HOLD: EVENT-SPACE AND CONTAINERIZATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

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"The New"

> *To approach the problem of "the new" then, one must complete the following four requirements: redefine the traditional concept of the object; reintroduce and radicalize the theory of time; conceive of "movement" as a first principle and not merely as a special, dismissible case; and embed these later three within an all-encompassing theory and politics of the "event".* (Kwinter, 2001, p.11)

Theatre Architecture is conventionally considered a static object – as playhouse, concert hall, dance space, opera house, stadium, or even art gallery – designed to contain performance and its audiences within a disciplinary hold. However, due to increasing interdisciplinarity and the blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality, the performing arts exceed genre taxonomy and even architecture itself. Performance therefore can neither be spatially contained nor physically restricted – especially in our age of media spectacles, fluid technologies and uncontainable bodies. Edith J. R. Isaacs recognizes this as far back as 1935 in the introduction to her anthology, *Architecture for the New Theatre*, writing that "in the art of theatre, which uses for its completion all of the other arts, the building that serves it should be a way to freedom rather than a house of bondage"

(1935, p.10). Centralizing spatial oppression as "the problem" facing theatre architecture, Isaacs maintains design needs to be approached "not only as an arrangement of mass and form, and not only as a functional unit, but as a social unit" (1935, p.12). Six decades later, architectural theorist Sanford Kwinter maintains that "the new" in architecture emerges from rethinking its objecthood by paying attention to temporality, mobility and the event dimension (2001, p.11). The perceptual shift from a static spatialization of time (architecture as enduring built form) to the livelier temporalization of space (architecture as dynamic environmental spacing) acknowledges 'spatial performativity', which philosopher Jacques Derrida refers to as "*espacement* (...) the archi-manifestation of force, or of life" (2004, p.46). By emphasising movement, relativity and duration, both Kwinter and Derrida hypothesize architecture as *evental* – active, spatiotemporal and interruptive of the status quo – and therefore as dynamic becoming rather than passive being. This has socio-political implications that require attention to ensure a less repressive and more emancipatory paradigm shift in performance space as well as a deeper engagement with its materiality, historicity and meaning.

In *Event-Space: Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-garde* (Hannah, 2018) I observe how space is shaped by the transitory event – whether historic (epic incidents), aesthetic (theatrical displays) or banal (daily occurrences) – in order to expose architecture itself as a multiplicitous event and an intricate player in our everyday lives. As an event, the space housing events is therefore an integral driver of performance and how it is experienced. What does this mean at the end of a year in which a global pandemic, as major irruptive event, creates myriad events that radically shift our spatial perceptions of proxemic bodies, contestable borders and uncontainable ecosystems, while proving the conventional auditorium to be a house of potential contamination? This paper considers the evental nature of a seemingly banal shipping container – designed to efficiently convey goods across oceans and continents – and its links to globalization (colonialism's ongoing project) and neoliberal gentrification, as well as more communal and haptic potential described by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) as flights of "Fantasy in the Hold".

In the days preceding Christmas 2020, Britain experiences its highest rate of coronavirus cases, alongside the introduction of a virulent new strain, resulting in a nationwide lockdown and Europe closing its borders to the United Kingdom. This leads to thousands of trucks stranded at the southern frontier on December 21st, an event consistent with the many breakdowns and interruptions experienced throughout 'the year of Covid-19'. The long lines of freight vehicles at a standstill – each carrying the ubiquitous shipping container – represent yet another disturbance in the smooth flow of global capital in which broken networks set off chain reactions that disclose an inherently unsustainable system. Earlier in the month, a multiple stack collapse on the freight ship *ONE Apus* led to 1,816 containers falling into the Pacific Ocean, including 64 dangerous goods (DG) boxes. While this 'record loss' (Van Marle, 2020) was barely reported in mainstream news, a media focus on the pandemic has exposed 'logistics' – the detailed organization and implementation of transporting goods and people – as a failed enterprise. Proliferating spectacles, such as miles-long tailbacks of lorries, draw attention to this icon of global trade and essential component in supply-chain capitalism.

