

movement research



critical correspondence

about

CONVERSATIONS | MAR 18, 2016

WXPT: In Conversation, Part 1

Critical Correspondence invites founder of WXPT (We are the Paper, We are the Trees), taisha paggett and collaborators (The company consists of Joy Angela Anderson, Heyward Bracey, Rebecca Bruno, Alfonso Cervera, Erin Christovale, Loren Fenton, Maria Garcia, Kloii "Hummingbird" Hollis, Jas Michelle, Meena Murugesan, taisha paggett, Sebastian Peters-Lazaro, Kristianne Salcines, Ché Ture, Devika Wickremesinghe and Suné Woods), to discuss their most recent project, The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People, a large scale installation and performance platform presented by Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) during late October–early December, 2015. Published in two parts, the company discusses, in a collective voice, the difficulties of authorship, legitimization, parachute artists, their recent critical, pedagogical framing of the project and its future iterations, and enacting a "collective movement choir" for the culminating performance *Meadow*.

This does not have to be a formal thing at all. I just feel there needs to be a beginning. Basically we've been in the middle of this project, and there are lots of wonderful things happening. Part one happened, and we scattered. And then part two happened, and we scattered. So it's nice to have a moment to get together and have a discussion about what it means to move forward. And what forward *is*. At the beginning I imagined this as a one-year project. There's something about, like, the time – time as a container, something to hold on, to hold the commitment in whatever form that means. There are a couple of starts. I feel like the audition was a type of start. I also feel like —

Lauren can you hear okay?

Yeah I can hear perfectly fine.

Ok, good. I feel like our first gathering in 2015 was also a start. I think it was March 28th or something like. In keeping to holding the container of that thing, I wonder what these last remaining two months should be for us. I want to open up a space to think about what our last chunk shall be, and then there's this other thing to discuss which is this invitation from Houston to continue the project there. I'm wondering now, 'where's the conceptual structure?'

That's a funny question.

That's a funny question. What does it mean to break the code of one thing to allow this other thing to happen? Or maybe this other thing is meant to be a very separate something, and the processes of identifying what the template was might be of this thing. How might it be easily translated into a new environment? Or maybe it's about breaking all of these rules ... not about beginning again but just continuing to grow from where we've left off.



So, everyone, please chime in as you can, as you'd like. I have a lot of questions myself about authorship. What I mean when I say this is this project is collectively ours. Who does it belong to when it moves to a different group? Does it keep belonging to more people? Is the question of belonging just a moot point to begin with? Also, WXPT often stands-in for your actual names and so in a way the representation of this collective also produces a disappearance of people's individual credit. I'm thinking about that, which is a bit more, um, archives and credits and those things. And, so, and then there are other people. There's Ashley's input, there's Kim's input into the project. And then there's just the whole reality of what happens when you put something in the different environment, and that whole history and new contexts that come up. I have a lot of questions about moving into this next stage and it all has to happen now. We're going to Houston tomorrow. [laughter]. There's no...hemming and hawing...action actually has to happen. And this is this weird...

I like how that sounds, 'we're going to Houston tomorrow.'

"We're going to Houston tomorrow.'

Kind of country western.

Taisha: Yeah, totally. Yes. So a lot of questions about moving forward but then also not a lot of space to luxuriate in these questions. And also not a lot of support to do it, necessarily. Um, so there's that to discuss. So maybe just to open up, because I would like to hear from you guys: What impression did this last project left on you and what does it mean for it to continue? What continues? What *can* continue and what *can't* continue. You still there Lauren?

Lauren: I'm here, listening and hearing everything.

Ok. And then the other facet of this gathering is to have a platform, to talk about the work, that platform being this *Critical Correspondence* invitation. I think we would have this conversation anyways but this invitation formalizes it. Which is really nice. But I hope that that formalizing doesn't make us feel formalized. And **the letter** provides an anchor to the conversation specifically as it relates to body and voice and the power that both things have, or the types of power that the body has that can't really be articulated. This all feels relevant to the school and the concept of unlearning.

Would we like to read the text? That's one question. My other question is: Are the Houston folks currently interested in having more folks there, and then we go there and build their community? Or is there a community there already? Or what's the landscape of that?

Good question. Well, I began this conversation a couple months ago with Diverse Works in Houston. It's a space that is committed to both visual art and performance and dance. I've not yet been there but we'll see it tomorrow.

Oh, you're literally going tomorrow??

[laughter]

Oh, I thought you were speaking metaphorically!

There are no metaphors in this conversation!

Going to Houston tomorrow!

[laughter]

That sounds poetic.

I wish it were so poetic! [laughter]



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

What about funding to support people... What is there to support people and the process? Can a process even happen inside that space? The way we were able to be inside our spaces... What does it mean to have that process without the weeks and months that we had together before we got to the school? What does it mean to bring a group of people in to suddenly activate the space?

How long are you going to be in this space?

It's probably somewhere like six weeks.

What are you doing exactly in Houston tomorrow? Like, are you just touring the space, are you talking about budget? What are you doing there?

I will travel there with Kim and Ashley and we will meet and we will see the space and we will have a conversation with the curator, who's a very great person. We'll talk about what is possible there. I'm going to attempt to have an audition but I don't even know what that means...

Taisha, how does the authorship question tie into this? Is it that you're thinking potentially to bring WXPT members with you? Or bring classes that were already created by members with you to Houston?

Yeah. I would *love* to bring everyone to Houston and it's hard to even broach the subject because just thinking about plane fare for however many people is a hard thing. But that would be the ultimate goal. I hope that we can get started with a local group in Houston, perhaps a group that already has something in common. What that is, is a question. That already has something in common, and that what they start with is *Meadow*, some sense of *Meadow*. Either as a score—or the dance turned into a series of questions... And at that same time, we are in a process where we are also engaged in *Meadow*... And in this fantasy swirl [laughter] funds would appear out of the sky...

[laughter]

Right?

In walks Mr. Funds.

In walks in Mr. Funds, right? 'From Houston!' [laughter] It's the oil man! oh geez.

Ya'll need money?

Oils below thirty dollars a barrel in like, more than decades. So oil man's not doing so well. [laughter]

That's true. Ok, so in this fantasy realm with all the money that just dropped from the sky, we could travel to Houston, spend a week or so in a residency...

Ahhhh..

So there'd be a moment of exchange but our time in Houston would be very truncated for logistical reasons and we'd create another container to have a rich exchange with this new group. And then we'd leave them to continue it on their own.

I like moments of exchange. Similar to how we presented workshops to each other and the community here to experience workshops or offerings that were generated by other people that had some kind of direction that could meet us halfway.

Mhmm.

And inform us from their perspective, something like that.

And that would happen before the residency, right? Because they would open the school as the residency in Houston? Or that would be the end of the residency?

So let's say the residency happens. Residency happens in a week, the performance happens that weekend, and then there's an install period and then the show opens.

Gosh.

So that would be...

Are we recording right now?

We are.

Do we have any extra blankets?

There's a blanket over here.

Thank you.



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

Do we have a vision as to how we might have the encounter...? I like the idea of being changed by it somehow but I'm just thinking out loud.

Being changed by the encounter?

Yeah, rather than having the piece be defined beforehand...

Mhmm.

I have a question. Did you already send out an audition notice to, like, people in Texas?

