

# A CALL FOR ACTION: MOVING IS UNDERSTANDING

motor dance journal / UCL

12<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 10.00 - 16.00

## PROGRAMME

10.15-10.30

welcome & introduction from *motor* co-editors Isabelle Bucklow and Hannah Woods

10.30-11.45

### Session 1 | Solo(s)

*Face after Face: Cruising as a 'quick dance'*

Jack Parlett, Junior Research Fellow in English at University College, Oxford University.

*Choreography as Climate Action: Embodied Experience and Environmental Movements*

Subathra Subramaniam, choreographer, dancer, educator and Artistic Director at Akademi (the UK's leading South Asian Dance organisation).

*Okwui Okpokwasili's Sitting on a Man's Head.*

Tamsin Hong, Assistant Curator of Performance at Tate Modern.

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11.45-12.00 break

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12.00-13.15

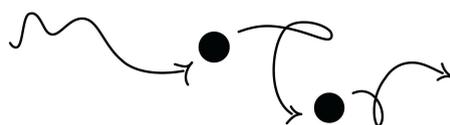
### Session 2 | Duets/Dialogues

*Movement, life, performance*

Helia Marcal, conservator, researcher and lecturer in Art, Materials and Technology at University College London

*The Old Coat: Some brief reflections on dance, plot and itinerancy*

Clair Wills, King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge and a keen, if not very proficient, jazz dancer.



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*A dialogue with the archival body (A reference to a reference to monumentality)*

Sanna Helena Berger, artist working with performance, choreography, installation,  
video, text and sound.

*The Critique of Institutional Dressage: Mike Kelley and Kate Foley's Pantomime Horse Dance*

Lisa Moravec, critic, researcher, and PHD candidate at Royal Holloway's Drama,  
Theatre, and Dance department

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13.15-14.00 break

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14.00-15.15

**Session 3 | Groupwork**

*The founding and early history of Chisenhale DanceSpace (1980-1988)*

Rachael Davies, curator, researcher, writer and PHD candidate at Centre for Dance  
Research at Coventry University

*Crush: Social Embodiment in Yvonne Rainer's 'Concept of Dust'*

Caitrín Barrett-Donlon, art historian and dancer, based in London.

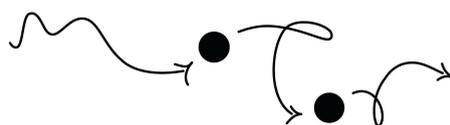
*HERDING, 2021*

Movement /// Possession - London-based platform for experimentation with movement and  
play - with Isa Rakel, performance artist and activist.

15.15-16.00

**Keynote**

Candela Capitán, contemporary dancer and choreographer (Lesionada Bendición).  
Candela will provide a live performance of her work *The Death at the Club. in 45 min.*  
(2018 -2021).



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## ABSTRACTS / SPEAKER BIOS

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### Session 1 | Solo(s)

#### *Face after Face: Cruising as a 'quick dance'*

This paper will consider cruising as a mode of solo movement that anticipates connection with other bodies, but also repeatedly defers or disrupts it. Responding to examples from queer culture's voluminous archive of transient encounters, it will reflect upon cruising as an act suspended between seriality – the urban procession of face after face, body after body – and interpersonality; a pause, an exchange, the possibility of moving in step with another.

**Jack Parlett** is a Junior Research Fellow in English at University College, Oxford, where he teaches twentieth- and twenty-first century literature and literary theory. His first monograph, *The Poetics of Cruising: Queer Visual Culture from Whitman to Grindr*, will be published by the University of Minnesota Press in January 2022. His second project, a trade book about the queer literary history of New York's Fire Island, will be published by Granta Books in June 2022.

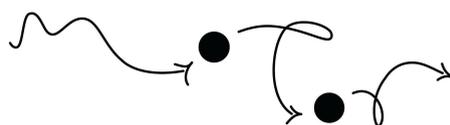
#### *Choreography as Climate Action: Embodied Experience and Environmental Movements*

Suba will discuss her experience of working with dance to approach the climate crisis. Her presentation will consider the capacities within embodied, lived-in experience, to engage with larger social issues and their affected communities. This will include reference to her solo choreographic practice, as well as the collaborative work she has done with scientists and young people to inspire climate activism through feeling and movement.

