

SATURDAY, MAY 29, 2021  
14:00 - 16:00 (EDT)

# INTERCULTURAL (DE)MONSTRATIONS

WORLDS BEYOND, BETWEEN & BENEATH

PRESENTATIONS

7

SESSION #

**Imagining a Participatory Theater in Ahmedabad, India: 1950-1980**

Daniel Williamson, Savannah College of Art and Design

**Interplays Between Noh and Architecture: 'Expressionless Expressions'**

Maria João Moreira Soares, Lusíada University of Lisbon

**Architecture's Role in the Balinese Theatre**

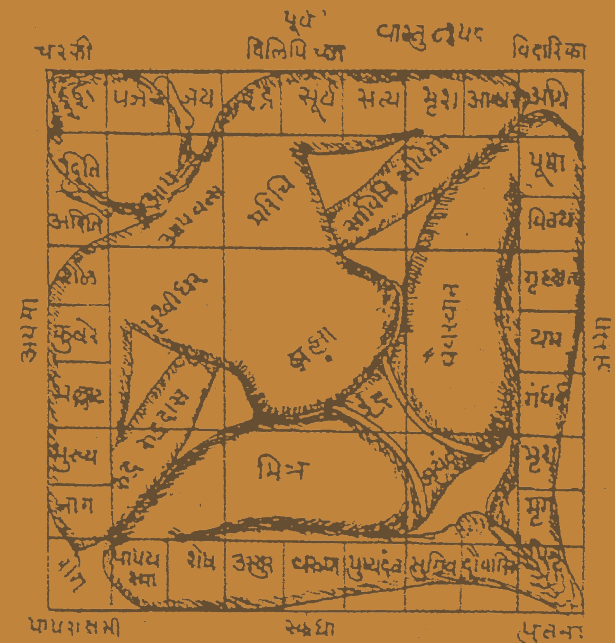
Tracey Eve Winton, University of Waterloo

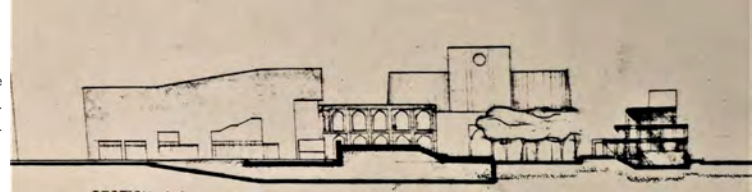
**Ceremony and Mitos: Hanay Geiogamah and Luis Valdez**

Amy Gilley, Tarrant County College

MODERATOR

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, McGill University





## MEMORY

## Imagining a Participatory Theater in Ahmedabad, India: 1950-1980

Daniel Williamson, Savannah College of Art and Design

In 1951, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation invited Le Corbusier to the city to design a modern museum. After Le Corbusier's initial visit to the city, the project blossomed into a fully-fledged cultural center that included two kinds of theaters. The first was an indoor theater conceived of as a "boîte des miracles." The second was an outdoor, participatory theater that Le Corbusier argued would be focused on "spontaneity" which would "erupt from the depths of one's being" as opposed to "art that is encouraged, commanded, in the service... of a power and employed by means of propaganda." With this project, Le Corbusier hoped to transform traditional conceptions of the theater and its architecture by recentering them in his growing interest in vernacular practices drawn from around the world. Yet, inherent contradictions in the project, from its top-down sponsorship by city elites to its disengagement from the urban core of the city led to the abandonment of Le Corbusier's theatrical vision. Instead, it was replaced by a more conventional auditorium designed by Balkrishna Doshi in 1961. At the same time, Doshi, who had worked in Le Corbusier's atelier on his Ahmedabad projects, revived the concept of the dual theater, including an outdoor, participatory component, for his Premabhai Hall project located in the heart of Ahmedabad's historic core. In doing so, Doshi sought to emphasize monumentality, while grounding the theater project more directly in an Indian cultural context, as opposed to the broader universal vision of Le Corbusier. Nevertheless, Premabhai Hall, like Le Corbusier's previous project, proved only a partial success. The outdoor components were never built and the theater is currently unused. Instead, the drama of a vibrant city market swirls around its dormant form. This paper will retrace the history of these projects to locate the limitations, lessons, and prospects for revival of a participatory theater in Ahmedabad.

