

# DEMOLITION: A DESTABILIZING FORCE FOR TRANSGRESSING ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES

ARIADNE MIKOU

## Abstract

In this text, I wish to use the concept of transgression in order to approach issues associated with the practice of interdisciplinarity between architecture, choreography and digital technologies, laying particular emphasis on the screen and the moving image. By referring to demolition, which implies the violent elimination of an architectural building, I wish to draw parallels with the concept of transgression and place it inside an interdisciplinary choreographic practice and discourse. Transgression has been defined by sociologist Chris Jenks (2013, p. 21) as something that “transcends boundaries or exceeds limits”, and I have been exploring the action of demolition as the process that destabilizes the notions of architecture and choreography by destroying their conceptual and perceptual boundaries. Through my personal research, I discovered that transgression between disciplines is an artistic practice in itself, which helps me to explore the most appropriate artistic medium for dealing with a specific issue, as well as the most relevant theories for responding to a specific question through artistic practice. By referring to a singular case, I hope that I will be able to address common issues in interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary practices and to cover other artistic voices, insecurities and concerns.

## Keywords

Practice-as-research; transgression; interdisciplinarity; architecture; choreography; screen; choreographic environments and events; Chris Jenks; Bernard Tschumi; Maya Deren

## Primary intentions in dialogue with dance scholarship

By examining the artistic outcomes of transgression in the field of dance and choreography, I will attempt to speak about interdisciplinarity as practice and not as a theoretical frame to analyse dances. Interdisciplinarity as a method of creating critical viewership of dance occupies a growing part within dance research, which, as dance scholar and critic Ramsay Burt (2009, p. 20) argues, it is necessary to combine with medium-specific methodologies in order to comprehend the ways that contemporary choreographic works engage “in a critical but imaginative way with

the institutional nature of theatre dance". Moreover, I do not intend to give an overview of interdisciplinary research in Dance Higher Education as Paul Carr et al. (2014) are doing, or to refer to the value of interdisciplinarity (Chettiparamb, 2007). Whilst being informed by such works and while positioning this text close to Erin Brannigan's *Moving Across Disciplines* (2010), which looks specifically at the creative processes of interdisciplinary practices in relation to dance, my purpose is to provide an experience from within that might resonate with other artists and practitioners and, hence, provide a different way of thinking about interdisciplinarity versus disciplinary autonomy in Dance Studies. My focus will be placed on the urgencies that call for interdisciplinary processes, the assumptions that these processes challenge, and the dynamics that occur in the interdisciplinary practices of which dance is an integral part. There will always be supporters and detractors of interdisciplinarity. This text eschews entering in this discourse and, instead, aims to offer an internal view of interdisciplinarity as practice and as transgressive, versatile behaviour.

### **Educational pedagogies**

In a Western philosophical tradition that still carries the residues of Descartes's thinking, the underestimation of the body has caused dance to struggle for gaining its recognition as a high art. Inside a system of values where mind has been considered superior, the art of dance as somatic or corporeally-based knowledge has been "marginalised politically, financially, theoretically and culturally" (Brannigan, 2010, p. 6) affecting the late establishment of dance as an autonomous art and academic discipline. Considering the relatively short history of Western Dance as an academic field and the lack of Dance Departments in many parts of the world justifies the arguments of several dance scholars and artists who advocate the autonomy and purity of Dance as a discipline, rather than an interdisciplinary field. As Burt (2009, p. 3) confirms, "knowing how hard it has been to gain recognition for dance within universities can lead to a certain understandable protectiveness about the specificity of dance". However, placing dance (dancing, performing, dance making, teaching, writing) in a larger context, a dialogue with the other arts, humanities and sciences becomes imperative, because "the way that dancing bodies mediate ideologies is interdisciplinary" (ibid., p. 2). The way that we analyse dance as viewers is a process that requires influences from outside the discipline of dance per se in order to refer to the potential of dance to speak at a cultural, social, political and even economic level. Australian dance scholar and arts' curator Erin Brannigan (2010, p. 2) states:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, contemporary dance is an interdisciplinary art form. It has found currency with progressive critical theories engaging new concepts of mobility and movement, and choreography is figured as a major player in informing and realising new understandings of key philosophical concepts.

