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MONICA CALCAGNO

INTERPRETING INNOVATION

Design Creativity Art

Foreword

Francesco Izzo

Preface

Andrea Moretti

Afterword

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For Carlo and Liliana

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Foreword

Dance me to the end of love

*Francesco Izzo**

Pina Bausch was undoubtedly one of the 20th century's greatest choreographers. She was renowned throughout the world for her experimental, innovative, and unconventional productions. She was able to blend elements of traditional dance, theatre, film and multi-media in a mixture of emotion and sensuality, pathos and humor. In her works, she brought together movement, singing, acting and music with an emotional content. Pina Bausch's vision for dance was ground-breaking: she conceived dance as an artistic expression without borders, where dancers could move amongst the audience and musicians play on stage.

The American choreographer William Forsythe once said that Pina Bausch "basically reinvented dance. She was one of the greatest innovators of the past 50 years. She is a category of dance unto herself. Dance-theater didn't really exist before she invented it".

Pina Bausch established a turning point in contemporary dance, reinventing the language and the meaning (the design?) of dance. She "has changed the dance and theater landscape forever", said Alain Platel, artistic director of Les Ballets C de la B.

Bausch's Tanztheater (dance theater) inspired and shaped a whole generation of modern dance creators and Pina's impact was perceived well beyond Germany, where she was born in 1940.

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Trained in Germany under modern dance choreographer Kurt Jooss, she won a scholarship in 1958 to attend the Juilliard School in New York and was then selected for the Metropolitan Opera Ballet Company. But in the early 1970s she decided to reinvent herself as a “cultural entrepreneur”. She became artistic director of the Wuppertal Opera Ballet, which she transformed into a hot spot of innovative and experimental works, attracting talent from all over the world. Moreover, she attracted a new audience, conquered by her avant-garde approach, structureless works, and unconventional sets.

But Pina Bausch was also a great leader. She created one of the most successful companies worldwide. She remained at the helm of her company - renamed Tanztheater Wuppertal - until her death; some of the dancers have been with the company for 35 years. Bausch’s leadership and working style became famous as well as her capability of leveraging the diversity of dancers. Someone defined it as collective genius.

As a commentator wrote:

Bausch changed dance fundamentally by removing the smiling ethereal ballerina attempting to float above us, replacing her with a fusion of radical interactive theater, surreal imagery, and ‘danced body language’. In contemporary dance today the influence of Bausch is seen in its rawness, relative freedom and willingness to explore a variety of forms so as to expose an internal world. Her influence is also seen in the way choreographers work with their dancers - a two-pronged process where through improvisation ‘tasks’ the choreographer allows the soul of the dancer to enter the process (Ashley, 2011).

The story of Pina Bausch, like those of Martha Graham for contemporary dance or Trisha Brown for postmodern dance, has many implications for innovation management scholars. Radical innovation. Exploitation and exploration. Recombination of elements in original ways. Creative thinking and action. Infinite variety. Interaction with audiences. Theory and improvisation. Contamination of expressions. Co-creation.

What can management learn from dance? First, how to be creative. For a long time innovation has been depicted as a structured process. Choreography shows another way. Dance is a great metaphor for creativity. Choreographers make something out of nothing. They have a vision to communicate and share with audiences. And their communication medium is a team of skilled dancers who must learn to work and act as a team if they want to succeed. As a consequence, innovation takes teamwork. In the performing arts as well as in an innovation project a group of specialists, a bundle of heterogeneous competences, collaborate together to make a creative product. The fundamental ingredient of teamwork, in a *compagnie de ballet* as well as in an innovative organization is (or should be) trust. Dancers put their safety in another's hands. And innovation managers, just like dancers, should learn how to take risks by trusting their teams.

Moreover, dance teaches entrepreneurs and managers that discipline and experimentation are the keys; that a choreography as well as an innovation project has to bring together structure and improvisation. Dance as a new product tells a story that has to capture attention: it is a search for a meaning to share with the audience (the market).

Monica Calcagno knows and loves the amazing and tough world of dance. As a social researcher, she has often laid her eyes on the intriguing field where art meets management, and artists reveal their talent also as cultural entrepreneurs. Particularly, she showed how deeply innovative the artist's creative process could be by observing Wanda Moretti and the company of vertical dance she founded (*Il Posto*). Vertical dance is another example of radical innovation as recombination of elements coming from different contexts and a process of rethinking artistic language.

Observed through the conceptual lenses of Monica, Pina Bausch could rightly be considered a creative agent, a "person who is able to play a creative role, realizing novel and useful ideas aimed at gaining success in the market and obtaining recognition in her professional network" (p. 78).

