





MICHAEL KLIËN

WORK

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Choreograph (v.): bodies in time and space

Choreograph (v.): act of arranging relations between bodies in time and space

Choreography (v.): act of framing relations between bodies ...

'a way of seeing the world'

Choreography (n.): result of any of these actions

Choreography (n.): a dynamic constellation of any kind,

consciously created or not, self-organising or super-imposed

Choreography (n.): order observed ..., exchange of forces ...,

a process that has an observable or observed embodied order

Choreograph (v.): act of witnessing such an order

Choreography (v.): act of interfering with or negotiating such an order

MICHAEL KLIËN, JEFFREY GORMLY, STEVE VALK

Can we even imagine another world without propagating the unforgiving, invisible insanity hidden in our movement, thoughts, and action? The relentless force of imagination spilling out inventions that bind the world into unimagined suffering. Wise individuals said, 'it is time'—this is the time to enter into the plethora of unthought alternatives. To burn oneself to ashes moving from within. A deschooling, a fragile, grappling with the naïve reality of the senses to unbind them from addictions, hidden ills. Patience. Time is of essence to transverse our senses harvesting the secret slowness of movement. A faint prayer in the storm: the eye in the hand, the grain of sand, the horn locking bulls, the galloping bison, the wrath of the land, burning thorns, wounded lamb, shrine of light. I, we, fleetingly unthreatened by identity: to listen, probe, dig, dream, ponder, alone and together, muting the droning words. There is no turning back. Longer waves last longer: we are expressions of wisdom from the beginning of life. Futures are written in ourselves, the maps and mazes of the world in its becoming. 'Discovery, discovery, discovery,'

TYRONE O'ROS

INTRODUCTION

CHOREOGRAPHIES OF REVELATION

In 1994, aged 20, Michael Kliën publicly declared Choreography and Dance to be entirely independent of one another; autonomous disciplines with entangled fields of engagement (*Manifesto*, 68% Choreography, London).

Since then, Kliën's artistic practice has encompassed interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking, critical writing, curatorial projects, and most centrally, choreographic works at home in both the Performing and Fine Arts.*

As a leading voice in contemporary choreography, Kliën has pioneered a form of 21st-century ecological thinking that arises directly from the body to transform human awareness of how to ethically and sustainably move in society. His extensive body of work, labeled at once emotionally and intellectually dense, continues to evade classification within the canon of Western Arts.

Kliën creates choreographic sites, openings in which new forms of movement and civic relations can emerge. They are rigorous, poetic artifacts that engage 'the unknown', observational and reflective realms to sense reality beyond rationality and purpose. The inner processes of these choreographies take years to fall into place. He often invites a diverse cohort of people and through various distinctive tasks, proposes that they observe themselves and the other, aligning their movements to their thoughts, all the while insisting that they refrain from being creative. These processes are fundamental contemplations on existence, emphasizing relations that change and grow whenever performed or situated.

The design and administration of pioneering cultural institutions have been central to this process and has marked his artistic direction beginning with Barriedale Operahouse, London (1994—2000), then Daghdha Dance Company, Limerick (2003—2011) and most recently with R.I.C.E. on Hydra Island (2012—). These new institutional models distinguish themselves through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking, dedication to high-level discourse, suspension of dominant ideologies of productivity, and finally, genuine

socio-cultural openness and interest in the potential of 'the other'. Numerous innovative educational and social choreographic formats have been the direct result of this mode of expanded inquiry. Alongside his choreographic practice, Kliën has developed several technologies for the self and the collective, ranging from meditative tool-kits (*The Hydrean*) to structured conversational frameworks (*Personal Cosmologies*) and novel teaching methodologies (*Excavation Sites*).

Kliën's choreographic constellations facilitate flight lines of imagination, out from the marshes of cultural convention toward enabling relational fields of possibility and potential.

* Over the years Kliën's artistic development has been guided by the ideas of Gregory Bateson, Alain Badiou, Joseph Beuys, William Forsythe, Steve Paxton, Gordon Lawrence and numerous close artistic collaborators such as Steve Valk, Jeffrey Gormly, Volkmar Klien and Vitoria Kotsalou amongst others.

CONTEXT

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EXPANDED CHOREOGRAPHY

We might think of choreography in terms of 'rehearsal'; that is, as the working out and working through of utopian, nevertheless 'real', social relations.

ANDREW HEWITT

As a central concern in his work, Kliën has been engaged in fundamentally deconstructing our civilization's assumptions on choreography, dance and culture. He understands choreography as an autonomous artistic discipline concerned with the workings and governance of patterns, dynamics and ecologies. In response to the urgency of our contemporary ecological situation, this new conception of choreography intrinsically engages its social potential to pursue sustainable orders of human relations (Social Choreography). Choreography—as an Aesthetics of Change—assumes the creative practice of setting relations or setting the conditions for new relationships to emerge.

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE

Patterns are everywhere. Patterns are in between, ephemeral but real. They are only visible to us under certain conditions; in certain wavelengths for us to grasp. The fact is that those patterns govern our lives. Routines, solar systems, life and conversations—all governed by subtle frames of patterns of some sort ... the patterns we live by. This is the search for patterns; patterns as Gregory Bateson reminds us ... 'that connect the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose, and all of them to me and me to you', aiming to imagine and formulate a vividly presented awareness of some profound and ambiguous structures and dynamics working in man and nature.

Patterns are not rigid. They are fluid constellations, appearing and disappearing, crystallizing and dissolving, being born and dying: an ongoing dance of creation and de-creation in the world in which we have our being—a subtle frame of flight. Amongst and in between this dance lies a world full of interaction, relationships, constellations, dependencies, arrangements and

ecologies. To enquire into the world of changing patterns and the forces at play is to enquire into the choreography of life, examining what makes us dance and why. Patterns can grow, live, learn and propagate—we might call these patterns an idea, a mug or Wilson. However these terms are only distinctions and Wilson, the mug and the idea form parts of other patterns, pattern of patterns. We, ourselves, are part of the larger choreographies and our acts are acts upon them. This requires responsibility and creative action. It requires a thorough exploration into the wider grammar of patterns, their proportionality and their paradoxes to discover the frames that bind us together and makes us see the dances we dance. With knowledge comes doubt, shedding light on the impossibility of static frames, questioning the validity and limitations of existing frames in regards to a 'wider knowing'. And with doubt comes the need for action, for rebuilding and re-framing of self; a need for changing and adjusting the way we conduct our life, interact, love, consume and apply ourselves to the social- and eco-sphere.

We are inscribed with the ability to bring about changes; to create conducive conditions for things to happen, for patterning and re-patterning. Doing so is the act of the everyday choreographer—the negotiator, the navigator and architect of a fluid ecology we are all part of.

MICHAEL KLIËN, 2005

EMBODIED MINDS

As the practice of choreography has been expanded dealing with relations and creating the conditions for bodily, mental and social relations to emerge, the field of dance has experienced a paradigm shift itself. A certain emancipation has taken place amongst dance practitioners that assumes neither the dancer nor the dance as the choreographer's subject. As agents of embodied realities dancers cultivate ways of sensing and maneuvering the world and actively resist being subjugated to the act of writing. In this process, dance has also been recognized as a phenomenon that is not necessarily contained in the body but can show itself between bodies, or between bodies and their context. Relations can attain a state of dance, and such state discloses reality and holds the potential for change.

In his writing and practice, Kliën marks dance as a manner of thought, an essential tool for the dancer and the witnessing collective to access other concrete realities. Dance is also described as 'the seeds of ethics' in communal settings. In his practice, the studio is transformed into a parliamentary site to negotiate human relations through the primacy of the individual and collective 'thoughtbody'.

DANCE AS A FIGURE OF THOUGHT

Dance allows the thoughtbody to show itself. It is the showing of the body in thought, independent of what constitutes such a body, whether its boundaries are made of skin or by constitutions played out in laws. Dance is the formation of certain configurations of thought, expressed in manifold ways by the birth of ideas or the shivering body. That is why evolution, animals and states are said to be dancing at times, because certain conditions are met allowing a system to be flexible and its emerging dancing body to be naked, anonymous and selfless. This is what constitutes dance. Hence dance is a matter of thought pointing towards the possibility of change as inscribed in the body. For the spectator to perceive dance is an exercise in trust, demanding the audience's absolute gaze, oblivious to

representational decor and fully focused on the underlying nakedness of a flexible body in thought. Our civilization has been turning dance into a perversion of itself, applying to and onto it everything that will prohibit its existence in the form of predetermined rigid time, space and action. It might be a symptomatic need to resist mortality's grip. Maybe the reasons are to be found in the dominant muddle of language, which in Bateson's words 'stops us from thinking straight' and from dancing in general. To govern dance is in itself a misleading conception, a seemingly vain attempt to fence off its mortal nature, putting shackles on what cannot be tamed without turning it into an empty shell, a sign pointing towards something other than what it is. To choreograph dance conventionally sets movement in stone, whilst trying to re-create, it proves to be an illusion. Dance is Dance and cannot be tampered with, just as Bateson reminds us that 'God cannot be mocked'. Dance has been crippled by conventional choreography for centuries. It is time to release choreography's hold on dance and let it simply be.

MICHAEL KLIËN. STEVE VALK. 2007

SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

The emerging field of Social Choreography* is engaging society with the sensibility of an artist, a poet, a dancer, and contributing to the creation of an ecological, social fabric. In striving to perceive the hidden choreographies of humans, Social Choreography aims for institutionalized thinking to enter into a state of dance to enable socially transformative processes.

Social Choreography comprehends the field of human relations as an aesthetic field, in which new orders and sustainable, ecological change emerge based on structural flexibility, the recognition of the other, and, centrally, the permanent expansion of the individual's perceived environment.

Social Choreography is thereby a cultural practice that brings bodily awareness to bear in the creation of new social situations and political processes. It also seeks to provide an ongoing practical discourse on the role of aesthetics in civility and governance.

A PRAXIS OF GOVERNANCE

I will refuse to choreograph institutions into being, which bury fruitful uncertainty beneath false or sterile assumptions, the lazy dogma of reductionist thinking, illusory perceptions or presuppositions. In the universe I know, there is only the contingency of fluid and free-floating forces. When I conduct the orchestra of space, commanding figments of time in the temporary shelter of my quicksilver ideas, their containers are never erected with the stones of dead builders but are instead undetermined, undecidable, and potentially endless. These vessels might transform themselves or be shed and forgotten, rediscovered or subsumed. Their skin is the surface of a pataphysical architecture; their choreography a collapsing, spiraling fall from grace. Like dust from the feet of the traveler at the end of his journey, it is from the mucky ground of being that I bring new form to the surface, to imbue life, to create a blossom, to realise potential and flirt with infinity. Perpetuity is a fleeting glimpse: true stability embraces ebb and flow. As an architect of the invisible, I, like you, set entities into relationship



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2002—

Choreography: Michael Kliën

Sound: Volkmar Klien

Original software design: Nick Rothwell, Michael Kliën

Original dancer: Nicole Peisl

Duration: 20 minutes

Commissioned by: Ballett Frankfurt (Forsythe), ZKM (Weibel), TQW (Gareis)

Video documentation:

<u>www.vimeo.com/klien/einem</u> (supported by custom-made software) <u>www.vimeo.com/klien/eineminchina</u> (not software supported)

Performed to critical acclaim by an exceptional roster of solo dance artists. Einem—a 'work in movement'—is a mediated dance work that is subject to continuous change. Since 2003 *Einem* has developed as a synergistic relationship between each dancer and the choreography itself: thus allowing the work to grow, learn, mutate and live together with the dancer with whom a communication occurs back and forth over time. Dancers who have 'co-habited' with the work include Christine Buerkle. Nicole Peisl. Elena Gianotti, and Laura Dannequin. Einem's choreography centers around a 'flowing' structure—a mix of variable instructions and propositions as to how the designated performer can map their conscious and unconscious thought-processes into movement. These propositions and instructions can and do themselves change, grow and learn within pre-defined parameters. Essential to the process is the dancer entering into a dialogue between himself/herself and the choreographic structure. Initially, this has been accomplished through the dancer's observation of a graphically expressed, complex algorithmic framework housed by a computer (and hidden from the audience). In later versions, new choreographic methodologies were developed to omit the software element of the work. *Einem* can be understood as a dialogical process between a self-propelled, dynamic and everchanging choreographic template (as proposed by the choreographer) and the performer.

The dancer not only influences and guides the template but inhabits it to perform and share the most inner workings of her mind.

(...) the 'true' dancer must never appear to know the dance she dances. Her knowledge (which is technical, immense, and painfully acquired) is traversed, as null, by the pure emergence of her gesture. (...) The dancer is the miraculous forgetting of her own knowledge of dance.

ALAIN BADIOU



STANDING IN INK

WORK FOR 2 DANCERS 2008—

Choreography: Michael Kliën Dramaturgy: Steve Valk Sound: Volkmar Klien

Original dancers: Mark Carberry, Laura Dannequin

Duration: 20-50 Minutes

Commissioned by: Daghdha Dance Company, 2008

Video documentation:

www.vimeo.com/klien/standinginink

Two dancers, two mammals, two bodies, multiple states of mind. No movement, spacing or timing agreed nor rehearsed; nothing set. They are poised to dance together. Standing in Ink emerged out of a yearlong conversation between the choreographer and the dancers, systematically examining and familiarizing themselves with their own and the other's processes of thought and perception. Over this long period, they reconfigured how they think about dance and how they think about the other. During each performance, the explorations and learning start anew as they negotiate reality and disclose a new world in dance based on their previously accumulated knowledge.

Dance immerses humanity in 'mind', into the moving dynamic systems, that hold together the world in which we have our being. The world needs dancers—to sweat, to smell, to think in flesh, to copulate and satisfy themselves, to surrender, to be present for everyone else who is not. The world needs dancers to be the embodied evidence and knowledge of a soaring mind—beneath and beyond frames of consciousness, on pathways of the unknown.

MICHAEL KLIËN



SEDIMENTS OF AN ORDINARY MIND

WORK FOR 4—8 DANCERS 2004—

Choreography: Michael Kliën Dramaturgy: Steve Valk Composition: Volkmar Klien Duration: minimum 60 minutes

Commissioned by: Daghdha Dance Company, 2005 Re-commissioned by: Weld Dance Company, 2013

Video documentation:

www.vimeo.com/klien/sediments (version 2005)

A thought is a physical act. With Sediments of an Ordinary Mind, choreographer Michael Kliën devised a range of procedures aimed at guiding dancers to embody their streams of consciousness in realtime, on stage. In this seminal work, he has created an artifact that purposefully channels the existing personal and social setup of four dancers into a dance of minds. The work embodies an enigma of human idiosyncrasies bearing extra-ordinary traces of the ordinary. Sediment's distinct choreographic and performative language is a result of Kliën's ongoing quest for new forms of choreographic expression. The work actively utilizes the underlying dynamics of the human condition: learning, faith, love, trust, hate, remembering and forgetting, trial and error—a permanent work-in-process continuously in search of the social glue.

Where you've nothing else ...
construct ceremonies out of the air ...
and breathe upon them ...
MCCORMAC



CHOREOGRAPHY FOR BLACKBOARDS

PERFORMANCE INSTALLATION FOR 6—8 CITIZENS 2006—

Choreography: Michael Kliën with Steve Valk

Dramaturgy: Steve Valk Composition: Volkmar Klien

Artistic collaboration: Jeffrey Gormly

Duration: 90—120 minutes

Commissioned by: Daghdha Dance Company, 2005

Re-commissioned by: IMMA (Dublin), Zodiak (Finland), PS122 (NY), Hayward

Gallery (London), Museet Moderna (Stockholm)

Video/web documentation:

<u>www.vimeo.com/klien/hayward</u> (edited version, 2010) <u>www.vimeo.com/klien/sediments</u> (full version, 2006) <u>www.tinyurl.com/po3t5p3</u> (essay/review on Culturebot.org)

Seven participants, chosen both locally and internationally, are working on seven monolithic blackboards spread throughout a large open space. Actively drawing on the blackboards over a set period, they follow exact, rehearsed procedures, developing and exchanging insights and individual expressions in various, immediate communicative forms, weaving their relations into a concentrated collective dance of minds to an electronic music score. Once the choreography has come to an end, a landscape of drawings is left for display. Observers are free to walk, sit, converse as well as read in an arena setting throughout the process. A silent and communal matrix of five individuals 'dreaming the real' imprints a landscape of marks and meaning on the surfaces of blackboards. Rising thoughts, raw visual thinking, and sensual perception form a choreography of self and other—of relations in dialogue, exchange, sedimentation, learning, disintegration, erosion and demise. Connoting qualities of ritual, audience members bear witness to the events of their immediate reality—to the unpredictable, exploratory dimension of creative thinking inherent in all natural systems. Diverting fingers long enough to release their hold on the situation,

the players in *Choreography for Blackboards* create a subtle participatory frame—a collective 'third space'—for sculpting the flow of a moving universe.

All dreamers are thinkers.

BION



PARLIAMENT

CHOREOGRAPHIC SITE FOR CITIZENS 2014—

Choreography: Michael Kliën Dramaturgy: Steve Valk

Artistic collaboration: Jeffrey Gormly, Vitoria Kotsalou Participants: 12—120 individuals and audience members

Duration: 5—21 days/6—10 hours per day

Commissioned by: Benaki Museum (Athens), 2013

Video documentation:

www.vimeo.com/klien/parliament

In this parliament of bodies a minimum of twelve local citizens (poets, politicians, scientists, pensioners, etc.) renegotiate human relations upon the primacy of the body. They are offered the opportunity to spend up to three working days together in a large space before others take their place. They spend the entire time observing themselves and each other while building a tentative system of exchange through simple means of movement. Earlier conversations with choreographer Kliën quide this process. The space offers no particular sensory stimulation; all day is spent tuning one's perception to the underlying dynamics of the individual and collective mind, sensing and interacting with nature's selforganizing dynamics. Traces inscribed in gestures and relations are left behind by each individual, potentially being picked up, developed, and propagated by someone else. The public, who moves freely through the space amongst the performing individuals, does not necessarily know who is and who is not officially part of *Parliament*. Audience members can volunteer to take the place of a participant for three days (after a day of initiation). Over two weeks, up to 100 citizens will have been performing *Parliament*, while 1000s will have spent time in the work. Parliament offers citizens an alternative context to re-sense as well as renegotiate interpersonal relations, one's positions vis-à-vis the other. Before the actual public installment of *Parliament*, the choreography is conveyed and rehearsed in a weeklong workshop. Within Parliament, every action aids to sense

the self-organizing principles of nature to engage with, and participate within, them. As the boundaries between 'official' participants and audience blur and at times disappear entirely, the work spans not only amongst the participants but envelops all visitors alike. The audience can remain in *Parliament* as long as they wish, leave, and return at will. Specifically, interested audience members can learn the choreography in a personal conversation with the artistic team and join the work as official participants the following days.



JERUSALEM

CHOREOGRAPHIC SITE FOR CITIZENS 2014—

Choreography: Michael Kliën Dramaturgy: Steve Valk Sound: Volkmar Klien

Artistic collaboration: Jeffrey Gormly, Vitoria Kotsalou

Participants: 8—12 locally recruited individuals

Duration: 120 minutes

Video documentation:

www.vimeo.com/klien/jerusalem

Jerusalem unravels a world of relations, order and ecologies. For one week up to ten diverse (age, body, sex, education, social background, etc.) citizens engage in a choreographic process based on embodiment, stream of consciousness, and the exchange of resulting physical traces. Jerusalem slowly emerges as a choreographic matrix that disregards its socially constructed context (i. e., the current social-economic conditions, protests, ideologies, etc.). This work focuses on physical presence: one's embodied being in exchange and commonality with others. The performed work unfolds over two hours. Unconcerned with established notions of grace, mastery, and beauty Jerusalem is a counter spectacle of things to come. Alone, the unusual constellation of diverse bodies on a delineated floor, their level of concentration and embodied communication, sets the work apart from its surroundings. Observers are free to casually walk, sit, drink and converse around the process. Throughout the days of performance, other citizens, artists, and stray dogs alike are envisaged to join the work spontaneously and without prior notice. This work is an urgent, necessary response to the contemporary situation of a globalizing reality. Rigid mind-dynamics of Western thought have been unable to address crises in a meaningful manner. Jerusalem suspends the dutiful workings of 'the cold winds of a civilization driven insane' (Bateson) for the 'other of rationality' (Boehme) to take charge, to think and speak. For the shameful body to come forth and

reclaim what is appropriately his and hers: Precisely not the frozen patterns of consciousness, but the presence and potential of all movement.

For we do not have an abiding city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. **HEBREWS 13:14**

Dance will develop oddly unburdened by codes, structures and language, providing tentacles into other realities. This raw physical matrix, the place for not knowing, will be at once unintelligible and engaging. What will emerge will not correspond to what we have previously known; no sanity will be found. It will make no sense. It will give no meaning: a thorough loss of coherence. This work is a crucial response to the contemporary practice of humanity: quietly crashing out of unsustainable visions of ourselves, into other worlds.

KLIËN



STATE OF THE UNION

PARTICIPATORY DANCE SITE 2016—

Choreography: Michael Kliën

Dramaturgy and artistic collaboration: Steve Valk

Sound: Volkmar Klien

Participants: 15—30 dancers as well as audience members

Duration: 1—14 days/4—8 hours per day

Original title: Excavation Site Martha Graham U.S.A.

Commissioned by: Martha Graham Company, New Museum and PS122

Emanating qualities of a ritual State of the Union engages an entire community's deepest beliefs as carried in the body to enter a communal world of unthought, alternative realities. The work is situated in a large space without any spatial or visual performer/audience separation. State of the Union is porous by design, organically drawing audience members and performers into its workings with neither force nor fear. There is one single entrance/exit. For a minimum period of four hours, 25 dancers of various generations gather to engage choreographic propositions as introduced by Michael Kliën. The propositions focus on observation, embodied thought, and the deconstruction of our perceived reality. During the unfolding event, dancers engage in deep reflection as well as passionate dances, connecting with their very own relationship to dance, dancing, their gods, and the world. The audience enters and exits at will and is free to move around in the space. Before they enter the space for the first time, they are briefed by a small number of hosts (also dancers). The briefing takes the form of a personal, relaxed, and partially causal conversation that introduces the audience to sensible ways of seeing, perceiving, and engaging with the unfolding spectacle at hand. As the work progresses, the audience and performers intermingle, and it becomes impossible to know the audience from the dance, with dancers and audience alike observing and witnessing or engaging in movement, alone or together. Throughout the installation, immersive electronic music by Volkmar Klien underscores, supports and enables the situation and experience. State of the Union is a somewhat Jungian topography of a

community in the manner of its operation, exposing the underbelly of 'the stage of life'. Skin reveals how freedom means restraint, madness, and perplexity, what is sacred, and the unbridgeable chasm between our plans and actions. In dancing, real vulnerability is showing itself. A showing of all wounds across the dimensions of collective and individual life. A communal, temporary liquefying of selfhood and social identity to experience the undercurrents of living.

Deeply I go down into myself. My god is dark and like a webbing made of a hundred roots that drink in silence.

RILKE



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R.I.C.E. ON HYDRA

2013—

REAL INSTITUTE OF CYBERNETIC EPISTEMOLOGY (R.I.C.E.)

Founded in 2013 by Michael Kliën and Vitoria Kotsalou, R.I.C.E. is a cultural initiative on the small Greek island of Hydra, whose acronym is purposefully interchangeable (Radial Institute for Choreographic Enquiry, etc.). The non-profit organization brings together renowned artists, thinkers and local citizens. Dedicated to exploring the Choreography of Humans, it aims to envision human relations (personal, political and social) with the sensibilities of artist, poet, dancer. Throughout the year, R.I.C.E. is active in maintaining a network of artists, researchers and partners. Based on emerging dialogues, R.I.C.E. entangles life and art to observe, reflect and act recursively. The outcomes can be concrete (social choreographies, advocacy, performance, texts, etc.) as well as ephemeral. In August 2015, R.I.C.E. launched the Ricean School of Dance (RSOD) that quickly established itself as the annual centerpiece of R.I.C.E.'s activities. For ten days in August RSOD regularly hosts over 50 people from abroad and Greece as well as the mixed ability group EnDynamei on the island of Hydra.

In winter 2016, the organization shapeshifted for the first time into an emergency relief initiative to elevate some of the suffering caused by the refugee crisis. A team of volunteers distributed 100 survival kits for young refugee families arriving on Chios island. The funds were raised through R.I.C.E.'s international network of concerned individuals. Through the years, R.I.C.E. was also incubator to various artistic formats such as *Parliament*, *Jerusalem* (Kliën), *Day out of Time* (Kotsalou), *Benchtalks* (Schouten), *Ricefields*, etc.

RICEAN SCHOOL OF DANCE (RSOD)

RSOD, a school without teachers, is a summer gathering of around 50 artists and engaged citizens to develop and employ new artistic and social strategies. RSOD takes place during August. The constituting principle of the school is self-actuated, in-depth research in a setting of aesthetic abundance. Within a

milieu that facilitates formal and non-formal exchanges, the school offers its students the opportunity to develop artistic practice within a social context. RSOD engages no teachers but invites dialogue that comes from the sharing of knowledge. A curriculum of neither led nor taught artistic research formats is in place and open to development. Most formats in place were developed by various participants in previous editions of RSOD. RSOD is a place where 'the one who moves teaches'. Bare and sufficient conditions are provided for inspired individuals to learn for themselves through each other. Participants are trusted to contribute in meaningful ways to the determination of the school's actions; to be interested in fundamental concerns; to allow for mistakes to happen; to initiate projects without the necessity of logic or conclusion, and to fearlessly offer their intelligence.





DANCE COMPANY AND CIVIC SPACE 2003—2011

DAGHDHA DANCE COMPANY—A NEW INSTITUTION IN DANCE

In 2003 Kliën took over the artistic directorship of Dahghda Dance Company (Limerick, Ireland). Over the following eight years, he and his team established the organization on the cusp of developments in contemporary dance. Daghdha distinguished itself through interdisciplinary thinking, their dedication to highlevel discourse, suspension of dominant ideologies of productivity, genuine social openness and interest in the potential of 'the other'. Through the ongoing entanglement of research, production and performance, Daghdha envisioned a new role for dance in society, rooting dance at the center of its wider community, supporting and engendering relevant interdisciplinary discourse and civic engagement. Home of up to 30 diverse artists at any time, the program formed an urgent response to a changing ecology, forging new production methodologies, management strategies, and the ways to disseminate ideas in the arts and beyond. Many performance formats were prototyped and tested in hundreds of formal and informal events at Daghdha (including Mamuska Nights, Excavation Sites, Gravity and Grace, Framemakers, etc.). It provided the cradle for numerous pioneering choreographic productions, including Choreography for Blackboards (2005), as well as pioneered integration initiatives for adults with Special Needs. In 2011 Daghdha ceased all its activities due to a total loss of funding during the Irish financial crisis.

DAGHDHA SPACE—A SOCIAL ORGANISM

In 2004 Daghdha Dance Company adopted a derelict church in Limerick, Ireland, and converted it into a stunning environment for exploratory dance and choreography. Daghdha space was opened with the first international symposium on a new conception of choreography entitled *Framemakers*. The symposium took the form of a five-week-long public thinktank during which the role of the arts in society was deconstructed through the lens

of choreography. Its concrete and ephemeral findings resonated into the programming of Daghdha space for years to come. For the following seven years, Daghdha Space served as a thriving incubator for new social situations and contemporary dance: a social experiment and social choreography in itself. Daghdha Space embodied one of the heralds of new cultural institutions: a curated space that was a museum, theater, cafe, laboratory, auditorium, gallery, library and community center all at once. Daghdha Space was perceived by artists and audiences alike as a radically new form: a new meaningful public space with dance at its nucleus.

(...) a vital and profoundly forward thinking dance institution which is offering a meaningful and socially sustainable 'way forward' for contemporary dance. All of us can look to the work, the ideas and the innovations developed at Daghdha with deep respect and admiration.

WILLIAM FORSYTHE



TEACHING

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LECTURE SERIES AND SEMINARS

Numerous public talks and workshops form the basis of these three lecture series, designed within the context of academia. Generally, all courses are open for individuals with and without movement experience. Lectures typically include well-established as well as experimental strategies such as *Excavation Sites, Physical Mind Mapping, Personal Cosmologies*, and *Embedments* originally developed by choreographer Michael Kliën that aid the formation of new thoughts and ideas.

THE CHOREOGRAPHIC MIND: ORDER | DISORDER | ORGANISATION | RELATIONS

This lecture-series presents a primer in disciplinary and interdisciplinary choreography. This course approaches choreography as the art of setting relations in time and space or providing the conditions for relations to emerge. Rooted within a contemporary dance-context, it expands its practice into various interdisciplinary fields. The series offers a practice-based discourse on patterns, order, and structure and examines multiple modes of structuring movement within the arts. The manner of operation behind classical, modern and contemporary choreographic methodologies are examined and theoretically contextualized to reveal prevailing ideologies at work. A practical introduction to the extended field of contemporary choreography and covers relatively recent developments such as Relational Art, Participatory Art and Social Choreography. The lectures also include an introduction to cybernetic principles.

DANCING STATES OF MIND: THE SELF, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PRACTICE OF DANCE

Dancing can be propaganda, protest, potential, poetry. Dancing provides 'the seeds for a new order' and makes change possible. We are all moving creatures born with the innate ability to dance. Our movement not only discloses our most

profound ideologies regarding the world we inhabit but can also open up new realities. At times radically experimental, this is an invitation to move to the edge of knowledge and reflect deeply upon the state of the world and our role within it.

THINKING THROUGH THE BODY: BECOMING AN ORDINARY GENIUS

Some of the most revolutionary thinkers climbed mountains; some ran, some sat at streams, while others watched birds. It seems that the most spectacularly unproductive 'waste' of times yields the utmost creative thoughts and solutions to previously unsolvable problems. In this seminar, students engage in game-changing methodologies devised by Michael Kliën for his professional dancers and performers in an attempt to surrender their comfort zones and narrowly structured ideologies. Students in this class will have the opportunity to dream the world anew, expand the rational and conscious mind into the corporeality of their existence, and connect their senses to the living world in manifold ways. Radically innovative, these simple strategies invite students to spend time alone, embed in the lives of others, explain their cosmologies to their fellows, and dream as a group.



EXCAVATION SITES

PHENOMENOLOGICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND MOVEMENT PRACTICE

Excavation Sites take an opposite strategy: instead of building (constructing, creating, inventing, etc.) upon established ideas and knowledge, they aim to determine new knowledge by revealing the thicket of mental relations that bind us; to build by digging.

MICHAEL KLIËN

Initially developed by Kliën to aid the creative process in dance, Excavation Sites have become a unique methodology for learning. The methodology encompasses observation, research, and performance and asks participants to test various concepts and beliefs as held by the individual as well as the collective against embodied experience. This way Excavation Sites establishes itself as a movement practice that expands and reveals embodied knowledge to the practitioner. The actual sites are facilitated, physical, communal, democratic spaces as dedicated to uncovering embodied realities as to recognizing collective and individual pathologies in order to cultivate sustainable modes of 'being in the world'. The simplicity of the format allows participants, dancers and nondancers alike, to suspend their dominant modes of perception and delve into the thicket of life and living. Although various movement strategies (so-called Field Studies) are shared, offered and discussed as propositions to further discourse, the practice predominantly supports participants to develop their individual movement and thought patterns, unearthing the inner-workings of individual and collective minds. Excavation Sites can equally be seen as a communal practice that recursively entangles one's place in the negotiation of community with others (Social Choreography). This way, a body can be defined in Keeney's words as 'a participant in a conversation' and a mind 'as the pattern of a conversation'. Always many bodies in many minds.



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BOOK OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN AESTHETICS OF CHANGE*

(...) Choreography needs to be the word given to the idea of 'recursive epistemology', indicating the essential intrinsic relationship of aesthetic awareness to being, in its lifelong process of world creation—invoking a rich. sensual inclusion of the observer him/herself in reality. Choreography as a way of seeing the world makes the present richer. It infuses into one's being the alchemical ingredients for perceiving new dimensions. These new dimensions of relations, proportionalities, movement and dance make us at once actors and creators in our newfound territory, restoring unity beyond separation. Naïve realism emerges as a new paradigm: sensitive knowing coupled with a deep, subjective observation of nature, society and oneself. Current social frames and self-fulfilling rationalism stand as concrete grey impediments. It is this illusion of concreteness that precise sensorial imagination unassumingly renders worthless. In a world of minds, the state of dance is of the essence. Dance is a display of elemental life-force. Don't think Pirouettes, think of bird flight, digestion and clouds. Dance is an ephemeral state of qualities and properties full of non-committed potential for change: a flexible and nondetermined condition, a specific, excited state of mind where change becomes possible and effortless. The way our culture has choreographed dance has always been reflective of the larger tendencies of how we, as a society, deal with the unknown, the unframable, the foreign, the spiritual and the animal. Conventional arrangements—those of streets, school exams, chains of command and soldiering performers—impose rigid frames upon dance. These systems are the embodiment of fear and the cultural suppression of that which is governed neither by subjective nor collective will. Our premise must not be to constrain movement into a set pattern, but rather to provide a cradle for movement to find its own patterns—over and over again; to preserve a body, whether bound by skin or habits, from stagnation; to enable lightness and primal energy, possibilities only found once relations start dancing. Dance immerses humanity in mind, into the moving dynamic systems, that hold together the world in which we have our being. The world needs dancers—to sweat, to smell, to think in flesh, to copulate

and satisfy themselves, to surrender, to be present for everyone else who is not; to be the embodied evidence and knowledge of a soaring mind—beneath and beyond frames of consciousness, on pathways of the unknown. What creates such dance, that is not to be obstructed by walls and constricted in knots? Maybe it is this 'clearing' a choreographer needs be concerned with. Freed from the tyranny of time, perception draws its breath from sensation and then maps out in myriad ways the landscape of our imagination. Choreography as the ordering of territory—a physical, habitual, perceptual opening—to the ones who will be dancing: a gesture of submission. Of such nature is a sane choreographic act, respecting the immense presence of unknown trails in the dim light of our collective consciousnesses.

It is time to stop choreographing Swan Lakes and timetables! It is causing me pain. In your quest for innovation you innovate nothing; only perpetuate breeding ground for the old. When the curtain falls on your Swan Lake, your nation's walls will be even taller, and all candles will have burned out. All you do is propagate existing patterns throughout the living matrix, taking part in dominant modes of organization. You are the State and your ancestors' minds: written patterns in your flesh and thoughts. Assume responsibilities for your being and your imagination. You are pattern, you are thought, none of which you have thought yourself. There is a future to be created. Your choreographies build our meaning and your creations—a picnic, a child or a garden—matter to me.

Take time to sense your context. It charts the boundaries of your imagination. Only fools go marching on—the wise ones dance.

^{*} Excerpt from Book of Recommendations—Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change, Kliën, M., Valk, S., Gormly, J., 2008, Daghdha, Ireland

BOOK OF PROPOSITIONS

TO DANCE DIFFERENTLY*

A call for Dance to dance differently. Our collective manner of disseminating dance globally has not only propagated a truly problematic ideology of what dance should be, it has also brought about peculiar ways of producing, relating and socializing. Adequate instincts seem to be lacking to perceive and engage dance as a vital technology of the self: to initiate, demonstrate and seed instances of a different life.

... Dance as we really know it ... Everyone has a sense of how to dance. This is a call for dance as it is first encountered, neither told nor taught, for the spirited suspension of normative life, untouched by rationality. This Dance knows nothing of acquired knowledge. Simultaneously specific and universal, Dance wraps itself around all living, to dispel life of all its assumptions, inadequate cognitive frames and prevailing truths. *Proposition: To Not Know*

... no dance in pieces ... Who ever told us that dance comes in pieces? What happened along the way and when did we succumb? All broken now, starting at 8 PM and specifically, and most perversely, not dancing as we have originally experienced it. Dance in Pieces is a packaged, stylized representation of what dance once felt like. Simulated spiritual disclosures, precisely measured pretend ecstasy. With philosopher Badiou in mind, I no longer want to think in pieces. *Proposition: The Unbroken Dance*

... ideas are responsible for the state of the planet ... Ideas have done their damage. Our quest for originality, grown in the mind of one's own individual genius, has brought about the world as it is. Our celebrated ideas are culpable and our response to this endless mess is to have more ideas. Troublesome and stuck. Ideas are means of the past, a double binding metaphysics that oscillates between fervently building the world anew and cleaning up collateral damage. Liberation from this addiction is required: to abandon the longing for wicked new ideas and instead to act and dance out a deeply perceived urgency. *Proposition: No More Ideas*

... sailing past the stones of dead builders ... In its institutional arrangements dance has always been dependent on the meta-message: This Is

Dance. Whatever it does, however it moves or stops, it constitutes itself that way. Such Dance has to perform and dramatize itself to be Dance. Breaking these unspoken agreements, abandoning the act of signification, to dance anonymously in silence, is the true subversive act of our times. *Proposition: It Dancing Itself dance is no language ...* Dance must rise, pull itself free from the spirits of gravity, from the writers (-graphers) of dance. It must find ways to govern itself, unburdened by the need for an authoritarian voice or an empathetic gaze. To find the site in which dance itself can constitute its own governance.

