Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done
ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

For a brief period in the early 1960s, a group of choreographers, visual artists, composers, and filmmakers gathered in Judson Memorial Church, a socially engaged Protestant congregation in New York’s Greenwich Village, for a series of workshops that ultimately redefined what counted as dance. The performances that evolved from these workshops incorporated everyday movements—gestures drawn from the street or the home; their structures were based on games, simple tasks, and social dances. Spontaneity and unconventional methods of composition were emphasized. The Judson artists investigated the very fundamentals of choreography, stripping dance of its theatrical conventions, and the result, according to VILLAGE VOICE critic Jill Johnston, was the most exciting new dance in a generation. Through live performance, film, photography, sculptural objects, musical scores, poetry, and archival materials, JUDSON DANCE THEATER: THE WORK IS NEVER DONE traces the history of Judson Dance Theater both in and outside the church, from the workshops that took place there to other spaces around downtown New York.

The program in the Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium is organized into multiple-week segments, each of which focuses on the work of one artist: Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, and Trisha Brown. Additionally, a video installation of related material, edited by the artist Charles Atlas, will be on view. In the final weeks of the exhibition, Movement Research, an organization with a direct lineage to Judson, will hold classes and workshops.

MOVING-IMAGE INSTALLATION DESIGNED BY CHARLES ATLAS

For this exhibition, filmmaker and video artist Charles Atlas has made an installation of historical moving-image material related to the work of the choreographers featured in the performance program, alternating with a compilation of performance footage from the Judson group’s various members. It includes footage of both individual and group pieces made during the Judson era and after, emphasizing the relationship of the soloist to the ensemble and showing how Judson influenced the later careers of these artists. To create the segment dedicated to Trisha Brown, Atlas collaborated with Trisha Brown Dance Company’s former archivist Cori Olinghouse.

For decades, Atlas (American, b. 1949) has brought together dance and media in ways that have transformed how performance is documented. Atlas moved to New York in 1969 and soon started working with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company as stage manager, lighting designer, and in-house filmmaker. He left the Cunningham company in 1984 but continued to collaborate with Cunningham while making his own films and working with other artists, dancers, musicians, and poets. Atlas has introduced new possibilities for representing dance on screen, collapsing moments in time and following performers with his camera to better capture their movement through space. He also contributed to PAST FORWARD, a major Judson reunion in 2000 organized by ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov’s White Oak Dance Project.
Since the beginning of her career in the early 1960s, Yvonne Rainer (American, b. 1934) has challenged many of the movement conventions and narrative structures of modern dance. The performance program features eight dances by Rainer, including her earliest works, THREE SATIE SPOONS (1961) and THREE SEASCAPES (1962), in which she explores various relationships between movement and sound. The program also includes two sections from TERRAIN (1963)—the Judson Dance Theater’s first evening-length presentation of a single work by one choreographer—“Talking Solo” and “Diagonal,” the latter of which uses games as a guiding compositional principle. TRIO A (1966), which has undergone many incarnations, is a series of precisely constructed sequences of seemingly disconnected motions, both virtuosic and mundane, in which the performer never makes eye contact with the audience. Rainer also experimented with athletic and everyday movements in WE SHALL RUN (1963), set to the Tuba mirum from Hector Berlioz’s 1837 Requiem, and CHAIR-PILLOW (1969), which was first performed in her CONTINUOUS PROJECT—ALTERED DAILY (1969). This latter project included many Judson dancers and explored different aspects of the working process of dance making, learning, and rehearsing. It was also an important source for The Grand Union, an improvisational group Rainer was key to forming in the 1970s, which gathered some of the same Judson participants together again.
DEBORAH HAY
SEP 24–OCT 7

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PERFORMANCE PROGRAM
OCT 4, 5, 6
AT 2:00 P.M.
TEN (1968)

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MOVING-IMAGE PROGRAM
Deborah Hay’s Dance Classes
(c. 1966)
Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton Dancing in the Spring St. Loft (c. 1968)
GROUP I (1968)
TEN (1968), performed in 1982
GROUP II (1969)
TRIO I (1969) and TEN (1968), performed in 1969

