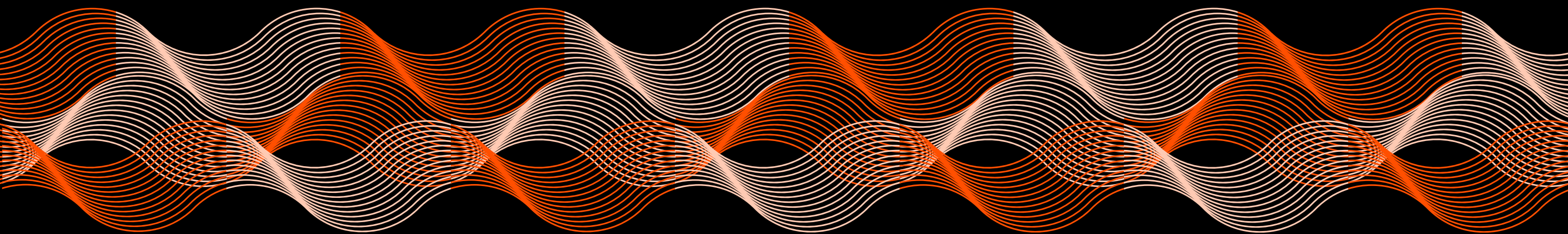


Towards a Model of Digital Narration

of the Creative Process of Performance



ELENI PAPALEXIOU

Résumé

Les réalisations dans le domaine en développement des humanités digitales facilitent grandement la documentation et le traitement du matériel d'archive, à travers l'élaboration de modèles pour des bases de données et d'outils de recherche. Grace à la grande variété des processus de création à l'œuvre dans les arts du spectacle, la recherche génétique se doit de posséder les moyens nécessaires pour la documentation, le recueil et la gestion d'un immense volume d'information(s) produites au long de tous les stades de création, depuis la conception initiale jusqu'à l'achèvement sur la scène.

L'article présente les principales hypothèses du projet récemment lancé et intitulé "Genesis : recherche génétique et visualisation numérique dans les arts du spectacle". Ce dernier se donne pour but de mener une recherche dans les études génétiques des arts du spectacle et en particulier de développer et d'implémenter un modèle de narration numérique du processus de création. Le projet est fondé sur le travail riche et complexe de deux metteurs en scène de renommée internationale, Romeo Castellucci et Dimitris Papaioannou.

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Summary

The achievements in the growing domain of the digital humanities greatly facilitate the documentation and processing of archival material, through the elaboration of models for databases and search tools. Due to the great variety of creative processes involved in the performing arts, genetic research must possess the necessary means for the documentation, collection and management of an enormous amount of information, produced during all the stages of creation, from initial conception up to completion on stage.

This article presents the main hypotheses of the newly launched research project 'Genesis: Genetic Research and Digital Visualisation in the Performing Arts', which aims to conduct research in the genetic studies of the performing arts, and more specifically to develop and apply a model of digital narration of the creative process. The project is based on the rich and complex work of two internationally acclaimed stage directors, Romeo Castellucci and Dimitris Papaioannou.

KEYWORDS

Theatre genetics, performing arts, performance, digital visualization, documentation

MOTS-CLÉS

Génétique théâtrale, arts du spectacle, performance, visualisation numérique, documentation



1. Introduction

This article presents the main hypotheses of the newly launched research project Genesis: Genetic Research and Digital Visualisation in the Performing Arts,¹ which aims to conduct research in the genetic studies of the performing arts, and more specifically to develop and apply a model of digital narration of the creative process. The Genesis project concerns the genetic analysis of all the stages of artistic creation, from initial conception up to completion on stage. Therefore, it focuses on the gradual realisation of dramatic and scenic composition; on the creators' elaboration of dramatic material; on the identification, and comprehension of, artistic thought's theoretical background and artists' sources and references; the study of the process of casting, rehearsals, and the training of actors; and the management of space, stage, costumes, lighting, production, etc. Our investigation is based on the rich and complex work of two internationally acclaimed stage directors, Romeo Castellucci and Dimitris Papaioannou.

1. The project Genesis is funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation, within the framework of the call 'Support of University Professors and Researchers', and will last for three years, 2020-2023. We would like to emphasize that the purpose of this article is to present the basic working hypotheses of a research programme which is in its infancy and has not yet entered the stage of producing research results.



Dimitris Papaioannou, *The Great Tamer*, Plovdiv One Dance Week, 28 September 2018.
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Within this framework, our research includes the following stages, which are analysed in detail later in this essay: **a)** documentation of creative material: this stage includes exhaustive archival research and study of the primary creative material (such as drafts and successive editions of the dramatic work, directors' notebooks on staging and choreography, and audiovisual material) in conjunction with other parameters (reception, critical-aesthetic evaluation, and revision or re-enactment of artistic work); **b)** casting, training, and rehearsals: this stage focuses on the close observation, recording, and study of the selection, didascalical and directorial methods, rehearsals, and the various versions of the final stage outcome; and **c)** digital visualisation of the above stages, aiming at wide dissemination of the acquired knowledge through the use of digital tools.

2. Project background

2.1. Theoretical framework

The gradual shift of interest from the study of the final stage result (the performance) to the systematic study of the process of its creation has led theatre studies to the development of genetic analysis, since the early 1990s, on the basis of the previous, and already established, genetic criticism, applied mainly to literature.² Numerous scholars have

² Cf. indicative works: A. Grésillon, *Éléments de critique génétique: Lire les manuscrits modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994); M. Contat and D. Ferrer eds., *Pourquoi la critique génétique?* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1998); J. Laurent and R. Watts, 'Genetic Criticism and its Myths', *Yale French Studies*, 88 (1996), 9-25; Dirk Van Hulle, *Textual Awareness: A Genetic Approach to the Late Works of James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Thomas Mann* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Antwerp, 1999); J. Deppman, D. Ferrer and M. Groden eds., *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Dirk Van Hulle, *Manuscript Genetics, Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

already contributed with important theoretical works to performing arts genetics by focusing on the study of manuscripts, as well as on the study of stage rehearsals.³ Through the thorough reading of their work, we constructed a theoretical framework in which the Genesis project evolved, and which is expected to have a great impact on its implementation.

However, today, one can observe an additional need for the application of new methods and models of analysis specialised for the genesis of a performance; in particular, a modern post-dramatic performance. There is a major need for systematic research which will determine, in full detail and with full exactitude, the theoretical framework of genetic research, its vocabulary and notional tools. This will contribute to the discovery and understanding of creative processes which frequently escape the notice of researchers, spectators, and sometimes even artists themselves.

