IEES INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN A SIMULTANEOUS SCENE MOVEMENT, CYBERSPACE AND NETWORKED GROUP CREATION

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Abstract

IEES is a piece of research, a networked multi-spatial performance, a human experience mediatized by technology, a door opening to a field barely explored yet.

A group of artists from Buenos Aires and Barcelona bonds together and sets off a research and staging process exclusively through virtual connection. Different emotional intensities and/or emotional tensions inherent to human bonding eventually turned into thematic and climatic quality within the creation process itself. Every event in this mediatized relationship gained awareness and became the warp and weft of the real/virtual body of the group. The use of technological devices unfolded problems such as the considerable modification of the space-time concept, the presence/absence of

the body revealing its identity through the image and tolerating the absence of real matter without a substantial loss of identity. Dialog, fusion and feedback between reality and virtuality. A barely-explored field opening to new dimensions for artistic and human development. A land offering itself to be conquered; a critical art that asks for new, fresh, creative energy to be withdrawn from the isolation of minority ghettos.

Keywords

Real/virtual body, cyberspace, networked scene, intersubjectivity

Developpment

Technology dominates the daily scene

Nowadays, the creator and his artistic work are permeated by a fast-transforming technological reality. This analysis is not intended to provide a political reading, but the real side of technological euphoria, and the way technology causes dramatic divisions among humans that used to be measured in terms of literacy cannot be ignored. The goals that encourage technological consumption and its inclusion in life habits cannot be ignored either. A creator who considers himself an artist and a contemporary one, can't afford to be naive or ignore the time in which he lives or the macrostructure he works in or better said, the macrostructure that works on him. As a contemporary individual, aware, or unaware, his work will be necessarily affected by the multiple transformations technology has brought.

Communication-wise, the encounter with the other is mediated by new configurations and if we are to find a dramatic art to support and renew social ties, it is mandatory to use common codes, everyday tools as a means to getting closer to contemporary individuals. Getting closer does not imply getting trapped in the same nets, but setting up communities to make identification and transfer possible. Without these psychic operations, there won't be either communication or possible effects. A tool is just a tool, and by *just*, I mean the chance of estranging it from the purpose it was designed for. The artist's presence creates a link to a shared code that sooths, bonds and makes propositions. At the same time, the tool subversion can act as a rope thrown down to someone who feels the threat of the spider's web in his face, fresh air that renews and allows reconsideration, relocation, making a slight impression of SOMETHING ELSE. A dual possibility for one same thing, a delicate swing an artist can and must know how to produce.

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Concept reconsideration

In this new technological and globalized context, certain bases of the dramatic arts are put in crisis. How could we reconstruct the concept of **work of art** from the new patterns created by the crossing with the technological context, without losing the critical perspective that contemporary art claims? My proposal is to leave the logic of production and objectification in order to come across more subtle aspects of the work. To think the **work of art** as a permeable device, that gathers a multiplicity of variables in one space-time spot, changing with every repetition. The convergence in one point produces a catalytic effect, a synergy colored by the particular conjunction of forces that will never be repeated exactly. The work of art as a fleeting effect that is generated in one certain convergence. Every time, a new chance to demand new possible significances or configurations from the material. Potential polysemy not intended to crystallize meaning but rather as an unstoppable search that questions the meaning the spectator and the artist/creator himself (?) produce.

It is also a chance to reconsider the role of the **interpreter** and the role of the **spectator or audience**. It might be necessary to use different words, other words that can convey ideas of a better shared work, that wipe off distances and hierarchies without falling into the nothingness of the dissolution. A bonding inherent to the passage of sharing the stage with certain particularities. An experience of a human relationship different from other experiences in other aspects of life.

The concept of **dramatic space** should also be changed taking into account the possible diversity of the new virtual space and the real configurations that can create networks with virtuality. Including the technological variable implies being able to think of a fluid dramatic space, which does neither start, finish or is confined to a certain geographic space. The cyberspace as a continuity that links several simultaneous spaces or relates with non-dramatic spaces such as, for example, the dwelling houses of the possible virtual audience.

