spatialities that have been invented despite the violence. In these practices, a *sensitive architectural touch* is outlined, capable of engaging with minor worlds making and learning from them.

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Today, the mechanisms of subjugation, aimed at limiting the possibilities of alternative world-making, are manifesting themselves in their interwoven and hybrid reality. Class and race issues become inseparable from environmental and climate issues. The conceptual framework needed to apprehend these forms of violence is nothing short of that of the extractive futures outlined by modernity-coloniality. Faced with the hybrid and trans-scalar nature of these mechanisms, the ways in which bodies can continue to affirm world-making evolve. The challenge is then to develop socialities that go beyond the human, but these cannot be isolated from the dynamics of subjugation, which appear to be more specifically human. The struggle processes must then be conceived both as environmental claims and as a redefinition of subjectivities. *Choreopolitical ecologies* transform into *climate choreopolitics*, where the forms of free movement also become ways of making worlds differently. These climate-makings or *weatherings* need to be urgently experimented with and enriched by numerous bodies simultaneously. In this perspective, it makes sense to collectively develop and explore *choreographies of weathering* wherever possible. As the dancer-choreographers of *Grand Union* demonstrated, a choreographic framework can take on a wide variety of forms, always with the goal of opening the event to its potentialities. According to Erin Manning also, choreography is even “a proposition to the event.”

Today, Geneva’s international peace activities play a major role in the city’s image to the outside world. However, the arrival of international organizations in the Geneva region has been linked to the competitive dynamics among countries vying to host this prestigious activity, starting with the arrival of the first one, the League of Nations, in 1920. In this context, the different organizations choosing to establish their headquarters in Geneva negotiate rights of possession over the most notable domains of the territory, despite the emergence of various protests. The neighborhood has thus become entirely devoted to international activity, despite having a unique territorial and landscape condition in Geneva. Today, climate change crystallizes tensions regarding the use of this territory among residents, international organizations, and public authorities, without revealing a clear trajectory of transformation. In such a context, a *choreography of weathering* becomes a means to explore the possibilities of collectively weathering and simultaneously reconfiguring the map of conflictualities. Such an approach prompts affective realignments. It raises questions of individual and collective subjectification, which are felt to be intertwined with climate issues and climate action. It allows the emergence of choreopolitical ecologies through the sharing of differentiated experiences of climate and the politicization of feelings. Nevertheless, the proliferation of these ecologies requires that the affective texture of the images that mobilize them be recognized, practiced, and affirmed.

The ability of choreopolitical ecologies to mobilize and proliferate across vast and multiple scales is now a reality in certain Latin American territories. In these geographies, extraction has rendered the territories nearly uninhabitable, and this environmental violence overlays and intertwines with patriarchal and racist violence. Extractive capitalism itself represents a combination of direct (racial capitalism) and indirect logics of subjugation, which largely manifest through the degradation of living milieus. In these contexts, the struggle has long been organized through intersecting claims and the weaving of solidarities. In the formulation and proliferation of struggles, the notion of *cuervo-territorio* has played a central role. This notion, emerging from feminist circles, emphasizes that the body exists as territory, and that the exploitation of territories involves the violation of every body. In response, through drawing techniques that start from a body-drawing and overlay it with affections and geographies of the territory, activists bring this reality into existence within their collectives and mobilizations. The affective image of *cuervo-territorio* mobilizes and enables solidarities around a movement of affirmation of life-living, in which dancer-choreographers have also easily found their role. Faced with extractive capitalism, it is now necessary to work towards developing planetary choreopolitical ecologies. And learning begins notably in contact with the minor worlds and knowledge that invent themselves in resistance to extractive capitalism. Embracing their movements then requires an understanding of the textures of the script and the *minor imaginations* that this research exposes.

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At the (temporary) conclusion of the plural investigations spawned by this initial questioning, the encountered dance-dancing knowledges in the course of the research have proven to be invaluable allies in understanding the textures of our scripted world and ways to collectively work towards their subversion. Meanwhile, the architectural perspective of the research has allowed for the examination and consideration of these knowledges not just as practices of (non-)movement but as minor architectural practices, enhancing our capacities to inhabit and world-make differently. Indeed, when Silvia Federici writes that “centuries of capitalist discipline have gone a long way toward producing individuals who shrink from each other for fear of touch” the author describes a reality of movement that is expressed not as a pure (im)possibility but as a *terrestrial* (im)possibility. This possibility depends on bodies always already situated in the world, constantly working, *rehearsing*, and affirming it. In this sense, this responsibility is also always a response-ability – the need to develop a tactful relationship with the world.