With the Genesis project, we wish to address this need in the study of the performing arts, and more specifically in the domain of performance analysis, by introducing a methodological approach that connects archival research with genetic study and the digital humanities. Therefore, we propose a compound model of genetic analysis of

³ Cf. indicative works: *Genesis, Revue internationale de critique génétique*, 26 (2006); Josette Féral ed., 'Genetics of Performance', *Theatre Research International*, 33.3 (2008); Josette Féral, 'Pour une analyse génétique de la mise en scène', *Théâtre/Public*, 144 (1998), 54-59; Almuth Grésillon, Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux and Dominique Budor, *Genèses théâtrales* (Paris: CNRS, 2010); Sophie Lucet, Bénédicte Boisson and Marion Denizot eds., *Processus de création et archives du spectacle vivant: du manque de traces au risque d'inflation mémorielle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018); Sophie Lucet and Sophie Proust eds., *Mémoires, traces et archives en création dans les arts de la scène* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017); Gay McAuley, *Not Magic but Work: An Ethnographic Account of a Rehearsal Process* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Sophie Proust, *La direction d'acteurs dans la mise en scène théâtrale contemporaine* (Vic la Gardiole: L'Entretemps, 2006); Luk Van den Dries, *Corpus Jan Fabre: Observations of a Creative Process* (Gent: Uitgeverij Imschoot, 2004).



Romeo Castellucci | Societas Raffaello Sanzio, *Genesi (From the Museum of Sleep)*, 1999.
Courtesy: SRS

performance, starting from the documentation of creative material, the systematic observation and recording of casting, training, and rehearsals, and finishing in the digital visualisation of the creative process. This methodology records the creative process gradually, and stage-by-stage, taking into consideration any factors that may alter or affect it, as well as the special properties of artists and their works.

2.2. Research Experience

Before we present in detail the stages mentioned above, we would like to refer to some additional background reasons for developing the idea of this project. The Genesis project relies on extensive previous experience, acquired through many years' research in the compilation, documentation, and study of the archive of the internationally acclaimed Italian theatre company Società Raffaello Sanzio and its director, Romeo Castellucci. This research began in 2012, under the leadership of scholars Eleni Papalexiou and Avra Xepapadakou. It was implemented originally thanks to the two-year, large-scale research project Archivio, funded by the University of Crete (2012-2014),⁴ and was continued at a later stage within the frame of the research project ARCH: Archival Research & Cultural Heritage (European Action 'Aristeia II'), hosted by the University of Athens (2014-2015).⁵

4. See more on the Archivio Project: <http://www.arch-srs.com/news-1-c1m0i/i9xcxcku20/The-Archivio-Project>

5. The ARCH-Archival Research and Cultural Heritage Project (Programme Aristeia II, 2014-2015) was co-funded by the European Social Fund and national resources through the Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning' (NSRF 2007-2013). See more: www.arch-srs.com. Presentation of both projects in: Eleni Papalexiou and Avra Xepapadakou, 'Raise the curtain! Digital theatre archives', *Insights. Archives and people in the digital age*, 2 (2016), p. 14; Eleni Papalexiou and Avra Xepapadakou and Valia Vraka, 'L'archive théâtrale de la Società Raffaello Sanzio: un pèlerinage à la matière', in *Proceedings of the International Conference Processus de création et archives du spectacle vivant: manque de traces ou risque d'inflation mémorielle?* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming).

Within the framework of both research projects, which were supported by Greek and European funds, we worked with different categories of materials, such as dramaturgy, theoretical texts, photographs, notes, audiovisual material, and interviews. This experience provided us with a complete picture of the artistic oeuvre of the Società Raffaello Sanzio and the directorial methods of Romeo Castellucci. More specifically, during the long phase of documentation and digitisation, we were given the opportunity to observe the progressive implementation of the dramatic composition, the elaboration of the dramatic text or script (dramaturgy), the investigation, revelation, and comprehension of the artistic thought and vision. Furthermore, we were permitted to follow the rehearsals of numerous theatrical productions.⁶

The above-mentioned initial stages of archival research, and the total experience acquired *in situ* — through numerous research expeditions for fieldwork in the premises of the archive at Comandini Theatre in the Italian city of Cesena, as well as through the dissemination of the research outcomes by a considerable number of publications of original articles and papers — constitute a true starting point for the Genesis project.⁷ The process of tracing the evolutionary development of the

6. Namely the productions directed by Romeo Castellucci: *Julius Caesar. Spared Parts* (2014); *Oresteia (an organic comedy?)* (2015); *Democracy in America* (2017). For further details, see the chapter 'Observation and Recording'.

7. The research outcomes include thirteen presentations at international conferences and meetings, twelve published scholarly articles in international journals and collective volumes, as well as the publication of the large-scale volume entitled: Eleni Papalexiou and Avra Xepapadakou, *Origins. The Archive of Romeo Castellucci and the Società Raffaello Sanzio. A Contribution to Theatre Genetics* (forthcoming). Preview: <https://www.arch-srs.com/single-post/2018/01/13/Origins-The-Archive-of-Soc%C3%ACetas-Raffaello-Sanzio-A-contribution-to-Theatre-Genetics>

A further achievement was the honorary selection and recognition of the archive of the Società Raffaello Sanzio as a 'national cultural collection of major historical interest and importance' by the Italian Ministry of Culture. The relevant research enjoyed considerable publicity in the Greek and international press (<https://www.arch-srs.com/press>).

Romeo Castellucci and Marika Pugliatti during the rehearsals of the *Oresteia* (an organic comedy?), July 2015.

© Maria-Vittoria Bellingeri



Societas Raffaello Sanzio's artistic work, from the end of the 1970s until today, branched out in the domain of genetic analysis, a relatively new, path-breaking research field in performing arts studies.

Our proximity to, and collaboration with, large research projects has also significantly contributed to the acquisition of our knowledge and experience in this domain. Of importance is the software *La fabrique du spectacle* which has been developed by Sophie Lucet, Université Rennes II, in collaboration with her research team.⁸ This remarkably useful research tool records the stages of the creative process, such as the observation of rehearsals, the collection of documents, video recording/photographing of performances and their preparation, and interviews with artistic contributors and production collaborators. We should also add here the work of Luk Van den Dries, principal investigator of the research project, *The Didascalical Imagination: Refigurations of the Regiebuch in Contemporary Postdramatic Theatre*, hosted by the University of Antwerp, which attempts the decoding and analysis of directors' notebooks during the creative process of the performance.⁹ The comparative study of the research outcomes of both projects contributed immensely to the conception and formation of the Genesis research project. Consequently, their principal investigators have joined the Genesis research team as main members and experienced consultants.

