

THE DANCING PLAGUE

An immersive experience by
Julie Desmet Weaver
and Eugénie Andrin

TCHIKI
BOUM



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LE GRENIER À SEL
ART & INNOVATION



forum
des
images



AT A GLANCE

An immersive and interactive experience

Run length : 25 minutes

Directed by Julie Desmet Weaver

Choreography by Eugénie Andrin

Visual creation by Claire Allante

Music by Cyrille Marchesseau

inspired by "La Danse Macabre" by Camille Saint-Saëns

Coproduced by Tchikiboum and Small Creative

Inspired by "Entrez dans la danse" by Jean Teulé - Editions Julliard

With Joséphine Terme, Marie-Pierre Génovèse and Cyrille Bochev...

With the support of CNC - Fonds Expériences Numériques, Région Sud, CNC - Création Immersive, L'Entre-Pont Nice - Résidence 2021, Fondation Martell

With the help of Hubblo, Compagnie Underground Sugar, Chaillot - Théâtre National de la Danse and La Marge - Lieusaint with Théâtre National de Sénart



CONCEPT

The Dancing Plague is a unique experience inspired by a famous event: the dancing plague of 1518. Within an immersive structure, the audience is invited to discover the story of Enneline, the first woman to be swept away by this pandemic. Combining theater and dance, this sensory experience invites us to follow the momentum of the bodies, a testimony to the distress of a population faced with rigid authorities. Borrowing from live performance and cinema, the experience becomes a real playground for the spectators invited to enter the dance.

Inside a dome surrounding the audience, the story is fragmented in a modern way. The device offers another way of looking at the movement, of gradually becoming part of it. Motion capture cameras, as well as a set of interactive shaders on the floor (colours and shapes), allow the audience to literally "become one" with the story. The narrative path will lead the spectators to become involved and invite them, little by little, to enter "physically" into the dance.

Managing to mix the spectators' flesh bodies with the filmed bodies of the dancers and the virtual bodies captured in motion capture is one of the main challenges of this experience.



INTENTION

The Dancing Plague has a political and societal intention: to install the gesture as an expression of despair, as a claim, as a reappropriation of the public space...

There are two leitmotifs that often recur in my writing and in my creations: the need to draw inspiration from literary texts and aesthetics that are anchored as landmarks in our collective memories, and the desire to bring to life parallel worlds and propose interpretations that resonate with our time and with our current situation. I am part of this approach, which consists of creating bridges between literature, the performing arts, cinema and innovation in order to offer new experiences to the audience.

Through this episode of a dancing epidemic and the story of the couple Enneline and Melchior, I wish to draw inspiration from the great pictorial and literary aesthetics of macabre art and propose a resolutely modern interpretation. In view of the difficult period we are going through, which invites us to change our habits and to transform ourselves in depth,

it is interesting to question our condition as men and women, in the heart of the city, and our ancestral, instinctive and organic fears of death.

The challenge is to illustrate the vertigo that the imbalance of these men and women can represent, to tell the story of the swaying, the shaking of the body, then of the bodies that will recognise each other, respond to each other in unison, and tip over into madness. As if the body suddenly opened up and became capable of letting out its darkest and purest moods. A carnivalesque universe, real and fictional, in which beauty and various forms of ancestral fears can exist and merge in harmony.

Julie Desmet Weaver



STORY



In a darkened workshop, Melchior is hard at work as a printer. Sitting at the other end of the room, Enneline, his lover, seems forbidden, frozen in another world. As she drops a baby's nappy, she is overcome with a sense of disquiet. Melchior gently tries to calm her down... without success. The young woman loses her temper, making an abrupt movement. She escapes from the darkness and dashes through the city. Her dance carries away the passers-by, one by one, contaminating them with her gestural madness.

Locked in their belfry, the Mayor and the authorities wonder about this meaningless "farandole" that is taking over the town. At first amused, the Mayor is soon overwhelmed by the events. In the streets of the city, Enneline is stirring, dragging the people with her. Melchior tries to follow her and save her, but the woman's body escapes him, ever more spirited, ever more dancing.

The authorities then send musicians to the main square to calm the ardour. The music invites them to sway and twirl, triggering the first rave party in history. In this hallucinatory space, the bodies are unleashed, gradually accompanied by the audience, who become actors in this infinite farandole.

Fantastic creatures populate the main square. Our characters rush in this collective trance, until it is dismantled by the guards, a dark and worrying threat that puts an end to the movement. Enneline and Melchior are left alone. He seems convinced that the madness has disappeared, that calm and stability have returned. But then he feels Enneline's hand against his back, stirring again.

