



Published by Danspace Project, New York,
on the occasion of Platform 2016: Lost and
Found, curated by Ishmael Houston-Jones
and Will Rawls.

First edition ©2016 Danspace Project

All rights reserved under pan-American
copyright conventions. No part of this publi-
cation may be reproduced or utilized in any
form or by any means without permission in
writing from the publisher.

Every reasonable effort has been made
to identify owners of copyright. Errors or
omissions will be corrected in subsequent
editions.

Inquiries should be addressed to:
Danspace Project
St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery
131 East 10th Street
New York, NY 10003
danspaceproject.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Judy Hussie-Taylor

EDITORS
Ishmael Houston-Jones, Will Rawls
& Jaime Shearn Coan

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Lydia Bell

DESIGNER
Judith Walker

PUBLISHER
Danspace Project
Saint Marks Church in-the-Bowery
131 East 10th Street
New York, NY 10003
(212) 674 8112

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: David Fanger
First Vice President: Helen Warwick
Second Vice President: Frances Milberg
Treasurer: Sam Miller
Secretary: David Parker
Mary Barone
Trisha Brown, Emeritus
Douglas Dunn, Emeritus
Hilary Easton
Ishmael Houston-Jones, Emeritus
Judy Hussie-Taylor
Nicole LaRusso
Ralph Lemon, Emeritus
Bebe Miller, Emeritus
Sarah Needham
Eiko Otake
Sarah Skaggs
Linda Stein
Nina Winthrop

Danspace Project

Distributed Worldwide by
ARTBOOK | D.A.P.
155 Sixth Avenue, Second Floor
New York, NY 10013

(212) 627 1999
orders@dapinc.com
artbook.com

LOST AND FOUND

Dance, New York, HIV/AIDS, Then and Now

**EASY TO FIND
IN THE EAST**

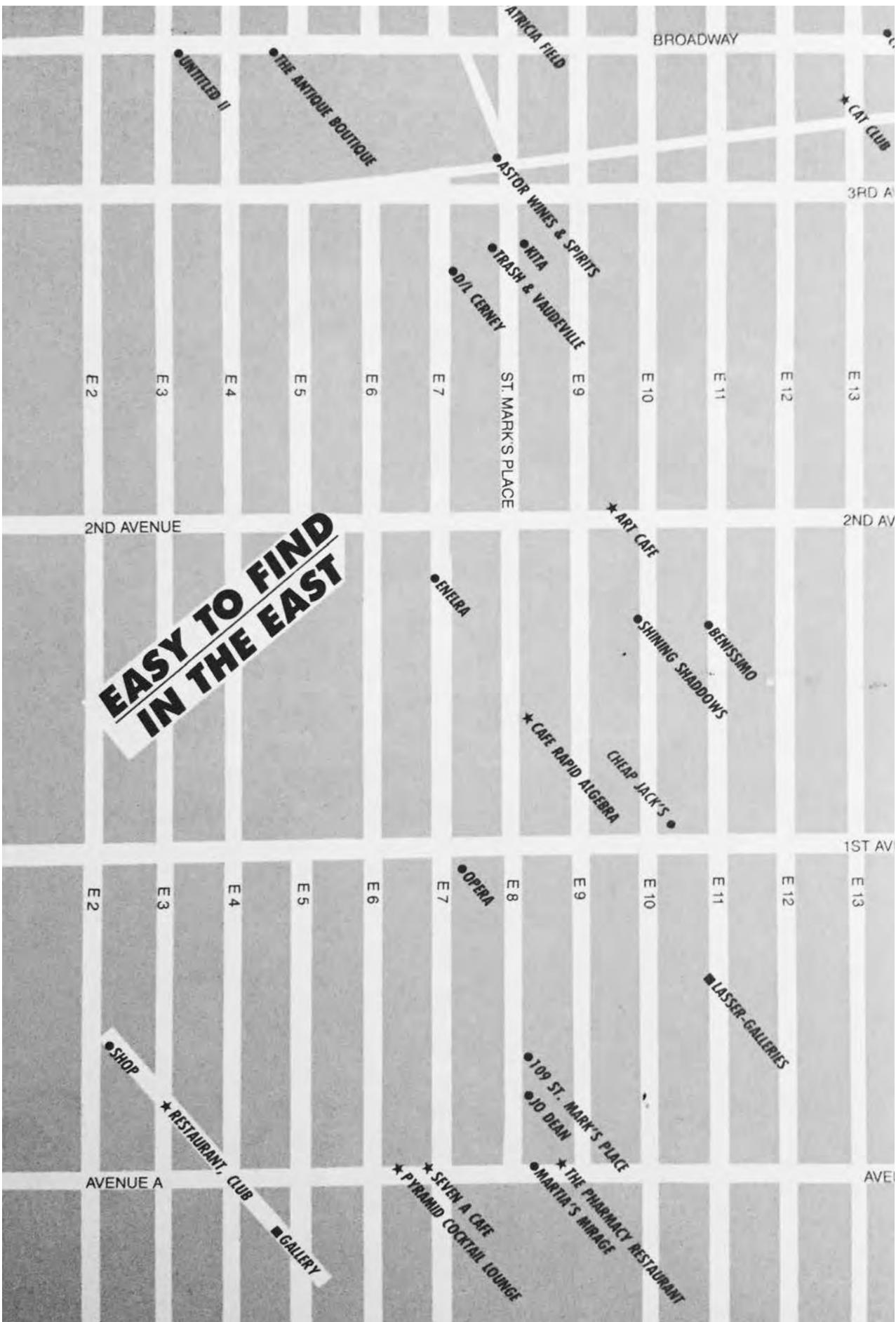


Table of Contents

FOREWORD

Judy Hussie-Taylor **7**

CURATOR ESSAYS

Ishmael Houston-Jones, *A Personal Reflection On John Bernd's Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life* **10**

Will Rawls, *Letters and Numbers* **18**

MEMORY PALACE

Tseng Kwong Chi, Muna Tseng, iele paloumpis, Denise Roberts Hurlin, Stephen Petronio, Tim Miller, Arthur Avilés, Peter Cramer & Jack Waters, Deborah Jowitt, David Thomson, Eileen Myles, Jen Rosenblit, Larissa Velez-Jackson, Lesley Farlow, AUNTS, Eiko Otake, Julie Tolentino, Lucy Sexton, Jeff Weinstein, Niall Noel Jones, Marissa Perel, Joshua Lubin-Levy, Reggie Wilson, Miguel Gutierrez, Dan Fishback, Nicky Paraiso, Talya Epstein, Linda Simpson, Tyler Ashley **29–64**

