

CLOUDS ON CLEAR SKY

EVENINGS
PRESS TEXT



Carrie McIlwain, *Cake Altar*, 2016

[Press kit](#)

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LOUDS ON CLEAR SKY

Vulnerability is not just the condition of being potentially harmed by another. It names the porous and interdependent character of our bodily and social lives 1.

The project CLOUDS ON CLEAR SKY will unfold in autumn 2021 in two phases. A series of Evenings with artists from different fields and a series of dance performances will take place respectively in September and October.

The dance performances are explorations on dying, death and finitude, choreographed by Johanna Ackva. Seeking the attitudes and practices around death and mourning in our contemporary society and their relationship to the body, Johanna Ackva invites dancers of different ages and backgrounds to engage with the topic through their own physicality. As much as a personal experience with finiteness and vulnerability, death is nevertheless embedded in the social reality and imbricated in an economic system based on growth, where aging and sickness are discredited and where social marginalization and capitalization on care and health seems to be the norm. This project responds to a need to observe the modes of dealing with death and dying in order to inform and make it possible to critically rethink our contemporary ways of living.

During the month of September, while leaving space for the dance rehearsals during the day, a series of 3 Evenings will take place in parallel at night. Intended to be a series of independent artistic events, they touch the ensemble of CLOUDS ON CLEAR SKY by weaving connecting lines. Crossing each other in the same space allows traces to invade gently into each other's fields. Johanna Ackva invites artists, readers, thinkers, musicians but also the public and the dancers, to this series of artistic interventions for moments of common reflection, of encounters, to let tears and pleasure run down around similar themes and create a network of sense. Sometimes giving rise to different approaches and media, this first phase intends to question and open new avenues for reflection.

¹ "Violence, deuil, politique", Judith Butler and translated by Cynthia Kraus, in *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol. 22, No 1., Paris: éditions Antipodes, 2003

EVENINGS

Weekly during the month of September, the space of artistic production and rehearsals will be opened in order to look at the subject of examination through the lens of different media and practices with invited artists, thinkers, dancers, musicians and the audience. This framework highlights our interest in creating a place where it is possible to talk and reflect about death and dying. The projection of a film about the disappearance of womxn in the rivers and canals of Berlin, a talk on grief and fluids, a ritualized dinner and a sound performance which raises the tension between the personal apprehension of death and the abstraction of numbers given by statistics will be featured during the month. The Evenings will be introduced by short poetic readings, drawn from a series of interviews conducted by Johanna Ackva. The interviews, part of a parallel research and related to the dance performances, serve both as an overture and a connecting line between the different events.

1. VALE OF TEARS

Thursday, September 9, 7-9pm

Talk, discussion and projection, with Magali Dougoud and Gesine Palmer

Beyond the enchanting image of its literal meaning, the expression Vale of Tears is related in the Christian tradition with the suffering path of life that one has to endure before dying; as to be observed in the homonymous monumental 19th century painting by Gustave Doré. However, the French understanding of "Vallée de larmes" is commonly dominated by a description of the skin lines formed by the passage of tears under the eyes, and notably used in the plastic surgery jargon. Whether a physical quality or a path of life, this title gives the tone for the first Evening. The artist Magali Dougoud and the writer Gesine Palmer will exchange on mourning, remembering, weeping and fluids. The discussion will take place after the projection of the video *Le Continuum Bleu* by Magali Dougoud and a talk by Gesine Palmer.

The video *Le Continuum Bleu* by Magali Dougoud connects together all the womxn whose paths and bodies crossed the rivers and canals of the city of Berlin. They died and were killed there but their bodies and minds have risen together to form an original memory that joins distant pasts and potential futures. A new population has emerged from these losses and the violence they carry: the Womxn Waves. According to scientists, they have forgotten to silence one of the X chromosomes in their DNA, altering their identity and changing their shape. By reclaiming the sounds, textures and intervals of their voices they started to rebel. Once the water contained in their bodies merged with the one that contained them, they were ready to build a common body for the uprising. In a poetic approach and a narrative aesthetic close to speculative fiction, the video questions the intrinsic violence of societies and mostly the one directed against womxn and correlates it with the domination exercised by humans over nature. What will we reconstruct together from all our losses?