You did! Was it the same one that we got in January of last year? Is it? Ok. I was wondering about that just in terms of the spirit that brought all of us together. It felt very contained in that audition, that notice you wrote out. So that's cool.

Yeah I'm a little ambivalent about it, honestly.

About? The audition?

Mhm.

What's that, in a way?

Did you hear that question, Lauren?

I did, I heard it.

I think it's that question – what restarts and what evolves. I also feel like that original call was written in a very particular moment for me, a very particular moment in time outside of me, and so to just redo it sets it in amber, in a way. But then on the other hand, I'm interested to know what it means to cast that same engine, and what will it set into motion?

It feels almost like a Fluxist instructional set.

Mhmm.

Is that being the means to question and start another company? The questions around what does it mean to be a dance company or support each other as a community, in that structure. Those questions are being asked again, it just seems like a long time though. And separate from the school I think, um, yeah I feel myself anticipating a necessary loss... You know it's all in the name of what we all do with performances necessarily ending and nobody owning, obviously, anything, and it's all ephemeral. But some of those first questions about what it means to support each other as a dance company in terms of not really authorship but I guess labor and I don't know I feel like I have lingering

questions from the performance and the process and I don't know if those continue in these next two months as we parse through what we've done together. Um...it just feels like even in a traditional dance company the dancer is the worker and the person who, you know, gets the least whatever... Whether it be financial compensation, or yeah, authorship, I guess. So I just want to say that out loud in terms of starting that process again. And with a new group how do we negotiate how to do this next part with all of us, or not?

Lauren, I just wanted to clarify some things for me. So the idea is that WXPT people from LA go to Houston for one week for a residency, and in that one week will be working with doing workshops with and teaching meadow to and exchanging with the people that you've auditioned there, and then that'll lead up to a performance of meadow and then we're handing off to them the concept of the school and then you'll install the exhibit and then they will recreate the school inside of the exhibit? Is that the idea?

Yes, yes, yes up to the point, up to the specificity of them creating and moving forward with the school. I think it is a school but how the school is constructed can be reinterpreted.

OK. That they will create their own classes and share them with one another.

Yes if that structure is replicated.

OK.

Part of me wonders... Maybe being in these states of not knowing is most productive.

I feel like that's been the only continuity, and I think it's very important that if we were to talk about any type of supportive aspect of the work it's that space of questioning, unlearning, and holding, you know... Holding these ideas instead of dissecting or knowing the specifics of things... I feel a lot of trust is involved in what the container of this project is. And when we were talking about sharing, exchanging... It's something that's core, that needs to be... The regular exchange of, what is this, what's supposed to be produced, and the reality of, like, well we're here, we're feeling, we're understanding, we're watching, we're in our bodies, we're doing this thing right now. I feel like I'm still wondering about the expansiveness and the complexity of that space, and also the ways that we showed up in the performance of *Meadow*. To have what people would assume is a structure, um... But to feel so mentally expansive and dynamic, and just linger. And so effective. It felt so effective. So I'm wondering what it means to engage other folks in the conversation of listening. And the conversation of, you know, quiet, or in the conversation of unlearning.

Is it a mistake to bring in a new group of people? Is it the wrong direction.

Oh, well. What was I gonna say? I'm still pretty enamored with like the opportunity to have an exchange with other folks and the trust of extending ourselves into a space where we need to have that dialogue and develop or continue that trust with new people...? There's something it seems about geography and the recognition of some kind of mutual intent, and having that *build* trust. It can be, it can have a really kind of profound impact on how people frame their selves, or their respective practice, and stuff like that.

I guess if I can jump in on that tagline... [something is spilled]

They say broken glass is like the ancestors are calling...

I'm worried actually...that was the universe saying, nope! Not you! Zip it!

[dog barking]

Izzy!

She's like, you woke me up!

[barking]

Hush! Hush! Hush!

There's nothing in it, that's great.

[vacuuming]

I think that's most of it.

Did you get under this table?

That's a cool little vacuum.

Yeah, I know right?

What's this, groupon?

Let's get under your feet one more time.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

During this interlude, I've been thinking about what it really takes to build community. And, to your question of, whether it's a good idea or not a good idea to invite other people in—I think that's whatever. I don't know if that's the right question, you know? But one thing I feel like I get a sense from this group and from other groups that I participated in is

that community building really takes time. That's an element that can't be extracted, in my experience. And so I wonder if introducing a couple people or a new group of people to some ideas, concepts, and then walking away, or not being there for the rest of it, it assumes so many things. It assumes that we've communicated, you know, clearly, it assumes that the way we articulate and express our concerns for the issues that we've been dealing with are somehow similar... So, to walk into a new place and really present a project that I think has so much to do with local individuals, and where we are in life and the core of these questions, is a challenge. So I'm just bringing that up. It just feels like... there's stuff there to mine.



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

Mhmm. And related it didn't feel like a challenge to invite people with us who didn't start, who ended up performing, people who came to school and then stayed for rehearsal, that seemed seamless and added to the expansiveness of it.

That's cuz we were there.

Inviting other people, it never felt like a big leap, it never felt really...

I can't hear...could you turn up the volume? Thanks.

I was just saying it didn't feel like a big leap to invite other people in to class who then performed with us, and we were wondering if that was because we were together the whole time in that process.

For this project to be about people and elements in migration, and location...those pieces, you know. I mean, transferring information... for some reason that feels really foreign, but um, engaging folks in conversation about dirt, and our relationship to our bodies, and our

relationship to community and struggle... That conversation feels possible. Dance exchange, engagement feels possible. And then also, oh, there's that thought, um...oh... transferring, transferring, um, I lost it. Shucks!

It'll come back.

Ok!

Maybe it's a question of language because what comes up for me, the words process and community... In the beginning it felt like this experiment with the rehearsal space and that process, which expanded over weeks and months... I do agree with Lauren—community building is something that takes time... What comes to mind when speaking about going to another location, projects that propose to potentially create something of a community, that whole parachute artist thing comes up.

What's a parachute artist?

Dropping in, and out, like—

It's this history of community art production, which sometimes produces great projects... When an artist comes from a different location and works within a very short period of time... with hope that the project may continue with maybe identified leaders or people that will continue the project as they believe, yeah. So, variations of that...

Yeah the community partners over there, that can be partners and collaborators with the local organization, [unintelligible] that knows the history and relevance to history and people there, specifically.

Right, as opposed to just the plop in and fly out...

Right! I think that there isn't a specific formula and I like that there was this unknowing of what was going to happen in our process, which I felt valued everybody and everyone's contribution and voice and body into the space. There was a value in that unknowing that created an environment where everyone felt like they could contribute and the opening of saying we're gonna create a curriculum together and what is that going to look like. We don't know, let's create it. It formed and there was the support that we all had with each other that was really valuable and so how can those things happen in a condensed way or maybe that's not something that needs to be replicated or...

