

DISCOVERING FRED SANDBACK

A dialogue between Sandback's sculptures and choreographed movement. In collaboration with Karole Armitage, founder of Armitage Gone! Dance.

Interview with Karole Armitage



Introduction

Discovering Fred Sandback is an online presentation and activation of the space presented by Monira Foundation in collaboration with Karole Armitage, founder of Armitage Gone! Dance to create a dialogue between Sandback's sculptures and choreographed movement.

For this collaboration, we reflect on the idea of the choreographic map and the paths we create as we move through space while we encounter obstacles that make us change our route. Karole Armitage creates a narrative in reference to the original piece by Bruce Nauman: *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (black-and-white film) and connecting it to the stories of the four dancers featured in this performance, which all happen to be immigrants. In performance #3, each dancer follows a different path through the gallery space, their paths symbolize a visual interpretation of a map that represents their own life experiences as they traveled and found new locations to live and develop their professional careers. Find more details of this collaboration and read our interview with Karole Armitage visiting Monira Foundation's Discovering web page.

This public program is presented in collaboration with the Fred Sandback Archive.

Discovering is a monthly program that welcomes the public into AYN Foundation and other long term presentations at Mana Contemporary to further learn and experience the practice of their featured artists through the scope of other artists and the multiple languages of art.

Choreographer: Karole Armitage

Dancers: William Isaac, Mei-hua Wang, Cristian Laverde-Koenig, Kali Oliver.

Creative Direction: Monira Foundation

Video Editing: Zitao 'Dylan' Liu



Interview with Karole Armitage

Discovering Fred Sandback was created in collaboration with Karole Armitage, founder of Armitage Gone! Dance and dancers: William Isaac, Mei-hua Wang, Cristian Laverde-Koenig and Kali Oliver. Lidia Costa, our Director of Public Programs, had a conversation with Karole about the project, which you can read here:

LC: Could you briefly explain the connection of choreography #3 with the sculptures and the space? What were some of the key references when planning the choreographies?

KA: I generally work in a dance vocabulary that is anything but pedestrian – my form of dance uses all of the body in a highly articulated curvilinear vocabulary that requires enormous skill and coordination. It takes years and years of daily, athletic training. It requires enormous humility because no dancer, even the greatest, can achieve what the art form demands. My work generally takes place in emptiness, in a field of space, where negative space has an important role. But in this case, the Sandback gallery installation interrupts and divides space. The dancers in this work are all immigrants. That gave me an idea. I felt it would be interesting to use a highly stylized and mesmerizing pedestrian walk to show the twists and turns of the immigrant traveler across time and space. I based the walk on artist Bruce Nauman's contrapposto videos. This concept is much more literal than my normal process, but I felt that having each of the 4 dancers do the exact same thing would also reveal incredible individuality. In the simplicity of walking with the same instructions on the same path and seeing the difference between them makes the experience anything but literal.



LC: What was the process of the choreography development in order to create a dialogue between dancers and the sculptures?

KA: The immigrant walker comes to a string. They must switch direction to get around the obstacle. Then they come to another string obstacle and have to change course again. Much of art making is finding a way to adapt to the unexpected and to embrace chance and accident. So much of the ability to pay artists comes from creatively adapting to conditions and finding ways around the obstacles. The dancers are William Isaac traveling from Antigua to the South Bronx; Mei-hua Wang traveling from Taiwan to Queens; Cristian Laverde-Koenig traveling from Cali, Colombia to Cuba to Connecticut and Kali Oliver traveling from Russia and Slovenia to Ohio. They also do a short dance phrase poised on a point in space that uses mapping in the mind to trace deliberate, intricate pattern on the air. Dancers map shapes in their minds while observing, interacting, feeling, analyzing and getting deep into their own understanding of being. This combination of the mental inside the physical creates an intimate portrait to share with the mind of the observer. This representation is about experience and perception.

About Karole Armitage:

Karole Armitage (Choreographer/Director) was rigorously trained in classical ballet, and danced professionally with George Balanchine and Merce Cunningham before forming her New York based company, Armitage Gone! Dance in 1980. She is renowned for pushing the boundaries to create contemporary works that blend dance, music, science and the visual arts. Known as the "punk ballerina" Armitage's work is at once both esoteric and popular. She has choreographed Broadway Productions, Videos for Madonna and Michael Jackson, several films for Merchant Ivory productions, a show for Cirque du Soleil and the Fall/Winter 2020/2021 Marc Jacobs Fashion show. In addition to creating over 100 works for her dance company, Armitage has directed operas and created new dance productions for major houses in the US and Europe. She was honored with an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from Kansas University in 2013, and a Radcliffe Fellowship at Harvard University in 2016 to study Native American Plains Culture. Armitage is currently an MIT Media Lab Directors Fellow.