



<http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com>

g/s/i is an annual peer-reviewed journal which publishes research on gendered identities and the ways they intersect with and produce Italian politics, culture, and society by way of a variety of cultural productions, discourses, and practices spanning historical, social, and geopolitical boundaries.

Title: “A Case in Transformation: Gender Bender Festival, from Cinema to Dance”

Journal Issue: *gender/sexuality/italy*, 10 I, II (2023-2024)

Authors: Dianora Hollmann, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

Publication date: 10/01/2024

Publication info: *gender/sexuality/italy*, “Open Contributions”

Permalink: <https://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/11-a-case-in-transformation-gender-bender-festival-from-cinema-to-dance>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15781/c017-3g15>

Author’s Bio: Dianora Hollmann is a PhD student in the International Program in History of the Arts at the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice. She has a master’s degree in CITEM Cinema, Television and Multimedia Production and a bachelor’s degree in DAMS Disciplines of the Arts, Music and Performing Arts at Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna. She has worked on a continual basis in the field of film festivals, especially in coordination and management roles, such as at the Far East Film Festival in Udine and for Cinema Ritrovato and Gender Bender festival in Bologna, and has collaborated with Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna, the restoration laboratory L’Immagine Ritrovata and the distribution company Tucker Film. In 2020, she was selected for the archival research program Biennale College Writing in Residence of La Biennale di Venezia, further collaborating in 2021 with Biennale Danza as a moderator in meetings with festival artists.

Abstract: This article examines the interdisciplinary festival Gender Bender, based in Bologna, Italy. Since its first edition in 2003, the festival has centered cinema as its core discipline, and from 2014, it introduced a new key section dedicated to contemporary dance. This case study investigates the shift in the festival’s programming, which is now more focused on dance than cinema, and explores the potential for dual positioning within both the film festival circuit and contemporary dance networks. The analysis examines key factors that led to the film section’s initial centrality and explores the curatorial motivations behind the programming shift towards dance, along with the cultural policy framework affecting cinema and live arts. Drawing on archival materials from the Cassero LGBTI+ Center’s community archive, known as the Centro di Documentazione Flavia Madaschi (Flavia Madaschi’s Center for Documentation), as well as interviews with the festival’s artistic and organizational directors, this study traces the historical background of cultural activism at Cassero and investigates the evolution of the festival’s programming. It highlights Gender Bender’s broader diffusion within LGBT and queer film festivals and its identity-related developments in the contemporary dance landscape.

Keywords: film festival studies, queer film festivals, LGBTQ film festivals, European dance networks, interdisciplinarity

Copyright Information

g/s/i is published online and is an open-access journal. All content, including multimedia files, is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution and is published according to the Creative Commons License, which does not allow commercial use of published work or its manipulation in derivative forms. Content can be downloaded and cited as specified by the author/s. **However, the Editorial Board recommends providing the link to the article (not sharing the PDF) so that the author/s can receive credit for each access to his/her work, which is only published online.**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

A Case in Transformation: Gender Bender Festival, from Cinema to Dance

DIANORA HOLLMANN

Introduction

The questions underlying this research work arise from observations of the transformation dynamics in the case of Gender Bender festival (Bologna, Italy). Since its establishment in the early 2000s, the festival has shown an interdisciplinary character, integrating cinema, performing and visual arts, literature and clubbing. While at first the focus of its programming relied on cinema, it later shifted to dance: since its first edition, in 2003, the film section held a central position in the festival programming, while dance gained prominence only during the 11th and 12th editions, held between 2013 and 2014. Even though in the 11th edition dance and theatre were still coexisting disciplines within the performing arts section, Gender Bender started to focus extensively on dance when it became the leading partner of the European network project *Performing Gender* (2013-2015), that was followed by two other projects, *Performing Gender - Dance makes differences* (2017-2019) and *Performing Gender - Dancing in Your Shoes* (2020-2023). From the 12th edition onward, the festival further established an autonomous dance section alongside the development of the *Performing Gender* project series, entering both the national and European networks of dance. From this point onward, Gender Bender has progressively undergone a great transformation in terms of its programming, funding and positioning, recognizing dance as a new pivotal discipline and redefining the disciplinary focus of its programming.

A key role in Gender Bender's transformation was played by the cultural policies that produced the framework in which the festival is embedded. Specifically, it is the ministerial fund of FUS Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo (Unique Show-Business Fund) that provides support for live arts and finances music, dance, theatre and circus both separately, as standalone events, and comprehensively, as part of interdisciplinary projects. This specific funding configuration does not allow cinema to enter into this interdisciplinarity, highlighting a clear separation between national subsidy for live arts, on the one hand, and for cinema, on the other. For this reason, the festival had to choose which discipline from its performing arts section was to receive financing. This resulted in the selection of dance as the funding discipline, at the expense of theatre, that was to be permanently left out of the programming. Since 2014, the FUS subsidy has led the festival to increase the presence of dance in its programming quantitatively, raising the share of the newly established disciplinary section, and the Italian Ministry to recognize Gender Bender as a dance festival, which shows a significant correlation between funding structures and festival evolution.

However, the redefinition of the performing arts section went hand in hand with the evolution of its film equivalent. At its inception, the festival built on the experience of Festival Internazionale di Cinema Gaylesbico di Milano e Bologna (Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna), a gay and lesbian film festival that ran from 1985 to 2002 presenting a joint programming between Milan and Bologna. Expanding on this legacy, Gender Bender claimed to have identified in the film festival form an already rooted, as well as economically sustainable, model. As a result, the festival placed cinema in a central position in its interdisciplinary programming, which resulted in the

film section expanding throughout the editions in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Gender Bender also participated in the creation of a national LGBTTI*Q¹ film festival network, namely *Coordinamento dei festival italiani di cinema LGBTQ* (Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals). Together with most Italian LGBTTI*Q film festivals, Gender Bender takes part in this network of representation and exchange, implicitly adhering to the film festival category and to the LGBTQ labeling.

In this regard, it becomes clear that Gender Bender plays a part in the elaboration of an identity-related discourse throughout its interdisciplinary programming, specifically in its main disciplinary poles of cinema and dance, as well as throughout its side projects and networks. However, the festival does not adhere to an explicit LGBT or queer labeling in its name or mission. Rather, by choosing “Gender Bender” as its name it aligns to the trend of adopting “monikers foregrounding fluid, rather than fixed, identities”² in festival naming. This stands as a stated commitment to overcome a category-based discourse on gender and sexuality, while hinting also at a queer horizon, and it is reflected in its programming choices across an evolving range of contents and disciplines, and in broadening the festival audience beyond the LGBTQ community. To some extent, through this initial choice, the seeds of a transformational bent can already be seen.

Transformation thus emerged across several interconnected levels, encompassing programming, funding and positioning. At the programming level, the festival underwent an overall growth in quantitative terms, as well as qualitative, with the evolution of the film section at the same time as the rise of the dance section. Similarly, this resulted in expanding the identity-related discourse deployed by the festival on a disciplinary basis, as well as alongside the *Performing Gender* project series. The result was the creation of a new audience segment for dance, besides the overall growth of the festival audience. While the newly established dance programming did not have a negative impact on the development of its film programme, it led to a shift in the overall programming balance, creating a twofold focus. In fact, while the new section emerged for curatorial reasons, it was also strongly influenced by the structure of national cultural policies, especially by the FUS fund, whereas the film section has failed to receive ministerial support since 2021. In this regard, this analysis sheds light on the festival’s transformation in terms of funding, specifically on the choice of maintaining a twofold disciplinary focus, when faced with the lack of funding for interdisciplinary projects including cinema and live arts and with the precarity of this cultural context³.

As a result, the festival holds an evolving position as an interdisciplinary festival, with a programme that ranges from cinema to dance. As a dance festival, it belongs to the cultural networks of dance, both on a national and European level, whereas, as a film festival, it belongs to the national LGBTTI*Q film festival circuit. However, it is precisely for the festival positioning that the dance section, with its wider reach, acquires a role of greater prominence than its film counterpart, since it features European and national collaborations with some of the most renowned players in the field. The film section, on the contrary, does not appear to be the feature that contributes most to the festival’s distinction⁴ lacking both the premières and guests that other film festivals of the national LGBTTI*Q circuit offer. Finally, as an interdisciplinary festival, Gender Bender underlies a trend that saw the emergence of identity-related interdisciplinary festivals, serving as a forerunner and model for new interdisciplinary festivals both in the Italian and European context. Also, the festival claimed to

¹ I refer to the use of the term LGBTTI*Q introduced by Dawson and Loist, recognizing in the asterisk a way of separating the identity categories from queer, as anti-identitarian, and at the same time of connecting them, thus highlight the complex history and interconnected developments of LGBTQ film festivals. Dawson and Loist, “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 16.

² Dawson and Loist, “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 10.

³ Loist, “Precarious Cultural Work.”

⁴ I refer to the use of distinction by De Valck in film festival studies, grounded in Bourdieu’s theory. De Valck, *From European Geopolitics*. De Valck, “Film Festivals, Bourdieu.” Santoro, *Forme di capitale*.

serve as an actual model of the society it aims to foster, working as a prefigurative space⁵ that looks at a possible transformation of the present reality. Transformation is thus seen as the common denominator of its mission and its own evolution.

