

POLITICALITY OF PERFORMANCE / PERFORMATIVITY OF POLITICS

DANCE FLOOR

MICRO MAGAZINE
OF PERFORMING ARTS.

Syrus Marcus Ware
Navtej Singh Johar
Filip Kijowski
Party Office
Liliana Zeic
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Katy Pyle
Jin Xing

EDITORIAL NOTE

Queer is most often associated with psycho-sexual identity, but it is also practiced in relation to various more or less problematic categories and cultural phenomena in order to dismantle and/or deconstruct them. Thus, for example, we speak of queering masculinity, language, history, sports, institutions or the system in general. In other words, all representations of binarity and normativity. And therefore art as well. You will find some examples of the practice of queering the performing arts in this issue.

Queer is a function or phenomenon that is fundamentally meant to challenge established patterns, ossified patterns and anachronistic structures. It's to be beyond all categories, systems and dogmas. Yet, paradoxically, the question of who has the right to queer patriarchy, authoritarianism, capitalism or art precisely remains valid all the time. Is it only those who identify as Queer? Or all those who understand its essence and support the dismantling of harmful norms? Queer is a phenomenon that goes far beyond imagined boundaries and thus shatters not only the fossilized boomers, but also the framework of identity politics.

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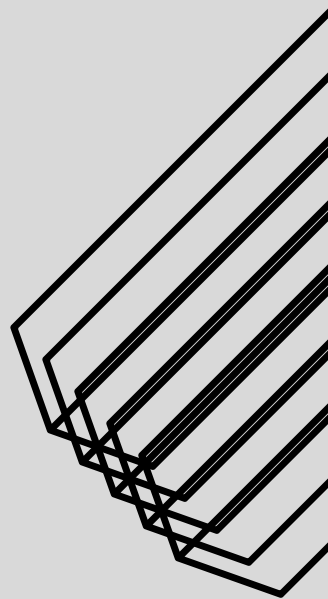
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Syrus Marcus Ware

a Vanier Scholar, visual artist, activist,
curator, and educator*

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Using painting, installation, and performance, Syrus works with and explores social justice frameworks and Black activist culture. His work has been shown widely, including solo shows at Grunt Gallery in 2018 and Wil Aballe Art Projects in 2021 (Irresistible Revolutions). His work has been featured as part of the inaugural Toronto Biennial of Art in 2019 in conjunction with the Ryerson Image Centre (Antarctica and Ancestors, Do You Read Us? (Dispatches from the Future), as well as for the Bentway's Safety in Public Spaces Initiative in 2020 (Radical Love). Syrus has participated in group shows at the Never Apart in Montreal, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of York University, the Art Gallery of Windsor, and as part of the curated content at Nuit Blanche 2017 (The Stolen People; Won't Back Down). His performance works have been part of festivals across Canada, including at Crippling The Stage, Complex Social Change and Decolonizing and Decriminalizing Trans Genres.

He is part of the PDA (Performance Disability Art) Collective and co-programmed Crip Your World: An Intergalactic Queer/POC Sick and Disabled Extravaganza as part of Mayworks 2014. He is the co-editor of "Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada" and has also co-edited "Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto" and "Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Histories of Toronto". Syrus is a core-team member of Black Lives Matter—Toronto and a co-curator of "Blackness Yes!/Blockorama".



He is also on the executive team of the Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism and a Faculty Member of the inaugural Black Arts Fellowship. Syrus has won several awards, including the TD Diversity Award in 2017, was voted "Best Queer Activist" by NOW Magazine (2005), and was awarded the Steinert and Ferreiro Award (2012). Syrus completed his PhD at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies in 2021 and is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of the Arts (Theatre and Film Studies) at McMaster University.

Photo courtesy of CBC's The Big Sex Talk (detail)

CHOREOGRAPHER / SOMATIC PRACTITIONER / SCHOLAR*

www.navtejjochar.com*navtej s. jochar*

Navtej Johar is a Bharatanatyam dancer-choreographer, a yoga practitioner, a scholar, and an activist. He has formally trained in Bharatanatyam at Rukmini Devi's Kalakshetra, and with Leela Samson at the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, New Delhi; he later studied at the Department of Performance Studies, New York University. Johar is trained in Patanjali Yoga at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, under the guidance of Sri T.K.V. Desikachar.



