

SEDIMENTS OF AN ORDINARY MIND

DANCE WORK
BY MICHAEL KLIËN
2004—



michael cliën

**SEDIMENTS OF AN ORDINARY MIND
DANCE WORK**

Choreography: Michael Kliën

Composition: Volkmar Klien

Dramaturgy: Steve Valk

A work for 4-8 dancers

For Stage/Gallery/Alternative Spaces

Rehearsal Period: 3-5 weeks

Duration: Minimum 60 minutes

Originally produced by Daghdha Dance Company with the support of the Arts Council, 2005

Re-commissioned by Weld Dance Company, 2013

Video Documentation:

www.vimeo.com/klien/sediments (version 2005)

www.vimeo.com/83308016 (version 2013)

<http://vimeo.com/81095651> (interview, version 2013)

*'Where you've nothing else...
construct ceremonies out of the air...
and breathe upon them...'* **MC CORMAC**

PROJECT DISCRIPTION

A thought is a physical act. With *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind*, choreographer Michael Kliën has devised a range of procedures aimed at guiding dancers to embody their personal streams of consciousness in real-time, on stage. In this seminal work he has created an artefact that actively and purposefully channels the existing personal and social setup of four dancers into a dance of minds, the work can be construed as an enigma of human idiosyncrasies bearing extra-ordinary traces of the ordinary.

Sediment's distinct choreographic and performative language is a result of Kliën's ongoing quest for new forms of choreographic expression. In a setting that is as real as it is fake, the work actively utilizes the underlying dynamics of the human condition: learning, faith, love, trust, hate, remembering and forgetting, trial and error... a permanent work-in-process continuously in search of the social glue.

"The piece is like watching a Jackson Pollock painting unfold" **DANCE EUROPE**

TEXT BY MICHAEL KLIËN COMMISSIONED BY WELD, 2013

In a deeply interconnect world, knowledge has to be first and foremost grounded in, and raised from within, embodied knowledge, the naïve realism of the senses: to integrate our most abstract concepts into our own physical existence and redefine collective assumptions by moving right through them; to disclose a sense of being to the world and simultaneously align ourselves with mental health. Dance and dancing becomes a singularity. It is a truly dedicated practice, the dancer holding the rare technology to eradicate the artificial ground of rational assumption and place the feet right upon her ancestors. To align the world anew. To give the world a new name. TYRONE O'ROS

What happened: It was. People doing things, moving around, not able to find solace, moving. Neither in a particularly coherent manner, nor in an overly interesting manner, curiously unable to formulate...working out things without ever succeeding. Finding momentary peace in an embrace and on the ground, as fear and the quest for living takes her off the ground once over. A social mud ensues. Many people moving in myriad pathways, endless trails and traces entwining. Sediments are falling in the mind: hands held. The prophet entering Jerusalem. On her toes. Sleeping furiously. A total loss of coherence and into other worlds.

The prophet, the hands, the uttering, the ground, the rising conjure to mute the hovering mind. Sinking into being-with. Gravity, souls, earth, thirst, wonder. There is nothing else but us. How noble. What beautiful life. To nurture and commune. To huddle against the sleet and snow.

Dear Steve,

At airport with 8 hours delay. Yesterday was weird. I got rather low afterwards...It just wasn't 'masterly' as my own skewed expectations might have hoped for, still I was taken back by the emerging aesthetics of it all - limited by how humans seem pre-determined to move. Then I couldn't sleep all night and the darkest, most profound dreams crept in - strong stuff. The manner of structuring, how things unfold, 'does' something to one's perception and thought. There was a philosopher who said he couldn't stop working on his thesis whilst watching, and a biochemist who couldn't stop figuring things out that had nothing to do with what he was seeing. It was only the dance-programmers - the programmers of dance (as it was part of a festival there were quite a few of them), whose gaze brutalised the moment, and maybe it was that, which was unsettling: the work seemed incommensurable with their reality, probably trapped in amateurish, random, moving about...I felt devalued by their presence. There was good feedback and generally I note, that however great it is to work in small circles, for this work to truly radiate one has to put the nothing on the altar of everything - meticulously presented and protected...anyways, these are only the first thoughts.

There I sat, almost a month after working on Sediments of an Ordinary Mind, looking at a distinctively large Rubens painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. This work had little in common with Sediments. I neither reminded me of the process with Weld company nor of any resulting manifestations. Sediments, Stockholm, Weld didn't come to the fore whilst gazing at an enormous depiction of some holy miracle. What I was much rather examining that very moment was the potential of turning its massive wooden frame into a life-raft. Could it be done? Is enough wood available, how many people could it carry, how far, under what weather conditions? Despite my father-in-law having been a naval architect I know nothing about boats and equally little about woodwork. I know more about painting. Yet, could I remove this frame and build a raft? What would I do with the painting? Can it be stored, displayed without its frame? Would I still care? Do I even acknowledge the painting's value in my shipbuilding scheme or have we simply passed the point in which to afford the luxury of tradition in the face of brewing storms?