**Daniel Williamson** has taught architectural history at the Atlanta campus of the Savannah College of Art and Design since 2011. He received a Master's degree in architectural history from the University of Virginia in 2005 and a PhD in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 2016. His research is primarily focused on colonial and postcolonial architecture in India. He is currently preparing a book length manuscript, based on his dissertation, that examines modern architecture in Ahmedabad after Indian independence as a manifestation of a specific vision of civic culture constructed by the city's industrialist elites. In 2021, he has forthcoming publications coming out on the Crawford Markets in Mumbai and the history of Brutalism in the United States.

## ACTION

**Interplays Between Noh and Architecture: ‘Expressionless Expressions’**

Maria João Moreira Soares, Lusíada University of Lisbon

The Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-1987) in the “Avant-propos” to the 1991 edition of *Cinq Nô modernes* (Five Modern Noh) by Yukio Mishima (1925-1970), refers to the angel in the Noh play *Hagoromo* (羽衣, *The Feather Mantle*), who is a celestial maiden seeking to return to heaven. In the play, the essence of flight is shown through an image of a body, stretching out, dressed in a heavy cloak. Arms in extension that raise the whole set, which is essentially static. Yourcenar uses the expression “hieraticism of Noh,” and in relation to this quality, i.e., the hieraticism, expresses that it is sublimated in the slow and deliberate walking of the Noh actor. Nomura Shirō, in his text, “Teaching the Paradox of *Nō*” (1997), says that Noh is an art of “nearly expressionless expression.” The greater the stillness of an actor, through “movement of constraint,” the more the heart and the mind are moved. In his text “Towards a Japanese-Style Architecture of Relationships” (2010), Kengo Kuma (b. 1954) refers to Japan as a passive century-old container of what comes from outside and impacts on the country. This state of apparent inaction is illusory. Passivity becomes a process of assimilation by means of a layered progression. These layers, in turn, consolidate themselves in a process of modernity. For Kuma, Japan is a country that has experienced modernity a number of times.

This text aims to reflect on a hypothetical modernity of Noh theatre and the mirroring of this modernity in an understanding of a contemporary architecture that seeks to respond to the demands of an increasingly volatile society – which can perhaps be confronted with the idea of the heavy cloak. Kuma’s image of Japanese-passivity, the constant flowing of waves of modernity, helps us to build a path for this fabric of thought.

**Dr. Maria João Moreira Soares** (Lisbon, 1964) is a Portuguese architect practicing since 1988, an assistant professor at Faculty of Architecture and Arts, Lusíada University of Lisbon [FAA/ULL], and a research fellow at Design, Architecture and Territory Research Centre [CITAD], ULL. Maria João is a member of CITAD’s Board of Directors, coordinator of Architecture and Urban Planning Research Group, research coordinator of RP “Architecture and Transdisciplinarity” [ArT], co-coordinator with João Miguel Couto Duarte of RP “Mapping the Architectural Inter-relations Between Portugal and Japan in an International Context” [JAPOM] at CITAD, and member of the Athens Institute for Education & Research [ATINER]. She is producer of *Aires Mateus: Matter in Reverse* (2017), directed by Henrique Pina and *Body-Buildings* (2020), also directed by Henrique Pina. Maria João holds a degree in Architecture from Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade Técnica de Lisboa [FA/UTL], 1987, and a PhD in Architecture from Universidade Lusíada de Lisboa [ULL], 2004.



Noh Scene:  
Hagoromo,  
1920s-1930s  
Kamisaka Sekka  
(Ink, color, and  
gold on silk)

## ACTION

**Monsters of Architecture and Theatre, A Look at Bali**

Tracey Eve Winton, University of Waterloo



In 1931, dramaturge Antonin Artaud saw Balinese dancers, musicians and actors perform. They were brought to Paris from Bali for the Dutch pavilion at the International Colonial Exhibition. What struck Artaud was the physical craft of their acting, which stylized expressions of the limbs, eyes, and hands (mudras) to act out mythic narratives and to dramatize the conflict between order and disorder. Against the body's own language of movement, Artaud set out to reform European theatre, which he saw as static and text-based. His encounter instigated the invention of the theatre of cruelty, a key shift in modern culture. Intrigued by its legacy to western theatre, and how its dance dramas relate to architecture in a meaningful way, I analyze these performances as a key to reading the built forms.