8. <http://www.fabrique-du-spectacle.fr/>

9. <http://dighum.uantwerpen.be/didascimagination/>

3. Scientific methodology

The Genesis research project will be carried out by means of the three stages mentioned above, each of which contribute to an encompassing understanding of creative processes in performing arts, in terms of resources and methodology. While these stages break the entirety of creative processes down into different constituent parts to enhance the feasibility of this project, it is crucial to emphasise that we do not consider them as separate entities but as parts of a relational integrated model in which the interaction between each part is as important as their respective content.

3.1. Documentation of primary creative material

The documentation of primary creative material is the necessary first step in the implementation of genetic research. Each document constitutes an invaluable fragment of a complex creative process. Those tangible traces of creation, the rough work, drafts, outlines, manuscripts, pre-studies, drawings, and sketches resemble the objects that, as Stefan Zweig suggests in his essay 'The Mystery of Artistic Creation' (1938), a murderer forgets and leaves behind in the scene of a crime.¹⁰ He argues, further linking the study of artistic creation to criminology, that these 'fingerprints' are the only reliable evidence, and witnesses upon which, the mystery of the artistic creation can be reconstructed.¹¹

Genetic analysis reveals the hidden aspects of the artist's creative thought and action, not only those which have led to a specific result on stage, but also those which never materialised, remaining unformed ideas and disjointed, incomplete work plans. This variable material constitutes a major and fascinating part of the creative process, which brings to light the artists' aborted thoughts, hesitations, self-criticism and painful but productive labour of creation, preserving them as a treasure trove of information for contemporary and future researchers.

The directorial notes and *Regiebücher* refer to the stage aspects of creation that were impossible to observe, or to recognise in the finished stage result, and therefore follow how an idea evolves, changes, is rejected, abandoned, adapted, and realised. Romeo Castellucci's notebooks are full of notes, diagrams and sketches. As the years pass, the size of the pages grows smaller, and his handwriting shrinks along with them. Often, we come upon notes for more than one performance, while at other times we detect the first germs of creative conception, which will eventually evolve into a future artistic work after a sometimes considerable length of time.¹²

One example, the phrase 'You are my shepherd', which is written in a piece of paper from the late 1970s, evokes not only the production of 1983's *I fuoriclasse della bontà* [*The champions of goodness*], but also the celebrated performance of 2011, *Sul concetto di volto nel figlio di Dio* [*On the concept of the face regarding the Son of God*]. In both performances, the same phrase is used: in the first case (*I fuoriclasse*) it is integrated in the dramatic dialogue; in the second (*Sul concetto*) it is projected on the stage wall, in the very last scene.¹³ Another example, discussed here, demonstrates

¹⁰ Stefan Zweig, 'The Mystery of Artistic Creation', Lecture manuscripts, U.S.A., 1938, in *Das Geheimnis des künstlerischen Schaffens* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1981), p. 223.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 235.

¹² See also the approach of Edith Cassiers, Timmy De Laet and Luk Van den Dries, 'Text: The Director's Notebook', in *Postdramatic Theatre and Form*, ed. by Michael Shane Boyle, Matt Cornish and Brandon Woolf, (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), esp. pp. 35–40.

¹³ Romeo Castellucci, 'Tu sei il mio pastore', unpublished manuscript containing sketches, The Archive of Società Raffaello Sanzio-The ARCH project, item: 09_01_18_001.

I' EUNG IER STEHAN

- SI - RESISTENZA ELIO
- UNA VASCA - O UN VASO - CON ACQUA
- UN PAIO DI SCARPE CHE CAMMINANO DA SOLE
- CHÉ INVOCANO UNA REAZIONE A CATENA.

- SI - UN MURO DIVENTA TUTTO AERO -
- SI - UNA NUOVA MANO DI TACCO
- SI - ELETTRICITÀ D'ACQUA ACIDI - CON SPARE.
- SI - ODORE CILINDRO
- SI - RANT DI GALVANI

- UNA BOCCA DA TATTO DI FERRO.

- SI - GATTO
- SI - VOLPE

- APPARATO MECCANICO

- SI - MACCHINETTA VIBRANTE
- SI - SORRISO D'ACQUA

- DIACRAMMA CON CORPUSCOLI.

CAMERA - I - INSETTI (API)

CAMERA - II - VENTILATORI + CASE URBANE.

III - CALAMITA + POLVERE DI FERRO.

IV - ACQUA STORCA CHE COLA

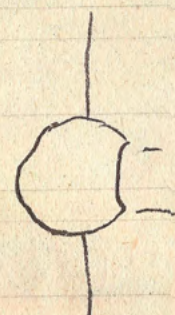


ELETTRICITÀ
CON SPARE
+
GLADIATORE
→ DAVANTI
A UNO SPECCHIO.
NETTO. CO. SPECCHIO....

GIOTOCENTRISMO

BUTTO È IL
CORRE DI SE' STESSO

~~Prova di studio tra
desiderio di tutto e
e la...~~



A page from the notebook of Romeo Castellucci from the production of *Julius Caesar*, 1997. The Archive of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, item 53_01_21_017, digitized by ARCH.

how ideas, creative stimuli, and old motifs mature in the director's mind. It is in Romeo Castellucci's early drawings and exercises from the time of his student years that we come across, for the first time, staging suggestions for Schoenberg's opera, *Moses und Aron*. He will eventually come to grips with this work more than thirty five years later, in 2015.¹⁴

The phase of documentation takes place in consecutive steps. The first step, that of identification and tabulation, involves an *in situ* examination of the archive or collection, with the aim to evaluate the size and quantity of the contents, as well as the classification, cataloguing, organising, and sorting of the records. The second step is the selection of the items which should undergo digitisation. At this point, it is necessary to formulate a policy for the selection of material to digitize and to develop a set of selection criteria with special concern for copyright matters. The first items to be digitised are those who stand out because of their unique character (single copies, manuscripts, etc.) and are consequently deemed rare and valuable. The next step of the documentation process involves the high-resolution digitisation of physical objects. The aim of the overall planning is to provide a digital rendering of the creative materials in a form as close as possible to the original. The digitised material is then stored in digital files and encoded with the appropriate metadata. At the same time, a digital database is developed providing several alternatives for data sorting, comparison, and filtering.