Methodology

The methodological approach set up to follow the transformation of the case study is in turn interdisciplinary. The theoretical framework of film festival studies, specifically its contributions on the LGBTI*Q circuit⁶, is addressed to analyze Gender Bender as a film festival. In order to do so, this work starts by tracing the origins of Gender Bender film section, beginning from the pre-existing gay and lesbian film initiatives, and examining its programming evolution alongside funding precarity for LGBTI*Q cinema. The case of Gender Bender is framed within the spread of LGBTI*Q film festivals and their historical development in terms of identity-related festival naming, as well as programming, from gay film festivals in the late 1970s, and lesbian and trans film festivals in the 1980s, to queer film festival in the 1990s⁷, up to emerging, and more open, festival monikers⁸. These shifts are precisely reflected in the case of Gender Bender, a festival that derives from a gay and lesbian film initiative. It not only aligns with the latest trend in festival naming, but also builds its programming accordingly, opening its scope to new contents and disciplines. After that, the paper examines the festival as part of the national LGBTI*Q film festival circuit, as it integrates the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals, that was established for visibility reasons in applying for national funding. This paper then takes into consideration the frame of cultural policies, with special regard to the Italian national context⁹, and the role the specific configuration of these policies played on the festival's transformation. The analysis of this national funding system establishes a connection between the festival's disciplinary fields of cinema and dance and gives an insight into the reasons behind the festival's programming shift in terms of its change in disciplinary focus. Meanwhile, this work addresses dance studies aiming at exploring identity-related horizons that are characteristic of this discipline and the specific exchange and circulation dynamics underlying the national and European dance networks. In this regard, the network emerges as a bridging concept to analyze the positioning of Gender Bender as a film, dance and interdisciplinary festival, and to offer a glimpse of these disciplinary fields and the potential of network creation.

This case study builds on the collection of archival materials from the community archive of Cassero LGBTI+ Center, an association for social promotion historically rooted in Bologna in the field of political and cultural activism and involved in the national scene as part of Arcigay, the main Italian LGBTI¹⁰ association. The archive is called Centro di Documentazione Flavia Madaschi (Flavia Madaschi's Center for Documentation)¹¹ and, aside from collecting the history of Cassero LGBTI+ Center since its foundation in 1982, it has stored all the material produced from and around the

⁵ Eleftheriadis, "Organizational Practices," 656.

⁶ Damiens, "LGBTQ Film Festivals." Damiens, "Queer Film Ecosystem." Dawson, "Queer European Cinema." Dawson and Loist, "Queer/ing Film Festivals." Dhaenens, "Pink Programming." Loist, "A Complicated Queerness." Loist, "Crossover Dreams." Loist and Zielinski, "On the Development."

⁷ Loist and Zielinski, "On the Development," 51.

⁸ Dawson and Loist, "Queer/ing film festivals," 10.

⁹ Cottler and Veaute, "Lavorare a partire." Cucco and Manzoli, *Cinema di Stato*. Fisher, "Le nuove frontiere." La Monica, "2008-2011."

¹⁰ I use "LGBTI" referring to Arcigay's self-labeling. Arcigay, "Who we are," <https://www.arcigay.it/en/chi-siamo/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹¹ I would like to warmly thank Sara De Giovanni and Antonia Pennella from the Flavia Madaschi's Center for Documentation for their valuable support in navigating the archive.

festival. Since the start of this research work coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the online archive¹² of Gender Bender also plays a fundamental role, allowing access to the digital version of the previous programs of the festival. Further relevant research sources include the semi-structured interviews¹³ conducted with the artistic directors of the festival, Daniele Del Pozzo, who already directed the Gaylesbian International Film Festival for Bologna, and Mauro Meneghelli, who is artistic co-director since 2019, and with the organizational directorship in the person of Andrea Berna, who has been engaged in this role since 2015¹⁴.

While archival materials provide an historical understanding of the festival case as a segment of a broader festival evolution, in continuity with former gay and lesbian film initiatives, and alongside the growth of queer film festivals and of interdisciplinary – or combined arts¹⁵ – ones, the interviews are crucial to investigate the dynamic underlying the festival’s programming shift. For this reason this paper traces the transformation of Gender Bender by exploring its changes over different levels and by focusing on programming. Here, programming is intended as the festival’s activity that dynamically bridges the spheres of content, outreach and practical limitations¹⁶. Specifically, Gender Bender is analyzed for its evolving interdisciplinarity – focusing on the progressive shift from cinema to dance – for its developing local, national and European outreach – resulting in multi-positioning – and for the limiting factors of funding precariousness and of competition for content, such as in the case of film premières on the national territory.

The historical framework

Gender Bender was established in 2003 following the legacy of an earlier gay and lesbian film festival, the Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna¹⁷, that ran between 1985 and 2002 under the direction of Giampaolo Marzi in Milan and Daniele Del Pozzo in Bologna¹⁸. This joint film festival was the first gay film festival initiative in both cities, emerging in the middle of 1980s political struggle fought by social and student movements. Also in 1985, Arcigay¹⁹ was nationally established as an association-based organization advocating for gay rights and fighting against AIDS, which led to the institutionalization of activism that was operating since the late 1970s. Only a year later, in 1986, a new gay film initiative was launched in Turin in the form of a film exhibition, which laid the foundation of what is now known as the Lovers Film Festival. Originally called “Da Sodoma a

¹² Gender Bender, “Past editions,” <https://genderbender.it/en/about-il-festival/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹³ In March 2020, telephone interviews were conducted with the festival staff due to the state of emergency brought about by the pandemic.

¹⁴ In terms of positionality, I need to explicit that I have conducted this research work before holding a job position in the festival, which was opened only later and consolidated into a long-term collaboration. In this regard, I want to sincerely thank Daniele Del Pozzo, Mauro Meneghelli and Andrea Berna, who at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic made themselves open for interviews.

¹⁵ Finkel, “A picture,” 3.

¹⁶ De Valck, Kredell and Loist, *Film Festivals*, 4. Rastegar, “Seeing differently,” 183.

¹⁷ Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Fund V_43, “Festival Cinema Gaylesbico (1)” and Fund V_44, “Festival Cinema Gaylesbico (2).”

¹⁸ The website of the Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna was online in spring 2020, while I was doing research on Gender Bender festival. Now it is no longer active but thanks to Internet Archive Wayback Machine website information could be found at

https://web.archive.org/web/20060516010244/http://www.cinemagaylesbico.com:80/2001/fs_submission.html May 29-June 8, 2002.

¹⁹ Arcigay Associazione LGBTI+ italiana, “Chi Siamo,” (“Who we are”) <https://www.arcigay.it/chi-siamo/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

Hollywood” (“From Sodom to Hollywood”)²⁰, this was one of the first major projects of the national gay and lesbian community and one of the first, and still running, LGBTI*Q film festivals in Europe, together with Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival, MIX Copenhagen and Hamburg International Queer Film Festival²¹.

As attested by Daniele Del Pozzo²², during the 1980s, cinema was the medium of choice for cultural activism of gay and lesbian communities, considering the lower running costs of film events compared to those of live entertainment. Over time, this led to the nationwide emergence of film initiatives and festivals and to the rise of an Italian LGBTI*Q film festival circuit. Specifically, the Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna, was not named as such from the beginning and was only held in Milan until 1997, when the programming was joined with Bologna²³. In 1985 it started as a film exhibition entitled “Cinema & Omosessualità Europa/Usa percorsi e confronti” (“Cinema & Homosexuality Europe/USA paths and comparisons”)²⁴ and in 1986 changed into “Uno sguardo diverso” (“A different gaze”). Moreover, the first edition took place as a way of collaborating with another film exhibition organized the same year in Rome, in the calendar of the Estate Romana, and called “Di quell’Amor...Cinema e Omosessualità” (“Concerning that love...Cinema and Homosexuality”), which was interrupted by the police with the excuse that the film exhibition lacked screening permission²⁵. Since 1993²⁶, the name of the festival has included “gaylesbian,” opening to both gay and lesbian programming content, and, apart from presenting a joint programming in Milan and Bologna, tried to expand to other cities, such as Viareggio in June 2000²⁷.

From the ashes of the Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna two new festivals arose in each city respectively. On the one hand, MIX Festival Milano was established in Milan in 2005 under the direction of Giampaolo Marzi as an international festival of LGBTQ+ cinema and culture, after two additional editions of the Gaylesbian International Film Festival that were held in Milan in 2003 and 2004 and named “International Festival of Gaylesbian Cinema and Queer Culture”²⁸. On the other hand, Gender Bender was born in Bologna in 2003 under the direction of Daniele Del Pozzo, showing continuity in the artistic direction from the former festivals to the new ones. Since their emergence in the early 2000s, both Gender Bender and MIX have shed the activist traits of the previous festival experience and opened themselves to queer discourse, in line with the rise of queer film festivals in Europe and the broader shifts of the LGBTI*Q circuit²⁹. Although these new festivals have always kept a strong focus on film programming, they abandoned the purely film orientation of film festivals and evolved into interdisciplinary initiatives. In addition to the Gaylesbian

²⁰ Lovers Film Festival, “Lovers Film Festival” <https://www.lovessff.com/it/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

²¹ Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival was established in 1984, MIX Copenhagen in 1986 and Hamburg International Queer Film Festival in 1989.

²² Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

²³ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070506131019/http://www.arcigaymilano.org/crono/sezione.asp?sez=CIG+Milano&sotto=Festival+Cinema+Milano>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

²⁴ Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Fund V_43, “Festival Cinema Gaylesbico (1)” and Fund V_44, “Festival Cinema Gaylesbico (2).”

²⁵ Mariella, “Festival MIX.”

²⁶ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060211194822/http://www.arcigaymilano.org/crono/sezione.asp?sez=CIG+Milano&sotto=Festival+Cinema+Milano&offset=10>. Accessed October 21, 2024.

²⁷ Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Press Review, “Festival cinema gay lesbico 1998/2000/2002.”

²⁸ MIX Festival, “Edition 2003,” <https://mixfestival.eu/old/2003/>, May 28-June 3, 2003; “Edition 2004,” <https://mixfestival.eu/old/2004/>, May 26-June 1, 2004.

²⁹ Dawson and Loist, “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 5.

