

One intersection

When we talk about spatial configurations, as architects, we imagine immediately a physical architectural implementation. This physical reality is seen most of the times as something fixed and, indeed it is in its classical representation: our plans don't show usually time or evolutions along time. We talk about light, temperature or texture changes, but also how our presence and position transforms the space. Normally, we distinguish between the architectural spaces, that is, a particular spatial configuration, and on the other hand our presence or the one of others organisms or objects, as totally different entities. What if we were able to have an alternative perception? What if we were able to appreciate a different landscape? A landscape in which a body or an object would be different depending on its position; where a specific space was able to mutate through the setting of new relationships with our body.

A landscape, which in Michel Tournier's words, would reveal the space as a full, dense, and rich in qualities substance, where things would be cropped islets made out of this substance, mobile ones, yes, but under the condition that all their relationships were shared with the ones of the outer substance, and were able to register movement¹. That kind of landscape that usually dancers perceive feeling that, the spatiality of the body and the rest of space are not different materials. As they perceive, we would talk about a space with changing configurations and cohesions as a consequence of our presence and movement; what's more, it wouldn't exist complete without us. In this case, we were not able to admit fixed architectural spatial configurations but ever changing ones. So in this case, what would be the necessary tools to work with these parameters in an architectural project?

One point of view

Maurice Merleau-Ponty highlighted how the phenomenological experience is activated through movement in its different modalities, and how it is through movement that a space-time sequence is built.

Specifically he explains that the kinetic experience of the body is the one, which allows us the access to the world². For him, the movement phenomenon shows up, in a very sensitive way, our temporal and spatial implication.

Following this line of thinking, what we emphasize is the experience of things- not the thing itself- in the sense in which Merleau-Ponty names "experience of things" or of *reality* referring to the complete coexistence with the phenomenon, when the body-articulation phenomenon is the highest⁴. Dance appears here as a model of this maximum articulation and agreement in the body-environment system. A place where is possible to freely study the problematic and methodologies of this system. The target would be to associate this study to the concerns of a possible architectural project methodology, which has between its main concerns this somatic and phenomenological rooted experience as a precious material. This nature of dance, which is referred to a direct experience- it is necessary a complete awareness of the situation- generated by this maximum articulation between body and events, has been deeply studied in *The Phenomenology of Dance* (1966) by Maxine Sheets⁵. The dance experience- following Sheets' ideas- is free of rationalization, comes to life spontaneously, communicates knowledge, tells stories about spaces, and unfolds different times in one instant. It is in these aspects that our body echoes it. It is a dynamic shape built instant by instant, in real time, and that requires us to be fully involved, no matter if we are either dancers or spectators, it has a phenomenological character. Without this maximum articulation between body and phenomena- body and environment in total continuity- without this awareness of the experience, dance loses its vividness and

becomes empty movement disconnected to us; there is not immersion in the phenomenon, there is not direct experience of it, we are not able to access to its unfolded world.

The territory of the intersection

In the landscape of this intersection between architecture and dance, the line differentiating the creative processes of both disciplines is blurred and thick, with multiple overlappings and juxtapositions. Dance in this panorama, appears as a key discipline from the architectural point of view- a powerful laboratory- ready to test with freedom the concepts engaged in the body-environment system. It has been in multiple occasions along history that this overlapping, which we recover now, has been revealed. Let's go inside this territory of the intersection re-calibrating its surface and kilometers...

One of the well-known examples for architects is the investigation fulfilled at the Bauhaus. It was developed by Oskar Schlemmer between 1920 and 1929, first in Weimar and afterwards in Dessau. But it is not the only one example, neither the most productive for us in our attempt to shed light again to this territory⁶. Prior to Oskar Schlemmer and the Bauhaus, and focusing in modern and postmodern dance or their origins⁷, we can mention some important collaborations between these two fields. Especially important is the one between the dancer Loïe Fuller and the architect Henri Sauvage- they worked together in the *Loïe Fuller Theater* built at the Paris World's Fair of 1900- and the collaboration between Heinrich Tessenow and Jacques Dalcroze when they were working together in the construction of the Institute for Education of Rhythmic Gymnastics in the Garden City of Hellerau, in 1907. Before and simultaneously to the Bauhaus some other important researches were developed like the one led by Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban, which were reported with emphasis by the architect Frederick Kiesler as a new beginning in the body-space field⁸. Well-known events take place equally after the Modern Architecture movement, like the ones related to the collaboration between the architect Charles Moore, the choreographer Anna Halprin and her husband the landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Primarily in the "Experiments in Environment"⁹ workshops, developed in the sixties. Charles Moore adds another example in his book "Body, Memory and Architecture"¹⁰ (1977) where Robert J. Yudell contributes with his knowledge of dance and movement; more recently the interest of Paul Virilio¹¹ stands out in dance notations, considering that they are a great complement to the traditional architectural representation systems: they include time and not only space, which is indeed how we experience the world, mixing both through movement; or the projects developed by Daniel Libeskind together with William Forsythe¹² and the research of Philippe Rahm with the choreographer Gilles Jobin. In every of these examples, the involvement of the body and the visualization of the space substance to which we refer in this article is produced according to different modalities respectively: working with the densification of the atmosphere; highlighting attitude and body-space relations; managing dynamic spatial masses generated by bodies or physical elements indistinctly; or through the intensification of the time roll in the conformation of reality.