Dance Studies can take various forms and each one of them holds a different percentage of disciplinary purity or interdisciplinary contamination. For instance, several worldwide conservatories

and academies still transmit the art of dance as a competitive sport rather than as a body-mind practice in need of interdisciplinary influences. Equating dance with the embodied art associated with the acquisition of excellence in performing a codified technique for moving in space and time inevitably requires specialisation and expertise. Conservatories and academies aim to transmit “the rigors and specialist knowledge” appertaining to the discipline of dance (Carr et al., 2014). Dance as a broad field of academic study penetrated by its own histories, theories and traditional practices is a twentieth-century phenomenon, well-established among English-speaking and continental European countries. However, we need to well consider that the possibility to be exposed to Dance Studies in Higher Education is not a global phenomenon. Taking as an example the academic contexts of Italy (country of residence) and Greece (country of birth), of which I have personal experience, Dance Studies in Higher Education usually takes the shape of individual and isolated modules instead of holistic programs that aim to examine dance as a broad field of art in which practices and theories are dynamically interrelated. In these cases, and although dance is framed inside an interdisciplinary context (different though from the major and minor options that many American Higher Education institutes provide and, moreover, closer to the Liberal Arts model), little attention or importance is given to the potential of the discipline of Dance as current choreographic practice to create social and political implications.

As a Greek-born dance artist, I was raised inside a disciplined environment where every subject of study – including Dance – at all levels of the educational system was being mastered inside a building (institution) specifically constructed or adapted for the promotion of an autonomous field. Furthermore, even the setting of the desks and their position within the classroom were organized frontally towards the tutor. Therefore, erect walls and internal setting were isolating, framing and disciplining knowledge instead of allowing contaminations and exchanges of knowledge. Poetically speaking, windows were the only openings and architectural elements of the institutions that could allow communication with other disciplines. It can thus be suggested that I have been academically disciplined in dance and architecture in two distinct and separate ways, and that I have not been disciplined in film, at least in a narrow sense. I am being educated in film studies not by attending a program in an institution, but rather by orienting myself independently and in an improvisational manner inside the field; discovering and following a self-exploratory learning path driven by inquiry. Therefore, I think that I can speak from the perspectives of three different modes of learning: rigorous disciplinarity, self-inquiry and discovery, and interdisciplinary research.

In my early twenties, I attended a rigorous dance training program designed and assessed by the Greek Ministry of Culture, which provided me with a Dance Teacher Diploma and enabled me to teach Ballet, Modern and Contemporary Dance, and Eurhythmics, if I wished to do so. Around that time and while being a student at the School of Architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, I heard for the first time a new lexical compound, *dance-architectures*, a concept that explored the unification of those two different and separate

disciplines.<sup>1</sup> In 2002 scholar, practising scenographer and theatre architect Dorita Hannah together with scholar and choreographer Carol Brown coined and theorised the concept of *dance-architectures*, dance *hyphen* architectures: “hybrid forms emerging at the interface between the disciplines of choreography and architecture through the creation of performance events” (Brown and Ramsgard-Thomsen, 2008, p. 217). In 2003, Brown gave a workshop at the Isadora and Raymond Duncan Centre for Dance in Athens, which I was unable to attend. Luckily, the reflections derived from the research workshop were published in the printed issue of *Χορός* (2003), the Greek dance magazine which at that time served as my first research resource. My curiosity for the interdisciplinary research in *dance-architectures* had just begun and, as I will argue, the strict and rigorous disciplinarity during my early education is what urged me to explore interdisciplinarity and approach it through the concept of transgression.

