

FALL FOR

BRILLIANT LOOKS TO STEP UP YOUR SHOW

NEW YORK STAGE TO WHERE

CAUSE CÉLÈBRE

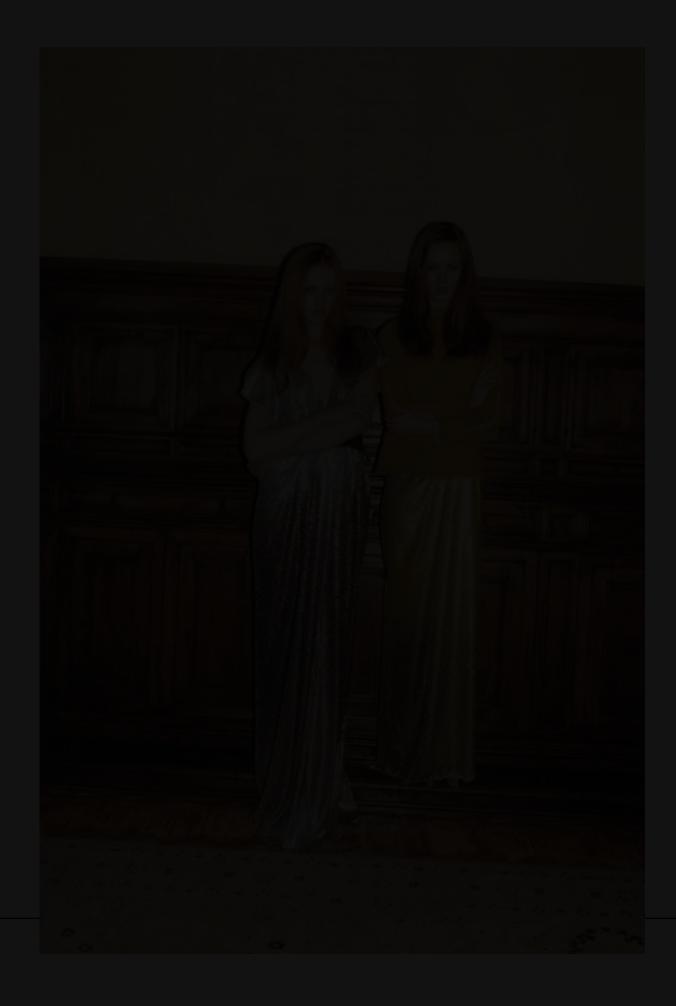
FASHION'S MOST LIKABLE CHARITY ON LIVING AND ACCEPTING LARGE

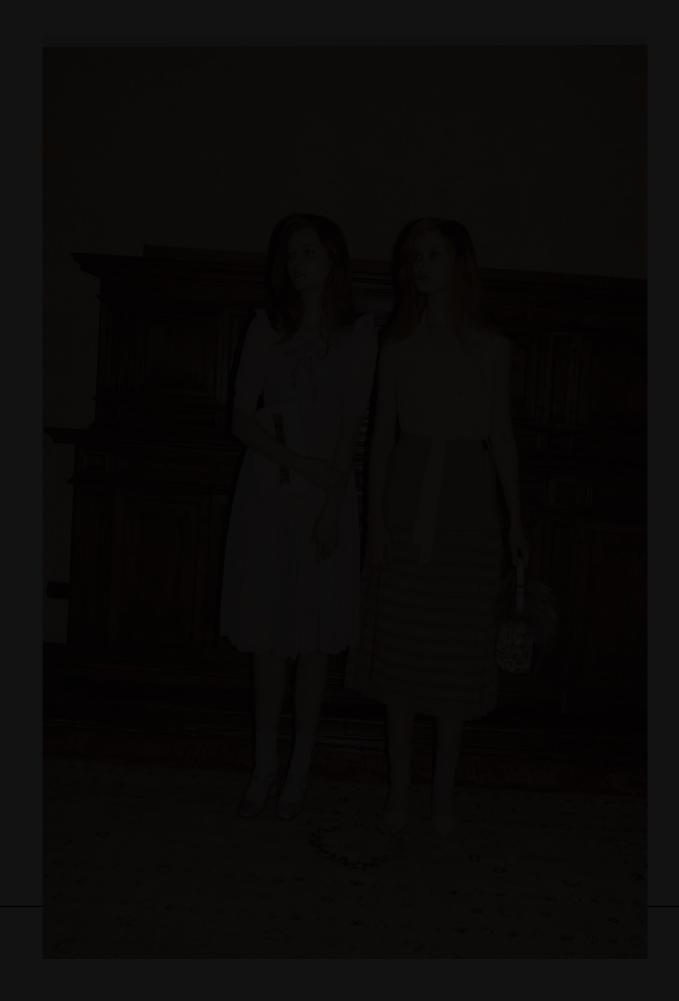
WALK
THIS WAY
HEAD TURNING
CATWALKS

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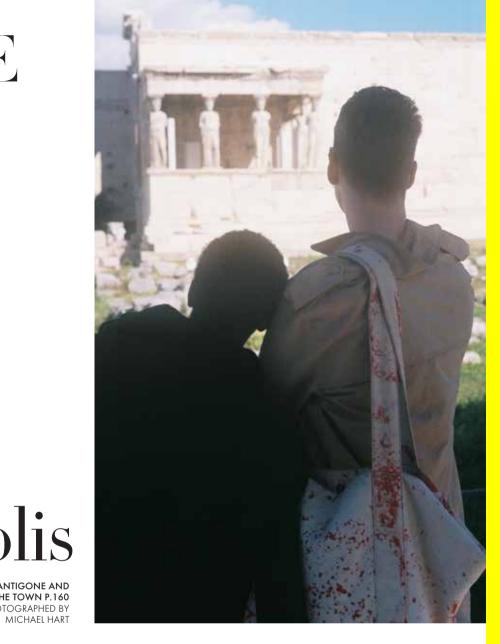








VOGUE



Acropolis

ANTIGONE AND
ISMENE ON THE TOWN P.160
PHOTOGRAPHED BY



COVER Look
TRAJAL WEARS A SWEATER BY UNCONDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDOIN DESFORGES

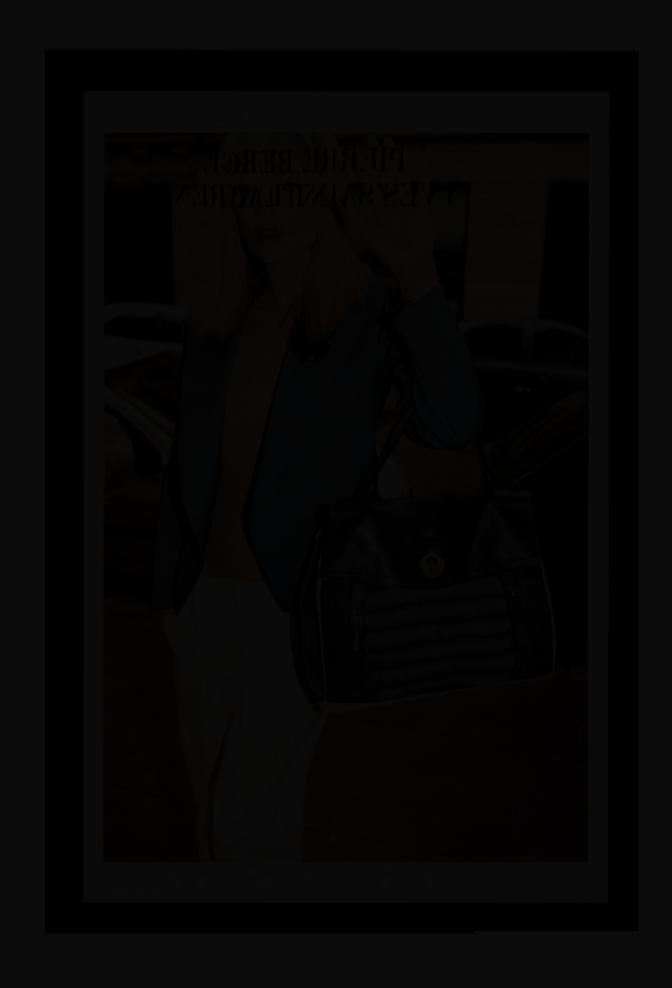
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VOGUE

Mom's THE WORD

MOTHER OF THE HOUSE P.204 PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL HART





VOGUEINFO

Back issues available NOW! Exclusive numbers from 1963







TWENTY LOOKS OR PARIS IS BURNING AT THE JUDSON CHURCH (XL)
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This is That (Athens, Greece)

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THE MISSING PEOPLE of COLOR
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AR

Lynda Benglis as in Artforum ad Nov 1974

VOGUE.INFO

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Ben Pryor and American Realness Festival (NYC) Gaston Core and Sala Hiroshima (Barcelona)

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letter from the editor

had convinced myself that (XL) did not really have to happen. Something about the open-ended possibilities blah blah, but as we put on the unfinished touches, the sense of closure moving into my state of mind was worth the wait but I don't want to wait much longer. The other day when I heard a U.S. Senator on CNN talk about "throwing shade," I gagged. The creativity and linguistic inventions of the voguing ballroom scene had made it into the political arguments of the 2016 election brouhaha. I'm sure he had no idea where that came from.

I have my sisters and brothers in the voguing scene, those in contemporary art, and those in contemporary dance. Thank you for all that you have shared of yourselves and uplifted inside of me.

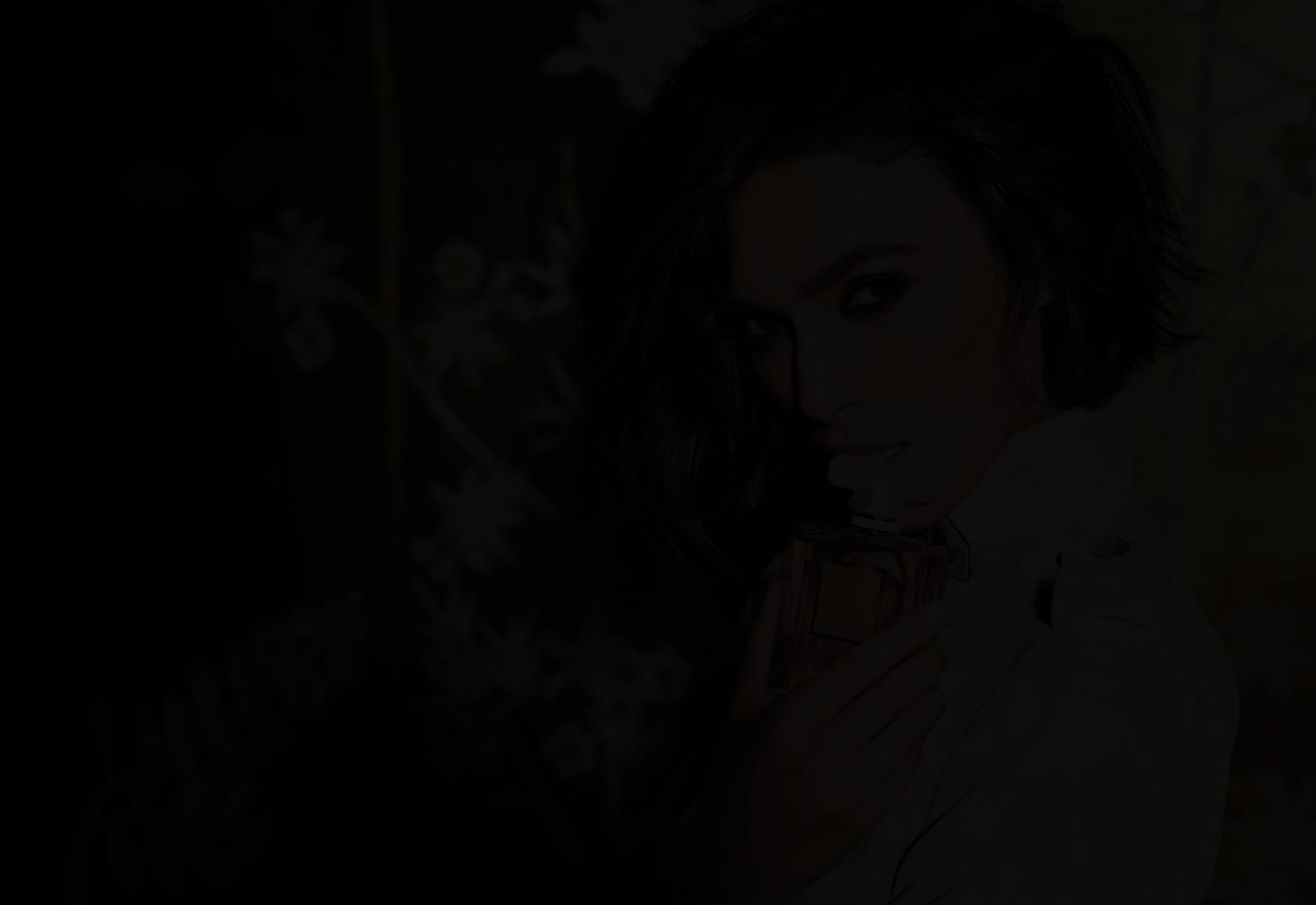
This Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (XL), let it be said, is voguing with a twist. The original idea to vogue the magazine Vogue came from Pierre Rubio, a French artist working in the choreographic field whom I met in Brussels. Many thanks, Pierre, for your early thoughts and ideas for this project. From those talks and subsequently with the co-editors and graphic design team, performativity remained an important aspect of this project. How would a publication embody the same performative strategies of live presence endemic to the Series? We have tried. To that end, we are on a clock. There is a moment in which we have to stop working, stop rehearsing, stop editing, stop laying out, stop finding, stop correcting and premiere. At that point, what you see is what you get.

Superthanks to the Doris Duke Foundation for the initial seed money, and to Karl Regensberger and Rio Rutzinger for the workshop/class to build on this idea. Immense thank you to all the contributors; to Thodoris Dimitropoulos and This is That graphic design studio; to Michael Hart, giving Mario Testino realness; and to co-editors Thibault Lac and Tom Engels, for being just crazy enough to sign up for this adventure.

And with no further adieu, we've already begun... This is indeed not page I. We are doing it like Vogue. But we are not Vogue! I repeat: this is not a real Vogue magazine. If anyone gets confused, it should be very clear. If not, please just get over that confusion, because I do not have time nor desire to walk up the runway to Judy Judy.

This is voguing magazine realness. This is transformation. This is a performance. This is an art object. This is a work of art. This is signed by me,

TRAJAL HARRELL



talkingback



Hello,

I was in Paris last Tuesday attending Antigone Sr and at the end of the show I went to Trajal to congratulates him and the only thing that went out of my mouth was "it was very very very nice".

And the oeuvre we were presented was not nice it was powerful and striking and it made me feel true joy in a though period of my life.

This email to apologize for such a diminushing adjective I used to talk about Antigone Sr.

All my best

FRIDAY APRIL 8^{TH} , 2016 AT 7:47 A.M. ANNE

Hope all is well. Just wanted to write and say great show in Paris. It was nice to meet you after the performance. I came up to say hello and congrats and that I lived in NY.. Bravo to you!!

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21ST, 2015 AT 9:02 A.M. LAURA SIMMONS

I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed your performance on the 12th of March in the Dampfzentrale Berne. It was extremely touching and enlighting to see the parallels between the story of Antigone and the gays during the 60's in N.Y!

During the performance there was a slow song playing with lyrics kind of like "When I came to earth I was a boy, I was a boy".

I'd be very glad if you could write me the name of this song or even the whole playlist of this evening. Keep on doing what you're doing! You're work opens up our eyes and also shows us new vantage points on how to look at LGBT community as such! All the best

> SUNDAY MARCH 15T^H, 2015 AT 5:55PM CLAUDIO RICHARD

Hello,

My name is Momar Ndiaye, I am a first year MFA (dance) student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champain. I was assigned for our comporary direction class to do a research and presentation about Trajal's work and I have a couple question to ask for my paper.

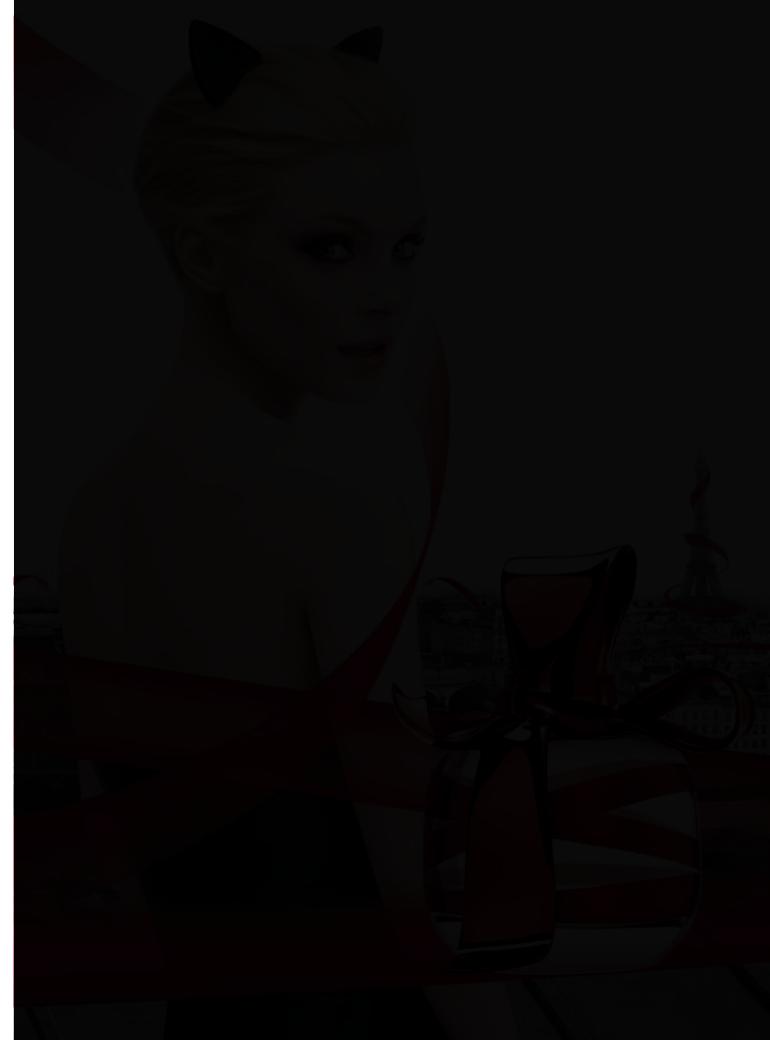
Thus would help us understand his working philosophy and methode. The questions are:

- I What the things he is giving values the most while making a piece?
 2 What's his politic about the body and choreography.
- 3 What are the influences for his work?
- 4 For whom he is making dance and why?

I am really looking forward to hearing from him and believe that getting responses to these question from him would serve us a lot.

Best regards,

FRIDAY MARCH 13T^H, 2015 AT 5:00 P.M. MOMAR NDIAYE



talkingback

Dear mr Harrel,

last night my daughter and I saw your performance in the stedelijk museum in Amsterdam. Thank you so much for an incredible evening. We especially liked the well balanced mix of so many recognisable elements.

We vist NYC as often as we can, and the strong whiff of a larger culture that your work gave to us was very uplifting. Holland is nice, but can be stifling, and your performance was not only a breath of fresh air, but also a a deep encouragement for those of us who are in the middle of the diaspora related discussion in society. It was great to see three people who represented the bigger picture, while here in the Netherlands we often get bogged down in racial nitpicking.

Please give our admiration to the two other performers as well. Especially the young man with the brown socks. So much expression and power. Fire and heartrending love, we thought. In the other man we liked the beautiful flow in his movements, the intriguing expressions he gave and his capacity to draw us into the act. With these individual comments I do not mean to distract from the overall effect as an ensemble: we loved you!! best regards,

FRIDAY
JUNE 13TH, 2014 AT 7:21 A.M.
ROLF HOLLAND

I was wondering if Mr. Harrell had ever owned a book called "This Bridge Called My Back" by Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga. I own a copy of the book, that was dedicated to someone by the name of Trahal Harrell. It has a very personal dedication from Ms. Anzaldua "Para Trajal" Que te vaya bien con tas estudios y tu vida." Contego Gloria E. Anzaldua New Haven. I was wondering if it was this Mr. Harrell's book.

FRIDAY JANUARY 24TH, 2014 AT 8:38 P.M. SAMANTHA JONE Dear Mr Harrell.

I recently saw your performance of Antigone Sr. & Twenty Looks..., that you presented in Santiago, and I was very touched by it. I'm not very versed in the scenic arts, however I was impressed on the freedom and liberties that were aparent during the play. I also very much enjoyed the moment when we danced, and when I later thought about it, I wish it could have ended differently, perhaps the people in Brazil continued to dance?

I also enjoyed the soundtraxk, is there a list of the songs you played? I would love to get a copy of some of the songs heard that night. All the best and thank you! Pablo

TUESDAY JANUARY 21ST, 2014 AT 11:18 A.M. PABLO RECABAL



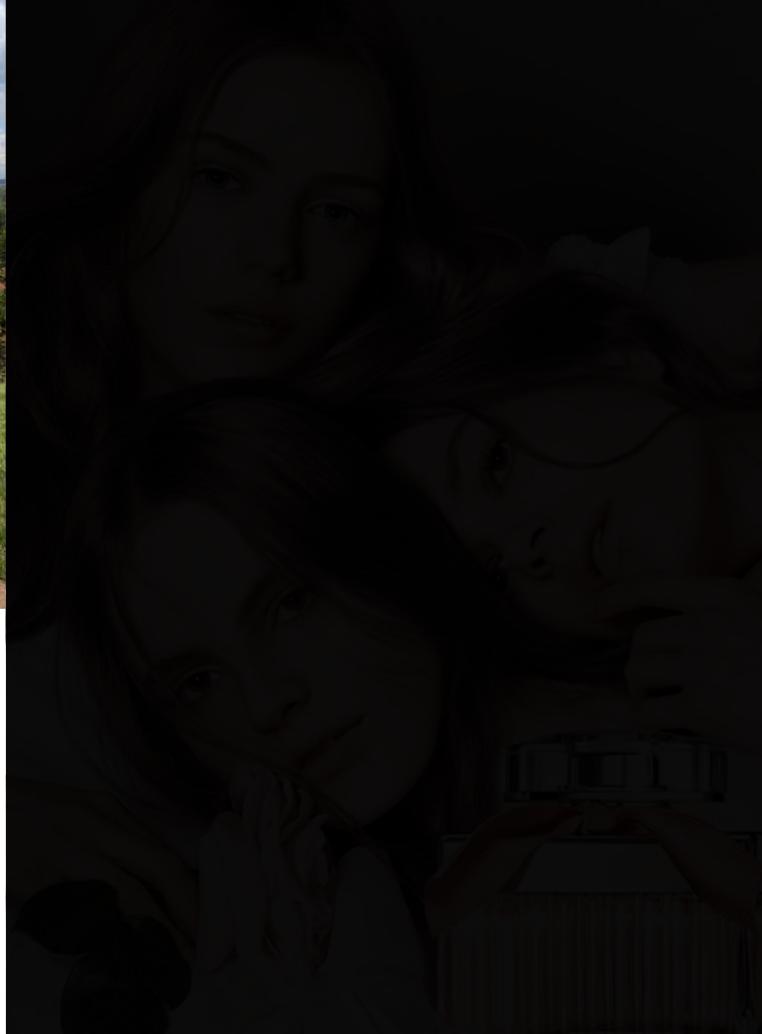




Catherine LEVINE

"I've watched 38 Antigone Sr.'s"









Ariel OSTERWEIS

n some future-past life, I was meant to be a voguer. I feel it in my double-jointed elbows, my love of a good beat, and my lifelong exploitation of high-flung legs. Many years past my Ailey training and Complexions dancing (as a mixed-race, mixed-technique Asian American woman), unsure if the voguing boat has sailed or is yet to come, I find myself intrigued by contemporary recontextualizations of voguing in settings beyond the ball. Within the same year in 2010, I found myself at Trajal Harrell's Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church (S) at the New Museum and then dragged my three-year-old son, Dashiell, to the Whitney Museum to see Rashaad Newsome's performance, Five. Energized by both performances, one fully embodying voguing and its essential excesses, the other distilling its imperatives into a theoretical premise, I wondered what it was about the form—its blacknesses, its genders, its fierceness?—that suddenly appealed to the "white cube."



JAIME Shearn Coan

"I am a doctoral candidate, expected to produce *scholarly* writing. I am a writer who writes poems and *creative* prose. I spend time with dancers and write about dances, which often gets called *criticism*. I read books and study Alexander technique. I do and I undo. I edit and I am edited. I use a computer. I use a notebook. I use my body. I forget about my body."

TAVIA NYONG'O

"You live only twice, as Nancy Sinatra sings: once for yourself, and once for your dreams. The balls are a social dream, a second life lived in flesh and blood, in sweat and tears, in flash and whirl. In the ball round you become other than yourself, higher, lower, faster, more ecstatic. And every solo turn is an invisible duet with the audience member who leaps forward in his or her mind's eye to share that limelight gleam."



28 vogue not 29



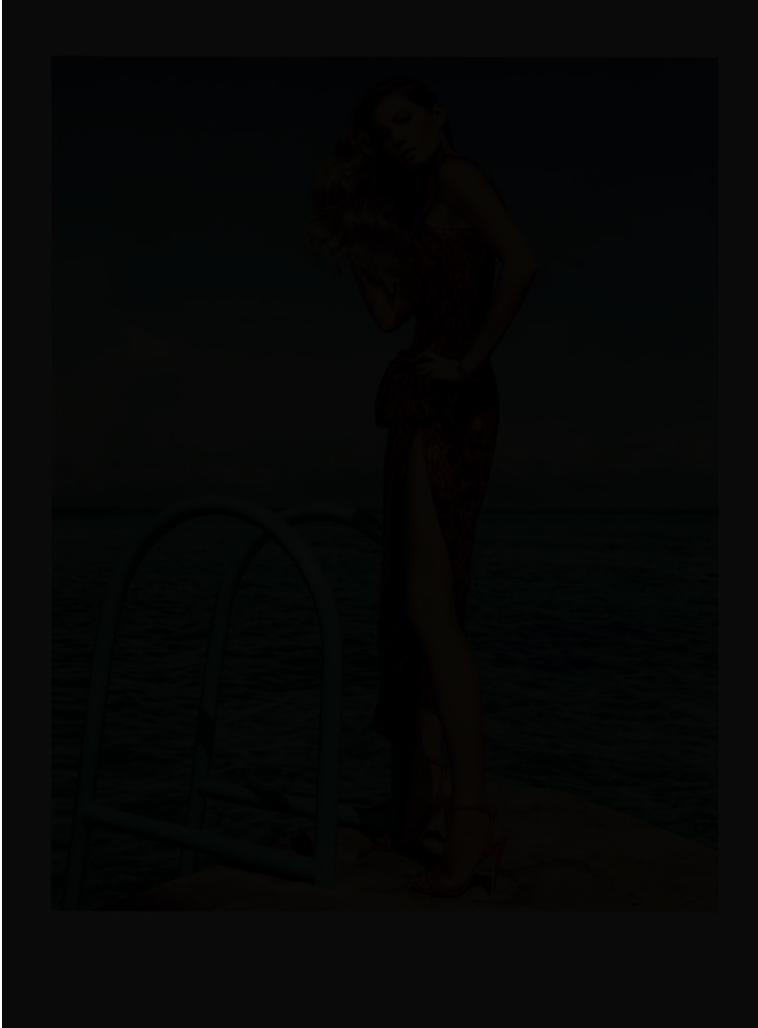
ORPHEAS Emirzas

"Denying conclusion, visually seducing, suggesting an association outside what is given is the reason I photograph. There is no specified theme, only variations."

STEFANIE SIEBOLD

"I am an artist working with performance, objects, installations, archives, video, sound and text There is a history in scenic design which I studied and earned my living from before my change into Fine Arts, the Volksbühne being my Mothership in the early 1990s in Berlin. Around the same time a DAAD Grant was spent with the Wooster Group, teaching me NYC-avantgarde and other Queer Practices. Later years added theory, curating and writing, usually triggered by attraction, desire and/or fandom for something that I see or experience and that I want to think about and understand further by writing."



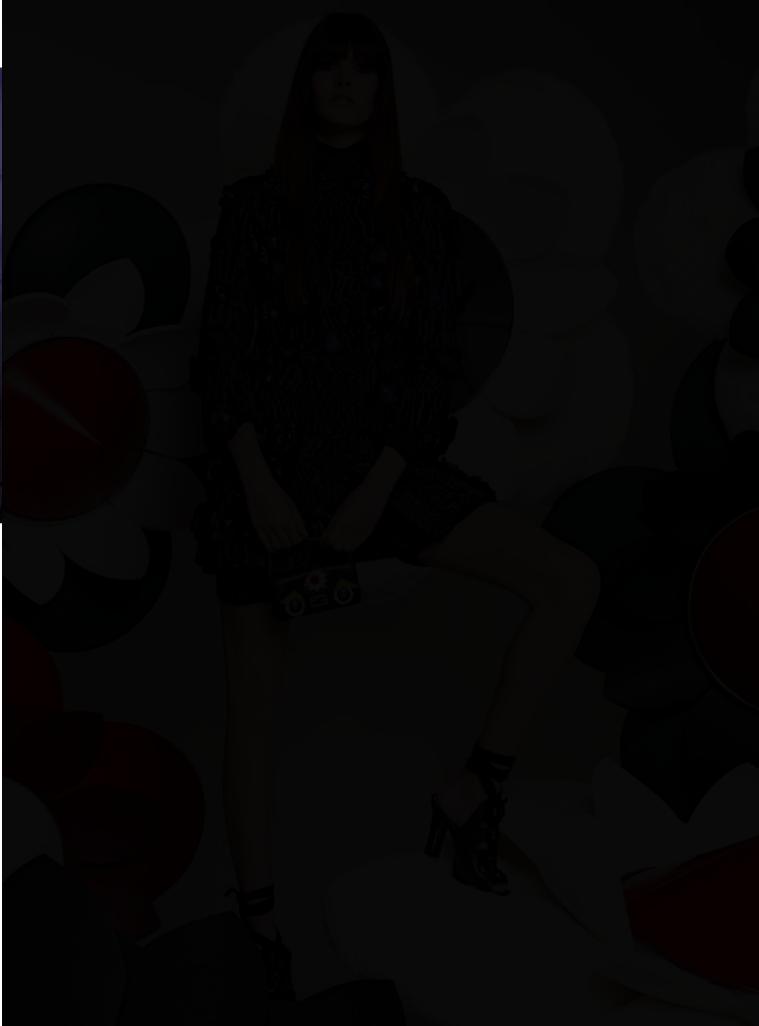




Camille DURIF BONIS

"Of the people doing *Antigone Sr*, I definitely have the shortest relation with the work. What is interesting about the work is that in time and only through multiple performances the piece gains a command over the feeling of insecurity and instability. It never stops being breakable, on the verge of shattering, but the people that surround me on stage get revved up by sitting on this edge. As for myself, I am vulnerable vulnerable. And I, on the mic, might shatter or slip into nonsense or fall into a hole."





STEFANE Perraud

visual artist who is mainly working on light poetically is the designer behind the darkness enfolding Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (XS). Collaborating almost exclusively with Trajal Harrell as a lighting designer, Perraud came to this task by way of curiosity and taking on a challenge. Through a chance meeting at a U.S.- France artists' summit, he came to Harrell's rescue by way of hanging around with his filmmaking soon-to-be-wife, Sina Khatami. The choreographer was looking for someone who was interested in lighting dance without theatrical instruments. That first project was (XS). The artistic pair have gone on to other projects including one where they were the first to to turn off every light in MoMA (with people in the building) for the sake of art. Perraud is a Parisian born and raised, and schooled at Ecole nationale des arts décoratifs de Paris. Although he has gone on to work with choreographer Ali Moini and there are future projects with Harrell in the pipeline, Perraud is primarily busy with his own visual art practice. Most recently he was busy with an exhibition in the Triennale de Milan, and next up is a show at the University of Hawaii and a mural for the Contemporary Drawing Art Center in Paris.





KAT REYNOLDS

Kat Reynolds is in her feelings, and will probably remain sitting there. At the moment she is based out of Saint Louis, MO creating conceptual portrait and architectural photography. From receiving her B.A in Dance from Webster University, movement comes second nature and is thoroughly integrated into her practice. Her recent work is made tobe literal, authentic, and emotional.





A quoi l'Amérique

By Gérard Mayen Photographed by Michael Hart

érard Mayen, critique de danse, a accompagné Trajal Harrel, en position de dramaturge, la réalisation de plusieurs des pièces de la série Twenty Looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church. Il livre ici une évocation commentée, de ce qu'il aura vécu comme un salutaire "brouillage sur la ligne Paris – New York". De quoi interférer, en travers de certaines convenances paresseuses de l'exégèse hexagonale du Judson. Et suggérer quelques usages inconvenants de la référence américaine.

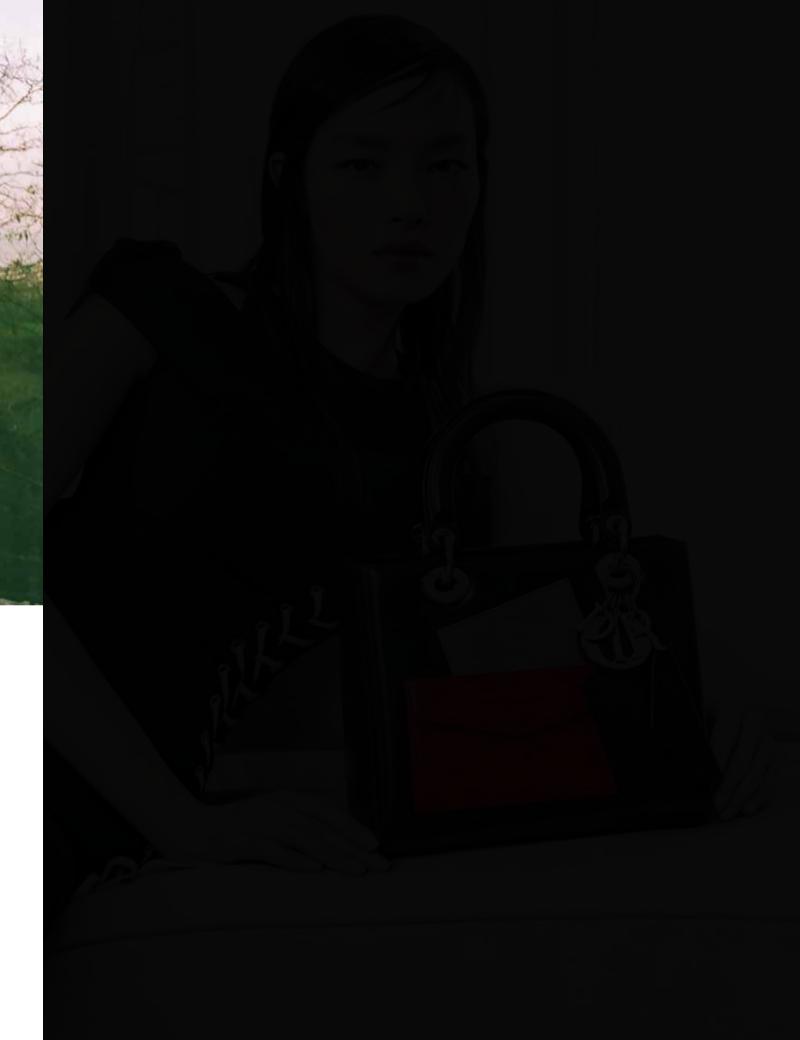
J'entreprends l'évocation commentée de mon parcours auprès de Trajal Harrell, au lendemain de la Journée avec Lucinda Childs du 19 novembre 2016 au Centre national de la danse (Pantin, banlieue parisienne). J'ai pu y apprécier la communication de Julie Perrin, enseignante-chercheuse du département danse de l'Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis. Cela sous l'intitulé : Loft avec vue : Street Dance, 1964. Les recherches de Julie Perrin rattachent cette universitaire au vif courant de curiosité pour la Post-modern dance américaine, qui anime tout un secteur de la pensée et de la création chorégraphiques en France depuis le milieu des années 1990.

On va résumer ici en très peu de mots la question que soulève cette communication universitaire, à propos de Street Dance, performance de Lucinda Childs. Aucune image n'existe, qui rende compte de ce que fut cette performance en 1964. La chercheuse aura donc travaillé sur les témoignages écrits et notes partitionnelles, disponibles. Mais en 2013, Street Dance est l'objet d'une reconstruction à l'université des Arts de

Philadelphie. De celle-ci en revanche, on dispose d'un enregistrement filmique.

Problème : ce qu'on y décèle de théâtralité exubérante heurte les certitudes installées concernant le minimalisme des pedestrian movements, qui sont au coeur de l'héritage consacré du Judson Dance Theatre. Lesquels imprégnaient la lecture qu'avait eue, jusque là, Julie Perrin, des sources écrites dont elle disposait pour imaginer Street Dance. L'attitude (beaucoup trop rare) de cette universitaire consiste à ne pas esquiver l'effet déstabilisateur de pareille situation. Au contraire, la problématiser.

Ce n'est pas la première fois que nous apprécions l'indépendance d'esprit de Julie Perrin, quand elle démêle d'une part ce qu'elle observe et analyse de la séquence historique du Judson Dance Theatre, et d'autre part les discours qui en découlent, notamment celui qui s'est répandu dans ce pan de la communauté chorégraphique de l'Hexagone, qu'anime depuis le milieu des années 90 une vive curiosité et un souci de référencement sur cette séquence historique new-vorkaise.



Le soupçon d'une paresse

En aucun cas, notre préoccupation n'est de minorer la valeur de l'apport du Judson dans l'histoire de l'art chorégraphique savant occidental dans la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle. Ni minorer l'effet combien stimulant qu'aura eu l'activation de sa mémoire pour le renouvellement esthétique dans le champ chorégraphique français (et pas que), à la fin du vingtième siècle. Mais notre soupçon serait que la dimension historicisée de ce mouvement même de curiosité et de référencement est par trop ignorée. Notre soupcon serait celui d'une forme de paresse, débouchant, comme très souvent en matière de référencement esthétique, sur un risque de sacralisation canonique, inspirant de nouvelles fixités acamédiques.

A rebours de ces travers, c'est un brouillage sur la ligne Paris - New York que j'ai tôt eu l'heureuse sensation de vivre en actes, au moment d'accompagner le chorégraphe new-yorkais Trajal Harrell, dans la création des formats S, puis L et XL de sa série Twenty Looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church, et enfin The Ghost of Montpellier meets the Samouraï, entre 2008 et 2015. A sa source, notre rencontre s'anime d'emblée d'un désir de sortir des cadres de l'héritage.

Cette rencontre se produit fortuitement, pour nous être retrouvés spectateurs voisins de sièges, lors d'une performance scénique dans les locaux de la Fondation Cartier à Paris. L'échange courtois de quelques mots, dans l'attente du début du spectacle, me faisait apprendre que Trajal Harrell était donc un "jeune chorégraphe new-yorkais", de passage à Paris. Le recours ici à des guillemets se justifie par le fait que - à quelques rares exceptions près et au seul vu des programmations sur les scènes de l'Hexagone - je n'avais jusque là connaissance de chorégraphes new-yorkais que âgés de 60 ans minimum, sinon plus, voire bien plus. Telle aura été la responsabilité des programmateurs français quand ils invitaient des figures new-yorkaises de la danse. Trajal Harrell se présentait à moi pour preuve vivante qu'on pouvait avoir entre 20 et 40 ans et faire œuvre de chorégraphie à New-York.

S'inventer son héritage américain

A quoi sert l'Amérique ? A quoi sert-elle, depuis plusieurs décennies, dans le discours de la danse contemporaine française ? Laquelle, du moins pour une part considérable, ne saurait expliquer ses propres recherches et travaux sans en référer au modèle de la grande modernité américaine. Cela à travers les figures tutélaires de Merce Cunningham au-dessus de toute autre, mais aussi Alwin Nikolaïs avant lui, Trisha Brown depuis, et encore les figures de la Post-modern dance telle qu'elle se forgea

Il faut noter une étrangeté concernant ces dernières, en ce qu'il aura fallu attendre le milieu des années 90,

trente années après l'émergence de ce courant, pour qu'un grand discours référentiel se forge à leur propos de ce côté-ci de l'Atlantique (leur accueil précoce à la Sainte-Baume où au Festival d'Automne de le fin des années 70 n'ayant pas suffi alors à ce qu'opère un embravage discursif).

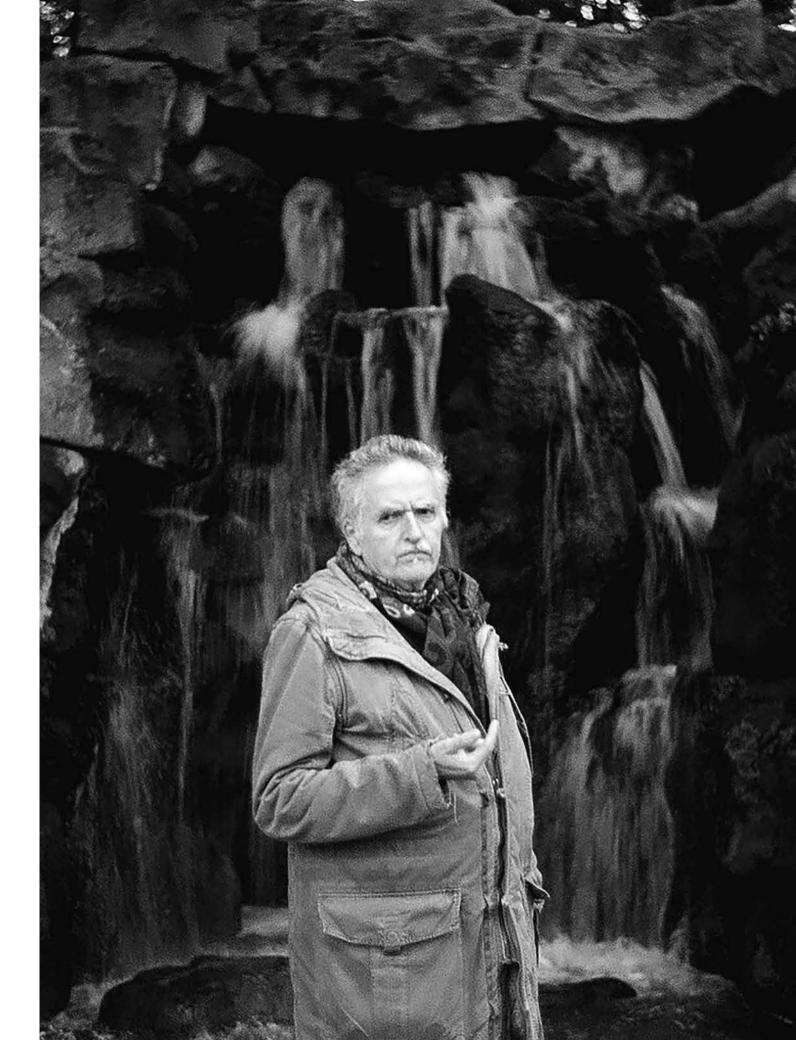
Cette étrangeté est l'un des arguments qui nous inspire de ne pas tellement nous intéresser à ce que la chorégraphie américaine nous dit, qui inspire les démarches hexagonales (cela est abondamment et fort heureusement documenté et étudié) ; ni même nous intéresser à ce que la scène chorégraphique hexagonale nous dit de ce que l'Amérique lui apporte (cela a plutôt valeur de document); mais bien à ce que cette scène chorégraphique en France révèle d'elle-même quand elle s'obstine à satisfaire ce besoin de s'inventer son héritage américain.

New York, en perte de leadership

i une, ni deux, me passant de tout encadrement - et financement - d'une invitation événementielle ou institutionnelle, je me rendais à New-York pour assister à la création d'une nouvelle pièce que Trajal Harrell m'avait annoncée (Before Intermission). Et j'y consacrais deux semaines à la découverte d'une nouvelle génération de la danse, et danse-performance new-yorkaises. Deux caractéristique sont ici, rapidement, à noter.

D'une part, je remarquais comment la référence au Judson paraissait toute académisée, simplement rangée sur les rayons obligés du savoir, aux yeux de la plupart de ces jeunes artistes, qui en avaient reçu les enseignements par voie purement universitaire cela quand ces mêmes acquis avaient effet de cure de jouvence pour nombre de leurs homologues français. D'autre part, ces mêmes artistes new-yorkais commençaient à découvrir sur leurs propres scènes, les travaux des artistes français de la déconstruction critique de la représentation chorégraphiques, Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Rachid Ouramdane, etc, d'alors. Il s'agissait d'un renversement de flux très neuf, quand jusque là une génération entière de la danse contemporaine hexagonale avait forgé son regard et ses pratiques en observant les spectacles new-yorkais et en fréquentant les studios du Village.

Le choc était considérable, que la critique du New York Times Gia Kourlas synthétisait alors dans un long article resté fameux, où elle établissait que New York était en train de perdre son leadership sur la scène chorégraphique internationale. Rien de ce qui précède ne saurait être lu comme une marque d'autosatisfaction hexagonale, plus ou moins chauvine. En revanche il faut noter comment, au moment où Trajal Harrell s'apprête à s'attirer un fort mouvement de curiosité



en France, les lignes d'influences Paris – New York (ou plutôt l'inverse), connaissent quelques brouillages, et interférences nouvelles.

On n'en finira jamai de nourrir la réflexion sur ce en quoi peut consister une mission de dramaturge auprès d'un chorégraphe. Quant à ma collaboration avec Trajal Harrell, il m'a souvent semblé qu'elle consistait à rendre intelligible à ce jeune artiste new-yorkais la question A quoi sert l'Amérique, d'un point de vue s'originant dans le champ chorégraphique de l'autre rive – la mienne – de l'Atlantique.

Hiérarchies et privilèges

Le projet artistique des Twenty Looks de Trajal Harrell, consistait en la fiction historique de l'arrivée de danseurs issus de la scène du Voguing un soir de concert des pionniers de la Post-modern dance à la Judson Church. En termes objectifs, l'hypothèse n'est pas absurde. Quant à leur datation, l'apparition et le développement de ces deux phénomènes sont concomittants. Et il n'y a guère que quelques stations de métro pour séparer le Washington Square que borde la Judson Church, et certaines salles de Harlem où se déroulaient des balls du Voguing.

Esthétiquement la distance est beaucoup plus grande. Ce sera l'oeuvre de Trajall Harrel, que de produire des court-circuits crépitants entre ces deux sphères d'expression à travers corps. Car enfin, un fil souterrain les relie tout de même, si ténu soit-il : les artistes du Voguing et les pionniers de la Post-modern dance partagent un même entrain dans la mise à jour critique des régime dominants de représentation, assignant les corps à la performance reproductrice de partitions culturellement construites (même si cela ne s'exprimait pas exactement en ces termes au milieu des années 60).

Or nul n'a jamais considéré comme seulement imaginable qu'un concert du Judson fasse place à une performance de Voguing. Cela tandis qu'il n'est pas un artiste du Voguing pour avoir imaginé d'aller pousser la porte de la Judson Church. Il en va des hiérarchies et privilèges au coeur des pratiques artistiques, et leur validation: si politisés et radicaux aient-ils été, les artistes du Judson campaient d'un côté de la ligne de démarcation des légitimités. Soit le côté où oeuvrent des artistes blancs, savants, majoritairement issus de la middle-class éduquée, regoupés en confréries d'avant-garde, rapidement avalisées comme telles.

Il faut relever ici un ricanement de l'histoire : la portée du Voguing n'aura été réévaluée dans certains cercles savants que fort tardivement et à la seule condition préalable que des intellectuelles qui campaient elles aussi du bon côté de la ligne de démarcation des légitimités, se soient emparés de l'exemple du Voguing pour aiguiser les théories des performances de genre, de classe et de race qu'elles étaient en train d'élaborer.

De manière joyeusement impertinente

e propos n'est pas ici de produire une analyse esthétique affinée des pièces de Trajal Harrell regroupées dans la série des Twenty Looks. On se contentera d'en relever l'exubérance, parfois l'extravagance, toujours le débordement des cadres taciturnes d'une certaine tradition critique contemporaine. Si la référence hexagonale à l'acquis du Judson a parfois dégénéré dans la sacralisation déférente, la mise en boucle de certitudes peu discutées, l'esprit d'entre-soi entre initiés du bon côté – que surprend si souvent l'esprit enjoué et malicieux de nombre des tenants américains de ce courant a – alors l'art de Trajal Harrell v aura interféré de manière joyeusement impertinente, en même temps que parfaitement savante.

Trajal Harrell n'est pas un artiste du Voguing. Mais de la danse contemporaine new-yorkaise. Ses pièces Twenty Looks, au sommet desquelles Antigone Sr, succès mondial, sont interprétées par des artistes européens, encore plus éloignés que lui des sources du Voguing. Ces caracéristiques ont pu lui être reprochées. Ces reproches sont sans pertinence au regard de son projet annoncé, qui n'a jamais été d'adapter le Voguing pour la scène contemporaine, mais d'en inventer une fiction critique. Reste à considérer un point qui n'est pas tout à fait mince dans cette configuration, résidant dans le fait que Trajal Harrell est africain-américain, porteur d'un héritage direct des Etats du sud, et en cela figure très peu courante sur la scène new-yorkaise.

Cette caractéristique résonne-t-elle en France ? Il est à considérer l'incapacité de l'essentiel de la danse contemporaine hexagonale – et vraiment pas que... – à prendre en charge la réalité, les représentations, les problématiques imaginaires et politiques, de la dimension post-coloniale de la société française. A commencer par la place qui y est dévolue à ses minorités. Aussi violemment travaillée par des formes de racisme que soit la société américaine, il s'y entretient une différence irréductible avec le mental hexagonal. Cette différence réside dans le fait que, même au comble de la stigmatisation dépréciative, un africain-américain ne se verra pas opposer le soupçon de n'être pas vraiment américain – ce qui demeure un réflexe banal quotidien dans le contexte français. Les mécanismes de la mémoire de l'esclavagisme ne recoupent pas strictement ceux de la mémoire colonialiste.

C'est ce qui permet à un africain-américain de s'installer à la Maison-Blanche. C'est aussi ce qui autorise une culture américaine plus diverse et bouillonnante, aux confins du populaire et du savant, aux franges du minoritaire et du mainstream, beaucoup



plus fluide que selon les usages hexagonaux. Je me suis souvent demandé si, dans le cas de Trajal Harrell, l'habituel grand détour par la case explicative nex-yorkaise, ne permettait pas de vivre, sur la scène chorégraphique française, une forme de dépassement minoritaire du legs post-colonial.

Une fluidité fantômatique

Je me suis réjoui au-delà de l'imaginable, mais ai frémi tout autant, lorsque Trajal Harrell a annoncé son intention de traiter du spectre de Dominique Bagouet, dans son projet faisant suite aux Twenty Looks. Soit la pièce The Ghost of Montpellier meets the Samouraï. Se réjouir, il le fallait, en considérant cette innovation historique, qui voyait un chorégraphe new-yorkais, pour une bonne part fondu dans les rouages de la production et de la diffusion hexagonaux, s'intéresser artistiquement à une figure de référence de la Nouvelle danse française. On n'était pas habitué.

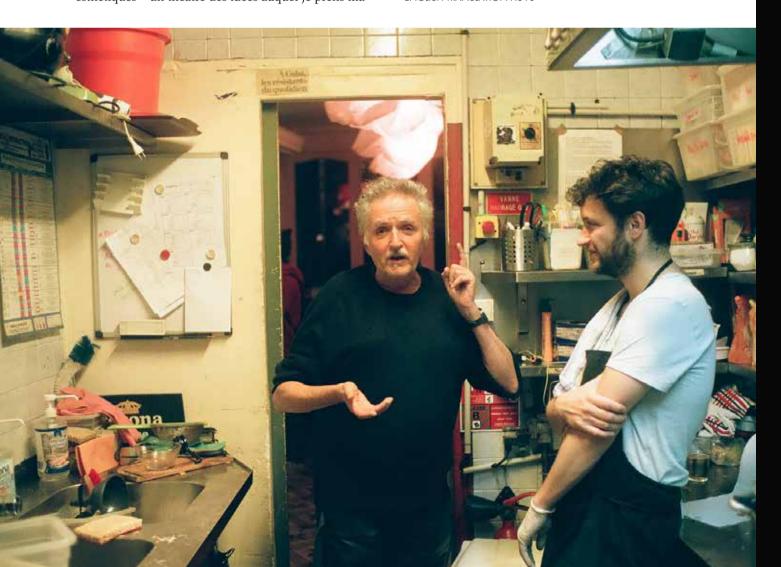
J'ai frémi aussi, en considérant les risques pris à s'engager dans une évocation totalement fictionnelle, toute indifférente à l'examen historique des héritages esthétiques – un théâtre des idées auquel je prens ma

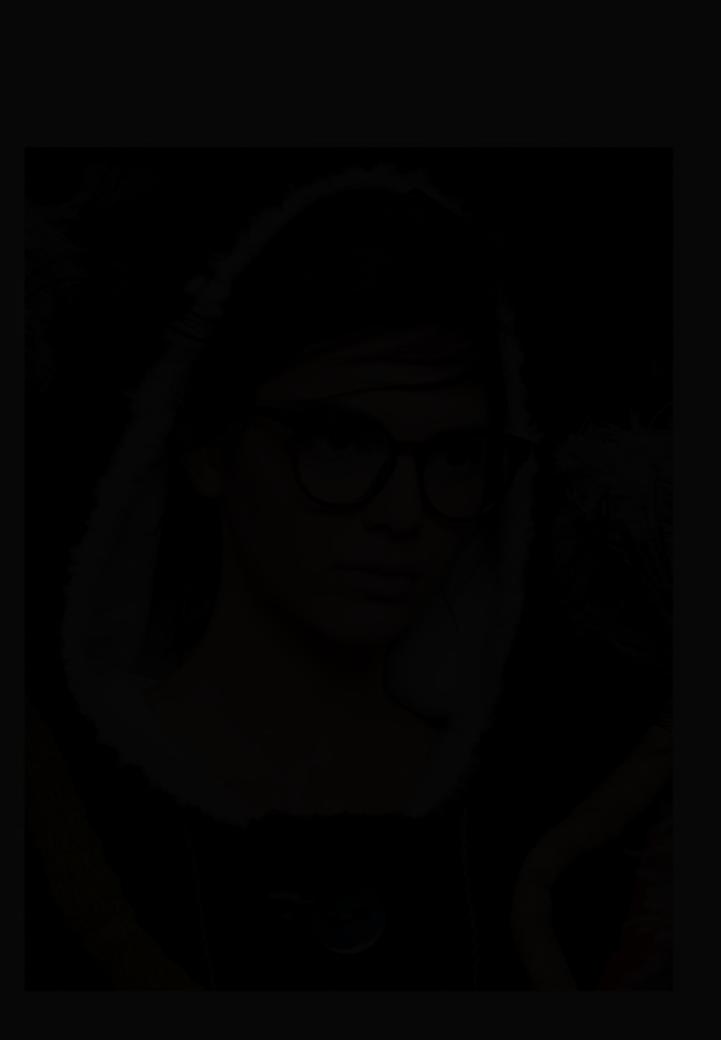
part, lorsqu'il faut aborder la mémoire de Dominique Bagouet. Trajal Harrell aura été aussi loin que je pouvais le craindre dans sa démarche iconoclaste. Tout un précieux échaffaudage qui étaye l'héritage de Dominique Bagouet sur la scène chorégraphique hexagonale allait-il s'en trouver endommagé? J'acceptai d'en courir le risque.

Il ne s'est rien produit de cela. Pas un écho de cette sorte ne m'est parvenu depuis les cercles Bagouet, singulièrement indifférents. Trajal Harrell avait parlé d'un Ghost. Un spectre. Il lui aura donné grâce joyeuse, presque loufoque, sur fond d'intense gravité. Il faudrait toujours qu'une part de cette texture, cette fluidité fantômatique, cet étourdissement des incertitudes, vienne contrarier l'esprit de sérieux, quand celui-ci menace de couler en mausolée, le mouvement dynamique des référencements historiques et esthétiques.

Pour commencer et terminer : je me rends compte que je n'ai jamais su ce que Paris vient faire dans le titre du célèbre documentaire consacré par Jennie Livingston à la scène du Voguing new-yorkais. Et donc dans la série des pièces de Trajal Harrell qui emprunte ce titre. Or je m'en porte très bien. Circulons, il y a tout à voir.

- ENGLISH TRANSLATION P:310







n a Sunday afternoon in November 2011 at the Audubon Ballroom in upper Manhattan, where Malcolm X was shot, Dominican folkloric musicians pulse out rhythms and sing and chant in honor of los misterios, the twenty-one spirits of an Afro-Caribbean religion known in the Dominican Republic, but almost invisible to the rest of the world. (If you are curious, read Martha Davis's chapter in a book I edited, Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Island Cultures.) There is tasty Dominican food, colorful posters depicting los misterios, and a Dominican crowd greeting friends and letting the music percolate inside them, sometimes externalized with dance steps, and for one or two inducing a spirit-possessed trance, something that now can also happen in clubs in New York City where musicians play for Dominican spiritualists.

Through the down to earth magic of the subway, I am transported to a different world, a gallery, 3^{rd} Streaming, in the southern part of SoHo. Here Trajal Harrell

and Thibault Lac will give a preview of Trajal's *Antigone jr.*, the junior size or "uni-size" of *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church*, for Performa II. As the audience assembles, I feel in another world indeed, cool and white-walled.

Yet each of Trajal's pieces surprises, and by the end of the evening, I will feel, with a thrill, unexpected convergence with the spirits of my Dominican afternoon. The trajectory of Trajal's work is itself a surprise and I would never have expected its arc to morph and intensify in so many directions.

His work also contains resonances and continuities that undergird new developments. And I enjoy seeing this palimpsest in pieces that, unlike his earliest ones, can be maximalist in baroquely morphing ways. I have been enjoying Trajal's dance theater works almost since their beginning. True, when I got an invitation to a lower Manhattan rooftop at dawn (as I recall it) to see something by someone I thought I had never heard of, I quickly filed it away as not happening for me. I didn't connect this improbable event with reports I had heard from my friend Lisa from Congolese dance class about her classmate from Yale starting to make dance, who,

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she said, was African American from south Georgia and obsessed with postmodern theory.

As the title Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church suggests, Trajal is much influenced by aspects of the Judson Church era, its minimalism, its homemade esthetic, its experimental questioning of the nature and circumstances of performance. Likewise, he is still under the influence of the voguing ballroom scene in the movie Paris is Burning, which led Trajal to visit the balls themselves and to investigate, through a video repeatedly watched, the exactingly stylized walks of a fashion show and to make a whole series of performances in a variety of settings, the Tickle the Sleeping Giant

series, that inventively turned the fashion show walk and its subtle variations into dance events.

In size Small (S), the first made of Twenty Looks, a solo that still reflects a minimalist esthetic, Trajal wittily combines the preoccupations of the title, including not only a sumptuously feminine dance and an intense, wilder one, but also examples of "realness" categories like East and West Coast preppie that only perhaps a postmodern Yale grad uate would think of. Antigone jr., a

two person show, still reflects a certain minimalism in its presentation, though its theatricality and range of emotion is anything but that.

But Georgia Peach, the first piece by Trajal that I saw, was lovely, but truly minimal, two short, quiet, rooted solos that exploited the possibilities of natural light at twilight. Trajal went on to present small works, some playful, some lyrical, some full of feeling—he has the ability in his own solos, then and now, to present emotion so directly that it seems to radiate straight from his insides to the viewer (see Extra Small (SX)), in formats that questioned ideas of performativity. In the Midday Modular Concert, for instance, viewers could, over the course of an afternoon, buy individual pieces at a time of choice for \$1 or \$2, the light changing on them as the day progressed.

How would a minimalist, a miniaturist do in a proscenium theater? Very well, it turned out, at Snug Harbor on Staten Island, when Trajal made Lullaby, a dance theater exploration of childhood fantasy for three dancers, with a richer movement vocabulary, fractured, varied, and repeated in more complex ways, and extravagant costumes by Brian Wolk.

When he became a Movement Research resident artist he had the chance to present work like Lullaby #3, a quintet for men and women who live together and are getting ready for bed, quietly performing a variety of daily activities, mundane and potentially fraught, in Judson Church itself. He also hosted study

running in such a way that I felt a void open up and swallow me, disturbing and enveloping like nothing I had experienced.

A long piece to Messien's Quartet for the End of *Time* had perhaps too much dressing and undressing (a hallmark of Trajal's work), but it had a similar emotional impact, engendering by its end a deep sadness. In Showpony, Trajal and two women dancers dressed and undressed, showing an audience on either side of a runway the pleasures and perils of being a performer. Coming by us, they looked intently and even, occasionally, sat on someone.

More recently I've seen what Trajal has done at the

So I'm used to how Trajal builds on what he's done, but morphs and enlarges and creates and re-creates until he sometimes amazes. I was prepared, but not prepared for *Antigone jr.*. I knew he wanted to incorporate the Antigone story as part of Twenty Looks. But how would he do that? Small (S) gave no clue. In fact the story itself is straightforwardly told in Antigone jr., with Thibault quietly, movingly, reading bits of it and condensing it. Thibault is Ismene; Trajal, Antigone. It is what went on before that ancient Greek story of family feeling and inevitable tragedy was told at that first performance at the SoHo gallery that astounded me.

Since then, with the making of Antigone Sr. (Large),

a big, complicated, cathartic experi-

ence that takes the ancient Greek concept of catharsis and transforms it completely for the 21st century, still delivering its emotional charge, much of the wild, cathartic nature of the first Antigone jr. has gone into the larger piece. Antigone jr. is quiet and somber and deeply moving now. But in that gallery Trajal was sashaying and stamping across the small place and shouting like I'd never heard him before. The names of designers were in-

voked—Givenchy, say, shouted out, with hilarious commentary, and adjectives like 'motherfucking." It was electrifying and somehow oddly cleansing, preparing us for pain and tragedy.

Though Trajal is not a traditional voguer or a member of a voguing ball fashion house, he has digested the form within his own intellectual and emotional sense of complication and gives it back to us, with multiple additions of ideas and theater of all sorts unique to his creative process, in pieces like that early Antigone jr. Voguing is an African American manifestation; los misterios, an Afro-Dominican one. Sitting in that gallery turned theater turned cathartic center, I felt my spirit move in ways I never expected, that seemed akin to the way spirits can ride you. My two worlds of that day came together.