Let's see without delay, one of these intersection areas in detail to see how the shared processes can be useful today. We should move to the sixties. Mainly between 1966 and 1968 but continuously till around 1981, Lawrence and Anna Halprin¹³ lead the *Experiments in Environment* workshops, some of them under different titles like *Communities* or *LA Spectacular*. The target was to explore relationships between people and their surroundings appealing to the direct experience of the body in the landscape through movement and perception. The participants, belonging to diverse

disciplines- architects, dancers, painters, landscapers, musicians...- would work with an extended awareness of the environment, blocking some senses (for example sight) and focusing in some other alternative ones and fragments of perception (sounds, smells, textures or temperatures...). They would use kinesthetic experiences and they would register them, with the goal of using them as creative material. Actually that was what it was: an exploration of new creative techniques (design ones in the case of Lawrence Halprin or choreographic ones in the case of Anna). As a consequence of this, Halprin will implement the RSVP¹⁴ cycles described in his book *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (1969), fulfilled in collaboration with Anna Halprin and the gestalt psychologist Paul Baum. These cycles indicated the concrete rules of the game in the proposed creative process: they were following stages of inspection of Resources including social, cultural, collective, environmental or economical aspects involved in the situation; implementation of Scores showing the interrelationship between these aspects and pointing out possible actions to intervene and transform reality through the action of the body or space transformations; critical Valuation of the process assimilating action as a critical medium; and Performance using resources and scores. The repetition of this cycle would produce the proposals. This exploration of environment was in consequence linked to a somatic component, developing spatial practices not codified till the moment: the tools where the ones provided by the body-mind. In some of the workshops, in particular the one created by Halprin for the UCLA students of Charles Moore¹⁵, *La Spectacular* (1981), the proposals were made without verbal communication between the participants, in silence, revealing the essence of the architectural aspects in their archetypical levels¹⁶.

In short, the individual-environment relationship appearing in these experiences emphasizes a non-utilitarian movement in space and, consequently a different type of space. Versus the practical visual space, in which we are used to orientate ourselves, this would be an acoustic space. Similar to the one produced by music, the place where the dancer moves normally. Is this acoustic space intertwined with the space of our intersection? Let's see its characteristics.

Parenthesis: A species of space associated

Erwin W. Straus in his text *The Forms of Spatiality*¹⁷ (1930) describes the spatiality of dance. Straus develops the differences between optical space and acoustic space. Taking as an example how we perceive colour and sound, he explains how colour appears in front of us confined in a position, demarcating different areas besides or behind of other ones, colour is adhered to the object or spatial area. On the other hand sound, gets closer to us, reaches us and surrounds us. Tones fill up the space taking shape in temporal sequences. Tone in its maximal development, in form of music, gets spatial autonomy associated to time. Music is temporal structure. In a way sound immerses us in the event while we can stay at some distance from colour. Under this point of view, optical space is mainly utilitarian, with a clear direction, we move through it with a target but the acoustic space is the one of dance, which is referred to the symbolic qualities of space and therefore is unlimited. Dance is not linked to any direction in particular; we don't dance to go from one point in space to another. *When walking, we move through space from one point to another; when dancing we move within space*¹⁸. The optical space has an established system of directions, the acoustic space in opposition, is homogeneous if we talk about directions, directions move and rotate linked to us. It is a space where you are immersed, where you have to participate in. In addition, in the optical space we move within historical space, there is *before* and *after* but when we dance the

historical action is stopped. The experience of the dance makes reference to *now*, to be involved in this moment. The temporal rhythm is the structure that configures the space of movement of the dancer- with or without music- and in the same way time is also the element that structures the acoustic or musical space. Sound is inevitably linked to a reality in continuous change, linked to the passing of time, there is no instant similar to another one. Although it's true that there is no pre-established system of directions in the acoustic space, there exists a temporal system, which is the one that makes it possible. Therefore one of the main characteristics of acoustic space¹⁹ is that it is polycentric, full of possibilities without hierarchies, everything at the same time in one instant. The tool to move within it is the whole body.