Our epidermises, our movements, and our inclinations are nodes in which, incessantly, history, ecologies, and worlds are replayed and inaugurated. Through these



nodes, what we call a body is in continuity with the world(s) and the territory(ies) with which it co-produces pasts, present, and futures. Movement becomes world-making. And this world-making unfolds and is practiced based on the ecologies in which bodies are inscribed. In one of her texts, Emma Bigé talks about the *other gravity*. She uses this expression, which I find particularly beautiful, to describe what Federici also describes, that is, a possibility of movement that is always to be envisaged from *everything that holds us back*. What holds us back is always a bundle of forces of multiple natures, in which the material textures of the world are intertwined with those of history. The image of an *other gravity* opens up to an *architectural* attention in which there is not just one gravity (the one architects are used to working with), but a plurality of forces and inclinations that give shape to the ways in which bodies inhabit the world.

The script of the possible, whose textures I questioned at the beginning of this research, appears to be written not only on the epidermis of human beings but on the epidermis of *world-bodies* or *cuerpo-territorio-tierra*. Beyond the questions of our human socialities (which are already always intertwined with the non-human), considering the nature and operations of the script that governs our mobilizations is presented in this research as central to protect, imagine, and advocate for socialities that go beyond the human. This would enable us to engage in plural and non-destructive modes of existence, embracing the possibilities of life on Earth. In this sense, the research reveals urgencies and calls for a multiplication of architectural inquiries that *take seriously* the potentialities of world-bodies and their movements in inventing more just worlds in contact with each other. In this approach, it is necessary to continue directing attention both towards the increasingly hybrid forms of violence and subjugation, and towards their subversion. It is also necessary to strengthen the capabilities of mobilizations to produce affective images, which can play a crucial role in the proliferation of practices, knowledge, and desires. The *architectural rehearsal* that I have undertaken to develop an architectural touch capable of apprehending the textures of the script that govern our movements, affections, and world-building is, in every way, a beginning.

In her book, Ariella Azoulay proposes nine rehearsals. Here, I have attempted to think and present one. We need much more.



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## Introduction

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Fig. 12 • A very slow march in SoHo to protest the war, in 1970, led by the choreographer Yvonne Rainer, front left, whose «Trio A» was a lingua franca for dancers meeting on SoHo street corners. John Sotomayor/The New York Times

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Fig. 72 • Screenshots of Emma Rose Brown, *Temporary Frames, Part 1*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By4g6lr1r-E>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 73 • Screenshots of Leonard Cruz, *Moon Warrior of Miracles*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz2g9iEMk1A>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 74 • Screenshots of Jesi Cook, *Scoria*. May 16, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m43GG-CyfNg>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 75 • Screenshots of Rosy Simas, *Yödoishëndahgwa'geh (a place for rest)*. May 23, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGNmLrRasI8>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

Fig. 76 • Screenshots of Emily Johnson, *Being Future Being(s)*. May 23, 2022. Movement Research at the Judson Church. Video: Alex Romania. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBKf6GIpp6I>. Accessed January 10, 2024.

## Chapter II

Fig. 77 • John Hejduk, Artist book Record Keeper of Hallucinations, from Bovisa, 1986. Painting with ink on paper, 100 × 65 cm cm. DR1988:0436:006, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 78-79 • Pages of Colin Rowe and John Hejduk. "Lockhart, Texas." *Architectural Record* 121, no. 3 (1957): 201-6.

