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## **ESPAÇO | corpo | Movimento**

O corpo enquanto gerador de espaço

**(EXTENDED ABSTRACT)**

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# Extended Abstract

## 1\_ Introduction

The present dissertation deals with the generation of spaces through the body. This is understood as the creator of spaces, as the user of the existing space and as an element of perception of used and created spaces.

The key areas are the space, as a varying in architecture; the body, as the medium, extension, end and beginning of space; and movement as a constant inherent in the body and in what the non-spontaneous movement, everyday, can generate dance and what this impacts on notions of space.

As initial premises was assumed that architecture and dance have the same method and that space is perception. Architecture and dance have a context, in architecture it will consist in a physical condition, as for dance besides this condition can be also a representation (of a space, idea or sound). This factor, in both disciplines, results in a movement, whether is the line on the paper, or the body in space, it is this movement that creates a space perceived and perceivable. In making this assessment it can be understood the quality of space existence. Therefore, the reason why we can comprehend the space as generated by the body, ephemeral, temporary, in the same way space is created in architecture, physical, tangible, is because this is imagery, i.e., the space exists for it is perceived. Until then there is no way to prove its existence.

The body is the link of all these assumptions and disciplines. It is the element for which spaces are created, from which they are created and that usufructs and perceives the space itself. Body acts as an element that has a presence, a physical existence, and that contributes to the occupation of space and the creation of spaces formed within the tensions between bodies. It is the body that feels, perceives and observes.

### \_Objectives

Thus, the main objective of the dissertation seeks to reflect on the move(s) of the human body in space, including: body(ies) while generator of spatialities and space as a support of spatialities created by the move(s) of the body(ies) itself(theirselves).

The work focuses on the reflection of the movements generated by bodies in turn creators of spaces; those spaces as perceivable elements, understanding this process of perception; and drawing as graphic registration of perceived spatialities.

Dance is the generator of a certain kind of spatialities. The movement, as a conductor of dance through the body creates spaces torn, continuous or even kind of contained. This has also the cultural property of an era or society, involving the viewer emotionally or not. The choreographer, like the director or the architect, has the power to guide the viewer's perception, focusing sometimes on the motion, now in space, sometimes in tensions between bodies or

between body and object.

The understanding of space differs necessarily from observers, two people will see two different things (Pina Bausch, *in* José Gil, 2001), but also differs depending on the proximity to the dancer, according to their own position that influences the understanding of the areas observed. This point of view influencing the perception is the parallax, being the differentiation of results dependent on point/ place of observation.

As observers of the (danced) movement we tend to see the drag body parts, default or habit, provided mobility associated with the body. We tend to focus on the movement itself and in the space it generates. When drawing a moving body we capture what the eye sees (Almada Negreiros, *in* Estação de metro do Saldanha) instead of what brain (believes) to be truth<sup>1</sup>. Through drawing we can observe space creator movements, i.e., space created between the range of body and movement.

### **\_Methodology**

The preparation of the dissertation was based in theoretical and practical information. The first is based on research around the themes of space, body, dance, body-space, body-dance and dance-space relationship.

The practical information was the result of running two workshops in 2009 and 2010, lectured to the first grade of the architecture course; the practice of six years of sevillanas and flamenco classes taught to adults and children without ballet formation; ballet plays watching, which approach to space was relevant and important in contributing to the understanding of the subject of the thesis; and talks related to dance and spatiality theme author(s).

The writing moment was focused in crossing theoretical and practical experiences that resulted in the understanding of the initial premises.

### **\_Work development**

The project began with the reading of the book "O poder do Centro", Rudolf Arnheim (1988) which laid the foundations for the first workshop (2009). The realization of the second workshop a year later, allowed the maturation of ideas and the experimentation of new practices. The workshops were launched under the theme space | body | movement towards the perception of the notion of space generated by the bodies through practical exercises and graphic registration. In November 2010, an open class was led with professor Francisco Teixeira Bastos for the discussion of results and perception of the student understanding against the lectured themes.

All the literature and observations of contemporary dance plays was being done during and after this period and the treatment of information clarified the organization of the work. Thus, it is divided into three parts, the first is a collection of processed information and data on the subjects covered from space to dance, without forgetting the body as a link and continuity; the second being a description of workshops and obtained results discussion; and the third part, the relations of the treatment of all information collected.

<sup>1</sup> One of the most difficult elements to draw are hands and faces, not only because we are used to see them, therefore mistakes are easily noticeable, but also, they are elements of recognition, that we see all the time and our mind refuses to let eyes conduct the drawing process.

