# Dance and Immersive Realities

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Audience wandering through *metakimosphere no.4*, created by DAP-Lab, 2017, London © DAP

You enter the large installation space. A blue-red light bathes the suspended, draping fabrics into a ghostly aura. The fabrics cover loudspeakers; to one side there is a soundsphere, lit by thin blue electroluminescent wires that glow like dendrites. You move between the many speakers distributed around this fabrics forest, noticing the subtly changing sounds that percolate through the atmosphere, like mist that slowly settles on branches and leaves. Clicking noises, small percussive shrieks, like bird cries or whispers of wind, repeat rhythms, slowly echoing away.

You sense the dusky light, an in-between shimmer of gray that filmmakers like when they search for the blur of indefinite tones. Over there, something moves, as if a figure had become visible behind the fabric. It turns out only to have been the masked ghost of a dancer, passing by. At the far end, you see a musician typing poetry on an

old typewriter, her fingers on the keyboards generating the sound that drifts through the space. On the other side you discover a floating coral reef, its under-water blue-green color a digital projection, but you want to lie down in it, be carried by the waves
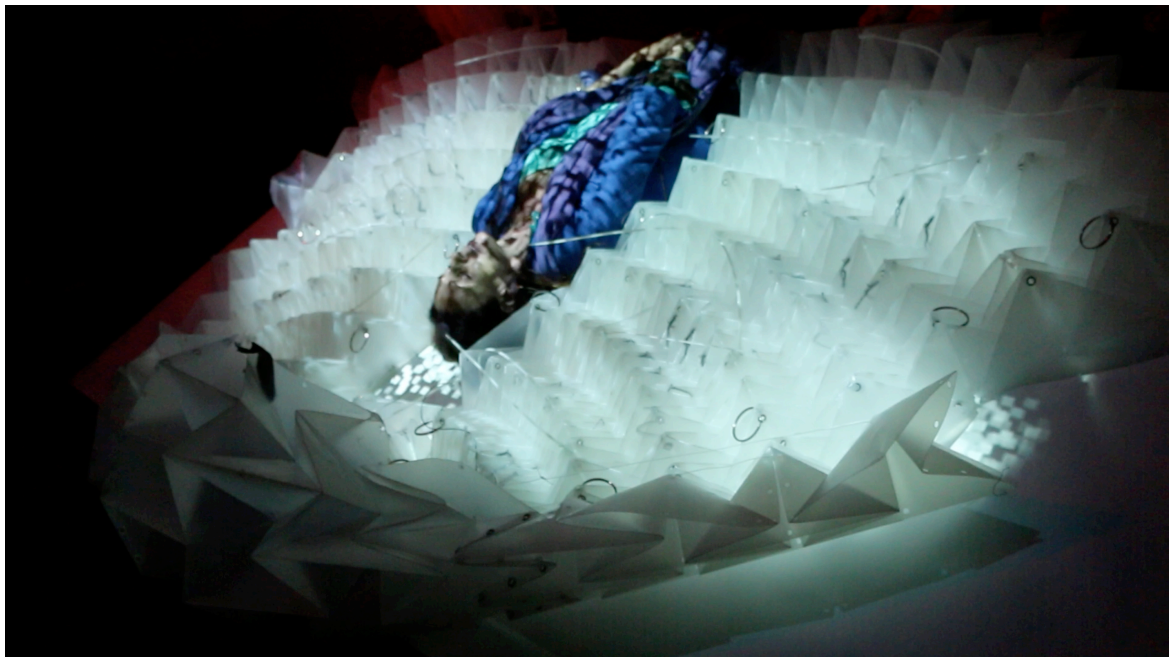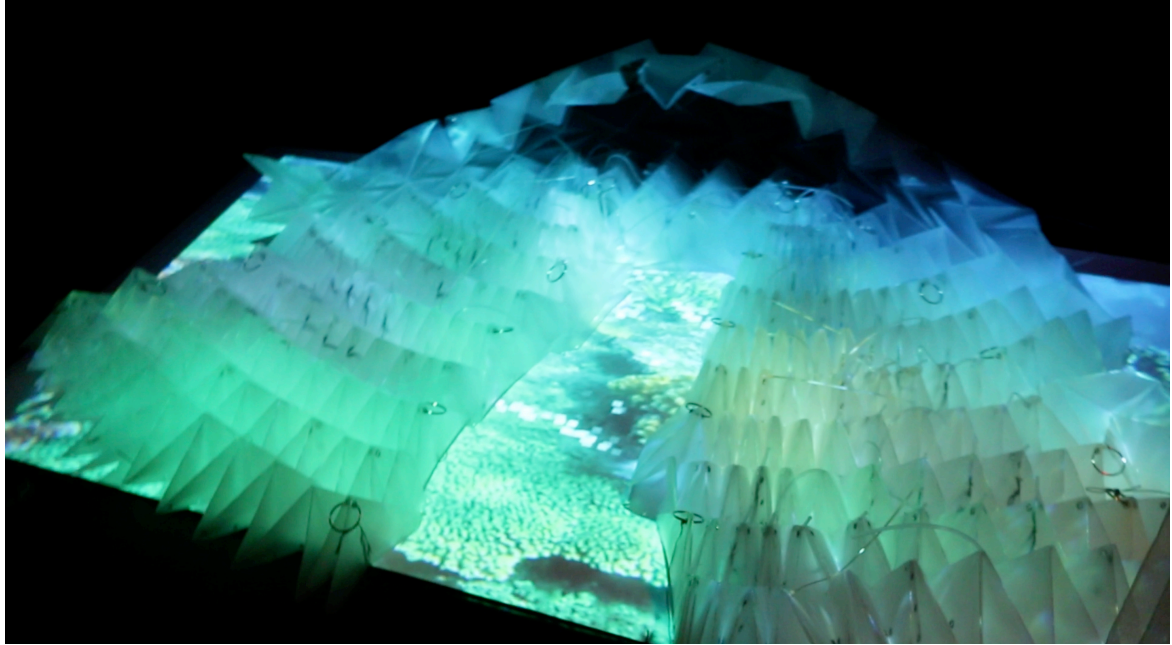
Visitor floating inside coral reef, *metakimosphere no.4* London © DAP