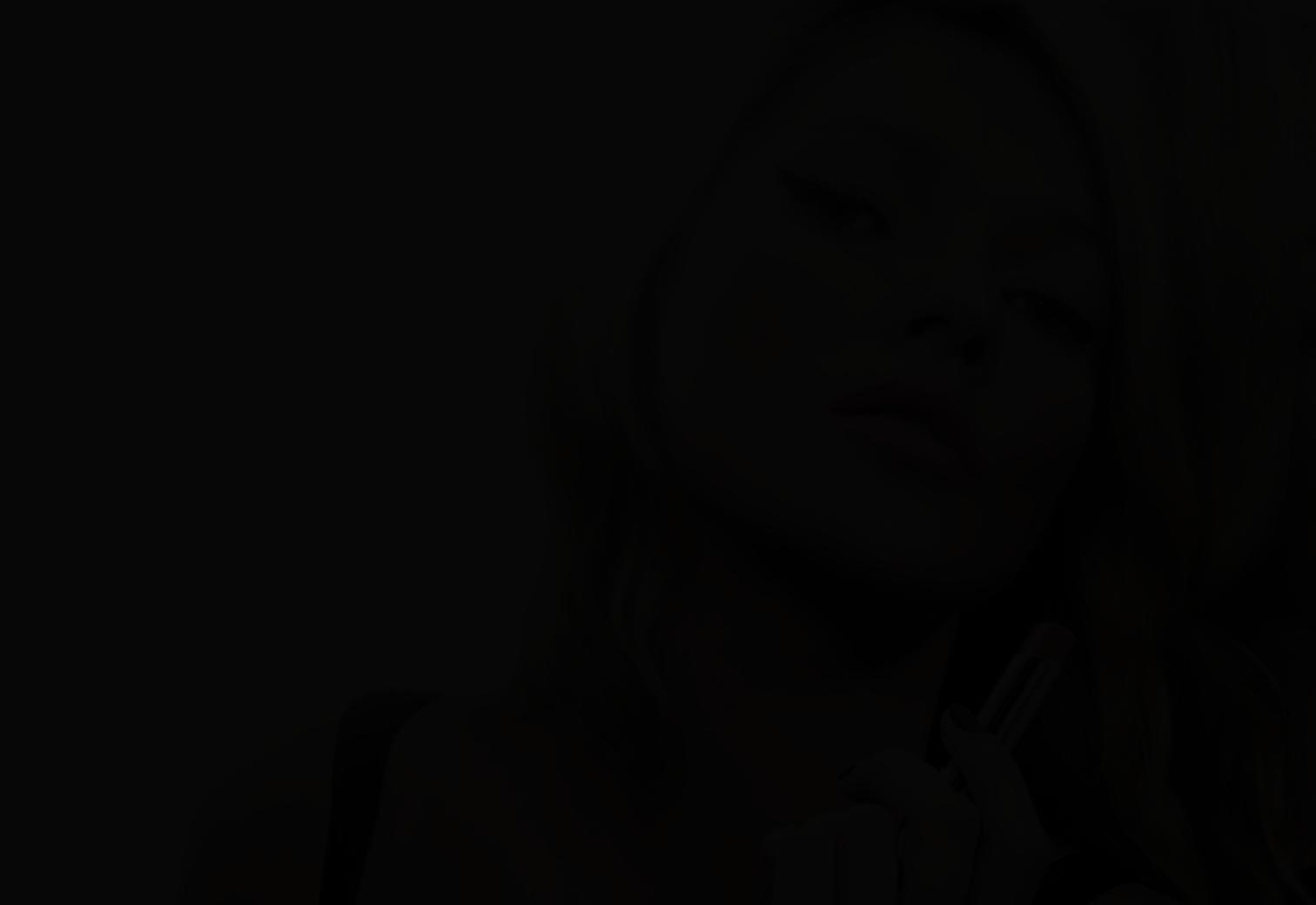
sessions there, curating related performances. And he danced out, solo, "It is thus from a strange new perspective that we look back at the Modernist origin and watch it splintering into endless replication," turning this appropriation of a scholar's statement (and Trajal is very inventive with appropriations) into a mix of intense intellectual curiosity and for the first time, fierce voguing. It was a surprise.

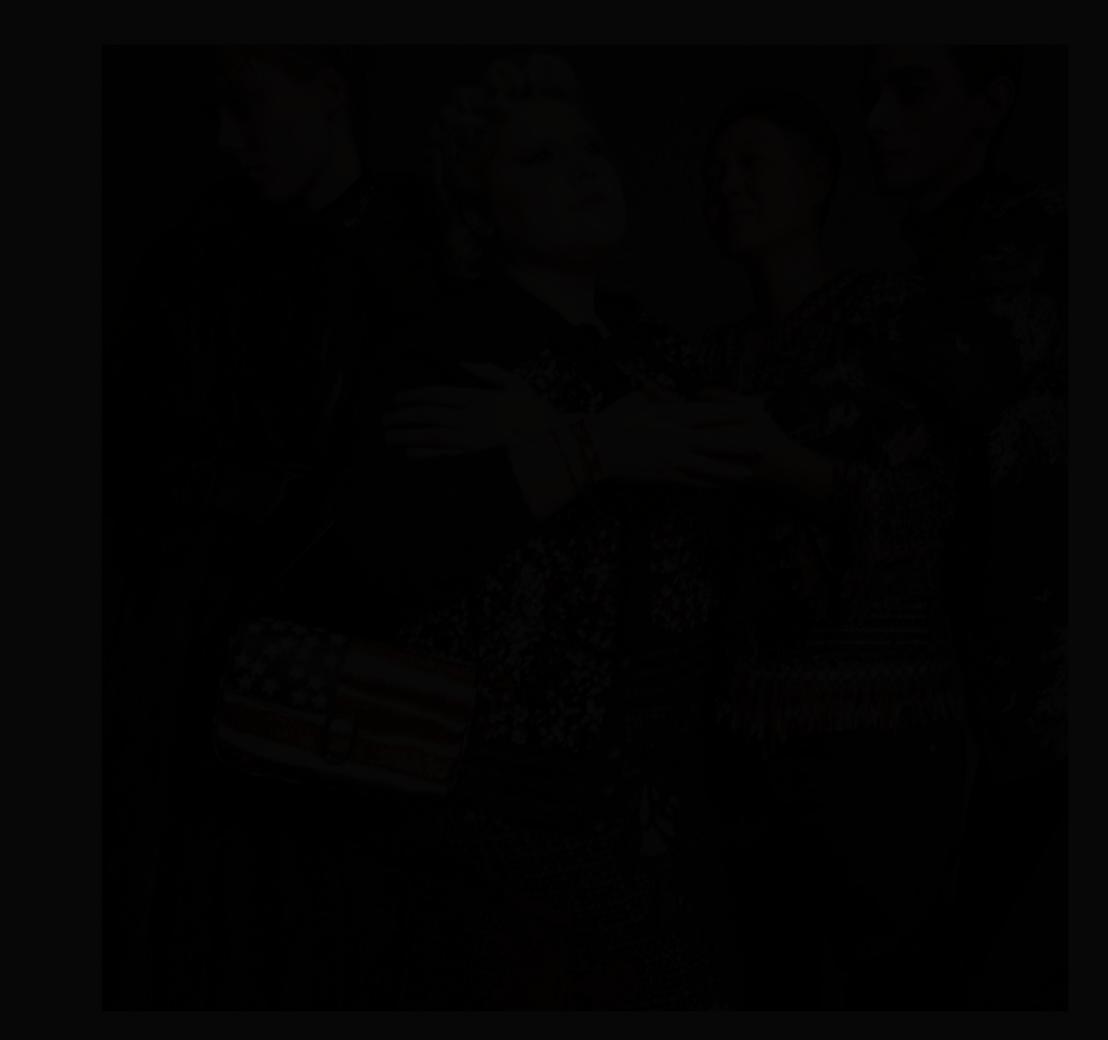
Notes on Less Than Zero, Trajal's first full evening piece, incorporated the fashion walk as it commented on characters in that novel, using appropriations from fashion, advertising, and cinema, and movement styles and structures that he had been cumulatively exploring for some time. The revelation for me was the ending, with one man running and running and

Museum of Modern Art, reflecting an interest in the originators of butoh, Hijikata and Ohno, but always in his own way, which doesn't copy influences, but studies and absorbs them, creating something utterly different and very much his own. He's an original.

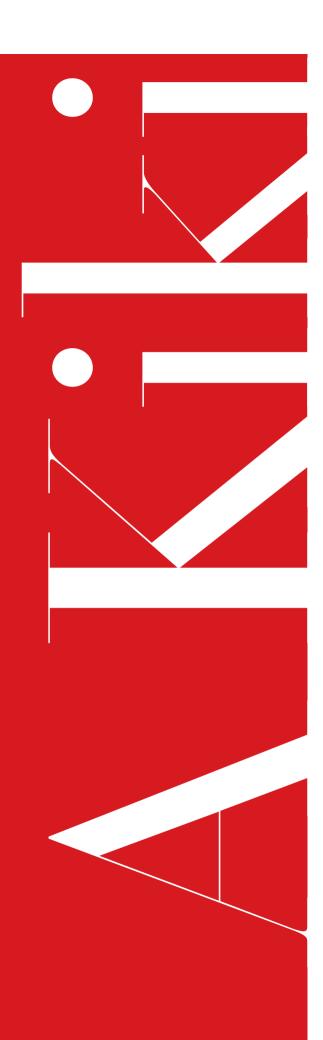
At MoMA I've seen him make a short, but rich, full dance in a day or two or three as part of *The Process*. And just the other weekend, I enjoyed The Ghost of Montpellier Meets the Samurai in its American debut in Minneapolis. It combines a curiosity about the influence of Dominique Bagouet and Tatsumi Hijikata and a salute to the late Ellen Stewart, creator of La Mama Experimental Theater, into a complex stew like nothing of the work of any of these people, but very much like Trajal Harrell, a maximalist now.

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nostalgia



ELI Sudbrack AND TRAJAL Harrell

ELI: at that point early 2000s people didn't talk about vogueing, had gone totally underground.

- and when i moved to NY i asked our common friend karim [Ainouz] if he knew somebody who would know if it still existed and he talked about u
- so i have no idea why he thought u knew about the vogue scene but somehow he told me that i should get in touch with u.
- did u know about the vogue scene? u knew somebody who knew about it?

TRAJAL: i remembered asking him and him telling me about you. i thought you were the one who knew. I thought i had contacted you

E: so how did we get to learn where it was happening?

T: i thought you found out about these kiki balls uptown in harlem

E: hahahahah i guess we both forgot how it happened...but maybe u have better memory than me – mine is bad.

T: mine is awful

E: damn i thought u knew!

— well i remember meeting u in nolita somewhere – maybe karim's apt – and we discussed going there. u had a friend with u who i don't think i ever saw again. maybe we met at a party at his house first time?

T: i remember some party with vicente de paulo

— and karim bringing you over

E: ahhhh that is it!

— and i remember we immediately talked about going to vogue ball.

T: yes

E: unfortunately i don't remember how long after that we ended up going

but i do remember that the first time we were a whole crew: u, me, carla, delia, gavin, aleksandra mir
 i wonder if those pix i sent u are in fact of our first time there

T: i wonder. i don't think so

— aleksandra isn't there is she?

E: she is in one of the pix.

T: really?

E: i remember she went only once

— yes!

T: so maybe it is the first

E: i remember the thrill of going up this walk up place with no sign, no clue what was beyond the staircase

- i walked by recently and it doesn't look there is anything else happening there
- and it was really fantastic and sort of surreal that the balls would start at 3am. that made it somehow so special. i always wondered why it started so late
- i guess a lot of those kids had night shift jobs?

T: exactly yes...the kids had to get off work and go figure out their fashions etc

E: exactly

— i remember even carla being "confused" with the role playing. i remember this super hot "butch" guy coming after her and her being so in love with him and then all of a suddenly he was competing in the "butch queen" category

T: well this confusion is what makes it so amazing

E: well exactly the base of the whole "realness"

— and it was very underground and we were clearly not part of that scene but somehow people didn't bother our presence i felt. i guess we had carla with us who was i guess a "realness queen"

T: yes indeed

- where is carla now?
- she got married?

E: no....she was in ny for a while till she got busted smoking weed on the street with a friend.

- she went to jail for a night but was released. she was here and left but on her way back customs people asked her if she ever had problem with police and she said no
- and she got busted because of that
- and she was sent away and never ever got back here. E: she broke up with that boyfriend she had

T: she went where? brazil?

E: she's been splitting her time between europe and sao



paulo. she is in sao paulo right now.

— she started making these incredible turbans

T: wow

— you see her still in sao paulo?

E: i did see her earlier this year. remember that "walking on thin ice" installation/video i showed at deitch projects in 2003?

- it was re-installed at a super nice collection in munich in july, SAMMLUNG Goetz
- and she came over and we spent sometime together taurelius: wow
- well in fact the vogue balls were the beginning of a lot of stuff for me in fact
- i incorporated vogue balls footage in this video program i put together mixing artists videos, excerpts from music videos, soul train, films etc. the program was called "butch queen realness with a twist in pastel colors" and its first version is 4 hours long and it was screened first time in 2003
- vogueing footage punctuated the video program "energy" lets say. the program was about expanding moments of ecstasy which vogueing was such a wonderful symbol, non stop energy flow

T: and then what about the project at rosa de la cruz during miami basel 2004 was it?

E: that was the first time i screened this video program. and i remember we were both so inspired by it. and we talked about doing something together and u wanted to incorporate vogueing in yr research.

— u were inspired by fashion shows back then right?

T: i was by both but i was really trying to go deeper into voguing

E: and u started incorporating vogueing at that point right?

— yeah i guess it was really important for both of us. it sounds like it was a turning point for both me and u

T: before i was trying to do small things but always it was more about the theoretical underpinnings such as realness that i wanted to bring out

— oh yes, it was definitely a turning point

E: at that point i was somehow very interested/inspired by finding new york city's soul. i did that project in central park with the roller skaters around the same time. somehow new york really inspired me still at that point

— it's also interesting that vogueing went back to a certain mainstream a few years after our first encounter with it. but it was really underground when we went. i remember talking to people and nobody knew it still existed

T: yes do you still feel it is in your work today?

E: always

E: when i mentioned before about the energy, this endless energy explosion – it's definitely somehow what i still look for in my work. i guess it resonated a lot with the way i think/react to the world. this endless spiraling energy burst

T: that's how i feel. i feel i want to let go but it's impossible once you've had that kind of experience with something so fresh as i experienced that. it completely changed the way i understood time, space, energy, sound, collectivity....

E: definitely it's interesting that that somehow also coincided with a moment where i started working with a lot more people as a "collective" under avaf

- and i think that was very motivated to gathering all these different energies from different people and presenting something really explosive
- and its funny now that i'm much more intimate in my work process and more silent (in fact i just started making works as E for the first time ever) and i still aim at that kind of energy even with my paintings
- now do you work under both?

E: i guess – it's very recent i still have avaf projects happening in the near future not sure what will happen yet — but i'm enjoying a solo existence

T: delia and gavin?

— did they have a dance troupe?

E: they separated many years ago after moving to berlin together. i collaborated with gavin for a whole year in presentations of his music project around 2008. E: he's been dj'ing a lot recently in these underground parties here in ny

- i just reconnected with delia. saw her in miami. she's got a kid nowadays with somebody she's no longer with
- she is making music also
- and yes they had that dance troupe and i think they also incorporated some vogueing at one point vi forget how it was called, it was delia, gavin and christian holstad

T: but it was like black orchid or something like that

E: black something yeah not orchid

T: no not orchid

E: black leotard front!

T: yes i loved that name but they were completely in the art world

— not dance world

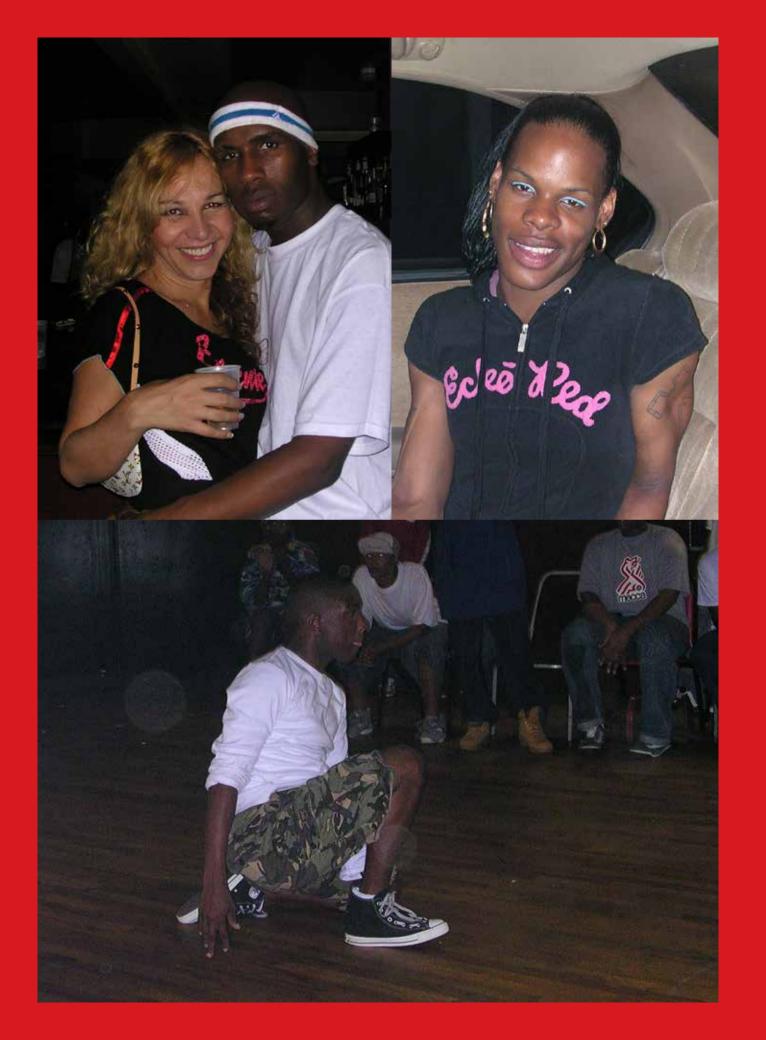
E: definitely which was a shame, don't think people in the art world really got it. i have amazing footage of their performances in different places

T: wow i would love to see next time i am in nyc

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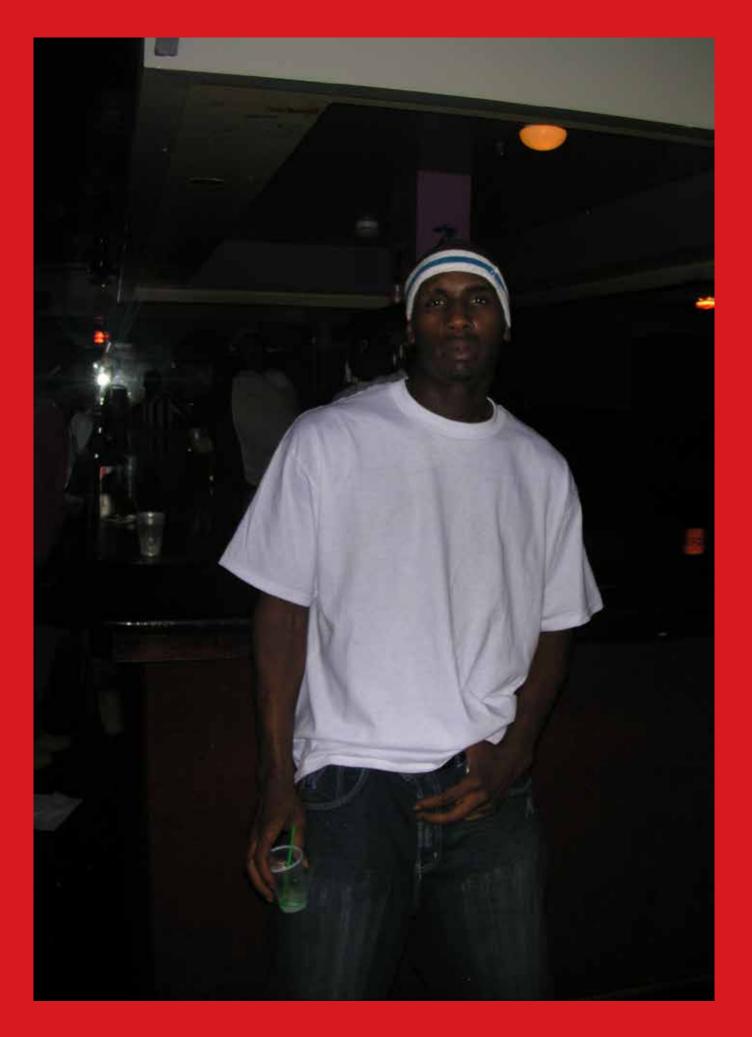


























E: but it was wild, they would do these crazy dances in the middle of openings

— they are all here in ny!

T: i want to ask you...

- at the balls, you talked to people, yes? i never did
- i was on this idea that i had to be distant

E: very little, carla was the intermediary T: so as not to think i was familiar

E: she talked to people for sure

T: yes but you didnt?

E: i dont remember talking to anybody

T: wow so we both didnt talk to anybody

E: i wanted to but i also felt more like a voyeur

- i also felt like i wasn't really part of that scene and didn't want to interfere
- and u started working with that amazing MC guy from that club – how did that happened?
- he was my favorite! loooove the harsh tone of his voice

T: he's amazing

E: Selvin Mizrahi

- he's a famous commentator in the voguing ballroom scene all over the world
- i suppose he still MCs right?
- commentator that is the word

T: yes, for sure. i just got his number from Alex Mugler a voguing and contemporary dancer and invited them both to do a production with me in Vienna

E: i remember seeing him at moma!

- what was nice about those balls we went is that i felt very insular, very underground, the location, the time they happened
- there were no outsiders but us

T: now i think its more inclusive and there are many different kinds of entry points

E: it was very new york/harlem latino+black crowd

T: i think there are many scenes now

E: it definitely felt very unique and not super accessible to a wider public back then

T: i went to a conference that MoMA psi sponsored

- it was great
- lots of legends

E: ahh i heard about that conference i think they wanted to screen one of my videos as background for a vogue competition

T: but i think how the scene preserves itself as it becomes more known more branches is interesting

E: but then i always get suspicious – and i was somehow part of that too – when u incorporate that scene into an art environment

T: but i think ultimately it's fine bc the people care about winning trophies at balls and that's what is motivating so they don't get caught up for very long in the art environment

E: its been happening a lot. and a lot of young artists like jacolby satterwhite are using vogue as inspiration

E: i know a few artists doing this actually

there is this other guy who was in a residency in brazil and he was after a vogue scene in sao paulo – and u know what- it exists!

T: they exist in berlin, helsinki, vienna, baltimore, atlanta, etc

— i saw a ball in paris

E: how was that?

T: it's not the energy that we saw

- back in the day
- but it's kinda great bc a lot of the kids learn everything from youtube

E: i know i hate to say this i always feel a bit bitter

T: bitter why?

E: u know: "the past was so great"

and the present is not

T: yeah

- but we carry this inside of us
- and this is really inspiring to know we both still so strongly carry this

E: oh my god, for sure, it's part of my soul forever. its like listening to house music/acid house for the first time. life changing

T: but last thing

- the project we did at rosa de la cruz collection
- what was that?
- you got her to commission a lot of us

E: my work had a buzz that year after the roller skate project in central park with the public art fund and my install at the whitney biennial. rosa approached me totally enamored with the work and offered me a commission to occupy the second floor of her collection house. nowadays she's got a museum space in the design district but back then she would only show her collection at that house. i wanted to make an interactive environment that would be activated by occasional performances and u were the first one!

and in fact that install still exists and its the only permanent avaf installation ever



nostalgia AKK

— she just in fact restored it and reopened it for the first time in many years

T: in the museum or still in the house?

E: her husband loves it so much and doesn't let her take it down

- still at the house
- i made those platforms and those pieces on wheels to be moved around for u!

T: it was amazing looking in the pics

— at the time, i was scared to death

E: i sent u the footage i have of u guys right?

T: yes

E: u were?

— why?

T: well i didnt really know what i was doing

- i was really trying out
- and discovering my relationship to this voguing material
- and trying to produce theory around it relating it to early postmodern dance

E: it was so great that it was also my first collaboration with shoppy and that outfit u had on was so gorgeous

— u still have it?

T: it was also in another piece Showpony, the one you did the set for so we had it and now for years i haven't been able to locate it

it was so fierce i think someone stole it

E: right!

- no way
- shame!

T: yes i am sure

E: so that piece we collaborated was right after the rosa thing?

T: not sure

- maybe before
- no it was after
- showpony is 2007
- rosa is 2004 right?

E: end of 2004!

T: yes

A KIKI
ELI SUDBRACK
AND TRAJAL HARRELL
ALL PHOTOS BY ELI SUDBRACK





In most of her projects Cecilia Bengolea works and performs as a (self-) ethnochoreologist; the research she advances on the anthropological implications of dance cultures doesn't exclude her own affective relation to them and her contribution to their legacy. In the same artistic lineage and relevance of other female dance pioneers such as Katherine Dunham and Maya Deren, her commitment to be part of the cultures she is fascinated by is as dedicated as her passion for moving. Besides that Cecilia loves dancing in unitards -the pluriversal piece of clothing that resumes the futuristic and historical aesthetics of Merce Cunningham and Zentai. No attire collects better than whole bodysuits the crossfade between postmodern and millennial attitudes towards the body: in its own justice while being stereotypical and exchangeable; hyper-visible and invisible like in cromas; superficial and deeply psychological; captive and in rapture. Wearing them is almost like being naked but wearing a different skin. We can see the versatility and diverse richness of an apparel that descends genealogically from superheroes, anime cosplayers, sex workers, spandex lovers, crossdressers, livings dolls, gymnasts and neo-classical dancers.

Unitards were instrumental in striping dance down to its core and as a result "the body" was revealed; the excess of elaborated characterizing costumes was rejected in the name of freedom of movement and from narrative. An aesthetic turn in the most puristic spiritual tradition facilitated a sexualization in all senses too. Similarly modernism and minimalism embody in architecture, art and design not just reduction, moderation and slickness but the sexy nude-ness so characteristic of Le Corbusier (see the photos of him painting naked at Eileen Gray's house E-1027), Donald Judd, Robert Morris (search his self-portrait and you will see him in a leather outfit), Helmut Lang or Calvin Klein.

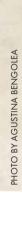
In the most iconic scene of (M)imosa Cecilia,

disguised in a skin-colored full-head-and-body unitard, takes the stage doing a full arch and moving forward at the same time as walking backwards. Under the prosthetic epidermal membrane we see a Leigh Bowerylike figure, with fangs, tits and an erected penis. Its presence is bizarre as daunting is its muted state (it can't speak although it tries). This liminal being is definitely more an idea of something, hyper-present because part of it is absent, a character that it is pure body, movement and presence; an identity like a dress waiting to be worn, a performance of someone in the act of performing.

The anonymity of this figure brings us back to the most classical of theatre traditions. The mask or the thin line between the act and the actor is a multi-directional device of micro and macro political implications: the performance impacts not just the performer and the audience but that simulacrum resonates on and from further aspects of society. In Ball culture bending strategies and paradox are the spiritual currency, the notion of realness is in this respect exemplary: a hyperreal attribute implying someone and its performance is more real than the original, far more authentic because it is constructed.

In her performance Cecilia bends backwards almost in a full circle destabilizing the rigidity of many apparent opposite ends of several linear conceptual spectrums: front and back, forwards and backwards, head and feet, male and female, the inner and the outer, high and low brow culture, human and non-human, art and life, and presentation and representation. With her performance she shows the power of cultural practices such as voguing and their ability for subverting and being an outlet of the tragic escopic ontology our civilization has categorized us to live in, one in which our reality is defined by the way we look.

- BY CARLOS (ATABEY) MARIA ROMERO



lives

Q: The cast is always a bit flummoxed that pictures of you always get chosen by the theaters and festivals for the publicity. And not just one photo but several differimages are only competing against each other. Can you reveal your modeling secrets or your tips for maintaining a long-term love affair with the camera?

A: Relationship to Image

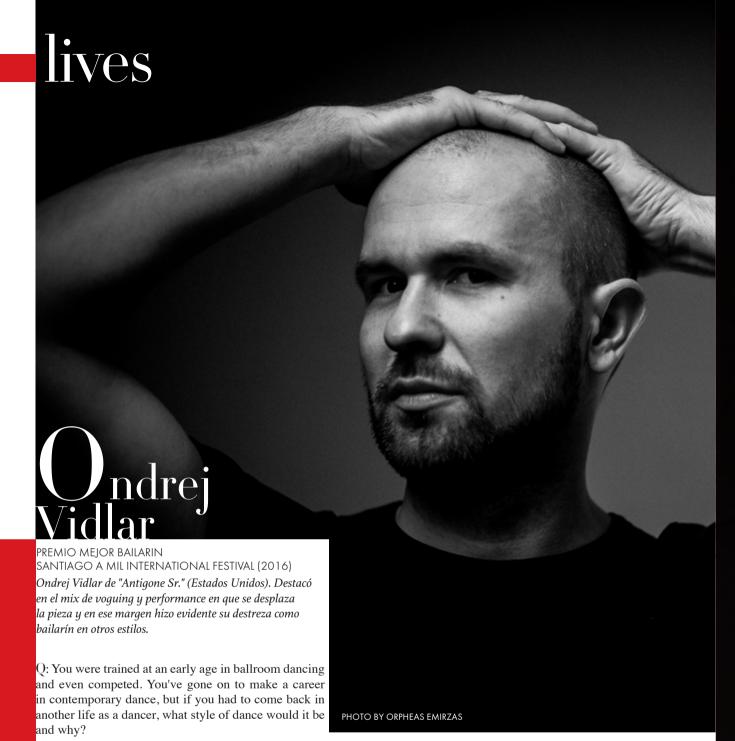
- 1. Part hair on the opposite side that you think you look
- there will be photographers. Know where they are in
- 3. The world is a stage, the stage is the world... every photo could be anywhere... love the camera.
- 4. Like Linda said..." I dont get out of bed for less than \$ ".... keep the dream a live... even when unemployed
- 5. Relinquish any control or expectation of any image going anywhere... its a messy battle... even between
- 6. Destroy all archives and traces.. you want to be remembered fabulous forever different ways!

PRELIMINARY STUDIES OF THE SKATER BY FRENCH ARTIST XAVIER VEILHAN.

THE COLOSSAL SCULPTURE OF ALUMINIM LIVES NOW IN OSAN, KOREA, UNDER A BLUE LAYER OF POLYURETHANE PAINT AND WAS MODELED AFTER STEPHEN THOMPSON, FORMER ICE-SKATING CHAMPION.

PHOTO BY XAVIER VEILHAN STUDIO





A: The question is not easy. Because I'm pretty happy with my contemporary career. But who knows how it will be in the future for dancers and what styles there might be. I'll answer to this question in a different way. I can tell you what dance styles I wanted to do during my life. I always wanted to do be a tap dancer if I had better feeling of rhythm.:) I wanted to be a ballet dancer if I was more flexible:)

And I definitely wanted to dance for MADONNA if I had more dance tricks and if I was more cool:) At the end, as I mentioned, I'm happy with where I ended up. Contemporary dance gives me the possibility to try many different "styles" and express myself in many different ways!



lighting situation occurs. She is a 'human not honoured with a human shape', a Caliban; the Other, a subaltern living on the outer part of the not visible. A mysterious, 'endo-exotic' creature outcasted far, far away inside of us. A humanesque.

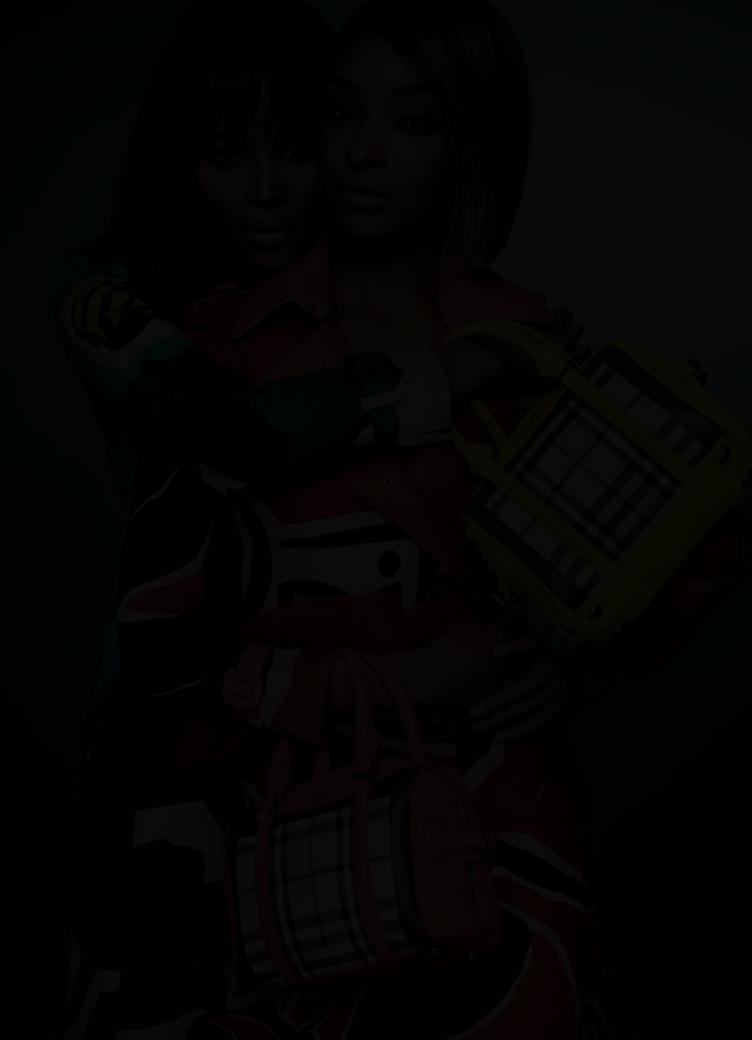
That Marlene and all her versions and relatives are kept forcefully away from the public in an colonized island only reachable through a somatic unfoldment, a Bosch, Octavia Butler, Jazz, Omar Souleyman, queen Händel, the gay Pierre Boulez, Tchaikovsky the sissy. That intensity is unbearable in quotidian time and space, maybe that's why the other Marlene is so demure, speaks so quietly, like a wise shaman. Maybe she is just protecting us.

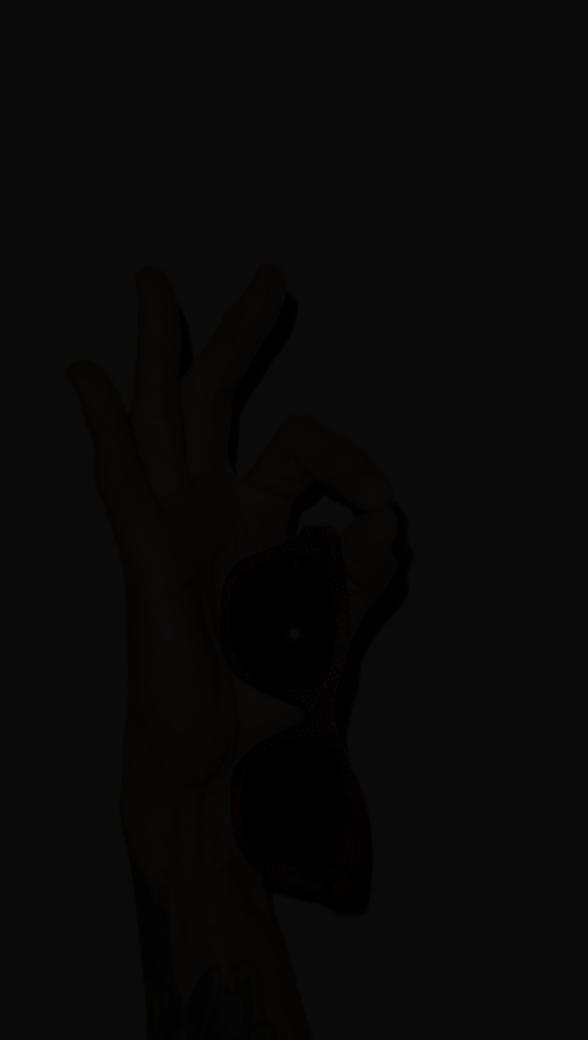
- BY CARLOS (ATABEY) MARIA ROMERO

 $80^{\, ext{VOGUE NOT}}$



lives Walk for me, walk for me, walk for me, walk for me Thibault Lac. Walk, walk, walk and walk. Walk, SERVE, walk, SERVE, walk, SERVE back that history of colonial white supremacy. Walk those legs, they were born for walking honey. Yes, those elastic long motherfucking butch queen legs. One step after the other, change direction, pose, pose, pose and keep on swirling your elegant dancer limbs. We are living with each centimeter of those kilometric columns of undulating grey sweatpants fabric twisting with every turn of your invisible pumps. Donna Karan is all about you, monochromatic with a twist. We deserve the privilege of that French sober cute regulating line of smile you pull, yes we do. Category is: European runway. Category is: Realness with a twist. Category is: Prince on the runway. Comme de Thibo. Comme de kid dancing to Madonna's Vogue. I'll see you after the function. Read that! - BY CARLOS (ATABEY) MARIA ROMERO



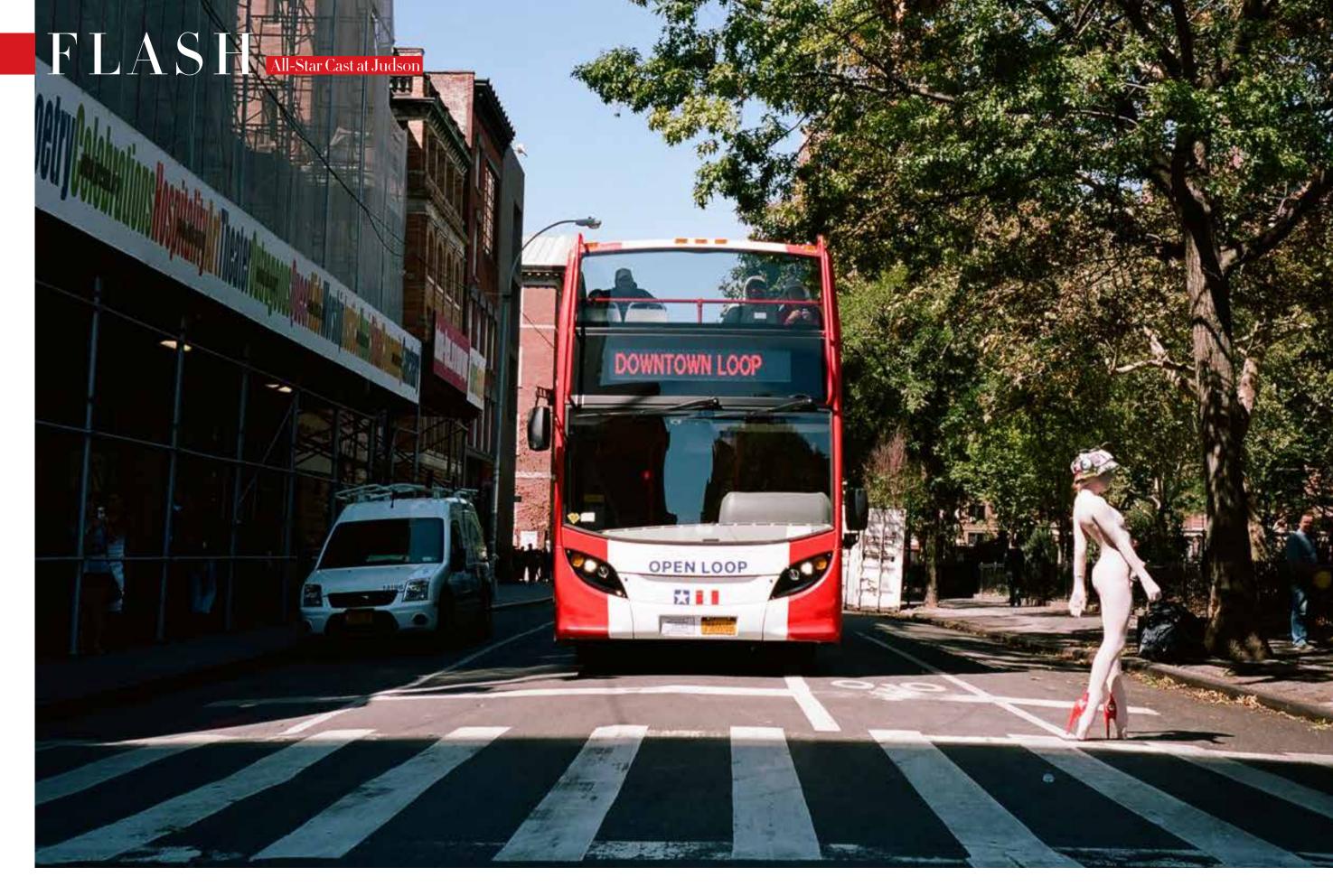












FLASH Talking Fashion



trajal. this extremely belated text emerges out of that particular muddle of feelings, temporality, perplexity, nausea, and urgency that many of us are calling (in

an oddly tangential way, or for lack of a better expression able to account for where exactly we are standing right now, collectively, politically, historically): the "after-the-election-effect," as such, this is not so much a text without direction, but a text looking for how to find

aim without predetermined directions. and yet, out of this perplexed sense of being collectively lost (but why, after all, this sense?, this surprise?, this nausea? - since obviously everything indicated that the "after-the-election" situation was after all the most likely direction that the relentless financialization of all aspects of life over the past thirty years, along with the overwhelming colonization of all sorts of vital matters by capital's essential poverty of spirit, were leading us into, and this more or less across the globe, or at least in those places i am familiar with and have a relation to - brazil, poland, western europe, the us – leading

cisms, tolerated racisms, non-exceptional authoritarianisms, normalized war without end, incessant state control, and ever-increasing self-control... maybe the surprise and the nausea come from realizing that the obscene marketing of "the audacity of hope" less than a decade ago had no audacity at all, and its "hope" indeed prevented us from realizing that we have not yet learned, politically, how to be pessimistic enough, as walter benjamin had already asked us to be, in the mid 1920s, advocating a methodical pessimism as essential to map, accurately, without illusions or delusions, the actual conditions of the world, a necessary, crucial pessimism that

ago, as precondition for the clarity of mind and activation of desire needed to indeed create a better politics, away from the cruelty of wishful optimisms that keeps us moving along inside pregiven paths of reasonable, consensual destinies), and yet, as I was saying, from within this sense of nausea and perplexity, i find crucial, dear trajal, to write about your work, perhaps because your work troubles commonsensical notions of what it means to have direction, since your work troubles for sure the one way street set by the temporal arrow that, as

On the Way Ongoing Going (SENSELESSLY WITH AN AIM): a FEVER

By André Lepecki

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 24 AND 25, 2016.

physics teaches us, points only unidirectionally. your

work scrambles that arrow, and its universal law; your work instatiates a local autonomy for history's arrow, making possible to move across a field of time, rather than a timeline, and i hope you will forgive me for, while writing these words, scatteredly, yes, but truly with an aim, which is to learn, thanks to your work, what it is to redirect history, and to redirect it corporeally, collectively, just as you do, you and all of those who work with you do, i write it while running a fever, heat-waves coursing thro-ugh the outmost edges of my skin, but i write it also willing this text to be itself a fever. therefore it is a text running, in the end, the risk of still

songs, and histories after all, to be lost in fever, since it is way too early for any of us to find a place, and to place thoughts in any proper, rested, order, perhaps we need to urgently get used to the idea that there is no place to find after all, not for our art to rest, not for our politics to rest, and not for our words to rest. perhaps we need to learn from the whirling dances that come out of m2m, when the three of you, move back and forth between a sitting position that does not bring resolution, but charges the affective field of the dance through your singing, and a wild spinning that disorients time, agitating the whole space at its most molecular level. perhaps

we should learn from all your songs in all your dances that words must remain in flight, and that only cruel optimism prevents us to see that there is no promised land, or promised time, but an endless, laborious, hard journey to tread, endless dance, to which we cannot help but to succumb to, lest we forget we cannot ever rest. ongoing going then: more or less forever, certainly still ongoing going after our death. no rest. no rest. so we better step on it then, more or less sorrowfully, more or less joyfully, more or less febrile, more or less alone, more or less in massive crowds, and get going dancing and singing, eyes fixed on those who preceded us, across millennia of planetary spinning, so we may collectively, not in their names, but with their spectral bodies, fight theirs battles as our own, and thus gather collective momentum to guide our acts. directionless but not aimless; away from proper meaning and yet filled with sense. dear trajal. i find crucial to write about your work, or from your work, or through your work, or with your work, or inside your work, since there is a force in it, that is not only derived from its peremptorily conceptual consistency, not only drawn from its particular performance qualities, always hovering, fortunately to us, your lucky audience, between a high precision of execution and an absolute awareness to the need for momentary openness and unmapped modulations according to the affectivity of each performance situation/iteration (i really like how, so many times, in your pieces, and m2m does it as well, there is a pre-beginning that announces the supposedly actual beginning, then the "actual" beginning, which does not start but already continues, thus expressing how to be in your dances is to be caught in mid-step from somewhen to somewhen) and to each situation's micro-perceptual, micro-political, micro-ethical demands. i cannot help but think that all the very different performers that choose working with you must know to embrace how to be open to that openness, to that ethics you choreograph so well: each dancer, singularly and also collectively, modulating and re-articulating capacities for affecting and being affected. what consists then, in this open field that each of your pieces brings about, in all the works in the series Twenty Looks... but also in your recent desire to revisit butch, and particularly the dancing and singing and compositional insistence in m2m, is your relentless commitment to conceptual integrity, these dances linger corporeally crisscrossing times and places because of the force of thought they animate and emanate. a force that emerges not only from bodies, actions, sounds, voices, but from your obdurate insistence in speculating corpo-affective-historically: through and with and because of dance's many secret histories. it is a feverish endeavor, you teach us that it takes at least 20 looks to speculate on what could have been. speculative work becomes the beautiful, necessary, urgent and fierce activation of a choreopolitics of the incompossible. actually, i do believe that tavia

nyong'o has written about your work in these terms, am i right? i think tavia is totally correct, and his assessment reminds me of a sentence by brian massumi, which i am paraphrasing now, in the fever: "the task is not to make the impossible possible, but to actualize the impossible into the world as the impossible." because, you see, the possible is confined to predetermined sets of pregiven options for action (i.e. possibility); while the impossible is the full and absolutely real potentiality of the virtual (i.e., the undetermined, or a life), the incompossible: the full potentiality of making life with those undetermined elements which we have been told could not co-exist, could not co-consist, and yet constantly insist, together, in obdurate affective persistence, daringly co-insisting their real impossible co-existence into potent living. that's you making one real incompossible really exist through impossible insistence: judson voguing butoh through the strong vet tremulous voice of a dancer singing a cappella and thus cutting a melodic line of resistance in the midst of the co-turbulent polivocality of the world, or when the melodic lines crisscross in a song of the multitude mouthing joyful sorrow in m2m. i cannot but help to think how those voices (sometimes yours alone, sometime's another's voice in your voice, sometimes others' voices without your voice), carry over at a distance that transhistorical force that gives them body. how songs keep resonating days after the piece is over, and in resonance they stay close, making matters, even when the dance is supposedly gone. in their somewhen, the obdurate presence of your songs and spins reminds us that proximity has nothing to do with spatial gaps, since distance is never measured in inches, kilometers, or light-years, distance as proximal intimacy is a somewhen, and somewhen is that incompossibly powerful trust in choreography's capacity to disorientate time, to interanimate wills, forces, and bodies of those (so many, so many, uncountable many) who will have gathered around your work, and together, even if miles or decades apart, dare to activate some other kind of memory-matter into the somewhen of the now. i see your work as one of re-legislating through empirical-political imagination, ways for inserting ourselves into alternative modes of imagining and making actions that matter a somewhen. here, i am paraphrasing patricia reed's profound analysis of the re-legislative power of imagination in contemporary art, when she writes about speculative imagination as political force in the age of control. dear trajal. i fear this text is way too long already, this delirium. forgive me after all these months of silence, to have now too many words pouring out, certainly exceeding the amount of space allotted. but, i cannot end without adding a few more words. this time not mine (whatever that means), but indeed, yours (whatever that means): "i'm interested in the impossibility, that history that could not come together."

us into renewed fasremaining lost, which may not be too bad a destiny for texts, bodies, dances, lauren berlant has also reminded us of, barely five years

96 VOGUE NOT VOGUE NOT 97

Rashaad Newsome, Trajal Harrell and VOGUING in the WHITE CUBE

By Ariel Osterweis



The struggle to survive is not really separable from the cultural life of fantasy.

—Judith Butler (1993, 216)

The museumizing gesture is a threat exactly because it reproduces cultural subjects as frozen....The recourse to fantasy is valued precisely for its power to dismantle the seemingly limitless power of the museumist model of cultural representation.

—Darby English (2007, 195)



unt-cunt-cunt. Cunt to the feminine-a-what." So begins visual artist Rashaad Newsome's performance of FIVE at the 2010 Whitney Biennial. Commentator Kevin Movado continues chanting into his mic, syncopating percussively at rapid-fire speed: "Feminine soft cunt to the cunt-cunt [...] Meow cunt to the meow [...]. Feminine-a-pussy-cunt." Crouched on the ground is dancer Dawn Ebony in ripped black lycra tights, black bra, black fingerless gloves, and black stiletto boots. She gestures with her arms, moving from one supermodel-inspired pose to another, ascending slowly as baritone Stefanos Koroneos, perched overhead on a suspended platform, begins singing the "Rosa del Ciel, vita del mondo" aria from Monteverdi's 1607 L'Orfeo (Newsome, 2010). I crank my neck from a crouched position amidst the eager, chair-less crowd, with a toddler on my left and a silver-haired man to my right. Five musicians (Michele Smith on flute, Holly Nelson on violin, Dan Vosk on bass guitar, Nick Gianni on saxophone, and Ryan Ramirez on drums) cover the upstage wall, standing side by side on a tall ledge as they wait attentively to accompany their respective voguers. Ebony is voguing, serving a recent style known as "Vogue Femme," which relishes in ponytail whipping, curvilinear transitions, and unaccented dynamics.2 Several observers blurt out,

"werk!" Vogue Femme, while at the forefront of its practice, also imagines a future that celebrates racial and gender ambivalence. Lycra-clad Ebony announces that we are in the presence of what could be called *Afrofuturist drag.*³ Disrupting the chamber musicians' relative restraint, her voguing is met with a deep bass club beat, and the show is on.

In FIVE, Newsome engages the broad relationship between performance and documentation through the history of voguing, a dance form that emerged in Harlem in the 1960s in Ballroom culture, which includes "houses" and "balls." Houses are alternative kinship structures "led by 'mothers' (mostly men, but sometimes women or male-to-female transgender people) and 'fathers' (men or female-to-male transgender people), who [...] undertake a labor of care and love for/with other members of the Ballroom community," explains performance and race scholar, Marlon Bailey (Arnold and Bailey, 2009, 174).5 Held in spaces that range from nightclubs to abandoned warehouses, balls consist of runway drag performances in which voguing enacts and exaggerates through dance the gestures found in fashion magazines. Battles consist of both voguing and walking the runway. Although voguing is celebratory, it is also cynical, sarcastic, and misogynistic: "pussy-cunt" is as much a degradation as it is an ideal. It emerged as an angular, percussive form rife with hyperextended

arm whacks threatening to tear the shoulder out of the socket and sudden hinges in which the head and bottom simultaneously dropped down to the ground. Rather than "striking" a pose, those who perform the currently popular style of Vogue Femme flow into and out of poses, undoing the 1980s-90s emphasis of pose over transition. Voguing's newer embrace of transition mirrors increasing acceptance of transgender identity in ballroom culture. By bringing together performance genres from different centuries and locales, Newsome's FIVE explores interwoven histories and genders together: trans-temporality meets transgender identity. In fact, Newsome explains to me that he chose the "Rosa del Ciel" aria for FIVE's opening because it is based on "a poem about a flower [that] goes through this transition [like voguing]" (Newsome, interview with the author, 2010). According to Newsome, the five elements of voguing are: "hands, floor work, dips and spins, catwalk, and duck walking" (2010). (The dip is also called the "death drop," appearing to simultaneously mimic and defy death.) The dancers in FIVE each represent a single element. Newsome takes on a multi-faceted role, DJing from the sidelines, documenting dance by projecting live sketches onto a screen, and archiving the performance for his own record, regardless of how the Whitney may or may not retain his work.

Newsome is one of several contemporary artists exploring voguing in a museum context, as I attended FIVE the same year I attended choreographer Trajal Harrell's 2010 performance of Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church (S) at the New Museum of Contemporary Art.⁶ The question driving Harrell's piece is, "What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing dance tradition in Harlem had come down to Judson Church to perform alongside the early postmoderns?" (Harrell, interview with the author, 2010). Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church (S), a solo (thus Size Small [S]), represents a portion of a larger series, "sold" to presenters in different sizes: from size Small (S) subsequent performances in sizes Extra Small (XS),7 Medium (M), Large (L), and Extra Large (XL) have emerged. Harrell makes explicit the apparatus of purchase by naming his pieces according to size, as one might sell T-shirts. As a solo, size small (S) refers to cast size and to the size of Harrell's insouciant movements, evacuated of voguing's characteristic speed and attack. Harrell replaces the cool façade of the typical voguer with a pained expression of mourning or longing that shifts attention from voguing's presenttense corporeal urgency to a facially apparent yearning for bygone eras and queer futurities. "I'm not a voguer," states Harrell. "The whole thing is an imaginative possibility. I'm interested in the impossibility, that history that could not come together.... This tradition has a very strong theoretical praxis underneath it" (2010). He adopts voguing as a theoretical framework, allowing the idea of voguing-and the culture from which it emergesto inform his dance; Harrell is not interested in perform-

ing the dance style with technical integrity or mimetic precision. Twenty Looks relies on tropes of decelerated runway strutting and matter-of-fact outfit changes, evacuating voguing of speed, sinew, and shine. These are the very characteristics that define voguing's challenge to capitalism's expectations for blackness (as hyper[hetero] sexualized "bling"), on the one hand, and femininity (as objectified commodity), on the other. While both performances stage corporeal explorations, one is an exercise in physical output, the other in containment: maximal and minimal. Newsome's accumulative effect is met with Harrell's pared-down aesthetic; Newsome presents activity, whereas Harrell sustains intensity. Both artists explore historical temporality through choreographic temporality, using velocity to indicate journeys and returns. Unrelenting in its insistence on voguing's kinetic speed, FIVE is a future-seeking performance that "reads" and remixes histories without stopping for a breath: visiting past centuries incites acceleration to queer-Afrofutures. By distilling voguing to its theoretical essence through deceleration, Twenty Looks imagines a heterogeneous history that never was, inhabiting an otherwise foreclosed postmodern choreography of the slow and the still.8

Institutions of Confinement

ecades after inception, the Whit-

ney and the New Museum challenge the white cube's characteristic wariness of both popular and minoritarian culture through FIVE and Twenty Looks, performances that take up voguing through self-reflexive, postmodern methods. By mounting voguing in the contemporary art museum, far from its subcultural origins, Newsome and Harrell arrive at the paradoxical crux of dance in the museum: when dance is subsumed by the museological preoccupation with static display, it is charged with the resuscitative function of announcing itself as present, live, and vital. The museum's habitual tendency to "freeze" objects in time and space can approach a sense of death and decay. As noted in the above epigraph by art historian Darby English, "The museumizing gesture is a threat exactly because it reproduces cultural subjects as frozen," and it seems that the Whitney and the New Museum (albeit somewhat differently) look to dance to enliven otherwise static space. Due to its frozen and liquid qualities, its simultaneous embrace of the static pose and kinetic transitions, voguing is an especially poignant example of dance in the museum, one that mirrors the museum's penchant for freezing subjects while offering the institution an aesthetic model of movement transitions to interrupt the rigidity of stasis. After all, that which is frozen can potentially thaw. Voguing's stops and starts ignite a sense of temporality internal to its danced iterations; yet, they also point to the dance form's unique

relationship to historical temporality, the way voguing has recently experienced a renaissance after emerging from spaces of incarceration and enduring years of loss due to the 1980s HIV/AIDS crisis.

As a dance form that drew from fashion photography yet remained underground for decades, voguing's influences reflect an unlikely spectrum ranging from "mass advertising" to Egyptian hieroglyphics (Crimp, 1993, 122). This range resonates with art historian Douglas Crimp's claim that Walter Benjamin does not necessarily lament the loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction (through photography and the like). Crimp reiterates an oft overlooked aspect of Benjamin's argument, namely, the revisionary potential afforded by the loss of aura: "Reproduction's 'social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable,' he wrote, 'without its destructive, cathartic aspect, its liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage" (Crimp, 1993, 113). Crimp explains that museums tend to be complicit in maintaining traditional valuations of cultural heritage and that their recognition of auratic loss led to recuperative efforts, especially beginning in the 1970s (114). According to Crimp,

It would seem, though, that if the withering away of the aura is an inevitable fact of our time, then equally inevitable are all those projects to recuperate it, to pretend that the original and the unique are still possible and desirable. And this is nowhere more apparent than in the field of photography itself, the very culprit of mechanical reproduction. (II2)

Inspired by the poses of fashion models in Vogue, bringing photography into dance, voguing inadvertently engages, even recuperates, photography's lost aura through movements of the live dancing body. Thus, to dance in a museum in a style steeped in mainstream fashion photography's imperatives while disidentifying with its subjects is to simultaneously recuperate and reject the auratic and to attempt to dismantle traditional museological modes of identifying and preserving cultural heritage. Yet, at the same time, that which makes recuperation possible in voguing—the body's repetition of photographic poses—also enacts mechanical reproduction: while less materially tangible and lasting, danced repetitions are indeed copies of an undetectable original.

Whereas Newsome calls upon actual voguing to pose questions about the museum as an archiving institution, Harrell merely alludes to voguing in order to stage an interrogation of dance history. According to Crimp, art history as a discipline is founded upon the institution of the museum; thus, we may deduce that dance history as a discipline relies on the institution of the theater. In contemplating the power of the museum, Crimp recounts Michel Foucault's analysis of "modern institutions of confinement—the asylum, the clinic, and the prison—and their respective discursive formations—madness, illness, and criminality" (1993, 48). Crimp refers to the museum and art history as "the preconditions for the discourse that we know as modern art" (1993, 48). Because, as famed voguer Benny Ninja (father

of the House of Ninja) has claimed, voguing was first developed by gay prison inmates imitating the pages of Vogue magazine; it is a dance form that has remained on the periphery of the theater as an institution and subsequently on the periphery of dance history as a discipline. In fact, in its relocation from prison, to non-institutionalized spaces of houses and ballrooms, then to the co-optive institution of the museum, voguing has bypassed the theater altogether.

Voguing in the museum is an exercise in overlapping temporalities. It is also one of intersecting "institutions of confinement." Newsome and Harrell trace voguing's movement from the space of the underground club to the space of the museum-from subculture to high culture, from spaces typically reserved for music and dance to spaces more accustomed to displaying art objects. With these movements come questions of value and consumption: the further voguing moves from its subcultural origins and toward the site epitomizing the visual art marketplace, the more it is valued as a legitimate art form. To resituate a marginalized dance form like voguing in the museum is to agitate the museum's idea of what it means for something to be worthy of display. Newsome and Harrell's performances implicitly question whether such acquisition would risk rehearsing America's foundational economy of capture, of creating an oppressed class and using its output-material and immaterial-for capitalist gain. That the Whitney and the New Museum both recognize voguing as worthy of artistic merit speaks to the dance form's multitemporal reception: it is perceived by its practitioners as mature, while much of its museum audience is experiencing it for the first time. Newsome and Harrell's performances enable us to observe how critical stagings of subcultural dance in the museum underscore the temporality of museological determinations of value: how does the historical temporality of the museum contend with the historical and formal temporality of voguing-its political and aesthetic time-keeping-in the spaces between decades and from one pose to the next? Because the museum has a particular relationship to history, one founded upon the preservation of objects over time, the placement of dance in its midst complicates assumptions of both the museum's ability to contain dance history and dance's ability to assert its cultural past under the scrutiny of a less familiar institutional gaze. While performance art in museums and galleries is most often improvised, operating in the service of institutional critique, museums inadvertently treat dance not as action but as art object, inviting choreographers to present prepared works. Often, when the museum provides space for dance performance, it temporarily takes on the role of the theater. In doing so, the theatrical is not generated by an art object's insistence on co-presence (as in the vein of "theatricality" criticized by Michael Fried in reference to minimalist sculpture); rather, a more traditional model of theatricality-that of concert performance-is reproduced. In

VOGUE Museum Realness

some respect, *FIVE* and *Twenty Looks* exemplify concert dance's bounded sense of theatricality, but they also rely on voguing's inherent improvisational approach: they are both choreographed and improvised, paradoxically only visible through institutional confinement.

You Betta Count: Rashaad Newsome's FIVE Elements

oth Newsome and Harrell take up voguing's preoccupation with the numerical and the categorical while subverting the dance's competitive expectations as neither one of their pieces fully satisfies the criteria used to judge balls. Numbers permeate titles (FIVE; Twenty Looks), tallying elements or "looks." The pieces' numerical structuring draws from the use of numbers in balls, from competition scorecards (I-IO) to the number of categories of looks being judged in any one event. Almost any dance form demands a type of counting, whether that of the beat or that of the number of rotations in a pirouette. Techniques such as ballet and voguing praise both efficiency and quantity, championing swift transitions (for example, from a standing position down to the ground in a "dip")12 and numerous spins (whereas most trained concert dancers can execute up to three rotations in a single pirouette, the virtuoso can make eleven, twenty, even thirty rotations without lowering the standing heel). Newsome displaces the focus on quantity somewhat by emphasizing Vogue Femme's spiraling "hair" dance, in which wig and weave-flinging head rolls initiate movement, allowing the rest of the body to follow in corkscrewing spirals down to the ground and back up.