Yeah, I guess I agree. I feel like I would hesitate if the goal in part is to recreate this idea of the school and that space of questioning and dialogue and development of workshops and community. I would almost feel like having all of us go there would be a big imposition like, *Oh we're going to teach you about community. Here's a community that we developed.* Not that that would be our intention or what we set out to do but I feel like just because of

the numbers and the relationships it's such a strong entity to go into somewhere and then try, as opposed to like letting something develop there. I would be interested in having a school established and be formed based on the similar questions and prompts that were given to us and then coming in at the end and having a dialogue with those people. That would be fascinating to me. To see where they ended up with the kind of a similar trajectory of prompts and play and community building that was also very flexible and not rigid in responding to what their needs were but coming from similar starting points and seeing where they ended up and seeing where we ended up. That would be an amazing mining of collective imaginations and ideas and realities. Um, and just like you say—I feel like I couldn't go to Houston and have any sort of opinion on what community building in Houston should be or what any sort of cultural relationships should be. I mean, I would just feel so weird walking into a situation like that. And I guess I've had different times when I feel like such a California guy walking into an area and I feel like that perspective is so strong and different and not necessarily useful...What?

I said here comes the California guy.

Yeah some people really don't like, also...

I think it would be fascinating, as you say, if you gave another group of people a similar set of prompts and let them run with it, then went to see and experience what they had come up with. That's what sounds really fascinating. But the other end of it is that I don't think us going there needs to be going there with the intent of going to impose our ideas on the people. I mean, they could do their thing, and that could be this autonomous thing that they do, but we could also go and kind of meet them in the middle and it could be more of a sharing and not us dictating. The meta-prompt could be what we did but we are here more to interact with you than say this is the way things should be or something like that. That could be a very rich experience as well.

And you're saying that's more possible at the end?

I'm just saying I'm skeptical of the idea of being able to do that with a large group of people and I feel like it would be such a strong statement to have a large group of people with such a developed history and ideology and experience as a group walk in and not feel if I walked into that room as a participant or somebody coming in for the first time, even if it was subconscious, I would automatically be looking to them for keys, physically, emotionally, pedagogically into how I should be behaving in the space—what I should be doing, what was appropriate, what was not appropriate. Even if it was just things like, "I feel really comfortable taking my shoes and socks off in a certain way." I mean, I just think that influence would be so immediate and so present from the beginning that there's no way that it would not be hugely influential in terms of what their actual process would end up being. Not that we would go in at all, of course, like trying to impose our ideologies.

Thinking of Taisha's as the thru-line, and the person who brought us together with a specific set of questions, continued to give us certain prompts and parameters that we're interpreting, that as a thru-line to me makes a lot of sense to then move that to another location like let that course play out and then compare the two petri dishes at the end of the experiment and see what came up. Because I feel like that other petri dish would probably have a lot of information that we didn't have, that we didn't come up with on our own, but was still coming from the same kind of ideas and the same impetus. That could be really helpful and be really great.

I really like that idea even though I presented a counter argument. I think that essentially Sebastian is right on at least in terms of what you're saying about us coming there as a group that had an experience together potentially conditioning the experience for them. For sure. It may not be immediately obvious but I think it would be really interesting to not have that happen and to somehow be able to compare the two petri dishes.

I will also say that that is definitely coming from the place of like a strong idea of the larger goal and what is interesting to me about this project... I feel like the larger goal is looking at how to be, how we develop community and conversations, and some other larger things, as opposed to having a myopic focus. Because if that's the goal then, yes, we should all go there and then figure out ways to share and be stretching and pulling what that means in a different location...

Well, yeah. No. It's so good to think about all these things. Conceptually this could be a compare and contrast experience and different outcomes. But, when you think about...

...The meadow

The meadow! [laughter] And then to think there's like community, in the institutional sense, in a buzz word sense, and then there's like actually what it takes to really commit to community, and then there's process and what it means in an institutional sense, and then the cliff's notes sense, and then what it really means to commit to process. I think it's kind of interesting, what you're saying Sebastian, and it's where my head goes—keep to the conceptual structure. It's interesting to think that the conceptual structure gets broken by this need to actually stay not faithful because that sounds like lying, but to stay...just to recognize that some things can't be cut off and just restarted.

I found that that's where most of my curiosity is coming from—looking at this project with a sense of expansion, I think you touched on it in the beginning, that conflict between the restarting and expanding. I think now we're discussing people and bodies and our relationship to that, sense of expansion. I'm wondering what folks' ideas are around what this. What expanding this project looks like, or expanding these concepts, expanding these actions. And then also the invitation is curious to me, too. Because right now I'm

feeling very grounded by [sigh] certain moments in the project, like the spell casting project, hearing songs of mourning or historical videos, and seeing Black bodies and people and holding space and moving through space and actually just witnessing each other. And our relationships to these things. I'm thinking about that invitation they gave to bring what you're working on. Bring it. Then your choice to be, 'well I'm working on this.' And so I'm curious about specifically your ideas around beginning this project and feeling present with it now and what it looks like to expand it and then I'm also curious to hear what other people think about you know our relationship to the project and then what it feels like to expand it.

It's interesting what caught me in what you just said, or stuck with me...*What is this?* That brings me back to some of what Sebastian just brought up. This is this experiment that conceptually involves... how can I say... the development of certain kinds of petri dishes, and so how is that most properly brought. If we or taisha are to bring that, what are we bringing? What form does that take? I don't know. Does it take the form of delivering prompts and then stepping back or does it take the form of having bodies actually be there? How do we position our bodies within that conceptual framework? Does my body need to be there? Who knows. Maybe that's a question we each need to ask ourselves, for some reason. I'm not sure. Do their bodies need to come here?

Are you leaving? Are you actually leaving?

For Texas?

[laughter]

Nice to see you Ashley. Did you get your grant application in?

Yes.

Yay!

[applause]

Sorry to cut you off, Heyward. Or interrupt.

Yeah, what are our bodies doing? Does my body need to be there, what is my body doing here, what has it done, what's its relationship with Joy's body? Who are we collectively? I don't really have a firm answer. That's the annoying. Maybe there's something I need to unlearn still. I don't know.

This ties back to or brings up a new idea for me regarding the ownership question because I'm realizing it's less about authorship or ownership of material or product and it's more about this kind of revved up feeling of us having a lot of work to do. A lot of

questions were raised and experiences were felt deeply where it feels like this is not a semester, this is a life-long school. This is a life long commitment to speaking in the way we speak to each other, making space the way we make space for each other. These things have created models for me that I don't feel like I'm done with, personally. On a bigger scale regarding the project, it feels like there's so much to do, and it's not done, whatever, it won't be done. But whatever that means, whether it's my own body continuing to do that with the same group of people or whether it's a new one, I think that's the underlying desire. Does that make sense that it's not authorship but it's... I'm not done thinking about this yet. You know?

To continue to be in part of the conversation...

Continue that research that we...

Bodies not done embodying this work.

Yeah that too.

Like questions of authorship assumes an object.

Yeah. Or even like...

Like a thing that's fixed.

Right, or choreographic material, or like the look of the show. But it doesn't even really, that's not really what I mean at all. But some kind of continued engagement with a particular way of practicing.

Philosophically you could extend that question into some kind of inquiry into the body's position in culture. It's part of what's got me going on the words thing that was in the text. It's like this fantastic experience of starting all of our conversations with the pronoun question, which is a practice that I hadn't done before but it's changed me I think. And those pronouns have to do with identity or gender or sexual orientation, or something like that, but I felt like... "he's back from Texas!" That meadow, the school in meadow, created this thing, "what is dance?" Is it self-expression, is it ritual, is it a formal container? I dunno, that could go on and on and on. And then there were moments during the performance where I felt like the ghost dance was there. Is it bodies engaged in some kind of entreaty having to do with their condition vis a vis nature, or social circumstance? Then there's another layer having to do with how Black bodies have been positioned historically within the American post-slave trade context, and stuff like that. There's just so much. It doesn't fit neatly into dance, and if I were to say: "what if I called it performance art" well, I could, but that's one way to grab a certain piece of it. But you know, I think, like Devika is saying, that continues. For me it's not something that I'm gonna have resolved either for

who knows how long. I'm reminded of that by the Lakota thing having to do with the seventh generation. It's probably that as a contemporary artist I've learned to think of authorship in terms of – I'm doing something that belongs to me, and, either exhibits my intentions or furthers my career or like it does something it hopefully does something of value.