3.2. Observation and recording

As a second phase, after the documentation of the primary material, a critical stage of genetic process consists in observation from up close and in the recording and study of rehearsals. During the process

¹⁴. Romeo Castellucci, 'Moses und Aron', unpublished drawings on set design, The Archive of Societas Raffaello Sanzio-The ARCH project, items: 1000_01_07_001 and 1000_01_07_002.



Dimitris Papaioannou, *Primal Matter. A piece for two male performers*, 2012.
© Nikos Nikolopoulos

of preparation, artists try out their ideas, reveal their intentions, and enter into a creative osmosis with the other artistic contributors, performers, and production assistants. At this point we are confronted with several questions. For instance, under which criteria do the artists choose their performers? Which are the training methods the directors apply? To what extent is the self-acting of the performer permissible? The implementation of this research stage widens the notion of 'documentation' beyond archival research of tangible performance material.

The procedure described above is characterised by a fragile relationship between the artists and the researchers. In the framework of the Genesis project, we will employ an ethnographic approach based on participant-empirical observation.¹⁵ For the cases of Romeo Castellucci and Dimitris Papaioannou, a relationship of cooperation between the two groups (artists – researchers) has already been established through a considerable number of working meetings. Furthermore, both artists had been thoroughly informed, and have given their consent on, the goals of the project and their involvement in it (such as access to archival material, permission to observe rehearsals, and active participation in meetings) from the very beginning, by signing a common protocol of collaboration.

In particular, through participant-empirical observation we are given the opportunity to comprehend the creator's methods, which would have been impossible to know and study without experiencing the rehearsals. Regarding this issue, we should refer here to the project ARGOS: Actes de Création et Dynamiques de Collaborations Croisées dans les Arts

¹⁵. Gay McAuley, 'Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 53, (1988), 75–85; Gay McAuley (2012); Sophie Proust, 'Les écrits de l'assistant à la mise en scène', in *Genèses théâtrales*, ed. by Almuth Grésillon, Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux and Dominique Budor (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010), 73–86; Luk Van den Dries (2004); Dio Kangelari, 'Que le chemin soit long... Les répétitions de Lefteris Voyatzis', *Les Répétitions: Un Siècle de mise en scène. De Stanislavski à Bob Wilson*, ed. by Georges Banu (Bruxelles: Alternatives théâtrales, 1997), 178–184.

de la Scène. The ARGOS project focuses on the practice of creation and the cross-cutting dynamics developed during the creative process, applying five types of observation in five different European locations of creation. The research outcomes of the project ARGOS are expected to contribute immensely to this phase of observation and recording.¹⁶

In addition to the observation of the rehearsals and the standard methods of theatre genetics that will be applied, we will be intensively occupied with the filming of the preparatory stages of the performance. At this phase, the assistance of technical collaborators and professional camera operators is essential, in order to thoroughly capture the training of the actors, the rehearsals, and the meetings. As a research team, we have documented and applied the following five different types of filming: **a)** presence of the camera operator at a predetermined time and place (the operator occupies a firm place in the location of recording and follows the director's wishes and restrictions);¹⁷ **b)** a discreet, nearly unnoticed, presence of the camera in the space; **c)** the camera has the permission from the director to circulate freely between the actors and focus on details (the cameraman in this case is a professional filmmaker who possesses the ability to lend a personal artistic look to the film work — we are dealing here with an intensively subjective style of recording);¹⁸

¹⁶. Cf. the presentation of the ARGOS project by Maria-João Brillhante, Brigitte Prost, Sophie Proust, Ana-Clara Santos in the current issue of the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance*, pp. 294–333.

¹⁷. In the framework of the first experimentation of the project ARGOS which took place at Teatro O Bando, in Palmela, Portugal, the director João Brites requested that his rehearsals would be filmed through a filter, placed in front of a camera. The final footage available to the researchers was totally controlled by the artist.

¹⁸. Collaborator on the ARCH project, film director Stathis Athanasiou has proposed a model of filming the creative process when recording the rehearsals of Theo Abazis at the Greek National Theatre. Cf. Stathis Athanasiou, 'Great Work In The Making (or how I learned to stop thinking about it and embarked upon emitting information to the Internets)', <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/great-work-making-how-i-learned-stop-thinking-embark-upon-athanasiou/>

d) the director takes over the task of filming the rehearsals and meetings him/herself;¹⁹ e) the researcher operates the camera. To share my experience, when recording the rehearsals of Romeo Castellucci for the production *Democracy in America*, I always bore in mind how to associate the images from the preparation with the creative material of the artist (director's notebook, scattered notes, inspiration material, etc.). Therefore, my gaze was focused on the elements directly connected to the *desiderata* of my personal research.²⁰

Our team has the remarkable experience of the filming of rehearsals, and has thus contributed to research concerning the recording of the creative process. For example, we filmed sections of the rehearsals of the *Oresteia* (*an organic comedy?*) in Cesena, in summer 2015, and in Paris in November and December of the same year.²¹ Furthermore, we recorded the rehearsals for the performance *Julius Caesar. Spared Parts* hosted by the Athens Festival at the National Theatre of Athens, and edited a short film on its creation.²²

To sum up, our intention is to apply a model of interpretive recording rather than a simple image capture. The images will go through the selection and editing process, after which either a chronological or thematic video will be prepared to present the creative process. By way of example, the rehearsals from each week could be placed and projected in a chronological order; conversely, a thematic approach will be preferable when focusing on certain elements of the performance: movement, voice, set transitions, mechanisms, etc. The video can be compiled not only from the material of the filming, but also from the material of the

earlier creative phases — that is, from authoring or drawing. The rehearsal film footage will be accompanied by a critical apparatus, edited by specialist researchers.

In the Genesis project, we will follow two live creative processes and will also study at least five others that have already been completed.²³ Additionally, we will be occupied with the elaboration and recording of unprocessed videos, and with film editing. This task includes audiovisual footage from rehearsals and performances, as well as material projected as part of a performance. This part of our research requires special handling and care, as a great number of older audiovisual materials are still in isolated forms of film (videotapes, reels, Super 8) and, therefore, need to be transcribed (and perhaps restored) before being stored and edited in digital form.

