

Crisis and Live Art in the 21st Century. Montdedutor: A Case Study

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English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

The overall ontological and methodological framework of this research is 21st-century emerging posthumanism, in which cognitive capitalism, technology and climate change come together in a decentralisation process of what is human, understood as a critique of anthropocentrism and humanism.

What relation is established between the posthumanist context and dance? With the multidisciplinary approach set out by the posthumanist framework, the objective is to outline relations between contemporary society and artistic practices in the 21st century in order to explore and identify how “non-artistic” fields, such as the economy, technology and social changes, influence and cut across artistic practices.

In order to address this case study, and situate the research, it will be necessary to outline a conceptual framework that brings together and proposes relations between key concepts such as physical work, precariousness, liminality, aesthetics and economy. Finally, the duo/constellation “Montdedutor” will be analysed, specifically their joint post-2009 period, which explores the field of dance based on codes and strategies derived from conceptual art.

Can 21st-century Live Art be understood based on the same presuppositions of the 20th century? The development of this case analysis seeks, ultimately, to examine whether Montdedutor's performative experimentation resignifies not only conceptual art but the very notion of performativity.

Keywords: movement arts, contemporary dance, posthumanism, Live Art, conceptual art, postconceptual art, advanced capitalism, Anthropocene, liminal art, performance, Montdedutor

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Crisis and Live Art¹ in the 21st Century. Montdedutor: A Case Study

21st Century and Global Crisis: A Posthumanist Approach

This case study forms part of a broader research: a doctoral thesis focused on the impact of 21st-century crises, in 2008 and 2020, on the ecosystem of the Live Art in Catalonia. Thus, it seeks to situate the research beyond the strictly economic repercussions, which — particularly in the case of 2008 — already have an extensive scientific literature to address the changes and transformations in the artistic languages brought about by these crises, and to set out a narrative that links social change, economy, aesthetics and artistic practices. To explore the relations between the Live Art and non-artistic fields and, specifically, the transformation or creation of new artistic languages and formats, we start from a general question: how does the 2008 crisis influence the languages and formats of the Live Art? The tentative hypothesis adopted as an explanatory work tool establishes the following: the reduction of the human presence in post-2008 Live Art pieces, as a result of the material restrictions of the crisis, transforms the artistic languages and formats and replaces the performativity focused on the subject with a decentralised performativity through a creative shift from the visual arts and cinema. This visual shift contains a return to the artistic movements and aesthetics of the past² that reappear in a context full of liminality, such as the 2008 crisis.

This article explores a more limited timeframe, related to the 2008 crisis and the immediately subsequent years in relation to the Montdedutor artistic duo. Although for the research question replacing the whole of the

1. "Live Art" is the translation I have chosen for the term "arts vives" and is a synonym for other terms that have emerged in the Catalan context, such as "art en viu", "escenes híbrides" (...), which designate those experimental artistic and multidisciplinary practices framed within the field of postperformance. This definition possesses, in the Catalan context, a specific genealogy which began with Quim Pujol in 2011 in the "secció irregular" of the Mercat de les Flors, in which he notes as a reference of a theoretical approach to non-conventional artistic practices Loise Keidan's concept of Live Art. In 2011, the translation of Live Art was, mainly, *art en viu*, and it was gradually replaced by the term *arts vives* until today.

2. Sections 3 and 4 of the article look in depth at the idea of expanded aesthetics that originated in the 20th century and that reappeared in liminal social contexts. Some of these movements are site-specific, conceptual art, documentary theatre, community art, or situationism.

Live Art with the specific case of the artistic duo object of study is obvious, the tentative hypothesis is not so apparent. Montdedutor bases the works or practices produced between 2009 and 2016 on very diverse performing arts challenges, material supports, and dramaturgies.

Nevertheless, from a general perspective, their work can be characterised as a revision of the foundations and conventions of dance by exploring movement beyond the body-subject of modern dance.³ Montdedutor is therefore the inheritor of the movement of no dance⁴ that began in the 1990s, as a more recent conceptual background, complemented with other elements of their own (humour, multidisciplinary character, and vision of the contemporary world), which make up their unique mindset. However, a more in-depth analysis of their practices reveals the use of conceptual strategies and issues that are characteristic of the theory and practices of conceptual art in its origin — the 1960s and 1970s in the field of the visual arts —, which will be the core of this case study.

The research to be developed will be aimed, therefore, at examining the practices of the duo from the perspective of conceptual art and the relation with some key elements of the hypothesis outlined: aesthetics, economy, the visual arts, and decentralisation of artistic practices.