Such systemic failure coincides with another event on December 21st, in which a UK court convicts two lorry drivers with people-smuggling and manslaughter after the discovery, a year previously (23 October 2019), of 39 Vietnamese men, women and children (aged between 15 and 44) who had perished of asphyxia and hyperthermia in such an enclosed container on the back of a truck. Here, a confluence of historic and quotidian events exposes the shipping container as neither a passive nor prosaic receptacle: aligning it to what Alexander Klose calls "a crucible of globalization", which harbours "container worlds" (Klose, 2009) that range from harbourside ports and industrial showgrounds to carriers of pandemics and human cargo: intruding into and reconfiguring physical sites and cultural paradigms.

Container Worlds… off-the-shelf, pop-up, fit-for-purpose, plug-in-city…

There are an estimated 20 million units of the standardized intermodal freight container – a steel box designed for efficient worldwide transportation by boat, truck and train – in motion over water and on land, rendering it the neoliberal global object *par excellence*. In theatre, its access and dimensions need to be taken into account for the efficient delivery, storage and movement of scenery and touring shows, which also link to a standardized architecture serving the performing arts market. Yet, the shipping container has become the building block for temporary venues such as the *Illuminated Container Wall* – a curving multilevel enclosure of staggered units designed by Bernades Jacobsen for Rio de Janeiro's Music Festival (2011) – as well as more enduring theatre buildings, the best examples of which are the *Container Kunsthalles* in Seoul (2009) and Berlin (2011) by Platoon Cultural Developments. What follows is a discussion of the aestheticization and utilization of the container as a modular building unit for a range of architectural typologies – from pop-up event spaces to high-end and high-rise housing, as well as emergency border accommodation and triage medical stations. Hailed as eco-friendly, sustainable, compact, structurally-sound, accessible and affordable, these easily reproducible transportation units are increasingly employed in the built environment as a modular clip-on kit-of-parts to be stacked, unstacked, relocated and reused as needed. However, the shipping container's 'meanwhile use' – co-opted for temporary and emergency accommodation – has become more and more long term, leading to the rather alarming phrase 'container urbanism', which signals an impoverishment of architecture and the built-environment itself. It is also employed as a theatrical tool for covert gentrification in which developers transform brownfields sites and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities into zones of privilege under the guise of 'culture-led regeneration'.

Ten years ago, and consistent with this container-turn in architecture, I was involved in the design development of the *Container Globe*, a classically Shakespearean pop-up venue to be constructed out of thirty repurposed shipping containers, the dimensions of which roughly conform to the multilevel seating galleries of the Globe Theatre that opened in 1599 on the south bank of London's River Thames, drawing audiences from all walks of life, until it burnt down in 1613.

The Container Globe: "party like its 1599!"

An economical, mobile and demountable alternative to a bricks-and-mortar venue, the *Container Globe* (Fig. 1) is described by its originator and producer, Angus Vail, as a "punk reimagining of Shakespeare's Theatre" (Vail, 2016). In the first half of the last decade, I collaborated with Vail – a zealous afficionado of both punk rock music and Shakespearean drama – on the design development of this venue, which was conceived as a transportable kit-of-parts, composed primarily of stacked shipping containers with rock 'n roll lighting infrastructure and exterior scaffolding walkways clad in steel mesh. In his 2016 TEDx Talk on the project, Vail describes the Container Globe as a "glow-in-the-dark, big Mad Max thunder-dome theatre", created from cheap, strong and universally available 20^{ft} shipping containers that resemble "giant punk rock Lego building blocks". Like New York City's Joseph Papp (1921-1991), who established *The Public Theatre* in the late 1950s, New Jersey-based Vail sees this venue as an opportunity to bring the Bard's work to diverse audiences, especially those who perceive conventional theatre as elitist, intimidating and unaffordable. He envisages the mobile venue occupying empty sites in deprived neighbourhoods as a means of urban rejuvenation, by cohering the community around the theatre. Clad with industrial steel mesh embedded with LED lighting, the venue is designed as a media object: fulfilling multiple roles, including cinema, gallery and even a skating rink; attracting food-trucks and micro businesses while transforming blighted locations into lively urban parks.

