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articles by

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W.B. Worthen

Student Essay Contest Winner

Danielle A.D. Howard

TDR

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TDR

the journal of performance studies

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Above: Slave Rebellion Reenactment, performance still-04. River Parishes outside of New Orleans, November 2019. See "Dread Scott's Slave Rebellion Reenactment: Beholding the Gap in Commemorations of Resistance" by Sarah Juliet Lauro. (Photo by Soul Brother; courtesy of Dread Scott)

Front Cover: Since her creation in 2016, Sophia has become the world's most recognized humanoid social robot. Exposed and posing during a 2018 photoshoot. See "Sophia Robot: An Emergent Ethnography" by Thomas Riccio. (Photo courtesy of Hanson Robotics)

Back Cover: Ita Segev in Knot in My Name. Gibney Dance, New York, 2019. See "Gender and Nation Tightly Bound: Ita Segev's Knot in My Name" by Yarden Stern. (Photo by Scott Shaw; courtesy of Ita Segev)

PROVOCATION



CORPO RANFLA: INTER RIM

by rafa esparza

*Collaborators:
Mario Ayala, Fabian Guerrero, Sebastian Hernandez,
Tanya Melendez, Paul Marcus Rodriguez*



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PROVOCATION

Corpo Ranfla: Inter Rim 2

rafa esparza

Corpo Ranfla explored formal aspects of “body-ness” in relation to cruising: lowrider car cruising and gay cruising. Mario Ayala, Tanya Melendez, and I worked my body into a lowrider car by giving it a paint job using an airbrush machine. At the helm of this production was my interest in the history of anthropomorphism, particularly of Mexican-Azteca iconography that illustrates the relationship between humans and nature. *Inter Rim* is a collage composition that takes on some questions that remain boisterous even after *Corpo Ranfla* materialized on my body: How can a lowriding body move? What attributes of a car, a machine, might a body take on as its own? What is there to gather about my and other bodies, the street, a neighborhood, one’s city, and the spaces between destinations when becoming a lowrider car?

rafa esparza is a multidisciplinary artist whose work reveals his interests in history, personal narratives, and kinship, his own relationship to colonization, and the disrupted genealogies that it produces. Using live performance as his main form of inquiry, he employs site-specificity, materiality, memory, and “(non)documentation” to interrogate power structures and binary forms of identity.

ARTICLES

A Spark of Freedom: Inherited Recitations of Trauma and Resistance 8

Laine Halpern Zisman

“From the ovens we rise with our fists in the air. Now is the time.” My grandfather, Dovid Zisman, was a Yiddish playwright and poet, writing and performing while in the Łódź Ghetto and Buchenwald concentration camp. Poetry, song, and performance were his way to speak the unspeakable. A messy assemblage of theories, memoirs, verses, images, and recordings reveal what we can inherit through writing as resistance and through the creative mappings of space and time.

Dread Scott’s *Slave Rebellion Reenactment*: Beholding the Gap in Commemorations of Resistance 24

Sarah Juliet Lauro

Dread Scott’s two-day *Slave Rebellion Reenactment*, part recreation and part historical revision, dramatized the 1811 slave rebellion in a more fully developed manner than historical records authored by slaveholders, incorporating a range of strategies used in other artworks depicting slave resistance, including: elisions, caesura, lacuna, off-screen action, obfuscation, abstraction, redaction, and more. These devices safeguard history from appropriation or commodification on the one hand; and on the other, highlight the way slave resistance is neglected in the historical record and commemorative landscape.

Sophia Robot: An Emergent Ethnography 42

Thomas Riccio

Since her creation in 2016, Sophia has become the world’s most recognized humanoid social robot. Gendered female by creator David Hanson, she is a harbinger of a tomorrow world that is here. She performs at events around the planet as a messenger, celebrity, and ambassador representing the human-technological future. Sophia is a symbol, and humans are witnesses to an origin story as much hers as it is our own.