The methodological framework of this case study is that of post-qualitative research, specifically posthumanism, which picks up the legacy of Deleuzian materialism and the early 21st-century new materialisms.⁵

Posthumanism is not only a theoretical or methodological framework, but also ontological and ethical. Braidotti, in line with the new materialisms, and in terms of research methodologies, advocates the need for a multidisciplinary and research perspective that encompasses the plurality that informs the concomitancy of the diverse phenomena, often with contradictory valences, which form part of the contemporary world, as well as creative research that sheds light on the new elements, processes and relations that make up contemporaneity. Following Haraway (1988), Braidotti proposes a contingent and situated objectivity. In this respect, posthumanism, like new materialisms, attempts to overcome the binarism between positivism and constructionism,⁶ the two major methodological paradigms of the 20th century.

3. Modern dance is a type of genre that originated in the late 19th century as a critique of and alternative to the rigidity and discipline of classical ballet, with figures such as Isadora Duncan, and which crystallised in the mid-20th century with Martha Graham or Charles Weidman, among others, placing the expression of emotions as the epicentre of the pieces.

4. The so-called no dance or conceptual dance began in the mid-1990s, mainly in France, and is characterised by an exploration and revision of the conventions of dance developed during the 20th century through a language belonging to the field of performance.

5. The ontology of posthumanism is based on the new materialisms which, in their turn, are an actualisation of Deleuzian ontology, which is the first radical critique of the binary and reductionist thinking of Western philosophical tradition. For Deleuze, reality is diverse and processual; therefore, thought should not only acknowledge this multiplicity and this contingency but contribute to creating new meanings.

6. Scientific positivism, coined by Auguste Comte in the first half of the 19th century, is a research methodology based on empirical evidence and which derives therefore from research into the natural sciences of that century. For positivism, facts, empirical data, are the ultimate and unquestionable evidence of scientific research. Constructionism, which appeared in the 20th century to a large extent as a critique of the apparent “realism”, argues that knowledge is relative and that there is no ultimate evidence but paradigms or structures of meaning that have internal coherence.

From an ontological point of view, Braidotti understands reality as a monist principle, in which the human being is only a part of this reality rather than the centre. The critique of humanism and its consequences have a central place in the theses of Braidotti, who establishes the current geological era, Anthropocene, as a central determining process of the contemporary world. Anthropocene situates us in a place different from previous centuries, as it is the evidence of human action as a destructive factor for the rest of the planet and, on the rebound, for humanity itself. This fact, however, reveals, on the one hand, the deeply anthropocentric and anthropomorphic position from which we relate with other beings, and, on the other, the co-dependence of human beings with respect to other non-human beings and the need to change these logics.

Although new materialisms, speculative realism and the theory of the actor-network⁷ are based on the same ontological vision as Braidotti's posthumanism, this philosopher develops a historically situated theoretical corpus whose focus is the analysis of current advanced capitalism (also known as cognitive, financial or late), and the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric relations and structures that still affect us. In keeping with this, we can glimpse the political dimension of Braidotti's theoretical universe, in which the concept of agency⁸ adopts a central place when claiming the acknowledgement of non-exclusively subject agencies, but rather collective and belonging to non-human agents (nature, objects and technology). This decentralised conception, in keeping with the environmental research perspectives emerging since the 21st century (Jornet and Damşa, 2019), not only give to the field of research a fact-based function but also an ethical-political function, making the conventional conception of research shift from a presumably neutral position to a deliberately activist attitude.

Although it is true that posthumanism features diverse issues related to the lack of concretion, not only of some key concepts, such as the definition of what is human beyond the figure of the heterosexual white man (Carrigan and Porpora, 2021: 1-22) to which the critique of posthumanism points and the complex cognitive line that is established in the attempt to address otherness based on the subjects historically constituted as such — as Schneider (Schneider, 2015: 7-14) argues when he ironically questions the radical performativity of the matter advocated by Bennet —, these arguments do not discredit the validity of posthumanist theses but rather highlight the need to continue working on the conceptualisation.

In terms of the Live Art, and studying them in depth based on posthumanist postulates, as both are recent concepts, the antecedents go back to an emerging line of research. On the one hand, the Studies in Performing Arts and Media at Ghent University has issued the publication *Performance and*

7. All three theoretical frameworks share a similar ontological conception based on the decentralisation of the subject as a fundamental thesis in order to establish a framework of horizontal knowledge and action, in which non-human beings and entities have the same importance as human beings.

8. Agency (in French *agencement*) is one of the central terms of Deleuze's philosophy: it refers to the potentiality of any being to establish new alliances with other beings and, therefore, to become something different, to produce, therefore, difference.