ESSAYS

Theodore Kerr, *The Sailor's Daughter: AIDS before AIDS in the Present* [2016] **82**

Kia Labejja, *Mimi's Last Dance* [2016] **141**

Nan Goldin, *In the Valley of the Shadow* [1989] **146**

Douglas Crimp, *Introduction to AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* [1987] **164**

C. Carr, *Radical Sbriek* [1990] **186**

Marc Arthur, *Biopharmaceutical Werewolves* [2016] **188**

Sarah Schulman, *Selection from The Gentrification of the Mind* [2012] **218**

Penny Arcade, *No Retreat. No Surrender.* [2016] **230**

Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *rainbow kids* [2016] **251**

niv Acosta, *sbe, alive* [2016] **255**

Pamela Sneed, *All Black/An Invitation* [2016] **258**

Eva Yaa Asantewaa, *the skeleton architecture, or the future of our worlds* [2016] **259**

LIFE DRAWINGS

Ethyl Eichelberger / Raja Feather Kelly **72**

Alvin Ailey / Narcissister **74**

Assotto Saint / Mariana Valencia **76**

Greer Lankton / Katy Pyle **78**

POEMS

DarkMatter, *rewind my body* **17**

Eduardo C. Corral, *Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease* **69**

Danez Smith, *1 in 2* **135–138**; *this strange dowry* **139**

Pamela Sneed, *For Donald Woods* **157**; *On the Orlando Shooting* **158**; *Rope-a-Dope: For Sandra Bland* **161**

Joan Retallack, *AID/I/SAPPEARANCE* **183**

Karen Finley, *The Black Sheep* **199**

Ishmael Houston-Jones, *Prologue to the End of Everything* **227**

JOHN BERND ZINE

Reproduction of original zine with contributions by Carol Mullins, Tim Miller, Jennifer Monson, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Lucy Sexton, Johnny Walker, Linda Austin, Michael Stiller, Jeff McMahon and Lori Seid [1998] **89–131**

PORTFOLIO: WILLI NINJA

Sally Sommer, *Willi Ninja* [2016] **150**

PORTFOLIO: THEM

Travis Chamberlain, *THEM AND NOW: An Oral History of a Performance Reconstructed* [2016] **173**

PORTFOLIO: BILL T. JONES

A duet, an argument, an inheritance: Bill T. Jones and Will Rawls in conversation [2016] **207**

PORTFOLIO: NEIL GREENBERG

Jaime Shearn Coan, *"I don't know what made this 'private' in the first place." Neil Greenberg's Not-About-AIDS-Dance* [2016] **235**

John Kelly, *Journal Entry* [1993] **248**

COLOR IMAGES

Tseng Kwong Chi **26–27**

Tyler Ashley **65**

Kia Labejja **142–143**

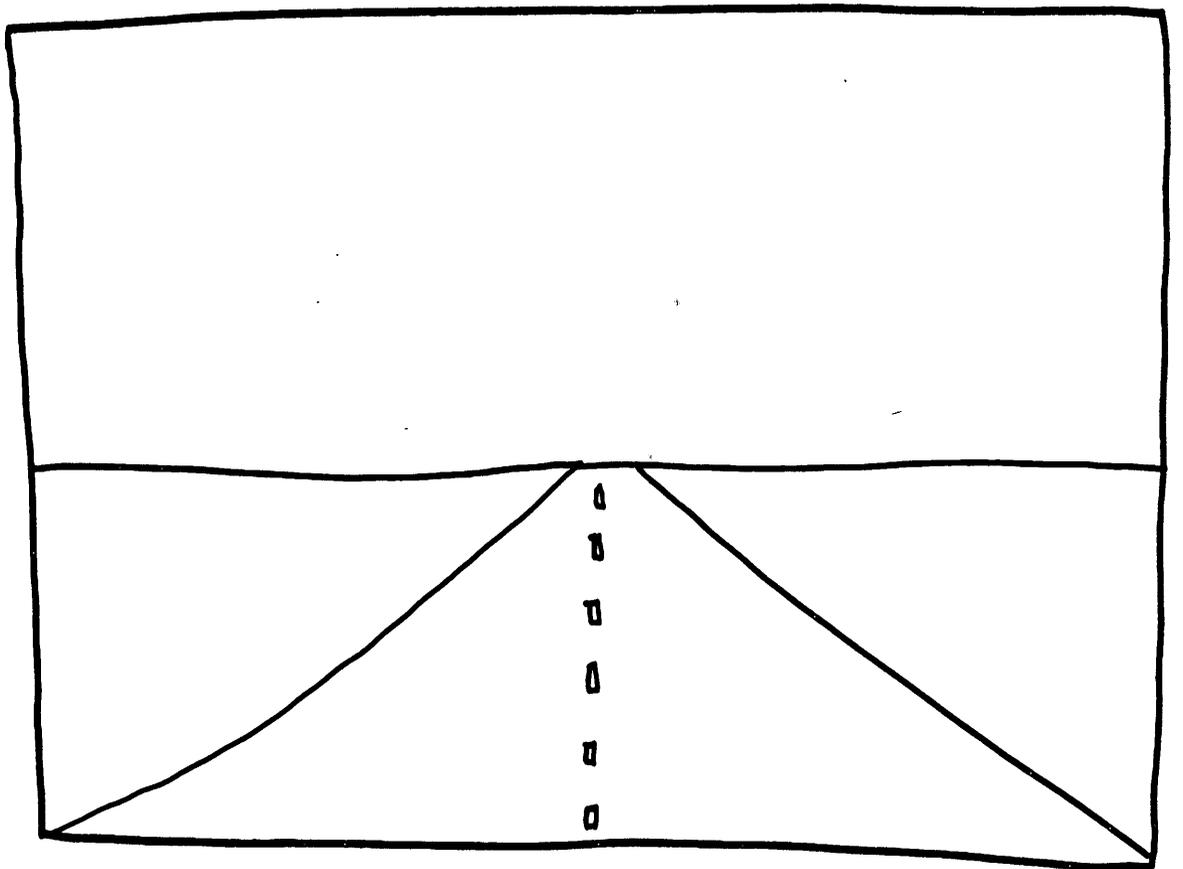
Jacobly Satterwhite **189, 190–191**

TM Davy **192**

PLATFORM 2016

Schedule of Events **260**

Biographies **262**





Foreword

When it comes to HIV/AIDS, we have a lot of history but not enough stories. We need more of both, and we need to ensure the stories circulate—because history will always be limited in its reach. —Theodore Kerr

While designing Danspace Project's Platform series in 2008, I knew I wanted to work with artists as curators to formally frame relationships between artists of different generations. That's where, I believe, there is productive tension, and where there's friction, there's always a generative spark or two.

