

ON FRAGMENTS OF OBLIVION

1ST CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

REPORT (TRANSLATION)

Institut del Teatre, 8 November 2023



**Diputació
Barcelona**

Institut del Teatre

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
'Esment'. Keynote by Mal Pelo.....	4
Forum #1: 'Can we, do we want to or do we know how to conserve the performing arts?'	7
Forum #2: 'What are we conserving when what we want to conserve doesn't exist?'	14
Forum #3: 'Is it possible to exhibit vanished works of art?'	21

On Fragments of Oblivion. Report

Original author: Rita Rakosnik

Translation: Babel Traductors.

Original: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11904/1544>

1st Conference on the Conservation and Dissemination of the Performing Arts

Curator: Laura Ars

Organized by: Performing Arts Museum (MAE)

Documentation Center and Performing Arts Museum (MAE)

Director: Anna Valls

INTRODUCTION

Last November, the Museu de les Arts Escèniques [Performing Arts Museum, MAE] of the Institut del Teatre [Theatre Institute, IT] held the **First Conference on Conservation and Dissemination of the Performing Arts** with the participation of performance artists, curators and dissemination experts in order to debate the idiosyncrasies of preserving and displaying the performing arts, as well as heritage institutions' rights and responsibilities towards the future.

The conference, which was targeted at professionals, students and researchers in both the performing arts and the preservation, conservation and display of the tangible and intangible heritage, promised to ask questions like: Are there works of art that exist solely in the moment, or is it possible to conserve them over time so that future generations can be familiar with, understand and analyse them? How can we preserve something that is ephemeral? Is it possible to exhibit a moment from the past in a meaningful, understandable way?

Given the unique characteristics of the performing arts, especially their ephemeral and fragmentary nature, heritage, conservation and dissemination experts come upon specific problems that are difficult to solve with the traditional preservation and display methods used by conventional museums.

In an attempt to think about and generate knowledge surrounding all these questions, the first conference on this topic welcomed the participation of performance artists, curators and dissemination experts who reflected on the idiosyncrasies of preserving and displaying the performing arts.

Sílvia Ferrando, director of the **Institut del Teatre**, opened the conference by highlighting the Performing Arts Museum's incredible efforts to conserve the Catalan performing arts over the years and thanking its entire team for their good work, especially its director, **Anna Valls**, and **Laura Ars**, the museum's curator and main driving force behind this conference. Ferrando also took the opportunity to thank **Cesc Gelabert**, **Alex Ollé** and **Sol Picó** for taking the initiative to create the manifesto **Per un nou MAE** [For a New MAE], which was the seed of many of the concerns articulated in these reflection forums. 'A theatre museum is not a museum of objects but a museum of ways of being in the world, a museum about dynamics, silences and other imaginaries, as well as an agora, a space of reflection and gathering for professionals in the sectors and lovers of the memory of the performing arts.' As Ferrando reminded us, the memory conserved in the MAE is the memory of a life for many people, and

this is why conserving it is a huge responsibility, although we still have to keep asking many questions.

The director of the IT concluded by citing the performance group **Mal Pelo**, who delivered the keynote, *ESMENT*, as an inspiration, and she particularly highlighted their emblematic project and multidisciplinary creation space around the body called ***L'animal a l'esquena*** [The Animal on Our Back].

'ESMENT'.¹ KEYNOTE BY MAL PELO.

Pep Ramis and **María Muñoz**, a duo of creators, choreographers and dancers, were charged with opening the conference, and they did so based on lived experience from a lengthy career that has equipped them with a playful, personal vision of concepts like memory, documentation, archive and transmission. Based on the contradiction involved in wanting to transmit something that is ephemeral and knowing for sure that the potentiality of the performing arts lies precisely in their momentary occurrence in a specific place, time, and space, Ramis noted the importance of referents when collectively shaping the imaginaries and cosmos behind a piece, but especially the importance of asking ourselves what we want to archive.

Muñoz spoke about this chain running from memory to documentation, from documentation to archive and from archive to transmission. Their experience from Mal Pelo's practice has shown them that this leap from memory to archive takes place because they view the body as an archive. This idea of archive has nothing to do with heritage; instead, it is an archive that stresses movement, that is, transmission. And the advent of video was crucial in all this because in the case of dance, it allowed a second-generation look that enabled them to get in touch with a genealogy of creators comprised of names like **Martha Graham**, **Jerzy Grotowski** and **Tadeusz Kantor**, among many others.

But we should never lose sight of the fact that the present time is what sustains dance and the performing arts in general. Discovering these materials was extraordinarily enriching, but Muñoz was interested in how we can refer to an archive via the body itself, in an attempt to corporally understand the urgency and drive of great dance masters' works. She also ventured to express a bit of scepticism about the scholarly output of Theatre and Performance Studies in the United States, which she praised for their attempt to contextualise and reflect on performance language but criticised for a potential over-analysis, which had led her to question whether the experiences that had accompanied the subsequent reflections on paper had been as powerful as they seemed in writing. She even confessed that she had actually thought that it was all just invented in some of her most critical moments. In any case, it is true that the hyper-production of reflection on the performing arts has taken on a dimension that often distances it from real experience, which is what we want to preserve and transmit.

¹The Catalan word *Esmement* translates to three concepts, which the talk encompassed: *Mention*, *Knlowdege* and *Care*.

Muñoz recalled the early stages of *L'animal a l'esquena*, where they organised activities precisely about documentation, transmission and dissemination with figures like **Toni Cots**, **Lisa Nelson**, **Steve Paxton**, **Peter Halton**, **Toni Serra** and **Julyen Hamilton**. One of the questions they explored together was how to establish a bridge of transmission: corporal, gestural and generational succession. Bereft of any definitive answers, the creator pointed to questions that were collected by her colleague, who noted the (impossible) nature of translation and (real) fiction in any re-reproduction effort in the performing arts. However, what we can do is earnestly strive for transmission so that lived experiences become, in turn, catalysts of new experiences.

Ramis claimed that more importantly there is an interest that joins us all, namely the passion for observing, for watching how something is created and experienced within the laboratory or studio, where magical revelations are conjured up that will never be seen again. Defending the intergenerational meeting point that is *L'animal a l'esquena*, Ramis shared his taste for play and the words *disseminate* and *intoxicate*, which are essential in human learning.

Both recalled *L'animal* projects prior to the 2008 crisis, a time of enormous artistic fertility and reflection on their own work and repertoire, where they developed initiatives like the *Arxiu Cos Creació Pensament (2001-2010)* in the guise of a website developed with the assistance of **Elena Oña**, which started with a bang but had to be taken down in 2010 due to a lack of resources. That was when Mal Pelo was able to team up and nurture itself with professionals like **Isabel de Naverán**, **José Antonio Sánchez**, **Ixiar Rozas**, **Bojana Kunst**, **Ric Allsopp** and **Scott Delahunta**, who, immersed in artistic practice, were asking the questions that they had never thought to ask, especially questions about the language of dance. All these voices comprise this living archive and serve as a source of inspiration and a catalyst.

