

DANCE4

4WORDS

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NOTTDANCE

PAUL RUSS

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF DANCE4

It's bittersweet waving goodbye to another edition of Nottdance. The 2019 edition was the first to invite an artist as co-curator, a collaboration between myself and associate research artist, Matthias Sperling. This voyage of discovery sought to ask questions about the future of the festival, what happens when the artists' perspective, knowledge and experience is in the research and decision-making process?

Increasingly at Dance4 we're asking questions about what happens if we create space for the artist to inform, influence and lead in our programmes? Where might this take us? What are the opportunities and the inherent problems with the institution inviting artists to fulfil work on their behalf or with us? So many questions remain unanswered, but we've gained much more experience that helps us take further steps towards, what we hope is a greater opportunity for artists to influence the resources available for Dance4 and dance.

Two years ago, inviting an artist to imagine and realise the future of Nottdance felt the most concrete invitation I could make. It is a known event to artists and a cornerstone of Dance4's programme. I wanted to create an environment for an artist's research, practice and artwork to be part of the festival, to be in dialogue and support anchor their curatorial interests.

I'm grateful to Matthias for his gracious and generous spirit and for the great questions and ideas he brought, to a festival not possible without him.

This edition of 4WORDS offers some reflections on Nottdance. We have invited a range of voices to share their Nottdance experience: people we know, people we have worked with and people who live here and far away. As we reflect on the 2019 edition of the festival, we're left thinking about who was present? what did artists see? what did a broader public see? who came to support, to see, to participate?



MATTHIAS SPERLING

CO-CURATOR OF NOTTDANCE 2019



Matthias Sperling was co-curator of Nottdance 2019. Below is his welcome message and introduction to the festival.

It's a joy to welcome you to Nottdance 2019, which I'm thrilled brings together an absolutely incredible group of artists and art works in Nottingham, all in one intensely packed week of extraordinary performances, talks and gatherings. This year's festival features more than 25 artists from the UK and abroad whose works are exciting, current, thought-provoking, challenging, vital, critical, humorous, stimulating, enlivening, curious and unforgettable. Among the festival line-up are manifestos, divining systems, conjuring acts, kaleidoscopic installations and investigative slapstick. There are exquisite radical dances, emotional landscapes of bravery and a durational parade that contemplates the problematics of 'universal' Western pop culture. This festival is an invitation to come together to share curiosity from differing perspectives. It celebrates artists and art works that are expanding, excavating and enriching the fields of dance and choreography.

It has been a real honour and privilege to be able to feed into the conversations about how Nottdance celebrates the many and varied choreographic practices that are transforming the horizons of dance in exciting ways, in this country and abroad. Nottdance has been an important festival for dance in this country for such a long time (and so formative for me as an artist, since I first participated 12 years ago) that I was absolutely floored to be asked by Dance4 to co-curate. For Nottdance 2017, I was primarily involved in curating a series of talks called 'Nottdance Debates'. This time, for Nottdance 2019, I am involved in co-curating the whole festival programme together with Paul Russ.


As ever, the process of seeing other artists' work and talking with them has been deeply nourishing and energising - there is so much fantastic work happening in dance and choreography right now, and Nottdance can only hope to be a small sampling of what's happening in the field. It feels vital to celebrate as many of these practices as possible - particularly those based here in the UK - because although an ever-growing number of artists are developing so much incredible work here, it's still far too unrecognised and is just not being seen widely enough. With its history of more than 25 years of presenting forward-looking dance practices, Nottdance is incredibly well-placed to recognise and highlight how mature and exciting the expanded dance field has become in the UK and to celebrate its connectedness with the vast range of brilliant practices happening abroad.

Through the lens of my own artistic interests, something that came to the fore for me within our co-curation is a particular focus on 'Magic & Science': tuning into how a growing number of artists' current practices are concerned with conjuring bridges between the magical and the scientific, the imagined and the actual, the subjective and the objective, or - as my own work has long been engrossed with - mind and body. The term 'Magic & Science' comes from Aby Warburg (1866-1929, Germany), an art historian who placed movement at the centre of his way of understanding the world. Within this category, Warburg gathered historical images that combined alchemy, sorcery, divination and prophecy, together with chemistry, physiology, mathematics and medicine. While Magic and Science might usually be thought of as opposites, if dance is considered as an embodied artistic medium, then it is always already navigating this zone in which subjective and objective, mind and body are inseparably entangled.

With 'Magic & Science', part of what this edition of the festival celebrates is the different ways in which a number of artists could be seen to be exploring aspects of this evocative and generative zone in their practices, and the potent ways in which this engages dance with current political urgencies. I see these practices as working within and on the fundamental connectedness of our mental being, our physical being, and the manifold other human and non-human beings in the environments around us.

By noticing, questioning and activating agency through these connections, the urgencies of ecological and social justice are all implicated, and ways of being in relation to those questions are manifested.

Another concept of Warburg's has been a helpful way to imagine how the festival artists might be viewed through a shared lens: that of the practitioner as 'seismograph' - a person who is tuning in to particular frequencies, resonances and ruptures that are vibrating in the environments around them, diagnosing their epicentres, and bringing them to light to be perceived. In different and yet related ways, each of the participating artists offers vitally regenerative responses to the many-layered complexities that we are living through. How we move through these is how we move forward together.