Posthumanism. Staging Prototypes of Composite Bodies (2021), an analysis of different contemporary artistic practices from a decentralising methodological perspective. Moreover, in recent years the group Artea at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha has researched *The New Loss of Centre. Critical Practices of Live Arts and Architecture in the Anthropocene* based on the concept of “environmental humanities” as a cross-over and relational context of knowledge. In keeping with this line of research, Brugerolle calls for a new conceptography of the term performance, which is capable of including the non-human artistic practices of the 21st century (Brugerolle, 2018: 271). Moreover, Lepecki, based on the analysis of contemporary dance, provides exhaustive research in terms of the decentralisation of the canon generated during the 20th century in the field of dance and, therefore, of the subject as a centre of the movement (Lepecki, 2005).

The study of the Live Art, and specifically the Montdedutor case, implies from a posthumanist optic, a cross-over exploration of the different concepts involved in the hypothesis that analyses the relations and processes established between them and which are — as noted at the start of this section —: neoliberalism, crisis, work, reduction of formats, decentralisation of what is human, and liminality.

Once this specific theoretical framework has been shaped, Montdedutor’s work will be analysed, specifically the introduction of codes and strategies belonging to conceptual art through a method of audiovisual observation in combination with the concepts previously developed, which will enable us to examine the case in a situated manner.

It is worth noting that the objective of this case study does not lie so much in verifying or refuting the tentative hypothesis behind it, in the manner of the positivist scientific paradigms, but in expanding the research elements of the study. The research proposed here is mainly exploratory, as it addresses a topic with scarce academic literature and, therefore, it is essential to examine it in its complexity.

Crisis, Neoliberalism, Dematerialization and Work in the 21st Century

Although the subject matter pointed out has a first local dimension, Catalonia, the fact that research is situated in a context of global crisis also requires a theoretical and conceptual structure on the capitalism of the new century as not just a material scenario but also a technological and ideological one of contemporary society. As Bourriaud notes in his latest book *Inclusiones. Estética del capitaloceno Inclusions. Aesthetics of the Capitolecene*: “The artist of this start of the 21st century is the contemporary of the Anthropocene; this does not force him to do anything, but determines him.” (Bourriaud, 2021: 120; trad 2021).

There are many theories and critiques of neoliberalism and the 2008 crisis, although in the framework of Cultural Studies, the sphere of contemporary art and Performance Studies, the range is notably reduced. One of the first contemporary researchers to deal with the 2008 crisis and the critique of neoliberalism as a system based on inequality is Rifkin (2014), who notes

the entry into the third industrial revolution enabled by the technologies linked to the web 2.0 and to the Internet of Things as a counterpower that in the medium term will enable an empowerment of the citizen-prosumer. From a more distanced perspective from this initial optimism, Braidotti and Bourriaud describe neoliberalism as a much more complex technological reality. For Braidotti, 21st-century neoliberalism is framed within advanced capitalism, which began with the change of century and no longer has the characteristics of Fordist capitalism; the nature of work is intangible, the crises become part of the systemic “normality”, economic and cultural relations are global, and technology is a liberating yet enslaving element, depending on the part of the planet and the social faction that uses it.

Bourriaud explicitly addresses the 2008 crisis, which he sees as a symptom of saturation of a self-referential economic system, based on loans that fund other loans while creating a bubble lacking elements that are external to the system itself, like a kind of process of systemic absorption which is ontologically linked to the idea of the Anthropocene and self-destruction inherent to it.

Both Braidotti and Bourriaud point to the current version of capitalism as a driver of dematerialization, as a dimension that generates intangibles and contrasts with the common vision of an archaic version of capitalism, linked to materiality and objects, both in terms of production and the material or physical work that enables it. “Capitalism is an idealism,” argues Bourriaud provocatively (2021), reasserting the shift of the principle of capitalism as an activity related to matter. The strategic sectors of financial capitalism — or *Capitalocene*, as Bourriaud also calls it — are no longer related to the manufacturing of material objects but rather to the production of non-material, intangible value, such as insurances, shares, credits, digital economies, bitcoins, and NFTs.

On the other hand, financial or advanced capitalism also introduces a radical division of labour that rewards speculative work and penalises physical labour. Braidotti points to the dissociation that exists between the exorbitant wages of the former and the systemic growing precariousness of the latter:

This highly mediatised system rests on the financialization of the economy, which brings about division between financial salaries that increase at full speed and other static rooted salaries, the fruit of work. This discrepancy between the financial and the real economy is the core of neoliberal systems. [...] Therefore, the progress within the Fourth Industrial Revolution creates as many problems as it solves (Braidotti, 2019: 47-48; trans. 2020).