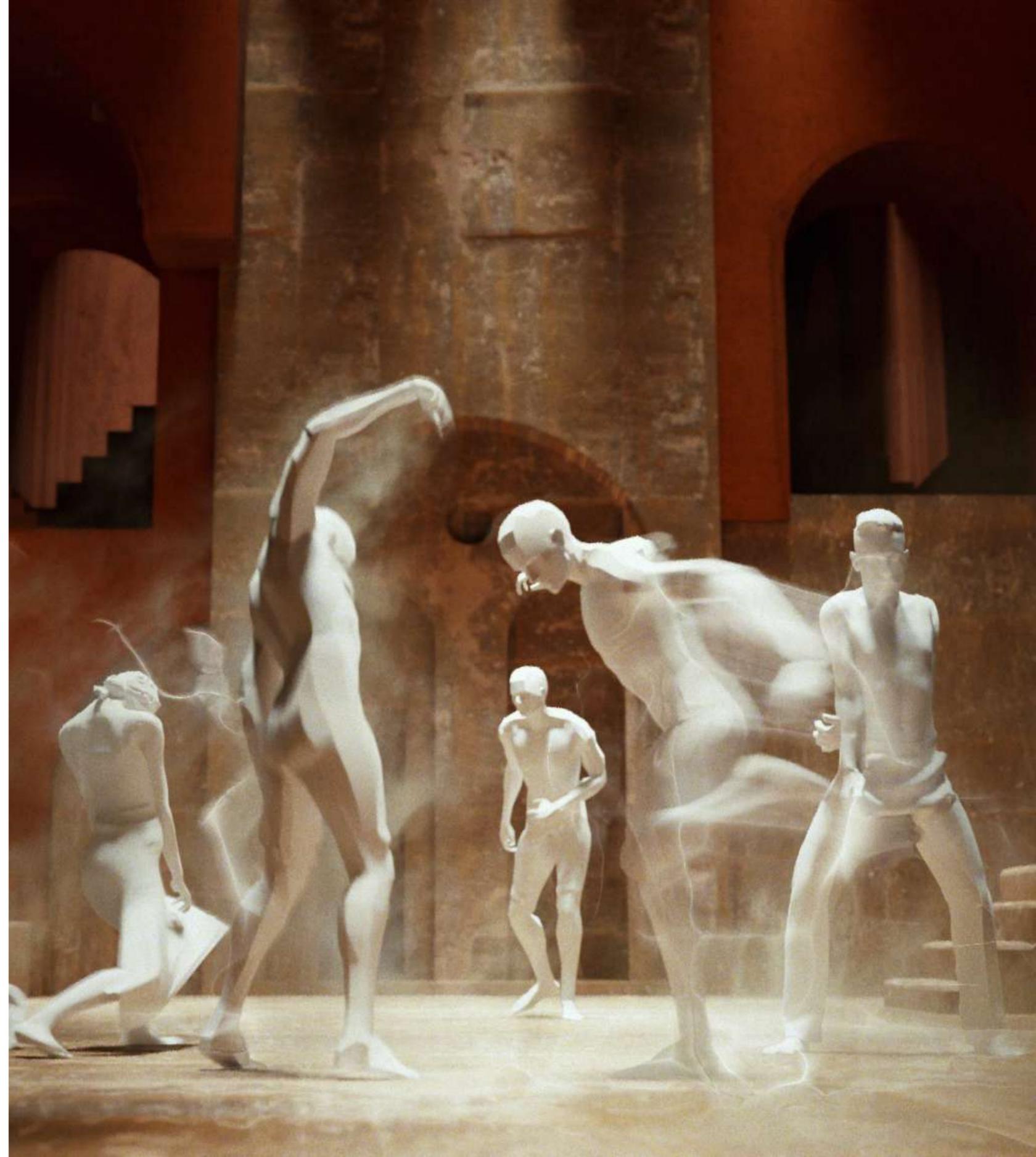
CHOREOGRAPHIC GESTURE

The choreography shows the slide of a joyful and light dance that sinks into the hell of an obligatory farandole. Foot tapping chanting an obsessive rhythm, dislocated limbs, suffocating bodies, crowds of people clumping together, incessant spinning... express the ambiguity between the comfort of trance as an escape and the pain, because it is a dance suffered that leads to exhaustion.

The dancers in the experiment each have a strong and unique physical and choreographic signature that it seems essential to preserve, in order to avoid any formatting that a common technique could have inoculated. Indeed, their singularity is a precious asset, put forward in order not to parasitize the natural movement of the dancers. For it is instinctively, without any rules, that the inhabitants, caught up in their madness, began to dance.

The experience will allow the spectator to be at the heart of the dance, as close as possible to the bodies. It is therefore a question of weaving a close link between the filmed bodies of the dancers, the virtual bodies captured in motion capture and the carnal bodies of the spectators. This material will allow the dance to unfold, using these bodies as vectors that bridge the gap between the screen and reality, reducing the boundary between these two universes, and thus allowing the spectator-dancers to enter the dance in a natural way.