### **Demolition: A conceptual pathway towards transgression of disciplines**

Transgression entails “hybridization, the mixing of categories and the questioning of the boundaries that separate categories” (Jervis, 1999, p. 4, cited in Jenks, 2003, p. 9). *Dance-architectures* is not the only transgressed art form that has emerged from the contamination of dance’s purity and absoluteness by other forms of art and science. A series of crossings and inventions that emerged in postmodern times include a variety of impure manifestations of dance, such as dance theatre, physical theatre, somatics, music theatre, dance therapy, videodance, screendance, and numerous other hybridizations that have resulted from the intersection of dance and technology.<sup>2</sup> Considering the latest post-disciplinary tendencies of artistic research in our digitally interconnected world, I am probably omitting, here, the research outcomes of many dance artists and practitioners, who – coming from diametrically diverse backgrounds – simultaneously and in unique ways explore the frictions and/or intersections of dance with other fields. Without having such an intention, my argument is that placing *dance-architectures* close to established

---

1 Architects and choreographers have been looking into each other’s art for inspiration since the first quarter of the 20th century, predominantly during Bauhaus, a period in the Arts characterised by the concept of total work of art; the artistic process and product derived from merging different disciplines. Subsequent collaborative examples include: the couple of Anna and Lawrence Halprin (from 1966 onward); William Forsythe with Daniel Libeskind and Nikolaus Hirsch (1990 and 1997); Lucinda Childs with Frank O. Gehry (1983); Frédéric Flamand with Zaha Hadid, Jean Nouvel and Thomas Mayne (2000, 2001, 2003, respectively); Mårten Spångberg with Tor Lindstrand (2007); Michael Douglas Kollektiv with Michael Steinbush (2012); Caroline Salem with Ed Frith and others.

2 Although this part refers to hybrid forms of dance and less to the inventors of these forms, the short list would have been incomplete without briefly mentioning the contribution of Merce Cunningham to the expansion of dance. Cunningham’s lifelong passion for exploration and innovation made him a leader in applying new technologies to the arts. He began investigating dance on film in the 1970s, and he choreographed using the computer program DanceForms during the latter part of his career. He also explored motion capture technology and collaborated with Paul Kaiser in order to create digital animations such as *BIPED* (1999) and *Loops* (2001).

hybrid forms is evidence of how dance practice is not as pure as some wish to contend.<sup>3</sup>

*Dance-architectures* gradually grows as an area of research attracting artists, scholars, researchers from both fields and, thus, it is enriched by a variety of hybrid and non-homogenized responses that each individual or team proposes. For approximately the last ten years, I am proposing my personal understanding of the merging of the two disciplines by combining two different roles – that of the educated, but not practising, architect with that of the dance artist and slowly becoming research-choreographer and dance scholar. In my research, I aim to explore what new possibilities and frictions could occur when attempting to bridge dance with architecture. However, looking at architecture as an already existing and static shell is not enough to cover the urgency of my inquiry. In the era of social and cultural mobility and economic instability, architecture in adaptability becomes an urgent demand for covering the needs of fast-evolving societies and populations. Moreover, human architectural creations are (and have been) destroyed in favour of capitalistic progress, terrorism or war, and new ones are (and have been) built in search of dwelling. Hence, demolition of architecture turns out to be the favourite habit of expanding neoliberal economies, and the process of demolition becomes a process of change and transition reminding us of the ephemeral, even of the ephemeral nature of architecture. Demolition becomes the moment *before* and *after* architecture happens; the moment that creates a suspended *void* waiting to be filled again. In this way, architecture, in a process of suspension and transition examined through the unstable and ephemeral nature of dance, gradually became central to my research, which keeps on slowly formulating my contribution to the field of *dance-architectures*.

Examining demolition as an architectural phenomenon with social, political and economic parameters that disappears through time urged me to explore ways of archiving architecture not as an idealised space, but rather as a living space transgressed by the everyday user. Transgression is a concept with philosophical roots usually applied in contexts such as madness, culture, art, carnival, ritual, sexuality, and crime (Jenks, 2003). More specifically, to transgress is “to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, is to violate or infringe” (ibid., p. 2). It is the conduct which “breaks rules or exceeds boundaries” (ibid., p. 3). Transgression has been used in recent architectural theory in order to articulate new relationships between the architectural concept derived from the architect seen as an expert and the architectural experience as an everyday phenomenon (Tschumi, 1996). Emphases on the experience of architecture by its users and their agency to alter their living space transgress the laws defined by the architect’s design. Therefore, my personal observation of demolition as destruction of the material boundaries of architecture became a concept that helped me to re-examine notions of architecture associated with fixity and permanence. The concept of demolition became synonymous with transgression

---

3 Ramsay Burt (2009) outlines the medium-specific advocacies as voiced by André Levinson (1927/1983), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966/1979), Janet Wolff (1997), Susan Foster (1998).

and was transformed into a metaphor for architectural *appropriation* and a new kind of space production (Lefebvre, 1991) generated by the user and dweller of space who demolishes the fixed identity of space.

