

SERENA MASSIMO

**DANCING WITH THE LANDSCAPE.
ANNA HALPRIN 'EXPLORATIVE' DANCE AS
THE ENCOUNTER WITH NATURE'S AND
ARCHITECTURE'S ATMOSPHERIC
AFFORDANCES**

1. To act on the territory vs to act 'with' the landscape

Comment agir dans un paysage qui est à la fois singulier et vivant, qui [...] qui oppose, à l'acte de projet un contexte matériel et social fluide et organisé, possédant une forme et une dynamique d'espaces et de temps qui lui est propre? Il faut apprendre à faire avec cette entité mouvante, mobile qu'est le paysage, avec ce qu'il contient, ce qu'il propose, ce qu'il refuse, ce qu'il empêche ou au contraire autorise. L'art du paysage, ou plutôt de l'agir *avec* le paysage, ce sera [...] apprendre d'abord à l'écouter, à le lire, à l'observer longuement, peut-être dans ses espaces et ses rythmes particuliers pour l'aider en quelque sorte [...] à devenir ce paysage que lui seul peut être et devenir. [...] Agir *avec* [...] pour que quelque chose qui est déjà là, arrive. Agir *avec* ce n'est pas tout faire, ce n'est pas tout produire ni fabriquer. Le but n'est pas de fabriquer tout le paysage, de le dessiner complètement d'avance, de planifier ses mouvements, ses formes et contenus [...]. Il faut agir certes, de telle sorte que le paysage se fasse et se transforme, sans qu'il soit pourtant possible de déterminer à l'avance ce qu'il va exactement devenir. (Besse 2018, 43-44)

The distinction introduced by Jean-Marc Besse between acting 'on' and acting 'with' the landscape does not refer to the distinction between two different ways of relating to the landscape, but to two different actions related to two different entities. When Besse claims that the activity of the gardener has to do with «quelque chose qui existait déjà avant l'action paysagère, un 'déjà là' qui vit et se déploie de lui-même et pour lui-même, et avec lequel les paysagistes [...] doivent composer» (Besse 2018, 43), it seems possible to conclude that the dynamic and relational nature of the landscape prevents it from being perceived as an entity that can be acted upon; in fact, one cannot perceive the landscape without being directly involved in its ever-changing transformation. If,

therefore, perceiving the landscape means already participating in a transformation that has already taken place, it is not possible to conceive of the actions performed within the landscape as an act that 'produces' the landscape, that is, creates it *ex nihilo*.

On the contrary, what can be produced in this way is territory, the set of signs that visibly refer to a «volonté d'appropriation material et symbolique» (Besse 2018, 18) of the possession of a land, and from which the landscape constitutively escapes. Although these marks and these signs are part of the landscape, the latter is irreducible to its sum, since it is endowed with a «puissance formative propre» (Besse 2018, 27) that invites to go 'beyond' the territory, involving in an

expérience dans laquelle l'espace et le territoire acquièrent de nouvelles qualités, ou renforcent leurs qualités déjà présentes et effectives. L'expérience paysagère transfigures l'espace et le territoire en révérant en eux les puissances affectives et signifiantes qu'ils contiennent [...]. Le paysage doit être compris comme un espace et un temps de transformations, de déplacements et de débordements qui en font une entité instable, dynamique et évolutive. (Besse 2018, 35)

Landscape is thus a phenomenon of the emergence of a state of continuous transformation of the actual state of things, an entity whose constitutive instability is the condition of the possibility of its own existence. The displacements and overflows that characterise it are, in fact, emblematic of its propulsive drive to transcend the actual configuration of things, a movement that essentially expresses its emergent character. Indeed, according to a certain meaning of the concept of emergence, the latter appears to be dominated by a movement of «'protruding', of 'rising to the surface', and thus of 'coming to light'» (Bertinetto 2022, 39) of something new. As we shall see, this 'new' is the landscape itself, where the new configuration of things is not the result of a new combination of pre-existing elements, but of the call for the emergence of 'new forms and forces'. For Besse, this is the essence of acting 'with' the landscape, emblematically represented by the activity of the landscape designer:

Le paysagiste crée des dispositifs [qui] ont un double pouvoir: celui de retenir et de rassembler les forces présentes éparses dans le paysage, d'une part, et celui, d'autre part, de provoquer l'émergence de formes et de forces nouvelles. En cela ils sont

comme des opérateurs décisifs pour la révélation et la transformation des paysages. (Besse 2018, 45)

