

Articulating Architecture: A Speculation with the Joints of Choreography and Architecture in Radouan Mriziga's *55* and the Palais de la Dynastie (Brussels, Belgium)

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In 2015, choreographer Radouan Mriziga (Morocco, Belgium, 1985) performed a version of his solo *55* (2014) in the Palais de la Dynastie in Brussels (2015). In it, he constructed a floor plan within a building that he leaves almost untouched, creating a moment in which choreography and architecture seemingly dialogue as equal interlocutors. This article will research when and how this moment takes place and argue that *55* and the Palais de la Dynastie come together by way of joints, physical as well as architectural. Building on post-structural theory, this text will find moments of speculation to tentatively flesh out the implications of this articulated approach to architecture, both for the Palais de la Dynastie as well as for *55*.

Keywords: architecture, choreography, joint, fold, Radouan Mriziga



Penser le territoire demande donc un geste: chercher à créer du jeu quand les conséquences collent aux causes, [...] quand les manières d'être se raréfient pour obéir à quelques principes. Ce qui veut dire aussi ralentir, laisser passer un peu d'air et se laisser aller à imaginer.¹

(Despret, "Habiter" 105)

Tracing the territory

For the 2015 edition of *Kunstenfestivaldesarts*, choreographer Radouan Mriziga (Morocco, Belgium, 1985) performed a version of his solo *55* (2014) in the Palais de la Dynastie on the foot of the Mont des Arts in Brussels. The building and its site were constructed for the Brussels' World Expo of 1958 by architects Jules Ghobert and Maurice Houyoux in the monumental architecture style (since 2019 it hosts a bar and event-space frequented by a mostly bourgeois clientele). As such, the Mont des Arts, and the Palais de la Dynastie in particular, are drenched in colonial heritage, built with money extracted from Congo for an Expo which hosted the last *zoo humain*. It is therefore at least noteworthy that Mriziga does not attack this building literally; a common strategy, since the 1960s, aimed at critiquing the institution that built it (Davidts 36). Even the conditions of the black box are not replicated in order to mask the building's presence. The audience members find themselves around the performative space of *55*, which refuses the theatrical schism between stage and audience. These strategies actively avoid the *a priori* structuring of the architecture and reveal an approach towards the monumental Palais de la Dynastie as it is found. That is to say, the space is only minimally, if at all, modified beforehand to accommodate *55*, postponing the relationship between choreography and architecture to the performance time itself (Fig.1).²

To think this particular *ecology*, as Isabelle Stengers (1949) would have it, I will ground my argument using post-structural theories and their ability to think relationalities. Through a formalist analysis

Figure 1. *55* choreographed by Radouan Mriziga, © Benjamin Boar

of Mriziga's movement, his floor plan and the architecture of the building, this article will argue that 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie are held together by way of *joints* and speculate on the implications of this articulation.

The word 'speculation' was chosen deliberately. This article is a reworked English version of a Dutch chapter, featured in an earlier published book on the way architecture and choreography function in Mriziga's work (*D'hollander*). Since publishing it, I was confronted with the work of Vinciane Despret whose philosophy, in line with Donna Haraway's speculative fabulation, searches for the ability of beings to act, inhabit or write. A work that Baptiste Morizot described as a "bataille avec la langue [...] pour essayer de faire justice à ce qui se passe"³ (in *La manufacture d'idées*, 36:11-36:45). With Despret, I realized that this was already unconsciously present in my thinking about the relationship between architecture and choreography and needed fleshing out.

This article, then, is a first attempt at exploring the speculative moments in the previously written chapter and to see how they can take place in full force. This demands a slow methodology, to stay with moments, corners and words that fascinate me. Through descriptions of what happens in the performance, architecture, texts, the rewriting and retaking of it offers possible avenues for doing justice to what happens. This article, therefore, does not only *talk* about dialogue, but is the product of that practice: a dialogue with my own previously written text, with those of others, and, above all, with the work of Mriziga.

Moving with architecture

Mriziga's solo consists roughly of two parts. He starts 55 by walking to the center of the space, gently lifting his outstretched arms and hands away from his body at a 45-degree angle and swinging them symmetrically forward and backward without his hands touching. They rhythmically describe a horizontal circle around the point on which he is standing. It is striking that in an initial movement, Mriziga uses only two joints to generate dance material: his shoulders. With the first flick of his arms in front of his body, he already takes two steps backwards and remains there, still swinging his arms,