It is worth noting that Papp, who came from an impoverished and itinerant childhood, inaugurated the New York Shakespeare Festival in an abandoned band shell on Manhattan's East River Park, insisting that all performances are

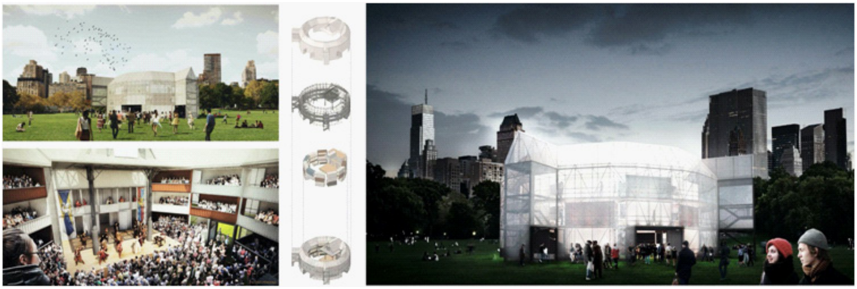

Figure 1. *Container Globe.* Images: created by Jonathan Go
http://www.thecontainerglobe.com

without charge. When the company lost the site in 1956 and were no longer able to bring the people to free Shakespeare, Papp decided to take free Shakespeare to the people on the back of a flatbed truck that toured all five boroughs of NYC. A year later the vehicle 'broke down' in Central Park, claiming squatters' rights and presenting gratis summer productions that led to Shakespeare-in-the-Park. This eventually became the site of the Delacorte Theatre, which opened in 1962 and – with continuing free admission – remains a permanent fixture alongside the Lower Manhattan multi-hall venue Papp established five years later in the former Astor Library, known as *The Public*. The name itself reinforces Papp's mission for the theatre to be part of the city itself and accessible to diverse audiences. Unfortunately, the 2012 renovation to *The Public*'s front-of-house (costing $40 million USD) has given precedence to sponsors and serving a free-market economy through a design – focusing on security, surveillance and gastronomy – that is no longer democratic in atmosphere or actuality. Such gentrification of spectators and neighbourhoods typifies the significant shift from a run-down late-mid-century NYC to a more thriving centre built on the ‘creative economy’ model, in which the cultural sector – hailed as an important driver of wealth, employment, tourism and development – now principally serves the capitalist elite. Stephen Pritchard refers to this as the ‘hyperinstrumentalization’ of art that “has entered into a Faustian pact with neoliberalism, gaining power and influence but only by becoming entirely incorporated into market economics, entrepreneurialism, commodification and consumerism” (2019).

The *Container Globe* is currently being tested on an empty lot in Detroit; a city that declared bankruptcy in 2013 and is regenerating through investor developments. Although Vail doesn’t advocate (as Papp tenaciously did) for all events to be free, he does envisage “the Yard tickets to be less than the price of a movie ticket – so almost everyone can afford to see great Shakespeare – and we think we’ll attract lots of students, millennials and young people just curious about this bold new theatre, who want to engage in and lead the audience’s involvement in the plays” (Vail cited in McKee, 2016). As will evolve throughout this paper, such idealism becomes caught up in art that serves, rather than challenges, the neoliberal elite, resulting in productions that generally avoid radical socio-political commentary in spaces, which eventually eradicate the very accessibility and diversity they purport to foster and support. Citing Aaron Betsky’s reference to the shipping container as “a building block, an expression of systems, a moveable bit of changing society, and something that could be found, rather than having to be constructed by using up resources”, Alexander Klose asserts it “must serve as a metaphor for everything bad, misanthropic and technocratic” (2009, p.283). As will unfold, despite its link to an affordable and sustainable ideal, we cannot ignore the container’s instrumental role in gentrification, exploitation, corruption and contamination, while holding its multiple mythologies in mind.