Another concept to reconsider is the concept of **author**. Author implies being outside the complex thought that visibilizes the impossibility of solitary creation. Something like the private property of an idea, which denies the certainties that the history of human thinking has shown; contexts expressed through their emergents. In this digital era in which technology has put an end to the idea of original and copy and at the same time easies the circulation of pools of knowledge and products and offers operating systems that "*create*" together with the human being, the question of copyright must be reconsidered.

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Account of an experience

IEES - A networked performance

Through a system of web cameras and Skype, artists from Buenos Aires and Barcelona share a process of research, creation and staging of a networked performance; two independent performances linked live create a virtual space that interacts with the real scene. In each country, the audience watches two different performances that share some identical scenes through internet connection, which, nevertheless, acquire different meanings according to the framework they are inserted in. The audience present at the real performance can only see a fragment of the work, since the multiplicity of spaces the performance spreads out in is too vast for one person to take in. In Barcelona, the audience will have access to a certain experience shared with real artists who deploy a whole universe of meaning different from the one experienced in Buenos Aires with other participating artists. The moments of virtual connection acquire different meanings as well, according to how those images are linked to one symbolic universe or the other. At the same time, the spectator who only sees the piece that is live-streamed, shall have access to one view or the other or both at the same time. The images spotted by the system are a synthesis in which the technological and human aspects converge and feed back. It is the complete network that becomes a multifocal artistic event, an event where human and technological variables converge, with pre-set patterns, some of which are fixed and others permeable to uncertainty, hazard and the unique impression of the now. More information at www.IEES:com.ar

Multispace or fluid space A performance that erases the edges and is embodied in networks of space and time. A counterpoint with contemporary ideas of discontinuous space and fragmented time. On IEES we could define three spaces at first sight, the theater in Buenos Aires, the theater in Barcelona and a cyberspace with different features that operates as the fluid that dissolves the tangible limit of each real space in order to produce a spatial continuity that "is seen" in every real space. It is a kind of flat and three-dimensional window, since the other audience can be seen in the background. The floor of our theater seems to continue in that other floor where our partenaires dwell and move. It is possible to add a fourth dimension to this linked spatial trilogy, the dimension of the live streaming of both views (Buenos Aires from Barcelona and Barcelona from Buenos Aires), that are taken by the cameras and digitally streamed for anyone to watch live on a computer. That fourth view opens up a new dimension for cyberspace that, apart from linking the real scenes, generates images that neither of the real audiences can see. Could we talk about a virtual dramatic space?

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The body in focus A focus placed on the body, the real and the virtual body. The presence/absence of virtual and real characters in several simultaneous spaces. The character images fuse and confuse, are entangled in cyberspace, are multiplied. The body in synchrony with everything that can be heard and not heard, what can be said and not said. Exploration of what is (not) possible in human bonds mediatized by technological devices.

When we think of a real body, several dimensions come to mind; image, sound, a volume that takes up space; touch, temperature, pulse sensations. However, the image is somewhat dominant as regards the body. According to Lacan and his development of the mirror stage, it is possible to consider the strong bond between the ego and the body image, and the constitution of the body as an imaginary representation that creates identity. Based on this, we can approach the question of the virtual presence of the other that, by offering an image of his body –even if the above dimensions are not present– can bear, however, a human identity with which to build a bonding relationship with the special features we have seen during this creative experience.

Personal Bonds Some conclusions were drawn from the IEES experience but many questions remain open regarding the kind of bonds built through technological mediation without direct physical contact.

