



| **LANDSKIN** | MET | TPO |



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Produzione Teatro Metastasio

Direzione artistica Compagnia TPO

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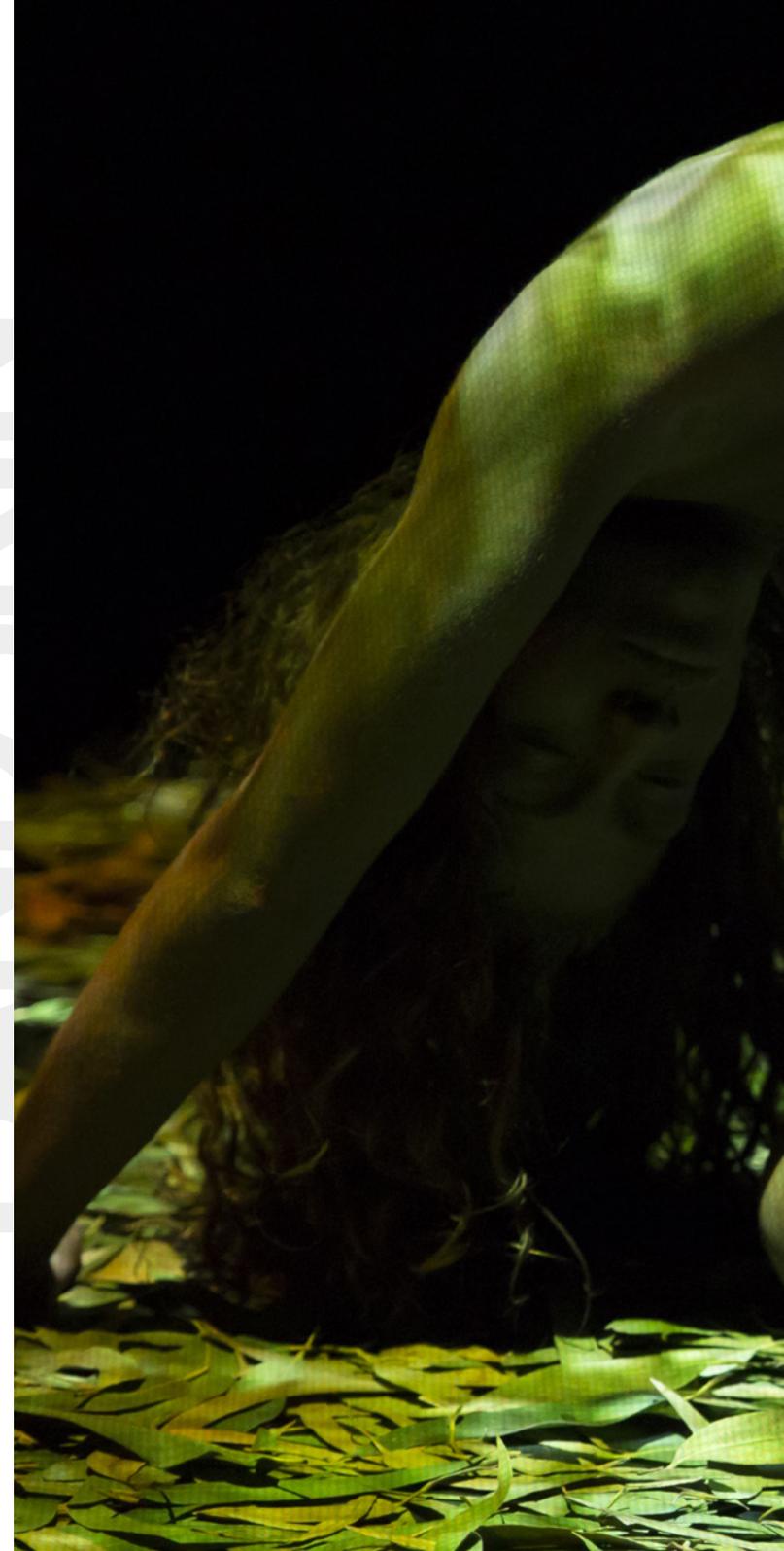
LANDS IN



Landskin is a coreographic action inspired by the poem “Dreamingtime” archetype of Australian aboriginal culture. On stage the space is entirely covered by fresh and fragrant eucalyptus leaves, two dancers emerge from the earth as vegetable beings and interact completely wrapped by texture, made from bark images, projected from above. Their naked body treated with clay cosmetic products absorbs light, it changes the perception of the skin, and it becomes one with the images. This electronic skin evokes an ideal territory, a space-garden in which the body and the eye act in harmony, sharing an abstract and ritual writing. Australian Aborigines, for example, paint their bodies with signs belonging to the language of nature and dreams, consider this relationship as an art form. In the performance the images of bark picture are expanded, take an “habitable” shape for dancers’ bodies, they turn into a skin-mother where lie down and compose works which are born and die in a live game of “electronics land art”.

