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Community, Place and Environment in Ritual Performance

Specific study on the relation of Place, Environment, and Community in Persian Passion
Theatre and Artus studio's Ephemeral artworks as case studies

by considering the Environmental performance in the Calvary building and its relation with
the community of artists in Epreskert as the artists' masterpiece

Theses of DLA dissertation

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Abstract:

There are places where we relate to other people, go to work, go on vacation, share travel stories, dig in the garden, explore unfamiliar towns, find our way to new restaurants. It is through our experiences of geographical places that, in diverse and changeable ways, we are connected with the world and the world with us. (Relph, 2015:177)¹

If we want to find a philosophical term to describe our experiences of these everyday geographical places in our life, the term Phenomenology could be mentioned. In simplest terms, phenomenology as a philosophical approach refers to the study of human experiences and situations in everyday life. We can define phenomenology as the exploration and description of phenomena, where *phenomena* refer to things or experiences as human beings experience them. Anything that human beings can experience, encounter, or live through them is a phenomenon. Any object, event, situation, or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through is a legitimate topic for a phenomenological investigation.

In this paper study on the relation of the human being with its environment refers to the human experience and the relationship between the human and nature, which makes the spirit of the place.

If we search for this spirit in the Theatre environment, we might refer to the **Ritual** performative events environment which theatre gets its root from. Before the creation of the Theatre buildings, many Ritual performative events such as celebrations, religious rites, and annual festivals were held in the outdoor found environment. This open natural space is where we can feel the entity of the sky above and the land under our feet. This unoccupied space gives freedom to human feeling and perception.

¹ Edward Relph is a Canadian geographer who has written many articles and book chapters that investigate the sense of place and the ways experiences of place are being transformed.

We can see the significant role of **community members** who organize these ritual performative events throughout the theatre history. The place of these ritual events is usually where the community members have some memory of or relation to. This place could be a corner in the street or a corner in the park or a place in front of the church. **To describe this relationship between places and community members in ritual performative events**, this paper will examine two case studies as well as Zahra fuladvand's DLA masterpiece.

The social, spiritual, and cultural relation of human behavior could be defined in an **environmental** discipline. This relationship which is based on human experience in ritual practices will be examined in the social spaces in the **Persian passion play** and the intimate old factory place of **Artus studio** and **the calvary building** where the master piece happened.

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Introduction:

From my early stage of encounter with the phenomenon of theatre, I knew that the theatre which happens in conventional theatre buildings is not my space. Although I watched many beautiful theatres and performances in these kinds of theatre buildings, I always search for a non-theatrical environment for the performance.

I remember, during my bachelor's studies at the Theatre university in my home city (Shiraz), I became obsessed with reading the history of Experimental theatre in the 20th century when the movement of performing in non-theatrical spaces was started. After I received my bachelor's degree, I was struggling to move to the capital of Iran to continue my study in theatre and be able to meet experimental theatre groups. I started to collaborate with one of the first avant-garde theatre groups in Tehran. The place to rehearse and perform for the Av theatre group² was the ancient thermal bath underground space which had been transformed into a theatre space. This unconventional theatre building was the place where we performed "Iranian carpet" (2012), "Gilgamesh"(2012) and later on, "Mel Pa Meni" performance (2013)(figure 1) in the natural cave environment in the north of Tehran.

The space for my theatre practices became much more natural and open when we traveled with the theatre play we were rehearsing "The Bacchae"³ (written by Euripides)(figure 2), in a village in the north of Iran. On that trip, we experienced the freedom and openness of the space when we performed some parts of this theatre play in the pure untouched nature.

After that in 2014, I traveled to Gardzience village in Poland to participate in Gardzience theatre group's⁴ summer theatre intensive sessions. The name of this group comes from the name of the Gardzienice village. This village lies 36 kilometers away from the large city of

²AV Theatre Group established the first independent/private dramatic art house with its public theatre place in Iran. A place that was a home for new ideas and new performances. It defined a new soul and character for independent/private theatre.

³Performance of "The Bacchae", written by Euripides, directed and designed by Zahra Fuladvand, The 16th International University Theatre Festival (May 2013), and it was performed for 3 weeks in the Arasbaran cultural center (September 2013). "The Bacchae" won the best Master final project at the 16th International University Theatre Festival in Iran for directing the performance (May 2013)

⁴Gardzienice theatre group, which founded its theatre academy in the rural areas of Eastern Poland, far from human civilization and in connection with native culture.

Lublin. This experience shaped my view on how to use the non-theatrical and open natural spaces for theatre.

I arrived in Budapest in 2017 with all my experiences in my head. I was searching for a new environment where I could start my theatre practices. With the help of my supervisor, I got the possibility to work in the old factory abandoned space where the Artus Studio⁵ is located.

This old factory was my studio during my studies at the Doctoral School of the Hungarian University of Fine Art. I needed the physical space in which I could create my art pieces, like painters who need a studio to create their paintings. I started to collaborate with professional performers, dancers, and musicians in “The Gate of the Wind” production 2018 and Ephemeral works series 58, 59, 60 in Artus Studio.

In the Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I will talk about my experiences in this old factory as well as the environment, place, and space of the Artus Studio specifically the relation of the place, environment, and space with the audience in Ephemeral works as the essence of Artus productions.

Besides my experiences in Artus Studio, I started to experience the unconventional environment in Budapest in my art practices during my studies at DLA. Performing in metro line 3 in Budapest (“The Mirror”, 2019)(figure 3), performing in the street in front of my previous building (“280 Days” 2020)(figure 5), creating the video art entitled (“14 Days”, 2019)(figure 4) shot in the Hospital room, and (“3 Angles”) video performance shot in an abandoned space of the old factory, Artus studio as well as “Rootedness”(2022)(figure 6) video performance shot in the street, garden and bedroom of my house, are parts of this journey of exploration the relationship between audience in non-theatrical environments with performance. I will talk about these experiences as well as my masterpiece in **Chapter 6** of my dissertation: “The Environmental Performance "After Death”

In addition to my art practice, during my study at DLA as an artist-researcher, I always searched to find the correct method of artistic research. I gradually understood, that the usual form of

⁵ Budapest, Sztregova u. 7, 1116

secondhand construction of scientific research is not applicable to artistic research since in artistic research understanding arises directly from the researcher's personal sensibility and awareness.

During my study and research on the concept of the place, I came across the term Phenomenology and some specific phenomenological research methods which I found very close to the way of my artistic research. In the **first chapter** of this dissertation: "Phenomenology of Space", I will explain this phenomenological research method and its relation with my research keywords which are: Environmental theatre, space, place, community, ritual, a found audience

The **second chapter** of this dissertation is a brief study on the environments and different places of theatre through the history of environmental theatre. I start from the first natural environment for the primitive performative events, then go to manmade theatre buildings with the proscenium, and then again in the twentieth century, back to the non-theatrical spaces. Also in this chapter, the term of the Space/Place will be examined from human geographical point of view.

The next keyword is Ritual which I explain in **Chapter 3**: "Ritual and Community Members in Performance". This chapter is the study of the role and significance of ritual ceremonies in human life. In modern life these ritual performative events lost their function but still, we can find these ancient gestures and bring them into Performances to connect with the original ritual events which elaborate throughout history for more than 3000 years. These ritual events originally happened in natural open environments.

One example of these ritual performative events is Muharam festival and the Persian Passion theatre which have been performed for more than 3000 years in Iran. In **Chapter 4** "The relation of place, Environment, and community in Persian Passion" is discussed.

In the end and as a conclusion, the last chapter of this dissertation, brings and connects together all the research keywords of my study in the previous performances that happened in non-theatrical spaces as well as the masterpiece which is the environmental ritual performance in the Calvary building in Epreskert , at HUFA, (or Hungarian University of Fine Arts)



Figure 1. Mel Pa Meni Performing in a cave (2013)



Figure 2. "The Bacchae", rehearsal in the village north of the Iran (2013)



Figure 3. The mirror 2019



Figure 4. 14 Days 2019



Figure 5. 280 Days 2020



Figure 6. Rootedness 2022

Chapter 1

Methodology

1/1. Phenomenology of Place

During my research and artistic practice at the Doctoral School of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, I understood that artistic practice should be seen as a way of thinking and understanding not as something that needs to be explained. The way I articulate, conceptualise and theorize my practice-based artistic knowledge and the questions that arise from it, is the main methodology I use in my dissertation.

In brief, I study the relationship between place, environment and people who have experiences related to that place in the Persian Passion theatre and Ephemeral works at Artus studio, as well as the space and environment in my art practices during my study at DLA in this dissertation.

In my study, I am using the phenomenological approach for looking at the person-environment relationship and for understanding its complex structure.

Phenomenology is the exploration and description of phenomena, where phenomena refer to things or experiences as human beings experience them. Any object, event, situation, or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through is a legitimate topic for a phenomenological investigation. There can be a phenomenology of light, color, architecture, landscape, place, home, travel, seeing, relationship, friendship, and so forth. All of these things are phenomena because human beings can experience, encounter, or live through them in some way.

A central focus of phenomenology is the way people exist in relation to their world. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) argued that, in conventional philosophy and psychology, the relationship between a person and the world has been reduced to either an idealist or realist perspective.

In an idealist view, the world is a function of a person who acts on the world through consciousness and, therefore, actively knows and shapes his or her world. In contrast, a realist view sees the person as a function of the world in that, the world acts on the person and he or

she reacts. Heidegger claimed that both perspectives are out of touch with the nature of human life because they assume a separation and directional relationship between a person and the world that does not exist in the world of actual lived experience.

Instead, Heidegger argued that people do not exist apart from the world but, rather, are intimately caught up in and immersed. There is, in other words, an "undissolvable unity" between people and world (Stewart and Mickunas, 1990, p. 9). This situation--always given, never escapable--is what Heidegger called Dasein, or being-in-the-world. It is impossible to ask whether a person makes the world or the world makes a person because both exist always together and can only be correctly interpreted in terms of the holistic relationship, being-in-world.

In my hypothesis, by mentioning Heidegger's theory of being-in-the-world, I would raise up the question, which way of interaction between the environment and the human can build up a closer relationship between them? Should the environment and place of performance be the function of the act of participators in that event? Shall we consider the separation between the auditorium and the stage in a conventional theatre building as a directional fact of shaping the relationship between the audience and performance?

In Chapter 3 section 4 of this dissertation, I bring an example of the environmental performance, "Tikverőzés Folk Festival" which happens every year in Moha Village in Hungary. The street of this village is transformed into the stage for the Tikverőzés Folk Festival by the act of participators who are the community of the people who live in this village.

Besides this example, To study the phenomenon of the relationship between Place, Environment, and people who have memories, feelings, and experiences related to that place, I chose two case studies making a direct connection with them.

The first one is the Persian Passion theatre which happens every year during the Muharran festival in the social environment in Iran. The second one is Artus studio located in an old factory building in Budapest.

In both case studies, I have a direct contact and experience with the performance and its environment. I participated in both of them and conducted interviews with the director of Artus studio and the director of Persian Passion Play.

In short, I have first-hand exposure to both phenomena. By phenomena I mean my experiences and relations with what I saw, felt, touched, smelled, knew, understood, and lived through during my cooperation with Artus studio (2018- 2019) and during my observation as an audience in one of the Persian passion theatres in Iran.

In my research on the Persian Passion Play or Taaziyeh, I used to watch Taaziyeh in the street from my childhood during Moharram festival in my home country Iran. I remember once I went out shopping with my mom when I was around 8 years old. We were near Shah Cheragh⁶ in my home city Shiraz. My mom bought fruits and vegetables and I was helping her by carrying some of the bags. When we were standing on the corner of the street to take a taxi to go back home, we heard the sound of musical instruments such as Sanj⁷ and Drum. My mom told me there would be a Taaziye happening soon and that they played these musical instruments to inform the people to gather and watch the performance. I have been curious to watch this performance and the Moharram festival⁸ ever since, from that moment until now when I am 37, and that is why I chose this performance and its environment for my study.