Reimagining the Brown Body: Contact Improvisation and an Alternative Masculinity in *Alignigung*, William Forsythe’s Screendance 78

Wesley Lim

William Forsythe’s screendance *Alignigung* (2016) depicts two male dancers, one fair- and the other brown-skinned, in hyperflexible and intimate configurations that vacillate between object and human. *Alignigung* engages with an egalitarian ethos along the same lines as contact improvisation but further demonstrates an alternative masculinity through movement qualities by reimagining the stereotypical brown body.

Playing with Horses: Improvisation and Communication 91

Kimber Sider

Listening to animals is not only about hearing howls, chirps, snorts, mews, nickers, and other vocal articulations; it is about recognizing preferences, perspectives, and relationships that animals communicate through movement, gesture, feeling, and resonance. When humans observe the complex ways that animals make meaning through performance, space emerges for animals to claim their rights to voice and agency in the presence of humans.

Embodied Philology: Translating Performance from Tashkent to Chicago 103

Leah Feldman

A collaboration between actors and musicians of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and Almaty, Kazakhstan, and local electronic musician and community activist Brother El of Chicago highlights the difficulties of translating embodied performances of race and ethnicity in a transnational post-Cold War context. In a comparative reading taking up a play by the Ilkhom Theatre of Tashkent alongside its citation in the Chicago collaboration, the framework of “embodied philology” exposes the limits of post-Cold War international political alignment.

STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

The (Afro) Future of Henry Box Brown: His-story of Escape(s) through Time and Space 125

Danielle A.D. Howard

Henry Box Brown, a Black man born into slavery in the American South, devised an unforeseen yet ingenious plan to achieve emancipation: he was shipped to the North in a cramped, wooden box. The first testament of Brown’s escape was not his emergence from his box, but instead his voice responding to the box’s addressee. Later, Brown reenacts his original escape in Victorian England and becomes “The King of All Mesmerizers” by envisioning an alien future for himself, much like musician and philosopher-poet Sun Ra.

CRITICAL ACTS

Gender and Nation Tightly Bound: Ita Segev's *Knot in My Name* 143

Yarden Stern

In her solo performance, *Knot in My Name*, Ita Segev utilizes transaesthetic strategies and technology to elucidate her mutually dependent investments in gender and nation and the urgent personal and political stakes of the ongoing Israeli occupation for the performer and her American audience alike.

Prophesizing the End of Theatre: La Laura Palmer's *Animales invisibles* 149

Andrés Kalawski and Cristián Opazo

The Chilean police keep firing pellets and tear gas bombs in the streets, blinding and injuring people by the hundreds. The people keep demonstrating. Two months before the protests of October 2019, a problematic documentary play, *Animales invisibles*, while distorting the genre, prophesied what was to come precisely in the way it departed from the documentary.

Embodied Memory and Alternative Futures: The Compton Cowboys' Peace Ride . . . 157

Ruby Clementine Kernkamp

Through the Peace Ride, the Compton Cowboys, as activists and performance artists within the Black Lives Matter movement, materialized the long legacy of Black men and women riders in the United States. These protest bodies on horseback imagine alternative futures for Black communities through embodied memory and a rewriting of the archive.



Randy Savvy, head of the Compton Cowboys, leads the Peace Ride. Compton, California, 7 June 2020. See "Embodied Memory and Alternative Futures: The Compton Cowboys' Peace Ride" by Ruby Clementine Kernkamp. (Photo by Kemal Cilengir)

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Zoom; or, Obsolescence

W.B. Worthen 181

The signal modality of theatrical production during the pandemic crisis of 2020–21 has been Zoom theatre. While Zoom theatre responds to public health concerns regarding virus transmission, it also articulates a vision of performance at the intersection of the public and the private, at the juncture between theatre and electronic media, and as a representation of theatre as a humanizing technology. Theatre has suggestively foregrounded new technologies under the sign of obsolescence, and in the affective register of nostalgia.