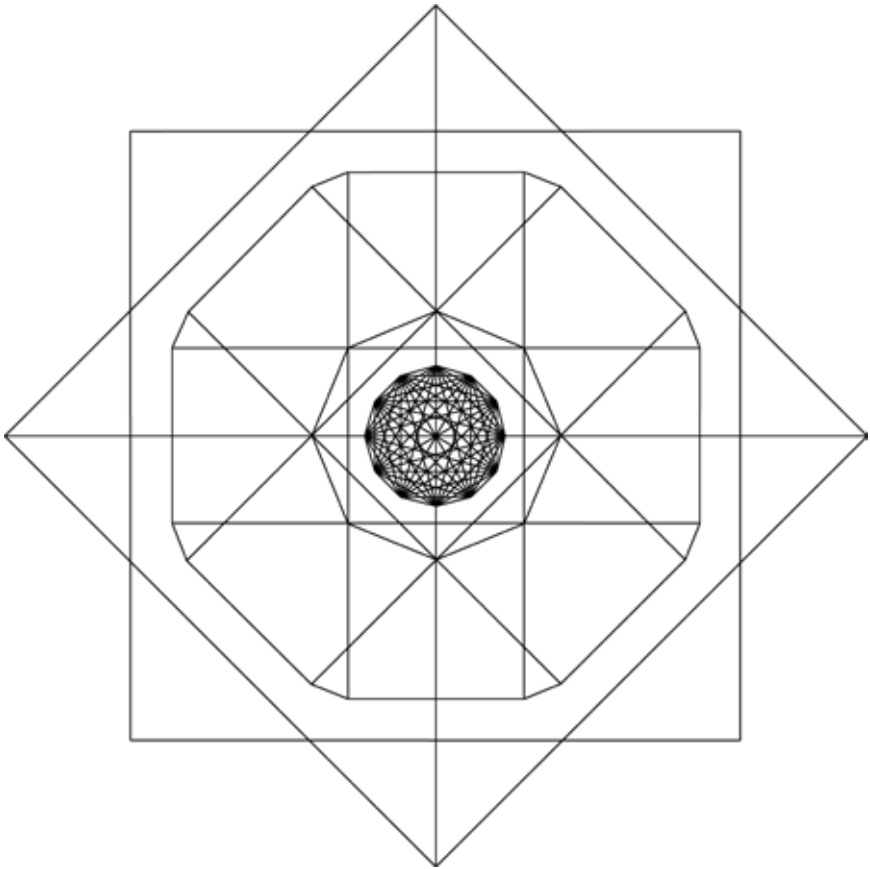


Figure 2. Floor plan of 55 (Radouan Mriziga), © Elias D'hollander

before stepping again towards the center, continuing the circling motion. Alternately, one foot remains in this point, while the other crosses his trunk, leg along the back, tapping the floor. From this middle point he gradually moves towards the edges, using everyday movement, snapping his fingers and doing lunges where he shifts one leg forward and lightly bends his knee.

It is because of the second section that the first one reads as Mriziga measuring the space. He constructs a geometric floor plan based on the Maghreb school of architecture with chalk and paper tape (Fig. 2) using similar movements. Swinging his arms in a circle, it is as if he is already measuring the space where the central figure will appear in the geometry. With the twelve taps of his foot, it

is as if he is marking the twelve points of this shape (Fig. 3). The choreographic chapter ends with Mriziga walking a large square. He takes five big lunges, with his arms accentuating the movement while swinging, to the next point until he has set out the entire square. He evokes the way we measure roughly one metre, using the body as a ruler. Repeating this a second time, he takes a crayon with which to carefully mark the points on the floor. The third time, Mriziga places his elbow at each point, as if it were his compass point, and draws a circle in chalk. These are then connected with their opposite in tape, creating two intersecting lines: the center of the geometry appears as an intersection point. From here, the rest of the geometry is constructed (Fig. 4).

