

# Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham

## **Schedule of Events:**

With the exception of the UApresents Merce Cunningham Dance Company performance at Centennial Hall, all events are free and open to the public. See venue addresses below.

### **Monday, February 14th**

The Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham Exhibition Opening  
Sundt Gallery [CALA], 5pm; talk by curator Beth Weinstein, 6pm

### **Monday, March 7th**

Film Screening, Merce Cunningham Dance Co. Films  
*Melange*, *Beach Birds for Camera*, and *Merce by Merce by Paik*  
CCP, 6pm, followed by a Q+A

### **Wednesday, March 9th**

Performance of John Cage's "Where Are We Going and What are we Doing"  
Performed by Charles Alexander, Renee Angle, Laynie Browne, and Tenney Nathanson  
Sundt Gallery [CALA], Poetry writing workshop 5:00 - 6:30pm, performance, 7pm

### **Thursday, March 10th**

Dance Performance, Mixed program  
Sundt Gallery [CALA] 6pm

### **Friday, March 11th**

Film Screening: Experiments in Art and Technology's *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering*  
Q+A with special guest and film producer Julie Martin [E.A.T.] and Laura Kuhn [John Cage Trust]  
MOCA, 6pm

### **Saturday, March 12th**

Roundtable, *The Collaborative Legacy*  
Moderated by MOCA Exec. Director Anne-Marie Russell  
Panelists: MDCDC's Trevor Carlson and David Vaughan, Beth Weinstein and other UA faculty, and special guests Paul Kaiser [OpenEnded Group], Laura Kuhn [John Cage Trust], and Julie Martin [E.A.T.]  
MOCA, 3pm

## **UApresents Event:**

### **Saturday, March 12, 2011**

Merce Cunningham Dance Company Legacy Tour Performance  
*Crises* [1960], *XOVER* [2007] and *BIPED* [1999]  
Centennial Hall, 8 pm performance, followed by a Q + A

Tickets available at the Centennial Hall Box Office: call 520.621.3341 or visit [www.uapresents.org](http://www.uapresents.org)

## **Venues:**

Sundt Gallery, College of Arch. + Landscape Arch. [CALA], 1040 N. Olive Rd	520.621.6751
Center for Creative Photography [CCP], 1050 North Olive Rd, Tucson, AZ	
MOCA Tucson [MOCA], 265 S. Church Ave, Tucson, AZ	520.624.5019
Centennial Hall [UApresents], 1020 E. University Blvd, Tucson, AZ	520.621.3341

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Merce Cunningham / John Cage / Robert Rauschenberg  
David Tudor / Andy Warhol / Jasper Johns / Marcel Duchamp  
David Behrman / Andrew Culver / OpenEnded Group  
Charles Atlas / Benedetta Tagliabue / E.A.T. / Billy Klüver  
Elliot Caplan / Nam June Paik / Lucinda Childs / Frank Gehry  
John Adams / Elisa Monte / Tod Williams + Billie Tsien  
Glenn Branca / Nacho Duato / Jaafar Chalabi  
Nikolaus Hirsch / William Forsythe / Frédéric Flamand  
Ai Weiwei / Dominique Perrault / Doug Nielsen / Beth Weinstein

*March 9, 2011: Poetry*

The University of Arizona is proud to present the exhibition—*the Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham*—documenting seven multi-disciplinary works from the Merce Cunningham Dance Company [MCDC] as well as selected works resulting from collaborations between other choreographers and architects. The exhibition features reproductions of music and dance notations, drawings, sketches, and photographs documenting the collaborative process and the performed works. The exhibition and related programming has been designed to complement the MCDC Legacy Tour performance presented by UApresents at UA's Centennial Hall on March 12, 2011.

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company, created in 1953, is one of the most influential contemporary dance companies in the world. Since Cunningham's death in 2009, the Company has embarked on a final, two-year celebratory world tour after which the Company will permanently disband. Merce Cunningham left behind a legacy of cross-disciplinary collaborations in all of the arts as well as a culture of creative research informed by such diverse interests as zen philosophy, environmental aesthetics, chance and indeterminacy, and digital technology.

This exhibition and related programming, which will include film screenings, curator talks and performances, will give scholars, students and the general public opportunities to discuss, debate and celebrate Cunningham's legacy during the month leading up to the MCDC's performance on the UA campus.