Muñoz stressed the idea of translation, even in early education: students use their tools to translate the lessons taught by their teachers. Younger generations go back to the works of their predecessors from their contemporary vantage point, translating—if not copying—with their body, trying to find this physical and reflective power that was the engine driving the original creation. Next, Ramis spoke about the fun and pleasure they got from self-translation, that is, creating installations and exhibitions about their own material and work. This exercise in recontextualisation or decontextualisation, such as from the stage to the exhibition hall, has a revelatory mirror effect, he explained, because it forces you to critically distance yourself from the work you have done and become aware of the route taken, the concerns and the essential lines of inquiry that permeate your entire practice, which enable you to cartograph the mental maps of an entire generation.

‘Where do we want to place the emphasis in this rescue of the ephemeral?’, ‘How can we preserve a perfume?’, ‘How can we preserve a specific quality of a body?’, Ramis wondered. Some loss is inevitable, and there will always be new creators, but it is worth not abandoning the desire to transmit, whose primary and most powerful tool is the body. Just as the dancer or the carpenter learn by watching, imitating and doing, the artisan’s (and the dancer’s) body becomes the container of the memory of an entire generation of carpenters, which would be impossible without the act of sharing.

To conclude, Muñoz cited two examples on documentation and reenactment within the performing arts. The first is the ***Documentación orgànica*** project by **Ayara Hernández** in conjunction with **Félix Marchand**, a series of works that examine the poetics of processes of recalling performance works. The second is the reactivation and reinterpretation of **Bach**, a very personal solo that Muñoz put on for the first time in 2004 and that in 2016 she transmitted to **Federica Porello**, an Italian performer who works with Mal Pelo. The transmission process was a revelation: while Muñoz had a piece of paper with a few lines about the piece, Porello filled two notebooks with notes. During the process of transmitting the piece, the two dancers watched audiovisual recordings of it, but more importantly they spoke and worked on the physical fine-tuning, musicality and composition around the piece. In this case, the transmission transcended the show, which was merely a channel, a filter. Porello may transmit the piece to another performer in the not-too-distant future, creating an invisible thread between bodies in motion that will only be glimpsed momentarily every time *Bach* is brought to the stage.

FORUM #1: 'CAN WE, DO WE WANT TO OR DO WE KNOW HOW TO CONSERVE THE PERFORMING ARTS?'

This forum was on the value, need, ethics and possibilities of conserving the memory of the performing arts through contextual documents in order to construct a shared history that takes into account all artistic expressions, including the marginal and the most popular expressions, like music, puppets and dance.

The participants were:

Anabel de la Paz, head of Archive, Library and Heritage at the Teatre Lliure.

Jesús Navarro, director of Morera. Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Lleida.

Jordi Alomar, director of the Music Museum (Barcelona).

Núria Guiu, dancer and choreographer.

Moderator: **Anna Valls**, director of the Performing Arts Museum (MAE).

Anabel de la Paz began by citing **Zara Rodríguez, Peggy Phelan, Richard Schechner** and **Juan Carlos Olivares** to spotlight the Gordian Knot shared by all documentation professionals: the impossibility of capturing and reproducing the ephemeral. We have heavily focused on documenting shows and the materials they generate, but we have to begin to document the creative processes, said the head of the **Arxiu Lliure**.

De la Paz spoke about **Lo Memorable**, a research project and archive of stage experiences by **Javier J. Hedrosa** and **Paula Romero**, which focuses on the figure of the performing arts spectator, specifically on their reception of the work. It is essential to document all these experiences, everything that makes it possible for a show to come to fruition while also bearing in mind the reception and impact it had on the audience and critics. And this show should be activated artistically and collectively, thinking about citizens and education. One example is the commented viewings of historical **Teatre Lliure** pieces held as part of **Dilluns d'arxiu** [Archive Monday], which highlights other voices beyond those of the director and actors. One of these viewings was done around the recording of **Tot esperant Godot** [Waiting

for Godot] (which premiered at the Teatre Lliure de Gràcia in 1999), which was commented on by one of the stagehands and the producer of the show.

The question is still how we can save and conserve these works, and de la Paz believes that documentalists are faced with the challenge of being creative while also staying faithful to the artists and the nature of their pieces. Moreover, they should not wait until the end of the processes (performance, premiere) to document them. The figure of the documentalist is therefore extremely important from the very outset. The **Cosmos** project, spearheaded by the Teatre Lliure, is a good example: it is a collaborative digital panel made available to the public so they can see the entire universe of (inter)connections that explain the show. It is an expanded reality of the creative processes that occur at the theatre but seldom leave the privacy of the rehearsal rooms. It is a living document that grows along with the production process until the premiere and remains afterwards as an permanent open-access archive where the public can freely browse and delve into contexts and references related to the show.

De la Paz cited the book **Desplega visions** by the choreographer **Quim Bigas** as an example of a kind of translation of the show **DV – Desplaçament Variable** to paper. The documentalist has to support creators and supply them with tools, but creators also have to be aware that everything they generate could become heritage. Making an archive showcases the work done and helps to communicate the piece, and this is why it is imperative to implement policies, guidelines, strategies and heritage plans that consider all of this and provide the tools to bring it to fruition. In this sense, de la Paz finds inspiration in **Belgium’s House of Letters (Letterenhuis)** and its toolkit **TRACKS**, as well as the **Podium Kunst**, a Dutch initiative associated with the state archive network which has a four-year heritage plan and invites creators and institutions to map their archives. Their website provides an array of tools and resources on documentation systems and criteria explained via the figure of a choreographer. De la Paz also believes that we can use artificial intelligence to catalogue and archive within the institution.

Finally, de la Paz offered one last recommendation in the guise of a book **Alguien lo hizo** by **Esteban Feune de Colombi**, a catalogue of performative actions held all over the world with an illuminating back cover text:

Someone did it. It doesn't matter if it's performance, event, fun, happening, activism, flashmob, action, installation, festival, video installation, ready-made, situation, site-specific, spectacle, architecture, photograph, film, painting, music, opera, sculpture, theatre, dance, cooking or poetry; it doesn't matter if all of this is erased in one fell swoop and all that remains is a long liminal line sketched in the snow or the bottom of the sea.

Jordi Alomar stated bluntly that it is impossible to conserve the performing arts, yet we have the responsibility to do so. He cited reflections on snow by the German philosopher and sociologist **Hartmut Rosa**, who defines it as 'the pure form of manifestation of what is unavailable'. We cannot fabricate it; we cannot get it by force; we cannot predict it; we cannot trap it; we cannot appropriate it. If we try to grab it, it melts; if we freeze it, it stops being snow; and if we carry it, it runs through our fingers. Alomar related this line of thinking with the project of modernity, which views the world through aggression, as a set of objects to be grabbed, attained, conquered, dominated and used. Only after this attempt to possess it can it become reachable by and useful for humans. Nostalgia and the fear of loss are ultimately the origin of both the social sciences and institutions that preserve and conserve memory, modern institutions like museums and archives which systematically and bureaucratically turn things into objects; that is, they objectify them. The world as we know it tends not towards approximation but towards appropriation, he claimed.