Cargo Architecture

This paper is therefore a coming to terms with the underlying narratives of container architecture and the complex role it plays in a globalized world, as exposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Yet, described by Klose as "the single most important technological innovation underpinning the globalization of trade" (2009), the simple intermodal box has long fascinated architectural modernists. In his 1967 article, 'Flatscape With Containers', renowned architectural critic, Reyner Banham, for whom container ports denoted a technologically advanced city, saw these inscrutable objects with concealed contents as monumental units in-flux (Banham, 1967). In *How Buildings Learn* (1994), Stewart Brand, whose research library was a shipping container, praised the simplicity and adaptability of their form. As visual cultures theorist, Richard. J. Williams, contends, "Banham and Brand helped make the container cool, plugging the shipping container into architecture's enduring but never-quite-realized fascination with modularity" (Williams, 2019). Performance designers, Shauna Janssen and Joanne Kinniburgh (2019), discuss the myth of their sustainable reuse in relation to the harmful nature of their materials and finishings, designed to resist marine conditions and unwanted pests, which create toxic waste when cleaned for repurposing. Fabricated for things, not people, the unit itself – damp, dark, airless and uninsulated – is inherently unhospitable, requiring a lot of work to be made habitable. Yet at the heart of its appeal seems to be the particularity of its minimal industrial aesthetic, which plays into a global imaginary, mythologizing its mobility, flexibility, materiality, ecology and universality.

Janssen and Kinniburgh collaborated with me on the design and curation of *PhoneHome* (Fig.2), an intermedial exhibition for Chile's 2017 *Architecture and Urbanism Biennale*, which was themed on 'Unpostponable Dialogues' and focused on emergency accommodation for which the shipping container provides a bottom-line form, adapted into the ubiquitous flatpack emergency cabin[1]. Assembled from extruded polystyrene sandwich panels, these off-the-shelf shelters are cheaply produced and sited in detention centres as well as countless refugee camps around the globe. Epitomising alienating and spatially reductive experiences, such accommodation barely contains what Giorgio Agamben (1998) calls a 'bare-life'. Arranged in precisely gridded coordinates they equate with Elaine Scarry's description of an architecture of "protection" as "a materialised image of decreased sentience" (Scarry, 1987, p.349). Their flagrant banality and attention to the most basic requirements of accommodation cause us to wonder at such design solutions, which are incapable of protecting against the indifference of extreme weather and vermin, let alone indicate any sense of comfort, domesticity or communality. As Shauna Janssen writes in the exhibition catalogue:

> *The miniature refugee cabins in* PhoneHome *reference architecture's capacity to reproduce a nation-state of social exclusion; provoking artistic, curatorial, architectural and urban design practices to address spatial injustice.* PhoneHome *is a "call" to redress the histories and contemporary continuum that the space of shipping and containerisation hold where refugees tend to exist as mere cargo and human surplus.* (Janssen, 2017)

This reference to human cargo recalls the aforementioned tragedy of human smuggling where countless refugees risk and forfeit their lives, unable to escape the airtight containers where they are sequestered by criminal syndicates who profit from their fleeing intolerable situations without ensuring their

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[1] *PhoneHome* was composed of nine identical maquettes of emergency refugee cabins on a mirror-lined niche in the gallery wall before which was placed a padded kneeler like those found in church pews. Each cabin is embedded with a smartphone streaming a looping video accompanied by sound connected to hanging headphones. Literally a home for a phone, *PhoneHome* refers to the need of those perceived as 'aliens' to connect and return to a familiar realm by utilising the mobile phone as a critical device. The architectural model is therefore scaled around a standard affordable smartphone, with each cabin streaming videos by artists and correspondents addressing the themes of spatial mediation, alienation and detention.