I'm glad you mentioned that because I think that's what I think about when I think about expansion of the project... My relationship to my body, and... If I'm there with thinking about the life of this intentional space, you know... Oh my gosh it's going to get really interesting now, but I felt gifted with the exchange, and I felt like it has been something that I'm engaging with. I think that dancing and moving weekly with a group of people, where we were sharing space and engaging material together that is related to social change, that's related to very personal and collective things... Then to be asked to share the ways that it's transformed us... It's hard to explain something so transformative. I think it's more than just a project. When I was asking a question of *what do you think about um WXPT expanding?* What do you think about *Meadow* expanding? What do you think about this movement this engagement we had expanding? I feel very close to again this word of engagement... I'm touching this idea or I'm touching this project from a space of openness and freeness about its own evolution. I think you asked me when we first opened the conversation, what did you gather from the exchange. Let me think... What it means for the work to continue and what we got from the process... I'm there with that. I feel like, Ok, that specific question of what it means is something I want to explore more. For me to see this work continue would mean that the idea of unlearning is carrying on, that the idea of questioning is carrying on. That I could just stop there. I feel very connected to that, and I feel like that'll come back to me. That is something that I'm still participating in, whether the project's in Houston or not. What I gather from engaging all this year was that some things aren't going to be processed through verbal exchange. My whole relationship to space and time and bodies, [laughter] is something that has the capacity it should be! And it's a big lesson, and thanks and I think that I would want to see that continue. And of course, yes, I mean, ask the people in Houston. [laughter] Ask them what they want, and my suggestion is commune, and communion. Maybe just being present and going on the trip and then coming back and talking to us about it. Keep your communication open, and maybe as a community supporting you, as your body travels through space and time and projects.

I would just want to tack on to that, like a slight ending, that it doesn't need to be like an end. It's not an end. It's a continuation. Just like what you were saying, whether it's supporting you in your travels or things come back I very much don't feel like this is an ending point. I'm interested in continuing this into perpetuity. So however that happens I'd

be interested in that. I think sometimes it is important to just that and let it shift and evolve and, maybe we can find like the exact road trip halfway point between Houston and LA and then meet there.

I'm thinking about the summertime [laughter] and the performance, you know, that we had, and the actions that were performed. We were running past each other!

I know!

And you were going out so far! But it felt like, *Ohhhh!* coming back, we were so connected and so stretched!

That was intense.

It was so intense! We're doing these things and we're moving with this slowness, and my eyes are here in front of my hands but I felt everything, everyone around me. It's a microcosm and it's macro. Gosh, I wonder if that's the principle. I wonder if that's something...I mean, for me, I felt like yeah, I just want to dot this thing, and embrace that right now, because I trusted, I feel like just a little bit. I trusted the beauty and intention in trailing and traveling and tumbling and moving slow together with this aura of awareness and each other. I just wonder about those principles [sigh] and what ongoing culture looks like supporting that kind of awareness.

I feel like a really big thru-line for this will be the physical space made in this gallery. I will say that I personally felt very disconnected from the process of that formation and our process. In a lot of ways that was my biggest area of discomfort. I feel like that space kind of ended up being imposed on us and our process. That it was never fully explored by us before the school began and integrated into what we were doing and what that meant to us. Even so much so as I feel like the conversation or the illusion of this space including the makers being Ashley, Kim, there was some integration but there was definitely not any sort of reflexive push pull in terms of that process. That made me kind of uncomfortable. I feel like it's a big question for me then that that was such a strong element that will be replicated there, feels like a bit of disconnection from like that process of *Meadow* and that kind of expansion. Whereas I feel like it was really about integrating that environment, the practice. We only got to that point in the final performances in that process, when I started to feel like what that space really meant and what an exploration of that space and energy meant. It was very different. It was actually something that felt a bit scary to me, which is not bad.

To interact with the space?

Yeah. That confinement and that artificially created space and really kind of figuring out the boundaries and what it meant, it pushed me into some unexpected place. Also we did the piece for like two hours, bumping our heads against that wall... But I do feel like it came out of the environment that we had kind of landed in. I just wanted to throw that out because we haven't talked about that aspect of it period. When we walked into the room it was kind of discussed, but a lot of it was just forming the curriculum and having the workshops happen but none of that stuff was really engaging with the materials and the space and what that physical space meant in any sort of way.

For me something that came up in, as you're speaking and then remembering the space... There's something in that moment where we came in as the space was being built. There was something that I trusted in that, that it was specifically coming from like your personal story, and like the origin of the school, which is in Texas right? And I don't know anything about the geography in Texas but is there any relationship between...

I have no idea what is being said here they are laughing.

It's about four hours outside of Houston.

Where your family had the school?

This particular school.

Wow. All right. All right. So there was...

So there was something in that trust that I was like, OK, Yeah. I know that there's a special relationship here and I'm here to have that with all of you all, you know. Yeah but there was something about, how this feels for me, this is my interpretation, but it feels specific to you know, that history, your history.

Mhmm.



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

Thinking about what you guys were talking about with the space, also what gets translated into performance and what we did so briefly even though it went on for a long time, but it was really brief... But questions, being really interested in how hard it was and the hard physical work, and questions I have about whether it means translating the work from the company or the school into a performance. Or whether it's the training of a company. This feeling of expansiveness, unlearning, holding space, how can that arrive alongside with this idea of rigor? Or either physical rigor, because there were moments, there was so much trust. I felt really buoyant with all of you, that it felt a little scary physically in the space, on my body. And rigor also in terms of like really adequately preparing ourselves for what task we're doing, and, being able to do that in a way that. Even though these words that I'm saying right now kind of sucks all the air out of it. It's both of those things. It's allowing for anything to happen, allowing for all these interactions to be possibilities, but then a strong desire I have to have a kind of rigor. I mean, rigor isn't implicit in asking us to do a task, all of these things together, and we embodied that, I think, ferociously. But also rigor in terms of preparation or training, or whatever that means, implicit in the investigation together.

Rigor...rigor and physical practice. Or that or just a type of awareness of?

And I think not just physically, I think, like, organizationally, or in conversations around practicalities for performing, or structures of the school, I mean both ways. Or maybe all ways. I wonder if that's even possible to exist with all of this really special and beautiful space, and possibility, because I think somehow it was both of those things for me. And I think that's a huge challenge.

There was a challenge for me especially early on jumping back into this process in August or whatever it was, feeling like the lack of rigor in terms of like rehearsal attendance, really practically. The danger is that immediately my response started to be: if this is not important to people, if this is something that is optional and not something that's worth doing for someone else, well I'm just not going to do it either. I could have made that choice too. And so it was a challenge for me in that period of time to not do that, and instead say *No*. I'm making this choice to go to these rehearsals because they have been scheduled and because this matters to me and because I can do it. I can make that commitment for whatever reason I had to trust that everybody was committing to as much as they could within those parameters. I think that just fits in for me because I feel like it is a really hard balance. I don't know what the answer is at all, and my goal in experiencing this was to only think about myself, in the context, and to make those decisions to do the very best that I could and commit as much as I could to it from the beginning.

