

# Moving through the inex- haustible world

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## Judy Hussie- Taylor

**PLATFORM 2014: *Diary of an Image*** by DD Dorvillier is the eighth iteration of Danspace Project's Platform series launched in 2010. It is the second Platform to devote multiple weeks to choreographic investigations of an individual choreographer. The original concept originated with curator/choreographer Melinda Ring who proposed a Platform modeled on the mid-career survey in the visual arts. The resulting **PLATFORM 2011: *Susan Rethorst Retro(intro)spective***, curated by Ring was, in truth, neither a mid-career survey nor a retrospective. But the prompt was generative and it opened up new possibilities for performance curation offering an innovative format for considering choreographic concepts. And so in 2012, I extended an invitation to DD Dorvillier.

DD has spent years considering the implications of a "retrospective." This Platform is, like Rethorst's, decidedly

not a retrospective. Yet it was a provocation for DD, as it is for many choreographers today who are struggling with legacy and archives. How does a choreographer represent her body of work? How does she return, revisit and reconsider former concerns in light of current interests?

DD's colleagues in New York City and France informed much of the early dialogue around what a dance retrospective or archive might mean. That inquiry resulted in an ever-evolving, intentionally incomplete series of encounters she calls *A catalogue of steps*. These choreographic events are built upon phrases, steps and gestures from her early work. They can be endlessly combined and recombined and are intended to occur in various places on various occasions.

While DD's inquiries form the center of this Platform, a fluid curatorial exchange between the artist and her many collaborators evolved over the course of two years. The most consistent interlocutor in this process has been writer and performance studies scholar Jenn Joy, who co-edited this publication with DD. Because Joy has been immersed in DD's process for more than a decade, she was well positioned to weave together the multiple threads that have informed DD's "choreographic mind" (a term I borrow from Rethorst). DD's influences are myriad but a short list (leaving out the many seminal postmodern dance influences for a moment) include minimalist and post-minimalist painting and sculpture; film history; music composition; social and traditional dance; languages; and "fun and games."

DD is always on the move but never removed. She is likely to jump up in the middle of a three-hour conversation to turn, leap, gesture or move a piece of office furniture. These physical utterances are aspects of her real-time syntax,

not interruptions, but part of her expanded sense of a poetic language spanning movement, objects, ideas, emotions, sounds and language. She is constantly *on the move*, just about to get into a plane, car or train to go *somewhere else*. But she is also driven by intense empathy and attachments to people, things and places.

Her acknowledgement of the influence of her collaborators, friends, and family speaks to her almost utopian sense of community across time and generations. These kinds of complex constellations of artists – moving simultaneously forward and backward in time – also inform our curatorial research at Danspace Project. They raise questions about the inter-related nature of art making and the relations that come into play before, during and after the curatorial and collaborative process. How do choreographers offer us a way of thinking/moving through the world? How is this transmitted between practitioners and collaborators? And what is the curatorial role connecting these invisible transmissions to those outside of a given constellation of practitioners?

The curatorial strategies we have explored at Danspace Project since 2008 include the Platform series, which was conceived as a set of exhibitions that unfold over time. The Platforms are predicated upon relationships between artists, curators, scholars, historians, writers and audiences. I often exercise poetic license by playfully referring to our collaborative curatorial process as “relational curation.” And, while not directly influenced by Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics*, the notion that an artistic endeavor takes into account “the sphere of human interactions and its social context, rather than an autonomous and private symbolic space” resulting in “collective elaboration of meaning” is applicable to the co-authored organizing of the Platform series. An active network of relationships

at the heart of the dance community provides the scaffolding for Danspace Project’s Platform series, which is but one component of Danspace’s Choreographic Center Without Walls, a center for artistic and curatorial research.

Yet perhaps no choreographer, even one for whom collaboration is so central, can escape the fact that in the act of making a dance, she remains curiously and existentially alone. It makes sense then that the dance DD has created to end the Platform, *Diary of an Image* is a solo, *almost*. I say almost as the piece was created in collaboration with Zeena Parkins and Katerina Andreou. I can’t imagine that their presence won’t be seen, felt and heard. But after two Platforms focusing on the work of an individual choreographer, I sense what a strange and vulnerable situation the artist finds herself in during this self-reflexive endeavor.

French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote: “The world is not what I think but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.” DD Dorvillier is an inexhaustible philosopher-choreographer open to and living through the world. While this Platform is not a retrospective, it provides an opportunity to experience vivid fragments of a singular artist’s past and present worlds.

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