

BODY WALL

Video-dance film

The video dance film “Body-wall”, aims to be a comment on the relationship between architecture and the human body, spatial memory, the gaze and dance expression. It explores ways to escape the self-evident.

The structure and form of a certain space, a bathroom in this case, was challenged and became the blueprint for a set of actions that were incompatible with its everyday use. The “memory” of the space’s formal use was recalled through a series of unusual events that were orchestrated in order to develop a dialectic between space and movement. Without the body and its physical movement the bathroom seemed incomplete. These actions were choreographed to resemble natural, trivial, human behaviour which was at the same time undermined, reversed, and transformed into illogical movement that turned “private” space into “personal” space. Peter Greenaway’s documentary *26 bathrooms* is a feature of different people’s bathrooms that are far from being typical; an archive of real personal idioms that provided a useful reference.¹ Aldo Rossi states in *Architecture of the City*² (when he makes the realization that in all European cities the initial purpose of certain buildings has been altered over the years) that the relation between form and function is neither abstract nor technical; it’s a dialectic one.

The idea of shooting a video-dance inside the bathroom existed even at the time of its renovation. Based on Jean-Clet Martin’s reading of Deleuze,³ the “Body Wall” video acts as a surface where nothing is hidden, but also where not everything is visible. The disrupted (non) narrative, the split screen, the fractured time line, the non-synchronized sound, the irrational cuts create a Deleuzian totality, a rupture. It employs non-linearity in an absolute form as far as the image, the frames and the time are concerned. In fact, it could be watched in any possible sequence. All the above, with the addition of the underlying main layers of the film (architectural design, choreography and music) turn a potential movement-image into a time-image, where the non-teleological functions as a transversal eye.

There are no predetermined choreographic instructions in order to achieve by means of improvisation a reading of the specific shell through the space created and built by the human body itself. The Brazilian choreographer Filippus Mendes attempted to translate theoretical notions into movement instructions. The key motion instruction for the performer was to create a constant negation of spatial and temporal continuity. The absence of a stable basis for meaning reinforces motion and favors multiple repercussions or interchanges of the spatial lines and levels.

Architectural design, choreography and music appear like three layers functioning autonomously as well as in a complementary manner. The performer succumbs to a network of limits, drawn by an unknown hand. The trace left by the physical movement could be an improved version of the architectural floor plan.

In *Body Wall*, the dysfunctional movement of the average western adult is put at stake, since, for once, it is actually ordered upon the dancer to STOP doing the expected and negate any kind of cohesion within her movements. What is actually imposed on us daily now becomes blatant and mundane, through a simplistic approach of space that turns the body into a dysfunctional entity and the body imposing itself in the given space.

The ergonomic dimensions of the bathroom were designed to a large extent according to Le Corbusier's *modulor system*.⁴ The architect has set the average human height to 1,83 m and it was by that system that he worked out the measurements and sizes for most of his architectural works. In the case of the bathroom that the video was shot in, the ergonomic sizes were adjusted to the average height of its designer and the video's performer, which came to about 1,70 m. The transfer of the human proportions onto the architectural plan and side elevations of the room's shell helped the performer's improvisations, along with the instructions that were given. The cold and warm materials that were used (marble, wood, ceramic tiles, synthetic granite) and the colours applied have a correlation with the psychological themes that develop in the performance.

concept - direction: Manolis Iliakis
choreography: Filipos Mendes Lazaris, Joanna Toumpakari
video editing: Polyvios Kessarlis
music: Cl. Debussy, (The Snow is Dancing, Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum)
photography: George Chrisanthakopoulos
performer: Joanna Toumpakari
costume designer: em.kei
spatial design: Manolis Iliakis
production: private [egotism], Thessaloniki Film Festival - VideoDance
(project|exchange|2005),
Greece 2005

¹ Greenaway, Peter, *Inside Rooms: 26 Bathrooms*, documentary film (England: London & Oxfordshire, 1985)

² Rossi, Aldo, *The Architecture of the City*, (The MIT press, Oppositions Books, 1984)

³ Martin, Jean-Clet, *La Philosophie de Gilles Deleuze* (France: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2005)

⁴ Corbusier, Le, *The Modulor, Modulor 2*, (Germany: Birkhäuser, 2000)