

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Confinement Dance Photo Essay Series: Abstract Bodies

by Christina Catanese

This week, our [Confined Dancing Series](#) of photo essays concludes, perhaps ironically, with submissions displaying abstracted bodies. The locus of our vulnerability to disease, our bodies are the essential tools with which we experience the crisis during this pandemic era. They serve as our vehicles for navigating safely through public space, where we are now all [dancers, choreographers, and improvisers](#). Yet, the pandemic has forced nearly all of our interactions into online spaces, and rendered the embodied and communal experiences on which dance has relied suddenly unavailable. This sense of abstract, disembodied movement and experience permeated reader submissions.

The human body is the medium of dance, but no one ever promised that we'd see these bodies in their entirety all the time. Some images show only portions of the moving bodies they depict—particular body parts and limbs stand in, leaving the rest of the body's machinations to the imagination. Faces in particular are obscured, modified, or digitized, variously humorous, unsettling, or tantalizing. Some of these faceless images called to mind for me Marcel Duchamp's seminal work [Étant donnés](#) at the Philadelphia Art Museum, a work that can only be seen privately by a single viewer, which depicts a nude body whose face is barely out of the frame (it's worth seeking out, when the Museum reopens). Some submissions also duplicate a single body multiple times, creating something of an ensemble out of government-decreed solos.

Disorienting at times, these reader explorations that abstract the human body reflect on our collective position in a larger, fragmented whole.

Irina Varina

March 29, 2020

Philadelphia, PA

dreaming hands

These are hands of David Brick, Zephyr Saffron Matsushima Brick, and Maiko Matsushima. It's a still photo from a shot that didn't make it to the video I was working on in March-April called "Dreaming Space" (<https://vimeo.com/407349254>). For it, I asked Philly folks to write down a dream about the kind of world they wanted to live in, use it as a prompt to create a short movement phrase, film it, and send it to me. The image was striking. Maybe it was the fun nail polish peeking through the gloves. Or the fact that I didn't notice them wearing gloves in the wider movement shots. Or maybe it was the radical capacity and courage of our imagination to dream about the new world while wearing disposable gloves.

<https://irinavarina.com/> | Instagram: @irvarina



Image credit: David Brick

Gabriel Paleari, of Estranha Company of Dance

April 28, 2020

Londrina, Brazil

Nothing else would be like before

During this time in quarantine, our research is about this time and the limitation of space. We have been motivated by the question of how to create in isolation. In this quarantine period, the act of dancing is a resistance, a way of being healthy, and a demonstration that we persist to exist. I try to dance the limitations of the days and the confinement and create, because creation is inherent, a necessity. It's time to dance.

<https://estranhacompanhia.wordpress.com/> | Instagram: @estranhacia



Photo: Cindy Amano

Margaret Wiss

April 21, 2020

Massachusetts

up in the air

A daily dance diary. Made in collaboration with the sky and landscape. Exploring expansive stillness.

www.margaretwiss.com | Instagram: @Wiss.co



Marina Kec

April 12, 2020

Philadelphia, PA

Lessons from Bolero

The stay-at-home order influenced me to tackle Maurice Béjart's ballet, *Bolero*. In April, I adapted an excerpt of the lead solo for film. The choreography stands alone as a compelling performance and naturally lends itself to experimentation with layered visuals. The relentless, looping score is a uniquely appropriate accompaniment for the unremitting movement. This project demanded consistency, endurance, and an ability to stay present in cycles of repetition—all skills that are necessary to persevere through extended periods of isolation.

