

Moving Spaces

Enacting Dance, Performance, and the Digital in the Museum

edited by Susanne Franco and Gabriella Giannachi

Dance Well and Diary of a Move: From Artistic Projects to Social Processes

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Abstract This chapter analyses two participatory projects conducted in the frame of the Creative Europe project *Dancing Museumus. Dance Well. Movement Research for Parkinson's* (2015) was hosted by the Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa (Italy) and was aimed at people affected by Parkinson's disease and their families; *Diary of a Move* (2020), which was conceived by the Italian-Japanese choreographer Masako Matsushita during the first lockdown in Italy, was addressed to a large audience. Operating outside the contemporary art mainstream and in a rather provincial and conservative political and social context, these two artistic projects and the processes they initiate by actively involving their audiences, have produced real social change and have created a sense of community rather than merely producing a display or a staged version of it. Both projects also prove how museums as cultural institutions can be “democratising and inclusive spaces” and how they “work for diverse communities” to “enhance understandings of the world”, as the 2019 ICOM Standing Committee for Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials suggested.

Keywords Participatory Art. Dance in the museum. Community. Re-enactment. Archive.

Summary 1 Defining Museums. – 2 *Dance Well*: From Museum to Society. – 3 *Diary of a Move*: From Society to Museum.

1 Defining Museums

Over the last twenty years, we have witnessed a growing presence of dance performances, choreographic works, and the birth of several new formats such as choreographic installations and choreographic exhibitions in museums of different kinds (art, natural history, science). Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this phenomenon has fuelled a lively debate and stimulated many questions such as what changes may come to dance and to museums from their interaction, and what so-

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cial and political issues are raised through it.¹ More specifically, scholars and curators have discussed whether museums give a real space to dancers and choreographers to explore new ways of relating to the public while recognizing their role in the history of art, or rather exploit them to increase and diversify visitors. It is undeniable that the presence of dance in museums contributes to communicating to a larger audience that dance and choreography are not only ways to structure movement in space and time, but also tools to gather people and make them interact with each other. To dance in museums is a form of participation and political intervention inasmuch as it activates a critical attitude in the visitors and encourages a sense of a local community. To dance in these spaces also means to transmit, share and preserve knowledge, memories and traditions, and to question our understanding of what heritage is and how we preserve it. Dancers and their choreographic approaches to exhibition spaces help in using these spaces to build a different sense of the past, contrasting linear and progressive narratives of rather traditional historiographical approaches, and safeguarding a wide range of memories for future generations.

In this chapter, I analyse two participatory projects, *Dance Well. Movement Research for Parkinson's*,² an ongoing project that began in 2015, and *Diary of a Move* (2020) that were both hosted by the Civic Museum of Basano del Grappa (Italy), as part of the activities conducted in the frame of the Creative Europe project *Dancing Museums*.³ These examples testify to how museums as cultural institutions can be “democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces” and work “in active partnership with and for diverse communities” as suggested in 2019 by a controversial definition of museum proposed by the Standing Committee for Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Aiming to reflect on the complexity and challenges of the contemporary world, the new definition identifies museums’ principal mission in the establishment of a “critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures” (ICOM 2019). It does not deny the importance of museum’s ‘traditional’ functions (to acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage), though the absence of the term ‘collection’ shifts the emphasis from the ownership of artistic work and cultural heritage to the process of recognizing the cultural practices and the immaterial forms of knowledge that generated them or are generated by them. From this perspective, museums continue to “hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society” but they also need to “safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people” (ICOM 2019). This sounds provoking in a museum system that is profoundly tied to the art market valorising artefacts and products over processes. ICOM’s provisional definition of the museum quickly became the subject of heated discussions because it produces a considerable change in direction. It has been accused of being far too ambitious and political if not ideological, in its aim to contribute to “human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing” and not only to “education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM 2019).

