



Michael O'Connor

PORTFOLIO
2024

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Michael O'Connor

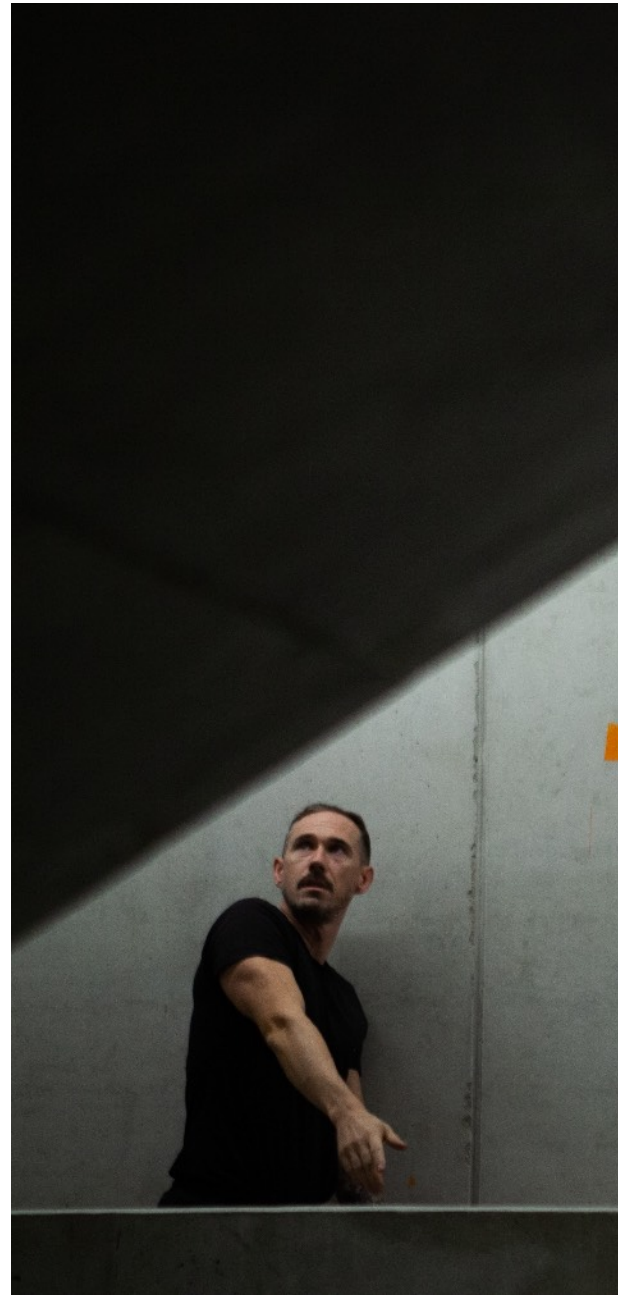
seamlessly blends practice and theory in his choreography and teaching. He holds a PhD having researched the body's connection to lines and movement. With an MA from Das Choreography in Amsterdam (formerly AMCH) and a BFA from the University of Utah, Michael has opened doors at the university level for artistic research and experimental choreography.

His solo premiere work *a waiting dog dies* earned him Vienna's 'dancer to watch' in Ballet Tanz Magazine 2008 yearbook edition. Michael's other choreographic works, *You are the Subject of my Seeing*, *A General Theory of Love*, *TERTIARY*, *Moving Around X*, and *Moving Around X:the x of y*, have been presented at *TanzQuartier Wien (TQW)*, *ImpulsTanz*, *WUK*, *BRUT*, *Burgenland Tanztage*, *DansMakers*, as well as *off-spaces*. In 2014 his piece *TERTIARY* was nominated for the Prix d'Jardin in the 8:Tension series at the *ImpulsTanz Festival*. His drag persona *Jai Jai Sincere* also performed an adaptation of *Deborah Hay's NEWS* at *Impulstanz* in 2011.

Since 2009 Michael is a facilitator for the *Field* organization which teaches artists how to give feedback. He has received a variety of residency scholarships from institutions like *ImpulsTanz*, *TQW*, *OMI* in New York and *The Place* in London as a *Carte Blanche* participant of the *ModulDance* program. Michael was a long time company member with *Cie. Willi Dorner* from 2003-2010 performing in a variety of stage works and setting the renowned piece *Bodies in Urban Spaces* in over 30 cities.

In 2011 Michael also premiered his work at *TQW*. Michael has taught creative practice and contemporary technique as guest faculty at *SNDO* and the new MA program *COMMA* in The Netherlands, *Arizona State University*, *SEAD*, *Danish School of Performing Arts*, *Fontys Dance Academy Tilburg* and *University of Music and Performing Arts Frankfurt*. He has also taught at *San Diego State University*, *Henny Jurriens Foundation*, *Maraméo* and *DOCK 11* in Berlin. *DanceUmbrella* in London, *Philly Live Arts* and *Tanz* in August among others. In 2012, Michael taught with neuroscientist *Corinne Jola* the workshop *Technologies of Love* at *ImPulsTanz*.