3.3. Digital visualisation

Digital visualisation refers to the implementation and integration of digital media — for instance combinations of digital documents, drawings, sketches and graphics, and audiovisual materials — into a structured, digital, computerised environment that allows in depth study and comprehension of the creative process.²⁴ The digital treatment of artistic creations has become necessary, given the extremely rapid progress

²³. Four creative processes of R. Castellucci: three completed: a) *Oresteia* (*An organic comedy?*); b) *Julius Caesar*; c) *Genesis. From the Museum of Sleep*, and one on going, *Eleusis* (provisional title). Four creative processes of D. Papaioannou: three completed: a) *Medea 1 and Medea 2* (re-enactment); b) *Primal Matter*, and one ongoing: *New Work* (provisional title).

²⁴. Indicative bibliography on digital visualization: Sarah Bay-Cheng, 'Digital Historiography and Performance', *Theatre Journal*, 68 (2016), 507–527; Martyn Jessop, 'Digital Visualization as a Scholarly Activity', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 23.3 (2008), 281–293; Edward Segel and Jeffrey Heer, 'Narrative Visualization: Telling Stories with Data', *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics*, 16.6 (January 2011), 1139–48.

¹⁹. Dimitris Papaioannou is in the habit of filming his rehearsals under his own supervision.

²⁰. <https://vimeo.com/224105576>

²¹. <https://vimeo.com/167599290> and <https://vimeo.com/163228708>

²². <https://vimeo.com/196430879>



Romeo Castellucci | Società Raffaello Sanzio, *Julius Caesar*, 1997.
Courtesy: SRS

of the digital humanities and the need for wide dissemination of knowledge, beyond geographical, temporal, and material limitations.²⁵

Digital visualisation of the creative process is expected to contribute to the creation of a new manner of narration that surpasses simple recording on paper, either in printed or digital form. Due to the multiformity of creative processes involved in the performing arts, genetic research must possess the necessary means for the documentation, collection, and management of an enormous amount of information produced during all the stages of creation. The achievements in the growing domain of the digital humanities greatly facilitate the documentation and processing of the creative process, by elaborating, *inter alia*, models for databases and search tools, as well as especially designed software that support exhaustive analysis.²⁶ For example, it would be impossible to analyse the notebooks of Romeo Castellucci without first having them digitised. Most of his manuscripts contain tiny handwriting, smudges, scattered sketches, and many corrections, which make them practically inaccessible to readers. The study of his material, let alone visualising it, would not have been possible if it had not been digitised and could not be magnified.

Furthermore, many of the parameters that make our work difficult involve artists' perspectives on the way their personal documents are presented.

²⁵. Rémy Rieffel, *Révolutions numérique, révolution culturelle?* (Paris: Folio, 2014).

²⁶. Worth mentioning are the following projects and research papers which have contributed to the digital visualization of the performance and its creative process: Clarisse Bardiot, 'Eclats: un projet de logiciel pour annoter des captations vidéo', in *La notation du travail théâtral: du manuscrit au numérique*, ed. by Monique Martinez Thomas and Sophie Proust (Carnieres: Lansman, 2017), 131–148; Clarisse Bardiot, 'Rekall: An Environment for Notation / Annotation / Denotation', *Performance Research. On An/Notations*, 20.6 (December 2015), 82–86; Thomas Crombez and Edith Cassiers, 'Postdramatic methods of adaptation in the age of digital collaborative writing', *Digital scholarship in the humanities: a journal of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations*, 32.01 (2017), 17–35.

For example, Castellucci refuses to publish a separated sketch cut across the page, as he believes that such an act of amputation would damage the unity of the document; as a result, the reader cannot see it properly. Digital imaging gives us the ability to visualise the environment of the sketch and then focus on it. Romeo Castellucci's stage language (and Dimitris Papaioannou's) require a specific digital elaboration that will contribute to the deep analysis of their creative processes.

Before examining the work of the researcher with regards to digital narration, we should present several important technical issues related to the methodology that will be used. Digital visualisation consists of the following basic stages:

— Digitisation of the primary research material (notes, drawings, and inspiration material, as contained in notebooks and drafts). This phase involves the high-resolution digitisation of physical objects, according to international standards. The aim of the overall concept is to provide a digital rendering in a form as close as possible to the original.

— Classification and labelling of the digitised creative material. The uniqueness of each digital document can be ensured using a tripartite code-number, denoting production date, genre, and serial number.

— Digital elaboration of the selected creative material, which includes tasks such as focus, clean up, an enhancement of documents, all without corruption of the original format.

— Cross-checking of the selected digitised material with the performance documentation, consisting of photographs and video recordings.

- Storing, manipulation, elaboration and retrieval of moving images from rehearsals, castings, discussions, interviews, etc.
- Combination of digital audiovisual films through a special montage-editing programme.

All stages of the above-mentioned technical process are necessary for the researcher in his/her attempt to compose the material and to author the narration. The researcher must take into consideration each artist's idiosyncratic poetics and select which phase of the creative process to focus on. To be more precise, in the case of Romeo Castellucci, special attention must be given to his creative material (manuscripts, drawings, and sketches in the form of notebooks or loose documents). In the case of Dimitris Papaioannou, of major importance is the process of training and rehearsal, as the corporal qualities of the performers are the basic element on stage. Conversely, in the theatre of Castellucci, the body of the performer is regarded as a form which includes the dramaturgy of the performance.²⁷

The process of digital narration is sophisticated and complex for the researcher. Therefore, this challenging task cannot be accomplished without the collaboration of a team specialised in the oeuvre of each artist. At this point, a couple of key questions should be posed: what are the limits of analysis and interpretation of the artistic work during the digital visualisation of the creative process? Should the researcher simply present the evidence avoiding, any critical reading (in an archival manner), or would a critical approach be more appropriate to contribute to the deep understanding of the artistic creation? Our method of digital visualisation does not aim to embellish or enhance the artistic work, nor does it make art upon art through intrusive editing and special effects, as if it

²⁷ Eleni Papalexiou, 'The Body as Dramatic Material in the Theatre of Romeo Castellucci', *Utopia and Critical Thinking in the Creative Process* (Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2012), 75–88.

was promotional material. On the contrary, the creative material is handled with objectivity and is combined through a thorough verification of the data, always conducted in collaboration with the artists themselves.

To be more precise still, at the beginning of the process of digital visualisation, the digital items are placed in an evolutionary series, starting with the very first notion of a creative concept and leading up to the final, completed ideas and their realisation. These items usually refer to the dramaturgy of the performance, its theoretical-philosophical framework, as well as to the artistic conception of staging. Since both Castellucci and Papaioannou are visual artists, creative material of excellent value and importance is at our disposal. Therefore, we particularly focus on drawings, sketches, and inspiration material such as photographs, press cuttings, and references to visual works.

