



ART

# Cosmogony. Explore New Territories

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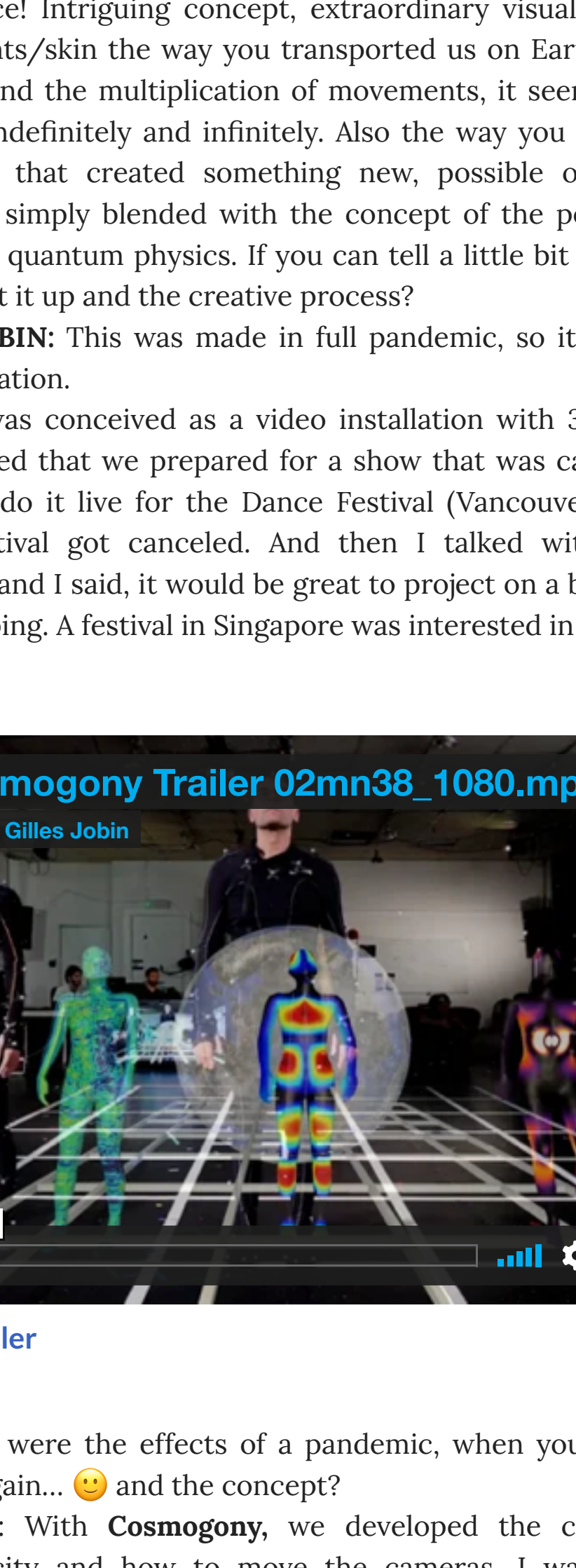
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**Cosmogony** is a fabulous live digital performance that is captured in Geneva, projected -through the use of mocap suit s- to **Sundance 2022**. Spaceship and from there made available all over the world.

Put together by the masterminds of virtual/digital contemporary dance company Cie Gilles Jobin, that already made performances such as: **WOHNB – a stereoscopic dance film (3D)**, **Dance Trail – Augmented Reality dance piece**, **VR\_I – Immersive VR experience**, **La Comédie Virtuelle – Live Show**, **VIRTUAL CROSSINGS**

The performance will transport you through different carefully visually designed spaces such as the empty streets from Earth, but also the fabulous Cosmos, where you fabulously fantastic creatures in mesmerizing garments/skins will accompany you. Their movements seem to multiply across time and space 'like particles in a quantum state, performing spooky actions at a distance'. And from time to time, the fantastic movements are interrupted or highlighted by over-sized giant Creatures or the tonality of music composed by **Tar Pond** that accentuate the Atmosphere. Only three dancers (**Susana Panadés Diaz**, **Camilo de Martino** and **Tristan Siodlak**) are present in the show – even if you see a lot of dancers – but dancers' movements are multiplied, while also embodying different Avatars during the performance.