This distinction enables us to explore the value system of the arts based on work with the body, or, rather, of those in which physical action is delimited as a monetarisation criterion. Although the arts in general are defined by their symbolic character, there is a key difference between the value system of the Live Art and that of the visual arts. While the visual arts market dissociates material value and symbolic value, which explains why a banana hung

on the wall can achieve an economic value of €120,000,⁹ most performing arts pieces are not monetised depending on their symbolic value — or market value, which is, in short, the same, except for the small core of the international star system —, but of the salaries of the people who participate in it within the specific space-time framework of the piece contracted. The economic value of the performative event is, from this perspective, comparable to all the other groups or sectors of advanced capitalism, whose work is valued under the coordinates of time and physical action.

This observation enables us to address the 2008 crisis in the Live Art sector bearing in mind not only the events but also the technoideological machinery underlying the decisions and strategies of the different agents involved.

Crisis and Live Art in Catalonia: Resilience and Shifts towards the Visual Arts

One of the direct consequences of the 2008 crisis in terms of the work of the companies, and which in the Catalan context began to be clear in 2011, consists of the reduction of the artists' fees. Jordi Fondevila, in his study of Live Art in Catalonia, compiles the accounts of agents and actors from the ecosystem of the Live Art in Catalonia around the economic constrictions experienced by artistic groups, both emerging and well-established, in the post-2008 years (Fondevila, 2018: 44-67). As an example, one of the companies, Agrupación Señor Serrano, carried out a painstaking analysis of the monetarisation of their work as performers: €379 net for a month of work, which the programming teams interpret, as mentioned before, “just for being on stage for a while” (Agrupación Señor Serrano, 2014).

The reductions of fees and impoverishment of working conditions make up a first material framework that both determines and generates resilience strategies in the artists and the companies that will decisively influence the transformation of the ecosystem of the Live Art in Catalonia. Although the 2008 financial crisis yielded a dramatic dismantling process of the Live Art sector, this same sector provoked a transformation in the artistic languages and formats that open new means of artistic expression. Braidotti considers this complexity, as mentioned in the previous section, under the principle of monist ontology (Braidotti, 2019) — a revision of Deleuze's monist materialism — in which the same reality contains and generates events with opposed valences and which is key to overcoming the binary readings of the phenomena happening in contemporary society.

As for the local context, Jordi Duran, artistic director of Fira Tàrrrega in the years since the 2008 crisis, outlines a first idea that links the terms of

9. In 2019, in the framework of the contemporary art fair Art Basel Miami, the artist Maurizio Cattelar exhibited the piece *Comedian*, consisting of a banana attached to the wall with tape, which David Datuna, another artist, removed and ate it. The global resonance of this action was triggered by the value of the work, established at €120,000, in contrast to the ordinary value of the object on which it is based: a banana. The difference between the economic value of the banana as a work and as a food can only be explained in relation to the symbolic value of the former.

precariousness, artistic languages and resilience to the observations about the shift of artistic productions during those years.

In the article “Europa a l’AND”, published in Aída Pallarès’ and Manuel Pérez’ *El carrer és nostre*, Duran addresses the post-2008 crisis changes. The first of the changes he formulates, a consequence of the generalised reduction of the budgets of facilities, festivals and institutions, is the reduction of the production formats: the big productions of Live Art companies that appeared in the 20th century, such as La Fura dels Baus or Comediants, have no place in a postcrisis scenario. Even those companies with smaller teams are forced to reconsider the conditions of their projects. Beyond the formats, in the context of street arts Duran points out the languages and aesthetics resumed after the 2008 crisis: “It is in the field of small formats, site-specific creation, the intimate and community work, where most of the production has focused” (Duran, 2017: 144-150). This post-spectacular shift in street arts, defined by other authors in the same book as a “change of paradigm” (Pallarès and Pérez, 2017: 155-157) almost brings together all the arts disciplines in performing contexts: circus (Joan Català, Quim Girón), dance (Quim Bigas, Vero Cendoya, Pere Faura, La Veronal) and multidisciplinary projects (Kamchatka, Obskené, cia Silere, Sociedad Doctor Alonso), among others.

Duran’s argument, however, opens another path of research on the Live Art, beyond the aforementioned languages and formats; if we analyse what they share, we can identify the visual arts as common denominator as well as because these languages belong to previous artistic contexts. A glance at the generation of Live Art post-2008 from this perspective (El Conde de Torrefiel, Agrupación Señor Serrano, Montdedutor, Cris Blanco, nyamnyam, Cabosanroque, Pere Faura, Marta Galán, David Espinosa, La Conquesta del Pol Sud, Sociedad Doctor Alonso, etc.) enables us to identify the influence of the arts and visual culture on their practices. Some of the currents and languages of the pieces by these artists are: the site-specific (nyamnyam and Pere Faura), conceptual art (El Conde de Torrefiel and Montdedutor), installations (nyamnyam, Cabosanroque), cinema (Cris Blanco, El Conde de Torrefiel, Montdedutor, David Espinosa), verbatim theatre (Marta Galán, La Conquesta del Pol Sud) or community art (Marta Galán, Sociedad Doctor Alonso).