Eugénie Andrin



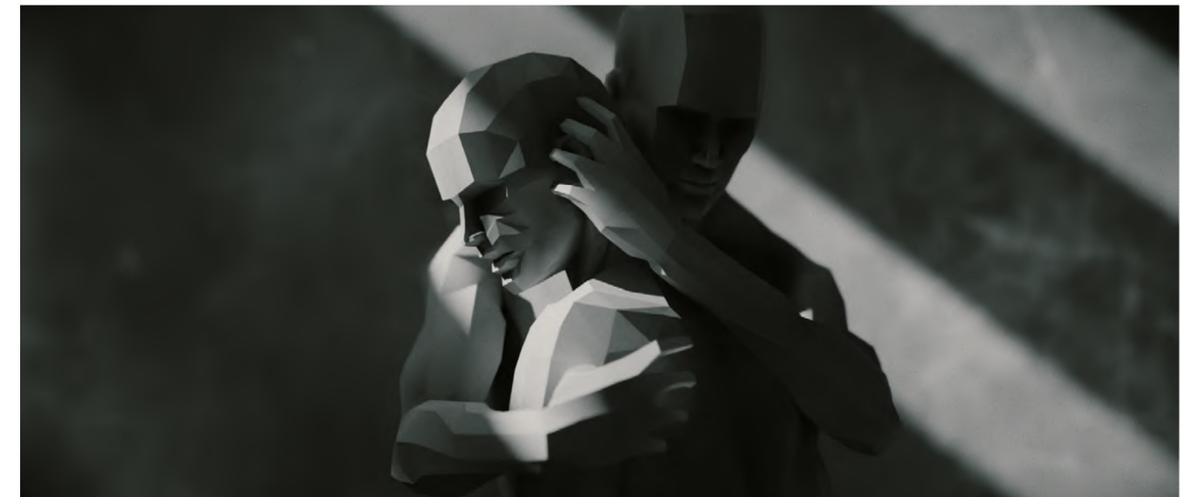
IMMERSIVE SPACE

Our installation is this imaginary space, into which about twenty spectators are invited to enter.

This space represents a world in which we want to immerse the spectators: different immersive tableaux will unfold all around them. We want to play with scales: by positioning the spectators sometimes in the centre of a 360° filmed scene, sometimes in the middle of the farandoles' bourrée steps, sometimes stared at by all the dancers... the spectators are physically and sensorially involved in the story.

Our intention is to mix the bodies of the spectators with the carnal bodies of the dancers and the hundreds of virtual bodies, which will be filmed in motion capture, reproduced and multiplied in space.

Finally, we will blur the boundaries with the screen, notably by extending our images onto the floor of the immersive space, so that they touch the feet of the audience.





IMMERSIVE AND INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION

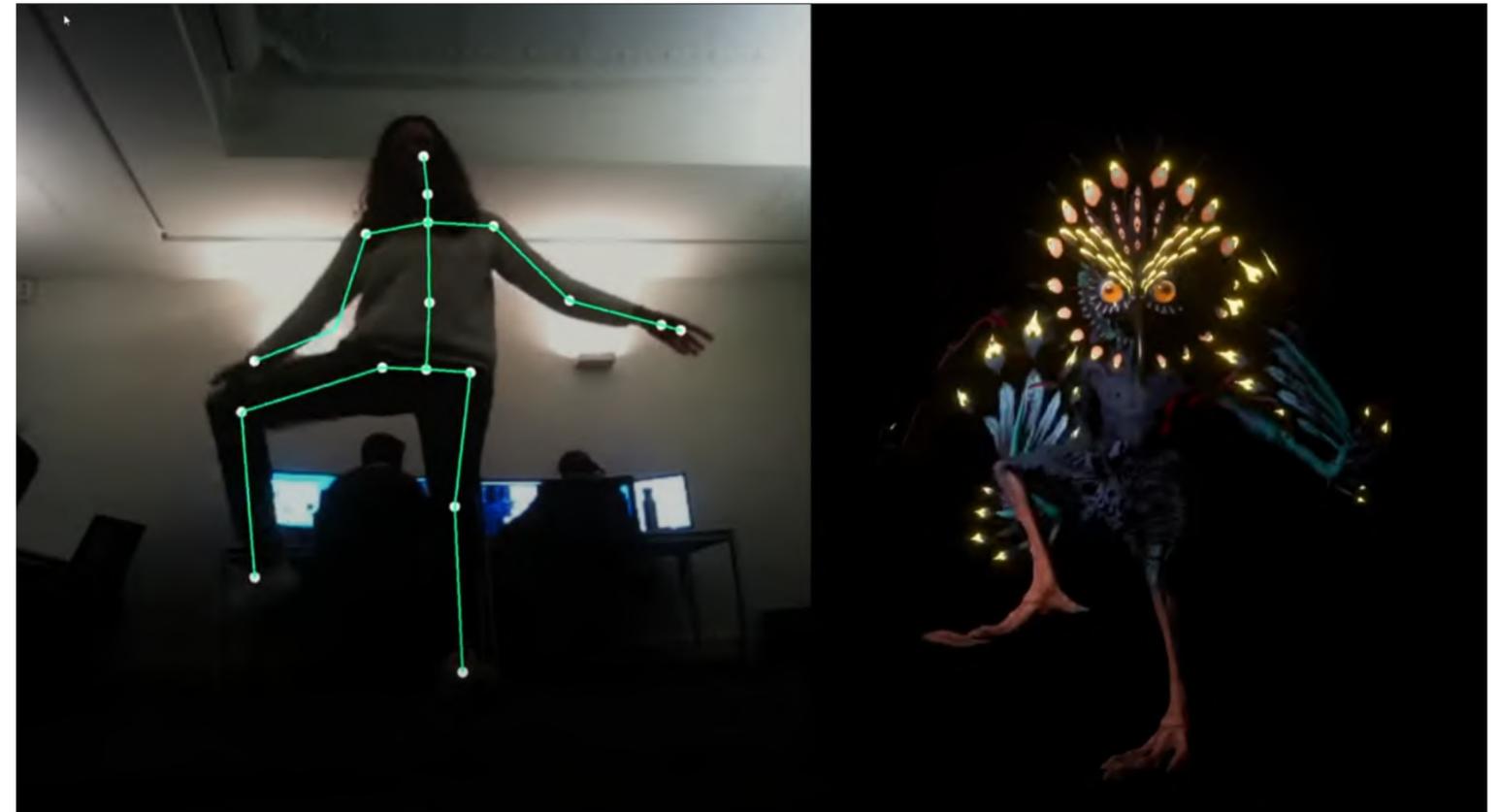
The original immersive installation allows for an unprecedented experience and design. By creating a dematerialized and dissonant narrative space at the heart of this story, we immerse audiences in unexpected synesthetic sensations.