FIVE is comprised of five sections that correlate with five musicians, five colors, and five elements of voguing. For example, after Ebony's exit, when the second dancer, \$hane Oliver, bursts onto the floor in a shimmery neon yellow lycra exercise outfit and a baseball cap with a ponytail weave flowing from the back, floutist (Michele Smith) begins to play. The third dancer, Prince Milan, in high tops, cropped hair, and red lycra, gestures in sync with a violinist's bold strokes. The dancers, who also include Aaliyah Ebony (in a pink leotard), Omari Mizrahi (a pique-turning wizard in blue), DaShaun Evisu (in purple), Nicole K (in the tiniest of black leotards), and Twiggy Prada (in a hip-hop inspired track suit), perform voguing's "five key elements":

I was breaking down the five elements that make up Vogue Femme, which is the most current style of voguing.... I then go back to the history and the original style of voguing... show[ing] the viewer how voguing is used in its original setting. It is a battling dance form, so...I staged a battle between two dancers. (2010)

Newsome likens the structure of FIVE to the narrative storyline of "an opera," on the one hand, but claims

it is pieced together "like a collage," on the other. Movado's commentary, while performative and descriptive, is not narrative. FIVE's voguers serve you arms, body, attitude, and skill-contorting into a dip on "one" and duck-walking in a crotch-tugging leotard on "two." The five elements reflect Newsome's interest in the structure of chamber music, typically performed by a small number of musicians. In such chamber performance, as in a family (whether heteronormative or like those of Ballroom's houses), each "voice" is potentially heard, no matter the degree to which sound is interlaced. Here the classical and the subcultural meet, and acoustic instruments provide the background to voguing's foreground, upsetting habituated hierarchies in Western art and performance. In FIVE, each dancer is distinct, exhibiting one of the five elements and dressed predominantly in a single color, with lipstick color that correlates to her respective musician.

Newsome's voguers place their emphasis on form, and a dance style once enmeshed in elaborate costume and attitude is pared down to its gestural, athletic impulse, presenting ambivalent gender formations: the embodiment of what American studies scholar Roderick Ferguson calls "queer of color critique," the dance itself "critically expose[s] the gender and sexual diversity within racial formations" (Ferguson, 21). Paradoxically, such gender diversity is revealed not through a quantity of types, but through minimal formulations such as single-colored costumes more evocative of American Apparel's oeuvre of retro '80s jazzercise gear than the flamboyantly normative girl-frills and boy-uniforms of balls in past decades.¹³

The dancers, musicians, and vocalists rehearsed with Newsome in very small groups, assembling for the first time in dress rehearsal. Newsome explains his process:

I was really inspired by Merce Cunningham's chance performances where he would work with people separately, and [then] come together....I wanted to work with people who were really in the scene and really part of the community.... All the people in my piece belong to a house....It doesn't necessarily mean that you live in the house with other people. You have houses and everybody lives their own life, but they manage to meet up...to rehearse when there's a ball coming up.... When I had found all the dancers, they were really proficient in certain elements (the hands, etc.), and I worked with each one of those dancers separately on a dance composition solely based on that element. [When] I started to look at those compositions, and I was trying to figure out a way to transform what was happening visually into something sonically, I had a casting call for musicians. They would have to come into the studio and play with the rehearsal videos to find a sound that would be the sonic translation of that movement. So, it ended up being flute for hands, and so on. Once I found my musicians I worked with them and wrote music for the dancer....I had them play over the electronic music that's playing. [I created] the bass track. It's...a mixture of all the tropes you would hear in standard ball music, that specific clash. (2010)

Even in his attempt to portray the history of voguing, Newsome relies on Cunningham and Cage's postmodern chance methods, in which dance and music are not paired until performance. Newsome's interest in postmodern dance is musical, related to his experience as a DJ:

My relationship to voguing and voguers goes back to when I was a teenager [in New Orleans]. I was going to balls even before I moved to New York. I have a background in DJing. I used to play music [for] friends who were who were in houses. I always had one foot in the community and one foot out. (2010)

Newsome sees his role as that of a live documenter interested in exploring new practices of archiving single performances. Nevertheless, to archive for one's own practice and portfolio has entirely different political ramifications than being archived by a museum in power. Newsome views the history of voguing as informed by what he sees as the starting point of visual art—drawing:

Historically, "art" begins with a drawing, literally and metaphorically—the conceptual starting point. In Five, the artist, dancers, musicians and audience create the conceptual starting point at the end through the technological delineation and reconstruction of a live dance and musical performance through real time audio and video processing and motion tracking software manipulation. (2010)

By placing art's foundation-drawing-at the end of the piece, Newsome temporally inverts process and result, action and production. In this case, the impulse for drawing emerges not from pencil and pad, but from the ephemeral-live music and dance. As such, he shifts the audience's attention to a history that was never written: "The piece is really about this practice, this dance, this art form. Voguing is constantly in a state of flux...like a tumbleweed...a composite of everything that came before it" (2010). As Newsome documents more and more variations of his work on voguing, he attempts to create a minoritarian historiography. Working against the durational exercises of performance art's past, he must rush to keep abreast of the activities his art records. By taking it upon himself to assume the role of Composer, Conductor, and Archivist, Newsome subverts and reclaims what has heretofore remained the domain of the museum: archiving, acquisition, and ownership. In doing so, he raises questions of cultural appropriation and representation: what kinds of "blackness" have museums sought to acquire and by what means; why hasn't dance, especially of queer black minoritarian culture, been deemed worthy of acquisition?¹⁴ While live documentation has become a more common art practice, it has never before involved voguing, whose inconsistent history Newsome tries to recover through the compulsive temporality of motion-capture technology.

Crammed into the Whitney's performance space devoid of seating, those of us in *FIVE*'s audience compete for a view. At times, we must choose whether to view the projection or the performers, as both cannot always be fully experienced at once.¹⁵ In negotiating the

Ballroom's inherently obstructed view (transferred to the museum), audience members crouching and perching to seize upon a glimpse of the scene also unwittingly mimic voguing's competition and floorwork.¹⁶ During the video editing process well after the performance, Newsome discovered that "[this older] critic for Opera magazine couldn't sit down because if he had sat down, he wouldn't have been able to get up" (2010). Indeed, numerous members of the audience scolded him for standing. As Newsome recounts, "Balls always happen in peculiar spaces and you just make it work wherever you can get a space. It's funny that even in the context of the museum, that was the same situation....Part of performing in that space was negotiating how you were going to work with [it]" (2010).17 While the performers continue to work the space, voguing in solos, duets, and finally as a quintet, Newsome sits on the perimeter of the performance space at his laptop, as an algorithm sketches the dancers' movement onto a projected screen and he DJs the clubby bass beats that provide the sonic foundation for the live instrumental performances. Brightly colored lines are projected onto a side wall, and accumulate with the dance.

Is Paris Still Burning? Judith Butler, Realness, and Trajal Harrell's *Twenty Looks*

ennie Livingston's 1990 documentary, Paris is Burning-the first to feature voguing and Ballroom culture-provided the occasion for Judith Butler and Peggy Phelan's foundational theorizations of gender performance in 1993. For both Butler and Phelan, the film provided an opportunity to theorize drag, gender, and the concept of performance itself. Coincidentally, voguing was once referred to by its practitioners as "performance." In the footsteps of "Vogue," Madonna's 1990 hit song and music video starring dancer Willi Ninja (featured in Paris is Burning asserting his desire for fame), Butler's Bodies That Matter and Phelan's Unmarked introduced academic readers to "fierceness," "striking a pose," "legendary status," "Ballroom culture," and "realness." Butler writes,

"Realness"...is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect. This effect is itself the result of an embodiment of norms, a reiteration or norms, an impersonation of a racial and class norm, a norm which is at once a figure, a figure of a body, which is no particular body, but a morphological ideal that remains the standard which regulates the performance, but which no performance fully approximates. (1993, 129)"19

Butler used the example of drag in Paris is Burning as a hyperbolic instantiation of gender performance in order to illustrate her argument that, whether reiterat-

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ing norms or embodying subversion, gender is repeatedly performed. Increasingly, museums are harnessing voguing—both its potential and its past—to perform a kind of "museum realness." In doing so, what kind of "belief" do they "compel," and what remains exposed, since "no performance fully approximates" realness?

As a dance form that coexists with a commentator's freestyle commands and interpellations, and submits to prescribed Ballroom categories, voguing easily destabilizes assumptions of dance's wholly corporeal performative potential. And the audience's apprehension of the added spatial and historical de- and recontextualizations in the museum of *FIVE* and *Twenty Looks* in 2010 depends on the their discursively informed familiarity with voguing as a form which emerged in the past. Live dance performance can indeed take on what Butler

calls performativity's destabilizing effects, but often do so while simultaneously capitulating to conservative demands for explanation. The "Foucauldian premise [is] that power works in part through discourse and it works in part to produce and destabilise subjects," amplified through FIVE's portrayal of the choreographic body dancing in direct response to performative utterances such as "Femininea-pussy cunt" and when Harrell performs in reference to textual categories like "Serving Old School Runway," listed in the program notes for Twenty Looks (Butler, "Gender as Performance," no page number provided). Such discursive supplements help to smooth the otherwise abrasive relationship between subcultural dance and

the museum, functioning the way captions or plaques might operate in service of more materially permanent artwork.

PHOTO BY MIANA JUN

Empirically speaking, Harrell has kept both feet out of the voguing community: "I grew up in Douglas, Georgia and I went to Yale....I didn't dance at Yale....I didn't dance with anyone. I always did my own work" (2010).²⁰ Never one to take daily technique class or to equate artistry with a consistent physical practice, Harrell is committed to mining voguing for its theoretical potential. In response to his initial provocation (of what he would do if he were a voguer from Harlem going downtown to wJudson), he asserts,

I would sell some things [....] What would it mean...for vogue to change markets?.... I thought of this famous picture [of David Hammons performing in Bliz-aard Ball Sale (1983)] selling snowballs on the streets of Harlem, and the different sized snowballs....I thought, I should do it in different sizes....

Literally, [the piece] is sold in different sizes to presenters on the dance market. I didn't want to deny the fact that the piece is for sale. (2010)"²¹

Harrell's performance is one of attention, in multiple senses of the word:

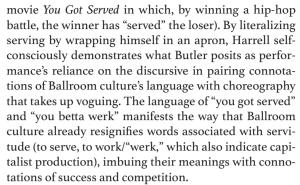
The power of attention and visibility in dance is in the hands of the presenters and programmers, unlike in most fields where there's also a negotiation with others. A singer or actor has an agent, publicists, all kinds of people who are in charge of their visibility....I wanted to make people question those kinds of power relationships: who decides who has attention and who doesn't have attention? (2010)22

Harrell demands of his audience an unbroken gaze, one that is forced to detect the uncomfortable process of change. Most of his time is spent changing from one outfit to the next. Harrell's twenty looks are discursively

delineated from the onset, as he begins his piece by handing out a cheat sheet of looks, from "West Coast Preppy School Boy" to "Serving Old School Runway" to "Legendary with a Twist" (program notes). Harrell's studied provocation de-drags and re-drags the full-out, coiffed wig, fake-eyelash-wearing, penistucking drag of Paris Is Burning. While numbers appear in competitive voguing in the form of score cards. Harrell's indicates his twenty looks by turning the pages of a propped-up sketchbook. Numbers charting performance ability are transformed into numbers that distinguish gender types.

Herein lies the subtle gender politics of Harrell's solo work. Each number holds the possibility of a "look," a way of

looking, a gender. For Harrell, "Voguing is another tool to look at [gender] issues....In voguing...you lose your ability to...automatically read gender" (2010).23 With his back to the audience, amidst a humble arrangement of six pastel colored folding chairs positioned in two rows upstage left, Harrell embarks on the first look ("West Coast Preppy School Boy") by donning a button-down shirt, a striped necktie, khakis, a yellow windbreaker, and white flip-flops. Most of these clothes are placed over his base outfit of black t-shirt and pants: on Harrell's stage, black is neutral. So is silence. One hears the audience's nervous laughter or the compulsive paper rustling returns to the program's "look" guide long before any music enters the scene. Later on he dons an apron, taking on Ballroom culture's trope of "serving," which typically refers to outdoing someone else with a look or a dance, and is now commonly used in popular mainstream dance culture (as evidenced by the 2004



When Harrell gently frames his face with his hands, his gesturally informed dance reads as allusion as opposed to fully embodied characterization. His references to straightforward categories reminiscent of Ballroom culture evolve into categories exhibiting a self-conscious awareness of debates of postmodern performance: "Basquiat Realness," "Old School Post-Modern." According to Harrell,

The piece...is a fashion show. There's always dressing and undressing....There's always voguing happening....I tend to be interested in histories of movement on women's bodies, movement that hasn't been recorded or hasn't been historicized. Voguing fits in there, but is a little bit different. (2010)

Harrell's hands tremble as he transforms voguing's typically hard-hitting dynamics of "striking a pose" into an evenly paced slow-motion aesthetic, creating a rather silent, static backdrop, against which the occasional club tune seems unexpected. I happened to be sitting

onstage in one of the chairs framing the perimeter of Twenty Looks' sparse set. Due to my proximity to Harrell's body, I was able to discern micromovements. Harrell's quivering limbs (intentional or otherwise) alerted us to the labor that a relative lack of movement requires. His movements resemble "marking," the way a dancer in rehearsal indicates a phrase with her arms in preparation for the full execution found in a performance. While seemingly haphazard to the contemporary viewer, Harrell's apparent marking evokes a significant moment in western dance history, namely, the court dance of Louis XIV and its restrained port de bras, limited by the constraints of taut costuming. Adding to suggestions of voguing's Ballroom and Louis XIV's court, Harrell's set implies a fashion show runway by overlaying a black strip of flooring atop the stage's otherwise grey surface. The New Museum set up a blackbox-within-a-whitebox performance space, creating the type of distance generated by typical theatrical stadium seating; disrupting theatrical conventions associated with such a seating arrangement, Harrell placed beside his runway rows of empty chairs facing upstage, as if to suggest an imaginary audience, absent now but seated in another time.

Implicit in Harrell's exploration of voguing are questions of race and class. He transfers Butler's observation of the role of drag in socio-cultural survival to the context of the contemporary dance community, placing these issues in dialogue with the idea of historical postmodern dance's exclusivity (interpreted by some as exclusionary):





How could I use the theoretical underpinning [of voguing] to think about the dance community? At the time New York was changing a lot and my friends were losing their places....How [were] we going to survive?...The thing we forget about Judson is that this was a community of people, and there were mini-cliques inside of it. It wasn't this neutral, non-socio-politicized milieu, you know?...That's something the dance world...doesn't want to look at. (2010)²⁴

The Judson Dance Theater was not known for its inclusion of black performers; as dance scholar Ramsay Burt writes, "The dancers themselves were almost entirely white" (22). Nevertheless, most experimental dancers, regardless of race "struggle to survive" financially, even if they are not subjected to the kind of violence (and concerns of survival) Butler discusses in relation to trans people of color. Explorations of whiteness and blackness in Twenty Looks begin with a coalescence of formal aesthetic components such as slowness, posing, and strutting. Snatched from its subcultural context of competitive Harlem balls, dance clubs, and the prestige of houses (such as the House of Xtravaganza, featured in Paris Is Burning and still functioning today), voguing's difficult contortionist movements are pared down to sparse, durational entries and exits into and out of poses. The "voguing" Harrell presents is perhaps best described through one of Harrell's "looks" itself: "Eau de Jean Michel" (a reference to black Neo-Expressionist painter Jean Michel Basquiat). Like Basquiat, Harrell is a black artist working within frameworks typically reserved for white artists. Like eau de toilette, Twenty Looks offers "eau de vogue," a deliberate dilution. If contemporary voguers dance to the beat, whipping their bodies in and out of challenging poses, Harrell pares such poses down to their spatiotemporal minimum, with a simple hand placed on a slowly jutting hip, held in position for the audience to scrutinize. Such minimalism (often referred to as a pedestrian aesthetic) typified the Judson Dance Theater, which eschewed characteristics that defined much American dance (by black performers and otherwise) that embraced presentation, expression, technique, and hyperkineticism.²⁵ Harrell's refusal to embody voguing rejects realness' compulsive effort, its associations with physical labor, questioning the over-rehearsed assumption that the black dancing body is necessarily in motion, necessarily laboring.26

Unlike Judson's rejection of capitalism, the runway is one of capitalism's most iconic stages, awash in the pouty refusal of expression and virtuosity. Harrell explains,

In 2000 I went to my first ball...the Love Ball...I was blown away by it....At the time my work was super minimalist. I had gone to the ball and I had gone to my first fashion show. These two things [were] more interesting than what I was seeing in dance in terms of postmodernism....The pedestrianism on the runway is incredible, the way it's a character but it's not. (2010)

In some ways, Harrell capitulates to his mostlywhite dance and museum-going audience; to a certain extent, one can assume that such an audience is familiar with the interstices of postmodern visual art and performance. Harrell is able to draw in his audience with an aesthetic of relationality (between performer and audience), duration, and the disavowal of technical bravura. These characteristics have historically defined white-dominated, heterosexual avant-garde practices such as those of the Judson Dance Theater, and Harrell's performance "reads" them from within, complicating the notion of neutrality. His faintly feminized lilt as he reluctantly strikes a supermodel pose here and a schoolboy stance there lingers in ambivalence.

Drawing a parallel between minimalist art and the work of the Judson Dance Theater, Burt emphasizes the idea that "saying no to aspects of the mainstream dance of the day" was not necessarily to reject the theatrical (II).²⁷ "It is these demands-that the spectator take time to see a minimalist work and recognize its presence-that art historian Michael Fried called theatrical" (13). According to Burt, the Judson Dance Theater required of its viewer active participation, and therefore fails (in Fried's terms) to "defeat theatre." In stressing the durational aspect of performance by introducing a kind of slow-motion voguing and demanding a participatory viewership, Harrell draws from the Judson Dance Theater's preoccupation with the relational. In place of voguing's embrace of swiftly executed doublejointed arm poses and runway struts, Harrell offers an aesthetic of stillness and duration reminiscent of the Judson dancers. The virtuosity famously rejected by Judson's own Yvonne Rainer (in her 1965 No Manifesto-"NO to virtuosity") is that which champions highkicking legs, fast pirouettes, pointed feet, and buoyant jumps. The Judson Dance Theater's preoccupation with the pedestrian, the durational, and the relationalthough "anarchic" in its time through its dismissal of the mainstream-can read today as a marker of "whiteness." Where Harrell diverges from the Judson Dance Theater is in his unexpected embrace of expressionism: "I don't start from a politics to make my work.... If you ask people what kind of work I make, they say I'm a conceptualist. I'm so not a conceptualist....I'm really an expressionist" (2010). Unexpectedly, Harrell's emotive facial expressions hearken back to the kind of drama found in more traditional western theater, in that institution of confinement constructed within the institution of the New Museum. Yet, it is the New Museum's institution within an institution that provides Harrell with the opportunity to stage a performance that approaches institutional critique. That Harrell slows voguing movements, phrasing them with an unaccentuated wash, is a choice that challenges binary conceptualizations of whiteness (as anti-kinetic) and blackness (as presentational and kinetic) in American dance.28 Whether in textual or choreographic form, it seems that a queer of color critique can only come into being if it operates within an institutional context-the academy, the museum, or the theater.

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Praxis in Poiesis: Jose Esteban Muñoz, Giorgio Agamben, and Voguing's Gestures

oguing as trace, voguing as dream: voguing can never be here. In Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity (2009), Jose Esteban Muñoz writes about voguing in the context of the solo drag performances of Kevin Aviance

(from the House of Aviance), which are knowingly abstracted from Ballroom culture and performed in largely white gay clubs.²⁹ Muñoz would like to "imagine that [Aviance's] performance is something that is instructive, that recodifies signs of abjection in mainstream queer spaces—blackness, femininity/effeminacy—and makes them something to be desired" (Muñoz 79). Like that of his predecessors Butler and Phelan, Muñoz's focus on drag, gender, and gesture—not the intricacies of dance—becomes the occasion to mention voguing. Muñoz cites voguing's imaginative potential for queer youth and, like Butler, finds in the dance the "trace of...survival":

Vogueing...is too often considered a simplistic celebration of black queer culture. It is seen as a simple appropriation of high fashion or other aspects of commodity culture. I am proposing that we might see something other than a celebration in these moves—the strong trace of black and queer racialized survival, the way in which children need to imagine being Other in the face of conspiring cultural logics of white supremacy and heteronormativity. (80, sic)

Despite its ability to do things in the present, voguing's performative power lies in its ability to join multiple temporalities. Newsome and Harrell's performances situate themselves in the very future that Phelan thought impossible in 1993, and in a past that could have been. Have they inaugurated an aesthetics of what Muñoz calls "queer utopia"-in the present (but with an eye to the past)?30 Or, if, as Muñoz suggests, queerness always has yet to arrive, do Newsome and Harrell offer us an imagining of what that utopia might resemble in a space of stasis (while risking the unavailability of queerness that arrives when one meets the present)? "Aviance," writes Muñoz, "reconstructs blackness as a mysterious Lostin-Space aesthetic....Afro-futurism" (76). Muñoz writes that Aviance's performances "insist on the fact of blackness in [an] overwhelmingly white space" (75). Albeit via a different channel of consumption-the art market of the museum as opposed to the social sphere of the nightclub-Newsome and Harrell also "insist on the fact of blackness" in spaces dominated by white patronage. Like Aviance, Newsome and Harrell insist on blackness through the nonrepresentational physicality of dance, not the literalism of scripted ethnographic detail favored

by Livingston's documentary, which signposts every new term ("fierce," "realness," "to read").³¹

In avoiding punctuated movement, Harrell's dance of unhurried flow offers an exploration of the relationship between gesture, dance, and the temporality of queer history that expands upon Muñoz's discussion of Aviance's gesture. Muñoz writes, "I wish to concentrate my focus on the precise and specific physical acts that are conventionally understood as gesture, such as the tilt of an ankle in very high heels, the swish of a hand that pats a face with imaginary makeup, and so many more precise acts. The acts are different, but certainly not independent, from movements that have more to do with the moving body's flow. Concentrating on gesture atomizes movement" (67). Although Muñoz chooses to focus on Aviance's movement through the lens of gesture (more than dance), I would suggest that even though voguing is informed by gesture, it is more fruitfully discussed as dance, for dance signifies differently than gesture. Gesture participates in linguistic communication, while voguing's use of gesture is citational, downplaying communication in favor of generating affect through an amalgamation of gestural images and choreographic transitions in motion.

Emphasizing means as opposed to ends, Agamben places gesture firmly in the realm of action: "What characterizes gesture is that in it there is neither production nor enactment, but undertaking and supporting. In other words, gesture opens the sphere of ethos as the most fitting sphere of the human. But in what way is an action undertaken and supported?...'Action [praxis] and production [poiesis] are generically different. For production aims at an end other than itself; but this is impossible in the case of action, because the end is merely to do what is right" (Agamben, [1992] 2000). Munoz wrote, "Agamben privileges gesture as a modality of movement that resists modernity's totalizing political scripts insofar as it promises a politics of a 'means with out end'" (Muñoz 162). Agamben focuses on action's temporality of immediacy, with interesting theoretical consequences for choreography, which tends to define scripted movement that is assembled in the service of production, in multiple senses of the word, as in a theatrical production as well as an envisioning of a final product that amounts to more than the sum of its individual parts. Dance styles such as voguing that privilege movement (as opposed to stasis), are comprised of both action and production, responding in the moment (both when scripted and when improvised) and working toward a larger whole, a production. Because voguing takes on gesture, which, according to Agamben (and Bourdieu in terms of habitus) is defined by habitual, societal "undertaking and supporting," it functions at the interstices of choreography and gesture, production and action. That FIVE and Twenty Looks are further contained by their respective choreographic productions in the museum places them further in the realm of production. Nevertheless, the way Newsome and Harrell culturally resignify voguing provides us with an opportunity to harness the potential for action *in* production, praxis in poiesis.

The staged performance of gesturally-informed dance signifies quite differently than the way gestures are performed in everyday life, as such quotidian gestures are unwittingly socially informed by-and defining-habitus. For, as Diedre Sklar (after Bourdieu) reminds us, "People are not in possession of the habitus; rather, they are possessed by it" (2008, 91). Performers such as Aviance (as well as Newsome's voguers and Harrell) cite gesture in the name of dance. Newsome is interested in the meeting place of gesture and movement-dance: "My fascination with voguing is in the abstract nature of the dance form. Another interest in my work is in non-verbal forms of communication, and gesture as a form of communication. Voguing in its original creation is a battling dance form so it's essentially a series of poses and movements that communicates to your opponents and judges" (2010). It seems that Muñoz inadvertently points not to movement, but to the pose and the pause when he writes "gesture," and I find it generative to explore the temporality of the pose/pause in relationship to gesture and the dance of voguing. In claiming that "Gesture...signals a refusal of a certain kind of finitude," Muñoz discusses gesture's role in the transmission of "ephemeral knowledge over and across time" (65). He continues, "Gesture transmits ephemeral knowledge of lost queer histories and possibilities within a phobic majoritarian public culture" (67). Aviance's queer gestures, for Muñoz, "contain [a] message [of]... racialized self-enactment in the face of overarching opposition" (80). I find that it is gesture's reiterability of the static pose that allows for its performative potential, its contribution to the survival of "queer histories" (67). The pose defines an arrival (as in "striking" a pose), but it also reminds us of the way subjects can be frozen in time by hegemonic institutions. Challenging museological stasis, voguing's movement takes its dancer from pose to pose such that the pause is often effaced in favor of continuity, transition.

Trans-Drag: Gendered Temporalities and Museological Fantasies

Fluid they usually say. Liquid assets.
—Phelan (108)

utler and Phelan's arguments on drag and realness hinged on 1980s looks coveted by ball competitors that encouraged heteromasculine ideals such as military chic or hetero-feminine aspirations of white suburban housewifery. Venus Extravaganza, who was openly transgender in Livingston's documentary interviews, adopted a look dictated by whiteness and was ultimately killed by a "transphobic john,"

prompting Butler's claim that the fantastical component of drag reveals the "struggle to survive" (2006, 216).³² On the one hand, drag embodies Muñoz's utopic future; on the other hand, it invites the violence it labors so hard to avoid. Butler maintains that "drag is a site of a certain ambivalence" (1993, 125).³³ As Newsome makes apparent in *FIVE*, drag's ambivalence in contemporary voguing culture functions differently than that of *Paris is Burning*. Instead of idolizing white gender constructions, Newsome's dancers' looks range from hip-hop track suits to futuristic spandex, looks that aspire to certain imaginings of blackness and the futuristic–even "dancer" itself becomes a professional category to covet. Nevertheless, such types circulate within a capitalistic system of consumption and are, to varying degrees, recognizable.

Gender performances of realness are not clearly legible in Newsome and Harrell's stylized museum performances. There is a divergence between everyday and performance subjectivities; moreover, the performers' jobs in everyday life do work to resolve some of the crisis or need to "survive" of earlier voguing communities. "The woman who does the hair performance," explains Newsome, "works for an HIV/AIDS organization in Jersey." Other performers in FIVE include "a fashion designer with a successful line called Hood By Air....a dancer in Vogue Evolution, the first ever voguing troupe...and a beautician" (2010). In addition to the five more widely acknowledged elements, Newsome explains, "There's been this long-disputed sixth element brought to the [voguing] community by the transgender community. And that element is called 'hair.' While two of the performers in FIVE identify as trans in their everyday lives, audience members are not privy to this information, and are forced to focus instead on the performance in the moment. As opposed to the documentary's descriptive qualities, moments comprising FIVE require a reliance on appearance-as-given in the sense that the audience does not have the opportunity to compare performance personae with everyday personae. And Movado's commentary creates further gender ambiguity, at once aggressively misogynistic as well as an affirmation of femininity: "Feminine-a-pussy-cunt" is interspersed with "grr grr grrrrr," even bringing species-based transness into the mix. In his assured tone, Movado's statements are positive supplements to the dancing body. To focus on the dancer as she operates in relation to the non-questioning commentary is to ascertain that FIVE (and to some degree Twenty Looks) eliminates the "not only...but also" function of textual discourse that Susan Stryker points to:

Do transgender phenomena not show us that 'woman can function as a social space that can be populated, without loss of definitional coherence, not only by people who were born with a typical female anatomy and reared as girls who identify as women, but also by people reared as girls who identify as women but who have physical intersex conditions, or by people who were born with a typical male anatomy but who self-identify as women and take all possible steps to live

VOGUE Museum Realness

their lives that way, or by people born female who express conventionally masculine social behaviors but who don't think of themselves as or want to be men? (12)

By showing-as opposed to saying-what, for example, "woman" can encompass, the voguers in FIVE present us with givens, and for a moment we are prevented from imagining another "woman" or a performer's everyday identity. Moreover, the dance itself is a "transing," a movement between categories. Stryker defines transing as "a practice that takes place within, as well as across or between, gendered spaces. It is a practice that assembles gender into contingent structures of association with other attributes of bodily be-

ing, and that allows for their reassembly" (13). As a practice that deconstructs and reassembles variously gendered, classed, and raced spaces, voguing makes visible Stryker's transing as a kinetic practice, and performances such as FIVE further formalize and sample voguing to both consolidate and elaborate upon the spatio-temporal political dimension of trans.34

In FIVE, even the biological female embodies the praxis of trans, as the elusive yet central dancer defining the sixth-yet still partially invisible-element of voguing refuses easy categorization, moving between hyper-femininity and athleticism, man-in drag and "woman." Emerging in the tiniest of black leotards toward the end of FIVE is Nicole K, and we are not privy to her gender iden-

tity. Instead, we are met with a performance of Vogue Femme, every bit as femme-y as Ebony's opening sequence. According to Newsome,

There are very few females in the scene who can really voque....In voquing there is such hyper-femininity, but as a performance of a performance of a performance, I wanted to pay homage to the women in the scene too....I had Nicole come out with [Movado, the commentator] because...she was like a physical manifestation of his voice....a male take on a female voice...also a physical manifestation of what all the performers were referencing in their dance...in its true form because she's a real woman. (2010)

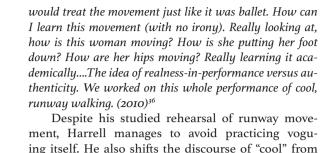
Of course, "real" and "woman" are both impos-

sible categories. Referring to drag, Phelan suggests, "a re-presented woman is always a copy of a copy; the 'real' (of) woman cannot be represented because her function is to re-present man. She is the mirror and thus is never in it" (101).35 But in suggesting Nicole's biological femininity, Newsome inadvertently points to the central "theoretical praxis" defining-and formulated by-voguing itself: realness. If, as Butler suggests, realness is the effect of an approximation as opposed to an actuality of the "real" (already an impossibility, a construct), then drag in contemporary voguing is a performance of aspiration that brings about belief, despite the audience's awareness of a lack of arrival.

Butler and Phelan believe realness is convincing, even though they do not believe in the "real." Contemporary vogue complicates Butler's and Phelan's assumptions of realness as defined by the inability to be "read" (to be denounced for failure) by instead exposing the artificiality inherent to realness and the "real." The ambivalent costuming alone in FIVE and Twenty Looks, ranging from Afrofuturist queer to hetero-preppy, in refusing stable normative categories, prevents a "reading." To aspire to gender ambivalence-in maxed out breasts, a flippy ponytail, buffed biceps, and little crotch bulge-is precisely where the praxis of contemporary Vogue Femme operates, at once exposing and concealing the labor of performance.

Even though Harrell's Twenty Looks is "not about copying voguing," it is to a certain extent about copying women, or, more precisely, approaching a sense of recognized femininity, that of the ideal runway model (Harrell, 2010). Harrell claims not to be engaging in the physical technique of voguing; instead, his performance is informed by a rehearsal process that explores fashion runway walking from an embodied-"woman's"-perspective. Harrell is doing the work of a historian by engaging with early voguing's prototype, the fashion model.

It's very specific that in this work we take on women's movement and not the men's....A friend gave me videotapes [of fashion shows] and we would work in the studio. We



ment, Harrell manages to avoid practicing voguing itself. He also shifts the discourse of "cool" from questions of black masculinity to questions of white femininity, bringing attention to the circulation and reappropriation of diasporic cultural formations-and

their subsequent theorizations-in society and the academy. Such shifting-or transing-is precisely what FIVE and Twenty Looks enact by recontextualizing voguing in the museum. Nevertheless, to introduce voguing to audiences unfamiliar with its history is to risk capture and dilution, the crux of Phelan's remark on visibility's complex aftermath, both a celebration and a lament: "The risk of visibility then is the risk of any translation-a weaker version of the original script, the appropriation by (economically and artistically) powerful 'others.' The payoff of translation (and visibility) is more people will begin to speak in your tongue" (97). The problem that ensues, then, when museums commission artists to stage critical transgender performances in

their midst is that under-versed audiences consume transgender images in a fetishistic manner.

Fantasy's liberating potential relies on the idea that one has at her disposal a number of imaginable possibilities for the performance of race and gender. Ball culture offers a multitude of such possibilities. The gendered ambivalence of drag and trans performance in *Twenty Looks* and *FIVE* epitomizes the power of the space of fantasy (that which rests between the social and the psychic) to confront the museum's regulating effects. English writes, "the limitless possibilities opened up in fantasy...lie between the social and the psychic." While Butler refers to fantasy in drag

performance in Paris is Burning as a necessary mode of survival, one that functions within everyday life as well as in balls, English cites Mario Van Peebles' blaxploitation film Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song (1971) and Isaac Julien's Looking for Langston (1989) as examples of engaging fantasy's imaginative potential to insist on visibility when dominant culture renders subculture static and invisible. English writes, "In blaxploitation, as in Julien's film, the recourse to fantasy is valued precisely for its power to dismantle the seemingly limitless power of the museumist model of cultural representation" (English 195). As live, dragged dance performances in museums, FIVE and Twenty

> Looks bring together Butler's notion of fantasy's role in survival in Paris is Burning and English's proposition that fantasy represented in queer of color film can unfreeze the museum's static treatment of black sexuality.

> For all their reinvigorating potential, FIVE and Twenty Looks cannot shake the spectre of stasis haunting the museum-and that may not be their intention. During performances of FIVE and Twenty Looks, the museum is snatched up in drag realness, as audiences sitting, squatting, and standing nod to the beat. Through voguing, the museum aspires to Ballroom's norm, ultimately performing an approximation, ready to switch up its garb to satisfy the next pang of nostalgia. And who, if anyone, will archive future performances com-

prising the museum's fleeting attempts at realness? Ultimately, the Whitney and the New Museum harness the fantasies of subcultural performing subjects in order to ensure their own survival. After all, as Butler once wrote, "The struggle to survive is not really separable from the cultural life of fantasy." Newsome and Harrell's focus on voguing as a dance form is what ultimately lends their work its resistant potential. By insisting that dance, as a cultural product, always returns to the body, Newsome and Harrell temporarily occupy the museum, spotlighting its inability to circumscribe and acquire the elaborating kinetic practices that define voguing.



Despite his studied rehearsal of runway movement, Harrell manages to avoid practicing voguing itself.

 $110^{\, ext{VOGUE}\, ext{NOT}}$

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NOTES

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ENDNOTES

- 1. Whitney Museum on March 19th, 2010.
- 2. "Vogue femme" is a recent style of voguing. It has developed since the beginning of voguing in the 1960s but only became explicit around 1995.

 Other styles include "old style" (pre-1990s) and "new style" (approximately 1990 onward). All three styles are currently practiced.
- 3. My provisional term.
- 4. FIVE is a single performance, having occurred only once, on March 19th, 2010, at the Whitney. Regarding the related video series, Newsome has said the following: "I've been looking for precision in a very specific style of voguing (vogue femme) because voguing has had various styles over the years. And I make these abstract compositions with no music so you can focus on the dance. So, the videos [Untitled]

are a work of abstraction but also a formal archive of this dance form that has existed for a long time" (2010). FIVE correlates with video installations (appearing on an upper floor of the Whitney) and subsequent multimedia explorations in other venues. Newsome explains that the idea of collage frames much of his work; he does not use terms such as multimedia, instead including dance and dancers as elements of collage: "A lot of my work is rooted in abstraction, more specifically, using the medium of collage. I use collage in the grand sense, whether it's several women on the stage and collaging together the sounds they're making into a musical composition or a paper into a visual composition or moving image into a visual and sonic composition" (2010).

- 5. "Ballroom culture, sometimes called 'house culture,' is a clandestine community consisting of African American and...Latino/a GLBTQ people. Since its beginnings in Harlem, New York, more than 50 years ago, ballroom culture has expanded rapidly to every major city in the United States" (Bailey, 2005, 1-2).
- 6. This solo premiered in October 2009 at the New Museum.
- 7. Notably, he names the sparsest of the series (a solo with only twenty-five to fifty audience members), Extra Small (XS) (Feb., 2010 at The Kitchen) with initials that read out loud as "excess," mirroring Harrell's evacuation of voguing's associations with excess.
- 8. Here I invoke André Lepecki's concpets of stillness and intensity. According to Butler and Bailey, Ballroom performance is already a practice of resignification. By abstracting voguing, Newsome and Harrell further resignify the practice. "The turn to drag performance was, in part, a way to think not only about how gender is performed, but how it is resignified through collective terms. Drag performers, for instance, tend to live in communities, and there are stong ritual bonds, such as those we see in the film Paris is Burning, which make us aware of the resignification of social bonds that gender minorities within communities of color can and do forge" (Butler, 2006, 216). "Ballroom performance is a central means through which Black queer
- means through which Black queer people resignify and recreate kinship relations within their social displacement and exclusion on their own terms" (Bailey, 3).

- 9. House of Ninja website: www.houseofninja.com (accessed March 1, 2010).
- 10. More accustomed to diluting hiphop, pop culture has recently turned to reappropriating voguing: think Gleedoes-Madonna-does-voguing. Such super-

ficial allusions to voguing fail to pay tribute to voguing's expression of Ballroom culture and its constituent queer black and Latina/o communities. Nevertheless, the television series America's Best Dance Crew and the dance band Hercules and Love Affair have featured voguers from the Ballroom scene. In New York, open dance classes in voguing have also become more frequent (taught by Archie Burnett and Javier Ninia). Since 1993, scholarly references to Ballroom culture include Barbara Browning's 1998 Infectious Rhythm: Metaphors of Contagion and the Spread of African Culture, which revisits Paris is Burning to align the kinship structures of "houses" with African diasporic "religious families" (161). She reminds the reader of the anthropological notion that "homosexual men play a significant role in the worship of African divinities and spirits" and that "spiritual penetrability...was equated with...sexual penetrability"-homosexuality, while often associated with the abject, the liminal, or the otherworldly, is not universally pathologized or named (161).

- 11. According to Bailey, "There are three primary aesthetic criteria by which the performances are judged: 1) each performer has to include the five elements of voque in their performance; 2) each element has to be performed within the rhythm established by the music, the commentator's chant, and the audience; and 3) performers must distinguish themselves by demonstrating intensity (with a physical crescendo at precise moments) exhibiting skills that are exceptional, and adding a special touch that reflects the performer's personality. Typically, the performer who exemplifies these attributes in the most effective fashion wins the trophy and/ or the prize and the respect of the Ballroom community" (103).
- 12. Similarly, the Martha Graham technique champions a "fall on one," which is a hinging or spiraling descent to the ground that takes place in one count.
- 13. "The balls are contests in which the contestants compete under a variety of

categories. The categories include a variety of social norms, many of which are established in white culture as signs of class, like that of the 'executive' and the lvy League student; some of which are marked as feminine, ranging from high butch drag to butch queen; and some of them, like that of the 'bangie,' are taken from straight black masculine street culture" (Butler, Bodies that Matter, 1993, 128-9).

- 14. Nevertheless, Newsome tells me his variously recorded performances will be "sold" on Whitney's website, ensuring further compensation (which probably will not amount to that of a performance piece to which a museum "acquires the rights" to (re)perform).
- 15. "The movement of the voquer is tracked by an algorithm that recognizes and traces a specific primary color on articles of clothing adorned by the dancer. This movement is translated into a continuous linear path both live on-screen during the performance and into a video file. I control which color(s) are tracked during the performance to best capture the flow of the stylized body language, and thus creating for the audience an enhanced visual display complimenting the voquing dance moves and pumping beat. The visual data is stored on a computer in a video file that is ultimately translated in realtime, into a multi-colored, unique line drawing" (Newsome, 2010).
- 16. I found myself squatting next to the man who needed to stand; he was met with aggressive commands from the Whitney audience to "sit down."
- 17. Like balls, museums are not particularly accommodating to disabled viewers in makeshift performance spaces and do not tend to promote disabled performers: as a competitive practice of virtuosity, voguing—while embracing otherwise abject gender formations—is not known for its inclusive disability politics.
- 18. "Performance" in Ballroom now refers to a single element of voguing.
- 19. "This performance works, effects realness, to the extent that it cannot be read. For 'reading' means taking someone down, exposing what fails to work at the level of appearance, insulting or deriding someone. For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible, or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind

of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide" (Butler, 1993, 129), "There is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and...drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms" (1993, 125). "The problem with drag is that I offered it as an example of performativity, but it has been taken up as the paradigm for performativity....I don't think that drag is a paradiam for the subversion of gender. I don't think that if we were all more dragged out gender life would become more expansive and less restrictive. There are restrictions in drag....Drag has its own melancholia." (Butler, "Gender as Performance," no page number provided.) "The performances, then, enact simultaneously the desire to eliminate the distance between ontology and performance-and the reaffirmation of that distance....As a documentary the film supports a belief in the 'realness' of being, and as a representational genre. the film also supports a belief in the unavoidability of performance, artifice, meditation. Realness, then, is not a static concept" (Phelan, 99). "Realness is determined by the ability to blend in, to not be noticed" (Phelan 96). Muñoz on Aviance: "Both his appearance and his performances are in no way attempting to imitate a woman. He is instead interested in approaching a notion of femininity" (Muñoz, 76).

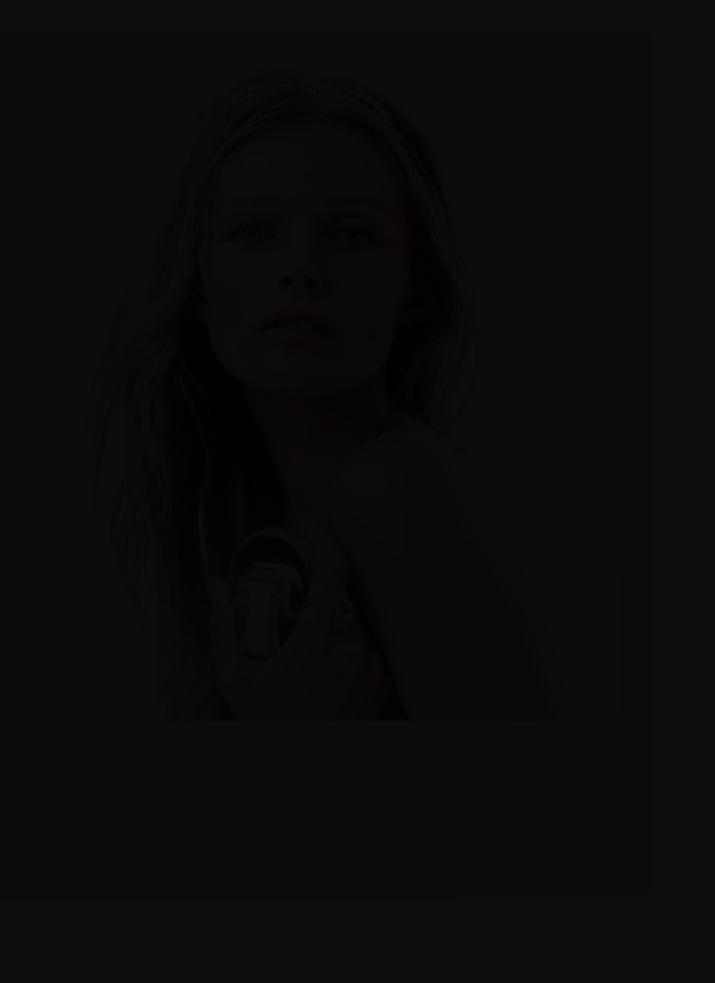
- 20. Harrell said the bulk of his theatrical experience in college included directing plays (2010).
- 21. "In 2001 I was playing around in the studio one day, and it just came to me: "What would happen if I made voquing minimalist?" Voquing is so elaborate and decorative in its use of the arms....I put on this Yaz song, "Ode to Boy"...I just walked and posed.... I thought no one would get it. I had this gig at Judson Church....the whole place erupted into applause....In Brussels... they didn't get it at all.... In France...it went wonderfully. Even though people didn't really understand everything (Americans really get the subtleties like Greta Garbo), when I got deeper into the piece, it became much more emotional...and this way of accessing the imagination" (Harrell, 2010).
- 22. "The whole piece [Show Pony] is a system...of a competition. It's not literal,

but we are constantly competing....In the end, the system exhausts itself until it becomes a showdown. You get the thing that you want. Before, it's like, what am I looking at, what am I looking at? This person's going there, and this person....Sometimes you can see things, sometimes you can't. And in the end, we do it: the battle. She goes. I go. She goes. I go....We compete...for the attention of the audience....This is always happening, whether or not we acknowledge it. In every performance, there are people we give more attention to and people we give less attention to. Sometimes we go to a certain show because we know a certain person. We get drawn to a certain person" (Harrell, 2010).

- 23. "I really fought (I mean, I grew up in south Georgia)...even to cross my legs, to be who I really was—my sensibility and the way my sensibility got expressed in me physically" (Harrell, 2010)
- 24. "I wanted to do a piece with Steve Paxton, but he wouldn't do it....Out of all of those people, my work is closest to Lucinda [Childs]. My work is very formal....Twenty Looks is very graphic in its way of thinking" (Harrell, 2010).
- 25. A. Voguing has become a staple of competitions such as House Dance International, which focuses on the dance itself, removed from drag attire and judged more for technical virtuosity than convincina drag performance. Recent voguing champions (such as Javier Ninja, also from the House of Ninja) are applauded more for their muscular-kinesthetic abilities than their performances of gender. B. The Judson Dance Theater—as well as scholarship on the subject-is associated with an anti-capitalistic aesthetic, and, as elaborated by Lepecki, this aesthetic privileges stillness' potential as an "ontopolitical critique" ("Choreography's Slower Ontology" in Exhausting Dance, Lepecki). Harrell cites in fashion runway walking a Judson-like pedestrianism.
- 26. Labor and "you betta werk": that term (and others from Ballroom/voguing culture entered into concert dance training, as I experienced at the Ailey school in the early 1990s.
- 27. Burt reminds us that, in his disdain for minimalist art's demands of its viewer, art historian Michael Fried famously stated, "'The success, even the survival,

- of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre' (Fried 1969: 139)" (13).
- 28. This further embodies a "queer of color critique." Like Newsome, Harrell's performance embodies a gueer of color aesthetic that is further emphasized through critical analyses of their work. In developing the idea of queer of color analysis, Roderick Ferguson focuses on capitalism's role in producing abject, ambiguous, and ambivalent gendered subjects, encouraging scholarship that attunes itself to these otherwise hidden formations: "Queer of color analysis can build on the idea that capital produces emergent social formations that exceed the racialized boundaries of gender and sexual ideals, can help explain the emergence of subjects like the drag-queen prostitute. At the same time, queer of color critique can and must challenge the idea that those social formations represent the pathologies of modern society. In other words, queer of color work can retain historical materialism's interest in social formations without obliging the silences of historical materialism" (11).
- 29. See Cruising Utopia, Chapter 4.
- 30. "Queer utopia is a modality of critique that speaks to quotidian gestures as laden with potentiality" (Muñoz 91). "The not-quite-conscious is the realm of potentiality that must be called on, and insisted on, if we are ever to look beyond the pragmatic sphere of the here and now, the hollow nature of the present. Thus, I wish to argue that queerness is not quite here; it is, in the language of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, a potentiality. Alain Badiou refers to that which follows the even as the thing-that-is-not-yet-imagined, and in my estimation queerness too should be understood to have a similar valence." (Muñoz 21)
- 31. Feminist scholars such as bell hooks have suggested that Livingston's white, Yale-educated, lesbian status—in relation to her "Othered" subject matter—places her in the position of colonialist ethnographer. Nevertheless, her film brought much-needed attention to Ballroom culture, as its viewership was more widespread than, for example, Marlon Riggs' 1991 Anthem or Isaac Julien's 1989 Looking for Langston, art films that allude to Ballroom/House culture.
- 32. There have been subsequent cri-

- tiques of Butler (on Extravaganza) by Jay Prosser and Judith Halberstam. However, I do not believe these critiques capture the nuance of Butler's argument, which indeed pivots around ambivalence. (Halberstam 51.)
- 33. "The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance....In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (2006, 175).
- 34. "'Trans-'...becomes the capillary space of connection and circulation between the macro- and micro-political registers through which the lives of bodies become enmeshed in the lives of nations, states, and capital-formations, while '-gender' becomes one of several set of variable techniques or temporal practices (such as race or class) through which bodies are made to live" (14).
- 35. "Vulnerable to a master myth and inscribed within the narrative telos of Mastery, the image and the name of woman is always temporary, metaphoric, substitutive.... The proper name for woman may be always a transsexual, a sign forever 'in process'" (Phelan 109).
- 36. "I did an experimental research project called Tickle the Sleeping Giant...interested in how 'cool' gets written on the body, the relationship between cool as an aesthetic and cool as a social motivation....Because we weren't skinny white models, when we did this movement, in a way, we were voguing. I mean, not voguing, but a theoretical....where is the realness?... "I think that if we take voguing as a theoretical concept, I would say we are always all voguing. It's like what RuPaul said: 'Who isn't in drag?''" (Harrell, 2010).





TRAJAL HARRELL'S

(email)
JOURNEY from
JUDSON
to HARLEM



he last time we sat down to discuss your work, we reflected on Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (S). What struck me from that discussion was your claim that, for you, voguing functioned as a "theoretical praxis," that you refused to embody it. How has that notion changed, developed, or remained the same since that time? For example, does taking a voguing class (if you have) undo that claim? And how has your idea of voguing as a theoretical praxis brought you to your current work, which you will be presenting at PICA's TBA festival?

TRAJAL HARRELL: I think it is always important to say that I am not a voguer. I don't make voguing. I make contemporary dance. I work with voguing and early postmodern dance as theoretical praxes. I am not trying to learn voguing moves and fuse them with postmodern dance moves, if those exist. I am addressing the theory and tenets underneath the two different aesthetics. Mainly, I am working through voguing's idea of "realness" and postmodern dance's "authenticity." Yes, I have taken a few [voguing] classes, but class is not the praxis I speak of. When I speak about voguing, I am speaking about the voguing ballroom scene. You cannot learn that in a class. It is a form of social performance and a practice of community.

In terms of the two pieces I am presenting at TBA, it is the same thing—"twirling," so to speak, between "authenticity" and realness. Too often, I think people forget about the early postmodern dance part, and they focus solely on the voguing. With the *Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem* piece, the early postmodern dance praxis is hard to miss.

AO: Twirling between (voguing's) realness and (postmodernism/Judson's) authenticity! (Do we want to make explicit a discussion of quotation marks here? I'm more inclined to put quotation marks around "authenticity." I feel the ballroom scene and Judith Butler have done a pretty good job of defining realness, allowing the word to mean what it performatively means—performing to the extent that one passes and cannot be "read"; whereas, "authenticity" opens up a huge can of worms.) I'm excited about Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem (Made to Measure)/Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (M2M). How does it differ from the other "sizes" I have seen (such as S, (M)imosa and XS)? You suggest that your praxis is a sort of practice-meets-theory in which a particular socio-cultural history (of ballroom culture) informs your choreography and interacts with Judson's postmodernist explorations of authenticity. Do you even like that word, "choreography?"

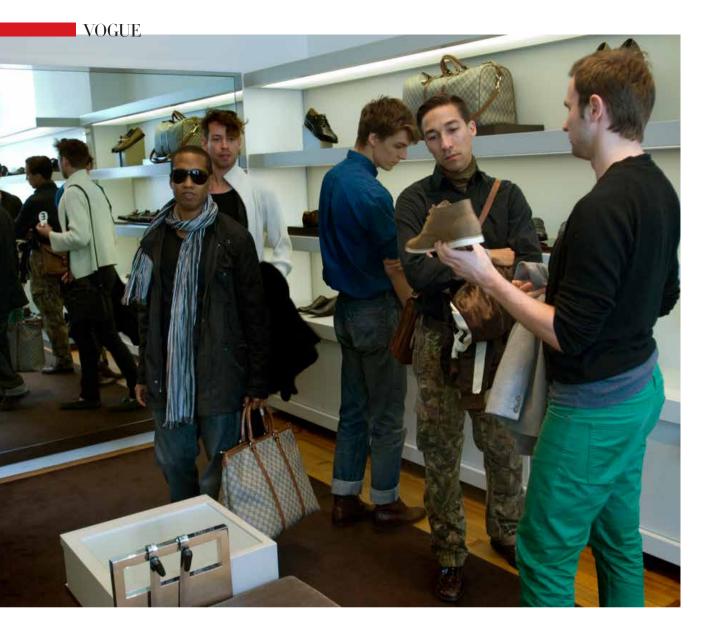
I agree that the term "fusion" has no place in describing your work. First of all, fusion indicates a mixture of

two or more elements, and when it refers to dance, it typically indicates the blending of codified techniques (or at least highly stylized forms). Whether embraced or shunned, the word "fusion" tends to emerge alongside a colonialist or exoticizing impulse, at least in common discourse (think "Asian fusion" cuisine, for example. The "Asian" is inevitably effaced or bastardized at best). And there's something anti-colonialist or recuperative about your project, about exploring what could have happened if a Harlem voguer from the ballroom scene in the 1960s had gone downtown to collaborate with the Judson Dance Theater (famous for Yvonne Rainer's No Manifesto, which declared "no to virtuosity" and "no to spectacle"). Of course, voguing's end goal is virtuosity, specifically virtuosity that can be described as "fierce," virtuosity so precise and breakneck that it can't be touched by questions of realness (so "unreal," colloquially speaking, that it is undeniably "real"). If size S served us deceleration and (M)imosa's exploration of drag was a total gender-fuck, how might you distill "(M2M)?"

Church! And, yes, I like the word "choreography" and think we should indeed place quotation marks around "authenticity."

AO: Church. You had mentioned gospel. Are we now going uptown to a church in Harlem? What does this mean for Yvonne and her Judson cohort? I mean, on some level they must have loathed having the name "Church" associated with them, as in the Judson Dance Theater rehearsing at the Judson Church. Do you think postmodern "authenticity" embraces the idea of the secular person devoid of religion? So often in concert dance training (especially, in my experience of ballet and modern—think, Graham and Ailey), one speaks of a "calling," a "gift" of talent that one holds a responsibility to fulfill (similar to but not identical to Weber's Protestant ethic of capitalism), and this is not far from a religious mentality. However, the Judson aesthetic seems so stripped of religion and spirituality. I'm curious to hear how you envision Judson at church. What kinds of praxes are at work in this project (M2M)?

I know it's not my turn to email, but something just struck me. I was reading a *Time Out* magazine interview of Wendy Whelan describing her new project, and she says she found Kyle Abraham so "hot and passionate and intense" that she wanted to "feel what that feels like" and subsequently asked him to choreograph on (!) her (8/15/13). We don't need Miley Cyrus' recent VMA antics to tell us that appropriating blackness is one of the foundations of American popular culture. But what of high art appropriations? Claims of "authenticity" often come with charges of appropriation. So, what would it mean (and



what would be the stakes of) appropriating the Judson aesthetic? What happens when we accuse (or don't accuse) performers of appropriating whiteness?

TH: Ha! That is super-loaded, and here I have to quote myself a bit: "My position in all of this is not without problematization. Though I am African-American, I am not a voguer from Harlem. I am much more from the legacy of postmodern dance [and Judson Church]. I wanted to problematize this location and the space I occupy within it. Therefore, I also felt the series had to have the classic double migration. So, we go back from Judson Church up to the balls in Harlem. For this I wanted to go directly to my own personal cultural roots and see how they affix themselves between these two locations. The Made-to-measure size, thereby, activates a singular position that I needed to acknowledge in the final piece of the series." That's all to say, most people do not come to me to appropriate blackness. My work is steeped in postblackness (maybe the "post-" isn't fulfilling enough). My roots are also in "white" culture. I don't feel at all that I

am appropriating whiteness. I am aware that the Judson aesthetic was developed by white artists, but I don't think minimalism and pedestrianism nor any of Yvonne Rainer's anti's are white, per se. Sure, we cannot separate the means of production and distribution from the realities of sex, race, class, and sexuality, etc. Regardless, authenticity was a fiction that Judson constructed as well. In terms of performativity, we find it very useful in the work that we do. What people do appreciate in the work is this problematization, because if we are honest, that's where everyone sits. My career and Kyle's have blossomed in the same historical moment. I hope one day someone looks specifically at the links and differences.

I turn the proposition around: what would have happened in 1963 if someone from Judson Dance Theater had gone uptown to perform in the voguing ballroom scene? What would it mean to come from Judson Church, to go uptown from Judson to Harlem? In my imagination, you would have to "give church" at the balls. In a voguing context or African-American context, "giving church" means giving it your all or taking it to the umpteenth degree.

AO: I appreciate your reflections on authenticity and appropriation. Because of my mixed-race identity, I am continually preoccupied with the idea of belonging. Your discussion of "roots" and your use of the pronoun "we" intrigue me. What exactly do you mean by your "cultural roots" and who is the "we" to which you refer?

TH: By cultural roots, I mean the topography of influences and socialization that have informed my personal identity and history: Polo Ralph Lauren, Madonna, The Flintstones, country and western music, the Clintons, CNN, Andy Warhol, Ralph Lemon, Adele, fried chicken, South Beach, bell hooks, Andre Agassi, Mark Rothko, Marguerite Duras, the Indigo Girls, Patti Labelle, the list goes on and on. And the "we" I refer to are me and the dancers with whom I work.

AO: Can you tell me about your upbringing and your experiences growing up? I mean, (pop)culturally, we are urged to "own it," on the one hand, but not to steal it, on the other. I wonder if "owning it" is only a message for the marginalized or weak, or if it gives license to appropriators at large, regardless of race or class. You and your fellow performers own it all over the place!

TH: I grew up in a small town in southeast Georgia. There were no voguing balls and no contemporary dance, but I did lie when I was eight years old about what time my gymnastics class got out. I said it was an hour later so I could stay and watch the girls' ballet class. No boys took ballet, but I was always there with my head in the door, watching from 4pm-5pm.

AO: Ha! On the one hand, you seem to point to blackness (and/as gay black men and queer black masculinity), but on the other hand, you are working with forms that you haven't necessarily lived with for a long period of time (voguing and postmodern), relatively speaking. What I'm wondering, more specifically, is, how and when do you find yourself an insider in ballroom culture (whether or not you vogue or don't vogue) and how/when do you find yourself an insider in the Judson tradition (and perhaps more broadly, in "Western Civ," since you tackle Antigone and Greek mythology in one piece you present at PICA)? Conversely, when do you find yourself an outsider?

TH: As an artist I am constantly shifting my location between insider and outsider. It goes beyond Judson and voguing. As an artist it is important for me to simultaneously occupy that dual positionality in order to experience the world.

AO: I assume that these terms (insider/outsider) are problematic for you, which is why I ask these questions. Especially now that I teach in a university environment, I find the issue of education very interesting in relationship to dance. Those of us who grew up in conservatory environments (not to mention the ethic driving American pop

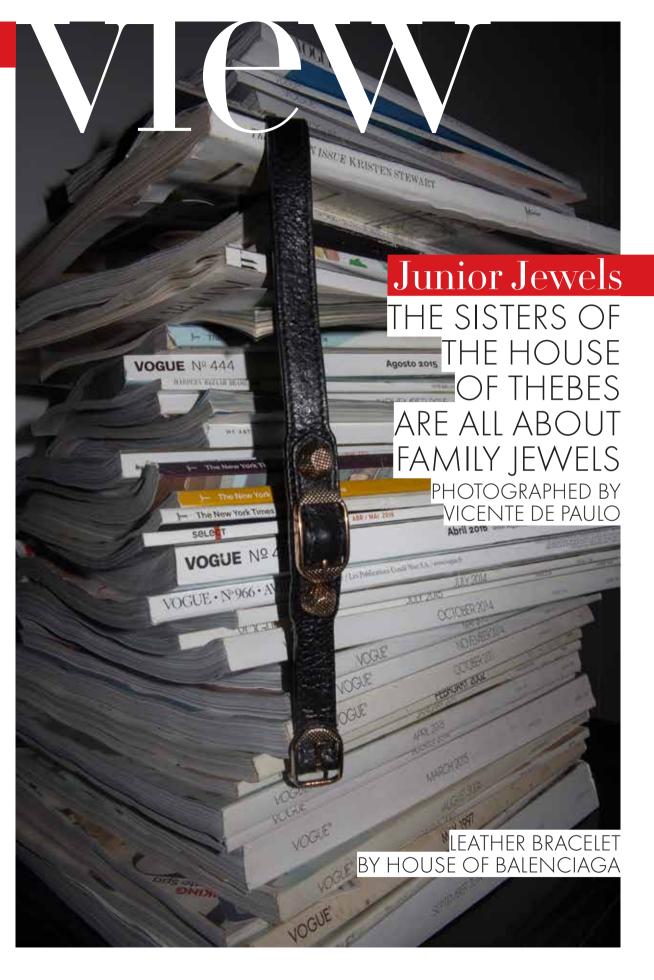
culture) were encouraged to "shut up and dance" and the trope of the dumb dancer persists today. Nevertheless, we find tension in the dance world between those who speak and those who do not (by choice or otherwise). More "conceptual"/"experimental" dance makers rely on text, discourse, and dramaturgy in a way that is sometimes looked down upon by more traditional/presentational concert choreographers. Few compelling contemporary dance makers steer clear of such reliance on a discursive backdrop, one informed by certain bents of critical and performance theory.

TH: I think that relying on text, discourse, and dramaturgy can be limiting when you want to engage more than a (S) mall audience. That's what I worked on in the series. Too often in experimental dance, that's where dance makers stay, and it blocks engaging a larger audience. In (S) mall, the performative operation is transparent. That is what makes that work important. But after (S), [my concern is] that too much focus on the performative operations can block the experience of the work.