The difference between acting on the landscape and acting with the landscape seems obvious: far from imposing new forms and forces on it, the landscape designer can only 'provoke' their emergence, i.e. create the conditions of possibility that – without determining them and therefore without the certainty of success – encourage the emergence of something new. What we will try to show is that the contemporary dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin's approach to dance – is a clear example of how artistic practice depends precisely on this 'second power' of 'acting with' the landscape. The idea, in fact, is that artistic creativity makes the preservation of the forces present in the landscape happen through the reactivation of their generative, 'emergent' potentiality, i.e. their ability to relate to each other in a way that promotes the emergence of unexplored – ways of 'being in relation' (Matteucci 2019, 88). This only happens when the artist adopts the same attitude as the landscape designer: he does not impose, he does not control, he does not dominate the landscape. He is with it and in it, participating in its transformation by giving relevance to the connection between some of its 'forces', so that a kind of network is created, and with it a new force field capable of renewing itself through the emergence of new possibilities discovered in the creative-transformative process itself. The experience itself of the landscape leads to assume this attitude that allows artistic creativity to unfold. The elusive ontological status of landscape, in fact, provides it with an incredible power: the power of something ungraspable from whose grasp one cannot escape.

Le paysage est le résultat toujours changeant des métamorphoses qui le traversent. A ces relations et ces échanges, à ces métamorphoses, les humains participent [...] comme sujets affectés, touchés, mis en mouvement au contact du monde [...] Les humains perçoivent, imaginent, transforment le paysage et ils le projettent. Toutefois, ils n'en sont pas nécessairement le centre fondateur et constitutif. Ils 'en sont', ils sont avec et dans le paysage, comme un de ses foyers métamorphique, comme des acteurs transigeant avec d'autres acteurs, en connexion avec de multiples autres puissances d'agir, habitant un théâtre déjà animé et dont ils ne sont pas les auteurs. (Besse 2018, 34-36)

Caught up in a transformative process that precedes him, the human subject turns out to be one of many entities that are both transforming and being transformed. At the very moment when he discovers the transformative power that the other entities exert on him, he ceases to perceive a territory on which to act and begins to experience a landscape with which he can only 'act', that is, participate in its own unfolding, which is always given.

2. Landscape as 'atmosphere'

The distinction between these two activities is therefore based on the fact that, unlike territory, landscape is not a «spectacular object posé face au sujet» but «l'expérience d'une traversée [...] qui agit en quelque sorte le corps et le met dans un certain état [...] voire une certaine humeur, une certaine disposition affective vis-à-vis du monde environnant» (Besse 2018, 43-44). The experience of the landscape changes the terms of the subject's relationship with his environment, because it profoundly modifies his attitude towards it: he is not only a subject of action, but rather a subject 'to' the action of his environment:

Le paysage, phénoménologiquement parlant, est plutôt comme une zone aux bords flous [...] il nous traverse, il nous emplit, il s'installe en nous, nous touche, nous pousse, bref c'est une expérience que nous faisons, et qui nous affecte [...]. Il est une réalité qui n'est pas celle d'un objet tel que nous l'entendons et le rencontrons habituellement, mais dont nous sentons la présence et la puissance, par les effets émotionnels qu'elle provoquent en nous. Le paysage serait la réalité de cette inobjectivité qui nous touche et nous affecte. Nous sentons cette réalité 'non objectale', nous y participons à notre manière [...]. La philosophie contemporaine nomme [...] atmosphère cette articulation entre un sentir non subjectif et une réalité non objectuale. Ces mots nous permettent de caractériser [...] le paysage comme sentiment spatial. (Besse 2018, 30)

It is precisely this 'affective', 'atmospherological' perspective that informs our reflection, the aim of which is to provide an example of dance's capacity to 'act with' the landscape. This perspective is that rooted in the New Phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz, an approach developed with the intention of restoring access to the spontaneous dimension of life experience. According to Schmitz, this access has been denied since Democritus, thanks to a series of 'reductions': the body has been reduced to its anatomical dimension, affective states to internal states projected outwards,

and the outside world to an objective, controllable entity composed of quantifiable and measurable elements. This approach – which is an expression of the ‘reductionist-introjectivist psychologist paradigm’ that characterises Western thought – is challenged by Schmitz through: the notion of the ‘felt body’, i.e. «what we feel in the vicinity (not always within the limits) of our physical body» (Schmitz 2019a, 65), the identification of affective states with atmospheres, i.e., ‘semi-physical’ entities that are poured into the ‘felt’ spaces and impose themselves on the subject in an authoritative way, and the valorisation of the felt dimension of reality thanks to notions such as motor suggestions, synaesthetic signs and felt communications (which are the ways in which atmospheres manifest themselves).

