

## Remediated Spatiality. Performative and Medial Spaces in the Work of Imitating the Dog

**Abstract:** This essay investigates how digital media relate to scenic space and modify its prerequisites and tensions, redraws its boundaries and creates new spatial models. In particular we analyse the use of space by the British company Imitating the Dog, finding three models of space remediation experienced in various theatre performances: the cinematic dramaturgy and theatricalizing cinema of *Hotel Methuselah* and *Kellerman*; the emotional space of the Winter Garden experience; *Arrivals and Departures* at the Deep, where scenic space redefines the borders of the urban environment.

**Key words:** *cinematic-dramaturgy, digital performance, Imitating the Dog, medial space,*

Published at the end of the 1960s, Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* opens with these words: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged".<sup>1</sup> In turn, the British director created a necessary relationship between theatre (in terms of a system of knowledge, practice and spectacle) and space within which theatrical forms are produced. According to Brook, a space is the starting point for any theatrical form at the social level, as it represents the point of connection between the various subjects living on stage. A mediological approach to theatre requires an understanding of how the medial universe, particularly the one bound by digital media, relates to scenic space and modifies its prerequisites and tensions, while redrawing its boundaries. Indeed, in the last ten years, various studies have tried to understand the nature of scenic device changes, although many theatrical companies and directors have investigated the properties of this new spatial model, which implies what is meant by digital in terms of technology and thinking machines. In her essay *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, the German philosopher Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests thinking about scenic space in two different ways: the architectural-geometric space, in which the performance takes place, and the performative space through which the performance comes into being.<sup>2</sup> In other words, space must be seen, on the one hand, as a physical place that exists before the show and does not end with its conclusion, while, on the other hand, the performative space opens up possibilities, without defining the manner of their use and fulfilment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London, Palgrave, 1968), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (New York and London: Routledge), 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

In the 20th century, the concept of space tore down the walls of the theatre and

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<sup>4</sup> On the importance of the scenic space as an active dramaturgical element, see Marco De Marinis, *In Cerca dell'Attore* (Rome, Bulzoni, 2000), Marco De Marinis, *Il Teatro dopo l'Età dell'Oro* (Rome, Bulzoni, 2014), Lorenzo Mango, *La Scrittura Scenica* (Rome, Bulzoni, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> On this topic, see Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), Richard Schechner, *Performance Imaginaries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: AJ Publications, 1982), Victor Turner, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 336.

<sup>7</sup> Birgit Wiens, "Spatiality", in Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender, Robin Nelson, eds., *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U. P., 2010), 91.

<sup>8</sup> Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi, *Performing Mixed Reality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Andy Lavender, *Performance in the Twenty-first Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 67.

challenged the hegemony of the so-called Italian scene by introducing a truly active dramaturgical element,<sup>4</sup> which opened up non-conventional spaces,<sup>5</sup> while redefining the spatial relationship between spectator and actor. Within this context, digital media became part of this rebuilding process which started with the historical avant-garde. As Steve Dixon noted, in one of the very first contributions to the historical-theoretical reconstruction of the theatre-digital media relationship, particular hybrid models were created since then: "Through the integration of media screens within the mise-en-scène, artists experiment with techniques that at times fragment and dislocate bodies, time, and space, and at others unify physical, spatial, and temporal significations".<sup>6</sup> Put another way, digital media did not only redefine stage boundaries, but also exposed bodies to relations with their image and their digital doubles, located in increasingly sensitive and intelligent settings. Digital technology allows for the construction of hybrid and hyperconnected spaces, where a scenic sphere forms a relation with a physically defined spatiality, which are interconnected by the alphanumerical nature of digital media.