## 2\_ SPACE | body | Movement

Sevillanas and flamenco dancing result from the intersection of ethnic dances and seventeenth century court dances and were the starting point of this thesis as body moves and dance experience beyond empirical experience of the intuitive use and spontaneous movements<sup>2</sup> of the body in space.

Dance and architecture, as for its identical process, idea | motion | space, result in the creation/generation of a physical or imagined space which is perceived. This space, resulting from this process, it is also occupant of space. This first existing space, occupied, enjoyed, is treated as empty, as a place for happenings. This place is described as a stage that can be enjoyed or experienced. What is lived and sensed is that area bounded by construction or movement, that somehow we can describe.

Space thus, appears as a reference. This reference is not only to a natural or artificial construction or to the result of demarcation in a way that creates that space, but also to the human intervention in natural existence that characterizes the space by organizing it in categories (Lefebvre, 1974).

The first constructions of man come up to provide protection against weather and as a strategical position for predators/ enemies. Soon this construction becomes a form of social organization with a strong influence in the evolution of Man. Cities evolution fits the body activity(ies) as center/ subject of their buildings. The solids and voids existing in the city create the diversity that allows the sensation of movement. Without them these spaces would turn out to be a solid block or the emptiness, simply.

There are about 20% of words dedicated or related to the concept of space in the dictionary (Edward T. Hall, 1986). This theme is inescapable and inseparable from each society (Durkheim, 1899). Spaces create comfort or discomfort feelings through its form and arrangement. Bodies tend to organize relatively to this feelings being part of the existing tensions in space and generating new ones. For space understanding the body is instinctively used as a measure of perceived data as size, orientation and shape. The body is the element of understanding space.

The space is created adjusting or unsuited to the body. The body is the measure of all things, more than in the classical meaning, it is the element of perception of the world.

This body is itself creator, being, it has a particular experience. It is not only space experience but space itself (Marc Augé, 2007). Since this body, as an entity, is certainly a body with life, it becomes much more than just the set of muscles and bones put together. Body is the primary means of communications. There are body gestures that are part of our language. But to whom do we communicate? When we talk to someone is to its ears that we direct our conversation to, but the intonation, the gestures, aims to achieve a deeper being, the body inside and not the surface. This deeper place (a deeper place inside an organ-free body) we seek is the Soul (José Gil, 1997). This is the true creative sensitive and thoughtful being.

Dance, a major performing art in antiquity is evolving throughout history and placing more and more the body as the main presence (Daniel tércio, 2005) exploring its capabilities rather

2 A non-planned movement in terms of dancing.

then being at service of gravity (Rudolf Arnheim, 1988). The Soul seeks to be released from the container of the body through dance (A. A. Wilson, 2002). Contemporary dance is thus the elimination of expression and the enhancement of the movement. The novelty “a emoção nasce do movimento, e não o contrário”<sup>3</sup> dominates the thinking of modern and contemporary dance.

The movement is the condition of the body existence (Daniel Tércio, 2005). The movement as a way of experiencing the body, is a form of perception of the environment that surrounds it. The dance is in this sense of experimentation, a way to reach new ways of moving. The dance is seen by Humphrey (Daniel Tércio, 2005) as the arc between two deaths, the death of the mobility and the death of balance. The dancer must find the balance in the imbalance (José Gil, 2001) consciously formulating the movement in thought.

Space is a frame for the movement that acts as delimitation and not as a limitation. This space has the potentiality to create vectors, strains, moments that give meaning to the movement and frame it. This relationship of continuity of space-movement is also valid for objects. Whether on stage as a setting, either as an everyday participant, the objects became the body prosthesis, continuing its moves.

### 3\_ Workshops

The bodies establish relationships and tensions between them, depending on their position, hierarchy or activity (Rudolf Arnheim, 1988). In these workshops tensions were explored and worked on trying to understand how bodies are organized either unconsciously or consciously.

The workshops held in 2009 and 2010 to the classes of the first year of Master Degree in Architecture at Instituto Superior Técnico were divided into two sessions each year. Each session took about 20-25 students and had the duration of three hours. The workshop was designed in four part framework, a preliminary exercise, exercise in perception of space and practical exercises.

#### \_Wokshop 1

The framework was referred to the general explanation of the theme of the workshop and its context in this thesis, the explanation of the dance experience of the instructor and the appliance of that experience at the start up where the body was physically warmed up, allowing the necessary confidence to start exercising. In this first exercise the idea of using each part of the body and its potential as tools for movement was explored.