He has presented his research on the intersection of neuroscience and dance in festivals in Germany, Portugal, UK, and the Netherlands. Michael has also worked with *David Zambrano*, *Deborah Hay*, *Georg Blaschke*, *Alain Buffard*, *Paul Wenninger*, *Barbara Kraus*, *Theatrecombinat*, and *Karol Tyminski*. He was a research fellow at *THIRD DAS Graduate School* from 2018-2022.



Linear Engagement

The space is limited and confined and the bodies search for lines, looking for possibilities of engagement. The dancers are connected through the building's materiality and their describing of it. The dancer's share a job description of translating the space, bringing the environment into their body. No preference is given for animate over inanimate lines as they also describe each other.

Video Link



Concept and movement practice: Mike O'Connor
Dance: Miguel Witzke Pereira, Sophia Obermeyer,
Mike O'Connor, Michela Filzi, Samuel Feldhandler
Camera: Jubal Battisti
Assistant: Harumi Terayama
Costumes: Mike O'Connor



Stills from video: Jubal Battisti

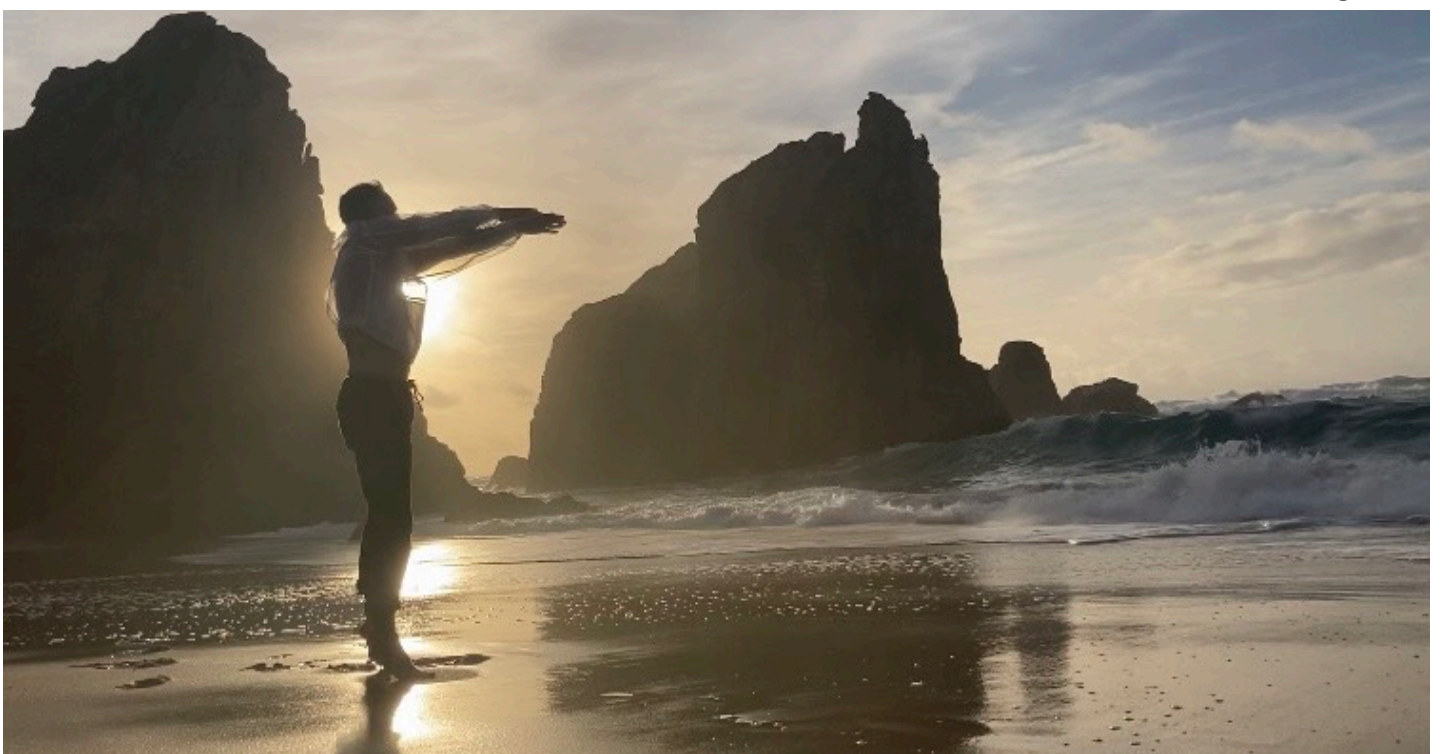
Between Foam and Origami

[Video Link](#)

Between foam, a line that is there due to a pushing and pulling of substances, and origami, an edge that is a line due to a fold, exists a feeling that is temporary and contextual, and partially illusionary. Between these two physical, concrete concepts, time creates or time takes away. We can photograph a tideline, but no one will ever be able to see that line again. We can unfold an origami to show where that edge came from but then we have lost the whole image the folds had created. We cannot see both at the same time.