Back in Athens, reflecting upon Sediments as proclaimed by Weld Company, the raft of Medusa came to mind, the infamous story of ship-wrecked survivors, immortalized by the Romantic French painter Théodore Géricault. The Meduse struck rocks off the coast of Africa due to the captain's incompetence and of the 150 or so who set off on a makeshift raft only 15 survived under the most treacherous conditions. Sediments has always been a choreography in itself. It is what it is talking about, a work-in-movement destined to change, adapt, melt, solidify and dance over time. It's a choreographic structure that has learning processes embedded at its core. The choreographer no longer dictates, proposes or demonstrates movement to dancers who inhabit the work; all movement material, positions, transitions, timings as well as interpersonal relations are grown out of a permanent discourse of the dancer with herself, negotiated in exchange with others and their specific environ (i.e. audience). When, ten years after its premiere in Ireland (the work was originally choreographed for Daghdha Dance Company in Limerick), Anna asked me to create a work for Weld, I wondered how Sediments would manifest nowadays, at Weld, with Weld, in Stockholm. Choreography, in this vein, has been utilised as a cradle of relations, a cluster of ideas that orders or supports the organization of human movement. Any work created in this particular paradigm will unfold differently with each performance as I, the dancers and the wider cultural, social and political context will have undeniably changed from one expression to the next. What will take hold this time? A work in dance like Sediments can't be constituted as 'a piece'.

....no dance in pieces...

Who ever told us that dance comes in pieces? What happened along the way and when did we succumb? All broken now, starting at 8pm and specifically, and most perversely, not dancing as we have originally experienced it. Dance in Pieces is a packaged, stylized representation of what dance once felt like. Simulated spiritual disclosures, precisely measured pretend ecstasy. With philosopher Badiou in mind, I no longer want to think in pieces. Proposition: The Unbroken Dance (From: Propositions: To Dance Differently)

Dance can be a showing of bodies in naked thought. And then there was my own father who extended himself in my mind. Where does he end? Where does he start? Whilst working on Sediments he entered the last stage of Parkinson's, me in Stockholm, he in Vienna, confused and silent. Such circumstance must resonate into my work. What artwork would not allow for life's fundamentals to take hold of the situation? It is meant to have a role in the process of living. In the opening days of rehearsals I would dance and revelations came flooding in. The interconnectedness of it all; deep waves of evolutionary thought we are bound into. Vast. Moving relentlessly: ancestry, paternity, love was closer to the surface. These waves kept crashing against the senses, they moved me. It made me dance differently, understand the work differently and resulted in an adapted choreographic structure with a new process entitled Jerusalem. In fact, my father, Medusa, the frame of Rubens are all held, sustained by Sediments, neither through me nor through the individual dancer, but by the shared dream we inhabit and which, close to its skin, we call reality. And then the six dancers built a raft to immerse themselves in the relentless void, the not knowing; one's physical situatedness as the navel of all dreams, being moved by everything but oneself, and relentlessly negotiating personal freedom, for whatever that might mean. The raft, the storm, the group and the interconnectedness of all humans. Sediments as a collective effort of digging into the fabric of life, to uncover, to understand, to adjust. Shall the performer fail to unfold these revelations, the entire audience somewhat fails, and in this manner this work binds everyone, the witnessing collective with the ones that dance.

In 2004 I distinctively remember Sediments to be 'a start'; an exhilarating expedition into the unknown, surpassing dance-technique to reach places where codes of interpersonal relations no longer work. A quest into how things are held together, what generates movement and change, how life and communication emerges in life's matrix, examining the governance of the movement-of-others and how this social mess might resolves into something? It was research with scientific inclination...to dissect, to test, to build. A journey that, beyond the performances that took place, has silently and invisibly persisted throughout the last decade - women and men looking into the storm, for self-preservation, survival, bare skin, nothingness, the void. Ten years later, Stockholm, and this expedition – now different men and women - has encountered the void: dance developed oddly unburdened by codes, structures and language, and now provided tentacles into other realities. This raw physical matrix, the place for not knowing, was at once unintelligible and engaging. What emerged did not correspond to what we previously knew, no sanity was found. It does make no sense. It does not give meaning: a thorough loss of coherence and a crucial response to the contemporary practice of humanity: quietly crashing out of unsustainable visions of ourselves, into other worlds.