For the purposes of our analysis, it will be particularly useful to return to the interpretation and further characterisation of Schmitz’s notion of atmosphere provided by Tonino Griffero’s atmospherological approach (Cf. Griffero 2014a, 2017)¹. One of the aspects that makes the latter relevant to our investigation is that it is based on a ‘pathic aesthetics’, i.e. an aesthetics that focuses on the way we, as ‘pathic’ subjects, i.e. subjects not of action but of the action of ‘what happens to us’, feel in space. Moreover, Griffero provides an account of landscape that allows us to better characterise Besse’s description of the ‘atmospheric’ dimension of landscape and the way in which this experience is articulated in dance’s way of ‘acting with’ the landscape. According to this account, landscape is an atmosphere, i.e. a «sentimental tonality, effused in a certain area of the

¹ The difference between Schmitz’s and Griffero’s understanding of atmosphere resides in the fact that, while for Schmitz, atmospheres exist only as objective entities that affect us without ever being generated by us, according to Griffero (like for Böhme) we have the ability of generating atmosphere. Moreover, Griffero provides a detailed classification of atmosphere, which we will briefly summarize: there are ‘prototypical’ atmospheres (the only atmospheres that exist for Schmitz), i.e., those suggested by the ‘first impression’ experienced when entering a space. They are objective, unintentional, and external, and they change over time. Then, there are ‘spurious’ atmospheres, i.e., subjective atmospheres generated and projected by the percipient in the space as reaction to the ‘prototypical’ ones. Finally, there are ‘derivative’ atmospheres, i.e., external atmospheres produced through the interaction between individuals and between the individual and objects (cf. Griffero 2019, 95).

pericorporeal space (a non-geometrical but felt-bodily and pre-dimensional space)» (Griffero 2014a, 11). Therefore,

there is a certain landscape where (and to what extent) that particular atmosphere is perceptible. Which is undoubtedly a sensible form that is exhausted in its own appearance and which must [...] be investigated [...] without deluding ourselves that its affective quality can be arbitrarily transformed by our prior affective state. (Griffero 2014b, 21-22)

On the assumption that, for the purposes of our analysis, we only want to highlight those aspects of both atmospherology and the approach to landscape outlined by Griffero that are crucial, we will focus on the following aspect of landscape in this account: 1) the latter is linked to a 'felt and pre-dimensional' space, i.e, the space of the felt body – but also of sound, weather – which, since it does not coincide with the Euclidean notion of space as it is formulated by physics, escapes the logic of efficient causality; 2) the landscape manifests itself through 'ecological affordances', and 3) these affordances externally modify the affective state of the subject, thus resisting any projective intention of affective states.

3. Affordances and creativity

If we read Besse's notion of 'acting with' the landscape through this conception of landscape, the kind of action involved will be neither a pragmatic action nor a projection of affective states. What we want to show, by characterising Anna Halprin's exploratory dance as a way of 'acting with' the landscape, is that the experience of the landscape is compatible with an action that is neither pragmatic nor projective, but also not exclusively contemplative. The kind of action in question is a creative one, understood as the search for ways of using atmospheric possibilities that are overlooked in practical life, and that realise unexplored ways of feeling, moving and being, essentially linked to the specificity of the concrete situation that has been created by the discovery of unprecedented ways of using atmospheric possibilities.

Therefore, before analysing Anna Halprin's approach to dance, it seems necessary to focus on the notion of 'affordance'. This term was coined by the American psychiatrist James Gibson from the verb 'to afford' ('to invite') to describe the possibilities for action

that the perceiving subject grasps in the environment and that vary according to its characteristics. Affordances refer to

both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment [...]. If a terrestrial surface is nearly horizontal (instead of slanted), nearly flat (instead of convex and concave), and sufficiently extended (relative to the size of the animal) and if its substance is rigid (relative to the weight of the animal), then the surface affords support. It is a surface of support [...], it is stand-on-able, permitting an upright posture for quadrupeds and bipeds. It is therefore walk-on-able and run-over-able. It is not sink-into-able like a surface of water or a swamp, that is, not for heavy terrestrial animals. Support for water bugs is different. (Gibson 2015, 119)

