

CHANGING SPACE AND PERFORMANCE FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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In 2014, the first Dramatic Architectures conference took place at Escola Superior Artística do Porto. The purpose of the conference was to explore different approaches and methodologies of connection between Architecture and Theatre, which we felt were usually overlooked.

The response to the call for papers was enthusiastic and that conference had a huge number of participants and perspectives, leaving us with the certainty that this could be a highly promising field of research.

After a series of collaborations and publications in the area, which happened under the project Dramatic Architectures, of the Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo, we felt the need again, six years later, of returning to the conference table, to find out what new ideas, areas, and issues were happening, and further promote the approximation between researchers. We decided to organize a new Dramatic Architectures conference, under the subject “Theatre and Performing Arts in Motion”, convinced that all the recent changes in technology, urbanism and society should have had an impact in the field.

Little did we know that the year of the conference, 2020, would be the year the world would grind to a halt due to the first large global pandemic since the beginning of the XXth century. After some rescheduling, the conference took

place online, the only possible format for sharing research and ideas. Again we were pleasantly surprised by the sheer amount of enthusiasm, diversity of approaches and freshness of perspectives, and of discovering new ways of how performative arts and architecture, usually fields so apart, can have such a mutually positive and challenging influence.

Obviously, such contamination is not new, and goes back at least to the Bauhaus school, where the concepts of performance, space, scenography, etc., became intertwined in artistic research, practice and education. In fact, the more the performing arts became less connected to a previously written text and a sequential narrative, the more space became important as its unifying signifier, as a challenge and frame for performance. Likewise, contemporary architecture, no longer tied to pragmatic needs, was looking more and more to find ways of engaging with individual human behavior and its concrete needs.

Considering the scarcity of publications on this crossroads of subjects, we found the need to put in print the most relevant papers presented at the conference as a way of sharing with others the current state of affairs in this area.

This book you have in front of you gives a wide and varied overview of all the different approaches to space and performance, usually based on real concrete examples and experiences, bridging both theoretical discussion and practice-based approaches. Together, they give a brief overview of the variety of approaches and possibilities, but also how this still promising field can bring huge benefits both for the study and practice of architecture and performing arts.

Due to the large number of texts and authors, in order to make the book easier to read, we organized the book in thematic chapters.

The first chapter, Theatrical Spaces, goes from the political and scenographical dimensions of the container, explored by Dorita Hannah, to the moving architecture of the theatre-circus in Spain, described by Josefina González Cubero and Leonor de Meer González, to the connections between theatres and churches, analysed by Bridget Foreman, to the use of industrial warehouses by Brazilian theatre companies, in Rio de Janeiro, as studied by Evelyn Furquim

Lima. It is remarkable how the needs of performance and the limitations of space can have such a deep impact not only on the development of architectural solutions, but also on the theatre performances happening in those spaces.

Spaces can also have different impacts on the different types of relationships. From the use of containers in theatrical venues, as described by Dorita Hannah and Luísa Pinto, as social interventions, to the exploration of different connections between the audience and the performance, proposed by Stefan Jovanović and Katarzyna Zawistowska.

Obviously, the theatrical field most intimately bridging performance and space, scenography, is the one most influenced by all these challenges, and investigating scenography can yield a plethora of ideas and solutions for many current problems. Space as scenography experiments is addressed by Niuxa Drago, on the case studies of audacious set designers like Herzog & De Meuron and Morphosis, or Carolina E. Santo on Renaissance scenographer Giulio Camillo, or even in eastern religious theatre, discussed by Zahra Fuladvand. Even the use of scenography in film, as addressed by Isabel Lousada and Vanda de Sousa can provide deeper meaning to the feminist representation of the work of Virginia Woolf in *The Hours*.

A more theoretically challenging approach is given by Yi-Chen Wu, who discusses Patrice Pavis notion of “performise”, and Višnja Žugić, who proposes three mechanisms through which architecture realises its performative potentials. We also examine different methodologies of working performatively with space, from the “architexting” of Jenny Knotts, which combines playwriting and architectural drawing, the use of the Spiral form in performances, by Hari Marini, to the implications of vertical dance as a scenographical strategy, discussed by Natalie Rowland.

In the chapter concerning Urban Spaces, the city space is questioned and investigated as a site of performance, where performance is itself part of the landscape. We examine three different performances taking place and questioning the urban space. Gabriella Kiss presents a case study of a performance in an

abandoned underpass that raises questions of “layers of the place”, Marina Hadjilouca uses the example of the growing gentrification and privatization in Nicosia, Cyprus, and the role of performance as a strategy of contesting the privatization of public spaces, while Jorge Palinhos examines the use of memory and parade as a performative device for the presentation and reflection of a post-industrial neighborhood in the city of Porto, Portugal.

In the chapter *Performance Materials*, a series of elements of theatre and performance are discussed in their spatial and architectonic potencial. Rafaël Magrou approaches the importance of Sound experiments in theatre through the example of French director and playwright Joël Pommerat, Tomás Ribas investigates the use of artificial light in urban spaces as an instrument of mass manipulation and surveillance and Lucy Thornett explores augmented reality as wearable technology that augments space at the level of the body.

The last chapter, *Performance and Architecture Pedagogies*, presents different examples of using performative elements as tools to teach architecture. Gray Read presents a series of exercises based in theatre techniques to invite young architects to consider how buildings act socially, while Natalia Solano-Meza describes the uses of architecture and performance at the University of Costa Rica to address political issues.

This is a wide range of perspectives that we hope can contribute to opening up new places of theatrical and architectural practice and research, bringing fresh concepts, methods and tools that can be quite useful as a way of rethinking the uses of contemporary architecture and performance.

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