International Film Festival, Gender Bender also drew on the experience of the film exhibition Blowing Bubbles, an international video competition on the theme of AIDS, held between 1992 and 2002 and organized by Cassero, Arcigay and the journal CON/TATTO³⁰. This initiative focused on gay imagery and showed a strong activist character in the fight against AIDS, and further developed the collaboration among Arcigay associations and institutions and supported itinerant screenings in several cities since 1997³¹. Moreover, from 1996 Blowing Bubbles saw the involvement of Daniele Del Pozzo in its artistic and organizational direction, then joined by Giampaolo Marzi in 1998³², thus creating a parallel configuration in the artistic direction to that of the Gaylesbian International Film Festival of Milan and Bologna.

While the film background of Gender Bender was developed in synergy with Milan and with further collaborations of national scale, its interdisciplinarity is deeply rooted in the local dimension and particularly in the experience of LUO, Libera Università Omosessuale (Free Homosexual University). As for the Gaylesbian International Film Festival in Bologna, Gender Bender was developed in the setting of Cassero LGBTI+ Center³³, an association grounded in political and cultural activism ranging from the local to the national level. Indeed, Cassero relied on the establishment of the first gay collective in 1978 in Bologna, called Circolo XXVIII Giugno (Club June 28th)³⁴ and, at the same time, it contributed to the foundation of Arcigay, also hosting its first national congress in Bologna in 1985³⁵, further pursuing cultural activism, besides the political activism it was already undertaking.

In this context, the interdisciplinary initiative of LUO– Free Homosexual University³⁶ emerged in 1995 with a laboratory-based orientation, aiming at creating a dialogue with the citizenship on the themes of gay and lesbian identity. This newly-established event took place on a biannual basis until 2001 and focused on topics from a variety of disciplinary fields, including literature, sociology, medicine, law, history and art history, religion, psychology, and cultural studies, in the form of meetings, lectures and seminars. Since it spanned disciplines and looked for a wider audience beyond the community one, LUO was open in terms of content and participation, contributing to a space of discussion and exchange. As Daniele Del Pozzo states³⁷, LUO inspired the making of Gender Bender, resulting in the emergence of an interdisciplinary programming strategy and in targeting a broader audience, as well as in an overall horizontal orientation between festival and public, in terms of communication, spaces and workshop activities. However, Gender Bender was developed by identifying a wider-ranging identity-related perspective than the gay and lesbian one, that characterized LUO, as well as the Gaylesbian International Film Festival and Blowing Bubbles. By addressing a broader identity spectrum and its interdisciplinary elaboration, therefore, Gender Bender is the point where the contribution of these former initiatives and the opening of queer perspectives merge, as it was already transformative in its establishment and in aligning with the broader shifts of the festival landscape.

³⁰ Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Press Review, “Blowing Bubbles.”

³¹ Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Press Review, “Blowing Bubbles.”

³² Center for Documentation Flavia Madaschi, Press Review, “Blowing Bubbles.”

³³ Cassero LGBTI+ Center, “Il Cassero,” <https://cassero.it/chi-siamo/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

³⁴ Circolo XXVIII Giugno (Club June 28th) entered Porta Saragozza, which would later become the historical headquarters of the association, on June 26, 1982. This led to a confusion of dates and to the celebration of Cassero’s birthday on June 28, instead of June 26, as stated in the “Editoriale” of *Clamorosa. Cassero: 40 anni di rumore* (La Falla, 2022) by Antonia Cassoli, Ren Arman Cerantoni and Valentina Pinza.

³⁵ Cassero LGBTI Center, “Storia” (“History”), <https://cassero.it/chi-siamo/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

³⁶ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091103185430/http://www.cassero.it/luo>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

³⁷ Camonchia, “Al confine.”

As an interdisciplinary festival, Gender Bender has undergone transformation across its disciplinary sections.³⁸ Unlike other disciplines, film programming maintained a central role over the years, starting from the very first edition, and was initially structured around themed subsections. Also, clubbing has always been part of the festival's side programming. Between 2003 to 2005, following the lead of LUO, the festival hosted lectures with a thematic slant on historical figures linked to identity-related imagery, such as Yukio Mishima in the 1st edition and Jean Cocteau in the 3rd edition. This led to a festival programming that, in its first stages, consisted at a basic level of film and lectures. Shortly after, in 2004, visual arts emerged as a disciplinary programming section in 2004 and presented art exhibitions until its end in 2010, with occasional subsequent events. Also in 2004, dance entered the programming and, in 2005, formally structured the performative arts section together with theatre. After the closing of the visual arts section, a new programming balance was reached with the creation of a literary meetings section that was formalized in 2011. Then, at the turn of the 12th edition, in 2014, theatre was removed from performing arts, thus leading to the rise of a dance programming section, which also included the workshop dimension. While the festival programming has experienced an overall growth in quantitative terms, also increasing the number of days and spaces, the disciplinary sections have shown a dynamic balance, where the film section has remained stable while the others have changed constantly.

The film programming

Given its stability, the film section has occupied a key role in the festival's programming balance and at the same time has carried with it the reasons for its transformation, especially when considering its long-term funding precarity. Although it has been recognized as a section less prone to change, film programming has had its own development. Due to the centrality of this disciplinary section, Gender Bender can therefore be investigated as a film festival, also in light of its association with the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals. Looking back at the former film initiatives labelled as “gay and lesbian” and at the festival's association-based background, it is interesting to see that Gender Bender has never adopted a film festival labelling such as LGBTI*Q³⁹ or referred explicitly to any of the categories on this spectrum. Even if the festival does not adopt the labelling just mentioned, it explicitly refers to the concept of gender bending, thus highlighting its interest for gender issues and its orientation toward queer horizons. This is also stated in the festival's mission, that emphasises the focus of Gender Bender as “the imaginaries of contemporary culture related to new representations of the body, gender identities and sexual orientation.”⁴⁰ Indeed, avoiding LGBTI*Q labelling in its festival naming and mission stands as a choice to overcome a category-based perspective and broaden the audience beyond the LGBTQ community, as claimed by the artistic direction.⁴¹ However, programming content, especially in the film section, is always marked in LGBTQ terms, since films make use of this label for reasons of circulation and reception.

Back in 2003, no other film festivals nationwide were seen to distance themselves from LGBTI*Q labelling in their naming or mission. While in Turin there was the Festival Internazionale di Film con Tematiche Omosessuali “Da Sodoma a Hollywood” (International Festival of Films with

³⁸ Gender Bender, “Past editions,” <https://genderbender.it/en/about-il-festival/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

³⁹ I refer to the use of the LGBTI*Q label by Dawson and Loist and I adopt it here to analyze film festival labelling. Dawson and Loist, “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 16

⁴⁰ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190721164356/https://genderbender.it/about/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁴¹ Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020. Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

Homosexual Themes “From Sodom to Hollywood”), in its 18th edition⁴², Milan hosted the 17th edition of the International Festival of Gaylesbian Cinema and Queer Culture, which pointed to an opening toward queer theories, despite translating its name in English into “Milano International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival”⁴³. Besides Gender Bender, Bologna held a lesbian and feminist film festival, Immaginaria International Film Festival of Lesbians & Other Rebellious Women, and a new film festival was established in Florence, the Florence Queer Festival.⁴⁴ Thus, Gender Bender stands as the first example that aligns with the ongoing changes in LGBTI*Q festival naming,⁴⁵ specifically in the recent adoption of “monikers foregrounding fluid, rather than fixed, identities,”⁴⁶ as mentioned earlier. However, in the last decade there are two more festivals that display similar choices: Orlando Identity Relations Possibility in Bergamo and Bari International Gender Festival in Bari, respectively founded in 2014 and 2015. Great resemblance between these festivals and Gender Bender is found in terms of naming and mission, without the use of LGBTI*Q labelling but with a broader outlook on identity, gender and sexuality. Even if both festivals are part of the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals, and they are thus considered film festivals, they actually emerged as interdisciplinary initiatives, like Gender Bender. In this regard, Daniele Del Pozzo states that the informal relationships between Gender Bender and the people involved in the newly-established initiatives led the festival to become a forerunner in setting up this identity-related festival format, that was further adopted in 2018 to create the What You See festival in Utrecht by Vincent Wijnhuizen from the Maastricht Dutch Dance Festival.⁴⁷

As a film festival, Gender Bender records a positive trend in its programming development, with a linear growth that was broken only in the 2004 and 2010 editions.⁴⁸ Overall, this resulted in a quantitative growth of films screened, from an average of 12 until 2008, to 18 in 2012, 22 in 2016 and 23 between 2017 and 2019. In 2020 and 2021, due to pandemic restrictions and the festival’s temporary shift from November to September, film programming was held in the form of open-air screenings, with a substantial decline in the number of films, 5 and 7 respectively. Over the editions, the film section has been developed in the framework of the significant increase in both mainstream and independent LGBTQ film productions, following the affirmation of New Queer Cinema in the early 1990s as a movement of queer-themed films and a niche film market.⁴⁹ In turn, LGBTI*Q film festivals have undergone a diffusion phenomenon throughout Europe since the 1980s, with a major development since the 1990s.⁵⁰ They have progressively structured themselves into a film festival circuit, where an ever-changing collaboration has been built in terms of LGBTI*Q visibility, community and film circulation. Indeed, LGBTI*Q film festivals have expanded in parallel to the historical development of LGBTQ politics and representation, resulting in a continuous process of festival naming and renaming.⁵¹ In regard to programming, this led to a shift from activist-related

⁴² An English translation for the festival name was added the year later: 19th Turin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20030803222035/http://www.tglff.com/2003/index.htm>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁴³ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20030623041006/http://www.cinmagaylesbico.com/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁴⁴ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20040209230718/http://www.florencequeerfestival.it/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁴⁵ Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 51.

⁴⁶ Dawson and Loist. “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 10.

⁴⁷ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

⁴⁸ The 2004 and 2010 editions showed a declining trend in film programming, with 10 films in 2004, compared to 13 films in 2003, and with 14 films in 2011, compared to 16 films in 2010.

⁴⁹ Dawson, “Queer European Cinema,” 196. Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 52.