In Balinese theatre, danced performances that originate in the living ritual traditions use the outer wall and gateway of a temple as a stage set, so that the dancing space of the stage represents the street or public square or *banjar* of the village. The original ceremonies still exist; they take place across the entire space of the village, the temples, streets, crossroads and cemetery. In the indoor performances, the audience sits facing the temple façade with the roofed gate, meaning they fictively occupy the first courtyard of the temple, and the divine characters disgorge from the savage 'mouth' of the *kori agung* to enter the space of the human community. In the Barong drama, this roofed gate acts like a mystical mechanism for embodiment through which the gods and heroes obtain a corporeal body to visit the village. Suggesting that theatre means the *niskala* (beyond time) world obtaining embodiment. The specific motifs ornamenting gateways in temples, resembling those of the Balinese courtyard house, strongly indicate that the precinct's thresholds serve primarily for the gods and ancestors to visit the outer world and only secondarily for priests and villagers to enter in. The asymmetrical threshold forms the momentary point of contact between the two worlds, which, because it is a 'concealed joint' is also an unrepeatable journey. By the same logic, the community's return through the first temple gate, the split gate or *candi bentar* to the four corners of their village provides a practical and moral rather than metaphysical benefit, of consolidating their community.

**Dr. Tracey Eve Winton** is an architectural historian and scholar, with an interest in architectural language and narrative. She has a PhD in the History and Philosophy of Architecture from the University of Cambridge, where she studied with Dalibor Vesely, and M.Arch. in the History and Theory of Architecture from McGill University, where she studied with Alberto Pérez-Gómez. Her doctoral dissertation was *A Skeleton Key to Poliphilo's Dream: The Architecture of the Imagination in the Hypnerotomachia*. She is associate professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, where she teaches design studio and cultural history, and for many years has produced experimental theatre. She holds a Creative Achievement award from the ACSA, and a teaching award from the NCBDS. She is currently writing a book about Carlo Scarpa's Castelvecchio Museum.

## ACTION

**Ceremony and Mitos: Hanay Geiogamah and Luis Valdez**

Amy Gilley, Tarrant County College

In Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s “Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space,” he argues that a performance space “can be understood as beyond its internal relations.” This is a familiar concept in landscape architecture; the palimpsest of a site is integral to its design. In the western theater tradition, we tend to limit the site of a performance to the internal relations: “the interplay of actors and props and light and shadows-mise-en-scene-and between the mise-en-scene as a whole and the audience.” And we tend to teach these western forms as the sole performance tradition. Action, or mimesis, becomes the definition of theater: we focus on the actor. And then, we focus on cause – effect as structure, even when faced with epic structure such as Shakespeare’s work, or Sophocles.

Beyond mimesis is a world of performance that better reflects the external relations. This presentation will examine the traditions in North American Indigenous cultures: public ceremony, storytelling, and community as expressed in the later work of Hanay Geiogamah and Luis Valdez. Geiogamah’s 49 departs from his earlier work in its reconfiguration of the powwow, a modern performance in the tradition of tribal ceremonies such the Ghost Dance, which are meant to recover and retain Native culture. Luis Valdez’ later exploration of Aztec culture in his Mitos performances transformed the western-influenced *teatros* into an arena of community performance. These re-enactments of Aztec ceremonies demand the players and spectators to merge.

What architecture can gain from a study of Indigenous performance is to embrace the vernacular. These performances begin within the community and reach out, embracing the community. If architecture could likewise rethink the external relations (both physical and spiritual), it could be an architecture for and by the community. Stars replaced by citizens.

**Dr. Amy Gilley** serves as Dean of Humanities at Tarrant County College, and most recently was the Director of General Studies at Arkansas State University-Querétaro (Mexico), where she taught art history. She has written, published, and presented both internationally and nationally on topics from the digital humanities to architecture theory and history. In addition, she has written and produced original plays and films. In 2013-14, she was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she taught American Studies and conducted research. A recent NEH grant allowed her to study Native American ethno-history, which is her current research focus. She has a PhD in Architecture Research and Design from Virginia Polytechnic and State University in addition to a PhD and MA in Dramatic Arts from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She studied landscape architecture at Morgan State University.