In recent years, however, new spatial models have revised conceptions of theatrical space. At the turn of the 21st century, digital media and global communication networks heralded a new spatial turn. The exponential increase of interconnections and real-time contacts between individuals and societies that are spatially, even geographically, apart from each other leads to new concepts of, and experiences within, actual and virtual spaces.<sup>7</sup>

This paper starts from a theoretical basis in order to discuss some of the spatial models present in the work of the British company Imitating the Dog, which, since its foundation in 1998, has investigated how digital media can recreate the mise-en-scène. This research applies methodology related to theatre and performance mediology, as well as the sociology of media, with the aim of understanding space at its borders and through its interconnections. I mean to show how this hybridity, as Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi have suggested, embraces "the nature of mixed reality and of performance ... involving multiple spaces, shifting roles, and extended time scales, all of which are connected in multiple ways through diverse forms of interface".<sup>8</sup> In other words, I try to discuss Andy Lavender's observation that "we are now so routinely in a domain where media interrelate that it may be better to talk simply of hybrid mediality: the work and effects of blended media, whatsoever they be, and howsoever (inter)related".<sup>9</sup>

## On the remediation of space

In *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan describes media in terms of translators. For McLuhan, media comprise devices that translate "one kind of knowledge into another mode".<sup>10</sup> To explain this operative mechanism, he refers to the metaphorizing power of media. For McLuhan, media represent 'active metaphors'

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with the power to translate experiences into new forms and new metaphors. Medial, as well as active, metaphors are operative, that is, they facilitate the process of translation and rewriting from one medium into another. Medial space is, according to him, a space whose fundamental characteristic is concerned with reinterpreting experiences into new forms, always through a metaphoric logic. At a conference in Madrid in 1946, some years before the publication of *Understanding Media*, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset explained that theatrical space, even before the birth of electrical and electronic media, needed to be considered as capable of metaphorizing.<sup>11</sup> Everything that happens on stage starts with a form of agreement among the actors (both performers and spectators) to interrupt everyday life. For Ortega, stage and actor are the embodied universal metaphor, theatre is namely this: visible metaphor.<sup>12</sup> Within theatrical space, everything that happens is always connected to some kind of translating power; but its peculiarity is that its mechanism, its being an 'active metaphor', is made visible. If, for McLuhan, the workings of media are founded on the presence of active metaphors, and for Ortega theatre works as an active and visible metaphorical machine, then we must conclude that theatrical space is medial because it shares its metaphorizing mechanism with media.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Un'idea di teatro* (Milan: Medusa, 2006), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See Fabrizio Deriu, *Mediologia della Performance* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2014), Antonio Pizzo, *Neodrammatico Digitale* (Turin: Accademia U. P., 2013), Alfonso Amendola, Vincenzo Del Gaudio, eds., *Teatri e immaginari digitali* (Salerno: I Gechi, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Re-mediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 5.

In 1999, Bolter and Grusin reconsidered McLuhan's assumptions made in *Understanding Media* in light of new and expanding media, citing the concept of remediation. This concept is based on the idea that digital media work through the multiplication of devices and, above all, through representative models. As Bolter and Grusin explained: "contemporary culture wants to multiply its media and to eliminate any track of mediation: ideally it would like to cancel its media in the same time it multiplies them".<sup>14</sup> Remediation, then, works as a space where one medium is represented by another. In this sense, theatre, in its relationship with other media, not only plays with and suffers from remediation processes, but, being performative, tends to show the workings of its remediated phenomena. Scenic space is remediated because it highlights the double remediation logic, i.e., the logic according to which a new medium takes characteristics from an old one and rewrites it while erasing the process tracks. In turn, rather than erase the remediation tracks, theatre intensifies their meaning. In this sense, it is possible to talk about remediated space because those mechanisms of remediation are brought into the light; they are made visible.

From this perspective, the work of *Imitating the Dog* can be said to be built around this remediation; it aims to show not only the processes involved, but also how scenic space reconfigures its borders from physical and experiential points of view. Since its remediative models are not univocal, but involve different medial and scenic concepts, I have decided to analyse the British company's experiments focusing on space. This analysis centres on three different operational models of space moving across a multimedia horizon and dealing with a media operativeness determined by individual media forms. As a whole, the work of *Imitating the Dog*

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can be considered as a place of possibilities, which grows or narrows according to how every single media form operates. We can interpret space as the condition that must be met for a scenic event to be possible. For Fischer-Lichte, the fact that a performative space determines the range of possibilities means that theatre is neither physical nor eventful, but procedural: “Spatiality is generated through the movements and perceptions of actors and spectators ... performative space does not represent an artefact for which one or more creators are responsible. By nature, the performative space pertains to events rather than works of art”.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 114.