...there is so much fantastic work happening in dance and choreography right now, and Nottdance can only hope to be a small sampling of what's happening in the field.

Matthias Sperling

KARL JAY-LEWIN

INVITED ARTIST REFLECTION

A selection of reflections from my Nottdance 2019. Not in any significant order.

Queer/ artist / gender / Transgender / artists / sex / Black / Asian / BAME / People of Colour / disability / identity / identity politics/ politics of identity / me / my experience / my responsibility /white cis male / accountability / academic / ritual / altered states / duration / trance / transitioning / sincerity / intimacy / exposure / thoughtfulness / returning / how far have we come / repetition / slow developments of material / no crescendos / thank you for inviting me in / gravitas versus notions of self-importance / thank you for mentioning class / returning / I might not understand it but I can still get it / us / us and them / who is this for / art for artists / art for people / artists are people / lovely dancing is sometimes enough.

I buy flights - Inverness to East Midlands and Birmingham to Inverness - adding two to the fourteen planes I've boarded over the last 12months. I justify flying again, explaining to people I know will allay my shame, that six of the previous planes had propellers (does that make a difference?) and that apparently the boat to Norway is even more polluting than a jet. And did you know the train to Nottingham takes 11hrs and costs twice as much as the plane? Well actually, to be honest, it takes 9hrs 52' with three changes or 9hrs 11mins with 5 changes and costs £183.25 return. But as I want to go to Birmingham on the way back it adds 75 mins each way and £45.55. Return flights are indeed cheaper, costing £120, although I should include airport check in and waiting times and taxi transfer costs in my calculation and weighing up. Instead, I fake a clear conscience, deliberately blinkered and squirming while trying to convince myself that the contribution the arts is making towards a better world gives me an earthly right to use up that little bit more resource, add that bit more to the global climate crisis. I have a degree of denial. I am overwhelmed and in despair. I don't even know if carbon offsetting is a useful thing.



I walk for 20 mins to the dance venue from my hotel and have difficulty negotiating the automatic outward opening door of the building. I eventually understand its safety feature and stand back to allow it to open. On the way up the stairs I wonder how often I stand in the way of my own progression. I am greeted by warm smiles and a delicious curry. When two or more gather in the name of art, over good food, only good work can come about from it – I made that bit up and like to think it's true. I gravitate towards familiar faces.

I once walked 90 mins to Pimlico and stood at the bottom of the Tate Gallery steps. I'd never been in an art gallery and I looked up at the great stone pillars, curious and uneasy, feeling both the call to adventure and intimidated. [How did the other kids at school ever get good at sport when we were not taught how to play it?] To avoid the terrifying shame of pushing on an outward opening door or some other embarrassment I take the long walk home.

I was politicised amongst the anarcho-feminist early 80s London squatting scene – smash the system. We pondered such things as whether heterosexual penetrative sex was inherently oppressive and whether a change of language to something like enveloping sex, made it less so. Back then Queer was still a pretty derogatory term.

I loved the piece, I loved the dancing, the swaying, the smiling, I loved returning to the underground cavernous space again, the whole body at once perceiving time passing, yet clock time, the whole body at once perceiving space moving, contained with concrete walls.

I was relieved when he publicly mentioned class system and its role in art.

"Self-consciousness is a heightened sense of self-awareness. It is a preoccupation with oneself, as opposed to the philosophical state of self-awareness, which is the awareness that one exists as an individual being".

I don't always read performance programme notes.
I like to take things at face value.

- Why the gnome ears?
- It's a reminder... not to take too seriously what I'm doing while taking what I do seriously

Thank you Mattias, all at Dance 4, all the artists and audiences.

When two or more gather in the name of art, over good food, only good work can come about from it – I made that bit up and like to think it's true.

Karl Jay-Lewin

SARAH TUTT

INVITED ARTIST REFLECTION

I should say I'm not drawn to watching people take more than one foot off the ground at the same time...or them jiggling about...or watching an old story acted out as some kind of mute Charades on hot coals (please just TELL me he's dead/lost/married rather than leaping about with your forehead on your forehead and your feet behind you)...

So Dance4's biennial festival of choreographic ideas – Nottdance – suits me well. Instead of linear, fixed scores, we find something more risky, vital and surprising. Many of the city's public and cultural spaces are transformed by the uncertainty of the human body in unexpected forms.

This year was no different. Two shows I witnessed took place in The Project Space at BACKLIT – a newly developed glorious cavern of mill-style architecture just forlorn enough to still hold its heritage ghosts and underdeveloped enough to not appear chi-chi despite its potential. With its gallery-finished walls, original features and columns, it provided a perfect placement for both *CHAUD* (CA) and *Make Banana Cry* (QC/CA).

In *CHAUD*, the space was transformed into a part club/wasteland/urban dwelling, where the invitation was to negotiate the space at the same time as negotiating our response to what was happening in front of us. After buying drinks at the bar, the audience became disciples to the two extraordinary performers, Antonija Livingstone & Mich Cota, following them through the space as they acted out a series of intimate, tender rituals around the semi-set punctuation of piles of earth, fire and branches.

