

THE  
KENAN  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
ETHICS  
*at* DUKE UNIVERSITY

LABORATORY  
FOR

SOCIAL-  
CHOREOGRAPHY

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN  
HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
AT DUKE UNIVERSITY

DUKE  
DANCE

Duke  
Arts

# LABORATORY FOR SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

AT THE KENAN INSTITUTE OF ETHICS, DUKE UNIVERSITY

## ABOUT LSC

*LSC focusses on the equitable transformation of social structures and the articulation of new modes of governance through aesthetics.*

Founded in 2020, the Laboratory for Social Choreography (director, Michael Kliën) is concerned with experiences and conditions that can overhaul fundamental assumptions about mind, body, society and environment. In doing so, the Laboratory brings together individuals from diverse disciplines and backgrounds to envision human relations that can meaningfully respond to the challenges of our times. LSC focusses on the equitable transformation of social structures and the articulation of new modes of governance through aesthetics. Furthermore, the laboratory is a hub for the research and development of transformative embodied pedagogies and experimentalist social technologies.

The Laboratory for Social Choreography is part of the Kenan Insitute of Ethics at Duke University (NC, USA) and generously supported by the Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University, Duke Arts and Duke Dance.

*'Social Choreography permeates the tightly knit fabric of socialization, for other potential realities to be sensed and experienced, and for new relational fields amongst human and non-human to be forged. The practice of Social Choreography deals with the uncovering of underlying social relations and patterns – the choreography of the social - through embodied practices, and always, engages these dynamics for new social choreographies to emerge simultaneously.'* Michael Kliën

## LSC ENDEVOURS

- To examine the role of corporeal awareness in the determination of ethics, relations and social structures.
- To emancipate embodied knowledge in response to excessive rational, narrow thought-processes in Western society.
- To stretch imagination through embodied experiences of interpersonal, -disciplinary and -institutional relations.
- To envision equitable, sustainable social structures upon an expanded awareness of ecological human and non-human relations.
- To design courses, actions and formats in response to academic and institutional stagnation.
- To glean new visions of community and potential modes of governance.

## ABOUT SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY is a holistic practice originating from the field of dance seeking to unify organizational dynamics as held in the body, politics and social relations.

Choreography has become a wide-ranging metaphor for movement processes that are not necessarily pre-planned in time and space, but describes the myriad relations and forces at play, that shape the way life unfolds. As an expanded practice, it has come to designate the act of 'setting the conditions for things to happen', preparing the psychic and social soil for permanent and ongoing change. Social Choreography is equally rooted in micro- and macropolitics, and traces the interdependent patterns at play between the different scales of interaction. In terms of micropolitics, Social Choreography is concerned with the manifestation of truth on the level of the body, examining the constructed nature of our deepest assumptions and recognizing the embodied reality of our senses, each deeply entwined with, and developed according to, context-specific cultural evolutions. Hence humans across different epochs, cultures and generations move distinctively different in every aspect of everyday life, poignantly expressed in the dances they dance.

*'Geography, economics, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, religion, sociology, an immense body of knowledge of humanistic ideas are embedded in the dance and the dance event. Dance is, in fact, a microcosm of culture.'*  
(Allegra Fuller)

These micro-politics, from which the individual emerges and resides in, extend themselves in reciprocal interaction with others and in turn determine macro-politics, expressed in the institutions of any given society and their underlying ideologies of education, production, family, love, etc. Social Choreography claims that alternative futures cannot simply be imagined, and that such a presumption spells the drama of our age, but that they need to be first felt. To meaningfully respond to the urgent issues of our times, the widely longed-for ecological, anti-racist and hence cultural, revolution needs to be aesthetic in nature and take hold of us on the level of our movement, emotions and senses.

Micro and macro politics are deeply entangled. They recursively affirm and shape each other, hence, distinction between them blur, and remain, in Batesonian terms, arbitrary. Separating micro-relations, as carried within the body, from macro relations as maintained in society, harbors the danger of ignoring the complex nature at play outside of rational models. The results is a reductionist worldview, that engages magical thinking in place of rooted, embodied thought.

## **PROGRAM 2020/21**

LSC generates experiential strategies to overcome entrenched patterns of perception, ideas, assumptions and positions. The laboratory conducts experiments in the emerging field of Social Choreography, organize events, design interdisciplinary courses and publish its outcome in various media (print, online, performance, exhibitions, etc.). LSC probes established realities and worldviews through lived experiences and embodied knowledge.