From the first Platform in 2010 curated by Ralph Lemon, through the present Platform curated by Ishmael Houston-Jones and Will Rawls, artists, curators, and writers have activated intergenerational networks to contribute to our re-imagining of how we contextualize and present time-based art today.

Platform 2016: *Lost and Found* is the 11th Danspace Platform and catalogue. It is also our second Platform in collaboration with artist curator Houston-Jones. And, with over 112 artists and writers contributing, it is Danspace Project's largest Platform to date.

In 2013 Houston-Jones came across a zine published by a group of caregiver friends of choreographer John Bernd on the 10th anniversary of Bernd's death from AIDS in 1988. Ish wanted to talk to me about John Bernd and the zine and that conversation evolved into this Platform.

The Platform's title, *Lost and Found*, was inspired by Bernd's trilogy of that name, which he created and performed as his illness progressed. Bernd has the heartbreaking distinction of being perhaps the first choreographer to make his illness the subject of his work. He insistently performed while ill, at one point escaping his hospital bed to take a cab to Danspace at St. Mark's Church to perform his latest piece. Bernd performed two of his three *Lost and Found* dances at Danspace Project. In the 1980s and 1990s, Danspace was the site of many memorials and was the first home of the marathon memorials of Dancers Responding to AIDS (DRA).

Houston-Jones instigated an intergenerational dialogue by inviting choreographer and writer Will Rawls, thirty years his junior, to join him in this curatorial endeavor. Each brought distinct perspectives and critical sensibilities to the process. They interrogated ideas, histories, stereotypes, and assumptions, ultimately creating a finely embroidered Platform, necessarily and exquisitely complex.

One of their early ideas was to compile files or “dossiers” of artists who died of AIDS and give them to younger artists to interpret in some way. Recuperating lost voices and having them be found by younger artists became the pulse of the Platform. This project is now called “Life Drawings” (one of several poetic titles credited to Rawls in this Platform). Rawls also developed the concept of the “Memory Palace,” a place for artists of all generations to remember a person or place associated with AIDS. A section of this catalogue has become a Memory Palace gallery and includes brief texts or images from more than 25 artists. There will be a Memory Palace vigil and reading at Danspace Project on November 15.

Given the original inspiration for the Platform, a DIY zine sensibility was an inevitable organizing principle. Our curatorial team meetings often had the same creative energy I remember from zine making during the 1990s.

There are several essays here, including some reprints, by writers whose research and first-hand accounts of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s are historically important and still resonant. We are honored to include texts by Douglas Crimp, C.Carr, Nan Goldin, Deborah Jowitz, and Brenda Dixon Gottschild. Newly commissioned essays by a younger generation of writers and artists, such as niv Acosta, Kia Labeija, Theodore Kerr, and Marc Arthur, contribute new research, stories, and questions as necessary counterpoints to nostalgic or oft-repeated narratives of HIV/AIDS as impacting predominantly white, gay middle class men during the 1980s. HIV/AIDS devastated men, women, and transpersons of color in the early days of the disease and continues to do so. Statistics bear this out. It’s shameful, shocking, and tragic.

This Platform, like all Danspace Platforms since 2010, is fueled by artistic inquiry and open-ended conversation in real time. Years of intellectual, emotional, and artistic exchanges occur before inviting the public into the conversation.

It is a privilege to work closely with curators and artists, writers, scholars, and interns who contribute so much to the process. I am grateful to our Curatorial Fellow, Jaime Shearn Coan, who generously and sensitively offered his extensive knowledge. We were all thrilled to be able to work, once again, with the gifted and generous designer Judith Walker on her ninth catalogue for Danspace. And kudos must go to the brilliant, dedicated Danspace Project administrative staff – Lydia Bell, Jodi Bender, Peggy Cheng, Lily Cohen, Michael DiPietro, and Kirsten Schrittker - whose ideas and solutions to the mind-bending problems each Platform proposes go above and beyond the call of duty. Many thanks to our Board of Directors for their trust and unwavering support for the Platforms. We are very grateful to all the artists, writers, partners, supporters, interns, and members. Thanks to

our Technical Director, Leo Janks and all front of house staff and volunteers for their ongoing commitment to Danspace's productions. Finally, I continue to be inspired by Will's and Ishmael's care, commitment, curiosity, and collaboration. No words can adequately express my gratitude to them.

During the two and a half years we've worked on this Platform, we've heard stories and memories every day from people whose friends, lovers, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, colleagues, collaborators, and neighbors died of AIDS. Every day our hearts were heavy with another story of loss. And every day we had the joy of learning about forgotten artists whose work has contributed so much to our culture. This Platform is dedicated to all those who died, and to all those living with HIV who teach us to live with grace, creativity, and courage. We mourn for those *lost* in hopes that their shimmering traces will be *found* by current and future generations.

Judy Hussie-Taylor

Executive Director & Chief Curator, Danspace Project

Editor-in-chief, Danspace Project Catalogue Series

Image on previous page: Line drawing by John Bernd.

A Personal Reflection On John Bernd's Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life

Isbmael Houston-Jones

PROLOGUE

In the early 1980s when the choreographer/performer John Bernd was first diagnosed with “GRID,” his was the most commonplace profile in the media of a person infected with this mysterious and frightening new ailment: white, male, gay, of the upper, middle or artist class. This profile would become the ubiquitous depiction of persons living with HIV/AIDS in the popular culture and in the consciousness of most Americans. There were parenthetical mentions of intravenous drug users, hemophiliacs and others who needed frequent blood transfusions and, for a while, people of Haitian descent. Though gay, white, males of a particular class have never been the sole face of HIV/AIDS, they have been, for more than three decades, the group most associated with the disease in most public discourse in the United States. This has been the pervasive public perception not only of those infected with HIV, but also of activists, caregivers, service providers, and cultural responders. Public representatives of activist organizations, talking heads on television news programs, advertisements for pharmaceuticals in magazines, all of these gave the impression that AIDS, almost exclusively, affected white, gay, cis-gendered males. But there were other individuals and community based organizations that were active at the grassroots level who were deeply marked by HIV/AIDS. Many of these organizations and the people who carried out their missions did not fit the prevailing profile. This was also true in the depiction of artists who made work in direct response to the crisis—especially when it came to choreographers, performance artists, and writers.