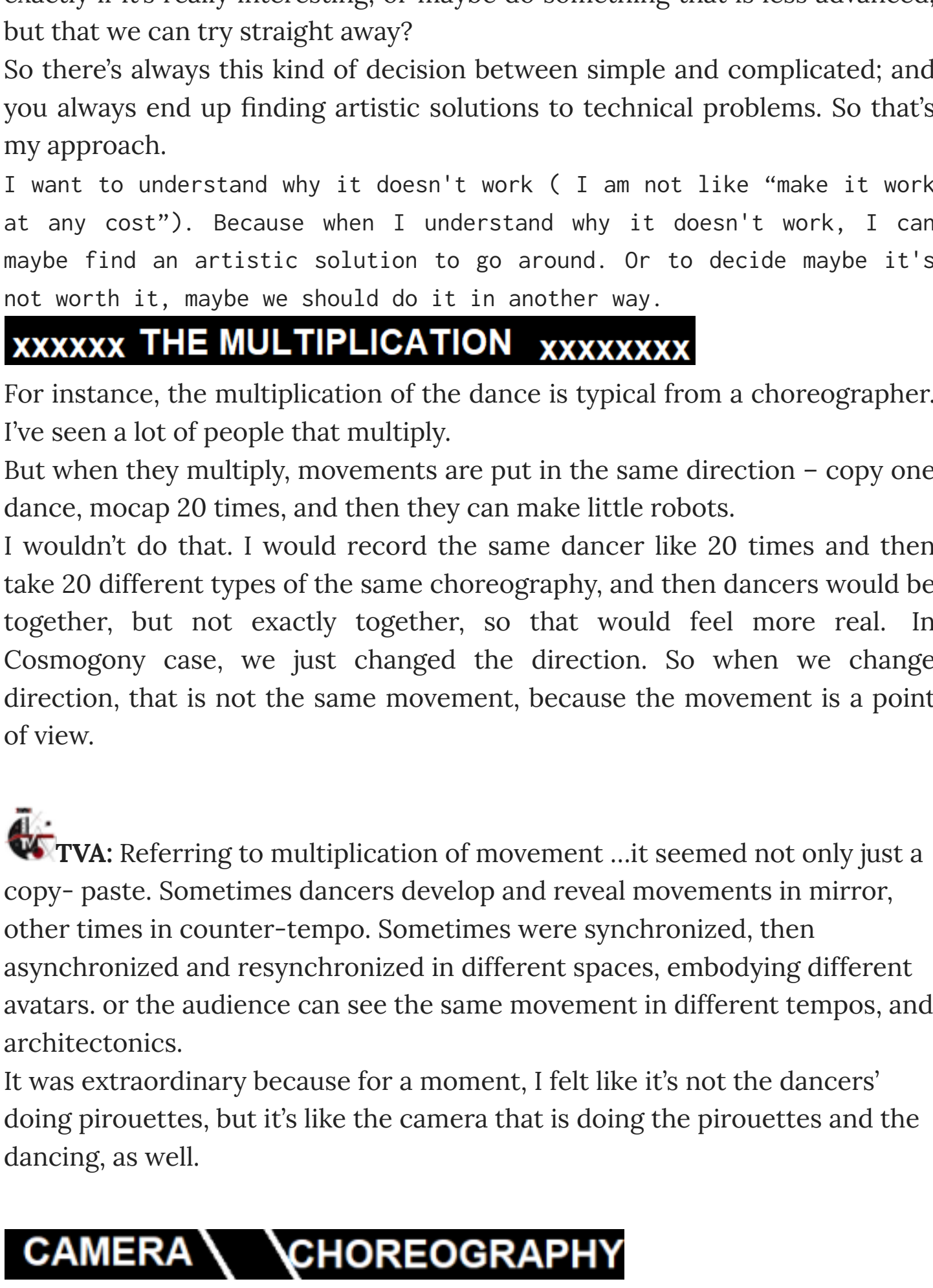
We sat down with **Gilles Jobin**, the director and choreographer of **Cosmogony**, to discuss the process behind the performance, impact of the pandemic, the advantages and disadvantages of technology, but also about...what he expects in 300-400 years 🤖



**TVA:** Firstly, congratulations, it was really a fantastic performance! Intriguing concept, extraordinary visuals, including the garments/skin the way you transported us on Earth and then in Space. And the multiplication of movements, it seems that you can do it indefinitely and infinitely. Also the way you played with technology that created something new, possible only in that space, and simply blended with the concept of the performance, inspired by quantum physics. If you can tell a little bit more about how you set it up and the creative process?