1 Franko, Lepecki 2014; Bénichou 2015; Chevalier et al. 2018; Franco 2020.

2 <https://www.operaestate.it/it/dance-well-2>.

3 *Dancing Museums* consisted of two parts: the first, “Old Masters, New Traces” (2015-17), and the second, “The Democracy of Beings” (2018-21). <https://www.dancingmuseums.com/>.

Critics of the new definition suggest that it should be sharper because museums cannot be everything; its supporters respond that to work with marginalised communities and minorities or decide not to do it are both political acts. The artist Tobias Rehberger recently suggested that it would be preferable to “stop thinking about what a museum should be” and rather think “about what museums are and what they could be” (cited in Bechtler, Imhof 2018, 192). This statement inevitably took on a different value during the pandemic that has overwhelmed museums, their programming and, for many, put into question the very possibility of their future existence. Today, it invites us to reflect also as ordinary citizens on the role of these valuable cultural institutions.

The ICOM Committee considers that museums should be “participatory and transparent” and should “collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world” (ICOM 2019). As a matter of fact, many dance artists invited to perform or create events inside museums have proposed performances and choreographed exhibitions that we can identify as forms of ‘participatory art’, a term that encompasses a great variety of genres such as interactive, relational, interventionist, cooperative, engaged, activist, dialogic, and community-based art. As suggested by Gabriella Giannachi, participation is not only a form of redistribution of power and a production mode of resources but also a form of consumption of value and is, therefore, part of the “experience economy” of our contemporary world (2021, 56), and of what Dorothea von Hantelmann defines as the “experiential turn” in contemporary art (2014). In our post-Fordist economy, the consumer is more and more a de-politicised ‘prosumer’ who actively participates in the production of what he or she consumes. Participatory art projects contribute to increase the number of visitors and diversify their type, but also to transform museum institutions into fully meaningful places for community members (Simon 2010). However, Clare Bishop advises that

participatory art is not a privileged political medium [...] but it is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context. (2012, 284)

Through this lens, I believe that participatory art in the museum can create a concrete dimension for political intervention by fostering initiatives that aim to sustain social minorities, the socially disadvantaged people and groups and the wellbeing of our social life. Participatory art can also build bridges, although fragile, between different communities and encourage political interest and engagement with today’s troubled world.

Historically, participation is about identity, empowerment and knowledge, and the notion of participation in art has been at the service of different political goals and can present a wide range of aesthetic outcomes. It implies forms of social and political mobilisation that would open alternative possibilities of living together and it contributes to inventing a new understanding of the public and the common through collaborative forms. According to Bishop, the relevant feature of participatory art is the need to “overturn the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience” (2012, 2). More precisely she affirms that the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as

a collaborator and producer of *situations*; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product, is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or 'beholder', is now repositioned as a coproducer or *participant* (Bishop 2012, 2). The idea of a coproduced situation is also embraced by Michael Kelly who points out that participatory art can produce an object or a performance but in other cases, the term "participatory" refers to the establishment of a set of relationships or the start of a process (2014).

The artistic projects I discuss here and the processes they initiate by actively involving their audiences may create a community rather than simply displaying or staging it. Operating outside contemporary art mainstream museums, but in a rather provincial and conservative political and social context, these projects have produced a real social change due to their strong and effective connection to other research projects and cultural activities involving the participation of local communities through the performing arts over a long period of time. The first project under the title *Dance Well* is an inclusive dance project for people affected by Parkinson's disease that has activated a social process that is still growing after almost a decade far beyond the physical boundaries of the museum. *Diary of a Move*, the second project in this discourse, is a dance project created during the first lockdown in Italy (April and May 2020), which proposed new forms of participation and coming together able to shape concrete examples of what a community can be. By presenting these two cases, I focus on how an artistic project based on inter-subjective exchanges and de-hierarchised creative processes can bring individual experiences, social situations, collective dynamics and needs before the visitor/spectator. I also show how an artistic project can be transformed into a social process lasting over a long period and involving different groups of participants and/or visitors/spectators. *Dance Well* was created for the museum and later moved towards society, while *Diary of a Move* was born in private homes and then arrived at the museum first as a performance and then as an exhibition.

