

“Performance is the art of our time. As environments become increasingly mediated by digital, algorithmic protocols, and surveillance capitalism, our bodies and movements are being recorded, photographed and tracked more than ever. Increasingly, there is an understanding and a realization that we are all performers and that performance is the epistemological condition of shaping time within this changing environment with which we all must grapple.”

(Kyla Gordon on Performance)

The theme of this year's Untitled fair is "gender and technology". The easy way out would've been to invite performers who are straightforwardly using digital technology, and to curate a program of art and tech demonstrations—and I seriously, seriously considered doing just that. But I wanted to think more broadly and abstractly about technology: what it is, what it means, and what it does to gesture and time. In my imagination, "technology" is a physical apparatus, I think of the images of early computing with large, cumbersome punch cards and operating systems the size of rooms with operators working with them and interacting with their colleagues around these machines. I watched a bunch of goofy, old British-Pathé newsreels of computers and these "new work places of the future" and I wondered about the social aspects of repetition, and unique physical toll on the body. When thinking of performances to include in this program I thought of Alexa West and her focus of choreographing around the built apparatus, and the physical and social dynamics these objects engender. The three dancers: Jade Manns, Amelia Heintzelman, and Justin Faircloth -three (almost) primary colors-represent distinct archetypes who move in repetitive gestures around this apparatus. I like the inherent humor in "Occasion, Occasion Occasion," and West's work in general, which makes me think of memes (which have really defined the visual aesthetic of digital time) and how memes so rely on archetypes to work. These movements are so meme-able and ripe for parody because they are so collectively understood. This work, like all of the performances for New York Performance NOW!, has been expanded upon and reimagined by bringing it outside (West typically makes interior performances), changing the material of the tables from a series of motley wooden ones to sleek (as it was presented during its premier this year for her Bard thesis show), shiny stainless steel; and taking away the radios so dancers have even less control over their environment. This effect was really dramatic and gave a new dimension to this piece."

At its most basic understanding, technology is a tool, an implement used for a specific a purpose. When tasked with selecting performances with the theme of "gender and technology" I thought a lot about the ways in which "gender" and "race" are capitalist technologies used to separate, control, and alienate people from one another. Technologies are tools within larger organizing systems that set and often violently enforce standards of legibility. In *American Idoll*, ms. z tye with Maya Margarita uses the 13 folds of glory—traditionally a ritualistic way of folding the flag to honor fallen soldiers—to memorialise the trans lives lost through violence this year. In this performance, 27 flags are folded. In 2023, so far, 27 trans lives were cut short due to violence. ms z tye uses the flag in her work as a way to interrogate Americanness and the promise of America—the national myth being one of individual liberty, economic opportunity, social mobility, equality, and justice for all. What does it mean that some people are excluded from this promise that has so defined the national character of this country? Yes this is art fair week, but we are still in Florida, a politically and culturally conservative state, a place that harbours Trump, a place with stringent anti trans legislation. *American Idoll* is a performance series (that I've been lucky enough to see many iterations of this year) in which z places the flag on the ground as a way of reimagining it—to lay on top of it, to connect with trans ancestors on it, to embrace and kiss a lover on it, to dance on it, to eat a picnic on it—as a backdrop and setting for trans love and life to unfold. In this adaptation of her series, z opted to silently construct a monument and end with a kinetic sculpture singing a hopeful and expansive call to pay attention. This work reminds us that the black trans body is an exulted body!

In further abstracting and considering "technology" (from the physical apparatus in Alexa West's work, and the notional, societal apparatus in ms. z tye's practice), I thought about the nature of systems in general and the shape of gesture to come. Mayfield Brooks' work explores a metaphysical apparatus whose material is composed of the spirit, folklore, memory, and grief. Of course, it must be stated that the future of technology lies in craft--one can only look to the nomenclature that we use to describe how we digitally interact that imply this truth: for instance, we reply to a thread, we "pin" posts and comments, we stitch videos, etc. The more technology advances, the more things become smaller and more automated, the more we will want to use our hands (I jokingly think that the future of industrial design lies in objects that appear automated, but must actually be manually operated...HaHa!) to connect with each other and the material world around us. But can we take this one step further and consider a future where we will intertwine in a more meaningful way with other

species? In Whale Fall: RESIDUE, Mayfield Brooks and Camilo Restrepo begin their performance entering the space from beachfront, sliding sliding and crawling on the floor through the length of the fair leaving a residue of sand inside, and ending back out into the ocean, accompanied by Dorothy Carlos @dorothycarlos on cello where Brooks' body becomes an instrument in which to vocalize a grief and a loss that is indescribable in spoken language but somatically articulated. Whale Fall: RESIDUE uses the beach as a setting to grieve and to explore time. This performance creates a circular path, rejecting verticality (a visual and physical quality of humanness), questioning nonlinear time, and leaves traces of the natural world in the highly artificial space of the fair. *Curatorial Text by Kyla Gordon*

ABOUT KYLA GORDON

Kyla Gordon is a New York-based curator, researcher, writer specializing in performance art, new media, film, and fashion. She is currently a researcher at The Museum of Modern Art, a programmer at Cybernetics Library, on the nominating committee for The Bessies NY Dance and Performance Awards, organizer of the daily performance art listing platform Performanceart_nyc on instagram. She received an MA in Visual Culture from NYU Steinhardt, studied modern art at Université Paris IV–La Sorbonne, and has worked in cultural institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center, The New York State Council on the Arts and Interview Magazine.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Alexa West is a choreographer and dancer based in New York City who studied both dance and sculpture and makes performances that incorporate material sensibilities across the two disciplines. She trained at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance before receiving a BFA at the Cooper Union, and an MFA at the Milton Avery School of Art at Bard College. West is a co-founder and co-director of Pageant, a performance venue in Brooklyn, NY. She has been included in PERFORMA 2023 and is currently a Dance Research Fellow at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library.

ms. z tye is a Brooklyn-based artist who explores concepts through ancestral praise. She is intrigued with somatic relations and how they associate with emotional connectivity. She has

been included in exhibitions at the Bronx Museum of Arts, The Living Gallery, Long Gallery Harlem, Movement Research, Postmasters Gallery, Fridman Gallery and Participant INC. Choreographic work has been commissioned by The Shed, BMW, BOFFO, Jack, Gibney, Movement Research, and Dance Canvas ATL.

Mayfield Brooks is a movement-based performance artist, vocalist, urban farmer, writer, and wanderer who explores the decomposed matter of Black life and engages in dance improvisation, disorientation, dissent, and ancestral healing. Brooks is the 2021 recipient of the biennial Merce Cunningham Award from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a 2021 Bessie/New York Dance and Performance Award nominee for their dance film, Whale Fall, a 2022 Danspace Project Platform artist, and 2022-23 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University.