Taping the floor plan, the grid of 55, over the course of the perfor-

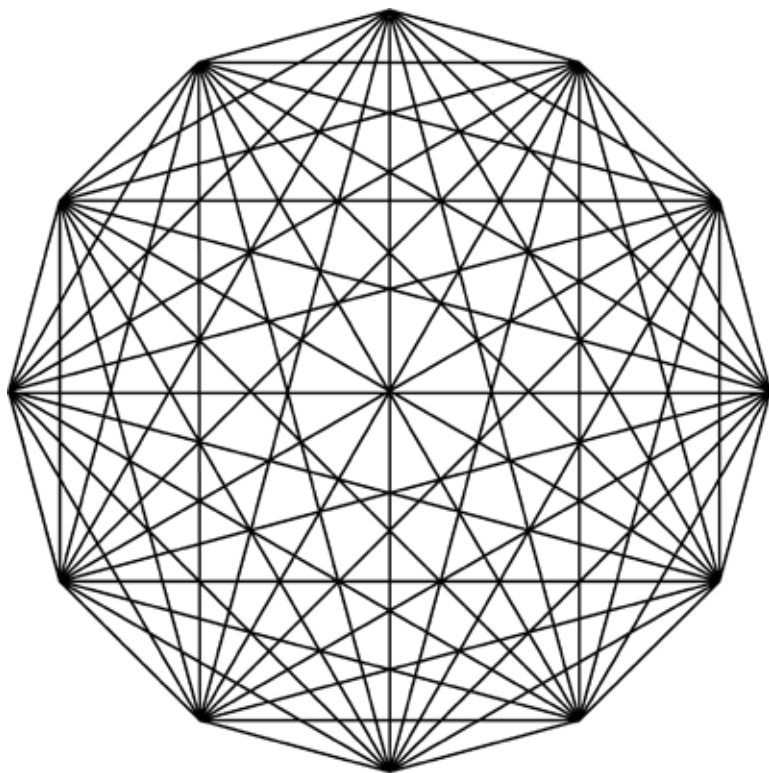


Figure. 3. Twelve-point circle in 55 (Radouan Mriziga), © Elias D'hollander

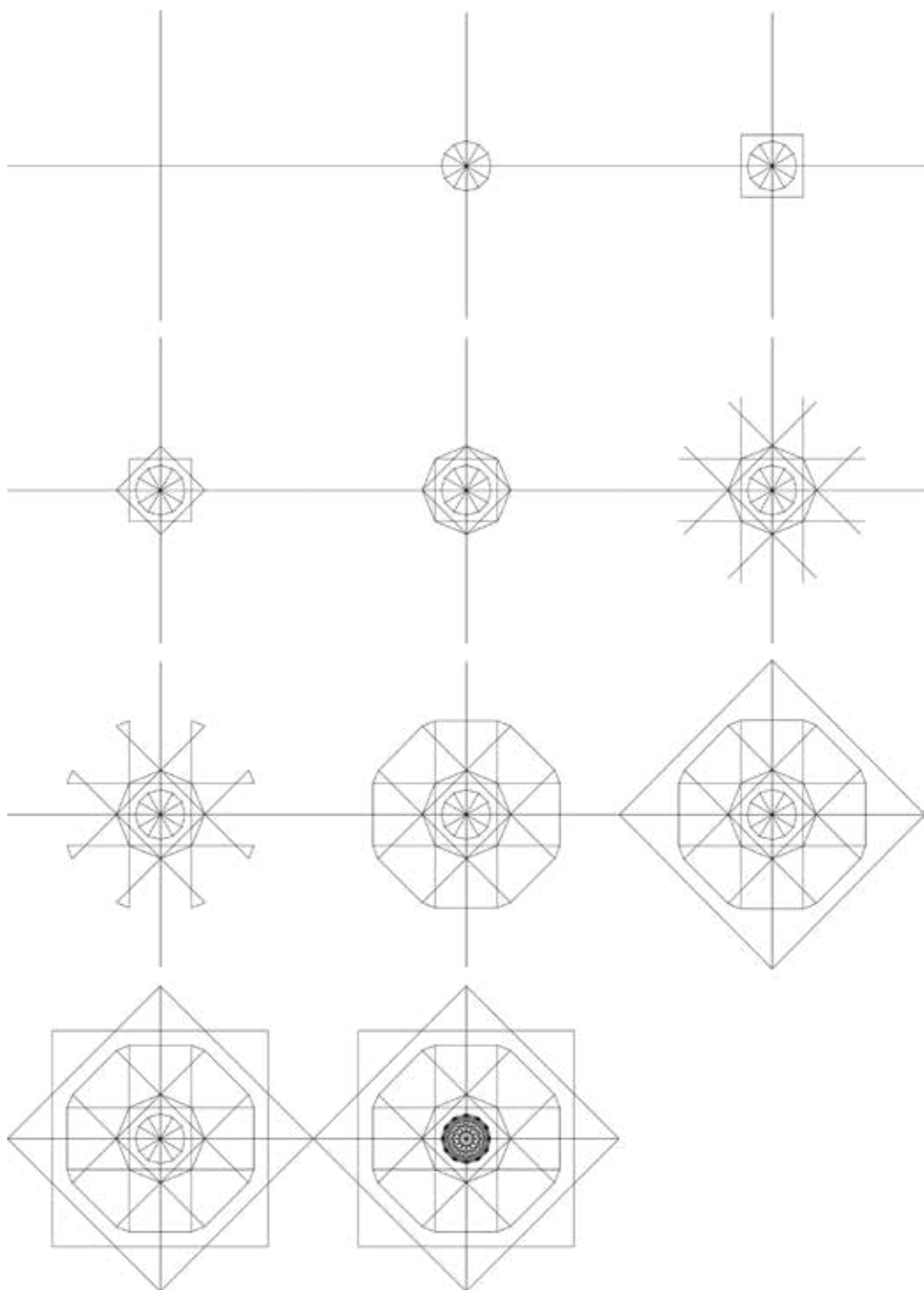


Figure 4. Construction of the floor plan in 55 (Radouan Mriziga), © Elias D'hollander

mance, already implies another relationship between architecture-choreography-ecology. The geometry does not *precede* the movement, but is the result of it. Jacques Derrida's analysis of what it means to establish a grid provides valuable terminology to rethink the bond between 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie:

To establish a grid is to cross through, to go through a channel. It is the experience of permeability. Furthermore, such a crossing does not move through an already existing texture; it weaves this texture. (313)

Mriziga's geometry does not provide a platform on which the body dances, but because of its construction, the choreography goes through the architecture. This going through brings forth a more intimate ecology: rather than mere decor, the building is woven into the texture of 55. By taping the floor plan through the Palais de la Dynastie as it is found, Mriziga has to take it into account. The architecture permeates the choreography. The softly blue windows, left uncovered, allow the natural light of "the world" to filter through in the performance and with it the changes in daylight. One window is made out of a grid of thirty glass rectangles which functions as a large opening towards the National Library on the opposite side of the Mont des Arts and the statue of King Albert I in between. The windows on the two adjacent walls, however, are smaller glass squares made up, once again, of a grid of 16 rectangles vertically stacked together in six 'columns.' This generates a rhythmic pattern of windows, thick walls and an accentuated monumental verticality. In contrast to the black box, grids and windows produce an architecture that is not a stable block of concrete. The movement of the city seeps through; the changes in daylight outside alter the light inside and the verticality of the windows *moves* upward: architecture acts.⁴

If in the first part of the choreography the Palais de la Dynastie is, as stated above, at the very least allowed to be seen, it takes on a more prominent role in the second half of the piece. Not only is the focus on the floor plan itself in tension with the monumental verticality of the building, during the taping of this geometry the choreography and architecture engage in dialogue, intensified by the grid of the tiled floor. This seems to be a continuation of the walls since the rhythmic pattern of stone and glass provide the pattern of the floor

(Fig. 1). The square windows are reflected in four square tiles that, together, form a larger one. These composite squares are separated by a grid – that follows the structure of the stone wall – made up of rectangular tiles that have the length of two squares, punctuated by even smaller square tiles that are placed on each of the four corners of the composite squares.

When Mriziga measures the five lunges to mark the points of the square, importantly he does not follow these lines of the tiles, but traces out a 45-degree angle to the visible predefined path provided by the grid of the floor. This means that, when he connects the points to form the diagonals of the square, these would be able to be taped following the lines of the floor. However, because his body performs the task of ruler rather than stone cold numbers and precise measurements, the smallest deviation of the trajectory of the lunges can cause shifts in the geometry, away from the architectural grid.