Foregrounding the body in his embodied practice Johar has developed a unique style, which is a synthesis of dance, yoga, and somatics. For Johar, all embodied practices are about seeing the body mindfully, rather than doing or performing an action. With a combination of both praxis and a radical re-reading of ancient Sanskrit texts on performing arts, Johar's practice empowers the body to embrace its uncensored sensual expressions and to forge a conversation between the body and the text.

Johar was the lead petitioner challenging section 377 of the Indian Penal code, which considered consensual homosexual sex between adults as unnatural, unconstitutional and illegal. In a landmark decision in 2018 the Article 377 was scrapped.



Camp Books and Prints, a publishing house in London, has released a poster titled: "queer pasts nourish queer futures." I take these words with me as I engage in various projects.

he/him

Filip Kiiowski

performer, choreographer,
dancer, activist

As I understand it, there is no queer performing arts without the involvement of society where the theme of being queer is one I talk about through my art.

In my art practice, I usually invite people to perform a task I propose. Each process **begins with a conversation**. I ask people the same questions that I seek answers to myself. It is important for me to see what lies behind the experiences of people who live in **queer bodies** on a daily basis. Calling what is about Us, by Us, gives me confidence in **future revolutions**. I wonder, what can politics learn from art? What can politics learn from the bodies it manages on a daily basis? Especially when it accomplishes this task by breaking the law, by **discriminating against certain bodies**.

During the workshop, under the working title "**informed innocence**," we work on the (social) norms that influence/affect our queer bodies and the way we experience them. The workshop is also about how society assigns meanings to different types of self-expression. We translate the knowledge that emerges in the working process into building exercises and **choreographic structures**. We examine how we can care for and support our bodies. We work using touch, contact improvisation, word and the composition of space, looking at **space as a laboratory** for collaborative exploration. Workshops have so far been conducted with local queer people in Poland, Norway, Sweden, England and Thailand.

The project I am currently overseeing is **Biblioteka Azyli** (Library Asylum), based in Lublin's **Labirynt Gallery**. Asylum is a **home of books and queer culture**, which was created thanks to invited authors and kind-hearted publishers, bookstores and friends from different parts of the world. Now, with the support of the European Cultural Foundation, we are providing a space for **young queer people** from Lublin to carry out their activities.



Party Office

Party Office

Info from the websites of [Documenta Fifteen](#) and [Collective Practices](#)

Party Office is an anti-caste, anti-racist, trans*feminist art and social space in New Delhi, India, initiated by Vidisha-Fadescha, which also operates at satellite locations and conceptual architecture. Through publications, grants, radical archives, conversations of life lived, social gatherings, parties and more, they are building translation dialogues on empathetic futures, care communities and radical agency.

Vidisha-Fadescha: "Within global and local contexts, 'radicalized and marginalized bodies' are those that have been subjected to hegemonic oppression and suffer under direct, institutional, and cultural forms of violence. We believe that effective countering by queering hegemony must include consciousness of class, caste, gender, sexuality, and forms of segregation and 'Othering' present within the socio-political techno landscapes of India and the World."

Artist-Curator Vidisha-Fadescha has organized alternative art and pedagogic spaces since 2011 and founded Party Office in 2020. Through video, text, sound, and performance, Fadescha's work focuses on body movement as an archive of multi-generational trauma, the body as the site to center one's desire, and Party as a site of resilience and affirmative kinships.

A portrait of Liliana Zeic, a woman with short, dark, curly hair, wearing glasses and a dark top. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

RITUAL OF VEGETATION, WATER AND COMMUNITY LILIANA ZEIC

On your profile on [Secondary Archive](#), you write about invisible structures of "intersecting privileges and exclusions" and that art is for you "a space of experimental elaboration of these invisibilities". Can you tell how you construct this space so that it becomes a workshop for working on these invisible structures and how you work them out as a result?