Fig. 80 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawing with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:002, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 81 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawings with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:003, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 82 • John Hejduk, The Nine Square Problem: conceptual drawing with notes. 1954-1963. DR1998:0044:004, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 83 • Margaret Deamer, Axonometric, *Inside/Outside*. Nine Square Grid, final project: 1st Year, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Fig. 84 • Daniel Kowler, Model, elevation view. Nine Square Grid, Architectonics, 1971-2. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 85 • Joanna Hickey, Model. Nine Square Grid, Architectonics, 1965. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 86 • Maxine Rosenberg, Sketches, Nine Square Grid, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 87 • Wesley Salley, Plan, Nine Square Grid, Spring Semester, Architectonics, 1973-4. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, The Cooper Union 2024 © all rights reserved.

Fig. 88 • Close-up of John Hedjuk's Plan with notes for Texas House 5, 1954-1963. DR1998:0051:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 89 • John Hedjuk, Elevations for Texas House 6, 1954-1963. DR1998:0052:034, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 90 • John Hedjuk, Notes and sketches for Texas House 1, 1954-1963. DR1998:0047:001:011, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA



- Fig. 91** • John Hedjuk, Sketches with annotations for Texas Houses, 1954-1963. DR1998:0054:012, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 92** • John Hedjuk, Sketches and notes for Texas Houses, 1954-1963. DR1998:0054:011, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 93** • John Hedjuk, Sketch plans for Texas House 1, 1954-1963. DR1998:0047:001:014, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 94** • John Hejduk, Axonometric for Diamond House B. 1963-1967. An axonometric with attached color separation positives. DR1998:0061:003:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 95** • John Hejduk, Plan for Diamond House A. 1963-1967. DR1998:0060:003:015, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 96** • John Hejduk, Collaged sketches with annotations for Diamond House. 1963-1967. DR198:0063:010, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 97** • John Hejduk, Collaged sketches with annotations for Diamond House. 1963-1967. DR1998:0063:009, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 98** • John Hejduk, Sketches and notes for Wall House 1. 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:030, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 99** • John Hejduk, Elevation with sketches for Wall House 1. 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:031, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 100** • John Hejduk. Sketches with annotations for Wall House, 1968-1974. DR1998:0081:031, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 101** • John Hejduk. Plan for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:003, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 102** • John Hejduk. Section for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:019, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 103** • John Hejduk. Elevation for Wall House 1, 1968-1974. DR1998:0077:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 104** • Cover of John Hejduk, *Victims*. Text / Architectural Association 1. London: Architectural Assoc, 1986.
- Fig. 105-106** • Pages of John Hejduk, *Victims*. Text / Architectural Association 1. London: Architectural Assoc, 1986.
- Fig. 107-14** • John Hejduk, *Soundings: Sketchbook*, 1991. Graphite, ink, coloured pencil, watercolour and paper collage on paper and reprographic copies, 31 × 24 × 6cm. DR1998:0129:002, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 115-18** • John Hejduk, *Artist book*, Riga, 1985. Watercolour on paper, 21 x 27 x 2 cm. DR1998:0113, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA
- Fig. 119-20** • *Sketchbook: plans, elevations, an axonometric, sketches, views of a model and buildings, portraits, typescripts of poems, typescript texts, postcards, clippings, and maps; drawings and sketches related to various projects by John Hejduk, including the Berlin Masque and the Lancaster/Hanover Masque. 1980-1983.* DR1998:0098:001, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA.

Fig. 121 • Cover of John Hejduk, *The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*. Exhibition “The Collapse of Time.” London: Architectural Association, 1987. The page presents the Clock-Structure designed by John Hejduk, titled ‘The Collapse of Time,’ which was erected outside the Architectural Association premises in Bedford Square in October 1986.

Fig. 122-23 • Pages from John Hejduk, *The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*. Exhibition “The Collapse of Time.” London: Architectural Association, 1987. The page presents the Clock-Structure designed by John Hejduk, titled ‘The Collapse of Time,’ which was erected outside the Architectural Association premises in Bedford Square in October 1986.

Fig. 124-25 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: watercolor on paper, 1985 8¼"x10 ½". Photo: Kim Shkapich. Right: John Hejduk, *The Hesitation Of Orpheus*, poem. 1953-1996.

Fig. 126 • Page of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, watercolor on paper, 1985 8¼"x10 ½". Photo: Kim Shkapich.

Fig. 127 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Work Schedule. Phase II: Final assembly of *Object/Subject* in The Great Hall. Drawings by Meton R. Gadelha.