### Space and cinematic dramaturgy

[Imitating the Dog] represent not only my own shifting site but more crucially they represent a tension between theatrical and cinematic techniques in multimedia performance.

(Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre*)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/ Technological Intersections in Multimedia Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101.

The first model of spatial remediation employed by Imitating the Dog reflected its approach to dramaturgy. As Jennifer Parker-Starbuck has observed, Imitating the Dog works across the border between theatre and cinema. Not by chance does the company use terms such as ‘cinematic dramaturgy’ and ‘theatricalizing cinema’ to describe its work.<sup>17</sup> In the scenic space, cinema and theatre enter into conflict with, and influence, each other, as the use of video allows for the multiplication of the actor’s corporal levels. In fact, thanks to technology, live projections ‘split’ the actor so that they can engage in dialogue with their disembodied digital double.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the concepts of ‘cinematic dramaturgy’ and ‘theatricalizing cinema’ recall the real-time cinema experiments of companies such as the Big Art Group and the Builders Association, as well as cinema narrative models, where image editing, as well as actors’ movements and dialogue hybridize theatre and cinema techniques. Thus, the scenic space becomes synthetic, meaning that it is not possible to comprehend a division between the mediated and the immediate. This is because, as a performative space, it is produced in relation to a single media form:

<sup>17</sup> Imitating the Dog, *Education Pack*, <http://www.imitatingthedog.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-ITD-EDUCATION-PACK.pdf> (accessed 12 September 2017).

<sup>18</sup> See Philip Auslander, *Liveness* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Philip Auslander, “Digital Liveness: A Historico-philosophical Perspective”, *PAJ-A Journal of Performance and Art*, 102 (2012), 3-11; Laura Gemini, “Liveness: media logics in live communication”, *Sociologia della Comunicazione*, 51 (2016): 43-63.

Indeed, where video art, installation and multi-media theatre have presented a formal diversity that reflects their cross-disciplinary roots, these practices have been marked by a tendency toward a return or resurgence of specific notions of place, presence and media, while reflecting upon the experience of the body, the performing subject and subjectivity. In this context, Multi-media: video – installation – performance is concerned with that which persists across these practices: with the implications of the convergence of the live and the mediated; with the tensions between television and video’s multiplication of the times and spaces of performance in their claim to simultaneity and presentness; with the diversity of forms and processes in which specific effects return.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Nick Kaye, *Multi-media Video – Installation – Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 10.

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According to Kaye, the first spatial model that Imitating the Dog applied on stage was cinematic since narrative logics played a primary role in the construction of the *mise en scène*. Cinema becomes performative and dialogue takes place alongside visual language. In this light, the term ‘theatricalizing cinema’ could explain the double process in action in the company’s work: on the one hand, there is the use of the cinematographic code (cutting, close-ups, long shots etc.); on the other, there is the presence of actors and their dialogue with their own images. As such, it is possible to define the theatre of Imitating the Dog as performative cinema or, even better, cinema in progress.