Deborah Hay (American, b. 1941) was active in the Judson Dance Theater group as both a dancer and choreographer. Like many of her peers, she explored the increasingly blurred line between choreography and everyday movement, organizing her pieces around tasks, games, repetition, and the reduction of movement. In particular, she explored group configurations in a selection of works shown at the Anderson Theater in 1968, including GROUP I (1968), GROUP II (1969), and TEN (1968). Jill Johnston, reviewing that concert in the VILLAGE VOICE, remarked that the three dances “leave me searching for superlatives. I’m tempted with platitudes like ‘breakthrough’ and ‘come a long way.’” The movements in all three dances consist almost entirely of casual steps ordered into strict geometric configurations, and use the same basic materials: musicians, movers, and poles. TEN requires ten performers to divide into groups of different sizes and play a version of follow the leader around a vertical and a horizontal pole. In the original 1968 performance, the rock band The Third Eye provided live accompaniment. However, when the piece was performed in 1982 at Danspace Project, ten contemporary New York–based dancers and the band Max Fraction were invited. Hay’s work illustrates her belief in the potential playfulness of dance and the responsiveness of the dancing body to its surroundings.
During his work as part of Judson Dance Theater, David Gordon (American, b. 1936) was interested in how choreography brings disparate elements together on stage, and how these elements are perceived by audiences. Gordon performed his solo MANNEQUIN DANCE (1962) at Judson Dance Theater’s inaugural concert in 1962. The following year, his growing fascination with show business and pop culture was visible in RANDOM BREAKFAST (1963), performed with his partner, dancer Valda Setterfield. In 1971 Gordon choreographed a group piece, THE MATTER (1971), during a Grand Union residency at Oberlin College, and it was performed a year later at the Cunningham Studio. Throughout that performance, forty dancers—both trained and untrained—suddenly froze, or took positions and revised them, and Setterfield performed a solo using the early photographic motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge as its guiding structure. THE MATTER also included some poses taken from the earlier MANNEQUIN DANCE. Since 1972, THE MATTER has continued to evolve and add other references from Gordon’s previous work. It was performed in his loft in New York in 1979, where it included extracts from his BAYADERE (1977) and CLOSE UP (1979). In 2012 it was performed at Danspace Project in New York with excerpts from BAYADERE, CHAIR (1974), CLOSE UP, MUYBRIDGE (1979), and MANNEQUIN (1962). The artist has conceived a new version, THE MATTER @ MoMA, especially for this exhibition.
In Lucinda Childs's (American, b. 1940) solo work of the early 1960s, she derived movements from the manipulation of commonplace objects like bed sheets and hair rollers. Childs performed her first work, PASTIME (1963), a three-part dance set to Philip Corner's recorded score of water sounds, in 1963 at Judson Memorial Church. After forming the Lucinda Childs Dance Company in 1973, she choreographed CALICO MINGLING (1976) and RADIAL COURSES (1976), both of which consist of four dancers moving in geometric patterns without musical accompaniment. KATEMA (1978), the final work in this performance program, was originally a solo, which Childs recently reconfigured as a quartet. As in ballet or military ceremonies, the group formations in Childs's works of the 1970s projected what VILLAGE VOICE critic Jill Johnston described as a “hard-edge concentrated impassivity.”
Between 1961 and 1965, Steve Paxton (American, b. 1939) toured as a dancer in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. During that time he also made his own choreographic work and collaborated with Robert Rauschenberg, the company’s lighting, set, and costume designer. In 1964, the two performed JAG VILL GÄRNA TELEFONERA (I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A PHONE CALL), in which they interpreted a collage of mostly sports photographs by mimicking each pose while freely linking the images through their physical movement and contact. The work anticipates Contact Improvisation—a collaborative movement practice Paxton developed in his 1972 performance MAGNESIUM, in which participants use touch rather than sight to generate movement together.

In 1982, Paxton gave the score for JAG VILL GÄRNA TELEFONERA to his student, Stephen Petronio, who performed the work with Randy Warshaw. For this exhibition, Stephen Petronio Company will reconstruct the 1982 version and create new interpretations of Paxton’s score. This program also includes Paxton’s THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS BY J.S. BACH PLAYED BY GLENN GOULD IMPROVISED BY STEVE PAXTON (1986–92), an ethereal solo that Paxton performed in empty dance halls and in the woods, among other unorthodox locations.

Steve Paxton’s video installation WEIGHT OF SENSATION (2008) is on view from November 19 through November 25. The work features Paxton speaking directly to the camera through a glass table. It will be projected onto the ceiling of the Marron Atrium.
From her solo and duet performances at Judson Memorial Church to the ensemble choreographies she made upon founding her own company in 1970, Trisha Brown's (American, 1936–2017) half-century-long career was characterized by sensuousness, analytical structure, and a feeling akin to flying.