In another transatlantic offering, Andrew Tay and Stephen Thompson's *Make Banana Cry* invited us to place pink plastic bags on our shoes before taking a seat. This simple re-costuming of the audience made us part spectacle as the repetition of pink plastic drew a low line round the room as the auditorium filled up. The space became transformed into an apparent hyper-hygienic catwalk snaking through the space. It was an intriguing opener that got strangers talking. It prompted the unnerving starter for ten – what were we protecting ourselves from?

As it turned out we were protecting 'them'. Who were they? Urban warriors turned playful creatures, who approached us with intimidating states of territorial overdress and confidence, and who journeyed through a relentless series of upbeat, exuberant states of dress and undress, to finally end up exhausted, vulnerable and naked, prostrate and trembling, at our feet.

Throughout the festival, a sense of questioning was a constant and necessary *modus operandi* for audiences. We were often not sure. Not sure of our role as audience (do we sit down, where do we sit down, do we get out of the way, do we follow that moving tree stump?), not sure of the genre framing what we were seeing (is it a band? a dance? a talk?), not sure of our response (should I be laughing, shocked, upset right now?), and importantly not even sure of what artform we should be valuing.

This uncertainty continued with *Beside* by Maribé – sors de ce corps at Nottingham Lakeside Arts – an amusing lost-in-translation battle between man and machine, where the art of listening, understanding and processing information becomes a compulsion. Here 'dancer' became 'interlocutor' as the banality of live local radio provided a verbal score, to which the performers responded.

A real sense of 'the live' is a feature of Nottdance. This 'liveness' comes from an apparent invitation to take risks – often physical (fire, heights, proximity, endurance), often situational (live radio, accidental audiences, external weather) and creative (push it, challenge it, dare to...). In turn, this seems to produce work that contains a tangible sense of intimacy, vulnerability and vitality. Something distinctly human. Something distinctly authentic.

This year, it couldn't have come at a more crucial time. When the navigation of the heartening and disheartening is frantically providing us with an emotional score in our daily lives, it is enriching and cathartic to be confronted with complexities that are tender and intimate and that offer new ways of being and seeing. The work I witnessed did exactly that. It offered me an 'Elan Vital' that was contagious. I was provided with a portrait of the human condition that reflected back to me a vulnerability and a serious playfulness that made me feel that change was possible.

Nottdance made me optimistic.

*The space became transformed into
an apparent hyper-hygienic catwalk
snaking through the space.*

Sarah Tutt





MAUD LANNEN

NOTTDANCE 2019 REVIEWER

REVIEW#1

Nottdance 2019 Launches and Gathers Together

The biennial festival now in its 25th edition returns to Nottingham to captivate us.

Tonight the pristine studio space has turned 'pop-up' canteen to feed all the guests, audience and staff equally, and Indian is on the menu provided by Nottingham caterers, 'Indian Nights.' Warming spices and delicate flavours delight. Hospitality and dialogue are put at the centre of this practice, that of hosting and unwaveringly collaborating and making space in the face of stringent cuts and political uncertainty. Matthias Sperling, artist and co-curator of the programme, announces: "We are ready to make our contribution". This year's focus on 'Magic and science' – the generative power of performance, of "gathering" – coheres a breadth of artistic practices in dance today. They articulate a felt-sense of social, political and ecological urgency and artistic unrest.

Themes of hospitality, collaboration, unrest and transformation follow in the opening performance *Music For Lectures/She Dancing* by Katye Coe, Jonathon Burrows and Mattheo & Francesca Fargion, relaying the unknown and unheard experience of the dancer (Katye Coe) in collaboration with Jonathon Burrows and the Fargions introduced as a rock band. On entering we are greeted by Katye performing gestures around the space and audience members. She is smiling, touching, furtively embracing, taking the time to greet all around. She jumps, rotates, tiptoes, circles. She feels the space above her head, twirls, inserts herself between two. This is an exercise in exploring what the body and space can do, and importantly what they can do for each other – What are the limits, the contours and capacity of the dancer's body? What are the limits of space, time and being with? What grammar of movement and intent must the dancer obey? And what new forms and sensations may emerge from disrupting such order? *She* knows. *She* knows the fullness that comes from a "re-orientated world from that wobbly felt-sense, from this misty unknown experience". *She Dancing* is a radical feminist dancing-voice, wild and learning to speak and honour herself, not a binary argument, and definitely not a representation by another "thank you but absolutely no, thank you." *She Dancing* is the voice that, courageously, under our gaze, is building alternative ways of being in the world from the inside/outside/inside. "Dance arrives in us" while music unfolds like an essential partner – generous attentive dynamic present – creating alluring cinematic frames and rhythms: narrow, close and ever-expanding landscapes. In them, we see more, go deeper and touch closer.

Themes of hospitality, collaboration, unrest and transformation follow in the opening performance

Maud Lannen

REVIEW#2

Generating New Spaces as a Creative Practice and Technology for Change

Day 2 begins with a walk through the historic Lace Market, once the heart of the world's lace industry, to get to Nottdance's hosting partner for the evening, Nottingham Contemporary – a leading art gallery for contemporary art in the UK. Designed by Caruso St. John Architects, the striking building is recognisable for its clean lines of concrete (imprinted with lace) and gold. When it opened ten years ago, the structure seemed to have landed from another planet and nestled itself accidentally in the (predominantly) Victorian landscape. But accident it was not, for it marked a very Western endeavour – that of creating a spatio-temporal tactile (yes, I said 'tactile') break in order to generate a new sense of place and a revitalised unity between culture, technology and (shared) purpose.