**The Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham Exhibition**

February 14, 2011 - March 22, 2011

Exhibition is free and open to the public weekdays 8am - 8pm  
Sundt Gallery, College of Architecture + Landscape Architecture [CALA]  
1040 N. Olive Road, Tucson, Arizona 520.621.6751

**Media Contact:**

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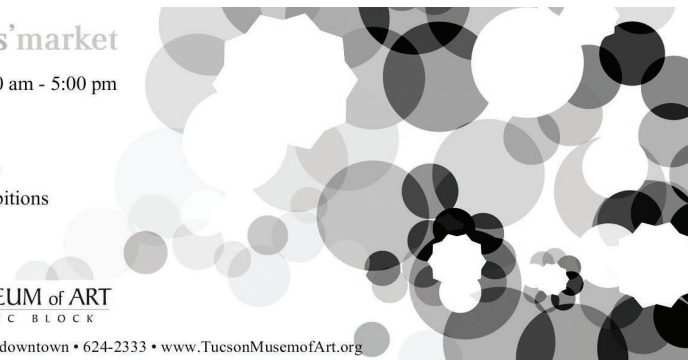
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**SUPPORTING THE COLLABORATIVE LEGACY**

# Collaborative Legacy of Merce Cunningham

Wednesday, March 9th

Sundt Gallery, CALA

Poetry writing workshop 5 – 6:30pm

*Where Are We Going and What Are We Doing?* 2  
Performed @ 7pm

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John Cage and Merce Cunningham

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## 2 Where Are We Going and What Are We Doing?

By John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, Wesleyan University Press, 1961

an excerpt, performed\* by Tucson poets and writers:

Charles Alexander  
Renee Angle  
Laynie Browne  
Tenney Nathanson

"As the unchallenged father figure of American experimental music, Mr. Cage wields an influence that extends far beyond sound alone....Indeed, the entire American avant-garde would be unthinkable without Mr. Cage's music, writings, and genially patriarchal personality."

—John Rockwell, *The New York Times*

*Silence*, *A Year from Monday*, *M*, *Empty Words* and *X* (in this order) form the five parts of a series of books in which Cage tries, as he says, "to find a way of writing which comes from ideas, is not about them, but which produces them." Often these writings include mesostics and essays created by subjecting the work of other writers to chance procedures using the *I Ching* (what Cage called "writing through").

"Of all Cage's books, it is perhaps the first, *Silence*, which has had the broadest impact. Even now, artists of all sorts continue to respond to its Zen principles, its chance procedures, and its revolutionary ideas about sound, silence, form, and time"

—Dance Chronicle

## Project Credits

*Curator, Exhibition Graphic Designer:* Beth Weinstein

*Project Assistant:* Annie Kurtin

*Research Assistant:* Lara Lafontain

*Spatial Design + Installation:* Beth Weinstein (project direction); UA Architecture

Student Design Team: Sulaiman Alothman, Kori Camacho, Alan Escarcega,

Michael Farley, Jesus Alan Figueroa, Jongwoo Kim, Corey Kingston,

Crista Mapes, Lara Lafontain, Alicia Perez, Shaun Poon, Mat Propst

*Poetry-Content Consultants:* Laynie Browne and Charles Alexander

*Graphic Design Consultant:* Ellen McMahon

*Exhibition Media:* Jamison Crabtree

## Acknowledgements "

This project would not have been possible without the moral and intellectual support, guidance, stories and images offered by Tandra Dillon, Kevin Taylor, Kevin Carr, Trevor Carlson and David Vaughan at the Cunningham Dance Foundation and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company; by Laura Kuhn of The John Cage Trust; Paul Kaiser of OpenEnded Group, and Julie Martin of E.A.T. Equal thanks go to the choreographers, artists, and architects who granted access to their archives, shared their stories, and hospitality—Lucinda Childs, Frédéric Flamand and Pierre Thys of the Ballet National de Marseille, and Tod Williams and Billie Tsien Architects; as well as to Jaafar Chalabi, Léa Richard-Nagle at Dominique Perrault Architecture, Joyce Shin at Gehry Partners, Julian Richter at The Forsythe Company and architect Nikolaus Hirsch. I would also like to thank the multitude of photographers who documented these dances for their generosity in granting permission to use their images. My gratitude to Annie Nequette, Paul Kaiser and Rosyln Sulcas for editorial advice.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of friends and family on the west side of the island next to the Hudson, and on the 'right' sides of the Seine, the Santa Cruz and the Potomac: thank you. – Beth Weinstein