The constellation of indicators comprised of the cultural industry, delimitable reference frameworks and technical reproductivity (photography and video) creates an illusion of availability which is far from the specific, particular feature of the performing arts: their unavailability. Thus, it ignores their condition of possibility, experience of resonance and experience of meaning. And this, Alomar said, leads us to distinguish two key terms: to conserve and to document, which should not be mixed up. The world in which we live invites us to conserve, given that documenting consists of viewing items as documents, items that become indexes or even

indications. Thus, conserving is an entelechy, even though it is our responsibility. 'So, what are the criteria for valuing and validating everything that can be documented?' 'Who has the judgement and legitimacy to apply them?' 'Are those criteria conventional? Imposed?' Alomar posed these questions and then invited the artists (and everyone in the value chain of an artistic act) to define the criteria needed to document their processes. 'How do we integrate the experience of this entire value chain?' 'How can we conserve something that is experiential?' Alomar confesses that he does not have the definitive answers, but he does say that it can only be understood by activating a heritage of experience. And the activation of this heritage happens if institutions consider it a core part of their action, not an appendix. Therefore, museums have to document and multiply (two verbs that Alomar associates) all these creative processes and life stories associated with the artistic act, as well as think about heritage as a point of departure, a trigger to embark on transmission, reinterpretation, translation, transduction and transfer processes.

Alomar cited several cases of heritage articulations that interest him, such as **Numax presenta (1980)**, a documentary by **Joaquim Jordà** on the collectivisation of a factory that twenty-some years later he revisited in **Vint anys no és res (2004)**, where the same characters return to the same place and talk about their memories of the experience of collective resistance.

Finally, Alomar cited four projects with this triggering view spearheaded by the **Music Museum**: 1) **Fragments d'oblit** [Fragments of Oblivion] by **Alfredo Costa Monteiro**, a French-Portuguese sound artist living in Barcelona, who has been working for more than half a year with all the forgotten instruments in the museum's holdings to create a sound landscape based on everything that is no longer in use musically; 2) the exhibition **Registrar, mirar, recórrer**, an invitation inspired by the contributions to the **Cançoner Popular de Catalunya** (Popular Songbook of Catalonia) based on its photographic legacy; 3) a project created as part of **Creació i Museus**, a programme in conjunction with **Graner – Fàbrica de creació de dansa i arts vives** [Graner – Dance and Live Arts Creation Factory], where they invited the choreographer **Constanza Brncic** to visit **Víctor Nubla's** sound and audiovisual archive; and 4) another **Creació i Museus** project in dialogue with El Graner, **Escoltes**

Divergents, by **Georgia Vardarou**, to explore three musical pieces in the museum's temporary exhibition, namely *I Am Sitting in a Room* by **Alvin Lucier**, *Vinyl Coda I* by **Philip Jeck** and *The Disintegration Loops* by **William Basinski** from the perspective of movement and sound, using the sound and instrumental imaginary of the **Bernard brothers** and **François Baschet**.

The choreographer and 2022 National Culture Award winner, Núria Guiu, stated that she and many colleagues from her generation felt a sense of orphanhood regarding the national history of dance. Along with many young creators, she is looking for a way to recover and learn about the past via other bodies and choreographers by summoning their absence and carefully conserving their remains. The artist is currently creating a piece at the **Mercat de les Flors** which has eight women dancers and examines the body as an affective channel that activates presences and absences, as a conduit of the invisible, that is, of dance, movement and gestuality, viewing all of these movements as a phantasmagoria. This phantasmagorical archive, she tells us, travels through time, bisects history and cultures and is manifested by a body or a performance at a given point in time. The fantastical nature of dance is exemplified, for example, in a specific movement that may come from our mother or our teachers, who, in turn, learned it from other teachers and so on, *ad infinitum*, weaving an invisible thread of transmission—by their presence—of gestures from body to body, generation to generation...

Guiu calls for more accessible, transversal, fully digitalised performing arts archives with fewer bureaucratic hurdles standing in the way of consulting them. In this sense, she highlights the efforts of **Anabel de la Paz** in the **Arxiu Lliure**, where she had the opportunity to experience the creation of one of its *Cosmos* firsthand. Echoing her colleagues' words, the choreographer said that activation is extremely important as a way to avoid rigidity and fossilisation in traditional archives.

To conclude, Guiu cited the performance studies theoretician and research, **Rebecca Schneider**, who talks about how this perception of the performing arts as ephemeral is largely Western, given that they leave no tangible remains but only intangible ones, even though these are equally important. As **Jaime Conde-Salazar** explains in *La danza del futuro*, a performance does not end with the applause but

more like the opposite: that is often when it begins. It begins as an echo, a reverberation that people carry in their bodies, an experience, an intangible remnant with high symbolic value. The work ahead of us, Guiu says, may be about valuing these intangible remains generated by the performing arts.

The first forum closed with Jesús Navarro, who reminded us how art museums have already incorporated the performing arts, especially since the 1950s and 1960s, with the international explosion of performance and happenings, which posed a real challenge due to their political will to escape conservation and mercantilisation. Thus, this posed an initial ethical problem for museums, which inevitably became the collaborators needed for their commercial exploitation, stripping these works of their original nature. Ultimately, what many institutions have come to understand is that the preservation of these works was a priority due to their political message. Furthermore, the art market has totally swallowed them up by incorporating performance into public and private collections, and it has usually done this through remnants, whose accumulation has led to an inflation in the significance of the documentary side that many professionals are trying to rectify.

Navarro introduced a fundamental variation: time, the temporary or permanent nature of a work, which leads to very different actions and mechanisms within museum practice. However, this is quite a lively debate around the world; the leading international museums have working groups focused on all these issues. One particularly noteworthy one is at the **Tate Modern**, which developed **The Live List: What to consider when collecting live works** in 2014, a series of guidelines to bear in mind when including an intangible work (dance, theatre, activism) in an art collection. Therefore, as Navarro pointed out, we are treading on ground that is conceptually somewhat slippery.

As an example he experienced firsthand, Navarro told us about the acquisition by **Morera. Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Lleida** of the work by the dancer **Aimar Pérez Galí** entitled **Sudando el discurso**. This purchase entailed not only conceptual problems but also, more importantly, administrative problems: 'How do we buy something that doesn't exist? Something that is intangible?' 'What exactly are we buying?' Admiring a text, a score or an object is very different than acquiring

an experience that only makes sense when performed live, but there is always a tangible part arising from any performing arts creation. Any creative process is always accompanied by documentation that drives part of the process and is important to conserve. In the case of Aimar Pérez Galí's work, the museum purchased the tangible part and both parties signed a contract stipulating that the piece would periodically be performed in the museum's spaces, bearing in mind that it will mutate over time due to its improvisational nature. With this purchase, the Morera has also pledged to introduce the performing arts into the museum not in the guise of parallel programming but as an integral part of the museum's permanent collection.