The interactions and aesthetics blur the boundary between the screen and the floor, so that the images spill over and extend beyond, touching and encompassing the bodies of the audience. Throughout the experience, participants are enveloped in a palpable and vibrant atmosphere.

This living, organic floor is ideal for involving the audience in movement and dance from the moment they enter the immersive space.

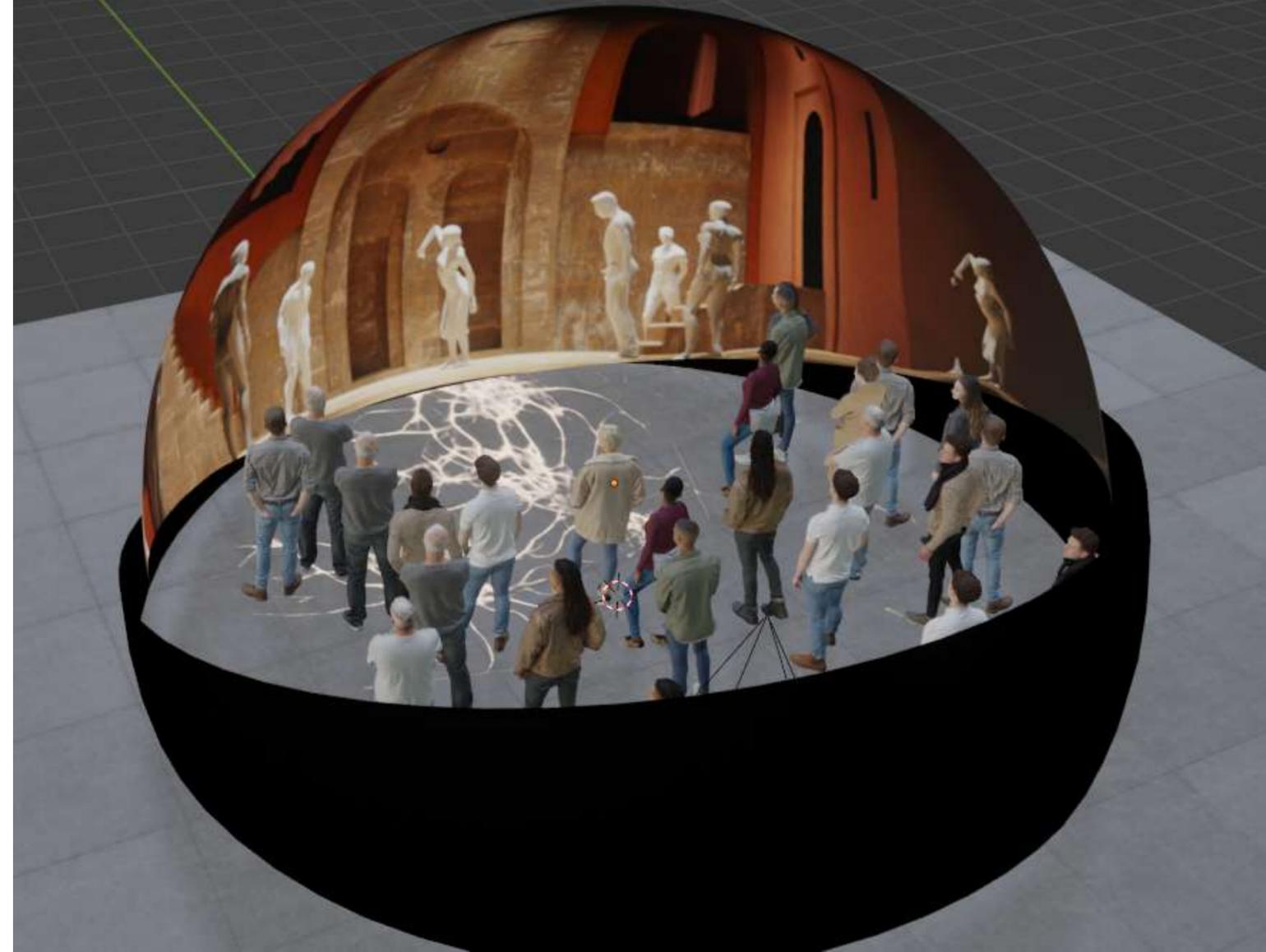
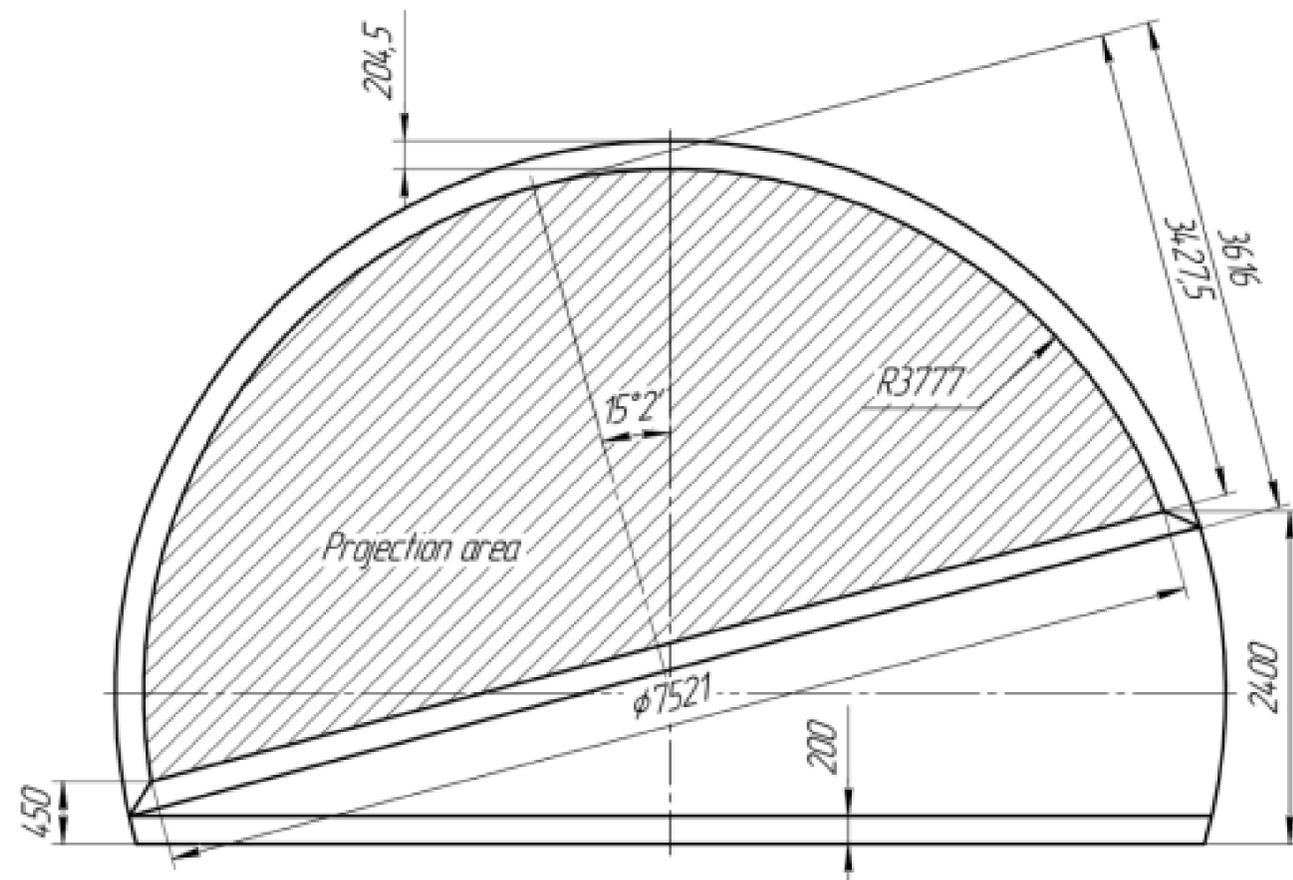
At the climax of this experience, offering the spectator the possibility to metamorphose by interacting through an avatar-chimer body, is to offer him the possibility to get involved and to physically engage himself, in apotheosis, in this dancing fresco.

Through a system of motion capture cameras, the audience will be able to approach the screens, seeing their silhouettes appear, blending in with the characters in our story. Thanks to a capture of their skeleton, the participants will be able to move their pelvis, tap their feet... and play with their avatar, involving themselves in the dance.