What I like about art is that it can give complicated answers, and that it is analytical. An example of what you're asking about is a project I did in 2021, funded by the European Union with the help of the Art Transparent Foundation in Wrocław that does projects in public space, and I got an invitation to do one specifically. In it I wanted to combine two extremes: the space of my worldview bubble with the public space. I rarely have the opportunity to do this, so I wanted to make the most of it. I meant a strong political gesture by converting the tallest monument in Wrocław, the so-called Spire - a 90-meter tall phallic structure in front of the 100th Anniversary Hall - into a May Tree dedicated to women, non-binary people who have experienced the effects of fake news, disinformation and all the anti-LGBTQ political propaganda on their own bodies. I wanted to make a symbolic gesture of dedicating the Spire's space to them and to queer and feminize this huge steel structure by adding seven ribbons made of delicate fabrics to shroud it. I wanted these queer stories to resonate in this way. And on the other hand, I was concerned with transforming this monumental structure, into a space of daily, delicate rituals. For seven days, under the Spire, I conducted simple rituals, to which I invited seven artistic, activist, queer and feminist people, so that each of them, in a simple, non-committal way for them, would share a piece of their everyday life, work and creativity.

It was a radically political gesture, as I had to convince the city company to implement this project in a representative public space. It was a process of several months of convincing the city, and this is to the credit of the foundation. Previous actions around the Spire were, for example, hanging the Polish flag and these kinds of national, identity actions. So my project was a radical role reversal of the place, which even architecturally became different. The heavy, geometric lump of the steel Spire became delicate and airy and so visually it became more feminist-queer turning also into an arena of non-Christian spirituality. My ritual around this place came out of thinking about vegetation, water and community. **(excerpt from the "[Którędy do wyjścia](#)" broadcast conversation in Radio Kapitał)*



*(formerly Piskorska), visual artist, Ph. D.
in fine arts, a practitioner of radical sensibility
(she/her)*



WILLI NINJA

(1961-2006)

Photo: (CC) / Source: <https://mubi.com/fr/cast/willi-ninja>
All informations from en.wikipedia.org →

Willi Ninja was an American dancer and choreographer. The godfather of voguing, was a fixture of ball culture at Harlem's drag balls and the world of haute couture to develop a unique style of dance and movement. Best known for his appearance in the 1990 documentary film by Jennie Livingston "Paris Is Burning". In 1989, Ninja starred in the music video for Malcolm McLaren's song "Deep in Vogue", which sampled the then-unfinished movie and brought Ninja's style to the mainstream.

Willi Ninja started the House of Ninja in 1982 with Sandy Apollonia Ninja, despite not having been part of a house previously or winning three grand prizes, which was generally seen as a requirement to start a house. The name Ninja came from the house's Asian and martial arts influences coupled with the fact that people in the ballroom scene did not know who they were and they "seemed to come out of nowhere". The House of Ninja had a reputation for being multiracial; except the Latino House of Xtravaganza, most houses at the time were African-American.

Ninja died of AIDS-related heart failure in New York City on September 2nd, 2006 at age 45. Since his death, he has continued to inspire many artists and music Djs. Ninja is a central figure in LGBTQ studies, gender studies, and performance studies for his nonconforming and transgressive gender expression as an artist. His presence is articulated in the book "Black Sexualities" by Juan Battle and Sandra L. Barnes as one example.

Text based on article of Bryan Grogan "[How Transgender Dancer Jin Xing Became A Chinese Icon](#)"

CONTR VERSIAL

ICON OF CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Jin Xing, designated as a boy at birth, is one of the most amazing and revolutionary figures of modern China. She was born into a Korean family in Shenyang, Liaoning, China, in the Dongbei region. She learned dance from the age of 4. In 1984 she entered the Military Academy of Arts as a dancer and graduated with the rank of colonel, becoming one of the most famous dancers in the world. In the 1980s and 1990s she studied and taught dance abroad. In 1995 she had gender affirming surgery and four years later founded Jin Xing Dance Theater in Shanghai, the first private dance theater in China.

As a 19-year-old, she moved to New York to study dance. Her stay in the U.S. and subsequent travels in Europe before returning to China, brought her vision of a gender affirming surgery closer. In 1999, for The New York Times, she said: "My whole being is feminine, I always knew I should be a girl."