The director of the Morera highlighted a key stakeholder in the art system, the curator, who supports artists' creative processes and enriches the context in which the work is produced by guiding the artist in their creation. Therefore, he claims, museums can not just document but also influence the creative process. In this sense, communication with the creator is important, even though there are creators who clearly understand that they have to come up with a translation of their work. In the case of performance, there are international artists who make a site-specific translation of their work when partnering with an artistic institution so that it meets the needs of each context. Navarro believes that we should think in this direction and that museums must make a clear effort to change their ways of collecting and instead try to capture the essence of the performing arts.

After acknowledging the breadth and range of topics discussed, Anna Valls closed the forum with the promise that next year's conference will revisit the topic and the issues discussed.

FORUM #2: 'WHAT ARE WE CONSERVING WHEN WHAT WE WANT TO CONSERVE DOESN'T EXIST?'

This forum examined what it really means to conserve the performing arts in the day-to-day operations of institutions of memory. Conserving documents and objects related to performance has been the traditional method of preserving the performing arts, albeit not without difficulties; today, we also ask ourselves whether that is enough or whether we should also conserve the life of these arts.

The participants were:

Carme Carreño, curator at the Performing Arts Museum (MAE).

Júlia Rubies, performance artist.

Marta Vega, head of the Studies and Documentation Centre at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA).

Moderator: **Laura Ars**, heritage officer at the Performing Arts Museum (MAE).

The second forum got underway after a much-needed dose of caffeine. It opened with a talk by Marta Vega, who said that MACBA is fortunate enough to have the complete collections of artists like **Joan Brossa** and **Jordi Benito**, without the missing parts that performing arts collections often have. She also noted that the archive and collection comprise a unique artistic-documentary heritage within the museum, which always fluctuates between these two spheres, even though they are actually just one. This makes it difficult to establish permanent conservation and documentation protocols, given that the same thing may be considered either just a photograph or an essential part of the work in different contexts.

Vega recalled the text by the dance theoretician **André Lepecki** about the **body as archive**, where he talks about the person-to-person transmission that exists, going from body to body, shunning everything static and any urge to record. Nonetheless, MACBA strives to document the performances and actions that take place there to generate documentation that is not part of the collection but traces what has happened in the museum.

With her hallmark sense of humour, Carme Carreño started her talk by joking about the way Laura Ars introduced her ('I'm conserved here') and then confessed that she had many more questions than answers. The MAE curator explained that in recent years the museum has undertaken a massive drive to acquire collections from creators, such as the **Comediants Collection**, which had a vast number of objects, meaning that a culling was in order. Carreño underscored the importance of getting these objects to speak, of the institution crafting stories to explain them and offer interesting reinterpretations of them.

Júlia Rubies expressed her pleasure at finding that the speakers and attendees were asking similar questions, and she proceeded to share her experience in the workshop led by **Quim Bigas** at **La Poderosa**, **Entrar-se. Arxiu de la Porta 1992-2012**, which invited artist to reopen the **La Porta** archive, where she discovered a host of documentation that profoundly challenged her and prompted her to embark on an investigation. 'How was it possible that none of that had ever reached me through any channel?', she wondered. The discovery made her feel like she had come to the party late, that she had missed something, that she had been unaware of an artistic scene and community that had existed for a long time. The performing artist said that today many artistic processes (especially investigation and research) come with a documentary part and that each artist interacts with it in a specific way, depending on their question or line of work.

Getting back to the issue of the ephemeral, the founder of the **Cascades** project cited a conversation between **Quim Bigas** and **André Lepecki**, in which Lepecki speaks about the performer as a telekinetic, telepathic machine that ancestrally houses bodies that navigate in a kind of constant telekinesis. As **Jaime Conde-Salazar** said:

Dance changes state as it is happening. It is multiplied and transformed; it invades other mediums and bodies, spreading unchecked. Dance is not exhausted in its doing. Its disappearance is not a punishment; it's what allows it to remain stuck to the body. That is, it never stops being alive.

To conclude, Rubies mentioned **Histoire(s)**, a piece by **Olga de Soto**, where the choreographer interviews the spectators at a Parisian ballet held in 1946, about which no documentation remains. The work questions what is more important: the

original event—which is non-existent, unrecoverable—or the embodied, engaged memories of the spectators?

Next, Laura Ars asked the second question of the forum: ‘When we decide as an institution what we preserve and what we don’t, do we become active agents in the work?’ Marta Vega began by underscoring the ever-changing, dynamic nature of archives: the form they take at home—more personal, original, chaotic—is not the same as when they enter a museum, where they are inevitably subjected to specific protocols that organise and standardise all the documentation collected. As an institution, many decisions are taken when shaping an archive and its classification; the way it is designed, the search parameters, etc. It is never neutral and is mediated by certain policies that the museum staff puts into operation. Therefore, the museum is indeed an actor that intervenes and affects the archive.

Carme Carreño, in turn, shared an anecdote that exemplifies museums’ intervention in archives: once, while setting up a dress from the **Gelabert-Azzopardi Collection** for a show, the curators made a mistake when they combined some of its parts, and **Lydia Azzopardi** told them: ‘Hey, I love it, but that doesn’t go with that!’ The museum had inadvertently proposed a new arrangement for the dress, thus intervening, in a way that, without excesses or in dialogue with the creators, can have a very interesting creative potential.

The MAE is engaged in constant dialogue with artists and their heirs. Every time the museum accepts a new collection, it starts a negotiation about what should be kept and what not, a form of discrimination that the museum would have to do by itself, solely guided by the documentation and basic conservation criteria, without this interlocutor. Photographs and family portraits are a paradigmatic case: this type of material is usually discarded and given back to the family, but afterwards it is common for the museum to receive requests for them, even though they are no longer in the archive because they were deemed personal items with no documentary value. The same holds true with objects made of materials that deteriorate easily and are likely to disappear, Carreño said, and she asked whether we should keep these things, and if so, how. For all these reasons, Carreño concluded

that the institution does not mean to intervene but always ends up intervening and taking decisions.

Next, Júlia Rubies shared her concerns about time and space, viewing the latter as a gathering point where this body-to-body transmission, from living archive to living archive, is possible. Regarding time, she once again cited **Jaime Conde-Salazar** to question the Western view of time, and especially time in the history of dance, viewed as a steady, linear progression of constant improvement over the previous movement. However, she says, the fact is that everything is happening at the same time; everything is alive at the same time; everything is superimposed in a much more chaotic way than we may imagine; and we are all somehow contemporary with each other.

