

Choreographic Architectures: When Dancing Designs the Urban Environment

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This paper aims to draw attention to the relationship between dance and architecture. After a historical and conceptual contextualisation, it sheds light on how the term choreography evolved its meaning along the twentieth century, indicating a dispositif for building a new ecology of the participative performance experience. In these terms, choreographic architectures can be recognised when in real and metaphysic spaces, movement strategies are planned to activate processes through which human dancing engages with the surrounding environment. This phenomenon is studied by comparing William Forsythe's theory of the "choreographic object" with some installations performed in urban environments. Finally, to provide an enlarged vision of how a choreographic strategy can cooperate in building a performative ecology to regenerate the inhabiting contexts with the acting presences of socially empowered citizens, my analysis ends with the description of *Asingeline* and *Garden State*, two emblematic works by MaMaZa, a Frankfurt-based group of artists.

Keywords: choreographic architecture, choreographic object, social empowerment, urban regeneration

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1. Introduction

Over the twentieth century, the theories by Dewey, Merleau-Ponty and Whitehead¹ drew a gradual ideological shift in the research on movement, which was recognised as a privileged site to investigate the relationship of human beings with the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the emerging Existentialist and Phenomenology philosophies slowly led to rediscovering the body as a source for having access to the tacit knowledge² embodied through the experience of being in movement. The enactive approach³ is founded precisely on these arguments by starting from the assumption that self-awareness emerges from a physical experience, thus from how we engage with the surrounding world through actions and perceptions. In Western culture, these concepts inspired scientific and cultural speculations on physical thinking and skills. Such a phenomenon incited intellectuals and interdisciplinary thinkers to research strategies for capturing, materialising, and studying kinaesthetic events. The relationship between dance and architecture finds its roots in this ideological context. Rudolf von Laban was one of the leading intellectuals who theorised the connection between dance and architecture. The founding father of Expressionist dance considered dancing and architecture as human beings' two essential arts from which the others derive. In fact, in the book *Choreutics*,

¹ See, for instance: J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1934, trad. it., Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1951; M. Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia della Percezione*, Bompiani, Milano 2003; A.N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, The Free Press, New York 1968.

² Explicit knowledge is that which is properly documented and formulated. Tacit (on implicit) knowledge is that which is learnt through experience; it is something hard to express and therefore hard to teach, e.g. knowing how to drive in difficult traffic conditions or how to move as a dancer. The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge was originally made by Ikujiro Nonaka, who developed the concept of "knowledge organization" to explain the emergence of quality in Japanese factories. Nonaka's thought became famous thanks to the publication of *The Knowledge Creating Company* (with Hirotaka Takeuchi in 1995). This concept can be used in many circumstances, including the arts.

³ A. Noë, *Action in Perception*, MIT Press, Cambridge-Massachusetts 2004; A. Noë, *Strange Tools. Art and Human Nature*, Hill and Wang, New York 2015.

by explaining his spatial conception of the movement, Laban claimed: «Movement is, so to speak, living architecture – living in the sense of changing emplacements as well as changing cohesion. Architecture is created by human movements and is made up of pathways tracing shapes in space which we may call *trace-forms*»⁴. Laban's movement analysis crucially influenced aesthetic and political concepts of modern and postmodern dance.

Afterwards, the expressive dimension of kinetic and kinaesthetic communication became paramount in artistic research⁵. Such a phenomenon established a critical turning point in performing arts. In the middle of the twentieth century, more than on discursive meanings and verbal conceptualisations, visual arts started sharing with dancing an intense common interest in moving bodies and their relation to space and time⁶. For choreographers, a pragmatological inquiry becomes to figure out how to materialise the physical thinking in analogue or digital objects placed in real or metaphysical spaces. Such a tendency drove the development of hybrid practices where dancing, architecture, and multimedia design cooperate in creating organic performative works. Consequently, «the notion of choreography expanded, and we observed several declinations of “making-choreography” codified according to specific creative technologies applied to meta-represent the experience of being in movement»⁷. Moreover, the impact of the digitisation process on human communication, both in everyday life and in the context of performing arts, stimulated the conception of innovative choreographic strategies. In this respect, we observed the development of expressions such as interactive theatre performances, dance exhibitions within museum spaces, digital architectures, and video-mapping installations in urban environments till the so-called extended reality productions⁸.