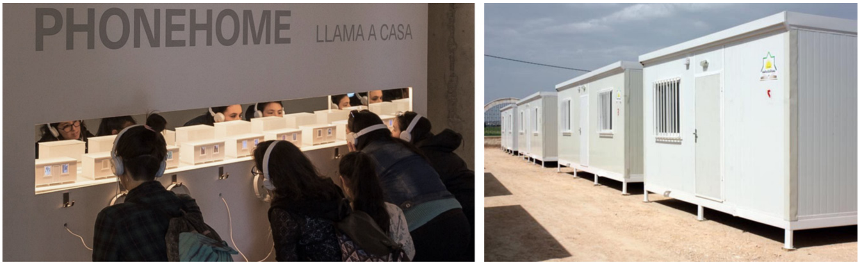

Figure 2. *PhoneHome* exhibition: 2017 Architecture & Urbanism Biennale. Valparaiso, Chile Designed and Curated by Dorita Hannah with Joanne Kinniburgh and Shauna Janssen. Images: Pablo Bianco

health and safety. The shipping container – often co-opted for emergency accommodation, solitary confinement and illegal trafficking – is haunted by histories of exploitation, slavery, colonization and racism (those 'container worlds' mentioned by Klose), which cling to the seemingly rational simplicity of form as architectural building block.

In his *New York Times* Opinion piece, 'The Sinister Brutality of Shipping Container Architecture', Williams, reminds us that "the harsh landscape of the shipping container is a terrible shorthand for modernity. It's not just the now-inescapable connotations of the migrant crisis. It's that the people who've most celebrated the container form are precisely not the ones who've ever had to live in one: they can always go home, to a proper building somewhere else" (2019). This becomes particularly acute when reviewing the designs of large-scale affordable housing designs: such as the solution gaining top prize for an ideas competition to upgrade Mumbai's Dharvi slum (2015), or the award-winning proposal to re-house those sheltering in Cairo's El'Arafa cemetery

(2019). In India, Ganti + Associates (GA) Design propose a 100-meter-tall vertical complex comprised of four eight-storey high, self-supporting container stacks while Egyptian architects, Mouaz Abouzaid, Bassel Omara and Ahmed Hammad, have planned 'sheltainers' made up of clusters and towers to be built between and over the tombs of a the Necropolis. Somehow the student-housing projects in more affluent countries, such as 1000-unit Keetwonen container city by Tempohousing in the Netherlands (2006), do not seem as problematic as the proposals to transform slums with their individualized makeshift dwellings into modular container landscapes that emphasize a technological hold on bodies while withholding flexibility and personal expression.

Container Landscapes as Scenography

In his *ArchDaily* Opinon piece, 'What's Wrong with Shipping Container Housing? Everything', Mark Hogan (2015) refutes arguments for the container as a feasible accommodation unit, indicating the limitations of size, structure, insulation, stacking, systems and modularity. He does point out that "(f)or a temporary facility, where an owner desires the shipping container aesthetic, they can be a good fit". However, this 'aesthetic' is culturally loaded. The flip side of low-end temporary container housing – often becoming permanent for those with limited or no options – can be found in imaginative architectural solutions for cultivating longer-term high-end developments, which co-opt the industrial seaport guise, described by Williams as "a mark of hipster modernity (…but) utterly ill-suited for human life" (2019).

This 'look' is often found in film, video and television such as the high-octane 3-D Hollywood film, *Step Up Revolution* (2012), which presents dance "as freedom, success, community, and even social engagement" (Backstein, 2016, p.300). Set in Miami, it features agitational performers, known as The Mob, who interrupt a business tycoon's announcement of his luxury waterfront development by dancing around and on top of stacks of shipping containers. Protesting his plans to raze 'the strip' – a poor black and Latino community where many of the dancers live and work – their carefully planned spectacle proves productive in winning over the developer who decides to build up and revive rather than tear down the existing neighbourhood. Ironically, The Mob's anti-capitalist protest becomes itself a consumer festival in this happy-ever-after story when they receive a contract to dance in Nike commercials.