In an exact fashion, the taped diagonals have gently diverged; the tape crosses the line of the tiles and does not intersect *on* the architectural grid, but rather *in* it (Fig. 5). The architectural grid, therefore, *crosses through* the choreography as well. 55's geometry has not been *clicked* into the grid of the tiles. Mriziga's decision to not follow their path results in a situation in which his movement and the consequent placement of the floor plan are dependent on the geometry of the tiles. Mriziga eyeballs the 45-degree angle and, as such, is influenced by the grid of the floor, generating the shift. Because of this, both 55's floor plan, as well as the lines of the tiles are visible, crossing over each other, generating a "weave", in Stenger's sense of the word, where their meaning is dependent on one another: "Le fil, là où il est, prend son sens et donne sens à ses voisins et voisines, à l'ensemble de ce qui tient"⁵ (Stengers, Dolphijn 95). Both choreography and architecture are threads that move through one another and nuance Derrida's earlier statement, since they do so through already existing textures. They appear horizontally, equally powerful, not subsuming the other in their own tissue. Mriziga's attitude is one in which it is not he himself, alone, that performs, but where the architecture participates. Both speak together, dialoguing the placement of 55's floor plan and, as such, its relation to the building in which it finds itself.

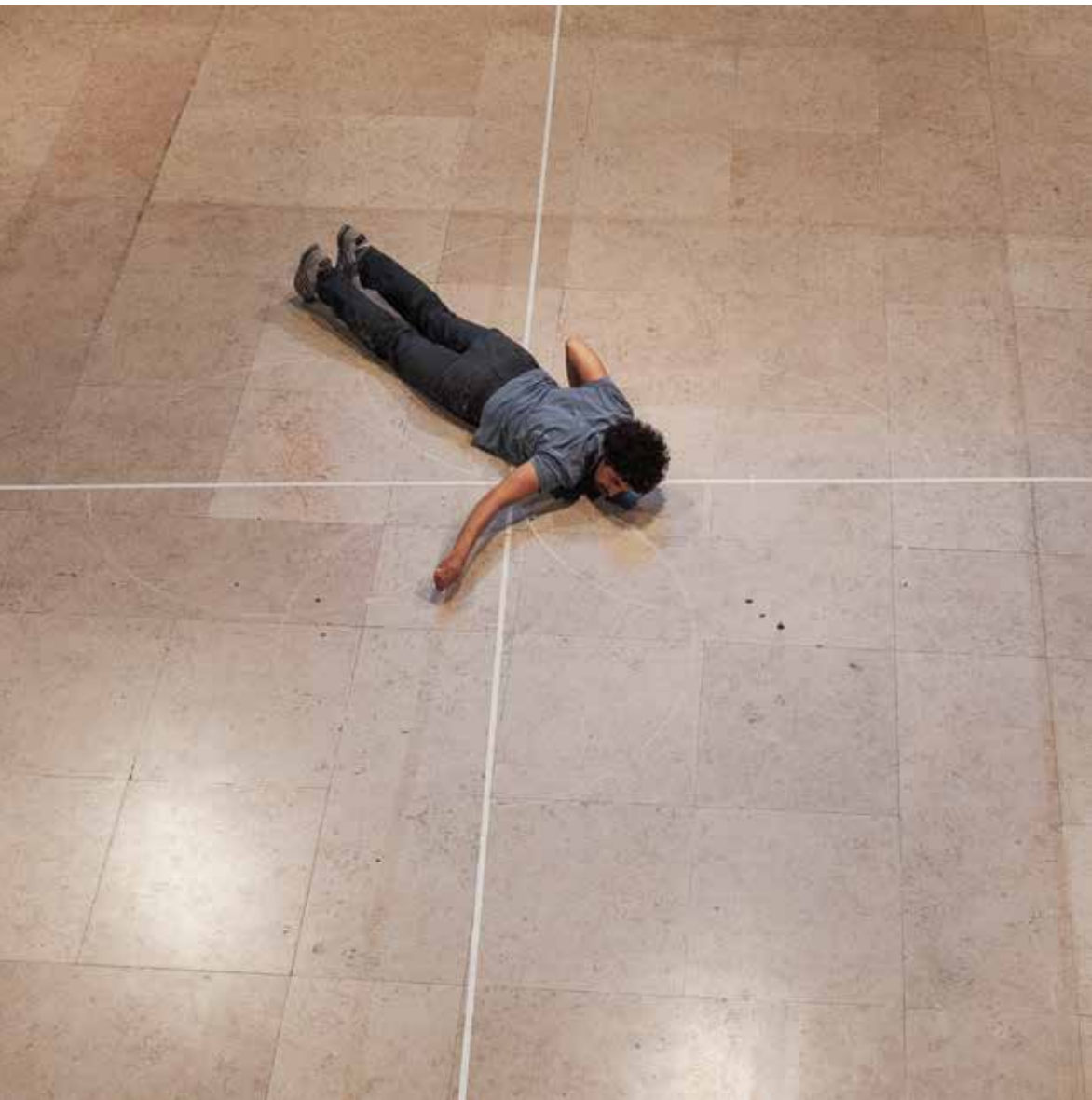


Figure 5. 55 choreographed by Radouan Mriziga, © Benjamin Boar

The twelve-point circle as joint

To understand how the shift works, it is important to look at the center of the geometry, since Mriziga seems to direct a lot of attention upon it. It is here that he starts, here from where he moves towards the edges to come back again, this time with tape. He places a piece of chalk on this intersection. Lying on the floor, he stretches his arm on one of the taped lines. Using his shoulder as a compass point, he draws half a circle on one side, turns, and does the same on the other one. He repeats this four times on each part of the diagonals, generating four overlapping circles (Fig. 5). After having carefully placed his shoulder on the center point, Mriziga uses his outstretched arm to the middle of each circle on the taped diagonals and two points on each circle's circumference. Connecting these points in tape, he forms a twelve-point circle with its twelve diameters. From here, he constructs the rest of the geometry gradually going outward towards the two squares (Fig. 4). Finally, after having taped the floor plan, Mriziga connects all the points in the twelve-point circle, generating a complex weaving texture inside it. The center of the geometry is here the result of movement – through the intersecting diagonals – as well as generator of it. It appears by way of contraction, after which it expands in the Palais de la Dynastie to then concentrate back on itself. This movement resonates with how Derrida describes the functioning of the point in a grid:

On the one hand, the point concentrates, folds back towards itself the greatest force of attraction, contracting lines towards the center. [...] At the same time, through its force of magnetic attraction [...] the point seems to bind, [...] the energy freely available within a given field (315).