Our first encounter was through an email then, we discovered our body images and our voices through Skype. We were enthusiastic at first, each encounter aroused curiosity and the will to get to know one another better. Everything that happened surprised us, those gigantic and beautiful bodies on the screen reacted to our movements or were able to copy us, follow us, propose things to us. Even being aware of the device, we found it amazing that the flat image would reply immediately. Little by little, the dazzle vanished and we were faced with the difficulty of exchanging glances, dialogs broken by faulty communication, different ways of guiding a research process, system failures and frustrated rehearsals and so many other obstacles that tinted the process, which was far from fluid. That weird world of voices with different accents and of flat and intangible but present, real and questioning bodies at the time of reaching an agreement about staging decisions, gradually turned into a daily routine that forged affective bonds. Sometimes, there was fascination, some other times, there was tedium, rejection, envy. As any human affective bond, it was shaped in multiple colors, but unlike the bonds where the real body is present and susceptible to touch, we noticed certain fragility, the feeling that any excessive tension might break up the relationship forever. The appearance of identifying traits was revealed, for example, through the appropriation we made of words and sayings, as well as the acceptance or rejection of very personal movements. The common phantoms that unconsciously overwhelm

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human bonds became present in this case too. The phantom of symbiosis and the devouring of the other, the feeling of vulnerability when facing an imaginary other who oversteps, the feeling of fragmentation in front of the other's complete image, the other as a threatening strange otherness, the other as someone to be incorporated, among various psychological constellations, materialized and became the storyline of the work. The fantasy of symbiosis among bodies that meet and identify with one another to later discover their differences was one of the main topics of the first connection.

Another determinant scene that shows the relationship dynamics is one in which a trio on screen performs a set of minimal movements with their hands which suddenly turns into **a gesture directed to the other group**. **A choral *fuck you* shocks us! After that, the movement shapes into a pistol that aims at us and shoots. Following the game, we die...** After this rehearsal, something awkward remained beating inside us. We did not talk about it. During the following rehearsal, we couldn't manage to set up the communication (?) We didn't try that hard either... We kept not talking about this... We decided it was important to include these scenes in the staging and so we made the proposal to our colleagues who were shocked by their own "subjective emergence" and a bit embarrassed, too. Something of the unconscious bonding weave emerged during these improvisations and we thought it valuable to use. The nature of the first emergence was lost forever; however, it encouraged and shaped a whole new reaction from our part which molded the entire tone of the language and choreographic structure from the Argentinian side.

Some months after the debut, one of the Spanish artists visits Buenos Aires and finally, a real face-to-face encounter takes place. Her shoulders are much broader, she is taller than we expected, all her features fit much better the attitudes we have seen through Skype. The fragile and childish shape the screen projected was not consistent with the powerful and unexpected reactions we had experienced. The technological device had built a different body from the real one which carried a personality that did not seem to fit well. Finally!!!!!! Tuxen was complete!

Something of what is present reveals an absence, at the same time, the virtuality adds a plus, something that it is but it is not. These relationships forged similarly to real bonds offer fragilities, distortions and advantages. Something of the self can remain protected due to the chance of suddenly getting away from the optical eye. From a distance, it is also possible to retain part of the information or to offer just one part, the prettiest. Cutting off the communication, something as simple as pushing a button allows the inactivation of all the range of affections; at the same time, the little machine lies there, alive, nearby, always ready to become a quick companion among many others, again, by pushing a button or perhaps, by just approaching the heat of one's finger.

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Uncertainty as an important variable
in dramatic processes and events

Both the creative process and the performance were open to the inevitable chance of uncertainty. The paradox is possible as the work is framed within the complex thought theory or the complexity paradigm. For more details, please read the article "Introduction to complex thought" by Edgard Morin (1994).

Different types of uncertainties -technological and human- could be determined. As to technological uncertainties, the randomness of communication due to different circumstances caused variations in streaming speed, image definition, sound distortion, freezing and connection failures. These forever present variables, at first, caused tremendous difficulties we tried to mitigate. Having gotten exhausted trying to reduce randomness to the limit, we discovered the great treasure. That was the key; using every variation to reinvent a new possible signification in the here and now, expecting the hazard of the instant for being alive on stage, free from the numbness of repetition.

On the human level, the uncertainty also produced interesting feedback. Until it became the work (?) we staged, we set off without any rigid ideas about the direction the way of creating, researching and composing would take, and much less the themes, the climatic and emotional tone and other questions such as the movement aesthetics and dynamics the process would acquire. We found out straightaway we DID have rigid ideas. Our expectations about how a research and staging process should develop were immediately to be contrasted with the different approach our Spanish colleagues had. However, we learned to have faith and take advantage of those oscillations and differences in favor of the artistic encounter; something like riding on the direction the impulse is going and jumping off at the right time, not before, not after.