The crises of 2020 have resulted in a necessary overhaul of the original program, adding virtual engagements and workshops to socially-distanced in-person events.

### **I SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHIC SITUATIONS**

#### **PARLIAMENT**

Due to Covid19 the work Parliament is unlikely to be programmed in 2020/21. However LSC will prepare the national presentation of this work as well as publish a book about Parliament in partnership with the CUNY Segal Centre. Parliament is a pioneering work of situational choreography, that has been situated around the world. It offers participants a critically needed withdrawal from normal modes of social action. A diverse cohort of citizen-performers, working in silence, comes together to hold council amidst the elemental phenomena and fundamental concerns of collectively lived experience. Four Parliaments, each carefully recruited, will be organized by LSC at the Van Der Hyden Theater. Each event will bring together diverse communities from Duke and Durham, providing an unusual and innovative site for 21st-century experimentalist cooperation.

- Depending on the developing situation, potential dates and events tba

#### **AMENDMENT**

A choreographic situation for up to 50 citizens conceived in direct relation to the new social situation of 2020 with full social distancing parameters in place. AMENDMENT, a social choreography that grew out of Kliens seminal work Parliament in response to the urgency of the situation, works on both the now and the next. At the same time, it develops the imagination for what comes after the catastrophe. How to rebuild? What do you rebuild? Going forward AMENDMENT wants to mend, to provide a viable lifeboat into the next.

- Dates and events tba

## II SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHIC SERIES

### SOCIAL DREAMING

Originally discovered by Psychoanalyst Gordon Lawrence at the Tavistock Institute in the 1980s, Social Dreaming has become a widely respected and applied group relational practice. In each Matrix, participants share past nighttime dreams or share associations with those that have been shared. Through a structured process, often-unexpected connections between ideas to emerge. Social Dreaming is thus a way to explore subconscious concerns or ideas that may be more widely shared. Moreover, the practice of Social Dreaming Matrix enables a collective capacity for associative thinking, allowing for new thought to emerge.

LSC is particularly interested to develop Social Dreaming as a critical tool to address contemporary societal issues, and envision alternative social structures and relations.

#### ACTIVITIES

- two series of ten publically accessible Social Dreaming sessions in partnership with the Center for Social Dreaming (London) in summer and fall of 2020
- two series of Social Dreaming sessions for underrepresented communities in 2021. All sessions will be conducted virtually on Zoom and upon invitation only
- a series of complementary workshops and lectures aimed at deepening the knowledge of Social Dreaming. All sessions will be open to Duke students, faculty, staff as well as participants in the Social Dreaming Matrix

All activities are co-presented and co-facilitated by the Centre for Social Dreaming, London.

### PERSONAL COSMOLOGIES

This pioneering conversational framework is designed to advance mutual understanding and new thinking by altering expectations of what information is to be shared and how. Personal Cosmologies yield intriguing results for guests and audiences alike. Open to the general public, each dialogue will be recorded, transcribed and published online

#### ACTIVITIES

- LSC presents a series of four public dialogues with esteemed professors from various fields at Duke University during Spring 2021. All sessions will be conducted virtually on Zoom.

LABORATORY FOR SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

### **III WORKSHOPS**

- Social Dreaming facilitation sessions in partnership with the Centre for Social Dreaming in London; free and open to Duke graduate students and faculty. Sessions will be conducted virtually on Zoom.
- Parliament/Amendment facilitation workshops for Duke and international graduate students. All sessions will be held in person at Duke East Campus (TBA).

### **IV PUBLICATIONS**

- seeding the first comprehensive Wikipedia page on Social Choreography drawing from various national and international contributors.
- All core-events will be documented and published on the LSC's website.
- publications of a small book on the work Parliament, commissioned by the Segal Theater Center at CUNY

### **V KENAN MFA IN DANCE FELLOWSHIP IN SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY**

Kenan Institute of Ethics awards a second-year Fellowship to one MFA student whose proposed social choreographic work aligns with, and extends, the mission of Kenan Institute of Ethics and LSC.

**LABORATORY FOR SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY  
KENAN INSTITUTE FOR ETHICS  
DUKE UNIVERSITY  
DURHAM, NC  
USA**