

We go vzw / Vincenzo Carta / Ongakuaw *GNOSIS#1*



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Focus on Art and Science in the Performing Arts
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GNOSIS#1

CONCEPT	Vincenzo Carta + Ongakuaw
CHOREOGRAPHY	Vincenzo Carta
BIOTIC SOUNDSCAPE	Ongakuaw
DANCE	Piet Defrancq, Stéve Paulet, Steven Michel, Vincenzo Carta
PRODUCTION	WE GO vzw.

CDTM Circuito danza campana, Naples; Fondazione Fabbrica Europa, Florence; Stuk Kunstencentrum, Leuven; Kunstencentrum nOna, Mechelen; Pianofabriek, Bruxelles; Sosta Palmizi, Cortona

In collaboration with: CanGo, Florence; Institut Français de Florence; Movi|mentale 2010 / Artgarage, Naples; Le Grenoble Institut Français de Naples

'Gnosis' is the Greek word for knowledge. It indicates a direct spiritual experiential knowledge and intuitive knowledge, mystic rather than that from rational or reasoned thinking.

Background

I would believe only in a God that knows how to dance. ~Friedrich Nietzsche

Over recent years the fascination for the ritualistic phenomena, and particularly the trance, has strongly influenced my choreographic research.

In my previous works (*We Go* and *INBETWEEN*, in collaboration with Benjamin Vandewalle) the concept of ritual was identified within the creation process.

In these first experiences we explored the possibilities to reach diverse states of consciousness through movement repetition. During the creation process of both *We Go* and *INBETWEEN* verbal communication was strictly avoided, allowing movement to elevated itself as the only means of communication. We created instant and instinctive choreographic compositions using the awareness of an altered perceptive state.

This interest to ritual is dictated by the necessity to dig out the roots of dance and rediscover it as the primary form of expression and social interaction. The body is the first vehicle for knowledge, through experience and perception, it creates a map of reality that allows us to understand the world around us, both in a material and an immaterial way. Dance is then a key to explore the essence of the human experience.

From research to artefact

The use of movement as a means to reach 'the trance' is still fundamental in the artistic discourse of GNOSIS#1. As a natural evolution of this poetic, over the last two years, the research is continued in searching the connections between body movement and states of consciousness.

Aiming to grasp a deeper knowledge of the phenomena and to extend my discourse to more complex compositional forms, I developed interests for scientific studies on ritual and trance; in particular biogenetic structuralism (a body of theory in anthropology) that gives a large overview of the evolution and structure of human ritual, its omnipresent nature and its role in controlling cognition and experience.

More precisely, these studies helped me to understand how a group can share the same experience and state of consciousness by practicing and repeating given patterns. My focus is the relationship between: movement, space, time and music, using them as "ingredients" to create a group dynamic that builds up a common experience shared among the dancers. In this new creation I will explore a complex composition system using each "ingredient" in different quantities to reach, not one, but several conscious states and a richer choreographic result.

For the creation of GNOSIS#1, I will collaborate with the scientist/musician/composer Ongakuaw (Andrew Ferrara) who over the last years developed digitally-based compositions using the body as a biotic instrument.

The interaction between the environment and the living body has implied the production of biotic materials. These materials are related to either the brain (cerebral energy) or body (kinetic energy) activity. Biotic materials are tightly connected with perception and experience, and in general with the complexity of life.

Collaboration with Ongakuaw

Background

Digital composition uses generative processes as a working method. When starting a new composition the composer defines a compositional strategy. In practice, this is achieved by defining rules or algorithms through which the material can self evolve once the process is started, requiring only a moderate-to no-control by the composer.

One important dilemma remains, however. The initial parameters need to be assigned somewhat arbitrarily by the composer himself. By introducing biotic materials as a starting point (instead of programmed algorithms) Ongakuaw tries to bring in the concept of necessity in the compositional process.

This approach will be crucial in GNOSIS#1. More concretely: biotic material is produced by and associated to activities related to living organisms (in this case the dancers). Thus the starting raw material used for compositional purposes comes from necessary life activities, the dance itself.

Description: technology – rituals and GNOSIS#1

The dance, in GNOSIS#1, takes its place as expression of the indissolubility and wholeness of the being. The bodies of the four dancers behave as parts of one entity, they are the organs of a collective body. The movement, in constant becoming, is spatially conceived with the purpose to produce a kaleidoscopic vision of the choreography.

The physical actions, beside giving life to the choreographic composition, have the goal to drive the dancers through several conscience states.

Those states will be monitored in real time by a system of EEG electrodes and hardware interfaces. Such digital flow of information will then be used to control the biotic sound and lighting system generator, transforming the resulting algorithms into music and light.

This technology was developed by Ongakuaw during his recent search and already experimented in other biotic installations, e.g. Nomadic Time.

The sonorous outcome represents a real time mapping of the emotions felt by the dancers and at the same time it influences the conscience state in a constant loop of feedback.

The human neuronal activity produces four types of waves: Alpha wave (frequency of 8-13 Hz), Beta (13-30 Hz), Theta (4-8 Hz) and Delta (0.5-4 Hz). The first ones are related to states of vigilant consciousness, the second is related to states of tension or fear; the Theta waves are induced by a problem-solving activity. Finally, the Delta waves correspond to states of meditation, introspection and, it seems, of trance. Every region of the encephalon produces all the four waves, but with smaller or greater intensity of the single components; however the global activity of the brain is given by the simultaneous interaction among the various encephalic regions.

During the performance, on the scalp of every dancer, in specific positions of the skull, 14 electrodes will be placed to measure the local cerebral activity. The four streams of signals conveying into the hardware/software will recreate one virtual entity that reassumes a wide psychic state distributed among the four dancers. We call it collective brain.

The collective brain controls the generation of sound and the flow of light. In return it influences through a process of feedback the choreographic composition and the state of trance of the dancers. The emotions govern sound and light, but sound and light also feed back onto emotions.

The spectator is immerse into the universe created by the dancers, populated by the sounds of their emotions and where the only spatial reference is the relation between them. The volume defined by the group of dancers expands and contracts itself creating a perceptive effect of zoom in/out of the space. The void that separates the bodies, the intensity of the gestures and the flow of light define a constantly morphing/bridging architecture.

Composition process

(1) The first step of the creation is a one-month period of research devoted to test the complex hardware system of detection and monitoring of the cerebral waves. This system will be attached to the dancers, connected with the elaboration station via wireless Bluetooth®.

(2) The use of such a technology opens possibilities for composition systems before unimaginable. The fact of measuring, in real time, the brain activity while executing movement gives the possibility to analyse movement according to the state of consciousness required or resulting by it.

(3) The compilation of answers of the digital system to qualitative different choreographic actions, will give us possibilities to compose the physical actions as a musical score. By voluntarily inducing the body in states of vigorous activity or passiveness, precise choreographed movements or free instinctive actions. The different phases of the creation are not separate but in a constant organic dialogue.

The creation and development of the piece will be approached as a daily practice, the dancers will be confronted with the repetition of physical tasks in order to create a common vocabulary that doesn't erase the peculiarity of the individual.

The concepts of collective body and collective brain are conceived as the identity and power that a group can create thanks to diversity and not to homologation.

The idea of ritual which I use in performing art doesn't refer to the literal meaning of the word, which is: "conforming, according to the rule". My ritual is a body movement practice that allows the mind to fly into a state of trance where anything may be possible.