The investigations into the kinetic modes of experiencing human movements, and the growing dialogue with speculations from the digital humanities field of study⁹,

⁴ R. von Laban, *Choreutics*, annotated and edited by Lisa Ullmann, Macdonald and Evans, London 1966.

⁵ D. Reynold, M. Reason (eds), *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, Intellect Ltd, Bristol 2011.

⁶ E. Brannigan, H. Mathews, *Performance, Choreography, and the Gallery: Materiality, Attention, Agency, Sensation, and Instability*, in “Performance Paradigm”, 13(2017), pp.1-6.

⁷ L.G. Monda, *Anarchiving a Screendance Archive. Reenacting Choreographic Traces within Museo Madre*, in “Danza e Ricerca”, 12, 31 dicembre 2020, p. 313.

⁸ V. Di Bernardi, L.G. Monda (eds.), *Immaginare la danza. Corpi e visioni nell'era digitale*, Piretti, Bologna, 2018.

⁹ See, for instance: M.B.N. Hansen, *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media*, Routledge, Abingdon 2012; M.B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, MIT, Cambridge 2006.

contributed to shedding light on how the concept of choreography has changed during the last century, opening up crucial questions on «what choreography is or might be»¹⁰. Accordingly, the modernised term choreography is used to mean the making-process of a «relational performance architecture»¹¹ based on the hybridisation of kinaesthetic and mediatic presences¹². In this respect, we observed creators who referred to the concept of *mobile architecture*, which underlined a conception of choreography as an event for the ontogenetic architecting environments in the moving. In these terms, the choreographer and philosopher Erin Manning claimed:

With the concept of mobile architecture, I am suggesting that a choreographic work ‘stands up’ when human movement evolves to include its associated milieu such that the milieu’s ecologies of relation themselves can be felt. This happens when the choreographic begins to shift toward a wider fielding of movement where spacetime itself begins to vibrate with movement expression¹³.

By considering the technologizing of dance performed in the post-digital era¹⁴, a second approach specifically intends with the term “choreo-graphy” the multiple ways of writing/coding/designing the movement by computer graphics. In this term, choreography is meant as the transcodification of the movement qualities into a liquid architecture planned to transmit and translate somatic information throughout digital circuits. As Marcos Novak argued:

If we described liquid architecture as a symphony in space, this description should still fall short of the promise. A symphony, though it varies within its duration, is still a fixed object and can be repeated. At its fullest expression a liquid architecture is more than that. It is a symphony of space, but a symphony that never repeats and continues to develop. If architecture is an extension of our bodies, shelter and actor for the fragile self, a liquid

¹⁰ From a conversation of the author with Dana Caspersen, former performer, and co-creator with The Forsythe Company.

¹¹ J. Birringer, *Dance and Interactivity*, in “Dance Research Journal”, 35(2), 2003, p. 90.

¹² M. Donnarumma, *Across Bodily and Disciplinary Borders: Hybridity as Methodology, Expression, Dynamic*, in “Performance Research”, 25(4), 2020, pp. 36-44.

¹³ E. Manning, *Choreography as Mobile Architecture*, in *Always more Than One: Individuation’s Dance*, 99-123, Duke University Press, Durham 2013.

¹⁴ M. Bleeker (ed.), *Transmission in Motion. The Technologizing of Dance*, Routledge, Abingdon 2017.

architecture is that self in the act of becoming its own changing shelter. Like us, it has an identity; but this identity is only revealed fully during the course of its lifetime¹⁵.

By following the definition by the dramaturge and philosopher Bojana Cvejic, today we can agree that «choreography designates patterns of the complicated, yet the seamless organisation of many heterogeneous elements in motion»¹⁶. With this respect, Laban's metaphor of the movement as living architecture can help us understand a crucial aspect of the speculation related to the dialogue between dance and architecture. It illuminates how a human's attitude towards the world determines the specific spatial-temporal conception of a period, an image that is none other than the graphic projection of this attitude materialized in geometry. Accordingly, just like a building or a house or any different construction, choreography organises, concerning spatial and temporal principles, the rules on which architectures will be designed to embody and express social, cultural, political, and anthropological conceptions of the movement related to a specific timeframe. As the geometry of human experience, choreography shapes human movements in models or bodily scores able to show up in living architectures. A choreographic score¹⁷ is a dispositif able to generate an architecture based on sensory actions that communicate and share modes of perceptibility.