Indeed, most of these artists do not acknowledge theatre artists from previous generations as references for their work but other types of disciplines such as installations, films, documentaries, literature and multidisciplinary practices. Moreover, in terms of their training, they have quite a hybrid educational and professional background in which the visual factor plays a key role that materialises in their own practices.¹⁰

10. As an example of this trend, we can mention Agrupación Señor Serrano, who acknowledge the influence of science fiction films in their productions; the members of nyamnyam come from music and the visual arts; half of Montdedutor (Jorge Dutor) has a background in set design and artistic practice prior to dance; the work of Marta Galán after 2008 takes on a community shift influenced by the practices that visual arts groups had already begun to put into practice (Idensitat, Sinapsis, LaFundició, etc...).

Expanded Aesthetics and Liminality

As we mentioned in the previous section, a notable part of the visual arts aesthetic languages and currents identified as part of the post-2008 Live Art practices appeared throughout the 20th century. Several authors have researched the path of these movements and aesthetics in the Spanish and Catalan context. José Antonio Sánchez explores the connections between the 1960s and 1970s “documentary theatre” and the early 20th-century theatre practices that are inheritors of both an aesthetic and ontological sociopolitical stance. Juan Pedro Enrile looks at the participatory practices of the first quarter of the 21st century, among which situationism and the creation of devices stand out, along with the incursion into documentary theatre. From an hauntological interpretative framework, Núria Gómez looks at some of the 21st-century practices until 2018, examining names and artistic projects of the Live Art generation post-2008, such as *El Conde de Torrefiel*, which manifest phantasmagorical qualities based on an evocation of past imaginaries, references and values:

In this respect, and consequently, we present the “spectropolitics” trope as a visual hauntology of the forms of the phantasmal siege of the tele-techno-media image and its devices for capturing human subjectivity to elucidate how, from the field of current artistic and performing arts practices, certain forms of seeing or critical visualisations capable of restoring the past and constructing new imaginaries, subjectivities and political formations are invoked in the configuration of worlds (Gómez, 2020: 7).

Just as Gómez provides an ontological validity characteristic of the hauntological artistic practices and the production of new meanings, which diverge from previous historical context and manifest the *zeitgeist* of a certain artistic contemporaneity, a part of the tentative hypothesis that underpins the study developed here advocates an expanded life of the aesthetic ideas beyond their contexts of origin. Moreover, as we will show in later sections, these artistic practices are situated, in the 21st century, within a new interpretative framework, that of the contemporary world, which inevitably resignifies their original meaning.

Faced with this panorama of return of certain artistic movements, aesthetics and references, it is inevitable to ask ourselves about the reasons or confluence of factors behind it. This same question is one of the pillars of Juan Pedro Enrile’s thesis (Enrile, 2020: 9-10), which is shared in less Hegelian terms by Sánchez (Sánchez, 2012: 23-24) and Foster (Foster, 2017: 127-130) and that relates to the concept of “liminality” coined by Victor Turner (Turner, 1974: 59). The concept of “liminality” has a long history in different fields, including that of Cultural/Theatre Studies (Erika Fischer-Lichte, 2004; trad. 2011), which links culture, social change and performance. Fischer-Lichte’s research focuses on the transformative potentiality of culture, specifically of the performing arts. However, Enrile turns the terms of the research around: which historical moments are liminal and which contained

greater transformative power in terms of social change? This case study will next examine how artistic practice and experimental and relational aesthetics reappear or are redeveloped at times of social transformation.

Although this statement is, on the one hand, too generalist and, on the other, Enrile's object of study mainly aims at relational practices and aesthetics, it enables us to establish a first connection between time contexts and aesthetic ideas.

Montdedutor: An Approach from Conceptual Art

The duo Montdedutor, formed by Guillem Mont de Palol and Jorge Dutor, started working together after the 2008 crisis. The first piece, *Uuhhh, yo también fui un hombre-lobo adolescente inventando horrores*, was premiered in 2009. It introduced in the Catalan Live Art a format (concert-performance) and languages that bring together references and ideas that are very different from those explored by local contemporary dance at the start of the 21st century and that establish a first context of reference of Montdedutor's practices.

Montdedutor belong to the first generation of artists trained in European contexts, specifically in Amsterdam, which favours the introduction of trends and aesthetics distanced from the ecosystem of local Live Art, such as the influence of "contemporary dance" or "conceptual dance" developed from the 1990s by artists such as Jérôme Bell, Meg Stuart, Xavier Le Roy, La Ribot or Boris Charmatz, among others (Lepecki, 2005: 45).