For this presentation, documentation of her work is organized into an installation designed by artist Charles Atlas in collaboration with Cori Olinghouse, the former archive director of Trisha Brown Dance Company and director of The Portal Project. The installation focuses on the period from Brown's 1966 HOMEMADE—in which she straps a projector onto her back, throwing a film onto the wall, floor, and ceiling in synchronization with her live performance—to a demonstration of phrase material from her 1979 GLACIAL DECOY, her first of several large-scale theatrical works. Moving images featured prominently in Brown's work; she used video as a preparatory tool for her choreography and collaborated with filmmakers such as Babette Mangolte, Elaine Summers, Robert Whitman, and Jud Yalkut. The installation traverses Brown's early practice, placing her highly organized “Accumulation” dances—in which simple gestures accrue through repeated iterations—in relation to the physical abandon she displays in WATER MOTOR (1978), a work Brown described as “unpredictable, personal, articulate, dense, changeful, wild assed.”
In the final weeks of the exhibition, the Marron Atrium hosts the New York-based Movement Research (MR), one of the world’s leading laboratories for the investigation of dance and other movement-based forms. MR was founded in 1978 as the School for Movement Research and Construction, and has been hosting performances and workshops at Judson Memorial Church since 1991.

Classes and workshops

MR will be offering classes, workshops, reading groups, and studies projects dialogues, transforming the Marron Atrium into a space for the creative process and education.

Classes are free and open to the public. For more information, including the full class schedule and how to register, please visit moma.org/judsondance.
SIMONE FORTI’S DANCE CONSTRUCTIONS
CONTEMPORARY GALLERIES, FLOOR 2

TUE, THU, SAT AT 11:30 A.M., 1:30, AND 3:30 P.M. THROUGHOUT THE EXHIBITION

Simone Forti’s Dance Constructions (1960–61) were key forerunners to Judson Dance Theater. Made from inexpensive materials, including plywood and rope, each “construction” prompts actions such as climbing, leaning, standing, or whispering. Simultaneously sculptures and performances, the works were first presented at Reuben Gallery and the artist Yoko Ono’s loft, both in New York.

The following works are performed: ACCOMPANIMENT FOR LA MONTE’S “2 SOUNDS” AND LA MONTE’S “2 SOUNDS,” CENSOR, HUDDLE, PLATFORMS, SLANT BOARD. On selected dates SEE SAW will also be performed, with special guests.

ANDY WARHOL AT JUDSON
THE ROY AND NIUTA TITUS THEATER 2

TUE, DEC 4, 7:30 P.M.
SAT, DEC 8, 4:30 P.M.

Andy Warhol frequently attended Judson Dance Theater concerts, where he first saw Fred Herko, the American Ballet Theater School–trained dancer who became his muse. Herko appeared in many of Warhol’s earliest films, including the newly digitized film reels featured here in which the dancer and choreographer skates and gazes at himself nude. This screening features JILL AND FREDDY DANCING (1963)—in which Herko performs with VILLAGE VOICE critic Jill Johnston on a Lower East Side rooftop—and includes Warhol’s films of Johnston performing with a broom at Warhol’s Factory.

The program also brings together Warhol’s Screen Tests featuring Judson participants, including the choreographer Lucinda Childs and the lighting designer Billy Linich.

For ticketing information, visit moma.org/judsondance.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

JUDSON DANCE THEATER
REASSEMBLED
JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH
55 WASHINGTON SQUARE WEST
SAT, OCT 13, 11:00 A.M.–6:00 P.M.

Organized in collaboration with Judson Memorial Church, the socially engaged Protestant congregation in Greenwich Village that originally housed Judson Dance Theater, this full day of programs includes a screening of Shirley Clarke’s THE CONNECTION (1961), a discussion about the mutual influence of art and religion, and performances co-organized with Movement Research. Drawing connections between the church’s past and present, the program aims to highlight urgent and persistent questions about creative expression and community organizing.

Free, no advance ticketing required

JUDSON DANCE THEATER:
A COLLECTIVE SPECULATION
MoMA PS1, 22–25 JACKSON AVENUE, LONG ISLAND CITY
SUN, JAN 27, 12:00–7:00 P.M.

A full-day symposium will reassess the Judson group’s continuing influence through presentations, discussions, and sound improvisations by artists, scholars, and critics. This program, co-organized with Malik Gaines, André Lepecki, and Fred Moten of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts Department of Performance Studies, is presented as part of MoMA PS1’s VW Sunday Sessions.

For ticketing information, visit momaps1.org.
THE ROY AND NIUTA TITUS THEATER 2

AN EVENING WITH YVONNE RAINER

MON, SEP 17, 7:00 P.M.

Yvonne Rainer presents the latest iteration of her REVISIONS: A TRUNCATED HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE FOR DUMMIES. A RANT DANCE AND LETTER TO HUMANITY, an ongoing reflection on current events. This program is presented as part of Modern Mondays. For ticketing information, visit moma.org/judsondance.

THU, SEP 20

A conversation between Yvonne Rainer, choreographer and dancer, and choreographer and critic Lynne Tillman follows the 12:30 p.m. performance.

THU, OCT 5

A conversation between Deborah Hay and MoMA’s Ana Janevski, curator in the Department of Media and Performance Art, follows the 2:00 p.m. performance.