My second case study is the Artus Studio environment and the artists who have a relation and connection with this old factory space. I participated in a few projects in Artus Studio entitled “Ephemeral works”. Ephemeral works are the essence of Artus Studio productions. Ephemeral works is a performance that is born within a single day. Each ephemeral work happens only on that single day. That is the reason why its name ephemeral.

I remember that during a discussion I had with Gabor Goda (the founder and the director of Artus Studio) about the Ephemeral sense of these performances he told me:

“I am trying not to own things because everything passes away one day. This is the concept of ephemeral in our everyday life. Nothing stays forever.”

⁶Shah Cheragh is a funerary monument and mosque in Shiraz, Iran

⁷ Senj or Sanj is a metallic percussion instrument like a cymbal. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanj>

⁸The Muharram festival is the most important Shiá mourning ceremony and commemorates the death of Imam Husayn

I observed and wrote down all my first-hand experiences during these Ephemeral projects when I was involved (April 2018 to October 2019). In addition, I used the interview tool to note down all the experiences during the Ephemeral works in a rich, and multidimensional way.

My masterpiece performance “After Death” is the best example of the relation between human experiences and environment. Where the calvary building become a stage for this ritual ceremony organizing by Iranian artists community.

Chapter 2

The Place/ Space/ Environment

What are Space, Place, and Environment, and what is the difference between these terms? This chapter brings the definition and explanation of these Place/Space terms from the human geographic point of view. This chapter also briefly explains the history of the Environment of theatre and its relation with the sense of place and place-making.

The **Place** can be described as a location created by human experience. For example, the Chain bridge on the Danube river in Budapest is one place that we might know and have some memory of, or experience related to the place while **Space** can be described as a location which has no social connection for human beings. This space could be a valley in the mountain or part of a forest that someone might pass through.

When we look through the history of human beings, it seems that the first community of humans were organizing a space so that it conformed to their biological needs and social relations. This is how the man-made space with the first houses was created by the river. These places are where human beings feel security and stability while being aware of the freedom and openness they carry within. The Man-made space can refine human feelings and perception. People are able to sense the differences between public/private, interior/exterior, closed/open, and dark/light in the built environment.

Yi-Fu Taun⁹ gives a contribution to the definition of Space and Place and the difference between them. Taun was convinced that people give or derive meaning from the world's geography (Space) and organize the world around themselves (Place)

To talk about the characteristics of the environment of theatre either in an open natural space or the auditoriums, the terms "Sense of place", "Place making" and "Found Environment" should be discussed.

⁹Yi-Fu Taunis a Chinese geographer who published the book "Space and Place" (1977)

2/1. Found Environment and Environmental Theatre

The origins of theatre go back far into the past to the religious rites of the earliest communities where the performative events happened in the outdoor found environment. And then it reached its dramatic forms in ancient Greek tragedy. This outdoor natural environment was the first Site for Theatre.

Despite the natural open space for theatre, gradually theatre environment was shaped and built up by human experiences. These changes reached its peak in the Italian Renaissance when a new theatre building with its proscenium arch and painted scenery was developed. This was when the architectural building emerged with its rigid separation between the stage and the auditorium, and when the proscenium arch was created. These places for theatre became popular throughout theatre history but in the twentieth century, non-theatrical spaces were used more by modern experimental theatre groups against proscenium staging.

“Found space which is frequently used as a setting for environmental performance, is any given space, used in its existing state for performance, most often space not originally intended for performance. Unlike most conventional theatres with a clear separation of the stage and the auditorium, a found environment has no preordained spectator space.” (Aronson, 2018, 9)

As Schechner described in 6 Axioms:

“The environment for theatre could be divided in two different ways. In the first case, the performance can create an environment by transforming a space while in the second case, there is given space and it could be negotiating between performance and environment. The found environment is called a negotiated environment by Schechner. This type of environment does not need to be designed and transformed for the spectators. The found environment is more fluid and leads sometimes to the performance being controlled by spectators.” (Schechner, 1968)

After many years, in the late 19th century, the centralized proscenium arch theatre buildings, began to change in the European theatre. These changes happened both in terms of architecture

and content. As Slovenian poet, playwright, translator, and the director of the National Theatre Museum of Slovenia, Ivo Svetina has noted:

“The year 1890 was undoubtedly a milestone with regard to a new understanding of the theatre, seeing it not just as a box in which performances are held evening after evening, but also as a space that has to be subordinated to the form and content of the performed theatre piece.” (Svetina 2010, 10)

The Environmental theatre had its roots in the European medieval theatre. In the early medieval time, the liturgical or church drama of western Europe was born based on the birth, life and resurrection of Christ. Medieval liturgical drama developed from the Christian liturgy, particularly from the Easter celebration somehow similar to the Persian Passion theatre development from the mourning ritual ceremony. The place for Medieval Liturgical performance at the beginning was inside a church or cathedral, and then it was gradually moved outside the church.

“The twelfth-century Anglo-Norman play Adam, one of the earliest to include speeches in the vernacular, was certainly set out of doors, with the church doors forming a background through which God and chief actors came and went while devils ran about in front of the raised platform.” (Hartnoll, 1978:40)

When we look through history we can see that Theatre had different spaces for itself. From the first natural environment for the primitive performative events, it reached manmade theatre buildings with the proscenium and then again in the twentieth century went back to the non-theatrical spaces.

During the postwar period, three art forms emerged which had a direct bearing on environmental theatre. These were environments, action painting, and happenings, the last of which like Futurist and Dadaist, combined art and performance.

In the 1950s, the artist and lecturer Allan Kaprow¹⁰ coined the term “happening” to describe many performances and events. In his point of view, happenings emphasized the organic connection between art and its environment.

¹⁰Allen Kaprow was an American painter and a pioneer in establishing the concepts of performance art.

The environment is the essential element of art happening. Non-concrete or ephemeral mode of production is significant, and audience participation and connection between art and everyday life are significant. In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, the elements in Happening performance are compared with Ephemeral performances in Artus studio.

2/2 Sense of Place

“Places are not so much the direct objects of sight or thought or recollection as Places are what we feel with and around, under and above, before and behind our lived bodies.”¹¹

Sense of Place is a faculty in which the particular attributes of landscapes are inserted. It connects us with the world and the world with us. Sense of Place allows us to find our way from the bedroom to the living room and back again. It makes it possible for us to distinguish different streets, cities, and regions. At its most considerable level sense of place is a type of intelligence and imagination that informs and is informed by our experiences and understanding of the world.

It is interesting to know that, there are cells in the human brain for distinguishing places from their surroundings. These cells are located in the hippocampus and they can store memories of places. “Place cells” were discovered by John O’Keefe in 1971.

John Zeisel, a neuroscientist who works with Alzheimer’s patients in New York mentions:

“To remember something you need to know where it happened as well as when it happened. ‘Place’ is essential to memory; without a memory of place, people lose their sense of self.”¹²

¹¹Edward Casey, 1993, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 313

¹²John Zeisel, 2006, 'A Sense of Place,' *New Scientist*, 4 March 2006, 50-51.

Each place we experience has a corresponding cluster of place cells in our brains. With repeating experiences of each place, the conjunction of these grows in strength.

It appears that the impressions of places registered in the neurons include the whole scene shapes, colors, walls, directions, smells, sounds, and arrangements of the parts because associated cells respond even when aspects of a particular place are changed. In short, the neural processes that connect us with places are comprehensive, flexible, and adaptable.¹³

We transfer our memories and values between places, at each stage adapting and rediscovering them even as we turn to them to find continuity in our lives.

2/3 Placemaking / Branding

“We are surrounded by places,” Edward Casey writes at the beginning of his book *The Fate of Place*. “We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, and die in them.”

With growing mobility, multi-centeredness, and forced displacement, it is perhaps not surprising that over recent decades increasing attention has been given to possible ways of reconnecting with places. This is most apparent in the emergence of ideas and practices of placemaking.

Placemaking, they argue, is as much about creating relationships between people in places as about the relationships of people to places.¹⁴

The term placemaking is usually reserved for community-based activities. Place branding, in contrast, is a corporate marketing strategy applied to cities, regions, and institutions such as universities in an attempt to capture, advertise and promote their identities.

¹³Dylan Trigg, 2012, *The Memory of Place: a Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press)

¹⁴Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley, 1995 *Placemaking: the art and practice of building communities* (New York: Wiley), 1-2.

By describing these two terms of sense of the place and Placemaking, this paper raises up these questions:

Do people have the sense of the place with the Theatre buildings in this modern life? To put it differently, does the place of theatre buildings connect the people with the world and the world with them? Is there any connection between human experiences and the space of theatre?

Shall we consider the modern theatre building the place branding which applies the marketing strategy to the theatre environment for audiences or we can consider the placemaking term for theatre environment where the community-based activity creates the space as a connection between each other.

If we go back through the theatre history In Open-air theatres like historical pageant productions and Greek theatres, we could observe that spectators had the experience of the surrounding natural features where the sky, trees or even buildings in the street were part of the setting and were sometimes used as a background for the stage. These pre-existing surroundings of the human social sites, like cities, villages, squares, etc. may be described as a found environment.

Pre-existing surroundings could be a good example of placemaking environment for theatre. These pre-existing sites could create a relationship between people in places rather than create a relationship between places in conventional theatre buildings.

In order to answer these questions, this paper will study the community-based activities and ritual performing events and bring two case studies in the following 3 Chapters.

In the following chapters, I explain the human geographical approaches and discuss the aspect of found environment in 2 case studies of this research. Before that, in the next chapter, I will talk about the Ritual and the role of the community members in creating the intimate place for performance.

Chapter 3.

Ritual and Community Members in Performance

3/1 Ritual

“Before, all arts wanted to be something real and needed, and have something to do in people's lives-to be something that people need, in their personal lives and in their communal lives. They used to serve funerals, they used to serve weddings, they used to serve childbirths, and they used to serve a lot of functions. Now all of these functions are taken care of by society in a very commercial and controllable way, so the arts have come to fulfil a sort of elitist function.” (Peter Schuman)

What is Ritual and what is the relation of Ritual with contemporary performance in modern times?. Do we still need a Ritual in our modern life?

It is obvious that nowadays, by growing the industrial and modern way of living, the ritual ceremonies are losing their original function in human life. Furthermore, the natural environment for these ritual performing events is gradually transformed into the modern Theatre buildings.

But, before the creation of the Theatre buildings, many Ritual performative events such as celebrations, religious rites and annual festivals were held in the outdoor found environment. This open natural space is where we can feel the entity of the sky above and the land under our feet. This unoccupied space gives freedom to human feeling and perception. This is the place where the relationship between human experiences and the environment was shaped in different societies during the ritual performative events.

Prior to further discussion of of some more facts about the characteristics of these natural environments and the role of community members in giving meaning to these places, let us first raise the question: what is Ritual? Ritual returns us to the center of who we are. In times of transition, loss, disconnection, and loneliness, ritual offers transformative power. It can

provide a language for expression, and stability, it can serve as an integrating force in the community, mediate tradition, and offer emotional support. Ritual formed an important aspect of social structure, a means by which people found a place in society.

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or objects, performed in a sequestered place and according to a set sequence. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community.

Rituals are a feature of all known human societies. They include not only the worship rites of organized religions and cults, but also rites of passage, and purification rites, dedication ceremonies, coronation, marriages, funerals, and more. Even common actions like hand-shaking and saying "hello" may be termed *rituals*.

Christopher Small brings different aspects of Ritual in the "Musicking: A Ritual in Social Space" by arising the term "Ritual: the Language of gesture"

"Verbal communication as it has developed, uniquely among human beings, has equipped us to deal with entities that are absent as well as those that are present, and with abstractions and with past and future events. Unlike the language of biological communication, the language of gesture, can deal with matters only one at a time. One thing at a time is just too slow to deal with the many layered nature of our relationship."
(Small:1999)

The language of gesture continues to perform functions in human life that words cannot. Those functions lie specifically in the exploration and the articulation of relationships, and in this function, they are no less precise than the words.

The communicative gesture is free from the immediate and possibly life and death situation. This gesture language makes a way of exploring and articulating relationship, not only among human beings but also between humans and the wider pattern of the cosmos. The ancient gesture has been elaborated over the million-year history of the human race into those complex pattern of gesture we call ritual.