Beyond the influence of 1990s European contemporary dance — which to a large extent can be understood as a version of 1960s and 1970s conceptual art (Fabius, 2012: 7-12) —, Montdedutor's work has, in the pieces between 2009 and 2016, a series of characteristics that relate to the aesthetic core of conceptual art in the framework of 1960s and 1970s visual arts. These elements, which will be the basis of the analysis of this case study, can be summarised in the dematerialization of artistic practices, their ontological turnaround, their multidisciplinary character, and the inclusion of theory and critique in the artistic practice itself.

In terms of the dematerialization of artistic practices, it should be understood as the refusal, not so much in terms of materiality but towards the idea that art has to do with an "object" or "product" that has a predetermined, reproducible, tangible format that can enter the art world, such as in the case of 1950s modern art, an idea substantiated by Clement Greenberg through the Kantian idea of "taste" (Greenberg, 1965: 5; ed. 1983).

Moreover, from dematerialization as critical artistic strategy, in which the concepts or ideas are considered "art" and their materialisation as secondary (Kosuth, 1991: 13-16), (Lippard, 1973: 7; ed, 1997), (LeWitt, 1969: 3-5) comes an ontological turnaround: the space in which art is generated is not outside but occurs inside the very mind or imagination of the spectator, where the aesthetic experience becomes meaningful.

The inclusion of languages from other artistic disciplines or fields, such as the case of the philosophy of language or analytics in the field of the visual

arts, enabled new aesthetic dimensions in artistic creation to be explored. One of the protagonists, who marked a turning point in 20th-century aesthetics, was John Langshaw Austin and his book *How to do things with words*, an examination of the performative possibilities of verbal language.

As a consequence of their multidisciplinary character, artistic practices included theoretical and critical aspects on the nature of art, which transformed the contemplative aesthetic experience into a reflective and critical experience. The generation of conceptual artists formed by Kosuth, Sol LeWitt or Lippard — among others — produce aesthetic sets of rules as part of their artistic practice in which they situate themselves and participate in the debate being developed within philosophy, by considering art as an analytical artifact and therefore the equivalent of thought: “Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context — as art — they provide no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact. A work art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist’s intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art *is* art, which means, is a *definition* of art” (Kosuth, 1991: 20).

Thus, just as conceptual art challenges modern art, inverting its ontological model, Montdedutor takes an “ontocritical” approach, paraphrasing Lepecki (Lepecki, 2005: 16), towards the idea of dance promoted by modern dance as an ongoing movement (of a human body), to then explore other possible modes of movements beyond the conventions initiated in the 16th century, sedimented in the 20th century and that involve the questioning and decentralisation of the human body as the epicentre of dance.

Montdedutor situate themselves, therefore, at the limits of dance, in metadance, because the exploration and critique that are the core or essence of their work involves questioning conventional performing arts elements through codes distanced from the stage — and which for this reason enable a space to be generated “from outside” — in the performing arts languages and formats. This critical vision in artistic forms rather than in contents establishes a shift in the Live Art after the 2008 crisis characterised by the creation of languages and formats that come from artistic disciplines that work on image, as already mentioned in section 3 of this article. Some examples are documentary cinema, situationism, the site-specific, community art, science fiction, visual and/or sound installations, devices, multimedia art, and conceptual art.

Decodifying Imaginaries. Uuhhh, yo también fui un hombre-lobo adolescente inventando horrores

In relation to this shift, which involves not only a greater disciplinary hybridisation in the field of Live Art but rather a transformation in languages, the first piece by Montdedutor, *Uuhhh, yo también fui un hombre-lobo adolescente inventando horrores*, is particularly appropriate as an exemplification of this shift. The piece, a concert-performance, as they call it, works on performativity from different disciplines and languages: sound, music, cinema, lighting or objects make up, in the words of the artists themselves, “the soundtrack of a possible scene in a possible horror film” (Montdedutor, 2011).

The first of the characteristics of this piece in relation to the strategies of conceptual art, is the break with a conventional format in the movement arts, with the decentralisation of the human body — and its ongoing movement — from the focus of artistic practice. Montdedutor uses the human body as a way of channelling sound, image and actions, and displaces the performativity focused on the performer in a multiplicity of objects, sounds and interactions between these elements.

The associations set out by Montdedutor between images and sound challenge the built and well-established logics, in this case from horror films, aimed at generating “movement” in the mind or imagination of the spectator, who has to decodify and recodify the scenes of this concert-performance.