Expanding the Tschumian concept of architectural transgression, choreography in addition to film are being offered as tools of spatial appropriation that help me to approach architecture as a time-based experience and contribute to remembering architecture as a living organism variable through time. The surfaces of architecture decay as time passes. Its external remains immovable while the internal space of dwelling is potentially reconfigurable, transformable and adaptable. Filmic space transmits the moving body experiencing space; the filmic lens witnesses from a subjective position and follows across a choreographic path this interaction between moving body and architecture as time goes by. The ephemerality of movement performed in a specific space – originally conceived in the design process as an empty and austere geometric space – and the filmic narrative unfolded through time challenge the understanding of architectural space as void and time as fixed, thus affecting the experience of architecture and its archiving as an austere and objective diagram. Therefore, a bi-disciplinary query (*dance-architectures*), stemming from a personal need to reconcile a double creative identity, opened to a third artistic medium (film) in order to explore: *how to archive architecture as living and not as a series of lines and curves constituting a-temporal diagrams? How to remember architecture as a living experience?* These questions summarise what I previously referred to as the necessity of interdisciplinarity to take place in order to address an issue or a problem. Interdisciplinarity is not taken for granted or it might not be always essential, as disciplinarity builds profound knowledge. But interdisciplinarity emerges when one medium is not enough to deal alone with a specific urgency,<sup>4</sup> such as the archiving of the experience of space examined in this discourse.

Architecture, choreography and the screen in quest of archiving enter in a triadic interplay and become the methodological concept that allows a new hybrid form of art to emerge or a new approach to an existing art form to occur. Here, I am particularly referring to screendance, but also to choreographic environments<sup>5</sup> and events<sup>6</sup> which I propose to be spatio-corporeal art forms derived from the conjunction of the spatial principles of architecture, the time-based values of choreography and film and their demolished and destroyed conceptual and disciplinary borders. Italian Marxist theorist and politician Antonio Gramsci explains that destruction, which is considered here

---

4 In my case, film belongs to a broader category of moving image that I shall name here “the screen”. The latter is an umbrella term that can embrace my versatile interests in screendance, videography, cinematography, writing and graphic design, where the screen as medium can refer to the screen of the camera, the smart phone, the computer, but also to any other surface that I can create or adapt in order to project a static or moving image.

5 Dance scholar Sophia Lycouris (2009) defines choreographic environments as installation spaces that have emerged from choreographic thinking and, as a result, they require from the audience to physically engage with them.

6 Architect Bernard Tschumi (1996) defined architectural event as the triadic relationship between space, action and movement.

to be a synonym for demolition, means “to destroy spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions” (Forgacs, 2000, p. 74). Applied to the context of interdisciplinarity, destruction may also mean to destroy limits between disciplines and to enable new crossovers. In this sense, destruction does not become a source for nostalgic sentiments to arise, but by taking a distance from negative connotations it becomes a creative tool for art making. Gramsci reaffirms, as transferred by artist Thomas Hirschhorn and exhibited in his installation *In-Between* (2015): “Destruction is difficult. It is as difficult as creation” (South London Gallery, 2015). Destruction requires creativity, so that something new can surface. The lack of disciplinary ground can also be a powerful place of potentiality and of construction of new possibilities.

### **Transgression and issues associated with interdisciplinarity**

Destruction of disciplinary limits might be challenging and demanding, and the interdisciplinary nature embedded in the process might not always be reflected in the product. At this point, I wish to make a clear distinction between the interdisciplinary process and the interdisciplinary product. An artistic process might be transgressed, but the product not always, and vice versa. An interdisciplinary process can be derived from exchanges, contaminations and transformations of different theories and methodologies, but it may lead to an outcome which is by no means innovative or different from the outcome of a disciplined process. The product or rather the medium of production derived from an interdisciplinary process might be something which others have arrived in after years of rigorous training that has enabled them to understand the discipline and acquire a deep knowledge of its theoretical issues and methodologies. To set this train of thought in motion: I do not consider transgression to transform the *dance-architectures* enquiry into a product closely affiliated with the products of film studies and visual arts, hence, film or installation respectively. I consider the process of *dance-architectures* transgressed, and what makes the product of this transgressed process different from a product derived from a disciplined process and created after years of rigorous training and expertise in film or visual arts is the freedom to create (and to fail); an attribute closely related to the *amateur*.

