

Dancing in Common

Dance Studies Association, August 8-11, 2019

Northwestern University, Evanston Illinois

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What might it mean to speak about “the common” or “the commons” in relation to dancing bodies? How do long-standing ideas about the common good and common property inflect past and present practices? What opportunities might dance and its concomitant registers of embodied exchange offer to bodies on the margins of or outside the common?

Writing about alternative forms of ownership, Lewis Hyde reminds us Thomas Jefferson regarded knowledge itself as “common property” (2010). The commons might refer to practices in the public sphere, as Elizabeth Dillon (2014) describes a performative commons that circulates throughout the Atlantic World and created new publics in the 18th century. However participation in such a commons is politically charged, as Fred Moten and Stephen Harney underscore in describing the futurity of the black radical tradition as located in the undercommons condition of being *in* but not *of* (2013). Chandra Mohanty and Ann Russo discuss power differentials of intersectionality in terms of the need to deal with “common differences” in feminist praxis (1983). Lauren Berlant (2016) and Leela Gandhi (2011,2014) imagine the commons as a space that, although marred by our “broken world,” can create a new and possibly better way of being in the world through action. Dance as a form of action activates the social in many spaces, from clubs to classrooms to stages. In these geopolitical spaces, dance and dancing bodies move us to find common ground. Given the long-standing interconnections between colonialism, racism, and capitalism that warrant the radical reconfiguration of dance’s historiographies and futurities, we look to disrupt our different experiences and understandings of “the/a common(s)” and to produce alternative spaces for thinking and collaborating in common.

Thinking about these and so many other different experiences and understandings of the common, we gather near Chicago to reflect, move, and create. Chicago is a city of the common—from a labor union history that appealed to the commonality of worker causes, to its status as a transit hub where the passenger rail trains to East and West of the country interchange from the mid-19th century to today, as well as its place in the Great Migration North for African American communities—and also of the uncommon, including the turn of the century feat of engineering that reversed the flow of the Chicago River. “Dancing in Common” meets on the campus of Northwestern University on the shore of Lake Michigan. The Hotel Orrington and other conference hotels are just a few blocks away in Evanston, near public transportation to downtown Chicago and airports. Film screenings, club outings, and performances at Links Hall complement the wide range of panels, workshops, and plenaries planned for DSA 2019.

Presentations may address, but are not limited to, the following topics and questions:

- Commons and canons: “Common knowledge” and “common practices,” including studio practice,**

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- historiography, repertory work, reconstruction, and pedagogy
- **Cultural commons and the public sphere:** How might we think about the commons across time and space, for example in relation to past and present (g)localities? What is dance's responsibility to and role within the environment as common site?
 - **Intellectual property and the commons:** Copyright and power versus common property, as well as the value of movement as part of a cultural commons associated with both heritage and innovation
 - **Media and the commons:** What is the role of the (popular) screen as a site of global production and distribution for an affective commons? What kinds of appropriations, intercultural practices, and commodifications could be (counter)productive to neoliberal approaches to the "cultural commons"?
 - **Relationships between the commons and institutions:** From funding dance with claims for the common good, to the limits of institutional belonging
 - **Ethics of difference, belonging, and solidarity:** How do we support an undercommons; a queer commons; a brown commons? How do we engage with institutional practices of intersectionality, including finding common ground between multiple disciplines or causes, without devaluing their particularity or presuming shared experience? How does dance practice solidarity and alliance?
 - **Theorizing the (un)common:** What are the tensions in dance making and scholarship between the unique or exemplary and the claim to speak for what is taken for granted as "common sense"?

We invite proposals from those situated in academic and professional practices to engage in conversations around the ways in which the practice and politics of dance and/or choreography offer critical and creative spaces of reflection on our embodied relationships to the multiple concepts of "the/a commons." Proposed presentations may take the form of papers, panels, roundtable discussions, lecture-demonstrations, movement workshops, dance works using outdoor or indoor sites, and screendances that address our theme. Papers that are already grouped into panels have a higher likelihood of acceptance and are encouraged; individual papers will be grouped into panels by the program committee.

In addition, in the spirit of the conference theme and looking toward how we ourselves might engage in a "practice of commons," we also invite proposals from teams of facilitators for a special presentation format: *Gatherings for Common Practices*. These will take a dialogical approach to share thinking and tools for creative scholarship and pedagogy among attendees, which might center around topics such as "Pedagogies for Un/Common Bodies," "Syllabi for a 21st Century Dance Commons," or "Strategies for Survival in Institutional Commons."

Submit your proposals by 15 January 2019. The online conference site will accept proposals after 16 August 2018. See <https://dancestudiesassociation.org/conferences>

DSA presents up to six awards each year to graduate students. The Selma Jeanne Cohen Award is for conference presentation; the graduate travel award is for participation or presentation. It is not possible to win both the same year. **The deadline for both awards is the same as for proposals, 15 January 2019.** For details on both awards, see:

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<https://dancestudiesassociation.org/awards/selma-jeanne-cohen-award>
<https://dancestudiesassociation.org/awards/graduate-student-travel-award-grants>

All questions, including regarding access, should be sent to
info@dancestudiesassociation.org

2019 Conference Program Committee: Anurima Banerji, Sherril Dodds, Imani K Johnson, Einav Katan-Schmid, Kareem Khubchandani, Lorenzo Perillo, Crystal Michelle Perkins, VK Preston, Chiayi Seetoo, Arabella Stanger

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