TECHNICAL INFO

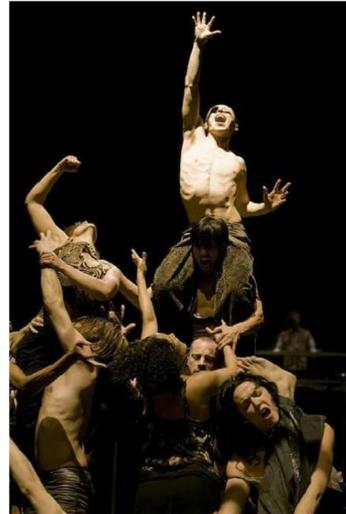
Immersive dome (mobile)
8m (diameter) x 5m (height)
4 video projectors
Spatialized sound
Maximum capacity: 30 people
Assembly/disassembly: 2 x 1 day (technicians included)
Indoor or outdoor installation possible



GRAPHIC AND VISUAL INTENTIONS

Characters

The opposition between the people and the rulers is reflected in the movements of the performers and in their clothing, whether fluid or rigid.



The "rigides"

The political and religious body is constrained in its gestures. We call them rigid. Their representations come in exaggerated and exuberant costumes. They embody the opulence of this burlesque aristocracy.



The people

The people wear flowing, loose-fitting clothes with a play of transparency. The clothes are patinated and patched, in shades of green. As the story unfolds, the clothes are torn apart, revealing skin glistening with perspiration and clay.

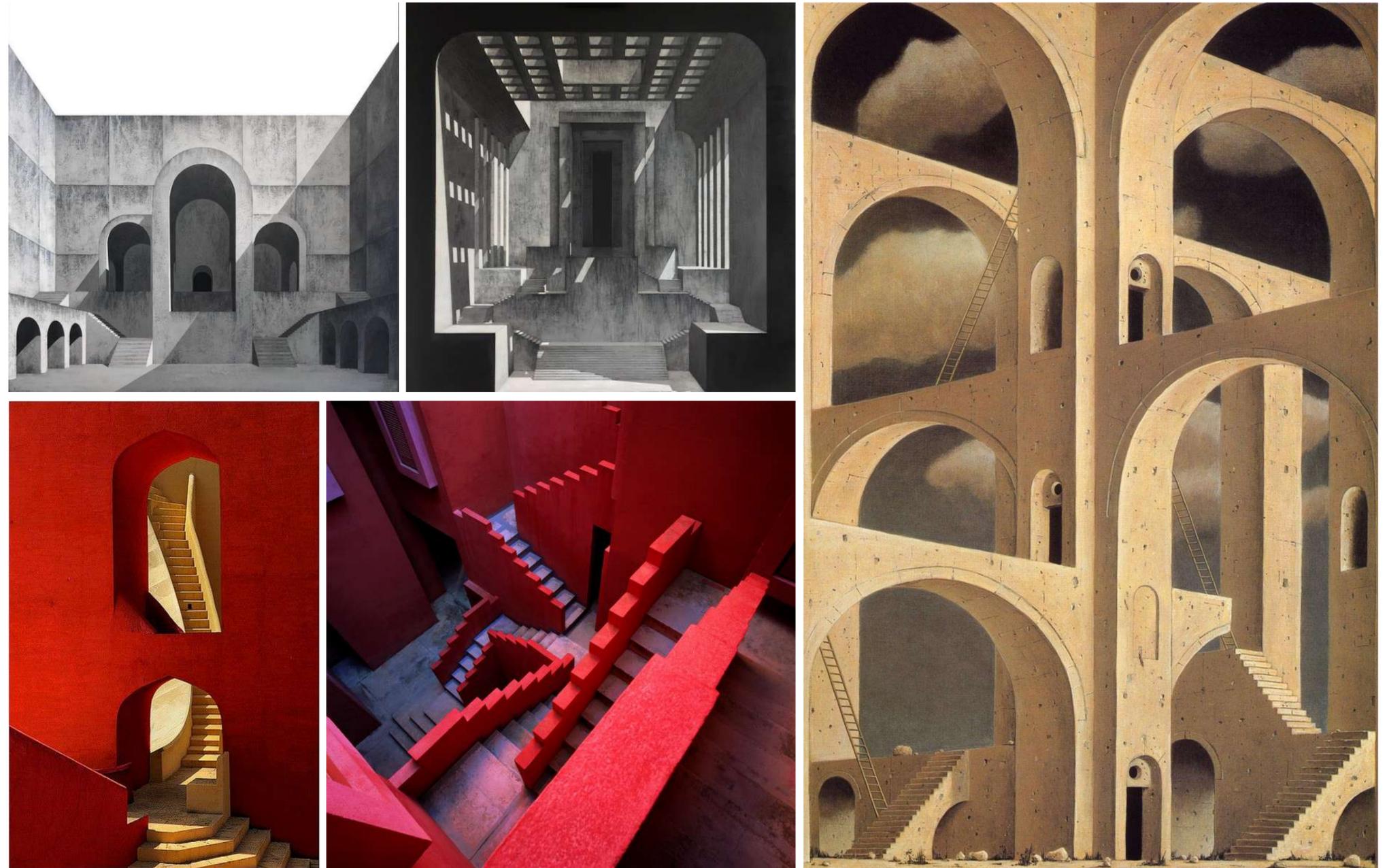
Settings

The architecture echoes a forgotten civilisation, but carries a futuristic vision, reinforced by enigmatic technological insertions. We want to place the story outside of time. The buildings refer by their excessive size to a totalitarian, whimsical and megalomaniac architecture. However, they remain very sober and minimalist in terms of materials. This choice creates a visual rhythm between the lines and curves of the architecture on the one hand and the dancing bodies in the city on the other. This also illustrates the separation between inside and outside, hot and cold, rigour and madness.