⁵⁰ Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 55.

⁵¹ Loist, “Crossover Dreams,” 58. Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 51.

contents, purposes and spaces, to less militant and more institutionalized ones, as reflected by the emergence of queer film festivals, underlying how they “owe much to earlier developments and experiments,”⁵² and by the introduction of queer-themed awards in major film festivals.⁵³ Moreover, the growing circulation of LGBTQ film content, through the LGBTI*Q film festival circuit and beyond, went hand in hand with the developing production of LGBTQ storylines and characters, progressively moving to differentiation and mainstream as well.⁵⁴

Besides the initial transition from the former gay and lesbian film initiatives to Gender Bender, this trend toward change can be seen in the festival’s programming development within the film section. Gender Bender has selected films that range from fiction to documentary and has occasionally included television content, such as *Six Feet Under* (Alan Ball, 2001-2005), a black humor US series about a family who runs a funeral home, in its first edition and *195 Lewis* (Chanelle Aponte Pearson, 2016), a dramedy on a group of black lesbian polyamorous women, in its 15th edition. It has screened international, European and national film premières, as well as content that was already premiered in other festivals from higher-ranking festival circuits, claiming not to prioritize novelty and exclusivity of films as required by the logic structuring the film festival hierarchy.⁵⁵ To develop programming year by year, the festival has faced issues with content availability and practical limitations on a recurrent basis, further working toward a programming balance in identity-related representation. In terms of content availability, the festival has identified its competitors for film premières in the Lovers Film Festival in Turin and in the Rome Film Fest in Rome, since they stand in a more relevant position on the national festival circuit and, being more influential in dealing with distributors, are more likely to get films premiered.⁵⁶ Also, VoD platforms, such as Netflix or Amazon Prime, have played an increasing role in terms of content availability with their ever-growing selection of LGBTQ films, that in some cases come directly from major film festivals, thus leading Gender Bender not to select this content⁵⁷. Lastly, faced with practical limitations, the festival has made programming choices according to its economic capacity, considering the precarity of cultural work within Cassero, with its few full-time year-round staff, and the long-term lack of national funding for cinema.

Nevertheless, the festival has focused on developing a programming balance in terms of identity-related themes, from seeing activist topics under a new lens to focusing on those that were not yet widely addressed, with an aim to cover contemporary issues.⁵⁸ Over the editions, it has shown a fluid rather than fixed programming orientation,⁵⁹ in selecting films that could porously move in and out the LGBTQ category and that have produced, as a whole programming, a fluid identity-related discourse in line with the festival naming and mission.⁶⁰ Aiming to offer broader representations and narratives in terms of identity, Gender Bender has aligned with a queer sensibility, since queer refers to a theory and activism of non-normative and anti-identitarian inclusion, based on overcoming categories and embracing nuanced imageries.⁶¹ Moreover, it is known that “what counts as queer cinema is a complex story”⁶² because, even if the presence of queer characters in the storyline stands as a shared feature, it actually depends on film reception, thus opening to a wider horizon of films. As

⁵² Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 49.

⁵³ Loist, “Crossover Dreams,” 60. Loist and Zielinski, “On the Development,” 53.

⁵⁴ Loist, “Crossover Dreams,” 58.

⁵⁵ De Valck, *From European Geopolitics*, 211.

⁵⁶ Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020.

⁵⁷ Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020.

⁵⁸ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020. Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17th, 2020.

⁵⁹ I refer to the emergence of fluid rather than fixed festival monikers, as stated by Dawson and Loist, and I adopt it here to refer to film programming. Dawson and Loist, “Queer/ing Film Festivals,” 10.

⁶⁰ Rastegar “Seeing Differently,” 186-89.

⁶¹ Loist, “A Complicated Queerness.” Loist, “Crossover Dreams,” 58.

⁶² Loist, “Crossover Dreams,” 58.

a result, film festivals contribute to defining queerness through their programming choices, as it is shown by the Spanish documentary on sexuality and disability *Yes, We Fuck!* (Antonio Centeno and Raúl de la Morena, 2015), that has been considered queer enough to enter the programming of the BFI Flare and the Scottish Queer International Film Festival in 2016⁶³, as well as Gender Bender's in 2017.

In the sphere of activist topics, the festival has focused on themes such as the AIDS epidemics by screening in its 15th edition films like *After Louie* (Vincent Gagliostro, 2017), on the comparison between the New York gay community in the 1980s and the contemporary one, and *Pushing Dead* (Tom E. Brown, 2017), on the paradoxes of the American health care system. As for lesser-covered topics, Gender Bender has dealt with sexuality, in line with its overall more explicit representations⁶⁴, and gender identity. Indeed, it addressed BDSM by screening the documentary *Violently Happy* (Paola Calvo, 2017), on a group of Berliners collectively experimenting with their sexuality, and sexuality of people with functional diversity in the aforementioned *Yes, We Fuck!* (Antonio Centeno and Raúl de la Morena, 2015). In its 16th edition, the festival brought to attention intersexuality through the documentary *Ni d'Eve, ni d'Adam. Une histoire intersexe* (Floriane Devigne, 2018), on an encounter between two intersexual people in search for acceptance, thus carrying specific political issues to the forefront, as it has occurred on a broader festival level with the rise of film festivals focusing on race or ethnicity, migration and intersectionality in the last decade.⁶⁵ Aiming at bridging the contemporary landscape, Gender Bender has programmed documentaries on gender-based violence like *Female Pleasure* (Barbara Miller, 2018) and *In the Name of Your Daughter* (Giselle Portenier, 2018), both in the 17th edition, explicitly referring to feminism and the Me Too movement, fighting against sexual harassment within and beyond the film industry. Also, it is relevant to observe that this programming relates to the Non Una di Meno (Not One Less)⁶⁶ feminist movement, that has been founded in 2016 and has a strong participation in Bologna.⁶⁷ Finally, there is an additional programming line including films linked to the art world, with biopics and documentaries on art movements or figures that have contributed to an identity-related discourse, such as *Bixa Travesty* (Claudia Priscilla and Kiko Goifman, 2018), on the Brazilian transgender artist Linn da Quebrada and *Rebels on Pointe* (Bobby Jo Hart, 2017), on the famous all-male ballet company Les Ballets Trockadero De Monte Carlo, respectively in the 16th edition and 15th editions. In this case, topics or specific figures are cross-functional to the film and visual arts programming, like in the case of the focus on Robert Mapplethorpe, in the 3rd edition, that was developed in both disciplinary sections.

Moreover, further considerations concerning the film section need to be raised in terms of film genre. Apart from fiction films, at the turn of the 16th and 17th editions, the number of documentaries has almost doubled, from 4 to 7, out of an average of 24 films. Although the festival does not present a documentary programming sub-section, a specific award for the best documentary was established in 2018, given by a jury of young film critics, in parallel to the one for best fiction film, which instead is awarded by the general audience. Of course, in the pandemic editions of 2020 and 2021, the documentaries have sharply decreased⁶⁸, following the overall reduction in film programming. Alongside the quantitative growth of the film section, the rise of the documentary genre has contributed to its qualitative development, side by side with the definition of different programming topics. In this regard, the artistic direction has reported a greater presence of

⁶³ Dawson and Loist. "Queer/ing Film Festivals," 2.

⁶⁴ Dawson, "Queer European Cinema," 191. Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 59.

⁶⁵ Dawson and Loist. "Queer/ing Film Festivals," 11.

⁶⁶ In Italian, the article "una" refers to a female subject.

⁶⁷ Bolognatoday, "8 marzo" (March 8), <https://www.bolognatoday.it/cronaca/8-marzo-corteo-bologna.html>, March 8, 2023.

⁶⁸ The festival programmed 1 documentary out of 5 films and 2 documentaries out of 8 films, in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

documentary as part of broader changes in the modes of representation and imageries of the LGBTQ community, where the increasing differentiation⁶⁹ of content has led to the emergence of a variety of aesthetics and productive dimensions, among which lies documentary. This opening toward the documentary genre aligns with the wide-ranging festival's selection and with the parallel transformation of LGBTQ imageries, theory, curatorship and community.⁷⁰ Thus, films with characters and storylines explicitly belonging to the LGBTQ imagery, as well as those dealing with identity in a more nuanced way, have constituted Gender Bender's film section and have produced, as a programming, a corresponding wide-ranging identity-related discourse, addressing a broader audience than the LGBTQ community.

Furthermore, film programming has been the only section to turn exceptionally to digital, by adhering to a joint film festival exhibition organized by the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals during pandemics. This initiative, called *Taglio Lungo* (Long Cut)⁷¹, was hosted in April 2020 on the streaming platform MYmovies and presented 8 films selected collectively by the Coordination. As in this case, the rise of streaming platforms has played a key role in hosting the online version of on-site film festivals and in getting them funded in spite of their readapted editions.⁷² However, this raises an open question on the relationship between a massive presence of streaming platforms and the specific liveliness of LGBTIQ film festivals, which are deeply rooted in "rituals, hype and the feeling of belonging to a group."⁷³

Finally, with the development of the film section, there is a need for more resources, which leads to take into consideration the funding framework.

The funding framework

In line with the development of funding strategies among queer film festivals⁷⁴, Gender Bender has structured its funding configuration by integrating different financing schemes in an attempt to achieve a nearly permanent organization. Funding availability is crucial to the viability of festivals, and especially of queer film festivals, which have always experienced scarce public support and precarious working conditions.⁷⁵ Since its first edition, the festival has been supported on both the local and regional levels.⁷⁶ On the one hand, the municipality of Bologna has allocated funding on an annual basis until 2017, and on a multi-year basis afterwards, providing an increasing support in shifting from a short to a longer-term contribution. Meanwhile, public subsidy has been granted by the Emilia-Romagna region thanks to the law 13 of July 5, 1999,⁷⁷ that has provided a three-year grant to live arts such as theatre, music, dance and circus. As a result, this constant support, even if in the latter case limited to live arts programming, has contributed to an overall festival continuity, building a progressively stronger basis in terms of economic sustainability and gradual shift from voluntary-based staff positions to paid work.