Fig. 128 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: Public opening of The Riga Project on Thursday, November 19, 1987, began with a poetry reading by John Hejduk. Middle image: The Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, main gallery at The University of the Arts, presented the RIGA book in its entirety, and other works by John Hejduk including books *VLADIVOSTOK* and *LAKE BAIKAL*, drawings, and models for earlier projects *BERLIN MASQUE* and *LANCASTER/HANOVER*. Right image: A view of *Object/Subject* in The Great Hall on opening night, looking west.

Fig. 129 • Pages of John Hejduk, *Object/Subject*, from the RIGA Book, 1985. Left image: On opening night, Connie Beckley performed *Crooked Lightning*, named after one of David Shapiro’s poems and dedicated to John Hejduk’s Riga Project. Right image: In December 1987, students from The University of the Arts School of Dance performed *The Fall of Guilt*, a response to The Riga Project conceived and choreographed by Associate Professor Manfred Fischbeck.

Fig. 130 • Footage of John Hejduk’s *The Collapse of Time*, video still, 1986, 47 minutes and 59 seconds, seen at <https://youtu.be/z91hfQ-D6oI>, accessed December 12, 2023. The structure construction was made to accompany the exhibition of Hejduk’s project *VICTIMS*, shown at the AA in 1986. ‘The Collapse of Time’ is the final element in a series of 68 structures. The tower, which represents time, was lowered twice by 45° at noon on Fridays 10th and 24th October 1986 until it was completely horizontal, signifying the total collapse of time. The construction of ‘The Collapse of Time’ was undertaken by AA staff and students. The structural consultant for the project was Frank Newby.

Fig. 131 • John Hejduk, sketch site plan for *Victims II*, 1993. Drawing in ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:004, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 132 • John Hejduk, Sketch details for *Victims II*, 1993. Drawing in watercolour with ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:049, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 133 • John Hejduk, Sketch details for *Victims II*, 1993. Drawing in watercolour with ink on paper, 28 × 22 cm. DR1998:0130:048, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 134-37 • Virtual consultation of the sketchbook John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, Drawings and Artist Book, 1994. DR1998:0132:002-009, John Hejduk fonds. Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA accessed via Zoom on June 30, 2021.

Fig. 138 • John Hejduk, *Berlin Tower*: Elevations and plans Elevation drawing south facade tower with architectural play elements «the painter» and «the musician». 1985-1986, Reprographic copy on paper. John Hejduk fonds, Collection Centre Canadien d’Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © CCA

Fig. 139-44 • Kreuzberg Tower, Berlin, Charlottenstraße 96–98, Germany, designed by John Hejduk in collaboration with architect Moritz Müller, Block 11, condition August 2023, Photo: Zoé Lefèvre.

Fig. 145 • John Hejduk, *The Mask of Medusa - La máscara de la medusa* in La Boca, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1998. A range of images depicting the structure, including images from its construction, the theater play presentation and preparatory drawings for the design. Photo: Daniel Casoy (construction), Sergio Penchansky (performing art).

Fig. 146 • Beth Weinstein, *making | unmaking of the camps*, video still, 2017, 3 minutes and 23 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/228899291>, accessed October 23, 2023

Fig. 147 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II* (2019). Performing Spatial Labour: rendering sensible (in)visibilities around architectures of internment, exhibition at Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania, November 30 – December 8, 2019.

Fig. 148-51 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II*, video still, 2017, 4 minutes and 9 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/279969528>, accessed October 20, 2023.

Fig. 152 • Beth Weinstein. *Othering (Collected)* (2017). Spatial Labor: Manifesting the Hidden in Architectural (Un/Re-) Making. Performance and exhibition at 191 East Tool Avenue, Tucson, Arizona, September 30, 2017.

Fig. 153 • Beth Weinstein, Performed drawing-erasure, 'States of Exception' (2018). This performance documentation captures spatial labour gestures across the façade of the Cité Internationale des Arts, aiming to expose entanglements between the architectural, political, and (in)visible. Paris, 2018. Photo: Anna McGrath, Rana Taha, Anne Barnard, Julie Parmentier.