To conclude, Rubies outlined two different ways of thinking about the future of the performing arts. The first one, based again on **Jaime Conde-Salazar's** thinking, imagines the future as a dimension that is already contained in the present from a place of desire. From this place, a dance speculates—a dance that exists because the present we are experiencing harbours the future—where form has no value, where there are no disciplines, where we do something blurry and liberating which cannot be pigeonholed by any definition. It is an invitation to explore ‘infinite strata of being and question any identity-based definition’. Rubies asked a very relevant question regarding the categorisation and capture of the performing arts: ‘How can we do it if they’re the ambitions of the material itself?’ In other words, how can we respect these ambitions and not once again fall into logics that constrain us and run counter to works’ aesthetic and political will? The second way of thinking is a speculative proposal posited by the philosopher and independent Italian writer **Federico Campagna** in his recent essay ***Prophetic Culture. Recreation for Adolescents***, which invites us to position ourselves as generators of documentation with the awareness that we are now the ancestors of a new culture to come, whose form we do not yet know. Adopting these authors’ theses, Rubies asks how to project this speculative gesture for the future generations who may not be able to access contemporary forms and codes (just as we Millennials do not know how to use floppy disks). She celebrated the fact that this gradual loss of information is also an opportunity and reminded us not to forget that a document is also a fiction.

To conclude the second forum, the moderator asked a final, complex question: 'Is it possible to statically conserve a dynamic art? Or should the museum try to give this entire heritage new uses and movements?' Based on her experience at MACBA's **Studies and Documentation Centre**, Marta Vega cautioned that static conservation inevitably plays a role, but this does not mean that we should not explore the possibility and power of conserved works, a power that may also be found in books and music scores. This was clear in the exhibition **Possibility of Action. The Life of the Score (2008)**, a music and performing arts show curated by **Barbara Held** and **Pilar Subirà** at the MACBAS' Studies and Documentation Centre. This can also be seen, albeit differently, in MACBA's acquisition of a book by **Enric Farrés-Duran** that has no material existence. The artist knows its structure but has only told it orally to the MACBAS' Studies and Documentation Centre staff, who have to activate the document by reproducing what Farrés-Duran has told them if they receive any inquiry about it. In view of the librarians' unease, the artist claimed that it was no big deal if the book was forgotten or gradually lost, and he added that physical books are also likely to be stolen or damaged. To conclude, Vega asked her professional colleagues to document as much as possible in order to make the contexts accessible and knowable, given that they are essential in activating new reinterpretations of live art archives and collections.

Carme Carreño pointed to the fact that the world of conservation is at a time of change, when protocols and ways of doing things are being reconsidered in ways that would have been unthinkable several years ago. She also shared one of the most human, recurring concerns of conservators, namely the worry that objects will break or be damaged by exhibiting or reusing them, and she cited the example of the extraordinarily elaborate, delicate clock from the set design of the **Gelabert and Aazzopardi** show **Preludes** by the artist **Frederic Amat**. The same holds true with **Harry Vernon Tozer's** emblematic puppets, which are conserved and documented in the MAE archive yet remain inanimate and imperturbable with no puppeteer handling them. Tozer would very likely feel sad seeing his creations stored and condemned to immobility, but the fact is that setting them in motion would entail not only considerable technical difficulty but also the risk of their breaking and deteriorating. The MAE conservator repeated the idea expressed by Marta Vega:

documentation is essential for the conservation and knowledge of the object (nobody asks for pieces without documentation), but it is essential to strike a balance between their durability and their use.

Júlia Rubies noted that when we decide what to save and what not to save, we are necessarily creating a system of visibility and invisibility, of belonging and exclusion, and we have to take responsibility for this by asking ourselves what memories we are conserving, how are they accessible and which ones are systematically lost. To illustrate this idea, Rubies summoned the image of all the stacked boxes in the garages of independent, dissident artists whose work will never come to light. We should constantly question this punitive system and deeply examine what we reproduce and what kinds of discourses and hegemonies it reinforces.

Regarding the issue of the difficulty of accessing memory in the performing arts, Rubies claims that this particularly arises at the time of reenactment, when we aim to reinterpret and reactivate works and objects in the present and are suddenly confronted with the hurdles of mercantilisation (copyright and image rights) and bureaucracy. Nonetheless, we have to accept the fact that we cannot save everything, that there are things that will get lost in the shipwreck and this is fine: we have to be able to live with this fact, she said.

Rubies cited several recent touchstone projects, such as the lecture **BOQUES PLENES. Fabulacions de cine inconcluses** by **Paula Caspão**, which was on the programme of the **Seqüència 2** festival at Barcelona's **Fabra i Coats**. Caspão spoke about the term 'acknowledgement' within the context of artistic inquiry and archival practices and underscored the importance of shared debts and loans, as well as the circular nature of knowledge. One example of creative appropriation is the Portuguese researcher's interpretation of the aesthetic of the early Internet, stating that 'the pixels from 2008 are precious because they blurred the boundaries of bodies'. The **Hacer Historia(s)** festival, a biannual contemporary dance and performance series curated by **La Poderosa**, is another example of working with concepts like archive, memory, community and edition.

Finally, the creator from Masnou shared two strategies for interacting with documents without falling into the traps mentioned above. She learned the first one

from Quim Bigas, and it has to do with taking responsibility for our own gaze at the document, not trying to be it but appropriating it with creativity and generosity. The second is the one the artist put into practice in **Cascades**, a project that began after she encountered the **La Porta** archive, which allowed it to be discovered in an independent setting, with a community and ways of doing that she traced by contacting specific people who were active within the framework of La Porta's activities to unleash this chain of intergenerational transmission. Even though they are living people-archives, the idea of the original was no longer relevant because these bodies had been permeated by space and time, enriched with new references and changed with new ways of doing things. In this sense, Rubies, concluded, many art schools or spaces could be ideal dance museums, given that they reopen and recontextualise its content, thus avoiding the restrictions of the traditional museum.

In the question-and-answer session, **Jacqueline Glarner** revisited the question of whether we should conserve everything; the director **Sergi Marí** introduced an ecological gaze at these remains of live art and proposed an intermediate phase in which costumes, objects and set designs are made available to the performing arts community in order to encourage their reuse; **Jin Hua**, from Comediants, shared her experience of giving her collection to the MAE; **Jesús Navarro** noted the difference between an archive, which is often more generous and tends towards accumulation, and a museum, which is much more restrictive in its role as an institution that puts its stamp of approval on cultural memory; and the performance researcher **Eduard Molner** praised the MAE'S efforts to digitalise its archive, without which his research on the Avinguda del Paral·lel would have been impossible. Then, he beautifully crystallised the reflections shared all morning as follows: 'We work with the carrot and hat of the snowman, a snowman that will never again exist and that we should not aspire to reproduce'.