Instagram: @marinakec



Alba Vieira

April 4, 2020

Vicosa, Minas Gerais, Brazil

body-shelter

I have been confined for more than one month now. Dancing at home has provided me holistic health in these difficult times. I have invited friends from all over the world to dance with me; they send me short videos of themselves dancing (1-3 minutes) and I answer to their dance through a video I edit of both of us dancing “together.” *body-shelter* is an image of a dance made with a German dancer friend. See the video at <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-wg2w8B6ll/?igshid=tdxctdcp0luu>

www.albavieira.com.br | <https://companhiamosaico.wordpress.com> | Instagram: @dancamosaico



Photo: Laina Vieira

Merián Soto

March 31, 2020

Philadelphia, PA

Selfie Isolation Practice

I have had a strong solo practice—dancing and self-documenting—for a long time. During the pandemic, I've extended this work to creating graphic dances with the selfie records.

www.meriansoto.com | Instagram: @meriansoto | Facebook: @meriansoto | vimeo.com/meriansoto



Sean Thomas Boyt

May 11, 2020

Iowa

Sundance

I opted to escape Philadelphia's city folk for new horizons—my mother's place in Iowa. Pre-pandemic, I was a happy home designer: reconfiguring my bedroom for optimal productivity and keeping my wits in my back pocket. "Camping" out in the wide fields of Iowa feels less claustrophobic. While I prepare to turn over a new leaf (grad school for dance), I realize that I'm stuck in this wild world for now. If only I bought the new Animal Crossing game.

<http://www.stbdancing.com/>



Nishat Hossain

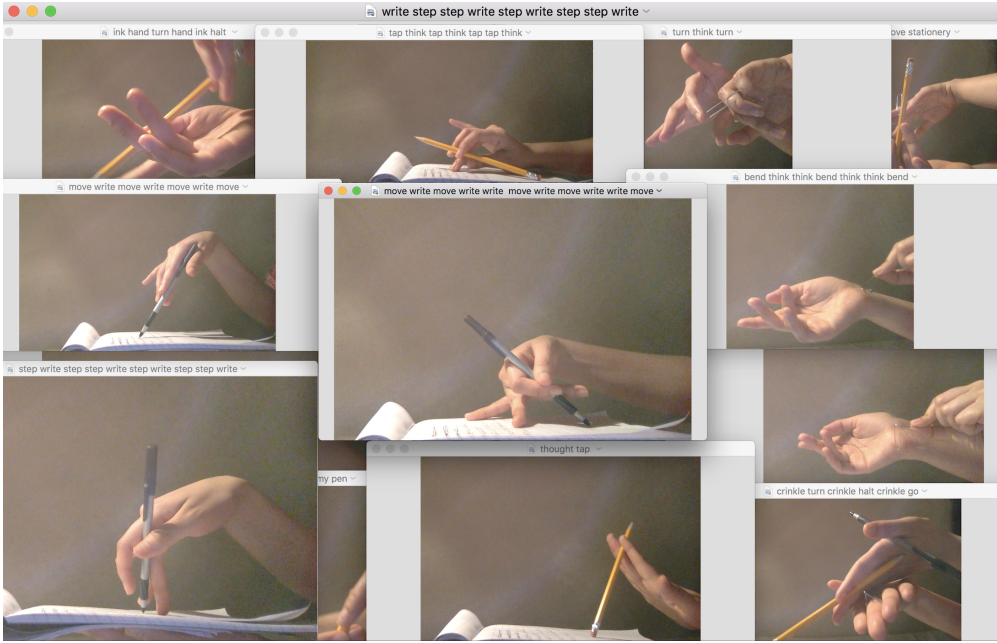
May 25, 2020

Philadelphia, PA

step write step

To write is to dance on the confines of a page. I spend so much time staring into a screen for remote work, I forget I have a body or I'm stuck in a room. To put myself back in my body, I write on paper with a pen. It's a small exercise I can sneak into impossibly long Zoom meetings. Quiet and camouflaged resistance. Professional and discreet scribbles. Repetitive and mundane like history and its violent turnings.

<http://nishathossain.com/>



Photos courtesy of submitting artists unless otherwise noted.

Previous posts in the series: [Domesticity](#), [Frames](#), [Black and White](#)

By Christina Catanese
June 5, 2020