Fig. 154 • Huda Tayob, Annotated rough sketch of an individual shop in Bellville. Cape Town. Drawing by Huda Tayob, 2014-2015. ©Huda Tayob

Fig. 155-6 • Huda Tayob, Fatima's Shop, Bellstat Junction, Cape Town. Drawing by Huda Tayob, 2014-2015. ©Huda Tayob

Fig. 157-8 • Huda Tayob, Hanaan's shop, Bellstat Junction, Cape Town. Drawing by Huda Tayob, 2014-2015. ©Huda Tayob

Fig. 159-60 • Huda Tayob, Annotated sketch of Nyanga Junction market on the left with the final drawing of the market on the right.

Fig. 161 • Beth Weinstein, *making | unmaking of the camps*, video still, 2017, 3 minutes and 23 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/228899291>, accessed October 23, 2023

Fig. 162 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II* (2019). Performing Spatial Labour: rendering sensible (in)visibilities around architectures of internment, exhibition at Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania, November 30 – December 8, 2019.

Fig. 163-66 • Beth Weinstein, *Razing Manzanar II*, video still, 2017, 4 minutes and 9 seconds, seen at <https://vimeo.com/279969528>, accessed October 20, 2023.

## Chapter III

Fig. 167-71 • The existing landscape heritage. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Julien Heil, Aurélie Dupuis © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 172-73 • The existing built heritage, locations: Château de Tournay, Domaine de la Pastorale now hosting the International Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI), Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, december 2021. Photo: Julien Heil, © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.

Fig. 174-78 • Lake views, locations: Domaine de Penthes, Port du Reposoir, UN beach. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative

Fig. 179-84 • Walks during Forums, locations: Vengeron Beach, Chemin de l'Impératrice, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Serres de Pregny. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, March and Mai 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative

- Fig. 185** • Snippet from the digital workspace for Forum III. The third Forum formulated strategic axes based on imaginaries in this case the Curation Strategy. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 186** • *Voyage Immobile - Immobile Journey* by Simon Lamunière, Swiss artist and curator. Opening intervention for Forum I. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 187** • *Versant - Catchment Area*, The watershed as a fertile, natural, and cultural terrain. Third forum / New images, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 188** • *Agora*, The lake as a social catalyst. Third forum / New images, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 189** • Screenshot from Forum I *Meta-themes*, which constrained by COVID-19, took place online, between Miro and Zoom. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 190-92** • The territorial figures of (in order) *la Lisière-the Edge*, *la rive-the Shore*, and *la Crête - the Ridge*. “Territorial Figures”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 190-92** • Compiled walks map. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 194-95** • Map and Zoom of Forum III Walk Map. The third Forum has formulated strategic axes grounded in the imaginaries of the Trames et Cordons Strategy. Vision: Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 196** • *Notice d’Action - Action Notice*, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 197** • Contour lines every 50m. SITG data. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 198** • *A. Voies-Rive—Roads-Lakeshore*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 199** • *B. Nations-Forum Terra*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 200** • *C. Promenade de la Crête—The Ridge Walk*. “Protoprojects”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 201-05** • Opening, gain access to spaces not ordinarily accessible to the public. Locations: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Vengeron Beach. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021. Photo: Architecture Land Initiative
- Fig. 206-11** • Security System, Protection, and Distance Management. Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, december 2020. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2020.
- Fig. 212** • *A. Trames et Cordons - Ecological Networks and Ecological Corridors* “Strategic Maps” Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 213** • *C. Seuils et Porosités - Tresholds and Porosities*, “Strategic Maps” Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, 2021 © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 214-16** • Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) as part of the Explore Geneva festival 2022, Performance Port du Reposoir, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, June 2022. Photo: Explore
- Fig. 215** • Forum IV “Protoprojets”, Vision Jardin des Nations, Geneva, July 2021. Photo: Miguel Perez-La Plante © Architecture Land Initiative, 2021.
- Fig. 217-19** • Crossing the lake, followed by a performance by Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) as part of the Explore Geneva festival 2022. Photo: Explore
- Fig. 220** • The Ariana Museum hosted the launch and vernissage of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations,” which took place from October 5 to 23, 2022, in the museum’s grand hall. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.