Maya Deren (1959 / McPherson, 2005, p. 17), a versatile figure of avant-garde film that transgressed dance, poetry, writing and anthropology, spoke about the amateur as the one “who does something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity”. Un-disciplined, free from commodity constraints that are often associated with the aim of providing pleasure to an audience and focused on knowledge production instead of an artistic product is, paradoxically, a position of advantage. Yet, from a product-oriented perspective, can the outcome of an interdisciplinary process be associated with the negative connotations of amateurism? In other words, do interdisciplinary explorations derive from superficiality and the lack of expertise in a specific discipline? These are rhetorical questions derived from a gap between research, usually embedded in the Academia, and product-oriented artistic practices usually located outside of it. But, in an attempt to give an answer, I will reply by paraphrasing Robert A. Segal’s (2009) words that digging

deep can lead to gold – but so can crossing borders. Horizontally acquired knowledge enabled through disciplinary transgression and vertically obtained disciplinary rigour and expertise can be equally negative and positive.

Collaboration inside an interdisciplinary context is a tool that can help overcome the gaps in vertical and horizontal knowledge. Architecture, choreography and filmmaking are in their essence disciplinary collaborative practices, but interdisciplinary collaboration works differently. Groups of different expertise and background are joined together in order to resolve problems by setting in motion their different perspectives. According to academic researcher Paul Carr (Carr et al., 2014, p. 6), there exist different ways of fusing disciplines under the broad term of interdisciplinarity; these include the following aspects:

- Multi-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline engage in a common learning, teaching or assessment activity.
- Cross-disciplinary: where aspects of one discipline can be explained in terms of another.
- Trans-disciplinary: where students/staff study in a way that blurs or even ignores traditional discipline boundaries to adopt a more holistic approach to learning/research.
- Collaborative mode: where students/staff work together but adhere to their disciplines.
- Integrated mode: where practitioners work together and sample each other's discipline.
- Intra-disciplinary: where collaboration takes place within a discipline.
- Inter-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline learn with, from and about one another through a common activity, usually in the context of practice.

Collaboration is the fundamental parameter for any sort of interdisciplinary exchange. But what is happening in cases in which an individual has a specialisation in two or more disciplines? By attempting to answer this question, I will refer back to the concept of transgression, which helps me to describe the demolition of boundaries between disciplines and their reintegration in one versatile identity performed by one person, the *cross-dresser*. In Gender Studies, the cross-dresser usually “adopts the clothing and often the characteristics of the opposite sex, but also simultaneously functions as his or her original gender” (Mosley and Sara, 2013, p. 18). Although this discussion does not aim to enter in a discourse on gender issues, cross-dressing refers to people who, in working interdisciplinarily, are not “merely stepping outside of their original discipline” (ibid.) but instead are inhabiting two or more at the same time. At a personal level, the transgressed role of the cross-dresser requires engagement with theories from different disciplines and working in architectural ways of looking, seeing and framing with the camera, and choreographic ways of

filming and editing. Simultaneously inhabiting two or more disciplines brings the cross-dresser in a position between vulnerability and potentiality due to the lack of rigorous expertise. Not belonging in a specific discipline provides the flexibility and advantage of being able to creatively bridge opposites and disconnected ideas and elements.