Another uncertainty... the spectator's. The spectator didn't know whether what he was seeing was a recorded image or a real-time image as it unveils towards the end. That twist in which the image gets alive produces a kind of surprise in the spectator who has not been warned beforehand. The reaction to that surprise is multiple and varied, and from then on, it leaves an impression in the final progression of the performance. Certainties and uncertainties as necessary pieces of every process and of every event, whether we are aware or not, whether we know how to take advantage of each of their qualities or not.

Telematic Art - Particularities

Dance is a privileged language when looking into the so-called telematic arts. Anchoring in the real and symbolic bodies allows for intense contrast and enriched dialog with technological supports that throw, process and re-create immaterial bodies and voices. An appropriation

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for dance of a new field which will allow the discovery of new areas we have no inkling about.

Until not so long ago, the image on screen couldn't look at who was looking at it. The image became an object to be contemplated (and still is in certain formats).

In this case, the image of an other somewhere away, responds to stimuli and can set up a real communication with real others. This living image without a material body produces a phantasmagorical effect because it offers some aspects of a human being but retains others. There is an absence, the absence of body matter.

On the other hand, the image is not the same the eye could take when looking at that person face-to-face. It is a creation, a result or synthesis where many human, technological and environmental variables take part. Delay, transmission failures, frozen images, high or low definition according to the time of the day and the massive use of the net, dampness or rain, among others are the conditions that produce a quantum of uncertainty and randomness in the possible communication and therefore in the dramatic scene.

Dialog, fusion and feedback between reality and virtuality. There is a person who is captured by a camera connected to a net that builds a certain code that is then decoded by another computer which, at the same time, emits a projection on a certain surface. From real to virtual, a multi-determined impression is made, feeding back with the effect it produces on the other human who receives that product and reacts to it, triggering a response (movement, voice, action, etc.). The response is again transformed before it is captured by the real other on the other side of the devices. What happens "in between" is intermingled with what is going on in the real scenes at one side or the other and, at the same time, shapes a reality that can be captured and transmitted as a third dramatic alternative in virtual circles such as digital channels or social networks. The work stems from the human-technological convergence; it is developed in simultaneous real and virtual spaces and is highly polysemous and multi-focal. The choreography can only be structured in terms of patterns that allow for the uncertainty of hazard and technological contingencies, as well as contextual influences of the intersubjectivity in play.

For further reading on the topic of intersubjectivity as a field for creative dramatic display, please see the article "El proceso creativo y el acontecimiento escénico a partir de la intersubjetividad" (TASSO, 2011)
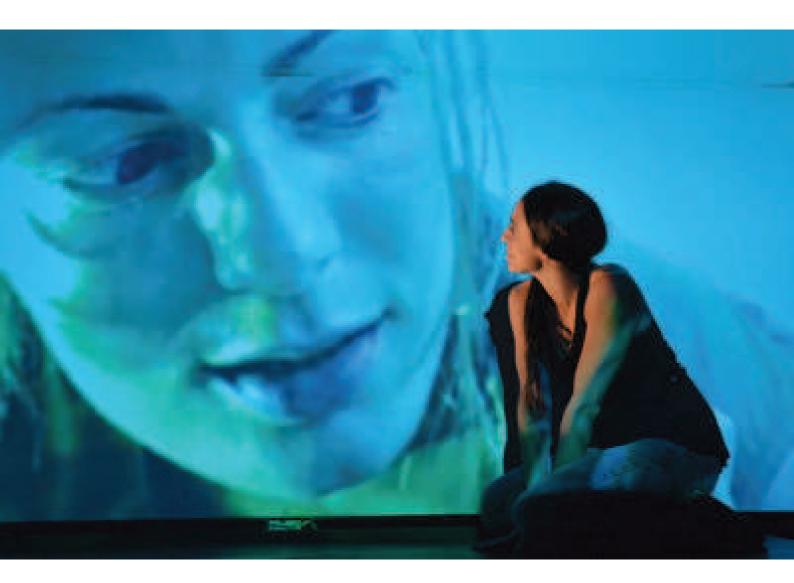
Conclusions

Those of us who work in art know the road is always harsh, the passage is marred with obstacles, loneliness is a recurrent variable, society seems to move along parallel lanes and yet still, we insist.

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We hold on to it as we feel it is a possible alternative to asphyxiating cultural frameworks. The role of the artist has changed with the times and context. We are urged by the question of how to reinvent the role of the artist in a new human culture stage.

The cyberworld is, without a doubt, a new field. We don't know it very well, we move around blindfolded and nevertheless, we believe we are glimpsing at horizons with different logics. Profiles that, when crossing with our creative powers, can unfold unsuspected senses and effects.
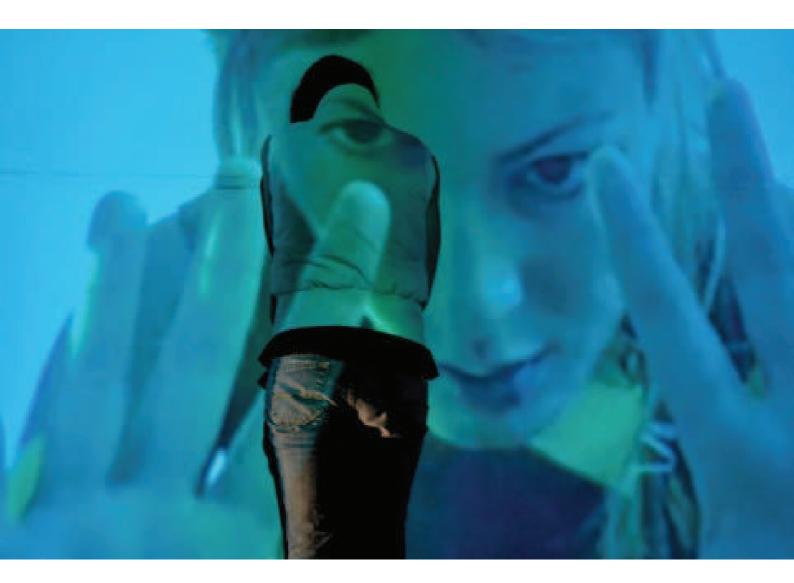
The conceptual plasticity shall be the key to the challenge, a kind of thinking that demands a distressing but necessary deconstruction. New contextual logics ask for new patterns of thinking and action. More than conclude my proposal is to begin.

Possible points for analysis

- Role of the current dramatic arts in the social imaginary. Its dialog with social context. Goals of the artists who develop it. What's the audience looking for in it? Is there an interested audience apart from performers and the social networks of the artists themselves?

- Possible inclusion in everyday social habits.

- Crossings between dance and technology. Particularities. Real-virtual feedback. Virtual creative groupality. Fluid Space and Cyberspace

- How to create alternative discourses without submitting into image dominance. How to use the tools with subverted significances.

- How to redefine the dramatic event reconsidering the roles for a possible virtual spectator. Replacing the concept of spectator by that of participant?

- How to support an art that moves in virtual spaces instead of real ones?

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Biography

Dancer, choreographer and psychologist. Formed in contemporary dance ballet and several body techniques such as Feldenkrais, Alexander. Specialized in techniques such as Releasse Contact, improvisation and composition at Duke University, USA. Took part in International festivals in Argentina, USA, Spain, Greece and Moscow. President of Cocoa Datei Choreographers Association since 2010. Co-founder of the Cocoa International Contemporary Dance Festival that takes place in Buenos Aires every two years. Author of papers submitted to different international congresses. Among other texts she wrote: *El entramado social en las fibras del cuerpo de la danza, El proceso creativo y el acontecimiento escénico a partir de la intersubjetividad.* Liliana Tasso has undertaken research on the crossings between dance and new technologies since 2008. As a result, she has presented two works *aRRaSStra* and *IEES*. More information at www.lilianatasso.com.ar

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