Bausch was undoubtedly a risk taker: she was an artistic genius who innovated out-of-the-box and dared challenge conventions, acting without being governed by rules, but she knew that a sequence of practices, hard daily work, and loyalty to a method were also essential ingredients of a creative process.

Pina Bausch or Wanda Moretti, like the Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena, the Chinese artist Cao Fei or the Italian cello player Mario Brunello, whose stories are told in this book, are not only artists. They act as innovators and are also cultural entrepreneurs. Even though perhaps they do not know it.

Yet, as Bob Dylan explained, in his Nobel prize speech (read out by the US ambassador to Sweden at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm City Hall on 10 December 2016), William Shakespeare, and himself, should be considered cultural entrepreneurs²:

I was out on the road when I received this surprising news, and it took me more than a few minutes to properly process it. I began to think about William Shakespeare, the great literary figure. I would reckon he thought of himself as a dramatist. The thought that he was writing literature couldn't have entered his head. His words were written for the stage. Meant to be spoken not read. When he was writing Hamlet, I'm sure he was thinking about a lot of different things: "Who're the right actors for these roles?" "How should this be staged?" "Do I really want to set this in Denmark?" His creative vision and ambitions were no doubt at the forefront of his mind, but there were also more mundane matters to consider and deal with. "Is the financing in place?" "Are there enough good seats for my patrons?" "Where am I going to get a human skull?" I would bet that the farthest thing from Shakespeare's mind was the question "Is this literature?" [...] But, like Shakespeare, I too am often occupied with the pursuit of my creative endeavours and dealing with all aspects of life's mundane matters. "Who are the best musicians for these songs?" "Am I recording in the right studio?" "Is this song in the right key?" Some things never change, even in 400 years. Not once have I ever had the time to ask myself, "Are my songs literature?"

² Full speech available at: <https://qz.com/860172/bob-dylans-gracious-nobel-prize-acceptance-speech-in-full/>.

Monica Calcagno, as in some previous works, looks at management issues through the eyes of cultural organization and explores the field of innovation by analyzing in-depth the experience of artists. It is an amazing journey in a Middle Earth where boundaries are indefinite (it is not by chance that she entitled one of her previous books *Narrare terre di mezzo*). Monica has put her observation point at a crossroad, where different paths – design, innovation, creativity – meet up to merge. A choice that is absolutely consistent with the philosophy of this book series.

For a long time, management scholars have striven to find which principles and managerial tools could apply to art and cultural organization. But, as this book and the entire research path of Monica Calcagno show, it is time to upset this perspective. We should ask ourselves: What can managers and management scholars learn from art and artistic organization? Why are creative industries at the frontier of innovation management?

This book is like a circular journey where Monica leads the reader across the field of innovation with art as a map and design as a compass.

At the beginning of the journey, she warns us against the risk of using “creativity” as a buzzword, trapped in a sterile and rhetoric discourse. Creativity is an ambiguous concept, and it is a slippery ground for researchers. Nevertheless, creativity plays a key role in any innovation process.

Indeed, creativity and innovation rely on dynamic routine, on daily effort rather than on the magic intuition of a solitary hero. Innovation is hard work. Perspiration, not just inspiration, as Thomas Edison once said. Later, the author quotes Twyla Tharp, a famous choreographer:

I think everyone can be creative, but you have to prepare for it with routine. There's no other way around it. It's an absolute mistake to think that art is not practical or that business cannot be creative (p. 82).

The author has emphasized the role of design not just as an aesthetic dimension of innovation, but as a learning attitude, as a strategic perspective. As she writes, design is

not just a creative activity devoted to identifying pleasant aesthetic solutions, not a specific industry producing fashionable pieces of furniture and appliances, not just a synonym of innovation, but all these things together and something more pervasive in our life. [...] The design [...] identifies a multidisciplinary terrain of debate and work, involving different actors – entrepreneurs, managers, designers, artists – and their domains of knowledge and practices (pp. 31-33, emphasis added).

Such perspective seems to be consistent with Simon's insight, when he wrote that "engineering, medicine, business, architecture, and art are concerned not with the necessary but with the contingent, not with how things are but with how they might be – in short, with design" (Simon, 1996: xii, quoted on p. 41).

Design, as has been recalled in the book, is an amphibious word: it is a *language* to make sense of the world as well as a *process* to seek and find solutions to the problems that affect human life. The analysis allows us to better understand the concept of design as a process of sense making, since products not only have symbolic dimensions under their physical surface but are also "socially and culturally dense objects" (p. 43).