The transgressive and cross-dressing artist has a paradoxical nature. (S)he functions only because limits and disciplinary norms exist, which, in turn, it his/her role to break. As Jenks (2003, p. 7) reaffirms, we need “to recognise the edges in order to transcend them”. Transgression arises because there are confines, rules, frames and by extension disciplines and specialisation, which transgression confirms by transcending them. In the same way that carnival is considered a temporary liberation from everyday norms of social behaviour and discipline, academic transgression redefines the rules and perceptions that every classified discipline is associated with. Dance is usually perceived as an ephemeral art produced by the human body in motion, whilst staticness is characteristic of architecture. Speaking about the Vitruvian considerations that have been hunting architecture’s limits throughout centuries, architect Bernard Tschumi (1996, p. 108) reminds us of them: “venustas, firmitas, utilitas – ‘attractive appearance’, structural stability’, ‘appropriate spatial accommodation.’” However, seen through the choreographic and filmic lens, architecture in transgression becomes a time-based and corporeal experience of spatial and material sensation.

### **Transgression as practice: An example**

Transgression attempts to challenge the strictly defined and refresh expectations. The theatrical stage remains dedicated to live arts performances, and performance theorist and maker Bojana Cvejić (2015), referring to theatre as an institutional structure, asserts that it protects the relative autonomy of conventional dance as an art form. Challenging this belief has been central to my recent work *Anarchitextures* (2016), in which the theatrical space, where it was presented, was misused and, as a result, its architectural identity was transgressed. *Anarchitextures*, while breaking architectural conventions and applying cinematographic principles to a choreographic context, share proximity with the art form of installation. Therefore, it should be expected to be presented in a space made to display visual art. Instead, the artistic choice was to transgress the rules of where installation art is usually placed, to prioritize the choreographic principles of the artwork, and place it at a theatrical stage; a space conceived, constructed and expected to embrace dance and choreography with live bodies rather than objects. If a theatrical stage anticipates a live human performance and a gallery or a museum an exposition of installed objects, then challenging this expectation becomes transgressive as well. Placing an installation inside a theatre instead of a museum or a gallery space alternates the identity of the space meant to embrace dance; placing dance in the museum context is mutually transgressive as well.

Through a history of almost one century, dance and the predecessors of modern dance have been intruding the art canon of visual arts, and vice versa. This tendency has been increased after War World II and arrived at its apex in recent years, during which galleries and museums have

been transgressed by performers and choreographers such as Jérôme Bel (*Disabled Theatre*, 2013), Xavier Le Roy (*Retrospective*, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Boris Charmatz (*Musée de la danse*).

Visual artists have also been adopting the role of choreographer, such as Bruce Neuman, Tino Sehgal, Pablo Bronstein, who hire dancers to become materials for their works. *Anarchitextures* aim to examine these tendencies, to reconsider the conventions imposed by the theatre, gallery and museum *dispositifs*, to rethink the limits between stage and auditorium, and to propose the stage as a revitalized public space for the dialogue between architecture, choreography and moving image. If theatre's identity is connected with the ephemerality of live performances, and museum with archiving and the creation of history, which challenges provide and which norms transgress the positioning of dance in the museum and of visual arts onto the theatrical stage? While there is a free circulation among the different manifestations of visual art (painting, sculpture, video) in the gallery and museum context, and the same happens among the live arts (dance, theatre, music) in theatrical contexts, how can we destroy and transgress boundaries among less obviously related disciplines such as architecture, dance, and the screen? What kind of spaces are appropriate for hosting these hybrid experiments?

Until now, I have argued that transgression requires order and principles in order to emerge. Transgression is a rather relative term and it depends on the context in which an interdisciplinary work and argument are located. Transgression flows between marginalized or central positions and it is continuously redefined. For instance, my work can be received as transgressive when positioned in the discipline of choreography, but traditional when located in the field of visual arts and film. Tino Sehgal's *This Variation* won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial of Visual Arts in 2013 "with a piece that can only be described as an extended, long-duration choreography" (Franko and Lepecki, 2014, p. 1). Sehgal's work has transgressed the world of visual arts by relocating the medium of choreography outside the dance context.

The last point I wish to refer to is that the transgressive and interdisciplinary outcome is often difficult to be categorized and classified. How to classify the transgressed without going against the nature of transgression? How to define as the one or the other or explain without sacrificing the principles, which, coming together from different fields, give birth to an artistic form? In the case of *Anarchitextures*, which definition can include all three disciplines in one? What follows is an attempt to describe *Anarchitextures* as an artistic product. It is also a dialogue with the ambiguous notion of architecture, choreography and film that aims at the provocation of non-explicit statements:

Anarchitecture.

