

UMassAmherst

Fine Arts Center

Bodies at Risk: Emily Johnson and Alice Sheppard

Thursday, March 18, 7 p.m. ET

Creative Conversation and Q & A



The *Bodies at Risk* series is sponsored by Daily Hampshire Gazette and New England Public Media.



UMass Amherst occupies the traditional land of the Nonotuck tribe. We recognize our neighboring Indigenous nations: the Nipmuc and the Wampanoag to the East, the Mohegan and Pequot to the South, the Mohican to the West, and the Abenaki to the North. We further acknowledge through language courtesy of Groundwater Arts, that YouTube, the platform used for this event, is headquartered in what is now called San Bruno, CA on the traditional lands of the Ohlone, Muwekma, and Ramaytush peoples. We acknowledge the lands YouTube resides on as the digital platform does not exist in an ether or an imaginary void, but is made possible because of physical land and the Indigenous people who steward it.



The UMass Fine Arts Center is supported by the New England Foundation for the Arts through the New England Arts Resilience Fund, part of the United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund, an initiative of the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with major funding from the federal CARES Act from the National Endowment for the Arts.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Bodies at Risk is a series of creative conversations between BIPOC performing artists, educators, activists, and other experts working to shift American society's understanding of and relationship with the racialized body and social justice. These events aim to engage, move, and surprise audiences through artistic demonstration and intellectual curiosity.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

EMILY JOHNSON

"I view our bodies as everything: our bodies are culture, history, present and future, all at once. Out of respect for and trust in our bodies and collective memories, I give equal weight to story and image, to movement and stillness, to what I imagine and to what I do not know."

Emily Johnson is an artist who makes body-based work. She is a land and water protector and an activist for justice, sovereignty and well-being. Emily is a Bessie Award-winning choreographer, Guggenheim and United States Artists Fellow, and recipient of the Doris Duke Artist Award. She is based in Lenapehoking / New York City. Emily is of the Yup'ik Nation, and since 1998 has created work that considers the experience of sensing and seeing performance. Her dances function as portals and care processions, they engage audienceship within and through space, time, and environment — interacting with a place's architecture, peoples, history and role in building futures. Emily is trying to make a world where performance is part of life; where performance is an integral part of our connection to each other, our environment, our stories, our past, present and future.

Her choreography and gatherings have been presented across the United States and Australia. Recently she choreographed the Santa Fe Opera production of Doctor Atomic, directed by Peter Sellars. Her large-scale project, Then a Cunning Voice and A Night We Spend Gazing at Stars is an all-night outdoor performance gathering taking place amongst 84 community-hand-made quilts. It premiered in Lenapehoking (NYC) in 2017, and was presented in Zhigaagoong (Chicago) in 2019. Her new work in development, Being Future Being, considers future creation stories and present joy.

Emily's writing has been published and commissioned by ArtsLink Australia, unMagazine, Dance Research Journal (University of Cambridge Press); SFMOMA; Transmotion Journal, University of Kent; Movement Research Journal; Pew Center for Arts and Heritage; and the compilation Imagined Theaters (Routledge), edited by Daniel Sack. She was an advisory committee member for Creative Time's 10th Anniversary Summit and a Phase One working group member of Creating New Futures. She serves on the advisory committee for Advancing Indigenous Performance Initiative of Western Arts Alliance, The Center for Imagination in the Borderlands and the Native

American Arts Program Expansion Committee for Idyllwild Arts. Emily is the Pueblo Arts Collaborative Diplomat at Santa Fe Opera, and a lead organizer of First Nations Dialogues.

Emily hosts monthly ceremonial fires on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in partnership with Abrons Arts Center. She is part of a US based advisory group—including Reuben Roqueni, Ed Bourgeois, Lori Pourier, Ronee Penoi, and Vallejo Gantner—who are developing a First Nations Performing Arts Network.

Emily Johnson's residency is made possible with funding from the "Gathering at the Crossroads: Building Native American and Indigenous Studies program of the Five College Consortium," an initiative underwritten by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

ALICE SHEPPARD

'My life changed when, in 2004, I saw disabled dancer Homer Avila take the stage. That performance and a conversation in which he dared me to take a dance class led me from my world as a Medieval Studies professor to a life of dance.'

Alice Sheppard took her first dance class in order to make good on a dare; she loved moving so much that she resigned her academic professorship in order to begin a career in dance. She studied ballet and modern with Kitty Lunn and made her debut with Infinity Dance Theater. After an apprenticeship, Alice joined AXIS Dance Company where she toured nationally and taught in the company's education and outreach programs.

Since becoming an independent artist, Alice has danced in projects with Ballet Cymru, GDance, and Marc Brew in the United Kingdom. In the United States, she has worked with Full Radius Dance, Marjani Forté, MBDance, Infinity Dance Theater, and Steve Paxton.

As an emerging and Bessie award-winning choreographer, Sheppard creates movement that challenges conventional understandings of disabled and dancing bodies. Engaging disability arts, culture, and history, she is intrigued by the intersections of disability, gender, and race. In addition to performance and choreography, Sheppard is a sought-after speaker and has lectured on topics related to disability arts, race and dance. Her writing has appeared in the New York Times and in academic journals.

Sheppard has received major awards, fellowships, and grants from numerous prestigious funders, including the Ford Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, Creative Capital, and DanceNYC.

Upcoming Events:

Fay Victor Chamber Trio

Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. ET | \$7

Concert and Post Show Q&A



Zaccai Curtis Afro-Cuban Jazz Quartet

Saturday, March 27, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. ET | \$7

In Conjunction with the UMass High School Jazz Festival



For more information about these and all UMass Fine Arts Center Events and to get your ticketing link please visit:

[**fineartscenter.com**](https://fineartscenter.com)