The phrase resonated and was later used for the title of the chronicle of the conference written by the theatre critic **Oriol Puig Taulé**, **La pastanaga i el barret** [The Carrot and the Hat], to which this report is indebted. As he said in *Nívol*, the MAE's public efforts are praiseworthy and benefit both scholarly researchers and a new crop of artists who are reforging the performance heritage, like **Glòria Ribera**, a post-dramatic crooner who is reviving old scores from Avinguda del Paral·lel.

FORUM #3: 'IS IT POSSIBLE TO EXHIBIT VANISHED WORKS OF ART?'

This forum revolved around exhibiting ephemeral works of art in an attempt to answer the question: 'What should be exhibited when the work of art has disappeared?' Contextual materials are usually the core of museum exhibitions on the performing arts, but here we questioned whether it is enough to show historical vestiges or whether we should go further and turn museum visitors into performing arts spectators.

The participants were:

Àlex Serrano, co-founder of the company Agrupación Señor Serrano.

Pau Garcia, co-founder of Domestic Data Streamers.

Rita Rakosnik, art historian.

Moderator: **Laura Ars**, heritage officer at the Performing Arts Museum (MAE).

The third and last forum was pervaded by imposter syndrome, a sense of humour and acerbic reflections. It opened with the question: 'How can we exhibit intangible, unrepeatable actions?' Rita Rakosnik was the first to break the ice by declaring the promise and political power implicit in the ephemeral nature of the performing arts. This connection with disappearance, she argued, could be used to dislodge the Western hegemony of the eye, a visualised regime systematised in the Italian Renaissance which still survives today and privileges the sense of sight.

The art historian is interested in the intangible and in oral history, but especially in all the views of an archive, a space able to hold the tender, blurry things that, she confesses, obsess her and permeate her entire practice as a kind of aesthetic protest against the current tyranny of HD, which she finds wholly uninteresting. Instead, she is interested in invisible things, those that cannot be seen, and that is why she believes that the performing arts space, with its fragile, ephemeral nature, is so appealing and has such potential for artistic exploration.

Rakosnik shares with **Rebecca Schneider** the idea of loss as the perfect point of departure to begin working, to exhibit and transmit a legacy that balances perilously between presence—of a dance slipper, a theatre text, a puppet—and absence—of a gesture, voice, movement. When we prioritise an understanding of the performing

arts as something that cannot persist, we ignore ways of knowing and remembering, and ultimately other ways of interacting with the intangible heritage. Perhaps we should explore and recreate ourselves more in how the performing arts do survive, but differently: they survive without being able to be seen. And at a time of obscene accumulation, this should not be disdained, Rakosnik said.

Paraphrasing Schneider, Rakosnik invited us not to think about ways archives depend on the performing arts, but how archives perform this association between performance and disappearance, even when they also perform the service of safeguarding the heritage. The ephemeral arts disappear only according to the logic of the archive, which comes from the hegemony of mimesis and ideas of authenticity and originality that we would do well to question.

Like museums, archives should unburden themselves of the colonial, racist, patriarchal gaze so characteristic of the West, and this is only possible by activating them and exploring them via collective mediation processes, which will, in turn, make it possible for the performing arts heritage to reappear and be reinterpreted. To keep the MAE's legacy alive, the archive has to be opened and made accessible, and this begins with the students of the Institut del Teatre, many of whom have never consulted the museum's archive, even if it is just a few metres away from them. Rakosnik bemoaned this *décalage* and asked that it be remedied as soon as possible: students with no genealogies, no reference models, are impoverished and alienated from their own history.

Archives should encourage new reinterpretations from all disciplines, especially when thinking about curatorial projects. In this sense, Rakosnik believes that cross-fertilisation with professionals from other disciplines is utterly necessary to keep the performing arts legacy alive, and especially the legacy of the MAE. The art historian even ventured to propose a series of guest curators and artists who could interact with, research and rethink the possibilities of the museum's archive not only from a heritage perspective but also, and more importantly, from the vantage point of fiction. Some of the guests whom Rakosnik would invite to work on the MAE archive include the visual artist **Javier Peñafiel**, the **Cabaret Internet** collective and **Domestic Data Streamers**.

Regarding working methodologies to build new contexts, Rakosnik proposed the **constellation** of **Walter Benjamin** and **genealogy**, both of which have been mined extensively in the field of photography and the theory of image, but perhaps not so much in researching and curating the performing arts. Another good idea, she added, is mirroring everything that is being done in performance, in all its different definitions. Regarding whether we can convey the value of a particular object and a work as a whole (one of the questions asked by the moderator), Rakosnik said that this is precisely what an archive does, given that it goes beyond the single event and the problems or possibilities of reproducing it and instead forces us to consider an extensive artwork and the means we have to tend to its remains. In short, one documents a work but archives a body of work.

Given all this, museums are poorly equipped to display and curate all this heritage. Rakosnik claimed that the institution of the museum is in a dire crisis and that it is highly likely that we will have to dismantle it and call it something different if we want to reformulate it and rid ourselves of this entire colonial, racist and phallogocentric legacy underlying the very concept of the museum since the Enlightenment. She added that cultural institutions have to think carefully about how and whom we choose to design the questions and lines of research when conceptualising projects and developing theoretical and practical frameworks.

Rakosnik believes that one of the MAE's strong points is its concerted effort to tend to and digitalise the entire archive-collection, which makes the centre an ideal project to transcend many of the traditional barriers that tend to separate the sphere of museums and galleries on the one hand, where, in theory, originals are displayed, and archives on the other, where documentation and contextual materials are stored. Because the MAE does not have originals in the strict sense, the collection is the archive and the archive is the collection, which should be interpreted as an advantage, not a shortcoming.

After confessing that he was totally and completely intimidated, Pau Garcia began his talk by contextualising the work of **Domestic Data Streamers**, a design and research studio, which has documented its projects from the very beginning, focused on experimenting with and visualising new data languages. In their case,

documenting and archiving their interventions—many of them ephemeral or temporary—serves a practical purpose and was crucial when making themselves known.

Archives, Garcia explained, can have social, academic, economic and environmental purposes, but they also have purposes we cannot foresee that go beyond our own today. One example of this is the architect **Abha Narain Lambah's** work restoring opera houses in India; she found out that 1950s and 1960s Bollywood films are the best way to find images of the way these buildings' interiors originally looked. The films shot in these spaces were not designed to serve as documents for their restoration, but they ended up being used for this purpose.

Garcia expressed his disagreement with stance taken by Jordi Alomar, who viewed documentation and conservation of the performing arts as a responsibility; the co-founder of Domestic Data Streamers does not view it that way but instead believes that not everything should be recorded and that we are even obligated to forget some things. In contrast, deciding what we recall is indeed a responsibility, in addition to deciding who decides it. This decision-making, which is not neutral, as we have discussed throughout the conference, cannot fall into the hands of the same people as always because they will continue to reproduce the same backwards logics, which leads to effects like the extraordinarily low percentage of female theatre directors in the country. Therefore, if we archive the same way that we create visibility onstage, we will end up reproducing the same shortcomings.