**GILLES JOBIN:** This was made in full pandemic, so it's a bit of a special situation.

Firstly, it was conceived as a video installation with 3-4 screens, pre-recorded that we prepared for a show that was canceled. We wanted to do it live for the Dance Festival (Vancouver) but then Dance Festival got canceled. And then I talked with different organizers and I said, it would be great to project on a building as a video mapping. A festival in Singapore was interested in May 2021.



Cosmogony Trailer

**TVA:** These were the effects of a pandemic, when you do re-planning over and over again... 🤖 and the concept?

**GILLES JOBIN:** With **Cosmogony**, we developed the concept, how to construct the city and how to move the cameras. I was influenced by watching footage at the beginning of the pandemic when there was a lot of drone footage of empty cities, empty streets. So there is something about an empty city that is filled by means that are fantastic. Is it kind of nothing that you see, there is that flat earth, that contamination.

It was the whole impression that we had, but I wanted to make something that was light and poetic. And also with a soundtrack that was a bit analogic, kind of an electrified instrument, to have something a bit more edgy music. I think that was necessary to get some power to the piece.

It is abysmal, most of my pieces are like this. But this one is more like an empirical from one discovery to the next one into the next one.

## TECH LIMITS & ARTISTIC SOLUTIONS

Because when you work with tech, you have to understand what is the tech, what are the limits, the possibilities, the constraints? You have to understand in which direction you are going.

Are you ready to spend one week developing whatever without knowing exactly if it's really interesting, or maybe do something that is less advanced, but that we can try straight away?

So there's always this kind of decision between simple and complicated; and you always end up finding artistic solutions to technical problems. So that's my approach.

I want to understand why it doesn't work ( I am not like "make it work at any cost"). Because when I understand why it doesn't work, I can maybe find an artistic solution to go around. Or to decide maybe it's not worth it, maybe we should do it in another way.

## xxxxxx THE MULTIPLICATION xxxxxxxx

For instance, the multiplication of the dance is typical from a choreographer. I've seen a lot of people that multiply.

But when they multiply, movements are put in the same direction – copy one dance, mocap 20 times, and then they can make little robots.

I wouldn't do that. I would record the same dancer like 20 times and then take 20 different types of the same choreography, and then dancers would be together, but not exactly together, so that would feel more real. In Cosmogony case, we just changed the direction. So when we change direction, that is not the same movement, because the movement is a point of view.

**TVA:** Referring to multiplication of movement ...it seemed not only just a copy- paste. Sometimes dancers develop and reveal movements in mirror, other times in counter-tempo. Sometimes were synchronized, then asynchronized and resynchronized in different spaces, embodying different avatars, or the audience can see the same movement in different tempos, and architectonics.

It was extraordinary because for a moment, I felt like it's not the dancers' doing pirouettes, but it's like the camera that is doing the pirouettes and the dancing, as well.

## CAMERA CHOREOGRAPHY

**GILLES JOBIN:** Exactly, and yes, the camera is going to the choreographer. That's a big-big difference compared to VR, because in VR it is the audience that is choosing where they are, they choose where they're going to look. VR is much closer to performing arts because you cannot force people to look in a certain direction. Depending on where they stay – more in the front, middle, back – people don't have the same experience. That is something that for us is quite natural to take into account.

## IDEA OF CONTINUUM PERFORMANCE

There is the idea of continuity, and it's a dance piece-and for the dancer, they never stop dancing for 30 minutes, they're active all the time.

They can't go out and have a little break for five minutes and then they come back. It's a trip for them as well, it's a journey. There's a continuity in their performance, and the performance is also always better.

But we could ask the question, is it really necessary to know that it was done in real time?

So in this case, yes. I think it is important that we show that it is a live performance, in the beginning, the middle and the end (editor note: the performance started with the dancers and choreographer from Geneva greeting the audience and only after we were transported in the 3D environment).

And in the end also, the audience can see the team in mocaps). It is also that during the performance, this allows for impression that you accept as a spectator.

**TVA:** Earlier you mentioned advantages but also disadvantages of technology (VR, AR or MR) Where do you see the pluses and minuses, especially when it comes to live performances like dance?

## ADVANTAGES /DISADVANTAGES OF TECHNOLOGY

**GILLES JOBIN:** The disadvantages are related to the accessibility issue in VR. Especially for live performances, it is very difficult to bring people together in VR at a certain time.

The context is not really there yet, and now in the pandemic that really affected even more, because people were ready and going every time to LBE – location based entertainment – spaces, like a theme park.