And indeed tonight, such endeavour was palpably at the centre of artistic concern, questions and experimental practice. Joe Moran's *Thirst*, performed by Sean Murray and Karl Fagerlund, is a seven-minute intervention in space – blink and you could miss it in the cacophony of the crowd.

Introduced as a 'spectacle', a term coined by Guy Debord (French philosopher and Marxist theorist, and leading figure of 20th century revolutionary movement the Situationist International), the piece pre-empted a 21st century wilful play of resistance against post-capitalist economy and its systemic degradation of human life. The performance is both quiet and furtive yet colossal, testing the very limits of balance, resistance, intimacy via the sense of touch and consent between two, and, refreshingly, between two men. Moran shows us that if "The Society of the Spectacle" does indeed degrade, its tools and force can be harnessed and re-orientated towards counter-ideologies.

Tools as technology is further explored in Matthias Sperling's *No-How Generator*, performed by himself and Katy Coe, with guest artist and dancer, Jennifer Lacey.

Before entering, we are given a question: "How in the act of dancing in performance can we experience new ways of knowing?" Initial humour is ensued by the ceremonious, dense and all-encompassing, slowly building up from the two mirroring bodies' continual rocking and extending outwards, and layered voicescapes. Together, they create a flow, a current, working the very materiality of space and us within it. The lighting turns red recalling ancient rituals and the celebrated, honoured and worshiped force that is fire (another technology). Here our bodies are absorbed in the thousand ecstatic voices conjuring through the bodies of the dancers as conduits to other worlds. This is a bold proposition for the audience: its immersion and 'totalness' is incessant and overwhelming. The idea of the crowd and its fanatic oneness in the presence of a multitude recalls for all in the West difficult memories, a deep sense of shame and the indelible desire never ever to repeat. However, here contained in the belly of Nottingham Contemporary, a church of concrete, deep below ground level, I too am reminded of the function of the 'core' navigating 'inside/outside/inside' – a necessary core from which culture, as an embodied, intuitive, felt-sense of knowing, originates.

We move next to another place of worship, St Mary's church, to attend Janine Harrington's *Screensavers Series* performed by herself, Vanessa Abreu, Stephanie McMann, Elisa Vassena, and Rosalie Bell.

Meticulously choreographed, it is a technical work of precision but also of capacity for attention, taking care and taking time for oneself and the other – another play of somatics leading to meditative repetition. We delight in its gift of space (and distance) and holding.



"[being] caught in the liminal space"; "a deep transformation of space"; "we're transcending";

Eve Stainton

Slug Horizons, created and performed by Eve Stainton and Florence Peake, returns us to Nottingham Contemporary. The two, stripped naked but for a black top, welcome us into the space like friends to Donna Summer's iconic and sexually charged I Feel Love. The space is relaxed, warm, playful. One can instantly feel the tantalised excitement of the audience.

This is going to be fun.

The stage is intimate and at floor level. We are seated around it tightly on makeshift beanbags, made from odd geometrical cuttings of foam. The stage floor is covered with a print appearing to merge different fragments of Florence and Eve's bodies together into one representation. I also notice amorphous ceramic objects in red and pink clustered in one of its corners and another small station of pens and pastels.