A LECTURE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF BEAUTY

THU, DEC 13

A conversation between Steve Paxton and David Velasco, editor-in-chief of ARTFORUM, follows the 3:00 p.m. performance.

POST-PERFORMANCE ARTIST CONVERSATIONS

MARRON ATRIUM

THU, SEP 20

A conversation between Yvonne Rainer, choreographer and dancer, and curator and critic Lynne Tillman follows the 12:30 p.m. performance.

FRI, OCT 5

A conversation between Deborah Hay and MoMA’s Ana Janevski, curator in the Department of Media and Performance Art, follows the 2:00 p.m. performance.

SUN, NOV 4

A conversation between Lucinda Childs and Suzanne Carbonneau follows the 3:00 p.m. performance.

DANCE CONSTRUCTION WORKSHOPS

THE AGNES Gund GARDEN LOBBY

SEP 18 AT 12:30, 2:30 P.M.
SEP 25 AT 12:30, 2:30 P.M.
NOV 10 AT 2:30 P.M.
JAN 5 AT 2:30 P.M.
JAN 8 AT 12:30, 2:30 P.M.

Experience firsthand how dance was redefined in the 1960s in these workshops based on Simone Forti’s Dance Constructions. Open and free to everyone. Sign-up begins thirty minutes before each workshop.

SPECIAL THANKS

The curators gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following colleagues and collaborators:

Charles Atlas, artist consultant (Marron Atrium); Kevin Balboni, Senior Graphic Designer; Ginny Benson, Assistant Performance Coordinator; Jonathan Berger, artist consultant (galleries); Sara Bodinon, Director of Interpretation, Research, and Digital Learning; Nina Callaway, Digital Media freelance; Harry C.H. Choi, 2017–18 Twelve-Month Intern, Department of Media and Performance Art; Lee Ann Daffner, Photography Conservator; Paul DiPietro, AV Technical Manager; Atheel Elmak, 2016–17 Twelve-Month Intern, Department of Media and Performance Art; Elizabeth Gallnick, 2016–17 Museum Research Consortium Fellow, Department of Media and Performance Art; Natasha Gilbert; Lizzie Gorfaine, Producer, Performance and Live Programs; Adelia Gregory, Associate Educator, Public Programs and Gallery Initiatives; Leticia Gutierrez, Associate Educator, Learning Programs and Partnerships; Aaron Harrow, AV Design Manager; Pablo Helguera, Director, Adult and Academic Programs; Athena Holbrook, Collection Specialist, Department of Media and Performance Art; Beatrice Johnson, Assistant Performance Coordinator; Sarah Kennedy, Assistant Director, Learning Programs and Partnerships; Rachel Kim, Senior Exhibition Manager; Tom Krueger, Assistant Manager, Art Handling and Preparation; Victoria Manning, Assistant Registrar; Maria Marchenkova, Assistant Editor, Publications; Christine Murray, Digital Media freelance; Sasha Okshay, Assistant Performance Coordinator; Peter Oleksik, Associate Media Conservator; Peter Perez, Foreman of the Frame Shop; Jason Perse, Editorial Manager, Marketing; Alethea Rockwell, Assistant Educator, Public Programs; Sammy Roth, Assistant Performance Coordinator; Damien Saatdjian, Art Director; Alexis Sandler, Associate General Counsel; Kate Scherer, Manager, Performance and Live Programs; Jess Van Nostrand, Assistant Director, Exhibition Programs and Gallery Initiatives; Annie Wilker, Associate Paper Conservator; Sean Yelter, Producer, Digital Media; Lynda Zycherman, Sculpture Conservator.

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Volkswagen

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Performances and moving-image programs are on view in The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium on the following dates.

**YVONNE RAINER: SEP 16–23**
PERFORMANCES SEP 16, 17, 19, 20, 22 AT 12:30 AND 3:00 P.M.

**DEBORAH HAY: SEP 24–OCT 7**
PERFORMANCES OCT 4, 5, 6 AT 2:00 P.M.

**DAVID GORDON: OCT 8–21**
PERFORMANCES OCT 18, 19, 20 AT 3:00 P.M.

**LUCINDA CHILDS: OCT 22–NOV 4**
PERFORMANCES OCT 29, 30, 31, NOV 1, 2, 3, 4 AT 12:00 AND 3:00 P.M.

**STEVE PAXTON: NOV 19–DEC 16**
PERFORMANCES DEC 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 AT 12:00, 1:30, AND 3:00 P.M.

**TRISHA BROWN: DEC 17–JAN 16**

**MOVEMENT RESEARCH: JAN 17–25**

Simone Forti’s Dance Constructions are performed in the second-floor Contemporary Galleries every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m.

Admission to performances and programs is included with the price of admission, unless otherwise indicated. For more information, visit moma.org/judsondance.