3/2 Community

These Ritual events are not only about these ancient gestures but what is significant is how the participators become a part of this event and how they give meaning to the place of these ritual events. Christopher Small believes that:

“to take part in ritual is to explore, to affirm and to celebrate the participants concept of the relationship of their world, or part of it, whether that part be physical, social, political, religious, or any of these in combination. It takes place in the language not of words but of gesture.”

Since all members of a society have in common with one another a number of social experiences and assumptions about relationships. That is what makes them a society. Without these Social experiences in the language of gestures elaborated into performative ceremonies in human life such as wedding or funeral ceremony, the Ritual would have lost its function.

In this paper, I am searching to find the relationship between the audience and the sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and actions in ritual performative events. The paper also considers the relationship between the audience and the place of these ritual activities. To be more precise, in this chapter I will bring two examples regarding this matter. The first example is one of my artworks entitled: “Darkness before Birth and after Death” inspired by the Iranian funeral ceremony. The second example is Tikverőzés Folk Festival in Moha Village in Budapest.

The Iranian Funeral ceremony is all about the relationship between the person who is dead and the people who know him or her. This ceremony happens in the natural space of a cemetery where you can feel the sky above and the earth under your feet. The ceremony starts the moment they put the corpse behind which everyone starts praying. After that, the close family members carry the corpse in their hands while the rest of the people follow them until they reach the grave. On the way to the grave, they put the corpse on the ground 3 times. When they put the body in the grave they unveil the face - this is the moment when the people can say goodbye to her or him after which soil is put on the body.

"Darkness before Birth and after Death" was performed in an old factory space of Artus studio as the idea of performing it in Kerepesi cemetery in Budapest did not work due to existing restrictions regarding the rules and policy about the cemetery space. This performance represents and articulates the gestures and movements of the Iranian funeral ceremony.

3/3 Me, Ritual, Death

I believe that some of these ancient gestures in the funeral ceremony still exist through Ritual performative events in different societies and cultures. "Darkness before Birth and after Death" is the title of the performance which was performed in Artus studio in May 2019 as part of "UNSEEN...UNHEARD...UNSPOKEN" Exhibition.

In this performance I used some traditional ancient gestures taken from the Iranian funeral ceremony in a dramatic way.

Besides the performance, the concept of "Ritual: The language of Gesture" was reflected in my recent art project exhibited in the Harom Het Gallery in September 2020. This post-documentary photo and video project is the result of the "Darkness before Birth and after Death" performance.

This performance, has been born from the simple image of Iranian Funeral ceremony. From that image, the others appear and find their connections. These Images had been photographed as Series of post documentary photos by Dr.Csanadi Gabor on November 2019. Besides that, there is a documentary video of the process of photography of the performance shot by Manuel F Conteras on the same day.

The narrative of this series of photos of performance which shows the ritual connection between this piece and the artist's personal life is written below:

Me

What is known for sure about death is that we don't know when and how we will die, but we are sure one day we will all die. I remember that snowy night when my sister passed away. It wasn't easy to say goodbye to her. I could feel the presence of death and the emptiness of space. I could hear the sound of a baby crying, and the wind blowing.

Where is she now? Can she still hear me? I need to talk to her before she disappears forever. I observed the process of washing and cleaning her body. I went inside the room in Cemetery where they wash corpses. In Iranian culture, only close family members can enter this room to observe the ceremony preparation. They combed her hair and cut her nails very slowly. It was the moment of saying goodbye to her.

Ritual

The funeral ceremony in the Iranian culture starts when people carry the corpse (covered by a shroud) in their hands and put the body in the grave. They all stand around the grave and say some prayers and throw soil in and put their hands on the grave. The ritual ceremony creates a relationship between human beings and the phenomenon of death. How do we relate to each other? How do we relate to a dead person? How do we relate to death? There are some similar patterns in different cultures that belong to ancient gestures. These gestures were elaborated throughout the history of the human race into these complex patterns of gestures we call rituals. In this performance, some of these Iranian funeral ceremony rituals were presented while it is obvious that in modern life, we have lost our connections and relations with these rituals.

Death

Death is a mirror in which the entire meaning of life is reflected.

Our existence is reflected in it.

In this performance, the movement of performers who hold the mirror and candles could represent the movement of Death coming to us. A mirror can show us the fact that without death, life doesn't have any meaning. The candles are the symbols of our life, which burn and light but will go out. The new door will open up to us and we should go through it like a newborn baby coming to this world through the darkness.



What is known for sure about death is, that we don't know when and how we will die. But we are sure one day we all will die. I remember that snowy night when my sister passed away. It wasn't easy to say goodbye to her. I could feel the presence of death and the emptiness of space. I could hear the sound of a baby crying, and the wind was blowing.

Where is she now? Can she still hear me? I need to talk to her before she disappears forever. I observed the process of washing and cleaning her body. I went inside the room in Cemetery, where they wash the crops. In Iranian culture, only close family members can enter this room to observe the ceremony's preparation. They comb her hair and cut her nails very slowly. It was the moment of saying goodbye to her.

me





ritual

The funeral ceremony in the Iranian culture will start when people carry the corpse (covered by shroud) on their hands and put the body in the grave. They all stand around the grave and say some prayers and pour soil in and put hands on the grave. Ritual ceremony creates a relationship between human beings and the phenomenon of death. How we relate to each other? How we relate to a dead person? How we relate to death? There are some similar patterns in different cultures that belong to ancient's gestures. These gestures elaborated over the history of the human race into those complex patterns of gestures we call rituals. In this performance some of these rituals in the Iranian funeral ceremony represented while it is obvious that in modern life, we lost our connections and relations with these rituals.



death

Death is a mirror in which the entire meaning of life is reflecting.

Our existence is reflected on it.

In this performance the movement of performers who hold the mirror and candles, could represent as the movement of Death comes to us. A mirror, can show us the fact that without death, life doesn't have any meaning. The candles are the symbols of our life, which are shining and lighting but will be ended.

The new door will be open up to us and we should go through it like a new born baby coming to this world through the darkness.



3/4 Found Audience and the Tikverőzés Folk Festival in Moha Village

We were near the village of Moha (a village near Budapest) in Hungary. This was the first time I was going to visit this village, and I was especially excited to see the ritual of Tikverőzés. It seems that this ceremony is held in this village every February and groups of people and children come from other areas to Moha village to participate in this ceremony. When we arrived in the village, we were greeted with homemade donuts and the famous Hungarian drink called Palinka prepared by the local villagers.

We walked with the crowd and on the way we saw the performers wearing costumes and masks while the crowd was moving behind them. The people entered the courtyard with the showmen speaking to each other and were greeted with donuts and palinka. The children also ran after the clowns with black faces, trying to blacken the children's faces with the soot in their pockets, which made children happy and entertained.

This ceremony seems to be more than a hundred years old and is held every year on a Tuesday (40 days before the Easter) in this village. One of the villagers involved in this ceremony, explained to us about this festival and ritual ceremony:

The name of the festival is Tikverőzés and the rituals that take place in this village at the end of the winter. It is a way of saying goodbye to winter and saying hello to spring and fertility and breeding in this village. Some of the main characters of the show walk from house to house in special costumes and masks, and people follow them. They enter the courtyard and are greeted by the host with donuts and palinka (the famous Hungarian alcoholic beverage). They walk toward the chicken coop in the courtyard and pat the chickens on the back to increase their fertility, and they take eggs from the host. The two girl characters, who are actually men dressed as women, carry a basket basketing which they place the eggs. These characters lead the line followed by the man dressed in straw suits, the clowns, and the people. Clowns with masks on their faces run after people, especially children, and blacken their faces with the soot they have in their pockets. All people's faces get blackened by the clowns in this ceremony.

Attending rituals can mean discovering concepts that relate to our relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the universe. This type of physical, social, religious, and political relationships in a system of theatrical gestures consisting of theatrical actions / colors / masks

/ theatrical exchanges / and methods that are contrary to the whole world language systems
And they are understood by all nationalities.

It was interesting to see how the community members of Moha village participate in this festival. They cook donuts, design their gardens, prepare costumes and welcome the visitors. The stage for this event is the garden of one of the villagers and in addition to being the performers with masks and costumes, the villagers are also the hosts and organizers of the event, and they gather and have palinka and donuts together..

In the chapters that follow, we can discover the relationship between the Persian Passion theatre in Iran and Ephemeral works at Artus Studio in Budapest through their Ritual aspects.





Chapter 4.

The relation of Place, Environment, and Community in the Persian Passion theatre

4/1. The historical background and the origins of the Persian Passion theatre

In order to get to know the Persian passion theatre, we first have to find out something about the origin of theatre in Iran. If we say that theatre comes from religious ceremonies and traditions, then we have to look back at religions in Iran. Iran had monotheistic (single-deity) religions unlike multi-deity religions in India and Greece. The single-deity religions in Iran like Zoroastrian and Islam have less dramatic aspects than multi-deity religions. Religious myths in multi-deity religions create stories between God and humans or between God and another God. But in single-deity Iranian religions, creating a story with the face and physical appearance of God and saints, or stories describing their behavior, is forbidden. Still, Persian mythology with traditional tales and stories of ancient origins did exist.

Before Islam, ritual ceremonies originate from some famous mythologies and rites such as Sug-e-Siavush¹⁵ based on the story from Shahnameh of Ferdowsi¹⁶. Siavush¹⁷ is a major figure in Ferdowsi's epic, The Shahname. There is a document that people made a ritual ceremony because of Siavush death and it could be the first Taazieh in Iran 3000 years ago. (Beyzai, 1965)



Figure 1. Painting of the archaeological image Mourning for Siavus, the original image Archeology in the U.S.S.R book by A.Mongait

¹⁵Mourning of Siavush

¹⁶Ferdowsi was a Persian poet and the author of Shahnameh (book of kings) which is the world's longest epic poem created by a single poet.

¹⁷Siavush was a legendary Iranian prince from the earliest days of the Iranian Empire. Siavush is the symbol of the innocent who had been killed by Afrasiab.

A study on Iranian Theatre, written by Bahram Beyzai¹⁸, is a valuable Iranian book about the origin and history of the Persian passion theatre, which has not been translated into English yet. This paper brings some facts from this book.

Islam was brought to Iran via Arab-Islamic conquest in 650 AD. However, the achievements of the previous Persian civilizations were not lost, but were to a great extent absorbed by the new Islamic polity. Islam has been the official religion of Iran ever since. There are two main branches in Islam: Sunni and Shia. A split occurred shortly after the death of Muhammad over the question of who to lead the Muslims. After Islam coming to Iran, the religious myth was created from the stories of the Battle of Karbala, which was the foundation for the Persian passion theatre and the mourning group movement or Muharram festival for Shia.

4/2: Mourning Ritual and Community in Muharram Festival

Taaziye usually performs during Muharram festival, which begins on the first day of the Muslim month of Muharram and ends on the tenth day, called Ashura. Muharram festival, which was started after 650 AD, was improved and found new forms over time, and we can still find some types of it nowadays in Iran. There are some dramatic aspects that can be observed in these Mourning groups rituals such as: the group, harmonized, soft movements and specific rhythms; a type of group singing, called Nohe in Persian, singing sadly about the injustice and cruelty suffered by the grandson of Mohammad; use of musical instruments like Senj and Dram as well as designed elements as the symbol of the story of the Battle of Karbala. We can observe the rhythmic ritualized acts in this festival such as: Sineh-zani, the rhythmic beating of the chest and Zanjir-zani involves striking the bare back with chains that may be bared.

This festival is more visible in the urban areas where the society has more significant roles to build up these events. As Mohammad B.Ghaffari in his interview with Peter J. Chelkowski observes:

¹⁸Bahram Beyzai is an Iranian critically and popularly acclaimed filmmaker, playwright, theatre director, screen writer, film editor and master of Persian history and Islamic studies.