We would like to give an example which combines all three stages that will be developed in the Genesis project (documentation, observation and recording of the rehearsals, and digital visualisation). When thoroughly studying Romeo Castellucci's 1995 theatrical production of the *Oresteia* (*an organic comedy?*), we figured out that the initial point of the narration was the dramatic figure, as it comprised a large number of symbols which the researcher was called upon to decipher and decode. A characteristic example of the possible options that the digital depiction provides is the case of the dramatic figure of Clytemnestra.²⁸

²⁸ This paradigm was presented in March 2016, at the University of Antwerp, within the framework of the international conference *Tracing Creation: Genetics, Genes, and Genealogies of Performance*, in the session 'Curating the notebook III – Romeo Castellucci and Eleni Papalexiou'. In this session on the notebooks of the artist, his creative methods were revealed and analysed to a specialist audience. For a detailed analysis of the creation of the *Oresteia* (*an organic comedy?*), see Eleni Papalexiou and Avra Xepapadakou, 'Sur les traces de l'Orestie (une comédie organique?) de Romeo Castellucci: De sa conception (1995) à sa reprise (2015)', in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Theatre Genetics Percursos de Genética Teatral* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de Teatro Universidade de Lisboa, PUR, forthcoming).



Dimitris Papaioannou, inspiration material: *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (c.1480) by Andrea Mantegna and *The Great Tamer*, 2017.
© Julian Mommert

Initially, there was the impression that Clytemnestra symbolised the large cetacean of Melville, as recorded in Romeo Castellucci's published notes.²⁹ However, in his archive we discovered a large number of unpublished notes, hardly readable as they contained tiny characters, with reference to the dramatic figure of Clytemnestra. We digitised the notes in high resolution, studied them carefully and detected the words, Çatal Hüyük [Çatalhöyük].³⁰ Çatalhöyük was a Neolithic city in Anatolia (in modern day Turkey). After studying the iconography of the statues discovered at the site, we found out that the shape of Clytemnestra's body was modelled after the depiction of the mother-goddess of Anatolia, the mother of fertility.

Subsequently, through a special montage-editing programme, we combined the shots of Clytemnestra that we had recorded during the rehearsals of *Oresteia* into a digital audiovisual film. The result was revealing, as the shape of the actor's body embodying Clytemnestra was the same as the form of the statue. The research team, though sure of the evidence for this case, confirmed this hypothesis with the artist, who was astonished when realising that he had long forgotten the original source of his inspiration.

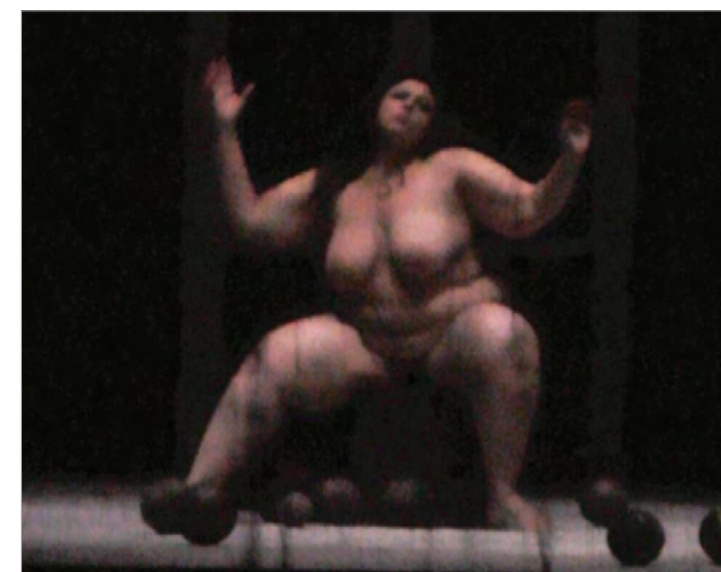
One last issue to point out here is that after the collection, analysis, and editing of digital material, this third stage will lead to the creation and operation of a digital platform. When visiting this digital portal, the user will be given the opportunity to 'observe', through one or multiple ways of narration, the processes of the artistic creation. Digital access to the above material and its metadata will increase the rate, and improve the quality of, research, allowing its composite elaboration (visualisation, deconstruction and reconstruction, contrasting, classification, comparative and complex searches, alternative readings, etc.).

²⁹ Romeo Castellucci, 'Appunti di un clown', in *Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Oresteia (una commedia organica?) Programme Leaflet* (Cesena: Societas Raffaello Sanzio, 1995), 4-14.

³⁰ Romeo Castellucci, *La scolta*, unpublished manuscript, The Archive of Societas Raffaello Sanzio-The ARCH project, 1995, item 48_01_25_001.

3
CLITEMNESTRA
AMORI DI RISSE IDIOMATICHE, TROVASI D'ALIA TUA CONDOTTURA. DA UN BUCO NELLA CAPOTA SI INTAVOLERA
UN FOLLO DI CORPO CHE AVANTA E INDIETREGGIA IN CONTINUAZIONE.
E LA CLITEMNESTRA BALENA. IL PIU' GRANDE MAMMIFERO. L'IDEA DI CORPO PIU' GRANDE DEL MONDO. IL
PARTE STESSE PIU' DEFINITIVO. MELVILLE, CREATURA PADRONA, ABISSALE, CHE TRASCINA GIU' A SE' OGNI
COISA CON IL RISUCCHIO DI OGNI SUA ~~TRIONFALE~~ LENTA IMMERSIONE. METAFORA PNEUMATOLOGICA?
COME OGNI OTTACCO PRATICA UNA ECONOMIA DEL RESPIRO INTUTTI I TUBI DELLA SCENA SUGGERISCONO (SOLLO)
QUESTO: DEFINITIVAMENTE APPARE UN'OVERLAPPIAZIONE PIU' VIBRENTE DELLA PAROLA.
COME HA VENESE DI ÇATAL HÜYÜK, CLITEMNESTRA E REGINA DEL CORPO PARTORITO. TEATRO SIGNIFICA UN'ALTRA
PARTORIRE DEMONICAMENTE UN CORPO, PRIMA DI TUTTO COME RES EXTENSA, VESO, GIUNGO DA FAR VEDERE PER UN SOLO
BARACCONO IN SE'. Sento fortissimo in questo momento lo scontro alto, l'AGONE CON

Romeo Castellucci, *La scolta*, item 48_01_25_001 (detail), digitized by ARCH.



Marika Pugliatti as Clytemnestra. The *Oresteia* rehearsals, Paris, December 2015.



