

PRESS KIT

William Forsythe donates his archive to the ZKM | Karlsruhe

February 03, 2023

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Founders of the ZKM



Baden-Württemberg

MINISTERIUM FÜR WISSENSCHAFT, FORSCHUNG UND KUNST

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THE PERFORMATIVE
ARCHIVE
WILLIAM FORSYTHE
UND PETER WEIBEL
IM GESPRÄCH
3. FEBRUAR, 18 UHR
ZKM MEDIENTHEATER



//////|<||| zkm karlsruhe

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PRESS RELEASE

William Forsythe donates his archive to the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe

For over 50 years, William Forsythe has influenced the perception of choreographic practice through his visionary concepts and productions. The award-winning U.S. choreographer is now transferring his extensive archive to the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, which will ensure the long-term preservation of the audiovisual media and documents and make them accessible to the public.

William Forsythe (*1949, New York) has been active in the field of choreography for over 50 years. His work is acknowledged for reorienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire to a dynamic 21st century art form. Forsythe's deep interest in the fundamental principles of organization of choreography has led him to produce a wide range of projects including installations, films, and web-based knowledge creation.

The ZKM | Karlsruhe's and William Forsythe's work is linked by their interdisciplinary experimental practice that encompasses all artistic formats. Thus, the CD-ROM »William Forsythe: Improvisation Technologies. A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye« developed by William Forsythe with the ZKM | Karlsruhe in 1999 was groundbreaking for its exploration and transmission of choreographic concepts via digital media. The transfer of William Forsythe's archive to the ZKM builds on these joint artistic collaborations and opens the way forward to a new long-term perspective for scholarly and arts-based research.

The holdings of the archive cover William Forsythe's creative period since the 1970s in its entirety: from his time at the Stuttgart Ballet beginning in 1976, at the Ballet Frankfurt (1984–2004), and The Forsythe Company (2005–2015) to the present. It contains an extensive collection of archival video recordings of rehearsals, performances and installations, as well as programs, posters, reviews, photographs, publications, correspondence, awards, and other documents. In the long term, William Forsythe's personal production notes will also be added to the archive.

By handing over the archive to the ZKM and making it available to the public and researchers, there is now the opportunity to explore

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Forsythe's revolutionary collective collaborations rendering it useful for future artistic research.

The long-term preservation of the valuable video holdings of the William Forsythe Archive is ensured by the ZKM's proven expertise in the field of audiovisual media as well as by the acclaimed work of the ZKM's Laboratory for Antiquated Video Systems.

William Forsythe:

"My artistic relationship with ZKM goes back a considerable way, but now this relationship will go an even greater distance, into the future.

ZKM had been the incubator for one of the most important projects of my career »Improvisation Technologies«, and my trust and respect for my collaborators at the institution was cemented by the enduring outcome of their skilled efforts. The team of deeply engaged experts in the ZKM Archive is a continuation of this legacy of professional excellence, and an indicator for truly sound and also novel outcomes for archival practices."

Peter Weibel, artistic and scientific director of the ZKM:

"The presence of William Forsythe's audiovisual archive reinforces the ZKM as a center of the performative turn. In the second half of the 20th century, art expanded into reality and the media, which opened up new fields of action. Forsythe is a grand master of these intermedia fields. His archive is a gift, not only for the ZKM, but above all for the artists of the 21st century."

The William Forsythe Archive enriches the research environment of the ZKM | Archive, which, with its select preliminary and posthumous bequests of artists and theoreticians, is an instrument both to gain new insights and to deepen knowledge of the intermedia arts of the 20th and 21st centuries. With its wealth of scholarly and artistic resources, the archive of William Forsythe — with its documents and large collection of video recordings — is an ideal complement to this research environment.

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ABOUT WILLIAM FORSYTHE

William Forsythe

William Forsythe (*1949, New York) has been active in the field of choreography for over 50 years. His work is acknowledged for reorienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire to a dynamic 21st century art form. Forsythe's deep interest in the fundamental principles of organization of choreography has led him to produce a wide range of projects including installations, films, and web-based knowledge creation.