“Then I wanted to show Peter Brook, a large taaziyeh, one that lasted for 10 to 12 hours. These are cooperative events of several villages and consist of various rituals such as procession and the taaziyeh. Contingents of mourners from several villages carrying Muharram banners called Alams converge on the village where the Taaziyeh will be performed. Special food is prepared for this occasion and everyone takes of it. I remember when I was a child that we used to go to this same village in a carriage during the first 10 days of Muharram and there were 2,000 to 3,000 people there. When I was six or seven, I remember vividly a performer playing a lion scared the horses and there was pandemonium. The performance had to be stopped because the horses galloped around the stage and then ran away.” (Ghaffari)

4/3 Taaziyeh

Persian passion theatre, called Taaziyeh¹⁹, is a type of performance that happens in the found environment and usually observed by the found audience. Taaziyeh is an indigenous form of Persian music theatre adopted from the religious ceremonies commemorating the suffering and tragic death of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad. Taaziyeh is performed once a year. This traditional theatre tells the story of the battle of Karbala, in which Muhammad’s grandson Hussein and his followers were killed in A.D. 680. at Karbala, Iraq. For the Shi'a, Hussein's suffering and death became a symbol of sacrifice in the struggle between the right and wrong, justice and truth and injustice.

Taaziyeh dramas are popular performances, and they are usually staged and watched in public places. As a cultural historian and performing artist, Peter J. Chelkowski observes “Taaziyeh is a complex subject involving many disciplines, such as religion, history, literature, anthropology, psychology, sociology, music, and the fine arts, as well as drama and theatre” (Chelkowski 1979, 255)

There are too many research methods on Persian Passion Theatre from different points of view such as: mythology, religion, semiology, music, roots and history, dramaturgy, stage and set design, costume and props, etc. while this paper mentions briefly all these aspects, it will focus

¹⁹Taaziyeh means comfort, condolence or expression of grief. It comes from the root Aza, which means mourning.

mostly on the cultural and social relationship between the environment and audience of traditional and ritual Persian theatre.

Participants and spectators do not view Taaziyeh as theatre, but rather as part of ritual mourning. Nevertheless, Taaziyeh has many theatrical conventions. The players do not memorize their roles, rather, they read them from strips of paper held in their hands called Tumar. The 'good' characters, on the side of Imam Hussein, chant their lines in classical Persian musical modes and wear the colour green. The 'bad' characters declaim their lines in stentorian tones and wear the colour red. Women's roles are taken by men who wear black and veil their faces. The performances offer a number of roles for children, played by young boys. The red colour symbolises death.

The text for each Taaziyeh performance, has been created and completed among the people during the course of time based on the oral stories of what happened in Karbala A.D.680. The author of the texts of Taaziyeh is unknown and if someone is named, it is the editor. The performers are just a narrator who narrates the texts which they have not even memorized.

The performers of Taziyeh are chosen by people to take the role of specific characters. Usually, the role of each character is passed on by each generation of fathers to the next generation of their sons.

The performance usually takes place in open locations with many people who are face to face with the performers. The way the audience sit or stand shapes the set and their mourning, tears and emotional reactions are considered a part of Taziyeh.

The design and setting in Taaziyeh utilize a special technique. This unique technique may not be accepted by western theatres or theatre designers, but Taaziyeh spectators accept the convention easily. They know the story and they use the symbolic elements in Taaziyeh to imagine the whole story in their mind.

Taaziyeh spectators are not surprised when they see two actors holding a door to show the door of Imam's house, or when they see a chair in two separate scenes representing a throne in the court of Yazid²⁰, or when a bowl of water represents a river. Props, except the real ones such as swords, are all symbolic in this play.

²⁰Yazid was the second caliph of the Umayyad caliphate. His caliphate was marked by the death of Husayn ibn Ali

To name a few more symbolic theatrical rules, the performers turn around the platforms once or twice to show the distance between two locations and passing of the time, and in order to determine the places as different cities in the performance, they announce the name of the location after turning around the platform. The musical intervals also show the passage of time.

The only conventional building built for Taaziyeh was Takiyeh Dowlat in Tehran in the Royal compound. Takiyeh Dowlat was built by the order of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar in 1870. This building was inspired by Europe's opera houses, but it was destroyed in 1947. As Chelkowski observed, eventually, Takiyeh Dowlat's walls, canvas ceiling and circular stage were copied in Takiyehs all over the country. After this building had been destroyed, social spaces for Takiyehs were built by society members, and these are the spaces for Taaziyeh and Muharram festival.

4/4 The Environment and Place in Persian Passion theatre

Like Western passion plays, Taaziyeh dramas were originally performed outdoors, at crossroads and other public places where large audiences could gather. Performances later took place in the courtyards of inns and private homes, but eventually unique structures called Takiyeh or Husseinyeh were constructed by individual towns for the staging of the plays (Chelkowski 2005, 17).

In Taaziyeh, the main characters who articulate and transform the space into the stage for Taaziyeh are ordinary citizens of that district. Citizens of a particular town or village give contributions and work together to build and decorate the space for Takiyeh. These temporary places are built in each town district with the support of locals during the Muharram festival. People cooperate both socially and culturally, and women even prepare food and refreshments and serve them to the spectators.

Briefly, we can say that Taaziyeh performs in a found environment that could be a spontaneously made circle in the street or a street corner, and all these places exist and have their own identities before they are used as stages. The audience area in Taaziyeh is a small or huge circle around the performers. There is no predesigned set up for this theatre, and the found audience are the people passing by who create a circle around it. As Shechner stated in six

Axioms, the negotiated environment is a more fluid situation that makes dialogue and shifting dynamic among performers and spectators, which we can observe in Tazziyeh as well.

The use of open-air theatre changes the system of illusion and technique on the stage. In Taaziyeh, there is no technological setting and even no light setting. Usually, the natural, outside light is used, and the performers use minimal, symbolic costumes and props to represent the characters and what they do.

Taaziyeh for the Iranian audience is part of ritual mourning where its audience stands in a circle exchanging dynamic energy with the performance. Although they all know the end of the story, the non-illusionistic convention of Taaziyeh ends with a moment of sadness that causes the audience to sob.

Nowadays, we can still see this Ritual Environmental Theatre in social spaces in many cities in Iran. In contrast to the richness of Takiyeh's decorations, Taaziyeh stage design is rather minimalistic and symbolic. All Takiyehs, regardless of their size, are constructed as theatres in a round shape to intensify the dynamics between the actors and the audiences. "The spectators are literally surrounded by the action and often become physical participants in the play, in unwallled Takiyeh. It is not usual for combat scenes to occur behind the audience." (Chelkowski 2005:17)

Peter Brook, who got inspired by Taaziyeh, mentioned:

Taaziyeh is one of the strongest things I have ever seen. A group of 400 villagers, the entire population of the place, sitting under the tree and passing from roars of laughter to outright sobbing—although they knew perfectly well the end of the story—as they saw Hussein in danger of being killed, and then fooling his enemies, and then being martyred. And when he was martyred, the theatre form became truth. (Chelkowski.1979-255)



Ta'zieh ritual in Iran – A UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage



Ta'zieh ritual in Iran – A UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage



Ta'zieh ritual in Iran – A UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage



Ta'zieh ritual in Iran – A UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

Chapter 5.

The Relation of Place, Environment and Community in Artus studio's Ephemeral works

5/1 Ephemeral works

It was a beautiful sunny autumn morning, I had an appointment with Gabor Goda (the founder and director of the Artus Theatre Studio) to talk to him about Ephemeral works. Walking in this old factory where the Artus studio is located is always full of positive energy. I passed through the main gate and walked towards the building, and approaching it slowly I was thinking about the summer 2018 when we had everyday intensive sessions in this place to be prepared for the "Gate of the Wind" production.

Now, after almost 4 years, I can think and write about all those days and experiences I gained, especially the Ephemeral works which is the essence of Artus studio.

Ephemeral Works is a performance born within a single day. The performing artists of Artus create a unique, unrepeatable one-off performance-event during a single day of intensive rehearsal, centered around a specific theme for the night. Anything happening in the course of each event will never be seen in that very form ever again. The most fitting term to describe this genre could be a "contemporary variety play" or "performance-pub series."

This is what is written about the Ephemeral works on the Artus studio website²¹ but I wanted to know more about it, especially the history, the background and space of it. How was the first Ephemeral works performance born? Was it an unexpected child of Artus studio or they were aware of having it? Why is it the essence of Artus studio productions? Many thoughts swirled in my mind until I met Gabor Goda. He invited me to go to his room and start our conversation there. We went behind the exhibition hall and I was surprised to see this secret room in the old factory building which I hadn't seen before.

²¹<https://en.artus.hu/keresz-muvek/>

Answering the first question about the name and the story about how it was chosen, Gabor Goda mentioned that the first title for these kind of performance was ‘pub series’ and later on ‘Ephemeral works’ or in Hungarian ‘Kérészt Muek’ (Mayfly) was chosen. The length of Mayfly life is only one single day, the same as Ephemeral works which are born and die in one single day.

The first Kérészt Muek was created in September 2010, almost 10 years after the Artus studio had been settled in the abandon space of this old factory. On that day, during the Hungarian ‘Theatre Night’ there was an open evening for public to visit the theatre buildings.

Gabor added: Artus Studio was also involved in this event but we realized that a bit late and we did not have enough time to prepare properly. We had just a few days to prepare. We were in the middle of preparation and rehearsing for our new performance, where we got some ideas and actions for this Theatre Night event. Our evening was very flexible and open where people could watch some parts of the performance that was going on mostly on the floor, among them. So the audience was watching the performance while listening random music and having their drinks – a pub-like atmosphere.

He also said: It was a great evening, everybody enjoyed and stayed until late at night. After a few months we decided to repeat this experience since it was a successful evening. I do not remember exactly when we chose the name “Ephemeral works” for it but this one-day performance was born very naturally and has been growing until now when it has reached its 68th edition in September 2020.

Furthermore, he said, that in the beginning there was no central theme or topic for the Kérészt Muek and later on (5 years ago) the first performance was created based on the central concept. Gradually, more fine artists and musicians were invited to participate in this event. After a few years they decided to meet a week earlier to talk about the main concept and have time to think about their ideas.

I remember the whole process of creation in one single day during my participation in Ephemeral works 52, All the artists (performers, dancers, musicians, fine artists from different artistic disciplines) who were participating in this event had the freedom to create the poetic

moments which they call “Haiku”. During this process, each of the participators is both a creator and director of their own art piece while Gabor Goda is the director of the evening.

I asked Gabor about the background and the function of the term “Haiku” in Ephemeral works. He explained:

This name came from another theatre director Andras Jalas. He used real poems or words from theatrical books like Shakespeare playwrights to create haikus from which then he created a theatrical theme. For me, Japanese Haiku is more important because it has 3 lines: Basic situation, something happens, change. For example - “A tree, the wind is coming, the fruit is on the ground”. This poem is very abstract and minimalistic. There is a very simple and strong philosophical concept in a few words. These few random words chosen to be the haiku are the essence of the philosophical thought and discussion around the main topic of the evening. These random words are based on the idea of Fractal (Fractals often exhibit similar patterns at increasingly smaller scales) If you have a bigger dimension of something and put it into millions of little parts, the meaning of the big part exists in all these little parts. If you see the shape of a snowflake and zoom it, you see the same shape in all the part of the snow.

As I observed, during the process of creation, by collecting random words from conversations, each participator creates his or her haiku in different mediums which could be a short action, music, dance, or video illustration or any other artistic form. What was interesting for me, in the end, I could feel this hidden dramaturgy which comes from Japanese Haikus and remains the main concept of our discussion in all art pieces.

On October 6, 2018, I was sitting in the discussion circle to choose the words to create my own haiku. It was my third time in the circle. The first time was during Ephemeral works 50 and this time it was Ephemeral works 52. But each time I had a significant question in my mind to ask Gabor:

Why Ephemeral works is the essence of Atrtus studio productions?

Gabor replied: “Live art is ephemeral. It only exists when it was being done. Like a meeting, like a talk, it exists as long as we meet and after that it is gone. Theatre as alive, art is ephemeral because of the quality of the relationship between the people

who participate in the performance as well as the public who are watching the performance that is being shaped during that performance when they meet. Personally, this ephemeral quality has always attracted me. I always clean my home and easily put stuff out. I have a rule - if somebody brings some new stuff to my house, some other stuff from the house should go out. I am trying not to own things because everything passes away one day. This is the concept of ephemeral in our everyday life. Nothing stays forever.”

