

HOFESH SHECHTER | CODA

Hofesh Shechter is a choreographer who is particularly conscious of measure, I would even say of temperature, atmosphere, of the climate at the onset of each of his creations. More than the plan of the whole or the design of the work, it is the beginning that seems to be of primary importance. Or rather, it seems to contain and anticipate within it both plan and design. [...] In dance, the beginning is not just about the form of a contract that seeks to create a bond with the public. The beginning coincides above all with the truest initiation of the spectator to the presence of the body, and therefore to the condition of the world that the performer carries within him. [...] This is what makes it surprising that the choreographer titled his site-specific itinerant performance, for and at the Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, CODA. [...] Like for the climate and the atmosphere, the coda is what remains in the air. For the skin of a body, it is an underlying residue, that marks the boundary of its surface: the coda is the material claim of what remains.

Thus with the lettering of the titles, the unconventional use of capital and lower-case letters, and the programme choices present at the very outset of the performance, Shechter redefines the boundaries of his choreographic work in a material sense, experimenting with a different concept of beginning and generating a change in the docile and compulsive forms that all too often epitomize contemporary dance events today.

[...] Hofesh Shechter visited the Maramotti Collection at the end of September 2015. His visit was slow, meditative, undisturbed by guided tours or superfluous elucidations. The choreographer's purpose was perhaps to convert the spaces and artworks into a unified visitor experience that would then allow him to discern a different approach. Or better yet, to discover a strategy of action based on a pluralistic logic that could transfer the visual dynamics and spatial memories into the terms of a performance. The result was a piece that was not composed as a sequence of partial moments, but of events taking place at different speeds, granting each participant the experience of unfamiliar zones, of actions that for some could have gone unobserved. And perhaps for the first time, the works in the Collection produced new combinations, not subjective but connected within the spaces by the unfamiliar and contingent vitality of the performers. The dancers moved across the spaces and rooms, neither tiptoeing in nor dominating them, but perhaps merely freeing them from their respective customary codes of fruition.

[...] this site-specific practice entailed making decisions about movement that were strictly correlated to pressing physical requirements. In a way, the bodies emptied the geography of the exhibition space of its territorial intentions. Here the idea of territory undoubtedly concerns the space, yet not its objective boundaries, but its existential ones. To bring it a new, however mobile and temporary, interior topography: an affective topography dictated by the presence and the action of the dancers. Like in other, and of course different, experiences in which dance has engaged with exhibition venues, the creative process has developed its itinerancy into a sort of atlas of images in motion. An atlas in sequence that follows the material plan of the building, the static nature of which has again been experienced through an outline that in this case was emotional. [...] The experience taking place in the spaces of the Collection concerns the living *that cannot be stuffed and mounted*, and calls for the viewer to show the discretion due the performer who is questioning otherness, *whose gaze may not be transformed into a mere object*. More in general, what is surprising is the position that the dancers simultaneously strike up within the rooms that in prevalence exhibit paintings: they start mainly from the sides, at the margins of the canvases as if the bodies, through the movement that is about to start there, become the living margins of a new event. An event created out of this encounter that includes both those who are being watched and those who are watching. The works on exhibit never are and never become a mere backdrop for the presence of the performer. And not coincidentally, a quiet even faint voice recorded on tape advises one and all that no one will be told what to do at any time. As it questions the meaning of words as mere solutions to situations that have no solution, movement, continues the voice on tape, "is the question but can't be answered". Shechter's premise is clear: unravel all the devices that can help understand so that the relationship to the world that every body carries within it might make it possible to experience what before it, behind it and around it appears as a void, an absence, not a physical one, but in a spatial sense, an objective one.

[...] And this is precisely how, through the action of the body, the space loses its centre, only to find new balance in movement.

[...] The motionless structure that hosts this site-specific performance has its epiphany in the experience itself. [...] Shechter is not a decorative choreographer, he does not believe dance to be a question of style, but always and above all a question of energy. [...] Chronology does not exist, there is no chronological order in the explosions of energy, in the relationship of movement with the space, in the life of the gestures. There is no History. Maybe just its ruins.