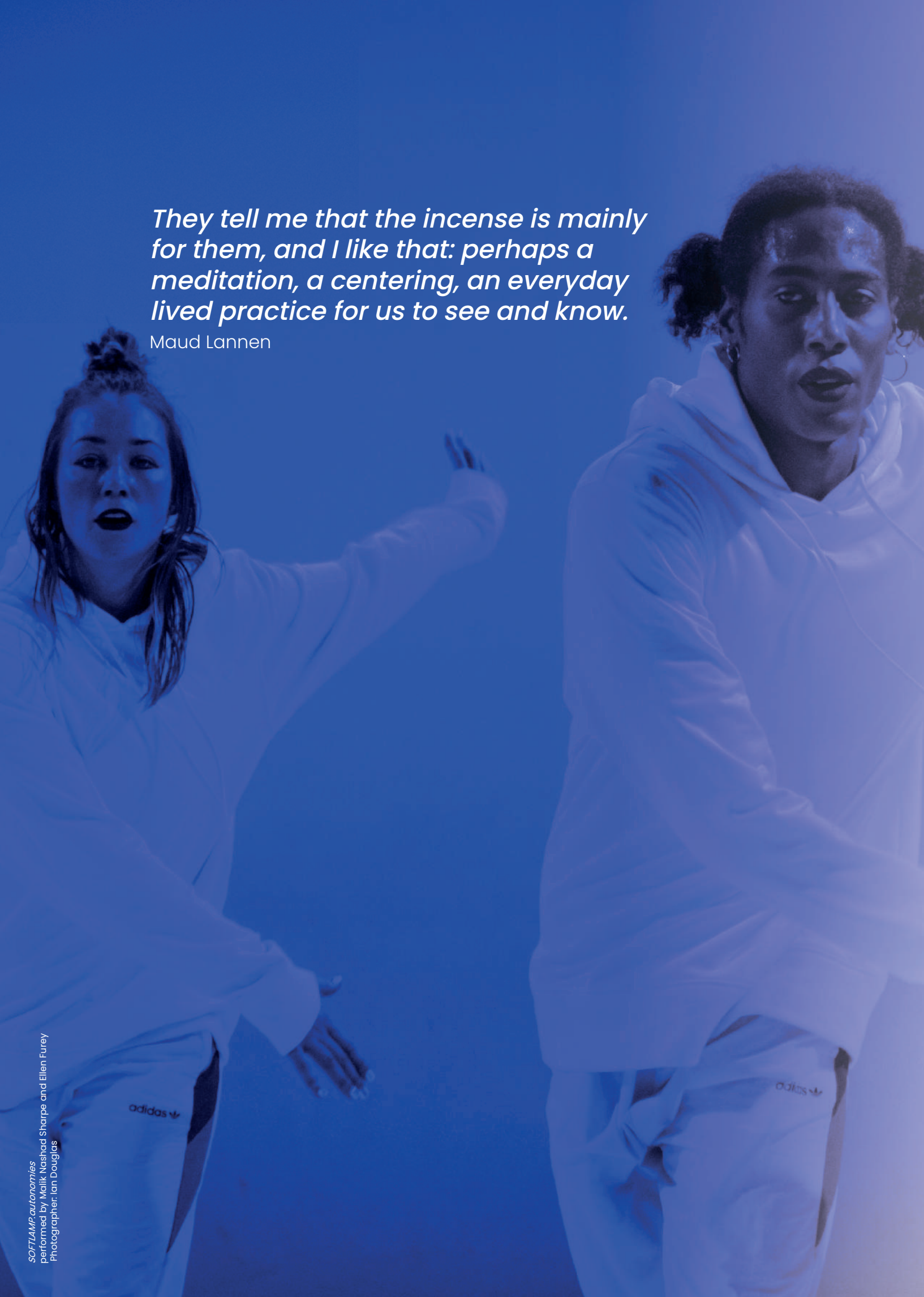
Florence and Eve begin and invite us to participate in colouring and drawing on their vulvas, genitals, bellies, marking the contours of their bodies with lines, colour and sticky fabric. The audience is only too willing to engage in such intimate and playful proximities. The space stays light and dynamic filled with humour and laughter, Florence blurting out, when one sticky tape is positioned into her crack (formally 'vertical gluteal crease') "this one is going to hurt!" or casually asking a member of the audience to sort out her pens and lids so she can move to the next section of the piece.

Five plastic pouches are hanging from metal chains over the ceramics. Florence and Eve remove the plugs. The pouches' beaks/teats begin to release a slime: translucent, brownish-pink, flesh like. They form heavy lines, pulled down by gravity and eventually hitting the installation below. Eve and Florence intertwine each other from the crouch (what Florence has described before as the quintessential patriarchal fantasy of lesbianism) and begin to assert their individual movements. It's a play of agility, suppleness, dexterity within the frame of power and resistance and, simultaneously, of generosity, curiosity and ingenuity within the frame of creativity – a tight and thin negotiation, exploiting bodily situations and gravity, and importantly, making at all cost.

When they finally disengage, they both perform orgasmic rituals, not with physical but imagined touch, raising interesting questions around the origins of bodily pleasure and erogenous zones, i.e. is it another construction? Then it's a game of tongues, a kind of intimate, explorative language between two lovers: the sucking of tongues; tongues hanging low, bouncing off each other; and, classic, tongue fighting. The pair then recounts their first encounter in the present tense while renewing their intertwining practice. Eve tells Florence, who was struck with lust on first sight, "no, I don't see you... I think that I smell you before I see you". They trace before us the mundane jarring memories of their encounter, one that is being re-constructed and re-fantasized in front of our eyes. The recalling and re-making, calling upon simultaneously memory and imagination, act to somehow distract and diffuse the intensity of the physical power play. Florence throws "... my sick is going into your mouth". Eve: "no, it's going into my shorts... I think it's inside my shorts and inside my mouth". In this sharing of bodily waste, they comically report "[being] caught in the liminal space"; "a deep transformation of space"; "we're transcending"; "maybe my entire body has been your sick... So we're liquid."; "our becomings", "it's beautiful".

They escape the stage following a trail of spit (their own) across the crowd while actual slugs, hermaphroditic being, perform their mating ritual on film projected on the wall: they entwine their bodies while hanging from a slimy mucus rope. Each slug has male and female sex organs and will both fertilize and be fertilized by the other slug; they bring closer the idea and imperative of looking out towards the poetics of re-imagined pasts to re-construct our present and shape our future in all of our most intimate and shared practices.





*They tell me that the incense is mainly
for them, and I like that: perhaps a
meditation, a centering, an everyday
lived practice for us to see and know.*

Maud Lannen

REVIEW#3

CHAUD is co-created by feminist choreographer and dancer Antonija Livingstone (CA) and award-winning artist, performer, and Trans & Indigeneity activist, Mich Cota.

