

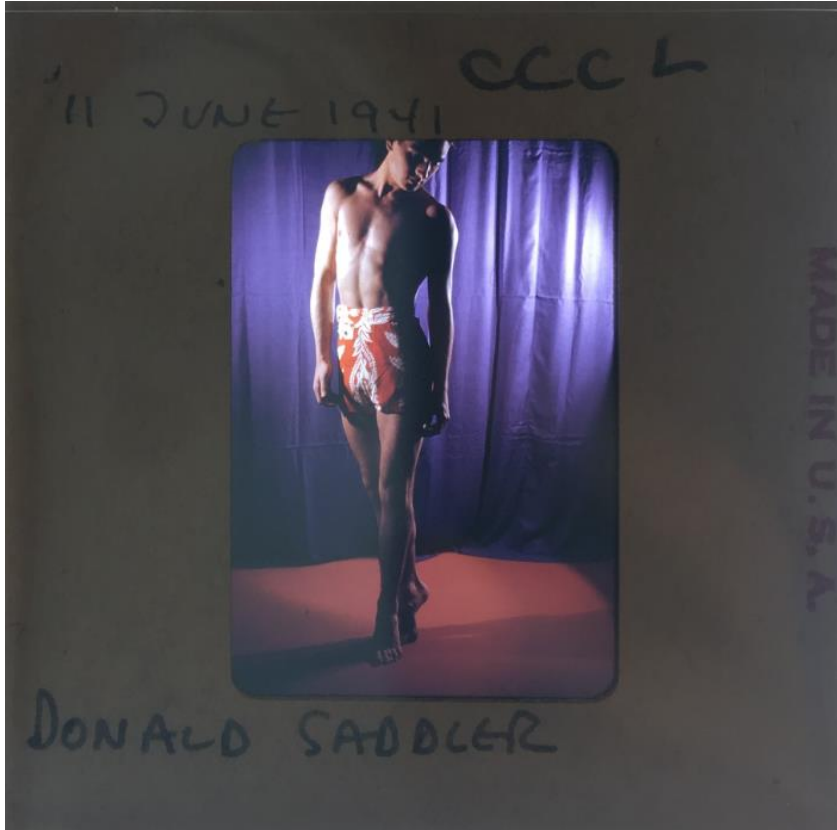
WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE



Carl Van Vechten slides, photographed by Nick Mauss. Courtesy The Carl Van Vechten Trust and The Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

NICK MAUSS: TRANSMISSIONS TO OPEN AT THE WHITNEY ON MARCH 16

NEW YORK, February 15, 2018 – For his first solo museum show in the United States, artist Nick Mauss (b. 1980) will present *Transmissions*, an exhibition conceived for the Whitney, which explores the reciprocal relationship of modernist ballet and the avant-garde in New York from the 1930s through '50s. The exhibition – which features daily dance performances in the Whitney's eighth-floor Hurst Family Galleries – goes on view March 16.

Scott Rothkopf, Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, remarked, "Since moving downtown, the Whitney has increasingly pursued experimental exhibition formats and innovative ways of engaging with artists, providing them opportunities to expand their work. For this project, Mauss merged the roles of scholar, curator, writer, designer, and even – with the collaboration of sixteen dancers – choreographer to devise a show that is itself a new artwork of his own."

Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography, noted, "*Transmissions* is an artist's vision that synchronizes the work of dancers, visual artists, and choreographers in a precisely realized performative space. Mauss has assembled a broad range of material and recovered forgotten social contexts through a unique blend of objects and live events."

Mauss's exhibition conjures a revisionist portrait of New York and its creative communities, through an interwoven presentation of paintings, photographs, sketches, sculptures, costumes, danced gestures, anecdotes, and films, including many works from the Whitney's own collection. As a 2016 Resident Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, Mauss honed in on an early moment of synergy between art and dance in New York's history that saw the introduction of ballet to a popular audience in America, and was inflected by transatlantic developments in modern dance, painting, photography, fashion, music, and poetry. The exhibition features works by George Platt Lynes, Pavel Tchelitchew, Paul Cadmus, Dorothea Tanning, Elie Nadelman, and Carl Van Vechten, among others. Some of these objects depict protagonists closely associated with the interdisciplinary and socially entwined worlds of ballet and art, including Ruth Page, George Balanchine, and Lincoln Kirstein, while also bringing attention to well- and lesser-known dancers such as Alicia Markova, Janet Collins, Diana Adams, Hernan Baldrich, and Hugh Laing, to name only a few. Mauss will stage all of these materials in a precisely designed installation, alongside works of his own as well as wall texts he authored that shed light on these figures and their conjoined histories.

Mauss's approach to constructing the exhibition departs from traditional methods of research and curating, emphasizing the importance of memory and chains of interpersonal association, which are also crucial to the passing down of ballet as a learned practice and as an art form. He began his process by looking at the collection of the Whitney Museum, and then sifted through thousands of photographs and slides at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library and the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (both lenders to the exhibition), arriving at an essayistic exhibition that argues for the inseparability of dance from art history. In the words of the expatriate American painter Gerald Murphy, "The ballet was the focal center of the whole modern movement in the arts."