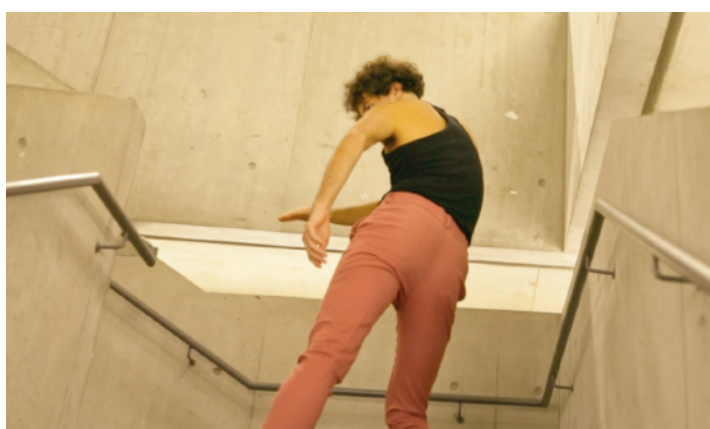
Stills from video: Lukas Georgiou



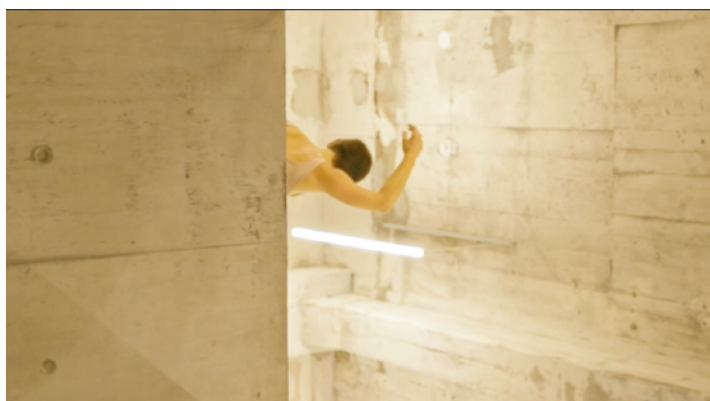
the Occluding edge

Video Link

To occlude means to block off or obstruct. The edges become the lines that we see separating the object from other objects as well as revealing hidden spaces and distances between locations. Relationships are made between hidden surfaces, layered objects, and moving bodies. The occluding edge is the point where things are simultaneously separated and connected.



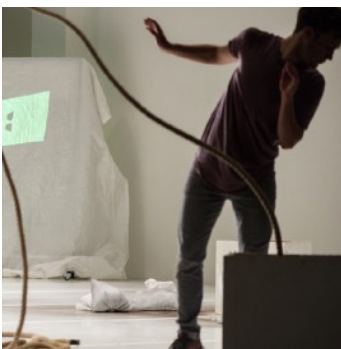
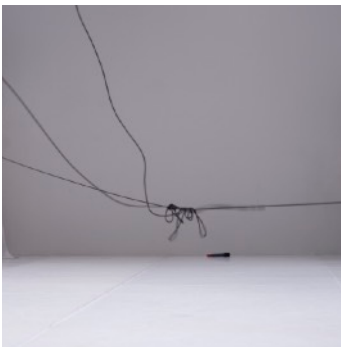
Concept and movement practice:
Mike O'Connor
Dance: Miguel Witzke Pereira, Sophia Obermeyer, Michela Filzi, Samuel Feldhandler
Camera: Jubal Battisti
Video and sound editing: Mike O'Connor
Second camera: Valentin Braun
Assistant: Harumi Terayama
Color grading: Jubal Battisti



Stills from video: Jubal Battisti

Lines of Thought



Moving Around X: **the x of y**[Video Link](#)

photos Nellie de Boer &
Niels Weijer

What is the quality of your thought? What is the rope-ness of a rope?

Moving Around X and Moving Around X: **the x of y**, are performance events focusing on the psycho-geography of our poetic understandings. The space becomes a virtual metaphorical landscape and its possible to see our language in action. Thoughts run slowly between my legs. Time parts my lips and presses on my tongue. Language is a movement of text and texture. X Is not the unknown. Instead it is a known subject matter that is constantly shifting and changing, presenting itself in different forms, depending on the different bodies engaging with it.