This is also a community. How are we supporting each other and we're all coming from different schedules, different means, different places to be, cars, not cars—how do we support each other? Those are realities too that came up.

I have to go, which is another hard reality. I have to leave, and I really don't want to go. This is really important.

No, I understand. It's 9:40.

Well we can stop here. I think it's fine to stop before we're exhausted. Though if people want to continue the conversation that's fine too. But I think, for my own brain and needs, it's been really productive.

Lauren, are you still there?

I'm here.

Can you see, Kristianne?

So I think what would be really nice, actually, is to throw out a few follow-up questions via email.

In terms of moving forward, and moving forward with your voices and thoughts, I would love to have your continued thoughts on what it means to expand this project. I am not interested in anything that diminishes the quality of the experiences we had... And, so for that reason, I feel like this doing of the school again is a very sensitive thing and it's important it's done in the right way. I think the right way will find itself, like the way we found this. This did not know that it was going to be this, so I think that Houston will also

become what it needs to be. But there are extra challenges of its remoteness. Please keep throwing out thoughts and I'll put out an email to see if people want to get together again and or add to the dialogue digitally, remotely, snail mail, and all that stuff. Lauren, any last thoughts?

No, it's good to see everybody!

So nice to see you Lauren, thank you for chiming in! Have a great...Enjoy Fresno!

Yeah, I'll be back this week, so I'll see you guys in person.

And then the question as to us meeting, there's more to discuss. We'll just say that. I guess this is a dot dot dot, and to be continued.

LACE presents The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People, a large-scale installation and performance platform by Los Angeles based artist taisha paggett. This project, which takes the form of a dance school, is shaped by the question, "what is a Black dance curriculum today?" The installation itself, developed in collaboration with artists Ashley Hunt and Kim Zumpfe, serves as a temporary dance school, performance space and home for dance company, WXPT (We are the Paper, We are the Trees).

The core of The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People is WXPT itself — a temporary, experimental community of queer people of color and allies, dancers and non-dancers alike. WXPT was conceived by paggett in early 2015 to expand upon the language and methods of modern and contemporary dance practices, to shift the ways dancers of color are positioned within the contemporary field, and to explore questions of queer desire, responsibility, migration and historical materials that inhabit our cultural imagination. The company consists of Joy Angela Anderson, Heyward Bracey, Rebecca Bruno, Alfonso Cervera, Erin Christovale, Loren Fenton, Maria Garcia, Kloii "Hummingbird" Hollis, Jas Michelle, Meena Murugesan, taisha paggett, Sebastian Peters-Lazaro, Kristianne Salcines, Ché Ture, Devika Wickremesinghe and Suné Woods.

In May of 2015, paggett organized evereachmore, WXPT's premiere performance created for the Bowtie Project, a partnership between Clockshop and California State Parks to activate an 18-acre post-industrial lot along the LA River. Amidst the recent unfolding of state violence against Black bodies, evereachmore sought to forge new economies of resistance, and new sensations of time, space and togetherness.

Inspired in part by a "school for colored youth" that members of paggett's family founded in early 20th century East Texas, The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People extends the praxis of WXPT into a curriculum and pedagogy. The installation at LACE

takes up the form of a school as an artistic and social problem, building the school’s curriculum and infrastructure through physical and social sculpture, performance and image, where the roles of artist and viewer, dancing and non-dancing body, art and learning coalesce.

The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People will offer a program of workshops, weekly classes and micro-performances initiated by members of WXPT. The curriculum will be open to anyone, blurring lines between audience and participant, while especially encouraging queer people of color to join. Across the bodies of the company and the members of the public who join the school, the curriculum will build an accumulative performance score in weekly increments, culminating in the performance of a “collective movement choir” at the conclusion of the exhibition.

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CONVERSATIONS | MAR 18, 2016

WXPT: In Conversation, Part 2

Critical Correspondence invites founder of WXPT (We are the Paper, We are the Trees), taisha paggett and collaborators (The company consists of Joy Angela Anderson, Heyward Bracey, Rebecca Bruno, Alfonso Cervera, Erin Christovale, Loren Fenton, Maria Garcia, Kloii "Hummingbird" Hollis, Jas Michelle, Meena Murugesan, taisha paggett, Sebastian Peters-Lazaro, Kristianne Salcines, Ché Ture, Devika Wickremesinghe and Suné Woods), to discuss their most recent project, The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People, a large scale installation and performance platform presented by Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) during late October–early December, 2015. Published in two parts, the company discusses, in a collective voice, the difficulties of authorship, legitimization, parachute artists, their recent critical, pedagogical framing of the project and its future iterations, and enacting a “collective movement choir” for the culminating performance *Meadow*.

My question is: Were there any lingering thoughts from our conversation that we started two weeks ago?

I felt like Sebastian's reasoning was really, really solid. The idea of continuing to create this container for purposes of process—what comes out of that is dictated by the people who inhabit it or that local community, those who bring their ideas and experiences.

I think about the idea of the rhizome, an underground structure that spreads laterally...

On the other hand I could imagine something going on from where we sit kind of feeling like I can't reach it. It's kind of far away. I find myself really curious about this idea of being able to have an experience and then take that experience and drop it somewhere else and stand back and watch and see how that grows or what comes out of it

That's what I struggle with. A framework that can be lifted and placed in any island, in any realm. What about the responsibility to the process that has already started..?

The process that includes the rest of the folks that are already involved?

The process that involves all of us, that we started a year ago, and, even to the extent of breaking the conceptual framework—this was going to be a year only. That year will be up in March but how can it stop? Some connection to process that happens across bodies, like actual living real people.

It's not just a conceptual framework.

And also because its one thing to set up a framework and its another thing to actually put it in motion. It's actually the putting it in motion that makes it feel like, well actually...

Hi Hi, glad you could make it. We're taking a pause, Kristianne just walked in.

[Chatter, compliments, greetings]

OK, continuing... What it means to continue the project, to continue the school, and what continues. What it means to set this structure, to see this as a structure, to see this as a template, to airlift it and place it in another population. Which reminds me of the parachute thing that Joy brought up. This idea of...what was it?

Like a parachute artist.

I just start writhing, just the notion of that. This art thing that functions like a community service provider in a thinly-veiled way... It really frightens me to think that anyone would see the work in that manner. Not that I believe that that's the only way such an approach would be received but I think it's there in the air, potentially. So there's that thought versus this kind of commitment, fidelity to our group, and continuity of our process. Which feels like it's still processing, right? And where does that go? And, which... I'm going to stop

talking. Which is interesting in relation to social sculpture. A frame is set that creates a type of social architecture, and then that thing moves, continues to live on, ideally outside of the thing that set it up.

I wonder if, I don't know, kind of like in our current, kind of cultural, whatever it is, conundrum. It's... how do I say it? It seems like the modern movement, it was a way of divorcing ourselves from tradition. So, that's left ritual out of a lot of what goes on as our practice. It seems.

By modern movement you mean Modernism?