## ACCESSIBILITY

People don't have to own the equipment, are welcomed, explained, and contextualized. And that was the big hope, for something that would survive as a way to bring real people in a real space.

When you start to go online, then you can get more people, but not so many because there's also limitations.

**Sundance** worked really well because it made it accessible for computers, too. But if it was only VR, you will have maybe not even half the people that were there at the performance, that could access it with the right equipment and are ready to wait and not forget that it's time to go to the show.

Cosmogony also was intended to be easy-to-access. I was thinking 'let's do a projection, do something that is accessible, do something that people can see in the street, outside like on a building and they can see that it's safer'.

The move to 2D makes my digital work much more accessible, because even AR is difficult to access.

If you don't have an iPhone, the right version and you don't know how to use it, then it is difficult; and people don't really use their phone for art, they do a lot of stupid things, but not art.

## LIVE PERFORMANCE IN MULTIPLE LOCATION?

At **Sundance**, the initial plan was to screen it in Egyptian for a real audience, so that was the programme. To screen it to the festival at the Egyptian and simultaneously on The Spaceship. And that was Shari Frilot's vision, that we share that this can be screened simultaneously to three, four or five cinemas at the same time. It's not a problem, it is very easy, totally feasible. It's not complicated, you just need to multiply, just need to have a PC basically. Someone needs a bit of preparation. Because it's like online gaming, you generate your game with your Playstation or your PC, and then you connect to a server and you send the position, your position in the game and the other player they do the same and that's how we can be in front of each other. So that's what we do, we only send the motion capture data and generate locally...

**TVA:** You have experience with both: live performances and digital, VR and so on. Of course the technology has its own magic and can-do lot of magic, but also technology can't be the panacea for everything.

What would you say are those elements that appears in a live performance and can't be transferred to an XR-type of experience?

## Creative investigation: New territory to explore

**GILLES JOBIN:** I don't think we should try to make a connection. They're just different worlds, they are like different realities. Walking on the earth or being underwater are different situations, you need to get organized differently for both activities.

For me, I see new territories that I can investigate.

Even in the 60s, in New York, contemporary dancers started to go out of the theater, performing on the roofs of New York, in the bars and in the museums. And people said, "oh, this is not dance, because it's not in a theater".

But now, all dance companies perform in many different spaces that are not theaters.

So, it's just a new territory to explore. And it's nice because it opens many different doors.

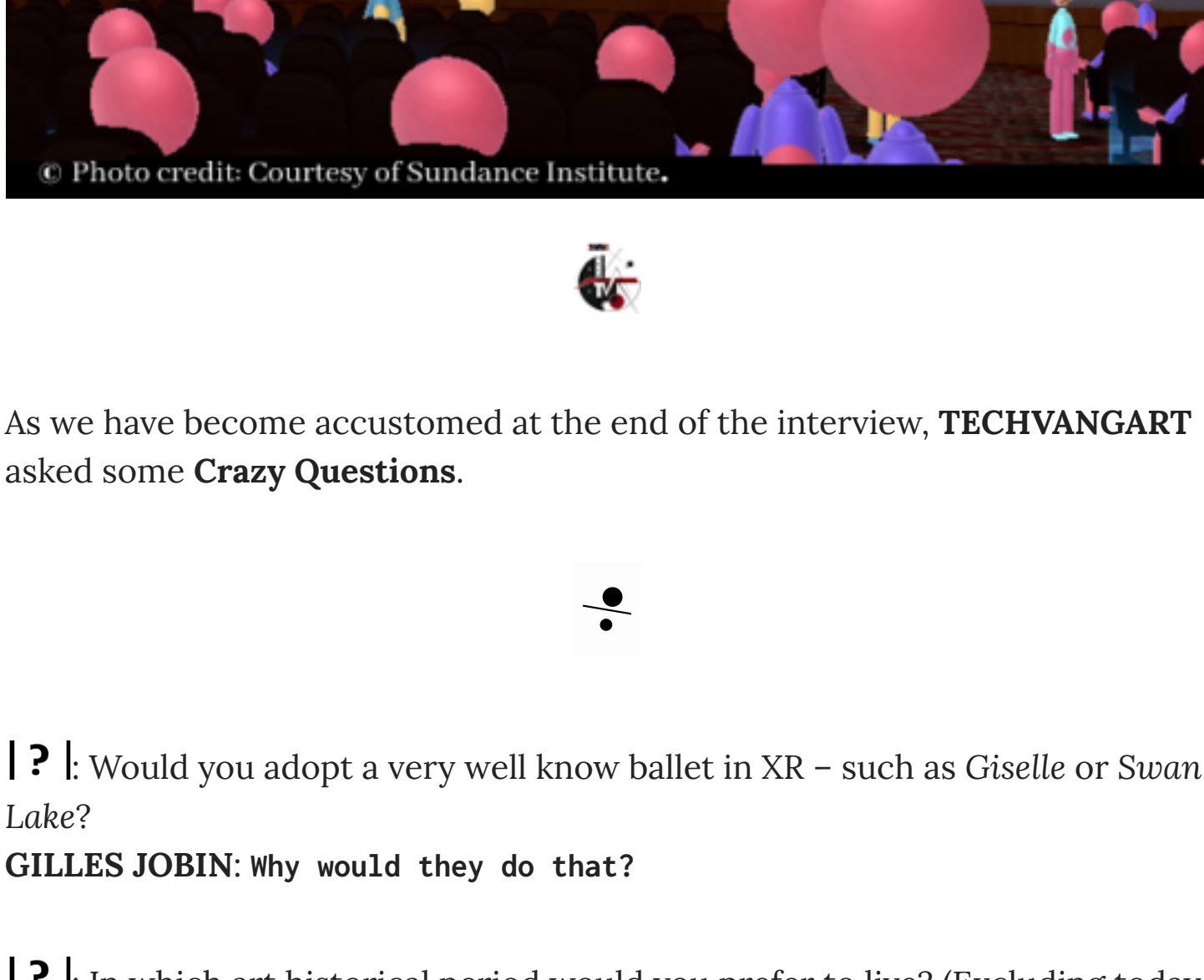
For example, in **Cosmogony**, you could make a film with it, like a proper film, you can rework it, redo it, fix it and film it and we will have one actually