According to a 2014 report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- “African Americans are the racial/ethnic group most affected by HIV in the United States.”
- “Gay and bisexual men account for more than

half of estimated new HIV diagnosis among African Americans.”

- “The number of HIV diagnoses among African American women has declined, though it is still high compared to women of other races/ethnicities.”¹

The more we delved into the subject matter, it became apparent that realities such as the three listed here would become some of the obvious lenses through which the curatorial team and I would envision Platform 2016: *Lost and Found*.

Through Platform 2016: *Lost and Found*, we look back at the plague years of mass AIDS hysteria, specifically the 15-year span of 1981-1996², to try to recover some of what was vanished by the loss of a generation of role models, mentors, and muses. We examine what the effect of that absence has had on art that is being made in 2016. We also honor rituals of grieving and the role of healers and caregivers. Moreover, in all of these contexts, we want to correct the flawed widespread impression of the demographics of HIV/AIDS. Poet-scholar Elizabeth Alexander writes:

“black people in this country die more easily, at all ages, across genders. Look at how young black men die, and how middle-aged black men drop dead, and how black women are ravaged by HIV/AIDS. The numbers graft ... to stresses known and invisible. ... Survivors stand startled in the glaring light of loss, but bear witness.”³

Consequently, we have risked erring on the side of welcoming more people of color, more women, and a more expansive definition of “queer” to rectify the omission of those voices from past conversations.

—IH-J

[1] Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “HIV Among African Americans,” <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/racialethnic/africanamericans/>. Accessed May 1, 2015.

[2] Lawrence K. Altman, “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Individuals.” *The New York Times*, July 3, 1981.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “1996 HIV/AIDS Trends Provide Evidence of Success in HIV Prevention and Treatment” <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/aids-d1.htm> Accessed March 8, 2015.

[3] Elizabeth Alexander, *The Light of the World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2015), 166.

"The present does not resemble the past ... the gay dead, locked in their youth, their youth is now locked in the past. Eighties haircuts, ACT UP demonstrations, tentative first novels from defunct presses. I find that my memories fade..."

—Sarah Schulman⁴

Rummaging through some old file folders I came upon a photocopied zine of essays, photos and simple line drawings. A group of comrades and I had put this together in August 1998 to commemorate the ten years since John Bernd had died at age 35. John's life and John's death held such complex meanings and intense emotions for us then. He was an artist, a contrarian, a lover, a broken-hearted soul. When he performed he danced loose-limbed and lithe, he stomped forceful rhythms, his singing was a plaintive keening. He was queer before it was hip to be queer. In our small, insular, bunkered village of downtown dance and theater John Bernd was both a sheltering guardian angel and the most bedeviling of devil's advocates. John was the first person most of us knew in this community who had contracted a terrifying disease that was attacking gay men, intravenous drug users, hemophiliacs, and Haitians. It didn't have a name yet but its effects were horrific and very often deadly. I remember improvising at the weekly Open Movement at Performance Space 122 one Tuesday when John arrived later than usual; he was typically there before anyone else to help set up. He came in saying he had gone to his dentist for a routine cleaning but his gums would not stop bleeding. I'm not sure if memory is rearranging sequences but the next image I have is of him phoning from a hospital as perplexed doctors suggested removing his spleen. He declined and left.

This was in 1981, shortly after his very public breakup (very public in our little world at least), with fellow performance artist Tim Miller. John responded to the heartache and the illness the following year with the performance piece *Surviving Love and Death*, presented at PS122, which David Gere asserts is "arguably the first performance to address the epidemic in the first person."⁵ Linda Small describes "[h]is black jeans cling to a slender, vulnerable frame. His curly mop of hair and sketchy facial hair create a scroungy look... He is war-weary; he has lost his lover; he has spent time in the

hospital battling a blood disease."⁶ At one point in the show John says that his doctors "wonder if he has the 'new gay cancer' but ultimately decide no... because he does not have... the two accepted markers for what at the time was being called GRID, or Gay-Related Immune Deficiency."⁷ During the piece he passed around a smooth chocolate colored rock for each audience member to hold for a few seconds. On the night I attended I was one of the last people to grasp it and it was so hot, really hot, from the body heat of all of us witnesses. I still have that rock on my headboard.

Of course John *did* have "the new gay cancer." In 1992 Jennifer Dunning wrote in the *New York Times*:

"The subject of AIDS has become so entwined with the politics of sexuality that, in reflecting upon the subject, one instinctively tends to start with the comparatively few expressions of gay sexuality in the dance of a decade or so ago. John Bernd, who died of AIDS in 1988, was one of the earliest New York choreographers to treat gay sexuality and the disease explicitly."⁸

In the next decade and a half, John and many others in our world would succumb to it. We were baffled. We were angry. We were terrified. We were wary of sharing a glass of water. But we also learned how to nurture and care for the sick and the dying. We made art, those of us who were dying and those of us who survived. Surviving love and death. Clearly, in the end, no one survives either of these. We all surrender to both. But so many in our tiny sphere died before they and we could garner the full harvest of their artistry.

Danspace Project at Saint Mark's Church, The Joyce Theater, and Performance Space 122 became sites where we mourned the young as well as applauded their shows. But we also rallied; we shouted; we marched in the streets. Today, a new wave of queer dancers and performance artists is making work without the dreadful firsthand knowledge of the living nightmare that left so many of us devastated. "PTSD," one of my colleagues said a short time ago, "after all these years we are still suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder." How is one able to, or can one, explain the pain, confusion, rage, and fear that HIV/AIDS caused a

[4] Sarah Schulman, "Through the Looking Glass" in *Loss Within Lost: Artists in the Age of AIDS*. Edmund White, Ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 13.

[5] David Gere, Introduction to the Estate Project website. Accessed June 8, 2015.

[6] Linda Small, "Review of *Surviving Love and Death*, by John Bernd." *Other Stages*, January 28, 1982

[7] David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of AIDS* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 31.