Yeah, Modernism, which kind of coincides with the growth of industrialism, and capitalism, and communism, and its colonialism. It's all of that. As a contemporary modern person, I sometimes wonder, does that mean that I'm just at this moment and in the know... contemporary guy? Or does it mean I've accepted a colonialist kind of agenda? Or something like that. So, I don't know. To make a long story short I wonder if in some ways to create a social sculpture, something that actually does create a process that stays alive, either in the community or in the bodies of the people that come into the project. If it's because that really affects some kind of social change or it's an experience that people take with them. I'm not always confident that I can do anything I want on-stage or raise any issue I want. The audience, they only take away from it what they choose to or what they're prepared to. But some kind of experiment in community, that is an art-making at the same time, it's kind of a different beast.



this is the caption for this image

What came up for me... ok, first I'm going to start with my questions. How can I support what's happening next? Like you were saying... I'm going to start with this image—talking about the parachute. I was thinking about the way epidemic spread works... One person who is affected goes to a different place and when that person leaves, it continues to grow. Then there's another start there, and this might be even the people who were exposed by that first person or possibly a different, unknown start altogether. Without it being such a dark image, this feels like how this process and structure has felt. Because from the very first day, I couldn't see how I'd be a part of it. I didn't see, as I can right now, how much it's changed me in a really subtle way, also in a very prominent way. I know that that came from that experience. And then being aware of those two possibilities—like I have the choice to either keep going with it and still be riding that process or sit with it for a little bit and let it stagnate. Or the other way around, take it with me and move onto something different. I think what was wonderful about this structure is that it was inter-layered. So, yeah what you were talking about, audience, as the artist who is putting in the work on-stage, you can put whatever you want in there but the audience gets to choose what they take in, how they take it in, and how it affects them, right? But what's so beautiful about dance and this structure itself was the beginning, this inclusiveness of where people were... Letting the progression of the structure evolve with the people who are in it, and who's not in it, and who's added later and, you know, all of the complexities that we added to the group because we are all individuals who are living very real lives that are very opposite and different. And so to the level of the performance, coming from whatever they, the audience, sees and then accepting what they cannot see. Which is the process within us as a group and within us as individuals. Because the process for me never ended after the rehearsal ended. It was also in the drive home—three hours of driving back and three hours of driving towards---that was part of my process... sitting with the things I heard and experienced just echoing in my head. And it'd produce this energy, energy, energy, and that brought me back to rehearsal the next Saturday. The multiplicity of these layers of this structure...

I'm really struck by what you said about meeting people where they're at, and that becoming what drives the process rather than this kind of concept that people's lives have to serve. It more comes from the people that are involved. Or at least that's a significant layer.

I remember from some rehearsals we had, you, taisha, sent us some videos or some articles and stuff, and here I am thinking I'm going into rehearsal and we're going to be talking about this. And then the conversation completely goes somewhere else. There's no attachment to whatever's brought up. But whatever's brought up is what brought us to where we're at that moment, so it's not wasted. I felt like that was very tangible for me, and it made sense to me right away. After the first three rehearsals it made sense. I'm like, okay, this is how we're working. Yeah.

I think it is productive for me to not be fixated on the thing. Like, we're all going to bring backpacks to a rehearsal, so we can all do a "backpack dance," and that's for what that backpack-ness brings into a room. I'm not interested in the backpack but maybe what posture comes from the backpack or the conversation that comes up—where people got their backpacks and in relation to where. I don't know. Get away from "about-ness" and move more toward creating, thinking of ideas more like fascia, you know?

They're interconnected.

Yeah, that ideas form architectures, or that ideas are sculptural. They're not things you can point at singularly. It's the whole.

In some ways it feels like the impossibility of the whole task. Like the whole endeavor to set out, even to do, to make a piece or a project with so many people in a limited time. And the subject matter being so important and so big and so vast. And people coming from so many different backgrounds. The impossibility stacked upon other impossibilities I think in some ways made that atmosphere...there's so much there that it really lent itself to this undercurrent of energy and ideas that were sometimes spoken out loud but sometimes not spoken. I'm reminded of something that Turay mentioned the last time we met, not just about the art-making but about how we relate to each other as a company. Even in decision-making process, whatever that means... To communicate by speaking but also what's communicated by not speaking. I think that would be another desired element in the bundle. Somehow fostering those two kinds of communication, or many different kinds of communication, through touch, through dance, through making, through speaking, through sharing. Then we find ourselves in positions where right now, or the last time we met, we're trying to function as a collective or a governing body and trying to make sense out of these ideas and trying to make a decision about how to move forward. It's interesting to me that we participate by talking out loud but also by not knowing how to and silently agreeing or disagreeing. Just being in the soup of things. It's not going to be a consensus but it does lend itself to a richness and a kind of communication that feels really solid no matter what, with all of the things that we've talked about. There was really the possibility of not only wildly different opinions or feelings about different things, but it feels like the communication between everybody was... full of respect is not really what I mean... in real consideration of each other. That is a different way of communicating than a regular school or an academic setting. I think those hierarchies were successfully challenged. The thing that you say about ritual, Heyward, is interesting to me because that seems like a satisfying way to transmit information instead of a capitalist art-making/branding thing. We did this thing and now you do this thing and it's the other iteration of it. Something about passing information along in the way that we did—people who came into the workshops or the idea of learning a tradition or learning a ritual, or creating your own ritual seems better or more in-tune with what I think we're going for. I

also wonder what would happen with the experiment if we, I don't know how plausible this is, or even if anyone wants to do this, but the idea that everything continues, like the virus. It starts in another place and we continue our practice, and everyone eventually interacts. The idea of that spreading is amazing. I don't know if that could happen, but...

Today I was coming from a rehearsal. I wanted to choreograph for an alumni and I brought up the experience of being a part of WXPT and then talked to them through my own lens of how the process unfolded for me. The thing is everyone had different entry points of how they came into this project. I appreciate the unknown of why I'm here. I didn't know what the decision-making was and I didn't know that I was going to be part of it. I was an hour late! [laughter] I told you, I was like, "Can I just watch? And you're like, "No, you're dancing."



Yeah, you were thrown into it.

Even the first performance, I was thrown into it too. A lot of my experience was: How do I fit? Okay, I'm a part of it somehow, and I'm trusting that I'm a part of it, but how? And then also understanding how it was all similar to my own experiences. Can I relate to taisha's experiences and what she's talking about and to Turay's experiences of what they're talking about? There's just all of that. I got into so much of the politics... I have never been so much into that. I'm this immigrant who came into the U.S., and actually the main thing that I had was knowing that I needed to learn English. I knew people were judging me because I didn't speak the language, so that was the main priority. I didn't understand it quite yet that, oh, I'm seen as a second-class citizen because of my identity. None of that,

until being in this process, and it was a long time, over ten years, of living here. Being bombarded by real-life experiences and talking about it, for me, started this curiosity. I feel like a lot of younger people take that as reality. We just accept it. But there was a kind of resistance in the existence of this structure... And, having these conversations. So I feel like, yes, we keep going, and I'm keeping it going, that work that I'm working on.

I feel like something similar happened with me that makes me really interested in what will happen in a different place, in a different city, in particular. In my mind and heart I've been politically conscious and engaged in similar conversations. But I feel like the pairing of getting to know this particular group here and also being new to Los Angeles, the conjunction of those two things have made me think about race and gender just in a very different, heightened way. In a way that I feel like I maybe took for granted in New York, just being around a lot of people or feeling like some things were more okay than they were. This very tight-knit group came together just as I was settling into a city that is very isolating, and very segregated. I think about race more here, and I didn't expect that at all. I really wonder about Texas, and I wonder what other places are like. It's very different everywhere.