TVA: I'm glad that you highlighted this aspect because, especially in the VR space, I see a lot of people try to just duplicate our physical reality...

## HYBRIDISATION

**GILLES JOBIN:** I think that in the end it will be hybrid, I think that the answer is really hybridity. So that's also what Sundance was supposed to do. I've been to **Sundance Film Festival** before, so I said to **Shari Frilot** (ed, note. Chief Curator, New Frontier) that I am not going, but that's the whole thing. The whole point is to be in Geneva, and to be at Sundance without going to Sundance.

So this was the idea, but then it all got moved to a new reality again (ed: due to omicron, Sundance moved online), but I think the future when this crisis will go, we will continue to mix the physical with digital.



As we have become accustomed at the end of the interview, **TECHVANGART** asked some **Crazy Questions**.

**?** Would you adopt a very well know ballet in XR – such as Giselle or Swan Lake?

**GILLES JOBIN:** why would they do that?

**?** In which art historical period would you prefer to live? (Excluding today :D)

**GILLES JOBIN:** I don't know, I'd rather probably be in the future than in the past. Because I have more faith in the future, than what I see from the past. And I will take a long, pretty long leap forward, not 30 years, but more like 300 or 400 years.

**?** And what do you expect to see in 3-400, for example, how it would be as a choreographer?

**GILLES JOBIN:** I don't know... maybe I will be alone, because the world has ended already. So...we'll be doing solos, I will be a solo dancer. I don't know... it's too abstract for me, this kind of question, I'm too 'Down to Earth'.

**?** And if we are thinking, more like an immediate future, how do you see the future of choreography and dance?

**GILLES JOBIN:** This is a difficult question, no one can answer. . . . If it was not for the COVID crisis, maybe I could tell you a little bit how it is going and what it was looking like.

**Question Of Sustainability**

But now it's very difficult because there is a question of sustainability.

How are we going to sustain dancers, dancing?

In which condition?

I think it is more a question of a big transformation of the performing arts in general, not so much specifically dance (about the way we toured, the way we produced) and it's very hard for the younger generation because the whole system was based on touring, and diffusion and being well-known – the more international you are, the more money you get, the more you are recognized.

So for the youngsters, they cannot look at us anymore because touring isn't the thing anymore.

**What are the new structures?**

The institutions and the people that have money to produce, what are they thinking about?

Are they going to change their ways and stop inviting dancers from everywhere?

It is a very neocolonialist world, that's art in general. Because it is run by agencies that are government agencies, and they have a goal of promoting. That's what we need to change, and is not likely to change fundamentally.

