

# ON PERCEPTION, DESIRE, AND CONSEQUENCE

Emails between Heather Kravas and Joseph Hernandez before the premiere of her work, RoCoCoCoCo as part of VELOCITY DANCE CENTER's MADE IN SEATTLE program, MAR 2026

Photos by Jason Starkie

**JH:** For a lot of people, working in the arts is a destabilizing venture. The creation of new things necessitates a willingness to relent to instability, both personally and professionally. Artists also are required to adopt a position of curiosity if they are to do the difficult work of dreaming. As an artist I find this positionality toward stability to be uncomfortable, so I am often drawn toward makers who assert their work with a clear conviction. Heather Kravas exemplifies this curiosity, but there is an almost mystical clarity to the way she discusses both her work and art in general. She seems tapped into something special. She doesn't lord this special perspective over you in an attempt to control your vantage point. She invites you to join her in the undefinable certitude of a curious and carefully critical perspective. Talking to Heather was a lot of fun. Here are our emails about RoCoCoCoCo:

ROCO  
COCO

**JH:**

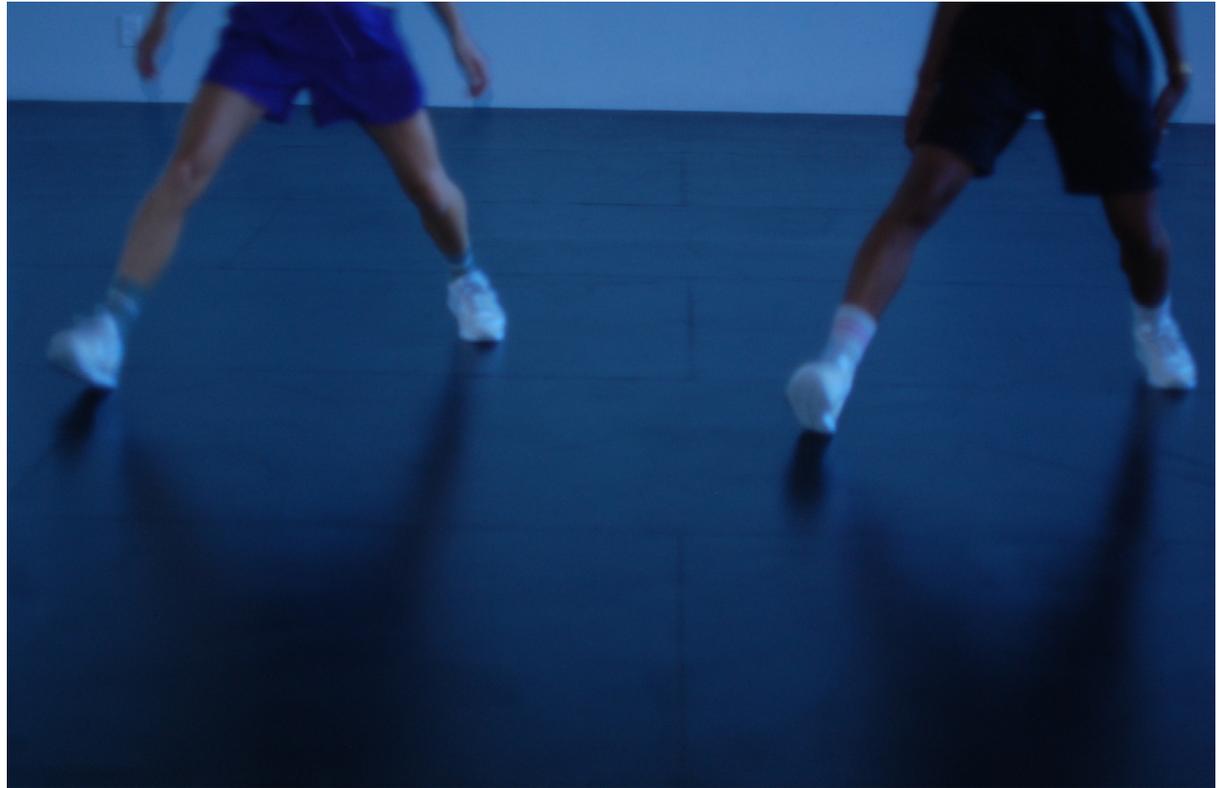
It's fun and a little difficult to ask a choreographer questions about their work when I've never seen anything live. I think this is especially true of your work. From my vantage point, you are interested in the spark of reality that can only exist in the experience of an event, the bright moment when all of your scheming and preparing becomes manifest. I might call it a kind of situational purity? I know words can be slippery and the description of choreographic intention, especially with words, can often be wanting.