Tellingly, it is precisely this point which has been pushed *in* the grid of the tiles. Mriziga's twelve-point circle folds back on itself and maintains a relationship with the environment that surrounds it, manifested in the space between the line of the architecture and the point of the choreography. It functions, therefore, as the place where Mriziga's floor plan speaks together with the Palais de la Dynastie and both are able to influence one another. It holds them in shift, in dialogue. Taping the contracting and expanding geometry becomes, then, a dialogical practice, a negotiation between architecture and

choreography. The lines of the tiles and the center point of Mriziga's geometry are held together by the shift and the weaving texture of the twelve-point circle.

Holding together implies, however, the possibility of breakage. Here, the twelve-point circle becomes "a breaking point: it interrupts, absolutely, the continuity of the text or of the grid. But the inter-ruptor maintains together *both* the rupture *and* the relation to the other" (Derrida 315). It marks a situation where the dialogue between choreography and architecture can be deformed as well as maintained, the possibility of rupture *and* relation. A shape, then, which has the potential to form as well as to sever, and generate conversations that emanate from a point that is as flexible as it is fragile. Paper tape breaks, crumples and is taken away easily, yet all the connections of the twelve points render this process much more difficult. Together they stick harder to the floor.

The twelve-point circle as a breaking point or inter-ruptor, becomes denser when read through the way Mriziga constructs his movement material (in general, but for 55 in particular). When he starts the choreographic chapter by swinging his stretched arms in a 45-degree angle, the place of the movement finds itself only in his shoulders. It is this joint that makes the swinging possible, a movement that gets repeated and systematically added to with other joints. From his hip, Mriziga's legs rhythmically cross one over the other and from his elbow he tilts his lower arm towards his chest to then rotate his wrist. With his palms facing up, he lifts his arms above his head to bring them down – again from his shoulders – in a half circle. It is the shoulder from which the entire performance flows, not by accident the most mobile and most precarious of all the human joints.

The shoulder manifests the function of the inter-ruptor, precisely because of the precariousness of this joint. Within the twelve-point circle, the fragile shoulder is a breaking point that "maintains together *both* the rupture *and* the relation to the other" (Derrida 315). The joint maintains the mobile relation of the upper arm and the shoulder blade as a ball joint, hence its fragility, maintained only by tissue. The weaving together of the points of the twelve-point circle involuntarily evokes this, not only by the connection to fabric-making techniques, but to the idea of the holding together of the relation of architecture and choreography. As such, the twelve-point circle

appears to function as a shoulder joint, where its center acts as the locus where 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie come together, the interval between their geometries as movement and the interwoven points as tissue.

Mriziga seems to render this parallel explicit when he tapes 55's floor plan and uses his shoulder as the center point and his arm as a pair of compasses to place it on the intersection of the large diagonals to mark the intersections he needs to construct the twelve-point circle (Fig. 5). Both are points of departure for, respectively, geometry and movement, "a multiplicity of matrices or generative cells" (Derrida 313). The dialogue is being *articulated* here, as movement is being generated by the anatomical *articulation* of the joint. The carefully placed shoulder *joins up* with the architecture as the upper arm does with the shoulder blade. Here, then, appears a body that is not placed hierarchically above architecture, or vice versa. After all, Mriziga does not hit holes in the Palais de la Dynastie from without, but rather works *with-in* architecture to weave his geometry. Architecture and choreography are thought of as horizontal, in a reciprocal relationship where they dialogue together from the twelve-point circle.

As such, movement is not the result of an all-capable body, but a conversation between body and space that articulate *together* around their shared joint. As the muscles lift the arm, the particular movement is only possible by the way in which the upper arm and the shoulder blade function as a joint. It is here that another topology emerges, one in which space and movement are thought of at once: a world that always already has the possibility to move, bending around the objects that find themselves in it. Space and time joined together in difference, then, temporalized and spatialized respectively. Architecture becomes lighter and choreography heavier: the weight of 55 is articulated in the Palais de la Dynastie.

The earlier described moment where Mriziga interweaves all the points in the twelve-point circle, strengthening the staying power of the paper tape, is then not only a way of holding together the joint during the performance itself, but brings forth a heaviness which makes it linger after the fact, as well. The Palais de la Dynastie houses the trace of choreography, articulated upon it through their joints. Similarly, it becomes possible to think the building as one that can

move and evolve, through articulations. When Mriziga traces the twelve-point circle, he tapes within it the possibility of rendering the Palais de la Dynastie physically unstable. Or, at the very least, the twelve-point circle may put the building in a kind of fluid state, physically as well as critically. Architecture is no longer poured into concrete, fixed in time nor captured by the institution that builds it.

