

ON "VENERE IN TEATRO" FESTIVAL

Everything that is possible can be done in these spaces

This text is a response dedicated to the Venere in Teatro, a festival that takes place every year in September in the setting of Forte Marghera in Mestre-Venice.

A special feature of this contemporary dance festival is that it is located in a former military fort, amidst former powder magazines and disused warehouses, overlooking the lagoon. Moreover, it is mainly promoted and curated by the Live Arts Cultures (LAC) association, which for years has been working both independently and in connection with local institutions in a way that I believe is unique and generative of good practices in a specific Venetian context.

Just a stone's throw from Venice, immersed in the greenery and lagoon of Forte Marghera — a 19th-century fortress and former army barracks, now home to various associations, ateliers, and refreshment stands — Venere in Teatro Festival, even before being a performance event, is itself a meeting point for multiple senses. A special place, which one can only enter on foot, and which, despite the gentrification of recent years, has preserved its essence, among the bunkers, cats, and clearings, immediately predisposing the public to a precious experience, at once kinetic and sensorial. There are no formal theatres, but various locations, such as repositories and former warehouses, which are re-discussed and prepared according to artistic needs each time. LAC, through Venere in Teatro, thus makes explicit the performativity of spaces, summoning that fabric of specific propulsive relations that are peculiar to festivals.



This photo shows the main entrance to Forte Marghera, where Venere in Teatro festival takes place. The path, which is only walkable, is surrounded by water to its right and left. At the end of the path are two brick-red pillars, surrounded by greenery. Near the entrance there are people walking. The photo was taken at sunset time.

As mentioned earlier, here you walk from one hall to the next, sipping a cool drink in a particularly hot September. Between performances, one can sit and lay among the comfortable, softly-lit cushions and chat with friends and acquaintances, old and new.

The continuous arrangement of non-theatre spaces is like reactivating new functions of the existing places through experiential choreography of the spaces themselves. This choreographic process generates an existential system that impacts both on the work of the dance artists invited and on the bodies of the audience. Pursuing the sensorial search for locomotion, the dance artists are invited to re-discuss the non-theatre sites; at the same time, the creative pieces are able to readjust themselves in the spaces proposed. This combination of sensorial and spatial readjustment engenders not only a shift in the change of claims and in the audience, but also suggests an altered vision which serves as preparation to embark on a journey of the gaze, together with what we sense, with a myriad of information and perspectives.



Border Line_the space game by Beatrice Bresolin / Base 9 ©Lorenza Cini

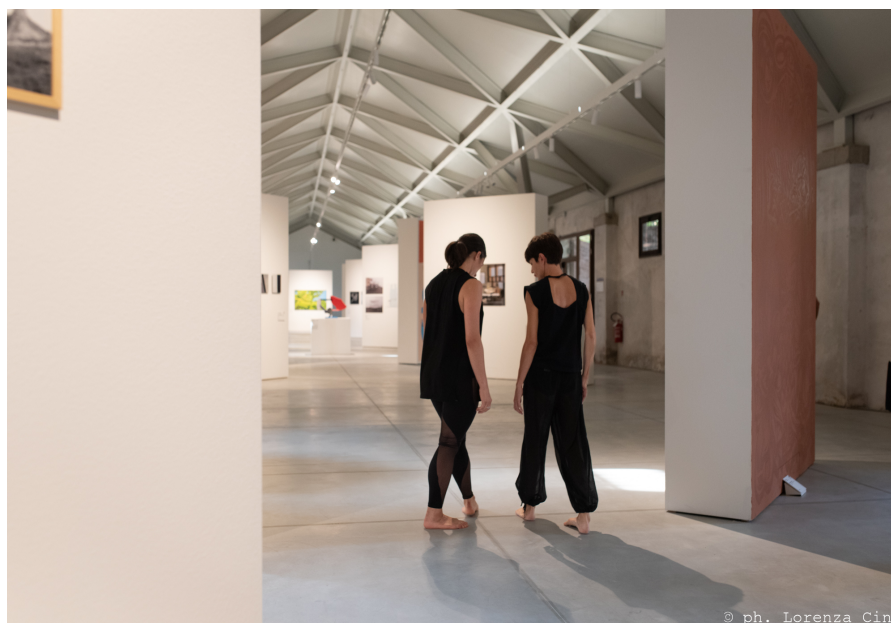
In the photo, a group of performers standing in a circle are taking off their jackets. The audience is seated around them in the space surrounded by green in front of shed C32.

CrePa

In one of the sheds used as an exhibition space, in which the audience are free to sit, stand, lean against the wall, and move as they please, we witness the gradual evolution of the durational dance piece CrePa (in English: 'crack', 'rift', 'fissure'...) where dance artist Sara Sguotti and writer Arianna Ulian use movement, poetry, and sound to investigate the metaphorical and physical consequence of cracks. In this case, a crack is explored as a somatic embodied element and as an ephemeral condition of every living thing through a movement and a live sound score. All these elements coexist as a manifestation of the creative and physical choreographic gestures. Cracks are conceptualised not just as instruments of facilitation and exploration through which real time choreography is reproduced, but also as a living exercise to embody the current discourse within changing bodies which are marked by cracks inside and out.