What does it mean to cry? What are tears made of? Why do emotional tears differ from tears caused by onions? What are their purposes and how do they define us individually, collectively, as a society? Gesine Palmer unravels this story through the prism of history, mythology and philosophy. Through a careful analysis of social representations, she reveals our relationship to tears and mourning highly gendered up until today. During this evening and in resonance with the projection of *Le Continuum Bleu*, Gesine Palmer is invited to open the theme of crying as a form of resistance against loss and as an indicator for physical reality as well as an element regulating social life in the grieving process.

2. TORPOR

September 16, 7pm, 7.45pm, 8.30pm

Sound performance composed by Laure Boer (dan bau) and interpreted together with Pina Bettina Rücker (quartz sound bowls) and Evelyn Saylor (vocals).

The score addresses the difficulty to relate to the abstraction of the covid-19 pandemic on a global scale on one side, and the falling in a period of torpor on a personal scale on the other side. The composition is built both, on the Robert Koch Institute's statistical data of the number of deaths due to the pandemic in Germany as well as on photographs of everyday life during this period. The first part of the score was based on the four seasons of the year 2020 and was presented as part of "Composite by the Numbers" (curated by Dayang Yraola). For CLOUDS ON CLEAR SKY, the score will be extended by 3 additional seasons corresponding to the duration until the launch of the project in September. For this edition, the piece - which can be performed by 3 to 13 musicians - will be interpreted by Laure Boer (dan bau), Pina Bettina Rücker (quartz sound bowls made of silicon) and Evelyn Saylor (vocals), all three bringing their own interpretation and musical particularities to the project. Each musician chooses a line. Where there is a light, there is a sound. This can mean volume or intensity, depending on the instrument. The ellipses are total silences referring to the amount of deaths in Germany. The photos and the seasons act as a narrative frame for the compositions. In this frame one comes back to very basic transcriptions of sensations: where you have light, you have sound. A way to transcribe the feeling of torpor, uncertainty and the necessity to move forward each day, step by step.

3. GRIEF AND GRATITUDE

September 23, 7-10pm

Performance and ritual by Carrie McLwain

If rituals surround death, perhaps it is because they allow those who experience it as survivors to start the mourning process. By isolating or gathering, rituals give rhythms and order to the evolution of emotions experienced in loss. They also evoke the tension between the intimate sphere, the (un)desired isolation, and the socially required gathering, governed by conventions. With Grief and Gratitude, Carrie McLwain takes us on a journey, in the form of a ritualized dinner to the discovery of ingredients and their interrelation with the body, its shapes and movements, its internal circulation routes and guts. Every meal can awaken the narrative of death: the inevitable transformation, loss, and elemental returns. Eating is a necessary violence; a site of sacrifice and incorporation as one material loses its form to sustain the life of another. Grief and Gratitude will invite spectators to a participatory feast of symbolic gestures and recipes connected to death rituals, wakes, and myths.

READINGS

Every Evening will begin with a reading from Johanna Ackva's interview series. The readings are intended both as an overture for the night, as well as a connecting line between all of the Evenings and with the dance performances.

Over the course of four years, Johanna Ackva had conversations with people who had encountered death, either out of professional or private realms. She asked her interlocutors about their experiences with dying and mourning, about death and the dead which have remained in their memory, and about how finiteness manifests in their lives or in their awareness. Among others, a funeral speaker, a Protestant pastor, a pathologist, a cemetery gardener and a historian describe the physical and psychological aspects of the dying process as well as forms and rituals of saying farewell.

Their stories and reports shed light onto the infrastructures, the written and unwritten laws that regulate the handling of death and the dead body. Meanwhile, their speaking about death remains a speaking about the unspeakable, their knowledge one that is unknowable. Their mournings as well as their ideas and speculations about the so-called afterlife reflect the limits of human agency, an existential vulnerability, which - though unevenly distributed - concerns us all.

