

Title: A 'Creative' Space

How the the concept was used as a metaphor for an inclusive dance practice and what the concept could bring to co-creation in the dance studio of Misiconi Dance Company



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Titel creative work, performance: Space between Space

Co-production with dancers.

Choreografie: Manouk Schrauwen en Laisvie Ochoa Gaevska.

Concept and artist direction by Joop Oonk.

Dancers: Mathilde Dirkzwager, Manouk Schrauwen, Eva Steringa, Laisvie Ochoa Gaevska

Link to work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkRtXrvPHBk>

Far away, close, touch, let go, come close or disappear: I have room because of my limits. A piece about the comprehensive concept of space. The Dancers look for their personal space and the space we share as people together. Boundaries are indicated and demarcated, but are we aware of this? We take up space and experience space without words.

A 'Creative' Space

In this writing I would like to discuss themes around the work *Space between Space* and how the the concept was used as a metaphor for an inclusive dance practice and what the concept could bring to co-creation in the dance studio of Misiconi Dance Company. In this article co-creation and inclusivity in the working methods stands for dialogue and a common ground, a place where everyone is involved. Hence, 'shared authorship' could be proposed as another term. In 2015 Thomas Hirschhorn about the *Eternal Flame*¹ (pp. 30-31) says that authorship equals 'responsibility'. However, within the shared authorship, one could say I am responsible for this, but not for that. It could be an excuse and not very helpful in the collaboration. He states that with the unshared authorship someone could be responsible for something someone is not responsible for. For example, if you're not even the author. This argument shows that within the co-creation could be a friction (pp. 30-31). Nevertheless, Hirschhorn (2015) also states that "[...]the notion of Unshared Authorship cal built, through 'equality' and 'non-exclusivity', a basis to engage the 'other' directly" (p.32). In order to create we need to literally open up the space for someone else, the 'other'. But, the responsibility might lie somewhere else.

Space between Space was created between september 2017 and december 2017 with 4 dancers from Misiconi DC. Misiconi DC is an inclusive dance company based in Rotterdam, a diverse company in a diverse city. The research of the concept began in 2016 with the aim of understanding how the human being relates to space and it's architectural and urban environment. As Sennet in 1970 says in *Interrupting the city Artistic Constitutions of the public Sphere*² "*It's the mixing of diverse elements that provides the materials for the 'otherness' of visibility different styles in a city; these materials of otherness are exactly what men need to become adults*" (p.162). In other words mixing diverse elements and being open for different styles is essential to growth, learning and to engage with the 'other'.

The research process started with the group studying daily human movement that was happening around a location where they felt comfortable and safe. This was the dinner table, a key prop in the performance and also a piece of urban furniture - almost an instrument for relationships and communication. An item of furniture that later grew into an architectural spatial element within the work. With the two tables space was continuously created by utilizing place, by actively controlling the tables, spaces were created. Rudi Learmans (1996) indicates "*Space includes a verb, a process of continuous 'spatialization'*. In that process place is made fluid, entering a state of permanent transmutation" (p. 280). The tables in the work were not only used to create and define space but were also turned. The '*Turning Tables*' also described as: reverse the situation, could be seen as a metaphor for a turning tide, making way for... or a transition zone from a place where we all find ourselves in a new process and creation, a place upon which we should reflect, constantly and repeatedly.

Nevertheless the research developed over time and so did the creation. For the dancers the concept of space in general is something that is always present in the work they make, even though we are not very aware of it because bodies are interacting naturally or on purpose in the dance studio. A shared space or an interrupted space is already created, by just being in the dance studio. For a dancer the 'other' is always there. It could be an object, time or even space. In the beginning it was hard for the group to define what space was besides the dinner table. The main tasks were built around how the concept could be translated into something that could be shown on stage. A product of the concept space.

The dancers considered three main elements: Own space, shared space and interrupting the space. These elements were researched from a subjective and affective matter. The awareness of space versus time, the body and other became very important. The somatic approach was extended towards small exercises in the previous training and rehearsals. The somatic movement studies came back in the personal experience and the internal sensation, feeling that was reflected on after guided improvisation tasks around the elements of own space, shared space and interrupting space.