Ephemeral works is a one-day performance that is born and dies in one single day but the Artus performers and artists usually get inspirations from this show and some of the creations from this show end up represent in Artus main theatre productions. I gradually understood that each Kérészs Muevek had the same value and contribution as each main theatre production in Artus creations.

Gabor explained: “Everything does have their own unit when we measure it. The unit of distance is meter, the unit of weight is kilo, the unit of time is minute, and so on. I was thinking what the unit of the universe is? It is life, one length of life is one unit, it does not matter if it is one day or hundred years. In Artus production also, each ephemeral work is one unit. It doesn’t matter if I work on one piece for half a year or one day. Each of them is one unit.”

My next question was about the space, how all these little haikus come together to create one space for the evening show?

Gabor explained: “For each show I have to think how to stage the actions and how to space the audience. I have to consider how the audience will be able to see the little actions around them. That’s why we put little stages around the audience. It is very important to find the line to connect one piece to another and it is also important to know how to space all the pieces. It is important how to space the scene and how to space the audience. How one scene talks with the other. Sometimes I repeat one scene like a motive.

The motives help to connect the pieces like a promenade (Promenade concerts were musical performances in the 18th and 19th century pleasure gardens of London, where the audience

would stroll about while listening to the music. The term derives from the French promenade, "to walk".)

Despite the regular theatre based on the playwright which connects the scene through the story, in Ephemeral works, this repetitive motives connect the scenes like a promenade. These motives give the feelings of freedom and creativity to the audience to let them choose what they want to imagine. This promenade could be repetitive graphic shapes projected on the wall or in the form of a short action or musical melody.

5/2 Ritual in Ephemeral works and Happening performance

About the relation between Ephemeral works and Ritual, Gabor Goda told me: “Theatre originally came from Ritual and in Theatre we want to go back to those roots. In the Ephemeral works, we always have something that happens repeatedly. For instance, the pattern we follow in each ephemeral work like sitting in the circle of discussion in the morning, sharing thoughts and ideas, choosing the best ideas, working on them until evening and starting the show at 8 p.m. with audiences. Then there is also the way we talk with the audience, having wine, using non-frontal stages, having the actions all around the audiences are repeated in each Ephemeral work like a ritual ceremony.

Gabor Goda added: “Every simple daily action like drinking a cup of tea could be ritual but the way we are doing it is important. If I put all my consideration and attention to it, that simple action will become theatrical and ritual. Our everyday life can be ritual and we can show those ritual aspects to the audience in the theatre. And it is important to repeat them at the same time because it helps the people to feel stable. They know where they are on the earth.”

These little rituals in everyday life are used during the Ephemeral works in the same way as it had been used in the happening productions.

To explain the Happening performance very briefly, The Happening combined art and performance and shaped during the post war period. In the 1950s, artist and lecturer Allan Kaprow coined the term “happening” to describe many performances and events. In his point of view, happenings emphasised the organic connection between art and its environment.

I saw the similarity in Ephemeral works and Happening performance which I will bring them very briefly here:

The unconventional performance Environment is important in both of them. In Artus Ephemeral works, little stages are set around the audiences and they locate within the actions around them. the same as 18 happenings in 6 parts (Allen Kaprow).

Kaprow focused on non-concrete or ephemeral mods of production, and Artus Ephemeral works series has the same essence. The performance which is born and dies in one single day. The audience are active and participating in both. In Ephemeral works spectators can choose their seat and move and drink wine while they are being asked to participate in different parts. For instance, Gabor Goda asked them to write 3 words related to space on a piece of paper - the words that will later be used to create haikus in further Artus production.

Like using everyday elements in Kaprow's productions, in Ephemeral works, the audience can sit in a pub, drink wine and chat together as if it were their everyday life. The artists use everyday objects like eggs, water, onions,... in their artworks.

5/3 Space, Place and Environment in Artus studio and Ephemeral works

Artus Studio was shaped from a former abandoned factory building of 2000 m² space. In contrast with some conventional theatre buildings built up by marketing strategy to attract the audience to buy tickets and watch the theatre plays, Artus community members made their own place in this open unoccupied pre-existing place more than 20 years ago.

Gabor Goda explained how they met their first audiences in their previous old factory space for "Noah Trilogy I" on 1997 for the first time. They met in the street in front of the building since they could not give exact location of the performance in this 8000 m² space to their audiences. They walked for almost 15 minutes to reach to the performance spot and Gabor Goda believed that this walk could help to clear all the pre existing cultural and conventional conception from the audiences mind.

After 3 years they moved to this current factory building and they keep developing and building up this environment since 2000. Gabor Goda mentioned, he prefer the factory environment rather than conventional theatre building because it has no cultural pre conception and this environment can be transformed to what they would like to do with it. In this sense, the mind of audiences or the guests of the Artus studio is getting empty from the normal conventional environment by experiencing this new place (which a bit out of the center of the city), passing the dark corridors, watching the huge metal sculptures and art pieces in exhibition hall.

I would like to bring this fact that, the adventure of experiencing the Artus studio atmosphere, giving the sense of the place to it's audiences. This common sense is what make them to feel they are relating to each other's. The reason why they came to this specific place is the common area which connect them to this place and the performance.

In Each event at Artus studio beside the new guests you could observe familiar faces that they regularly come to this old factory building. These audiences mostly come from the artists or Taiji trainers community. Besides the community of Artists who have a studio in this abandoned space, there is Taiji trainers community who usually come to this place and learn Taiji from Gabor Goda who is Taiji master and also a director of art productions at Artus. Gabor mentioned that Taiji rehearsals started at the early years of their movement to this current factory building. The first auditorium in this old building built up by Gabor Goda and the Artus company members for their artistic creations as well as their Taiji trainings.

I would like to bring this fact that, This old factory artistic environment had been shaped by human experiences, the community members as well as the audiences who watch the performances in this place regularly, having common memories or relation with this specific place.

Now after almost 4 years following Artus productions and Ephemeral works in this old factory space, and also being a member of Taiji group, I can recognize the role of the audiences in Ephemeral works. Although they come to watch the performance, they want to talk to other members of Artus society, visit the exhibition located in the same building and take a walk around this huge abandoned space.

“As it is through our experiences of geographical places that we are connected with the world and the world is connected with us”, We can relate this Edward Relph’s sentence to the Artus studio geographical place and its connection with the Artists and members who built up this place.

I remember the evening I stepped in this factory to watch Ephemeral works in 2017, I entered the building from the underground space following the dim light of the candles showing us the way to the auditorium space. I came up the stairs and I saw huge metal statue in front of me, about which I only later understood that it was created by one of the artists who is a member of Artus Studio. Behind the statue I could see the broken windows and huge empty space of this old factory. I was curious to explore this space and find my relation with it. Later on, I asked Gabor Goda if I could visit the second floor of this factory building where the studios are located.

This abandon spaces on the second floor is empty (some parts of them were transformed into storages). The space is full of spirituality and most probably old memories we don’t know who they belong to.

I decided to make a video art in this space. In the beginning I wanted to walk through all these abandon places in the factory building and simply take videos of them. But then a small triangle on the floor appeared in contrast with the huge space around it.

We frame our soul in a specific dimension of our everyday life. We cannot go further as we feel comfortable within our limits, finding ourselves scattered around our limited space with so many contradictory voices and feelings that fight for control over our inner life. But are there higher dimensions of consciousness that can surpass our awareness?

The triangle on the floor represents the boundaries of our everyday life. The performer is trying to fit herself into this limited small space while there is a huge empty environment around her.

The idea for this video was derived from an inspiring image of a tree branch framed by one square of a huge window in the Artus auditorium. We could only see a tiny part of this big tree through the window. The inspiration also came from this Lao Tzu poem:

"Can you keep your soul in its body? Hold fast to the one and so learn to be whole? Can you be a bird with her nestlings? Can you know by not knowing?"



"3 Angles" Video art

Duration: 10 minutes, Creator: Zahra

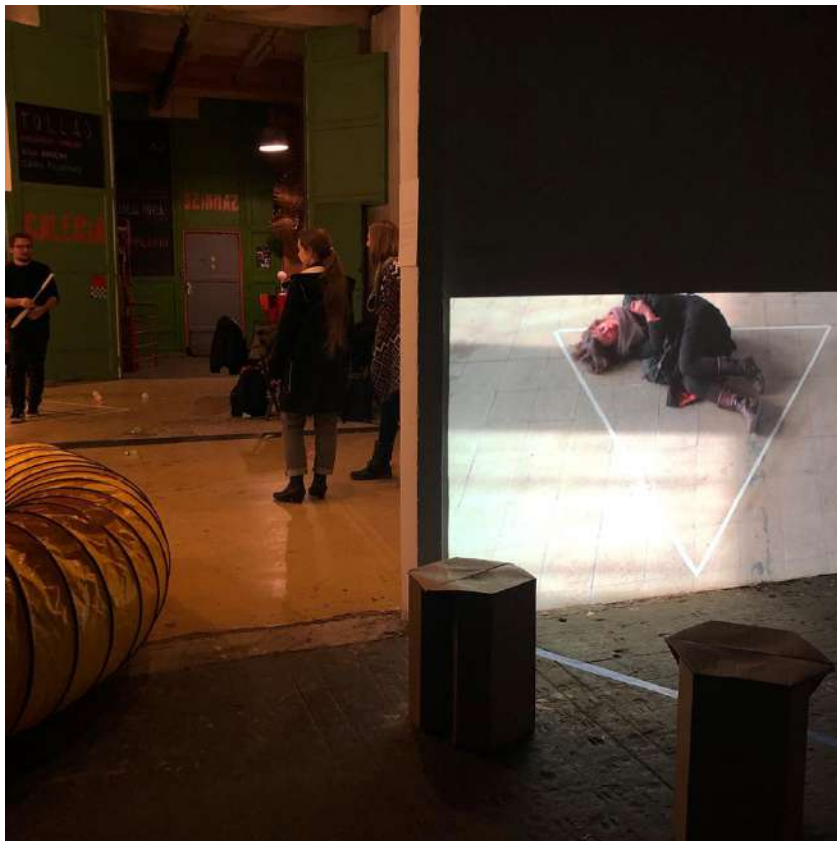
Fuladvand, Performer: Eszter Nagy, Camera:

Manuel F Contreras, Music: Adrienn

Dorsanszki, CsanadSzesztay, exhibited in Artus

studio, Tollas match performance and

Exhibition, January/February 2019



Chapter 6.

DLA Master Show

The Ritual Environmental Performance “After Death” at the Calvary building

22/5/2022 at 19:00

1062, Budapest, Bajza utca 41, Epreskert, Hungarian university of Fine Arts, Calvary Building

6/1 Previous projects

Before talking about the Master show project, I would like to explain very briefly my 2 previous artistic projects which both happened in natural environment.

“The Mirror”

During my artistic career as a performative art creator, I was interested to explore the relation of the found environment with the spectacles that could be found in these places. One of them is “Mirror” performance that happened in Metro M2 in Budapest in January 2020 and was exhibited in the Parallel Hungary exhibition in a group project of the students of the Doctoral School, at the Hungarian University of Fine Art’s gallery, Aula on 30.1.2020. I explained and spoke about this project under the title “The reflection of the found audiences in the Mirror performance” in the PQ symposium “Where Are We” on 5.5. 2022

In this performance, performer who is covered totally with black veil, appear in metro M2 with the big mirror in her hands. During this live performance, the reaction of Hungarian passengers in the mirror had been recorded with my cellphone. This video art is 6 minutes and 27 seconds.



“Rootedness”

Video Art/ Performance exhibited in Parallel Hungary II Exhibition at Profil Gallery on May 2022

Performer: Zahra Fuladvand

Camera and editing: Manuel F Contreras

“Plants have roots, Human beings have feet and minds” (Yi-Fu Tuan)

I am living far from my homeland for more than one decade. I gave birth to my daughter in Budapest, Hungary which is 4500 km far from my hometown Shiraz. After all these years, still I am asking myself, Can we root in a foreign country?