The exercise of the perception of space explored variations of feeling of space through the interpretation of characters of different ages whose mobility was a factor of influence of space measurement.

The application exercises were performed in three moments in which the class worked in groups of four. The **first moment** was to think of an idea | emotion | feeling and expressing it through the movement which created a space suggestive of the initial idea. For this exercise groups of

<sup>3</sup> Translation: The emotion is born from the movement and not the other way around. José Gil- *Movimento Total: o corpo e a dança*. Lisboa: Relógio d'água, 2001, p. 53

four worked in pairs, half performing and the other half sketching.

The exercise was initially tested in individual performance. To assist in this task was introduced the theme center as the organization of the individual in a space, in a group and the group within a space (Rudolf Arnheim, 1988). Students then began to try to create their own imaginary center, in a spherical way- level 1. Later, the center was the given to their colleague, but still no interaction, each one had the center in their turn-level 2. Level 3<sup>4</sup> consisted of sharing the center with his colleague, in a free and fluid movement that would make the individual dominant center imperceptible.

Finally, the pair thought of an expression / idea to try to convey through simple gestures, avoiding clichés and theatrical aid focusing on the quality of movement to achieve this result. The second pair was trying to capture this idea through observation and drawing. Especially as students of architecture graphic registration was being encouraged as being an aid to perception as it has the power to see what the brain can not decode, “O desenho é o nosso entendimento a fixar o instante”<sup>5</sup>. The drawing was still shy, often lost in the sheet, unfinished in an attempt to be faithful to the capture of the body or too stylized, away from the idea of movement thought the body.

The **second stage** consisted in the observation of three choreographies of sevillanas and flamenco (interpreted by the trainer) and the resulting graphic registration by students. This register was intended to train the drawing and understanding of the capture of the significant motion. As an ethnic dance, the schemes of the sevillanas represents a relationship between two people, their approach. Even without the possibility of observing a couple the intention was to observe how the presence and actions announced these successive approaches. Drawings eventually focused more on the spell out of the movements of the skirt and in positions captured on the motion stopped, than actual representation of the space of the pair. The rhythms presented afterwards, a rumba (aflamencado rhythm) and alegria (flamenco rhythm) wanted to show two types of disparate movements, rumba, with open movements, more vague and circular, occupying the space, meaning festival, fair, meeting, socializing and animation, and alegria, with its wide gestures but with a little more intense, disturbing rhythm, the ‘jondo’, meaning deep feeling, the alegria has its name for being to be the most joyous rhythm of cantiñas<sup>6</sup>.

The drawings’ effect sometimes was considered to fail as it represented multiple records on one sheet and withdrew the perception of personal space of each figure. Sometimes it could be sensed the lack of poetry in the bodies represented- although this was not considered an error, the truth is that this perception of poetry was part of understanding of the choreography. Not classifying the results as right or wrong, the drawings have been gaining more and more expressivity, space, physicality and poetics, losing place the stylized figures or the abstract lines suggesting movement as the bodies in motion started to gain form in drawings, suspended in

4 The levels category is based in Man’s history of life. When is born, the individual is a being connected to his mother, that is his only recognition of the world, that will be level 0. Only when the baby can be apart from his mother, he feels to be a unic human being, he then believes he is the center of the universe, this is the level 1. By contacting the community the child begins to believe that he is not the only center in the world. There are other centers, as important as his. This is level 2. For level 3, the child believes there is a hierarchy with more important centers than his (Rudolf Arnheim, 1988).

5 Translation: Drawing is our perception setting the moment. Alamada Negreiros, *in* estação de metro do Saldanha.

6 Cantiña: flamenco rythm with its origin in Cádiz (South Spain).

static representations .

For the **third moment** of the exercise students participated in simple choreographed movements that suggested moves that could be used to implement the next step. The knowledge gained during the workshop should be applied, each group should think of a concept, from which was generated a movement that would lead to a space. This process was accompanied by the understanding of the idea of individual centers, their relationships within a group and with the common center. To help develop the choreography was broadcasted a music from Buika (2008).

There were various groups that worked out the idea of the explosion of an existing center and its subsequent recovery. Some other groups had the same idea but ended in the dispersion. Overall, the movements were symmetrical and organized, as well as synchronized. They parted from a central group to then disperse and, in general, return to a center again or started up a little more scattered to finalize returning to the center together, all the elements very close and shrunk. Sometimes the termination happened to be identical to the beginning.

## Workshop 2

The maturing between 2009 and 2010 allowed the maturation of some components taking dance as less central or nuclear, and spatial sensory perception exercises most complete and extensive.