From a confident expedition that started in Limerick, Ireland to a dilapidated life raft lost at sea in Stockholm. Sediments took a journey in which something shipwrecked, something died, something survived. That's how this work moved between its own manifestations. Over years it progresses as a dream beneath the breath of consciousness. And by connecting to this dream, these clusters of concerns, the

work continuously teaches me to think. It connects Rubens paintings, and if only their frames, to urgency, my father to myself and ancestry, and recursively to future governments and health. This might constitute a crucial function of choreographic work: to propose, experience, test and rehearse thinking that, in its manner of operation, is closer to the thought that thought oneself up.

do not have ideas
do not be creative
do not judge
do not resolve
become your own forgetting
radically un-ashamed and of unspoken confidence.
sediment
Jerusalem

BIOGRAPHY

MICHAEL KLIËN (*1973, AUSTRIA)

Michael Kliën is an acclaimed choreographer, curator and producer of numerous touring productions, installations and events. In 1994 he co-founded the performance collective Barriedale Operahouse (in operation till 2000) and worked as a choreographer for Ballett Frankfurt, Volksoper Wien etc. From 2003 to 2011 he was Artistic Director/CEO of Daghdha Dance Company, one of Ireland's premiere dance organisations. His artistic practice encompasses interdisciplinary thinking, critical writing, curatorial projects, and centrally, choreographic works equally at home in the Performing as well as the Fine Arts. Michael Kliën's choreographies are predominantly dance-based works of art, situated in galleries, museums or on stages. Increasingly, visual art works form part of his choreographic output; yet, other creations may act directly upon the social sphere (Social Choreography). His choreographies for dance are marked by a distinctive improvisation methodology and the subsequent movement aesthetic. Amongst a considerable body of work, Michael Kliën's seminal choreographies include *Einem* for Ballett Frankfurt, *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind* and *Sense and Meaning* for Daghdha Dance Company (Limerick) as well as *Choreography for Blackboards* for Daghdha Dance Company and Hayward Gallery (London) and *Slattery's Lamp* of IMMA's (Irish Museum of Modern Art) permanent collection. www.michaelklien.com

STEVE VALK (*1962, USA)

Contemporary dance dramaturge, visual artist and designer, lecturer and leading figure in the emerging field of Social Choreography. Influenced by his experiences as Personal Assistant of theatre director Robert Wilson (1988–90) he joined Ballett Frankfurt as Head Dramaturge and creative collaborator for William Forsythe (1992–2004). From 1998 to 2004, this dramaturgical practice and a subsequent focus on trans-disciplinary networking strategies lead to the development of a new participatory/situational epistemology for the institution of contemporary dance. From 2004 to 2011, Steve Valk, in partnership with choreographer and Artistic Director Michael Kliën, became Head Dramaturge and artistic collaborator of Ireland's Daghdha Dance Company. In 2007 founder of the international dramaturgical and social choreographic design agency r.i.c.e. Since 2012 he has been Director of the newly founded Institute of Social Choreography in Frankfurt, where he currently lives.

VOLKMAR KLIEN (*1971, AUSTRIA)

Volkmar Klien today strives to extend traditional practices of composing, producing and listening far beyond the established settings of concert music. He works in various areas of the audible and occasionally inaudible arts navigating the manifold links in-between the different modes of human perception, the spheres of presentation and the roles these play in the communal generation of meaning. His works have been widely recognized, exhibited, performed and presented. He has received commissions from institutions truly varied in nature. For Volksoper Wien (Vienna) he composed music to a full evening ballet, the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media & Performing Arts Center (Empac, Troy, New York) invited him to produce multi-channel electronic sound works and for Transito MX (Mexico City) he produced a mixed media installation acoustically surveying landscapes. In his installation *Aural Codes*, funded by the Arts Council England, he turned the radio sphere over London into his exhibition space inviting residents to tune in and also interact. Throughout his career he has collaborated with his choreographer brother Michael Kliën on numerous performative projects exploring relationships between sound, bodily movement and human communication. Works stemming from this ongoing collaboration have been produced and presented at ZKM Karlsruhe, Ballett Frankfurt, the Hayward Gallery London, and—most recently—by the PS122 (New York). Volkmar Klien's work has been awarded numerous prizes and awards, amongst these an honorary mention at the Prix Ars Electronica, the State Scholarship for Composition of the Republic of Austria, the Max Brand Prize for Electronic Music, the Scholarship of the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra and the Gustav Mahler Prize for Composition. www.volkmarklien.com