The first aspect that needs to be emphasised is the relative nature of these properties; not only are they not the same for every animal, but they also vary according to the animal and the characteristics of the situation. A surfactant that is acceptable to a quadruped might not be perceived as such by a biped or another quadruped. Water acts as a support for bugs, but not for humans – at least not in the same way. This aspect is emphasised by Gibson himself:

Note that the four properties listed – horizontal, flat, extended, and rigid – would be physical properties of a surface if they were measured with the scales and standard units used in physics. As an affordance of support for a species of animal. However, they have to be measured *relative to the animal*. They are unique for that animal [...]. They have unity relative to the posture and behavior of the animal being considered. So an affordance cannot be measured as we measure in physics [...]. Different layouts afford different behaviours for different animals [...]. The different substances of the environment have different affordances for nutrition and manufacture. The different objects of the environment have different affordances for manipulation. The other animals afford, above all, a rich and complex set of interactions, sexual, predatory, nurturing, fighting, playing, cooperating, and communicating. What other persons afford, comprises the whole realm of social significance for human beings. (Gibson 2015, 120)

The irreducibility of affordances to physical properties is emblematic of the fact that they concern the qualitative dimension of perception, that is, the way in which we are affected by what we perceive, namely the way in which what we perceive invites us to

do something. The nature of this invitation, however, is not something that is already present in the environment; on the contrary, it emerges from the encounter between the specific characteristics of the concrete environmental situation and the specific characteristics of the perceiver. This allows us to characterise affordances as the result of a phenomenon of emergence, i.e. a phenomenon of spontaneous generation of possibilities for action from a contingent, unforeseeable interweaving of the state of being of the environment and the state of being of the perceiver. This explains the complementarity between the subject and the environment, which reflects the relationship of cyclical 'mutual codetermination' that informs perception (De Matteis 2019, 62). In this mutual codetermination, it is particularly important to highlight the influence of the perceiver's way of moving, whose movements are the particular response of the individual subject to the invitations – coming from the environment – to move in a certain way, and at the same time the means to discover new possibilities and, through them, new ways of moving.

This is the reason for the link between affordances and creativity, a link that seems to become clearer if we consider the relationship between the perceiver and the environment as an 'encounter' rather than an 'interaction'. The latter, as Anne Boissière has pointed out, is a term originally associated with the idea of the transmission and reception of information. The notion of interaction thus subjects the relationship between the perceiver and the environment to a linear causal logic, in which a given sensory stimulus corresponds to a given response in a way that lends itself to being codified and normalised in a 'system of rules'. According to this understanding of our relationship with the worlds, the only creativity allowed would be that provided by a 'combinatorial logic', i.e. «the art of creating new combinations from pre-existing elements» (Boissière 2023, 61). On the contrary, by characterising the relationship with the world as a form of 'encounter', we open up the possibility of a creative action understood as a «practice of exploration that articulates itself in the contingency of the 'experience with'» the world (Bertinetto 2021, 163).

This perspective benefits from Griffero's characterisation of affordances as 'invitations to feel' rather than 'invitations to act'. Atmospheres are, in fact, themselves a set of atmospheric

affordances: «Irreducible to occasional subjective vibrations, atmospheric feelings may within certain limits be traced back to a more or less homogeneous set of affordances understood as an atmosphere generator Böhme) and thus be recognizable and linguistically expressible. By using the power of their affordance, atmospheres tonalize the affective space in which we (literally) enter and segment it through boundaries that are not geometrical but emotional» (Griffero 2022, 86-87).

Rather than inviting to a practical acting, atmospheric affordances invite to feel in a certain way, acting through 'motor suggestions' and 'synaesthetic characters', by Schmitz identified with the 'felt-bodily directions' that animate the 'felt-bodily directional space', i.e., the predimensional, non-geometrical space that underlies and grounds the physical one (the system of relative *loci* we use to orientate in practical life). Motor suggestions and synaesthetic qualities are, specifically:

bridging qualities that can be noticed in one's own felt body but also be perceived in encounters with others, whether at rest or in motion. These are suggestions of movement – vivid sketches of motion without being fully enacted – and synaesthetic qualities that are mostly intermodal properties of specific sensory qualities, but can, in the case of expansive, dense or pressing silence, also occur without any sensory quality. Synaesthetic qualities that do not require synesthesia are, for example, the sharpness, luridness, softness, flashiness, brightness, hardness, warmth, coldness, gravity, massiveness, density, smoothness, roughness of colours, sounds, smells, sound and silence, of a springy or sluggish gait, of joy, of enthusiasm, melancholy, freshness and tiredness; this list suggests how much overlap what is felt bodily and what is perceived objectively. (Schmitz 2019a, 68)