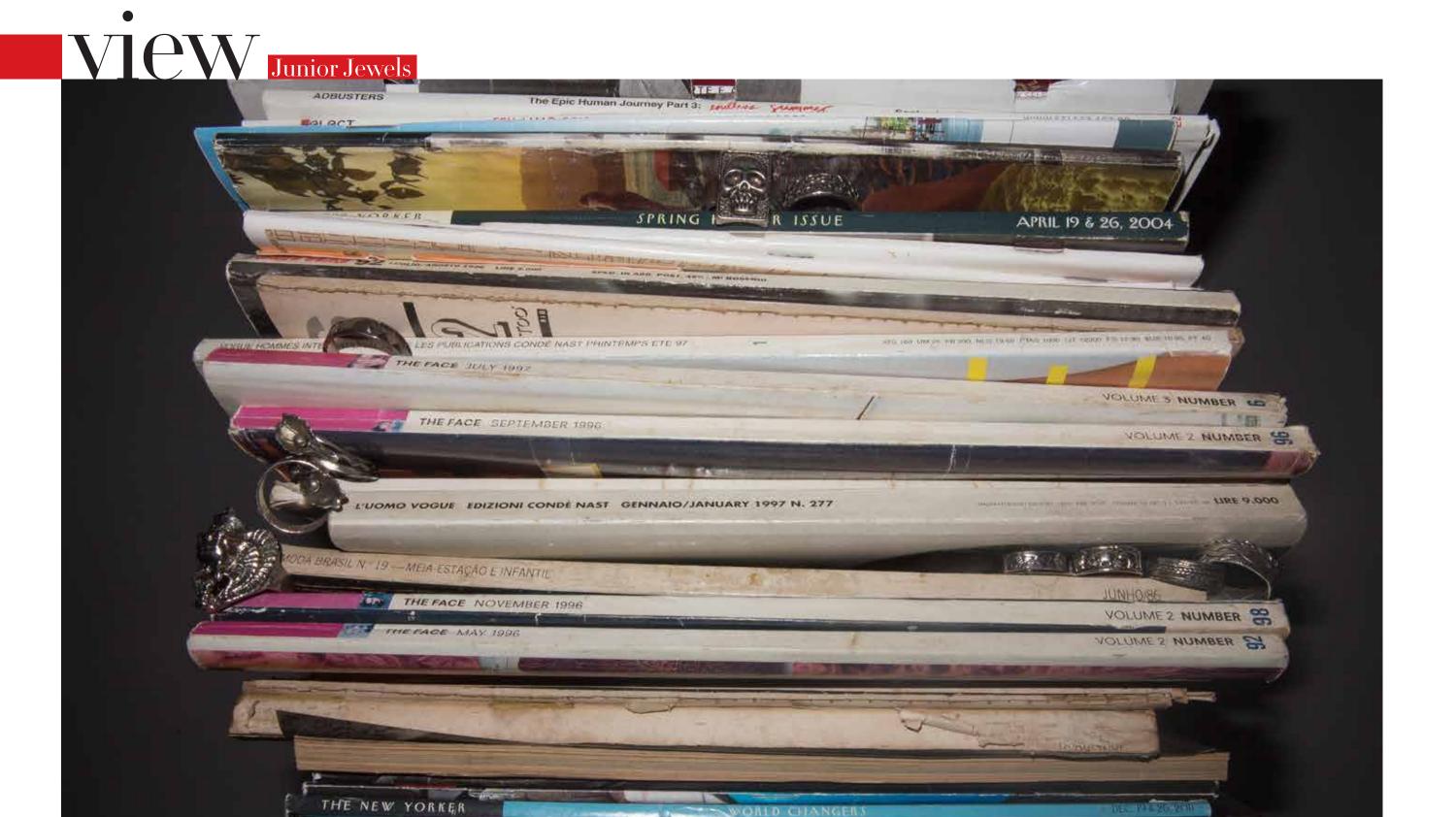
I have never heard someone say, "I can't wait to go read that dance." My work is founded in theory, but I work to build on the theory, not to rely on it as a status symbol. So both sides have a point—the presentational and the conceptual. I'm interested in making Art with a capital A; and for that, I must always remember that theory and discourse are tools, not the thing itself.



AO: It's interesting to hear you discuss size not only in terms of a piece's scale, but in terms of the size of an audience in relation to a piece's reliance on (or exposure/concealment of) theory.







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GO MAY TVSTI DISCOVER!

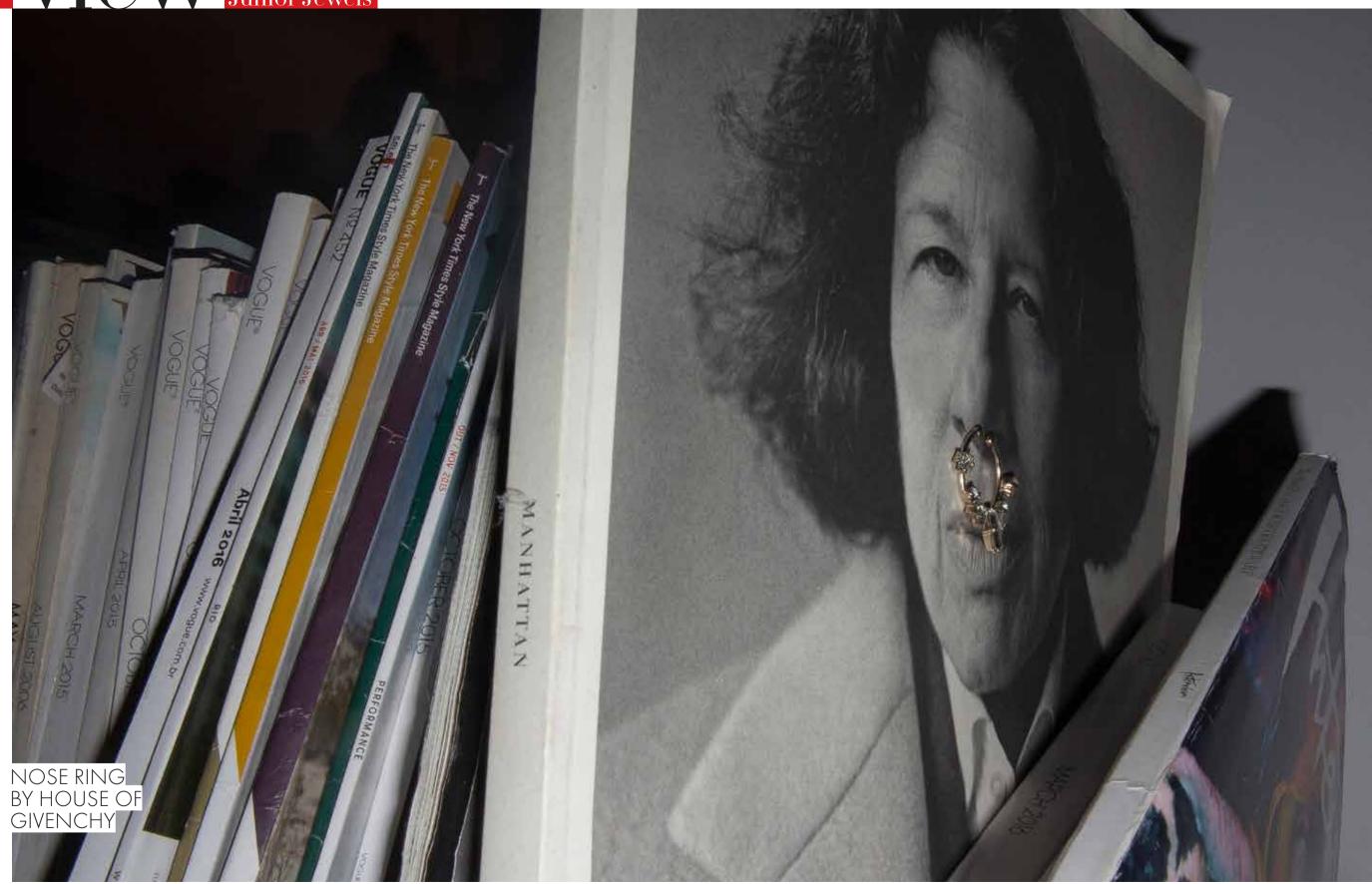
WORLD CHANGERS

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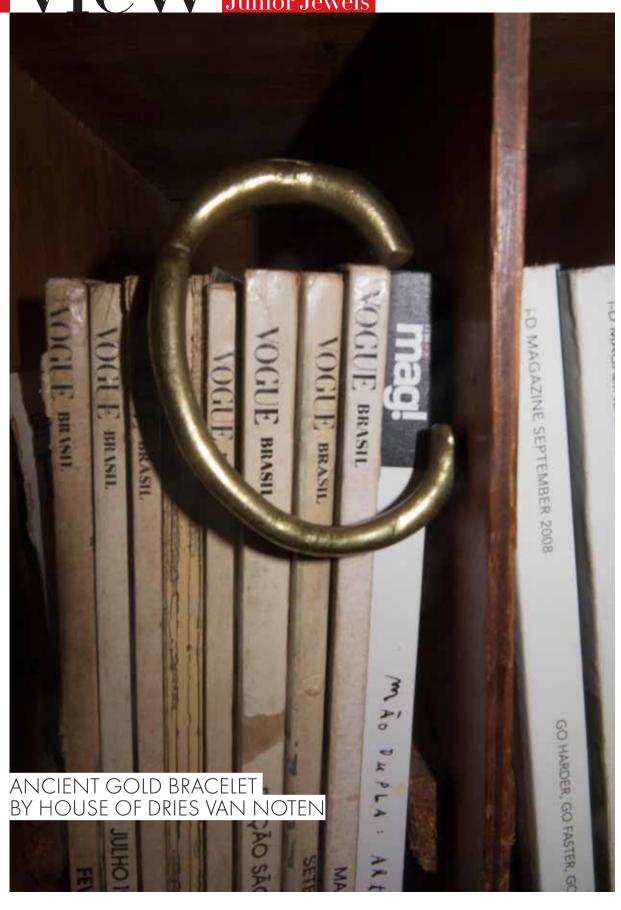
BY HOUSE OF MODEL'S OWN THE NEW YORKER

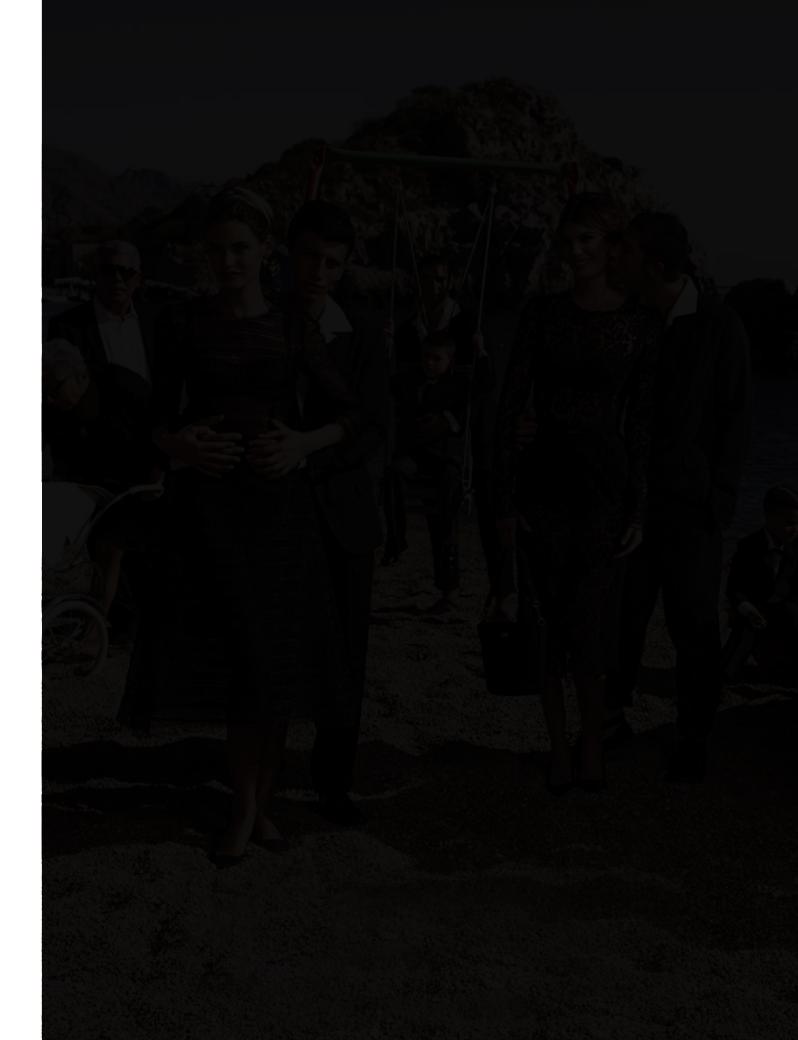


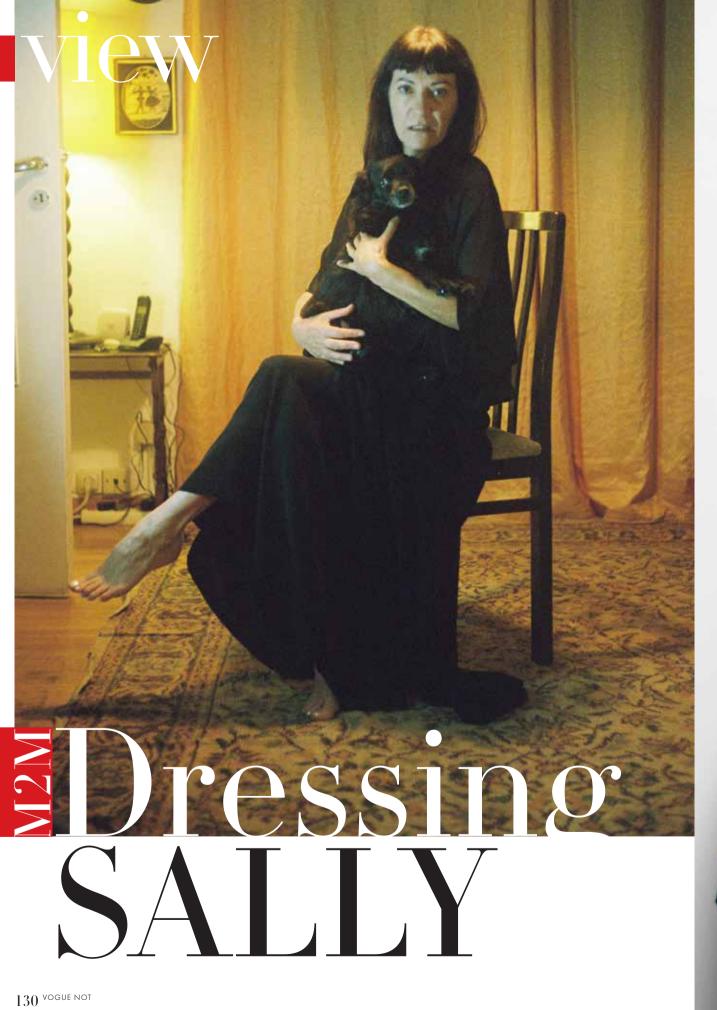


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View Junior Jewels











THE M2M DRESS
TEXT BY CLAYTON EVANS,
DESIGNER OF COMPLEXGEOMETRIES

he Cope Tank was originally from my Spring Summer 2012 collection, *The Light*. The collection took inspiration from different ideas about light, including literal references like reflections and the sun, as well as more obscure references like the Christian concept of the divine light.

The piece itself was conceived as a simple combination of two garments; a basketball jersey and and a ruana, a traditional Andean garment, much like a poncho.

The pattern itself was as simple as the idea. The front of a tank top was sewn to a large ruana, with a casing for a drawstring belt added. But in monotone silk chiffon and charmeuse, the resulting piece gives a more sophisticated impression. It looks more like an elegant choir robe or gracefully draped toga. The generous volume and weightless materials also mean the piece moves with a beautiful, organic rhythm.





view

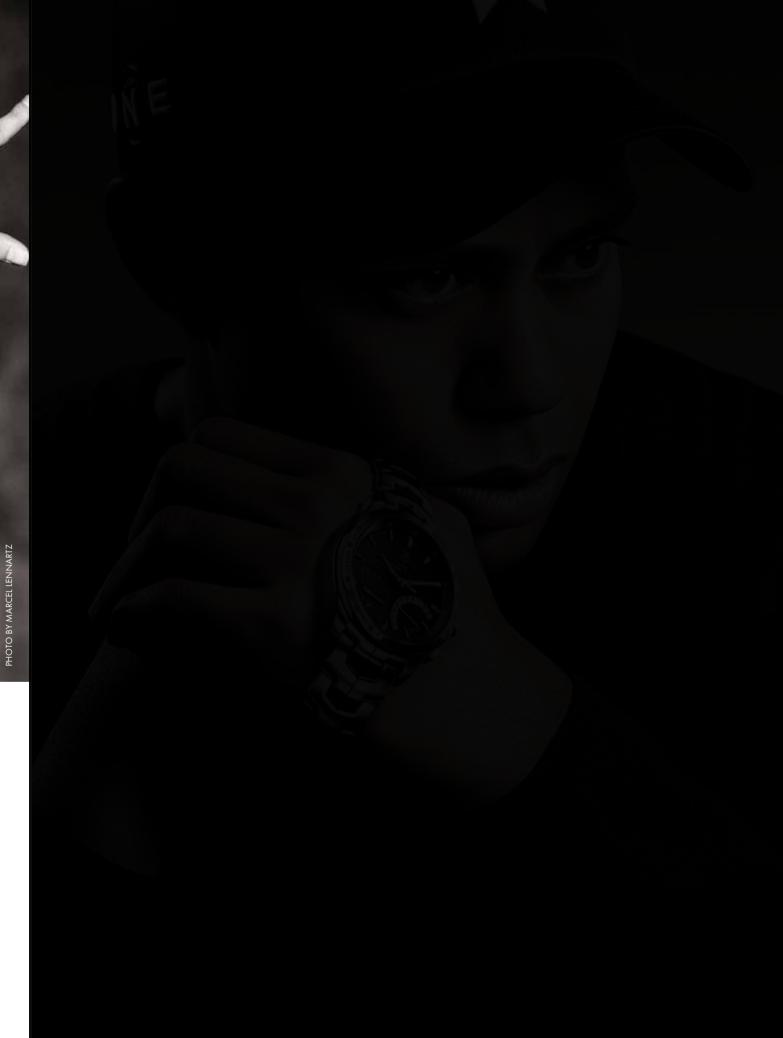


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PHOTOS: MICHAEL HART





Beauty Back stage

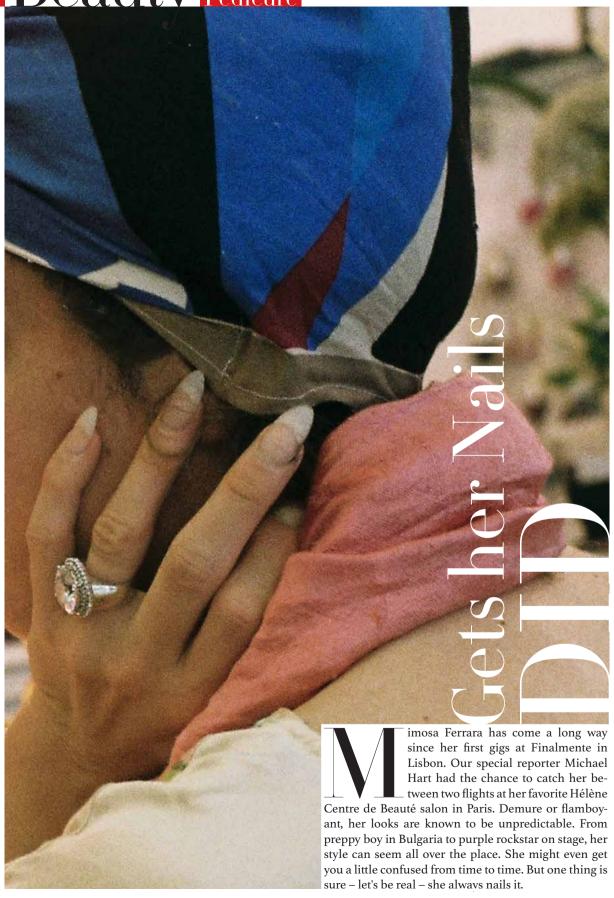








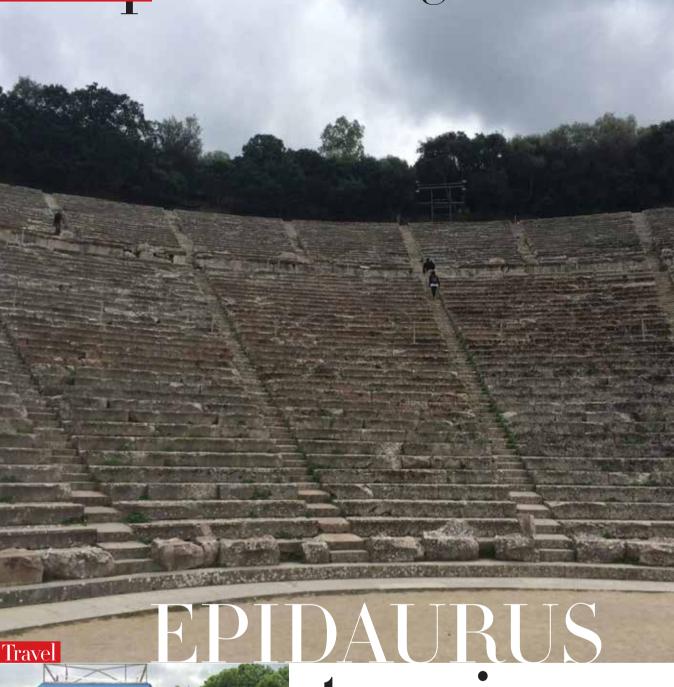
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People Are Talking About



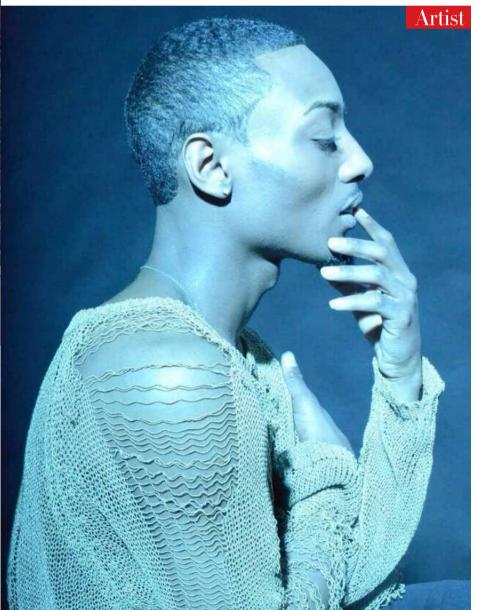
tourism

House of Theatre – where Antigone died over a thousand times. Located on the Argolid Peninsula at the Saronic gulf, Epidaurus harbours the ancient theatre designed by Polykleitus the Younger. Marked by outstanding acoustics, one could hear Ismene's tears hitting the stage floor. For exquisite relaxation, visit the asclepeion; the gods will advise how to regain your health.

— TRAVEL TO EPIDAURUS BY BUS FROM ATHENS IS 2 HOURS.

Alex Cephus

hen the (M)imosa co-authors needed a voguing teacher, they learned from Alex Cephus or as he is often known, Alex Mugler, from the house of Mugler. Renown for his captivating category winning Vogue Femme performances, this native New Yorker is back and forth between Paris and New York working like a charm. After meeting Cecilia Bengolea at a kiki ball at the midtown manhattan club Esqualita's, Cephus has gone on from teaching the Mimosas to working with Bengolea and Chaignaud on several European projects, as well as working with Trajal Harrell at MoMA and the Vienna Impulstanz Festival. Most recently he's choreographed for Rihanna's concert tour and worked with Riri on her movement language for the video "Four Five Seconds." Having graduated from New York's High School of Performing Arts, studied at The Ailey School, and veered from plans to get a business administration degree in college, Alex prefers his identity as simply "artist." Summarily, he says, "I'm searching for ways to express my truth."





BOB

You might run into Bob Bellerue in the rues of Bushwick where he lives, but in fact, you might run into him anywhere around the globe. This talent of experimental electronic music and junk metal ensembles loves to dig into resonant feedback systems and amplifying instruments, objects and spaces. It's kind of hard to believe touring the world as a creative technician and composing sound scores for dance, theater, video and performance art still leaves him with the capacity to organize and curate his cutting-edge Ende Tymes noise festival. But we've heard from the finest connoisseurs it's where it's at, so don't even try to miss a chance to catch the next edition of Ende Tymes 7 Festival of Noise and Experimental Liberation.



People Are Talking About



Just back from Los Angeles: A PORTRAIT OF YVONNE RAINER

Just back from Los Angeles: A Portrait of Yvonne Rainer is the third in a series of portraits by artist Adam Pendleton. The video poetically captures the choreographer, filmmaker, and writer Yvonne Rainer in conversation with Pendleton at a diner in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood. Rainer and Pendleton, through a scripted and unscripted exchange, reflect on life and work, politics and art, and the relationship between memory and movement. The film is commissioned on the occasion of 100 Degrees Above Dada, the Performa 17 biennial's history anchor. As with previous biennials in which Performa explored Futurism (2009), Russian Constructivism (2011), Surrealism (2013), and the Renaissance (2015), Performa approaches Dada's (1916-1925) art historical relevance and influence on artists through unexpected and unusual perspectives and juxtapositions in intermedia art. Curated by Adrienne Edwards.

- ALMOST DIRECT COPY OF PERFORMA EMAIL



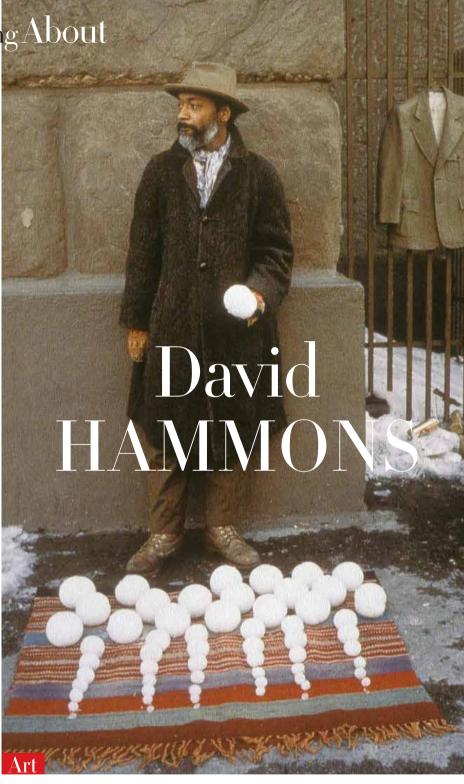
154 $^{\mathsf{vogue}\,\mathsf{NOT}}$

People Are Talking About



Rem Koolhaas & Bruce Mau

Size matters!? In S, M, L, XL, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau present the first twenty years of design work by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (O.M.A.), founded by Koolhaas himself. This insightful compendium travels through different architectural and urban scales; from the domestic (S) and the public (M), to the architecture of Bigness (L) and the urban scale at large (XL).



the United States and the Carribbean." As he said himself: "I can't stand art actually. I've never, ever liked art, ever."





LEGENDARY TEACHERS

Trisha Brown

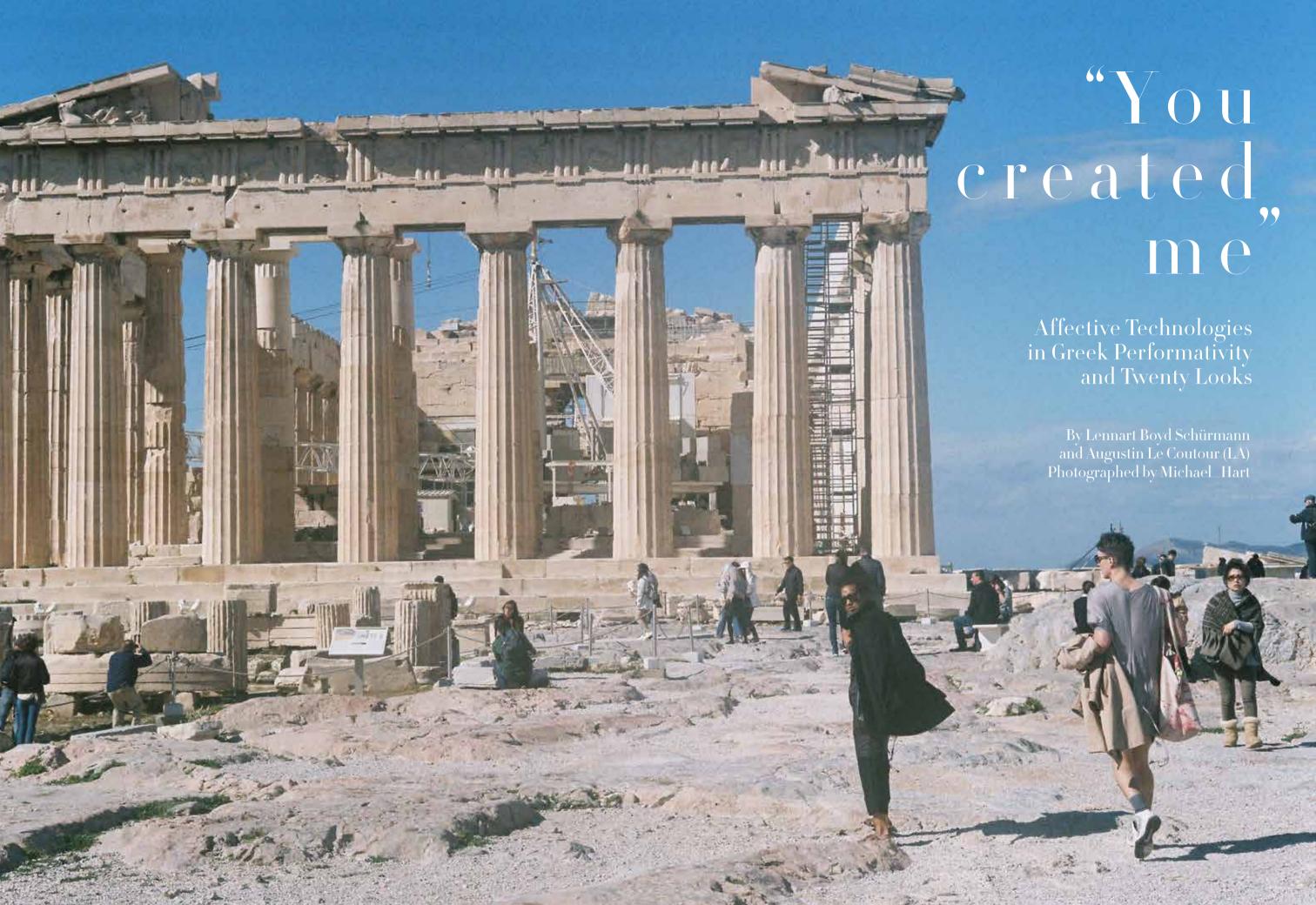
Archie Burnett

Alex Mugler Cephus

Lasseindra Ninja

Yvonne Rainer

Mårten Spångberg



DE-PHILOSOPHIZING PERFORMANCE

(in order to rediscover its affective-intellectual pleasure Looks on

n discovering Paris is Burning at the Judson Church at the CND in Paris in April 2016, we were enchanted. Within a highly contemporary semantic framework of references, viruosically drawn from art, fashion and pop culture, a long forgotten questioning took

shape. It might be most adequately described as anthro-Delete: pological, even if this term has fallen out of fashion as a eductive consequence of its association with a psychology that reduces complexity to the individual Ego and its inner feelings. On the contrary, Trajal Harrell's anthropological questioning develops a performative space in which the affective universes and forces connected to a wider concept of the psyché, intertwined with other se-

We were fascinated by the urgency and precision with which he posed the seemingly harmless question: the question to be intense with one another? Asking this question today means to first of all re-discover and re-appropriate togetherness question for the artistic practice. It requires re-discovery, since a seemingly unbridgeable gap separates all the various highly differentiated contemporary artistic practices from the questions regarding experiential ualities of human beings and spaces to share them.2

mantic environments, are interrogated and unfolded.1

The discrepancy between artistic practice and collective practice might be understood as a consequence of the philosophical conceptualization of the modern art work as autonomous. Autonomous was first conceived Add: Twenty modern aesthetics as a purely reflexive play of our cognitive faculties, independent of sensual affectivity, of any need and of the spatial-temporal situation.3 Emancipated also from a technical understanding of art as being in the service of intellectual and physical interests. The strict separation of the "defective" sensuality of the corporeal side of the human from the rational transcendental subject implied a hierarchy between social conviviality (vulgar playing) and art proper (philosophical play). The latter's dignity consisting in the adaption of a philosophical questioning: art had to be concerned with sense or an ontologicalized understanding of the play of signs, precedent to any concrete game that is actually played together.4

> The postmodern attempts to overcome these distinctions rests-paradoxically mostly within the philosophical conceptual framework. Two modifications of the philosophical generalization of the game have been prevailing: one ontological, the other socio-economical. The ontological version doesn't restrict the game to the aesthetic judgment but refers to every possible access to reality5: All our semantic references to the world are conceived in the form of a game, consisting of semantic differentiations. In consequence, the conception of art related to it, is to mimetically present the philosophical ontology: To evoke the game of the world which is always already playing its game with us.6 In the socio-economical version, the game is taking place within a certain field of power relations or a-certain communicative systems (the art field as one semantic playfield among others). We as players might in-

autonomous was used to designate

Within the tracks

of Kantian

aesthetics.

vest our symbolic capital in such a field.7 Another pattern is to animate the autopoietic reproduction of the system's logic.* The art practice related to it, is to signal that we indicate one's awareness are aware of the system's structure as semantic processes.

One consequence of this universalization of the game is to underestimate the complexity of the phenomenon of playing and its affective dimensions. Since entertainment and pleasure is regarded as something immediate and given, not worth further consideration, the concrete-virtual shared sensual space is often overlooked along with its own complexity, relations and potentialities. While our autonomized discursive systems produce endlessly new virtualities and differentiations, we are left alone, lacking procedures that aim to establish a commensurability between the growing, de-inhabited archive, and each other.

Phantom, displaced reality haunts us in our longing for the ever unattainable wholeness of a "mythical" past. The consequence is an interminable oscillation between irony, and a Rousseauist craving for an always already lost *pure origin*. Since every framework and narrative appears as a *mere* construction, we would as Having stated that the together performatively in a temporarily shared space a consequence have to abandon them altogether. If we conceive it to be a radically singular phenomenon of post-modern times to have finally understood all that, to have for the first time lost our innocence, then we would indeed have no alternative than to wallow in melancholia. Luckily, if we are approximately right in our philosophical genealogy of the universalization of the game, we might be able to find a means of escape by posing the problem beyond philosophy.

We believe that Trajal Harrell's work opens up such an alternative, by turning towards qualities proper to performative, theatrical research. It is a mistake to believe that a refusal of the primacy of an ontoepistemological questioning will automatically lead to resignation, arbitrariness and frustration. Hasn't the

7. See Bourdieu, Pierre: Les règles de L'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire, Paris 1992.

philosophical tradition always been in competition with itself, with conflicting practices of truth and reflection, just as in poetry and the theatre? Turning towards those artistic practices in their combination of theory and practice might lead us to be more careful about too quickly abandoning the difference between play and footnote actual reality. We might instead first of all question and differenciate the gap between the two.

In asking not for the play of the world, but rather turning towards the plays within the world, we discover through Trajal Harrell's work a dimension of playing that emphatically focuses on the dialectical entanglement of virtual frameworks with the situative reality produced thereby.10 It is the reflexive consciousness of participating together in a game that first gives us access to an increased affective intensity not to be found elsewhere. Emphasizing in a limited framework that the game is a game invites us generously to experiment with the entanglement between the game we play and the game that is played with us.11

as being at the core to Trajal Harrell's work, we might

10. Derrida, Jacques: let us return for a second to Derrida's claim in the context of the deconstruction of a phono-logo- Derrida eentric philosophical tradition. The thesis of an unlimited and endless game of deferrals is not about an adequate interpretation of what has happened in history but has a systematical aim, that is the thinkability of thinking as processual. Every historical material is allegorized against the questioni backdrop of such an ontologicalized game. From this perspective, the entire theatrical and artistic tradition is no more or less game than any other action would be, properly understood. We assume that the games in the world are irreducible to a philosophical interpretation of the world.

II. Ritual and anthropological research on performativity even inclines us to regard reflexive distance not as a correlate of emotional distance but on the contrary, as something that allows first of all an affective investment, the entanglement with a situation. Helpful in this context is Robert Pfallers interpretation of the game as increasing the psychic intensity, following John Huizingas notion of the game's "sacred seriousness". Pfaller underlines correctly the game's dialectical dimension, the fact that it is the knowledge of the players that the games is a game which allows an intensity to take form that can't be found in everyday reality. We don't follow his suggestion though to understand the game not as a practice but as a "psychic phenomenon" since our question is, through which practices a psychic space can be developed. See: Huizinga, John: Homo ludens: proeve eener bepalling van het spelelement der cultuur, Haarlem 1938; Pfaller, Robert: Die Illusionen der Anderen: Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur, Frankfurt 2002 (English: Ibid.: On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions Without Owners, London/New York 2016).

italics 2. The latest production of the reflexive loops within the complex discursive system of contemporary art, was the prefix not his post-prefix with internet and human. The in italicis lectical result of this universalisms is the ironic longing for an authentic, intact realness,

before "ironiciis movement seems inappropriate to us because of ndividualizedpolitical urgency of the question at stake. Turning toeschatologiesdividual eschatology's is to surrender in front of the growing abstraction, privatization and anonymity of the spatial and economical organization of live forms. We believe that such a negligence of the question of togetherness is to guit the field for identitarian movements.

artistic practices and philosophies, and possible

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VOGUE NOT 163

^{8.} See Luhman, Niklas: Die Kunst der Gesellschaft, Frankaf-

^{9.} The imaginary of an intact Greek past with its art often served as a counterpart to the perceived tendency of modernity towards abstraction. Longing for a revival, the figure of a "new mythology" became prevailing. Richard Wagner's instauration of Baureuther Festspiele is paradigmatic for such a project: Wagner, Richard: Kunst und Revolution, Leipzig 1849. The following proposal is somehow indebted to the question of how to become polytheist again, with the important difference, that focusing on the performative dimension of some early Greek practices, the category of pure origins is left out. Is it a signal of a neoliberal individualization of this longing that pure origins O appeared 2010 as the name of a coffee chain in Berlin Mitte? The culture critique as a stimulus for ever more differentiated consumption?

I. See: Schlesier, Renate: "Die Seele im Thiasos. Zu Euripi des, Bacchae 75", in: Holzhausen, J. (Ed.): Psychê Scele Anima. Festschrift für Karin Alt, Stuttgart und Leipzig 1998, 37 72. The anthropological concept is further developed below: II. Affirmed Betrayals: Illusory Shores, 231.

^{3.} See: Immanuel, Kant: Kritik der Urteilskraft, Berlin und Libau 1790, B252f. "Game" and "Play" are used synonymously here.

^{4.} For an emblematic articulation of this underestimation of the concrete act of playing together, see: Sonderegger, Ruth: Für eine Ästhetik des Spiels: Hermeneutik, Dekonstruktion und der Eigensinn der Kunst, Frankfurt 2000. Her wide concepts of art as a reflexime game ignores all the attempts to rediscover the potential of actual gaming within modern avantgardes, for instance in the heritage of Dada's Anti-Art, Fluxus or Happening.

^{5. &}quot;Dans ce jeu de la représentation, le point d'origine devient insaisissable. Il y a des choses, des eaux et des images, envoi infini des unes aux autres mais plus de source. Il n'y a plus d'origine simple.", Derrida, Jacques: De la Grammatologie, Paris 1967, 55; See also: Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, Frankfurt 2006, § 69.

^{6.} For instance, spontaneistic strategies which expect the always already absent signifié to show up in a revelation-like quentuess The simplifying typology is meant like eventness. to point out some interdependence of





his attempts to answer it

collective

become interested in its establishment. Since we inhabit a variety of highly desynchronized perceptive frameworks, the here and now of a shared experience requires its institution. We need common places, a shared repertoire of narrative patterns that enables us to synchronize our various interests and to swap the persona (mask) we usually wear, with another one offered by the poetic imaginary. Trajal Harrell's strategy can be understood as re-animating the archive through the emotional texture of our contemporary environments, what we would like to call museion.12 The rich material of past experiences and possibilities is re-composed in order to constitute a virtual framework that allows a performative space to emerge.

INHABITING LUST TOGETHER

Trajal Harrell's

The following part aims to develop more precisely and concrete aspects of TH's artistic techniques, through analyzing performative patterns of the Greek symposium and the tragic choir. With the Greek polytheistic conrajal Harreliext as a background, we may be able to suggest the ways in which the aesthetic strategies TH develops can be seen as fruitful perspectives through which to approach mentioned phenomena beyond the dead-ends of contemporary conceptual frameworks described above. One reason for this is that the practices developed in the early Greek context (7-5 BC) precede the tradition of philosophical ontology with the consequences of its binary oppositions described above.

no paragraph What can be found instead is not the paradisiac origin to be found in a from muth to logos narrative. On the contrary, we encounter a complex network of narrative patterns and schemes, presented through poetry, i.e. dance and music, that can be re-written and re-performed according to the specific situation. This implies an essentially performative, theatrical conception of theparagraphiory, of what it is to gain insights. When attending Antigone Sr., we had the impression that there were indeed fundamental parallels between techniques employed in TH's work and patterns in ritual Greek performance we have been concerned with. Parallels pertaining to

> 12. The archive is here employed to designate the sum of material traces of experiences, that are being stored as neutralized and homogeneized objects, dissolved from their passed historical context and lacking a contemporary one. Museion serves to designate a way of relating to history which diverges from the Museum that has as its condition a progressive conception of history which put the objects chronologically in distance to the present. The Museion: modelled after the Alexandrinian School (3 BC-6 AD), is based on a model of history that would have not so much a temporal, but a spatial conception of history.

the structural level of the performative techniques, not to a historicist fetish. In the following, through assembling a catalogue of performative techniques and tracing their patterns, we will rather indirectly try to answer the questions raised above. We hope that the suggested difference between an ontologicalized game and the concrete forms of play with their inherent reflexivity becomes evident as the material is unfolded.

SYMPOTIC



ympotic gatherings, centered around the drinking of wine, were a central institution for the constitution of a social and practical self-comprehension and one of the most significant and differentiated cultural practices in the Mediterranean from 2000 BC until late antiquity.13 Within a spatially separated setting, a temporarily constituted

community made experiences, of which different qualities and degrees of pleasure were the most specific.14 The symposium (that is: drinking together) has mixture in all its dimensions as its fundamental concern, crystallized in the figure of the transitory god Dionysus.15 Dance, painted drinking vessels, lyric (music+poetry), games, scents, clothes and erotic intercourse constituted a multi-sensorial environment and field of action.

Departing from the cultural practice of collectively drinking wine, auto-referential procedures were developed within vase painting and poetry that led to what we would like to call a double spatiality.16 The objects and

13. For a historical introduction see: Wecowski, Marek: The Rise of the Greek Aristocratic Banquet, Oxford 2014.

14. The notion of a collective and individual experience of lust is a key part of the symposium. On the connection between the symposium and the "l'ordre du plaisir": Vernant, Jean-Pierre: L'individu, la mort, l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne, Paris 1989, 219. Many vases which have been exported to Sicily and Italy have been preserved because they were burial objects meant to guarantee the enjoyment of sympotic pleasure in the afterlife, a further indication of the symposium's role in creating pleasure. Murray, Oswyn: Early Greece, Harvard 1993, 208f.

15. See: Lissarrague, François: Un flot d'images: une esthétique du banquet grec, Paris 1987.

16. This perspective is largely indepted to the work and teaching of Renate Schlesier on the Greek Symposion. Compare: "Krater. The Mixing-Vessel as Metaphorical Space in Ancient Greek Tradition", in: Breytenbach, Cilliers; Horn, Fabian (Eds.): Spatial Metaphors, Ancient Text And Transfor-

of which four instances are examples are discussed in the following

Where do we put the Psiax-Plate?

the Psiax-Painter

poems appearing in the actual event designated patterns of action while at the same time mirroring and echoing them.17 Through referential (poetological) procedures (deixis), aspects of the ongoing action could be delineated, overwritten and integrated into a poetic environment. Body gestures, directions of gaze, the quality of applied objects and substances were re-staged in the artistic (technical) productions, performatively analyzing the situation's possible modifications in its variety. This the experience accessible and communicable. Inversely, the sympotic configurations also serve in other contexts, political ones for instance, to structure more abstract relations and concepts. 18 This inherent reflexivity, more elosely investigated under two relational configurations, anticipates fundamental aspects of the choir's structure in tragedy, as developed below.

(See below: TRAJIC)

Framed Openness

The basic structure of the symposium described above-as an experimental set-up with a variety of fixed components and codes that open up a semantic space, with the help of a plate by can be retraced with a plate of Psiax' (See: last page). It iconically stages the paradox of very stable basic elements that produce a highly situative transgressive experience.19 The composition works with a combination of horizontal and vertical axes which constitute the

mations, Berlin 2016, 69-84.

17. Compare Hobdens wider discussion of "Metasympotics": Hobden, Fiona: The Sumposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought, Cambridge 2014, 22-65. Hobden, Fiona: The Symposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought, Cambridge

18. From the perspective of ritual theory the administration of experience is a basic function of any ritualistic action which functions through the establishment of a formalised context of operations with different variables. However, we argue that the explicit thematisation and reflection on this function as part of the ritual is part of the symposium. See: Lang, Bernhard: "Ritual", in Cancik, Hubert; Gladigow, Burkhard; Kohl, Karl-Heinz (Hg.): Handwörterbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe. Band IV, Stuttgart 1989, 442-458.

19. Athens advanced in the 6th century BC to a center for the mass production of vases in large manufactures that, that were exported into the whole Mediterranean. The painters developed systematically professional iconic programmes that distinguished them from others, partly signaturing their vases. Since the geographical distance was so huge, the painters had to respond to the challenge of combining scenic and compository specificity with a general applicabasic set up from which the dynamic movement of the dancer develops.

vertically

This relation between the static and the dynamic is iconically staged on a plate by Psiax. On a horizonaforementione tal line, serving as a spatial marker, a strictly verticallyd plate shows depicted woman (marked by the mitra as a hetaera) a horizontal plays on a double-aulos, which is horizontally directed line, serving towards the head of a dancing man. The man adorned as a spatial with an ivy wreath (as an attribute of the god Dionysos) allowed to single out formal patterns making parts of and wears an eastern dress that links him to the Lydean imaginary, associated with splendor, voluptuous luxury and effeminate behavior (habrosuné).20 He is presented woman as elastically dancing on his tip toes, his torso turned towards the woman, the feet pointing in the opposite di- and his bend rection, to which his knees bend also, whereas his arms have adapted the horizontal-vertical scheme. With the left hand, he balances a kylix, a sympotic drinking vessel, horizontally above his head, while the right hand grabs a barbiton (string instrument). A diphros with predator's feet is placed behind the aulos player; on the left side of the scene. There is an aulos container made of animal skin, with a pixis, serving for make-up. The theriomorphic elements signal the domestication of animal qualities, whose potentialities are evoked, though in this transformed way. Through the evocation and blending of these diverse elements, an imaginary space is delineated. The central theme of this strictly formalized basic set-up seems to be the ecstatic experience of transformation that is about to take place: the dancer leaves with his left toe the plate's inner circle—his left With his left foot has left the horizontal line, freely floating in the foot freely air. This formal transgression of limits is codified as an floating in ecstatic experience through the position of the head the air, the between the aulo's sounds, the wine (in the kylix), the dancer's toe instrument, and through the bending backwards of the body in movement. Important in the present context is that it seems that the staged arrangement of singular material components from a more general repertoire is understood as a condition for, not a contradiction of, a highly specific affective quality.21 In the context of application, the imaginary that is established serves to alter the space semantically as one vase-painting among others, forming part of a varied repertoire of possible actions and gestures.

> TH similarly plays with the mise-en-abume of frameworks in order to transgress them.

> In the beginning of each part of the PB/JC series, the performance that is about to take place is situated in the context of the overall proposal [What would have

20. Around the figure of the eastern performer Anacreon that might be depicted here, a fashion developed of men dressing up as women, wearing parasols and earrings, avially underming the normative role models, see: Lissarrague, Francois; dasdfasdf: From ambiguity to ambivalence

21. See also below: Affirmed Betrayals. Illusory Shores

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happened, if ... and presented as a consumer product [S, M, L, XL, Made-to-Measure]. In the beginning of Antigone Sr., Trajal Harrell performing the choreographer quotation Trajal Harrell, with an I-Pad in his hand, designates marks each component of the performative setting: the concept, scenery, lighting, and costumes are all By rendering singled out. The presentification of the elements conpresent the stituting the performative infrastructure constitute a constitutive of ramework with its potentialities, creating expectations that don't have to be necessarily fulfilled. The same goes performative for the architectural requisites from performance hisinfrastructuretory. The bar stools in Antigone Jr. ++ and M[imosa], are
their associated with stools in a strip club or a variety context. potentialities Their over-determination now provides the possibility are evoked, for an emotionality to take place in the performed songs that would usually be repudiated as a cliché.22 Other laid out trails are laid only to awake and to render present our attent such as the rack of costumes animated by a ventilator in Judson is Ringing in Harlem, which is ponderously placed on the stage only to be taken quietly away after having made its appearance.

Interruptions are another means of keeping up the

oscillation between different layers of play. The tyrannic power of the performer is the desire of the public to be italics, notaken by him to performative virtualities. In Antigone comma Ir., ++, the interruption of the performance because of a supposedly forgotten costume throws back in an almost unbearable manner to the material base of the show. What before was the unquestioned reality has now benot-yet- come the unbereable virtuality of a not-transformed bare presence. Our desire is increased for the transformation to take place again. Being seduced by TH, we lose control over the different levels of virtuality and their texture. After the voguing of the tragedy's persona in Antigone Sr., TH changes the music on the laptop, takes up the microphone in the role of TH; the choreographer ("I guess it's time to make things clear...."), but continues as Antigone ("I buried the brother, I did the deed and I had to pay the price"). To desynchronize the moment of demonstratively turning on a sample on the laptop and to start dancing only afterwards, poetologically accompanies the process of transformation into affective posture. The accentuation of its construction as a quasi-experimental set-up allows the facticity of the movements when dancing to transcend this framework and become even stronger and more surprising.

Distributing masks

A main feature of the Greek symposium was the implementation of temporary categories and differentiations. The material of a shared mythical network, known personae such as gods, heros or humans was re- comma distributed among the assisting guests. A fragment of the lyrical poet Anacreon (mid 6th century BC) might

propsive as a point of departure:

φέρ' ὕδωρ φέρ' οἶνον ὧ παῖ φέρε <δ'> άνθεμόεντας ήμὶν στεφάνους ἕνεικον, ώς δή ποὸς "Ερωτα πυχταλίζω. Bring water, boy, bring wine, bring garlands of flowers to us: fetch them, so that I may box against Love/Eros.

Water, Wine, and flower wreaths, that mark the sympotic context, are demanded for an "Us" from someone addressed as "παῖς" (boy, girl, servant). The central word of the fragment is the imperative (φέοω) that is repeated four times, exhorting with an untempered impatiency, even increased by the grammatical form of the last repetition ("ἔνειχον") and the temporal particle "now". As the finality of the demands, a boxing match is named, by an "I", separated from the group, against Eros.

The modality of transition from arrangement of the material components to the expected boxing match with the god of love, Eros, is unspecified. Is an epiphany of the god to be expected in the symposium that became an arena merely by arranging substances and objects? Is a chosen symposiast addressed, who is going to take on the poetic mask of Eros as soon as they start drinking? Or are the consequences of the consumption of wine and water presented as an increased erotic desire of the lyric "I" through the metaphor of a boxing game?

It is not only the lack of context for the fragment that opens up this polyvalent space of interpretation, as similarly functioning transmitted poems show. 24 Highly situative instructions with deictic particles such as "here", "now", "we", are an often found topos in the sympotic lyric. Since the poems were not only performed by travelling composers, but also by the participants, it would be misleading to perceive them as an exact duplication or a later mimesis of the actual situation. Rather, codes are implanted, that institute a range of imaginary and concrete possibilities of action. These can take on different meanings according to the context of application. In the present fragment, the poetic I monopolizes his access to Eros, challenges him as a partner in a playful-violent game and plays up his individual obsession. In this respect it is a quite individualized and specified voice. At the same time, the missing specification of the "I", the explicit reference to an "Us", and the quasi-voyeuristic structure allows for an identification. The one performing transforms the space by means of the situation created in the poem for the entire group in an erotic

"bring

"+

quotat

In Antigone Sr., TH and TL-perform a spiritualpractise guide Yogi-Duo who perform their conversion into the mythical signifiants of contemporary Western culture (We are: Chanel, Dior, Tour Eiffel, Deleuze and Guattari, Godard, The XX, life and death, être et ne pas-etre [...]) through the quasi-magical technique of naming. The contrasting source environments of the names (fashion, philosophy, art, existential experiences, tourism etc.) are leveled out, being part of a universalized spiritual exercise. A particular tragic question makes its way through the identity claims: Can the irreducible singularity of a person and his faith be entirely dissolved in the endless virtualities of mimicry (see below: Emotion: Tragic Game) When TH and TL perform each other through alternately changing the language of the conjuration's first part from French to English (We are ...; Nous sommes ...), the absolute metaphoricity of the chains of reference is somehow returned to an explicit, reversible metaphoricity.25

Not adapting, but assigning roles to others is a particularly powerful technique. As with the Alcaeus fragments for instance, structures from military exhortatory poetry used in war were adapted for sympotic purposes, which reappeared in the voguing context as throwing shade. When TH performs the mother of the house, commenting on the others' performances during the voguing part of Antigone Sr., this playful domination increases the impact of what is done and at the same time subverts social categories of distinction. The performative effect of this technique is to provoke a certain reaction in the other person. Stylized insults, in the Voguing sense of "Reading", was a genre developed especially in the context of the Roman symposium.26 An interest that could be called anthropological is always in the center of these actions: How to make visible the potentialities of a person hidden under his mask (mask means person)? The notion of truth as a-letheia is to be understood in this sense: Making something visible that is covered through a third medium.27

See especially the poems of the roman poet Catull as well as 26. See: Catull, Ecc... those of the Neoterics. 27. This theme appears in the sympotic context mainly in

Illusory Shores

We encountered as a central feature of the symposium the possibility to produce, within the architecture of a stable and repeatable basic form, a variety of experiential environments. The drinking vessels and poems served as an intermediary space which linked the concrete situation to the virtual environments they created, re-functionalizing the single elements within the introduced overall scope. Within that framework, the composers began to further develop and reflect on their technique's transformative power with increasing selfconfidence and freedom. The present fragment of Pindar (ca. 520-446 BC) is an example of such a poetological accompaniment of the poetic production. The poetic techniques are reflected within the sympotic scenery and its actions.

Pindar, fr. 124 ab28

*Ω Θρασύβουλ', έρατᾶν ὄχημ' ἀοιδᾶν (1) τοῦτό <τοι> πέμπω μεταδόρπιον· ἐν ξυνώ κεν εἴη συμπόταισίν τε γλυκερον καὶ Διωνύσοιο καρπώ (Β') καὶ κυλίκεσσιν 'Αθαναίαισι κέντρονάνίκ' άνθοώπων καματώδεες οἴγονται μέριμναι (5) στηθέων έξω· πελάγει δ' έν πολυχούσοιο πλούτου (Γ') πάντες ἵσα νέομεν ψευδή ποὸς ἀχτάν· ος μὲν ἀχοήμων, ἀφνεὸς τότε, τοὶ δ' αὖ πλουτέοντες *** (8) (Δ')<-> ἀέξονται φρένας ἀμπελίνοις τόξοις δαμέντες

Oh Thrasyboulos, I am sending you this chariot of lovely songs

For after dinner. Amid the company may it be a sweet goad for your drinking companions, for the fruit of Dionusos,

and for the Atheninan drinking cups, when men's wearisome cares vanish from their breasts, and on a sea of golden wealth we all alike sail to an illusory shore; then the pauper is rich, while the wealthy increase in their minds, overcome by the arrows of thevine.

The address establishes the formal frame of the Enkomion and evokes a geographical width, before the poem itself becomes the subject of the plot. As a dessert ("μεταδόρπον", 2) it is placed at the beginning of a sympotic meeting ("ἐν ξυνῷ", 2), which it anticipates and becomes part of through a clearly prescribed effect; as a sweet spurn ("γλυμερὸν", 3; "μέντρον" 4) it ("εἴη", 2) is meant to intensify the effects of wine and the kylikes (drinking vessels).

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^{22.} The idea of the cliché, topoi seems central to us to comprehend the discursive spatiality that constitues a shared imaginary.

^{23.} The Greek texts are taken from the Online-Version of the TLG. The translation stems from the authors, if not indicated differently.

^{24.} E.g.: Alkaios, fr. 346 (LPP).

^{25.} See also below: The metaphoricity.

connection with wine, of which the gnoseology has survived: In Vino Veritas.

^{28.} The translation is from William H. Race: ibd.; Pindar: Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes, Harvard 1997.

The next lines leave the specific context of the symposium at Thrasyboulos and thematise the dichotomous effects of the wine-poem as a metaphorical row on the wide sea accompanied by a luxurious materiality ("πολυχούσοιο πλούτου", 6). The narrator has bridged the spatial distance, the deictic adverbs ("άνίχ", 5; "τότε", 8) evoke a presence, which includes the first-person narrator as part of those rowing from their sorrowful thoughts to move on to greener banks. The nautical metaphors open a field of associations borrowed from the epos (Ulysse's dangers, adventures, efforts and dares) and continue the semantic of the spurn introduced earlier. The aim of the voyage are banks described as phantasmal ("ψευδή", 7). The real social relationships are turned upside-down; struck by the (potentially life-threatening) arrows of wine the illusion of a magnificent reality dominates, whose effects are characterised as violently overwhelming ("δαμέντες", 9).

The deception is revealed in the moment of its staging and decidedly affirmed. The poetical space of the poem transforms the definite virtual space of the symposium into a dramatic utopic journey while stressing the latter's violent consequences that distort reality. The rapid changes of place, the stress on the adventurous-violent dimension as well as the dramatic scenery of the dangerous row develop the idea of the poem as a sweet spurn introduced in the beginning which animates and pushes the listener. As a result, an internal reality is produced that does not need to hold up to the yardstick of outward relations.

A returning strategy in the Twenty Looks-series is singing on a playback (karaoke), re-functionalizing the dramatic material of a song according to a specific situation. Borrowing from the reservoir of contemporary pop songs, the material is found which the fragmented dramatic patterns can inhabit. The function is not only to borrow and actualize someone else's emotionality, to take on the mask of the singer. When once integrated in the collaged material texture of the series, the material itself undergoes a transition. It plays karaoke, as it is endlessly re-contextualized, taking on different meanings and styles. As Pindar in his fragment, Trajal Harrell is the one that controls the layers and transitions that he serves us in a bitter-sweet envelopment, using his power as a performer to take us to illusory shores. While marking them as constructed, the intensive desire to join his boat might first of all be shared. admitted

We might at this point, having gotten to know some of the sympotic performative patterns, precise the notion of the anthropological concern that we ascribed earlier to Trajal Harrel's work. The participants of his performances, parallel to those of the symposium, are able to reflect their environment. The spatial components and the communicative situation surrounding them are made transparent, by singling them out through deictic performative strategies. In this way the experiential quality of complex spatial proceedings can be created and analysed in its development at the same time. We

propose to call the insights gained through such a process anthropological since all the intellectual operations are referred to the subjects creating them: the ones participating in the play: playing together

Dancing Philosophy

Xenophon's and Plato's symposia dating to the early fourth century BC are the first purely literary symposia known to us. Within the emerging practice of philosophy, the social experience of collective drinking loses its position as a realm of experience that merits reflexion in itself. From the perspective of philosophical questioning, the interpersonal, situational practice is secondary when opposed to the experience of thinking. Nonetheless, the concrete-virtual sympotic space is not abandoned altogether, but re-functionalized in the service of a philosophical programme which results in a transformation of the status of its spatiality.29 It might be understood as an inversion of the above developed double spatiality: the virtual relations and concepts of philosophy are mediated through the space of the symposium. Since absolute ideas such as truth or happiness are meant to be independent of situational moments, the miseen-scene of the symposion in philosophical literature serves to provide evidence for this claim, often using the actual sympotic context as a contrastive example to be reformed. This is linked to the aim to direct the staging of opulent pleasures (habrosyné) into more ethically admissible, temporally stable and logical coherent realms: not pleasures in plural, but the one, eternal happiness.30

Xenophon uses the form of the symposium as an ideal type from which he exemplifies the adequate behaviour according to an abstract concept of justice. For our purposes it is of particular interest, that in the last party [VII-IX] the political-economic thoughts are discussed and re-evaluated through the medium of dance.

As a reaction to the spectacular and virtuous performance of two young dancers under the guidance of a "Syracuse man" (Compare the Psiax plate) Xenophon lets Socrates ask to produce a counter proposal for the dance. According to him the just passed presentation, while spectacular and dangerous, does not increase pleasure ("εὐφραινοίμεθα", VII 2; "ήδονὴν:", VII 3).

Now turning somersaults into knives strikes me as a dangerous exhibition, and utterly out of place at a banquet. Writing and reading aloud on a whirling potter's wheel may be something of a feat too, yet I can't conceive

what pleasure even that could afford. Nor is it any more diverting to watch the young and beautiful twisting their bodies about and imitating hoops than in repose.³¹

The asking of philosophical questions is instead suggested as much better suited to inspire pleasure and marvel [VII, 2-5]:

In fact you can marvel at what's right in front of you now,—for instance, why the lamp gives light by having a bright flame while its bronze reflector, likewise bright, doesn't produce light but instead reflects other things that appear in it. Or how it is that olive oil, though wet, makes the flame higher, while water, because it is wet, puts the fire out.