Biography

Raised in New York and initially trained in Florida with Nolan Dingman and Christa Long, Forsythe danced with the Joffrey Ballet and later the Stuttgart Ballet, where he was appointed Resident Choreographer in 1976. Over the next seven years, he created new works for the Stuttgart ensemble and ballet companies in Munich, The Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as director of the Ballet Frankfurt, where he created works such as »Artifact« (1984), »Impressing the Czar« (1988), »Limb's Theorem« (1990), »The Loss of Small Detail« (1991), »A L I E / N A(C)TION« (1992), »Eidos:Telos« (1995), »Endless House« (1999), »Kammer/Kammer« (2000), and »Decreation« (2003).

After the closure of the Ballet Frankfurt in 2004, Forsythe established a new ensemble, The Forsythe Company, which he directed from 2005 to 2015. Works produced with this ensemble include »Three Atmospheric Studies« (2005), »You made me a monster« (2005), »Human Writes« (2005), »Heterotopia« (2006), »The Defenders« (2007), »Yes we can't« (2008/2010), »I don't believe in outer space« (2008) and »Sider« (2011). Forsythe's works developed during this time were performed exclusively by The Forsythe Company, while his earlier pieces are prominently featured in the repertoire of virtually every major ballet company in the world, including the Mariinsky Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Semperoper Ballet Dresden, England's Royal Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet.

More recently Forsythe has created original works for the Paris Opera Ballet (»Blake Works I«, 2016), English National Ballet (»Playlist (Track

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1,2)«, 2018), Boston Ballet («Playlist (EP)«, 2019), as well as »A Quiet Evening of Dance« (2018) produced by Sadler's Wells Theatre (London) and »The Barre Project (Blake Works II)« created in 2020 for the digital stage.

Awards received by Forsythe and his ensembles include the New York Dance and Performance Bessie Award (1988, 1998, 2004, 2007) and London's Laurence Olivier Award (1992, 1999, 2009). Forsythe has been conveyed the title of Commandeur des Arts et Lettres (1999) by the government of France and has received the Hessischer Kulturpreis/ Hessian Culture Award (1995), the German Distinguished Service Cross (1997), the Wexner Prize (2002) the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale (2010), the Samuel H Scripps / American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement (2012) and the German Theater Award FAUST for Lifetime Achievement (2020).

Forsythe has been commissioned to produce architectural and performance installations by architect-artist Daniel Libeskind (Groningen, 1989), ARTANGEL (London, 1997), Creative Time (New York, 2005), and the SKD – Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (2013, 2014). These Choreographic Objects, as Forsythe calls his installations, include among others »White Bouncy Castle« (1997), »City of Abstracts« (2000), »Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time No. 2« (2013), »Black Flags« (2014), »Underall« (2017) and »Unsustainables« (2019). His installation and film works have been presented in numerous museums and exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial (New York, 1997), Louvre Museum (2006), Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich (2006), Tate Modern (London, 2009), MoMA (New York 2010), Venice Biennale (2005, 2009, 2012, 2014), MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst (Frankfurt, 2015), 20th Biennale of Sydney (2016), ICA Boston (2011, 2018), Museum Folkwang (2019), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2020) and Kunsthaus Zürich 2021.

In collaboration with media specialists and educators, Forsythe has developed new approaches to dance documentation, research, and education. His 1994 computer application »Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye«, developed with the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, is used as a teaching tool by professional companies, dance conservatories, universities, postgraduate architecture programs, and secondary schools worldwide. 2009 marked the launch of Synchronous Objects for »One Flat Thing«, reproduced, a digital online score developed with The Ohio State University that reveals the organizational principles of the

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choreography and demonstrates their possible application within other disciplines. Synchronous Objects was the pilot project for Forsythe's Motion Bank, a research platform focused on the creation and research of online digital scores in collaboration with guest choreographers.

In 2002, Forsythe was chosen as the founding Dance Mentor for The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Forsythe is an Honorary Fellow at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and holds an Honorary Doctorate from The Juilliard School in New York.

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THE ZKM ARCHIVES

The ZKM's collection and archives are unique in their specific focus on 20th- and 21st-century media art. In order to meet the challenges associated with the preservation, scholarly cataloging, and mediation of these works and archival materials, the department of science brings together various areas and expertise: collection, archives, library, the restoration of electronic and digital art, and the Laboratory for Antiquated Video Systems.

Thus, the archive now preserves over 150 archival holdings by artists and theorists. Some of these are purely audiovisual archives (with a total of approximately 27,000 videotapes, approx. 400 films, and approx. 5,300 sound recordings) as well as complete preliminary and posthumous archives with documents of all kinds, including entire work libraries (with a running length of approx. 500 meters).