The way through which the context we are affects our way of feeling is precisely through the 'atmospheric resonance' provoked by motor suggestions and synaesthetic qualities whose sensorial perception is mediated by our felt-bodily isles. The latter, i.e., pre-dimensional, 'absolute' areas corresponding to some areas of the physical body (but irreducible to them) configurate in a way related to the peculiar felt-bodily communication that arises between the subject and the animate or inanimate entity he is affected. When a bug stings us, for example, a felt-bodily isles arises correspondingly to the part of the physical body affected; it is an area that cannot be located, measured through references to its position and distance in respect to other parts of the body. An

example of incorporation is that generated when a bulky mass is directed towards us; its motor suggestion is incorporated in our motor scheme and, by magnetically attracting our gaze – which is itself a motor suggestion – we evade it. In this way, a felt-bodily ‘antagonistic one-sided encorporation’ occurs: by provoking in us a contraction, the motor suggestion coming from the mass, triggers in us an expansive response that manifests itself in the physical movement of evading it. Felt-bodily encorporation can also be mutual: when we dance in couple, for example, the dance leverage on the alternance of the pole of contraction from one dancer to the other.

Contraction and expansion are precisely the two tensions that compose the ‘vital drive’ on which is based the ‘felt-bodily dynamic’. The latter is the dialogue that constantly occurs between contractedness or narrowness (*Enge*) and expensiveness (*Weite*). The oscillation between these poles gives rise to our affective states (fear, pain, lust, hunger, thirst, disgust...) which are positioned on a scale from privative contraction and privative expansion, i.e., the condition where contraction and expansion appears, without being intertwined with, respectively, expansion and contraction. Our movements are the expansive response to the contraction felt in correspondence to the affective involvement we experience (being stinged, being menaced by the coming of a bulky mass, but also every sensorial solicitation). As ‘process of movements’ (*Gestaltverläufe*), motor suggestions do not simply solicitate the performance of a single movement, but an entire motor pattern, i.e., a determinate disposition and coordination of our limbs, conferring to our movement specific qualitative characters. It is so that round forms, which triggers in us a sense of expansion, invites us to perform movements whose form is characterised by a gliding momentum (*gleitender Schwung*) (cf. Schmitz 2006), while angular forms elicits a sense of contraction that reflects itself in angular movements (Schmitz 2019b, 44-62; cf. Schmitz 2019c, 36-40). It is therefore through motor suggestions and synaesthetic characters – which are inherent, although not reducible to sensorial qualities – mediates the felt-bodily communication that arises in correspondence to affective involvement. The peculiarity of dance seems to be that, by making the subject receptive to all the motor suggestions and synaesthetic characters present in the concrete situation one finds itself, it makes one feel the atmospheric affordances coming from

their surroundings with a peculiar intensity. It is so that not only they exhibit in an amplified way the expansive, motor response triggered by the sensation of contraction by them provoked – a response that changes according to each dance genre and technique – but, precisely because their movements follow a specific pattern dictated by a technique or by a peculiar choreographic approach, they show the different ways through which solicitate the – always joint – affective power of atmospheric affordances manifest thus resonating in them and in the audience each time in a different ways. If we identify the landscape with an atmospheric tonality, dance can be conceived as a practice that shows the peculiar atmosphere of a certain landscape by soliciting, through their movement, usually unexplored mutual influences between the atmospheric affordances present and by fully investigating the impact of these influences on their ways of feeling, moving and thus renewing each time their encounter with different operativities of atmospheric affordances.