The performance takes place at Backlit, an artist-led contemporary gallery and studios in the heart of Nottingham. Backlit is housed in a 19th century textile factory, once owned by Samuel Morley, an eminent national political figure (MP for Nottingham, social reformer in adult education and the abolition of slavery, and philanthropist). As I enter, I am struck by the scale of the site: a long, generous internal space connecting with an outside yard leading onto the street. Techno music is playing (courtesy of sound designer and composer Brendan Dougherty), giving the empty shell a distinct club/rave feel.

I hook up with Malik Nashad Sharpe (aka marikiscrycrycry, US/UK) who co-created and performed *SOFTLAMP. autonomies* with Ellen Furey (CA) on day one of this year's Nottdance. We talk about the piece, the burning of incense at the start. They tell me that the incense is mainly for them, and I like that: perhaps a meditation, a centering, an everyday lived practice for us to see and know. The conversation turns to the monumental, exhaustive and repetitive nature of the choreography. For Nashad Sharpe, as a non-binary black person, it stands as an expression of political action and struggle reflecting the conditions around their bodies. With Ellen (who is not present), they wanted to show the mental and physical character of exhaustion and struggle, and yet the unbreakable will of two subjects who get up again, keep coming back. This is not easy, comfortable material. Malik performs in many mainstream settings, including on the club scene.

The culture of clubs and the underground scene was and remains an important site of refuge and resistance for the marginalised experience and the expression of non-normative creatives – especially queer performance artists, the most prominent figure among whom is body artist Ron Athey (US).

At Backlit, soft, warm sensual yellow and red lighting brings the inside and outside together, exciting our senses in anticipation of both pleasure and risk, for while *CHAUD* (the French for 'hot') or 'chaleur' (warmth as temperature or emotional) is the most human basic necessity to sustain, heat can also burn.

And risk is announced when Livingstone throws at the onset: "We're going to move a lot, take care of yourselves". And she means it. This is not a "safe space" (a 1970s feminist concept) – initiative that, in the context of trans people's access to women's spaces today, is the subject of controversial and heated debate, and often severe criticism. This is a "post-safe" space, a place for the type of dialogue and material that is, of necessity, challenging, uncomfortable. The type of exchange and presentation (not a representation) that overthrows all of our white, middle-class, heteronormative, western assumptions and the lies we tell ourselves about our identity, our all too often "skewed" liberalism (and I include myself in that).

The performance is built around a series of site-specific actions (ten) and constructed 'lived-in' frames dotted around the site, its narrowest edges and beyond. The delivery is very dynamic and fast-paced. Both Livingstone and Cota exude presence, a sense of urgency and unwavering purpose.

This is activism in the making. We have no idea what is going to happen next or where. All we know is that when it happens we need to get out of the way pronto. They run across the site holding a giant tarpaulin that floats and waves behind them, catching all around. Livingstone shouts out "get out of the way!". It's make or break. The action will not hesitate. Protective barriers are tipped over while the two escape to roam the streets. Other actions include pouring barrels and buckets of water onto the ramp giving access from the street to the yard and watching it flow and gather. Other actors in the piece include manure, earth, hay, lavender, leafy branches and ribbons to name a few. Cota waves the branches energetically above her head, we smell the green. She then drops her top down and begins vigorously throwing a mixture of earth, manure, branches and hay – debris comes, brushing and/or flying into the audience. Livingstone's giant snail also joins us – the performer spits on her hand to gently invite them out of their shell. Cota covers herself with long, flowing ribbons (blue, white and orange) assisted by Livingstone and sings in Algonquin – her indigenous language – performing an unknown dance. Physical contact and interactions with members of the audience are at play throughout via the sheer exposure to the environment, and then warmth, tenderness and a desire to connect emerges; Livingstone dances close to a member of the audience, whispering to them; Cota offers one end of her ribbon to another, playing a short game of resistance before rolling her body around it and hugging the individual; Cota's hand held in the air invites the hand of another for a moment. Fantastic scenographic frames are being generated in front of our eyes in quick sharp successions: Livingstone takes the lead in moving the flood lights around the floor, switching or turning off other sources to create instant new spaces. One doesn't miss that she verbally cues the changes to assistants either, which, for an audience, breaks with the conventions and staged magic of theatre.

But magic is not lost. Instead the magic and uniqueness of place and people, and their capacity to make and witness and hold and behold lives, and its memory dances here, here, here and here.

CHRISTOPHER MATTHEWS

INVITED ARTIST REFLECTION

I feel I need to talk about “showing up”.

If we define “showing up” by Merriam Webster ideas (they are the word experts), it’s an intransitive verb meaning “to appear or to become involved with others and make an active contribution.” (Cool I did that) As a transitive verb MW says “to expose or discredit especially by revealing faults.” (did that happen? not sure but I hope it didn’t)

I have attended festivals similar to Nottdance but the difference being I was paid to be there either to teach, speak on a panel or perform. That’s generally how I am able to attend festivals by working for them in some capacity. So, for first time ever I went to a festival solely to just be there (almost true).

By definition I “showed up” because I appeared in Nottingham to be with others making a contribution to the arts by seeing shows, having conversations and spending money in local establishments.

I showed up to see my friends shows.

I showed up to see shows that weren’t made by my friends.

I showed up to Jennifer Lacey’s amazing transformative tarot card reading. She was happy because the person before me hadn’t shown up.