I'm reminded of really close friend who I've known for a long time. This one conversation... Recently I was telling her about WXPT and she had this response where she was kind of like, now that I think about it I think we should have just let the South go. And her reasoning was we fought this really, really bloody war, to keep this part of the nation that had this very questionable economic, based-in-slavery, as a part of the whole. And part of that conversation was, things are getting better there too, but her thought was that if we had just let the South go, maybe it would have been better for what wasn't the South. And the South itself would have maybe made more progress. It would have been left to its own, whatever it was doing. That was also around the time that the Confederate Flag was taken down in South Carolina, the time that we were having this conversation. That was when we were doing our thing, too. I thought that that was a really interesting response.

My father's from South Carolina, so I still have some aunts there. I remember when that debate was going on, finding out about why the flag was there in the first place. It was there because basically white law-makers put it there to protest the integration of the schools there. A part of me wanted to call my aunt, and go "why are you living in that place?" A part of me just couldn't. Maybe part of that comes with growing up on the West Coast, or something. It's not like the West Coast is heaven or anything like that when it comes to race relations. But, yeah, it's needed. I have to say that all my information about the South is second-hand. I've never been. My father avoided it, until he was really old, going back to the South. My mom and her sisters weren't allowed to spend time at friend's

houses because they grew up in neighborhoods that were mostly white. From my grandpa's experience, you could have anything done to you and no one would be held accountable. It's like... here we are again.

When you mention the word, stop policing yourself some time ago, this little trigger went off in me. Policing, who are the police? The whole thing gets into very dark stuff around our bodies and how bodies of color have been made to carry a certain thing. It's really pretty hard to shed. It's woven into the fabric of how people think and relate in this country. It's locked in there. Sometimes it's like a bulldog. It's got its teeth in and it won't let go. And then, here comes Donald Trump. It's really wild stuff. I'm curious to be able to have the opportunity to witness or have some experience of how people in the South would actually...what their process would be like, or what would it bring out. Maybe different experiences. There have got to be a lot of correlations. The generation of people that migrated here from the South are either really, really old or they're starting to not be with us anymore. It's taken me a long time to get it that people migrated, and that there's a body that's supposed to be there. It has meaning. But, the rest of the way that I live modern life tends to abstract it. I'm not really satisfied with it being abstracted.

Wait, I lost it. What's the "it" there?

Which "it"?

You said you're not comfortable with it being abstracted.

That the meaning of bodies moving across geography impacted by an experience or an ecology that's either social or cultural. That's either supported or destructive. The unfortunate thing in our country's case, a lot of it has been not so nice.

My question that's following that is, then, as a community of people coming from different places what do you call that?

As a community coming from different places?

Existing together in the same... sharing same place, geographically.

Yeah, does that then, because of space, does it make them a group?

I don't know. Because it starts to get into that "what is a nation?" kind of thing.

We all carry our own cultures and our own histories but then all of a sudden you're in this configuration of different people. What is that, as a whole? What does that make all of us, together? I feel like this is one thing that I never understand. It's so simple in this structure

that we've created together. We all had these similarities and differences and our own identities, but that together was the art of dance. Making art together. And then somehow that made us a company. Does that make sense?



I feel like that's the thing, thinking of a dance company as a type of population, as a type of community, as a type of collective body. What happens if you hold the framework of the dance company but change all of its rules and change how it operates, and what it does, what that group of people do when they're together? Otherwise nothing, I would say, is our common denominator. All the way to the fact that you live all the way in a different county and Kloii's over there and everyone's backgrounds are different. No one is the same height and no one thinks the same thing about performance. It's kind of like the company became this arbitrary kind of border.

Yeah, that's a whole other tangent. From my own perspective a lot of this was in filling the limits. The question of what can art do and the limits of my own practice in relation to the things I wanted my practice to take up. And feeling like I can't take them up with just my body. I can't take them up just in doing solos for this or that audience. When we all came together I didn't know what we were going to do. I just knew that it was important. That it'd be a catalyst for people to create meaning together in whatever form that might take, and to keep listening to what comes up. The fact is that I was so terrified to have some of the conversations that we had, early on. And also quite terrified by everyone's sense of why they were there. Like, this person is expecting this, and this expecting that, and this person is expecting, and. Whoa. Who is going to be right? Who's going to get the thing that they want? Maybe just for this time, surrender. I think that was what was helpful,

actually, about holding it to a year. This is a container that can be held for a year but not much longer, to some extent. Which is what makes it feel so fraught now. Because it got set in motion, now what does it mean to break it? Or to let the timer go off and say, "done!"

I think also what's come up is a broader question of authorship. It's not my choice to say that it's done, because it's not really mine. The relations that have been built and the experiences and what people take on and utilize and trouble in their own work or their own relations, and that belongs to you, and you, and you. I know there's this moment when my father got sick and I just couldn't do anything, but felt like it was important to keep the process going. I thought maybe I'm going to be overthrown, and maybe that's great! Maybe that's what needs to happen. Even though I was afraid to have a lot of conversations, I did feel it was important that they happen, and that we kept returning to the body, to practice in some way. But now I have this impulse for us to now just be in the studio. It's like we had to work all this up to actually be able to have like a real experience in the studio. It would actually be so satisfying.

It probably is obvious or sounds redundant, but it feels like the school or the approach or whatever we're doing, we're uniquely poised to address all of this stuff. All the trauma around bodies and bodies in migration and history of bodies. It does sound so obvious to me but most of these conversations are just conversations. Or they're people online, writing feeds or arguing with each other or in schools or not talking at all. It's so rare for people to even talk with people who are different from them, and to consciously get a group of people together and work through these things in a non-linear way, with the body. That's the point of it. It feels like the inherent value. It's very powerful. I would imagine that if it did take all this time to get to that understanding I would be really interested to see what comes up physically, after all of that.

Can I ask you something? Maybe a closing thing... Maybe you can modify this. What's a single question that is still lingering for you concerning this process? Maybe a question that came up before that never got solved. A question that remains. Something that never got addressed. A question that needs to continue to be asked. Something that needs to be in the room of this conversation. Or just something that has been stirred up.

I have one thing that I'm still trying to find answer to as an artist and, in the process, everything we're talking about feels relevant. How then can I put that in the body, and what gets put in the space in the work? What's taken out and what's that filter that we're using? How is it going to be translated? Not even translated, but put in. Because translated makes it seem like it's turning into something else, that the body is there the whole time. How is that, what's the word? I don't know what the word is to describe that, but it's not translating. From this conversation, from all of this growth, from all of this insight to movement, to the physicality of the body, and all of that.

What are we manifesting? What gets manifested?

Yeah, what gets put? What is that filter? What's that line or how does it get crossed? That's has been the ultimate thing from the very beginning 'til the end. I'm still dealing with it.



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

Yeah, it makes me begin to wonder afresh, something like, "what is art?" You could say that in some way art becomes the filter. What is art doing, or who made art? Did I make art? Or are we making art? And then, did the definition of art change? Does art reside in the body? Where is art? And, then there's the body stuff. How is your body? What's going on there? Maybe by being more aware in some way that I'm not aware of yet how other people are experiencing their bodies I'll better understand who I am. There's something about personal identity that it's constantly morphing. I like that. I like that we have created an opportunity to work and grow in ways and to create questions. We have to enter those questions with our bodies in order to maybe find an answer but maybe just to get to the other side of the room. Or something like that. To have a sense of the space, in a way, that we can understand bodily.