[8] Jennifer Dunning, "Choreographing Deaths of the Heart In a Singular Age." *The New York Times*, March 22, 1992.

whole generation? And for those of us who are artists of that era, how do we measure the damage but, yes, also the vision and resolve that such trauma wrought?

Discussing this Platform with choreographer Jennifer Monson, I asked if HIV/AIDS had in any way shaped the work she made in the 1980s and 90s. She wondered aloud, “How could it not? Anyone living and creating artwork in this community at that time had to have been influenced by AIDS.” She then considered that because of the large concentration of “out” HIV-positive people in the Downtown dance communities, there were three significant factors that informed pieces like her own *Tackle Rock* (1993) along with the work of her contemporaries. First, there was an atmosphere of loss, mourning, and grief that permeated many of those dances. Additionally, she and many choreographers were inspired by their participation in AIDS protests and rallies. And finally, there was the close physical contact, the sharing of sweat in dances, which in the context of the epidemic had become a risky provocation. Loss, activism and bodily contact: “These three elements colored much of the choreography created at that time, in that place.”

As for myself, would I have wrestled a cinderblock in *Without Hope* (1988) or a goat carcass in *THEM* (1986) without AIDS to prompt me to do so? Obviously AIDS has given rise to dances with images that are seared in my memory: the bloody prints on paper towels in Ron Athey’s *Four Scenes in a Harsh Life* (1994), Da-

vid Rousseve’s naked silent scream in *Colored Children Flying By* (1990), and the gallons of stage blood poured over Anne Jobst’s and Lucy Sexton’s nude bodies in the many DANCENOISE pieces come immediately to mind. While AIDS was never mentioned in the text of Bill T. Jones’ *Still Here* (1994), it deeply shaded its aura. Neil Greenberg’s *Not About AIDS Dance* (1994) was definitely about his relationship to both dance and AIDS. And Ethyl Eichelberger’s signature song “(We are) Women who Survive,” accompanied by accordion as a finale to many pieces, took on a more heart-rending meaning after Ethyl’s AIDS-related suicide.

David Gere, in his book *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of AIDS*, writes of pieces made for the concert stage as a response to the plague by artists Bernd, Jones, Miller, Rousseve, Arnie Zane, Joe Goode, Rodney Price, Tracy Rhoades, and others. He also describes site-specific street interventions by Keith Hennessy and ensembles such as The High Risk Group. But Gere also describes (as performance) the ceremonial unfurling of the AIDS Quilt, the tactical choreography of AIDS protests, the strategic placement of AIDS galas, the theatricality of AIDS funerals, as well as rituals of healing. What are the rituals of healing today?

Are there young LGBTQ artists who are making work today unconsciously under the influence of John Bernd and all the others who died before they were born? Is there an authentic way to prove what the loss of so



L to R: James Del Priore, Irving Gregory, Donald Fleming, Joseph Pupello, John Bernd, Chris Burside, (out of frame, Ishmael Houston-Jones), Photo by Dona Ann McAdams.

many from one age group has had on the next? How do I quantify a negative; how do I curate an absence? How can I tell the innumerable untold stories of artists lost to AIDS? How in this current cultural moment can I raise awareness as well as mark the historic trajectory of the crisis? Today, the current generation of dance artists, including many voices from queer communities, has inherited this profound absence, activism and public outcry has quietly waned, the urgency around this continuing crisis has diminished.

But AIDS was and is a global pandemic. Here in the developed world this is often forgotten. Access to effective, yet costly, drugs with innumerable side effects has branded the disease “manageable.” But in developing countries a diagnosis of AIDS can still be catastrophic, much as it was in the 1980s and 90s here. And it was here in the downtown Manhattan performance art scene in the 80s and 90s that I saw my first premature deaths by a virulent affliction and the society that would be too slow to attack it.

I can visualize men vanished from my own dance and performance world: Arnie Zane, Arthur Armijo, Barry Davison, Bob Reese, Carey Erickson, Charles Ludlam, Chris Komar, David Wojnarowicz, Demian Acquavella, Ethyl Eichelberger, Frank Maya, Harry Whitaker Sheppard, Jim Tyler, John Bernd, John Sex, Manuel Alum, Michael Bennett, Michael Schwartz, Reza Abdoh, Robert Kovich, Ron Vawter, Tracy Rhoades, Ulysses Dove, and Woody McGriff. Add to these the visual artists Keith Haring, Kirk Winslow, and Huck Snyder who designed sets for Bill T. Jones, John Bernd, and John Kelly and me, respectively. Add to these, photographer Tseng Kwong Chi who chronicled, through portraiture, many of the key players on our stage. Add to him, men who contributed to the soundtrack of my life: composer/cellist Arthur Russell who improvised with Bernd, Donald Fleming and me on the lawn of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum; accordionist Billie Swindler who played in my *Adolfo und Maria*; musician, author, and AIDS activist Michael Callen of the Flirtations who testified before the President’s Commission on AIDS and before Congress; singer, songwriter Freddie Mercury from the rock band Queen; Klaus Nomi, a singer known for his bizarrely visionary theatrical performances; Eazy-E, “The God-Father of Gangsta Rap,” who performed in the group N.W.A. Add to these, African-American gay rights activists: poets Assotto Saint and Essex Hemphill and filmmaker Marlon Riggs. And there were so many more. These were all men I admired as choreographers, dancers, writers, directors, musicians or other types of artists. Each died between

the years 1987 and 1996. Each was under 50 years old when he died. I knew some personally, some intimately, some I appreciated only through their work. Add to these, three more well-established choreographers in their 50s who died during this same period: Alvin Ailey, Robert Joffrey, and Rudolf Nureyev, plus the incalculable myriad of women and transpeople lost and one begins to understand activist/author Sarah Schulman’s account of those years:

“I am talking about the Plague. . . the years from 1981 to 1996. When there was a mass death experience of young people. Where folks my age watched in horror as our friends, their lovers, cultural heroes, influences, buddies, the people who witnessed our lives as we witnessed theirs, as these folks sickened and died consistently for fifteen years.”

The streets of my city were crowded with ghosts.

I danced in all three iterations of John Bernd’s *Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life*. *Part Two* was performed at Dance Theater Workshop and *Part One* and *Part Three* were done at Danspace Project at Saint Mark’s Church (where I would later speak at his memorial service). The three parts of *Lost and Found* coincidentally track the development of John’s illness, which is to say, they track the early evolution of AIDS in the consciousness of this community.