**Subathra Subramaniam** is the Artistic Director at Akademi—the UK's leading South Asian Dance organisation. Suba was Co-Education Director of Cape Farewell—an international not-for-profit programme working to bring creatives, scientists and informers together to stimulate a cultural narrative that will engage and inspire a sustainable and vibrant future society. Suba was Artist in Residence at the Environment Institute at UCL, where she worked closely with climate scientists to investigate the value of dance as a means of raising awareness of climate change. She is also a trained secondary science teacher.

#### *Okwui Okpokwasili's Sitting on a Man's Head*

Tamsin will consider the dance-based practice of Okwui Okpokwasili who often integrates disruptive forms of storytelling into her work. Okpokwasili explores the structures of memory in her installation-based durational performances, engaging with the history of political protest by Nigerian women. Okpokwasili draws inspiration from the vocal, activist practice of the public shaming of government officials conducted by women in southeastern Nigeria called 'Sitting on a Man'. This form of embodied protest makes visible and speaks in defiance of the silence that an oppressive system demands.



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**Tamsin Hong** is the Assistant Curator of Performance at Tate Modern. In March 2020 she co-curated the BMW Tate Live Exhibition *Our Bodies Our Archives* which presented work by Faustin Linyekula, Okwui Okpokwasili and Tanya Lukin Linklater.

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### Session 2 | Duets/Dialogues

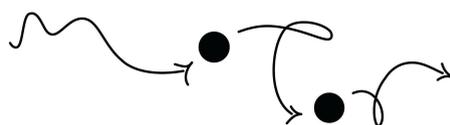
#### *Movement, life, performance*

Performance art has long ceased to be considered as ontologically separated from any form of mediation, including in the Museum. The ubiquitous nature of mediation has transformed the way we perceive and experience our world, and performance art has participated in the making of forms and ontologies of objecthood that move beyond traditional dichotomies and axioms. This talk will explore the vitality of performance art in what pertains to the flows of life within and outside museum ecologies. It will explore themes like presence and absence and the vibrant matter (Bennett) of care of performance art for now and the future.

**Hélia Marçal** is a lecturer, researcher, and conservator based in London. She was appointed Lecturer in Art, Materials, and Technology at University College London's Department of History of Art in 2020. Before this appointment, she worked as a Fellow in Contemporary Art Conservation and Research of the Andrew W. Mellon funded research project "Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum" at Tate and a Science Manager at the Institute of Contemporary History (Universidade Nova de Lisboa). She has been the Coordinator of the Working Group on Theory, History, and Ethics of Conservation of the International Council of Museums' Committee for Conservation since 2016. She holds a European Doctorate (PhD) from Nova University of Lisbon. She has published various articles and book chapters on conservation theory and ethics, conservation of time-based media and performance art, embodied memories and the body-archive, and participation and stewardship of cultural heritage, having been awarded the Taylor & Francis and ICON Outstanding Contribution Award in 2017. She co-edited a Special Issue on Portuguese Performance Art (*Revista de Historia da Arte*) in 2016 and a book on Archival Practices in the Performing Arts (Coimbra University Press) in 2020.

**The Old Coat: Some brief reflections on dance, plot and itinerancy** A piece of experimental writing about 'abandonment', which, is as much about plot as it is about dance - how dance furthers or produces breaks in the plot and the role of improvisation in producing the breaks, as well as the relationship between improvisation and dispossession.

**Clair Wills**, King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge and a keen, if not very proficient, jazz dancer. Clair has set up an interdisciplinary workshop with colleagues in Cambridge to explore the question, 'What do we write about when we write about dance?'. She is a frequent contributor to London Review of Books and New York Review of Books and has published several books, her most recent; *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Random House, 2017).



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### *A dialogue with the archival body (A reference to a reference to monumentality) [Video]*

I am working with the archival body in my archived body of work. In work shown and in work which remains unshared, exists reservoirs of movements and forms. A body of work is always changing. It still moves alongside one's work, which progresses. You can revisit your archive / your oeuvre / your body of work, which seems still, but it is still shifting with every work you make.