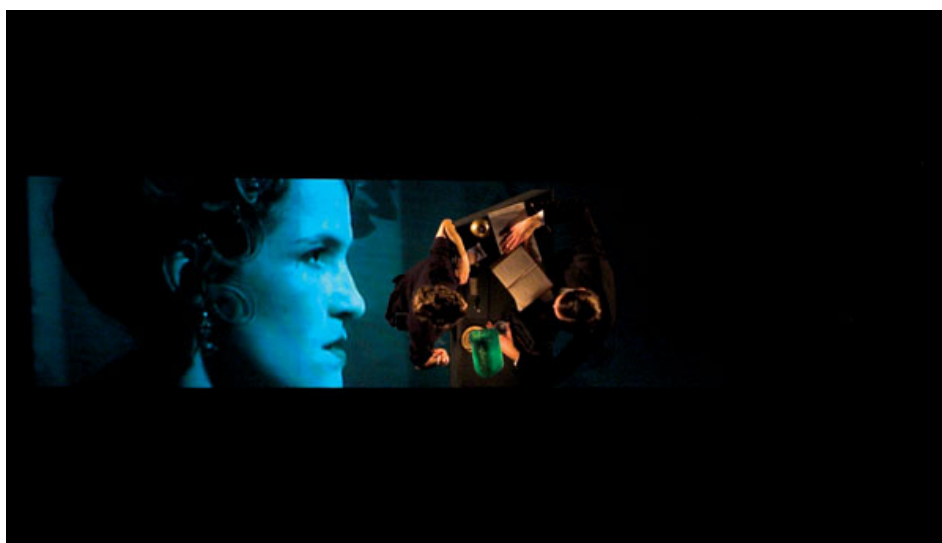


Fig. 1: *Hotel Methuselah* @Imitating the dog

We can observe this process in the 2005 show *Hotel Methuselah*, where the stage took on the shape of a 16:9 screen onto which images were projected.<sup>20</sup> The show started with an audio-visual projection, which followed the construction logic of cinematic space. At first, headlines appeared, then the space split: on one side, you could see a cinema image space, on the other a live voice-over gave way to a more complex splitting. Indeed, the company has made it clear that the show was created in the same way as “post-war British cinema and the French new wave”.<sup>21</sup> By ‘cutting’ theatrical space in this way, the spectators were unable to see actors’ faces while they performed; only their bodies were visible. However, facial expressions were filmed live, using close-ups, and projected behind the actors. Cinema techniques replaced the theatre space in *Hotel Methuselah* via an interactive screen. For Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, “*Hotel Methuselah* unfolds like a film, although crucially constructed through an engagement with the theatrical bodies on stage”,<sup>22</sup> that is, the show was constructed like a film, in which real bodies played a crucial

<sup>20</sup> Imitating the Dog, Pete Brooks, *Hotel Methuselah*, in Anna Furse, ed., *Theatre in Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Imitating the Dog, “*Hotel Methuselah*”, <http://www.imitatingthedog.co.uk/portfolio/hotel-methuselah/> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg*, 136.

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role. The actors' entered into dialogue with their own digital bodies until the latter broke into little pieces, thus becoming real fragments in the digital environment. The second show by *Imitating the Dog* under analysis is *Kellerman* (2008), which shared some of the cinematic construction principles of *Hotel Methuselah*. In this show, the space was split into two projectable parts, still recalling the cinema logic of 16:9; but, unlike the first show, this split created two places in intimate relation with each other. Actors performed live and 'entered' the images, so that they were almost flattened, with the scenic space becoming bi- and tri-dimensional at the same time. Entering the image, using it as scenery and, above all, as a sensitive ambience where the action happened, the British company tried to interrogate the difference in the enjoyment models employed in cinema and theatre. Stanley Cavell emphasized that this difference involves production and consumption: in cinema, production precedes consumption, while, in theatre, they coincide.<sup>23</sup> In the work of *Imitating the Dog*, even if some images are created in advance, they are actualized during the performance; for this reason, the gap between production and consumption is closed. In addition, during *Kellerman*, the lower space was further sectioned, which, in a theoretical sense, recalled the mobile panels, or screens, that Edward Gordon Craig projected onto during the 1908 Moscow staging of *Hamlet*, directed by Konstantin Stanislavsky.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge and London: Harvard U. P., 1971), 31.