¿Y por qué John Cage?. The Performativity of Words

The expanded exploration of performativity beyond the bodies is an aspect deeply related to conceptual art. In 1962, Austin published *How to do things with words*, a book of analytical philosophy that revolutionised the idea about the function of language as it is based on the analysis of ordinary language while noting the performative dimensions of some enunciations, such as “I do take this woman to be my lawful-wedded wife” or “I declare war” (Austin, 1962: 11; ed. 2020). In this way, it opens the performative field beyond the bodies to the words.

Although conceptual art is usually associated with rational, calculated and distant proposals, it is necessary to recall its origins in the 1960s and the objective it sought, driven by a strong determination and a desire for revolution in the artistic and aesthetic field — as well as in the art market —, until then quite conservative and based on objects considered artistic as they adopted a given format, such as paintings or sculptures. Thus, conceptual art was the strategy that emerged as a response to a stagnated artistic panorama. In the same way, Montdedutor rescues strategies, codes and concerns of conceptual art aimed, in this case, at the stagnation or exhaustion of dance, which are reflected in the piece *¿Y por qué John Cage?*, clearly alluding to this conceptual artist prior to the 1960s movement.¹¹

What is proposed, first and foremost, is a piece based on the process rather than the result, a factor that provides a much slower tempo to the experience of the performance and that, therefore, deaccelerates the audience’s expectation, along with an interruption or suspension of the movement, or rather, a displacement towards the performativity of words through an exercise of repetition and variation — characteristic of conceptual art and dance — that generates meanings and situations through the same words and which, therefore, proposes a movement that does not occur in the object but in the experience of the spectators.

11. The works of some artists such John Cage and Marcel Duchamp, despite belonging to a timeframe prior to the coining of the term conceptual art, are based on ideas or concepts rather than on the artistic materialisation of their work, just as conceptual art claimed it decades later as a foundation of their artistic practices.

HOLAQUÉHACE. The Dematerialisation of Performing Arts Practices

A second major aspect for conceptual and postconceptual artistic practices, in the work of Montdedutor, which we will analyse next, is the idea of the “dematerialization of art”. In 1969 Joseph Kosuth wrote a key text regarding the aesthetic principals of conceptual art, *Art after philosophy and after*, where he established a new field for artistic practices. In contrast to the Kantian aesthetic thesis advocated by Greenberg, Kosuth states that art has nothing to do with the objects, or with beauty or with the “taste” of given critics who decide what is art and what is not; Kosuth situates art on an eidetic, immaterial level, and the execution, the object, are considered a mere procedure.

In this context, art critics Lucy Lippard and John Chandler coined the term “dematerialisation” to refer to art without objects (Lippard; Chandler, 1968: 31-36). These authors predicted an artistic future that would allow the commodification of art to be avoided. This notion denotes the revolutionary and critical character of conceptual art, as it points to not only the art market but also to the socioeconomic framework that underpins it: the capitalist system. Indeed, the 1960s were the moment of consolidation of the middle classes, Fordism and the economy based on the acquisition and production of objects. The object becomes principle and fetish of a society that assimilates the mercantilist logic into any other field of life. The idea of “dematerializing” becomes, therefore, a critique of the core of the system and a proposal of dissolution of its main pillar, the object:

However, it was usually the form rather than the content of Conceptual art that carried political message. The frame was there to be broken out of. Anti-establishment fervor in the 1960s focused on the de-mythologization and de-commodification of art, on the need for an independent (or ‘alternative’) art that could not be bought and sold by the greedy sector that owned everything that was exploiting the world and promoting the Vietnam war (Lippard; Chandler, 1968: 31-36).

Thus, in relation to or rather against the idea of art as a market, Montdedutor present a piece that rejects recognisable performing arts spaces, the possibility of its reproducibility and, in short, being identified as art: the intervention HOLAQUÉHACE. It is not even aimed at a specific audience and its decontextualisation purposefully dilutes or confuses artistic practice with everyday life. The intervention took place at the Festival Salmon in 2015 in several non-performance spaces, such as the toilets and the coffee shop of the Mercat de les Flors, or the entrance to the auditoriums, as well as on the stage in an exercise of replacing artists when taking their leave of the audience.

Lucy Lippard’s conception of the future without objects or Sol LeWitt’s statement “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art” (Sol LeWitt, 1967: 80) seem to glimpse what decades later we call the digital world, a world lacking objects which, despite being shaped as a possible – and desirable – world based on the theses of conceptual art, also means everything

that conceptual art sought to deactivate: a space that is not only occupied and exploited under capitalist logics but which emerges, again, as a global fetish space and the playing field of new biopolitical variants.