By roots, I mean Deep roots in a place that are essential to existence. To be rooted is perhaps the most important need of the human soul.

Many people have deep attachments to specific places and communities. There are many reasons that could force them to get displacement from these places. “Are they going to be able to grow new roots in this new land?” Is the main question in my mind and this art piece.

“Rootedness” is my video art/Performance project, for the Parallel Hungary II exhibition. This video art shot in different places such as my home as an intimate place, and the public space of the street where my house has been located.

In this video art, I hold the green grass (Sabzeh)[1] with roots in the air. With closed eyes, I spray the water on the roots and cut the green grass by scissor. These actions and the reactions of random people around had been recorded by mobile phone.

For the opening of the Parallel exhibition II, This video projected as my background while I was spraying the roots and cutting the green grass with closed eyes in front of the audiences at the exhibition space.

[1] Sabzeh is the sprouted wheat grown for the Persian New year celebration. Sabzeh Nowruz is the symbol of rejuvenation and new life and it is one of the ever-present items in this very ancient ceremony.



6/2 About master show project

Supervisor: Judit Csanadi

Artistic dramaturgy: Samira Sinai

Environment Designer Artist: Erekle Chinchilakashvili

Performers: Enkhtaivan, Zita Mayer, Lili Mayer,

Iranian community creators: Samira Sinai, Ahmad Shekari, Akram Asrani, Arghavan Shekari, Helia Chaichi, Obaidullah Shinwari, Niloufar Zibakalam,

Musicians: Ashkan Ghanbari, Lukács László

Photographers: Csanadi Gabor, Mona Monsefi, Matyus Kriszta

Camera: Manuel F. Contreras, Cecilia Bandeira.

I was standing on the roof of the Calvary building located in Epreskert. It was a beautiful sunny day in September 2017, I could feel the sunshine on my skin and the light wind swirling around me. That was my first encounter with this building. I went around the circle of the rooftop observing the buildings of the university departments, statues, trees even the cars and streets surrounding me. I could feel the whole sky above me and this ancient building underneath me. I could imagine people coming up the stairs to see a performance on this rooftop. I keep asking myself: what is the history behind the Calvary building in Epreskert? How has its function changed from a sacred to an art exhibition place? Is this the right unconventional place to relate me and my thoughts to the audiences?

During my experiences about the relation between audiences and performance in unconventional environment, I gradually understood that there is an invisible string that interconnects all my art practices and me. The ritual aspects of our everyday life were this invisible line between my art pieces and me. From my point of view, the ritual returns us to the center of who we are. In times of transition, loss, disconnection, and loneliness, ritual offers transformative power. It can provide a language for expression and offer emotional support. Unfortunately, in our modern times, the ritual has lost its original function in human life.

I wanted to bring some of these ancient, thousand-year-old ritual gestures into my performance. I created this language of expression in my complex exam performance based on the Iranian funeral ceremony. “Darkness before Birth and after Death”

Some of the images of this performance were photographed as a Series of post-documentary photos by Dr. Csanadi Gabor. Besides that, there is a documentary video of the process of photography of the performance shot by Manuel F. Conteras. This photo series and a documentary video were exhibited in HÁROM HÉT Gallery on September 25, 2020. “After Death” has the same roots as the previous performance but with new branches that started to grow.

I worked with the community of Iranians who are living in Budapest. Being part of a community and working together around a common concept is the first step to getting close to the origins of a ritual ceremony. Representing the form of a few small ritual gestures that still have a function in our culture and our life, the “After Death” performance is the outcome of our gatherings and meetings every Saturday evening for almost 3 months.

The rooftop of the Calvary building is where the audiences will meet the ritual performative gestures that come from the Iranian funeral ceremony. The similarity between the structure of the Calvary building and the Tower of Silence makes me sure that the Calvary building is the right place for this performance.

I will explain the origin of the Tower of Silence and its similarity to the Calvary building in the next Chapter



“After Death” Performance on the roof of Calvary building



“After Death” Performance on the roof of Calvary building

6/3 Tower of Silence

The Tower of Silence also known as a Dakhma, is a circular raised structure built by Zoroastrians²² for excarnation. This complex was built to hold the particular Zoroastrians funeral of the dead. According to a tradition, bodies were carried to the Dakhmeh during which special religious ceremonies along with prayers were conducted.

Until 40 years ago, corpses could still be found on top of the Towers of Silence in Yazd, Iran, slowly disintegrating or being picked apart by desert vultures. In the Zoroastrian tradition, once someone has died, their body can immediately be contaminated by demons and made impure. To prevent this infiltration, Zoroastrians purified the dead body by exposing it to the elements and local fowl on top of flat-topped towers known as Tower of silence in the desert.

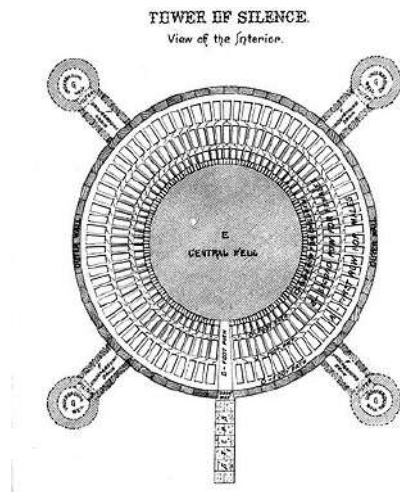
According to a tradition dating back over 3,000 years, bodies were arranged on the towers in three concentric circles. Men were placed in the outer circle, women in the middle, and children in the inner-most ring. The bodies were then left until their bones were bleached by the elements and stripped by the vultures.

After the purification process, the bones were placed in ossuaries near or inside the towers. Ossuaries from these rituals have been discovered from the fourth and fifth centuries BC. Similar dakhmeh exists just outside of Mumbai, India as well, although the most prominent “Towers of Silence” are in Iran.

As Iran developed and urbanized, dakhmeh became increasingly closer to city limits, severely curtailing their use. Since the 1970s, the use of dakhmeh has been illegal in Iran, forcing orthodox Zoroastrians to adapt to new burial methods. Many in the Zoroastrian community have moved to burying bodies beneath concrete to keep out all contaminants.

Although the towers are no longer used in ceremony, they can be visited along with a number of the ossuaries in the area.

²² Zoroastrianism or Mazdayasna is an Iranian religion and one of the world's oldest continuously-practiced organized faiths, based on the teachings of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster



Tower of Silence located in Yazd, Iran

6/4 Calvary Building in Epreskert

When I started to research on the history of Epreskert Calvary building, by the help of my supervisor Dr. Habil Révész Emese I found out the JOURNAL OF ART HISTORY. Akadémiai Kiadó (Academic Publisher) - 2003 - Volume LII. no. 1 – 2. as one of the best resources in this regard which is in Hungarian. Since I needed to look more deeply through the history of this building I asked Eszter Nagy to translate the first chapter of this book “The Epreskert Calvary in the light of the sources” written by PÁL RITOÓK to English.

In this chapter of dissertation, I am going to bring the brief history of the Epreskert Calvary in its original place and also the story of Calvary building after relocation to Epreskert, by using the English translation PÁL RITOÓK valuable research source.

“Compared to all the other calvary-constructions in Hungary, the Epreskert Calvary is certainly the most outstanding work, both in terms of architecture and elaboration of details. The former Calvary from Pest, Józsefváros was moved stone by stone to its present location in Epreskert – namely, to 41 Bajza Street, VIth district - in 1893, on the initiative of sculptor Alajos Stróbl.

The building, which has already been standing in its new location for over 100 years, became thus known in art history literature as Epreskert Calvary.



Photo 1. The Calvary from the west, 1993. Photo by Edit Szilágyi

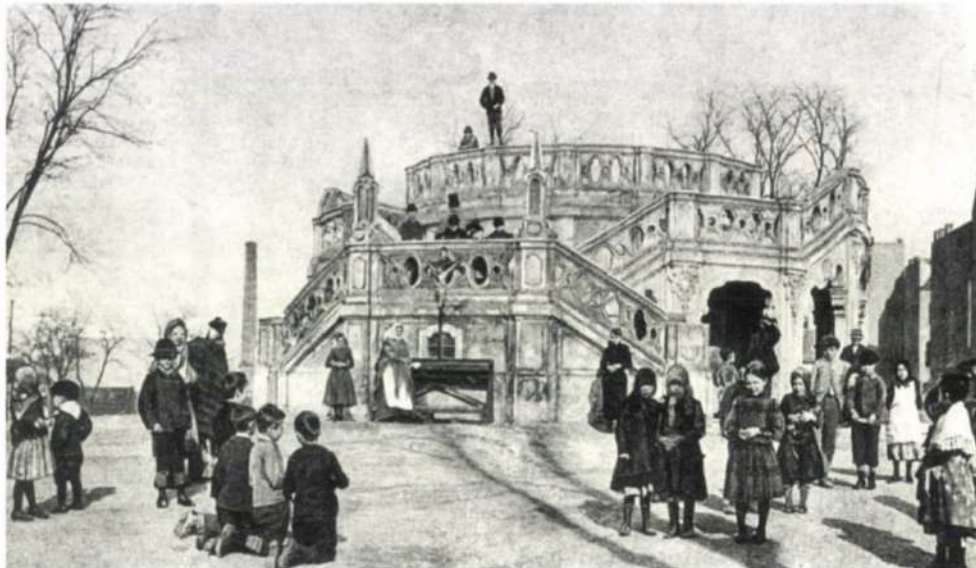
The freestanding, circular, Baroque-style Calvary lies in the Epreskert campus of the University of Fine Arts, in the middle of the roughly rectangular plot of land, bordered by Bajza Street, Kmetty György Street, Szondi Street and Munkácsy Mihály Street, on a slight promontory between the ateliers of the University. Its orientation has been adapted to the street grid, thus its main axis runs south-east-north-west through the entrance of the chapel currently in use.

As part of the constructed, architectural calvary series, this work evokes Mount Calvary, the site of Christ's death on the cross in Jerusalem by purely artificial, architectural means. The circular chapel that forms the core of the building is surrounded by a series of arcades composed of nine sections.



Photo 2. The arcade from the east, 1993, by Edit Szilágyi

Two staircases with curved arms lead up from opposite directions to the terrace with braided balustrade, situated above the chapel and the arcades. Entering the chapel, we find a circular room the plastered, whitewashed wall of which is barely divided by anything. At either end of the diameter perpendicular to the axis of the entrance (i.e. to the north-east and south-west) there is a semicircular niche, ending in a semi-dome. Above the niches, there are bright, rounded side-windows. The thin light thus filtered is strengthened by the skylight at the top of the dome, providing sufficient illumination.”²³



6. Az egykori józsefvárosi kálvária eredeti helyén, a Kálvária téren, 1893. Morelli Gusztáv felvétele, Vasárnapi Újság

Photo 6. The former Calvary of Józsefváros in its original place, on Kálvária Square, 1893, by Gusztáv Morelli, Vasárnapi Újság

²³ PÁL RITOÓK: 1-2

“The 1889 resolution of the General Assembly of Budapest agreed to the proposal that the Calvary of Józsefváros should be completely closed down at its present site, removed from there and a new, ornate Calvary should be erected instead of the former one along Orczy Street.” According to the two resolutions from 1893 of the same Assembly, Budapest ceded the old stone structure of the Calvary from Józsefváros to the sculpture school. The same is reported in *Építészeti Szemle* (Architectural Review): "The Calvary of Józsefváros will be removed for public traffic reasons and the sculpturally valuable and interesting work will be transferred to the artists' colony from Epreskert, to avoid its complete loss and to serve as a study object for young artists.

In the classical case, the calvary-complex is indeed composed of several elements: the stations, the calvary-scenes marked most often by three crosses and possibly supplemented by statues, the calvary building or -height, a calvary chapel and the hermitage. The chapel, however, was not an indispensable part of the calvary. One or three crosses were sufficient to commemorate Christ's death on the cross. Calvaries, as sceneries of the Way of the Cross, constituted an important and very sought-after component of Baroque popular religiosity, thus the canonical visitation rather suggests that the Calvary of the parish from Pest, erected before 1732, was already frequently visited by the worshippers, but the ecclesiastical authorities only later gave their official permission for its use (possibly for mass/ celebration).