As an alternative to the elaborate but inefficient virtuosity he demands an allegorising choreographic process which equates dance to writing: VII, 5

But if the young people were to have a pipe accompaniment and dance figures depicting ("γράφονται") the Graces, the Seasons, and the Nymphs, I believe that they would have a far easier time of it and that the banquet would be far more delightful."

Corresponding to this functionalisation of dance in the services of a rationalized economy of pleasure, the pragmatist Xenophon proposes a dance that allegedly conforms to the natural requirements of the two young dancers and whose effects are described as especially authentic. [IX, 4-6].

Now Dionysus arose and gave his hand to Ariadne to rise also, and then there were the movements of lovers kissing and caressing each other to watch. The onlookers saw a Dionysus truly handsome, an Ariadne truly fair, not presenting a burlesque but offering genuine (ἀληθινῶ) kisses with their lips; and all watched with heightened excitement.

For they overheard Dionysus asking her if she loved him and heard her vowing that she did, so earnestly that not only Dionysus <. . .> but all the bystanders as well would have jointly sworn that the boy and the girl were surely in love with each other. Theirs was the appearance not of performers who had been taught their moves but of people now permitted to satisfy their long-cherished desires.

Corresponding to Xenophon's model of non-physical homosexual friendship, Dionysus and Ariadne are the model of a heterosexual relationship which is able to integrate the enjoyment of erotic pleasure into the conjugal realm thus guaranteeing political and temporal stability. According to this economy of pleasure sexual acts are postponed to the time after the symposium, either to the matrimonial bed or sublimated into the context of political activity.

By linking the abstract concepts of the useful, the natural, the true, to the notion of pleasure and beauty, forms of luxurious burlesque or disguise that were fundamental to the symposium are, conversely, not to be regarded as beautiful or entertaining. Following on from this the domesticated wedding dance is understood as a preliminary stage of the entire sublimation of dance in a life, fashioned according to philosophical standards. In the service of those standards, the symposium is meant to provide political stability- only then it can be beautiful, a beauty legitimized through it's utility, beyond the pleasures of technicity.

TRAJIC



he double spatiality traced in the Greek symposion is mirrored in the double aspect of the tragedy both as a *genre* and as a *concrete practice*: Being historically located, it might be interrogated in terms of its specific social and aesthetic modalities, its functions within a certain historic moment.

Adopting our more historical-analytical approach we applied to the symposium, we are here following a tradition of reception that is interested in the tragic a a somehow universalizing category. Focusing on the tragic genre nonetheless, by turning towards it's hist appearance (around 5 BC), we aim to develop an angle to approach the TRAJIC in Trajal Harrell's work.

Emotion: Tragic Game

The intimacy between Trajal Harrell's practice and the tragic project might be found in a shared attempt to answer to the question: How to be intense with each other? After the epic poem, whose plot, char-

simultaneously be

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Compare: Teçusan, Manuela: "Logos Sympotikos: Patterns of the Irrational in Philosophical Drinking: Plato Outside the Symposium", in: Murray, Oswin (Hg.): SYMPOTICA.
 A Symposium on the Symposion, Oxford 1990, 238-260.

^{30.} See Plato:

^{31.} The translation stems from: Marchant, E.C.; Todd, O.J.; Xenophon: *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, Harvard 2013.

See: Billings, Joshua: Geneaology of the Tragic, Princeton 2015.

^{33.} Turning tragedy as genre into something essential is insofar a choice on our part as it becomes an artistically fertile horizon, a formal tool. From this point of view, there is a potential fact in our aesthetic horizon: expectation and realisation of a tragedy following different poetic attempts. A Shakespearian tragedy, a Racine play, an opera of Britten or Monteverdi as well as certain cinematographic attempts, either explicitly or implicitly belong to the tragic genre by meeting both its final goal and its key poetic forms, sometimes spontaneously. Other works will implement some tragic features without reaching the genre.



acters, and facts were assumed to be well-known, a material texture to be constantly rewoven, the tragedy might be understood as a process of elaborating the matter at hand, distancing it in order to exploit and develop its emotive resonance. Tragedy, as an artistic genre, glorifies the tyranny of emotion.

Emotion is a tragic thing, it has the taste of fate: it touches us, from outside, constraining, unavoidable, unmanageable. In a programmatic definition, tragedy is the confrontation of an individual with his fate. Not fate as a religious idea, but as a fundamental existential intuition, which could be translated into psychological terms as an intimate and tenacious feeling of a tendency steering me somewhere in spite of my clear ability to choose.34 The intuition of fate, as something we cannot dominate, causes emotion: as long as we are unable to answer a certain question, it affects us; if we are lost, unable to dominate the question, psychologically it stirs up emotion. It is an emotional question. like the question "Why me?", which is indeed the burden and scourge of the tragic persona. Why am I, Antigone, the one concerned, the one gripped by the unavoidable feeling, the pressing need to fight for justice? Why me-to the death-and why not my sister Ismene?

"Hello, I'm Trajal Harrell", that's how all the pieces from the Twenty Looks-series begin. As a performer he directly questions the possibility of temporarily assuming the identity of a certain character and provides his suffering with a voice. Not so much as an actor, whose identity would be protected in the execution of the play, whom we could assist, as strangers to the exercise, an audience in the proper sense of the word. His gesture is that of a performer, creating a suffering human being in front of our eyes. The bringing-into-existence of the suffering subjects implies the dissolution of the perfomer's identity and his elevation to the level of tragic practice: "Who am I? I am Trajal. I am Trahal. I am Trâdjel. I am Traedjal. I am Traedjel. I am Trayal now. I am Antigone". Not male, not female, neither Trajal, nor Antigone, the tragic persona is a densified extract of human experiences.35"We are always proving who we are, always reaching for the rising star ... ".36 Indeed, any attempt to answer the question "Why me?" naturally tends to deal—perhaps as a feint—with identity issues ("Could I be someone else?") and genealogy ("Where do I come from ?"). « You know, the person who chooses your name doesn't always have good intentions. That's what happened to me. Because when I first started in transvestites forms, in Guissény, in West of France, next to where my parents were living (...), I thought first I would perform as François, which is my birth name, but it was ridiculous. So I changed it to Franz, but it sounded weird. So every weekend I wanted to change it: Francine, Lucienne, Lucie, Maeva, Ulrika, many names... But for some reasons, it always sound ridiculous. »³⁷. Enough to despair in fact.

Lyricism is Trajal Harrell's performative strategy to face the emotional consequences of this question. Lyricism: That is to say some kind of stylized overstatement in an attempt to formulate tragic feeling, giving it a resonance. Is the emotional trauma to be understood as preceding its performative formulation, as an ex-pression of an emotional subject's feeling, or is it rather first of all constituted through the staged reality? Does expression clear me out or fill me up? 38 By making the lyric voice stand out alone, sounding raw and lacking a proper drama, tragedy is reached at its core, using all the resources of singing, dancing, discourse, together with any other means necessary. The exhibition of the tragic emotion through the demonstrative gesture of lyricism is employed in an almost obscenely and cruel manner by Trajal Harrell, making use of a possibility proper to the performative process at work, not the dramatic work. The performer suffers in front of us, not because of a dramatic cause (e.g. a calamity striking a character) but rather here and now in his effort of reaching and sharing tragic emotion. In the M2M size from Twenty Looks, Trajal Harrell is compelled to keep singing and dancing under another's injunction, while he again and again returns to slump and weep in his chair: "Don't stop!", and in it's sublimed version: "Work". This tragic affectivity must not be confused with ponderous gravity on a stylistic precisely here where humor can occur.

Togetherness: Extension Game

Extension towards a collective level of emotion needs a performative framework. In the case of the Greek symposium, the specific performative strategy consists in mirroring the collective action of drinking wine through present tangible objects that are being used in the same time. In the case of the greek tragedy,

component

the specific performative strategy is the chorus (χορός). A principle consequence of the approach taken here to tragedy, focusing on its procedures of (re-)presentation, is to underline the crucial role of the tragic chorus. The functional center of tragedy is not the representation of action (δράμα), but the (chorus.39 "What can be started with the chorus?" is dramatically an almost irresolvable question. In his own way, Trajal Harrell displays a theatrical framework, that is genuinely tragic not primarily in its explicit references to Antigone but by staging chorus alone, as the place of a performative extension of the drama. The material of the drama is turned from the re-presentation of an action towards the performative present. Drama achieves a status of reality it did not have before: it loses its fictional status (being true but not real) in favor of an actual status (real but maybe not true).

Let us naively consider a precise example: in Antigone Jr.++, the first performer (TH) says "I'm Antigone" and the second (Thibault Lac) "I'm Ismene". At a given point, the latter recites a part of Sophocle's text (Act I, Sc. I, Antigone, Ismene) through the book's mediation (having Sophocles' text in his hands) and then stops in order to state some kind of a lyrical confidence, through a direct speech to the public. Appearing on the threshold, at the miraculous moment as he gets ready to leave or has just left the drama, as if with his mask already in his hand.

With respect to tragedy's performative and nonfictitious situation, it should not be forgotten that it is a collective ceremony of a myth's re-actualisation. Myth is not exactly fictitious⁴⁰. The characters of Oedipus,

Creon, and Antigone allegedly really existed, in the period of the city's founding. Since the city conceives itself as a family, a tribe, one can consider in jest that when the city of Athens gathered to witness the tragedy of Oedipus, it created a similar situation to that of a family gathered to perform once more some anecdotes from their grandfather's life story. It is not a spectacle but in fact an actual and cult-related event (as it is by nature public)41. Of course, the myth's development is fictitious (it's plot could change) but, almost contradictorily, its status is not. The gesture of performative presentation is only made possible by the fact that the adapted material has a non-fictious, but an assumed historical status. It constitutes a space of possibilities that have been real as possibilities. In the present of the performative event, their potentiality is re-actualized and re-affirmed. That means conceiving the past as a space of virtualities that are at our disposal.

"All the series shares the same proposition: what would happen in 1963 if someone from the voguing dance tradition in Harlem would had come down to Judson Church to perform, alongside the postmoderns. This is not trying to be a historical recreation of that question. This is an imaginative possibility we share together. Something that can not have been seen in Harlem, something that can not have been seen in the Judson Church. Something that con only be seen today, in the room with us, together, here and now⁴²".

Moreover, as already established in the enquiry into the symposium above (See: framed openness), this rhetoric rests upon a repertoire of gestures, commonplaces, and affective codifications. The dramatic material can be actualised and shared by its transformation into topoi, that install a temporarily shared koiné aesthesis (a common repertoire of gesture). Primarily spatial, the chorus' interventions bring us from one narrative to the other in an un-fictitious and un-dramatic manner.⁴³

Since dramatic time is constrained by the succession of action, the extension of the dramatic towards the

archaischen und klassischen Epoche, Stuttgart 2011.)

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^{34.} These psychological terms that are our own refer to an inner life that doesn't amount to the Greek notion of $\psi \nu \chi \dot{\eta}$, as a psycho-physical force, not only inhabited by the individual. But can we offer something better?

^{35.} We find the strategic use of Neutral Gender categery's already in Sappho, See: Schlesier, Renate: Atthis, Gyrinno, And Other Hetairai: Female Personal Names in Sappho's Poetry », Philologus 157, 199-222.

Irene Cara's song from Fame "Out Here on my own", performed in Antigone Jr.++

^{37.} performer François Chaignaud, in (M)imosa.

^{38.} This question becomes delicate since expression (expressio) as an aesthetic figure is highly indepted to 18th century german pietistic theology and its conception of an inner subject. Herder.

^{39.} From one fine nuance to another, these latest key inputs have resulted in completely revolutionising the established points of view, reversing the traditional Aristotelian definition of tragedy ("Thus, tragedy is the imitation of an action (δράμα) (...). Imitation by acting characters, and not by means of a story", Poetics, 1449 b) towards a choral definition of it. Aristotle recognises the chorus' key part in the genre's genealogy and creation, but mainly from a historical perspective. The more he inserts the represented action within the overarching form, with a teleological aim ("after several modifications, it stabilised itself after reaching its own nature", Poetics, 1449 a), the more he naturally draws the chorus towards this definition, stresses its dramatic role and defines it as a character in itself ("Moreover, the chorus is to be considered as one of the actors, to be part of the whole ensemble and join in the plot, not as in Euripides but rather like in Sophocles", Poetics 1456 a). It is important to understand that reducing the chorus in dramatic terms is a choice of Aristotle's ("not as in Euripides but rather like in Sophocles") and that a complete understanding of the chorus' status in tragedy requires a consideration of the opposite hypothesis.

^{40.} See Burkert, Walter: Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical, Harvard 1985, (originally appeared in german, now in a revised and extended version: ebd.: Griechische Religion der

⁴I. The choreutes are young men chosen by a public magistrate among the finest families of Athens. Les choreutes sont de jeunes hommes choisis par un magistrat parmi les meilleurs familles d'Athènes.

^{42.} Trajal Harrell's live introduction to many shows from the series Twenty Looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church:

^{43.} We refer to the study by Gagné and Govers Hopman of the second stasimon from Euripides' Elektra: "In fewer than fifty lines, the is able to bring the audience from the mountains of Argos to the agora. From the recesses of the household to the movement of the stars, and the four corners of the world." (Renaud Gagné and Marianne Govers Hopman, "The chorus in the middle", in Choral Meditations in Greek Tragedy, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 8)



performative implies a resistance to dramatic temporality. Creating a time not yet dominated and filled by the action, a dramatically empty time. The occurrence of music in Greek tragedy as well as in Trajal Harrel's practice is the means par excellence to establish another temporality, a rhythmical one.

Trajal's ball: ritual game

Twenty Looks is an organic ensemble44 that spreads and develops from the inside, by means of reminiscences and connections, pointing out the effort of the ongoing movement.45 From one show to another and within each show, each moment is at once located here and now with the greatest strength, and is the reactivation of a gesture, the echo of an endless song or dance. The show is never properly ended, as its concern is endless.46 Trajal Har-

44. First of all, let's remain cautious, as regards connections in Trajal Harrell's work, about what is too visible. We like to think indeed that the explicit seriality from the series Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church falls under an almost ironical justification. In reality, despite the fact that each show from the series share the same programmatic assumption(« what would have happened in 1963etc. on the question of man. Despite the important difference if someone from the voquing dance tradition in Harlem would have come down to Jusdson Church to perform-»), they do not seem to exist in complementarity with each other in a relationship of necessity, which would imply that idea of a superior order, a kind of great Work and an organising principle between them. There is perhaps in Trajal Harrell, in repeatedly asserting an order (each play being inserted within the series, and the assertion of it beeing inserted oraly in each play) actually a certain humour that condemns the pathetic nature of such an order. The relationship between each moment resides rather at another level, namely that of a great disorder, more deeply, since Trajal Harrel's method is inter-textual, rather than serial.

45. The time-related formulation of a series is as follows: shape (S) by 2009, shapes (XS) and (M) by 2011 and then (M)imosa, by 2012 Antigone Jr. and Antigone Sr.(L) and by 2013 the full series with Antigone Jr.++ and (M2M) Made to Measure, with an (XL) form added in Paris in 2016 (in the form of this publication). One can't help having in mind Proust's formulation of La Recherche, an idiomatic model for such development from the inside, by way of both echo and extension. It also represents the transition of his work from dance towards theatre.

46. Proust again: « Je pourrais, bien que l'erreur soit plus grave, continuer, comme on fait, à mettre des traits dans le visage d'une passante, alors qu'à la place du nez, des joues et du menton, il ne devrait y avoir qu'un espace vide sur lequel jouerait tout au plus le reflet de nos désirs».

"Although it would be a more serious mistake, I could keep put-

rell's work's chorality has a ritual dimension. It consist in the substitution of a point not to be ultimately grasped through the repetition of gestures that aim at approaching it, including the reflexive repetition of the execution of gestures itself. The luxuriance of the so instituted never ending metaphors is ritualistic. Research is taking place in this intertextual and metaphorical practice, performing ever refined references.

It is first and foremost an ordinary intertextuality, from one show to another, which suggests not only that this show extends into others but also that it is not itself fixed47. It is then a game of intratextuality or connection within one single show: when different performers from (M)imosa explicate the title using different narratives, "Mimosa" each time figuring as the performer's name, this contradictory and complementary plurality creates a network of meaning that is both vague and complete. In this case, connections between the narratives make it absolutely impossible to determine the meaning and open every connection of signification from the singular to the universal: Mimosa is not an individual, Mimosa is an en-

This intertextual procedure accesses tragedy in its very raison d'être. Beyond their important divergences, choruses of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides are all deeply connected to one another, like the prolonged writing of a single remark, an ongoing, developing meditation in voice from one play to the other, and within any single play, the echo of previous moaning is still heard and words to come are already sensed. Each chorus is still here and now for a new song but it raises its arms in both directions and embraces the entire diversity of locations and times, as long as a human being is present. One could imagine, as a fanciful invention a unique work made up of the entirety of these choruses, forming a never completed poem on man: "Among all those marvels of the world, the areat marvel is man"48.

ting features on a passerby's face, as people do, whereas actually, instead of a nose, cheeks and a chin, there should be nothing but an empty space played upon, at most, by the reflection of our desires" (Proust, A la recherche du temps perdu, Le temps retrouvé, last chapter)

47. The epilogue of Antigone Jr.++ provides us with a series of songs that are introduced and sung by both performers. "This is a song from Mimosa, the medium size in the series. It is a song I used to sing in Mimosa, but now I changed and it's nice to go back to it". Then: "This song is from Antigone Sr., the large size". And lastly: "This song is from Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem. I was in love with the quy. It was a terrible relationship, and it didn't work out, but I kept the song."

48. Sophocles, Antigone, v.333

Obsession: the play of desire

"In the long run, I took pleasure from this Eureka that dragged me off myself [...]. I started preferring manufactured stories to improvised ones; the strict succession of words grew perceptible to me: they came back, always the same ones and in the same order, I expected them. In Anne-Marie's tales, the characters lived haphazardly, as she did herself: they gained fates. I was at Holy Mass: I witnessed the endless return of names and occurrences, 49"

At this stage, we should not hesitate to listen to our pleasure. As with a mass, one has to be there, one must see, in its almost ritual dimension, Trajal Harrell's gesture in order to enjoy this fact of witnessing somethingthat's-happening. We enjoy this gesture. We enjoy this gesture's repetition. The pleasure we feel, which is characteristic of the ritual, is that of the gesture's repetition. We can't help but think that Greek theatre, tragedy from a ritual perspective, by actualising shared myths at a given date, stimulated this childish pleasure, an addictive pleasure. We can't help thinking of the pleasure at work within the symposium, a ritual enjoyment of shared experience of existing together.

It is not only the ritual addiction to pleasure that reminds us of Sade, as he says, «desire is the space between what we are and what we are not". Desire is cruel, tragic, creative and indomitable: it calls out by any means possible to what we are not. This inbetween area is the room given to us for experimentation, so much so that we might consider this definition of desire as a definition of theatre. In this sense, Trajal Harrell's work is theatrical, since the opened space is a space of desire, a space where a possibility becomes real with great strength, an option missing from the (other) reality of daily life, namely that of sharing together and for good something-that's-happening and the corresponding emotions.

The interruption of the show in Antigone Jr.++ because of a supposedly forgotten costume??? (see above: framed openness) shows Trajal Harrell's theatrical mastery of our desire's patterns. As the incident occurs, the only alternative to our being totally lost with ourselves consists in being absolutely together, in admitting our submission, our entire loss of autonomy and, eventually, our desire for this to keep going. This playing with and controlling of the frame creates a strong seduction on

49. Jean-Paul Sartre, Les Mots, first part, « Lire » ("A la longue je pris plaisir à ce déclic qui m'arrachait de moi-même (...) Aux récits improvisés, je vins à préférer les récits préfabriqués; je devins sensible à la succession rigoureuse des mots: à chaque lecture ils revenaient, toujours les mêmes et dans le même ordre, je les attendais. Dans les contes d'Anne-Marie, les personnages vivaient au petit bonheur, comme elle faisait elle-même: ils acquirent des destins. J'étais à la Messe: j'assistais à l'éternel retour des noms et des événements.")

the performer's part and on everybody else's the desire to share the gesture, to be part of it, in togetherness.

In the end, there is no show but rather a gesture and an artist (or several), a set of gestures that stem from the same artistic desire. There is Trajal Harrell, or rather Trajal Harrell and his own, in a relationship of addiction to the audience. The artist in all his beauty, his loftiness, his tyranny, his narcissism, ritually renews the gesture of invitation addressed to the audience: questioning together the possibility of sharing an emotion.

"Here and now, you created me. All of you. All of New York all of Paris, all of Tokyo, you created

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^{50.} Trajal Harrell, performing in Antigone Jr.++.



FOR THE UNMARKED TEXT OF "YOU CREATED ME..., "
PLEASE CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING LINK:
HTTP://S3.OTHERPEOPLESPIXELS.COM/SITES/10389/ASSETS/I_9LXWCERBAXTQMN.PDF

















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OR What History? Whose History? To What Purpose? (Titel)¹ by Trajal Harrell, Stefanie Seibold

I. Quote from: Douglas Crimp, Getting The Warhol We Deserve, 1999

ontexts create expectations. In 20
Looks or Paris is Burning at Judson
Church Harrell re-works some of
these expectations very productively
and as a result offers a new reading
of history. In his piece Antigone Sr.
which is part of the series 20 Looks,
Harrell achieves this to my mind by
operating in various different stylistic modes – historic
and contemporary – all at once. Dramatic moments of
great intensity are followed by stepping outside (of the
fourth wall) and adressing the audience directly, reading from scripts, demonstratively staging fashion show

elements featuring extravagant selfmade-costumes, silently sitting alone wailing wearing historicist costumes etc. concluded by the dancers self-forgotten ultra-slow dancing in intimate spotlights right in front of the audience, suggesting a never ending late night dance-floor, literally exploding the time and space of the theater.

The bodies onstage all perform a series of more or less recognisable modern and post-modern dancemoves followed by equally coded queer gestures from underground Vogueing Balls in Harlem and truly popular movements like disco-dancing. All this is embedded in a strategic frame of conceptual dance's rejection of movement starting with the adressing of the audience,

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handing out texts, concluding with the collapsing of time and space of the theater.

Harrells inital idea for the series was that of looking at the Judson Avantgarde Dance Movement of the 1960s (prevailing the contemporary dance scene in the late 1990s as a conceptual-moral imperative) through the lens of Vogueing, aiming to deconstruct and displace some of the most basic rules and beliefs connected to the powerful Judson Myth at the time. Through this active misunderstanding of "context", Harrell and Co. bring together highly charged (dance) histories subverting audiences and critics expectations of stylistic purity and their desire for artistic "authenticity" ignoring both very productively. The result is a destabilising confusion about what kind of piece we are witnessing and by whom - and how exactly we are supposed react to it: Is it a reactionary late-Modernism-reviving Melodrama – reintroducing virtuousity and erotic sensuality - or does it adhere to the list of the post-modern NOs? How can it be a conceptual work if they have such great fun dancing and wailing? Should we immerse ourselves into its atmosphere and get moved or is this some kind of a trap and we have to stay even more alert, detached and critically reflecting?

Antigone Sr. plays the categories of modern, postmodern, conceptual dance or minimalism like a proper Vogueing ball plays with its inventive categories on gender, status and race. Through this in a similar maneouvre, and a more general sense, the work raises important political questions about passing and failing (in) any kind of context and just how debatable definitions really are.

By putting into question what exactly it is that we are confronted with, Harrell is taking away our secure modes of interpretion and safe categorisations. With this the piece singles us out in the audience, reminding us instead that "knowledge" and "history" are fictional categories, that are neither universal nor neutral and that such a view is privileged and not available to everyone. It shows these powerful concepts as deeply biased, contingent and dependant on individual experience and context.

The piece asks: Whose stories are being told? Whose are silenced? Which context accepts what forms and contents as valid and readable statements? What is deemed "knowledge"? Whose knowledge is deemed "knowledge"? What is seen as worth saving? What falls away? What and who enters the canon?

By implicitly posing these questions in Antigone Sr. and his series 20 Looks Harrell deconstructs the genderand racially biased, heterornormative, western, art- and dance-history that we have come to understand as historic facts, and exposes them as a system of inclusions and exclusions that are in urgent need to be re-negotiated.

With the series 20 Looks or Paris is Burning at Judson Church Trajal Harell and his Compagnie (Troupe) offer an important critique and and exciting revision of (dance) history as we know it.

Transcripts Interview, Meeting August 1st, 2013 at Museums Ouartier, Vienna

STEFANIE SEIBOLD: We were just talking about the different contexts between theater or lets say dance context And also in the beginning of one of the pieces of 20 looks you said that you wanted to start a discussion.

TRAJAL HARRELL: a debate

SS: a debate around this work, and i think this has a lot to do also in which context you would show it and what people know actually

TH: jajaja, of course

SS: And i was wondering what kind of discussions did come from it or could you say something about this?

TH: Well for sure, that's in small, beause it is small, i knew that this piece was primarily going to be seen in places among kind of the dance cognescienti, and perhaps some of the performance cognescienti. But there were two debates, that i was kind of debating, one had to do with the future of conceptual dance, because at the time when i made this piece, conceptual dance was still, for some maybe it was kind of still the "trend" in dance and no one knew how to get out of it, so i made, small it is a conceptual piece but it kind of breaks out of conceptualism by it's very nature, it has this lens of vogueing which is reflecting upon everything and then the other debate was about a kind of neutrality of judson and the way that the judson dance aesthetic had been appropriated by the kind of conceptual dance movement and maybe by other people as a kind of neutral, as if judson had invented like neutrality and democracy and this is like a fictional myth in history and thats what i was trying to show - in small there is this layering of judson aesthetics, but it's always shown through this lens of realness through vogueing, so that you hopefully can begin to see that it's another kind of fashion or another kind of realness as they call it in vogueing – we talked about it in the workshop, i said conceptual dance is just another ethnic dance – these are the kind of debates that now perhaps, because this was me in 2009 now it's 2013, 4 years later, and people listen and say now they say oh, jajajaja, but at the time when i first started doing that piece of course people couldn't deal with it. What I was doing was not possible, you could not show this kind of work in contemporary dance, because i was challenging all the aesthetic precepts that you were supposed to have to make a contemporary dance which was supposed to be conceptual. And according to the rules of Yvonne Rainer. And i was like, all those rules,

i was saying, all that No-Manifesto i was saying: maybe, maybe, and people couldn't deal with that.

SS: Did you ever meet with Yvonne?

TH: yeah yeah, a friend of mine dances with her. I mean Yvonne does not adhere to those precepts anymore. You know she makes still a very particular kind of work, but she was not following the No-Manifesto the way other people were anymore.

SS: Last night i caught up a little bit on Paris is Burning because i had seen it but ages ago, and also last year when i watched the Antigone Sr., the sadness that you were producing which i found quite special within this queer, because often you have a queer piece everybody is happy they are so queer and then they are happy to be queer, so you brought in that sadness, and i read it also in terms of remembering that i think all of the protagonists of this film are dead, or almost all or lived in poverty, and this kind of sadness, and because i was working with the wooster group, and the history of aids-related deaths, which is a history which I cannot access anymore because the protagonists are gone, so i was also reading the sadness in your piece in that way.

SS: Now i saw the twenty looks, because i had also seen it online

TH: You mean "small"

SS. Yes, where you flip the pages

TH: yes, you mean "small"

SS: that's what i was going to say, and I saw Paris is Burning, and i thought ah ja, preppy style!

You know i understood, because when i was sitting in there i was thinking, okay now he does that, and some connections i had, and this is also again the question of context, which kind of knowledge do you have, do you have the knowledge about the "houses" and all that, do you have a superficial knowledge, do you have a special knowledge and all these things, and also about dance, what kind of knowledge do you have about dance and this connection of desire, sadness is not right, "Trauer", death and birth and all these kind of Martha Grahamish things, and somehow that's how i saw the last couple of "Looks", the last three let's say, and I find it very interesting which layers you bring together there, of knowledge also of "fields of knowledge".

TH: jajaja, for sure, and unfortunately and also - one thing i learned here - you really should start with xtra-small. Because xtra-small is where the sadness is really like ch-ch-ch - it's really like in a nutshell, here is the sadness that you can take away, here is something you can read. To prepare you then to be in the "small"audience. That's the way it's supposed to operate, you know?

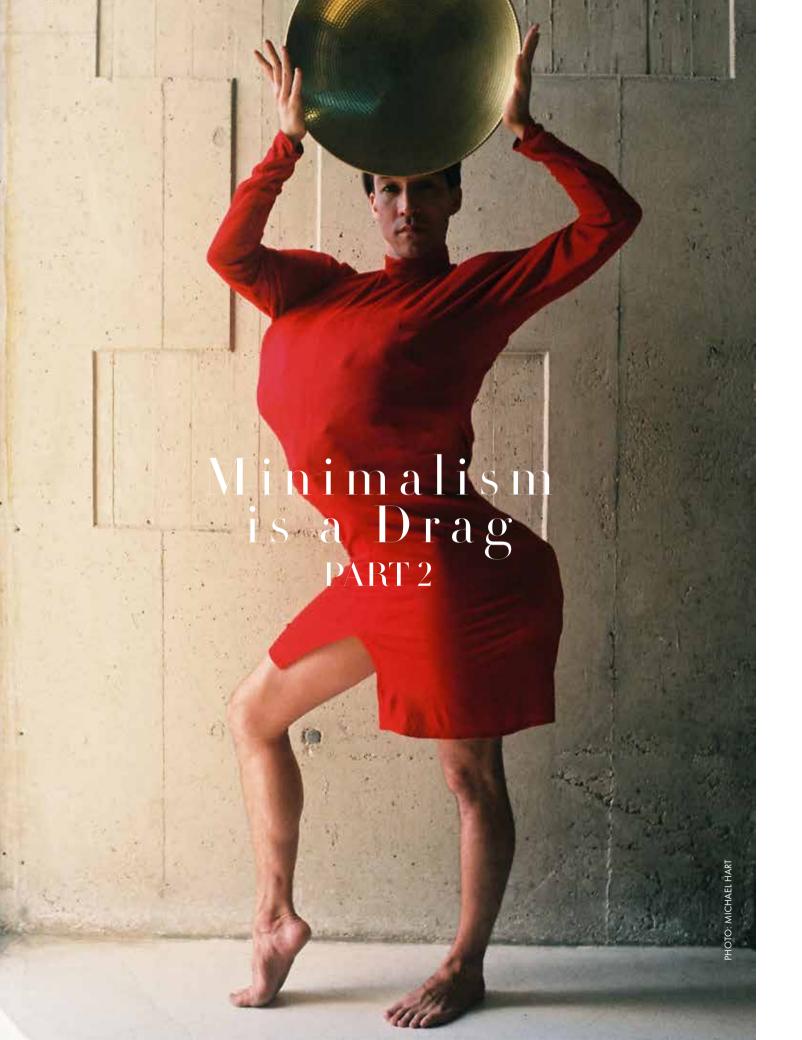
SS: Yes, many of the other pieces of "20 Looks" which i now saw fort he first time, I understood now differently through last year's experience, and what I found so exciting in bringing these worlds together. (as Douglas Crimp said: they have never been separate) And actually i liked it that it was at eleven o'clock even though i HATE to be up so late usually, but there I thought oh that is super super nice because it ends in a club or something.

SS: My interest for this PHD was to ask: I know a lot let's say about the work of Yvonne Rainer and Joan Jonas work, and i was very interested of how they both had worked with minimalist/formalist, very intensely worked out minimalist and formalist works that were extremely beautiful, and then both switched, in the wake of feminism, that is how they both talked about it, into a narrative...being interested in narrative, and if you would think about your piece along these lines, because I was thinking about their narratives in terms of going away from so called abstract formalist world into an let me call it emancipatory - narrative, that challenges this neutral, white male position.

TH: Yes of course, jajaja, i mean you said it better than I do...This is the debate that i set up in small is, and this is why i take on the tragedy, to drew? What i want: You should not do narrative you should not do retro/y? you know, ja, ja for sure...and i mean i think that for Me, I think that is not, i used to say that i am the child of Yvonne and Lucinda who has a crush on Uncle Steve, i guess what i am trying to say is that I see all of that as my inheritance, i just want to be able to understand that of course I can put on, that's what I am trying to say, when I want it to be conceptualism I can do it, i can make it: here we go, here we go, here we go (pounds on table) I can make something conceptual, but i also have the option to understand that this is a fiction. That is a performative strategy. It's not like a universal dominant thing that we all have to adhere to in order to understand what is good art. And this is what had become of it in dance, I mean: this is what it means to make good art. Like you know you make things according to this set of precepts and this is the death of art for me.

Yes of course I can work on minimalist strategies, i don't have a problem with it, but it's just another fiction (for me). I mean, that's the thing i get from vogueing, that all these things are just, RuPaul said, we all gotta put on some drag today, minimalism is another kind of drag, you know?yeah, it's beautiful your language around it, i really hope to read what you write...yeah yeah.

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The photo conversed about below is actually not the photo you see on the left page. The original photo is out of commission. The one we show here is just here. It's less minimal, but it is in the same drag.

TRAJAL HARRELL: Sorry I am a little bit under the weather

STEFANIE SEIBOLD: Poor thing, I can imagine

TH: Anyway, we're here to talk about this photo

SS: Talking about the image that was used in the campaign in 2011 or 2013

TH: The premiere was in 2012, and it's one of the pictures that venues can choose for publicity

SS: It was used by the Impulstanz Festival to promote..

TH: Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church: The Series and more specifically the piece Antiqone Sr.

SS: which was the one you performed....

TH: Large

SS: ...in Volkstheater in 2013

TH: We performed it in Volkstheater in 2013 and in Kasino in 2012

SS: That's where I saw it...Kasino....when were skyping we were talking about what you would see in this image and what I would see. Why you liked it and why I had problems with it.

TH: (sniffle, sniffle) You brought up a very interesting point because one of the reasons I liked it was because it threw out all these racial stereotypes. Because in the piece we talk about "the mythical black people" and "the mythical beautiful African woman who has a big butt," and here in the picture we have an exaggerated

female body but it's on an Asian man. So it was playing with these concepts of gender and race, but of course you brought up a very interesting point that the image outside of the context of the show produces different meanings and questions.

SS: Yeah, for me, in the show it's very logical. It makes a lot of sense with all the female impersonations in this queer context, in the context of voguing, and in the context of what your show is. There are many different layers of critical context. The all-male cast is something different with its queer connections and voguing connections than having that represented in the larger world but also in the context of a dance festival that is not a queer festival.

TH: Yeah

SS: Also, the exaggeration in the image as an image without the context mostly plays on the imitation of women by men for carnival reasons. I read it from the outside in a heterosexual imitation context. And what you said about stereotypes and the discourse about black women's bodies is something in Europe that people don't know. I mean they are ready to imitate black women's bodies any second but they don't know about it, that it's a thing or that it's offensive in a different way... And the racial connotations: the idea of Stephen as an Asian man on this picture gets lost. Because in Europe you have these critical discourses around representations of race and the third wave feminism that you are interested in. You have that maybe in academia or in a critical small group but it's not as widespread by critically producing artists as it would be in the United States.

TH: I agree with you.

SS: I was just surprised because the show does something and the image does something else for me.

TH: It's a question of marketing. Basically, you have to be as critical about your marketing as you are about the show. We generally have a number of images that venues can choose from to promote the show. And I wasn't so specific as to say this image might work in the U.S. but may not work in Europe, but it is the kind of thinking you need to do around these things.

There is a history in Europe of representing African people and colonialism. There's the Venus Hottantot which was a figure of exaggeration that is related to this somehow.

SS: Yes, that's true.

TH: This picture was definitely the one most used out of the five or six. It was used a lot....perhaps because it's a bit funny.

SS: It signals immediately something erotic.... with the red maybe. Something queer. But also something exaggerated. Something not naturalistic. Dealing with something experimental in way.The image is not a bad image, of course, there are a lot of things you can see in it. But....

TH: decontextualized from the show without some kind of text around it, it could be very simply be seen as a caricature of women.

SS: Usually when I see images like this, it is in carnival and this kind of heavy drinking part of the year. So men with this kind of exaggerated ass and boobs is something I also know. So it's something you produce within your show but you also show how you make it. And that's not in a benevolent way if you guys do that. It makes fun of older women. It makes fun of women with big breasts. Of spinsters. It de-sexualizes in a sexual way. So from a feminist point of view, there's a lot of history of offense in dressing up as a woman.

That's so interesting because in this voguing context there is so much going on at the same time that it is actually not the point. You have people passing as a straight, as a flight officer....

TH: It depends on the category.

SS: So you have all kinds of approaches to "realness."

TH: Also, we were really relating it to the ancient Greek theater, because of the men who were participating, it was very carnivalesque. The new research coming out is showing that it was very much a dionysian ritual with these boys dressing up and doing things as a rite of passage.....sorry, I'm not very articulate. My head is really stopped up.

SS: I still think it's not only this image in relation to your

work which I saw and very much liked and I was surprised to have this single image. But also the idea of a single image of a show...often times to me as someone working within fine arts, these images that are picked out as representation of a piece or a theater piece are as images not interesting enough. Don't produce such an interesting discourse. The interesting discourse is being produced in the whole piece...

I dislike lots of images in dance festivals for example. I dislike lots of representations of bodies on posters. So, I think, lately, Impulstanz has gone with fragments and I totally prefer that. This representation of able bodies, perfectness, or high jumps, [I dislike]. And theater has different kind of image things going on. They have the portrait of the actor. So they focus on different things. But this representation of these bodies in public space and at the same time you have Gisele Bundchen stripped down to her bikini bra.

Because of its "new" role as an advertising image on the street, its context then is *all* other commercial images on the street. This is a hyper-consumerist, capitalist context that is by default *always* heterosexist and racist, a context which *produces* normativity in extremely powerful ways as we all know. So I suppose this image was liked by most of the festival-promotion teams exactly because it seems to be critical about heteronormative, sexist and racist representations but actually it is not strong enough as a single image to turn all of that around. It needs the context of the performance to be understood as queer instead of sexist. And it is very difficult to create successful critical images, the entire feminist art movement was busy with that question...

....And, of course, I'm not telling you anything new. Because one of the interesting things that we were talking about is that you said you are so interested in feminism and that you were trained by feminist scholars.....

TH: Well, I think again, we have the marketing of dance and the general audience. They still think of dance as this thing that is virtuostic even though we've had a conceptual movement. It's still quite a struggle; but it's also about educating the public about dance and the potentiality of dance. Most people still want to go see something where people do fantastic feats....

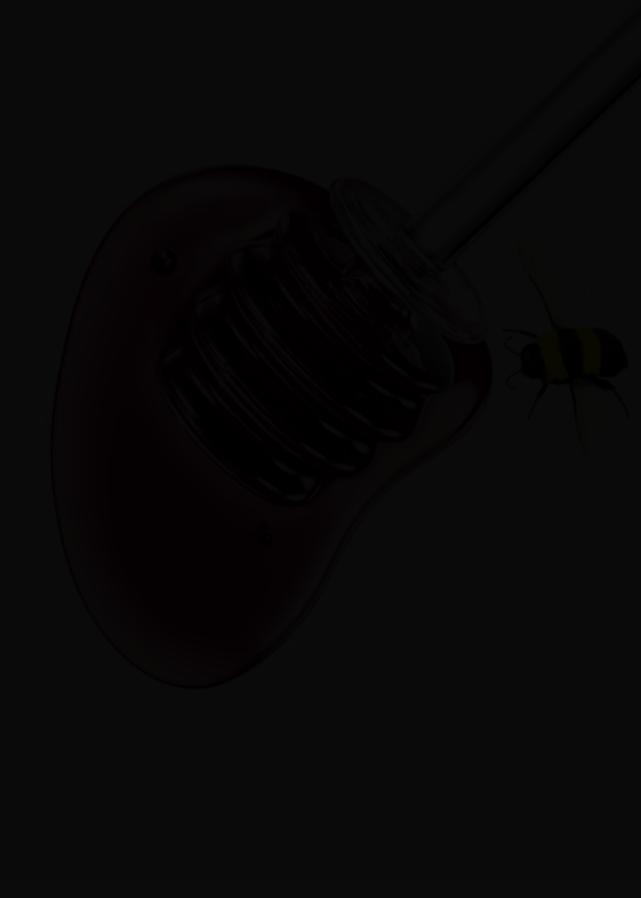
(sniffle) I'm sorry. I'm so...

SS: You want to go home?

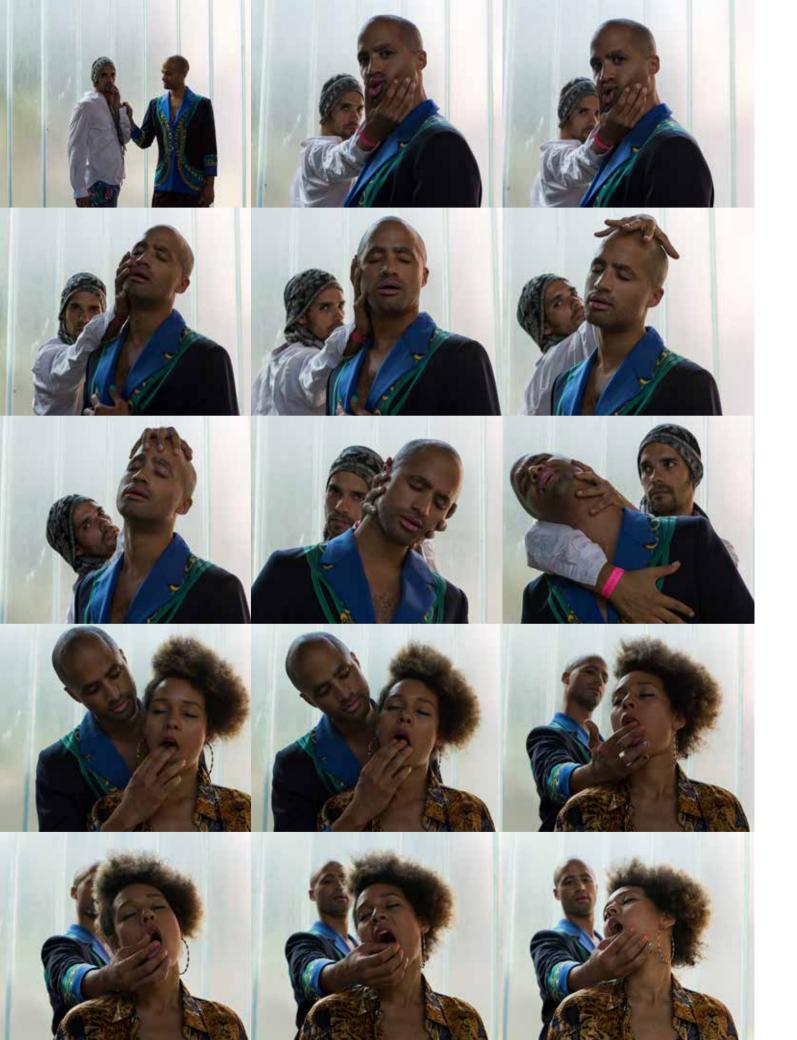
TH: I think I have to. I might be having chills and I think I might be coming down with the flu or something....

ENDNOTES

1. Addendum: The original photo – through a completely black/abstract background behind the figure – added to the issues we discussed above because there was no visible context/space for that specific body in the image."







For those of you who have been looking for the missing people of color in the series, here they are. They've been working in Vienna on a secret size. They've been very hush hush and you have to have the special code that was given out at the 2016 Berlin Biennial during their guerrilla performance to understand
when the premiere is taking place.
In the meantime, they took some time
out of their rehearsals to do a fashion shoot, and to say, "Here we are. we are peaches and herb, we are lemon and lemon, we are sonny and cher, we are FA-MI-LY..."









The Way to Pronounce It is me-MO-sa

By Mimosa, with Ryan Tracy Photograph By Svetla Atanasova

s it must be said, and as not saying it is liable to lead to a considerable amount of confusion, I will therefore say it, definitively, once and for all—I am the real Mimosa.

It happened that I was left waiting by several good friends of mine one unseasonably warm afternoon in March at the more or less deserted Café L'En Vogue on Bartók Béla út, just around the corner from the magnificent Gellért baths. The five of us were meeting up in Budapest to discuss a new

project. We are all performers with very successful international careers, so when it comes to getting us all in one place, it is often an impossible location, an unthinkable city, that ends up supplying us with a momentary site for gathering together and hatching plans.

I was waiting for the despondent female sever to bring my Bellini. She wore slim-fitting black jeans, a black tank-top and glossy black stilettos. (In this part of the world, it is quite common to see women in the service industry dressed up as if they were heading out to the club.) She was pretty. Her eyes were an emerald green and her sandy blonde hair was pulled back into a tight ponytail. But her face retained a distracted expression; on the verge of boredom. In fact, she was so committed to broadcasting her ennui during our interactions that I began to wonder if it was me, personally, who was inspiring in this otherwise fetching young woman such intense feelings of indifference. It was perhaps after a twenty-minute interval from the time I had placed my order with her that I remembered what my grandmother had told me about the service in Budapest. We were Skyping—she from Tahiti, I from St. Petersburg—and when I told her I was going to be in the Hungarian capital she paused the conversation to impart a piece of learned knowledge. «Budpest, one should know, is not known for its service. Even if they smile at you—and that's a big if—do not mistake it for a promise of expediency.»

Having remembered my grandmother's warning, I resigned myself to waiting. To keep me company, at least, I had the strange comfort of the overhead radio that was piping in Sheila E's "The Glamorous Life." Hearing American music abroad is always somewhat bittersweet. One's heart is warmed by the familiarity—of the attitude, the beat, the almost childlike strain of wanting to be heard; to be noticed. And yet one cannot escape a sense of guilt (maybe regret is a better word) about the hegemony that the American way of life has achieved over the planet. For it is not only our popular culture—our McDonald's, our supermarkets, our Sheila E's—but even our marginal and regional arts (what at one time might have been called *avant-garde*) that have gained influence over the elsewheres of the world. Hence, when I discovered the article in question, it was not its presence in the



Café L'En Vogue on Bartók Béla út on the Buda side of Budapest that surprised me. No. What surprised me—what *scandalized* me—was the realization that those friends for whom I was now waiting had betrayed me in the most personal of ways imaginable. They had stolen my identity. They had turned me into an art.

I was practically on the verge of dry mouth, and my patience with the local service had nearly evaporated, when the server at last arrived with my Bellini. She set the tall glass on the lithe wrought iron table, which was topped by a round mosaic of mother-of-pearl tiles. The pale pink elixir was bristling in the glass with delicate effervescence. As the server stepped away, the pointed toe of her shoe knocked something out from underneath one of the legs of the table.

The server was not one to take note of such an error, nor was she at all concerned that her clumsiness had caused some of my beverage to crest over the rim of the champagne flute and was now forming into a sad, sticky pool of peach bubbles on the mother-of-pearl mosaic. I hesitantly mopped up the spilled Bellini with a stack of paper napkins that I had saved from the café I had been at earlier in the day. (Something I have learned from living the itinerant life of an internationally celebrated performer: One can never have too many paper napkins in one's purse.)

After the server had disappeared into some back region of the café, I noticed the small white square that had remained behind. It appeared to be a piece of paper that had been folded many times so that it was fat and solid. I deduced that someone must have wedged it under one of the legs of the uneven table to level it out. I leaned down to pick it up. As I placed my fingers on the paper, I froze. There on the square surface was my name—Mimosa—printed in black ink.

«What on earth could this be?» I said aloud.

I brought the piece of paper underneath my eyes so I could inspect it better. There I was—Mimosa—surrounded by what appeared to be words written in Croatian. I unfolded the white square and found that it was a page that had been torn out of a *Time Out Zagreb* magazine. And there at the top of the page was an image of the four friends for whom I was presently waiting. Their names were listed in the subordinate caption: Trajal Harrell, François Chaignaud, Marlene Monteiro Freitas, and Cécilia Bengolea. These were my friends.

I could not tell when or where this image had been taken. My "friends" stood in a semi-circle, staring down the viewer. Each wore some mix of red, gold, green and black—my signature colors. Yet I had never seen any of them in any of these garments. Nor could I fathom when they would have gotten together to organize, create and produce what was becoming apparent to me now: *They had made a show without me*. Not only that, but judging from the title of the article, and the numerous times my name stood out in the Croatian copy, they had named the piece after me!

I immediately checked the date of the article. It

was from the previous week. This could only mean that what I was looking at was a performance preview. I was now burning to know what the article said.

I immediately called for the server. As I could recognize Croatian but could not really *read* Croatian, I needed help translating. While, yes, Croatia and Hungary are different nations, the two cultures share a border. And it is quite possible to find natives from one side making a life for themselves on the other. There was thus a chance that the server might be Croatian, or might at least know enough Croatian to help me decipher the article.

«Szia! Szia! Halo?» I called out. (My Hungarian was good enough to navigate a few everyday interactions, and to acquire help in the event an emergency.)

When the server finally arrived, I asked her if she spoke Croatian.

"Beszél horvát?»

«Nem.» she replied, then disappeared again.

Feeling completely out of luck, I bit my thumb and stared helplessly at the torn page. I battered my already bruised ego with so many unanswerable questions. How could my friends have done this to me? Why had they kept this a secret? How could they not think I would find out? And why, out of all of us, had I been the one to be excluded? At a complete loss, I inhaled the rest of my Bellini and glared out onto the street.

Just then, the server returned with someone by her side; a stout, older man wearing a chef's jacket, blue jeans and a pair of brand new Timberlands.

The server pointed at the man and said, in English, «Croatian.»

It turns out that the old man was the chef at the café and had been living in Budapest for six years. He had moved there from his hometown of Osijek, a small, gorgeous city just across the southern border of Hungary.

The chef, however, did not speak any English. So I asked the server if she would ask the chef to translate the page into Hungarian. This would also require the server translating the chef's Hungarian into English, which she knew enough of. So after a few terse moments of mangling one another's native language, plus some awkward pantomiming, the three of us sat down to tackle the translation. It was worked out that the chef would translate the text from Croatian to Hungarian, addressing this to the server, and the server would translate the Hungarian translation into English, addressing this to me. It was a wild plan, but there were no customers other than I, and it seemed to interest the server more than had my mere presence as a patron. And with everything set, the old man began to translate the preview of the performance that my friends had made about me, and

From what I can gather—and you must keep in mind that I was getting this all through two levels of translation—Trajal, François, Marlene and Cécilia made this piece together and had been performing it around the world without my knowledge. They had called the

piece (M)IMOSA. My name. However, the awkward spelling of it had something to do with the sizing of mass produced clothing. M stood for medium, or so that's what the Croatian chef had conveyed to the young server whose face had become increasingly animated as we delved further into the translation. While (M)IMO-SA was, apparently, one dance out of a series that Trajal had been making—I knew of this series, Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church—I had no idea of his plans to enlist Cécelia, Marlene and François in the creation of this specific work. And I certainly did not know that I had been excluded from Trajal's vision for it. Trajal and I had toyed with the idea of me appearing in one of the sizes. My preference, naturally, was to participate in XL, which is where, after all the drama that you are now reading about, I at last fit into the series, but nothing had been set in stone at the time I found my name being used as a prop. So (M)IMOSA had become a sort of showcase for the talents of Cécelia, Marlene, François and Trajal. Like something out of a Colette novel, each had brought her most brazen talent to the table, and from this, a sort of variety show had come into being, all held together by my present absence from the work.

Now, the personal slight aside, and from what I could gather from the server's translation of the chef's translation of the Time Out Zagreb preview, I didn't entirely abhor what my "friends" were going for. Mimosa, after all, is the name of a drink that is often shared by friends over what we, in the West, call brunch. Brunch, for the uninitiated, is a colloquial portmanteau between "breakfast" and "lunch" that is meant to convey the liminal temporal location between them (brunch is a little later than breakfast, and can also last quite long after what is normally considered lunchtime) while also suggesting that the available food and beverage options will be a little more substantial than a simple breakfast menu without sacrificing the lightness of items like egg and toast which imbue breakfast with its fresh, rustic appeal. Brunch, then, is a celebratory occasion for compromise; for bringing worlds and friends together. Hence the Mimosa, a cocktail that combines something as quotidian as orange juice with champagne, a luxury beverage. High and low. Flat and con gas. Late and early. Mimosas and brunches bring distant worlds together to create a space where people can share the joys of friendship. Imagine: Friendship as a way of art.

Well, I broke down into tears. The server ran to fetch me a box of "Oops" tissues and the chef flew to my side to console me. If (M)IMOSA was a dance that centered friendship as a guiding logic for the making of a work of art—the server had been very adamant about her translation of the chef's translation on this point—then why had I been singled out for exclusion? I wailed, feeling the strong arms of the chef pull me to him and for a moment I thought there might be something more to his steadying grip. His eyes, gray and aged like a fine blue cheese, furled together and gazed at me with a wisened look that said—in English—«You magnificent creature,

fear not. Your friends have honored you with this tribute. The time will come when you will take your place alongside them on the stage of the world. Have patience, my dear Mimosa.». The warm scent of onion was coming off his fingers, and I found myself acquiring the slightest pinch of hunger. But as tears and food seldom mix, I felt the sudden urge to flee the café despite the hospitality of which I had been the hapless recipient.

I looked into the chef's eyes and said, in English, «Now is not our time, handsome fellow. I must go off on my own to strike a path through a future that has become overgrown with the pricks and thorns of heartbreak and persecution. I must be Mimosa. Singular. Intrepid. Alone.» I touched his lips, which quivered upon his searching mien. The server, who was rushing back to give me the tissues, stopped herself to grant the chef and I this rarified moment of intimacy.

Just then, my phone buzzed. It was Trajal. He was wondering where I was. He, Cécelia, Marlene and François were all waiting for me at the Café L'En Vogue on the Rue Oberkampf in Paris. It was getting late and they all had to catch flights to wherever else in the world they were going next. *They* were wondering if I had stood *them* up, or, as François had said, "Where the fuck is Mimosa?"

I immediately withdrew my diary from my bag and turned to the itinerary. Sure enough, on this day's date, I saw the words "L'En Vogue" written in pencil in my very own handwriting next to the letter B. A laugh escaped my body. B is my scheduling shorthand for Budapest. Following the name of the café, this meant that I would be meeting my friends at the Café L'En Vogue in Budapest. It was precipitously becoming obvious that I had accidentally written B instead of P, which is my shorthand for Paris, the city in which my friends were now waiting for me, Mimosa.

When I explained the mistake to the server, she whipped her ponytail in delight, and when she explained this to the chef, he clapped his hands on his thighs and let out a hearty guffaw. We all shared a round of Bellini's and the chef brought out a few Napoleon desserts he had delivered each morning.

I texted Trajal back and informed him of my error and how I had found the preview of (M)IMOSA in the *Time Out Zagreb* and that I was sure that their ruse was all in good fun. He didn't respond right away, but it was too late to get to Paris anyhow.

I thanked my new friends from the Café L'En Vogue, and they sent me on my way with hugs and kisses and a small meat and cheese sandwich for later. The sun was setting, and a great golden light was veiling the city and skipping off the Duna in little glinting waves. I walked toward the Gellért baths daydreaming of floating on my back in the medicinal waters under the watchful eye of the chubby marble cupid perched atop a lapis basin; daydreaming of making art, and traveling the world, and having fabulous friends.

I am the real Mimosa, and this is how one learns that BP is the appropriate shorthand for Budapest.

Mira, what's the TITLE of this Piece?*

By Mira Todorova

дин от най-интересните съвременни артисти в областта на танца и пърформанса спектакли е американският хореограф Тражал Харел. Базиран в Ню Йорк,

но работещ много в Европа, Харел е изключително нашумяло име по световните фестивални сцени. В рамките на фестиала ImpulsTanz 2013 той представи своята серия спектакли, общо шест – под общото название Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church, като форматът им варира – Jr., Sr. (L), Made to Measure, X, XS, M(Mimosa). Концептуално са обединени от идеята да срещнат две паралелни линии на развитие на танца, които нямат пресечна точка във времето на своето възникване – нито социална, нито естетическа. Това са воуг сцената на Харлем, организирана в т. нар. балове, където се изявява маргинализираната хомосексуална общност чернокожи и латино мъже, и новаторската постмодерна вълна, асоциирана с динамичната формация артисти около Джъдсън Чърч Данс Тиътър. Какво би станало ако някои от воуг артистите от Харлем биха слезли в Гринидж Вилидж и биха участвали в представленията на постмодернистите от Джъдсън Чърч през 1963 г.? Това е хипотетичната ситуация, която представленията на Тражал Харел "разиграват", като буквално цитират това допускане преди всеки спектакъл. Без да пресъздават на сцената подобни обстоятелства, артистите по-скоро ползват тази хипотеза като вдъхновение и отправна точка. Представленията са изключително интересна постмо-

дерна смесица от поп култура, високи референти (текста на Софокъл "Антигона"), технически прецизно перформиране, лежерно "ежедневно" поведение, харизма, артистизъм, своенравие, театралност, дискотечност, мода, всекидневност. Филмът Paris is Burning на Джени Ливингстън разказва за афро и латино-американските хомосексуални мъже, които намират излал от невидимото си живеене на ръба на обществото в баловете, организирани от т. нар. домове (houses), носещи името на "майката" – Пепе Лабежа, Анджи Екстраваганца и т.н.Домовете са едновременно убежище, семейство, зона на солидарност, разбиране и подкрепа за тези изключени от "центъра" хора. А баловете са социалните пространства, в които те могат да се изявят, като компенсират социалната си невалидност през травестия. Пеги Фелан определя тези балове като "маскаради на отсъствието и липсата, които разиграват мазохистичната сила и истинско удоволствие на символната идентификация, толкова важна за капитализма и еротичните желания^{"1}. Стилът воуг се ражда именно в тази среда, която се изявява през подражание на копнежни образи. Бялата, богата, бляскава, луксозно живееща жена е една такава икона, с която тези гей мъже се идентифицират. Бел Хукс нарича това "обсесия по идеализирана фетишизирана версия на женствеността, която е бяла" . Поради тоталното предоверяване в образите, които наподобяват, Джудит Бътлър определя воугинга като "фатално несубверсивна апроприация" 3, чиято цел е трансормацията от невидимост към видимост, от неприсъствие към пристъствие, което обаче е преувеличено. По същото това време в "центъра" тече обратна тенденция. Постмодерният жест на артистите от Джъдсън Чърч е в посока закриване на танца

като спектакъл, като продукт на техническа виртуозност и преправяне, които го държат във фокуса на прожекторите, и изобретяването му като пространство на "невидимото", "ежедневното" движение. Ивон Рейнър написва прословутия манифест "Не на спектакъла" (1965), в който се казва "не на представлението, не на виртуозността, не на трансформациите, магията и илюзията, не на блясъка, не на превъзходството на звездния образ..." Акцията на постмодернистите от Джъдсън Чърч има противоположен заряд – срещу наподобяването, срещу изкусността, срещу илюзията с цел завръщане към "автентизма", "истинността". Какво се случва когато се срещнат този порив за "автентизъм" с порива за тотално преправяне, който обаче е много по-автентичен, защото е същностен, движещ копнеж, въпрос на социално оцеляване, отколкото концептуалния порив за "автентично" присъствие на сцената на постмодернистите? Изключително интересно съпоставяне, на което Тражал Харел намира своеобразни изрази в своите шест представления. Те наистина смесват ежедневно поведение – изпълнителите се мотат, влизат и излизат от сцената, ровят си в багажа, говорят с хора от публиката

- с театралност, концептуалност, пасажи от "Антигона" на фона на поп музика, дискотечни танци, модно дефиле, пеене, паузи, тъмнини, които могат да се проточат отвъд поносимото. Представленията впечатляват със свободата и своенравието си, с таланта и харизмата на пърформърите, които присъстват много лично с телата, с историите, с уменията си. Харел взима от воугинга, от който вече шества единствено опаковката на стила, неговата същност на трансформация в иначе недостижим образ, чиято истинност толкова силно желаеш, че почти сбъдваш в главата си. Изпълнителите влизат и излизат от различни образи с изумителна лекота, самоувереност и убедителност, но най-вече с наслада, с радост, със забавление и доверие (което прави воугинга толкова "автентично" преживяване), които са причина представленията да имат особено емоционално въздействие върху публиката, подобно парти или концерт по-скоро, отколкото театър.

*Mira finally answered. The title is: "ImpulsTanz 2013. Танцът като преживяване" (in English - Impulstanz 2013. Experiencing dance)

1.Peggy Phelan, Unmarked The politics of Per-formance, Routledge, 1996, p. 94

- 2. Bell Hooks, Black Looks. Race and Representation, South End Press Boston, Is Paris Burning?, p.148
- 3. Judith Butler, Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion, www.pica.org

SEAIOUS Play

Trajal Harrell's

Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church
By Jaime Shearn Coan

PURSUANCE AND PERUSAL

spent a week in September 2014 attending all seven sizes of *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* at The Kitchen in New York City. In my review for *The Brooklyn Rail*, I questioned what I saw as the explicit framing with which Harrell began each performance. The framing was a performance in itself—loosely following a script and even repeating quips and jokes. I wondered about the motivation for guiding the audience in such a way.

Here is what I wrote then:

What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voquing ballroom scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns at Judson Church? This is how Harrell situates his series at the start of every performance, explaining that his intention is to create not a historical fiction, but a realm of possibility.... Throughout the six evenings of the run at The Kitchen, I wondered about the impact of Harrell's explicit framing. From the way that Harrell prefaced each show to the handouts he distributed (providing brief historical background regarding Judson and voguing, as well as theoretical texts focused on spectatorship and appropriation), it would seem that these works were largely directed towards an audience unfamiliar with these contexts. It is impossible to know the degree to which this framing was an artistic choice to assert more control over the audience's experience, or a response to pressure by funders, producers, and venues to clearly present material that could be mystifying or inaccessible.

I. Supplement I: Six Nights and Seven Sizes Later (BR)

From that initial response, I have traveled through many ways of seeing Twenty Looks. My methodology has been one of "pursuance" (John Coltrane's invention) and perusal. I have wound my way through a series of readings, including and exceeding the source materials that Harrell has distributed in the form of hand-outs. In what follows, I will present a sort of walking tour through the collective thinking that has brought me to this here and now (where I am still walking, actually). Three supplements exist alongside this text, which will be signaled at their proper moments, in which I push into the margins of the source material: the first is the review I wrote for The Brooklyn Rail: my first engagement with the series; the second, a tangent-heavy inquiry into the handouts Harrell distributes in (XS) and (S); and the third, a subjective reading of some early critiques of Jennie Livingston's Paris Is Burning.