The sessions of this workshop were given in different places for the two different days. The first space was a sports' gym and the second was held in the same space as in the first workshop session. This difference would have influenced the results and conclusions of the workshop. The first, of exaggerated dimensions in comparison to the small group, created the sense of lost in that space, and left, in general, students a little more timid in comparison with those who were in the first workshop's room, this second session was actually, difficult to control and direct, since the students were frankly (more) comfortable.

The framework and preliminary exercises were identical to the first workshop. The exercises of the perception of space encouraged students to go through the space seeing it, feeling it, now circulating in groups, sometimes crossing at various speeds, both eyes open or eyes closed, and testing notions of innate distance, marking the points of arrival that students would have to achieve with their eyes closed.

About these exercises the second space allowed a more thorough check of the conditions of light and sound that we didn't have at the sports' gym, working these in the first session, a bit like guides in space as well.

The application exercises, again run in three stages, beginning in the **first moment** identically to the first workshop, and with identical results. Students experienced the construction of his personal and unique center and gradually started interacting their center until the sharing of it. Finally, they tried to express through movement one idea / feeling. For the graphic registration was seen more often the use of representation of the movement (such as circles, lines suspended and without a body of reference) than the body as the initiator of it<sup>7</sup>.

The **second moment** corresponded to the moment three of the first workshop. The exercise  
7 This group, however, maybe for their classes occurring for two months then, had easily the eager to try new materials and ways of expression.



wasn't the conclusion of the session anymore but an understanding of the process, students, in general, came to the same results as the previous year, with the difference that they weren't much comfortable to perform danced movements. Although the disparity between the first and second sessions was huge as the first group of students felt more contained in the vastness of space while the smaller room urged expansion of movement.

The **third moment** introduced the conclusive exercise and some changes from the previous year. This exercise consisted in divide the group into two and as half were designated as the builders the other half were living the spaces created.

Thus, the first group should define a living space with an entrance and different areas linked together. The space should not have holes in containment plans or areas without access, should have input(s) and areas with different spatial characteristics. The bodies that limit should be standing up.

At the first session the space created was elongated as much as possible in order to try to occupy the large space. The feeling was that those who went through the narrow space felt more comfortable than in the total space of the sports' gym. In the second session feelings were described as gripped, small and limited. Once finished the exercise the builders who had created the space now experience the space as the second half took their place. Builders should now go through the generated space with their eyes closed testing their memory skills and understanding of the created spaces.

The exercise was repeated with the second group creating its own space, this time lying down. This space should also be walked through on their knees or dragging, what made, in general, the space look and feel bigger or at least slightly larger, as time and factors associated with difficulty strenght those feelings. Also the fact that the bodies bounding space did not prevent the display of the limits of the total space created boundaries less imposed as the ones created by bodies standing up.

This workshop made possible to have the return of the students some understanding of the issues / sensations, as an open class and discussion of results happened one month after where students have been asked to draw the spaces of the sessions according to the defining areas of comfort and discomfort and select their drawings to best illustrate the idea of center and movement. It was noticed that the students had similar opinions about the sensations caused by spaces.

#### **4\_ The body as space generator**

The body is an element from and in the space. It uses the space when moving and by doing that it generates a different space at a different scale and with another meaning, but equally valid and noticeable.

The ephemeral nature of dance is not a castration of itself, but the very understanding of their condition (Yvonne Rainer, 1965). The observer being a motion living, move with itself its point of view, making the understanding of the dance a factor dependent on its position (in the proximity, separation and visualization constraints).



The spaces created by bodies have a presence in the experience of the observer. The intention of this dissertation is to remove the perception of these spaces the feature of a metaphor and approach the observer of the different types of spaces created, highlighting the space perceived as a result of experience. Thus, lived space is the space constructed on the space perceived.

## **5\_ Conclusions**

The theme of the dissertation combines the disciplines of dance and architecture highlighting their commonalities as the body, space and movement. The fact that I had no academic training in dance area required greater effort, a research and learning as well as a closer monitoring of that area.

The approach to a subject not much explored also created some difficulty in finding the adequate bibliography. Eventually I looked up for each topic at the basis and got sometimes the thematic approach in José Gil (*Metamorfoses do Corpo*, 1997; *Movimento Total*, 2001) and in Arnheim (*O poder do centro*, 1988).

The workshops provided a deep understanding of spacialities, from its generation to its achievement from the experience of the bodies to the graphic experimentation, which created a distinct space from the one translated by the understanding (registration of eyes capture versus the understanding generated by and in the brain).