Garcia brought up the story of the theft of **La Gioconda**, perpetrated by one of the workers at the **Louvre Museum** in 1911, as a pretext to reflect on the space of the ephemeral, on what happens when a work disappears and how its space can endure as context: during the two years when the **Leonardo da Vinci** painting was gone, the public would go to the Louvre to look at the empty space where it had previously been hanging.

Garcia focused on testimonies and oral history and memory, with the example of a friend who goes to see a play and tells you about it excitedly, and this narration is even better than the performance itself. In this sense, the artist **Tino Sehgal** can help us to reflect on the importance of orality, traces and testimonies: he forbids his

work from being documented, and if he sells it, he explains it by whispering into the buyer's ear.

Echoing the idea of absence as power, Garcia proposed not only transmitting objects and documents that archives conserve but also explaining and communicating everything that we do not have: our information gaps about the works. Some of the information from the performing arts world that he would highlight include the bank accounts of professionals in the sector, which may help to explain the reality of the systematic precarity that permeates it.

Àlex Serrano recalled how many years ago he happened upon a book that described the piece **El venedor de gelats** by **Albert Vidal**, performed within one of the early editions of the **Festival de Sitges**. The brevity of the description, just a few lines long, enabled him to let his imagination soar, but shortly thereafter all that fantasy was wiped away when he turned the page: the book included a photograph of the action showing a city square, clothing and individuals very different to the ones conjured up by Serrano's imagination. 'Is remembering possessing?', he wondered, before he explained the urge to possess which totally overcame him at the **Centre National de la Danse** in Paris, where he became obsessed with copying the centre's entire DVD collection. Serrano reflected on this brief accumulation mania and wondered what triggered it, although he still cannot come up with a clear answer. And just as his pirate collection of DVDs was lost, some day so will works like **Las Meninas** and **La Gioconda**, no matter how much we invest in conserving them as carefully as possible.

To conclude, Serrano shared a poignant family story which featured cinnabar, a semiprecious reddish stone that darkens in the sunlight, which was the only inheritance he asked for after his father's death. Every now and then, the artist shows his children the mineral, aware that this implies the loss of both the cinnabar and the memory of his father.

The next point to consider was whether a visit to a museum can be a performative action. 'Is there any way of exhibiting in present and presence?', Ars asked the forum members. Rita Rakosnik expressed her doubts, but she made it clear that the way forward is not to approach the vestiges of the performing arts through a metaphysics of presence, which fetishises a present, unique, original and

unrepeatable moment. Her preference, she repeated, is to challenge and recreate ourselves in loss. Beyond presentism, the interesting point of a museum is its view ahead towards the future. The same thing that **Jacques Derrida** suggested about the nature of an archive can be applied to a collection and a museum, which is ‘a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’.

Regarding the question of the spectator, Rakosnik upheld an emancipated spectator in **Jacques Rancière’s** terms, while also calling for more sophisticated critiques about audiences and not considering the *traditional*, more contemplative visit passive by default. The historian underscored the fact that looking is not passive; the process of looking is also an action. Before investing our money and efforts in interactive museums, which, Rakosnik criticised, resemble amusement parks or escape rooms, we should try to get away from the collective obsession with experience and immersion and wonder more about the gaze and how we can educate it from the early years of schooling. And museums can play a critical role in this.

Rakosnik seeks emancipation for spectators, and for the artists, curators, technicians, documentalists and librarians who, in her opinion, have to avoid playing the role of educators of the ignorant masses and instead start from the assumption that the spectator has an active ability to interpret. ‘Perhaps we don’t have to build a **Terra Mítica** [amusement park] in order to make aesthetic experience possible, but this is why we should also stop thinking that some people are unable to see’, she concluded.

Pau Garcia began his response by inviting the attendees to visit Terra Mítica, which he considers an anthropologically interesting experience. He then reflected on the limits of the museum: ‘Does the museum end at the door?’, he wondered. Domestic Data Streamers has sought to question and expand the vision of the museum and the exhibition space, he said, by thinking about the user’s everyday life and how a visit may affect it. In order to understand and design transcendent experiences, the vision of the museum has to be expanded; it should end not at the door but in the

conversation you have about the show after visiting it and, in short, the questions it prompts you to take home with you.

Garcia and his team fight and rebel against the traditional conception of the exhibition, which implies one-way curatorship, enlightenment and a concern with famous names that makes it impossible to experience the museum as a porous space of dialogue in relation to the community that inhabits it. And this necessarily entails interaction, which may be looking, although this is often insufficient, Garcia claimed, responding to Rakosnik's earlier reflection. However, he does agree with her that museums are institutions in crisis which have to expand their boundaries and be for more than just the select few.

Àlex Serrano confessed that he enjoys the format of the guided tour because it is like the way a storyteller tells a fictitious story; if they do it well, we can even lose sight of the works themselves and focus our attention on their narrative skill or gestures when speaking. He also likes to ask questions of the gallery staff in museums, as people who have a very particular everyday, familiar relationship with the works, who become founts of information and stories that are seldom included in the official guides and narratives.

The last question in the forum was: 'Is re-presentation essential for exhibiting performing arts?', which sought to trigger a debate around reenactment, an essential part of conserving the performing arts. The first to answer was Rakosnik, who said she admired the grassroots nature of reenactments, from the fascist US Civil War recreators to **Charles Ludlam's *Theater of the Ridiculous***, where the reproduction of classics and camp recreations of pop cultural expressions considered vulgar, like B-movies, were very important and offered a different type of live story. Another interesting example in this vein is underground ballroom culture, which sprang up on the margins as a queer, working-class, ironic recreation of fashion shows, boasting overwhelming inventiveness and richness.

Drawing from the theoretician **Heike Roms**, Rakosnik defended the performativity of documentation. This author noted that the key relationship may not be between the original event and its documentation but between the document and its audience (the audience of the document, not of the initial event). Perhaps, Rakosnik

speculated, the authenticity of the performing arts document lies in its relationship with its spectator more than with an apparently original event: perhaps its authority is phenomenological more than ontological. These pleasures can be gotten from the documentation and therefore do not depend on whether the audience witnessed the original event. The more radical possibility, Roms says, is that perhaps it does not even matter whether or not the event actually happened. Perhaps our sense of the presence, power and authenticity of these pieces does not come from treating the document as an initial gateway to a past event but perceiving the document as a performance that directly reflects the aesthetic project or sensibility of an artist whose audience we now become. In this sense, it is interesting to bear in mind whether recreations of performative expressions based on their documentation are truly recreating the original event or performing its documentation. Rakosnik mentioned **Marina Abramović's** recreations of the performances of other artists in **Seven Easy Pieces (2005)** as examples of works that play with and reflect on this issue.