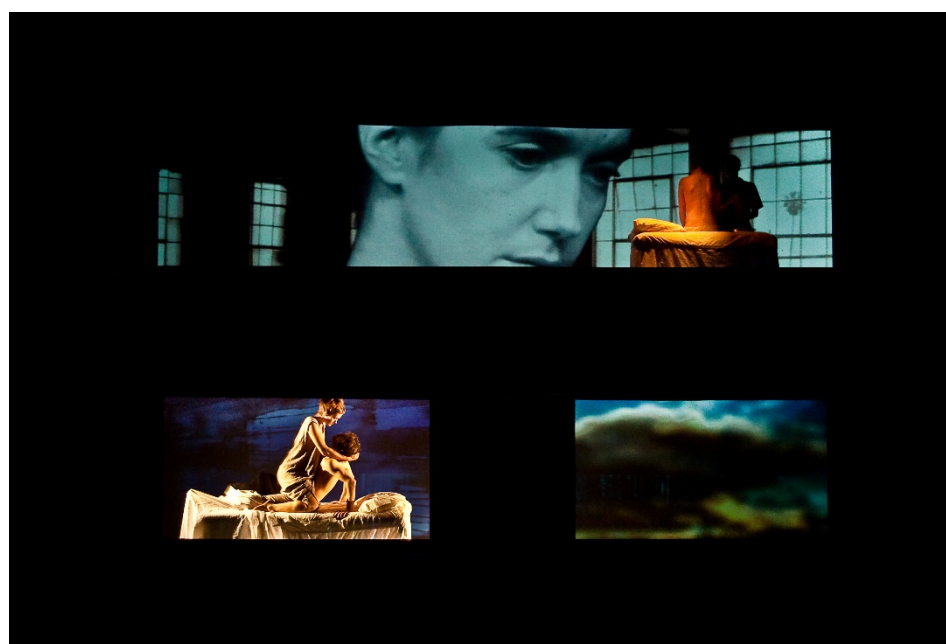


Fig. 2: *Kellerman* @Imitating the Dog

For *Imitating the Dog*, scenic space is no longer a simple container, which grows or narrows; nor is it possible to recognize any spatial differences between theatre and cinema. The suspension of cinema's narrative logic creates confusion: "These interruptions occur on many levels within the pieces: narratives and



character formation, visual composition of film and stage elements, desynchronicity and soundscape”.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, for the two shows described above, the scenic space evolved out of the confusion sown among the audience, who needed to reconsider their spatial perception and recalibrate it according to the diachronic and synchronic movements of the actors and images: “I would like to suggest [*Hotel Methuselah*] is not just about, or by, people, it is directly connected to the ways in which different modes of representation operate; how cinema and theatre work (and fail) to make their representations hold fast in the world”.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Piotr Woycicki, *Post-cinematic Theatre and Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 157.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Quick, “The Space Between: Disorienting Landscape in the Photographic Works of Willie Doherty”, in Gabriela Giannachi, Nigel Stewart, eds., *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 147-64.

## Operating space

In *Hotel Methuselah* and *Kellerman*, we face a sort of indistinction between scenic and cinematic space, where depth is lost due to the flattening of the film image, which, at the same time, facilitates a wider field of vision. The second spatial model employed by *Imitating the Dog* took a different turn. Starting from the ‘performative turning point’,<sup>26</sup> the company went beyond the division between the stage and the auditorium, viewing the entire theatre building as an operative space, which could be modified and moulded by the use of technology. In this second model, instead of envisaging a kind of theatre space, which is flattened into a cinematic image, we could observe a scenic space that was deflagrated and expanded.

<sup>26</sup> Besides Erika Fisher-Lichte, see also Simon Sheppard, Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

This sort of operative space expands thanks to the use of video technologies until it is no longer possible to trace its borders. It is not only the sum of the medial operations used to produce it; it is also about using media to change perceptions about what has appeared. For *Imitating the Dog*, the operative space has acquired completely different perceptual characteristics, which do not coincide with the geometric space that precedes it. In other words, the use of media implies a ‘plastic’ change at the geometric level, which shift shapes and, above all, changes the spectators’ perception of the space.

In this context, Erika Fischer-Lichte is clear that the performative space is not intended to be a simple relational space of possibilities; rather, it must possess an atmospheric function: “performative space is always, at the same time, an atmospheric space.... Space is not only formed by the use that actors and spectators make of it, but also by specific atmosphere that this space seems to irradiate”.<sup>27</sup> By atmospheric, we refer to a sort of place from where something irradiates and becomes a presence. According to the German philosopher Gernot Böhme, atmosphere is a perceptive model based on something that is irradiated from space. It is not exclusive to space; it is also inside the perceptive sphere of a subject: “atmosphere is something you cannot completely build a distance from, it does not vanish or narrow in a thing. Atmospheres have a subjective part, they are always codetermined”.<sup>28</sup> Atmospheric space is codetermined because, for Böhme, it is not only perceived on a cognitive intellectual level, but also needs to involve

<sup>27</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 201.