These dance projects were carried out in Bassano del Grappa, which is located in North Eastern Italy near Vicenza. A beautiful and small medieval town with strong historical connections with both World Wars, Bassano del Grappa is part of the Veneto region which went from being a mainly agricultural economy plagued by poverty and migration to become one of the most affluent European regions, with a post-War economic expansion that also underwent profound social, political, and cultural changes. Known for its closely-knit rural communities mainly supporting conservative Catholic forces, Veneto became a bastion of the Lega Nord party, whose populist agenda has targeted Southern Italians and foreign migrants as different scapegoats over the years. Mostly concerned for the region's economic prosperity the disillusioned voters have contributed to making Veneto a region riddled with contradictions where racism coexists with socially integrated migrants and the very rich cultural and artistic heritage with an anti-intellectual stand. All these factors, alongside the decline of Catholicism, have put an enormous pressure on the traditional sense of identity and belonging, which makes it very interesting to notice how alternative forms of community have been experimented with in recent years through the performing arts. These changes have profoundly transformed Italian society in the transition from the second to the third millennium, providing the socio-

logical context where influential philosophical theorisations of the community have been offered by Italian thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben (1993), Roberto Esposito (2010), and Massimo Cacciari (2016).

Bassano is also the only city in Italy that directly manages a multidisciplinary festival and a Centre for Contemporary Scene (CSC), which is both part of the European Dance House Network, and a space for artists, producers and scholars to meet and creatively collaborate. More specifically, it sustains the programming of Operaestate Festival (founded in 1987), and most recently of BMotion, a festival within a festival, which has gained reputation as one of the most original and stimulating international hubs and showcases of choreographic research. In 2006, the CSC was established as a residency centre for dancers and choreographers, and as a platform where to present new works and to discuss the outcomes of these experiences with both experts in the field and the local community. The CSC (which is hosted in a former huge garage made available by the owner of the famous Grappa Nardini, one of the leading local industries) has also become part of the European Dancehouse Network, which includes some of the most active centres of contemporary dance in Europe, promotes and supports professional artists and their transnational mobility through numerous European grants. All together these activities have contributed to the growth of new generations of artists, both locally and internationally, and to the education of spectators through the audience development activities of many dance projects scheduled during the year in the local museum. The Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa is one of the most ancient museums in this region, and is known for its paintings from the 13th to the 20th centuries (among others, the largest collection of works by Jacopo Bassano, sculptures by Antonio Canova, and paintings by Giambattista Tiepolo), its archaeological collection, and its Cloister with lapidary of stones, inscriptions, and other architectural fragments.

Over time, the 'Bassano system' has affected the mentality of local people and their perception of what contemporary dance could be by creating new occasions for them to attend performances and site-specific works in various public places as well as public events and meetings with Italian and foreign dance practitioners in residence. It has also had a great impact on the Italian artistic scene, where contemporary dance has little economic support and is followed by an audience largely made up of professionals. In Bassano on the contrary, contemporary dance is not only a familiar art form for many people, but is also interwoven with the local economy, thanks to the ancillary activities that the presence of so many artists and spectators produces. In this context, the role of the museum and the many inclusive and participatory art projects that hosted and supported have also changed it profoundly, rendering it for many citizens in a participatory place. In Bassano, practising and seeing dance in the museum is not perceived as an unusual activity, rather it is part of social life and constitutes a form of political engagement into the weaving of the social fabric.

2 Dance Well: From Museum to Society

Dance Well. Movement Research for Parkinson's is a form of contemporary dance training offered weekly and for free in the Civic Museum to people affected by Parkinson's disease and their families between the ages of forty and seventy, but also to dancers, choreographers, doctors, physiotherapists and researchers interested in various ways of exploring new forms of practising wellbeing.⁴ Since 2015 more than 13,000 participants have attended *Dance Well* classes, whose ensuring continuity despite the frequent cuts in health care support, served as a concrete response to the needs of people affected by Parkinson's and their families in addition to the cycles of the standard medical therapy. *Dance Well* originated as part of *Act Your Age* (2011-13),⁵ a research project supported by the Culture Program of the European Commission and based in Bassano that aimed to involve artists usually excluded from the stage because of their age and to encourage a dialogue with the multi-generational audience of Operaestate Festival.⁶ In the same period, the CSC began to collaborate with the Dutch headquarters of *Dance & Health with Parkinson* where ten Italian dancers followed the training and right after started the first series of free contemporary dance lessons at the Civic Museum. In 2015, this group initiated the first edition of *Dance Well* to investigate new approaches to Parkinson's focusing on the concept of health as a harmonious balance between all components of the individual.

Dance Well is less a method than a series of shared principles and objectives. During the classes, the teachers share their technique based on their personal experience with dance. The classes, therefore, do not constitute "a new form of dance therapy because their purpose is artistic, not therapeutic" (Houston 2019, 52). Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative condition that affects voluntary movement and balance. The complex symptomatology that accompanies the development of the disease is characterised by movement disorders (tremor, rigidity, akinesia), compromised static posture, altered dynamic balance, but also affective disorders and mood alterations, states of anxiety, depression, social withdrawal and fear. Pharmacological stimulation can also produce the exact opposite, namely euphoria, disinhibition and hyper-impulsivity. While in traditional physiotherapy priority is given to the recovery of certain aspects of body movement and posture, the practice of contemporary dance has offered to many patients a different way to improve motor performance but also increased psychic wellbeing. In particular, the use of choreography to structure movement sequences in time and space and to stimulate both the senses and the imagination contributes to developing a new awareness embodied through constant practice. Dance stimulates cognitive skills and proprioceptive abilities, which favour the acquisition and retention of new motor habits. Moreover, *Dance Well* helps to overcome the sense of isolation, whether self-imposed or involuntary, which is a common consequence of the disease, by encouraging social participation and transforming a group of dancers into a lively community.

⁴ See <https://www.danceforparkinsons.online/kinesiphilia/>.

⁵ See <https://www.operaestate.it/it/progetti-europei/57-centro-per-la-scena-contemporanea/progetti-europei/progetti-chiusi/2954-act-your-age>.

⁶ See https://www.nederlandsedansdagen.nl/en/publiek/ndd_projecten/act_your_age.

The artistic environment has also proven to amplify the impact of the practice of dance by offering a source of inspiration. More specifically, it suggests critically rethinking some of the fundamental values of our aesthetics such as harmony and grace. In dance, the concept of grace is tied to natural predisposition or a particular skill gained by the dancer through exercise and in a constant comparison to other bodies (when not in competition with them) to master a harmonious relationship between weight, flow and time. In a community context like a *Dance Well* class, grace needs to be reassessed because people move in diverse ways yet feel a sense of relationship and belonging. Here each person comes to terms with their condition and the transformation of their unique body, rather than the evaluation of their own achievements in comparison to the other members of the group. Sara Houston has pointed out that “dignity is a sign of the empathetic relationship that these people feel one to each other in a non-judgemental and non-stigmatizing atmosphere” (2019, 129). Moreover, she affirms that in a dance for Parkinson’s context, grace and dignity are both relational and community focused (Houston 2019). In these classes, *Dance Well*’s dancers – as they define themselves – feel again their bodies in motion as a source of pleasure and as a vehicle of beauty and grace, a sensation definitely amplified by being surrounded by paintings, sculptures and installations.