Step Up Revolution's multilevel filmset of stacked containers bears an uncanny resemblance to a *Temporary Shipping Container City* built for Amsterdam's annual 10-day *Over het IJ Festival* on a disused wharf the same year the film was released. O + A Strategies in Architecture describe their design as follows:

> *The three-dimensional checkerboard pattern offers a great spatial diversity, while simultaneously communicating the Festival's ambition to the city. As such, the hospitality area is tall, airy and compelling, while the artists use the labyrinthine aspects of the more intimate area of the container city. With a height of four layers, the mountain of containers manages to justify its presence between the large warehouses of the former shipyard.* (O+A)

It will be interesting to see the effect of the *Over het IJ Festival* on the NDSM Wharf site in the longer term and what developments emerge from it. A similar yearly festival that utilises shipping containers takes place on Wellington's waterfront in New Zealand. Since 2011 the *Performance Arcade* has offered a diverse program of free live performance, installed within and beyond varying architectural arrangements of shipping containers that briefly occupy the harbourside site – designed by Wraight Athfield Landscape + Architecture – which was originally slated for commercial developer-led projects but became a municipal project due to protests and pressure from The Architectural Centre, Waterfront Watch Organisation and Wellington Civic Trust in the 1990s. Wellington's harbour design that prioritises public access and activity, provides an example of somewhat successful grass-roots resistance to local council's partnership with private enterprise. Like *Over het IJ Festival*'s Zeecontainerprogramma (Shipping

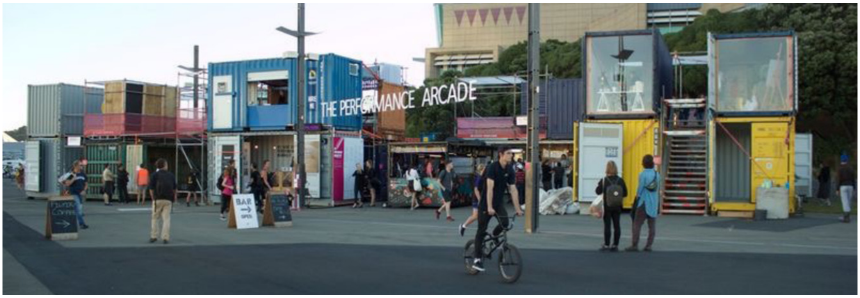

Figure 3. *The Performance Arcade*: Wellington Waterfront, New Zealand

Container Program), the *Performance Arcade* annually calls for event/installation proposals from local and international artists. Its ever-changing landscape of containers is based on the flexibility and adaptability of the shipping container: artists negotiate with the organisers around the siting and modifications of each unit, while operating beyond the confines of both container and the arcade precinct. In 2021, taking the global pandemic and 'social distancing' into mind, the event will extend into Wellington's urban environs, asking artists to consider 'What if the City was a Theatre?'

Having welcomed artists who critique both container and city over the last decade, the *Performance Arcade's* question is deliberately discursive. Expanding the conventional notion of theatre – beyond produced art form and entertainment – it acknowledges that cities operate on a trajectory between urban performance (events of varying scales) and performative urbanism (city as multiscalar event). This is evident with the 'creative economy' model, through which a scenographic landscape is established by private enterprise in order to achieve large-scale gentrification that masquerades as cultural development. Here, the shipping container is often called upon to play a central role in performances co-opted in the service of market-led infrastructural development, which, like *The Public* theatre in NYC, is no longer truly democratic in its publicness.

Developer Theatrics

UK-based theatre scholar, Michael Shane Boyle, examines container aesthetics and infrastructural politics in contemporary performance via an article focussing on 'The Boy Who Climbed Out of His Face' (2016), a 2014 Thames-side event in London's North Greenwich, staged by immersive theatre collective, Shunt:

> *What geopolitical and historical conditions must first conspire to allow artists to repurpose a linchpin of international trade like the shipping container into the physical infrastructure for performance? And what can Shunt's container aesthetics reveal about the enmeshment of contemporary performance in the urban and transnational infrastructures of global capital?* (Boyle, 2016, p.59)