— I wouldn't dare to call it like this, but thank you, Gordon Matta-Clark, for being my progenitor.

An architecture.

– No, as far as architecture is associated with the Vitruvian trilogy of *venustas*, *firmitas*, *utilitas*.

– Yes, as far as architecture is regarded in terms of texture, ephemerality, instability, atmosphere, internal volume, light and experience.

Anarchi-texture.

– Yes, as far as it concerns painting.

A material occupation of space.

– Not only that.

An environment.

– Not quite.

An installation.

– No (referring to Alan Kaprow's definition of installation as a series of objects installed).

– Yes, as long as the term embraces the interaction of different media in the artwork.

A three-dimensional work of art.

– Yes, but not only.

A multimedia sculpture.

– No.

An architectural montage in space that requires a concurrent assemblage by the viewer.

– Possibly.

An organization of "windows" (fabricated screens) with animated and moving images.

– Sounds close enough.

A path in space and time that encourages mobile spectatorship.

– Almost. (Thank you, Sergei Eisenstein, for helping me to comprehend the triadic intersection through this lens.)

An architectural event choreographically devised.

– I wish it could be.

A choreographic object.

– It could also be (if I am not stealing someone else’s copyright on the invented term).

An expanded choreography.

– Perhaps.

A choreography.

– It depends on how you approach it.

A slow process of erasure.

– Yes, in some degrees. Especially when retaining the disappeared trace of Banksy’s statement “Sorry! the lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock been restored” on the streets of Poplar (London) and in the project itself.

The transgressed product can be all of the above and none of them simultaneously. The hybrid outcome is indeterminate, although it might share similarities with predefined art forms. It is an *emergent whole* in which “the parts are so dynamically related as to produce something new which is unpredictable from a knowledge of the parts” (Deren, 1946 / McPherson, 2005, p. 65). The *emergent whole* is also a *difficult whole*, referring to Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). The interdisciplinary process and product emerge from the assemblage or integration of disconnected parts (challenging collaborators, contradictory ideas, concepts and theories derived from different disciplines) which, through continuous adjustments and repositionings, create *a whole that emerges with difficulty and is defined with difficulty*. The *emergent* and *difficult whole* requires a process of negotiation for balancing opposite and disconnected elements. That could be referred as an *unstable equilibrium*, a concept found in Deren’s essay “Cinema as an Art Form” and is described as “the concept of absolute, intrinsic values, whose stability must be maintained” in order to give way to “the concept of relationships which ceaselessly are created, dissolved and recreated and which bestow value upon the part according to its functional relation to the whole” (Deren, 1946 / McPherson, 2005, p. 31).

While demolition as an artistic concept has been approached in this text as a violent intervention in disciplinarity, Deren’s notion of *unstable equilibrium* helps to apply dynamic relationships to the process of disciplinary destruction. Demolition as a concept, when placed inside an isolated context, risks creating negative connotations associated with the lack of productivity. Deren’s *unstable equilibrium* may suggest the transformation of a practice upon or before its destruction and contamination by another discipline through destabilising processes aiming to move the discipline away from fixed perceptions and convictions. This image works when we imagine disciplines less as authoritarian buildings, but as frames made by malleable membranes; when we imagine them

as *weak*<sup>7</sup> disciplines. Through this lens, transgression (the moment of un-disciplining disciplines) describes the birth of hybrid forms that continue to evolve through dynamic relationships and exchanges. All three claims outlined in this essay (Jenks, Deren, Gramsci) have helped me to advocate the belief that demolition as a concept suggests a creative artistic tactic that enables rebirth, re-orientation and relocations of forms and principles through dynamic processes.

### Conclusion

I have attempted to address the experience and the issues associated with interdisciplinarity. I have arrived to work as an interdisciplinary artist out of necessity to explore a specific question: *how to remember architecture as a living organism rather than a fixed structure*. Throughout this paper, I have tried to shed light on the different ways of working interdisciplinarily and I have examined transgression as intention, as a role adapted by the artist-researcher who is transformed into a *cross-dresser*, as a process and a product. In all four cases, knowing-how interacts with learning-how-to, making and thinking as research. The concept of demolition has been crucial in helping me to transgress different disciplines.