of color and touch of light. After you have floated, you want to fly, perhaps become avatar-like in your unbounded leaps across the Malagasy landscape following the path of the lemurs, you, the moonlit acrobat. You are handed the VIVE headset, and enter the VR world – night wanderer and dancer amid the tamarind trees. Your ears hear

the footsteps ascending, your skin's uncommon senses pick up the currents of unseen rivers, you are transported and become the dance.

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"Immersive Medien," Chris Salter argues in *Tanz* 12/2016, are recording systems of motion capable of measuring the body as an instrument whose movements could be quantified and objectified. In an interactive feedback environment, moving bodies can also mingle with a moving (VR) world, either projected into the surrounding or onto the screens of the wearable goggles. Whereas Salter warns us of today's enhanced *society of control*, where automated machines and algorithms are "technologizing the senses," a manifesto of future immersive dance would take the opposite stance: Let us proclaim the end of theatrical control. Immersive dance gets rid of the illusion of community and immunity.

Visitor wearing an HTC VIVE headset in *metakimosphere no.4* © DAP-Lab

What virtual reality translation means for us, in DAP-Lab's immersive dance installations, is a form of sensorial interconnection with the atmospheric. Rather than just offering the telepresencing of 3D virtual and computational worlds that can be entered through wearables, we imagine the entire environment to be multisensorial,

experienceable through touching, listening, and moving-through, with encounters that surprise in a continuum of atmospheric "wearable" space. You become ensounded and entranced. The whole a wearable – in the sense in which Forsythe created matter-of-factly choreographic objects that include algorithmic instructions, e.g. *A Volume, within which it is not possible for certain classes of action to arise,* or *Nowhere and Everywhere at the same time.* We tend to think of our immersive dance atmospheres as invitations, not instructions. For *metakimosphere no. 3,* for example, we invited an audience of blind and vision-impaired people, offering them to touch the dancers' costumes to feel and hear how they move generating sound. We did not expect them to stay for quite a long time telling us all they imagined through sensing.

The audience dances through the intra-corporeal atmosphere (digital projections, sound, light becoming part of the dynamic embedded experience), which in *metakimosphere no. 4* also includes a game console and the nervous soundsphere in which visitors can listen to their temperatures (GSR interface). Rather than worrying about technologizing the senses, we give more weight to *immersion* as an kinaesthetic and somatic practice. The progression of technologies, as we know from the failure of interactivity in dance, is a relative phenomenon, and not all of us are hooked into the latest data devices. The dance of biosignals is still unexplored, and biosensors need to learn to understand our organs better. An increasing number of artists, who may even use live coding and real-time media, are interested in retro media, strange confluences of old and new instruments, the noise of vibrational disorganization. The sensorial interconnection and social ambience of *atmospheres** offers new, vibrant potentials to examine how a space enters us, and how we enter an elemental material perception space.

* Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, 7th edition, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2013.