Thanks to a shared movement language, the basic motion components by consisting of, for instance, stretches, limb extensions, and body vibrations, strive for an essential yet mesmerising and sensual interconnection between the two performers, the surrounding space, and proximity to the public. Investigating the dynamics of touch, adjusting the timing between stillness and movement, an exquisite and fluid choreographic language emerges from the internal landscape, flooded with natural light and live electronic sounds.

The piece unfolds into a movement landscape consisting of mirroring, fluidity, waiting, gentle intersections, reiterations, micro-movements, and sudden pauses at a distance. The choreographic yet improvised score blends in naturally as the gestures, facial expressions, and close crossing over between performers becomes more intimate. In addition to this, I myself, as a member of the audience, move to another point in the room to follow the development of the choreographic score, my own body thus takes on different shapes and positions, changing its viewpoint several times and creating a multitude of emotional states.



CrePa ©Lorenza Cini

Pictured are the two performers, Sara Sguotti and Arianna Ulian, standing in the shed, which is now an exhibition hall. Both have their left foot positioned forward and are looking down. They appear to be walking forward.

The sharp magnetism and suspended attraction between the performers, pieces of art, and audience members creates a mesmerising experience for me.

Due to the poetic element, which is strongly present through the declamation of poetic fragments by Ulian herself, CrePa is a fine example of how the audio score can perform as a clear dramaturgical skill.

Although I get the sense that there is a feeling of searching for fluidity in the choreography, despite the crack theme, as I observe it, it is like a movement object transforms into another movement object, as if crossing the boundary of a physical obstacle. It is as if through the theme of cracks, a non-hierarchical approach of treating all objects equitably is manifested.



CrePa ©Lorenza Cini

In the photo, the two performers are close together. Sara Sguotti is on the floor, bent over, leaning on her head and hands. Arianna Ulian has her torso bent forward and her hands are resting on Sguotti's torso. The audience is scattered around the room, some standing, some sitting, between the exhibition panels.

A Few Words To Conclude

When you experience festivals that were born, developed, and matured on a multifaceted and multi-experiential site, such as Venere in Teatro, you are able to find the warmth to embrace it as a living, pulsating organism. From a curatorial perspective, CrePa is an example in how the search of the lively and layered curatorship of Venere in Teatro Festival utilises dance and performativity as its primary access tool for the manifestation of a possible coexistence in a fragmented cultural territory, such the one of Venice/Mestre, represented through the physical and sensorial proximity of bodies sharing specific re-generated spaces.

The very concept of this festival is that of a conciliating and cohesive civic experience, the result of systematic work on places, their spatial and cultural value, able to develop a civil transformation through bodies in motion, care for urban sites, communication, and mutual listening.



Down - Single Version by Mélissa Gueux/Sumo
Company ©Lorenza Cini

In this last photo, set in a green area, a performer is advancing with a lit coloured smoke grenade in her hand, while the audience is watching her. Festival artistic director Marianna Andriago can be glimpsed in the centre of the audience group.

The majority of Forte Marghera and the festival sites are all wheelchair accessible, with the exception of one for which you have to agree with the festival organisation in advance. Car parking is located right next to the entrance bridge. There is also the possibility to enter by car by applying for a permit first. For every need, the LAC organising association can give more details and info.

Credits

Venere in Teatro Festival di Danza "Poesie del Vuoto" (Poems of the Void), III Edition, 5 to 17

September 2023

Forte Marghera, via Forte Marghera, Venezia Mestre

Curated by APS Live Arts Cultures in collaboration with Perypezye Urbane, With the support of: MiC, Comune di Venezia, Fondazione Venezia, Fondazione Forte Marghera. Under the patronage of: Regione del Veneto.

In collaboration with: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Università IUAV di Venezia, New Echo System /Pro Helvetia in Venice, WeStart, Drupa Centre, Scuola di Shiatsu-Shintai di Padova. Partner: Milan Ingegneria, Lab43. Part of the programme Città in Festa, Comune di Venezia

<https://liveartscultures.weebly.com/venere-in-teatro-2023.html>

CrePa

By and with: Sara Sguotti and Arianna Ulian

Text: Arianna Ulian

Sound environment: Spartaco Cortesi

Dramaturgical accompaniment: Giovanni Sabelli Fioretti

PR and media relations: Giuseppe Esposito

Co-production: Perypezye Urbane e Nexus in collaboration with OperaEstateFestival \ CSC centro per la scena contemporanea di Bassano del Grappa with the support of IIC Zurigo, Tanzhaus Zurich, Passages Transfestival, IIC Strasburgo, Santarcangelo Festival

In collaboration with: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia