

# Subject / Object / Practice / Place

## *Connecting Creatively through the Performing Arts*

10<sup>th</sup> Annual School of Performing Arts Conference, University of Malta

### Film Abstracts

#### Dr Heike Salzer & Prof Ana Baer: HinterTerra (2022)

*HinterTerra* captures the ephemeral of screendance in a split screen installation of moving images inviting a slowing down and attentive viewing of the manifold textures, colours and sounds of the Maltese landscape. Focusing on the details of the environment and finding trajectories of movement in objects and nature, the works transmit the many tensions between Malta as a developed, ‘progressive’ European state, and Malta as an idyllic Mediterranean island.

Direction: *Ana Baer Carrillo · Heike Salzer*

Choreography, Dance: *Florinda Camilleri · Michelle Nance · Heike Salzer*

Costume design, Textile Art: *Robert Burton*

Music Composition: *Richard Hall · Jack Laidlaw*

Camera: *Ana Baer · Heike Salzer*

Editing: *Heike Salzer*

Photography: *Heike Salzer*

Artistic Consultant: *Florinda Camilleri*

Production: *WECreate Productions*

### **James Weisz: Parallax Point**

Parallax point is an expressive dance piece that attempts to capture the kinetic energy of a dance, by placing the audience member inside the dance and by the same methods allowing the artist to have full agency over the cinematic lens. They move with the camera, not for the camera. Developed over six months with two dancers, in creative collaboration experimenting and playing with the technology; and the placement of the camera on the body.

Creative team: *James Weisz, Antonia Lange, Josef Griffiths*

Artists: *Laura Hague, Lloyd Lovell*

### **Dr Margaret Jean Westby: Corporeal Vistas: Scotland**

The dance film is an improvisational experiment around synergies between moving bodies, landscapes, and perspectives of place. The concept explores the notion of framing, influenced by visual art practices and the actual material feature of the film body – the camera frame. Both the dancer and the camera operator are moving by improvising in the space together – navigating the terrain and the frame simultaneously through positive and negative space. In doing so, I explore how site-based dance and movement practices of filming provide an entry point into engaging with lived environments through the concept of the frame. The inspiration came from a workshop from dance filmmaker Katerina McPherson that offered creative possibilities in the natural landscape in Easdale, Scotland in June 2022. This also reflects on my own personal experience of nomadically moving to places surrounded by water, but also reaching out to locals of these lands with generational legacies.

### **Paula Dobbin Carouso: The Fabric of Life**

Entitled “The Fabric of Life”, the 8’33” art video takes place in a political and social context of desperation and helplessness, in which a Tuareg (Berber warrior, member of a people made up of semi-nomadic shepherds, farmers and traders who in the past, they controlled the caravan route in the Sahara desert), he walks through an emotional desert while news of the global COVID-19 crisis informs his trajectory. The eyes of the Tuareg warrior (character played by the researcher performer) are open windows in the sound storm of news and death counts, and in moments of extreme pain and mourning the wind of new days gradually transforms into a possible horizon for the observer that through touch, provided by light, sound and the consequent vibration of sound waves in the air, walking side by side, in a non-linear way, in a relationship of animated movement and sharing of the atmosphere, as if covered by a smoke screen, performer and observer discover, in hope, a dance and a genuine desire for survival.

### **Paula Guzzanti: Silent Talks**

The gaze speaks out the movement of our minds. Through the gaze we speak to the landscape, we ask questions to the sea, to the sky, to each other. *Silent Talks* explore the language of the gaze in four women who have something to say, yet they don't find the words for it.

Choreographer & Director - *Dr. Paula Guzzanti*

Cinematographer & Editor - *Matthew Muscat Drago*.

Performers - *Chiara Bellich, Antea Buro, Kailey Deguara, Nicole Zammit*

Original Music - *Veronique Vella*

### **Sara Wookey: UmWelt: A Site-Specific Dance Film**

UmWelt is a new collaborative project by photographer and filmmaker Christian Kipp and dance artist and researcher Sara Wookey. The project considers ways to make visible and felt the ways in which we meet and create relations with spaces and places we reside in – both the natural and built environment – through our bodily movements, gestures and senses as we interact with other humans and non-humans. It begins by asking, what do we bring to and how are we changed by our environs? It takes place in the Laplands in the far north of Sweden in December.

This work was created for a mobile gallery that will tour in the north of Sweden and connect with local audiences. It forms part of Northern Sustainable Futures (NSF), an initiative promoting sustainable processes of development across the region. Working together we built upon a previous project, *A New Role for Dance*, in which qualities of dance – care, courage, empathy, play and resiliency – as a practice might be made visible and considered in terms of our current contemporary moment. During this residency, we will work with human movement, image, sound and film in and around the residency site take one quality per day as our guide. The project is inspired by James Bridle's *Ways of Being: Animals, Plants, Machines: The Search for a Planetary Intelligence* (2020) who makes a case for intelligence as relational – an entanglement of relations between self, each other and non-human world, including machines.

## **Simon Ellis: Children of the Soil (2022)**

Children of the Soil is a short film that explores the slow work of growth, gravity and decay. It was created through several practices: 1) falling slowly to the ground; 2) timelapse photography; 3) post-production explorations of spatialising time (using graphic novel 'panels'); 4) texts exploring the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996). I was relatively new to all of these practices before pre-production, although the body-based work is a natural extension of my ongoing corporeal practice. The four practices coalesce around two artistic contexts that I have worked in for 20-30 years: choreography and screendance. I don't yet know how to write about it as research and for which community of practice. I have tried to clarify these issues in a journal article called Ecosystemic practice-research (for the benefit of others) (2023) but tend to think of it as research in and for the screendance community (albeit in an experimental way) that aims to question the role and presence of the human body without simply rendering it invisible.

Texts influenced by – or drawn from – the work and ideas of Nils Bubandt, Rainer Maria Rilke, Wendell Berry, Johnny Cash, Brother Phap Dung, Siobhan Davies, Donna Haraway, Heather Swanson, Anna Tsing and Elaine Gan.

With thanks to Barbara Stimoli, Titta Raccagni, Isabel Kuh, Giuseppe Mongiello, Danielle Stevenson, Marco Ranieri, Nora Sweeney, Sonia Arienta, Ilaria Mazzoleni, Lil Boyce, Rosa Cisneros, Paul Paschal and Siobhan Davies.

Developed as part of a Nature, Art & Habitat Residency in Taleggio Valley, June 2022. Supported by C-DaRE – the Centre for Dance Research – at Coventry University.

## **Thea Cunningham & Nicoletta Pizzicotti: Project 01.01**

Project 01.01 was created in Marche (IT) in November of 2023 in collaboration with dancers Thea Cunningham and Nicoletta Pizzicotti, videographer Kenneth Cassar, and assistant Christian Bouvett. The project was inspired by *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* by Eckhart Tolle, stating: "A victim identity is a belief that the past is more powerful than the present, which is the opposite of the truth" (Tolle, 1997, p. 82). Our mission is to challenge the public vision of childhood trauma as an obstacle for the individual, in contrast with the development of a healing journey that enriches the empathic power of self. Based on site-specific work, we aimed to work in extensive natural areas: Monte Conero, Osimo, and Castelfidardo blended with tight indoor settings. 01.01 targets video art and dance movement in connection with the place and its energy, evolving the relationship between contemporary dance and cinematography. The investigation aims to connect the search for identity with discovering movement dynamics and movement material within the body. Furthermore, concepts of trauma and the sense of identity resulting from it are explored through life experiences, portraying a message of rebirth and self-healing. The video consists of one minute and-a-half series of visual images which develop the connection with the music *Saviors* interlude by Kendrick Lamar.

The different backgrounds of each collaborator of project 01.01 influenced the creative process, shedding light on the effects of various upbringings and life experiences on identity development. Combining four artistic perspectives creates a collaboration that navigates empirical places and physical ones.

Participants: *Nicoletta Pizzicotti, Thea Cunningham, Kenneth Cassar, Christian Bouvett*

## **Dr Heike Salzer & Prof Ana Baer: HinterTerra (2023)**

Developed on journeys through the streets and paths of Malta, a group of women, the local, the nomad, and the visitor, experience sites through the perspective of the other. The resident local provides depth and authenticity and vice versa, placing a stranger into a familiar environment highlights the features that have forgotten to be seen. The editing intensifies the opposing features of historic architecture and the sounds of construction sites, illuminating themes of heritage and development, and frictions between community and commerce.

Directors: *Ana Baer Carrillo & Heike Salzer*

Choreography and Dance: *Heike Salzer, Michelle Nance, Florinda Camilleri*

Costume design: *Robert Burton*

Music composition: *Jack Laidlaw*

Sound Design and Mixing: *Richard D. Hall*

Camera: *Ana Baer Carrillo & Heike Salzer*

Editing: *Ana Baer Carrillo*

Production: *WECreate Production*

## **Maria Salgado – IuSui**

IuSui is an ode to the visceral power of beauty, nature, freedom, and the vulnerability of the human psyche. You will be taken on an aesthetic and kinaesthetic voyage to what might be a very tangible place on earth or the most hidden site within the mind. From dark underwater depths to soaring above the clouds of Sweden, our female protagonist explores what it means to be human.