4. Anna Halprin's 'explorative dance': a way to connect with nature and with oneself

Active from the 1940s until her death in 2021, Anna Halprin's dance is characterised by its experimental character, which breaks with the way dance is conceived, taught and experienced. She has been called a 'pioneer of postmodern dance', but she herself says that this definition does not capture the true nature of her work and that her intention was in fact something 'more fundamental', 'more humanistic', which goes beyond the birth of a new dance genre and goes straight to the roots of dance itself as an anthropological phenomenon, in an attempt to recover an original conception of dance as a tool that a community needs to solve its problems. The idea is that dance can provide the answer to individual problems (including physical well-being, which is a whole chapter of Halprin's dance that I will have to leave out today) and collective (socio-political) problems: the aim is to create through dance a community that is able to 'heal itself' by sharing in the creative process.

Dance movement is not to be used in a stylised way according to the style of a 'leading choreographer' as in modern dance, but in a direct way: «Dance is the key, and what connects all three levels of consciousness reveals 'feelings, emotions and images long

buried in our bodies'» (Halprin, in Worth-Poynor 2012, 61). The technique offered is concerned with teaching anatomical principles and developing the ability to isolate the basic components of dance (space, time, force, gravity, inertia, momentum and rhythm) and move through each of these movements to determine the quality of the movement.

This technique provides the tools to develop 'one's own style of movement'; the way in which the physical, emotional, and imaginative levels combine in each individual. The emotions and images that emerge from this process are transformed into artistic material and thus creatively and collectively resolved, resulting in an alternative experience, a way of experiencing individual and social problems from a different perspective. The recovery of this function of dance is inseparable from the recovery of a more direct and authentic relationship with nature, which urban lifestyles and technology have caused to be perceived no longer as a living entity, but as an 'inanimate object' to be 'exploited and controlled'. Dance should neither imitate nor represent nature, but participate in its dynamic and processual nature, discovering ever new ways of encountering it and thus achieving new ways of experiencing nature and oneself.

The insertion of spontaneous 'tasks', ordinary movements to be performed often repeatedly, (tasks oriental movements such as carrying branches' trees, falling and getting up for 20 minutes, bending over 25 objects, dancing while holding long bamboo sticks, placing 40 bottles of wine on the ceiling) go in the direction of a dance that allows no distraction from what is happening, from what such activity is provoking. As Anna Halprin says: «An exploration requires you to stay on this particular path, focused on confronting a particular element, for a certain amount of time, and you cannot escape it. You cannot just move in a familiar way» (Worth-Poynor 2012, 193). The task-oriented movements are functional for exploration because they make it possible to focus on a basic component of dance, such as space, which is explored in terms of area, density, levels or directions, leading to a refinement of the kinesthetic sense, which is essential for the discovery of one's own style of movement, the acquisition of which modifies the way one relates to oneself and to the environment: to others and to the place in which one finds oneself.

5. The 'dance deck' as an invitation to acting 'with' the landscape

To understand this better, it is useful to recall the experience behind the creation of such an exploratory dance: the outdoor studio that her husband obstructed when they moved to a house in Kentfield, California, in the late 1950s (designed in collaboration with lighting designer Arthur Lauterer). Built in the middle of the woods, the house (which includes an indoor hall) is connected to a hall (Gate One) that links the house to the studio. It consists of an irregular geometric structure that does not refer to a geometric form, namely the 'cubic space', through which the traditional studio reproduces the theatrical 'stage box'. There is no stage, there are no 'wings'; there is an apparently central platform, but it is not designed as a stage, but for the exploration of wide movements. Lawrence Halprin's description makes it clear that the studio was designed primarily to facilitate particular experiences, ranging from the exploration of particular movements to close contact with the audience (much of Halprin's work is characterised by questioning the distinction between audience and dancer); the staircase, Lawrence points out, can itself function as a stage.

It is precisely this experiential dimension of this 'architectural space' that plays a key role in our reflection on the relationship between dance and landscape: this space plays on the 'dynamic quality' of an architectural work, on its ability to evoke, through the forms and materials that compose it, a sense of movement, the 'motor suggestions' that lead to physical movements. This aspect is made tangible in this open-air studio not only by the irregularity of the forms that compose it, broken lines alternating with wide spaces, but above all by the fact that, being outdoors, it is subject to meteorological, seasonal and hourly variations. By making themselves receptive to the way in which the architectural and natural elements present influence each other, and how this simultaneous conjoint action affects their affective states and thus leads them to move in a corresponding way, the dancers are asked to change, through their movements, the geometry of the forces of tension present in this particular situation, exposing themselves to new modes of action of affordances. The short and angular movements required by the narrow and angular forms of the dance floor can invite the dancer to adopt certain body positions – as bending over, or even squatting or lying down – that can