This total immersion fits with the permeable space of our body in contact with the more general space; it fits in the space of our intersection. A territory in which, as we already mention at the beginning, it is unavoidable to see reality in a dynamic way, under the appearance of continual evolutions...

The event's builders

It is under this form of continual evolutions that the shared working processes between the landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin²⁰, and the choreographer, Anna Halprin, were built in real time. They were using improvisation between other tools. Anna Halprin developed her main activity in California and she, together with Merce Cunningham, was the great influence over postmodern dance, of which she was a pioneer. Just like Merce Cunningham, she questioned modern dance basis, and the main tool for that was improvisation. Improvisation was linked to the relationship with environment. The main characteristics of the creative methodology of Anna Halprin were the mutual influence individual-environment (following our line of thought made both of the same substance), and the creation of scores (more or less opened) of choreographic and action notations to follow along time, like evolutions. In this time-evolutions space but also social conditions (the awareness of the others and the community) were indeed fundamental. The perception of spatial physical masses was important, but also corporal ones. Music was not very important, it could be an ingredient in the environment or not, but on the other hand the qualities of the space where she moved through, were essential²¹. In this way improvisation is a precious system of immersion and reaction inside a medium-, which is understood, in its acoustic qualities- building forms in real time. It is the body thinking, there isn't any pre-established imposition of movement, and the question is to react, naturally, in favour of the dynamics. It is a kind of body knowledge... and the dance and movement modifies in a reciprocal way space and individual.

It is a system of continuous readjustment, adaptation and process. Anna Halprin is the first to consider improvisation as a result in itself, not only as a process to create something finished: the process is the result, is the goal. There is not right or wrong result, there simply is. Improvising implies that a whole trip between the known and the unknown is made, between the things one can imagine and the unpredictable ones, one is able to work with uncertainty. Improvisation makes body and mind switch to a new adaptable (and mutating along time) apprehension²². We could summarize it saying that improvisation *provides an experience of body in which it initiates, creates, and probes playfully its own physical and semantic potential. The thinking and creating body engages in action. [...] During this playful labor, consciousness shifts from self in relation to group, to body in relation to body, to movement in relation to space and time, to past in relation to present, and to fragment in relation to developing whole*²³. It is with this process that the authentic nature of the

landscape we are trying to see is shown. Following this system, there is a kind of constant auto-regulation depending on the conditions along time, as we have already seen but also the system based on improvisation is a way of exploration and research, a way of knowledge. Our awareness and attention is selecting but at the same time, building an experience in real time, a specific perception and intense reading about what is happening. From this starting point, Anna Halprin began to search the natural balance between a total structured system and freedom, working with *exploration* more than *improvisation*. *Exploration* would be to work through improvisation but around a precise idea, producing evolutions focused on that. For this process she needed *open scores*, graphic documents that were able to generate a kind of structure to begin to work but which at the same time, had multiple forms according to *how* it was finally being performed. The process was structured but the results were boundless. This way of working is especially interesting in our reflection about the architectural project methodologies arising from the shared processes we are revising.

Lawrence Halprin is a good example of how to use these strategies in landscape and public urban space projects. The opportunity of working with movement (with Anna) gave him interesting tools to work with mutable things. The RSVP cycles are related to this but also his contact with dance made him go deep into notations of movement in the design process. Both, Anna and Lawrence were interested in the development of a graphical system to produce participative situations- either dances or public spaces so that, different actions or spatial experiences could be developed inside a same time structure- taking into account the time proposals, action and the experience along it. These cartographies were used to register what was happening but also to notate the projections of new situations, let's say to make projects. This kind of design documents were named *notations* by Halprin, scores which were able to put together the interactions of the qualities of experience which were designed for a particular context in a graphic way. The design of places according to this process was able to involve the sensitive panorama of people in a kind of continuous choreographic sense. Especially interesting is the score produced for the design of Nicolllet Avenue in Minneapolis (1962) where time is introduced (units of ten seconds each) together with space. In the score it is also possible to deal also with the experience and attitude of an observer, showing a notated panorama ready to be manipulated working with a complex approximation to reality, trying to take into account different levels of perceptive situations including tangible and intangible elements. This system is also used in numerous occasions as a method to plan the urban development of a community. The first step used to be a communal workshop with the inhabitants where the development of the score about resources and possible actions (RSVP cycle) triggered the urban planning. We can find an example of this in *Trinity River Study* (1969). It was an open design, able to integrate uncertainty as a parameter and able to take into account the body as the element that would complete the design in real time. These are also the main components, together with the playful activity, of the urban spaces developed in Portland by Lawrence Halprin: *Lovejoy Fountain* (1964), *Pettygrove Park* (1964) and *Forecourt Fountain* (1970). These public spaces would be based on processes and open structures, which would be only concluded when they were performed.

