

# A Space for Black Dance Artists to Create in the Hudson Valley

New Dance Alliance announces a residency program and its first three recipients: Angie Pittman, Johnnie Cruise Mercer and Leslie Cuyjet.



Angie Pittman in her work "Leaning" at Danspace Project in 2018. Ms. Pittman is one of three dance artists selected for the New Dance Alliance's Black Artists Space to Create Residency program. Credit: Simon Curchel

By **Peter Libbey**

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When the staff, leadership and advisory committee of the New Dance Alliance gathered to draft a letter in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the group soon realized that words wouldn't be enough to demonstrate the organization's commitment to racial justice. "It became really apparent to us that, unless we were backing it up programmatically, whatever we were writing was hollow," Fernando Maneca, the president of the Dance Alliance's board, said in an interview.

The group decided to reach out to Black artists to determine what kind of material support would be useful. On Friday, New Dance Alliance announced the start of its Black Artists Space to Create Residency, a pilot program that will give recipients the chance to spend two weeks at Modern Accord Depot in Accord, N.Y., in the Hudson Valley, where they will enjoy unlimited access to a dance studio and a quiet, comfortable living space. The residency will also come with a \$2,000 stipend.

Because the program was designed to give recipients the chance to create away from everyday stresses, participants will not be required to present new work at the end of their time in the Hudson Valley.

"We wish to radically reimagine what it means to serve Black artists right now and to do so in the specific spirit of reparations," Mr. Maneca said in a statement.

The first residency recipients are Johnnie Cruise Mercer, Leslie Cuyjet and Angie Pittman. Ms. Pittman, who is also an advisory board member at New Dance Alliance and part of the group that conceived of the project, has been hired as residency director. She will guide the program going forward. (Mr. Maneca said Ms. Pittman was not involved in the process that led to her being selected as an inaugural resident.)

"While we are honored to offer this residency program, we understand that the ideas around it are not new and not ours," Ms. Pittman said in a statement. "As a Black artist working with a white-led organization, I want to make sure we credit the countless Black, femme scholars and activists who have called for the equitable payment of Black folks."