FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Announcing Movement Research Performance Journal Issue #54

MRPJ54: Spatial Practice includes contributions from:

Critical Resistance
Alan Ruiz
Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco
Julie Tolentino and Sadia Shirazi
Kaegan Sparks
Martha Rosler
Suzanne Stephens
Joshua Lubin-Levy
Lo-Yi Chan and Tim Hartung

Olive McKeon
Alice Sheppard
Biba Bell
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BRANDT : HAFERD
V. Mitch McEwen and Olivier Tarpaga
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MRPJ54: Performance Journal features contributions from:

Angela Davis
J. Bouey and Melanie Greene
Lisa Nelson
Diana Crum
Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal
Jess Barbagallo
John Hoobyar and Simon Asencio
Layla Zami
Cristiane Bouger

Daria Faïn and Marjana Krajač
Germaine Acogny, Helmut Vogt, and André Zachery
Milka Djordevich and Tim Reid
Melanie Maar

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Movement Research announces Issue 54 of its publication, the *Movement Research Performance Journal*. Continuing to experiment with approaches that engage contemporary choreography and performance through the medium of print—poem, prose, image, interview and a wide range of formats give form to critical and self-reflexive discourses and material histories. *Movement Research Performance Journal* acts as a site of convergence between publication, editors, writers, designers, and artists to consider the place of dance, performance, and choreography in relation to the contemporary moment.

For *MRPJ54: Spatial Practice*, guest editor, artist Alan Ruiz invited contributors to examine the ongoing legacy of neoliberalism and the cultural production it engenders, specifically focusing on the relation between bodies and the built environment. Contributors have explored the contexts and histories in which we dwell, create, and coexist to interrogate how space is produced both as material and ideology during the hyper-development and hyper-exploitation of the urban environment, predominantly in New York City. *Spatial Practice* asks: how does this impact the bodies that labor and move to keep the kinetic machine of “progress” moving? Contributions offer multiple perspectives—through a variety of genres—on the ways in which the political project of neoliberalism has, in part, shaped the designation and use of public space as well as enthroned the philanthropic class and the cultural institutions associated with them. Alongside the consolidation of wealth and power, neoliberalism’s underlying insistence on individualism has also reinforced and normalized the braided conditions of capitalist exploitation, structural racism, and patriarchal domination. Unraveling this logic allows us to collectively imagine alternatives to the prevailing systems of property, dispossession, ableism, and incarceration that parcelize existence.

Within *Spatial Practice*, a separate section dedicated to dance includes submissions culled from the performance community tied into the larger thematic architecture of the issue, but meant to stand alone. These works range from descriptions of the politics and ethics of various art works to which the writers bore witness or take the form of dialogues about practices and philosophies of the role and perception of art and artists in self-reflexive essays and tributes. Some artists share scores and visual essays to elucidate their creative process, institutional critique, and political sentiments. Also included are edited transcripts from interviews about creating techniques and practices around embodied and disembodied notions of performance as well as discussions around the importance of probing the hierarchies created by white supremacy in spaces of dance-making, dance pedagogy, and auditions. This collection of creators, scholars, and figures in the field of movement enrich the very focused discussion of Issue 54 to incorporate voices from the community. This section of the *Performance Journal* functions as an open and expanded container—not assembled through theme-based content, but through incidental and sometimes concurrent concerns.