2. Choreographic Architecture

Since its origin in the ritual, dancing was dispositif to build up an architectural framework where the culture of memory – which includes the imagination of a community – could show up¹⁸. As Kirsten Maar wrote: «The myth of Ariadne can be seen as a constitutive narrative of the origins of choreography: Ariadne's thread helps Theseus get out of the Labyrinth build by the famous architect Daedalus. After his liberation, a ritual is performed to thank the gods – a dance that re-enacts the spatial patterns of the Labyrinth»¹⁹. In these terms, I would argue how dancing has always been a performing

¹⁵ M. Novack, *Liquid Architectures in Cyberspace*, in M. Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, MIT Press, Massachusetts 1991, p. 284.

¹⁶ B. Cvejić, A. Vujanovic (eds.), *Public Sphere by Performance*, b_books, Berlin 2013, p. 72.

¹⁷ See L.G. Monda, *Choreographic Bodies. L'esperienza della Motion Bank nel progetto multidisciplinare di Forsythe*, Dino Audino, Roma 2016.

¹⁸ See also L. Schwarte, *Philosophie der Architektur*, Fink, Munich 2009.

¹⁹ K. Maar, *Exhibiting Choreography*, in AA.VV. (eds.), *Assigne and Arrange. Methodologies of Presentation in Art and Dance*, Sternberg Press, Berlin 2014, p. 105.

art to enable the participatory assembly experience of a community, thus an event to be performed and shared with other people and not merely watched on a theatre stage²⁰. Furthermore, dancing is an art form that requests a potential space where our ability to comprehend ourselves throughout the movement experience could be manifested. Therefore, if understanding space is the act of moving, architecture design is an act of choreographing the human body through spatial constructs. In these terms, «choreography serves as channel for the desire to dance»²¹. As the architect Daniel Libeskind claimed: «this space of non-equilibrium – from which freedom eternally departs and towards which it moves without homecoming – constitutes a place in which architecture comes upon itself as beginning at the end»²².

After being ignored for so long, such an intimate relationship between dance and architecture has acquired new relevance nowadays to explain a phenomenon that since the Fifties saw the migration²³ of performing arts from theatre to alternative sites, such as museums, urban environments, factories, or institutional buildings. As a result, creators have conceived innovative choreographic procedures to increase the audience's participation in dance exhibitions performed in public spaces, promote social empowerment, and sustain a new ecology of experience²⁴. Choreographers and artists - like Yvonne Rainer, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, but also Jan Fabre, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Ruth Gibson and Bruno Martelli, and many others – identified in the exhibition the appropriate context in which to apply choreographic strategies conceived to re-establish in the audience the sense of community and the social identity²⁵. In this framework, happenings, events, and urban installations

²⁰ See also S. Sinisi, *Storia della danza occidentale. Dai greci a Pina Bausch*, Carocci, Roma 2005.

²¹ L. Neri, E. Respini (eds.), *William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects*, Del Monico Books, Boston 2018.

²² D. Libeskind, *Architecture Intermundium*, in "Threshold", vol. IV, Spring 1988.

²³ The term "migrations" is used in this paragraph to propose a parallelism in order to make visible how the increasing presence of dance and choreographic exhibitions within alternative space such as museums, urban environment, etc. happened as the direct consequence of the digitization processes that affected global communication strategies. As long as the human presence migrated from the organic bodies to the virtual personifications (objects), the choreographic thinking migrated from the (dancing) physical body to multimodal choreographic objects. In this respect see also: C. Bishop, *Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention*, in "The Drama Review", 62(2) (T238) Summer 2018, pp. 22-42.

²⁴ E. Manning, B. Massumi, *Thought in the Act. Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, Minnesota, Minneapolis, London 2014.