I showed up to meet programmers to sell my work to them in between the hustle and bustle of programmed performances.

I showed up for the blue cheese that was served in mass quantities.

I showed up for the dialogues and conversations, those being formal or casual/social moments.

I think about the others; the volunteers, the staff, the programmed artists, the programmers. The programmers; oh did they show up! I realised this as I saw them running from the Dance4 building to the train to catch a show in London. They showed up even when they needed to be in two different cities hours apart on the same day. I am not sure why I am sympathetic because we artists are running all the time but I am sympathetic to those programmers and their cardio induced efforts.

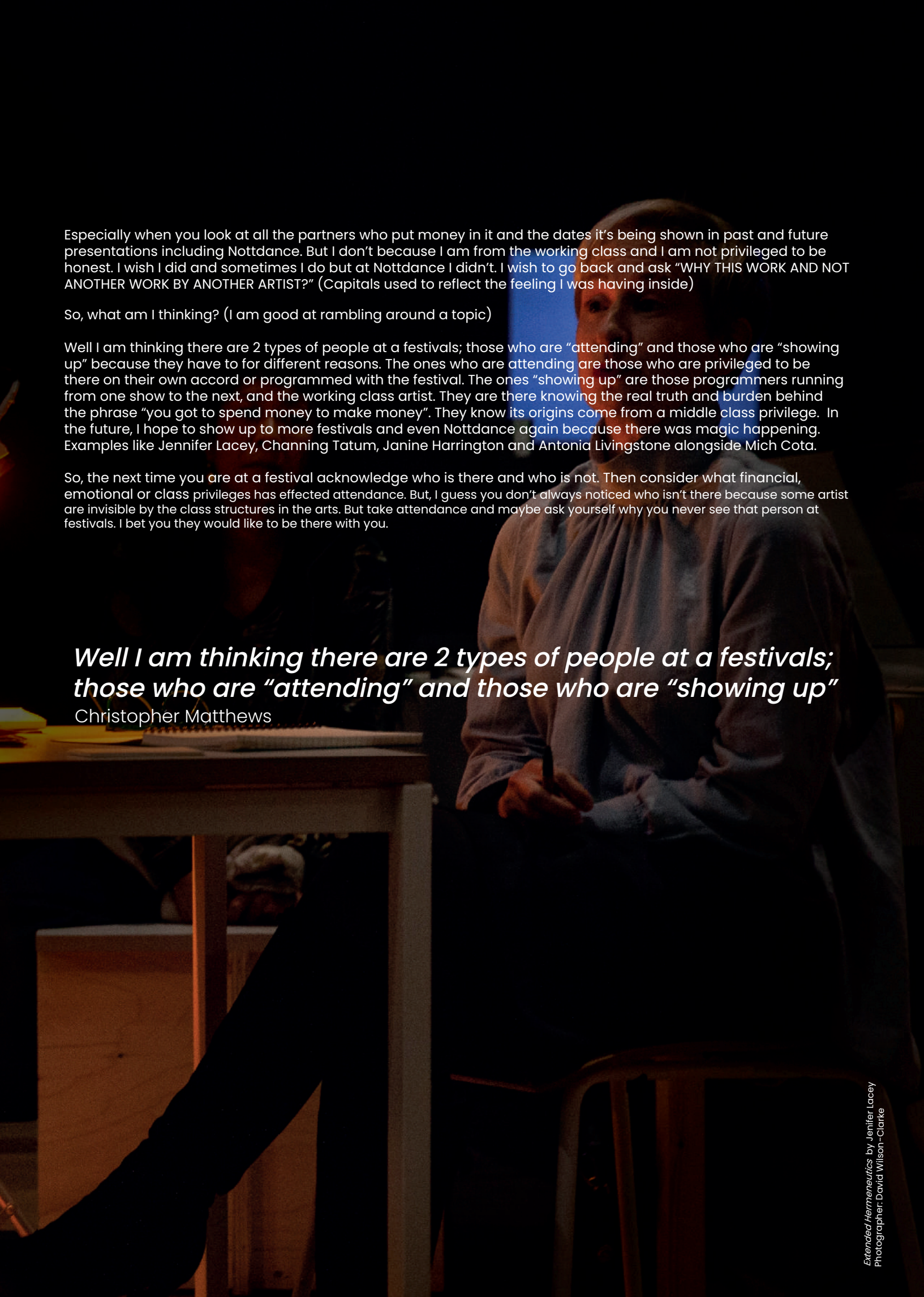
What does it mean to “show up?” Not in a philosophical way but more in a economical/political way. I decided to reflect on this because it came up in conversation with some artist who didn’t realise their middle class privilege of being able to pop from one city to the next to attend all the festivals. (I answered a few times over the weekend that I wouldn’t be attending the other festival next week because I can’t afford to just go to festivals)

As a working class artist, it is not always possible to show up even though we are expected to. Like I said I have only been to a festival if I have been paid to be there. That’s not about being a snob that’s about privilege. So, I showed up to Nottdance but not without struggle. I am writing this reflection to help subsidise having fees waived, I moved some money around in an Arts Council grant to pay for the hotel and train, and finally I basked in the free croissants and soup since I didn’t have a per diem.

