

Dance and Art Forum: Why Dance in Museums?

9 November 2017

The Next Questions

Dance and Art Forum: Why Dance in Museums? was the latest manifestation of Siobhan Davies Dance's ongoing engagement with the intersection between dance and visual art, indeed, with the boundaries of dance and choreography as it intersects with other disciplines more generally. The event was a chance to share and reflect on several aspects of our programme over the past two years: the publication of *Who Cares? Dance in the Gallery and Museum*, our three year Dance Artist / Curator Mentorship Scheme, our participation in the two-year Creative Europe collaboration project Dancing Museums, and our touring dance work for galleries, *material / rearranged / to / be*. These have all taken place in a context of ongoing and increasing activity in this area internationally. The focus for the day came out of the evaluation processes for all of those projects, which revealed a need to examine the value of the intersection of these practices, particularly within museums and galleries. We wanted to look critically at whether dance and the museum actually make good companions, and how the practices of artists and institutions can evolve toward an enriched landscape for practice and for audiences to encounter work. And we wanted to establish a new set of questions and concerns to be addressed in the next phase of our programming.

The day was a rich and lively moment of encounter between artists, curators, researchers, educators and others, culminating in an experience of dancing together within the frame of *OK Future*, 'a prototype of a future performance space...an amalgamation of many cultural sites and experiences; part installation art, social choreography, movement class, and mindfulness guide' devised by Connor Schumacher and Lucy Suggate. This project draws on research from their participation in Dancing Museums.

The afternoon's discussions concluded with a moment to gather up key points to take forward, and we also asked for additional thoughts via email. Here are some questions that arose as crucial for us and for others moving ahead:

What is the added value of dance and choreography appearing in museums and galleries, above and beyond them being places with large, flexible spaces and ready audiences?

How can dance and choreography work within and against hierarchies of value within the museum attached to time or duration, space and permanence?

If we think of museums and galleries as civic spaces, whose purpose for facilitating encounter among people and artworks is even more critical in a time of digital saturation, what could the role of dance and choreography be toward enabling new forms of relating between people?

How does the museum function as a site for defining both the contemporary and the historical? What does this mean for the way dance and choreography are represented within it – what are its effects?

How can we develop a new language that accounts for the hybridity of practice between dance, visual art and other disciplines? To what extent do we need to preserve an idea of 'dance' and/or 'choreography' a practices with specific capacities and expertise?

How might dance and choreography function differently in museums not primarily for displaying art but for heritage, history, science, etc?

What forms of agency are at play when dance and choreography appears in the museum, for the institution and its representatives, the artist and the audience?

How can we develop a more substantive critical infrastructure for dance and choreography in the UK?

What is the value of encountering dance and choreography in museums and galleries for audiences? What is needed to facilitate these encounters so they can be enriching for audiences and supportive of practice?

What is the future space for dance and choreography? How can we create a space that takes the best things from the museum, the theatre, the public square and yet can hold dance and choreography with the care and attention it requires and deserves?

Each of these questions summarises a rich field of enquiry that began to unfold during this event and in other contexts in relation to our work, and we are developing means to address them further. At Siobhan Davies Dance we are involved in a constant, ongoing process of evolving our activities to support the practices of artists who want to work at the intersection of dance, choreography and other disciplines, and to facilitate opportunities for audiences to encounter these practices. In relation to this area of practice, we are committed to:

- Commissioning new work
- Offering support and advice to artists, curators and others
- Creating ongoing opportunities for critical dialogue
- Developing new means for audiences to encounter this practice, here at Siobhan Davies Studios and elsewhere, through the presentation of work and of process at a variety of stages along the lifecycle of an artwork and an artist

We are looking forward to continuing to develop this work with you.