²⁵ L.G. Monda, *Luci ed ombre sull'uso del digitale nella danza. Dal Festival Più che Danza! una riflessione sulle reti sociali e le app per condividere i processi creativi coreografici*, in "SigMa Rivista di Letterature comparate, Teatro e Arti dello Spettacolo", vol. 3, 2019, pp. 959-981.

underlined how the central role of the visitor is experiencing physically and interfacing kinaesthetically with choreographic architectures. In this direction, for example, the Swiss choreographer Nicole Seiler developed the performance *Willis*²⁶, an installation in some urban forest to explore the choreographic architecture from the dialogue between digital technologies and the natural environment²⁷. On the other hand, the New Zealander choreographer Daniel Belton delved into the re-enactment²⁸ of existing architectures in city spaces by virtual reality (VR), full dome 360° cinema, video-mapping, motion capture and other technologies applied to design dance interfaces to project on building facades²⁹. Therefore, by adopting different approaches, such works can serve as examples to point out a penchant for implementing choreography to synthesise somatic narratives with several urban scenes in moving images.

Natural environments, urban spots, or building facades can take on the function of potential spaces where to play a polyphony made by kinaesthetic phenomena. In this context, contemporary choreographers design “behavioural objects”³⁰ – time-based sculptures or digital languages of light dancing code – that work as algorithms or diagnostic equations for the spectators, pushing them to wonder: «how am I in the world as a body?»³¹.

3. Dancing Designs the Urban Environment

In the speculation about the dialogue between dance and architecture, one of the main contributions was by the choreographer William Forsythe. In the essay *Choreographic Objects*, he wrote:

²⁶ See the video of *Willis* by Nicole Seiler at the following link: <https://vimeo.com/110465913>.

²⁷ The audience gathers in a clearing nearby Lausanne city centre at twilight. Here, two composers, a light designer and a video-maker expert in 3D animation, are creating the choreographic environment. A ballet of physical, corporal shadows comes to life, evolving into the projection of a minimal video which, through the use of specific video techniques and Motion Capture, slowly reveals the different natural forms created by the trees and the secret inhabitants of the forest. See L.G. Monda, *Immaginando la danza*, in V. Di Bernardi e L.G. Monda, *Immaginare la danza*, cit., p. 17.

²⁸ On the concept of reenactment in the field of performing arts, see C. Baldacci, S. Franco (eds), *On Reenactment: Concept, Methodologies, Tools*, Academia University Press, Torino 2022.

²⁹ D. Belton, *Choreographing the Screen*, in V. Di Bernardi, L.G. Monda (eds.), *Immaginare la danza*, cit., pp. 159-168.

³⁰ The concept of *behavioral object* in the field of visual and performing arts has been theorized by Emanuel Quinz. See E. Quinz, *Contro l'oggetto. Conversazioni sul design*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2020.

³¹ Forsythe in conversation with Neri-Respini, cit. p. 32.

Choreographic objects are examples of specific physical circumstances that isolate fundamental motion activation and organization classes. The objects instigate processes in the body that instrumentalise the body's readiness to provide input for our heuristically driven, predictive faculties, which work incessantly to secure for us a higher probability of preferred physical and mental outcomes. A principal feature of the choreographic object is that the preferred outcome is a form of knowledge production for whoever engages with it, engendering an acute awareness of the self within specific action schemata³².

Crucial in Forsythe's investigation into choreography has been collaborating with the Deconstructivist architect Daniel Libeskind, who invited him to participate in the project *The Book of Groningen* in the Netherlands in 1990.

Daniel Libeskind's plan for the city markings of Groningen is an adventurous approach to the theme of non-existent reality. In it, he subsumes the past, the present and the future of the city of Groningen. «The Books of Groningen» refer to the cultural, social, political and economic process that the city has undergone since its origins and which is continued in the inhabitants' lives. «The Books» comprise a text, according to Libeskind "the historical text, read and written by the citizens of the once and yet-to-be City, permanently remarking the boundaries of Groningen in time and space³³.

