

Jeannette Ginslov for Willem de Vries

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P(AR)take

1 How did the idea for P(AR)take come about? How long did it take to create?

My specialities are dance on film, Augmented Reality, screen and the Internet. Breaking conventions, researching new ways of presenting dance, digital materiality and capturing dance for screen inspire me. Since 2000 my research and practice has explored the interdisciplinary nature of dance and technology and has led me to using the Internet as a site for new outcomes. In 2010 I started collaborating with Prof Susan Kozel, Professor of New Media at Medea, Malmö University, on the Augmented Reality (AR) project *AffeXity*. a play on both 'affect city' and 'a-fixity'. This is an ongoing project and an interdisciplinary, collaborative project drawing together dance, tagged visual imagery, and people using mobile-networked devices. It exposes somatic and affective layers of urban spaces through dance improvisation and screendance. See: <http://affexity.se/>

With this research I approached Ismail Mahomed, Director of the National Arts Festival in 2012 and together with Screendance Africa (Pty) Ltd, my newly formed company with partner Dominique Jossie, proposed making a Sreendance Festival with an AR component. It was only in 2013 that he gave us the go ahead and the project became part of the Main NAF Programme for 2014. I suppose it is timeous as P(AR)take can be seen to celebrate the Festival 's 40th Anniversary!

The research started December 2013 with my MA Drama research assistant Ester Van der Walt and myself researching the NAF Contemporary Main and Fringe Dance Platform as well as significant events that occurred in South African history since 1984. The archived dance works span the demise of Apartheid and the birth of Democracy in South Africa and so the resonance between the works and dates of performance needed to be curated. The curating started January 2014 and the contacting of artists, gathering of archived dance video, compiling, editing and testing of videos and tagged images have been ongoing since February this year.

2 How is the archived work incorporated in the piece? What can audiences expect of the production?

These videos are suspended as hidden layers of archived media, tagged on images of the dance works to be found in the City of Grahamstown, during the Festival. The dance video material is then part archive, part "time-machine" and part performance of memory - a living archive. The tour is a dialogue where you partake in a choreography of time and history.

The archival video footage is first sent to me by the artist, usually the full work, 30-40 minute long videos. These are then edited by myself to 40 second clips. I have tried to select and highlight parts of the work that I think are the signature of that choreographer's work. The works themselves should also speak to the time in which they were produced. I think that aesthetics and context in which they were produced should resonate.

Audiences will be presented with this virtual public dance video archive all along High Street, Grahamstown. Audiences partake by using their smart mobile phone or tablets and the AR app Aurasma. This triggers the Auras tagged on the images and are viewed as overlays on their phone's camera viewfinder.

Audiences will meet Ester and I under the Drostdy Arch, from Monday 07-10 July at 11:00 and Friday 11 July at 12:00. Here the audiences will download and familiarize themselves with the app Aurasma. They will then be instructed on how to use and test the app on their phone before setting off by themselves as a group, to find ten tagged images to trigger the archived footage: a kind of treasure hunt if you will! Each audience member will also receive a map detailing where to find these images which will start at the Rhodes University Clock Tower and move down Hight Street, to end in front of the Cathedral. The tour should take approximately one hour.

3 What archived works are included in the production? Which choreographers created works for P(AR)take?

Firstly the choreographers did not create works specifically for P(AR)take. They had video material of their works that were commissioned by and appeared on the Main at the National Arts Festival since 1984. They were selected because their works appeared on the Main, may have received Young Artist Awards, or resonated with the time period that we highlighted and most importantly if their work was documented in some video format. You will be amazed at how hard it is to find archival footage!

List of Choreographers:

- 01 1984-1989 Tossie Van Tonder *Thabangita* 1984
- 02 1994-1996 Vincent Mantsoe *Gula Matari* 1996
- 03 1996-1998 Debbie Rakusin & David Matamela *African Moves* 1998
- 04 1999-2001 Robyn Orlin *Daddy I've seen this piece six times...*2000
- 05 2001-2002 Jeannette Ginslov *clinical capsule* 2001
- 06 2002-2005 Gary Gordon *The Unspeakable Story* 2004
- 07 2005-2008 Gregory Maqoma *Beautiful Us* 2006
- 08 2008-2011 Jay Pather *Body of Evidence* 2009
- 09 2011-2012 Mamele Nyamza *Isingqala* 2011
- 10 2013-2014 Fana Tshabala *Ndumba* 2013

4 This year marks 40 years of Grahamstown. How do you feel about dance in SA and the festival's involvement in SA and international dance?

Excellent. The NAF supports local and international dance as best as it can given budgetary constraints and I think tries to cover as many different art and dance forms as possible, from Mainstream to the highly experimental and innovative. It has not always been this progressive but thanks to Ismail's endeavours and enquiring mind and probably the internet, the NAF promotes and supports local and international artists such as myself.

Dance in the rest of SA is in dire straits. Good work is being made locally then toured and

celebrated internationally, see Dada Masilo's "Swan Lake" but locally the platforms and Festivals are dying, the Dance Umbrella is a case in point. Small scale Festivals connected to Universities have subsequently taken shape, run by lecturers who have University jobs to support their "passion". I have seen this in many places around the globe. Dance Companies closing, stopping international touring, for example NDT, they only tour Holland now!

I think that is one of the reasons why I have migrated to dance and new media and production and screening on the internet. Until things get better economically and we pull ourselves out of this economic depression, the arts will continue to suffer. We just have to evolve and find new outlets. For me the internet is one of these and its for free!

5 You specialise on multi-platformed dance and performance. What has been the most interesting dimension for you working with augmented reality, archived work and performance?

I am interested in challenging traditional and conventional means of presenting dance on stage. Site specific works, new media and screendance in urban spaces using cell phones and apps is a new platform for dance and breaks conventional way of viewing dance. The audience becomes part of the choreography, the virtual, digital and become part of the dialogue between the "internet of things".

The augmented media amplifies the ephemeral nature of dance that the viewers "captures" with their mobile device. Ultimately its about agency for the viewer. With P(AR)take they are not passively consuming the performance video and the history of South African Contemporary dance, but entering into a dialogue with it. The media floats between them, the internet and mobile technology. The dance video material is then part archive, part "time-machine" and part performance of memory - a living archive. The tour is a dialogue and a choreography of media and audiences where you partake in a choreography of time and history.