The release of *MRPJ54* coincides with the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political actions taken by Black Lives Matter and abolitionists across the world. This moment has demanded that the world take pause and consider the multiple precarities and conditions under which bodies operate and are assigned value in society. The built environment is not merely a backdrop for these questions but, as many of *MRPJ54*’s contributors suggest, is constitutive of an apparatus of political forces. These forces shape the built-environment—and yet, how we
perform against urban and social infrastructures (especially those that reinforce existing structures of power) can be understood as a fundamental dimension of ongoing agonistic struggles. Protest does more than take to the street—it takes it over and rewrites the protocols of space. Many activists and scholars have long argued for the importance of mass demonstration in the struggle for social transformation and that neoliberalism and carceral capitalism are both expressions of the same underlying system of exploitation and oppression. Included in Issue 54 is material by the grassroots organization Critical Resistance—founded by Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Rose Braz, and others—that is dedicated to dismantling the prison-industrial complex. Critical Resistance’s “Abolitionist Toolkit” is reprinted as the interior cover to *MRPJ54: Spatial Practice* and a chapter from Angela Davis’s *Are Prisons Obsolete?* is reprinted as the interior cover to *MRPJ54: Performance Journal*. The wrapped cover of *MRPJ54: Spatial Practice* depicts the shuttered entrance to the Whitney Museum of American Art, which—like several other prominent New York City museums and hundreds of businesses—responded to civic unrest by denying its capacity to function as a public space. As a counterpoint, the *MRPJ54: Performance Journal* section’s wrapped cover depicts the opened entrance to New York Theatre Workshop, which was one of several arts organizations participating in the #OpenYourLobby initiative by functioning as sites of refuge during weeks of protests. Rather than simply a container, these examples reveal how the built environment is a necessary site for both action and critique.

In light of the global health crisis and the limitations that have been placed on our traditional model of distribution through community performance centers and the mail, we will also be releasing *MRPJ54* in a unique vivisected digital form each week beginning August 5, 2020. Every week we will release a curated bundle of article PDFs until the entire issue has been distributed as arranged content groupings. To maintain both the integrity of the printed publication as a choreographed and designed object itself, Issue 54 of *Movement Research Performance Journal* will only be available in its entirety in its printed form. The issue will still be mailed to all subscribers and distributed publicly for free in New York City where possible. To subscribe to the mailing list of the *Movement Research Performance Journal* to receive the weekly articles or to become a subscriber to the printed publication itself, please write to: katepatchett@movementresearch.org.
“Abolitionist Toolkit”
Critical Resistance

Critical Resistance created a Toolkit for abolitionist organizing strategies after discussion that began in Boston in March 2012. These kits include resources, exercises, and elucidation of concepts and ideas that Critical Resistance has been working on for many years. These kits are meant for U.S.-based community organizers as well as allies to establish a place to start thinking about abolition as a life project.

“Thank You For Your Flexibility”
Alan Ruiz

Alan Ruiz writes on flexibility as an ideology and a spatial disposition, tracing the genealogy of this word from its emergence in the mid-20th century and into contemporary architecture. In particular, he examines the notion of “flexible space,” the ever-present term used by NYC-based cultural institutions that have expanded or modified their interiors to accommodate live and spectacular work. Ruiz looks at how flexibility is a form of soft power that puts workers in ever more precarious and expendable positions.

“Expansions”

Over the last ten years, United States cultural institutions have acquired more than 13,000,00 square feet. This matrix lists the expanded square footage of some institutions that have undergone renovations or acquired new property during this timeframe. The table creates a cross-section of institutional authority in relationship to questions of spatial and economic scale.

“The Bed and the Drill Hall”
Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco

Architect Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco investigates the coexistence of a homeless shelter facility and spectacular live performance events at the Park Avenue Armory since the 1980s, using the venue as an example of a wider societal tendency to separate bodies based on “action.” As more and more cultural institutions promote themselves as spaces for liveness, this division, Casanovas Blanco argues, should be scrutinized.

“Dissecting the Park Avenue Armory Social System”
Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco’s drawings interrogate the spatial implications of the legal definition of shelter space in New York City from 1981 to the present. The drawings question the spatial rights legally granted to people in need of shelter and the architectures resulting from the implementation of the law. Translating the law into visual graphic form, they reveal how spatial mechanisms undergirding municipal and state institutional homeless policies build and normalize a specific ideological construct of the homeless subject.

“There is a Bounty in What is Lost”
Julie Tolentino and Sadia Shirazi

The Clit Club was a queer DIY party housed in a two-level bar in the pre-Giuliani Meatpacking District of 1990-2000, before its final two years in the East Village. Founder
Julie Tolentino returns to the original site with writer and curator Sadia Shirazi to reflect upon the ghosts and memories that can be unearthed in the site’s floorplans. Together, they trace the history of the building and the Gansevoort district, detailing how it became a space for underground club nights that took up residency here throughout the nineties.