Interestingly, Monica Calcagno distinguishes the design driven model from the design thinking approach. While the former is based on the relationship between the entrepreneur and the designer, the latter is rooted in the relationship between the designer and the user. Whereas in the design driven model a strategic vision (the *entrepreneur*) is combined with technical competences (the *designer*), design thinking offers a different perspective: "a user-centered world where design is a box of tools that everybody can access and use to satisfy their own unmet needs" (p. 61). In both cases, design is adopted as a language, but in the first one it generates emotions through aesthetic and symbolic

dimensions while the customer keeps a passive role: in the second, it induces interaction, leaving room for user participation/involvement. We seem to hear the echo of von Hippel's work on democratizing innovation (2005) or the idea of co-creation according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) or even the choral architect's manifesto, inspired by principles of collaborative design and open source architecture (Ratti and Claudel, 2015). It is clear which implications this distinction may have for the innovation process. But Calcagno does not abandon her critical approach wondering skeptically: "A golden age of participation and design for all seems to be opening up, but are we all designers? [...] how should user involvement and participation be organized?" (p. 62). The story of Alejandro Aravena, the well-known Chilean architect, and his social housing projects describes in an exemplary manner the complexity of such a model.

Though Calcagno points out the limits of design driven framework, she underlines how the interplay of the two dimensions of value used by Verganti – technology and meanings – as drivers of functional and semantic design can be effectively deployed by a firm to radically change the market even with small investment in technology, if the new meaning is able to redesign the process of consumption and the user experience.

Moreover, Monica Calcagno recalls the importance of cultural industries for regenerating capitalism and critically rethinking management. Yet, she emphasizes how creative processes are physically and symbolically embedded in the context and in specific places. Such places are crucial not only for the process of knowledge creation and for innovation but they provide a space where audiences can be engaged in the process of sense making and sharing the creative experience.

Analyzing the design thinking approach, she recalls that an innovation process has to be grounded in experimentation, participation, and inclusion, but above all that creativity must be recognized "as a common resource for everybody, and not a profession-

al competence". In such a perspective, the effort to classify creative industries turns out to be vain. Creativity and creative works live and act well beyond creative industry (Hearn *et al.*, 2014).

The stories Monica has told in this book suggest what fundamental lessons innovation management could learn from artistic experiences. She emphasizes the creative product as a symbolic construct, where artistic progression must find a delicate but essential balance with market expectation and satisfaction. Moreover, dialogue between art and management allows for a better understanding of how to generate creative ideas, to nurture an innovation project with passion, to sustain a continuous change strategy.

As Monica shows in the book, an analysis of artistic and cultural practices might inspire a parallelism with the innovation process: "cultural and creative organizations [*she writes*] are the places where innovation is a continuous process of change, and where the tension between market and novelty, commercial aims and radical changes find a possible solution" (p. 70).

The world of art has long been used to describe how creativity triggers the innovation process, but here the perspective chosen by the author is original. She analyzes the interplay between creativity and innovation in the art world focusing on three fundamental issues: the role of the creative agent; the process of artistic production; the final product in the field of art and culture. Hence, the development of a creative idea, as Monica writes quoting Osborne (2013), is

a process of knowledge creation that can be represented as a continuous evolutionary process of learning punctuated by a certain number of discontinuities. These discontinuities represent the moments in which the idea emerges, the final product of all the moments experienced by the artist in the past, and a starting point for further refinements. This makes the process a sequence of inspiring creative flashes and hard days of repetitive work (p. 81).

Here is a paradox, as Monica points out: on the one hand, you have to replicate patterns, actions, solutions that have already

proved their effectiveness; on the other hand, you must continuously look for a breakpoint and identify what creates a competitive advantage. As Sonenshein has written, creativity is “a natural part and consequence of enacting routines, just as structure is a natural part and consequence of creativity” (Sonenshein, 2016, quoted at p. 86).

But it is when Monica Calcagno describes the real challenge of an artist who wants to be innovative that she unveils the essential lesson a management scholar has to learn from the world of art:

Artists face the ambivalence of producing something that commercially satisfies the market, yet experiment new ideas and maintain a constant dialogue with their own artistic domain. These opposite aims influence the artistic trajectory and its result in terms of products whose success or failure depends on the capability of the artists to successfully mobilize a network of actors and resources, orchestrating a strategy to generate a change in the norms and conventions regulating artistic practices [...] Artists live in constant tension to balance the radicalism of their leap into the artistic language with the capability to stay in the market and satisfy their audience (pp. 83-94)

Thus, the relationship between art and business is fascinating and dangerous as well. Nevertheless it represents a research field where scholars may learn from each other in order to understand the process that transforms individual practice into organizational knowledge, and turn creativity into innovation.

From the world of art Monica draws both the idea of products as symbolic constructs and of production of novelty as the passionate exploitation of an intuition. “Artists are perceived as masters of innovation, considered able to overcome all possible obstacles to bring their own idea to life” (p. 93) as well as “meaningful examples of divergent thinking in action” (p. 88), while art is “historically immersed in processes of sense making, experience building, and symbolic production” (p. 95).