Female figurines from Çatalhöyük.

3.4. Artistic corpus

The two case studies selected are the creative processes and works of Romeo Castellucci³¹ and Dimitris Papaioannou.³² These two major artists of the contemporary international theatre scene are famous for their unique poetics, which cover the whole range of performing arts and introduce new questions concerning the methodology of their analysis and interpretation. Both artists value the creative process of their work, and have published genetic material from their creations many times in programme books and albums. Romeo Castellucci, in particular, has been in the habit of editing programme books containing collages of images and visual

31. <https://www.arch-srs.com/romeo-castellucci>

32. <http://www.dimitrispapaioannou.com/en/profile>

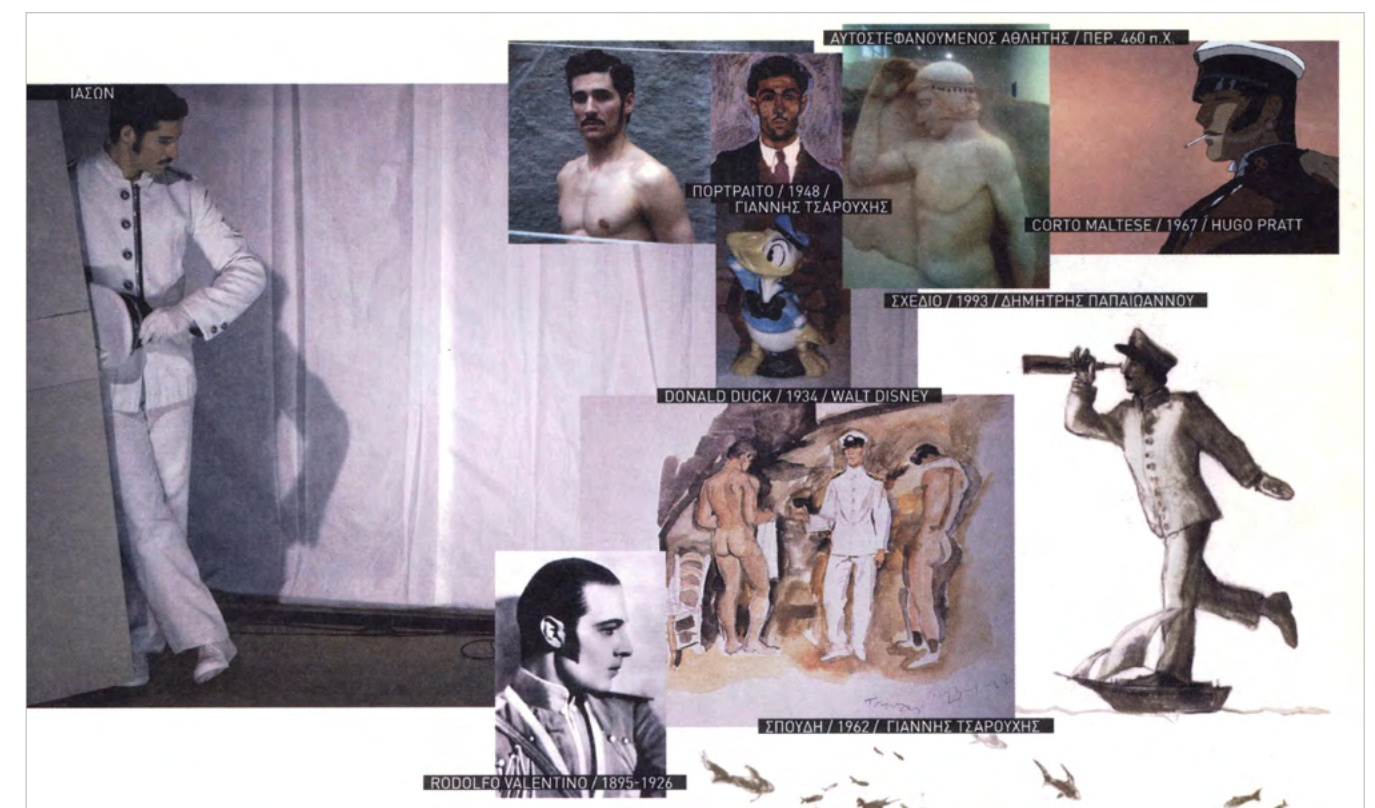
arts works with rather cryptic references to the dramaturgy of each performance. In such a case, our research task is not only to collect but also to decrypt and interpret this enigmatic material.

We applied a considerable number of criteria for the selection of the two artists who constitute the main case studies of the *Genesis* project. Among them, I should mention the hybrid and post-dramatic character of their work, which covers the whole range of performing arts: theatre, opera, dance, video art, and installations. Their multi-prismatic creation is accompanied, too, by rich and visually interesting documentation material contained in their archives (drawings, sketches, diagrams, outlines, notes), since both of them are also visual artists, an attribute which relates directly to their creative work. Additionally, the possibility of access to their archival material, and of observing their rehearsals, also played a crucial role when we reached our final decision.

Both Romeo Castellucci and Dimitris Papaioannou have developed a unique creative process, which has led to emblematic works of art, such as Castellucci's *Santa Sofia. Khmer Theatre* (1986), *Hamlet (the vehement exteriority of a mollusc's death)* (1992), *Oresteia (an organic comedy?)*



Romeo Castellucci's collage on page 35 of the programme leaflet of the production *Julius Caesar*, 1997, item 53_03_11_035, digitized by ARCH.



Dimitris Papaioannou's collage on page 94 of the programme leaflet of the production *Medea 2*, 2008.

(1995), *Julius Caesar* (1997), *Genesis. From the museum of sleep* (1999), *The Divine Comedy* (2008), *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2014), and Papaioannou's *Medea 1* (1993), *2* (2006), *Medea 2* (2008), *Primal Matter* (2012), and *The Great Tamer* (2017). Regarding our work on the artistic corpus, the Genesis research team is expected to elaborate, in the course of three years, at least eight different creative processes, six of which are completed performances, while two will be ongoing (works in progress). In the case of completed processes, research is based on their documentary traces (audiovisual material and written documents), while in the case of ongoing processes, their development will be observed and recorded from their gestation onwards. The research results of the project aim to develop new protocols and methods which may be applied to the work of other artists, thus leading to the establishment of interdisciplinary genetic research in the domain of the performing arts.