Kaegan Sparks
Art historian Kaegan Sparks reflects on the artist Pope.L’s crawl performances, concentrating on his first in 1978, *Times Square Crawl*. Sparks explores the relationship between the prostrate body and the skyscraper city, considering Pope.L’s refusal of verticality in relation to infrastructural collapse, class and housing politics, and the municipal fiscal crisis in 1970s New York. She includes a postscript describing *Conquest*, Pope.L’s 2019 group crawl in downtown Manhattan, which was commissioned and produced by the Public Art Fund.

*The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*
Martha Rosler
In her photographic series *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, Rosler employs images of the run-down Bowery neighborhood and its vagrant population alongside text associated with drunkenness. In doing so, she offers a critique of documentary photography in regards to its exploitative nature and its failure of objectivity.

STOLEN ARTICLE
“Culture as Consumption”
Suzanne Stephens
Originally printed in the December 1973 issue of *Architectural Forum* (Vol. 139, No 5), “Culture as Consumption” considers the proliferation of cultural centers as the physical embodiments of American political and economic power, and commodities in themselves. The text preceded three profiles on recently completed arts centers in the United States—Edwin J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall, Akron, Ohio; Drake University Fine Arts Center, Des Moines Iowa; Veterans’ Memorial Auditorium, Binghamton, New York.

“Breaking Ground”
Breaking Ground depicts two different groundbreaking ceremonies on the west side of Manhattan: President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Robert Moses, Borough President Hulan Jack, and Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. breaking ground at Lincoln Center in 1959; then Stephen Ross, Anderson Cooper and Big Bird at Hudson Yards last year. These images, especially seen side-by-side, evoke the performative and ritualized culture that surrounds corporate and metropolitan expansions.

“Scotch-Tape Urbanism”
Joshua Lubin-Levy
Framing his essay in light of the ongoing pandemic, Joshua Lubin-Levy dives into filmmaker Jack Smith’s work, looking at the choreographic dimensions of his film *Scotch Tape*. Lubin-Levy also considers the work in relation to urban sites of demolition and death, as well as Smith’s chosen site of the under-construction Lincoln Center of 1959.
“Liveness, Movement, Architecture”
Alice Sheppard
Reflecting through her personal history of blog-writing, solo-making, and city-navigating, artist Alice Sheppard traces her development as a mover. She meditates on the writing she did as a beginner dancer and novice wheelchair user, learning to navigate her cities and institutional spaces. The essay reveals how and why she came to desire disability pleasurable design and the ways these ideas manifest in her practice.

“Memory Work: Excavating the Room”
Biba Bell
Choreographer and writer Biba Bell reflects on memory’s choreographic and spatial character, employing the image of a “memory palace.” She recalls a conversation she had with Vito Acconci about the memory of a performance; explores the notion of creative labor and domesticity in urban, precarious spaces; and describes a posthumous excavation of Jack Smith’s apartment through film.

“Becoming Undone”
Erik Thurmond
Choreographer Erik Thurmond provides three photographs, displaying a body sprawled in different arrangements on a staircase, alongside a score and a text describing his own practice’s relationship to spaces of control and convention.

“POPS”
BRANDT : HAFERD
Harlem-based architecture and design studio BRANDT : HAFERD presents a collection of drawings that weave together several POPS, or privately owned public spaces in New York City. An exercise in both arrangement and imagination, the drawings prop up the importance of public space and their potential for culture, discourse, and community-building.

“When Birds Refused to Fly”
V. Mitch McEwen and Olivier Tarpaga
Architect V. Mitch McEwen and choreographer Olivier Tarpaga discuss their experiences collaborating on the project When Birds Refused to Fly, a performance piece that explores life in Burkina Faso under military coups and army control from 1966-1970 and was originally presented at the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University. The two reflect on where their own practices were able to complete one another, and speak more generally about how their forms overlap and diverge.