Articulation and folds

The fluidity of the architecture stands in opposition to its destruction. The joints are, after all, not being smashed into the architecture as if out of nothing, dragging this architecture with it, as if Mriziga was a sort of Atlas figure. It is rather the result of the dialogue between architecture and choreography and how the body is in, or with, the world, consciously, responsibly and humbly. His body is one that is in conversation with the architecture and the world in which it finds itself and is thus unable to create – from the outside – these joints in the architecture. Within the found architecture, its dynamism, direction and temporality is left intact: the grid of the tiles, verticality of, and the light falling through, the windows, preserving the differences of 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie *and* setting up a dialogical praxis between both. Architecture's temporality is not being reduced to the body's and vice versa; each has their own history, an enduring dialogue in the moment of 55's performance. The upper arm and shoulder blade do not change themselves; it is their relationship that does. The radical separation of environment and movement becomes untenable and makes place for an articulated dialogue: moveable, changeable, able to fold:

Yes, folded. What is the fold? The aim of re-establishing architecture in what should have been specifically its own is not to reconstitute a simple of architecture, a simple architectural architecture, through a purist or integratist obsession. [...] [A] narrative montage of great complexity explodes, outside, the narrative which mythologies contracted or effaced in the hieratic presence of the 'memorable' monument (Derrida 311).

Through the articulated dialogue, the folds in architecture do not

point towards a how-it-should-have-been, but rather *multiply* its constitution. Meaning is not fixed in the architecture with joints. It is a humble architecture that allows for change, difference and dynamics and even expects them, but never eternalized as *monument*. Indeed, “this work does not pour the difference into concrete; it does not erase the differential trait, nor does it reduce or embed this track, the distract or abstract, in a homogeneous mass (*concrete*)” (Derrida 311). To trace the sides of the squares, Mriziga places one end of the tape on the center point of the earlier-drawn chalk circle and pulls it vertically upward, stretching his arm above his head, as if to measure himself with the tape. Next, he connects this with an adjacent middle point, set low, as if dragging the tape over the floor. The vertical pull points to an architectural fold with the movement of his body: the building becomes complex, subverting the enduring thought of a dominant, unchangeable one, poured with concrete.

Walking to the center of where the twelve-point circle will be taped, swinging his arm back and forth, Mriziga does not merely show its placement, but, more importantly, engages in a moment of listening, of receiving the architectural joint inherent to the grid of the tile floor. By continuously crossing his legs one behind the other to mark all the twelve points of the circle, Mriziga takes this activation even further. The points *stick* to his feet and are folded upon each other while he articulates them with the Palais de la Dynastie, bringing the circle with his arms towards his chest and folding it open towards the ceiling by rotating his wrists, lifting his gaze and stretching his arms upward. Then, the ceiling and floor fold with the walls under the impulse of the downward movement of his arms. Mriziga repeats this phrase, each time turning his body, thus establishing a folded space.

This folded architecture is a radically different topology. Mriziga is not thrown in the world, as if from outside, but is inherently part of it. He is not the unbridled virtuoso dancer on the platform of a black box theatrical space; rather, his movement is always already in dialogue with the architecture that surrounds him. Since he does not generate movement solely from his anatomical joints but does so as well from those of the architecture, his dancing is, before anything else, a response to the joints of the architecture, to the verticality and the gridded tile. This architecture with joints, one with folds as concrete possibilities, is one that places body and cho-

reography on equal ground, one that is able to adapt and respond to what takes place. That is to say, the building becomes, what Mriziga calls *non-linear*: narratives, meaning and histories are articulated, one on top of the other, in an architecture that is more than what is present *here, now* (Mriziga).

The architecture folds into multiplicity and *sticks* to the body as the tape *sticks* to the floor. The folds in Mriziga's performance with the Palais de la Dynastie and the affirmation of the joints stretch the building beyond the institute that performs its power. An architecture with joints is one that holds within its complexity, without a desire to resolve it and therefore explodes The Institutional Narrative which holds the building captive. Through folding joints, the Palais de la Dynastie becomes re-marked, not as a mythic monumental system, but as just that: architecture.

Architecture as speculation

Architecture as a "narrative montage of great complexity", freed from its "hieratic presence" (Derrida 311) becomes question rather than statement, precisely because of its ability to maintain "the *dis-jointed* as such" (Derrida 314). Responding to this demands a flexibility architecture is traditionally not endowed with, for which 55 and the architectural joints it makes clear are invaluable. These inter-ruptors housed in the Palais de la Dynastie itself – the tile joints, the grid of the windows and even the corners of walls, floor and ceiling – allow the building to become lighter, supple, and, therefore, bring forth the potential to adapt, receive and answer to the complexity that circulates through it.

To receive before answering problematizes the idea of a person that creates by and from themselves, alone. Mriziga and the Palais de la Dynastie are dependent on one another and, as such, are only able to articulate a dialogue after having received the potentiality inherent in the architectural and choreographic joints. The choice of not following the grid of the tiles is, therefore, a gesture of listening before articulating a response. Through this dialogue, it is architecture and choreography *together* that create, a situation that Étienne Souriau calls "instauration" (Stengers, Latour 10). This designates an action in which something is created, not out of nothing, but by

engaging “la responsabilité de celui qui instaure, à accueillir une demande”⁶ (Despret, “Au bonheur” 16). The person carrying out an act of instauration has, first, to listen to the demand made upon them by their object or environment: creation is always relational. Mriziga’s tape becomes not so much an owned geometry placed over another, but rather an instaurated fold between the grid of the tiles, as if the tape shows a shift within the architecture, which has adapted itself. The Palais de la Dynastie has become speculation:

L'accueil du signe se fait dans le régime des ‘peut-être’, du doute, [...] des ‘comme si’, des reprises de formulation. [...] Chaque ‘peut-être’, chaque ‘comme si’, chaque doute exprimé, chaque reprise pour ‘dire autrement’ mobilise d’implicites ‘et’, d’avidés ‘ou alors’, en quête d’une autre version (Despret, “Au bonheur” 151).⁷