One of the strengths of the development of this project is a long-term process that goes beyond the material boundaries of the museum through its interaction with other research projects based in Bassano, which are supported by the European Community and have transformed the city into a hub for artistic and social research. Thus *Dance Well* has crossed paths with *Migrant Bodies Moving Borders* (2017-19)⁷ that focuses on identifying, developing and testing new and relevant actions for the inclusion of refugees and migrants within dance and movement-based initiatives. Migrants and refugees have been invited to participate in *Dance Well* classes, attend events and performances, experience being part of a collective, and live a shared experience with members of the local community. Their presence in the *Dance Well* classes has enriched the educational programme, insofar as each of them brings different traditions and choreographic knowledge, creating new possibilities of exchange with the *Dance Well* dancers, the choreographers in residence, and the local population. The *Dance Well* dancers were also able to meet the members of the Creative Europe funded project *Performing Gender* (2016-19) that aimed to help a new generation of European dance artists and professionals to develop a new form of narrative for the LGBTQ+ identities.⁸ *Dance Well* also intersected with *Empowering Dance*, a project supported by Erasmus+ that examined how contemporary dance (practised in collaboration with others and in which the creative body is central) can be an example of a practice that helps people of all ages to develop those ‘soft skills’ considered crucial in contemporary society and labour market.⁹ Moreover, *Dance Well Explore* is one of the side projects of *Dance Well* and consists in a dance practice open to visually impaired and blind people, while *Dance Well Crea* offers dance classes for oncological patients in collaboration with a local association of medical assis-

⁷ See <http://www.migrantbodies.eu/>.

⁸ See <http://www.performinggender.eu/about/>.

⁹ See <http://dansateliers.nl/en/project/empowering-dance-developing-soft-skills/>.



Figure 1 Dance Well class at the Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa (Italy). © Roberto Cinconze

tance.¹⁰ All together these networks have proved to be a fundamental factor in developing the project and turning it into a social process. Last but not least, the collaboration with local secondary schools and the involvement of younger members of the local community has offered an opportunity for different generations to enter into dialogue and support each other. It gave the chance to young people to experience at first hand a way of building relationships with the older generation marked by illness by practising dance and actively contributing to an artistic and inclusive activity that should become a reference point for future projects [fig. 1].

Dance Well was also one of the activities included in the first part of the project *Dancing Museums* that brought together five European dance organisations and eight museums¹¹ to explore new ways of engaging audiences. This occasion was fundamental to coordinate the activities of the museum, the festival and the CSC so that at each edition the *Dance Well* dancers could study with the affiliated professional choreographers who were invited to the residency programme of Bassano every year. The festival has also started to commission site-specific dance pieces for them, which are presented as part of the official programmes of Operaestate and BMotion festivals. This synergy has led to the paradoxical situation that, in a country where there is no national training centre for contemporary dance (only a national academy mainly oriented towards classical dance), the *Dance Well* dancers are one of the groups that has studied and worked with many internationally known choreographers, from Yasmeen Godder to Daniele Ninarello, and from Pablo Leyton to Francesca Foscari among others, and is now starting to be programmed at festivals and events outside Bassano.

¹⁰ See <https://www.operaestate.it/it/dance-well-2>.

¹¹ See <http://www.dancingmuseums.com/>.

These encounters offer the people with Parkinson's an opportunity to participate in an artistic project and to meet with local and international audiences, presenting themselves as dancers and not as patients affected by a disease. In this sense, *Dance Well* has become a microcosm in which different generations interact to claim a political solution for inclusiveness. Power relations are maintained (if not created), building an alternative space where to dance means also to live and share a social dimension.

