

■ PARLIAMENT

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE LABRATORY FOR SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY AT DUKE UNIVERSITY
2022/2023



PARLIAMENT
A SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL KLIËN
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LABORATORY FOR SOCIAL
CHOREOGRAPHY

Concept & Realisation: Michael Kliën

Artistic Team: Vitoria Kotsalou, Steve Valk, Cory Tamler

Participants: 15-1000+ citizens

Duration: 5—90 days / 4—10 hours per day (longer periods are also possible)

Parliament is a pioneering social choreography for citizens. Entirely comprised of humans in movement and thought, and in the absence of language and objects, individuals re-negotiate fundamental principles that govern their interpersonal relations. The situation offers diverse participants and audiences alike, a critically needed withdrawal from normal modes of social interaction and provides instead an innovative site for 21st-century, embodied experimentalist cooperation.

"Parliament acts as a psychedelic thunderbolt. It draws everyone out of their day-to-day functional perception and plunges them into a lived world of communal wealth, mystery, beauty and potential."

short excerpts

<https://vimeo.com/klien/parliament>

<https://vimeo.com/340488576>

Talk at CUNY (hosted by the Segal Theater Center)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PZkX3eoUNw>

Originally commissioned: 2014; Benaki Museum, Athens; recommissioned 2018 Nasher Museum, North Carolina ; numerous 'closed' (to the public) Parliaments have been situated around the world.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Sitting within Kliën's wider oeuvre of "choreography as an aesthetics of change" this work has grown out of living in Greece throughout the financial crisis and extended public unrest. The work responds to universal conditions and wider realisations that Western paradigms left us largely bereft: psychologically, socially, spiritually and ecologically. *Parliament* enacts democracy through the primacy of the body.

Initially a minimum of 15 local 'citizens' (immigrants, politicians, students, scientists, workers, pensioners etc.) spend four hours together in a large space. The entire time they observe themselves and each other in silence whilst building a tentative system of exchange through simple means of movement. This process is guided by an earlier conversations with choreographer Kliën. The space offers no particular sensory stimulation; the time is spent tuning perception to the underlying dynamics of the individual and collective mind, sensing, and interacting with self-organising social dynamics. Traces inscribed in gestures and relations are left behind by each individual, potentially being picked up, developed and propagated by someone else.

CONCEPT - BARE LIFE IN REVOLT

A *Parliament* is a discussion; in its modern meaning it has come to be used for a body of people (in an institutional sense) meeting to discuss matters of state. This new adaption of the word *Parliament* aims to get the body politic into a state of dance: 'In truth, the right way to begin to think about the pattern which connects is to think of it as primarily a dance of interacting parts.' (Bateson—*Mind and Nature*) *Parliament* enables communal situations in which the depth and workings of human relations can be sensed and made palpable to participants and audience alike. It acts as catalysts and amplifier for embodied knowledge to formulate, for mammalian intelligence to unfold, specifically in respect to recursive, inter-personal/social relations and their governance. Fundamental to these processes is choreography's unique position in its regard of the body being simultaneously subject, theme, material, tool and terrain. As in Kliën's previous works, choreography is approached as a discipline developing into a cultural practice that contributes to the creation of original politics as well as a social-political consciousness. In fact, *Parliament* reveals the necessity of embodied aesthetics in the (r)evolution of ethics.

AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

Regular visitors to the museum/Parliament are made aware of the format and concept of the situation by a small number of guides. They gently aid members of the public to enter and manoeuvre through *Parliament*. Initially the audience will be aware of the unusually concentrated and quiet situation. After a short, non-obligatory briefing with a guide they enter the work in their own time and move freely in the space. Some audience members will attempt to contribute to the situation in a playful manner, whereby others will prefer to predominately observe others. *Parliament* allows all visitors to individually and freely engage with this unusual, social and real situation: communicating with fellow humans without words, taking a nap amongst strangers, observing and being observed, dancing, daydreaming etc. Visitors can return at any time to spend more time in *Parliament*, effortlessly becoming full contributors to the 'parliamentary' process. At the exit they can also volunteer to join in the choreographic work as official participants, which will require an introductory conversation with the artist-team.

PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Large, indoor space such as black-box theatre with retracted seating, gallery, large hall, min 15x8m
No special lighting or sound setup required. Please note that this work is scalable in space-size as well as numbers of participants.

ORGANISATION

A small artistic team in collaborations with presenters (curator/pr/marketing), will create a call for participants up to three months prior to the event. Instructions for participants will be shared at the beginning of Parliament's session. The initial casting process forms a central aspect of the work in order to ensure diverse and locally representative demographics of the participants.

MICHAEL KLIËN (*1973, AUSTRIA)

Choreographer and artist Michael Kliën's work has been situated around the world. Widely considered as one of Europe's foremost thinkers in the field of contemporary dance and choreography today, he has been commissioned by leading institutions such as Ballett Frankfurt, Martha Graham Dance Company, New Museum, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Benaki Museum and Hayward Gallery. As Artistic Director/CEO of Daghdha (2003-2011, Ireland) he developed notions of an extended, socio-politically engaged choreography often referred to as 'Social Choreography'. Kliën's artistic practice encompasses interdisciplinary thinking, critical writing, curatorial projects, and centrally, choreographic works equally at home in the Performing as well as the Fine Arts. He has been awarded a PhD from Edinburgh College of Art in 2009 and has been lecturing about his findings at various distinguished academic institutions. In 2017 Kliën was appointed Professor at Duke University. He is director of the MFA in Dance: Embodied Interdisciplinary Praxis and founded the Laboratory for Social Choreography at the Kenan Institute of Ethics at Duke.

www.michaelklien.com

www.vimeo.com/klien



images: Christina Gangos