During this experience, Forsythe recognised how «choreography is about organizing bodies in space, or you're organizing bodies with other bodies, or a body with other bodies in an environment that is organized»³⁴. Afterwards, long 40 years of his career as a choreographer, he experimented with producing several types of choreographic objects, from performative architecture to choreographic installations, from pedagogical digital devices to dance for camera and virtual choreographic objects. He explored paradigmatic strategies to engage «the public with the choreographic, and often political, question of how the body moves and how bodies in space are organized»³⁵. Furthermore, his aim was also to stimulate people to pay attention to the surrounding environment. In performing a

³² William Forsythe's essay *Choreographic Objects* was published in 2008 in the book *William Forsythe. Suspense*. Afterwards, Forsythe edited the essay following the evolution of his choreography practice. The last version appeared in L. Neri, E. Respini (eds.), *William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects*, Del Monico Books, Boston 2018. The mentioned book was published on the occasion of the exhibition "William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects" held at The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston in Boston in 2018.

³³ W. Forsythe website 2022:

https://www.williamforsythe.com/installations.html?&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=36.

³⁴ S. Spier, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography it Starts from Any Point*, Routledge, Abingdon 2011, p. 142.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

choreographic object, participants are put in the condition to rediscover their pure feelings and body awareness. A choreographed environment might be a floor planned to make users split upside down their balance perspective and lead unconventional walking motion. By doing that, a subject can once again acquire the feeling of standing up as a way of being present, as a condition for sharing the empowerment resulting from that experience³⁶.

Accordingly, an emblematic installation is *City of Abstract*, created by William Forsythe in 2000 and has since been performed in numerous cities and several urban environments. By studying this installation performativity, it is interesting to notice how people move in and occupy urban and public spaces. *City of Abstract* is a way of setting bodies in motion in a choreographic environment. It consists of a videowall able to alter the reflected images of the passers-by. A camera records the audience moving unawares. Computer software processes these images by an algorithm programmed to play them on the videowall with a slight time delay. Participants are also invited to interact with sequences of ectoplasmic forms of their bodies projected into the videowall³⁷.

As Forsythe claimed: «I feel the project of a democratic dance is perhaps almost impossible to achieve within a theatre. It seems that only by ambushing amateurs can you arrive at a truly democratic way of organizing dance»³⁸. What is crucial in *City of Abstract* is the role of the mobilised spectator; they «are not conceived as “disembodied eye” anymore but as performatively framed subject whose corporeal presence becomes central»³⁹. The citizen's movement composes the screen's content, while the videowall becomes part of the city as an element of its architecture. In this way, the choreographic object plays like a dispositif to perform a democratic dance materialised as a living architecture within the urban environment.

In this discourse, another relevant Forsythe creation is *Aviation*⁴⁰. Performed at Theatreplaz in Basel in 2013, it consisted of a device installed within trees to enable some branches to shake in accordance with the movement of the people walking or sitting around. The choreographic strategy designed provides an exhibition to exhort the

³⁶ See for instance the work *White Bouncy Castle* by Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe.

³⁷ See the video of *City of Abstract* by William Forsythe at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4jGBtSpOlc>.

³⁸ G. Siegmund, *The Space of Memory: The Ballets*, in S. Spier, *William Forsythe*, cit. p. 73.

³⁹ C. Teckert, *The Mobilized Spectator*, in AA. VV., *Assign & Arrange*, cit., p. 122.

⁴⁰ See the video of *Aviation* at the following link: <https://youtu.be/0HoZOOXP1YI>.

pedestrians to pay attention to the trees as living beings which can communicate by sharing vibes.

The trees' movements thus serve as the project's basis and its content as viewers self-reflectively engage with the resulting choreography. Their hearing and sight follow the movements taking place on the square, where nature is "staged" and "intensified" in a highly nuanced manner. The swaying branches and rustling leaves also have an effect on the local bird population – as the work's title suggests⁴¹.

By interacting with the dispositif, many people felt the need to hug the trees and play with them. The choreographic object triggers an ongoing interaction process among environment, architecture, and body presences through which people could share common values. The works mentioned above show how a "simple" choreographic object can cooperate in building a performative ecology by using elements, entities, and constructions that already exist and inhabit the city structure and, in its nature⁴².