In *Part One* (1982), John had some patches of dry skin due to psoriasis but he was seemingly robust and healthy. He whirled agilely around David Alan Harris, Tom Keegan, Erin Matthiessen, and me, shaking his trade-mark mop of curly hair, stomping assuredly in his hiking boots, and singing wordless songs to the church’s vaulted ceiling.

In *Part Two* (1983), Chris Burnside and Joseph Puppello joined the ensemble. This section was darker in both physical ambiance and underlying mood. Throughout the piece at the rear of the stage, details from Caravaggio paintings or of John’s own simple line drawings of shrines and roadways were projected on the cyclorama. His curls had been shorn; he was thinner. There was a voiceover that played during his singing; he was reciting a hypnotic prose poem about travel to nowhere:

*“One, then two, then one again. Then it’s three or four but it always comes back to one. To the same place; because something happened, something changed. . .”*¹⁰

[9] Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 45.

[10] John Bernd, *Lost and Found* (Scenes from a Life, part II). Transcribed

Even in the more exuberant dance sections of *Part Two* there was an air of desperation and anxiety, as though we all were rushing to complete this thing before it was too late.

Part Three (1985), was darker still. John and I, now joined by Yvonne Meier and Stephanie Skura, were back at Danspace. But the space was lit by a solitary light this time. John was visibly ill, as noted by the late Burt Supree reviewing the piece in the *Village Voice*: “Only six days out of the hospital, and John Bernd was dancing - plainly and softly, but dancing. There was respect and welcome in the setup he arranged for the sanctuary of St. Mark’s in-the-Bowery. . . . And as a result of the caring that went into it, the evening had grace.”¹¹

This was December 1985. John would go on to make and perform in more pieces but it was obvious to all of us that he was getting weaker. Schulman describes seeing his last show, *Two on the loose*, in 1988, months before he died:

“I saw him perform many times with his beloved red chair, for which he built a custom carrying case. I remember his final performance with choreographer Jennifer Monson, he was so disoriented he could barely follow her. . . . I went to his funeral. There, Meredith Monk sang his favorite of her songs. His mother said, ‘John very much wanted to live. . . .’”¹²

But what do John Bernd’s life and death signify? So many others like him died so prematurely and their work has been lost or forgotten. A younger performance artist recently remarked to me, “My friends and I keep hearing about John Bernd, but none of us know who he was.” In reality there are hundreds, there are thousands, of John Bernds, who were killed by a virus and governmental neglect before their art fulfilled its promise, but who nevertheless laid the foundation for work being performed today. These are the lost unknown ghosts of AIDS.

If on August 28, 1988 John Bernd had been miraculously cured and lived on, what consequence would that have had on art that is being produced in 2016? Focusing on the time elapsed between the initial AIDS crisis to the present, how can we bridge this expanse? We can theorize, but can we ever really know? I think not. To quote bell hooks: “The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is – it’s to imagine what is possible.”¹³

So this is a platform for dreaming, for fantasizing, for conjuring what has been lost. And through evoking that loss, we will grasp at that which may be found.

*In the end, truth will be found in his work, the corporeal body of the artist. It will not fall away. Man cannot judge it. For art sings of God, and ultimately belongs to him.*¹⁴ —Patti Smith

[May 8, 2016]

by Ishmael Houston-Jones from a video recording. ([https://nypl.bibliocommons.com/item/show/12172133052907_lost_and_found_\(scenes_from_a_life\)#bib_info](https://nypl.bibliocommons.com/item/show/12172133052907_lost_and_found_(scenes_from_a_life)#bib_info)) Accessed August 1998.

[11] Burt Supree, “A Space of Grace: Review of *Lost and Found (Scenes from a Life, Part ii)*, by John Bernd.” *The Village Voice*, December 17, 1985.

[12] Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind*, 59.

[13] bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York:

Routledge, 1994), 281.

[14] Patti Smith, *Just Kids* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2010), Dedication.



Melanie Greene courtesy of EmergeNYC.



DarkMatter. Photo by Barbara Anastacio.

rewind my body

rewind my body
rewind my body

there is something i need to show you
there is something i need to show you

i am only here because my people survived
i am only here because my people survived

before voice there was riot
after riot there is voice

before stage there was movement
after movement there is stage

before art there was culture
after culture there is art

before capital there was abundance
after abundance there is capital

rewind my body
rewind my body

before house there was holocaust
after holocaust there is house

before profit there was slavery
after slavery there is profit

before immigrant there was settler
after settler there is immigrant

before hometown there was homeland
after homeland there is hometown

before diaspora there was war
after war there is diaspora

rewind my body
rewind my body

before brown there was ocean
after ocean there is brown

before border there was trust
after trust there is border

before police there was peace
after peace there is police

before nation there was god
after god there is nation

before us there was blood
after us there is blood

rewind my body
rewind my body

before marriage there was empathy
after empathy there is marriage

before sex there was pleasure
after pleasure there is sex

before gender there was people
after people there is gender

before me there was us
after us there is us

before planet there was space
after space there is planet

before universe there was riot
bang
bang
bang

rewind my body
rewind your body

until there is nothing left
but the darkmatter
that gave birth to us

Letters and Numbers

Will Rawls

Don't be afraid of the clocks, they are our time, time has been so generous to us... We conquered fate by meeting at a certain TIME in a certain space. We are a product of the time. Therefore we give back credit where credit is due: time. We are synchronized, now forever. I love you. —Félix González-Torres¹

I am either a very late Gen Xer or a very early Millennial, depends on who's counting. Looking for clues on how the *Lost and Found* Platform might spark conversations among artists with vastly different experiences of the AIDS crisis, friend and curator Amanda Hunt recently connected me to Lucas Michael, an artist member of Visual AIDS. I described myself as floating in a "bridge generation" between Michael, who was born in 1965, and the Millennials. I grew up as a gay kid in the 80s and 90s, absorbing the AIDS crisis mostly through the news media and later when the film *And the Band Played On* premiered on HBO on September 11, 1993. When I read the date again, September 11, I realize how different moments of American cultural trauma can form a palimpsest of letters and numbers. This Platform has been a process of decoding this stacked metonym that is drawn out over decades and compressed into instances of death.