Grand Applause. Non-Anthropomorphic Choreographies

Byung-Chul Han, Bourriaud or Rosi Braidotti are some of the thinkers that identify the dematerialization of capitalism as a key feature of the 21st century, by displacing the global economic core to intangible spaces and formats. In 1995, Bill Gates formulated his personal futuristic idea of consumption, based on the concept of friction-free capitalism (Gates, 1995: 158): capitalism freed of the drawbacks of matter, bodies, the human factor, nature, time, space, and so on, as a kind of platonic world of the ideas that works autonomously and indifferent to the rest: capitalism without capital.

However, conceptual art has not returned to the 21st century to provide a symbolic framework to “friction-free capitalism” but rather the contrary: to explore other possible worlds. Even, in an unexpected shift, to claim other material forms and other ways of being body. As previously mentioned, the idea of introducing strategies and codes of conceptual art in the case of Montdedutor to create the devices which, in short, their pieces are, has to do with the situation of exhaustion, of stagnation of dance, but not only of dance. In *Exhausting Dance*, Lepecki defines modern dance as an ongoing movement that reproduces the very principle of modernity and its capitalist economic logics of production of subjectivity, of disciplining of the body, etc. (Lepecki, 2005: 13). Therefore, when the experimental choreographies, such as in the case of Montdedutor, propose interrupting, annulling or deaccelerating the movement, they also challenge the whole socioeconomic structure that underpins this aesthetic paradigm built throughout the 20th century. This critical movement with respect to the contemporary world, however, is not aimed, ultimately, at ourselves, at the question about the place, about the frame of mind and the future of human beings in the 21st century. One of the tentative responses from neomaterialisms, posthumanism, speculative realism and the theory of the actor-network that appeared in the 21st century, consists of the revision of the concept and the relations we establish with the matter, and which at the same time involves a revision of our anthropocentrism, of the being of the things depending on us and subjected to the human body under logics of use, resource and exploitation.

In relation to this framework of thought, the piece *Grand Applause*, a version of Bizet’s *Carmen*, reconverted in a choreography of objects, proposes a final ontological shift. In *Grand Applause*, Montdedutor reject to a great extent being present, having a leading role on stage and anthropomorphic representation in favour of a choreography focused on non-human elements: recontextualised artistic installations in which objects are the core of the movement of objects; even the opera choir appears in the guise of a ghost, thereby blurring the human figure. Apart from the end of the piece, the appearance of Montdedutor possesses a fundamentally technical function, which consists of performing some of the scenic changes of the opera. In short, this commitment almost to the dissolution of the performer as a

human representation seems to point to the culmination of a decentralisation process of the very role of the performer as an axis or demiurge of the stage — already present in pieces such as *Uuhhh, yo también fui un hombre-lobo adolescente inventando horrores* (performer as a medium), *¿Y por qué John Cage?* (performativity beyond the body) or *HOLAQUÉHACE* (dissolution of conventional performative contexts) — which becomes yet another element of the choreographic ecosystem.

Conclusions

Based on the ontoaesthetic weave of conceptual art, Montdedutor articulates a drift of performativity which is established in the 20th century and that Fischer-Lichte condensates in the sentence “The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators enables and constitutes performance” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 32). Although the first works of the duo analysed here took place in a context that corresponds to what Fischer-Lichte establishes as a performative framework, the two subsequent pieces — *HOLAQUÉHACE* and *Grand Applause* — are distanced from the performer-spectator co-presence; the former dilutes the status of the performer and makes it unidentifiable, and the latter eliminates to a great extent the leading role and the human presence in the equation. However, and despite the disappearance of one of the terms of the equation, the presence of performativity, in keeping with the theses developed, is unquestionable. It is, however, a type of performativity different from the one imagined by Fischer-Lichte. The artistic practices that the German philosopher adduces as cases or examples form part of the theatre or relational art that originated in the 1990s, in which participation is the backbone, crossed by an amalgam of specific sociocultural and economic processes (Bourriaud, 2008) that cause the filtration of art in shared and public spaces. The post-2008 Live Art, however, require new conceptual references that meet their peculiarity, in particular the decentralisation processes of the artistic practices. In this respect, Bourriaud defines the contemporary artist as a “molecular anthropologist” (Bourriaud, 2021: 107), whose function lies in reestablishing otherness, and Brugerolle suggests a change of genealogy of the verb to perform (which includes objectual postperformative practices), which relates to the French root of the word *perfourrir* and refers to an object in its original meaning (produce or make furniture) (Brugerolle, 2018: 271). However, perhaps the revision of the word *liveness* (in the sense of live arts) enables the inclusion of both human and non-human agencies in the field of the postperformance or Live Art. In the framework of the controversy over the term Live Art in the United Kingdom, Johnson recalls that the meaning of liveness is not related to a strictly human or bodily presence but to the temporal simultaneity of an event towards the spectator (Johnson, 2013: 28), and expands in this way the agency and concept of — human — performance proposed by Fischer-Lichte.



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