change the dancer's experience of the motor suggestions and synaesthetic characters present – the warmth of the sunlight, the freshness of the air currents, the massiveness of the trees, the solidity of sound of the wind between their branches – in an unusual way². He may be led to tactically explore the synaesthetic qualities of the dance deck – its hardness, its amplitude, its luminosity – by moving his whole body towards the wider parts of the dance deck, or he may be captured by the movements of the trees and led to extend the shadows of the branches with his elongated body, which from his perspective appears more visible and longer than if he were standing. This is because, as Peter Merriman points out: «The space itself is alive and kinetic. It is variable – it invites one to move with the changing natural environment: the conditions of light, temperature, air currents, seasonal foliage [...] thus challenging one's sense of movement» (Merriman 2010, 433). In this regard, Merriman quotes Anna's comment on such a space: «Space explodes and becomes mobile. Moving within a mobile space, I discovered, is different to moving within a static cube» (Merriman 2010, 433). The process forms that come from the irregular geometrical forms of the dance deck, in fact, have such an affective impact on them that force the dancer to leave the geometric space and to enter the 'felt' space, i.e., to switch from a controlling, dominant, attitude on the space (the territory) to a pathic attitude that makes them available to the encounter with the landscape.

The peculiarity of this encounter between the dancer and the atmospheric affordances resides in the fact the latter never 'cause' certain movements, but rather, by affectively involving the dancer, they felt-bodily resonate in him allowing a felt-bodily incorporation with the entity/ies he is in contact with to emerge. Useful, in this regard, is the notion, introduced by Gernot Böhme, of 'ecstasies of things', i.e., «the way in which a thing steps out of itself and into the surrounding space, where it becomes palpably present» (Böhme 2017, 129). The ecstasy of things coincides not with their material or physical form, but with their «expressive forms [that] radiates into the surroundings [...] takes away the homogeneity of the surroundings space and fills it with tensions

² Our thesis is based on an understanding of architecture that identifies the latter more as a spatial than a 'visual' art, and where the space concerned is a 'felt-bodily' space (cf. De Matteis 2019).

and movement suggestions» (Bohme 2017, 23). It is so that the architectural elements that compose the dance deck, but also the trees, the leaves, and so on, manifest their presence by 'expressing' themselves through the radiation of motor suggestions into space, i.e. expanding into space their affective power and thus their power to 'generate atmosphere'. Far from causing, or determining the appearing of an atmosphere, in fact, they create the conditions of possibility for an atmosphere to emerge through the motor suggestions they emanate. The latter do not cause or determine a certain motor sequence, but they create the condition of possibility for a certain motor dynamic, a disposition and a coordination of the limbs with other bodily parts that allow the dancer to unfold its creative ability, i.e., its ability to emphasise the effect of certain atmospheric affordances upon others and their influence on the motor patterns he performs as if he were discovering themselves each time anew, since every situation in which he performs them affects him in a different way. The felt-bodily incorporation that arise, in fact, although they are marked by the peculiar motor pattern provided by the motor suggestions, are differently declined accordingly to the sensibility – and the formation – of each dancer. His choreographic choices of the dancers would therefore not be the result of an individual decisional process, but a phenomenon of emergence depending on the encounter with the landscape, that is to say, with a specific atmosphere whose affordances are «condensed in a meaningful way»³ (Griffero 2022, 94), in a way that is coherent with the encounter between that peculiar atmosphere and the dancer invested by it.

The sense of disorientation provoked by a living and mobile space endowed with a life of its own is determined by a change in the perception of one's own agency: one is no longer an agent who plans and thus foresees and controls one's actions and their consequences, but one discovers oneself as a pathic subject, subject to the affective action of the environment. Anna Halprin's exploratory dance takes on such a mode of being, an openness to pathically dispose oneself to the affective action in what surrounds us. In fact, insofar as it is intended to have an impact on the life of the individual and the community, it reveals the

³ Gernot Böhme's notion of ecstasy of things is linked precisely to architecture's 'atmospheric power' (cf. Böhme 2017).

repercussions that contact with the environment has at a relational level. According to the way in which the dancer is involved in the environment, in the encounter between, for example, architectural elements and natural elements, the suggestions aroused between the dancers, and thus their communication, change, which reverberates on the audience, acting formatively on the individual and the community in the way they feel, move and relate: an unprecedented way, to be discovered again and again, of 'acting with' the landscape.

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