<sup>28</sup> Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre, Estasi, Messe in Scena* (Milan: Marinotti, 2010), 82. Translation is mine.

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<sup>29</sup> Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Tonino Griffero, *Atmosferologia. Estetica degli spazi emozionali* (Bari, Laterza, 2010), 17. Translation is mine.

<sup>31</sup> Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, 83-84.

<sup>32</sup> Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 202.

<sup>33</sup> About site-specific theatre see Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art Performance, Place and Documentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Alfred Hickling, "Sea Breeze review. A phantasmagoric and unforgettable spectacle", *The Guardian*, 24/09/2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/24/sea-breeze-review-winter-gardens-morecambe> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Cit. in Jarka Burian, *The Scenography of Josef Svoboda* (Middletown: Wesleyan U.P., 1971, 2).

participation: we feel an atmosphere when we are emotionally involved.<sup>29</sup> For the Italian aesthetics scholar, Tonino Griffero, this involvement primarily means being involved with situations and not just 'things': "atmospheric perception is not seizing (alleged) elementary sensitive data and only afterwards ... states of things, but being involved with things, and even better, situations".<sup>30</sup> This means that the second spatial model employed by *Imitating the Dog* was mainly an emotional space, a space you were emotionally involved in, where you did not perceive borders, but continuous irradiations, albeit not in things and not in subjects. On this topic, Böhme remains clear:

You find out that atmosphere is a space you enter. Naturally this space is not a metric space, and it would have something to do with geometrically meant space in an abstract way, i.e., in topology. Still it is a space wherever possible you can enter, being inside it and being wrapped, and spatially the experience we make of it, as affective situation, is like the experience of a place. Atmosphere is now in a space with its own emotional shade ... it is a state of mind.<sup>31</sup>

Atmospheric space for Böhme works on an emotional level, as long as the user shares the emotional shade. In particular, it overtakes the user, thereby inhibiting their capacity to precisely know from where the emotional shade irradiates. Meanwhile, Fischer-Lichte emphasizes how "atmosphere in theatre is the first thing the spectator notices, which 'dyes' his perception, allowing him a particular experience of spatiality".<sup>32</sup>

On this matter, the show that, maybe more than others, exemplified this second model of space was *Sea Breeze*, staged in collaboration with Raisin and Willow in 2013. *Sea Breeze* was a site-specific show, conceived for the Winter Gardens Theatre, a Victorian theatre in Morecambe, Lancashire, which originally closed in 1977.<sup>33</sup> In this project, *Imitating the Dog* was not concerned with the stage, which was designed by two Liverpool artists; however, the spatial construction process did use technology, although no cinematization was involved. For the show itself, the company built a wrapping space, where no cinematization was involved. Medial and geometric spaces were considered in the creation of a comfortable space. For this huge theatre. In turn, *Imitating the Dog* imagined a kind of architectural tone poem,<sup>34</sup> that is, a poem dedicated to the theatre. The architectural space became a uniquely phantasmagorical and projectable space, where physicality and mediality were interrelated. Changes to the mise en scène were continuously achieved by using videomapping: in other words, the theatre became a 'psychoplastic' space (a term used by Josef Svoboda),<sup>35</sup> which, at a certain point, was transformed into a real planetarium.





Fig. 3: *Sea Breeze* @Imitating the dog

The operative space designed for *Sea Breeze* sought to return the theatre to its former glory, as well as create moments of friction in which the atmosphere conflicted with the derelict state of the theatre building when spectators entered inside. The narrative contribution from Raisin and Willow, meanwhile, was focused on telling the stories of those who had worked or been entertained there from the 1930s until it closed. For its part, *Imitating the Dog* ‘played with’ an urban legend associated with the Winter Gardens, involving paranormal activity, by using old footage, which, like ghosts, brought the past into view. Projections entered into a dialogue with the entire space, from ceiling to floor, until the point at which the planetarium materialized. According to Raisin and Willow, *Sea Breeze* was about “searching for stories in the bones of [the Winter Gardens] beams and its rivets and its rafters”.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the show’s aim was to produce emotional memory, starting with the space, starting with a theatre, which “has been standing here, on the edge of the sea and the land, for a century and more”,<sup>37</sup> because “memory is everything, memory was everything”.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Raisin and Willow, “*Sea Breeze*”, <http://raisinandwillow.co.uk/projects/sea-breeze/> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Raisin and Willow, *Sea Breeze* (video-document), <https://vimeo.com/223761370> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