4. MaMaZa Enacted Thought

Originally founded by three former performers and collaborators with The Forsythe Company - Fabrice Mazliah⁴³, Ioannis Mandafounis and May Zarhy - the Frankfurt-based artist group MaMaZa worked on the direction of the above-mentioned performative architectures. The company designed and performed two relevant choreographic strategies to sustain the regeneration of urban environments, such as *Asingeline* and *Garden State*. With the purpose of providing an ongoing participatory collective experience, such site-specific events establish a form of "communing"⁴⁴. They are based on the direct involvement of the city where they are performed. Their inhabitants are the performers who, by participating in the events, reconnect themselves with the environment and re-enact the performativity of the city's architectural framework.

⁴¹ See *Aviation*, in William Forsythe website: https://www.williamforsythe.com/installations.html?&no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=53.

⁴² With this regard see N. Stewart, G. Giannachi, *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*, Peter Lang, Berne 2005.

⁴³ Since 2022, the organization turn in *Work of Act*, a new structure directed by Fabrice Mazliah, where he explores and develops choreographic practices in dialogue with a network of creators of various disciplines.

⁴⁴ P. Chatterton, *Seeking the Urban Common: Furthering the Debate on Spatial Justice*, in "City", 14(6), 2010, pp. 625-628.

*Asingeline*⁴⁵ was developed in September 2011 to engage people to reflect on how a line, especially a red one - usually perceived as highly charged politically, as well as a symbol for dividing and separating - can change its action. In this direction, *Asingeline* was designed by the creators to connect, almost literally, the public with its art and culture. About such a work, MaMaZa claimed: «It is a straight line drawn from one point which is the city centre all the way to a second point which is a cultural centre building: a theatre, a museum or other»⁴⁶. The line is meant and performed in essence, not as a performance or an installation. It works as Ariadne's thread described above. It is an enacted thought, a thought put into action as a strategy to drive MaMaZa, and the local team who collaborates with them on the project, to cross the city through its public spaces – squares, streets, parks – and its private ones – domestic houses, shops, restaurants - to accomplish the drawing line. Establishing the choreographic object leads the creator to be involved in a constant line of communication and negotiation with the local inhabitants (shop owners, landlords and so forth) to enter their spaces, put the red line on the floor, and then take it off. Such enacted thought interconnects the private to the public sphere, transforming the public space into a “common” area⁴⁷. In this way, the citizens are involved in the action from the very beginning of its realisation, becoming part of the ecology performative experience. Accordingly, the choreographic strategy focused on a “technique of relation”⁴⁸ to catalyse the community and implant opportunities for its creative participation.

As MaMaZa pointed out:

The line doesn't remain there. It is ephemeral in character; it keeps on disappearing. Nevertheless, its presence is felt through the necessity of having to draw it throughout the city and the memory and thoughts it leaves in people's mind. *Asingeline* is about following a direction, heading towards a common aim and collaboratively joining forces to accomplish it. Its straightness is complex, although its apparent result should be a totally straight direct

⁴⁵ After the first realization of *Asingeline* in Antwerp (Belgium) on 2011, MaMaZa has been invited by the Goethe Institute to perform the project in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Johannesburg (South Africa), and Lagos (Nigeria). See the documentary film at the following link: <https://vimeo.com/140568771>.

⁴⁶ *Asingeline* description in MaMaZa website, http://mamaza.net/mamaza_installation_asingeline.html

⁴⁷ K. Gurney, *The Art of Public Space. Curating and Re-imagining the Ephemeral City*, Pelgrave McMillan, London 2015.

⁴⁸ E. Manning, B. Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, cit. p. 92.

line, it forces the creative team to go through walls, fences, obstacles, discussions and interactions of all different kinds⁴⁹.

These pieces of evidence help me to sustain the following argumentation. Thus, choreographic architectures can be recognized when movement strategies are planned to activate processes through which human dancing engages with the surrounding environment. I am talking about human dancing and not just about movement because the design of the space based on a choreographic strategy directs the patterns of movement of the people involved in the performative architecture. This means the visitors/citizens' movement is not governed by movement tendencies or automatism. Still, the designed environment plays like a dispositive to push the subject to rediscover her physical skills in a space governed by precise rules. Taking for granted the case of *Asingeline*, often those strategies consist in developing and setting in a precise spot a choreographic object as a dispositif able to redirect the audience's movement patterns, scoring living architectures. Like slides designed on choreographic strategies, these objects can shift the public perception of the surrounding space, drawing people to engage with it by movement, and so by paying attention to details such as in the urban environment can be historical, political, cultural, and ecological memories embodied in a city structure.