⁶⁹ Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 58.

⁷⁰ Damiens, "LGBTQ Film Festivals." Loist, "A Complicated Queerness." Rich, "New Queer Cinema." Rich, "Collision, Catastrophe, Celebration." Richards, "New Queer Cinema."

⁷¹ MYmovies, "Taglio Lungo" ("Long Cut"), <https://www.mymovies.it/cinemanews/2021/174847/>. April 1-4, 2021.

⁷² De Valck, "Vulnerabilities and Resiliency," 131-32. De Valck and Damiens, "Film Festivals," 301.

⁷³ Dawson and Loist, "Queer/ing Film Festivals," 3.

⁷⁴ Loist and Zielinski, "On the Development," 53.

⁷⁵ Loist, "Precarious Cultural Work," 269.

⁷⁶ Berna, telephone interview, March 23, 2020.

⁷⁷ Regione Emilia-Romagna Cultura/Spettacolo, "Finanziamenti. Legge 13/99" ("Funding. Law 13/99"), <https://spettacolo.emiliaromagnacreativa.it/it/finanziamenti/legge-13/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

However, funding availability becomes more complex on the national level. Since the large cuts in financial laws over the last 15 years, state funding for the cultural sector has significantly decreased, and especially the FUS, Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo (Unique Show-Business Fund).⁷⁸ Festivalization, as a broader cultural trend, has strongly emerged as a winning formula in this system for the exceptionality, brevity and economic sustainability of the festival format, and has led to a nationwide festival spread and increasing competition for resources.⁷⁹ Direzione Generale Cinema (General Direction for Cinema), within MiBACT, the Italian Ministry of Culture, is in charge of financing cinema, while funding for dance is provided by the FUS fund. As a film festival, Gender Bender was not funded by the General Direction for Cinema prior to 2021, when it received a 10,000 euro grant.⁸⁰ In this funding scheme, it is recognized as a film exhibition and not as a film festival,⁸¹ due to the lack of certain parameters that are set for festivals, such as the presence of a professional jury, cash prizes and festival catalogs. Gender Bender, indeed, does not meet any of these requirements, since it has a non-professional jury, namely the general public and the young critics, has never awarded monetary prizes and has neither produced catalogs. In 2017, the festival initiated its funding application process for its film section, first to the ministerial call for public contribution in 2017, regulated by Article 6 of the Ministerial Decree of July 31, 2017, and then to the promotion grant for cinema and audiovisual initiatives, governed by Article 27 Law no. 220 of 2016.⁸² In neither cases, the festival has obtained public support as a film event, thus questioning the economic sustainability of its film programming.⁸³ Over the same period, more precisely in 2018, the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals was established to achieve a stronger institutional representation in terms of funding application.⁸⁴ No festivals from the network had ever received state funding,⁸⁵ highlighting a lack of public support for LGBTI*Q film festivals, which further aligns with the wider scarcity of subsidy for this festival category. However, by increasing the visibility of LGBTI*Q film festivals through the newly-established network, MIX Festival Milano and Sicilia Queer Filmfest, both part of the Coordination, have been financed by the General Direction for Cinema since 2019 within the festival scheme.⁸⁶

By contrast, as a dance festival, Gender Bender has been supported by the Ministry of Culture in the framework of FUS, that provides a three-year grant for producing and programming live arts within the areas of music, theater, dance and circus, or interdisciplinary projects including these disciplines. Despite its interdisciplinary programming, the festival could not fit into the category of interdisciplinary projects, because cinema, which has been one of its programming focus, is excluded from this funding structure. As a result, this availability of subsidy led Gender Bender to face a choice in selecting one discipline among those eligible. This brought to a change in the festival's performing arts section that resulted in the expansion of dance programming at the expense of theatre, and to the

⁷⁸ Cottrer and Veaute, "Lavorare a partire," 363. La Monica, "2008-2011," 511-12.

⁷⁹ Cottrer and Veaute, "Lavorare a partire," 360.

⁸⁰ General Direction for Cinema, "Rassegne 2021 – Allegato B/2" ("Film Exhibitions 2021 – Annex B/2"), <https://cinema.cultura.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/uploads/STO/2021/rassegne-per-publicazione-1.pdf>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁸¹ General Direction for Cinema, "Rassegne 2021 – Allegato B/2" ("Film Exhibitions 2021 – Annex B/2").

⁸² Berna, telephone interview, March 23, 2020.

⁸³ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

⁸⁴ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

⁸⁵ General Direction for Cinema, "Allegato A/1" ("Annex A/1"), <https://cinema.cultura.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/uploads/CA2/2020/allegati-d-d-21-09-2018-delibera-fest-rass-premi-sca.pdf>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁸⁶ General Direction for Cinema, "Allegato B/1" (Annex B/1), <https://cinema.cultura.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/uploads/CA2/2019/allegato-B1-DD-29.07.2019-festival.pdf>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

establishment of a new disciplinary section dedicated to dance. Since 2014, the festival has received the FUS contribution for its dance programming and has been nationally recognized as a dance festival. Given a progressive increase in funding, Gender Bender has experienced a quantitative as well as qualitative growth in its dance section, both in the number and variety of shows and artists. This positive trend started in 2014 with a €8,000 contribution, followed by a tripled amount in the subsequent three-year grant of €25,054, €26,807 and €28,683 respectively.⁸⁷ As for the next three years, the upward trend was confirmed with a contribution of €30,117 in 2018 and €32,000 in 2019, decreasing in 2020 and 2021 to €9,789 and €20,526 respectively due to an overall programming decline in pandemic times.⁸⁸

Funding availability thus stands as a key point in the festival's programming redefinition, since the long-lasting lack of funding for the film section led to a steady increase of the dance one, actually driving the festival to shift its focus of programming. The evolution of this particular case study alone urges more broadly to reconsider the effectiveness of the criteria for funding culture,⁸⁹ specifically in the Italian context. Overall, it emerges that the existing structure of cultural policies related to cinema does not allocate resources effectively, thus lacking a positive impact on the development of the whole system⁹⁰ and raising problematic issues in the festival context.⁹¹ Since festivals are to be framed on the basis of the opportunities generated in a given area – including the specific funding configuration –, Gender Bender faced a separation of the film and dance subsidy into two different funding schemes, even though FUS was in charge of financing the film sector until the establishment in 2017 of Fondo per lo sviluppo degli investimenti nel cinema e nell'audiovisivo (Fund for the Development of Investments in Cinema and Audiovisual Industry).⁹² As a result, the festival could not receive national funding as an interdisciplinary project that includes cinema and live arts and was supported, as such, only on the local level. After the development of the dance section for funding reasons, the film section suffered due to a lack of funding and it remained as a curatorial choice, although without any grants until 2021. This shows that public contribution is a basic condition that impacts festivals' transformation, although curatorial choices could still remain in play. In this case, the long-lasting lack of state funding pushed the festival to shift its focus of programming from cinema to dance, having at least one funding-based section and keeping the film section for its long-standing programming relevance and for its historical role in the development of national community activism.⁹³

After the film section was funded, it is observed that the financial amount of film funding is 1/3 of that of dance, highlighting a different availability of economic resources between the two sections and thus leading to a redefinition of the festival's programming center. Moreover, while the reach of the film section is national – in terms of national *premières*, audience and network dimension with the Italian LGBTI*Q film festivals –, the dance one is both national and European. In this regard,

⁸⁷ FUS Archive, “Consultazione Contributi. 2014 – Danza. Rassegne e festival” (“Consultation of contributions. 2014 – Dance. Exhibitions and Festivals”), <https://spettacolo.cultura.gov.it/assegnazione-contributi-2014-danza/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁸⁸ Documentation on FUS 2015-2017, 2018-2020 and 2021 are available at Direzione Generale Spettacolo (General Direction for Show), “Danza” (“Dance”), <http://www.spettacolodalvivo.beniculturali.it/category/attivita/attivita-danza/page/6/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁸⁹ Fisher, “Le nuove frontiere,” 85.

⁹⁰ Cucco and Manzoli, *Cinema di Stato*, 33.

⁹¹ AFIC Associazione Festival Italiani di Cinema, “Fondi ministeriali 2018 ai festival: il commento dell'AFIC” (“2018 ministerial funds to festivals: AFIC's commentary”), <https://www.aficfestival.it/2018/10/08/fondi-ministeriali-festival-2018-commento-afic/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

⁹² Cucco and Manzoli, *Cinema di Stato*, 54. Camera dei Deputati. Documentazione parlamentare (Chamber of Deputies. Parliamentary documents), “Il Fondo unico per lo spettacolo” (“Unique Show-Business Fund”), https://temi.camera.it/leg18/post/il_fondo_unico_per_lo_spettacolo.html, October 20, 2021.

⁹³ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

a key role has been played by the *Performing Gender* project series, that has been developing since 2013, even before the establishment of the dance section, and have focused on identity under the disciplinary lens of dance. While on the national level reference has been made only to economic contribution, on the European level is the relational rather than financial dimension that has been favored, since the festival does not receive European funding, but its side projects do. This non-financial form of support has allowed the festival to cultivate a wide ranging network dimension – getting to know European artists and their identity-related work, as well as dance centers and festivals – that contributed to the development of dance programming, characterized by a European reach, and pointed out a preexisting orientation toward this discipline. Indeed, although the dance section has clearly emerged for funding reasons, its choice and evolution are not limited to that.