In fact, the transfer of the Calvary to Epreskert was part of a process initiated earlier. Alajos Stróbl²⁴ had already had other monuments moved and re-installed here, the most important of which is the 13th century south-eastern doorway of the Church of the Assumption of the Buda Castle. Due to Stróbl's monument-rescue actions, the restored objects provide also artistic inspiration for the students. (An article written in 1890 about the sculpture school mentions the intention to bring in Epreskert other monuments, too, such as some of those excavated in the Aquincum.)

It is possible that the copy of the famous Apollo Belvedere, standing in the entrance hall of the building of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts at 69 Andrassy Avenue, had once been decorating the Calvary and was taken from there to its present location.²⁵

²⁴ Alajos Stróbl was a Hungarian sculptor and artist. His work is characterised by sensitive realistic modelling and he became one of the most renowned sculptors of memorials in Hungary at the turn of the 20th century

²⁵ Anikó Bojtos, *The History of Epreskert*

Since no documents relating to the transfer have been found, we have to rely on a single newspaper article: "The dismantling of the old Calvary began this week, and the individual pieces of stone are being transported to the garden of the Painters' Masterschool, where they will be carefully rebuilt. Its central part will be arranged into a large studio with overhead lighting/ skylight for Gyula Benczúr. The surrounding niches will be used as studios for art students. The whole building will be remodelled inside and out, and some of our most distinguished artists will paint frescoes on the walls. Thus the Calvary, which our artists will dedicate to the Muse, will be one of the most remarkable jewels of our artistic community."

We do not know the exact date of demolition and rebuilding. It can be inferred that the Calvary was demolished in the autumn of 1893 at the latest, but it seems more likely that this happened in the months July-August. The Calvary hill was subsequently removed and the square landscaped. A photograph taken around 1900 shows the state of the park after the renovation.

There is no exact date for the rebuilding of the Calvary, but this probably happened right after the demolition, in July-August 1893. There is no reason to suppose that the rebuilding would have taken a long time and that it might have been delayed until the following year. In all likelihood, it was easier to rebuild the Calvary immediately from the pieces that had been transported, than to find a suitable storage place for the numbered pieces.

It is likely that Stróbl himself was involved in the professional management of the relocation. I assume he also had a say in the alterations made to the building. Without having any sources to back this up, I assume that one of the architecture teachers of Mintarajziskola (Pattern Drawing School), most probably Frigyes Schulek, may have been also involved in the rebuilding. He may have designed the alterations. Or, at least, it cannot be excluded, that - as an outstanding heritage expert and as a fellow teacher and friend of Stróbl - he had something to do with the rescue and rebuilding of the Calvary.

The history of the Calvary after the relocation²⁶

The fate of the Calvary after 1893 can be reconstructed only fragmentary. In the *Művészet* (Art) journal, first year, Kornél Divald mentioned the Calvary of Józsefváros as being "a remarkable work of Hungarian Baroque art, erected in the garden of the masterschool." The

²⁶ PÁL RITOÓK: 11-14

first photographs made after the relocation were mainly taken to capture the student artists, so the Calvary was always used as an impressive background. Shortly after the move, the vegetation took full possession of the Calvary. The school used the building freely to house various objects.

The photograph of the Calvary was added in 1913 by Albert Petrik in his book entitled *The Architecture of old Buda-Pest*, and this seems to have done much to promote the building. After Petrik's death, his negatives were bought by the National Monuments' Committee, and later reproduced in various books on monuments. There is also a photograph of the Calvary from 1915, on which we see Hungarian soldiers in front of the building, as during World War I, the Epreskert artists' colony was also converted into a military hospital.

In the 1920s, the Calvary appeared in the registry books of the archives of the National Monuments' Committee. In 1922, the restoration of the small chapel at 23 Bajza u. was entrusted to the architect Gyula Walder, whose survey drawings are now in the Plan Library of the Cultural Heritage Protection Office.

An important sentence can be read in the volume entitled *Monuments of Budapest*, published in 1924. Robert K. Kertesz, author of the chapter "The monuments of the Baroque period", wrote that the Epreskert Calvary "still stands today as a consecrated chapel for the spiritual care of the college and its surroundings." This is confirmed by a report written in 1939: "One of the most beautiful ornaments of the garden, and also of the capital, is the Baroque style Calvary chapel, which was transported to the Epreskert at state expense on the initiative of the late Master Strobl, during the restoration of the Calvary from Budapest in the '90s and was erected there by the late Master and partly at his expense. It is a consecrated chapel where religious services were also held."

This suggests that the building was used (even if not regularly) also for religious services. Similarly, the photos show that statues were placed in the arcades, sometimes on the terrace. Statues were probably not stored inside the chapel. All in all, the question of whether the Calvary from Epreskert was used as a consecrated chapel or not, is obscure.

Here is a further addendum. In 1926, the National Royal Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts wrote a letter to the Council of Budapest Capital City, that "the Roman Catholic parishioners of the Dalnok-street local pastorate of Budapest had decided upon the erection of a church, for

which they requested the lease of a suitable part of the land situated at 23 Bajza Street, which was originally owned by the Capital City of Budapest, but currently was being used by the College." The College had already addressed this issue a year earlier and was of the opinion that the request of the clergy could not be granted, "and its realization would be downright disastrous for the college education now in force."

This raises the possibility that masses were held in the Calvary chapel for demonstrative purposes, in order to preserve the integrity of Epreskert, while showing the religiousness of the college. However, this is only conjecture.

To this is related also the fact that between the two world wars there was a stone cross on the terrace of the Calvary, in the central axis of the front balustrade, which first appears in photographs taken by Elemér Révhelyi in 1926. In the college's yearbook of 1934-35, we also see the cross on the Calvary. However, this is no longer visible in the photographs taken in 1938 by Rudolf Balogh. There is no evidence to confirm that the stone cross standing on the terrace of the Calvary from the second half of the 1920s to the 1930s could be related to the fact that the building was used as a consecrated chapel at a certain time. The maintenance of the Calvary tended to be characterised by infrequent, campaign-like repairs, and it was only after the partial restoration of the building that it was regularly maintained for a short period.



Photo 13. The entrance to the chapel and staircase from the south-east, circa 1938. Photo by Rudolf Balogh. BTM Kiscelli Museum

Ernő Szakál mentioned in 1963 that the chapel suffered heavy damages during World War II: "While the atmospheric pressure did not cause major damage, the bomb fragments caused an entire series of injuries of varying magnitudes, among which we can mention the severe defects of the balustrade." (The war damage was partially illustrated in a drawing made by Szilárd Iván in 1946.)

The Calvary as a protected cultural heritage²⁷

The Calvary of Józsefváros was mentioned as a landmark already in the 19th-century German and Hungarian-language town-descriptions and guidebooks. The fact that Stróbl and his associates did not allow it to be destroyed, but transferred it to the Epreskert and rebuilt it as a valuable, picturesque artistic monument, thriving to authenticity with a greater or lesser degree of accuracy, marked the beginning of its assessment as a monument.

The Calvary was officially listed as a historical monument thanks to Péter Gerecze, who included the building in the national topographical list of monuments in Hungary, following which the construction was included also in the official list of monuments to be preserved in Hungary, published by the **National Monuments' Committee** in 1918. Jenő Lechner included it in his 1924 register of monuments and monumental buildings of Budapest, as well. After World War II, István Genthon and G. Sándor Zakariás included the construction in the 1949 list of Budapest's monumental buildings. From then on, the Epreskert Calvary was listed as a monument in all the registers of monuments published since then.

²⁷ PÁL RITOÓK: 19-20

The idea to make the area serve the training of artists emerged only in the 1880s, at the time Ágoston Trefort (1817–1888) was the Minister of Religion and Education. A decision was made in 1881 to establish a school for masters of art, administratively separated from the Royal Drawing School, where young people wishing to pursue arts could work under the guidance of renowned artists. In the Strawberry Garden, in addition to the studios of the Departments of Painting, Sculpture and Visual Design, there are metal, bronze, stone carving, plaster and glass workshops for students.

This Garden has been part of the Hungarian University of Fine Art since 1921. The Scenography department along with Painting and Sculpture departments and art studios for students are located in the Garden. The Scenography department in Epreskert is where I started to visit students and relate myself to this environment during my studies at this university. Judit Csanadi (my supervisor) was the head of this department in 2019-2020 when I started to give series of lectures entitled “Professional English presentation course” to master students of the Scenography department.

In brief we can say, The Calvary building was brought into the Epreskert garden by master sculptor Alajos Stróbl. He turned the garden into a sculpture garden, where he regularly organized celebrations (performances). In this context, the new location of Calvary is no longer a sacred place, but a stage and/or lookout tower, which is part of the whole play of the garden furnished by Stróbl. Between the two wars, it regained its sacred function: it functioned as a chapel and then, after 1945, became an exhibition space.

So, to emphasise the change of the function of this building in brief we can say that in the last century, a substructure of the former Calvary of Józsefváros (1744-1749) was added to the Strawberry Garden, which is currently an exhibition space presenting the works of the college students. It is the venue for individual and thematic group exhibitions during the year, and for the exhibition of diploma theses at the end of the academic year.

In the next chapter I will explain the similarity between Calvary building and Tower of silence.



Calvary building at Epreskert, photo by: Mona Monsefi

6/5

The similarity between the Tower of Silence and the Calvary building and its relation with the ritual activities of the Iranian community:

The architectural structure of the Calvary building has similarity with the structure of the Tower of silence. Both of them are round towers with a flat circular shape top. In both structures, visitors should embark on a journey climbing up the stairs until they reach to the top. Beside the structure, Mount Calvary, evokes the site of Christ's death on the cross in Jerusalem.

Calvary is a place in Christian art that refers to the story of Christ's suffering. A pilgrimage based on the movement of the believer (viewer) in which the believer travels a path (usually a path leading to a hill, a mountain). The journey is framed by works (paintings, sculptures) depicting scenes from the Passion, and at the end of the journey a crucifixion of Christ

appeared. Calvary in its original essence is a sacred place. The believers and prayers imitates the route and movement of christ's former way of the cross.

After the relocation of Epreskert's Calvary building, the function of this chapel had been changed. In Its new function after 1945, It became a lookout, a space similar to a stage. This building by the attempt of Strobl became the exhibition space for artists and students belong to Epreskert artists colony.

In this masterpiece project, the rooftop of the Calvary building is where the audiences meet the ritual performative gestures that come from the Iranian funeral ceremony. The similarity between the structure of the Calvary building and the Tower of Silence makes me sure that the Calvary building is the right place for this performance. 3 circles created with charcoal on the roof of the Calvary building were inspired by the Tower of Silence structure. According to a tradition, bodies were arranged on the roof of the Tower of Silence in 3 circles. The outer circle belongs to men, the middle belongs to women and children are located in the inner circle.

In this project, audiences could see 3 circles made by charcoals on the roof where they could stand in the outer circle and see the corps located in the inner circle. Furthermore, the circle could be a metaphor of human existence. We were born out of the darkness of the womb, see the light of life and back again to the darkness when we die. (Images 1, 2, 3,4,5)

Beside the 3 circles on the roof, we created one more circle on the grass in front of the Calvary building by handmade earthenware cups. Using the round circle as a stage is very common in Iranian ritual and traditional performance arts. Especially in Persian passion play, the circle stage could be created by people who are standing around this circle. In this project, the circle on the floor which was created by the Iranian community, is not far from this historical Iranian tradition. This circle on the floor transformed into the little stage for the Iranian community performance. (Images 34, 36, 38)

As I already mentioned, the Tower of Silence as a complex raised structure was built to hold the particular Zoroastrian's funeral of the dead. This project also represents the Iranian funeral ceremony on the rooftop of the Calvary building finding inspiration in the death ceremony on the Tower of Silence.