REVISITING THE FRAME

When I wrote my review, I was concerned that Harrell's proposition foregrounded a (his) conceptual framework over the spectator's perceptual experience, with the result that this created a more passive audience. My reaction was influenced first by my experience as a spectator (perception) and then by the work of art historian Darby English (conception), who has argued that a pre-conceived approach to artwork can eclipse the perceptual experience that occurs during the encounter with the work. English argues that a prioritization of perception over conception can result in the frustration of what he calls "positive identification" (31). This positive identification, he argues, in the case of work by black artists, is often a measure of intelligibility, wherein the spectator scans for information they can index as racialized (32). Harrell employs other means to interrupt this process, including the delivery of faux-autographical monologues, or what art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty terms "parafiction."



I will return to English and Lambert-Beatty in more detail later, but for now I will say that I have come to see conception and perception as operating dialogically in Harrell's work. Conceptual frames can facilitate new perceptions just as easily as they can foreclose them.

Even the word "frame," meaning a rigid structure, is one that I myself placed around Harrell's work. Its function is to constrict and order. A proposition has no fixed shape or end. It is an invitation to consider bringing a set of variables into relation. It takes place outside of time; it is hypothetical. The proposition operates in the field of the conditional, which moves between and unfixes the past, present, and future. Harrell's proposition involves time travel as well as travel between bodies that have been marked as racialized and bodies that have not. What if? What if not? What else is made and unmade within the imaginary realm of Harrell's proposition?

BLACKNESS, EPIPHENOMENAL TIME, AND POTENTIALITY

The relationship of space and time to blackness has been widely theorized by scholars engaging Black Studies through various disciplinary backgrounds. Geographer Katherine McKittrick asserts that "Black matters are spatial matters" (xii). Dance scholar Anita Gonzalez conceives of "black" as "a dialogic imagination" (6). Gonzalez's term recalls Frantz Fanon's perspective in *Black Skin*, *White Masks*, which "suspends blackness in the place between interpolator... and the interpolated," constructing a "makeshift dwelling" of blackness rather than a permanent one (English 37). Interpreted spatially, *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* is one such "makeshift dwelling," where blackness floats, fragments, and reconfigures itself.

Addressing the effects of a linear notion of time on contemporary black life, African-American and Comparative Literature Studies scholar Michelle M. Wright, in her recent book, *The Physics of Blackness*, maintains that "Our *constructs* of blackness are largely historical and more specifically based on a notion of spacetime that is commonly fitted into a linear progress narrative, while our *phenomenological* manifestations of Blackness happen in what I term *Epiphenomenal time*, or the 'now' through which the past, present, and future are always interpreted" (4).

While Wright does not apply this spatiotemporal framework to time-based performance, she provides a way to build upon Darby English's emphasis on the "now" moment of encounter in determining aesthetic judgment, expanding the "now" to include the unlimited potenti-

alities that arrive when temporality, archive, and identity categories are unfixed. I use potentiality in the sense that Brian Massumi portrays it, in opposition to possibility:

Possibilities are already-charted alternatives. Which means that they are already in the present. They're already on the chart, ready at hand. So when you think in terms of possibility, you are really reining in change, because you're drawing a line of continuity between a way of doing that is already charted-out and some future point at which the doing is actually done, in conformity with the plan. Potential is different. It's emergent. It happens, and always differently than you imagined-singularly, in conformity with nothing. Potential is how the *unforeseen* is already present. The thing is, you can feel the opening for it, even if you can't see what it will be. And you can invite people into the opening.... This is not to say that this kind of revaluing is simply playful, in the usual sense of being frivolous or inessential. This is serious play.

While Harrell's proposition may initially appear to occupy the realm of the possible in that it brings specific variables into relation, there are no anticipated results in mind—after its announcement at the beginning of the evening, the performance proceeds by fragmentary and contiguous means, with no clear narrative or teleological aim, no step-by-step guidance. "Serious play" is one of the best descriptors I can think of to describe *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church.* The performances are often wild, funny, and flamboyant—but, since the lives and legacies invoked have not been accorded equal value, the stakes of the proposition are quite high.

OF APPROPRIATION & AUTHENTICITY: PARIS IS BURNING

ometime after I had seen and reviewed Twenty Looks, I rewatched Paris Is Burning. Right away, I realized I had missed the visual reference to Livingston's inter-titles in Harrell's handout from (S): the white text on black background, the same font. This blind spot had contributed to my reading of Harrell's "framing" as heavy-handed. I had been so caught up in thinking about Harrell's framing of the works in relationship to his audience and to the contemporary structure of dance economies, that I had neglected to see how, as evidenced in the very title, he was addressing the ball scene as mediated through the culturally dominant status of the film. While I don't think that Harrell is exempt from being expected to perform a certain amount of cultural translation, especially for his non-US audiences, it would seem that his framing is at least partly tongue-in-cheek—a commentary on the ethnographic style that Livingston employed in her representation of ball culture and that he in turn is



FILM STILL FROM JENNIE LIVINGSTON'S PARIS IS BURNING (1990)

Paris Is Burning has become the exemplary representation of the ball scene of the 1980s, which was called into being by queer and transgender Black and Latino residents of Harlem—despite the fact that it was made by a white lesbian filmmaker. It has created a common archive for later generations of queers of color as well as enabled appropriation by mainstream/white gay culture. It has also been blasted, or at least critiqued, by critics ranging from Peggy Phelan to bell hooks to Jackie Goldsby to Judith Butler. Their primary critique is the ethnographic and fetishistic approach that Livingston demonstrated, which did not address her (or her camera's) authoritative position². These critiques, made in the early 1990s, forefront the fact that Livingston was not a member of this community and so could not rightfully represent its members. However flawed its technique however, the film did help create an epistemology which has been put to use in various ways. As far as I know, there has been no "authentic" self-representation by this community put into circulation, and I am not sure how authentic it could be even if there was, given the distorting nature of representation itself.

Because Harrell is black, people may assume that he comes from ball culture and is therefore in a position to represent it—or, even if he's not, that the balls are at least part of his "cultural legacy." On the other side, some may argue that because Harrell is *not* from ball culture, he is in fact appropriating it, albeit from a different subject position than Livingston. Rather than making any identitarian claims of authenticity regarding this archive, Harrell moves further into the direction of speculation, circumventing the expectations and assumptions of the (largely white) audiences that come to see his work.

Depending on the audience's ability to accept his proposition, however, there is a danger that the complex set of relationships that Harrell navigates might be flattened under the rubric of racialization. Art historian

tions'—aesthetic, cultural, moral—attach like barnacles to the designation 'black artist' and anything one touches" (45). This flattening process also relies on a onesize-fits-all appraisal of the black artist. In *Appropriating* Blackness, E. Patrick Johnson discusses "blackness" as an always-contested term, locating a danger in the need for one authentic conception, which always leads to exclusion (3). Michelle M. Wright offers Epiphenomenal time as an analytic that "enables a wholly inclusive definition (appropriate to any moment at which one is defining Blackness)" (4) Johnson asks: "What happens when 'blackness' is embodied?" (2). Harrell's embodiment of blackness prevents a fixed, unitary, or "authentic" display of black subjectivity through the spatiotemporal "third space" of the performance, where the imaginary intersects with and shifts the real.

Darby English articulates how "a bevy of 'thematiza-

AFFECT WARS: POSTMODERN, MODERN(E), OTHER

he narrativization of the Judson archive has also largely emerged from a single source. Sally Banes's *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* has long reigned as the definitive historical account of Judson (in much the same manner that *Paris Is Burning* stands in relation to the Harlem ball scene).

Democracy's Body, despite (or because of) its title, has been critiqued for hardly presenting a "democratic body." Instead, Banes chronicles the work of white Judson dance artists without much reference to not only non-white artists, but, more largely, the political climate of the 1960s, with the Civil Rights movement being the most obvious omission. An excerpt from Democracy's Body appears (unattributed) in the (S) handout³ under the category Postmodern Dance, below a quote from Peggy Phelan describing Paris Is Burning. Harrell's reference to these two exemplary texts in his handout is surely meant to call attention to the tendency of the object to stand in for the real, or for the archive to supplant the ephemeral. Archives are never unmediated or apolitical, as performance scholar Diana Taylor has established (19).

Just as Harrell resists a naturalized affinity with ball culture, as evidenced by his allusions to *Paris Is Burning*, he also insists upon his access to the lineage of Judson. He must therefore engage with representations of the Judson aesthetic as affect-less and pedestrian, in addition to the idea of the "neutral" postmodern dancing body. Postmodern dance was very much a rejection of the dramatic nature of modern dance, as best exem-

3. See Supplement 3: Reading the Handouts

plified by Martha Graham, who Harrell takes delight in resurrecting through his use of costume (Look 18 of *Twenty Looks (S)* is "Moderne,") vocabulary, and the incorporation in his series of the Greek tragedy *Antigone*. It should be recalled that Graham and the other moderns derived much of their inspiration from "primitive" cultures, i.e. from black and brown bodies. Although the moderns are not directly invoked in his proposition, Harrell's embodiment of Graham's vocabulary and affect point to the inherent erasures in this legacy as well.

Harrell troubles the racialized aesthetic boundaries of his archives through the demonstration of a wide range of affect. Sometimes he seems very nervous and uncomfortable. In (S), he ends his show in sobs, both hands holding up a black piece of fabric. The lights go down and he takes a while to shift into the role of the performer taking a bow, signaling that the moment is not mere camp. Or is it? In Antigone Sr. (L), "Harrell begins to shudder, appearing to be overridden by spirits—until abruptly dropping the act and announcing with full command and poise: 'Next category is 'Mother of the House" (BR). And in Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem (Made-to-Measure), "Harrell performs a church affect, moaning phrases from "Good morning, Heartache," trembling, sobbing, clutching" [his chest/dress]. After some time has gone by, it appears that Harrell has "fallen asleep" in his chair" (BR).

Harrell is the most consistent performer of grief and agent of pathos—often his presence is in direct opposition to and ignored by the other performers who are busy looking either fierce or unaffected. This theatrical excess, an obviously put-on and yet not easily dismissed display of pain, can't readily be placed within the tradition of the balls or Judson. In addition to summoning the moderns. Harrell could be addressing the association of the dancing black body with the overproduction of emotion and sound (Johnson 7). If we take into account the absent presence of black dance artists at Judson, Harrell could be embodying what sociologist Avery Gordon refers to as "ghostly presences." In her work, the ghost figures as "that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present" (24).

MOBILIZING BLACKNESS MOBILIZING ARCHIVES

side from (S), (a solo) and (M)imosa, a collaboration with three other artists, Harrell works with the same group of performers in *Twenty Looks*, all from outside of the U.S. and all non-black. His body, then, is not the only one through which these imag-

ined archives move through. Thibault Lac, a tall, youthful French dancer, is featured most prominently. His

 $240\,^{ ext{VOGUE NOT}}$

^{2.} See Supplement 2: Five Reads of Paris Is Burning

long arms make him a perfect candidate for voguing, and he is very good at it. In Antigone Jr. (++), Lac dances a solo that features a mixture of classic hip-hop moves, resulting in a spectacle that is comical in its obvious cultural appropriation. Perhaps this is an example where, as Johnson suggests, "some sites of cross-cultural appropriation provide fertile ground on which to formulate new epistemologies of self and Other" (6). Indeed, this statement could offer a key to Harrell's whole project.

While Harrell places white and other non-black bodies within the legacy of the Harlem balls, his own embodiment of the Judson archive also points to how racialized bodies do not fit neatly into the white origins of postmodern dance. These chiastic racial crossings coincide with the gender transgression associated with the balls and the androgynous gender presentation of the

Judson dance artists, reminding us that the original proposition of the piece is not just to remix the past and redesignate binary identity positions but to create something altogether different in the present.

The dialogic relationship between the balls and Judson is activated in Twenty Looks through references which often trouble the distinction between them and emphasize their commonality. In (S), a runway is constructed out of tape and paper. On the floor, whirring away, is a fan, that shortcut to glamor. In (M)imosa, we find a pointed Judson reference in the engagement of chance operations, enacted when each performer draws a number to determine the

order of their finales. In Antigone Sr. (L) the performers emerge from the back of the stage one after another, dressed in a truly impressive series of looks, all of which are crafted from the same set of clothes and accessories, in an impressive parody of couture fashion and a nod to the working-with-what-you've-got-ness of ball culture. The visibility of the clothing rack hearkens back to the showing-the-seams nature of Judson. In Antigone Jr. ++, a bathrobe is turned by Lac into an off-the shoulder gown; some of the other clothes are obviously high-end, and in those cases, Harrell leaves the tags on. The nooffstage and informal attitude is very Judson, but the elaborate costuming and the egging each other on (or fiercely competing) is certainly a nod to the balls. And

this may be a stretch, but Steve Paxton, one of the most visible figures of Judson, is known for "walking."

PARAFICTION OR REALNESS?

n (M)imosa, the performers offer the audience movement material purportedly from their personal archives. Are these fictional or real archives? It's hard to know. They sing (covers? original songs?) and deliver monologues in addition to improvised(?) asides. Individual solos are often contiguous and "strange pairings occur, such as when Harrell sings Diana Ross's 'Do you know where you're going to?' wearing an uncared-for short wig and a red scarf around his shoulders while

> François Chaignaud sings a French song in falsetto in full drag" (BR). Aside from the mash-up of musical genres, the "bad drag" that Harrell displays offers a rejection of "realness" in that he makes no attempt to appear as a passable, beautiful woman. As each performer attempts to persuade the audience that they are "the real Mimosa," the audience resides in a state of uncertainty, unable to ascertain the level of the "real" concerning the movement, the monologues, or the affect of the performers.

> Darby English has noted how, in the artist Glenn Ligon's work, the "'I' is in every sense is already a site of representation" (210). Consciously taking up the unstable relationship of the "I" to

"identity," Harrell sings a song to his audience (claiming he wrote it after a breakup) with the refrain: "When I lose myself, I find my identity." Harrell addresses the audience frequently—but it seems that the location from which he is speaking is not a stable one. The proposition of Twenty Looks requires a suspension of time, space, and subjectivity. One of the primary ways in which I see Harrell resisting a fixed position regarding the archives that he is working with as well as the racialization of the work he produces, is through a conscious destabilizing of the representation of his own identity through the utilization of parafiction. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, in her 2009 article "Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," defines

related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction as established in literary and dramatic art. It remains a bit outside.... has one foot in the field of the real. Unlike historical fiction's fact-based but imagined worlds, in parafiction real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived.... Simply put, with various degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes, these fictions are experienced as fact. (54)

Harrell makes this even more of a challenge by performing "Trajal" in various ways, as the next two examples illustrate: In (XS), a performance limited to twentyfive audience members, Harrell personally greets each person as they enter the space, shaking hands and exchanging names. He tells the audience, who is seated on the ground: "I shake when I'm nervous." He also says: "I'm interested in ocularity." Twenty-five audience members means fifty eyes, and he has learned that that is the max he can handle for this piece, he says. Harrell's acknowledgement of the spectator's gaze having an effect on him, as well as his personalized introduction marked with physical contact, creates an intersubjective and intimate encounter. Is this the real Trajal? He passes out a handout that includes several readings, along with the front and back of Darby English's How to Read a Work of Art in Total Darkness (the background color of which is black). It has the aspect of a joke, a trick—Harrell shows some of his source material, but it's in the dark-visible but not knowable. The tie-in becomes more literal as Harrell closes the performance with a dance in the dark. Ocularity refers to the number of eyes needed to see something—and yet, once these eyes are assembled, they are stripped of their function. Harrell's body almost disappears from view but remains present. Fifty eyes adjust and twenty-five spectators have to reckon with a limited capability to label and interpret what they see.

Striking a very different register, in *Antiqone Jr.* (++), in a white room lit brightly, Harrell struts around, deconstructing his artist persona, giving the credit (or blame) to those who have represented him professionally:

At one point, Harrell bursts out in a theatrical litany: "I am Trajal!" he proclaims, pronouncing his name in several accents. "You made me New York, you made me—" he continues, "David Velasco, Alastair Macaulay!" calling out the critics in the room. Those who recognize these names laugh. (BR)

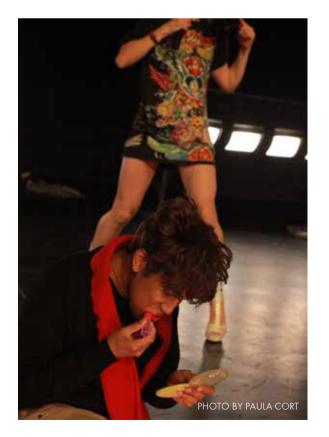
In this example, Harrell uses parody and hyperbole to address the situation of the artist as commodity, a product produced by the press, presenters, and funders. But this doesn't mean that this performance is any more authentic or true than any other. Lambert-Beatty argues that "the crucial skill for parafiction is stylistic mimicry" (60). "Realness" could be described in a similar fashion. In (M)imosa, Harrell says, 'Realness is when you try to be something you're not" (BR). While reminiscing about his "grandmother," Harrell tells a story about being followed in an airport boutique while looking at Chanel bags. Wearing sunglasses during the telling, his voice rises in pitch and his diction shifts as he tells the audi-

ence that they have to know "when to take the real shit and when to take the fake shit."

This inability to distinguish the "real shit" from the "fake shit" is precisely the pin that parafiction turns on. Later in the monologue, he refers to his grandmother as the grandmother of the house, and asks the audience if they know who the "legendary children" are. He gestures around him: "We are the legendary children!" he says. The references to Paris Is Burning are only there if you know to look for them. Later, Harrell says, out of the blue, "I'm really excited because my girlfriend is here tonight." There is a long pause and some giggling. He pretends to be insulted and chastises the audience: "You thought I was *qay*, didn't you?"

Parafictioners produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose various configurations of knowledge and 'horizons of expectation' determine whether something is plausible to them. While something similar is true of any artwork—that is, meaning is produced in the encounter with the spectator—a parafiction creates a specific multiplicity." (Lambert-Beatty 73)

This multiplicity has the effect of either rewarding or embarrassing spectators depending on their "in" knowledge. But embarrassment, like uncertainty, has the positive function of shaking up pre-formed conceptions. Every spectator of Twenty Looks becomes increasingly aware of their own expectations, assumptions and desires. In the case of the racialized artist, parafiction



"Do you know

where

you're going to?"

DIANA ROSS' MAHOGANY

242 vogue not VOGUE NOT 243 may be mobilized strategically to upend the dominant white culture of performance spaces. Additionally, the employment of parafiction acknowledges that an audience is never uniform—not to do so is to erase the presence of minoritarian spectators. Lambert-Beatty does not specifically address the factor that race plays in the dynamics between spectators and performers, but, as we saw in the monologue adapted from *Paris Is Burning*, Harrell's utilization of this technique serves to challenge the audience's expectation of racial authenticity.

Lambert-Beatty's theorization of parafiction resonates with practices that have long been employed and theorized by black and other minoritarian scholars. In a recent essay, Hershini Bhana Young summons up the figure of the trickster from Henry Louis Gates's classic text Signifyin' Monkey: "The trickster's characteristics include irony, parody, indeterminacy, 'open-endedness, ambiguity... uncertainty, disruption and reconciliation, betrayal and loyalty, closure, and disclosure, encasement and rupture (Gates qtd in Young 57). These characteristics line up almost perfectly with Harrell's role(s) in Twenty Looks. We could also identify Harrell's variations in affect, persona, and speech as aligning with the practice of code-switching: the practice, often associated with black and queer culture(s), of switching vernacular registers while operating within mainstream culture.

THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY

In my initial reading of Harrell's work, the framing of his proposition, which appeared to encourage conception over perception, troubled me. Now I see that the framing is just another encounter, another staging of "realness." The frame is *intentionally* "trying to be something it's not" —appearing to close down potential

epistemologies in its reproduction of the ethnographic frame of Livingston's film. But *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* is more concerned with imagination and illusion than it is with defining and narrativizing.

In January 2015, I attended a conversation at MoMA between Harrell and the dance artist Eiko Otake. Responding to Otake's reticence about using the term "butoh," Harrell placed the term next to the similarly hardto-define concepts of blackness and queerness. Asking, "The map is not the land, is it?" Harrell (re)called our awareness to a distinction between representation and the real, or the ontological. His phrase hails back to the visionary Jamaican theorist and writer Sylvia Wynter, who, in "On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project," argues that the Western concept of Man has only been made possible by excluding black, colonized, and poor subjects. Wynter rejects the fight for symbolic inclusion into a liberal multicultural framework (the map), insisting instead that the very concept of the human must be rethought (the territory).

Harrell's series expresses a desire to be *present* in various locations, without the constraints of time or historical record in order to create, as Lac offers in *M-2-M*: "a third possibility, here and now." His engagement with both real and imagined archives demonstrates that his proposition is a reparative gesture just as much as it is a speculative one. Harrell's embodiment of "ghostly presences" has the material effect of dis-ordering the spectator's knowledge of dance and cultural histories. Using parafiction and Epiphenomal time, he forestalls an easy read.





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 $Harrell, Trajal. \ Twenty \ Looks \ or \ Paris \ is$

Burning at Judson Church Co-presented by The Kitchen and The French Institute Alliance Française as part of the Crossing the Line festival, September 14-20, 2014

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SERIOUS PLAY SUPPLEMENT 1

SIX NIGHTS AND SEVEN SIZES LATER by Jaime Shearn Coan, for The Brooklyn Rail (October 3, 2014)
Trajal Harrell: Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church
Co-presented by The Kitchen and The French Institute
Alliance Française as part of the Crossing the Line festival, September 14-20, 2014.

What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ballroom scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns at Judson Church? This is how Harrell situates his series at the start of every performance, further explaining that his intention is to create, not a historical fiction, but a realm of possibility. The first time the series has been presented in the U.S. in the order it was created, it brings with it a touring history of approximately 108 presentations, mostly international, over the period of 2009 – 2014. The entirety of each cast, aside from Harrell, is based outside of the U.S.

Throughout the six evenings of the run at *The Kitchen*, I wondered about the impact of Harrell's explicit framing. From the way that Harrell prefaced each show, to the handouts he distributed (providing brief historical background regarding Judson and voguing, as well as theoretical texts focused on spectatorship and appropriation), it would seem that these works were largely directed towards an audience unfamiliar with these contexts. It is impossible to know the degree to which this framing was an artistic choice to assert more control over the audience's experience, or a response to pressure by funders, producers, and venues to clearly present material that could be mystifying or inaccessible.

So how did it feel to watch it in New York—the historical site of both Judson and the ball scene in Harlem? How did it feel to watch it in the United States, with its particular history of racial stratification? And what does Antigone, a tragedy centered around a strong oppositional figure whose loyalty to her brother leads her to violate civic law, have to do with all this? What does it mean to watch Twenty Looks now—as a restaging, rather than a new work? Viewing the entire series in such a condensed period of time, I began to discern Harrell's navigation of pathos and theatricality, of sentimentality and camp. Harrell's presence onstage remained fairly consistent yet resisted claims of authenticity. As he points out in Antiqone Sr., "Realness is when you try to be something you're not." It is this *trying on* of styles that distinguishes Harrell's work. Not many people showed up for all the shows—it's a lot to ask after all. After the run had come to a close, I found myself in the same room as Harrell, who came right up to me and asked, with a rush of impatient curiosity, "Who are you?" And so I learned that I, too, was being read all along.

(XS)

I sit on the stage with the other spectators. Under my left thigh is a set of readings Harrell has handed out (including a photocopy of the front and back cover of Darby English's *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* and Peggy Phelan's essay on Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning*). He leaves us for a while, then reappears with a tray of lights. Backstage outfit changes yield a brightly colored apron and later a tiger suit. The music shifts from classical to disco to contemporary jazz. He dances in the dark, a twisting that starts in the wrists and travels down to the waist, his face contorting, my eyes straining to adjust. The lights flare on; all of sudden seeing is painful. The show ends with a signal.

(5)

In the upstairs gallery space, bland electronica music and white walls place us in a non-specific environment. Among a cluster of metal folding chairs draped with clothes, Harrell uses a lined notepad to flip through numbers 1-20 of the Twenty Looks. He moves slowly and appears uncomfortable at first. He is—as are we—clearly illuminated in the harsh bright light. A deft adjustment of an apron moves us from "Serving" to "Superhero." In the end, Harrell cries, both hands holding up a black piece of fabric. The lights go down and he takes a while to shift into the role of the performer taking a bow, signaling that this moment is not mere camp. There is a rubbery stubbornness to this piece, a net of tension that is occasionally broken up by humor.

(M)IMOSA

(co-created with Cecilia Bengolea, François Chaignaud, and Marlene Monteiro Freitas)

Nothing medium here, despite the *M* in the title. Freitas starts off the show with a masculine-inflected stroll back and forth across the front of the stage. Her performance of seduction unravels as she pushes herself to extremes, evoking vaudeville, minstrelsy, forced exhibitionism. A two-and-a-half hour carnival ensues. Cabaret, karaoke, dance club, drag show. Latex, wigs, black lights. Music overload, mash-ups. Who is the real Mimosa? What is autobiography and what fiction? The performers refer to the dressing rooms of The Kitchen, to the length of the show—wonder if we'll have to use the bathroom. Sometimes we think we are being addressed rhetorically, but then the performers refuse to continue until we answer them. We are climbed over and sweated on, asked to pass makeup bags and zip dresses. There is no backstage. The performers walk around in bathrobes and casually walk along the front of the stage, treating it as an informal runway.

Disclosure and discomposure make up the fabric of (*M*)*imosa*. Coming-of-age stories proliferate, and the performers offer the audience movement material supposedly from their personal archives. Did Harrell's solo really originate in Zagreb? Was Freitas truly obsessed

with purple as a child? Musical mash-ups abound, such as when Harrell sings Diana Ross's "Do you know where you're going to?" wearing a short wig and a shawl around his shoulders and Chaignaud sings a French song in falsetto. Freitas plays an imaginary piano with a raw egg in her mouth while Bengolea (whose role is the least dynamic) cavorts around reciting rap lyrics in a deadpan French accent; at the moment when Freitas finally spits out the broken egg, Bengolea happens to be saving: "get so frustrated—" Chance operations are put into play when each performer draws a number to determine the order of their finales. Without giving more away, I'll just say that if Prince ever saw Freitas doing Prince, he just might give up. The anarchic virtuosity and excess of *M(imosa)*, surely a result of Harrell's collaboration with three distinctive dancer-choreographers, make it the high point of the series for me

(+/++) ANTIGONE JR.

The proposition, which I have memorized by this point, is extended this time to include an explanation of ++. Harrell explains that it was made in response to the demands of presenters, who generally preferred evening-length work. Both performers (Harrell and Thibault Lac) have seats staked out in the audience. The two take turns walking down a makeshift catwalk: confident, sexy, devoid of affect. The timing is fairly regular until Lac starts fumbling in his seat. Lac dashes off, and Harrell explains that a costume is missing, apologizing multiple times to the audience. We sit there in awkward silence until Harrell announces that they will start over. Something entirely new begins.

If the question of size M was "Who is the real Mimosa?" the questions of + might be: "Who is the real Trajal?" or "Where is the real performance?" At one point, Harrell bursts out in a theatrical litany: "I am Trajal!" he proclaims, pronouncing his name in several accents. "You made me New York, you made me-" he continues, "David Velasco, Alastair Macaulay!" calling out the critics in the room. + ends and moves into ++, which amounts to a seated sing-along by Harrell and Lac, featuring songs from the other shows in the series. ++ feels like a bit of a symbolic "fuck you" to both the economic structures of the dance world and the power of representation given to critics. Ultimately, it feels as if the audience is being held hostage, a sacrifice to the choreographer's critique. ++ is metaperformance, is commentary, is measured time.

(L) ANTIGONE SR.

A lone palm tree made from construction paper occupies a corner of the stage. Through a gap in the curtain, a clothing rack is visible—throughout the performance we see hands grabbing garments off the rack. Here we have the largest cast of the series: five performers including Thibault Lac, Rob Fordeyn, Ondrej Vidlar, Stephen Thompson, and Harrell himself. A series

of solos on white squares ("islands") ensues. Fordeyn is particularly striking as he dances (wearing socks) a wild flinging sequence that never loses control. The dancers appear through a slit in curtain, replacing each other in what feels like a mounting competition, until suddenly Harrell calls out: "Stop the show!" and proceeds to recite a text via microphone from within the darkened house. Later, a vocal duet between he and Lac: "We are..." in which various duos are invoked, ranging from pop divas, to 19th century novels to, hilariously, "tits."

The worlds of Greek tragedy, fashion, and the ball scene are brought together under the rubric of the "House of Thebes," culminating in a fashion show, complete with commentary coming variously from Harrell and Fordeyn, who moves languidly in impossibly high stilettos, dangerously trailing a long mic cord. (He can't compete with Harrell's quick wit—but I don't think he's meant to.) The three other performers emerge one after another, sometimes overlapping, dressed in a truly impressive series of looks, all of which are crafted from the same set of clothes and accessories, in an impressive parody of couture fashion and nod to the workingwith-what-you've got-ness of ball culture. The visibility of the clothing rack hearkens back to the showing-theseams nature of Judson. Thompson stands out for his physical humor.

The story of Antigone feels largely tangential, or at least, interests me less than everything else. At the moment that Lac pronounces "Antigone is dead," a web of blue strings fall to the floor. Harrell begins to shudder, appearing to be plagued by spirits—until abruptly dropping the act and announcing with full command and poise: "Next category is 'Mother of the House." Towards the end of the show, in an effort to elicit audience response, Harrell recycles a speech from (M)imosa, telling the audience, "You're on my team!" The only moment that I feel a flicker of sincerity is when Harrell says, "Can you be here with me?" But overall, his MC'ing feels a little forced. We stand, cheer, throw flowers, someone even tosses his hat onstage, but the feeling of being coached keeps me from feeling like I could undergo any real transformation.

Later, there is a brief moment where the performers face each other in a circle towards the back of the stage. The ritualized nature of their positions opens up a mystical space, one more in keeping with the rites of ancient Greece. When the stage goes dark towards the end of the show, our eyes slowly adjust to see the figure of Fordeyn, looking like a totem, bearing a headdress, and nearly lost in countless layers of fabric, his arms outstretched. Is he Prince Polyneices come back from the dead? The performance closes with a set of solos danced in the dark on the white islands. The lights gradually come up on each dancer in a beautiful mirroring of the beginning of the piece, where the solos emerged out of ego and competition. Now, in the dim light, each dancer is ghost and trace. Finally, the lights stay out and we are in the dark together for just a moment.

M2M (MADE-TO-MEASURE)

The gallery is rearranged to allow for a long, shallow stage. In what feels like a very literal demonstration of the reversed proposition of this piece (Judson comes uptown to Harlem), Lac delivers Harrell's proposition. The three performers (Harrell, Lac, and Fordeyn) wear simple, black tunics. Fordeyn whispers unendingly into a microphone, "Don't stop, don't—" while Harrell performs a church affect, moaning phrases from "Good morning, Heartache," trembling, sobbing, clutching. Lac is Harrell's echo, able to emote grief and yet the figure of innocence. After some time has gone by, I'm amused to notice that Harrell has "fallen asleep" in his chair. Indeed, this section seems to go on interminably, Rob's voice turning into an irritating buzz.

And then suddenly, a turn. The lights dim, and it's time to walk. Rob is sly and poised on his toes, Harrell all bounce and flounce, and Lac laconic model meets club kid. The energy mounts. The three performers encourage each other and take turns showing off. Lac's solo features a mixture of classic hip-hop moves, resulting in a spectacle both virtuosic and comical in its obvious cultural appropriation. The glimpses of his patterned Uniqlo boxers only add to the incongruous nature of what we're looking at. The trio gets more and more worked up: voguing, twirling, leaping. Harrell's superhero returns; with one fist in the air, he charges across the stage. This is the sort of abandon I've been waiting for: the three chant, "Don't think, just werk."

For the final movement of the piece, the three performers return to their seats and pick up their microphones. Lac murmurs, "Are you on fire?" Harrell begins to sing a new song, with all the hyperbolic intensity of the truly broken-hearted. I look around to see if anyone else recognizes the Indigo Girls—but if that is the case, not one face betrays it. What fully takes hold of me in the moment as the last note lingers in the dark is the pleasure of code-switching. More than just a fixed index of references, it is the elusiveness and play of the material that produces a made-to-measure experience. In *Twenty Looks*, Harrell offers an assemblage of images that collapse time periods, places, identities, and lineages. It is no coincidence that the most memorable of them happen in the dark.

SERIOUS PLAY SUPPLEMENT 2

FIVE READS OF PARIS IS BURNING (A SUBJECTIVE SUPPLEMENT)

READ 1: BELL HOOKS AND ISAAC JULIEN: "STATES OF DESIRE" (1991)

Isaac Julien: To me, one of the problems in «Paris Is Burning», is that the subjects in the film are, to an extent, presented to us as objects of a certain gaze, that is, in the end, ethnographic. It's a modern ethnographic film set in New York. And why is it that, at the moment, we have a gay culture that is postulating itself in this kind of way? I think it has

something to do with the AIDS crisis. And that's something that was never clearly articulated in the film.

bell hooks: One thing that struck me about *Paris Is Burning* is that there is no sexuality in the film.

IJ: Desire is not really at play at all in "Paris Is Burning"; desire is enacted by the subjects in the film, because their fantasies are about being Vogue models or articulating black style in a hybrid way. It has to do with their lack of access to those industries of desire, which channel and create desire and fantasy, real psychic areas for white subjects; black people are excluded from them. Black gay people in particular are parodying all these different styles, and these different representations of fashion, of the cat walk, are very incredible and in some ways very important... But if I made "Paris Is Burning", I'd have to have some kind of critical discourse somewhere that says: where does this leave you?

When I re-watched *Paris Is Burning* with my mother recently, she asked me about Willi Ninja. "Oh, he's dead," I said. "They're all dead. AIDS happened." Julien is writing in 1991, where there has hardly been a chance to become nostalgic, and yet nostalgia is so much a part of this film—whether it's for pre-AIDS queer culture, or the old Christopher Piers, or Washington Square Park before it had a children's playground and nice bathrooms.

I'm struck by the wide horizon of Julien's response about the lack of sexuality in the film. I do see sexuality in the film, but mostly it is projected towards the future, it is wishful and romanticized, clean. There are references to turning tricks, and queer joking between friends, but the desire for casual sex is not articulated. Julien cites the material conditions that limit desire. Ultimately, he sees Livingston's film as falling short in its lack of criticality surrounding the triangular relationship of race, economics, and desire.

READ 2: BELL HOOKS: "IS PARIS BURNING?" (1992)

The first time I read this I was so distracted by the way that hooks linked drag to misogyny, via the lesbian separatist Marilyn Frye, that I had a hard time letting the rest of her analysis sink in. I think the reason she engages this line of thinking, although she is certainly embracing a hostile figure, is to support her intervention in the assumed oppositional stance of Livingston's work. Once hooks denaturalizes drag performance as oppositional, the argument follows that the documentation of this performance can also reinforce dominant ideas about race, gender, and sexuality. While I agree that this assumption deserves to be derailed, hooks runs the risk of reinforcing an essentialist view of gender as well as a cissexist and transphobic view of the subjects of Paris is Burning by portraying these subjects as men who pretend to be or play at being women, rather than describing the range of gender identities and positions these subjects occupy. In another simplifying gesture, hooks reinforces the binary of black and white, when Latino/a subjects are very much a part of the film.

Responding to overwhelmingly positive reviews by mainstream media as well as prominent black artists and intellectuals, hooks is emphatic in her critique of the unexamined glorification of whiteness in the film: "[I]n many ways the film was a graphic documentary portrait of the way in which colonized black people... worship at the throne of whiteness" (149). While I am not sure how much that has to do with Livingston's shaping of the material (see below, Isaac Julien's remarks), the following quote addresses the way that Livingston hides this very shaping in the film:

Jennie Livingston approaches her subject matter as an outsider looking in. Since her presence as white woman/lesbian filmmaker is 'absent' from Paris Is Burning it is easy for viewers to imagine that they are watching an ethnographic film documenting the life of black gay 'natives'; and not recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed by a perspective and standpoint specific to Livingston. By cinematically masking this reality (we hear her ask questions but never see her), Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness 'represents' blackness, but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic. (hooks 151)

Later, hooks distinguishes between ritual and spectacle, positing that Livingston's portrayal of the balls functions at the level of spectacle only: "Ritual is that ceremonial act that carries with it meaning and significance beyond what appears, while spectacle functions primarily as entertaining dramatic display" (150). hooks describes her experience of watching the film in a movie theater primarily filled with white patrons who laughed at scenes that she felt were filled with pathos (154), depicting this majoritarian response as a response to spectacle. Concerning the treatment of Venus Xtravaganza in the film, hooks writes: "Having served the purpose of 'spectacle' the film abandons him/her....To put it crassly, her dying is upstaged by spectacle. Death is not entertaining." (155). I agree with this critique, and I can't help but recoil from the pronoun "him/her" that hooks employs; to my mind, this is another act of violence against Venus, who very clearly self-identifies as female, and shows hooks's disregard for transgender self-determination. (I am aware that hooks has since revised her language and politics in this arena.)

As a trans person, I am touched by hooks's statements, which consistently mischaracterize trans lives, and, as a white cultural producer, who also writes critically about black performance, I heed her warning about the danger of not being explicit and visible in my position of whiteness.

READ 3: JACKIE GOLDSBY: "QUEENS OF LANGUAGE: PARIS IS BURNING" (1993)

Like hooks's "him/her," employed to describe Venus, Goldsby's terminology is just as hard to swallow, especially her designation of "wo(men)" as found in her statement "wo(men) like Octavia St. Laurent" as well as in referencing the mothers of the houses, some of

whom, like Octavia, identify as transsexual women. But again, I have to remind myself of the year, take a deep breath, and continue. (I notice also that in her conclusion, she uses female pronouns to refer to Octavia.)

Largely a sympathetic review, Goldsby finds the film's strength to be rooted in its investigation of and investment in language:

Linking the portraits of the individuals and the spectacle of the competitions is language, which, along with the notion of performance, structures both the ball world and the film. The film unfolds conceptually, initiating visual understanding of the culture through its linguistic signifiers. Title cards flash periodically — "BALL," "HOUSE," "REALNESS," VOGUEING," "READING," "SHADING," "MOPPING" as if to drill the viewer into learning the ball world's lexicon. *In this way, Paris Is Burning becomes a kind of talking book,* a radically updated and situated version of Raymond Williams's classic historiography of language, Keywords. Williams attributed language's slippery fix on meaning to its subjection to political contexts. Paris Is Burning projects a similar critique, specifying the body as both subject to and the instrument of re-vision because of its (dis)engagement with commodity culture. (10-11)

Goldsby's response to *Paris is Burning* is far less scathing than hooks', but while she locates much to be lauded in the film, she insists that, contrary to Livingston's disavowal of any tension between her and her subjects, "the cultural and social privilege of the filmmaker is inscribed into the film, however unobtrusive she strives to be" (115). In other words, she explains, comparing Livingston's work to the film projects of Marlon Riggs, "she can tell this story because she is not implicated in it" (115).

READ 4: JUDITH BUTLER: "GENDER IS BURNING: QUESTIONS OF APPROPRIATION AND SUBVERSION" (1993)

While agreeing that drag is not necessarily subversive (citing examples of straight drag in which the fear of homosexuality is excised (384-385)), Butler responds to hooks's alliance with Marilyn Frye as follows: "The problem with the analysis of drag as only misogyny is, of course, that it figures male-to-female transsexuality, cross-dressing, and drag as male homosexual activities—which they are not always—and it further diagnoses male homosexuality as rooted in misogyny" (385). She also points out that, ironically, if borne out, this line of thinking provides "a way for feminist women to make themselves into the center of male homosexual activity (and thus to reinscribe the heterosexual matrix)" (385).

Butler also points out the ethnic lines along which the (Latino, as well as black) Houses are established (390) and expands hooks's characterization of the ball categories by reminding readers that not all of the categories are taken from white culture" (386); the categories of Bangee Boy and Bangee Girl, for example, con-

cern a representation of straightness that is distinctly of the street, and belongs to the domain of black culture.

Here is Butler's take on "realness": "what determines the effect of realness is the ability to impel belief, to produce the naturalized effect. This effect is itself the result of an embodiment of norms, a reiteration of norms, an impersonation of a racial and class norm, a norm that is at once a figure, which is no particular body, but a morphological ideal that remains the standard that regulates the performance, but that no performance fully approximates" (387). The "no particular body" is of course the unmarked body that represents whiteness. Butler points out that Livingston's sidewalk shots of New Yorkers, largely wealthy and white, serve to represent this symbolic body against the foreground of the balls.

Although she takes a somewhat corrective approach to hooks, Butler is by no means letting Livingston off the hook: if we return to the idea of "no particular body" mentioned above, Butler follows hooks in her critique of the absence of Livingston's body/subjectivity; Livingston, via her camera, possesses "the gaze that has the power to produce bodies, but is itself no body" (392). She wonders what it would be for Livingston to not only let her whiteness be "visible" but also to show how her (lesbian) desire shaped the film (391).

Butler begins her article seeking out the possibilities inherent in the film: "the rearticulation of kinship in *Paris Is Burning* (1991) might be understood as repetitions of hegemonic forms of power that fail to repeat loyally" (383). She goes on to identify the risks inherent in this project: "Venus, and *Paris Is Burning* more generally, call into question whether parodying the dominant norms is enough to displace them" (384)

In her conclusion, she expresses her lack of confidence in the film to effect an alternative: "But this is a film that cannot achieve this effect without implicating its spectators in the act; to watch this film means to enter into a logic of fetishization that installs the ambivalence of that 'performance' as related to our own" (393). If the audience does not question their own "ambivalence of embodying—and failing to embody—that which one sees" (393), the subjects of the film remain ethnographic subjects, entertainment. Thinking back to hooks's description of being surrounded by laughter in the movie theater, it would seem that Butler's prognosis is accurate

READ 5: PEGGY PHELAN: "THE GOLDEN APPLE: JENNIE LIVINGSTON'S PARIS IS BURNING" (1993)

Phelan's chapter is the source that Harrell selected for the reading packet that he distributed to each audience member at the beginning of (XS). In the following passage, Phelan lays out the ethnographic structure of the film, which has much to do with its reception.

Livingston employs some of the common ethnographic devices for displaying community inter-titles explaining specific lexical markers seemingly "unique" to this community—(but translatable none-the-less)—"reading," "shading," "mopping"; interviews with articulate informants; a significant change within the community under observation—the consciousness of AIDS; and voiceovers marking the consequences of that change. In presenting her community as both unique and comprehensible Livingston implicitly fetishizes her subjects, by transforming the "unknown" (and potentially anxiety-producing "other") into the "known" (the reassuring familiar). Once fetishized, another displacement occurs from the performance to the film, and Paris Is Burning itself becomes the reassuringly familiar, the fetish object. (94)

This metonymic relationship, wherein the film stands in for the balls and is uncritically viewed as a missive that has traveled through time to share its rarified, exotic beauty, is of course entirely mistaken. And yet, like anything that is cited and re-circulated within mass culture, *Paris Is Burning* has also served to function as a common source to be referenced and claimed by generations of young queers of color—of course, it has also been appropriated by white gay men and Madonna, among others. Phelan carefully treats the political and economic factors that must be considered in any discussion of the representation of a precarious community.

The power of the 'unseen' community lies in its ability to cohere outside the system of observation which seeks to patrol it. So the 'in-jokes,' the 'secret' codes, the iconography of dress, movement, and speech which can be read by those within the community, but escape the interpretative power of those external to it, can create another expressive language which cannot be translated by those who are not familiar with the meanings of this intimate tongue.... The risk of visibility then is the risk of any translation—a weaker version of the original script, the appropriation by (economically and artistically) powerful 'others.' The payoff of translation (and visibility) is more people will begin to speak in your tongue. (97)

Phelan cites hooks's response to Paris Is Burning, and frames it properly as a critique that took place in an atmosphere of heavy praise for the film, including that of the black writer and critic Essex Hemphill. She extends hooks's critique of the representation of the walkers as worshipping whiteness, pointing out that: "The walkers admire 'whiteness' in part because it is unmarked and therefore escapes political surveillance" (95). She goes on to clarify between an identification and identity: "Some of the walkers want to pass as white, but they do not want to be white. This is a crucial difference" (102). Phelan articulates the film's failure to consider "the incredible allure of being unseen when visibility has meant (and continues to mean) violence, imprisonment, death" (104). Although she does not explicitly name transgender women of color, this is certainly the community that continues to face the most violence.

SERIOUS PLAY SUPPLEMENT 3

READING THE HANDOUTS

(XS

Harrell himself handed me a reading packet, following the shaking of my hand and the exchange of a brief introduction, at the opening of (XS). The contents of the packet are as follows: a bilingual description of (XS) and of the series as a whole. That is followed by a piece (review? program note? critical text?) by Gérard Mayen, originally written in French and translated by Ben Evans, which describes Harrell's project as creating "friction" between the two movements (I like the sensory quality of this image, the productive excess of something else that Harrell may be referring to when he describes the "third space" that he is producing/working in). Mayen asks: "Which privileges, which omissions, have tainted the readings and interpretations of history?" prompting the reader to consider the construction of dance histories and, for that matter, cultural histories.

Explanations of voguing and postmodern dance follow, and then a short text that seems to be an introduction to a magazine called artpress2, written by Christophe Kihm and titled "The Society of Performance." A single page that looks to be an entry in an encyclopedic text, titled "Contemporary Performance," turns out to also be part of artpress2 and is written by Laurent Goumarre and Christophe Kihm (I wonder if there is writing about Harrell's work in this issue?). Both of these pieces appear to address a preoccupation with the term "performance" in a contemporary context. The last lines of the latter piece appear to hold some affinity with Harrell's project—perhaps we are meant to read this as an aspirational direction for the work: "for still others, it [performance] is the privileged locus of a relation to history, of a movement from past to present, the join where the recall, invocation and reactivation of gestures permits a renewed link to the powers of modernism." That the transhistorical "join," of Judson, frictive as it is, is reactivated via gesture feels enormously relevant to Harrell's project. The photocopied front and back covers of Darby English's book How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness come next, striking in their closedness, and the last item of inclusion is the entirety of Peggy Phelan's chapter on Livingston's Paris Is Burning from her book Unmarked.

(S)

There is a second handout, overlapping in some of its content, distributed in (S), this time waiting for us in our seats. Unlike the rather boring, academic look of the stapled packet of (XS), this was a single sheet folded in half—on the outside was a list of each of the "Twenty Looks" that Harrell would be presenting, and on the inside were bilingual French-English descriptions of Postmodern dance. I noticed that on the left side (English), Wikipedia is cited, but on the right side (French), Wiki-

pedia and Sally Banes (*Terpsichore en baskets*) are cited. I scan an online version of *Terpsichore* to see if the quotes correspond. They do not. I google phrases, and a reference to a 2009 Wikipedia article comes up, now obsolete. I also find a critique written by Susan Manning that focuses on the discrepancy between Banes's "Introduction" written in 1987 and the original from 1980. The rebuttal by Banes and Manning's reply are published under the humorous title "Terpsichore in Combat Boots" in *TDR* (1989). It seems likely that the now-defunct Wikipedia entry, still circulating in Harrell's handout, is derived from the original introduction.

Above the quote from *Democracy's Body* appears a quotation from performance studies scholar Peggy Phelan from her article: "The golden apple: Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*" (*Unmarked* 1993) which reads as follows:

The balls are opportunities to use theatre to imitate the theatricality of everyday life—a life which includes show girls, bangee boys, and business executives. It is the endless theatre of everyday life that determines the real: and this theatricality is soaked through with racial, sexual, and class bias. As one [participant] explains, to be able to look like a business executive is to be able to be a business executive. Within the impoverished logic of appearance, 'opportunity' and 'ability' can be connoted by the way one looks. But at the same time, the walker is not a business executive and the odds are that his performance of that job on the runway of the ball will be his only chance to experience it. The performances, then, enact simultaneously the desire to eliminate the distance between ontology and performance—and the reaffirmation of that distance. (Phelan 98-99)

In the handout, Harrell places this quote between definitions of "The Voguing Dance Tradition" and "The Postmodern dance Tradition" (note the placement of the big "D" and the little "d"). Although the quote is attributed, its placement, directly following "The Voguing Dance Tradition," does appear to treat "The balls" rather than Livingston's presentation of the balls as seen in Paris Is Burning. I'm reminded of Phelan's acknowledgment of the danger of conflation that she herself encounters: "My friend keeps telling me to be sure I keep saying I'm only writing about Livingston's film of the balls and I'm not writing about the balls themselves" (104). In going from Harrell's handout to the source text of Unmarked, I encountered one small discrepancy, or perhaps we can call it an adjustment: Harrell changes the phrase "As one of the informants explains" to "As one [participant] explains" (my bold). However valuable, Phelan's article has become one of the dominant critiques of the film, and is therefore subject to the same process of canonicity—which sediments more than it circulates. With this almost undetectable change, Harrell re-activates and challenges Phelan's critique, asking new questions about agency through his careful redesignation of language.

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I. More on Phelan's critique can be found in Supplement 2: Reading the Handouts



n 2009, the dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell set out to rewrite history. To be more precise, Harrell formulated a proposition for a series of dances, collectively entitled Twenty Looks, or Paris is Burning at Judson Church. Through a choreographic process he has called "fictional archiving," Harrell proposed to chart the distance and proximity between

Dancing in the

Subjunctive: On Trajal Harrell's Twenty Looks

By Tavia Nyong'o

the queer transgender African-American vogue balls that had taken place uptown in Harlem since the early twentieth century, and the predominantly white downtown avant-garde dance scene. In the subsequent years,

Harrell staged iterations of his Twenty Looks project in concert dance spaces across Europe and America, creating a counter-archive of possibilities for dance history in the process. Aside from generating a series of remarkable performances, Twenty Looks placed a series of questions on the table. Why would a twenty-first century artist look back to moment a half-century prior for creative inspiration? How are we to make sense of his paradoxical proposal to look to the past, not as it was, but as it might have been? And what difference does such an appeal to history makes in the process of inventing

something entirely new? What, in summary, is the performative effect of turning to history in a propositional or speculative mode?1

There is, in the academic discipline of history, a recognized sub-field of counter-factual history, a genre in which small or large historically variables are hypothetically altered, and scholars try to determine how they would have changed the outcome of key events. Historical fiction, to be sure, is rife with such "what if" scenarios. But performance has perhaps the richest set of affordances for approaching such speculation, insofar

I. The exact phrasing of Harrell's proposition for Twenty Looks, as repeated by Harrell himself or one of his dancers before most performance, and as reported by dance critic Deborah Jowitt, was as follows: "What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns in Judson Church?"

as it is inherently virtual. Harrell's particular approach to reworking the virtual past begins by positing a stark reversal of the established trajectory wherein, since the beginning of the twentieth century, white people have travelled up to Harlem for a night out amidst what poet Langston Hughes aptly termed the "spectacles in color." In Harrell's counter-factual hypothesis, this well-known slumming narrative is turned on its head, and an itinerant voguer instead makes their way downtown, fiercely sashays through the doors of the imposing Italianate church overlooking Washington Square Park, fearlessly rubs shoulders with the cognoscenti of postmodern dance, and then dances until dawn in the cradle of the downtown scene.

Nothing like the above scenario was ever directly reenacted in any of Harrell's pieces, of course. Much

to the consternation of

And geography.

distance along Broadway today, one would likely pass mercial entertainment, and a teeming embodiment of process. The avant-garde, in turn, often cast its aesthetic in opposition to the commercial world of entertainment, producing a particularly contorted orientation to the black culture from which that commercial world so frequently drew. If black culture is always already com-

some literal-minded critics, his proposition didn't didactically determine the compositional field in which Twenty Looks took shape. More nearly, the proposition shaped the negative space around which the actual dances unfolded. It was their external condition of possibility and constraint, just like history itself.

As globally circulating performance, Twenty Looks returned constantly to the affordances and constraints

of the six or so miles distance separating Washington Square Park and 125th street in Harlem. Traveling that through Times Square, the city's great vortex of comthe constant erasure and re-drawing of the highbrow/ lowbrow divide in American culture. As a number of historians have shown, this class hierarchy in taste is also deeply racialized, with black culture continuously providing a source of artistic innovation from which mass culture draws from, usually whitewashing it in the modified, insofar as black culture originated in the commercial traffic in transnational slavery, then a certain bad faith has always accompanied avant-garde attempts to distance itself from crass capitalism. Of course, black

culture has often been held up as an inspiration for the avant-garde, but black culture is only rarely recognized as itself an avant-garde: that is, as a militant vanguard of collective artistic expression that rejects the corrupt and ossifying culture of its day in order to imagine and usher in a better order. The vogue balls, which originated in black and Latin working class communities of gendernonconforming rebels, have remained a spectacular example of such a black and brown queer avant-garde: a popular, underground, often criminalized space of utopian counter-positions to the hegemonic order of an anti-black, anti-queer, and misogynist world, a space where quotidian violence, insecurity, poverty and exploitation are transformed into extravagant beauty and beloved communitas. On the downlow undercommons of angular dark sociality, history is lived as counter-factuality.

The ingenuity of Twenty Looks can be grasped, at least in part, by contrasting the aesthetic principles of the dance forms it claimed as its contributaries. Where postmodern dance accentuated quotidian movement; vogueing was built out of a uniquely virtuosic movement vocabulary. Where Judson Dance theater, as its name suggests, was sponsored by the most venerable patron of arts, the church; vogueing was a fugitive dance form cultivated by a band of outsiders. Correspondingly, where postmodern dance choreographers enjoyed copious news coverage by respectable dance critics, vogueing was beneath the contempt of all but its die hard practitioners and aficionados. Postmodern dance came with programmatic intentions like Yvonne Rainer's "no manifesto"; the ball children published no such statements of their aesthetic ideology (although independent publications like the Idle Sheet did circulate among ball-going readers). And if one reads Rainer's manifesto, it reads almost like a point-by-point refutation of the very values an audience participant at the balls might cherish: spectacle, virtuosity, etc. In short, vogueing and postmodern dance seem so diametrically opposed that attempting to combine them would seem like a recipe for disaster, and yet Twenty Looks found a basis for their union, however incongruous. It was not so much that opposites attract (although they can), so much as that each dance form could take shape only in the negative space left open by the other.



s its name implies, Twenty Looks comprises a finite series of approaches or "looks" into the proposition, rather than a unified theme or story. This again has caused unnecessary consternation, as if the role of the arts was somehow to make the rough

timber of historical experience smooth. Harrell's choreography acknowledges, even celebrates the rough as well as the smooth, the glitch as well as the flawless gesture. There is a run in history's fine stockings, but Twenty Looks wears it fearlessly. Beyond the dialectic of crossover versus underground through which most narratives of black culture seek to preserve a criteria of authenticity against which to measure a given work of art, Twenty Looks set the entire dance of black and white on its head, and examined the performative reinscription of racial meanings as a choreographic challenge and creative injunction to think, feel, hear, see, and above all, to move otherwise.

Most particularly, the series embraced the double sense of "moving" that relates the word to both dance and the emotions: large portions of many individual pieces contained little of the expected virtuosic dancing (a strategy that befuddled some traditional-minded critics) but instead turned to music and song, to chant and silence, to the cultivation of a time and space for absorption, reflection, and reaction on the part of Harrell and his fellow performers. These moments of seeming nonperformance, or performative withdrawal, were in fact key to the larger proposition: in the face of the enormous and unequal history to which Twenty Looks gestured, it was as if the choreographer was demanding space for himself and his audience to think.

And the prospect of reenergizing the vexed legacy of vogueing crossing over into the avant garde and mainstream pop culture does indeed provide much food for thought. The vogue balls first came to wider attention when Madonna released her hit single "Vogue" in the 1990s. As critics noted at the time, her depiction of a bygone Hollywood glitz and glamor was entirely white, even though the vogueing dancers she featured in the video to "Vogue" and in her ensuing world tour were not. In an era in which the phrase "Make America Great Again" has decisively entered the political lexicon, Madonna's nostalgic whitewashing must read as all the more unforgivable (especially considering the pop superstar came up in the black and brown queer nightlife scene of New York in the 1980s, and knows better). To this day, "Vogue" is held up as a prime example of how the love and theft of black culture operates in real time, showcasing the racial amnesia that lies in every twist and turn of American national nostalgia.

Twenty Looks proposes that the response to this kind of whitewashing cannot be found in a retreat into black particularism, however, but through a strategic and often playful disruption of the norms that police which bodies appear where, under what conditions, and with which gestural vocabularies. To be sure, the disruptions of such normative patterns in culture have given rise to a corresponding critique of "cultural appropriation," a defensive posture that seeks to recast blackness as a collective property to which only those with the proper identity can lay claim. However understandable they may be, such responses only reify further the

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logic by which every creative act is deemed property, and takes a possessive investment in expressive culture as cold consolation for the absence of racial justice and equal opportunity. *Twenty Looks* does not skirt, but charges directly into these vexed questions it raises, by casting Harrell in a predominantly white and European company of dancers. Through sharing out the unshareable, Harrell asks whether the transgression of racial boundaries in expressive movement can ever be ethical, and has the courage not to impose a didactic answer to this quandary.

The approach of *Twenty Looks*, as I've already mentioned, departs from any attempt at scrupulous fidelity to the archival record or the impossible feat of complete reconstruction. Instead, Twenty Looks takes refuge in the fragment, in the detail, in the vintage garment, and in the idiosyncratic practices of collection in the fashion world. If the fashion system seems even easier to parody than the art world, *Twenty Looks* defies mockery in its sustained and sincere attention to the manner in which couture puts together a look. Whether it is loud vogue ball announcements called out in the staid galleries of the MoMA in New York, or sleeping dancers in the House of World Cultures in Berlin, Harrel performs a subtle but distinctive art of institutional critique.

The transgression of aesthetico-political boundaries proposed in Twenty Looks -- boundaries between black and white, gay and straight, haute couture and everyday dress, bohemia and the urban ghetto -- is a transgression that has preoccupied the imaginaries of many an artist, writer, and social reformer over the course of the twentieth century. Rather than cast this fraught history as a trauma to be corrected by a future performance in which bodies bear only the expressive possibilities to which ascriptive race-thinking demands, the proposition of Twenty Looks contains what I call "angular sociality": an edgy contact improvisation with and against the color line in art and aesthetics. Such performative angularity refuses to wish away racial difference in an impossible act of colorblindness, but de-dramatizes the alternative stance of structural antagonism that can produce dreams of a frictionless, color-coded sociality. Rather than retreating into a mythic blackness, however consoling, Twenty Looks bears witness to the scenes of its own repeated travesty, and seeks to locate spaces of affordance, intensity, and even joy therein.

But what is a proposition, considered in a choreographic sense? The term is increasingly ubiquitous in the contemporary art world, to the point where it might even be considered a jargon. To propose is to project, to conceptualize, to curate, and to select from the infinity of possible activities that might count today as art or dance that smaller set to which the artist aims to temporarily restrict themselves and their audience. The aesthetic proposition has become a subterranean term that links the conception, presentation and reception of, and even reaction to, a given work of art. The canniness of the proposition today suggests that it may itself be the

true medium in which post-conceptual art subsists, the performativity that has quietly but definitively saturated a field of cultural production, eclipsing prior criteria like "vision," "virtuosity," or "message."

The inventiveness of Trajal Harrell's Twenty Looks may well lie in sustaining the viability of the proposition beyond a mode of circulation, and repeatedly showing how it can motivate and direct the production and consumption of dance as well. To say this is to note, even if only in passing, how some skeptics have taken the proposition made by Twenty Looks to be a conceptual ploy, one that, furthermore, is the task of criticism to dispel. My own critical practice is different from such practices of normative evaluation, in which, say, the partisans of pure movement see the importation of historical fabulation into the performance as an unfair stratagem that places a burden of proof on the critic or audience rather than the dancer. If a choreographer can so give their work its own interpretative frame, these partisans worry, then a kind of chaos might ensue in which the very seat of aesthetic judgment might be precipitously overthrown. In the face of such revanchist aestheticism and formalism, it becomes all the more important to vindicate the proposition, precisely along the same terms with which its critics seek to indict it. It is precisely by opening the space of dance to the virtual and uneven intersection of historical forces that the proposition is afforded the possibility of finding or showing something new.

There is, in other words, an alchemy at work in the proposition for Twenty Looks, within which dance is obliged to betray its premises in order to fulfill them. So for instance, one might ask: Is there vogue in Twenty Looks? Of course. Is there postmodern dance? Certainly. But there is no synthesis of the two, and no attempt to envision a history in which their differences were ratified by institutions devoted to the reproduction of aesthetic, racial, and gendered hierarchy. The investigation therefore never produces a single style or movement vocabulary, but a collage of sites and spectacles. The competitive form of the vogue ball is not something Twenty Looks is interested in replicating. Instead, it wants to learn from, and, where possible, adopt the elements of vogue. These elements reside in the double negation of performativity: not vogue, it is also not not vogue. And it is that dance of double negation that attunes us to the "anticipatory illumination" of another way of living, to use a term from Ernst Bloch given renewed purchase by José Esteban Muñoz.

The show Antigone Sr. exemplifies Harrell's passionate attachment to history in its subjunctive mood. At one level a mash up between Sophocles' tragedy Antigone and the competitive categories of vogueing ball culture, Antigone Sr., never approached the play text through straightforward exposition. Instead, Sophoclean character and plot were employed like a dress form around which a new performance could be draped. Unraveling to almost three hours in length,

Antigone Sr., redresses Greek tragedy through sequences of posing, stripping and dressing up, singing and emoting that together manage to conjure, with remarkable effectiveness, the mood of an all-night ball (a form that is also characterized by periods of languor, disinterest, and fatigue in between unexpected clashes of electrifying intensity). Holding together all the strands and eccentric performances of this piece were two central ball categories: "The King's Speech" and "The Mother of the House." An actual ball, of course, would feature a number of houses in competition: in Harrell's fictional archive, by contrast, there is but a single house, the House of Harrell. The Mother of this house, however, is no "dance mom" of Reality TV cliché, cruelly demanding movement virtuosity according to normative standards. Instead, she is a "good enough mother" in terms that psychoanalytic theorist Winnicott uses: like the goodenough mother, she creates the performance space as a "holding environment" in which "the children" (as they are called in ball parlance) can act out scenes from the good-enough life.² In thus dedramatizing the theatrical canon, Antigone Sr., employs the form of black queer ball culture to reshape the contents of postmodern dance's interest in everyday life.