Welcoming the demand, or the sign of the environment, implies doubt in search of another articulation of architecture, away from the monumental stability imposed upon it by the institution that has built it. Instauration, therefore, might return the building to what it could be: uncertain and hesitant, adaptive and architecture as such. 55 seeks to articulate the Palais de la Dynastie differently. The jointed approach puts the building conceptually in doubt, to be sure, but maybe it does so physically, as well. Mriziga’s practice of generating movement does precisely that, since he builds his movement phrases as if the architecture in which they are generated can fold. Because a step, a snap of the finger in Mriziga’s work are thought of as folding the space during the creation process, they receive from its conception the ability to fold the building, or else to open it up and erect columns. Reaching an arm towards a corner, before attentively moving the arm somewhere else is, in effect, to displace it, or to open up a wall. Speculation: might the Palais de la Dynastie, at least during the time of Mriziga’s 55, be deformed, since the latter’s movement is built *as if* the building could be folded?⁸

By stretching the tape, it is *as if* the floor is stretched towards the walls and ceiling, evading as such the connotations of a platform on which Mriziga’s body is fixed. He is not being pulled on a plane by gravity as if he can be thought of as detached from it, but is rather intrinsically woven of the world. Here, the dialogue between architecture and choreography is, once again, instaurated “comme si

le réel insistait. Là où il y a usuellement production de séparation, [...] les choses se mettent à communiquer autrement"⁹ (Despret, "Au bonheur" 150). The insistence of the relationality of movement and space makes them dialogue differently: not dancer *on* stage, but architecture and choreography *in* articulation. 55 folds the building, as the Palais de la Dynastie folds it, in turn. Architecture becomes speculation through doubt, adapting to the complexity of difference.

This carries out an immense responsibility, since movements from an 'outside' would know a more free and all-possible statute, not being an intrinsic part of the platform on which they are performed, enjoying, therefore, less accountability. Only after having received the joints of architecture is Mriziga put in a state of response-ability, able to move as if folding – not by hypothesising this possibility beforehand, but by welcoming speculation. It is the floor-ceiling-wall-fold that allows him to work against the monumental verticality of the Palais de la Dynastie: a folded building that opens itself for adaptation, as speculation, no concrete given fact as a tool to exhibit power on that which finds itself in and around that architecture. Doubt, through the *as if*, rather than confidence, invites complexity once more and generates different versions of architecture. Or else, with these physical articulated folds in the building, the Palais de la Dynastie in 55 becomes multiple.

Multiplying the Palais de la Dynastie

Folding a choreography whose floor plan refers to Maghreb architecture in a Palais de la Dynastie of a country with a colonial past of its own, generates an extremely sharp criticism. It is the taping of the geometry that criticizes the architecture-as-institute, *adding* to the building, rather than attacking it. That Mriziga interweaves with it a geometry that has its origins within Moroccan architecture, a country that was itself heavily colonized by France, intensifies the link between the Palais de la Dynastie and Belgium's colonial history. After all, the building was built for Expo '58, the pinnacle of unbridled colonial modernity, and displays a monumental prestige that should be very explicitly linked to colonial Belgium. Indeed:

[T]he cool white marble of the hall [of the Palais de la Dynastie] keeps alive the memory of Leopold II's plan to

use the blood money extracted from the Congo, safely put away in the royal foundation and so protected from 'recuperation' by the Belgian state, to build, among other projects, a mausoleum and a palace to the glory of the dynasty (Van Synghele 34).

As such, the focus on two-dimensionality in 55 that counteracts the vertical movement of the building takes on political connotations. The building's grand verticality is rendered monumental by the institution and its associated power structures at work: they impose their form and with it an institutionalized grid that holds the architecture, as well as its dweller, captive. The Palais de la Dynastie has always been an inaccessible block, a facade more than anything else, safeguarded, or so it seems, by its monumental verticality. Even now that Plein Publiek has taken over the building – some years after 55 – it remains, thus, protected by the men in suits and their after works.

By folding the floor plan of 55 with the Palais de la Dynastie, the building is articulated differently and the institution critiqued. The architecture *in itself* does not crumble, but the institutional decisions do: the verticality is still vertical, it only loses its "hieratic presence of the 'memorable' monument" (Derrida 311). That is to say, through the folding of the joints, the architecture is speculated upon, and becomes supple. Glorification, nor mausoleum, it regains its connection to a more natural scale. In dialogue with Mriziga's movement; it is as if the stones become tactile again, the shades in colours of the windows gain beauty *for themselves*, and are no longer the servants of the vertical movement. Or else, perhaps, articulated with each other, window, wall and floor are able to exist, woven together with the colonial critique, held by the tissue of the twelve-point circle.

With Mriziga's movement and the architectural joints, the Palais de la Dynastie is opened up. Today, after the fact, passing by the Mont des Arts – now protected by the men in suits on their after works – it is as if the hollow facade of the building remains folded with its interior. The verticality of the windows continues to recall the paper tape that bent the ceiling, wall and floor; the grid in the windows, folded on the grid of tile floor, retains the trace of the twelve-point circle that once held them together. Or, to put it differently: 55 has given the Palais de la Dynastie an interior again: Mriziga's response

to the architecture that “cries out for new life” (Van Synghele 36), is not filleting or hollowing out the building, but speculating upon it, folding it in dialogue. An articulation emerges which has returned the (colonial as well as architectural) transparency it lacked, “especially in the vertical sense” (Van Synghele 36).

Here, something demands attention: Mriziga’s approach to dealing with monumental verticality differs fundamentally, after all, from the way André Lepecki analyses the crawl pieces of William Pope.L. Lepecki uses Frantz Fanon’s notion of “the stumble” to think about Pope.L’s embrace of the horizontal plane and refusal of verticality, which is here the orientation of the institution’s brutality:

The moment one gives up one’s own verticality, the first thing one discovers is that even the smoothest ground is not flat. The ground is grooved, cracked, cool, painful, hot, smelly, dirty. The ground pricks, wounds, grabs, scratches. The ground, above all, weighs in (99).