This project started a process that is still ongoing and involves an increasing number of people from different generations and social groups, outlining the contours of a model of socialisation in which certain aspects highlighted by sociological and philosophical theories on community resonate. In particular, Roberto Esposito has introduced the concepts of "communitas" and "immunitas" to contrast the idea of community as the negation of the individual (2010). Starting from the Latin noun of *munus* (gift/duty) that denotes exchange (by accepting a *munus*, we are in obligation to perform a good or service), he proposed a notion of *communitas* understood not as belonging but rather as a process resulting in a mutual relationship based on giving and taking. This shared commitment is opposed to the concept of *immunitas* (immunisation), which consists in prioritising the individual relief from taking charge of the common good and therefore defending oneself against full absorption in the *communitas*. In our post-Fordist and neo-liberal globalised societies, art (and dance) seems to have assumed new responsibilities, and artistic projects are asked to compensate the dismantling of the welfare state. Social integration and participation are the main functions that art is more and more required to take on to be relevant for our societies, while we need to be conscious that this is possible only "at the price of dissolution of the boundaries of art itself" (Klein 2013, 206). If we agree that aesthetics is inscribed in political practices, which in turn delineate both the political space and our own perception of the social dimension, we can also affirm that dance practices (whether as a shared activity or in the form of a choreographic work) are political actions. In this sense, they represent configurations of the concept of community that society cannot ignore. As a dance practice and as a series of performances, *Dance Well* has become a social process happening into the museum but spreading its effects far beyond its walls and (re)presenting an innovative model of artistic and political inclusion for the local community.

3 Diary of a Move: From Society to Museum

Diary of a Move, conceived by the Italian-Japanese choreographer Masako Matsushita, is a creative, multidisciplinary, and participatory artistic project promoted by the CSC at Bassano del Grappa between March and April 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown.¹² Matsushita describes herself as a "mover" or a "movement artist" rather than a dancer and choreographer acknowledging her political responsibilities and taking a stand in contemporary debates. As for *Dance Well*, the creative process of *Diary of a Move* started long before, to be precise in 2012 in London, where Matsushita be-

¹² See the short documentary *Diary of a Move*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_NFW9j0pr0.

gan to investigate the subject of movement archiving and the role of the body in long-term memory creation through her piece *UK30*. The project was further developed in 2016 in Norway and Japan with *NOR14 | JP15*. After a short residency at the CSC in early 2020 and the outbreak of the pandemic a few weeks later, Matsushita decided to react to the unexpected interruption of her work by launching a public call for participants willing to record one movement a day for at minimum 14 and maximum 30 days in an analogue or digital diary. Among the many people of different ages and social backgrounds who responded, sixty-two decided to share their diaries with the choreographer. Participants subsequently stated that they had decided to apply to fill their days and to give meaning to the timelessness in which they were suddenly immersed and felt deprived, but also to get to know contemporary dance as an essentially relational art form, to follow a creative process from within, and make their own vocabulary. For many, it was a way of living fully in the present at a time of psychological and existential uncertainty, as well as of restricted mobility.

Standing, sitting, walking and running but also perceiving our weight, balance, and orientation in space and time tells us about the many ways we experience our condition of being in the world. The body is shaped by use and therefore is a repository of forms of usage that Marcel Mauss has defined as “body techniques” ([1936] 1973). In our everyday life we also kinesthetically perceive our ordinary movements and gestures and empathise with other people’s ways of moving, building a complex network of inter-subjective and inter-corporeal relationships. Some dance and performance scholars have recently revived the concept of the body as an archive of sensorial knowledge that preserves and at the same time processes our individual and collective memory (Baxmann 2007; Lepecki 2010; Bissell, Caruso Haviland 2018). They have also recognised how precious is the body when we aim to activate narratives of a past event (Buckland 2001) and how (dance) performances are conceivable as forms of archiving processes (Taylor 2003). In order to use our body, we always need a form of archive, whether it is based on muscle, visual and verbal memory. Everyday movements, more than dance movements, stimulate the sensorimotor system of a person watching it according to a shared body technique and a shared memory. Dance, as a practice of radical embodiment, as a social practice, and as a performing art, mobilises kinesthetic empathy, activates sensorial memories, stimulates consciousness, involves embodied cognition, and, last but not least, produces a sense of community (Foster 2011). By dancing, we acquire knowledge, we remember, express our emotions and transmit our stories. Dance activates and mediates personal and cultural memories producing long-lasting effects on the audience who ‘internally simulate’ the movements and gestures as they were enacting them while observing them. The audience also processes and transforms this experience into their incorporated memories (Hagendoorn 2004). Finally, if dance is a metaphorical space in which to reflect on bodies and their mobility, and the culture of knowledge (Brandstetter 2007), dancing must be considered as an embodied cultural and historical phenomenon to inquire, if we want to expand our understanding of the past (Nordera forthcoming; Franco, Nordera 2010).