In retrospect, my relationship to the AIDS crisis was a luxury afforded by the timing of my birth—birth and class—even though so many others of my age were and are not as lucky. Lucas Michael said two things, "You must be traumatized," and, "I've been spared." The tables felt flipped; I was projecting a trauma onto him that was not felt in the way I imagined. He projected a certain unresolved angst onto me. He suggested that indirectly internalizing the AIDS crisis, as a visceral weather pattern, might be more insidious now than his head-on experience of it as a direct witness. In 1996, Michael contracted HIV, just as the antiretroviral cocktail appeared. He feels spared by the timing.

As the tables turn again, what is a younger generation consciously aware of in their own weather patterns,

having been born after the arrival of antiretrovirals? These conversations about generations can tend towards consumer metrics, branding and accusation—useful for corporations and historians while producing abstract pressure on either side of the date line to rep one's native territory. But I think there are real, non-accusatory, non-superior differences among us, worthy of speculation, that include the experience of time and the body as allusive and collective, a porous process.

In terms of new collectivity, the creative output of women, people of color and queers is on the rise in this dialogue about decolonizing cultural access to history and its expression. It seems obvious to me that we no longer have the option to live in linear or straight time. We circle back to retrieve, stay here to stake claim and move forward to imagine all at once. It requires new physics; at every stage a prognosis, an intervention is required. In the poem they contributed to this catalogue, the trans, South Asian performance art duo DarkMatter iterates:

*before stage there was movement
after movement there is stage*

*before art there was culture
after culture there is art*

*before capital there was abundance
after abundance there is capital*

*rewind my body
rewind my body²*

As DarkMatter flips the pages of history and metaphor back and forth, the contingency of different perspectives converge, tenses blur into queer reinterpretations. In the context of both the *Lost and Found* Platform programming and this catalogue, we ask how performing artists can exchange the cultural genius of a generation that was lost to AIDS and the genius of one that was not. Admittedly, this polarity is as flawed as Michael's and my mutual projections of trauma, but flawed thinking can be a starting point rather than a shut down valve. Could we also exchange a renewed sense of possibility? I can't quite remember when in my adult life the word "positive" started reclaiming its former meaning of optimistic. This optimism now shares space in my lexicon with

[1] Félix González-Torres, *Lovers*, 1988. Dedicated to his lover, Ross.

[2] DarkMatter, "rewind my body."

the fretful possibility of a positive HIV diagnosis and the beneficial presence of drugs that can mitigate the side effects of HIV seroconversion. In the spirit of DarkMatter, the Platform flips back and forth to rewind our bodies forward. In all this page-turning, the metaphor of zines has been on my mind—an apt container for the dense stack-up of names, dates and references we've been trying to collect, as best we can. For every name mentioned there are thousands left out. The accumulated and silent absent are a staggering number. When I read certain queer zines I get a sense of numbers that is productive when sensing a silent invisible majority. A zine demonstrates what's calling from an elsewhere (or right around the corner), a compact *anima* of underrepresented voices pointing out how many mics we still need to pass around. The analogy of the zine contains a certain promise of this trans-historical weave we're spooling.

Speaking of analogue, zines were born in the 20th century and are commonly defined as grassroots, non-profit, self-published endeavors. Often a handmade collage of original and appropriated texts and images, zines have served as a serious or gleeful alternative to the reductive reality of mainstream magazine publishing. Instead of plastic they serve plasticity. In attitude, tone, and visual punch, zines seem to presage the truncated, mashed-up sentiments of today's infographics like bitmojis and gifs (the latter technically an invention of the 80s). However, in their limited print runs, zines cannot achieve the standardized fungibility of emoji and perhaps this is a good thing. Limited circulation of terms leaves room for additions to the dictionary. In any case, could this current emotional economy of emoji be instructive in conversation with the epic poetry of our predecessors—some of whom are also our contemporaries? Or could we all be more long-winded?

*Queer zinesters are people of color, gender-fuckers, economically disadvantaged, young, old, disabled... There is urgency in the air, fresh challenges rooted in old causes that force us to take up our pens and glue sticks or fire up our computer's graphic design programs.*³

Zines have been a locale where fandom, rage and sex can meet feminist, minority and queer politics and history. In the case of the zine commemorating dancer

John Bernd's death, it was a place for Ishmael Houston-Jones and other artists to assemble their grief in 1998, a singular gesture in the landslide of AIDS losses. In the case of Linda/Les Simpson's *My Comrade*, the zine offered a leftist, campy take on the actively queer art and performance subculture in NYC in the 80s and 90s. Partially included in the pages that follow, *My Comrade* proclaimed itself as "the court jester of the queer press,"⁴ using a mashup of gossip, horoscopes and biography to lend focus and infamy to local celebrities. There is an arch naïveté to the content of many zines, an oops I did it again *manoeuvre*.

Embedded in this *manoeuvre* (whose etymology includes manual labor, troop deployment, tactic, trick and manipulation), the personas and bodies that are laid out in zines are magnetically and strategically static-active—evasive and charged like dancers. The small booklet that contains these bodies becomes a species of choreography, assembling information, movements, meaning and resistance. The sum message of a zine can be quite entropic, like a little smart-bomb has detonated in your frontal lobe. In my mind, this resembles the entropic effect of dance on the senses; it resembles the entropic effect of AIDS on our history and present. Again, we need a nimbler physics to traverse these effects. In very different ways, dance, AIDS and zines furnish the temporal drift and delayed promise of "then and there,"⁵ to borrow from the late queer theorist, José Esteban Muñoz. More dance and zines can be made in response to AIDS, and through their unruly relationship to meaning perhaps other narratives can be told. Zines are much less familiar to me than dance as a means to identify how, in particular, queer people and bodies cross historical borders to convene in a collective, temporal schism. But the zine's unfamiliarity as a metaphor may lend some perspective. Perhaps this is ultimately what this moment is about: less-intimate familiarity in exchange for more.

In their exuberant, two-volume compendium *Queer Zines*, AA Bronson and Philip Aarons note:

While strikingly personal, zines in general, and

[4] "My Comrade." *Wikipedia*. Accessed August 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Comrade

[5] "We must vacate the here and now for a then and there. Individual transports are insufficient. We need to engage in a collective temporal distortion. We need to step out of the rigid conceptualization that is a straight present. In this book I have argued that queerness is not yet here but it approaches like a crashing wave of potentiality." José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 185.

