



Umwelten - Surroundings -

Juri Nishi in collaboration with Bitter Suite
Commissioned by Royal Academy of Arts

The body as a container for sensation and memories
Architecture as a vessel for imprints of life, body and imagination
Surroundings as a life form

Umwelten is a site-specific performance that opens our sense of awareness to change the way we perceive and embody the world around us. Through guided movements and stimuli the audience is invited to wake up their skin and enter their inner landscape to experience the world around them with heightened body awareness. The audience will embark on a sensorial journey of choreographed voices, sounds, touch and movements inside a secret space at the Royal Academy of Arts. The performance enquires our haptic and phenomenological experience of architecture through the interplay of the presence and the absence, the sensed and the imagined, the conscious and the unconscious. Each audience is invited to construct their own imagined space through a landscape of poetry and movement inspired by the myths and architecture of the Burlington House.

The title makes reference to a term used in sensory ecology, a study on how organisms acquire, process and responds to information from the environment, exchanging materials, energies and sensory information. The umwelt theory proclaims that the mind and the world are inseparable, as it is the mind that interprets the world for the organism.

The poetic and sound score has been created by established poet Amy Neilson Smith & her collaborator Zara Jayne Arnold – the words, metaphors and score responsive to the history of women whose voices were silenced. The narrative has been inspired by the various myths of the poet and architect Sir John Denham (commissioner of Burlington House) and his wife. Historic accounts inscribe that Denham suffered from madness and his young wife was poisoned and died in this house. The music for the piece has come from inspiration from the structures of the time in Renaissance / Baroque transition. The ideas, rhythms and textures used are traces from that period. It is structured loosely like a cantata that is built up of recitative and aria with textures in canon and polyphony.

The performance is an open-ended enquiry into how we sense, inhabit spaces, raising questions rather than to form a fixed end. The bodies of the audience (in both roles of participant and observer) become part of the process and the continuous creation of a new history of the space.

Concept, direction & choreography: Juri Nishi, artist and choreographer
Composition & direction: Stephanie Singer, composer & director of BitterSuite
Poetry: Amy Neilson Smith & Zara Jayne Arnold
Performers: Susie Browning, Amy Harris, Zara Jayne, Madeleine Jonsson,
Amy Neilson Smith and Justyna Sochaj

Biographies

Juri Nishi is a Japanese artist and designer working in the fields of architecture and choreography. She creates performances and art interventions that challenge perceptions of the body, energy, time and space. She is interested in cultivating a space that allows for the listening of the mind and of the body and for the opening of the heart, a state that enables the possibility to form new insights and connections between individuals and the world around them.

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Stephanie Singer is an English composer and large-scale installation artist. Particularly interested in how music, theatre and the senses can combine to create worlds for audiences that place them at the heart of an "everyday magic". She founded company BitterSuite to create experiential, sensory concerts for classical & original music. A collaboration between perfumers, chefs, neurologists, dancers, somatic practitioners, musicians & composers she leads BitterSuite to create large-scale concerts with equal numbers of audience members to dancers.

www.bittersuite.org.uk

Amy Neilson Smith is a published poet, performance artist and Sensory Poetry Educator (Goldsmiths University) - developing spoken word for visually impaired students, using synaesthesia, taste and smell to create a metaphorical sense of colour; and is soon to take her Artist Residency at Maison Gai Saber, France, writing her new collection Splintered Boards. Amy was a collaborator on Umwelten, writing the metaphorical text for the soundscape and developing the placement of the piece within a poetic structure.

Zara Jayne has graduated from Royal Central School of Speech and Drama with a Performance Making degree. She has performed in various theatre productions including Fandom at Performance Space and Barbar The Elephant at Edinburgh Fringe. Zara has set up her own theatre company called In Sight Theatre and is hosting creative writing workshops with use of video, audio, imagery as well as written word.

Susie Browning is a recent graduate from London Contemporary Dance School. She is now a freelance dance artist performing and collaborating with both dancers and other artists, as well as creating her own work for gallery spaces and performance platforms.

Amy Harris was born in Cairo and raised in Peckham, Amy is a movement artist with a love for book arts and botany. www.amykharris.co.uk

Madeleine Jonsson is a Swedish freelance dance artist who recently completed her training at the London Contemporary Dance School. She has recently performed for Didy Veldman.

Justyna Sochaj is a freelance Polish dance artist and community dance practitioner. Having trained at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, she has performed and collaborated with Tino Sehgal, Levantes Dance Theatre, Lea Anderson, Rosemary Lee, Sioned Huws, Nutshell Dance Company, LCP Dance Theatre. She has recently reconnected with her practice as an independent dance artist towards choreography and improvisation.