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uch dancing in the subjunctive mood of "what would have happened" is an instance of afrofabulation in motion. Fabulation, in the philosophical tradition of Bergson and Deleuze is most succinctly thought of as an impulse towards the virtual. Fabulation in this sense is not so much imagination as it is imagination's shadow; stepping into

the propositional mode of revised histories allows for the retrieval of abandoned practices and unspoken scenarios. These powers of the false provide a performer like Harrell a means to invent an alternative tradition within which to position his own dancing body and, in and through the same gesture, to mark out a space for blackness and queerness in the contemporary dance and performance scene. By delving into the fraught dynamics of this zone of sexual and racial dissidence, Harrell's afrofabulation interinanimates the present with the past, making the lively arts of dance, story, and song a vehicle for virtual memory.³

The series of dance pieces that comprise *Twenty Looks* was indeed structured by a conviction that something was missing: missing from the dance scene, from

contemporary critical vocabularies, from a collective sense of shared possibility. The Twenty Looks were a queer fantasia of an avant-garde dance scene that had never actually existed, and perhaps couldn't even now. That is to say: while the original proposition referred to Harlem and Greenwich Village, localities steeped in neighborhood lore and dense association, the actual staging of Twenty Looks was an utterly globalized affair, characterized by postmodern fragmentation of locale and a polyglot, cosmopolitan corps of dancers. Ranging in scale from a solo dance in the dark (XS) to evening-length pieces that took on the shambolic dynamic of an actual vogue ball (XL), Twenty Looks brought the most spectacular effect and the subtlest gesture into repeated and rotating juxtaposition. The frequently melancholic tone of the project belied the utopianism of its vision of black and white aesthetic forms meeting and commingling across class divides, aesthetic hierarchies, and the color line.

And the looks the dancer-choreographer gave over the course of performing in his own pieces -many more than twenty looks of anguish, effort, attraction, repulsion, interest, amazement, sadness, fatigue, grimace, seduction, surprise, care, concern, regret, dejection, incitement, lust, anger, side-eye, shade, signification, transport, triumph, pain and abandon -- were performances in themselves. As such, these reactions provided an index to the dance's possible meanings. In so modeling this auto-affective response to the danced story of erotic and euphoric entanglement, Harrell did not so much supplant the critic and historian as take his place by their side, stalking the footlights of his own stage, sitting in his own audience, and breaking the presentational frame through a variety of other stratagems.

"The loss of stories sharpens the hunger for them," the scholar Saidiya Hartman has noted, "So it is tempting to fill in the gaps and to provide closure where there is none. To create a space for mourning where it is prohibited. To fabricate a witness to a death not much noticed."4 Hartman here speaks to the interdiction of black life beyond any hope of critical redress. But where her argument disrupts the story-telling imperative in its normalizing mode, she also points to an alternate mode which does not seek closure so much as its opposite: an open-ended confounding of history's narrative form. Critical fabulation as both textual practice and performative enactment works reparatively beyond repair; its intent and (where achieved) its effect is to render temporarily inoperative the narrative machinery by which the status quo continuously reproduces the past as an image of itself, shutting down possibilities of living or feeling otherwise.

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^{2.} I am indebted to Anna McCarthy for the phrase, "the good-enough life" which is a Winnicottian play on the common phrase "the good life."

^{3.} On interinanimation as critical poesis, see {Moten 2003}

^{4. {}Hartman 2008: 8}



ndex(s) 1. Black and white netted scarf 2. Two white with blue trim towels 3. Black Aldo Sunglass case 4. Black and silver bracelet 6. Paintbrush 7. Black socks 11. Lime green cashmere gloves 12. Soul train handbag by Marc Jacobs 13. Olive green with brown trim attaché

Moriah Evans' unfinished piece of Writing

By Moriah Evans

Trajal Harrell exposes the inherent performativity that we each embody in everything we do. Performance is presence; presence is performance. Trajal Harrell knows this, shows this, dissects it, comments upon it, entertains us with it and critiques our social practices. Harrell's recent choreographic devices, in Showpony (2006) and 20 Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church (S) (2009), expose how social conventions both determine the characteristics of individuals and give us an idea of the range of properties we can have, and of the limits of each individual subject. Without words, Harrell finds choreographic devices through which we are "interpellated" as subjects, to use the ideas of Althusser, based on and in the body—fashion and dance traditions from the Voguing traditions in Harlem to the postmodern dance traditions propagated through the Judson Church school of dance.

Just ten feet apart, the audience sits in two rows along a runway, gazing at each other and certainly just as much "on show" as the three performers. He sits on our laps, one-by-one, sometimes two at a time, but very rarely. Even if we wish to avoid this inherent confrontation between performer-choreographer (Harrell) and audience member as well as the very close gaze of the other spectators, we cannot. We each perform in this moment and are part of the piece through the mechanism of his steady sitting—it's slightly confrontational, slightly sexual, slightly flirty; it's kind yet can be bitchy; it's about others watching and it's about your response; it's about the social space defined by the people sitting along the runway. Choreography functions as a motor to expose how we embody ourselves and are valued and evaluated by others that witness and comment upon what we do. This is Harrell's critical entertainment. Who we are: people on display for each other, objects for the gaze and commodities to be circulated about through the clear references of the structure of a fashion show? What is value, how do we obtain it, get it, announce it, and display it? What are the structures to enable us to do so—is it fashion, is it the power of our body on display, our control over what we show and when we show it? Is it the community we are inside of? In Showpony, the structures and the system set-up enable a concept

However, the question of limits of the individual subject shifts in the three years between these two pieces. In *Showpony*, the bodies of Harrell and dancers Cris-

tina Vasileiou and Katy Hernan are limited to the space of the gaze of the audience and the community inside of which they are vying for a livelihood—the community of contemporary dance makers, doers and programmers revealed through the homage slideshow at the end of the piece, almost like a list of credits and memories of dialogues, exchanges and encounters. Meanwhile, in 20 Looks the limits of Harrell's own body transcends the space of a self socially constituted in a frame and opens towards a space of elsewhere, another place for presence to be performed, another performance of presence. The imaginary, the autofictional presence of the performer, as Gerard Mayen contends, is the heart of the piece. Through the minimal structure of moving through each "Look," we watch his morphing of presence and types as well as witness our shifting of perception and understanding of what and who and how it is we watch. In 20 Looks not only does Harrell compose a rigorous set of dance and socio-cultural references that could almost function as a history lesson of possible identities or a biography of the author himself, he constructs a space of watching, waiting and even boredom that opens into sentiment and sharing. Human to human, person to person-no more "looks" just feelings and transcendence of social limits and the beginning of a new cultural era of identity in culture as well as dance.

And so above, you read some of my intentions from seven years ago. It's quite a pity, I never managed to complete the thinking for an argument.

I got fired up about the potentiality of writing something again a few months ago, despite years of procrastination. Here are some notes:

Watch the vimeo link: https://vimeo.com/35343463.

You will have to ask Trajal for the password. Yes, the piece works on video. And one remarkable aspect of watching the video is to be reminded of the dexterity of Trajal's performativity. He is an exceptional performer. He goes through various terrains, transforming from one being to another.

So watch it or imagine you are watching the video.

We are very much in a room and at a gathering in this room at the start of this piece. There is an acknowledgement to the process of seeing and analyzing who is in the room as people file in and take their seats. Trajal hands out some papers, a reference tool explaining some of his research as well as the list of 20 looks. Are we at a conference? A performance? A lecture performance? A gathering? The format of the container to which we are about to subject our attention for an hour is not entirely clear. Trajal welcomes the audience with a nonchalant confidence that is also underscored by a humility of earnest intent.

Over the course of the next hour, Trajal moves in and out of a makeshift closet composed from six mismatched folding chairs, where the palette of interchangeable clothes, shoes and accessories subtly shift from one look to another. We read his activities through the numbers he has written into a notebook—a clever tool producing legibility and a direct reference to the old school fashion shows in Parisian couture salons. The sequence of moments from look to look is intricately composed. Eyeballs only. Arms as ornament and extension of the state of the body are utilized only after a certain moment. Some looks are long, while others are short. Certain looks take longer to appear and change into than they are performed as events. There is a rhythm to the deployment of the looks.

The soundtrack mixes in and out with the modes of Trajal's looks as yet another system of signs we are invited to read together through his choreographic propositions. For instance, the sounds of the walking heeled shoes recall pedestrian concepts from Judson era dance but also recall high heels on a fashion runway. There is a constant reminder of pedestrianism, walking, the runway and social space. We know not which one might be the original source of this motif of sound, but we are reminded throughout the piece of this ambiguity. The body functions, in part, as a sign, and the soundtrack also functions, in part, as a sign. Importantly, though, there is tension—for a look is never just a sign neither is a song just a song. The look must be fully embodied and the song must function to make us think as much as it triggers feelings and seduces us into a social space of perceiving. Trajal does not fear confrontation, he transparently exposes the signs he uses and in doing so indoctrinates us into his universe.

We are with Trajal. He is serving our identities in service of a permeable historical fantastical identity he proposes as a general frame in which to watch this piece. Trajal, and his looks, are at once delicate, precarious and yet entirely deliberate. Minor changes seem like major adjustments—the introduction of a pocketbook clutch is a major event in the system with which he is formulating. A mere gesture is a whole new motif, a renewed framing on his body. The idea of gestures and decorum of the runway as a dance certainly becomes clear as we read and experience this performance. He seduces the public into understanding the activity of watching what he is making happen. The virtuosity of his runway movement might easily be overlooked or taken for granted, but if we look and look again and again, one can see this new vocabulary he suggestively wedges into the conversation of dance history.

Look II is labeled as Look ______. It's a blank. And fact, it is the one time in the sequence of looks that Trajal steps outside of the main stage and runway area and looks at the scene / set that he has been inhabiting from outside the neon tape's demarcations. He directs all of his attention upstage, and so, we once again reorient ourselves in relation to his new stance on his own creation. Identity is not fixed and can never be. A person possesses the potentiality to always and forever be out of bounds or between boundaries—if we can imagine impossibilities together maybe we can change ourselves,



The value of blackness is the full absorption of light (after Lina Victor)

By Debra Levine

She watched the people, how they live They've forgotten how to give They had fodder in their brains They had dust inside their wings....

—Nina Simone

he strings that commence Imani Uzuri's complex interpretation of Nina Simone's "Fodder on My Wings" reverberate as if their plucking could excavate the soul that even you, a confirmed post-modernist, will momentarily swear you possess. Yet that is not the most impossible proposition in the extra small (XS) version of Trajal Harrell's Twenty Looks: Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church. In the final moments of the perfectly brief twenty-five minute long solo performance, the recorded warmth of Uzuri's voice cuts like a resonant beacon through the envelope of blackness that descended around the fifteen minute mark. Uzuri's voice is the signifyin' counterpoint to Simone's and the song serves a bridge between the dead and the living. It is also a mode of transport that eases us to Trajal who moves through it in the thick of the present.

Izuri adjusts our eyes. Darby English's text, "How To See A Work of Art in Total Darkness," serves that same purpose in a different register. But before we are exposed to Trajal's arm and hand movements, his body only partially discernable in the darkness, Harrell appears among us in the light, intermittently. The houselights have not yet snapped off when, clad in a Marimekko Unikko apron (the ubiquitous flower print that has endured for decades, and imprinted on so many college dorm room duvets) he emerges from behind the curtain hung at the far back of the room and hands us English's text which is stapled to a few others. The xeroxed readings, another throwback to college days, are complex texts preoccupied with ocularity, the ontology of performance, and Jennie Livingston's iconic 1990 documentary, Paris Is Burning, the film that chronicles the 1980's drag ball culture in Harlem.

Simone song, Izuri's voice, those past and present divas of house balls, the iconic prints, lights, texts, speeches and darkness function as introductory primers just so that at the twenty-two minute mark, the audience might recognize and absorb Trajal's mesmerizing and fragile gesticulation—his two hands delicately

crossing back and forth, back and forth. Throughout the performance, Trajal has served us, and that service is complicated by the memory of all the historical injuries associated with that term. But his artistic service is necessary, and so in a mere twenty-five minutes, he takes us "there." There are difficult steps to negotiate in between however, and so, for the first fifteen minutes of the show, maybe longer, he has us lie in the light, scattered on the marley dance floor, individually absorbed in our reading, alone together.

At first, it's not easy to dismiss the suspicion that our act of reading is the entirety of his show. Or maybe that Trajal feels that reading is the only sure way to prepare us to speculate on a historical event that couldn't have happened. One text in our reading packet is a disquisition by French journalist and critic Gerald Mayen, entitled "Privileges and Omissions," and it is written as a corrective to address what drops out from circulation in the codes of representation. Its admission points to an anxiety that we in the audience cannot properly "read" the significance of the Trajal's continual costume shifts when he occasionally darts in and out of our sight. Without the texts and the lengthy reading, the question still remains: wouldn't we recognize that Trajal himself is an autofictional creation, a performative creation that could not be thought without the contributions of Harlem ballroom culture? The texts point our attention to the clothing choices that become more recognizable as costumes as time passes. They aid us in considering that all outfits signify personas that Trajal performs with varying degrees of "realness" - from the black shirt and shorts of "the artist is in the house," to the apron, then kimono, then kimono with a bow, then Madonna Louise Ciccone tee shirt and tiger suit.

Without theory—embodied by (among others) the selection of theorists—Mayen, English, and Peggy Phelan—in her oft overlooked chapter "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's Paris Is Burning," (also included in our reading packet) from her groundbreaking book on performance, the 1993 *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Trajal intimates that we might lack the capacity to see and interpret the runway as a performative

site of identity production, or understand voguing as the paradigmatic performance that displays that knowledge. So he strengthens our capacity in XS for the texts provide much more than context. They assist Trajal in reconciling our eyes to the material and political properties and potentialities of blackness. The struggle to negotiate those properties was noted by Phelan in the writing of *Unmarked*, decades before Trajal's Twenty Looks series. Phelan would have been amiss if she hadn't included Harlem ballroom culture as a case study in her examination of liveness and the performativity of gender, race and class, for that scene was ground zero of the cultural avant-garde during the AIDS crisis and the culture wars of the late 1980's and early 1990's. The performance styles developed in the Harlem ballroom scene best demonstrated the performantivity of identity and how certain identities were only admitted as "real" properties of certain bodies. The ballroom scene also very self-consciously marked the vast economic disparity and access to social and cultural services that were privileges accorded to concurrent avant-garde movements like the Judson post-modern dance scene in New York City's West Village.

Phelan was canny enough to mark her own inability to fully inhabit the scene of her writing—and displayed her reluctance to risk the sometimes virulent criticism leveled at Livingston, a white lesbian, of cultural appropriation and voyeurism for heading uptown to capture a scene in which she had never participated. The recognition of that ethical bind possibly inhibited Phelan from taking that New York City subway those one hundred and twenty-five blocks from her downtown NYU office for fear of becoming another yet another ethnographic interloper. That choice however, left her to depend on Livingston's film for her cultural analysis, and presented her with a theoretical bind. While Phelan focused on the already seismic shifts in the scene (including voguing's commodification post-film release and the AIDS deaths of its most significant performers) her intent in Unmarked was to make a claim for the singularity of live performance. And so she wrote about the ballroom scene as both live performance and as the documentary trace. She depended almost wholly on Livingston's spectacular and flawed film to work through her insights. While Phelan's argument that the recording is an inadequate transport to get us to the singular ephemeral feeling of assembly, which is the utopian promise of performance at the heart of her book, her chapter displays a schizophrenic disavowal/avowal of how she could get there herself in her writing.

Phelan's critical blur of the live and the recording isn't a negative for Trajal. Instead he seizes it as an opening to both avow and disavow what is produced during the performance throughout the series. Trajal fashions the unstable nexus of avowal/disavowal into an aesthetic form. It is the foundation from which he takes on cultural legacies of avant-garde movements and makes something new of the live *and* recorded history; it is the

opening from which he can risk the critique of being an interloper. By insisting on the right to inherit the legacy of two concurrent avant-garde movements and "werk" them through the materiality of his own African American queer body, he both hails and undermines Phelan's famous declaration that, "without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility—in a maniacally charged present—and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control." Phelan's claim is predicated on her own unstable critical act of working between the live and recorded. That impasse generates a way for Trajal to channel and make a different thing with the aesthetic and critical practices that didn't touch then, but come together differently through how he choreographs our present situation.

For me, the entire series of Twenty Looks: Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church trades on the nexus of melancholia and Trajal's assertion of his own place in the genealogical lineage of the two cultural movements - the uptown voguers and the downtown postmodern choreographers -- whose political and social limitations were such that each couldn't admit or recognize their proximity to the other. The formal intervention of this concept, acknowledges the commodification of the historical practices he considers. Twenty Looks as a formal series of nine different scaled performances, sized according to the commercial practices of the fashion industry, amplifies and vogues the commodification of historical avant-garde. And it situates itself squarely in the twenty-first century, where in our culture of surveillance and our worship of the archive, it is now next to impossible for performance to disappear or escape commodification.

In XS, it is not just Uzuri who connects us to Simone – it is her recording of Simone's earlier recorded song and published lyrics. Recording transports us to perceive how Trajal makes claim to a lineage. And the recording wholeheartedly avows that Simone amplified her own legend and made her political claims through similar circuitous paths. But the commodification doesn't have to overwhelm the experience.

We can still attune ourselves to the reincarnated bird Simone offered us in "Fodder." The bird, Simone, Izuri, Trajal Harrall-all are visionaries, afflicted by what afflicts all of us. And that resonant communication has a different purchase on us after we become better attuned to it. The bird repeats its presence, again and again, in the texts we read, in the vibration of the recorded sound and in the perception of Trajal's hands moving at the end of XS, back and forth, back and forth. That hand motion is the next to last movement in XS (I lied earlier when I said it was the last). And the hand motion doesn't just take us there and leave us be. Trajal actively cuts us off from that pleasure. He embodies what is still excessive about performance. He can become the agent who reaffirms the melancholic premise in Phelan's figuration and quite possibly, between the live and the

recorded, between his choreographic premise and the history he undoes, he demonstrates how performance can provide some possibility of recuperation. The final hand position he performs, well known to us as marking an end to time, draws not from the Harlem ballroom scene, but from everyday life. The Judson postmoderns, who found their utopia in the anti-theatrical and the performance of the everyday venerated those gestures and amplified their presence.

Trajal remains faithful to the promise he made at the beginning of the show (and which then, we could never have interpreted as a warning), that when his hands form a T (and he shows us that T), the gesture signifies a full stop to the evening. First, when he first uttered the instruction, it merely seemed like a neutral code. We couldn't have known then, when we stepped into the performance space and when Harrell, dressed in everyday workout clothes greeted each of us, and settled us in, how "woke" we could feel at the end of twenty-five minutes. It hardly seemed possible when at the beginning of the show he explained his rather complicated and abstruse question that evolved into the series' proposition: "What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early post-moderns at the Judson Church?" Looking back at the beginning of XS after it ended, we could hardly know just how desperately we needed instruction, the everyday and the performative lift of illusion, the mesmerizing dance of the hands, Simone and Izuri, the glitter of divas.

By placing himself at our service as teacher and minster, by greeting us in the garb of the artist who is present to us, aka "Trajal," Trajal showed the power of the artist to assemble us into a public. We gained clarity that the performance had commenced and it was a mutual operation – one neither he nor we could do alone. We all needed a service in order to become a congregation and specifically Trajal's service to make our assembly cohere. Trajal made space for the spiritual in a secular temple of art and expected us to adopt his religious practice of reading critically, beside one another. The first movement of XS made our reading practices the subject of the work and the condition of our rich experience. Reading, and feeling the presence of others doing so is haptic-you eyes cast on the performative object or subject and you feel it. XS foregrounds this shift in attunement, and the work offers a glimmer of a vision that modes of ethical congregation still exist, especially now, post-Phelan, engaging with a form of liveness that privileges affective knowledge rather than liveness itself as the apex of a cultural experience.

And, isn't that hope and desire at the heart of voguing as well as its effect? In voguing, we congregate in a forms of assembly that can offer us affective experiences of criticality that are intertwined with the joy of movement. Vouging demands reading skills as well as giving ourselves over to the experience. Knowledge werks

through and by means of the body to renegotiate how might approach feeling ourselves together as a community in dissensus, assembled to feel the effects and aesthetic production that has emerged from the erasure of history and difference? Isn't XS what happens when we werk words, werk acts, werk blackness, among one another?

And if Trajal gets you there, as he did me, I can't even to begin to describe the devastation that will floor you when his hands re-form the shape of the T at the end. The gesture unleashes unbearable sadness. It is an abrupt and unwanted return that belies the adequacy of Harrell's initial speech act. For in twenty-five minutes we have sunk deeper and deeper into the fullness of his show. Maybe like me, in that twenty-five minutes, you almost got there too. Maybe you were almost touched the spirit of commonality that happens when we lose the need for instructions. Because, like me, you may have become almost acclimated to a premise that offers a promise of experiencing together, in the here and now, two kinds of radical aesthetics that were formed through race and gender, class and sexual difference, and which then, could not bridge the one hundred and twenty five block divide. Maybe you feel the sadness and the joy all together, that two brilliant aesthetic forms that had never had, until Trajal, been allowed to associate when their radical spirits were at an apex.

Beside and with Harrell, we feel the possibility of what was formerly impossible, that in the late twentieth century, that two sites of cultural worlding -the downtown postmoderns and the uptown Harlem ballroom voguers—could never meet or share the premises they theorized and embodied. It's one thing to know the abstract details of the obstacles that prevented promiscuous cultural alliances. But it's another thing entirely to feel the remains of them within our own bodies in the here and now, feeling the feelings and thoughts that inhibit knowing, seeing, experiencing. In XS, Trajal produces the melancholia of time itself, passing too fast, even when we are forewarned. Faithful to his premise as well as his promise, his real final gesture is the horizontal hand that is laid perpendicularly over the vertical hand. Plenitude existed maybe for a moment. Now we can read it as an illusive sign.

In XS we are Nina Simone's reincarnated bird. Our lives are freighted with a lightweight material of little nutritional value. Fodder is food and an affliction, which paradoxically doesn't inhibit the bird or the people she observes from flying. In Harrell's XS, fodder is light and brightness. Fodder is transparency. Fodder is the regime of visibility that naturalizes and affirms the mechanisms of social exclusions. Fodder is the impulse to mobilize without or before considered reflection. In XS Harrell suggests that some kinds of magnitude are also fodder. And so he offers us a set of operations – community, criticality and spirituality – that might excise a bit of that dust inside our wings, shake out some of that fodder out from our brains.



TRAJAL HARRELL

Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (XS)

Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church takes a new critical position on postmodern dance aesthetics emanating from the Judson Church period. By developing his own work as an imaginary meeting between the aesthetics of Judson and those of a parallel historical tradition, that of Voguing, Trajal Harrell re-writes the minimalism and neutrality of postmodern dance with a new set of signs.

Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church prend une nouvelle position critique sur l'esthétique de danse postmoderne émanant de la période Judson Church. En développant son propre travail comme une rencontre imaginaire entre l'esthétique de la Judson et ceux d'une tradition parallèle historique, celui de voguing, Trajal Harrell réécrit le minimalisme et la neutralité de la danse postmoderne avec une nouvelle série de signes.

Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church comes in fives sizes-from extra small (XS) to extra large (XL). These five choreographies share the central question: "What would have happened in 1963 if someone from the voguing ball scene in Harlem had come downtown to perform alongside the early postmoderns at Judson Church?" Rather than illustrating a historical fiction, the (XS) transplants the proposition into a contemporary context. What we experience was neither possible at The Balls nor at Judson, but a third possibility is created.

Twenty looks or Paris is burning at the Judson church se présente sous cinq tailles — de l'extra small" (XS) à l'extra large" (XL). Ces cinq chorégraphies partagent une même question : « Que se serait-il passé en 1963 si un participant de la scène voguing de Harlem s'était présenté downtown pour se produire au côté des premiers post-modernes du Judson ». Plutôt qu'illustrer une situation historique, la version solo (S) transporte cette proposition dans un contexte contemporain. Ce qu'on y traverse n'était possible ni sur la scène des compétitions du voguing, ni à Judson, mais une troisième possibilité est ainsi créée.

Privilèges et omissions

Tout spectateur européen avisé en danse contemporaine situe peu ou prou le mouvement new-yorkais du Judson Church Theater. Au début des années 60, des artistes chorégraphiques tels Trisha Brown, Yvone Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, Simone Forti, font table rase des règles établies de la représentation spectaculaire en danse. Cette séquence fut très brève. Mais sa radicalité expérimentale fut telle, qu'elle continue de fournir un repère consacré pour nombre de recherches et pratiques actuelles autour de la performance, des release techniques, du contact-improvisation, de l'interdisciplinarité, etc.

Or l'histoire de l'art n'aura pas eu la même considération pour un autre mouvement de danse, qui commence à se développer dans les mêmes années, également dans Manhattan, mais cette fois à Harlem. Soit le phénomène des ball rooms, qui voit de jeunes africains-américains ou latino-américains pauvres, gay le plus souvent, concourir dans des performances hyperboliques d'imitation, en fait de décodage, des attitudes les plus outrées de l'univers blanc de la mode, des stars et du glamour. De ce mouvement à la fois populaire et underground émergeront les figures drag queen, ou encore le voguing.

Le Judson réunissait des artistes et un public de la middle class, blancs et culturellement sélectifs, politisés et convaincus de la portée démocratique de leur option pour un geste quotidien, neutre et plein d'"authenticity". Les ball rooms réunissaient des artistes et un publics des classes pauvres, non blanches, nourris de cultures populaires, éperdus dans la quête d'une "realness" du geste. Cette strategie marginale retournait de facon magistrale les termes même de leur stigmatisation.

Toutes ces notions n'appellent-elles pas un dialogue, qui toutes suggèrent une charge critique à l'endroit des codes de la représentation ? Twenty looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church met en friction ces deux mouvements, rebelles chacun à sa façon ; une rencontre qui ne pouvait que demeurer impossible. La permanence de ces cloisonnements sociaux et culturels ne peut qu'interroger. Des pans importants de la création chorégraphique européenne réactivent aujourd'hui la référence au mouvement new-yorkais du seul Judson church. Quels privilèges, quelles omissions, viennent teinter ces lectures et interprétations de l'histoire ?

Ainsi est-il très précieux qu'un artiste chorégraphique new-yorkais vienne lui-même faire acte de sa présence autofictionnelle en aiguisant ces contradictions stimulantes. Trajal Harrell demeure lui-même encore très rare non blanc dans les rangs de la danse savante américaine de création contemporaine. Il est par ailleurs très au fait des pratiques européennes de la performance. Chacun de ses pas délicats, de ses looks étudiés, de ses subtiles inflexions transgenres, vient faire bouger les lignes, avec la force d'une caresse savante, légère et ironique.

Gérard Mayen

Gérard Mayen est journaliste, critique de danse. Il collabore régulièrement aux revues et magazines Danser, Mouvement, Quant à la Danse, Pref, et au site Mouvement.net. Il rédige des textes d'accompagnement ou de réflexion, des plaquettes, pour de nombreuses structures à vocation chorégraphique: Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Centre national de la danse, Arcadi, Centres chorégraphiques nationaux de Rennes, Montpellier, Angers, Belfort, Biennale de Lyon, festivals Montpellier Danse, Uzès Danse, etc. Il est actuellement chargé de mission pour le 30e anniversaire du CNDC d'Angers et prépare un ouvrage sur ce thème. Il a conçu et animé le colloque Ce que le sida a fait à la danse, ce que la danse a fait du sida, à la demande du festival Montpellier Danse 07. Il est titulaire d'un master du departement danse de l'Université Paris 8. Il s'y est consacré particulièrement à l'analyse du spectacle. Il a publié deux ouvrages dans ce cadre : De marche en danse dans la pièce Déroutes de Mathilde Monnier (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005), et Danseurs contemporains du Burkina Faso (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2006).

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Privileges and Omissions

Any informed European audience of contemporary dance is more or less familiarized with the Judson Church Theater movement, which took place in New York in the early 1960s. During this time, choreographic artists including Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, and Simone Forti, made a clean sweep of the established rules of dramatic representation in dance practice. This moment was quite short, but its radical experimentation was such that it continues to provide a benchmark for a significant amount of dedicated research around performance, release technique, contact improvisation, interdisciplinary practices, etc. even today.

The history of art has not had the same consideration for another dance movement, which started developing at the same time, also in Manhattan, but this time in Harlem. This was the phenomenon of ball rooms, in which young and poor African Americans and Latino Americans, most often gay, competed in extravagant performances of imitation; rather, a decoding, of the most exaggerated postures of the white world of fashion, of stars, and of glamour. From this movement, at once lower-class and underground, one could distinguish the figures of the drag queen, and voguing.

Judson reunited middle-class artists and audience, white and culturally selective, politicized and convinced of the democratic scope of their privilege for an everyday gesture, neutral and full of "authenticity." The ballrooms brought together poorer artists and public, non-white, fed by pop culture and a frantic search for the "realness" of gesture. In a skillful way, this marginal approach reversed the very terms of their stigmatization.

Do not all these concepts call for a dialogue, each of which is critically charged, in place of the codes of representation? Twenty looks or Paris is burning at the Judson Church puts these two movements in friction, each a rebel in its own right; a meeting that could only seem impossible. The durability of these social and cultural divisions can do nothing but question, and central elements of current European choreography reactivate specifically this reference to New York's Judson Church. Which privileges, which omissions, have tainted the readings and interpretations of history?

In this way, it is incredibly valuable that a choreographic artist from New York comes to record his own "autofictional" presence, honing these stimulating contradictions. Trajal Harrell himself still remains quite rare: non-white in the ranks of an informed American contemporary dance practice, who is also well-acquainted with European practices of performance. Each delicate step, each studied look, each of his subtle transgendered inflections, pushes the boundaries, with the force of a knowing caress, light and ironic.

Gérard Mayen

Translated from the French by Ben Evans

Gérard Mayen is a journalist and dance critic. He contributes regularly to journals and magazines such as Danser, mouvement, Quant à la Danse, Pref, and Mouvement.net. He wrote the accompanying text or discussion, platelets, for many choreographic structures or venues such as: Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), Pompidou Center (Paris), Centre National de la Danse, Arcadi, National Choreographic Centres of Rennes, Montpellier, Angers, and Belfort, Lyon Biennale, Festival Montpellier Danse, Danse Uzes, etc. He is curren in a part of the organizing leadership for the 30th anniversary of the CNDC in Angers and is preparing a book on this subject. He holds a masters of dance from the department at the University Paris 8. He devoted himself particularly to the analysis of performance. He has published two books in this framewor From march dance in the piece Déroutes by Mathilde Monnier (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005), and contemporary dancers from Burkina Faso (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2006).

La référence du Voguing

Le terme de Voguing fait référence aux compétitions qui firent leur apparition dans des salles de danse de Harlem à la fin des années 60. Structurées autour de participants appartenant à des Maisons qui portaient le nom de leur membre le plus remarquable ou plus souvent le nom de signatures prestigieuses de l'industrie de la mode (Saint-Laurent, Channel, Armani, etc), ces compétitions tendaient à abolir la frontière entre danse sociale et performance sociale.

« Ces compétitions constituent une opportunité d'user du jeu théâtral pour imiter la théâtralité même de la vie quotidienne – une vie qui inclut aussi bien les filles de cabaret, les garçons de la rue, que les hommes d'affaire. C'est ce théâtre infini de la vie quotidienne qui détermine la réalité : et cette théâtralité est saturée de préjugés de race, de sexe et de classe. Comme l'un des participants l'explique, pouvoir paraître un homme d'affaire, c'est pouvoir être un homme d'affaire. La logique de l'apparence recèle un pouvoir tel que l'opportunité et la capacité [à occuper telle ou telle position] sont connotées à travers de look d'une personne. Mais au même moment, le participant qui défile n'est pas un homme d'affaire, et les tenants et aboutissants de la performance qu'il effectue de ce statut social sur le podium de la compétition constituera sa seule chance d'en éprouver l'expérience. En fait, ces performances mettent en pratique simultanément un désir d'éliminer la distance entre le fait d'être et le fait de performer, et la réaffirmation de cette distance même ». Peggy Phelan, The golden apple : Jennie Livingston's Paris is burning – Unmarked. Routledge, Londres 1993.

La référence post-modern

Les artistes qui formèrent le *Judson Dance Theater* sont considérés comme les fondateurs de la *Postmodern dance*. Les artistes regroupés dans le Judson furent des expérimentateurs d'avant-garde qui rejetèrent les limites de la pratique et de la théorie de la danse moderne. La première représentation du Judson eut lieu dans l'église de Judson, - située sur le parc de Washington square le 6 juillet 1962. Wikipedia.

Les débuts de la postmodern dance se concrétisèrent dans une démocratisation de la danse à travers le recours au mouvement quotidien, tels que la marche, la course, la simple position debout; à des mouvements définis comme des "tâches" à exécuter; et la revendication de tout mouvement comme étant de la danse, de n'importe qui comme étant un danseur (qu'il soit entraîné ou pas). Aujourd'hui on l'associe avec le Manifeste des Non, énoncé par Yvonne Rainer en 1965: Non au grand spectacle non à la virtuosité non aux transformations et à la magie et au faire-semblant non au glamour et à la transcendance de l'image de la star non à l'héroïque non à l'anti-héroïque non à la camelote visuelle non à l'implication de l'exécutant ou du spectateur non au style non au kitsch non à la séduction du spectateur par les ruses de l'artistes non à l'excentricité non au fait d'émouvoir ou d'être ému (traduction Denise Luccioni, in Sally Banes — Tepsichore en baskets, ed. CND.

The Voguing dance tradition

Voguing refers to the competitive balls staged in Harlem dance halls beginning in the late 1960's. The balls, structured around participants belonging to "houses" named after the most captivating member of the house or most often after the prestigious houses in the fashion industry (Saint Laurent, Chanel, Armani, etc.), blur the boundaries between social dancing and social performance.

The balls are opportunities to use theater to imitate the theatricality of everyday life——a life which includes show girls, bangee boys, and business executives. It is the endless theater of everyday life that determines the real: and this theatricality is soaked through with racial, sexual, and class bias. As one [participant] explains, to be able to look like a business executive is to be able to be a business executive. Within the impoverished logic of appearance, 'opportunity" and "ability' can be connoted by the way one looks. But at the same time, the walker is not a business executive and the offs are that his performance of that job on the runway of the ball will be his only chance to experience it. The performances, then, enact simultaneously the desire to eliminate the distance between ontology and performance——and the reaffirmation of that distance." Phelan, Peggy, "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's Paris is Burning," <u>Unmarked</u>. Routledge, (London) 1993.

The Postmodern dance Tradition

The group of artists that formed Judson Dance Theater are considered the founders of Postmodern dance. The artists involved....with Judson Dance Theater were avant garde experimentalists who rejected the confines of Modern dance practice and theory. The first Judson concert took place at Judson Church (located on Washington Square Park) on July 6, 1962. Wikipedia

The early postmodern dance was exemplified by the democratization of dance through the use of everyday movement such as walking, running, and standing; task-based movements; and the claim that any movement was dance and any person was a dancer (with or without training.) Today, it is most readily associated with Yvonne Rainer's No Manifesto of 1965: NO to spectacle NO to virtuosity NO to transformations and magic and make believe NO to glamour and transcendency of the star image NO to the heroic NO to the anti-heroic NO to trash imagery NO to involvement of performer or spectator NO to style NO to camp NO to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer NO to eccentricity NO to moving or being moved.

Performances contemporaines 21 5



La société de la performance

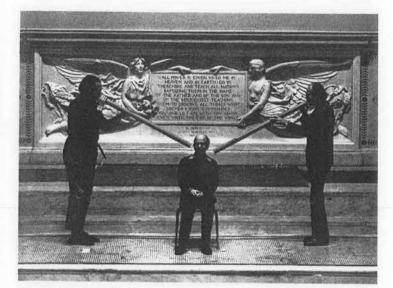
Christophe Kihm

«Toute la vie des sociétés dans lesquelles règnent les conditions modernes de production s'annonce comme une immense accumulation de spectacles. Tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans une représentation. » Cette affirmation lapidaire, qui ouvre la Société du spectacle, pose les fondements d'une thèse générale où notre exposition aux puissances du spectaculaire organise la perte de toute vie authentique. Si nous nous référons ici à ce texte, c'est qu'il peut éclaircir certains points relatifs à l'usage proliférant du terme « performance » comme sa valorisation contemporaine dans le contexte des arts. Le poids des écrits de Guy Debord, en France, auprès du milieu artistique et de ses différents acteurs, n'y est certainement pas indifférent. L'un des effets du succès de la Société du spectacle - dans sa simplification et au détriment parfois de son propos - aura été de porter une suspicion généralisée non seulement sur les termes de « spectacle » et de « spectaculaire », mais aussi sur les obiets et les dispositifs qu'ils recouvrent dans leur grande diversité (musique, danse, théâtre, présence d'une scène et d'un public). Performance ne désigne aujourd'hui, le plus souvent, rien d'autre qu'un spectacle qui tente de se dire sans honte, et le terme qui, historiquement, a pu effectivement désigner des pratiques alternatives aux logiques spectaculaires, semble le plus souvent aujourd'hui leur servir de simple substitut. Il serait donc difficile de pointer des différences profondes entre une société du spectacle et une société de la performance, sinon dans la revalorisation de l'action qui peut accompagner la seconde jusqu'à porter l'attention sur son effectivité : performance signifiant épreuve et accomplissement.

En 2010, dans un contexte particulièrement exalté, où ce terme semble plus que jamais ouvert à toute proposition artistique pour peu qu'une action y soit produite, et puisqu'avec la performance les voies de l'interdisciplinarité semblent immédiatement retrouver celles de l'indiscipline, il devient difficile d'assigner des limites à un territoire précis. Tout le monde fait de la performance ou au moins croit en faire. Étrange situation pour une pratique minoritaire qui, historiquement, avait fait de ce statut mineur la condition même de ses audaces. Il apparaît plus que jamais nécessaire de repenser l'ensemble de ces pratiques, de situer leurs enjeux, et de spécifier au sein de l'ensemble v performance » des discriminations pertinentes afin de mieux pouvoir les évaluer.

Ce numéro fait suite à un premier numéro d'artpress 2 consacré à la performance, publié en mai 2007, dont le succès nous laisse croire que ces questions sont partagées.

Black Market International The Artist's Dilernma 1997 Roi Vaara (membre de BMI) Ph.de l'artiste/Naranjs



The Society of Performance

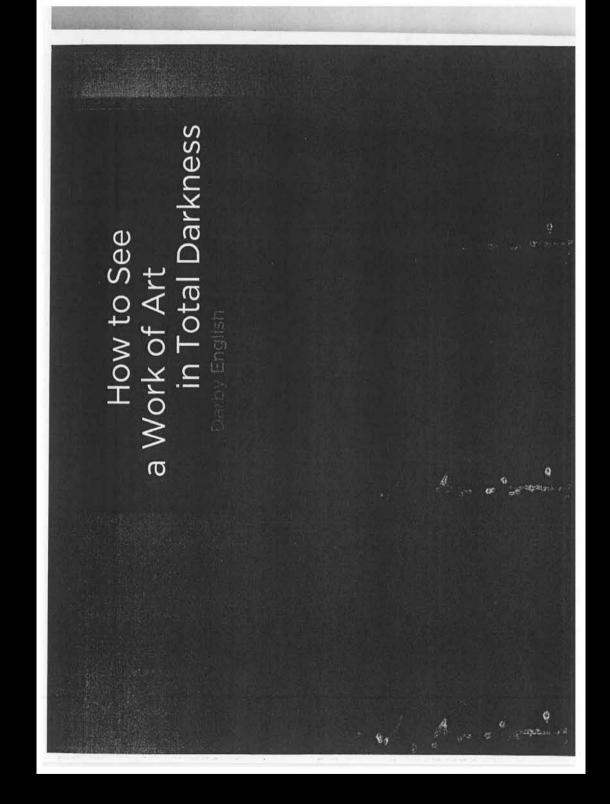
"The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation." This lapidary opening paragraph of Guy Debord's La Société du spectacle clearly lays out the book's thesis, namely, that the powers of the spectacle are bringing about the loss of all authentic life. To quote it in this context, when introducing a discussion of performance, could help shed some light on the proliferating use of the vocabulary of performance and on the value placed on the form in today's art world, Indeed, the influence of Debord's writings in France's contemporary art milieu may have something to do with this, since one effect of the success of La Société du spectacle — and therefore of the simplification and occasional distortion of its arguments—has been to make us suspicious not only of the terms "spectacle" and "spectacular," but also of the highly diverse cultural productions to which they can be applied (music, dance, theater, and all events involving a stage and an audience). Nowadays, the term "performance" is often used to mean little more than a show, a spectacle, and is used because it is thought to be relatively free of the pejorative connotations attaching to spectacle. Where once it was used to designate alternative practices involving elements of spectacle or staging, today it seems simply to serve as their surrogate. In this sense, it would be hard to find any profound differences between a society of the spectacle and a society of performance, except perhaps that the latter puts the emphasis back on action, and even raises the question of its effectiveness, since performance also implies some kind of testing and enactment.

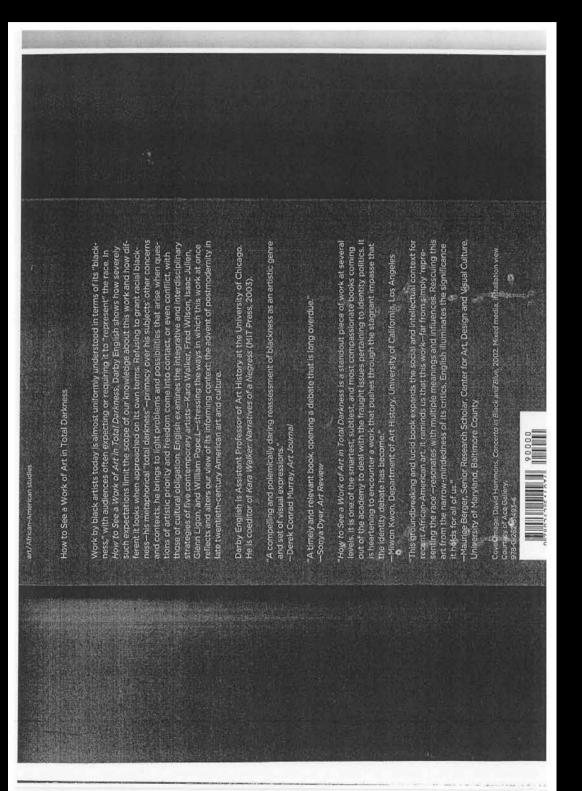
In 2010, in what seems a particularly excitable context, when the term is readily applied to any kind of artistic proposition containing just a little hint of an action, and given that in matters of performance the interdisciplinary is never far from the undisciplined, it is very difficult for anyone who takes these many events seriously to define a clearly delimited territory. Everyone does performance or at least they think they do. This is quite a turnabout for a practice that, historically, was defined and even nourished by its minority status, which went hand in hand with its daring. It therefore seems increasingly important to George Mediunas rethink all these practices, to work out what is at stake in them, and to establish some relevant distinctions Performance realisée per Jean Dupuy et that can be applied within the general ensemble that is "performance," the better to assess them.

This is the second issue of artpresss2 about performance. The success of the first, published in May Church, New York, 1977. Performance 2007, suggests that these questions continue to resonate widely.

Christophe Kihm - Translation, C. Panwarden son Church, 1977 Ph. Harry Shunk

Dick Higgins. Chant a capella, Judson by Jean Dupuy and Dick Higgins, Jud-





Performance contemporaine

Laurent Goumarre, Christophe Kihm

Le terme de « performance », dans son usage contemporain, regroupe un ensemble de Page de gauche: pratiques diversifiées qui n'appartiennent pas toutes au domaine artistique. Ce numéro Massimo Furlan Numéro 18 8 août 2006. d'artpress2, bien qu'il se consacre aux seules pratiques artistiques de la performance, ne saurait à son tour éviter le constat de leur diversité.

À cela, plusieurs raisons. Se référant à diverses traditions plasticiennes ou théâtrales, Didier Roustan et Basile Boli. Ha-enacrment à différents héritages littéraires ou musicaux, savants ou populaires, les artistes contemporains ont considérablement élargi le champ de la performance. Chacun des articles de ce numéro s'applique à tracer une ligne dans ce vaste territoire (les objets de la performance, les reprises de performances, les corps contemporains de la performance, les techniques d'intervention dans l'espace public, les écrits sur la performance...), ce qui player (France lost on penellies) permet également de ré-évaluer les enjeux théoriques de la performance, quitte à émettre de nouvelles hypothèses à leur sujet.

De fait, la performance ne saurait plus se replier sur la définition linguistique des années 1950 d'un régime performatif - « un énoncé qui constitue simultanément l'acte auquel il se réfère» -, ni confisquer le corps à sa gloire hic et nunc, dans l'affirmation pauvrement identitaire que ce corps est un médium pour l'art... L'un des enjeux de ce numéro est donc, également, d'évaluer une pratique contemporaine de la performance qui vienne «rejouer», «déjouer» ou «contrer» les éléments supposés constitutifs de son histoire, comme ceux, supposés, de son ontologie (unicité, authenticité, vérité). La performance pourrait bien être aujourd'hui un point nevralgique du contemporain: si pour certains elle représente une simple boîte à outils, ensemble de techniques et de procédés qui permettent d'avoir une prise active sur le réel contemporain, pour d'autres elle est le lieu idéologique d'une remise en question de la pensée postmoderne, dans une alternative radicale qui ne chercherait pas à travailler avec l'histoire mais poserait au contraire comme acte fondateur l'absolue négation de l'histoire et comme but son audelà ; pour d'autres encore, elle s'affirme comme le lieu privilégié d'une relation à l'histoire, où s'effectuerait un passage du passé dans le présent, jointure au sein de laquelle le rappel, la convocation et la ré-activation de gestes permettrait une liaison renouvelée aux puissances du modernisme.

Parc des Princes, Paris (Festival Paris quartier d'été). Avec la participation de Michel Hidalon

Platini in the 1982 soccer World Cup semi-linal against Germany, a game notorious for a blatant and potentially life-threatening foul on a French

(Ph. Laure Ceillier/Lausanne, Court, Galerio Georges-Philippe et Nathalie Vallois, Paris).

Contemporary Performance Laurent Goumarre and Christophe Kihm

The term "performance," as understood in contemporary use, covers a diverse set of practices not all of which belong to the artistic field. And although this issue of art press2 examines only artistic practices of performance, there too the diversity is undeniable.

There are several reasons for this. Referring to various artistic and theatrical traditions, to different literary or musical heritages, to both high and popular culture, contemporary artists have considerably widened the scope of performance. This issue ranges across these practices in a dozen articles, each of which explores an aspect of this extensive territory (the objects of performance, re-enactments of performance, the contemporary body in performance, techniques of intervention in public space, writings on performance, etc.) and in doing so provides the opportunity to reassess the theoretical issues of performance, as well, perhaps, as to formulate some new hypotheses about them.

The fact is that performance can no longer lean on the linguistic definition of a performative regime formulated in the 1950s, as "an utterance that simultaneously constitutes the act to which it refers," Nor can it merely confiscate the body for its glory hic et nunc, in the indigent affirmation that it is identified by this as an artistic medium. One of the challenges for this issue, then, will also be to evaluate the contemporary practice of performance that "replays" or "downplays" or "counters" the supposedly constitutive elements of its history, and also of its purported ontology (uniqueness, authenticity, truth). Today performance could be seen as the sensitive spot of "the contemporary": if for some it represents a simple toolbox, a set of techniques and procedures affording an active grasp of contemporary reality, for others it is the ideological locus of a calling into question of postmodern thought, offering a radical alternative that does not seek to work with history, but on the contrary posits as a founding act the absolute negation of history and as a goal what lies beyond it; for still others, it is the privileged locus of a relation to history, of a movement from past to present, the join where the recall, invocation and reactivation of gestures permits a renewed link to the powers of modernism. Translation C. Penwarden

apple: Jennie Paris Is Burning The golden a Livingston's F and they saw the lights going on all over the city, the firen and the great crowds cheering, and plenty to see and plenty i everywhere, and amidst all this they felt entitled to walk the these two, they felt entitled to stand side by side, to be as remans they were and yet go unremarked.

(Neil Bartlett, Ready To Catch Him Should He Fal

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nually discover new Others (or new aspects of the Same will be vered until the terrain of the visible is as absolute as the map in est allegory). And gazing at everyone we will see no one.

92 Unmarked

ed. /

law of the ethnographic documentary allows them to retain some of their subversive power, the power of the unsurveyable. The degree to which the spectator is made conscious of what the film cannot and/or full not show is the degree to which the film, unwithingly, succeeds fully abler's speculation that it may now be a matter of "letting that which cannot fully appear in any performance persist in its disruptive promise" is given forceful, if unconscious, weight by *Paris is Burning*.

Focusing on cross-dressing as a means of investigating the politics of culture, knowledge, and power, Livingston employs some of the common ethnographic devices for displaying community: inter-title, munity - (but translatable notetheless) - "reading," "shading," "morping"; interviews with articulate informants; a significant change within voice-overs marking the consequences of that change. In presenting her felishizes her subjects, by transforming the "unknown" (and potentially once felishized, another displacment occurs from the performance to felish object. By "explaining" her subjects so (apparently) thoroughly drama, their pain, their art. She provides the spectator with a feeling of terms of that reading, however, bear further secution, - if only because motivates the drag performance itself: In other words, the film traces a fetish."

In part a visual threnody for a pre-AIDS culture, the film is nostalgic for a future her informants had dreamed of in a more vital past. The loss idealized femininity. (While the performances are also aimed at other dealized images – such as male business executives and military men –1 these dreams frames the space of this particular theater. The balls the masochistic power and genuine pleasure of symbolic identification for crucial to both capitalism and erotic desire. ² Part of that symbolic ent from "identification is with the power connoted by whiteness (which is different from "identifying as white"); another part of that identification

The walkers admits "whiteness" in part because it is unmarked and the teachers political surveillance. For these men who are simultimounly over-seen and under-represented—they are overseen because therefore escapes political surveillance. For these men who are simultimounly over-seen and under-represented—they are overseen because they are corrected to the one hand, it is complicitous the motion of whiteness as an unmarked part of "ideal beauty" and under-represented part of "ideal beauty" and under-represented part of "ideal beauty" and under the motion of whiteness as an unmarked part of "ideal beauty" and under on the motion of whiteness as an unmarked part of "ideal beauty" and under on the motion of whiteness as an unmarked part of "ideal beauty" and under since the motion of the motion of whiteness as an unmarked by more than the model. Is embayeded within a complex community of familial, inquisitic, economic, psychic, aesthetic, political, and evolt signifiers, reading" the balls is tricky business. Livingston carefully explains the arrotures of the communities, the families, the hierarchies of the balls, and the common linguistic signs – shading, mopping, realness – which inform and define the competition. Participants are performing legends, mothers, up-and-coming legends, or children. They compete in contests whose names include Military Realness, Butch Queen Realness, Best Mange Boy and Bangee Gall. They belong to house, which, under the eventually thin bond of fashion and style, kitti members together into the fabric of family. Their family names are taken either from the stars of the fabric of family. Their family names are taken either from the stars of the fabric of family. Their family manes are taken either from the stars of the fabric of family. Their family manes are taken either from the stars of the father the houses valorize the femininity which they enure over, is thoroughly masculine. And is thoroughly reflects the psychical structure of capitalism.

The driving force of an appropriate a

positive, The children want to be mothered and to be given the nurtural ant pleasure associated with breasts, but they also want to see the Mother and to participate in her construction and (re)birth. The layers here are thick: ironic, ambivalent, and earnest; at once the invention of this Mother is extraordinarily intricate. Freud believed that the malechild's desire to ingest the maternal breast was a formative influence on his castration complex. (His desire is projected and displaced onto irre, with appropriate shifts in body parts duly noted.) Although not completely inside the heterosexual narrative within which this psycholanalytic proposition rests (although neither completely outside of it), the children of Paris reverse the assumptions of this narrative. Assumed of access to the breasts they purchased and thus own, the children blissfully keep the breasts before them while retaining the potent reassurance of "her" (and thus their own) penis. Angie Xtravaganza's breasts turn the silent, invisible "no" of the castrating father into the giddy and visible "yes" of the Mother. The children of Paris accept the structure of the Freudian narrative, in much the same way they accept the operative power.

gender play operative within Paris is Burning, therefore, involves more than cross-dressing. And the stakes are higher than most tical speculation around gender generally allows. Driving the nism of these performed identities is a notion of "the real." as is determined by the ability to blend in, to not be noticed. Like formance of passing more generally, the performance at these

balls represents that which cannot be seen precisely by undernung unawhitch is seen.

The paradox of using visbility to highlight invisbility is complex and quite often misfires. Passing performances in general seek to use one form of invisibility to highlight a usually privileged form of visibility. Gays and lesbians who choose to pass as straight, are employing the (relative) invisibility of the marks of sexual preference. But this very passing also highlights the "normative" and unmarked nature of heterosexuality. It is easy to pass as heterosexual because heterosexuality is assumed. In other words, what is made visible is the unmarked nature of heterosexual identity. The one who passes then does not "erase" the mark of difference, rather the passer highlights the invisibility of the mark of the Same. But increasingly the "privileged" form of visibility is shifting. We are now witnessing the attempt of heterosexual men, for example, to pass as gay. Matthew Barney's Fall 1991 show in New York illustrated a significant moment in contemporary art as this signature statement. Madoma's public flirtation with Sandra Pernhardt is another instance of a straight woman attempting to pass as a lesbian. While the

gegrandizing self-promotion which attends them, the philosophical and psychic performances necessary for these attempts to pass continue to provoke my interest. For if the ascendant term in the binary heteronome is beginning to shift, it only in these limited instances, perhaps to othe binary visibility-invisibility will also shift.

The power of the "unseen" community lies in its ability to cohere outside the system of observation which seeks to partof it. So the "in-lokes," the "secret" codes, the iconography of dress, movement, and speech which can be read by those within the community, but escape the interpretative power of those external to it, can create another expressive language whitch cannot be translated by those who are not speech show makes members of these communities complain of claustrophobia.) The risk of visibility then is the risk of any translation – a weaker version of the original script, the appropriation by (economically and artistically) powerful "others." The payoff of translation (and visibility) is more people will begin to speak in your tongue.

The story of feminist theory within the academy is a good illustration of the risks and the promises of translation and visibility. On the one thand, Tania Modleski can now write a book entitled Feminism Without Womer, on the other, more students than ever before have heard of something called "the male gaze." Both facts continue to inscribe the gender binary. This binary is precisely what is a sissue in Paris is Burning demonstrates how intimate the link is between the binaries. The walkers use one set of binaries to question the other. Before returning to the liming binary of the seen and the unseen, the visible and the invisible. This binary is broken down. But fundamental to passing is the binary of the seen and the unseen, the visible and the invisible. In want to interrogate the question of the stability of the binaries by eccourse to another passing performances seek to make visible what is taken to be invisible. Piper, who is a light

Dear Friend:

I am black.

I am sure that you did not realize this when you made/laughed alvageed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or

socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.

Sincerely Yours faret Smith Piper Adrian Marg

Piper's text resists the disappearance of her difference by those who would pass her without her consent. Working on the opposite end of the visibility/finvisibility continuum from the walkers in the balls, Piper's performances are aimed at re-establishing the force of that which is not registered within the given to be seen, her radal identity.

Piper's work consistently dramatizes the failure of the visible to represent race. Her performances seek ways to "supplement" the visual by marking what it excludes. Refusing to let her identity be a matter of its visible appearance, Piper has gone very fart in imagining another form of identification between performers and spectators. By appropriating the tight square of the business/calling card, Piper suggests that the business of politicizing radal difference involves marking its disappearance. (The white liberal response to racial difference —"it doesn't matter what color you are, you are my fixed"—can be seen as a way of ignoring the historical force of racism itself.) Piper's card then establishes, simultaneously, the failure of racial difference to appear within the narrow range of the visible and registers her refusal to let the visual field fail to secure it. The card itself unptures the given to be seen and exposes the normative force of everyday blindness: if no one looks black, everyone is white.

White.

The insecurity engendered by the disavowal of the visual field to perpetuate racial difference is an incredibly potent consequence of Piper's work. If racial difference is not registered visibly, where is it located? Is it a free floating signifier? How can one secure it? By marking her tracial "otherness" in the landscape of the Same, Piper points to the universalizing mimetic "likeness" that the given to be seen attempts to secure. In denying that likeness, Piper makes the insecurity of vision and visibility apparent. Suggesting that location and identity are never only related to what can be seen, Piper's work forces spectators to look much more closely at their internal politics of location and cidentity to look much more closely at their internal politics of location and racial difference than they are usually required to do.⁶

Within the communities recorded in Paris, however, the possibility of passing is seen as something to be exploited, not resisted. The extravagant costume and personne displayed at the balls are serious rehearsals for a much tougher walk – down the "mean streets" of New York City. The balls are opportunities to use theatre to initiate the theatricality of

ryday life - a life which includes show girls, bangee boys, and lines executives. It is the endless theatre of everyday life that determine, and this theatricality is soaked through with racial, sone of the informants

use of the informants explains, to be able to look like a business to one of the informants explains, to be able to be a business executive. Within the impovered logic of appearance, "opportunity" and "ability" can be connoted the way one looks. But at the same time, the walker is not a business cutive and the odds are that his performance of that job on the way of the ball will be his only chance to experience it. The performer when, then, enact simultaneously the desire to eliminate the distance were notology and performance – and the reaffirmation of that

The relative claims of the "realness" promised by Being and the "realness" created in performance are interrogated by the filmic documentmy of these performances. This is worth remarking. As a documentary the film supports a belief in the "realness" of being, and as a representational genre, the film also supports a belief in the unavoidability of performance, artifice, mediation.

Rediness, then, is not a static concept – anymore than race, sexuality, or identity are static. Dorian Corey, one of the wisest informants in the film, is a light-skinned African-American who dresses a far Marilyn Monroe in part because when he began to do drag performances the show-girl look" was the apex of drag. 8 That "show-girl look" was the apex of drag. 8 That "show-girl look" was emphatically white. The younger and darker-skinned teenagers who walk in the balls now dressed as "bangee girls" have a radically different image of what the ideal drag performance initiates. The performances can congenially inhabit the same frame, however, because they both appropriate the historical image of "the woman" and in that appropriation recirculate it (Figure 22).

woman remains avaiance to in unter rectutuation in part because sine is that which can never be internalized as identify for men and in part because each repetition of that image (re)marks its perpetual (re)construction. Woman is the figure of disguise, of masquerade. In imitating her, the cross-dresser makes visible his own desire to be disguised. Within the economy of patriarchal desire which frames – although it does not completely define – gay male cross-dressing, the figure of the woman is appropriated as a sign to validate male authority. His authority is determined by how fully he can "wear" her; in wearing her, however, he renders her actual presence unnecessary. In this sense, gay male cross-dressing makes manifest the psychic structure of "traditional herencescual culture" – which is to say, male homosocial culture. Woman is a necessary point of tension because she reflects and assures male authority. "She" disguises his desire for the phalfus – and the



competition to wear her well merely makes room for the displacements operative in all erotic exchange.

A re-presented woman is always a copy of a copy; the "real" (of) woman cannot be represented because her function is to re-present man. She is the mirror and thus is never in it. Her narrowly defined but unfiquitous image represents the frenzy of man to see she who makes thin him. (Woman is man's always-mother.) In the film, Willi Ninja foothes young women how to walk like women—to be "models." These walkers are in turn inflated by Ninja's compeers at the balls. A man feaches a woman how to walk and she models that walk for another man to imitate. Given the slippery politics of appearance, this walk contributes to the definition of what a woman "is." Homophobia demands that the woman continue to be placed between the bodies of the two men. At the balls, he then displays that walk for the approval of other men.

with men.

"A" mothers," women's bodies retain the possibility of being entered and evacuated by other bodies. As a Mother, she internalized him within her body – and women in general become for men always potential Symbolic Mothers. The tight literalness of the Western psyche were equations and equivalencies, women cannot themselves enter the hody of men, they can internalize men but they cannot be internalized by men. Men's inability to absorb the woman fully accounts for the projective amosty of castration which traditional heterosexual culture projective amosty of castration which traditional heterosexual culture projective amosty of castration which traditional heterosexual culture is dedicated to keeping her image external, forever before their eyes. As a supplement within the field of the Same, the re-presentation of the woman is a substitute for a substitute, a fetish. ¹⁰ She is the miscern-without of partial representation for both heterosexual and gay male culture (insofar as it is useful to make the distinction between these cultures – heterosexual culture is mainly a male homosocial culture

Gay male cross-dressers resist the body of woman even while they make its constructedness visible. This is in part why the misogyny which underlies gay male cross-dressing is so painful to women. As Maniyn Frye puts it: "[Glay men's effentimacy and donning of feminine apparel displays no love of or identification with women or the womanly. [. . . .] It is a casual and cynical mockery of women." But it is something more than that as well.

Within the film world of Paris walking in a ball is at once a celebration of one's grandest ambitions to charm, seduce, and attract, and an admission that the model one most admires is perennally hostile and impervious to such admiration. Masochism is an integral part of the spectacle; but it cuts both ways. The distance between the model and the

101 aldge no The golde

walker – what the performance totes to narrow even while, necessarily, reaffirming – produces violence. The barely contained violence of the balls (vogueing itself is described as a "safe" gang war) comes from the parofound display of the arbitrainess of this disbarace. Pain is never too far from the parade of costume and Protean self-invention denanded by the discriminating spectators/performers who watch the show – spectators who, no matter how critical (and competitive), are ever so much "safer" than the spectators on the street, the subway, the line for the

The filmic spectators who watch Paris is Burning have a different relation to the performance than the spectators/performers recorded within the film. Within the film, the spectators are also performers: the categories, like the boundaries around sexual difference, are extremely unstable. Underneath the film, the spectators are also performers: the categories, like the boundaries around sexual difference, are extremely unstable. Underneath the film there is a performance but it is extremely difficult to say what the performance means." In an effort to ease this difficult, Livingston "fixes" her own spectator via the form of filmic address she employs. In keeping with the law of the genre of ethnographic film, Livingston addresses her spretator as external to the community. Ethnographic law insists that the film will function as the liminal figure who sutures "them" to "us." The film will function as the liminal figure who sutures "them" to "us." The film will function as the liminal figure who sutures "them" and "us." so as to justify its address and its powerful liminality. But these very categories are severely questioned by the performance itself.