### Media space

Space, for *Imitating the Dog*, is plastic. It moves in parallel with geometric space, when it is cinematic, or it changes its borders, when it is operative. The models employed by the company are somehow medial because their construction was the consequence of geometric/medial spatial relations. The company’s third model, which we will now explore, also involved an operative space; but, instead of

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<sup>39</sup> This is a clear reference to performance studies and, above all, to the use of non-conventional spaces.

<sup>40</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of the New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press), 18-55.

creating an atmospheric environment, the staging of the show in question was moved to an urban setting.<sup>39</sup>

One of the pioneering essays about new media, written by Lev Manovich, claims that space, following the evolution of digital media and under certain conditions, can itself be a medium since it can be transmitted, stored and recovered in a snapshot. Space can be squeezed, re-formatted, changed into a flow, filtered, computerized, programmed and interactively managed.<sup>40</sup> Imitating the Dog's transportable, plastic space is itself a medium that can be moved and moulded. In this sense, the spectacle that, more than others, represents this idea of media space was *Arrivals and Departures*, staged in Hull on the occasion of its year as the UK City of Culture 2017. The focus of the show was the setting: namely, The Deep, an aquarium located in Hull Bay, as opposed to a purpose-built theatre, whose edifice was transformed into an enormous screen.



Fig. 3: *Arrivals and Departure* @Imitating the dog

According to the Catalan company Konic Thtr, theoretically, the use of mapping needs to follow three rules:

- The interrelationship between image, object and volumetric support communicates the notion that dramaturgy is focused on a “mapped” image of the object. This emphasizes that the augmented object has turned into an image-object hybrid.
- The concept of mapping: it is a ‘skin’ made from images and light covering the volumetric object. A dynamic and flexible skin, which fits like a dress on the object, from where it is projected or visualized.

- Technology, whereby mapping involves building a perceptive device made of light, image, sound, software, hardware, space and time, architecture, actors and spectators; with all these elements brought together, it creates an experiential and relational set.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Anna Monteverdi, "Videomapping: dal monumentismo digitale al videomapping teatrale", <http://www.annamonteverdi.it/digital/videomapping-dal-monumentismo-digitale-al-videomapping-teatrale/> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

*Arrival and Departures* moved towards an architectural change of space, where scenic space became the real protagonist transforming and redefining the borders of the urban environment. The piece related the migration story of the city, but the urban space played a role other than to provide scenery, by interacting with actors and audience, thanks to the use of mapping. Describing the show, Simon Wainwright, its video designer and storyboarder, said: "A video and sound installation at The Deep which explores the role of migration in the shaping of the 'mosaic city' of Hull".<sup>42</sup> His comment denotes how the company's idea was to create a live show based on a sort of transportable media space, which interacted with The Deep building:

<sup>42</sup> Bethany Watson, "Introducing Simon Wainwright, co-creator of Arrivals and Departures", <https://www.hull2017.co.uk/discover/article/made-hull-artists-imitating-dog/> (accessed on 5 March 2018).

Our initial concept was a live show, but it soon became obvious that the piece would benefit from being sound and video-based. Once we had the building blocks of the piece – modes of transportation and the architecture of the building itself – it was really all about research into the history of Hull and migration that shaped the work.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

In these terms, then, *Imitating the Dog* envisages scenic space as plastic and synthetic, where digital technology, far from being mere decoration, is a fundamental actor in the process of defining scenic space. Clearly, the three models that we have analysed in this paper are often interrelated and never appear alone. Moreover, when the company reflects on a space, it is focused on finding a continuous theatrical replacement within the new media universe and, above all, on the possibility of creating a synthetic and digital theatre, where scenic space is a space of vision, in one word: *Théatron*.