The relation of this project with the ontology of Khayyam²⁸ poems appeared without any personal intentions. When I started to work with the Iranian community, I already knew that the part of the performance was related to the Iranian funeral ceremony and the previous project of my complex exam. I created this ritual language of expression in my complex exam performance based on the Iranian funeral ceremony. “Darkness before birth and after Death” (May 2019). “After Death” (May 2022) has the same roots as the previous performance but with new branches that started to grow.

I worked with the community of Iranians who are living in Budapest. Being part of a community and working together around a common concept is the first step to getting close to the origins of a ritual ceremony. Gradually during our meetings, we made a decision to choose some Iranian ritual gestures that still have a function in our culture and our life. We decided to perform on the ground and work on the concept of being alive and celebrating our present moments in contrast to the After Death concept that happens on the roof.

What would be closer to this concept than reading Khayyam poems, drinking red wine in an earthenware cup, singing in our circle, and sharing these moments with our audiences?

The poems written on the earthenware cups are selection of some poems from Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat. (Images 31, 32) In his poems, Khayyam talks about happiness while living for the moment. In the second part of the performance, the Iranian community members read some of these poems in Persian and Hungarian language. The most significant concept of these poems refers to living in the present and not concentrating on unknown future, with which Khayyam is telling us to celebrate our existence and enjoy the moments of our life since we do not know where we come from and where we will go. You can see below one of these poems in Persian, English and Hungarian.

این قافله عمر عجب می گذرد
دریاب دمی که با طرب می گذرد
ساقی غم فردای حریفان چه خوری
بیش آر بیاله را که شب می گذرد

One moment in Annihilation’s waste,
One moment, of the well of life to taste,

²⁸ Omar Khayyam(1048-1131) became known to his country and to the west world as a mathematician, philosopher and astronomer. His poems Rubaiyat came to be known to the whole world after Edward FitzGerald published his English translation in 1859.

The stars are setting, and the Caravan
Draws to the Dawn of Nothing oh make haste!

Egz perc Megállás, egyetlen íyes
Korty az életből, s íme a tüzes
Sívtag Líderc Karavánja már
Hazaér a Semmibe óh síess

[\(Omar Khayyam Rubaiyat *** Translated by Edward FitzGerald\)](#)

“Funeral” is the documentary video of the photography session process from the “Darkness before birth and after death” performance. This documentary video was shown in the exhibition space of the Calvary building at the same time as After death performance was happening. This video was shot and edited by Manuel F Conteras, while Dr. Csanadi Gabor took photos of this performance in November 2019.

The Hungarian performers on the roof walk in the circles while one of them is holding a mirror and another one a tray full of rice. Using the traditional ritual materials in this performance help the audience to feel the spirit of these ancient gestures. (Images 17, 18, 19)

I chose rice since, preparing, cooking and eating rice is very traditional in Persian culture. In most of ritual ceremonies like wedding or funeral, the family members cook rice and serve it to their guests as the main part of the ceremony ritual. Before the cooking process, the rice needs to be cleaned. Usually, a group of women sit together and put dry rice in big trays. The action of pouring the rice up and down on the tray, to separate the dust and small stones from it, was the inspiration for this masterpiece project. (Images 16, 20, 22, 23)

A mirror is another significant traditional object which has been used in most of the ritual Persian ceremonies such as a wedding, funeral and Persian New Year celebration. In the Iranian funeral ceremony, a photo of the dead person with candles and a mirror are placed on a table.. The mirror next to the photo of the dead person is a metaphor of death for each participant in the ceremony who see themselves in it. (Images 17, 18, 21)

Another ritual object which was used in this masterpiece performance is Esfand. Esfand or Espand has a strong presence in every Persian house and cultural rituals. Iranians believe that this dried herb has the magical power to stave off harm and the negative vibes. When the audiences come back from the rooftop to see the second part of the performance around the circle on the ground in front of the Calvary building, one of the Iranian community members burns Espand seeds and let the smoke come to the audience as we do in Persian ritual ceremonies. (Images 39, 40)

Beside the Iranian ritual and cultural gestures, on the top of the Calvary building, there was the ritual shamanism ceremony for a dead person represented by Mongolian artist, Enkhtaivan Ochirbat. As I understood from him, a shaman is a person who lives side by side, communicates with the holy spirits of the offspring, nature and his ancestors. Enkhtaivan who observed this shamanism ritual ceremony, from his mother and his sister, tried to bring some ritual gestures to this performance by sitting close to the head of the corpse, praying and calling the birds by making some voices and using his special musical instrument. (Images 26, 27)

Conclusion:

The natural pre-existing environment is where human beings can relate themselves to this environment during the ritual performative events. Despite the modern man-made buildings for performing arts, these natural sites give the sense of place to their audiences. This natural environment gets its identity by experiences of the people who have memory or feelings related to that place.

In brief, throughout my observation, experiences and research on the relation between ritual activities, community members, environment and place in performative art, I reached to the phenomenon of **human being experiences**. By human experiences, I mean the social, cultural and spiritual relation of human behavior with the environment. This relation or term of place making is usually reserved for community based activities.

The community members, articulate and transform the place to the stage in ritual performative arts. This relation and connection create the spirit of the place which could be observed in the case studies of this paper.

As a conclusion, the environment, and the relation and connection of the people who are building the performative events in these natural found environment, are highlighted in this research paper. As I mentioned some facts in my case studies in previous chapters, the Persian passion play is created by community members of a specific district or village and happens in the social environment which is familiar to them. Moreover, the Ephemeral works as my second case study, were created mostly by the community of artists from Artus studio who know and have experiences related to this old factory environment.

In my last example, the “Arter Death” performance was created by the Iranian community related to their traditional and cultural background. “The funeral and celebrating the life ceremony”, happens in the Calvary building which has a very close similarity with Tower of Silence from the Iranian Zoroastrian history.

In all case studies, the community works make the spirit for the performances. The most significant aspects of the research in this paper are how community members relate to each other, to that specific environment and to other people coming to see the performance. .

During the “Before Death” performance, the participants could hear an Iranian song, musical instruments and the birds singing, smell the smoke of Esfand and charcoals, taste the Iranian traditional dates and red wine, see the performers, actions and they could also see themselves as the participants in this performance, which led to their sharing the feelings, thoughts and experiences with each other and the performers. What they can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, know and understand or live through during the performance is the phenomenon of their experience in this specific environment.



Zahra Fuladvand
**AFTER
DEATH**

DLA Masterpiece Show
RITUAL ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

19:00 - 22.5.2022

1062, BUDAPEST, BAJZA UTCA 41, EPRESKERT
HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, CALVARY BUILDING

SUPERVISOR: JUDIT CSANADI

ARTISTIC DRAMATURGY: SAMIRA SINAI

AN ENVIRONMENT DESIGNER ARTIST: EREKLE CHINCHILAKASHVILI

PERFORMERS: ENKHTAIVAN OCHIRBAT, ZITA MAYER, LILI MAYER, ANNA KECSKÉS

IRANIAN COMMUNITY CREATORS: SAMIRA SINAI, AHMAD SHEKARI, AKRAM ASRANI, ARGHAVAN SHEKARI,
HELIA CHAICHI, OBAIDULLAH SHINWARI, ABOUZAR SOLTANI, ZAHRA FULADVAND,

MUSICIANS: ASHKAN GHANBARI, LUKACS LASZLO

COSTUME DESIGNER: ARGHAVAN SHEKARI

POSTER DESIGNER: TRA NGUYEN

PHOTOGRAPHERS: CSANADI GABOR, MONA MONSEFI

CAMERA: MANUEL F CONTRERAS

The video Documentary of the “After Death” Performance :

<https://vimeo.com/735906752/245d94774c>

The Photo Documentary of the “After Death” Performance:



Figure 1, After Death Performance, photo made by: Mona Monsefi



Figure 2, After Death Performance, photo made by: Mona Monsefi



Figure 3, After Death Performance, photo made by: Mona Monsefi



Figure 4, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kollar Margit



Figure 5, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 6, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 7, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 8, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 9, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 10, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 11, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 12, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 13, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 14, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 15, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 16, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 17, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 18, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 19, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 20, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 21, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 22, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 23, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 24, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 25, After Death Performance,
photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 26, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 27, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 28, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 29, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 30, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 31, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 32, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 33, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 34, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kriszta Matyus

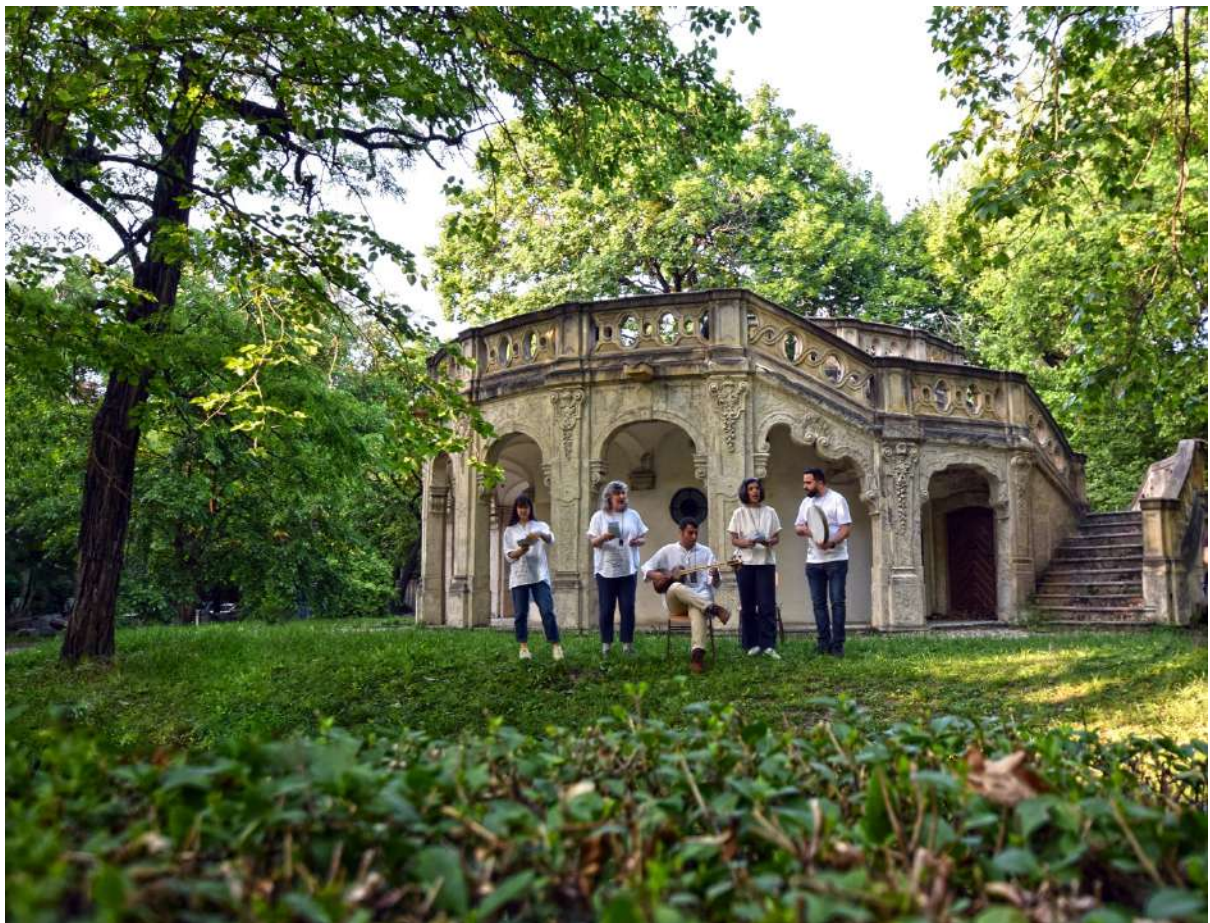


Figure 35, After Death Performance, photo made by: Mona Monsefi



Figure 36, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kriszta Matyus



Figure 37, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kriszta Matyus



Figure 38, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kriszta Matyus



Figure 39, After Death Performance, photo made by: Kriszta Matyus



Figure 40, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 41, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 42, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 43, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 44, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 45, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor



Figure 46, After Death Performance, photo made by: Csanadi Gabor

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