**SUMMONING IMAGERY IS ONE THING,
BUT CREATING A LANGUAGE OF DANCE
IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ONE.**

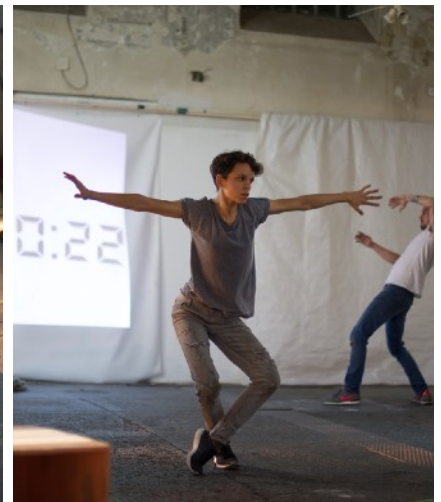
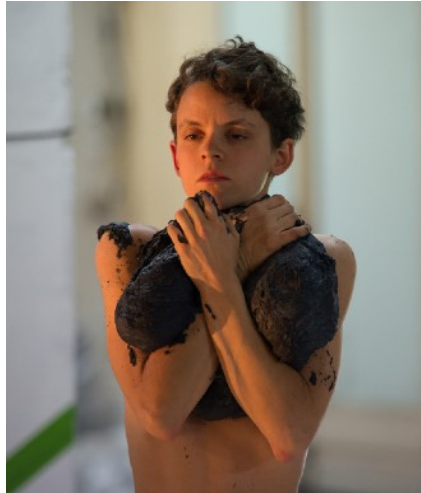
O'CONNOR IS PROFICIENT OF BOTH.

-Michaela Preiner/2014

**THE TWO BODIES "ENTER INTO
COMPOSITION WITH THE OTHER"
DESTROYING CLEAR BOUNDARIES
OF WHERE ONE SUBJECTIVITY
BEGINS AND THE OTHER ENDS. TO
ATTEMPT TO CLEARLY DEFINE THE
INTERTWINED PRESENCE OF THE
TWO PERFORMERS, OR TO
DEMARCATHE THEIR BODIES FROM
THE MATERIALS THEY PULL UP OR
DOWN, IS TO MISS THE SUBTLE
INEFFABLE INTERSPACE THAT IS
GENERATED IN THE BACK AND
FORTH OF THE MOVEMENT, SOUND
AND IMAGE.**

KG GUTTMAN

Moving Around X

[Video link](#)

photos Georg Scheu

"With Moving Around X, O'Connor more than accomplishes everything one could hope for in a contemporary dance piece. It is a work driven by its own contradictions, one that constantly creates poetic imagery and that confronts the spectator with associations that cannot be shared with anyone." -[Michaela Preiner/ European Cultural News](#)

Moving Around X is about metaphor, the deformation thereof, and the creation of new ones..... And the audience may view and marvel. And realize in surprise that time has indeed stopped. The hour was much too short." - [Dita Rudle/ Tanz.net](#)

"Moving Around X creates an experience that makes tangible how fragile is the relationship between reality and perception. And that the margins created by this fragility allow actions which fracture norms and thus prevent the hardening of social fabric." - [Helmut Ploebst/ der Standard](#).

SUMMONING IMAGERY IS ONE THING,
BUT CREATING A LANGUAGE OF DANCE
IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ONE.
O'CONNOR IS PROFICIENT OF BOTH.
-Michaela Preiner/European Cultural News



TERTIARY [8:tension] Young Choreographers Nominated for the prestigious Prix Jardin d'Europe



photos Georg Scheu

As far as human behavior, perception is often a deceptive matter. Especially when empathy comes into conflict with imaginings. This tension is performed by three very different but equally charismatic personalities, with great sensitivity and almost an equally strong sense of irony. " – [Helmut Ploebst/ der Standard](#)

"The underlying structure of TERTIARY results from the given space, the space between the dancers, their contact with each other, a watermelon and the musical score."

- [Ulli Moschen/Falter](#)

"More heated than affectionate, more aggressive than erotic, passionate in any case, [...] tangling and intertwining of three bodies into one."

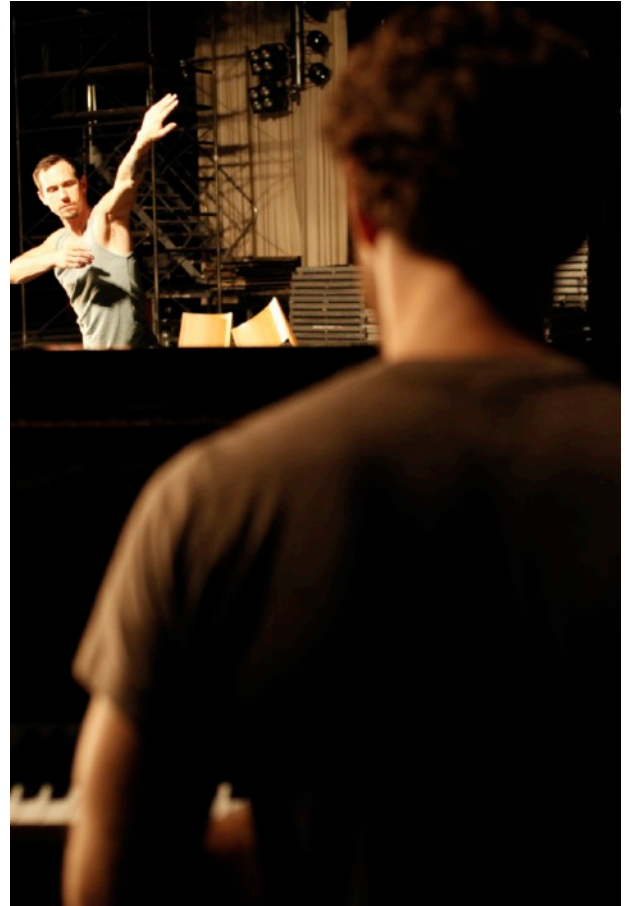
- [Ditta Rudle/ Tanz.at](#)

Video Link

TERTIARY EXAMINES HOW THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF EMPATHY BECOME A VISUAL-TACTILE TOOL CONNECTING THE PERFORMERS TO EACH IN OTHER IN THE SAME WAY THEY CONNECT TO THE AUDIENCE.