Fig. 221 • The recordings of Nadine Schütz ((Echora)) were showcased as part of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations, Photo: Nadine Schütz

Fig. 222 • Vernissage of the exhibition “Quartier Paysage/Jardin des Nations,” Photo: Corentin Bonvallat © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.

Fig. 223 • Orchard plantation, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, December 2022, Photo: Architecture Land Initiative

Fig. 224 • Bleachers Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Corentin Bonvallat

Fig. 225 • Construction of the Bleachers, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Léonore Nemeč

Fig. 226 • Bleachers opening, Parc Rigot, Vision Jardin des Nations, Architecture Land Initiative, Rigot Park, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Corentin Bonvallat

Fig. 227-31 • Three nights of music, with Bongo Joe Records and Canal 54, *Vision Jardin des Nations*, Architecture Land Initiative, Kiosk of the Nations, Geneva, September 2022. Photo: Julien Heil © Architecture Land Initiative, 2022.

Fig. 232 • Rosa dos Ventos Lopes Heimer and Nina Franco. *Travelling Body-territories: A video-essay on survivors mapping coloniality, violence and resistance*. <https://vimeo.com/462689153> accessed January 24, 2024.

Fig. 233 • “This is the reflection of what it is to survive” – Amanda’s Cuerpo Territorio. Photo: Nina Franco, reproduced with the research participant’s permission.

Fig. 234 • “Introduction to the analysis of health processes in contexts of extractivism”, organised by the Instituto de Salud Socioambiental with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Design and editing: Iconoclasistas. September to November 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Fig. 235 • “Everything takes its toll on the body” – Hermana’s Cuerpo Territorio. Photo: Nina Franco, reproduced with the research participant’s permission.

Fig. 236 • Regina José Galindo, *Stone (Piedra, 2013)*, performed in São Paulo, 2013. Documentary photograph. Photo: Marlene Ramírez-Cancio, courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani, Milan.

Fig. 237 • Regina José Galindo, *Stone (Piedra, 2013)*, performed in São Paulo, 2013. Documentary photograph. Photo: Julio Pantoja, courtesy the artist and Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani, Milan

Fig. 238-39 • Carolina Caycedo, Stills from *Thanks For Hosting Us. We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies/Gracias por hospedarnos. Estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos*, 2019, HD Video, color and sound, 11 min, photo courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 240 • Screenshots of Carolina Caycedo, *Thanks For Hosting Us. We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies/Gracias por hospedarnos. Estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos*, 2019. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/9m3wr6e214flns7/HostingBrokenBodiesOCMA.mp4?dl=0> accessed January 24, 2024.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Aurélie Dupuis (CH, 1989) is an architect, teacher and researcher, currently a doctoral student at EPF Lausanne. She is also a founding member of Architecture Land Initiative. Her research, at the intersection of architecture and performance arts and studies, explores the unspoken violence that arises from the limited understandings of the politics of body, movement and co-presence in Western architectural and spatial theory and practices and how this reductive pattern has been integrated into the history of the discipline. She thinks alongside architectural/spatial practices and performance arts as they relate to the collective imagination of alternative futurities. She is based in Geneva.

## 1/ PERSONAL INFORMATION

Aurélie Dupuis (She/Her)  
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 Nationality: Swiss  
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## 2/ EDUCATION

## 18.12.01

— Now PhD candidate, architect and lecturer at ALICE (Atelier de la Conception de l'Espace), EPF Lausanne, CH. Research Title: 'Proto-choreographies: Drawing, Imagination, and Translational Gestures in the Production of Urban Commons'. Supervisors: Prof. Dieter Dietz (EPFL) and Yves Citton (Paris 8).

## 21.03

— 21.09 Doc.Mobility fellowship of the SNSF, Yale University

## 13.09

— 15.07 Master of Science (MSc) in Architecture, Orientation urbanism, EPF Lausanne, CH. Master Project: 'Expérience d'un Bas-relief de la Modernité. Urbanité Territoriale' with Catherine Seiler. Guidance: Prof. Dieter Dietz and Prof. Paola Vigano, EPF Lausanne, CH.

## 08.09

— 11.09 Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Architecture, EPF Lausanne, CH.

## 04.08

— 08.06 Gymnasial Matura, Option: Ancient Greek and German Geneva, CH.