As Jackie Coldsby points out in her incisive review of Paris, Livingston "can tell this story because her identity is not implicated in the lilm however unothursive she strives to be" ("Queens of Language": 11). That cultural and social privilege of the filmmaker is inscribed into the film however unothursive she strives to be" ("Queens of Language": 11). That cultural and social privilege of the filmmaker is inscribed into the film however unothursive she strives to be" ("Queens of Language": 11). That cultural and social privilege of the filmmaker is unor-interrogsted whiteness. The danger of this particular form of liminality is that it allows the white spectator to be flattered, rather than bodied in the balls. The distinction between symbolic identification and identity is in danger of being lost by the form of special column of want to be white. This is a cr

hagemonic grasp, also forestully denounces the uncritical praise of the films methods. Her critique is severe but it should be noted that she is writing against the adoring voices of reviewers ranging from Vincent Canby to Essex Hemphill. ¹² Hemphill, for example, remarks enthusinatically: "We are not exposed to any of Livingston's judgments, if she has any, of the subjects. The authentic voice of this community emerges unfettered" ("Paris Is Burning": 10). The wish to hear an authentic, single voice is very strong, but representation is never transparent. The desire for an "authentic" racial and sexual identity is similarly impossible to satisfy, the walkers accept that desire and stage its perpetual faiture. The specific and important achievement of Paris is that it opens up the possibility of seezing an appropriative epistemology not about cross-dressing but indebted to its wisdom. Livingston's film does not enact the radical epistemology of her subjects - it sticks too close to the rules of ethnographic documentary to experiment with crise-crossing filmic dentities. To take the challenge of her subjects seriously, Livingston might have eagerly and resibessly ransacked the codes of the filmic real—the history film, the "realism of melodrama," the simulated-crime film, the story film, the "realism of melodrama," the simulated-crime film, the story film, and astonishing documentary about something that may be unfinable.

unitimable.

The balls Livingston documents and the film with which she documents them are peccisely alike in their revulsion for and adoration of the man. Ontologically, cinema detests the real because it must remain a celluloid shadow of it, a trace of something always receding and absent. At the same time, cinema loves the real because in tracing and absent. At the same time, cinema loves the real because in tracing and framing the real, it gains power and definition. Similarly, those who walk in the balls win for imitating — rather than being — the real. The walks both perpetuate the aspiration to be real and mark again the artifice that makes it, always, impossible to be real and mark again the artifice that make it, always, impossible to be real and mark again the artifice that make sit, always, unabsolute to be real and mark again the artifice that wastessly wanders out of the clubs into the streets of mid-town and finds what normally would appear to be white, heterosexual couples chatting in well-coificiared hair and trim suits. The walkers want to believe that such people are real in order to have something to imitted and define themselves against. But realness has become such a fluid term that these heterosexual white couples seem exceptionally artificial. In fact, these couples appear to be more "unreal" than the walkers because they remain unaware of the artifice that the walkers have made hyper-visible. Firmed within a film that is so relendessly concerned with the fine gradations of the (relative) real, these couples have the same uncanny appearance as those who attend a costume ball without disguise.

ms like the masks, the "natural" appear

All film is preccupied with the calibrations of illusion inherent in the real because ontologically film is excluded from the real because ontologically film is excluded from the real because ontologically film is excluded from the real because ontologically film is excluded in the walkers are cost excluded ontologically. The state of the walkers, however, is to illustrate how resem ontological. The art of the walkers, however, is to illustrate how expricious such exclusions are, and how falsely narrow the white heterosexual "real" is.

The balls aim to show that a flamboyant walk at the Imperial Elks Lodge is a ticket to passing for real outside of the club. Counterintuitively, performing this real allows the walker to be passed over, not vulnerable to the hostile gaze of white heterosexual culture. The goal of the balls is to theatricalize the passage from excessive hyper-visibility attendant on the "other" in white, affluent culture to the "invisibility attendant on the "other" in white, affluent culture to the "invisibility attendant on the "other" in white, affluent culture. The image of the woman is the figure for this theatricality because she is the currency with which men strive to out-purchase one another.

When the white couples appear in Paris, it is almost as if the film has become a commercial selling and exposing the commercial velling and exposing the commercial or the walkers and forces—and the surface casualness of these couples real. This easy casualness is the inimitable kernel of the Real that eludes the walkers. The balls are the manifestation of the alarmingly powerful distance between symbolic identification and identity itself. The figure of the (while) woman as the cipher for that distance is then necessarily a figure to fake up that harder project is the fallure to look closely at the political implications of appropriative epistemology and to examine the indeedible allure of being unseen when visibility has meant (and continued times to mean) violence, imprisonment, death.

My friend keeps telling me to be sure I keep saying I'm only writing about Livingston's film of the balls and I'm not writing about the balls themselves. My friend knows how tempted I am to take Livingston's film as a perfect unbiased record of the performances. That's where the hook of the film (and perhaps of most ethnographic film) breaks my skin. Like Essex Hemphill, I want a film that substitutes for the performance itself — a transparent film that renders the performance itself.

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complexity. I know there's no such thing as transparent film, but that doesn't make my with four it disappear. So my friend tries to remind me of the difference between what know to be true and what I wish to be true. I half listen and half anti. I type and ettype these old and new words, look at the clock, look at time moving across my own face. This typedace. The projector is still on.

I want the film to be transparent so I can explain in Javish detail how the performance makes equivalencies between mopping a St Laurent dress and "buying" breasts. Gender has a price tag – and once in the market of elegant signs. But there's something more behind my desire for the film to be "real." White women like myself have been encouraged to mistake performance can provide a substitute to let clefs in the market of elegant signs. But there's something more behind my desire for the film to be "real." White women like myself have been encouraged to mistake performance can provide a substitute to late is real, and thus sufficient to constitute an identity," can truly be an invention – not something susceptible to some external dars (fological, sexual, economic) which prohibit our access to "femininity." "beauty," "glamour." "power." "wealth," or whatever it is we desire. But the only way we can see if performance is an adequate substitute for onlogy; is favoud, he as taging of performances. In that enactment, however, we make conscious again the difference between performance and onlology: precisely what motivates the performance is that which ontology. He question of being itself – will not and cannot answer. In the variations on that re-enactment, we can need the historical and political imperatives that prohibited Dorian (cory from seeing Lena Horme as his real dolt twenty years ago, and allows someone today to see Patit La Belle as his. Are these the "facts" that cannot be flicked away with the surgeon's knife? Is impained to have he says that he thinks having a sex-change operation is native men and less astute about t

Of the mythos of success. ¹³

Overlaid on this mythos is the American philosophical predisposition toward pragmatism; the sense that philosophy and jurisprudence must, above all, be practical and concern themselves with the questions and problems of "the ordinary guy." Philosophical positions and judicial decisions must, in other words, be responsive to the real.

Given the accents on pragmatism within the US, the judicial stance toward difference, most recently underlined by Bouers v. Hardwick (1986), has a startlingly clear relation to the street life and culture of "the ordinary guy." Bowers v. Intraduick effectively eliminated the notion of privacy for homosexuals: the state is legally permitted to survey and prosecute sodomy between same sex partners, even in their own bedrooms. By legally eliminating privacy for homosexuals, the Supreme Court extends the runway of the ball. There is no legal boundary to the gaze of the state and the "enforcers" of the law. Thus, if a gay man can get home on the subway dressed as a woman without having his head bashed in, he wins because he has managed to escape scrutiny and notice. That's pragmatism and self-invention at once. That is America. And that is living and surviving based on appropriative knowledge.

But it is here too that the most troublesome aspect of Livingston's film is revealed. This is the same problem endemic to ethnography: once the subject is turned into the Subject-supposed-to-know, the subject is misrecognized. Lacan argued that "truth" emerged from the fact of this misrecognized. Lacan argued that "truth" emerged from the fact of this misrecognition, that what one knows, finally, is that misrecognition is a defining aspect of all true knowing. Certainly, this essay itself implicitly assummes that Livingston's misrecognition produces what I know, and my misrecognition of her work will motivate your response to these words. But what Lacan consistently understated and critical commentary to transform the unknown (the thing one cannot recognize and th

securely own. One then represses the fact of the transformatio although it remains "known." As Freud put it in his brief article fetalism one continually finds oneself saying, in effect, "I know we well, but just the same..." And it is at the level of "just the sam that the fetish functions.

However, the affective power of misrecognition also promises the However, the affective power of misrecognition also promises the throat and joy of self-dissolution. Leo Bersani elaborates a psychomalytic desire for "self shattering" and suggests that sexuality itself contains within it a kernel of masochism that is pleasurable precisely contains within it a kernel of masochism that is pleasurable precisely contains on the verge of being unbearable to ourselves, the ability to magine our own dissolution is often pleasurable, if only because it works the tenacity of our imaginative will, as Western theology, literature, and pulloscophy have demonstrated. Is nother words, part of what motivates the misrecognition of the other is the real knowledge that one onto see or recognize oneself. The failure to recognize one's internal other, is rehearsed and projected externally as the misrecognition of the online vectoral other. Thus psychic mimesis, an adequate reflection of the online is ethnography, in literature, in love. To avoid the conquering mapuless of fetishism, representation must mark the limits of its generic mays—limits which expose what cannot be seen, what will not appear within the representational frame. And Law itself, if it seeks to nurture modelly, must bow to the higher claims of privacy and individual

Within these boundaries then, where does the power of Paris Is Burning lie? In framing the mimicry of all identity, Livingston's film documents the impossibility of securing the authentic view of anyone or anything. The film mimes the performance; the performance mimes the images of women; the images of women mime the fantasies of men; the images of women mime the fantasies of men; the images of one mime the smooth reproduction of physical images on The balls intervene in the smooth reproduction of physical images by using mimicry and appropriation both to point out the constructedness of that image and to replicate its power. Unavoidably complicitous with the thing they try to denounce, the walkers – like other postmodern arists such as Cindy Sherman. Sherite Levine, and Richard Prince – find themselves caught in the tight logic of the commodified sign. This virtually impossible to escape this logic and Livingston's lucrative film – to appropriate Foucault's description of Freud – would have to be invented if it had not already appeared.

E

If the challenge of Paris is to find a filmic equivalent for the appropriative knowledge of cross-dressing, what is the challenge for withing, for the critical-political economy of the sign? It must require more than the insistent mentioning of "my triend." Writing always requires scrutiny of the name; all signature is appropriators, writerly authority and identity are both announced by and through naming. By quoting the response of an unnamed authority in a text covered with the authoritative names of others – from Freud to bell hooks – I (feebly) attempt to re-mark the collaborative and appropriative nature of writing itself. "Venus Xtravaganza." "Willi Ninja." Names are the literal signs of appropriative knowledge. As metaphors of identity, these renamings serve to make present the absence of the "proper" name – for subjects and for objects. It is this absence which metaphor thies to hide.

By linking the appropriated, metaphorical name with the masquerade of stylized, performed identity, the balls underline the violence of language and, more specifically, the retoric of identity. Neither metaphor nor performance can summon the proper name which will reveal ourselves to ourselves. There is no transparent document which contains our image, our name. Always we are stuck trying to find ourselves within and through the realm of the Other, which is to say within the other-sign.

within and through the realm of the Other, which is to say within the other-sign, the metaphor.

Between my own first and last names, my first name for my mother, my sur name his name, is the Symbolic identification that allows these words to be rewritten, written over, touched up, retouched, reprinted, revised. And here too is the inscription of violence. Circulated again in the economy of print, bleeding into another text, notating the choreography of another film. Falling in behind Barthes (diff-III, the always already read, the quoted words, the floating (phantasmatic?) friend. That's always the (small) authority of girl italk. Nothing ever set in stone; nothing ever rigid. Huld they usually say. Liquid assets. Rigid is boy talk. Reprint as is. Girls can mimic boy talk. Boys can teach girls to talk and walk. James Joyce writing Molly's version of Bloom's (second) coming. Willi Ninia teaching the girls to swing their hips wide for the boys. Incomplete choreography, the stutter step before the music fades. The open hand writing; the emptiness of the word carring a space for the contrast in inhabit.

others to inhabit.

The dramatic climax of Paris Is Burning is not, as the title suggests, the final and grandest ball of the season. (Another displacement of the proper name: the title "fails" to convey the film's subject.) It is rather the murder of Venus Xtravaganza. Petite and soft-spoken, the pretranssexual Venus, dressed all in white and learning back against a bed, says she wants only to be a "spoiled rich white girl" and live with the

man also loves. As Venue speads I am struck again with how deeply self-invention and reinvention structure the performance of identities. In abandoning the dream of being a spoiled white girl I paradoxically confirm the fact that I am spoiled enough and white enough to be able to alford to abandon it. Venus abandoned "being a man" in part because her version of masculinity gave her no currency (or even a negative currency, a perpetual debit) within the rigid economy of the sex-gender system. Through the single interview she conducts with Ange Kravaganza, Livingston implies that Venus, found under a bed in a chop hotel after four days, was murdered because she could not finally pass as a woman. Livingston wants that to be the message of her film gender and excuality are games played for keeps and no one who steps too far outside traditionally assigned noles is even home free.

But it may well be that Venus was murdered precisely because she did pass. On the other side of the mirror which women are for men, women witness their own endless shattering. Never securely positioned within the embrace of heterosevaluity or male homosevuality, the woman winds up marker the bed, four days dead.

Paris, the city on the Seine. In the song Judy Collins sings her father always promised her they would live in France; go boating on the Seine, and she would learn to dance. (He never does take her three though.) In the myth, Paris is the one who must decide which of the three god-desses should get the enigmaticially inscribed golden apple. "In the singular "I" of Strife; that is why she alone among the divinties is not invited to the wedding. The apple is immediately given to Zeus who is a saked to settle the apple? Zeus, a wise god, says Paris, the most handsome among the divinties is not invited to the wedding. The apple is in mediately given to Zeus who is a saked to settle the question of rightlul ownership — who should appropriate the apple? Zeus, a wise god, says Paris, the most beautilal woman, will love him. Paris gives P

Figure 23 Film still of Venus Xtravaganza from Jennie Livingston's Paris Is Burning (1991). (Photo: Jennie Livingston. Courtesy: Prestige, A Division of Miramax Films)

enunclated by Parts is that what the walkers want is a life on film: a life which records the subtle transformations of physical surface by manipulating the light, changing the shutter speed, cropping this or that unnecessary surface defail. Such a life guarantees the production of the walkers' endless representation, a reproduction which promises perfect copies. In a climate which aggressively and violently associates "imperfect "desire with death, the frozen image of a perfect copy maintained in the perpetual present seems more than an appeal to "surface."

While always entering representation disguised as an other, these walkers remain invulnerable to surveillance as themselves. As the possibility of "privacy" continually recedes in this culture of the documenting comer and legislating lens, this strategy of misirepresenting has its own brillint and tragic logic. "And were it not for the assistance of a projecting "the woman" the walkers manage at once to be the screen and the creators of that image. "And were it not for the assistance of a projection screen—a dead cave — which provides some goal for representation, no doubt representation would fall short" (Ingaray, Spezulum: X5). That dead cave is the "real" body of the woman — she who is actually screened out of representation to assure men of their image. Flims own ontology, its need for dark comes and bright light, mitigation between the real and the phantom. Film's history is implicated in the impoverished politics of appearance that fuel the balls. Like old lovers who leave snoke in your eyes, film must always leave a ghost on the screen. This time her name is Venus. She died because she thought if she were a beautiful woman, a man might love her. But that's against all the rules. Zeus to Paris: the golden apple is always given by men to other men.



THE VOGUING DANCE TRADITION

Voguing refers to the competitive balls staged in Harlem dance halls beginning in the late 1960's. The balls, structured around participants belonging to "houses" named after the most captivating member of the house or most often after the prestigious houses in the fashion industry (Saint Laurent, Chanel, Armani, etc.), blur the boundaries between social dancing and social performance. Voguing was brought to a larger public through the seminal documentary Paris is Burning (1990), directed by Jenny Livingston "The balls are opportunities to use theater to imitate the theatricality of everyday life-a life which includes show girls, bangee boys, and business executives. It is the endless theater of everyday life that determines the real: and this theatricality is soaked through with racial, sexual, and class bias. As one [participant] explains, to be able to look like a business executive is to be able to be a business executive. Within the impoverished logic of appearance, "opportunity" and "ability" can be connoted by the way one looks. But at the same time, the walker is not a business executive and the offs are that his performance of that job on the runway of the ball will be his only chance to experience it. The performances, then, enact simultaneously the desire to eliminate the distance between ontology and performance—and the reaffirmation of that distance." Phelan, Peggy, "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's Paris is Burning," Unmarked. Routledge, (London) 1993.

THE POSTMODERN DANCE TRADITION

The group of artists that formed Judson Dance Theater are considered the founders of Postmodern dance. The artists involved....with Judson Dance Theater were avant garde experimentalists who rejected the confines of Modern dance practice and theory. The first Judson concert took place at Judson Church (located on Washington Square Park) on July 6, 1962. Wikipedia

The early postmodern dance was exemplified by the democratization of dance through the use of everyday movement such as walking, running, and standing; task-based movements; and the claim that any movement was dance and any person was a dancer (with or without training.) Today, it is most readily associated with Yvonne Rainer's No Manifesto of 1965: NO to spectacle NO to virtuosity NO to transformations and magic and make believe NO to glamour and transcendency of the star image NO to the heroic NO to the anti-heroic NO to trash imagery NO to involvement of performer or spectator NO to style NO to camp NO to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer NO to eccentricity NO to moving or being moved.

GLOSSARY/GLOSSAIRE

The Hokey Pokey

a dance and song game taught to young children in English-speaking countries for learning the parts of the body as well as the difference between left and right. "I put my (left) (hand) in. I put my left out. I put my (left) (hand) in and I shake it all about. You do the hokey pokey and you turn yourself around. That's what it's all about. Hokey Pokey. You put your (right) (foot) in...You put your (nose) in..."

The French Lieutenant's Woman

A 1981 film (based on a John Fowles novel of the same name) starring Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons. A film within a film, Streep and Irons play film actors who are having an affair and also filming a film about forbidden lovers in Victorian England. The movie became as well known for Streep's iconic image on the movie poster where she is covered by cloak and hood and looks mysteriously at the camera.

TRAJAL HARRELL TWENTY LOOKS OR PARIS IS BURNING AT THE JUDSON CHURCH (S)

LOOK 1 West Coast Preppy School Boy
LOOK 2 East Coast Preppy School Boy
LOOK 3 Old School Post-Modern
LOOK 4 American Casual Sport
LOOK 5 Sporty Contemporary
LOOK 6 Sporty Contemporary with a Twist

LOOK 7 New School Hokey Pokey

LOOK 8 Serving Old School Runway

LOOK 9 Serving

LOOK 10 Serving Superhero

LOOK 11 _____

LOOK 12 Legendary

LOOK 13 Legendary Face

LOOK 14 Icon

LOOK 15 Eau de Jean Michel

LO**OK 16** Basquiat Realness

LOOK 17 Runway Performance with Face and Effects

LOOK 18 Moderne

LOOK 19 Legendary with a Twist

LOOK 20 Alt-Moderne feeling the French Lieutenant's Woman





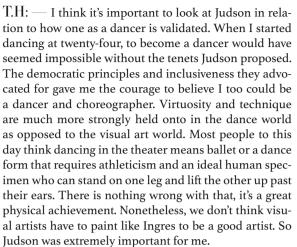






CLAIRE BISHOP:

«Twenty Looks» is like many works of contemporary art and performance that make reference back to historical precursors (in this case, Judson Dance Theatre and voguing balls). In most of these works — which are so prevalent as to constitute a defining characteristic of contemporary culture — I always struggle to pinpoint the younger artist's exact relationship to the historical referent. The relationship never seems to be one of Oedipal rejection (as was common in modernism), but more akin to a fascination, even a reverential invocation. Sometimes the relationship is so tenuous that the older (and more famous) precursor is ultimately little more than a cerebral marketing device. How do you define your relationship to Judson and voguing in Twenty Looks, and what are you trying to say about both genres of dance from the perspective of today?



Therefore, most of my experiments in the beginning were sitting, standing, and walking. And by say 2000-2002, in the sector of contemporay dance that I worked in, those Judson tenets had become like rules. I was suspicious of this new orthodoxy, and it felt like a deadend. I myself needed to breakout of conceptual dance. Then I discovered voguing, and the pedestrianism, neutrality and authenticity I'd gotten from studying Judson, could be seen and questioned through a different lens. Steve Paxton, also said, that we needed to rebel against them. He was waiting.

I feel that Judson is the dance legacy I come from, but the voguing tradition gave me a way to reevaluate and see myself from a different perspective. The proposition of the series is a kind of migration story. Indirectly inside of that is the problemization of my own personal history with dance and with these forms.

I don't know if I'm trying to say anything in particular about these genres. I'm interested in their theoretical foundations and after working on this for eighteen years, it will always be a part of my work. I didn't go to ballet school. I went to the school of these theoretical questions about the parallel histories between early postmodern dance and the voguing dance tradition. From that research and education, I'm always trying to make a third thing that isn't either of those things.

ADRIENNE EDWARDS:

Is blackness an animating force in your work? If so, how do you feel it is most notably expressed? And, if indeed it is, do you think this sense of blackness can be felicitously transferred and even possibly usefully transgressed by those who deem themselves not to be black in their performances of your choreograhies (an artistic question)? What are the stakes involved in your selection of such performers when you consent them to the shadows of blackness (an ethical question)?

T.H: — Which has deeper roots in historical aesthetic blackness – early postmodern dance or voguing? The influence of jazz and improvisation coming out of Har-

lem on early postmodern downtown dance is huge. I don't know what blackness is totally. It seems to me to be expansive and contractive in the best and worst ways. Personally I feel an affinity to celebrate this at times as well as to manage and critique its limits and definitions since we know it can be deftly used to oppress people's freedom and lives. Blackness however is rarely isolated from gender or sexuality or class or a host of other links. I rarely focus on it as the beginning point in the studio, but it's significantly weathering within the aesthetic realm of many things I embrace. My work is primarily animated by craft and how to actually make a dance. That said, when I start thinking about making a dance I want it to be full of life and produce an experience that is reflective of our contemporary condition and questions. Since I am not constructing nationalistic nor religious dances, as artistic proposals, the questions themselves become the form of content. Therefore, the propositions, and imaginative cracks in history that I go into are for sure problematizing racial, gendered, and sexualized alignments, assignments, and realities. That's the education from voguing's idea of realness. And that perhaps leads into this useful transgressing. We aren't really sure in my work what came first the transgression of the chicken or the egg as the result of the transgression. I would say that in the case of the Series and the proposition, I think it's imaginatively plausible that the person coming from the ballroom scene to perform at Judson Church might have been working with people who were not deemed black. It's imaginatively possible that the person coming from the Ballroom scene might not be deemed black. I want the work to continually problematize all those assumptions and static positions regarding representation. Therefore, the stakes are quite high in terms of having really good performers. If the performers are great, they are able to bring out the complexities of these issues and open up new possibilities and new ways of seeing and thinking. It's incredibly important to have performers who can walk that tightrope, otherwise, the work falls apart and falls into reaffirming stereotypes. It's extremely important in my work, because often we are also performing as female figures. In a way, that's what the voguing competition relies on - the high stakes involved in performing as something you are not. "Can you bring it?"

EUNGIE JOO:

In «Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church» you make reference to the two separate avant-gardes in New York. Can you explain what their convergence means in your work with regards to race, normativity, and marginalization?

T.H: — As I was telling Claire in the previous answer, the theoretical premise of realness gave me a way to critique the neutrality of postmodern dance. I am indebted and grateful to Patricia Hoffbaaer, a dancer-choreogra-

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pher and scholar. We spent hours talking about these issues. Judson was rejecting (No Manifesto) in performance everything that voguing was saying through their performance of "realness" was always operational in everyday life. So I began to understand Judson too as another kind of "social and politcal" drag that could be seen through race, sexuality, gender, economics, etc.

Their convergence in my work is really about an impossibility. Tania Bruguera has been a big influence on me. She was the first I heard speak about the importance of impossibility. The convergence happens in the imagination of the audience. It's a perfomative strategy to get the audience to think together about what they see onstage. It's a direct shortcut in a way. It's like giving everyone a pair of 3-D glasses.

When I began to think about the proposition of someone going from the ballroom scene in 1963 downtown to Judson, I had to also take into account the problems of migrating from a non-dominant cultural space to a more dominant cultural space. We know the history of how this works - the blues into rock n' roll for example. And let's be clear that doesn't just get stolen and renamed and repackaged by corporations, it also happens by individuals and groups operating in alternative artistic spaces. So, I immediately thought - "how do we subvert this marginalization and cooptation?" I was at a friend's apartment and saw the book by Rem Koolhaas S,M, L, X L which reminded me of David Hammon's Blizzard-Sale with the different size snow balls. That all led me to think, well if you have lots of shit, nobody can really steal your shit. They take one thing and you just show back up with another one and/or another in a different size. So, that's how I started to think about a series in sizes, and problematizing the racial and cultural marginalization that was at stake. Of course, these were formal strategies and my way of extending postmodern dance's relationship to minimalism.

E.J: — Tell me about the presence and absence of the black male body in «Twenty Looks».

T.H: — That was the question I was hoping someone would ask. You know, Eungie, I originally thought I was only going to do a solo that you would present at The New Museum. So this wasn't such a question in the beginning, but once I began to consider working with other performers onstage, the question became a huge one, because I knew the implications were great.

I have a lot of respect for voguing so I knew I had to be careful. There had been many dance projects at this time that had mixed voguing movements with other kinds of dance. The thing I felt I had to be most careful of was not representing the voguing community. I am not a voguer. I have my friends in the ballroom scene, but I am not an ambassador for the community. With that in mind, I knew that if I and other brown skin bodies were onstage, all the imaginative strategies would go out the window for 85% or more of the audience. They

would immediately think we were voguers and/or see us as representing voguers. That's just how people shorthand with race. I needed a workaround. So, I decided first that I would be the only brown skinned person, and further problematize my position. And secondly, I did not want to work with American dancers. This had more to do with the process of making the work in the studio. If I was to create something that was not voguing, I wanted people who knew very almost nothing. Americans may not know specifics but we have this reference in our larger culture maybe because of Madonna's song, and especially contemporary dancers in the U.S. have a reference for voguing. I wanted to force the performers to work only in the imagination.

With (M)imosa, it was different. We were co-authors and they wanted to learn some from voguing teachers. As (M)imosa was the piece in the middle of the series, I said okay. I had been working with this research for twelve years at that point, and felt I could filter what I thought would have been inappropriate or not fall into weak appropriative modeling. I also wondered at that point, if I changed my process, what would come out on the other side.

But after (M)imosa when I started working again with me as the sole author with the dancers for the Antigone pieces, I told them they could not learn voguing on the body. We did reading instead. I knew if we started it would be a trap we couldn't get out of, and soon we would be doing fusion work. I wanted to discover something that we could not image what it would like like. For that you have to be rigorous with and trust the imagination. Subsequently, I have let some exact references in, just as there are exact references to early postmodern dance. Though, these are purposeful, and in quotes in the performance, so they are tributes rather than stealing something and pretending you look like thing and sadly passing. I didn't want that, so yes, the presence of this one black male body and the absence of others is on purpose. Open for critique, but I was not checked out on that.

JEAN STEPHAN KISS:

You always state when u speak about the genealogy of The Series, that at one point you realized that for you post-modern dance was on the catwalk. Can you elaborate on the architecture of that equation and place it for us on the sociopolitical chess board?

T.H: — Please allow me to put that statement back in context. When I came to New York around 1997/98, I was very confused by how I saw people dancing in the downtown scene. I had read all my postmodern history and dance theory etc etc., and expected to find a lot of standing, sitting, running, and task based movement. What I found was a lot of what looked like to me modern dance movement with more attention and emphasis on anatomical issues. There was also a lot of contact

improvisation, but you could have thought Judson and early postmodern hadn't happened. Of course, Judson happened in the 60's and although those tenets had been ressurected by important choreographic artists in Europe (primarily in France, and later other places), in New York that had been other inventions since that time. In fact, the principles of Judson hadn't stuck to the ground. I think Gerard talks about this a bit in the piece he wrote for (XL).

In any case, when I finally went to my first fashion show. This is before all the big brands have their fashion shows on the internet, and before Americas's Top Model or Project Runway. Fashion shows were private events for industry selects and difficult to get invitaton. I finally went to my first fashion show I think around 1999, and yes, I thought it was much more postmodern than what I was seeing at dance shows. The pedestrianism; the relation between performance and representation; gender issues; class issues; labor issues. There was so much to critique and to think about it. Not to mention the production design was so interesting to me. The catwalk or runway as a defining space that gets reinterpreted in so many ways. Of course, companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on fashion shows and some into the millions, so they can afford amazing production values. Nonetheless I was impressed by the formal processes.

That said, the runway always provides the architectural foundation in my work. As early postmodern dance had pedestrianism as a founding principle and voguing appropriated fashion procedures such as runway shows where models are seen walking, I began to use the runway as the theoretical meeting place between early postmodern dance tradition and the voguing tradition.

It's always my beginning point and trying to understand how I will make the next dance. Socio-politically it's gets worked out differently in each work. In (S), for example, there is the runway just beside a set of chairs where I change into the different looks. A closet, I would also see it as. This is for me certainly a critique of how Judson eschewed any interpretations of sexual identity in their work at the time. It you look at it from the voguing tradition, we would probably look at this as "passing" which is related to Eungie's question previously.

If we look at *Antigone Jr.* for example, the runway is a purely graphic structure in the staging and in the choreographic composition which refers to the emphasis in early postmodernim on the aesthetic of minimalism the strategy of repetition.

But, In each work it's changing.

ALEXANDER KOLLATOS:

To what extent has religion inspired your work and especially the last choreography of the series: Judson Church is Ringing in Harlem (Made-to-Measure).

T.H: — I would say only in (M2M) as we've nickname *Judson Church is Ringing In Harlem*. When I thought

about taking the proposition backwards from Judson Church uptown to the balls of Harlem, I realized that some people may not get the shorthanding of Judson Church to mean Judson Dance Theater or postmodern dance. It's something we say all the time but forget that 99% of the world would think Judson Church is a church as in a bulding for religious services...

The form of (M2M) is inspired by a Southern African American baptist church meeting and seeing the "shouting" as a little boy. Shouting is when someone believes to be filled with the holy spirit and release this energy in public at church. It's full of crying, emotional outbursts, hollering, conversing with God, and jumping. As a young child, I was extremely frightened and fascinated at the same time. My father was baptist and my mother was not. So she didn't believe in shouting. So, it gave me a critcal lens and questions of theater and performativity that permeate my work, today.

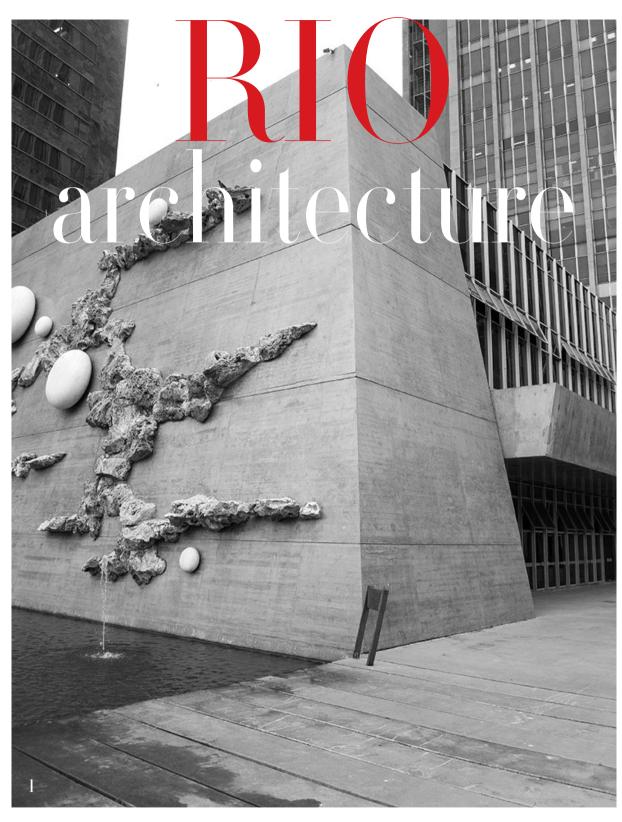
ALEXANDROS MAGKIANOIATIS:

Your work has a lot of emotion, do you think that what really drives life is pain and the desire to escape it? And along that thought, is pleasure a relief in the larger current of want and suffering? As a bottom line do you enjoy your symptom?

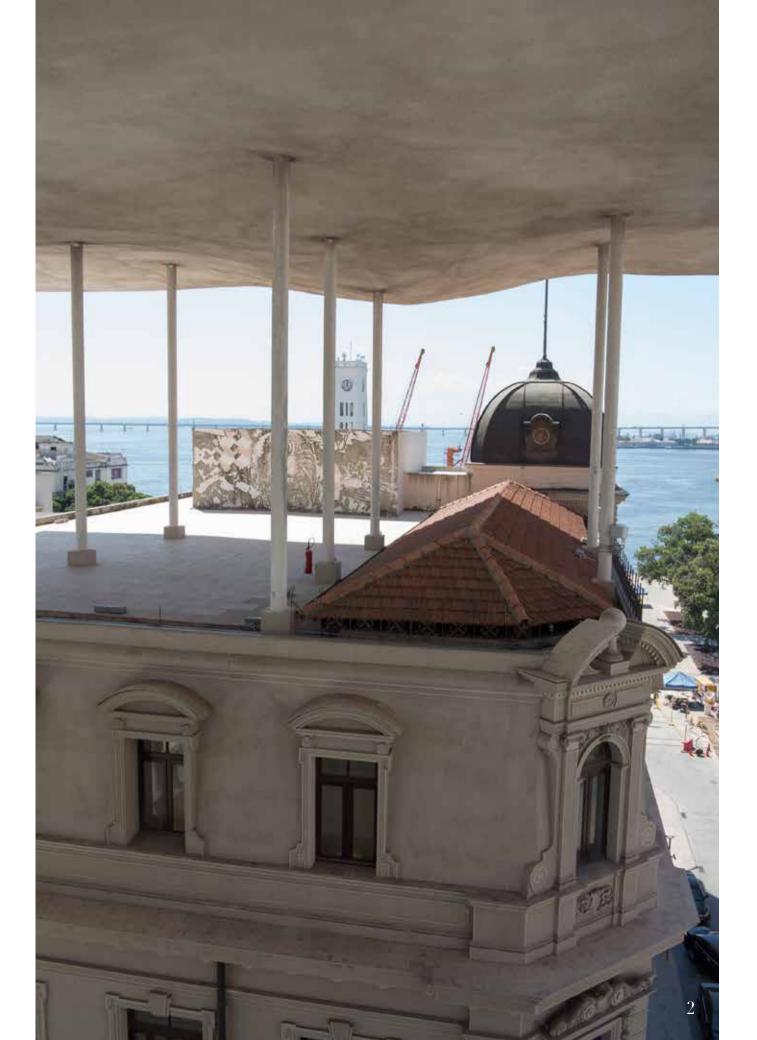
T.H: — I have no idea what drives life. There are so many answers. I do think many people are driven by pleasure for pleasure sake, however, and of course to relieve suffering and want. The suffering we see in my work is very specific- for example, Antigone's dilemma and in (M2M), the penitent is a part of the form I use. There's even more suffering in my latest works related to butoh. I say that I am now looking at butoh through the theoretical lens of voguing and at modern dance through the theoretical lens of butoh. In butoh, there is real value in giving representation to suffering, sickness, the weak, death, old people, "the crippled," etc.

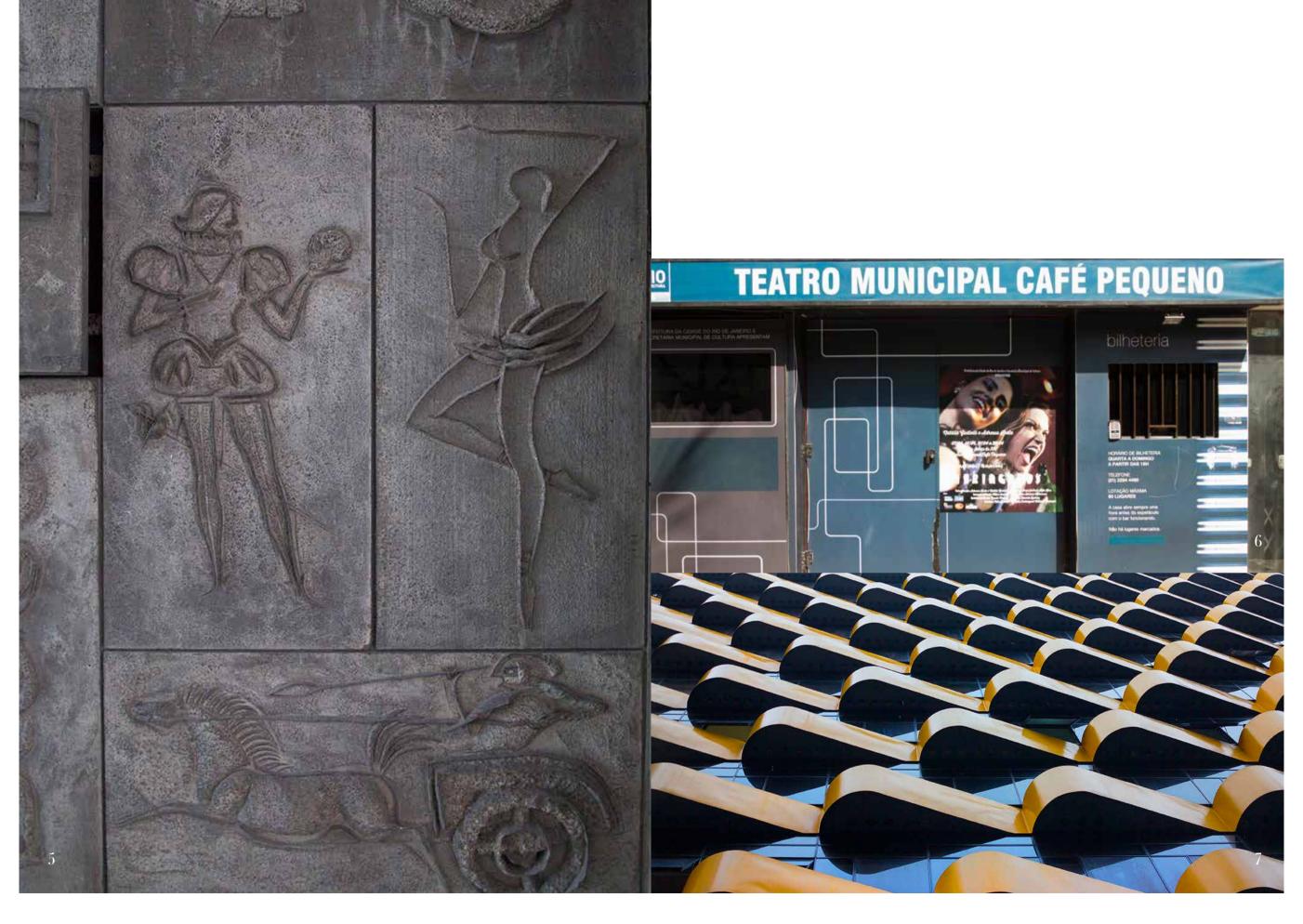
With the Antigone pieces, we started working with the production of tears as material in the work. M2M became almost half about tears (Trajal laughs). It's rough and I don't enjoy the suffering when I perform. It doesn't feel pleasurable at all. It's always challening to produce, and I'm scared before the performance that I wont be able to do it. That's the performer's dilemma, but since I am the choreographer, I always make a dramaturgical release in the dance. With (M2M) I know that despite the suffering throughout the beginning and middle, I will get to the end and finally get to let go. It's even in the text I speak, "And one day, here I stand..." So I know catharis is on the way, and that allows me to push through the pain.

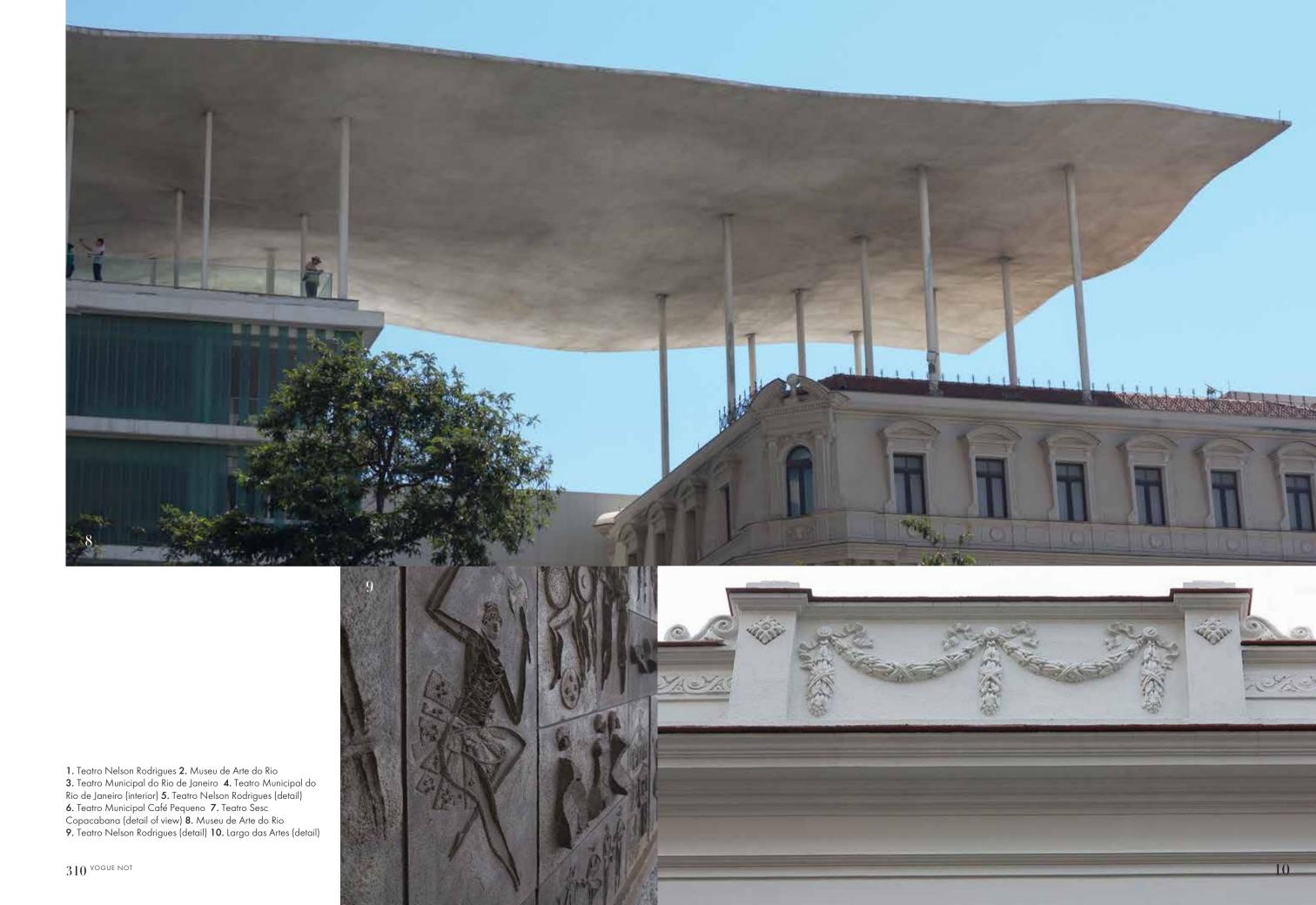
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PHOTOGRAPHER VICENTE DE PAULO TAKES US ON A VISUAL TOUR OF SOME OF THE THEATER ARCHITECTURE IN RIO DE JANEIRO THAT HAS HOSTED PERFORMANCES OF THE TWENTY LOOKS SERIES. (M)IMOSA, REPEAT PERFORMANCES OF (S)MALL, AND ANTIGONE SR. AT THE CITY'S JEWEL OPERA HOUSE, TEATRO MUNICIPAL, MAKE RIO THE TWENTY LOOKS HOME AWAY FROM HOME.







WHAT IS AMERICA FOR? BY GÉRARD MAYEN

(Loosely translated through google translate.)

Gérard Mayen, dance critic, accompanied Trajal Harrell, as the dramatuge, in the creation of several of the pieces of the *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church* series. He delivers here a few comments on what he would have experienced as a salutary "scrambling on the Paris – New York line". Comments that could interfere with some lazy agreements of the French exegesis of the Judson and suggest some inappropriate uses of the American reference.

I undertake the commented evocation of my journey with Trajal Harrell, the day after the Journée avec Lucinda Childs presented on November 19, 2016 at the Centre National de la Dance (Pantin, suburb of Paris) where I was able to appreciate Julie Perrin's lecture (She is a teacher/researcher at the University Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis' dance department). Under the title Loft with a View: Street Dance, 1964 Julie Perrin's research links the academic she is to the stream of curiosity for the American post-modern dance movement, which animates an entire sector of choreographic thought and creation in France since the mid-1990s.

We will summarize here in very few words the question that raises this scholarly discourse about *Street Dance*, performance by Lucinda Childs. No image exists to accounts for what this performance looked like in 1964. The researcher will have worked on the written testimonies and partition notes available. But in 2013, *Street Dance* is being rebuilt at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, of which a film recording is available.

Problem: what is revealed in exuberant theatricality hurts the established certainties concerning the minimalism of the *pedestrian movements*, which are at the heart of the

consecrated legacy of the Judson Dance Theater. This impregnated Julie Perrin's reading of the written sources she had at her disposal to imagine *Street Dance*. The attitude (far too rare) of this academic is not to avoid the destabilizing effect of such a situation but on the contrary to problematize it.

It is not the first time that we appreciate Julie Perrin's independence of mind when she unravels on the one hand what she observes and analyzes of the Judson Dance Theater historical sequence and, on the other hand, the speeches that stem from it – especially the one that has spread in this part of the French choreographic community which, since the mid 90's, is animated by a lively curiosity and a concern of referencing on this historical sequence of New York.

THE SUSPICION OF LAZINESS

In no case, do we want here to undermine the value of the contribution of the Judson Church to the history of the western choreographic art of the second half of the twentieth century. Neither do we want to diminish the stimulating effect that the activation of its memory has had for the aesthetic renewal in the French choreographic field (and not only that), at the end of the twentieth century. But our suspicion is that the historicized dimension of this very movement of curiosity and referencing is overlooked. Our suspicion is that of a form of laziness, leading, as usual in terms of aesthetic referencing, to a risk of canonical sacralization, inspiring new academic fixity.

Against this backdrop, it is a scramble on the Paris-New York line that I soon had the happy feeling of living in action, when accompanying the New York choreographer Trajal Harrell, in the creation of S, then L and Jr. in his series Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church, and finally The Ghost of Montpellier Meets the

Samurai, between 2008 and 2015. At its source, our meeting was born from the outset of a desire to leave the frames of Inheritance.

This meeting happens fortuitously, as we found ourselves spectators sitting next to one another, during a performance in the premises of the Cartier Foundation in Paris. The courteous exchange of a few words, while waiting for the beginning of the show, made me learn that Trajal Harrell was therefore a "young choreographer from New York", passing by Paris. The use of quotation marks here is justified by the fact that - besides very few exceptions and only within programmation in French venues - I had, until then, only known of New York choreographers who were at least 60 years old, if not more or much more. This was the responsibility of the French programmers when they invited New York figures of dance. Trajal Harrell presented himself to me as a living proof that one could be between 20 and 40 years old and perform choreography in New York.

INVENTING HIS AMERICAN HERITAGE

What is America for? What has it been used for several decades in the discourse of contemporary French dance? Which, at least for a considerable part, cannot explain its own researches and works without referring to the model of the great American modernity. This through the tutelary figures of Merce Cunningham above all others, but also Alwin Nikolais before him, Trisha Brown since, and again the figures of Postmodern dance as it was forged at Judson.

We must note a strangeness concerning the latter, in that it was not until the mid 90s, thirty years after the emergence of this current, that a great referential discourse is forged about them on this side. (Their early reception at Sainte-Baume where the Autumn Festival

of the late 1970s was not enough for a discursive clutch to work).

This strangeness is one of the arguments that inspires us not to be so interested in what American choreography tells us, which inspires the french approach to choregraphy (this is abundantly and fortunately documented and studied); or even in the fact that the french choreographic scene tells us of what America brings to it (this has rather the value of a document); But rather what this choreographic scene in France reveals of itself when it persists in satisfying this need to invent its American heritage.

NEW YORK, LOSS OF LEADERSHIP

On a whim, and without the support – whether financial or else – of any eventual or institutional invitation, I took off to New York to witness the creation of a new piece Trajal Harrell had informed me about (*Before Intermission*). I thereof devoted two weeks to the discovery of a new generation of the New-York dance and dance-performance scene of which two characteristics should here, rapidely, be noted.

On the one hand, I noticed how the reference to the Judson appeared to be all academic, merely arranged on the mandatory shelves of knowledge, in the eyes of most of these young artists, who had received the teachings in a bare academic manner - even when these same achievements had a rejuvenating effect on many of their French counterparts -. On the other hand, these same New York artists began to discover at the same time and on their own scenes the works of the French artists of the critical deconstruction of the choreographic representation movement Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Rachid Ouramdane, etc. It was a very new overthrow of the flow, when until then a whole generation of the contemporary dance of France had forged its look and practices by

watching the New York shows and attending the studios of the Village.

The shock was considerable, which New York Times critic Gia Kourlas then synthesized in a long article still famous, where she established that New York was losing its leadership on the international choreographic scene. Nothing of the foregoing can be read as a sign of french selfsatisfaction, more or less chauvinistic. However, one should note that, at that very time Trajal Harrell was preparing to attract a strong movement of curiosity in France, the Paris-New York (or rather the reverse) lines of influence were subject to some scrambling and some new interference.

We will never end the reflection on what a playwright's mission can consist of with a choreographer. As to my collaboration with Trajal Harrell, it often seemed to me that it consisted in making intelligible to this young New York artist the question "What is America for?", from a point of view originating in the choreographic field of the other side – mine – of the Atlantic.

HIERARCHIES AND PRIVILEGES

The artistic project of Trajal Harrell's Twenty Looks consisted of the historical fiction of the coming of dancers from the Voquing scene to a concert evening with the pioneers of the postmodern dance at the Judson Church. In objective terms, the hypothesis is not absurd. As for their dating, the appearance and development of these two phenomena are concomitant. And there are only a few subway stations to separate Washington Square that borders the Judson Church, and some halls in Harlem where Voguing balls were held.

Aesthetically the distance is much greater. This is the work of Trajal Harrell, only to produce cracking short-circuits between these two spheres of expression through body. Indeed, an underground thread connects them all

the same, however tenuous: the artists of the Voguing and the pioneers of the post-modern dance share the same enthusiasm in the critical updating of the dominant systems of representation, assigning the bodies to the reproductive performance of culturally constructed scores (although this was not exactly expressed in these terms in the mid-1960s).

No one has ever considered it imaginable that a concert of Judson should give way to a Voguing performance. This while he is not a Voguing artist for imagining going to push the door of the Judson Church. Hierarchies and privileges are at the heart of artistic practices, and their validation: if politicized and radical, the artists of Judson camped on one side of the line of demarcation of legitimacy. Either the side where white artists, scholars, mostly from the educated middle-class work, are cut up into avant-garde confraternities, quickly endorsed as such.

We must note here a sneer of history: the scope of the Voguing was not reevaluated in certain scholarly circles_until very late and with the only precondition that intellectuals who also camped on the good side of the line of demarcation of the legitimacy, took the example of Voguing to sharpen the theories of gender, class and race performance they were developing.

CHEERFULLY IMPERTINENT

The purpose here is not to produce a refined aesthetic analysis of the Trajal Harrell pieces grouped in the *Twenty Looks* series. We shall content ourselves with pointing out the exuberance, sometimes the extravagance, always the overflowing of the taciturn frameworks of a certain contemporary critical tradition. If the French reference to the Judson's values and achievements has sometimes degenerated into deferential sacralization, the looping of little-discussed certain-

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ties – the "amongst the peers" spirit of the insiders of the "good side" – which so often surprises the wicked and playful spirit of many of the American proponents of this current – then the art of Trajal Harrell will have interfered with it in a joyfully impertinent – and at the same time perfectly learned – manner.

Trajal Harrell is not a Voguing artist. But contemporary New York dance. His pieces Twenty Looks, at the top of which Antigone Sr., worldwide success, are interpreted by European artists, even more distant than him from the sources of Voquing. These characteristics may have been criticized. These reproaches are irrelevant with regard to his announced project, which has never been to adapt Voquing for the contemporary scene, but to invent a critical fiction. Trajal Harrell is African-American, with a direct inheritance from the southern states, and is very uncommon in this respect of the New York scene.

Does this characteristic resonate in France? It is to consider the inability of the essence of contemporary French dance – and really not only that ... – to take charge of the reality, the representations, the imaginary and political problems, of the post-colonial dimension of French society. Beginning with the place devoted to its minorities.

As violently worked by forms of racism as is the American society, it maintains an irreducible difference with the franco-french mind. This difference lies in the fact that even at the height of depreciative stigmatization, an African American will not be opposed the suspicion of not being truly American – which remains a daily banal reflex in the French context -. The mechanisms of the memory of slavery do not coincide strictly with those of colonialist memory.

This is what allows an African American to settle in the White House. It is also what allows a more diverse and bubbling American culture, on the borders of the popular and the scholar, with the fringes of the minority and mainstream, much more fluid than according to the french usages.

I have often wondered whether, in the case of Trajal Harrell, the usual large detour through the explanatory box in New York, did not allow us to live, on the French choreographic scene, a form of minority overcoming the post-colonial legacy.

A GHOSTLY FLUIDITY

I rejoiced beyond the imaginable, but trembled as much, when Trajal Harrell announced his intention to deal with the specter of Dominique

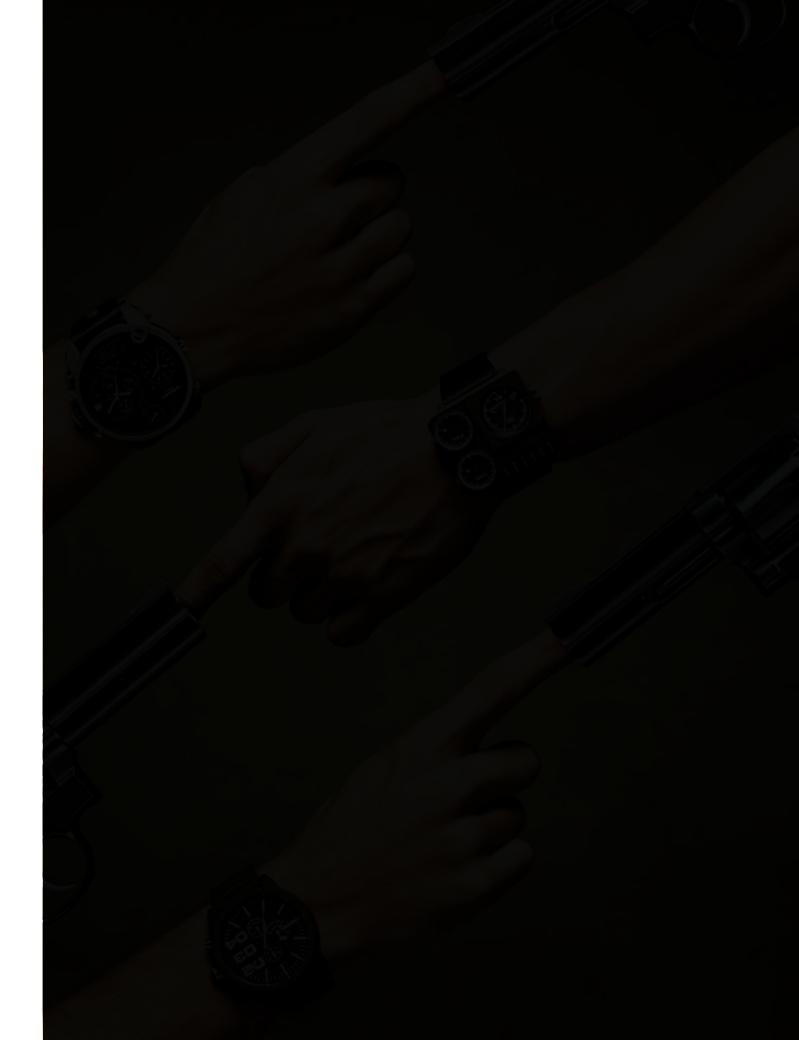
Bagouet, in his project following the *Twenty Looks*. *The Ghost of Montpellier meets the Samurai*. To rejoice, it was necessary, considering this historical innovation, which saw a New York choreographer, to a large extent melted in the workings of french production and distribution, artistically interested in a figure of reference of the New French dance. We were not used to it.

I also shuddered, considering the risks involved in a totally fictional evocation, all indifferent to the historical examination of aesthetic inheritances – a theater of ideas to which I take my part, when one has to approach the memory of Dominique Bagouet. Trajal Harrell will have gone as far as I could fear in his iconoclastic approach. Is any precious scaffolding that underpins the heritage of Dominique Bagouet on the french choreographic scene damaged? I agreed to run the risk.

Nothing happened. Not an echo of this kind has reached me since the Bagouet circles, singularly indifferent. Trajal Harrell had spoken of a Ghost. A spectre. He gave him a joyful grace, almost zany, thanks to a background of intense gravity. It would always be necessary that a part of this texture, this ghostly fluidity, this stunning uncertainty, should thwart the spirit of serious-

ness, when it threatens to flow in a mausoleum, the dynamic movement of historical and aesthetic references.

To begin and to end: I realize that I never knew what Paris has to do with the title of the famous documentary dedicated by Jennie Livingston to the scene of the New York Voguing. And so in the series of pieces by Trajal Harrell who borrows this title. And I feel very good about that. No loitering, there's everything to see.



L'Oeilde VOGUE



RUNWAY PERFORMANCE Pat Cleveland

By Trajal Harrell

had a skype appointment with Pat Cleveland and in my mind's eye I expected a glamourina in a dark mink coat and awell, I cant remember all that I expected, because turns out what befits a legend is warmth, generosity of spirit, and individuality. She had a story for each pair of sunglasses and glasses she tried on, but, of course, in the spirit of good fun and graciousness, she settled on the pair I preferred.

She has a new memoir out, Walking with the Muses, about her life as a famous mixed-race (African-American and Swedish) supermodel way before the era of Naomi Campbell and Tyra Banks. And like myself, she spent time as a child playing in the red muds of Georgia from where her mother's side of the family hails.

That said, this was not the first time I had encountered Cleveland. The first was at The National Arts Club on New York's Gramercy Park, about ten years ago. Someone mentioned that Pat Cleveland was in the room, and what happened after, changed my life. Me, being a young go-getter, I sauntered right up to the renown manneguin and introduced myself and my current research looking at runway movement, voguing, and postmodern dance. Pat surely responded, "well, you mean..." and she started moving in a way that I had never seen before. I can only quickly surmise that it was a mix of runway, sashay, glide to the front and the back, floral pronouncements of the hands, and turns with a healthy heaping of ooh la la and old school salon runway mixed in. It was a vision of both elegance and panache, and succinctly dance dance dance as I had never seen. And she just did it full-out in the middle of the social hall in The National Arts Club--- while wearing a pencil skirt, knit sweater, and knee-high boots with a heel. She stopped and went on talking about her daughter now modeling. I wanted to ask a bevy of questions but the reality of the cocktail party took over and one thing led to another, someone else entered the conversation, and soon we were separated. I went over to my

friends to brag about my meeting while holding the shock of what I had seen neatly at bay. I was desperately trying to put it all together in my head while nursing a white wine and pretending to listen to new conversation. Pat had just embodied what I had been learning between the archives of Dior; the history of the evolution of the ballet d'ecole from the courts of Louis XIV; sneaking into the fashion tents at Bryant park; reading Sally Banes' tomes on postmodern dance; and watching the kids at the kiki balls.

For those of us who follow the runways, Ms. Cleveland is the gold standard having served it like no other on the catwalks of Paris in the 1970's and 1980's and to this day, still making talked about global appearances. Trust, the children are taking lessons on youtube. So on skype, I am surprised, but it totally makes sense when Cleveland tells me that as a young child in the 1950's, she was hanging on the ballet barre at Katherine Dunham's studio while her aunt jumped and shuffled across the floor with the likes of Eartha Kitt, Marlon Brando, Dorothy Dandridge, and Dunham's company. She was the class mascot. Her aunt carried the class over to her mother's house, and the musicians and dancers carried on. At three a.m. they would invite her in to do the limbo to a conga drum. When I comment, "that was quite an education," without missing a beat, she adds "that was quite a lesson in learning how to stay up all night."

Today she seems well rested but still quite the life of the party as she had been with Jerry Hall, Grace Jones, Andy Warhol, Halston, and a cornucopia of bright stars at Studio 54 back in the day. Comfortable in her own skin, age has made her more beautiful and more joyful. She's still living it, loving it, and not throwing any shade when she's a guest on The Wendy Williams Show. When asked how she would describe how she moves, "Like silence," she says, "...stealth coming in...being present like a butterfly and disappearing like a dream . "So finally, what befits a legend most, my child, is her legend."

VOGUE



Pat Cleveland

Diego used to be a guard at the Museum of Modern Art. He was on the night shift. His job was to go around the museum and tell people to leave. Or, as he put it, 'Snap them out of their art trances.' People who'd been standing in front of one thing for hours, he would jump in front of them and snap his fingers, and he'd say, 'Time to go.' Time to go. Time to go (repeat)

– LAURIE ANDERSON