Last but not least, the Genesis research project highlights the spirit of cooperation between European researchers and institutions. Although it is hosted in a Greek academic institution, the University of the Peloponnese, it exhibits great extroversion as it integrates European artists and European universities, embracing the main objectives of the European Association of Theatre and Performance (EASTAP).³³ The co-operative work, which characterises the performing arts in general, encourages collaborations between artists, researchers, and the audience. Therefore, the proposed corpus forms the basis for a bidirectional research path that will enhance the interests of both Greek theatre studies scholarship towards contemporary international developments in the domain of performing arts, as well as of the international academic community, especially that of the genetics of performing arts scholarship, for modern Greek art, with an ultimate aim to promote synergy and cooperation.

³³. The EASTAP constitution, Paris, 07.10.2017:

<https://www.eastap.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/EASTAP-constitution-.pdf>

Dimitris Papaioannou, *The Great Tamer*, 23 May 2017.
© Julian Mommert



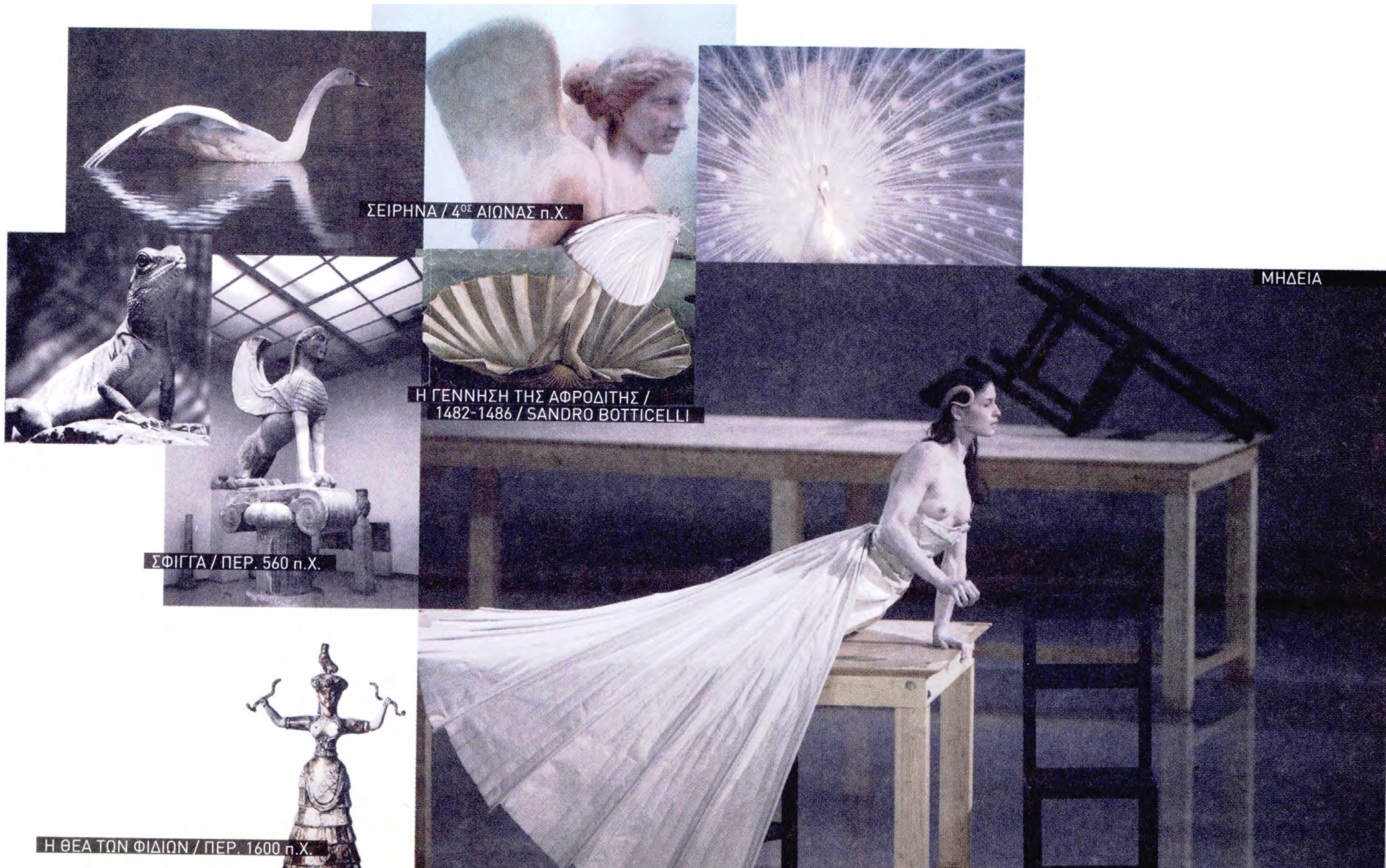
4. Conclusion

The Genesis: Genetic Research and Digital Visualisation in the Performing Arts project combines genetic research with new technologies and is expected to contribute to the proliferation and dissemination of acquired knowledge. Furthermore, through digital recording, enhancement, and visualisation of archival documents and performance material, genetic research imparts a technological dimension to the arts and humanities so that they may better serve research, educational, and cultural aims. Moreover, the Genesis project envisions encouraging artistic research and performance experimentation on new forms in the competitive digital environment of the twenty first century. Finally, this project hopes to contribute to performing arts research, with an emphasis on the elaboration of complex and pertinent research questions, the widening and deepening of knowledge, and the establishment of large-scale collaborations in the artistic and academic field.

Within this framework, the project aims to produce a series of applications with beneficial social and economic results (digital collections, data dissemination platforms, digital exhibitions, internet-streamed screenings, open access cultural depositories, lifelong and long-distance learning, etc.). From this perspective, genetic analysis will allow contemporary art to be studied, interpreted, and understood by a wider audience. Additionally, active public participation is now necessary to disseminate scientific knowledge to non-experts.³⁴ It is precisely this need that is expressed in this project through open culture. To cite the director Milo Rau, 'Theatre is not a product, it is a production process. Research, castings, rehearsals and related debates must be publicly accessible'.³⁵

← 34. Linda Silka, "'Silos' in the Democratization of Science', *International Journal of Deliberative Mechanisms in Science*, 2.1 (2013), 1–14.

← 35. Milo Rau, 'Le théâtre à venir / The Theatre to Come', Keynote speech at the First EASTAP conference, *Decentering the vision(s) of Europe: The Emerge of New Forms*, (Paris, 25–27 October 2018).



Dimitris Papaioannou's collage on page 94 of the programme leaflet of the production *Medea 2*, 2008.

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