IN NEUROSCIENTIFIC THEORIES, THE BORDERS BETWEEN WHERE ONE PERSON STOPS AND ANOTHER BEGINS ARE BLURRED.

A GENERAL THEORY OF LOVE

[Video Link](#)

photos David Payr

What started out slowly, is now obvious. Gestural pain and collapses make it clear that the relationship has come to an end. A few moments later, in the most beautiful and touching phase of the evening, again raised to be on a positive level. Those who previously did not know - for the initial question should have been answered. These are the same rules, mechanisms and conventions to same-sex and heterosexual relationships... - [Michaela Preiner/ European Cultural News](#)

BASED ON THE LATEST
DISCOVERIES IN
NEUROSCIENCE, THEY AIM TO
CULTIVATE LOVE BY CREATING
AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE
THEIR BODY SYSTEMS CAN
SYNCHRONIZE.

Where as the topic of nature stimulates political performance, the topic of love in Michael O'Connor's piece is treated rather privately. This is why A General Theory of Love, with Inertia de Witt singing so touchingly, and O'Connor and Gonzalez dancing so tenderly, seems to be more of a pragmatic answer to the crisis of romantic love. Interlaced with quotations from an interview with US physics nobel laureate Richard Feynman, the sensitive poetry of the piece turns into a statement that could again be paraphrasing the title of Hessel's book: "Touch each other!" - [Helmut Ploebst Der Standard](#) .

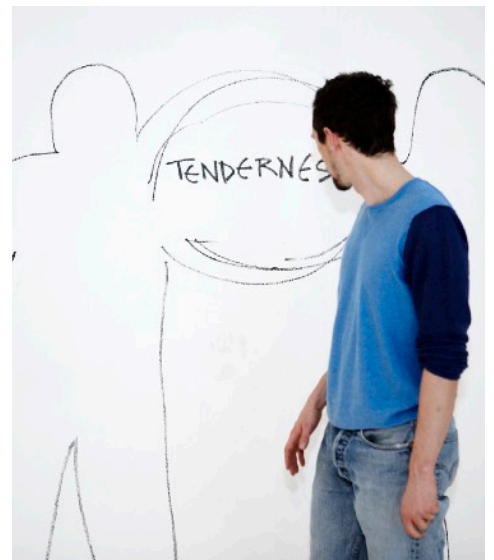
CHOREOGRAPHY

YOU ARE THE SUBJECT OF MY SEEING

[Video link](#)



photos David Payr



Body and mind hold memory of the future. Living in desire and lamenting in the past. We exist in relation to events that have already happened and will eventually happen. Harboring tension by teetering on memories and anticipations, we are actually thrown into the present moment which my body and mind can't actually comprehend. Focusing on elements such as pain, muscular endurance, speed, breath or strength, American performer and choreographer Michael O'Connor wants to explore the simple limit of the body, the amount of space that we can occupy and the limit of space that we are put into while on stage. In his new solo, the audience witnesses a state that actually slips from our grasp as soon as we realize it.

"THE CHOREOGRAPHER GLIDES THROUGH THE
"EGO TUNNEL", AS THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER
THOMAS METZINGER FROM A NEUROSCIENTIFIC
PERSPECTIVE PERCEIVES THE CONSTRUCTION
OF THE SELF AND THE INNER BODY IMAGE.
HELMUT PLOEBST/ DER STANDARD.

NEWS deborah hay adaptation

Video Link

News is something that interests us when it is shocking, moves us when it is compelling and informs us when it is out of reach. However, more often than not, news is forgotten.

Caught between personal agenda and political activism, Jai Jai Sincere becomes the site of the experiment where personal and political combine. However, exposing perspective is as much as she can do within the balance of art, form and agenda. The political aspect also lies within the audience and their willingness to broaden their viewpoint. Deborah Hay, a member of the New York Judson Dance Theater in the 1960s, created NEWS in 2006 for Michael O'Connor, who after the three month commitment of practicing the solo, passed the work on to Jai Jai Sincere five years later and started the practice again. Accordingly, NEWS is a hymn to queerness, in which the artistic identities of Deborah Hay, Michael O'Connor and Jai Jai Sincere intermingle.