The dancing body: a mind that governs its thoughts. No words spoken, no sentence written. This is the necessary dance of our time. *Proposition: Changes in Governance*... the ungovernable moment ... If we encounter others in the moment of dance, relations are naked: a primal, communal site is substantiated in its embryonic state. A third body is born, made of All dancers in continuous

exchange: the invisible assimilation of one body to another. This site is not predetermined, planned or bounded. Dance in its communal surge has to be cultivated through itself only. No writers present. *Proposition (after Ana): Dance*

as a Parliamentary Site

^{*} Excerpt, currently in preparation for publication

BOOK OF GRACE

FRAGMENTS*

He desperately endeavored to create objects outside of the currents of living. Sentient to his self-delusion and with burning passion, he pretended to log meaning and mystery onto solid ground to preserve and worship instances of frozen gods. To the estranged, the dead objects smelled of death, imbued with the scent of decay and excrement—lifeless and discarded, detached from immediate processes of living. And yet, on the altar of arranged attention this shit shined: so bright, the gathered crowd were in awe just as the high priests were, mesmerized, in trance; their doors of perception blinkered to think through this lifeless waste shielded from nourishing mud. Nothing soared, no daring thought was thought. Pathetic communion, pathetic futures, pathetic presence. (...) Upon his return from Patagonia he relished the thought that a strange inversion must have taken place in men during some phase of his becoming. What was christened supernatural seemed, in the realm of the senses, to really be the lining of it all (...), as it is, and always will be (...), whereas that named natural was in fact supernatural, a crude echo of unbound richness. He took it upon himself to twist the meanings into their rightful place. Doing so he sensed the intrinsic guidance of a dark god, whose thousand roots drink in silence. He sensed a thousand other gods that competed for his attention, bidding to extend their reign and pull him into the vortex of their concerns: some humble, others over-bearing, some necessary, others distractive; all moving to their own means. Everyone he'd ever known: guided by these spirits, daemons, angels, systems, desires, networks, and relational realms that move through unutterable dimensions of time and space—living through all as their sustenance. These gods, their roots entangled fused in self-fulfilling prophecy to a mindless mess, moving each one from cradle to the grave and threatening blindly, free from shame, all within its reach. He continued moving.

Dance pulls bodies into the wake of much larger dynamics at play: a getting even, a becoming flat; motion with no primary purpose, no direct function. An impulse not focused on the narrow aims of survival, but one of touching and attuning itself with grace. A being at once inanimate and spirited,

prey and predator, purposeful and void. Dance resonates in this paradoxical field. It binds the worlds of opposites together. Dance is the weaver; a giver of meaning to our senses in psyches torn. Still, watching people dance he foresaw civilizations rise and fall, their cities grow and vanish, love and alliances being made and being dissolved. In these moving bodies a world unfolded itself upon the earth. In these instances of revelation, the social unconscious, the cultured flesh showed itself and ideas of freedom and individuality silently vanished. During such fleeting moments, when bodies unravel their circumstance and inscribed destiny he was dumbfounded by the absurdity of his personal endeavors. The currents of the cultured flesh were frighteningly vast and magnificent; seemingly untouched by will they moved towards a conclusion in their own myriad ways. He felt the need to inverse attention and look at and act within the open, starry, sky of his consciousness, sensing that the width of breath that governs this life is flowing in glens indistinguishable from the big wide open firmament, the sea, the mountains. All these things from the depth of being and the height of perception fold readily into unity. We are the maps of our context, he thought. Each organism a map of others. Maps and mazes of the world in its becoming—a reciprocal affair of minds. Silence. Grace. In Dance this life will develop oddly unburdened by codes, structures and language-tentacles into other realities. This site, the place for not knowing, will be at once unintelligible, radical and engaging. Deities shall exhale in relief abandoning their burden of creation, courts can crumble and nations falter as life as he knew it would leave its tracks and turn to clay and butter. What emerges would no longer correspond to what was previously known, no sanity would be found. It will make no sense. It will give no meaning: a thorough loss of coherence. This was his crucial response to the contemporary practice of humanity: quietly, collectively crashing out of unsustainable visions of humanity, into other worlds.

^{*} Excerpt, currently in preparation for publication, based on the unpublished journal *Return from Patagonia* by Tyrone O'Ros

BIOGRAPHY

MICHAEL KLIËN (1973, AUSTRIA)

Michael Kliën is a choreographer and artist whose work has been situated around the world. Considered as one of Europe's most notable thinkers in the field of dance today, he has been commissioned by leading institutions such as Ballett Frankfurt, Martha Graham Dance Company, New Museum, PS122, Volksoper Wien, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Hayward Gallery, and ZKM. As Artistic Director/CEO of Daghdha (2003—2011, Ireland), he developed a distinct movement aesthetic as well as influential concepts of politically engaged choreography, performance, and dance. He received a PhD from the Edinburgh College of Art in 2009 and, as a committed teacher, has been lecturing about his findings at leading academic and non-academic institutions. After living in Greece for five years, he became Associate Professor at Duke University (North Carolina) in 2017 and inaugural director of the MFA in Dance: Embodied Interdisciplinary Praxis in 2018.

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. Michael Kliën's choreographies are predominantly dance-based works of art, situated in on stage, galleries or alternative spaces. Increasingly, visual artworks form part of his choreographic output, yet other creations may act directly upon the social sphere (Social Choreography). His choreographies for dance are marked by a highly sophisticated improvisation methodology and the subsequent movement aesthetic.

Amongst a considerable body of work, Michael Kliën's seminal choreographies include *Einem* for Ballett Frankfurt, *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind* for Daghdha Dance Company (Limerick), *Choreography for Blackboards* for Hayward Gallery (London), *Slattery's Lamp* for IMMA's (Irish Museum of Modern Art) permanent collection and *State of the Union* for New Museum/Martha Graham Dance Company (New York). Solo-exhibitions include IMMA (Dublin) and Benaki Museum (Athens).



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