But, it felt important as I wanted to support the artists I love and I desperately needed to meet the programmers to get my work shown. The catch-22 of having to be at the festivals so you can get programmed for the festivals. I know programmers receive thousands of emails a year so I understand why mine never get answered. This is why I showed up to where they all showed up to so I could introduce myself in person.

When I think about the artists who have shown up even on an overdraft it makes me critical about the programming and it influences how I view the work. If it was a wonderful piece then it felt good and I never think about money. When I showed up to a painstaking horrendous performance it reminded me of the economical burden I have endured to “show up.” Yes there’s a transactional thinking when one is calculating every move and meal at these events.

When it comes to the quality of a performance I wonder if anyone “shows up” to tell an artist your work really isn’t ready to be performed at a festival of this caliber. I know that was happening in the foyers and breakfast tables privately. But no one is being critical and asking artists to be held accountable or even the programmers to be held accountable for spending money on such poor quality work. Myself included, there were works at Nottdance that made me angry for being shown. One in particular was dreadful that I could feel the claustrophobia of the audience wanting to get out of the theatre immediately. Of course people are “showing up” to tell artists when their work is excellently crafted and performed or placed in a context that further expands its beauty, rigour and political relevance. Even myself muscled up the courage to tell Jennifer Lacey how overwhelming the experience was and thanked her for making that work. But when a show is outright bad why don’t we “show up” to voice it.



Especially when you look at all the partners who put money in it and the dates it's being shown in past and future presentations including Nottdance. But I don't because I am from the working class and I am not privileged to be honest. I wish I did and sometimes I do but at Nottdance I didn't. I wish to go back and ask "WHY THIS WORK AND NOT ANOTHER WORK BY ANOTHER ARTIST?" (Capitals used to reflect the feeling I was having inside)

So, what am I thinking? (I am good at rambling around a topic)

Well I am thinking there are 2 types of people at a festivals; those who are "attending" and those who are "showing up" because they have to for different reasons. The ones who are attending are those who are privileged to be there on their own accord or programmed with the festival. The ones "showing up" are those programmers running from one show to the next, and the working class artist. They are there knowing the real truth and burden behind the phrase "you got to spend money to make money". They know its origins come from a middle class privilege. In the future, I hope to show up to more festivals and even Nottdance again because there was magic happening. Examples like Jennifer Lacey, Channing Tatum, Janine Harrington and Antonia Livingstone alongside Mich Cota.

So, the next time you are at a festival acknowledge who is there and who is not. Then consider what financial, emotional or class privileges has effected attendance. But, I guess you don't always noticed who isn't there because some artist are invisible by the class structures in the arts. But take attendance and maybe ask yourself why you never see that person at festivals. I bet you they would like to be there with you.

***Well I am thinking there are 2 types of people at a festivals;
those who are "attending" and those who are "showing up"***

Christopher Matthews

MARIE BELAND

NOTTDANCE 2019 ARTIST

On Being a Witness

Being an audience member at Nottdance 2019 and attending most of the programme, I could not stop thinking about a notion André Lepecki defends in his last book, *Singularities* and the notion of the “witness”. While attending the performances, I kept asking myself: What type of witness am I? What do I do with the experience I get from the performances? How do I give back?

The momentum of a festival acts very differently from theatre seasons, as it is condensed and intense. It seems to me like the perfect context to really embrace this posture of the witness as Lepecki defends it. The shows I saw gave me the space and the capacity to be their witness, meaning I felt welcomed, available, free. I had both a physical, emotional, intellectual experience I could then relate to and share. Sharing was a huge part of Nottdance for me. I will cherish the memories of all the conversations I had about the shows with colleagues, Canadian fellows and other dance artists. Each time everyone could freely talk about the experience they had, how the performance affected their feeling, their identity, their limits. No judgment. No wrong answer.

Words were rarely enough, and isn't that the challenge of this sort of exchange? Saying unsayable things? Trying to put words where no words were needed? I love those exercises of putting words on feelings, on intuitions, on sensations. Maybe because it never does, so it stays a never-ending quest, or a game we try to play between the sharing members. So, we did that, we shared about how all those artworks got through us, and changed something while passing by. They were experimental, and they were experiential. All the works gave me something to grasp, something to carry. I was watching the shows through my eyes, but also through the “others” eyes, knowing we would talk about it at the end of the night. Isn't it one of the main reasons why we keep coming to those events: to be co-present, corporeally there with the others, without the need of any (social) media to interact? Projecting myself in those sharing moments made my experience of the shows rich and complex. It gave to my personal experience of the works a communal component. The works transformed me twice: while I was living it, and when I was telling it and listening to the stories of others.

Then I came back to Montréal, and to being alone in front of my computer. I know those transformations are there, somewhere inside of me. And now I don't have to name them anymore. They are just there, and probably influence the way I think, the way I perceive the world, the way I act in it, the choices I make. There is no way to say if that makes me a better human being. It's just different.

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Main front cover image; *SOFTLAMP.autonomies* with Malik Nashad Sharpe. Photographer: Ian Douglas
Small front cover image; Nottdance 2019 Launch. Photographer: David Wilson-Clarke
Reverse cover image: *BESIDE* with performers, Rachel Harris, Sylvain Lafortune and Bernard Martin © Montréal Danse.