(O'Connor) is able to stimulate the performance as Jai Jai Sincere's reflection on gender conventions and expectations, not only in general but especially in the local field, respectively, European contemporary dance and choreography. It is hoped that the increased volume of queer choreography in this field of gender binary norms and conventions will cause the dominant question to be asked and subverted. Dancers have an unbeatable weapon - the body.

May many Jai Jai Sinceres on the stages of this country come and offer their bodies in motion as "a site of critical reinvention" to the eyes of the spectators. -Astrid Peterle //

Corpus - Internet Magazine for Dance Choreography Performance.

BODIES NOT AGAINST EACH OTHER



against: *'in disagreement with'*
and *'in physical contact with.'*

Historically people of color, woman, gay people, people with disabilities and immigrants have had their bodies de-valued. Between a (mythical) center-periphery schematic, of those in power against those marginalized to the edges, exists the in-between space where our identities and abilities **intra-act** and define each other. It is these types of intra-actions that define and label identities. Undervalued bodies usually are not represented in aesthetic norms. By questioning how certain aesthetics could change if we give more space for undervalued bodies., traditional aesthetics like symmetry, flow and ease can be challenged. Our bodies become entangled, weight sharing is sporadic and we break momentum to stop trajectories.

IF WE COULD ASSUME WE ARE
APPARATUSES OF EACH
OTHER, HOW CAN
COMMUNICATION BE
ESTABLISHED ACROSS
PHYSICAL AND PERSONAL
DIFFERENCES?

Bodies not against each other has had research residencies in

OMI New York 2016

Theatrehaus Berlin 2017

DansMakers Amsterdam 2017

Ufer Studios Month of Research Berlin 2017

HORIZONTAL GRAVITY

post/contact improvising

Essay

Our visual field allows us to simulate touch beyond the borders of our skin. By means of extra-personal space, we are actually larger than our physical frame. Vision allows us to touch with our eyes. This visual-tactility is not passive, but relational and engages the body with surrounding other bodies.

Horizontal Gravity is about the simultaneous approach and withdrawal of two bodies. A pulling toward and a pulling away. It is not limiting. It notices a relationship between two objects and those objects are unique and even temporary, perhaps transient. The forces are intertwined and created with the other, yet also independent and possibly even measured or understood in different values.

HORIZONTAL GRAVITY IS ABOUT THE SIMULTANEOUS APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL OF TWO BODIES.

A PULLING TOWARD AND A PULLING AWAY.



Horizontal Gravity is about colliding micro organizations and harmonizing affective affordances. The practice is to expand the space between control and being controlled. A calling out of the body with movement.

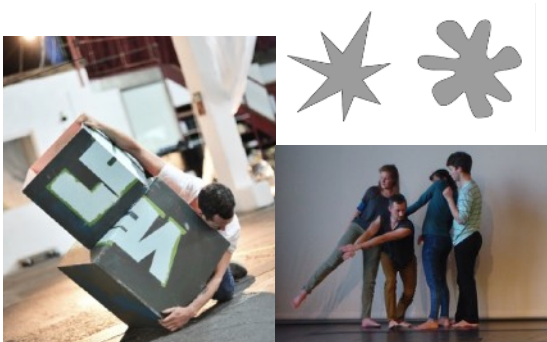
The workshop explores incorporating the visual field into our movement impetus, while divorcing touch from only function. Pulling from quantum physics, phenomenology and psychology, post/contact improvising practices seek a foundation of ambiguity – a certainty of many possibilities, – where the dance can encounter touch with or without skin.

More info on workshop

TEACHING Workshops

METAPHOR & MEANING

Embodying metaphor as a playground



More info

How to materialize what is intangible? Sound, space and time can metaphorically be transferred to movement, objects and dynamics. Making a metaphorical playground of usually intangible concepts. allows us to understand a deeper meaning in form and have a greater sense of relationship when working with the object and qualities. We also look at the felt sense of the meaning of a word, using our own embodied experience to consciously represent words as actions or movements. By the end, the workshop attempts to reveal how we may have similarities in motivation, but differences in our expression.

TECHNOLOGIES OF LOVE

The neuroscience of love as a template for movement



More info

Our creativity comes in how we try to solve unrealized concepts.. Love is a game. Love is a journey. Love is work. This is not about sex or therapy. Its about cooperation, collaboration and connection. Oxytocin, metaphor and neurons. Sensory awareness and poetry. We have the potential to be our own private neuroscience by examining ourselves in relation to another through attention towards areas involving: Exchange, Negotiation, Resonance, Synchronicity, Awareness, Modulation and Attunement. Love is a laboratory.

FIELD WORK

Giving feedback that is helpful for the artist



More info

Do you find when you routinely speak about all the elements you did not like? Have you found yourself feeling defensive when receiving feedback from someone? Fieldwork is a method that provides the participants with tools to speak clearly about their opinion and in a way that is helpful for the artist to proceed working.