“Pivot and Slide”
Sarah Oppenheimer
Sarah Oppenheimer’s black and white drawings and animations explore issues of temporal choreography as it functions in the built environment. Oppenheimer presents graphic depictions that reference material and immaterial boundaries, trajectories through space, and repeated daily actions.
“Giving a Body to an Image”
Jimmy Robert and Mario Gooden

“Dance and Real Estate in Los Angeles:
Reconsidering Glorya Kaufman’s Dance Philanthropy”
Olive McKeon
Glorya Kaufman has made significant philanthropic donations to dance institutions in recent years, especially in Southern California, where she has funded the establishment of an entirely new dance department at USC and the restoration of the dance building at UCLA. Dancer and researcher Olive McKeon traces the origins of Kaufman’s wealth and considers how her patronage links Los Angeles dance directly to suburbanization, white flight, and urban redevelopment.

“Institution Building: Abrons Arts Center 1975–2017”
Lo-Yi Chan and Tim Hartung
Alan Ruiz hosted a 2017 public conversation with the original architect of Abrons Art Center, Lo-Yi Chan, and Tim Hartung, one of the architects leading its upcoming renovation. They discuss the history of this iconic building as it has aged and served the community over the years, and how the new plans will focus on Abrons’ identity as a space for arts presentation.

“Uncontainable”
Dominic Cullinan
Architect Dominic Cullinan designed a project employing sea containers and has since been asked to use these universal and nomadic objects to create sports halls, schools, and community centers. He describes recent challenges encountered while building a Hindu temple in a city in middle England, which has troubled and confused the neighbors.
STOLEN ARTICLE
“Abolitionist Alternatives” from *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
Angela Davis
Activist and scholar Angela Davis lays out the graceful and humanely reasoned arguments for alternative structures that can assist in the process of decarceration and ultimately the abolishment of the prison system altogether. Davis provides a historical precedent of abolition movements around the world and lays out how many solutions exist for the prison industrial complex.

“The Dance Union’s Town Hall for Collective Action:
Dismantling White Supremacy Within Dance Institutions”
J. Bouey and Melanie Greene
On June 1, 2020, The Dance Union hosted “Town Hall for Collective Action: Dismantling White Supremacy within Dance Institutions” in response to the essay *An Open Letter to Arts Organizations Rampant with White Supremacy* by Nana Chinara as well as to the uprisings sparked by the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. Artists Melanie Greene and J. Bouey invited artists Marýa Wethers, Christine Wyatt, Jonathan Gonzalez, Remi Harris, Ube Halaya, Raha Behnam, Zavé Martohardjono, NIC Kay, and Marguerite Hemmings to speak about their experiences with white supremacy within the dance world as well as strategies for reimaging dance institutions and equity in the dance world.

“Nancy Stark Smith: A Tribute”
Lisa Nelson
A tribute to the late Nancy Stark Smith, a foundational figure in contact improvisation and beloved and iconic member of the dance community.

“Multiplicity of Practices”
Diana Crum
Diana Crum reflects on the multiplicity of her own practice and challenges the common separation of public performance and community-engaging practices. Crum, a choreographer and dance educator, traces how this chasm has come to exist in American funding structures. She argues that compartmentalizing these practices has a stultifying effect on both performing and teaching, and she suggests the dance community should reshape the existing infrastructure to support the interdependence of these disciplines.

“dunked”
Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal
Choreographer Kristopher K.Q. Pourzal presents a visual poem that includes anatomical language, stills from rehearsals, desktop screenshots, and images of workspaces. Foregrounding the embodied personal effects of working from home with critical race and gender theory, Pourzal provides insights in the development of interiority and the work that it bodies forth.
“For Official Use Only:
Staging the Verbatim FBI Interrogation of Whistleblower Reality Winner”
Jess Barbagallo
With both the distance of a viewer and the closeness of a collaborator, Jess Barbagallo writes on Tina Satter’s 2019 play Is This A Room, a work that performs a verbatim transcript of whistleblower Reality Winner’s interrogation by the FBI in 2017.

“Rumors”
John Hoobyar and Simon Asencio
John Hoobyar interviews Brussels-based artist Simon Asencio about the choreographic potential of rumors. Asensio discusses how he thinks about starting and spreading rumors, their relationship to epidemiology and word-of-mouth marketing, as well as the way he distinguishes between rumors, gossip, and stories.

