



March 14th, 2012

Interview by Elmes Gomez, Joyce SoHo intern with Karen Bernard, Director of New Dance Alliance and producer of the Performance Mix Festival, this week at Joyce SoHo

by ceilers at 4:23 pm

What are some of your experiences that led to the foundation of New Dance Alliance?

I began studying dance at age three with my father, Steven Bernard, a company member with the 20th century pioneer Charles Weidman. I grew up in a household that incorporated my father's dance school on a day-to-day level, with students crossing through the family space. My sense of performance and performance art stems from this familiar blend of living and presenting. In my living loft and studio in Tribeca, I began showing work with other artists including Yvonne Meyer and Jennifer Monson. But I quickly outgrew presenting in a residential dwelling and in 1987 I discovered DIA Center for the Arts. Encouraged by Joan Duddy, I formalized the Performance Mix Festival.

The Breakfast Mix (Thu 3/15) series stimulates discussion on the challenges artists face in their professional careers. Could you elaborate on present challenges in the performing arts you feel are critical?

It is a great challenge to make a living as an experimental performance artist. Most artists have alternative jobs that hopefully relate to the field, i.e., teaching and body work. But some work in restaurants, babysit, office temp — the list goes on. Funding is scarce and you may not fit the mold — you may be not emerging, emerged or just not fitting in to the current political aesthetics.

You have used media tools such as projectors in your solo pieces. How do you perceive this integration as embodied through your movement? Do you have any specific media influences?

I move and alter the projector and laptop, which adds a "present" and behind-the-scenes reality to the fluid movement between fantasy and reality that is integral to dance. White surfaces form asymmetrical images that blend photographs, movie footage, sound, and text into an enveloping and continually changing environment. The laptop and projector are both a physical partner and virtual vehicle through, which I attempt to control her world. Through projections the work expands from a solo to a duet (with the computer) to a group work (through video). I travel beyond the space I occupy, generating an emotional, if not a physical freedom.

Ouette is loosely based on the François Ozon movie *Swimming Pool*. Bernard's character parallels the film's protagonist, an elderly English novelist who becomes involved in a dangerous sexual fantasy that is part her fiction and part her desire.

Is there a specific process in deciding what artists and works get presented by the Performance Mix Festival?

I have a gut response and get excited about work that challenges the definition of dance. I seek work coming from different approaches, so that the audience can have a dialogue about the differences and sameness. Works on the

same program can actually begin to look like one piece as they inevitably seem to speak about each other. I love when connections are made.

Do you have anything to say to those interested in performing in the Performance Mix Festival?

Yes, come to the festival and see the work we promote. The application for [next year's] festival will be available on our website April 1 and is due June 1. newdancealliance.org