Boyle carefully unpacks the production's design dramaturgy, sited in and around shipping containers on a disused concrete coaling jetty, in order to expose a mutuality between the performance and proposed gentrification of the Greenwich Peninsula by Chinese developers, Knight Dragon, who publicise the development as "London's single largest residential-led regeneration project" (WSP). While Knight Dragon sponsored 'The Boy Who' by providing the site and permits required for its refit as a performance space, they marketed the project as a temporary platform and pop-up venue – reinforced by the *London Evening Standard* description of a "hi-tech village for arty, foodie, design-savvy Londoners" (Mount, 2004) – thereby boosting their aspirational online claim to establish "an emerging modern community centred around design and culture"

(WSP). Unlike the Hollywood film where a guerrilla performance successfully protests and halts developer-led gentrification, Shunt becomes entangled in supporting such development. As Boyle writes, the company "aestheticizes capitalist infrastructure itself" (2016, p.59), illustrating how pop-up container venues provide "affordable stopgaps that erase the past to usher in a dicey future" (p.71).

Boyle points out that on 16th August 2014, two days after 'The Boy Who' opened, thirty-five Afghan Sikh 'stowaways' were found in a shipping container on the docks of nearby Tilbury, one of whom died in passage from Belgium. We therefore return to the haunting of the 'hold', and the fact that a "history of shipping cannot be separated from a history of the shipped" (Harney). In their essay 'Fantasy in the Hold' from *The Undercommons*, Harney and Moten equate the freighted spatial condition to the colonization and financialization of bodies, and therefore to the slave ship:

> *To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others. It is to feel at home with the homeless, at ease with the fugitive, at peace with the pursued, at rest with the ones who consent not to be one. Outlawed, interdicted, intimate things of the hold, containerized contagion, logistics externalises logic itself to reach you, but this is not enough to get at the social logics, the social poesis, running through logisticality.* (Harney/Moten, 2013, p.97)

The hold, where bodies are thrown together, is also historically a floating microcosm for disease: from the grain ships carrying the Justinian Plague (541-542 AD) that devastated the Byzantian Empire; to the Diamond Princess cruise ship, which docked in Yokohama on 4th February 2020, carrying more than half the known cases of Covid-19 in the world outside China. Coronavirus has shown us that contaminants can be neither controlled nor easily contained: evading borders, invading bodies and proliferating silently, quickly and without prejudice. However, as Harney and Moten maintain, such a rise of "dispossessed feelings in common" allow us to develop "hapticality (as…) a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you" (2013, p.98). Theatre has generally 'left the building', which, as an interior with multiple histories, has too-long held its audiences in social bondage without acknowledging their haptic potential. This aligns to Jon McKenzie's notion of 'Global Feeling' as "political love" – an interconnected condition we are both *a part of* and *apart from* in order to transmit effects and affects in unprecedented ways (2008, p.129). Aligning theatre to the hold as a "contrapuntal island" where we are marooned in "stateless emergency" (Harney/Moten, 2013, p.94), what now pops-up in relation to dramatic architecture in-motion?

Conclusion

> *We … have to recognize the wide range of uses for which the container box has been repurposed in different parts of the globe, as it now functions not only as a container for travelling commodities but also, in different contexts, as a form of temporary shelter, of low cost housing, and as one of the 'building blocks' of military encampments, prisons, educational institutions, and large-scale markets across the globe.* (Morley, 2017, p.13)

The hold is a performative space etymologically linked to power, control and detention. It clasps, grasps, grips, clenches, imprisons, locks up and shuts up, influences and dominates. As a hold, the shipping container appears identical on the outside. Yet, as home, hideaway, or even prison, each unit is individualized by its occupants who attempt to establish a unique habitat, as they are held in a limbo of non-belonging, other than to each other through shared kinship, culture and hopes of return or better lives elsewhere. As Shauna Janssen points out in her catalogue essay for *PhoneHome* (2017), by acknowledging the agency of the 'shipped', Moten and Harney's 'Fantasy in the Hold' also renders containerisation a space of critical mobility and political love: "Intensifying the