Therefore, the research aim of the author becomes even clearer when she writes that the investigation of art as a field of research

through the conceptual lenses of management “invite management scholars to observe the artistic and creative experience as a special place of experimentation and a source of interpretation of the processes observed in the organization, especially those relating to innovation” (p. 97). In other words, her message is straight: re-think innovation adopting an artistic and cultural perspective.

And there is still a fundamental thing that management scholars and innovation managers might learn from creative artists: how to be liquid in the early stages of an innovation project, as Frank O. Gehry, the path-breaking American architect once said speaking about his experience. Monica depicts such concept in a picture (fig. 3.1) where she translates Gehry’s philosophy on architectural projects into a new model of conceiving the innovation process, “characterized by continuous movement back and forth, while selection does not imply a definitive reduction of the design space, and any promising idea can be introduced and developed until the very last end of the process” (p. 100). After all, the same thing happens in dance...

As often in her research activity, Monica has privileged an ethnographic approach and participant observation for deeper and richer understanding, immersing herself in the context, focused on social rootedness, involving the object of research in an open and participative process. She firmly believes in involvement and experimentation.

In this inspiring book, Monica Calcagno shows once again that she likes to do research acting as a designer: placing herself in the context, absorbing its culture and giving voice to the actors of creative processes, «with special attention for those needs that remained unmet» (p. 54). As a designer, a management scholar should combine technical skills with human feeling, creative competences with strategic vision: “empathy, cooperation, optimism, and willingness to experiment” (p. 55).

“What moves people is more interesting than how they move”, Pina Bausch once said. It is true for management scholars as well as dance.

Preface

*Andrea Moretti**

Calmly swimming in deep waters, in a crystal-clear sea. A sea that, so far, has been observed only from above. This is what the author of this book promises her readers. With gentle guidance, she brings us from the surface to a level of depth allowing an overall view of the phenomenon. Anyone willing to dig deeper into the topic is welcome: all the necessary tools are provided.

As author of this preface, I chose the metaphor above to depict the contents of this book in the form of a single vision. Writing the preface of a book is always an honor, but also a great responsibility. In the case of this book, I was pleased to take this responsibility. As editor of this preface, I followed the same attitude of research activities: that is, to accept to rely upon a discovery process working on the researched matter: in this case, the relationship between *design, creativity, and art*.

In dealing with this topic, Monica Calcagno goes through different and numerous analytical levels, leaving to the reader the task to further develop them: interpreting, understanding, designing one's own path in this interpretive space is possible.

In terms of conceptualization, this book is not a simple book; rather, it is simple in its implementation.

The effort provided by the author is highly recognizable as the – successful – attempt to deliver a project that, although it

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considers the relation between design, innovation and management, is still “frugal”. I consider it a huge value, given that this book is aimed at making apparent the essence of investigated relations with curiosity, efficacy and depth.

Following the initial metaphor, the reader can immerse into the matter from several levels, without worrying about the risk of entering dangerous caves, specious discussion and/or classifications. In this book, there are no elements to be considered as potential sources of boring or waiting moments.

The topic examined in this book is *extremely* relevant; however, although it has undoubtedly been the subject of specific attention, existing analyses have been mostly inspired by a reductionist perspective.

Monica Calcagno leaves the multidimensional approach (a *safe haven*) helping us to live in a world made of single analytic patterns, stimulating the creation of a dialogue.

This approach allows us to properly include this book within the core of managerial disciplines. This is not a “general purpose” management book, given that it is devoted to topics that actually have been examined also by other disciplines. Rather, the design and the development of this book make it possible to account for what can be considered the actual contribution of managerial sciences to individual and collective decision makers.

Monica Calcagno offers a contribution that can help readers (experts, professional, students, beginners) to carry out their own interpretation in a complex, post-modern context like the one in which we live. The book is an “artifact” that, bidirectionally, allows the co-production (i.e., open text) of meanings with readers. The book does not provide prescriptions: rather, it offers specific elements helping readers, during and after their reading, to be able to orient in light decision-making contexts: tools available in this book have been shaped with such forms and functions (design) that they are able both to achieve their finalistic purposes and to face serendipity.

There is no need in this preface to specifically present the single components of the book: this would just be a repetition of the contents provided in the “guide for readers” related to the first chapter.

I hope the authors of researches in this field will be as respectful and courageous as Monica. Respectful for others, where the word *others* might entail several interpretations: subjects, disciplines, organizations, artifacts, to be considered as counterparts with which to develop a dialogue throughout the analyses. Courageous in terms of carrying on their belief in proposing (not imposing) a learning process, and not a destination.