The dance section

The initial reasons for not choosing dance as a focus of programming had always been economic. As stated by the artistic direction, live arts programming, even if desired within the festival, would have required greater economic capacity than film. As a result, dance has long held a secondary position to the film section for reasons of economic sustainability rather than curatorial desires. Starting from 2014, Gender Bender has produced an identity-related discourse through dance programming, in parallel with the film section, reaffirming its wide-ranging elaboration on identity issues across different programming disciplines. Dance has been chosen for its potential in creating a discourse on identity, gender and sexuality throughout bodily presence instead of verbal language. Indeed, dance is rooted in the physicality of the body and the dancing body stands as a symbolic expression that embodies a variety of notions.⁹⁴ The immediacy of this bodily language, when compared to the use of the verbal, drove the festival to such a disciplinary orientation – also considering the greater economic burden of the subtitling process for theatre.⁹⁵ As a nonverbal body movement communication in time and space, dance conveys “meaning through the use of space, touch, proximity to another dancer or to an observer, nudity, stillness, and specific body postures and movements,”⁹⁶ and embodies expressions of gender, sexuality and multi-layered intersectional identities.⁹⁷ Specifically, it produces a discourse where multiple identities are embodied, constructed, and negotiated,⁹⁸ so it is possible to consider the festival’s shift in programming focus for the wide disciplinary potential of dance in dealing with identity throughout the body.

Since its inception, the dance section has experienced a steady quantitative growth, although clues to this disciplinary orientation were already found in 2013, when 3 dance performances and the annual sharing of the first *Performing Gender* project⁹⁹ were presented in the performing arts section. This increasing trend started in 2014 with 9 dance performances, which raised to 11 in 2015 and 2016, and reached 13 in 2017, 2018 and 2019. However, in 2020 and 2021, the festival showed respectively 11 and 9 dance performances¹⁰⁰ due to the outdoor stage that was used when the festival temporarily

⁹⁴ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 212.

⁹⁵ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

⁹⁶ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 213.

⁹⁷ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 212. Risner and Pickard, “Editorial, special issue,” 118.

⁹⁸ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 217. Risner and Pickard, “Editorial, special issue,” 118.

⁹⁹ Gender Bender, “Past editions,” https://genderbender.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/gb13_programma_web.pdf, October 26–November 2, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Gender Bender, “Past editions,” <https://genderbender.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/GB2020-WEB-1.pdf>, September 7–18, 2020; https://genderbender.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/C006_GB21_programma_web-compresso-1.pdf, September 2–19, 2021.

turned into an open-air event. In contrast, theater has evolved inversely to dance, ranging from 6 performances in 2013¹⁰¹ to isolated appearances in the subsequent editions. A key role in the growth of dance programming has been played by the development of the European network project *Performing Gender*. This project series led to the creation of a network dimension among European artists and dance centers and festivals involved, in line with the relational approach developed by festivals to foster transnational collaboration and discursive elaboration, alongside the broader affirmation of cultural networks, interdisciplinary perspectives and new audiences.¹⁰² This network collaboration resulted in the involvement of many international artists – previously part of *Performing Gender* – into the festival’s dance section, as well as in the development of a workshop sub-section. However, while this network boosted the dance section, it was also favored by a gap. Indeed, a scarcity of dance programming in the local cultural offerings, where only ballet was present in theatre seasons, and a lack of contemporary dance, resulting in a lack of audience, contributed to the choice of dance as a programming discipline, which would purposefully fit into a gap and be geared toward creating a new audience.¹⁰³

While the orientation toward contemporary dance is based on economic assessments, local cultural offerings and audience engagement, this programming shift is deeply grounded in curatorial reasons. The artistic direction indeed claimed that dance has been the festival’s discipline of choice because “in focusing on identity, gender and sexuality, the body stands as the key instrument of artistic representation” and “dance has strongly brought the body – the imaginaries that are built around it, its stories, relationships and dynamics – back to the core.”¹⁰⁴ Thus dance, in its language potential of bridging a variety of embodied imageries, is recognized as the key disciplinary dimension to elaborate the festival’s discourse. Moreover, dance, as a space in constant definition, offers a safe exploration to transcend dominant ideologies and contributes to the construction and deconstruction of a sociopolitical imaginary of bodies in motion.¹⁰⁵ As for its identity-related elaboration, this discipline takes part in a broader and ongoing process of artistic, cultural and social questioning of patterns of dominance and gender roles, where specific interest is given to the body as primary sign in relation to identity, subjectivity and the social dimension, further enabling cross-contamination with the transnational scene.¹⁰⁶

It is within this horizon of identity embodiment and transnational exchange in dance, that the festival has developed its new disciplinary section. In line with Gender Bender’s proximity to queer horizons, dance programming has focused on bodily imagery by overcoming the narratives of white, heterosexual, capitalist and patriarchal society,¹⁰⁷ and shifting from binarism to an expressive reappropriation of body and identity.¹⁰⁸ Both at the level of individual dance works and at the level of the overall programming, several overlapping identities emerge, ranging from race, ethnicity, social class, ability, gender expression and sexuality, thus reflecting an interest on intersecting types and levels of injustice that move “beyond strict ‘identity politics’ focused only on one type of social category or identity, such as racism or sexism, to examine how social oppression is multi-layered and multiply experienced.”¹⁰⁹ *Passing the Bechdel Test*, for instance, a work by the Belgian choreographer Jan Martens

¹⁰¹ Gender Bender, “Past editions,” https://genderbender.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/gb13_programma_web.pdf, October 26–November 2, 2013.

¹⁰² Gallina, *Organizzare teatro*, 13–14. Bouquerel, “Le reti culturali,” 357–58.

¹⁰³ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Daly “Dancing Democracy,” 8. Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 214–16. Franko, “Danza e politica,” 12.

¹⁰⁶ Franco and Nordera, *Discorsi della danza*, XVIII.

¹⁰⁷ Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020. Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality,” 223. Lepecki, “The Impossible Body,” 258.

¹⁰⁹ Risner and Pickard, “Editorial, special issue,” 118.

that was presented in the 17th edition, dealt with sexual orientation, gender equality, role models and stereotypes for female identity, as well as with acceptance of one's own body, showing 13 teenagers confronting each other on these issues. Similarly, a reflection on the canonical body and gender roles and stereotypes has been developed by the Italian choreographer and performer Silvia Gribaudo, whose *A corpo libero (Free body)*, in the 8th edition, focused on the freedom of the female body facing feelings of inadequacy and social limitations, and *R.O.S.A._10 Esercizi per nuovi virtuosismi (R.O.S.A._10 exercises for new virtuosities)*, in the 15th edition, which reflected upon a non-canonical female body and social schemes and stereotypes. Still in relation to the canonical body, *Non è mai troppo tardi (It's Never Too Late)*, in the 9th edition, dealt with female aging, which was also explored in *Blitz Over60*, a choral dance performance resembling a flash mob performed by women over 60 in a city supermarket. Specifically, this last dance performance, together with others, such as *Passing the Bechdel Test*, has aligned to the recently emerged contemporary trend of community dance, which involved ordinary people as dancers, creating a shift from the experience of the spectator to the participant.¹¹⁰ Due to its inherent relational aspect, community dance stands as deeply grounded on bodily presence and on the representation of power dynamics and patterns among and through bodies, thus becoming a valuable space of elaboration in terms of dance works and workshop initiatives. Again on the intergenerational aspect, *Victor* by Jan Martens, presented in the 11th edition, relates back to the generational encounter and exchange between father and son, which lies in the bodies of the two performers. Then, the identity-related discourse is developed over sexuality in works such as *Tel Quel!*, in the 13th edition, and *Les rois de la piste*, in the 16th, by the French choreographer and dancer Thomas Lebrun, which respectively inquire paths of acceptance of youngsters and codes of expression in the disco dance culture of the 1970s. Concerning this last case specifically, it is significant to highlight how disco dance constitutes a space for bodily reappropriation, where expression of sexuality is less conditioned by social forces and where each generation or minority builds its own dance style and vocabulary.¹¹¹ Moving forward in the development of the intersectional identity discourse, transgender identity and religious identity are addressed within *Savvūšun*, in the 17th edition, by the Iranian transgender artist Sorour Darabi, who proposed a thematization of the male body through Shiite rituals practiced by cisgender men and traditional models of masculinity. A reflection around race, specifically on the black body and its representation and stereotypes, is shown by *O samba do crioulo doido*, in the 20th edition, by Luiz de Abreu e Calixto Neto, while an implicitly political work on ability is developed by the artist Chiara Bersani, whose *Gentle Unicorn* was co-produced by Gender Bender in 2020 and *L'Animale (The Animal)* was programmed in the 19th edition.

Workshops entered dance programming in 2017 with the *Warm Up* format, that was conducted by the artists for the audience and consisted in a sharing and teaching of some excerpts from the show, launching an even more participatory dimension at the festival. In addition to connecting to the emergence of participatory practices in dance, as in the case of community dance above mentioned, workshops relate to the traits of openness and horizontality that characterize the festival's modes of organization, as intentionally pursued by the artistic direction.¹¹² Such non-hierarchical and participatory forms of organization align with the DIY (Do It Yourself) discourses and praxes recognized in queer film festivals, that involve an experienced-oriented participation of the festival community and lead in their reiteration "to attribute a performative character to the festivals, which help in their turn reify a specific alternative identity."¹¹³ Similarly, Gender Bender is seen to take a DIY perspective in the way it directly engages the audience through dance workshops and horizontally-

¹¹⁰ Daly, "Dancing Democracy," 9. Pontremoli, *La danza 2.0*, 133-40. Zagatti, "Parole per dirsi," 354-55.

¹¹¹ Hanna, "Dance and Sexuality," 226-28.