In movement-making there are compositions which are structured in flux only to be dismantled and discarded. This can be said many artforms, which in their process of becoming, are so many other things, so much more than their final sum. Volumes which gather momentum and proof and rise but then deflate, becoming revised, held back, never shown as part of the 'result'.

I'd like to show more of my process.

I look at my own archive as a sample bank from which I create other work, another work. Not applying too much emphasis on what is considered 'new' and with it a value which is stricken from the 'old'.

Instead, an annexation of movements un-shown becomes reformed. Discarded and disassembled parts can reassemble anew. Choreography, gestures, language, movement composed which can become disjointed or connected, sped up, slowed down, which reverses or stops sharply or moves in a staccato pattern.

And, wow how the body moves. As motor, as prosaically functional and yet entirely fluid.

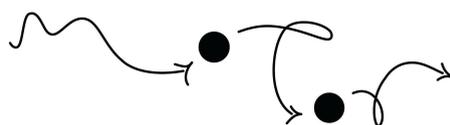
I will show 'A reference to monumentality' in which I reworked movements and scenes choreographed and staged by me and performed by Shade Th eret as an example of archival experimentation. Movements which laid at times dormant but never dull, on the processual shelf since 2016.

**Sanna Helena Berger** is an artist who works with performance, choreography, installation, video, text and sound. She is currently in the process of releasing a concept album with 'Cherche Encore' where sound, text and choreography create 'A movement'.

### *The Critique of Institutional Dressage: Mike Kelley and Kate Foley's Pantomime Horse Dance*

In 2009 Roselee Goldberg commissioned Mike Kelley to stage his musical *Day is Done* as a live performance event at the Performa biennale. My talk analyses the two horse dance numbers, #32A *Horse Dance of the False Virgin* and #32C *The Judson Church Horse Dance* that Mike Kelley produced with the Croatian choreographer Kate Foley in the early 2000s. Her choreography is based on a series of photographs of a high-school performance that Kelley had randomly found. #32A shows the rehearsal of the performance, which the four female dancers casually dressed in Judson Church style-like training clothes, and #32C shows the same choreography performed as a spectacularly costumed pantomime dance performance. This paper discusses the increasing incorporation of artistic live performances into the neoliberal, performance-driven 'dressage operations' of the cultural industry and makes a claim for artistic critique. It argues that commercially produced artistic performance works can, despite being institutionalised, project a general social critique of the culturally ingrained 'dressage practices' within which they are produced.

**Lisa Moravec** is a researcher, focusing on contemporary performance from the late 1960s. She is currently completing her PhD, entitled '*Dressaged Animality: Human and Animal Actors in Contemporary Performance*' at Royal Holloway, University of London and is finalising the co-edited special issue 'Balancing Acts' of the journal *Platform* (with Josephine Leask). She has been a visiting lecturer at Royal Holloway and Kingston School of Art since 2017. She also works as a freelance critic and has recently co-edited the special issue 'Humanism after the Human' of *Photography & Culture*. She holds an MA in History of Art from UCL and has completed the Bavarian MA programme *Aisthesis*.



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## Session 3 - Groupwork

### *The founding and early history of Chisenhale DanceSpace (1980-1988)*

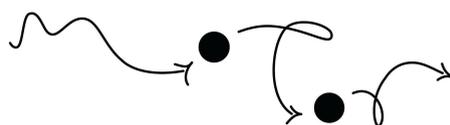
This paper focuses on the formation and early history of Chisenhale Dance Space and in doing so demonstrates the significance of its history in the development of artistic practices in the UK. Founded in 1980, Chisenhale Dance Space contributed to the New Dance movement by supporting the development of artists' practice and fostering relationships with the local community in Tower Hamlets. Both Chisenhale Dance Space and New Dance emerged alongside the later activities of the Women's Liberation Movement. However, whilst feminist art and discourse in the visual arts were widely documented during this period (Nochlin 1971/2003; Parker and Pollock 1981, 1987; Carroll 1976), Britain's early experimental dance history received much less attention in both feminist discourse (Brown 1994) and within broader narratives of art history. This paper explores the influence of second wave feminism on Chisenhale Dance Space through an analysis of its organisational model, policy and programming and considers its history within the development of art history in the UK. In doing so, this paper considers why Chisenhale's early history has been overlooked in both dance, visual art and feminist historiography.