Movement-wise demolition hints in its process the action of *shaking*, and the notion of unstable equilibrium suggests *balancing*; both of them, when they are applied as metaphors to the interdisciplinary discourse, help to expand a strictly defined discipline while maintaining medium-specificity. Without destroying and completely rejecting disciplinarity, *shaking* can help to expand the limits of a discipline and, thus, enrich it. *Shaking a discipline* and *balancing between different disciplines* is a practice that requires continuous adjustments, re-positionings and flexibility in order to maintain equilibrium and avoid collapsing. Specifically for the field of dance and dance making, a broader understanding of *shaking* and *balancing* as movement options may contribute to ideas about transition, transformation, and re-location so relevant to the contemporary concepts of archiving and expanded choreography.

### References

- Brannigan, E. (2010) *Platform Paper #25: Moving Across Disciplines. Dance in the 21st Century*. Platform Papers. Quarterly Essays on the Performing Arts. Sydney: Currency House.
- Brown, C. and Ramsgard-Thomsen, M. (2008) "Dancing-Drawing Fields of Presence in SeaUnSea", in Hannah, D. and Harslof, O. (eds) *Performance Design*. Copenhagen: Roskilde University, pp. 228–246.

---

7 Architectural theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1997, p. 71) defines disciplinary weakness as "a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential".

- Burt, R. (2009) "The Spectre of Interdisciplinarity", *Dance Research Journal*, 41 (1), pp. 3–22.
- Carr, P., Rea, D. and Hand, R. (2014) *Dancing with Interdisciplinarity: Strategies and Practices in Higher Education Dance, Drama and Music*. The Higher Education Academy.
- Chettiparamb, A. (2007) *Interdisciplinarity: A Literature Review*. Report for the Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group, Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, School of Humanities, University of Southampton, Southampton.
- Cvejić, B. (2015) *Choreographing Problems. Expressive Concepts in Contemporary Dance and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 225–231.
- Forgacs, D. (ed.) (2000) *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*. New York: New York University Press.
- Foster, S. Leigh (1998) "Choreographies of Gender", *Signs*, 24 (1), pp. 1–33.
- Franko, M. and Lepecki, A. (2014) "Dance in the Museum", *Dance Research Journal*, 46 (3), pp. 24–31.
- Jenks, C. (2003) *Transgression*. London and New York: Routledge.
- (2013) "Transgression: The Concept", *Architectural Design*, 83 (6), pp. 20–23.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Lycouris, S. (2009) "Choreographing Environments: New Technologies and Movement-related Artistic Work", in Butterworth, J. and Wildschut, L. (eds) *Contemporary Choreography. A Critical Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 346–361.
- McPherson, B. R. (ed.) (2005) *Essential Deren. Collected Writings on Film by Maya Deren*. New York: Documentext.
- Mosley, J. and Sara, R. (eds) (2013) "The Architecture of Transgression. Towards a Destabilising Architecture", *Architectural Design*, 83 (6), pp. 14–19.
- Segal, R. A. (2009) "Crossing Borders Can Lead to Gold – But So Can Digging Deep". Times Higher Education [Online]. Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/crossing-borders-can-lead-to-gold-but-so-can-digging-deep/407028.article> [Accessed 4 January 2017].
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1966/1979) *The Phenomenology of Dance*. London: Dance Books.
- Solà-Morales, I. (1997) "Weak Architectures", in Sola-Morales, I., Thompson, G. and Whiting, S. (eds) *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

- South London Gallery (2015) "Thomas Hirschhorn: In-Between" [Online]. Available at: <http://www.southlondongallery.org/page/thomashirschhorn> [Accessed 4 January 2017].
- Tschumi, B. (1996) *Architecture and Disjunction*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press.
- Venturi, R. (1966) *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- Wolff, J. (1997) "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics", in Desmond, J. (ed.) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 55–57.
- Worton, M. (2013) "Big Picture From All Angles". Times Higher Education [Online]. Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/comment/opinion/big-picture-from-all-angles/2001745.article> [Accessed 4 January 2017].