By placing our characters in these places, even if they are fantasised, we project them into a city, into a space where everything begins. Just like the bodies, this space evolves and transforms, to the rhythm of the speeches and intentions of each other, until the climax in an imaginary dancefloor.

References:

- Paintings by Minoru Nomata
- Renato Nicolodi architecture
- Joseph Svoboda scenography



Photography, lighting and colours

The story starts in a stifling atmosphere. A strange fog fills the interiors and the streets. A few glimpses of light cut out the silhouettes through the windows and buildings. This disturbance of reality announces a dark omen, right from the start of the story.

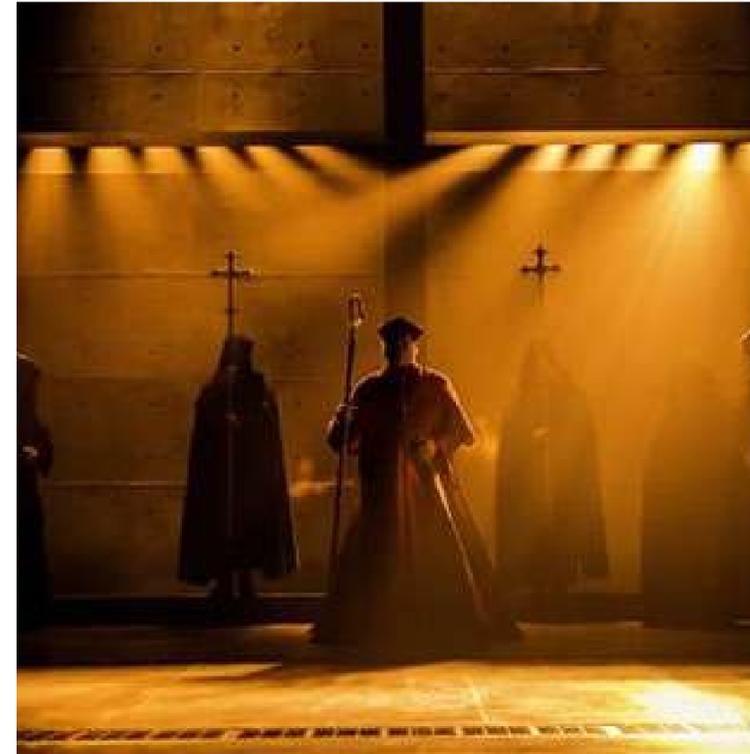
As the story progresses, the image begins to deteriorate. Like old film, eaten away by chemistry and time, an organic matter nibbles away at the scenery and the bodies. A pictorial effect with glass plates, or multiple exposures that blur the bodies. Photography becomes surreal and pictorial, it concentrates on revealing the beauty of bodies and materials.

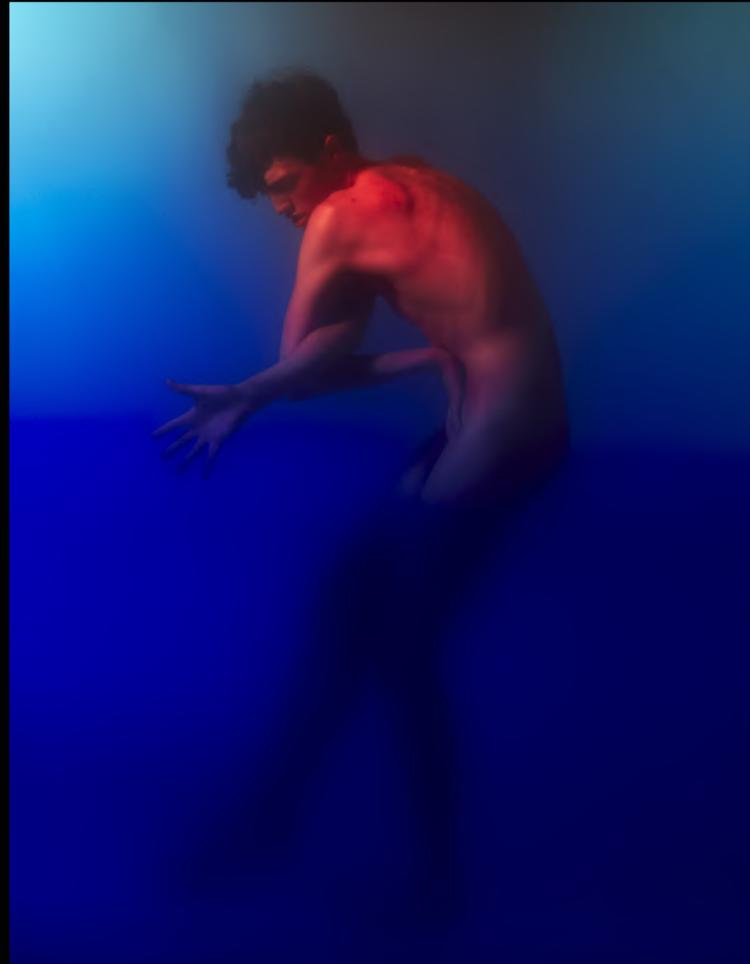
In the last part, we witness an explosion of supernatural colours, in reference to today's rave parties. The superimposition of images, bodies and light creates a chaotic effect. The tilt into madness is total, the retina of the audience is saturated with visual elements.