Mauss sees this history as a rich site of cross-media production and influence, very much in keeping with his own artistic practice, which insists on the need to emphasize histories that fall outside of dominant narratives. He has written: "Through a web of genealogies I eventually arrived at the flamboyant intersection of ballet and art in New York in the 1930s and '40s. There the avant-garde experiments of the previous decades in Europe incited a particularly intense cross-contamination, and an overt articulation of homosexual erotics long before the emergence of a public language around queerness. Looking at modern American art of this period through the prism of ballet reveals a tangle of interrelationships, collaborations, derivations, and hybrid aesthetic programs that feel surprisingly contemporary."

Central to the exhibition is a daily performance by four dancers in the Museum's eighth-floor Hurst Family Galleries. Mauss cast a group of dancers with divergent relationships to ballet and collaborated with them to create a new work as an interpretative reaction to the artworks and archival materials in the exhibition. The dancers' movements incorporate quotidian gestures and procedures from a dancer's daily practice as well as a choreographed sequence, creating an arc of performance that invokes ballet as it comes into tension with modern and contemporary techniques.

Performance Schedule

Performances will take place daily, 12–4 pm, and additionally on Friday evenings, 6–10 pm.

About the Artist

Over the past ten years, Nick Mauss has explored historical and contemporary material in precisely staged exhibitions that disrupt conventional narratives and categorization. In the 2012 Whitney Biennial, Mauss created an environment, transposed from his memory of Christian Bérard's décor for L'Institut Guerlain in Paris, which became the backdrop for an installation of works from the Whitney's permanent collection. In 2014, as part of Frieze Projects, Mauss exploded an art fair booth into a multi-tiered stage on which ballet dancers, musicians, and artists performed and rehearsed continuously among spectators for five days. From 2014–16, Mauss conceived an elaborately detailed mise-en-scène that drew on historical textiles, drawings,

maquettes, and texts for an exhibition of costumes and drawings by the celebrated costume designer Léon Bakst at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco. And in 2017, Mauss exhibited his own sculptures, paintings, and drawings in an empty Art Deco villa at the Fundação Serralves, in Porto, Portugal, choreographing the viewer's passage through historical domestic interiors. Mauss has written for various publications and catalogues on the work of Jochen Klein, Lorraine O'Grady, Madame Grès, Florine Stettheimer, Susan Cianciolo, Hanne Darboven, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, and Ian White. He was a guest professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg, from 2011–12, was a 2016 Resident Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, and is on the faculty of the MFA program at Bard College. Mauss received his BFA from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, and lives and works in New York.

Curatorial Credit

This exhibition is organized by Scott Rothkopf, Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, and Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography, with Greta Hartenstein, senior curatorial assistant, and Allie Tepper, curatorial project assistant.

Dancers

Alexandra Albrecht
Kristina Bermudez
Maggie Cloud
Brandon Collwes
Ahmaud Culver
Jasmine Hearn
Elizabeth Hepp
Forrest Hersey
Alexandra Jacob
Burr Johnson
Maki Kitahara
Evelyn Kocak
Benedict Nguyen
Matilda Sakamoto
Quenton Stuckey
Anna Witenberg

Exhibition Support

Generous support is provided by Deutsche Bank and the Performance Committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In-kind support is provided by The Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University.

Performance at the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art has a uniquely rich history of presenting performance within its programming and exhibitions. A spirit of patronage and inclusion can be traced to the Museum's roots as it sought to serve as a collaborator, incubator, and supporter of the work of contemporary artists in diverse disciplines. From presentations in the 1920s and '30s of music by Edgard Varèse and Carlos Salzedo, who also in turn programmed Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg, to the 1960s and '70s with landmark performances by John Cage, Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Laurie Anderson, and continuing to this day, the Whitney has welcomed artists at the forefront of their disciplines and built a program that crosses the boundary between visual and performing arts.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined	October 20, 2017–February 25, 2018
Experiments in Electrostatics: Photocopy Art from the Whitney's Collection, 1966–1986	November 17, 2017–March 25, 2018
Juan Antonio Olivares: Moléculas	March 2, 2018–June 10, 2018
Zoe Leonard: Survey	March 2, 2018–June 10, 2018
Grant Wood: American Gothic and Other Fables	March 2, 2018–June 10, 2018
Between the Waters	Opens March 9, 2018
Nick Mauss	March 16 – May 2018
Mary Corse	Opens June 2018
Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Building the Indigenous Present	Opens July 2018
David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night	Opens July 13, 2018
Kevin Beasley	Opens Fall 2018
Andy Warhol	Opens November 2018
An Incomplete History of Protest:	Ongoing
Selections from the Whitney's Collection, 1940–2017	Ongoing
Where We Are: Selections from the Whitney's Collection 1900–1960	Ongoing
Christine Sun Kim: Too Much Future	Ongoing

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday. Adults: \$25. Full-time students and visitors 65 & over: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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