**Rachael Davies** is a curator, researcher and writer living in London. She is currently a M4C PhD candidate at the Centre for Dance Research (C-Dare) at Coventry University in collaboration with Chisenhale Dance Space, London. Davies' research is concerned with British experimental dance and performance art of the 1970s and '80s with a focus on feminist discourses. Her current research explores the early history of Chisenhale Dance Space within the context of the New Dance movement (1977-88). She is particularly interested in alternative organisational models, feminist historiography and practices of archival study. Previously, Davies worked as public programme curator and gallery manager at Cell Project Space, London, where she curated 'X6 Dance Space (1976-80): Liberation Notes' (2020), the first exhibition to document the work of the X6 Collective (1976-80). Other curatorial projects include events with Hannah Quinlan Anderson and Rosie Hastings, Harriet Middleton Baker, Sanna Helena Berger & Shade Thérét, Emilyn Claid, Fergus Early, Jacky Lansley, Sean Roy Parker, Mary Prestidge and Shadow Sistxrs. She is editorial assistant of *Choreographic Practices Journal*, Intellect.

### *Crush: Social Embodiment in Yvonne Rainer's 'Concept of Dust'*

Caitrín will be presenting research from her recent Master's thesis on Yvonne Rainer's *The Concept of Dust* (2014) in response to the theme of group work. Her presentation will examine Rainer's open exploration of the relationship between choreographer and dancer/s through a focus on the Crush, the central moment of group movement in this dance. Touching upon themes of sociality and the mobilisation of a composite body, Rainer's Crush will serve as the basis for investigating the complexity of group dynamics and the corporeal vulnerability of the individual, offering dance as an insightful means to reconsider the personal and socio-political.

**Caitrín Barrett-Donlon** is an art historian and dancer, based in London. With a focus on art from the 1960s to the present, Caitrín has a special interest in dance and performance; her research investigates themes of the body, temporality, and transitional materiality. Caitrín will be commencing her doctoral studies in September 2021 within the History of Art Department at



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University College London. Her PhD project will address the recent work of the choreographer, Yvonne Rainer (b.1934) – one of the most important figures of postmodern dance – with the broader aim of exploring dance's emerging place within art history and museum practices.

### ***HERDING, 2021 [Video]***

Movement /// Possession will share a new video work made with longtime collaborator Isa Raket. Utilising the body as a stage for activism requires an equal understanding of the body as a site for gestation, intimacy and grief. Embodied theory demands an analysis of our responsibility and response-ability; envisioning choreographic improvisation as a form of pilgrimage. Considering the artist as a steward of the land and tapping into shared experience of place, we intend to memorialise the impact of traumas that are recorded and stored within organic environments

**Movement /// Possession (with Isa Raket)** In 2018, queer performer Sim Gray founded the collective Movement /// Possession; this project is defined by humour, improvisation and collaboration - a dynamic practise that fully embodies pleasure and catharsis. Isa Raket is a performance artist and activist, who views the body as a stage for transgressive encounters. Her work uses movement and the body to engage with ecological grief, interrogate her own complicity and disrupt pre-established orthodoxies.

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### **Keynote**

#### **The Death at the Club, in 45 min (2018-2021).**

*The Death at the Club. in 45 min.* 2018 -2021, is a long-lasting performance that subjects the body to a state of death impulse. What is it that makes us behave as if life has no value? A proposal that explores the dark sides of strong individualism in modern society through dance. After the Covid-19 pandemic, this piece takes on new meanings.

**Candela Capitán** (Andalusia 1996), is a performance artist and choreographer who explores the languages and discourses of the body through different paths, practices and means. Her work uses various choreographic platforms such as installations, live actions or video. The generational gap, sexuality, consumption, voyeurism and new technologies are the subjects that allow Candela to create a provocative world full of fantasy and vandalism in which she invites the viewer to participate directly in her tensions, joys and delusions.