Instead of giving up his verticality, Mriziga affirms it. He is never off-balance, never threatened by horizontality nor verticality. He moves through the building’s planes with ease, even retaking the movement he uses to draw a circle in chalk on the floor when he is upright. From his shoulder, his stretched-out arm traces a vertical circle. As the floor of the Palais de la Dynastie takes its pattern from the walls (or vice versa), so Mriziga *implicates* verticality in horizontality and in north, east, south and west. Herein lies the risk: he challenges the building’s lack of vertical transparency, by folding it with horizontality, holding both ‘in relation’: “des plis pliés les uns dans les autres, impliqués les uns par les autres, qui tiennent les uns grâce aux autres ou au risque des autres”¹⁰ (Stengers and Schaffner 35). Speculation: might the ground weigh in, not by wounding, but through its joints that render it supple, by folding around, or with, the weight of the choreography? Stumbling would be impossible here, since architecture’s tissue would support the body that folds through it.

Folding brings forth an articulated topology and a way of dealing with a past of architecture without destroying it, not a *tabula rasa*, but an affirmative critique, once again, in the realm of “des ‘peut-être’, du doute, [...] des ‘comme si’, des reprises de formulation” (Despret, “Au

bonheur” 151). The folds of Maghreb geometry in 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie establish an architecture – and the Western ideology that builds it – as if it has always been folded: in its basis with an ancient world that is not merely Western European, the Mediterranean that has never been homogenous, and with a colonial heritage. Through dialoguing articulations, the architecture becomes supple and can once again be worked with, all the while unfolding the processes of the history of its building. By coming together in joints, folding past, present and eventual future, architecture and choreography have genuinely become non-linear: 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie fold in an articulation, as if *joined* together through time, in earth:

Mais si le territoire le [l’oiseau] tient par tant de choses, [...] n’est-ce pas d’abord parce qu’il le tient, tout simplement? [N]e serait-ce pas le fait que, quand un oiseau habite un territoire, il est complètement habité par lui? [...] C’est le territoire qui le fait chanter, comme il le fait arpenter, danser, exhiber ses couleurs.¹¹

(Despret, “Habiter” 122)

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55. By Radouan Mriziga. Palais de la Dynastie (Brussels), 2015.

Notes

- 1 Thinking territory demands therefore a gesture: searching to create a game when the consequences stick to the causes, [...] when the ways of being rarify themselves in order to obey some principles. Which also implies slowing down, letting pass a bit of air and letting oneself go and imagine. (My own translation)
- 2 This inadvertently recalls the discussions surrounding 'site-specificity', a notion that has long gained popularity within the fine arts (see for example Miwon Kwon's *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002)) and has since been used and adapted within performance studies as well (see for example Melanie Kloetzel's notion of *site-adaptive dance* in "Site and Re-site: Early Efforts to Serialize Site-Specific Dance" in *Dance Research Journal*, 49:2 (April 2017): 6-23). Here, however, I am interested not so much in the fact that the performance is site-specific or site-adaptive, but rather in *how this* choreography and *this* architecture dialogue together and what this relationship *does*.
- 3 A battle with language, to try and do justice to what is happening. (My own translation)
- 4 Elsewhere I have analysed architecture's potential to act through Michel de Certeau's concepts of 'place' and 'space'. See: D'hollander, Elias. *Architectuur choreograferen / Choreografie architecturen. Het verweven van choreografie en architectuur in Radouan Mriziga's '55' (2015)*. Tectum Verlag, 2021.
- 5 The thread, there where it is, gets it meaning from, and gives meaning to, its neighbours, from and to the whole of that which maintains. (My own translation)
- 6 The responsibility of the person who instaures, to welcome a demand. (My own translation)
- 7 The reception of the sign finds itself in the realm of 'maybe', of doubt, [...] of 'as if', of reworking formulations. [...] Every 'maybe', every 'as if', every expressed doubt, every reworking 'to say it differently' mobilizes the implicit 'and', the enthusiastic 'or perhaps', in search of another version. (My own translation)
- 8 The concept of architecture as speculation should not be confused with speculative architecture, which often brings forth dystopian typologies. It is rather more closely related to the idea of architecture as hypothesis, coined by practitioners

and theorists Madeline Gins and Arakawa. (See: Gins, Madeline and Arakawa. *Architectural Body*. The University of Alabama Press, 2002.) Speculation as well as hypothesis think architecture adaptively and unstable. However, they imply a radically different approach to the built environment, manifested in their different tenses ('as if' versus 'what if'). Hypothesising architecture means, in effect, to posit a hypothesis beforehand. Here the relation of the stated hypothesis and the thing hypothesized seems to be less intimate, less interrelated, where speculation, through instauration, works more closely *with* the thing it speculates upon. Asking 'what if' is more of a free-for-all, whereas 'as if' is more interdependent, response-able.

- 9 As if the real insisted. Where there is usually a production of separation, things start to communicate differently. (My own translation)
- 10 Folds folded one in the other, implicated one in the other, that hold by the grace of each other or at the risk of one another. (My own translation)
- 11 But if the territory holds it [the bird] by so many things [...] would it not be first of all because it *simply holds it?* [the French 'tenir' signifies 'to hold' as well as 'to like', 'to love', 'to desire' etc.] Would it not be the fact that, when a bird inhabits a territory, it is completely inhabited by it? [...] It is the territory that makes it sing, just as it makes it roam, dance, exhibit its colours. (My own translation)