The art historian also warned about the dangers of 'the fallacy of intentionality', a literary term that claims that the meaning foreseen by the author of a work is not the only or even the most important one. Archiving and conserving the performing arts are always stalked by the ghost of the author's original intention. Scholars have often fallen into the trap of looking to the archive in search of the *true* meaning of a work of art. As Rakosnik admits, it is easy to buttress the belief that there is truly something 'beyond the text' by perusing an artist's manuscripts, notebooks, scores and letters. And this is somewhat paradoxical, because the majority of performing arts expressions, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, outstrip the boundaries of the single live event: they contain a conceptual dimension (which we should not confuse with *intention*) that artists revisit. This dimension can be expressed in both documents and (or in addition to) the live performance. Therefore, instead of bemoaning the inevitable loss inherent to the performing arts, Rakosnik invites us to embrace the archive in all its possibilities, exploring the continued presence of the live art and our encounter with these ideas.

Rakosnik once again cited **Heike Roms**, specifically her text **Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains?**, to talk about the actors or agents who are essential

in conserving the performing arts: the scholar, the artist, the archivist or documentalist and the family. The responsibility is shared and should lead to an archive which is a blend of voices, a collaborative effort built via care-based documentary practices. Roms discusses and defends archival practices of care undertaken not only by the archivist but also by students, artists, scholars, experts, friends and families of artists, and, in short, by anyone whose work contributes to creating and caring for a collection of documents. These practices blur the boundaries between documentary work and academic (and artistic) work as distinct activities and instead recasts them as places of mutual collaboration. In Rakosnik's opinion, archives are spaces that crystallise the tension between accumulation and tenderness, and this is why they fascinate her.

Regarding the role played by curators, designers and critics when activating, rereading and reinterpreting these vestiges of the performing arts, Rakosnik believes that they play a very important one. All these stakeholders, she added, have to fight to rid ourselves of stale habits and compulsions when rising to the challenge of curating and displaying all these materials. 'We have the responsibility to question and do away with the hegemony of visuality and foster new sensibilities, subjectivities and imaginaries', she said. We are also responsible for posing new approaches and asking trenchant questions that go beyond mercantilisation and fetishisation, the showcase effect. And here, she concluded, education in the humanities is essential, given that without an aesthetic education in the Schillerian sense, the affective, effective activation of these fragments of oblivion is impossible. A glance at other disciplines like poetry, which is so accustomed to working with absence, is imperative.

Pau Garcia spoke about a mass at church as the ultimate example of a reenactment, as a globally shared representation repeated liturgically to communicate certain ideologies, political perspectives and ways of viewing the world. Drawing a parallel with opera, Garcia then shared his experience at the **Gran Teatre del Liceu**, where he was able to experience the dynamics, repetitions and customs of its most regular users.

Likewise, the co-founder of Domestic Data Streamers highlighted the exhibition ***Judson Dance Theater. The Work Is Never Done***, held at the **MoMA** between 2018 and 2019, which traced the history of this group of choreographers, visual artists, composers and filmmakers who coalesced around the Judson Memorial Church in New York's Greenwich Village in the 1960s. The display was simple but effective: it consisted of projections of three videos accompanied by a series of instructions which invited spectators to dance and reinterpret the choreographies. Garcia was particularly attracted by this idea of reconstructing memory from the museum user's body, an idea that could lead us to **Martha Graham** and her conception of dance as corporal memory. Dancing to instructions or following performative instructions is also a way to make memories, to re-perform via the body, beyond the gaze.

Garcia stressed the idea of a reenactment of the ephemeral that does not aim to reproduce it, because we know it cannot, but instead seeks to find all the forms it did not have which have yet to be explored, thinking about the cracks and crevices yet to be examined. In short, the idea is to exercise lateral thinking to find imaginative solutions to the problems of conserving and disseminating the performing arts. One example of this lateral thinking can be found in the first project that planted the seed of Domestic Data Streamers, an installation in Barcelona's Tres Xemeneies, where they spent 24 hours asking people how many faucets and windows they had at home. What they were truly doing was trying to find out the respondents' purchasing power, a response that they would have been hard-pressed to get if they had asked it directly. However, they managed to get this information through this lateral question, which had a 70% accuracy rate. 'So, what are the lateral ways of approaching the conservation and dissemination of the performing arts?', Garcia concluded by asking. This is the crux of the matter.

Àlex Serrano closed the forum by citing two short stories by **Jorge Luis Borges**, ***Funes the Memorious*** and ***On Rigour in Science***, which masterfully reflect on memory and cartography, respectively. After that, he added that it is important to think about the motivation behind a reenactment, whether it is actually necessary and whether we can provide an interesting interpretation of the intangible traces. In this sense, the one-off post-dramatic super-productions by **Marta Galán** and

Juan Navarro, made within the **La Corporación** project, are a good example of intelligent reuse and re-representation. In these pieces, the artists reused set designs from other shows to create over-the-top projects that were impossible to distribute and commercially exploit. Serrano identified closely with this gesture and recalled how when he was a student at the Institut del Teatre, they were all keenly aware what day of the week the rubbish from the sets at the Liceu opera house were thrown away.

The co-founder of the Agrupación Señor Serrano ended his contribution by summoning the image of rubbish containers full of materials from the sets of the **Teatro Real**, stacked up on top of each other in an open lot 50 kilometres from Madrid. These containers resembled niches in a cemetery, imperturbable against the weather and potential receptacles of a mystery, of a piece of cinnabar awaiting to be touched by light.

Laura Ars closed the last set of questions by turning to the speakers and asking if they could share an interesting museum experience. Rakosnik recommended the exhibition **To Dance is to be Free** curated by **Manique Hendricks** for the municipal archive of Amsterdam, which traces the city's club culture from the 1980s until today. Garcia cited an intervention at an H&M in Paris, where activists changed the labels on all the clothing for new ones that listed all the human rights that the brand violated when manufacturing its goods. Serrano returned to cemeteries and shared his fondness for **The New York Earth Room (1977)**, a permanent installation by **Walter Maria** at New York's **Dia Art Foundation**.

Among the attendees, the actors **Jaume Comas** and **Ferran Rañé** took the floor, the former to defend making theatre as a communicative act more than an experience, and the latter to share a family story permeated by cemeteries, absence and memory. As **Montserrat Roig** wrote, 'If there is an act of love, it is memory'; that is, if we interact intimately with performing arts archives and collections and find the tenderness in accumulation, their future will be worthwhile.

Sílvia Ferrando closed the conference by thanking all the participants for the incredible range of contributions and inviting them not to feel like strangers at the MAE, given that 'public institutions are ours', as is the performing arts heritage housed at the MAE which, we hope, will find an appropriate location soon.

In theatre, as in love, the theme is disappearance.

Herbert Blau

*



**Diputació
Barcelona**

Institut del Teatre