The fact that, being a public figure in China, she performed gender correction surgery was quite shocking. However, she has lost nothing of her popularity. Her appearance in 2013 on the jury of the Chinese version of "So You Think You Can Dance" resulted in her own talk-show on Chinese television: The Jin Xing Show. In 2017, for New York's Theater Times, she said: "There is only one Jin Xing, and Jin Xing's success cannot be replicated."

As we read on her theater's website, Jin Xing represents China's new generation. Her name is synonymous with courage, freedom, self-responsibility and infinite strength of artistic spirit. Nevertheless, there are also criticisms of her, pointing out her anti-feminist attitude and support for the patriarchal system. For more on the critical perspective toward Jin Xing, see Luo Beibei's article for [Sixthtone.com](#).

JIN XING



FAFSWAG is a Moana Oceanic arts collective founded in Aotearoa in 2013. They aim to challenge the lack of representation of Queer and Indigenous people in the creative industries by evading heteronormativity and establishing multicultural identities and an interdisciplinary practice.

Operating across a multitude of art forms and genres, FAFSWAG's artists work collaboratively to activate public and digital space. They celebrate Queer Brown bodies, contemporary Pacific arts, and cultural restoration. Their online platform Fafswagvogue.com documents in an artistic manner the cultural connectivity of Queer Pacific People of Color navigating their unique identities within New Zealand's urban landscapes. The collective develops site specific cultural experiences and arts engagements that speak to their unique and diverse contexts as LGBTQ people from Oceania.

For [documenta fifteen](#), FAFSWAG presents three site-specific works that draw from their own spiritual connections to ancestral practices of storytelling and Indigenous cosmology.



FAFSWAG

KATY PYLE

they/them

Photo: M. Sharkey / Ballez.org

BALLEZ IS LESBIANS DOING BALLET. AND BALLEZ IS NOT JUST LESBIANS, IT'S ALL THE QUEERS THAT BALLET HAS LEFT OUT.

Katy Pyle – a creator of Ballez Dance Company – is a genderqueer lesbian dancer and choreographer who began Ballez in 2011 to explore their complicated relationship to the cishetero patriarchal form of ballet, and to make space for their own, and their communities', presence within it.

Ballez welcomes the outcasts that have always been ballet's muses; those whose identities have been a part of ballet, but were forced into the shadows. In the margins, we have still communicated who we are through the study and mastery of ballet's coded gendered gestures, and we know how to dance our identities, and subversively change our genre. It's time for us to step into the spotlight, to demand that the form of ballet defy its racist, cishetero patriarchal lineage, and embrace the vitality and powerful life force of positive, inclusive change.

Since 2011, we have invited the broader community into our work through open Ballez classes and workshops that share our vision of re-imagined ballet class culture; inviting dancers of all identities and backgrounds into our process to re-imagine all the standard components of a ballet class, but with joy, generosity, play, mutual admiration, and a reflection of our constantly evolving intersectional queer-feminist values. We re-introduce the desire, sexuality and provocation always inherent to ballet, but with the necessary addition of CONSENT, owning our own beauty and sexuality, and defining and creating that for and with each other, with respect for one another and our boundaries.

WE'RE TAKING BALLET BACK, FOR OURSELVES, AND FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF DANCERS, ON OUR OWN TERMS, AND FOR OUR OWN EMPOWERMENT.

22 - 26 FEBRUARY 2023

QUEER FIGHT WINTER CAMP 23



SELF-DEFENSE / MARTIAL SPORTS

RUCHOMY KLUB SPORTOWY "GWIAZDA"

This time, the winter camp is entirely devoted to the basics of self-defense and the fundamentals of combat sports. Therefore, we invite primarily LGBTQ+ people without experience in self-defense and martial sports training, and possibly those who would like to go back to their roots and recall the basics. Allied individuals also welcome.

QUEER FIGHT WINTER CAMP 2023

22-26
February
GABRI
ELNIA

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NEXT ISSUE:
artistic
research

ANNA MAJEWSKA
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FERNANDO BELFIORE
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KOO JEONG A
ANDREW WASS
WILL RAWLS

SPRING 2023