¹¹² Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020. Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

¹¹³ Eleftheriadis, "Organizational Practices," 663.

oriented as well as affective communication, alongside the clubbing section, that again includes dance in its clubbing form. The repetition of these organizational practices structures the festival and leads to the formation of its prefigurative vision, both reinforcing a feeling for belonging of festivals participants and organizers and directly involving the audience in building the festival's identity-related discourse.¹¹⁴ Gender Bender thus act as a prefigurative space that grounding on its organizational choices aims to serve as a model to build new identities through specific practices.¹¹⁵ Of course, this is also reinforced by the festival's discursive frames, as in the case of its mission where it claims to work as "an actual model of how differences can contribute to building a richer and more welcoming society in human, social and cultural terms," referring to a model of society that is not yet real, since we do not yet live in a post-identitarian world.¹¹⁶

By tracing the shift of the festival towards more workshop-oriented dimensions, alongside the development of dance programming, a progressive centrality of the bodily presence occurs, showing an extension of the festival's performative negotiation¹¹⁷ of identity, which is grounded on the repetition of meaning-producing acts, which comes full circle with participatory engagement from the audience. Indeed the audience, a nevertheless active part of this performative negotiation, fluidly shifts between its role as a witnessing spectator of the performance and as the subject of a performative artistic dimension and contributes in a participatory way to the building of the wide-ranging identity-related discourse of the festival.

Positioning

The progressive transformation of the festival leads to a multifaceted and evolving positioning on the national and European levels. Its positioning as an interdisciplinary festival, which centralizes film and dance in its programming, can be traced by looking back at its association to formal festival networks. As a film festival, Gender Bender is part of the Coordination of Italian LGBTQ Film Festivals,¹¹⁸ which consists of 9 members, including the Bari International Gender Festival (Bari), Florence Queer Festival – International Festival of LGBT Cinema (Florence), MIX Festival of LGBTQ + Cinema and Queer Culture (Milan), Immaginaria International Film Festival of Lesbians & Other Rebellious Women (Rome), Orlando Identity Relations Possibility (Bergamo), Sardinia Queer Film Festival (Cagliari), Sicilia Queer Filmfest (Palermo) and Some Prefer Cake Bologna Lesbian Film Festival (Bologna). Not included in this network is the Lovers Film Festival in Turin which, unlike the other LGBTIQ film festivals, is no longer embedded in an association-based framework, but has been institutionalized as a cultural initiative of the Turin National Museum of Cinema. As reported by the artistic direction,¹¹⁹ this nationwide coordination was established following the previous networking experience initiated by Gender Bender on the local level with Some Prefer Cake Bologna Lesbian Film Festival and Divergenti International Festival of Trans Cinema, thus taking this collaboration dynamic to the national level. Indeed, beyond reasons of visibility in the cultural policy context, the network was built to share resources, like subtitles, reach more favorable economic agreements with distributors and encourage the circulation of LGBTQ content. The affiliation with this LGBTIQ film festival network places Gender Bender in this national circuit and at the same time under the

¹¹⁴ Eleftheriadis, "Organizational Practices," 664.

¹¹⁵ Eleftheriadis, "Organizational Practices," 651.

¹¹⁶ Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 1.

¹¹⁷ Loist, "Queer Film Culture," 228.

¹¹⁸ Internet Archive Wayback Machine,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200605093237/https://genderbender.it/en/network/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹¹⁹ Meneghelli, telephone interview, March 17, 2020. Del Pozzo, telephone interview, March 20, 2020.

logic of *film premières*, which in the national film festival hierarchy see the historic Lovers Film Festival in Turin at the top, being characterized by the presence of *premières*, competitive sections and international guests as well as juries.

As a dance festival, Gender Bender reveals both a prominent national and European positioning, unlike its film counterpart that remains nationally rooted. On the national level it takes part in the performing arts festival network Festival della Scena Contemporanea (Festivals of the Contemporary Scene), recently renamed Rete dei Festival Contemporanei (Network of Contemporary Festivals),¹²⁰ which is characterized by a research-oriented perspective where contemporary dance holds a prominent role, since it involves the key players of the national dance landscape. The festival is thus framed as part of this performing arts circuit, more specifically of the contemporary dance circuit, emerging as one of the new players in the field of dance promotion by increasing training opportunities for young artists and companies and developing new organizational profiles in the field,¹²¹ This is also confirmed by the involvement of Gender Bender in national projects, such as *DNAppunti coreografici* (DNA Choreographic Notes),¹²² which displays a training framework for young choreographers, and *Swans Never Die*, a network project of choreographic production around the traditional figure of the swan from the *Swan Lake*.

A wider-ranging positioning is then achieved on the European scene through the *Performing Gender*¹²³ project series, which has been a network-based project financed by Creative Europe. *Performing Gender* (2013-2015) started as a two-year project, developed almost in parallel with Gender Bender's dance programming, and was then followed by *Performing Gender – Dance makes differences* (2017-2019) and *Performing Gender – Dancing in Your Shoes* (2021-2023). Similarly to the festival's dance section, *Performing Gender* was established to develop a discourse around gender – and more broadly around identity – through community dance, specifically in the workshop format which is one of the key dimensions of audience involvement in community dance.¹²⁴ As the leading partner of this project, Gender Bender has worked with a variety of European dance festivals and production centers, and has progressively entered these cultural networks of dance by extending its collaboration with artists and players on the European level. Moreover, as an interdisciplinary festival, Gender Bender shows both a local and European positioning. While it joins the local festival network Bologna Contemporanea (Contemporary Bologna),¹²⁵ it is recognized in the European context with the EFFE label, a quality hallmark for arts festivals that places them within a circuit of quality, visibility and promotion, thus becoming part of the network EFFE Festivals for Europe, Europe for Festivals, by the European Festival Association.

As a result, it clearly emerges that Gender Bender, as an interdisciplinary dance-focused festival, succeeds in establishing a greater festival reach and works more extensively with this discipline towards a broader and more participatory audience engagement, which is further reflected in the festival's wide-ranging elaborations around identity.

Conclusion

¹²⁰ Operaestate, "Network," <https://www.operaestate.it/en/european-projects-networks/networks>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹²¹ D'Adamo, *Spazi*. Pontremoli, *La danza 2.0*, 25. Pontremoli, *La danza 2.0*, 25.

¹²² Gender Bender Special Projects, "DNAppunti coreografici," <https://genderbender.it/progetto/dnappunti-coreografici/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹²³ Gender Bender, "Performing Gender," <https://genderbender.it/progetti-speciali/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

¹²⁴ Pontremoli, *La danza 2.0*, 133-40. Zagatti, "Parole per dirsi," 354-55.

¹²⁵ Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200605093237/https://genderbender.it/en/network/>. Accessed October 31, 2024.

The analysis of this case study sheds light on the complex history of Gender Bender's shift in programming focus from cinema to dance. While the festival has progressively undergone a great transformation in terms of programming, funding and positioning, these two disciplinary programming sections have emerged from its interdisciplinary structure evolving, albeit non-synchronously, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. On the one hand, the film section is strongly rooted in what could be seen as the activism of the 1980s Italian film initiatives and established itself as a curatorial choice, since it has greatly suffered from a lack of funding. Due to this economic precarity, the festival has never prioritized novelty and exclusivity in the selection of contents, not considering film premières as a necessary requirement to build the film programming, thus placing the festival on the LGBTI*Q national circuit – with the development of a national festival reach – and not even in the higher-ranking positions of this festival hierarchy. However, this programming has reflected the broader festival mission, producing a wide-ranging identity-related discourse and engaging with an increasingly broad-based audience beyond the LGBTQ community. On the other hand, the funding availability of FUS subsequently enabled the establishment of the dance section, which was not limited to a choice driven by cultural policies, but rather opened a space to a bodily elaboration on intersectional identities, in both the dance works and the participatory dimension of the workshops. The festival's access to both national and European dance networks led to a development of the resulting festival reach, which provided it with a more relevant positioning than that of its film counterpart, and to the reproduction of its own festival format, as adopted by newly-established festivals on both the national and European levels. The dance programming finally contributes more to the festival's distinction, by producing a discourse, grounded on the potential of the dancing body, where intersectional identities are embodied, constructed and negotiated, and engaging the audience in an even stronger participation as subjects in this identity-related elaboration, as also developed in parallel by the *Performing Gender* project series.

The case study of Gender Bender thus shows that in such a programming shift curatorial reasons intertwine with economic factors, despite the configuration of cultural policies that stands in an influential position with respect to the transformative paths of festivals and their positioning in national and international contexts. In this regard, turning back to consider the specific choice in the festival's naming, one can see the character of fluidity through which Gender Bender has transformed, moving from its historical roots and the search for economic balances, to the redefinition of its programming focus to dance. Ultimately, this research work offers a small insight into the Italian LGBTI*Q film festival/festival circuit – both in terms of its historical legacy and current interrelated dynamics – which, in fact, is still a story to tell when it comes to academic research.

Works Cited

- AFIC Associazione Festival Italiani di Cinema. "Fondi ministeriali 2018 ai festival: il commento dell'AFIC." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://www.aficfestival.it/2018/10/08/fondi-ministeriali-festival-2018-commento-afic/>.
- Arcigay. "Who we are." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://www.arcigay.it/en/chi-siamo/>.
- Bouquerel, Fanny. "Le reti culturali europee." In *Ri-organizzare teatro. Produzione, distribuzione, gestione*, edited by Mimma Gallina, 357–358. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2014.
- Camonchia, Sabrina. "Al confine fra maschile e femminile. La prima edizione del festival voluto dal Cassero tiene a battesimo la Manifattura delle Arti." *Il Domani*, November 11, 2003.
- Cassero LGBTI+ Center. "Il Cassero." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://cassero.it/chi-siamo/>.