Participants in the *Diary of a Move* were asked to indicate the date, place and source of the movement and to note a ‘pause’ if there were no movements to enter during the set time frame. People notated graphically as well as verbally and recorded on video simple actions such as kneading bread, locking

and unlocking the house or cutting a flower. Other movements, such as the act of opening arms to the sky imitating the flight of a bird, rhythmically dipping a tea bag up and down in the cup, but also steps and gestures passively incorporated thanks to recurring (if not tormenting) commercials or video clips that went viral on social media, all speak about excitement, desires, boredom, and loneliness. After 14 to 30 days, Matsushita with the help of two dancers and assistants, Vittoria Caneva and Ilaria Marcolin, contacted the participants again and through individual meetings began to compare the many movements noted and verify differences and similarities. The final analysis revealed, for example, how the pauses in the archiving process were linked to moments in the day when various forms of psychophysical discomfort were most evident due to stress or online work. During the notation process, the participants could share their experiences via Zoom and discuss with Matsushita the sense of their moving and how they felt. The exercise of listening to a movement consultant was experienced by many as a concrete help in overcoming these difficulties with such beneficial effects that more than half of the participants decided to continue the filing process for another two weeks. By writing down their movements in their personal diary (and describing them in a technical or narrative way or emphasising their psychological aspects) they became more aware of the way they use their bodies, express themselves and draw on personal memories also by evoking gestures, postures and motor sequences. They also learnt to exercise a form of control over their built-in habits and postures and developed a greater awareness of how even bodily movements that are functional for performing everyday actions carry deeper meanings. Movement research became a way of creating relational dynamics in a micro-community of interconnected citizens thanks to a daily practice of listening, observing and archiving. In addition, the process of sharing traces and memories brought out in the participants the empathic ability to rediscover themselves in the experience of the body of the other, restoring the emotional ties threatened by loneliness and the digital dimension. In a subsequent interview, Matsushita remembers the psychological burden of listening to these voices and looking at these bodies expressing moments of joy, discomfort and grief as when some of them lost their parents in these very weeks.¹³

At the end of this archival phase, participants were invited to choose one of the movements from their diary that they considered most representative of this time and experience, and show it via Zoom to the group. Matsushita, who performed her own movement, was thus able to watch the participants and incorporate their movements together with the personal stories they were tied to. Having both in mind and in her own body the drawings and descriptions of the diaries, the real movements and the voices of each participant, she created a choreography from each individual contribution making reference to a set of compositional rules and dramaturgical strategies. She then shaped a spatial and temporal order that could express the sensation of extreme compression and dilation experienced during the lockdown. The final work, a solo performed by Matsushita also named *Diary of a Move*, was presented in August 2020 in the museum cloister as part of the

¹³ *Diary of a Move* is a film directed by Matteo Maffesanti and Beatrice Bresolin. It is produced by the Operaestate Festival and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Cooperation (Italy), 2020.



Figure 2 Masako Matsushita in *Diary of a Move* (2020). Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa (Italy). © Elena Bovo

Operaestate Festival program in front of the project's participants who for the first time met physically, and then to a larger audience. This solo is an archive made alive and a performance displaying its function as both an archive and archiving process.