CREATIVE PRACTICE: BOTTOM UP

body knowledge guides the explorations



More info

In this workshop, improvisation functions as a tool to expand and practice our potential for creativity and communication. We learn to listen and respond with our bodies as our ears. The goal is to bring our trained dance bodies together while not forgetting all of the cultural and social information our daily bodies carry. We maintain responsibility for ourselves and those around us, giving as much space and time to stillness as the movement so we can stay tuned for the possibility of anything to happen.

Stealing concepts from social anthropology, we use three concepts as starting points:

Participant Observation, Generalized Reciprocity, and Creative Participation

CONTEMPORARY TECHNIQUE

expansiveness of the intimate

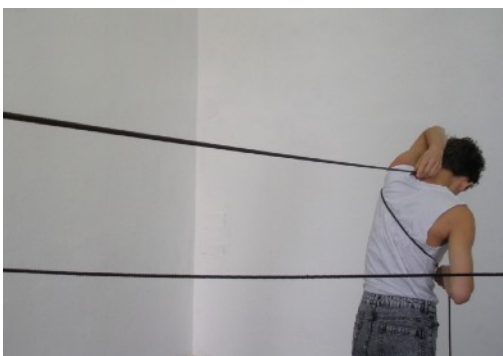


More info

The class is based on the premise of using your inner core and your outer kinesphere to maintain balance and coordination so we can blur the lines between verticality and horizontality. The class utilizes floor work, release technique and head-tail connections to create delicate and strenuous phrases that challenge each dancer. A mindset that allows us to risk and enjoy the temporality of movement, becomes functional when held together by awareness and technique; which keeps the dancers' minds open and free to make choices.

KNOWING WITHOUT A NARRATIVE

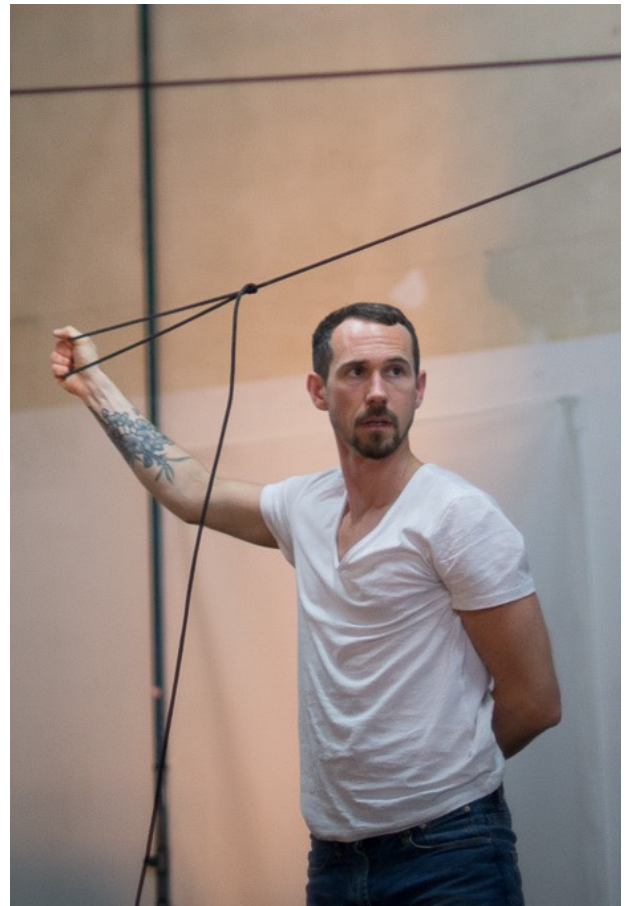
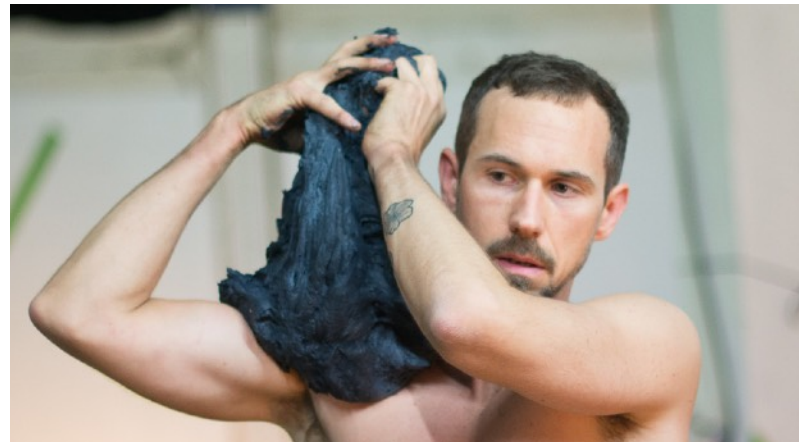
generating meaning without words



More info

This workshop aims to give participants practice in reading the space and others as data and understanding the different bodily responses available. By engaging in practices that sharpen the dancers eye, allowing them to read their partner and space around them, we find ways to generate meaning and explore reasons for movement. This work blurs the edges between vision and listening, so that we can listen with our eyes and understand space with our ears. We don't break old habits; we instead awaken our perception to many new possibilities and engage ourselves with impossible tasks that there becomes no space or time to fall back on old habits. The biological and psychological information carried in the body is witnessed and explored in order to quiet the mind and sense the body knowing without a narrative.