[3] Christopher Wilde, "From Ephemerality to Eternity: The Queer Zine Continuum," *Queer Zines 2*. (New York: Printed Matter, Inc., 2014), 246-7.

HAPI PHACE-

THOSE LIP-SYNCHING SHE-MALES; HE-SHES THAT SING AND DANCE AND MINCE AND PRANCE; LADIES WHO SHAVE; THE INTRIGUING EXISTANCE OF MEN WHO DARE TO BE LIKE WOMEN, THAT IS WHAT THIS COLUMN IS ALL ABOUT. I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT YOUR AVERAGE AMATEUR HALLOWEEN DRAGSTER. I AM TALKING THE BIG TIME, HONEY!!! AS M.C. AND GRAND HOSTESS OF NEW YORK CITY'S PREMIER QUEEN SCENE, "WHISPERS", THE WEEKLY SUNDAY NIGHT CABARET AT THE PYRAMID CLUB, I HAVE HAD THE UNIQUE FORTUNE TO MEET, GREET, AND GET TO KNOW THESE SPECIAL SOULS, AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE THESE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL FRIENDS WITH YOU. HERE IS JUST A SAMPLING OF A FEW OF THE LOVELY "LADIES" YOU MIGHT SEE WORKING IT ON THE STREETS OR THE STAGE OR WHEREVER SISTERS ARE MAKING THE SCENE. LET'S DISH....



TABBOO

This Aquarius never ends. How does she do it? (Coffee!!) Does she ever wear the same thing twice? (Smells like it.) I am insanely jealous of her thigh-high, 7-inch heel go-go boots.

BUNNY

That firey Leo is too royal. Leona Helmsley watch out, because Bunny has deluded herself and Michael Musto into believing that she is the queen of New York. But then, Bunny gets my vote over Leona any day. The lady deserves a medal for putting together Wigstock every year. Wigstock, for those of you couch potatoes who never venture off the sofa, is the most fabulous Labor Day rock concert/love-in, wigfest in Tompkins Square Park, featuring many of the celebrities you are reading about now.

SISTER DIMENSION

The ultimate dancing queen, when sister spins, queens twirl. This disco Virgo is resident Whispers D.J., and I want her record collection. But where would I put it? A special sissie who wears a hat better than anyone.

OLYMPIA

She is a big girl. Did you know she is an amateur photog? I think she is a Libra. There is the story about the New Year's Eve when Limpy got real sauced and slept through all the festivities on the dressing room floor. But that was years ago so we won't mention it now, will we?



EXOTIC AND BIZARRE



ALEXIS DE LAGO

Still yet another Scorpio, Alexis makes me proud to be a Scorpio and a queen. (Yes, yours truly was born on Halloween, sun in Scorpio.) Alexis put the oom in kook, and she rides a mean bike (with her face on), and you'll never see her sweating, but you might see some razor stubble sticking through her base. Why you should see her apartment! Wall to wall mirrors and she has more bottles of perfume than Bergdorf's.

TANGELLA

Another sister Scorpio, this spicy dish hails from Texas. A never-ending bundle of energy (nerves?), she has got to be the best little bar-dancer, and she is so sweet - even if she does still owe you money.

queer zines in particular, were most important for how they served to create and foster a community through shared content and their highly personal means of distribution."⁶

The zines collected in *Queers Zines 2* seem to relish the effect of being oh so wrong that it's right. They trade on the risk of being off color, off topic and allergic to silence, in order to get at something like a truth. Zines often take more effort in hours and person-power to make than they could possibly hope to retrieve in sales. Zines strike me as quixotic and determined, a necessarily illogical money-making adventure whose precarious value in the market also reminds me of dance. After stumbling off the radar, following its Y2K showdown with internet blogs, zines are now having a resurgence. *My Comrade* began republication in 2004 after a 10 year hiatus. Organizations like Printed Matter Inc., MoMA PS1's Book Fair, The Barnard College Zine Library and QZAP (Queer Zine Archive Project) among many others, continue to produce, distribute or archive zines that represent a radical multitude of positions in relationship to the printed letter and "being read" anew.

Inside of the Platform we are producing two zine-making projects led by Allied Productions/Le Petit Versailles and AUNTS. As self-organized collectives intent on alternative presenting models (Le Petit Versailles offers a public garden, AUNTS occupies clubs, lofts and festivals), they widen the scope of visibility to artists and performers who may not have typical access to presenting their work. With access to residency space during our program, LPV and AUNTS will invite contributors to their zine projects, compiling a limited edition of zines for distribution during the Platform. In hopes of translating the two organizations' missions and holding this metaphor of zine-as-history, these two, artistic bodies will have the chance to beget other bodies. In their bio, AUNTS claims:

AUNTS is about having dance happen. The dance you've already seen, that pops into your head, that is known and expected and unknown and unexpected. Dance that seeps into the cracks of street lights, subway commotion, magazine myth, drunk nights at the bar, the family album, and the couch where you lay and softly glance at the afternoon light coming

*in through the window. AUNTS constantly tests a model of producing dance/performance/parties. A model that supports the development of current, present, and contemporary dancing. A model that expects to be adopted, adapted, replicated, and perpetuated by any person who would like to use it. Where performing can last five seconds or five hours; never a "work in progress." Where the work of performing is backed by the "land of plenty" rather than "there is not enough."*⁷

The LPV website quotes founding member Peter Cramer:

*One of the nice things that happened when we first started the garden was someone threw a note over the fence and the note said, "I've been living here a number of years and seen this blossom." I don't remember the exact words, but just that they really appreciated that someone was taking the trouble.*⁸

And so we take the time and take on the trouble of bringing the letters and numbers together, indexing what must be said and what is left out. We don't expect a comprehensive result, as this would, in some ways defeat the very potential of filling in the gaps with other kinds of narrative.

For our purposes, this catalogue has to a greater or lesser extent been shaped by the aesthetics of the zine. We offer a tumble of texts and images from our generous contributors—reprints, originals, poems, photos and slogans. As this book shifts vernacular from choreography to theory to poetry to image, our hope is that the bindings of collective memory will also shift and multiply, into limited and mass editions.

[August 26, 2016]

[6] AA Bronson and Philip Aarons, *Queer Zines 2*, (New York: Printed Matter, Inc., 2014)

[7] <http://auntsisdance.com>

[8] "History," <http://alliedproductions.org/le-petit-versailles/>