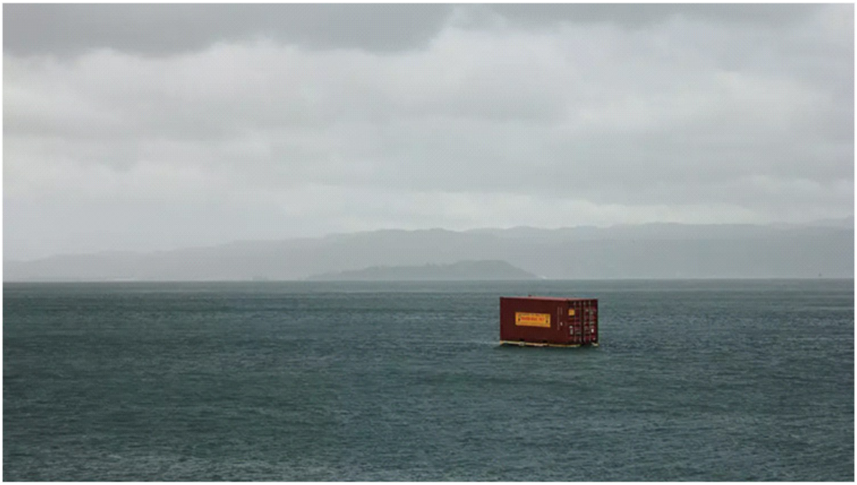

Figure 4. *Cargo* by Kasia Pol in *The Performance Arcade:* Wellington, New Zealand (2012)
www.kasiapol.com/cargo

proximate intimacy of human bodies within it forms a site of shared corporeal vulnerabilities, via a biopolitics of globalisation where the temporality of shipping and the shipped continues to overflow" (Janssen, 2017).

This paper has engaged with the multiple narratives and histories of the shipping container, especially in the time of a worldwide pandemic, which, according to Michael Pooler and Thomas Hale, could signal "an end to the golden era of globalization… a period in which containers have been both the symbol and instrument" (Pooler/Hale, 2020). Through their socio-political associations, concealed haptic potentiality and problematic relationships to power and precarity, they can be understood as much more than neutral building blocks with an industrial aesthetic. So, what does this mean for Vail's proposed *Container Globe*, which is still being investigated while New Zealand's *Pop-Up Globe* (2015), which is principally constructed out of scaffolding, has succeeded in becoming "the world's first touring replica of Shakespeare's theatre" (Gregory, 2020)?

In his Prologue to *Henry V*, William Shakespeare described the *Globe Theatre* as a "wooden O", capable of holding worlds within its timber embrace (1599). Regarding its circular plan as cosmological, Frances Yates also asserts the Globe as a quintessential 'Theatre of the World', operating at microcosmic and macrocosmic levels (1969, p.189). The *Container Globe*'s 'steel O' presents a fitting venue in this age of faltering hyper-globalization, reminding us that Shakespeare himself "lived in the age when all the world's populated continents were first permanently linked by trade" (Bosman, 2010, p.285). However, it is inside the yard, rather than within the stacked shipping container galleries, where fantasy in the venue's hold may lie: as the groundlings haptically negotiate each other's bodies; self-organizing as a microbial organism in constant flux.

Having taken up Boyle's provocation in 'Container Aesthetics' that "any analysis of this infrastructural aesthetic must consider the material effects of transforming shipping containers into art" (2016, p.59), my paper concludes with an image from the 2012 *Performance Arcade*, connecting instead with the *multiple affects* of such transformation. Untethered from the waterfront site, a single rusty shipping container floats on Wellington harbour as if long-lost overboard. Titled *Cargo*, this project by Polish artist, Kasia Pol (Fig. 3), occupies the main event's periphery and spectator's peripheral view. An event in itself, this marooned vessel draws attention to the distant port on the other side of the harbour, which is alive with movement as machines move and stack countless containers enclosing a multiplicity of mysterious contents. As a resistant yet melancholic architectural object – suggesting events of escape, smuggling, entrapment, voyaging and disaster – *Cargo* bobs, sloshes and drifts, responding to the flux of weather and the sea it rides; transforming the city harbour itself into an event-space. Here, in its temporality, mobility and multiple event dimensions, we glimpse 'the new' as proposed by Kwinter in this paper's opening epigraph.

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