## 3/ LANGUAGE

French (mother tongue), English (C1), German (C1), Spanish (B2)

## 4/ ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

## 20.12

— Now Co-founder, Architecture Land Initiative Société Coopérative (ALIN), Zurich and Geneva, CH

## 18.12.01

— Now PhD candidate, architect and lecturer at ALICE, EPF Lausanne, CH.

- 15.09  
— 18.11 Architect, design-research and lecturer at ALICE, EPF Lausanne, CH.
- 18.01  
— 18.06 Architect. Project lead for the design and redevelopment of Resilient Campus, campus EPFL, supervised by Dieter Dietz, EPFL.
- 16.08  
— 17.07 Architect. Project lead for a research project with RATP on the Great Paris, supervised by Dieter Dietz. EPFL.
- 15.09  
— 16.12 Architect. Project lead for the design and redevelopment of the Place Cosandey, campus EPF Lausanne, Prize 'Distinction de l'Ouest 2018' supervised by Dieter Dietz, EPFL.
- 12.09  
— 13.07 Intern. Caruso St John architects, Zurich, CH.
- 11.09  
— 12.08 Intern. Darlington Meier Architekten, Zurich, CH.
- 10.07  
— 10.08 Intern. CBN architects, Zurich, CH.

## 5/ TEACHING ACTIVITIES

- 17.09  
— 19.06 Lecturer. Development and teaching of the multidisciplinary teaching unit ENAC "Atlas Poliphilo", bachelor 3rd year, EPFL.
- 18.09  
— 19.07 Teaching assistant. Master Project and Master Thesis, EPFL
- 17.09  
— 18.07 Design Studio Teaching assistant. Bachelor 1st year, EPFL.
- 17.09  
— 18.07 Teaching assistant. Master Project and Master Thesis, EPFL.
- 16.09  
— 17.07 Design Studio Teaching assistant. Bachelor 1st year, EPFL.

## 6/ JURY

- 23.05 Jury member. Design Studio Céline Baumann, EPFL
- 22.11 Guest lecturer. Design research unit Superstudio, EPFL
- 16.09  
— Now Jury member. Design Studio teaching. Bachelor 1st year, EPFL.

## 7/ ORGANIZATION OF CONFERENCES

- 21.03  
• 24/26 Co-organisation of 'Deep City. Climate Crisis, Democracy and the Digital', Latsis Symposium granted by the LATSIS Foundation. Organisation of the content, peer-reviewing and selection of participant, Moderation of paper sessions and Keynote lecture (Yves Citton). EPF Lausanne. <https://deepcity.ch>
- 20.12  
• 21.05 Co-organisation of the seminar series 'Surrounded by a Fog of Virtual Images' Chair of the session 'Choreo-spatial politics' with Karen Kurczynski and Beth Weinstein. <https://surroundedbyafogofvirtualimages.ch>
- 18.11  
• 22/23 Co-organisation: 'Scaffolds, Open encounters with Society, Art & Architecture', Chair of the panel: Cognitive and Sensory Strategy for Understanding and Shaping our Environment, International Symposium, Brussels, BE. <https://scaffolds2018.epfl.ch>

## 8/ PRIZES, AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS

- 21.03  
— 21.09 Doc.Mobility fellowship to complete the research 'Proto-choreographies: Drawing, Imagination, and Translational Gestures in the Production of Urban Commons'. (38'000 CHF) Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Yale.
- 20.08 Canadian Center for Architecture (CCA) Doctoral Research Residency.
- 18.06  
— 20.06 Visions prospectives pour le Grand Genève. Habiter la ville-paysage du 21e siècle. Fundamental and Design Research in collaboration with ALICE Lab and AWP Atelier (80'000 CHF).
- 18.03 'Distinction de l'Ouest' for the project of the Place Cosandey, EPF, Lausanne, CH.
- 17.09 Design Prize Switzerland in the category Research for the House 1 project. CH.

## 9/ CONTRIBUTION TO CONFERENCES

- 23.09  
• 22/24 Dupuis, A., Architectural Rehearsal: Unearthing Embodied Architectural Precedent. Criptic Conference: (Un)Common Precedents, Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, Carleton University, Ottawa, CA.
- 23.02  
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