This way of design working instant by instant within the spatial substance, whose relations are multiple, overlapped and permeable with the space of our body, are also present in other coetaneous examples. All of them, with variations, work with the construction of events- spatial configurations- along time. In addition to Anna Halprin (1920) and Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009), we find similar approaches in the avant-garde

movements *Lettrism* (1946- 1951), *Letterist International* and the *Situationist International* (1957-1972), and with intensity in the *New Babylon* project (1957- 1974) by Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920- 2005); or in the Dutch Structuralism, in particular in the projects developed by Aldo van Eyck (1918- 1999), the Amstelveenseweg municipal orphanage in Amsterdam (1955-60), the Sonsbeek sculpture pavilion in Arnhem (1965-66) or the assembly for the 15th Milan Triennial Exhibition in 1968 *Il grande numero* are good examples of spaces with acoustic characteristics in which the body is interrelated frame by frame with the architectural substance; the proposals defined by Paul Virilio (1932) and Claude Parent (1923) in *Architecture Principe* (1966) develop in the same way ideas related to movement and environment. We could also establish parallels with the design processes of Cedric Price (1934- 2003), where time as a parameter has a great impact through the use of game rules, cybernetics or systems theory; or with some representative works of the Radical Architecture movement (1956- 1974), especially considering the Austrian phenomenon. In dance, equally since the fifties, appears an intensification of the qualities of *acoustic space*. We could say that its characteristics are highlighted concerning processes and formal structures, specifically the work developed by the Judson Dance Theater (1962- 64) or the one by Merce Cunningham (1919- 2009) and John Cage (1912- 1992), whose random processes with time as a main parameter are able to establish a close dialogue with the work of Cedric Price.

Shared processes

Why is it interesting for us nowadays to look into this shared territory? Which conclusions or working hypotheses can we take from this territory of intersection between dance and architecture?

These shared processes make reference to a position that, although has its roots in phenomenology, is expanded from that starting point and shows possible design methodologies, which are able to go beyond the traditional approaches that architecture has had with phenomenological concerns. At the moment, phenomenological approaches have different branches supporting the pertinent recovery of this view. We refer mainly to the currents of thought so-called Somaesthetics and Environmental Aesthetics, both based on the somatic paradigm. Somaesthetics as defined by Richard Shusterman²⁴ is referred to the way we use our body (soma) as a place for creation and perceptive appreciation. According to this we talk about an intense awareness from inside of our body. A body centred in a symbiotic and synergetic disposition, not an autonomous one, focused on an enlarged perceptive awareness, as the one which dance is able to provide. The goal would be to use this as a creative architectural material. On the other hand Environmental Aesthetic defined by Arnold Berleant²⁵, describes how environment is not something to look at but, as we are saying, body and environment are in continuity. Berleant following this line of thought argues, that architecture is inseparable of the body so it is fundamental to take into account this continuity when we design something new. The architectural experience is mainly somatic and instant-linked, associated to the perceptive awareness of the moment.

This could lead us to enunciate some of the working hypotheses unfolded from these shared processes:

1/ The demarcation of objects and environments is redefined (or undefined) according to a permeability and total continuity, which proves the poverty of a simplistic reduction to the visual or of staying on the superficial part of what is perceived. The body (the object) is in continuity with its environment forming various assemblies along the time. The limits (variable) are subjected to continuous negotiation.

2/ The space of the body is not only physical but also imaginative and the tightened nets in spatial assemblies are not only topological but also belong to the fantasy.

3/ Time is actively involved in the generation processes of novelty, which actually implies a certain degree of uncertainty (we refer here to the latent potentialities yet undisclosed) active at all times.

4/ The cartography or mapping, the notation of events, is necessary so that these can be incorporated to the project architectural design process. There is no external point of view to trace them; we are part of its very substance.

To finish and according to this, we could say that under this point of view, architecture would be in charge of revealing events (phenomena) within the spatial assemblage which our body displays along each time-frame, building events able to light the everyday life. The expansion of this creative territory has just begun...



CREATIVE PROCESSES
ARCHITECTURE
DANCE
PERCEPTION
PHENOMENOLOGY