**TVA:** so, you think that the next big finance, those who will support and will replace the governmental agencies – who are massively financing arts for the moment – will be the tech companies? I also think that maybe Google will make its own theater and dance company....???

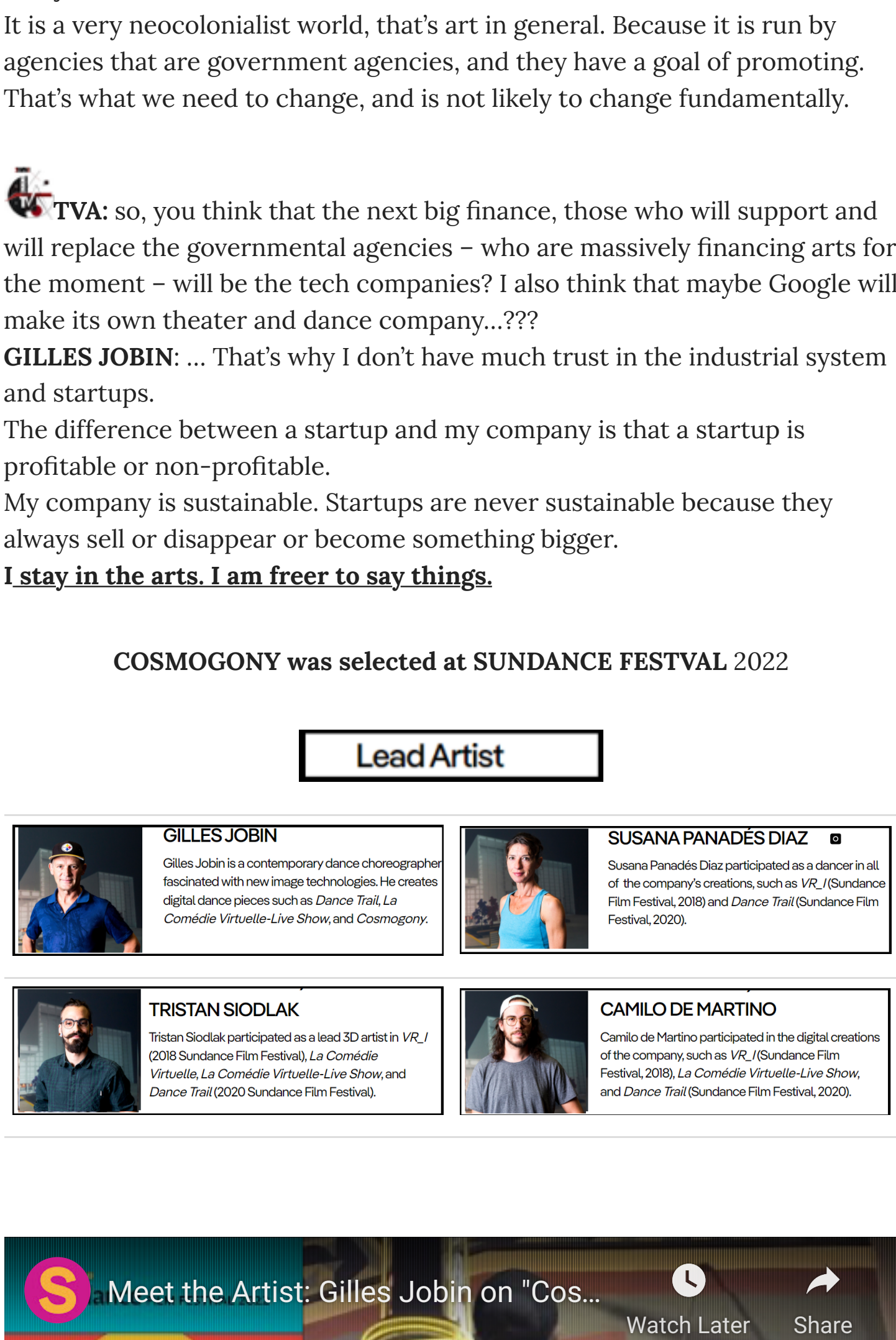
**GILLES JOBIN:** ... That's why I don't have much trust in the industrial system and startups.

The difference between a startup and my company is that a startup is profitable or non-profitable.

My company is sustainable. Startups are never sustainable because they always sell or disappear or become something bigger.

**I stay in the arts. I am freer to say things.**

COSMOGONY was selected at SUNDANCE FESTIVAL 2022



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