CALENDAR

September 9, 2021 - 7-9pm

VALE OF TEARS

With Magali Dougoud and Gesine Palmer

Projection & Talk, Discussion

September 16, 2021 – 7-9pm (7.00pm / 7.45pm / 8.30pm)

TORPOR

By Laure Boer (dan bau) with Pina Bettina Rücker (quartz singing bowls) and Evelyn Saylor (vocals)

Sound performance

September 23, 2021 - 7-10pm

GRIEF AND GRATITUDE

With Carrie McIlwain

Ritualized diner

October 7-10, 2021

CLOUDS ON CLEAR SKY

By Johanna Ackva

With Regina Baumgart, Jan Burkhardt, Emeka Ene, Sophie Kuhlmann, Akemi Nagao

BIOGRAPHIES

Johanna Ackva is a choreographer and dancer, often working in collective constellations or collaborating with artists of different backgrounds and media. Her interest lies in the sensorial, affective and political dimensions of the diverse relationships between self and world. Investigating and (re)negotiating these relationships with commitment and humor is central to her work. Johanna's artistic approach is informed by philosophical and anthropological theory as well as the practice of Somatics and a variety of other body-based techniques, ranging from dance improvisation to meditation and singing. She lets herself be led by her curiosity about what it is that moves us – on a macro and micro scale, globally as well as locally. Since 2014, her collaboratively made works have touched upon diverse topics such as work and its value (The Agreement), experiences of natural wastelands and solitude (Salt Lake), notions of femininity and its relation to fluids (Women and Watery Men, EARTHBOUND SQUATTERS), or death and finiteness (Out of Our Hands, Solo ohne Titel). In 2020 and 2021, Johanna has received Scholarships from the Cultural Senate of Berlin (Elsa-Neumann-Stipendium), as well as from the German Cultural Fonds Dachverband Tanz and Fonds Darstellende Künste. Since 2019, Johanna is part of Libken (www.libken.de), a collectively run venue for cultural events and creative residencies in Uckermark/Brandenburg. Since 2017, she is part of the Berlin-based dance collective Suddenly. As a performer she has worked a.o. for/with Lea Martini & Dennis Deter, Monster Truck, Pauline Payen, Emma Tricard, Grazyna Roguski, titre provisoire, Roni Katz.

Laure Boer is a multi-instrumentalist based in Berlin. Her music is inspired by noise and traditional folk music. Her performances are hypnotic improvisations around traditional instruments, odd percussions and sometimes a voice, singing or reciting in her native French; a vibrant universe that is both vulnerable and brutal. In fall 2019 she did a 2 month residency in Manila, Philippines, organized by CTM Festival, Goethe-Institut, Nusasonic and Musicboard Berlin. She performed at the WSK Festival in Manila. In January 2020 she was resident at Amplify Berlin, ACUD, with Rabih Beaini as mentor. www.laureboer.com

Magali Dougoud (*1986, CH), lives and works in Lausanne, Switzerland. She graduated from HEAD-Geneva and HKB-Bern with a Master in Fine Arts. She also has been co-curator of the independent art space Urgent Paradise in Lausanne from 2012 to 2020. Magali Dougoud dismantles dominant historical and scientific narratives to find other possible subjectivities. She develops an emancipatory feminine imagination through notions such as liquidity - as a means of heterogeneous connection -, violence, eroticism, plural and inter-species intelligence. Her work, mainly video, but also text, sound and installation is inspired by hydrofeminism(1), the idea that we are all "Bodies of Water". Water, as an omnipresent motif in her work, allows ambiguous and hybrid figures, often in revolt, to create new narratives in which voices multiply, repeat and overlap. (1) NEIMANIS Astrida, Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. www.magalidougoud.org

Marie DuPasquier (*1984, Lausanne) is a Swiss independent curator and museologist, living between Zürich and Berlin. She graduated with an MA in History of Art and Museology at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Eugène Ferdinand Prize), and has been Associate Curator & Administrator at Maison d'Ailleurs, Museum of science-fiction, utopia and extraordinary journeys, and President of Biel/Bienne Photography Festival for several years. Although her work recalls contemporary art practices, museum- and curatorial studies, it also reflects her transdisciplinary approach.

In her recent researches as a freelance curator, she focuses her interests on “contact zones”, exhibition design and devices, the movements and meeting of different bodies involved in a space and the activation of image systems. They take form in the multiple collaborations and exhibitions made with Display, space for artistic and curatorial practices in Berlin that she has founded and runs since 2015. Display was doubly awarded by the prize of the City of Berlin – Senat Kultur & Europa: Auszeichnung Künstlerische Projekträume und – Initiativen, in 2018 and 2020. She participated in the curatorial residency in Mumbai Art Room (Mumbai, India) in partnership with Pro Helvetia New Dehli and in Künstlerhaus Lukas, Ahrenshoop. By focusing on the collective aspect of projects, she engages in various collaborations on the long term with the artists, curators and researchers.