Own space

The own space can be seen and described in many different ways. The dancers divided it into three main elements. Firstly as a space where you feel comfortable, that place that you mark as your own space. The space where you want to be when you want to be alone. For example your bedroom. It could also be seen as a private space like a room but there are also private spaces on and within the body.

Secondly, the group worked with measurements of the personal space. If you could measure your own space, how big is it? How big is the bubble around you? To imagine a bubble or aura around yourself was important for the

¹ Mobile Autonomy Exercises in Artists' Self Organization by Nico Dockx & Pascal Gielen (eds) 2015

² Interrupting the city Artistic Constitutions of the public Sphere by Sander Bax, Pascal Gielen and Bram Ieven (eds.) 2016

dancers because it made the concept more visual. In that way it was easier for some to make a choice or talk about it. We should not forget that space is something we can not grasp. It has many forms and definitions. It changes constantly.

And finally, occupying your own space in the studio was part of this research. Making your own choices and the ownership of the space around you. When do you occupy the space and what do you need for this? For some in the group these choices of stepping into the space do not come naturally. Tasks about giving and making choice were created within the dance material. At some points these choices became part of the choreography. However, these choreographic choices and therefore the ownership of created material was also a tool to co-create and actively participate in the creative process. The direct consequence is that when someone else reacts to an action you have deployed, the 'other' becomes essential and inseparable from the whole.

Shared Space

Shared space, a space we share with other bodies. We react already by being, we interact. The touch of someone and trust within this action. The dancers looked into some parts of social choreography. How do bodies relate in space, what does distance tell you and how do we relate to each other in different kinds of settings? Some actions were more natural than others, in other words we act in a certain way because of architectural environment or just because of our upbringing and education. However, within this segment 'other' becomes more important. In this process and especially within an inclusive practice we believe in equality. That means our relationship towards the other is well thought out, with a certain mindset. As Hirschhorn says (p. 32) Encounter 'Equal' Its the only possibility to encounter. However, as we know in an inclusive dance practice it's not always easy because of conditions and contexts, but like Hirschhorn also states, 'within a process of art there must always be given something, something essential and absolute. This could be the concept, the task, the 'other' or the space. From there we can start to share and build towards the art work.'

Conclusion

To conclude, the creative research around Space between Space contained different aspects. In the practice a co-creation and a 'common' ground was voiced. However, only on a certain level - that responsibility was not borne by the entire group. In that sense it was a unshared authorship. More, it made the group act like a small community in which the 'other' is needed to exist and needed to create art. Like Hirschhorn (2015) says "*Only one-on-one contact can create a dialogue or even a confrontation within the Other*" (p. 33).

Space between Space and in general the concept elements around space have become a reflection of the 'common'. The research and the 'common' can be compared with each-other. Inclusive dance practice and co-creation stands for a certain practice where the 'common' is expressed and reflected. As Lieven De Cauter (2016) says in Common places on the (Spatial) Commons³ "*In short, the common is a space or a area that can be both physical and symbolic, both material and mental and may serve as a resource for all*" (p.289). It reflects a symbolic meaning of what space does to the body and relationships, also it is visible within the material that was used in the piece, a dinner table.

Like Pascal Gielen (2016) is says in Interrupting the City⁴; "*The common city exists by the grace of the unpredictable performances in which a dissonant space of multitude of voices and encounters-voices emerges.*" Visa versa we all contribute to the common (city), it doesn't always matter if the authorship is shared or not as a dancer and performer you are always contributing by putting your body into the space.

In Interrupting the City Lieven De Cauter (2016) compares the common with the community, a place for informality (p. 262-263). This is comparable to the dance studio. De Cauter states that "*The common is the body without the politic, [...]*" (p. 263). She says that there is always community before policy and institution. However, this community could never become a blueprint of society. There is always a friction with outside factors. For example authorship. Therefore it will always be very difficult to point out the 'common' space and complete inclusiveness. Not forgetting, space and the 'common' is always fluid, changing and transforming and maybe does not have any physical form. The bubble and the informal space where we create together, have a dialogue and aim for inclusive research.

³ Interrupting the city Artistic Constitutions of the public Sphere by Sander Bax, Pascal Gielen and Bram Ieven (eds.) 2016

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