“Of Circles and Cycles:
Remembering, Ritual, and Rhythm in Black Queer Female Dances”
Layla Zami
Layla Zami discusses four performances witnessed in New York City within a ten day period, all created by Black Queer cis-women: Oxana Chi, Maria Bauman, Taja Lindley, and Nia & Ness. Dr. Zami (Pratt Institute) reflects on her experience of seeing these works in close succession in 2017. While holding her own experience as a Black Queer woman in equipoise, she considers the overlapping and distinctive approaches to themes of visibility, place, survival, and rebirth, which take on a visceral meaning in our current moment.

“Unbeer Sonata”
Cristiane Bouger
Cristane Bouger discusses the early stages and development of her work Unbeer Sonata, a piece born in response to the sexist culture of Brazil, demonstrated in several beer companies’ advertising campaigns. Bouger elucidates how Unbeer Sonata is a project that explores the movement of precarity and violence for both the viewer and the performer. She details the work’s score, as it progresses through a traditional sonata structure, using the breaking of beer bottles as her instrument.

“It is Necessary to Look at What is Vital”
Daria Faïn and Marjana Krajač
Marjana Krajač interviews artist Daria Faïn in 2018 after participating in her COREMOTION Program movement sessions. They talk about how Faïn arrived at her current choreographic practice, including her early study at The Graham School, her relationship to poetry and architecture, and her ongoing collaborations with The Commons Choir and Robert Kocik.

“Germaine Acogny and Helmut Vogt”
André M. Zachery
André Zachery interviews Germaine Acogny, affectionately nicknamed the “Mother of African Contemporary Dance,” who is a Senegalese dancer and choreographer who has revolutionized dance through her Modern African Dance Technique. She and her husband/collaborator
Helmut Vogt discuss the journey of establishing their educational center, l’Ecole des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal as well as how this center relates to their current choreographic work and touring structures.

“Conversations”
Milka Djordevich and Tim Reid
In 2017, writer Tim Reid was invited to witness and respond as an embedded critic to the creation process of Milka Djordjevich’s *ANTHEM* over two years. This interview is culled from the twenty-five hours of recorded conversations they had, in which they discuss the presence of butts and hair in Djordevich’s work, Reid’s perspective and presence as a man in the studio during the rehearsals, and the decision to either provide certain contextual details to Reid or not, as an outside witness.

“Dark Uttering”
Melanie Maar
Choreographer and performer Melanie Maar offers a poem that probes internal thoughts and sensations that arose while performing in a museum. She considers her relationship to the institutional rules and interactions with the museum guards. Alongside the poem, she offers an accompanying photograph of her performing in a gallery next to an artifact.
ABOUT MOVEMENT RESEARCH
PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

Started in 1990, the Performance Journal is a printed forum created by and for artists, fostering the evolution of written and graphic languages that contemplate current issues of dance and performance. Published twice annually, the Performance Journal provides a unique forum for critical rigor and a multi-disciplinary readership. Writings are specifically linked to events, artists, trends, and ideas associated with the current and upcoming performance season in New York, as well as nationally and internationally. The Performance Journal has focused on artists’ of-the-moment concerns, with past topics including gender, environments, identity, technology, activism, dance writing and, most recently, an exploration of how contemporary dance negotiates with the larger culture, via a magazine format.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Movement Research is one of the world’s leading laboratories for the investigation of dance and movement-based forms. Valuing the individual artist, their creative process and their vital role within society, Movement Research is dedicated to the creation and implementation of free and low-cost programs that nurture and instigate discourse and experimentation. Movement Research strives to reflect the cultural, political and economic diversity of its moving community, including artists and audiences alike.
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Thanks always to the clergy and staff of Judson Church, including Donna Schaper, Micah Bucy, André Daughtry, Jeanne Travis, and Zac Mosely. Judson continues to be a beacon for free spirits in the arts and politics and a leader among progressive faith communities in the city and nation for over 100 years. Enormous gratitude to Frances Alenkoff (1920–2012), founder of Eden’s Expressway, and to her daughter Francesca Rheannon and family, for their continuing belief in the mission of Movement Research and for keeping alive Frances’ spirited example of what lifelong artistry is. Special thanks to Center for Performance Research, Danspace Project, Gibney and Mount Tremper Arts for their ongoing partnerships.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

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