## Project Support

The University of Arizona

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	<p><b>BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL:</b> <b>In Concert</b> <b>MARCH 5</b> <b>8pm</b></p> <p>Center Stage Series Sponsors: Marsha &amp; Gary Tankenoff • Event Sponsor: Shirley Estes</p>		<p><b>MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY:</b> <b>The Legacy Tour</b> <b>MARCH 12</b> <b>8pm</b></p> <p>Dance Series Sponsors: Stephen Golden &amp; Susan Tarrence • Event Sponsors: John E. Wahl &amp; Mary Lou Forier</p>
	<p><b>KRONOS QUARTET</b> <b>APRIL 3</b> <b>7pm</b></p> <p>Classical Series Sponsors: Ginnie &amp; Bob McKay • Event Sponsors: Kai Family Foundation • John &amp; Jihong Kai</p>		<p><b>MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY</b> <b>APRIL 16</b> <b>8pm</b></p> <p>Dance Series Sponsors: Stephen Golden &amp; Susan Tarrence • Event Sponsors: Ginnie &amp; Bob McKay • Panorama Sponsor: Dr. Mary Jo Chory</p>

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## Poet Performers 3

**Charles Alexander's** books of poems include *Hopeful Buildings* (Chax 1990), *Arc of Light / Dark Matter* (Segue 1992), *Near or Random Acts* (Singing Horse 2004), and *Certain Slants* (Junction 2007). He lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he directs Chax Press and shares an art studio and life with visual artist Cynthia Miller. He has received three Fund for Poetry Awards as well as the Arizona Arts Award. He teaches at Naropa University, the University of Arizona, Chax Press, and Pima Community College. He is a founding member of the Tucson poetry and art presenting group POG, and former director of the Tucson Poetry Festival and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts.

**Renee Angle** works at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. Her poems have appeared in *Diagram*, *Practice: New Writing + Art*, *EOAGH*, and others.

**Laynie Browne** is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently, *The Desires of Letters* (Counterpath, 2010). She currently edits for the journals *Tarpaulin Sky* and *Trickhouse* and teaches and runs an interdisciplinary Writers in the Schools program for The Poetry Center at the University of Arizona.

**Tenney Nathanson** is the author of the poetry collections: *Ghost Snow Falls Through the Void* (2010), *Erased Art* (2005) and *Home on the Range (The Night Sky with Stars in My Mouth)* (2005), as well as a critical book on Walt Whitman, *Whitman's Presence: Body, Voice, and Writing in Leaves of Grass* (1992). He is professor of American Poetry at the University of Arizona.

## 4 John Cage

**John Cage** was a composer, writer, philosopher, and visual artist. After a stint overseas, and around the time of his studies with Schönberg in Los Angeles, Cage published his first compositions, in a rigorous atonal system of his own. In 1937 he moved to Seattle to work as a dance accompanist, and there in 1938 he founded a percussion orchestra; his music now concerned with filling units of time with *ostinatos*. He also began to use electronic devices and invented the 'prepared piano', placing diverse objects between the strings of a grand piano in order to create an effective percussion orchestra under the control of two hands, for which he wrote numerous works including the major concert work, *Sonatas and Interludes* [1948].

He was associated with Merce Cunningham from the early 1940s, writing and performing music for him; he was Founding Music Director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and remained as Musical Director until his death in 1992. Cage and Cunningham were responsible for a number of radical innovations in musical and choreographic composition, such as the use of chance operations and the independence of dance, music and sets.

From the early 1950s Cage became interested in Eastern philosophies, especially in Zen, and began his systematic establishment of the principle of indeterminacy; by adapting Zen Buddhist practices to composition and performance, Cage succeeded in bringing both authentic spiritual ideas and a liberating attitude of play to the enterprise of Western art. His aesthetic of chance produced a unique body of what might be called "once-only" works, any two performances of which can never be quite the same. In an effort to reduce the subjective element in composition, he developed methods of selecting the components of his pieces by chance, early on through the tossing of coins or dice and later through the use of random number generators on the computer, and especially *IC* [1984], designed and written in the C language by Cage's then programmer-assistant, Andrew Culver, to simulate the coin oracle of the *I Ching*.

### Sources + Further Reading:

John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writing*, Middletown, CT. : Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1961  
<http://www.johncage.info/index2.html>

**Jackson Mac Low** (1922– 2004) created poems, essays, and music, performance, visual, and radio works. Author of about 30 books and published in over 90 collections, his works have been published, exhibited, and performed (often by his wife, the poet, visual artist, and composer Anne Tardos and himself) in many countries. He has received many awards including: Guggenheim, NEA, NYFA, and CAPS fellowships and the 1999 Wallace Stevens Award of the Academy of American Poets. Some of his books are: *42 Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters* (Barrytown, NY, 1994), *20 Forties* (Canary Islands, 1999), *Struggle Through* (Canada, 2001), *Les Quarantains* (Extraits) (France, 2001), and *Doings: An Assortment of Performance Pieces 1955–2002* (Granary Books, New York, 2003).