Carrie McIlwain is interested in the possibility of artistic performative research to enable other spaces of existence along-side normative structures of reality. During their studies at HZT Berlin in the BA Dance, Context and Choreography (2013-2017), they initiated various collaborative projects, with focuses on being-together, applied anarchy, byproducts of the body, ritual and the political character of the witch. In parallel to performance work, they maintain an artistic studio practice in the form of drawing, tattooing and writing. Carrie has spent 2021 as a RED Resident artist in Tanzfabrik Berlin. In 2020, Carrie was invited as co-performer in the series “Late Night Group Therapy” by Susanne Schuda (WUK Theater/Wien). Resulting from a shared interest in the figure of the witch, the Theater Vierte Welt has invited them to perform in the film for the installation/performance “BLOCKI Nuovo Corviale”. Additionally, their text, “For the Love of Dream Boards” was published as part of the collective writing project, “Kultur und Politik im prekären Leben: Solidarität unter Schneeflocken” released by Neofelis Verlag (October 2020). www.carriemcilwain.com

Gesine Palmer (*1960, DE), lives and works in Berlin. She is a German author, journalist and theologian. After studying Protestant theology, Jewish studies and general history of religion, Gesine Palmer worked in the academic field until 2006. In continuity with her work of those years she is still active as a member of the International Rosenzweig Society in the field of Jewish-Christian intellectual relations. Since 2007, she has been working independently as an author and speaker in Berlin with the Büro für besondere Texte (Office for Special Texts), publishing literary, philosophical and journalistic texts. The design of eulogies and the accompaniment of mourners has become her main field of work. She is the author of “Tausend Tode. Über Trauer reden.“ (A Thousand Deaths. Talking About Grief”), published in March 2020. www.gesine-palmer.de

As a sound artist, **Pina Bettina Rücker** has been exploring the musical possibilities of her Crystal/Silica Bowls in concert settings for over 10 years. Crystal singing bowls originate from the semiconductor industry - as quartz crucibles - and are used to cultivate silicon monocrystal layers. She has developed a new musical instrument out of the intriguing context of industrial high technology and analogue sine tone, and helped bring it to acceptance and use in the musical world. Her performances take place in churches, concert halls, galleries, clubs, she has played at festivals for classical music (mdr-musiksommer, moviementos) or experimental music (sinwald, sinusTon, ZixP, StelzenFestspiele bei Reuth), for yoga (YogaUnited), world music (Lauschrausch, Ancient Trance) techno (KONG, Garbicz) and also the ChaosComputerClub - Congress. In collaboration with artists such as Gesine Adler (soprano), Hayden Chisholm (saxophone), Kinan Azmeh (clarinet), Gert Anklam (sheng/saxophone), six CD productions were made. www.kosmosklang.de/pages/projekte.php

Evelyn Saylor is a composer from New York City, currently based in Berlin. She writes electronic music for the concert, for the theater, for modern dance, and for film. She is also active as a singer, performer, pianist, synth player, and sound technician for live electronics. She has received commissions from the Akademie der Künste Berlin, the Heroines of Sound Festival, the Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau, the STEGREIF.orchester and others. She has written music for the theater company The Agency and the choreographer Julian Weber, and regularly collaborates with the choreographer Ruben Reniers as well as with the artists Dear Reader, Caterina Barbieri and Holly Herndon. Her work has been performed in the Tischlerei of the Deutsche Oper, the Akademie der Künste, HAU2, Uferstudios, Dock 11, and other spaces in Berlin, as well as in New York, California, and throughout Europe. Saylor received her BA in Music Composition from Pomona College in California and her MA from the Universität der Künste Berlin, where she currently teaches. www.evelynsaylor.com

CREDITS

Artistic direction, choreography: Johanna Ackva

Performance, co-choreography: Regina Baumgart, Jan Burkhardt, Emeka Ene, Sophie Kuhlmann, Akemi Nagao

Production: Valerie Terwei

Music: Evelyn Saylor

Video, projection: Max Hilsamer

Costume and space design: Bettina Mileta

Artistic assistance: Carrie McLwain

Technical support: Aiko Okamoto

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Curation Evenings: Marie DuPasquier

Guests & artists Evenings: Laure Boer (with Pina Rücker and Evelyn Saylor), Magali Dougoud, Carrie McLwain and Gesine Palmer

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