Diary of a Move is a dance solo based on the re-enactment of a series of movements and gestures selected, re-elaborated and performed by an artist who interacts with this material adding her own emotional experience, memories, body technique and movement quality. As it is for a dance piece (or a performance), which, every time it takes place and is re-enacted in a public context, it will be transformed and placed in a web of individual, collective and historical temporalities (Franko 2018, 4) that contribute to keeping it alive and meaningful for other audiences. When performed (or reenacted) in a museum, it also contributes to re-evaluating dance as a living experience rather than as a stable artistic product to be preserved and passed on [fig. 2].

The last phase of the process activated by *Diary of a Move* was its transformation into an exhibition called *Terzo Paesaggio. Inchiostro degli occhi e diari in movimento* (Third Landscape. Eye Ink and Diaries in Motion) that was inaugurated in September 2020 at the Civic Museum to present the project to a larger audience, including visitors not familiar with contemporary dance. A selection of the participants' diaries, drawings and videos was displayed in dialogue with the pictures taken by the Gruppo di Sostegno per Fotografi Pigri (Support Group for Lazy Photographers) that was coordinated by the visual artist Sara Lando to chronicle people's experience of the lockdown. A special space, named 'phone call corner', was dedicated to real-time interactions with some of the authors of the diaries. The visitors could contact them to discuss their experience and this improvised interaction was an act of interrogating the traditional museums' protocols and viewing conventions that helped to experience immediacy and proximity.

Diary of a Move echoes a long tradition in the 20th and 21st centuries of artworks by artists using archival methodologies for exhibiting personal or autobiographical histories (Giannachi 2016). Recent curatorial projects that use digital tools to record, document and preserve individual memories of ordinary people reflect a similar tendency that is directed towards building a collective past.¹⁴ Altogether the solo, the exhibition and the catalogue that reproduces the diaries offer an example of how performance and documentation are “mutually constitutive” (Westerman cited in Westerman, Giannachi 2018, 11) but also how archiving, exhibiting and performing can be mutually generative (Borggreen, Gade 2013, 16). Finally, they contribute to discuss what dance and dancing mean for us today and how we can preserve dance pieces, traditions, and repertoires by making them present.

When bodies move and dance, both for artistic purposes and in everyday life, they convey an ideology. In other words, through dancing a social order is installed directly at the level of the body because dance is a generative force capable of establishing new embodied social and political procedures and *habitus* (Hewitt 2005). As pointed out by Bojana Kunst

the attentiveness to the forces of mobilization that sets bodies in motion could disclose a great deal about the political dimension of society and the time in which we live. (2015, 90)

In this sense, dance and choreographic practices need to be understood as a laboratory of possible ways of moving and acting in which the spatial and temporal arrangements of bodies can influence social behaviours, and offer “another understanding of the public and the common” (90). The two projects analysed here are being developing precisely along this direction and so far they seem to have started complex social processes through which to mobilise museum spaces and enrich their institutional and political mission and role.

Politics becomes a discipline and a participatory practice that is entirely aesthetic because it is capable of changing the way we see, feel and perceive. Following Jacques Rancière’s concept of “distribution of the sensible” (2004) politics and aesthetics hold the possibility to make the previously unseen ‘seen’. Referring to these kinds of political (and artistic) engagement that would guarantee the active participation in the “distribution of the sensible” with the verb “to initiate” rather than “to participate” is a valuable critique suggested by André Lepecki (2013). The very act “of initiating a movement”, both in its physical and political meaning, can actualise something “unthinkable beyond authoritative authors, leaders, artists, and disengaged (yet perceptually free!) spectators or aesthetes” (Lepecki 2013, 37-8). By hosting dance and dancing people, museums ‘initiated’ a movement that is of great help in exploring new possibilities that make them “democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces”... and hopefully also moving spaces.

¹⁴ See, for instance, the project *Citizen Heritage*, <http://www.citizenheritage.com/the-project/>.

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