Davide Venturini

First study 30' (July/October / 2016)





LANDSKIN





MOTHER SKIN

Landskin takes inspiration from the immemorial relationship between the mythical forces and the earth they have inhabited. According to Australian Aboriginal peoples, this is the Dreamtime, the dream as the stage for creation. “*Once there was nothing./ Nothing,/except the Spirit of Each Life./For a long time/There was nothing./Then,/in the mind of the Spirit of Life/... the dream began.*” In these words, which Jim Poulter has gathered and recorded from Aboriginal culture, dream is a realm connected to the creation; it is like an act through which the spirit of life is embodied in form. By becomes living life, it is, in turn, enriched, varied, re-elaborated and passed from hand to hand, from being to being, from animal to animal until it reaches Man. Almost as if the dream were an ever-burning torch to be relayed in a race. In this case man stands for only one of the possible living bodies ready to take up the dream; in the great circle of life, he is only one of the possible configurations of existence. In the traditional Aboriginal world view, no prerogatives are reserved for mankind, which doesn’t play any superior hierarchical role. This is because every “Dream” expressed by a mythic animal leaves an equally important trace in and on the earth; in this way the latter’s skin becomes the mother-skin. So it happens this skin turns out to be the writing of passages, of meaningful crossings of the living entity; it is fabric saturated with stories, which must be understood, conserved, passed on, shared. In the poetic text titled *The Secret of Dreaming*, according to Poulter’s version of it, this is the precise moment when the figure of man intervenes. “*The Man dreamt/of sharing the dawn birdsong,/the emu’s dance/and the red ochre of the sunset./He also dreamt/of children’s laughter./And the Man understood the Dream./Then he continued to dream/all the things/that had been dreamt before.*” This is the first constituent motif of the theatrical action that the TPO Company has achieved with *Landskin*. They have further enriched it with another element: the ‘garden’, according to the meaning that Gilles Clément has ascribed to the term. So it is no happenstance that Clément recalls the context of Dreamtime in the visionary chapter titled *Le rêve de l’escargot*, contained in his book *Une court histoire du Jardin*. The point of conjunction between the realm of the garden and the realm of the Aboriginal Dream is given by the encounter between art and nature. According to this view, Clément’s gardener must set aside the behaviour of one who imposes an alien design on nature; rather he must open his senses towards his regulated life, to his “spaces of respect”, to those “distances of timidity”, whereby nature regulates its own productivity.

It calls for a change of paradigm in order to fulfill, “the ecological era,” the need to give form to the gardener’s art. Clément writes, “*Down to the second half of the twentieth century, the gardener was responsible for the garden’s production [...] and its architecture and he took care of its composition and aesthetics [...].* In gardens based on aestheticism, even the plants are counted among the primary resources.” With respect to this paradigm, the gardener-artist must observe a different custom; that is to say, he must know how to achieve that awareness whereby he feels that he “belongs to the garden” rather than believing that the latter is his possession, a mere reserve of construction materials. He sharpens his senses to listen to the garden’s life, “his presence expanding over time.” He assumes as his own that art which has evolved under nature’s tutorial, which knows how to let time run its course, offering and lending words to whatever wants to come into being. Here, once again, is the recollection of the Aboriginal Dream and of the realm of time which crystallizes within it. This is not linear time, not a time when one thing merely occurs after another in a cause-related consequence; rather it is a long, dense time, a time of origin -- which is, so to speak, eternal metamorphosis and continuing assumption of new forms, like the tale of myth, passed down by oral tradition. This time becomes skin, it becomes body.

The Aboriginal Dream and gardener-artist’s aspiration - this is the substance from which Landskin takes form. This theatrical action staged by the TPO Company contains the answer to the question of how time can be visibly rendered or, to put it another way, how is it possible to make present nature’s dense, geologically-stratified, slow time, a time that is rather more auditory than distinctly visible. The answer is that time’s becoming present, its intensive actualisation, can only take place via the body. The Skin of the Earth is this body-time, a body that captures time, without allowing it to pass by and away; rather it holds onto it. The dancers move slowly on the mat composed of eucalyptus leaves and scattered pieces of bark, which is a skin; mythological animal spirits continue to live in this skin of the earth, along with their stories and actions, which gave form to the earth’s configuration; Skin, whose mixture is matter and time. So it follows that one should say that the dancers, with their snaking and fluid movements, do not act on the surface of this skin-stage; rather, they act inside it, blending in with the skin of the land and, with it, forming an indistinct natureman, a neo living organism that takes form from that which is indistinct, from the pre-formal realm of the origin.

The dancers' body-image creates a particular kind of relationship with the electronic images which fall, from above, onto the skin of the land. As active light, these images are an essential dramaturgical moment and they enter into synergy with the realm of sound, making the strategy of listening an active one. They confer the power of language on the world of natural forces, on their generative moment, such as the instant when a piece of tree bark unleashes a sound vibration that takes over the set's space. Moreover, thanks to the play of shadows and volumetric chiaroscuro, the images do not appear as a superficial light but rather as a colour-light that paints the dancers' nude bodies. This is an element of great impact. With no frills, costumes or clothing that can be traced to social roles, the dancers' bodies are literally brought to new life by the electronic image-lights, which cover the performer's body like a chromatic skin. Skin of light, skin of Dream, mother-skin.

Luca Farulli

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