**Anne Tardos** is a poet, composer, and visual artist. She is the author of several books of poetry and the multimedia performance work and radio play *Among Men*. A selection of her readings and performances (many with Jackson Mac Low) can be heard on the University of Pennsylvania's web site: PennSound and on UbuWeb Sound. Her book of new poetry, *I Am You*, has appeared from Salt Publishing, and she is the editor of *Thing of Beauty*, by Jackson Mac Low. Her poem "The Pure of Heart" (2009), has been set to music by Michael Byron. She is a 2009 Fellow in Poetry from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

**Frank O'Hara** (1926 –1966) was an American poet, curator and art critic and member of the New York School of Poetry. His poetry chronicles and was informed by various art happenings, often in the form of Odes, Occasional works and poems for individual artists. In his infamous manifesto, "Personism" he writes:

"As for measure and other technical apparatus, that's just common sense: if you're going to buy a pair of pants you want them to be tight enough so everyone will want to go to bed with you. There's nothing metaphysical about it."

Some of his major influences include Abstract Expressionism, Imaginative Realism, Surrealism, French Symbolist poets (particularly Rimbaud and Mallarme) and Mayakovsky.

O'Hara's work is also known for his engagement with the Visual Arts. He worked for *Art News*, and in 1960 was Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions for the Museum of Modern Art.

## A Constellation of Poets Associated with John Cage and Merce Cunningham 5

**Charles Olson** received his B.A. and M.A. from Wesleyan University, then entered Harvard University in 1936, where he completed coursework for a Ph.D. in American civilization. Rather than pursuing an academic career, Olson became active in depression era politics and served as the assistant chief of the foreign language section of the Office of War Information (OWI).

He published his influential essay "Projective Verse" in 1950; among other things, the essay posited that poetry should embody the rhythms of natural breath and thought. Olson claimed "a poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it . . . by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader . . ."

In 1951, Olson was hired as a visiting professor at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. He would eventually succeed the artist Josef Albers to become the school's rector. Poets and artists including John Cage and Robert Creeley studied or taught at the College, which was a home for experimental and socially-progressive thought. Olson's ideas of verse had a profound influence on a whole generation of poets, including writers such as Denise Levertov, Paul Blackburn, and Robert Duncan.



**Joan Retallack** is the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of Humanities at Bard College. She is the author of numerous books of poetry, winning many awards including the Columbia Book Award, a Lannan Foundation Poetry Award (1998–99), the America Award in Belles-Lettres, and a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

Retallack is the author of many critical studies, including *The Poethical Wager* (2003), and a study of Gertrude Stein (2008). Her most recent books of poetry include: *Procedural Elegies / Western Civ Cont'd* / (Roof, 2010) and *Memnoir* (The Post-Apollo Press, 2004). Recent critical books include: *Gertrude Stein: Selections* (UC Press, 2008).

Her poem "Not A Cage" (from *Procedural Elegies / Western Civ Cont'd*.) was composed from units of language found, using chance operations, from the beginnings and endings of books she was culling out of her library in the Fall of 1990.

**Robert Creeley** attended Harvard University from 1943 to 1946, taking time out from 1944 to 1945 to work for the American Field Service in Burma and India. In 1946 he published his first poem, in the Harvard magazine *Wake*.

In 1949 he began corresponding with William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. The following year he became acquainted with the poet Charles Olson. In 1954, as rector of Black Mountain College, Olson invited Creeley to join the faculty and to edit the *Black Mountain Review*. In 1960 Creeley received a Master's Degree from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

Through the *Black Mountain Review* and his own critical writings, Creeley helped to define an emerging counter-tradition to the literary establishment—a postwar poetry originating with Pound, Williams, and Zukofsky and expanding through the lives and works of Olson, Robert Duncan, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Edward Dorn, and others.

Robert Creeley published more than sixty books of poetry in the United States and abroad, including *If I Were Writing This* (New Directions, 2003), *Just in Time: Poems 1984–1994* (2001), *Life & Death* (1998), *Echoes* (1994), *Selected Poems 1945–1990* (1991), *Memory Gardens* (1986), *Mirrors* (1983), *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley, 1945–1975* (1982), *Later* (1979), *The Finger* (1968), and *For Love: Poems 1950–1960* (1962).

In a review of *Life & Death*, Forrest Gander writes: "Robert Creeley has forged a signature style in American poetry, an idiosyncratic, highly elliptical, syntactical compression by which the character of his mind's concentrated and stumbling proposals might be expressed ... Reading his poems, we experience the gnash of arriving through feeling at thought and word."