Claire Allante

References:

- Elizaveta Porodina
- Chiron Duong
- Tim Walker





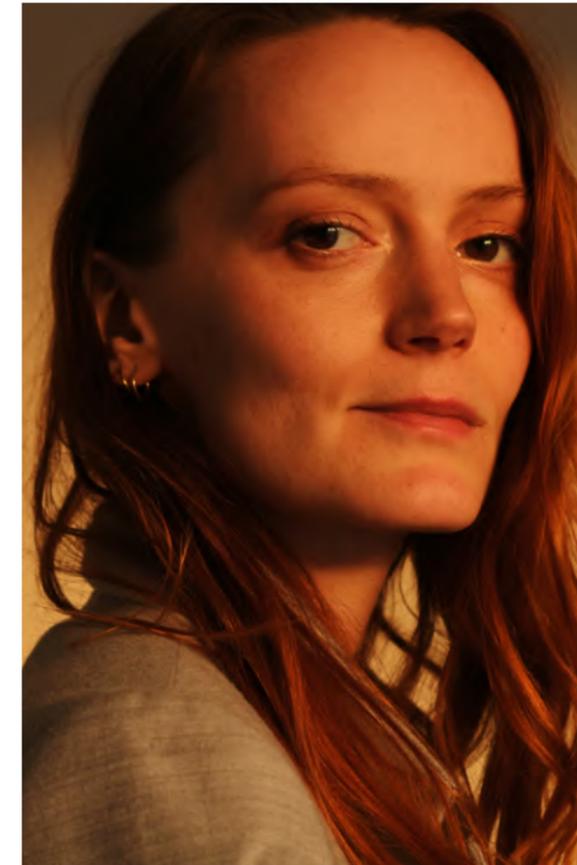
CREATIVE TEAM



Julie Desmet Weaver
Author - Director



Eugénie Andrin
Author - Choreographer



Claire Allante
Author - Artistic director

CREATIVE PROCESS

More than a ballet recording or a 360° dance film, The Dancing Plague is an immersive and interactive experience that invites the spectator to become physically involved.

The spectator is invited to dive into the heart of a narrative and to move through the immersive space amidst dancing bodies. Very quickly, he becomes a central element and plays a key role in our writing, which consists precisely in being able to mix flesh bodies, filmed bodies and virtual bodies. We will use motion capture to represent the 'carnal' of the digital body: by creating this virtual space, we offer all the characters a fantastic universe in which the real and the fantasised blend together.

The Dancing Plague is a hybrid project that draws on our complementary technological expertise and artistic desires. To accompany the artistic approach of the authors, the production and the studio wish to set up a nomadic, universal and innovative project, to be deployed with large and varied audiences.



WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

The project is supported by the CNC - Fonds Expériences Numériques, by the Région Sud, the CNC - Création Immersive and in residence with Entre-Pont Nice, 2021 and Fondation Martell 2022.

We were also present at the XRFM NewImages in 2020.

The experience is supported and distributed by Pascal Pelletier for Hubblo and allows us an easy and nomadic installation.

The Dancing Plague will be presented at La Marge - Lieusaint in partnership with the Théâtre Nationale de Sénart in May 2023.

The official launch performances will take place at Chaillot Théâtre National de la danse in June 2023.

We strongly believe in the playful yet artistic endeavour of this experience and we hope to make it travel to different countries.

We define three possibilities of co-production and diffusion:

- Co-production or pre-purchase with primary distribution
- Pre-purchase with revenue sharing
- Rental



SHOWCASING THE DANCING PLAGUE

We wish to highlight Julie Desmet Weaver's mediation and commitment to the public, through meetings and workshops.

Several operating models are possible and we can adjust the offer according to the needs of material and mediation.

Recommended admission price: 8 to 12€.

Up to 30 people per 30-minute session.



CONTACTS

**TCHIKI
BOUM**

Sarah Arnaud

19 rue Saint-Hélier
35000 Rennes
+33 (0) 6 38 93 87 10
sarah@tchiki-boum.com



Voyelle Acker

61 rue de chabrol
75010 Paris
+33 (0) 6 07 16 43 21
voyelle@small-studio.io