- Chadha, Siddarth. “Curating Precarity. Swedish Queer Film Festivals as Micro-Activism.” PhD diss., University of Uppsala, 2021.
- Cottrier, Claudia, and Monique Veaute. “Lavorare a partire dal caos. I festival in tempi di crisi in Italia.” *Economia della Cultura* 3 (2009): 359–365, <https://doi.org/10.1446/31108>.
- Cucco, Marco, and Giacomo Manzoli, eds. *Il cinema di Stato. Finanziamento pubblico ed economia simbolica nel cinema italiano contemporaneo*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017.
- D’Adamo, Ada, ed. *Spazi per la danza contemporanea*. Spoleto: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2009.
- Daly, Ann. “Dance history and feminist theory: reconsidering Isadora Duncan and the male gaze.” In *Gender in Performance. The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*, edited by Laurence Senelick, 223–238. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Daly, Ann. “Dancing Democracy.” *Dance Research Journal* 34, 2 (2002): 8–11.
- Damiens, Antoine. “The queer film ecosystem: symbolic economy, festivals and queer cinema’s legs.” *Studies in European Cinema* 15, 1 (2018): 25–40.
- Damiens, Antoine. *LGBTQ Film Festivals: Curating Queerness*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
- Dawson, Leanne. “Queer European Cinema: queering cinematic time and space.” *Studies in European Cinema* 12, 3 (2015): 185–204.
- Dawson, Leanne and Skadi Loist. “Queer/ing film festivals: history, theory, impact.” *Studies in European Cinema* 15, 1 (2018): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2018.1442901>.
- Delanty, Gerard, and Monica Sassatelli. “Festivals in cities, cities in festivals.” In “European Arts Festivals. Strengthening cultural diversity” *The Euro-Festival Consortium* (2011): 47–56.
- DeLuca, Kevin Michael. “Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First, Act Up and Queer Nation.” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, 1 (1999): 9–21.
- Dhaenens, Frederik. “Pink programming across Europe: exploring identity politics at European LGBT film festival.” *Studies in European Cinema* 15, 1 (2018): 72–84.
- De Valck, Marijke. *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007.
- De Valck, Marijke. “Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the Economization of Culture.” *Revue Canadienne d’Études cinématographiques. Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 23, 1 (2014): 74–89, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjfs.23.1.74>.
- De Valck, Marijke, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, eds. *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- De Valck, Marijke and Antoine Damiens. “Film festivals and the first wave of COVID-19: Challenges, opportunities, and reflections on festivals’ relations to crises.” *NECSUS* 9, 2 (2020): 299–302, <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/15321>.
- De Valck, Marijke. “Vulnerabilities and Resiliency in the Festival Ecosystem: Notes on Approaching Film Festivals in Pandemic Times.” In *Pandemic Media: Preliminary Notes Toward an Inventory*, edited by Philipp Dominik Keidl, Laliv Melamed, Vinzenz Hediger and Antonio Somaini, 125–135. Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.14619/0085>.
- Direzione Generale Spettacolo. “Danza.” Accessed October 31, 2024. <http://www.spettacolodalvivo.beniculturali.it/category/attivita/attivita-danza/page/6/>.
- Direzione Generale Spettacolo. “Consultazione Contributi. 2014 – Danza. Rassegne e festival.” Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://spettacolo.cultura.gov.it/assegnazione-contributi-2014-danza/>.
- Eleftheriadis, Kostantinos. “Organizational Practices and Prefigurative Spaces in European Queer Festivals.” *Social Movement Studies* 14, 6 (2015): 651–667, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2015.1029045>.

- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe." In *The Film Festivals Reader*, edited by Dina Iordanova, 69–96. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013.
- Finkel, Rebecca. "A picture of the contemporary combined arts festival landscape." *Cultural Trends* 18, 1 (2009): 3-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548960802651195>.
- Fisher, Rod. "Le nuove frontiere delle politiche culturali." *Economia della cultura* 1 (2002): 69–80.
- Franco, Susanne, and Marina Nordera, eds. *I discorsi della danza: parole chiave per una metodologia della ricerca*. Torino: UTET libreria, 2005.
- Franko, Mark. "Danza e politica: stati di eccezione." In *I discorsi della danza: parole chiave per una metodologia della ricerca*, edited by Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera, 5-30. Torino: UTET libreria, 2005.
- Fung, Richard. "Programming the Public." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, 1 (1999): 73–93.
- Gallina, Mimma, ed. *Organizzare teatro a livello internazionale. Linguaggi, politiche, pratiche, tecniche*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2008.
- Gallina, Mimma, ed. *Ri-organizzare teatro. Produzione, distribuzione, gestione*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2014.
- Gamson, Joshua. "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma." *Social Problems* 42, 3 (1995): 390–407.
- Gamson, Joshua. "The Organizational Shaping of Collective Identity: The Case of Lesbian and Gay Film Festivals in New York." *Sociological Forum* 11, 2 (1996): 231-261.
- Gender Bender. "DNAppunti coreografici." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://genderbender.it/progetto/dnappunti-coreografici/>.
- Gender Bender. "Past editions." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://genderbender.it/en/about-il-festival/>.
- Gender Bender. "Performing Gender." Accessed October 31, 2024. <https://genderbender.it/progetti-speciali/>.
- Ginot, Isabelle. "Identity, the contemporary, and the dancers." In *Dance Discourses*, edited by Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera, 251–266. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Grazzini, Barbara, and Andrea Pignatti. "La politica europea per la cultura." In *Riorganizzare teatro. Produzione, distribuzione, gestione*, edited by Mimma Gallina, 361–372. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2014.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- Hanna, Judith Lynne. "Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves." *The Journal of Sex Research* 47, 2/3 (2010): 212-241, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224491003599744>
- Haslop, Craig. "Wot No Queers: The Search for Sexual Representation in Audience Research." *Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network* 2, 1 (2009): 1-15.
- Iordanova, Dina. "The Film Festival as an Industry Node." *Media Industries* 1, 3 (2015): 7–11.
- La Monica, Denise. "2008-2011: I finanziamenti al Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali." *Economia della Cultura* 4 (2008): 511–521.
- Lepecki, André. "The impossible body: Queering the nation in modern Portuguese dance." In *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in The Portuguese-Speaking World*, edited by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas, 258–275. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, Project MUSE, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/32003>.
- Lepecki, André. "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer." *TDR* 57, 4 (2013): 13–27, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24584841>.
- Lepecki, André. *Exhausting Dance: performance and the politics of movement*. New York: Routledge 2016.

- Loist, Skadi. "Precarious cultural work: about the organization of (queer) film festivals." *Screen* 52, 2 (2011): 268-273, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjr016>.
- Loist, Skadi. "A Complicated Queerness: LGBT Film Festivals and Queer Programming Strategies." In *Coming Soon to a Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals*, edited by Jeffrey Ruoff, 157-172. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Books, 2012.
- Loist, Skadi and Ger Zielinski. "On the development of Queer Film Festivals and Their Media Activism," in *Film Festival Yearbook 4*, edited by Dina Jordanova and Leshu Torchin, 49-62. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012.
- Loist, Skadi. "Queer Film Culture: Performative Aspects of LGBT/Q Film Festivals," PhD Thesis, Institute for Media and Communication, University of Hamburg.
- Loist, Skadi. "Crossover Dreams: Global Circulation of Queer Film on the Film Festival Circuits." *Diogenes* 1, 16 (2016): 1-16.
- Mariella, Roberto. "Festival Mix: Uno sguardo diverso. Trent'anni di cinema gaylesbico a Milano." July 1, 2017. <https://www.cinemagay.it/news/2016/07/01/festival-mix-uno-sguardo-diverso-trentanni-cinema-gaylesbico-milano/>
- Magaudda, Paolo, and Marco Solaroli. "I festival artistici e la cultura pubblica europea." *Il Mulino* 5 (2011): 897-903, <https://doi.org/10.1402/35406>.
- MIX Festival. "Edition 2003." Last modified May 28-June 3, 2003. <https://mixfestival.eu/old/2003/>.
- MIX Festival. "Edition 2004." Last modified May 26-June 1, 2004. <https://mixfestival.eu/old/2004/>.
- Morganti, Iliara, and Massimiliano Nuccio. "Gli studi di impatto dei festival: esperienze e riflessioni." *Economia della Cultura* 3 (2009): 325-339, <https://doi.org/10.1446/31105>.
- Papa, Salvatore. "Daniele Del Pozzo." *Zero.eu*, October 27, 2015, <https://zero.eu/it/persone/intervista-daniele-del-pozzo-cassero-gender-bender/>
- Pontremoli, Alessandro. *La danza 2.0. Paesaggi coreografici del nuovo millennio*. Rome, Bari: Editori Laterza, 2018.
- Rastegar, Roya. "Seeing differently. The curatorial potential of film festival programming." In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, edited by Marijke De Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist, 181-195. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Rich, Ruby. "New queer cinema + the present onslaught of independent gay and lesbian film and video." *Sight and Sound* 2, 5 (1992): 30-34.
- Rich, Ruby. "Collision, Catastrophe, Celebration: The Relationship between Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals and Their Publics." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, 1 (1999): 73-93, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822399698-005>.
- Rich, Ruby. *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Richards, Stuart. "A New Queer Cinema renaissance." *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture* 1, 2 (2016): 215-229, https://doi.org/10.1386/qsmc.1.2.215_1.
- Risner, Doug and Angela Pickard. "Editorial, special issue: intersectionality and identities in dance." *Research in Dance Education* 21, 2 (2020): 117-121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14647893.2020.1799528>.
- Santoro, Marco, ed. *Forme di capitale*. Roma: Armando Editore, 2015.
- Senelick, Laurence, ed. *Gender in Performance. The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Stringer, Julian. "Global Cities and the International Film Festival Economy." In *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, edited by Fitzmaurice Tony and Shiel Mark, 134-144. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470712948.ch11>

- Warner, Michael. "Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version)." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 4, 88 (2002): 413–425, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630209384388>.
- Wong, Cindy Hing-Yuk. "Publics and counterpublics: rethinking film festivals as public spheres." In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, edited by Marijke De Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist, 83-99. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Zagatti, Franca. "Le parole per dirsi: verso un lessico condiviso della danza di comunità." *Danza e ricerca. Laboratori di studi, scritture, visioni* 10, 10 (2018): 349-369.