As a media art archive, the ZKM not only offers scientists, curators, and artists access to essential sources of art historical research and mediation but also provides restorers with access to crucial information for preserving 20th- and 21st-century art.

The William Forsythe Archive at the ZKM contains approximately 4,000 videotapes and data carriers. These audiovisual documentations and records are supplemented by about 40 linear meters of documents, including correspondence, notes, ephemera, and publications, as well as photographic documentation. The core archival tasks of cataloging, indexing, preservation, and accessibility are carried out in close cooperation between the archive, the library, and the Laboratory for Antiquated Video Systems.

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Archive project: William Forsythe: Improvisation Technologies. A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye (1999) – Website

The first project of the William Forsythe Archive at ZKM is the republication of the contents of the CD-ROM »William Forsythe: Improvisation Technologies. A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye« (1999) in the form of a website.

The CD-ROM »William Forsythe: Improvisation Technologies. A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye« – developed in 1999 by William Forsythe and the ZKM and published together with the German Dance Archive Cologne – shows the most important principles of his improvisation work and provides unique access to the cosmos of this choreographer. »Improvisation Technologies« was originally conceived as a professional training tool for the dancers of Ballet Frankfurt. Forsythe demonstrates and comments on the essential principles of his movement language in videos in which animated white lines and other effects trace the movement sequences and figures. He addresses perception, body organization, and memory in the process of improvising. The videos teach “...the basics of observing movement because here movements leave visible traces in space.” (William Forsythe)

The combination of contemporary dance and digital visualization makes it possible to observe and understand dance in a completely new way. Dancers can analyze dance as writing and thus understand improvisational principles. Likewise, the CD-ROM was understood as exemplary of a “cultural archaeology” (William Forsythe), as a procedure for preserving dance and choreography in the form of a digital archive. The CD-ROM has been used for over 20 years in professional companies, dance colleges, universities, and schools worldwide for training and teaching.

Since the CD-ROM, now published in its third edition, can no longer be played on current computers, William Forsythe and the ZKM | Karlsruhe decided in 2022 to make the main contents of the CD-ROM available anew in a technically updated version in the form of a website, long-term, worldwide and free of charge.

The project, which began in January 2023, is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media in the NEUSTART KULTUR program, tanz:digital aid program of the umbrella organization Tanz Deutschland, and will be presented at the ZKM.

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The historical CD-ROM »William Forsythe: Improvisation Technologies« was created with the collaboration of Nik Haffner, Volker Kuchelmeister (ZKM), Yvonne Mohr (ZKM), Astrid Sommer (ZKM) and Chris Ziegler (ZKM).

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**William Forsythe: Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time, No.2
June 30 to August 06, 2023 at the ZKM | Karlsruhe**

As part of the publication of »Improvisation Technologies - A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye« as a freely accessible website, the ZKM is showing the installation »Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time, No.2« by William Forsythe from June 30 to August 6, 2023.

»William Forsythe, Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time, No.2«, 2013
(plumb line, line, air cylinder, aluminum frame)

Producer: Julian Gabriel Richter

Technical conception and realization: Max Schubert

Construction: Christian Schubert

Programming: Sven Thöne

The installation preserves and privileges two central interests in Forsythe's oeuvre: counterpoint and the unconscious choreographic competence induced by choreographic situations. Suspended from automated grids, hundreds of pendulums are activated to initiate a sweeping 11-part counterpoint of tempi, spacial juxtaposition and gradients of centrifugal force which offers the spectator a constantly morphing labyrinth of significant complexity. The spectators are free to attempt a navigation this statistically unpredictable environment, but are requested to avoid coming in contact with any of the swinging pendulums. This task, which automatically initiates and alerts the spectators innate predictive faculties, produces a lively choreography of manifold and intricate avoidance strategies.

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The ZKM | Center for Art and Media

The ZKM | Center for Art and Media is a cultural institution that is unique in the world. With its art collection, publications, archives, and artistic, scholarly and scientific research on the electronic arts, the ZKM stands for a program of interdisciplinary projects and international collaborations. In its exhibitions, symposia, concerts, and workshops, the ZKM communicates the theoretical discourses of philosophy, science, technology, politics, and economics from a contemporary artistic perspective.

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Monday & Tuesday	closed

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