ARTISTIC STATEMENT



"His gift was to search in the outer world what nature had laid in his inner world," wrote Goethe about art historian Johann Winckelmann. Choreography interests me as a medium that allows me to use the body as a way of blurring what could be considered the inner and the outer world. I consider the moving body as thought and value it for that.

I have called myself an artistic neuroscientist. I derive practice from cognitive science studies, where performers on stage create poetic experiments. Anthropology, psychology and neuroscience help me get a better understanding of why I do what I do. 'Why do we exist?' or 'Does this mean the same thing to you?' are ongoing questions that generate material for me. There is an impossibility in knowing one another, as our body language has been crafted from our own personal experiences. I dance in order to understand life—to understand the other. In this

way I don't distinguish between choreographing and dancing.

Recent interests could classify me as a love archaeologist. I am curious to look into evolutionary and personal pasts of my body through immaterial things. Metaphor is a way of thinking. It is not representational. This makes a surrealistic seasoning at times that can be humorous or tragic in my work. I understand things by their qualities.

My works are usually delicately held together. The potential for them to fall apart is on purpose. Its part of how I match the outer world, to feel like the transient inner world. Endings are often inconclusive. Ambiguity for me is about an unfinished-ness. This allows for multiple interpretations. I prefer simplicity in style, but layering and complexity in content. I believe there is a fragility that exists between ideas that must be negotiated, so as to provoke meaning for the audience without being explicit.

- "Materiality of Lines: Kinesethics of movement uniting cave art and dance".
with A. Cienki. Chapter In: *Movement, Embodiment, Kinesemiotics: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Movement-Based Communication*. Frontiers in communication.
(upcoming)
- "Dialogical Practices for Imagined Lines: Listening, interference, straight".
2022. In: Performance Philosophy Journal volume "Technology,
Mediation, Performance" a joint issue of ECHO. (upcoming)
- "Researching embodied metaphor production through improvisational dance
practice". 2022. with A. Cienki, chapter in: (eds) Herbert L. Colston, Teenie Matlock
and Gerard J. Steen. *Dynamism in Metaphor and Beyond*. John
Benjamins. pp. 63-76.
- "Lines of Experience: toward a research method". 2022 In (eds) Carla Fernandes, Vito Evola,
Cláudia Ribeiro. *Dance Data, Cognition, and Multimodal
Communication*. Routledge.
- "Bodies not against each other: Online engagement strategies for improvisation". 2022
In: *Dance Education in Practice Journal*. vol 8 issue 2. pp 23-27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23734833.2022.2059240>
- "Relationally responsive dialogically structured understandings". 2021
Third Talks. Das Graduate School. Amsterdam University of the Arts.
<https://thirdtalks.org/research-experiments/relationally-responsive>
- "Metaphorical Objects": Danswetenschap in Nederland edition 9/ 2017

CONFERENCES

Dance, Data and MultiModal Cognition. Lisbon, PT 2019
Presented "Perceived, Temporal, Imagined bodily Lines"

Arts in the Alps. Grenoble, Fr 2019
Presented PhD research

Metaphor Festival. Amsterdam, NL 2018
Nominated Christina Alm Arvius best student paper award "Touching Thoughts".

CIRP Contact Improvisation as a Research Paradigm. Paris 2018.
Presented "Horizontal Gravity".

Detroit Dance City Festival Movers and Shakers Symposium 2017
Presented MA research

PRODUKTIVE ÄQUIVALENZ Metaphor Symposium. Mind and Brain School Berlin. 2017
Presented: Metaphorical objects: Making sense of Contemporary dance

Making sense of Contemporary dance. SpringDance, Utrecht NL,.. 2017
Presented: Metaphorical objects

Research and Applying Metaphor RaAM, Berlin, DE 2016
Invited guest

PRACTICE AS PERFORMANCE. Symposium Coventry, UK 2014
Presented: Love is an Action paper.

Festival Art as Research Ottersberg, DE 2012
Presented: Love is an Action paper.



RESIDENCIES

OMI Dance 2020 (Covid Canceled)

OMI Dance 2016

TanzQuartier Wien 2015.

Impulstanz 8tension 2014

TanzQuartier Wien 2013

Raum33 Wien 2013

Theatrecombinat LM 2012

Festival of Art as Research 2012

TanzQuartier Wien

Empathic Encounters. Intersection of Art and
Science 2012

Arizona State University Dept of Dance 2012

Carte Blanche;

The Place London. Modul Dance 2011

ImPulsTanz Turbo Residency with mentors Ivo
Dimchev and Keith Hennessy. 2011

TURBO Residency at BRUT in Vienna 2007

PAIN Residency for Research in Brussels 2007





Mind and Brain School Berlin performance

Thought as a Rope 2017