How does your body experience your pressure? Or whatever it is that we're talking about. How is then the body dealing with it as an entity?

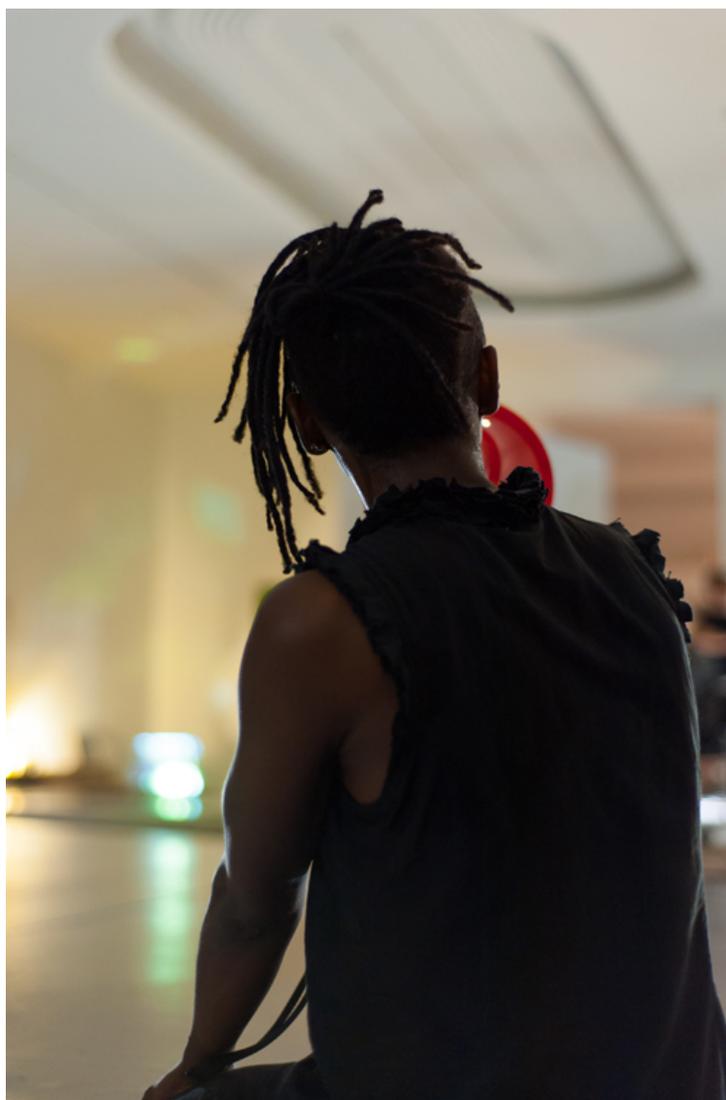
My questions are similar. When I said before something about the inherent value or virtue in this endeavor or this experience, and we're all, even though our experiences are really different, in pretty strong consensus of the transformative elements of the whole thing—interpersonally, politically, physically, dynamic and transforming. That radically challenges the idea of making a product, an art-product. That seems really clear to me and then for some reason, just because it was brief, the experience of actually performing, I feel like I still have questions about what happened. Not just what people thought, because I actually didn't get a ton of feedback, I got people's impressions that for the most part were very visceral and emotional. Not too lengthy. For some reason there's a sticking point for me where I wonder about...either conceptually or...What's the word? What was made, what was crafted, what was presented? Because I feel very strong about that transmission from us to the audience. Being in the space and having the space, I saw how that changed a little bit as time went on. I wonder how that changed from night to night as time went on. If we had a longer performance practice what would come up from that? I don't really know yet what my specific questions are regarding authorship but I know that I have the desire to talk more about that. There's a lot of like quasi-utopian language around the formation of the group. I get really excited about those possibilities and then you know, the real-life practicalities of everything, it's like it can't ever be perfect. But I wonder about that transparency between all the levels of the people involved and thinking about the dancers in the company as workers. There always is a level of slight...it's not even exploitation but the performers are always at the bottom of whatever this thing is. By participating in any way in this structure of art-making or art-world, I feel like there is always that thing there. It can't be divorced from that. What are the ways we can continue to challenge those things, those roles, or just talk about it more? It's not a thing that I feel very comfortable talking about either.

Talking about what?

The politics of this is our job. We're all getting paid for this, paid for our efforts, and it's a labor of love, and it's what we're doing. But it also has all of these different aspects to it. Yeah, I'm interested in different ways of addressing...

I was also really aware of a shift in the paradigm between dancing in an outdoor space and being dancers in an art space. Wherever this continues to happen, it's a whole other set of questions to think about. Yeah, I have too many questions, I think.

I have to go, this is the shitty part of this, that I have to stop. You can continue this conversation, but this is my cue that I have to leave. Thank you so much.



WXPT's Meadow, photo: Christopher Wormald

LACE presents The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People, a large-scale installation and performance platform by Los Angeles based artist taisha paggett. This project, which takes the form of a dance school, is shaped by the question, “what is a Black dance curriculum today?” The installation itself, developed in collaboration with artists Ashley Hunt and Kim Zumpfe, serves as a temporary dance school, performance space and home for dance company, WXPT (We are the Paper, We are the Trees).

The core of The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People is WXPT itself — a temporary, experimental community of queer people of color and allies, dancers and non-dancers alike. WXPT was conceived by paggett in early 2015 to expand upon the language and methods of modern and contemporary dance practices, to shift the ways dancers of color are positioned within the contemporary field, and to explore questions of queer desire, responsibility, migration and historical materials that inhabit our cultural imagination. The company consists of Joy Angela Anderson, Heyward Bracey, Rebecca

Bruno, Alfonso Cervera, Erin Christovale, Loren Fenton, Maria Garcia, Kloii “Hummingbird” Hollis, Jas Michelle, Meena Murugesan, taisha paggett, Sebastian Peters-Lazaro, Kristianne Salcines, Ché Ture, Devika Wickremesinghe and Suné Woods.

In May of 2015, paggett organized evereachmore, WXPT’s premiere performance created for the Bowtie Project, a partnership between Clockshop and California State Parks to activate an 18-acre post-industrial lot along the LA River. Amidst the recent unfolding of state violence against Black bodies, evereachmore sought to forge new economies of resistance, and new sensations of time, space and togetherness.

Inspired in part by a “school for colored youth” that members of paggett’s family founded in early 20th century East Texas, The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People extends the praxis of WXPT into a curriculum and pedagogy. The installation at LACE takes up the form of a school as an artistic and social problem, building the school’s curriculum and infrastructure through physical and social sculpture, performance and image, where the roles of artist and viewer, dancing and non-dancing body, art and learning coalesce.

The School for the Movement of the Technicolor People will offer a program of workshops, weekly classes and micro-performances initiated by members of WXPT. The curriculum will be open to anyone, blurring lines between audience and participant, while especially encouraging queer people of color to join. Across the bodies of the company and the members of the public who join the school, the curriculum will build an accumulative performance score in weekly increments, culminating in the performance of a “collective movement choir” at the conclusion of the exhibition.

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