In this way, choreographic architectures stimulate the visitor to rediscover the relationship with the public space, reconsidering through movement the importance of their presence and role in that environment, increasing, as a direct consequence, social empowerment. Furthermore, by acknowledging how an architectural construction can influence the movement path, a subject becomes aware of how their physical activity can impact the environment, which nowadays seems crucial due to the climate change emergency we are globally responsible for.

The second work, *Garden State*, is inspired by the story of Libertalia, a possibly fictional anarchist colony founded in the late seventeen century in Madagascar in which pirates freed slave ships and lived communally in an exotic peaceful environment. The site-specific action was firstly presented at the theatre of Frankfurt am Main,

⁴⁹ Asingeline description in MaMaZa website, cit.

Künstler*innenhaus Mousonturm, in January 2014⁵⁰. The work was then performed to Buenos Aires. Subsequently, it was reconceived as an art installation in the frame of "Performing Architecture" at the German Pavilion of Venice Biennale in 2014. In this choreographic architecture, the main protagonists are plants – of every species, size and shape – from Venetian homes and private gardens, personally collected door by door by the artists in the upcoming days of the opening, and then re-composed as a mobile island on the stage of the theatre Fondamenta Nuove. The theatre thus became a meeting place between plants and people, a malleable space, subject to constant changes and exchanges, ready to be adapted to accommodate the various daily activities planned to take place within – yoga lessons, talks, afternoon snacks, concerts, performance - and free to be lived and inhabited. *Garden State* connects natural and artificial, public and private, inside and outside spaces, and puts the viewer's experience at the centre of attention. Indeed, the garden becomes the setting for a social choreography, in which the inhabitants come and go and participate in the events that take place during the day. In addition, MaMaZa designed a sonic environment⁵¹, creating auditory visions within the garden⁵².

Throughout this choreographic strategy, the perception of exhibit space changes radically since it invites people to stay, chat and listen. This action was planned to emphasize the sensation of a wide open and forever transforming landscape. Visitors come into direct contact with the space, shaping and changing it, thus becoming an essential element of this mobile architecture and its creation.

5. Ending Thoughts

By studying the dialogue between dance and architecture, we can discover new ways to design the surrounding environment. The materialisation of our physical thinking in living architectures can regenerate the inhabiting contexts with the acting presences of socially empowered citizens. Moreover, choreographic objects can trigger an ongoing

⁵⁰ The work was recreated at the theatre Mousonturm in Frankfurt, in collaboration with the Städelschule's Architecture class SAC in 2014. For this botanical general assembly, MaMaZa has created a unique choreographic biotope together with students of the Städelschule architecture class. Permanent rearrangement, mutating light and sound conditions, and mood-raising events throughout the entire day transformed the Mousonturm stage into a gathering place for plants and people, a mobile architecture to be commonly inhabited.

⁵¹ The sound design was created by Johannes Helberger (kling klang klong).

⁵² It is a 14-hour-long composition for 32 speakers consisting mainly of original sounds collected during travels through South America, Southeast Asia, Europe and Africa.

choreographic-making process. This allows resulting architectures to embody eternal values related to languages, history, communication, and other media, such as cinematic technologies, music, and digital devices. In these terms, choreographic architectures can be channelled through which the experience of our memory and cultural heritage opens *suspense* - or rather an outstanding dimension in time and space - where a subject can wonder about crucial questions on life itself.

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Figure 1: MaMaZa, *Asingeline*, 24-26 August 2013, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. © MaMaZa



Figure 2: MaMaZa, *Asingeline*, 20-24 October 2014, 14th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice, Italy. © MaMaZa



Figure 3: MaMaZa, *Garden State*, Teatro Fondamenta Nuova, 30 October-2 november 2014, 14th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice, Italy. © MaMaZa



Figure 4: MaMaZa, *Garden State*, 9-12 January 2014, Kunstlerhaus Mousonturm , Frankfurt, Germany. © MaMaZa