

AN ARRAY

solo dance work

Maya Dalinsky is a dance artist currently working with solo improvisation for performance. *AN ARRAY* was in residency at Forsøgsstationen in February and April, 2025, for a total of 9 days, followed by a 5-day residency as part of the "Tid i Rum" program at Udviklingsplatform (May 19-23). Between these residency periods, Maya continued to work on this solo as an integrated part of her regular studio practice, which consists of 1-3 days in the studio each week.

How can I source my dancing in sensation and affect?

In 2012, I embarked on a solo project called "All I Need Is Here" that worked with emotion and affect as kinesthetic input. I was curious about how the effect of being seen--and 'affect' as a personal response to the environment--might become sensory material for live composition. With "An Array", 10+ years later, I hope to investigate the opposite pathway: How might every and any sensation lead to an emotion, to affect, to thoughts or imagination? How can I use my skills as a dancer to notice, craft and be surprised by sensation as it emerges out of kinesthetic experience and into my inner world of imagination and feeling?

What is the broadest possible array of experiences that I can conjure and explore with a defined framework (time and space), or before an audience?

Process

AN ARRAY is the latest development stage in an ongoing, long standing improvisational practice dedicated to solo performance. This solo performance is not pre-determined, rather sourced in the materials of the present moment--the body, the environment, as well as the latent socio-cultural landscape.

When broken down into units, much of my material is sourced in sensation, kinesthetic input, perception and proprioception, affect, action, imagination, time and space, amongst other 'material' that might emerge through doing. I compose this in real time by making choices relative to speed, timing, size, direction, muscle tone, frequency, axis, shape and musicality.

Conceptually, I came to the notion of AN ARRAY as a way of encompassing all the instances and variation in gestures, dances or dramaturgical units present in a freely devised dance before an audience. AN ARRAY is not what I am producing as the performer, it is a space we cultivate together. Like in a museum, an array means a collection of disparate elements that come together in a shared space and time to be considered as a whole. Rather than appearing in a display case, however, this array of dances is considered in the studio space. The audience's gaze acts as the case, the container in which the proposed elements find their unity.

Researching how sensation becomes movement through daily practice

When I arrive at the studio, the process involves transitioning my attention from one activity to another. This can mean: changing in and out of clothes, having coffee, cleaning the space, journaling, stretching, dancing, singing, dialoguing with others, crying, resting, eating, reading through my archives or engaging with specific scores, tasks or warm-up routines.

At every moment in this process, I have to hold something in my attention in order to get to work. It is a phenomenological practice in that I place something at the forefront and observe how the rest arranges itself around it or adapts to accommodate a new configuration of attentions.

In writing, this seems like an ordered process. But in practice, it is disordered and still at the whims of my immediate needs and desires. Most practice is fueled by a simple value: to take pleasure in what is happening, to invite myself to enjoy. If I feel good, if I enjoy, if something gives me pleasure, I can continue to focus on that until questions, needs or other driving forces come to mind.

So when does the work begin? I'd say it begins when my noticing and my 'generating' or my 'doing' coincide: I notice a transition and can engage with it, I can have intentions for it. I notice that I'm no longer busy with thoughts about the day, that my breath has slowed, that my body feels ready and available, that I'm dancing without forcing. This is where the work begins.

Much of the process for AN ARRAY was about bringing sensation, action and imagination to the forefront of my attention in different orders or in different ways. Do I prepare in advance by analysing yesterday's work and deciding to go from sensation to action to imagination? Or do I just get moving and see what order is already occurring, if any?

Often I use writing as a way to recall what I do and keep track of what I've tried. So I took time to journal as a way of writing down the 'order' of things and organize my work.

Regular practice affords a sense of continuity and progress. Long breaks in between practice moments affords a sense of starting anew, of inviting in new orders, and of letting go of past experience.

One part of the process kept coming back as useful and ultimately became the focus of my research time: the transition from 'warming up' to fully dancing, and parallel to this, from working alone to performing for others. AN ARRAY no longer felt like a title given to a practice, it felt like a question about how to shift from 'being ready to see' to 'truly looking at what is on display'. For this, I developed a kind of ritual that welcomes both myself and spectators to engage in the same dilation of the beginning, of the transition from 'casual' to 'attentive'.

This ritual involves: taking deep breaths, allowing oneself to be seen, and then allowing the gradual and accumulative shifts in attention to be seen, step by step, always with the option of letting go, of returning to the first signs of transition, to breath, to not-producing. By hovering in this phase for a long time—allowing oneself to be seen, allowing oneself to be seen changing, allowing oneself to be seen returning to simple breath, allowing oneself to be seen noticing... etc.—dances emerge that are not the 'outcome' of intention but simply the non-verbal, physical

expression of attention dilating and collectively refocusing. From there, anything is possible. And everything is allowed. And any Array of dances are valid.

AN ARRAY is defined as:

- an impressive display or range of a particular type of thing
- an ordered series or arrangement
- a verb for displaying or arranging things in a particular way

This research is about all these aspects of the material and its organization over time and space. It is about uncovering/emerging emotions through sensation, about displaying and arranging affect as a kinesthetic process digested by the dance-artist's personhood in real time. It wonders how sensation becomes action becomes emotion. Is there a consistent pathway? Can it be choreographed?

In less analytic terms, I'd say I was surprised to discover a kind of ritual, a special way of beginning, that would simultaneously calm my nervous system, let time and space settle, invite audience to watch and listen, and enclose us in the metaphorical 'display case' that AN ARRAY is all about. It sets a baseline for what can be expected and for seeing the beginnings, for sensing the shifting attention, and for welcoming the uncertainty of things not being predetermined.

CONCLUSION

This research intended to invite a rigorous method of using sensory information as a source for action, emotion and imagination, by following a kind of chain of events that would see one source of movement lead to another and feed a larger narrative arc. This occurred at first but ultimately, with practice, my attention and needs shifted away from this as the initiation point, as the building block for a solo piece, and I realized that there was something else that needed to happen before even beginning to dance. I discovered the need for a pre-dance. In this sense, my question about sourcing movement in the transition of sensation into action, as a form of live composing, became secondary. It only came up once the performance was going. However I realized that the dilation between phases of attention offered even more nuanced stages than sensation, action, imagination and affect. It offered a chance to work on the space and time that is required to dilate that attention. And this can be reproduced, and even practiced as a tool in order to cultivate a shared sense of dilated time and space with the audience.