In order to make some sort of progression from the known to the unknown I will start with the context that I have in my hands, this book 'visions', written as a companion to your work 'Visions of Beauty' that premiered at Performance Space New York written by Jenn Joy. I love a text that feels like watching a dance—text that illuminates as much as it mystifies. A lot of my favorites are quoted here: Anne Caron, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Heidegger, Kathy Acker. [I have an Anne Carson tattoo]. The complicated web of artists that buttress a work's identity feels like a deeply personal secret language of creation. In this new work, RoCoCoCoCo, have you found a similar cast of characters popping up? Who are the new faces, if they have faces at all?

**HK:**

I love this question because it immediately brings the conversation into the depth and desires of the work. And also illuminates how a work exists in relation to other people and situations. There is so much about making a dance where I am contending with what the thing is and wants to be and it always begins in relation sometimes even in imitation and then ideally, and with patience, starts asserting and insinuating its different-ness.

With RoCoCoCoCo I wanted to engage with a distant feeling. The feeling had to do with connecting with what I loved about dance when I was much younger, when I first wanted to make things and had really no idea how to do that. And there were dances that I saw and read about that sparked something in me. But it was also the music I listened to, the books I read, and how my access to these things was really spread out. I guess I could just say I was thinking about being 18 19 or 20 and how in love with art I was.



Symone Sanz + Julia Sloane

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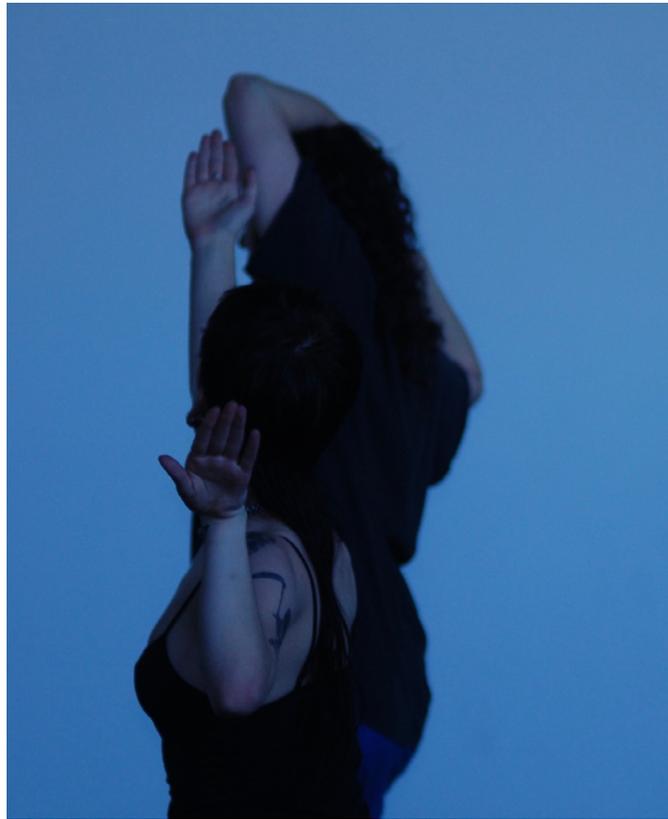
I felt full of rage and hope and in some dances I saw my rage and hope reflected through form, through physicality, through women's bodies that were not constrained. They were dances that did hard things. And I was really naive. Which was embarrassing then and really I am still embarrassed about this early dancing self. But I think it also let me really feel my way into becoming an artist. That naivety had to do with having to hunt and discover what I was interested in. I'm really analog and of an analog age.

Anyway! I was reflecting on that core part of my younger self that wanted to dance. That was full of desire. And I was thinking about the choreographic materials that I have collected since that time. The actual moves. There are not so many of them: a tendu, a lunge, a down up down, a perimeter. I wanted to re-examine my re-examinations almost as a way to get it out of my system. Again it was this sinking down into making the dance. I want the dance to be about itself. I want the tendu to be about itself. And weirdly, then I feel like it can also be about lots of other things.

These dances maybe seem spare but I am asking if it is even possible that they can extinguish. I think just today I realized they are all about opening up.

I am not very successfully answering your question!

I'm going to try it as a list:



Allie Hankins + Sylvia Schatz-Allison

RoCoCoCoCo feels in conversation with and has been guided by:

The years I have been dancing while listening to the compositions of Eliane Radigue

The dances I made with artist Antonija Llivingstone

The time I spent in the studio with DD Dorvillier

The dancing of and beside Rebecca Brooks and Cecilia Lisa Eliceche

The book Arm and Arm and Arm by Remy Charlip

The art of Victoria Haven and the friendship around that art

Reading The Golden Compass books with Valentina Starkie

Zadie Smith's introduction to Dead and Alive

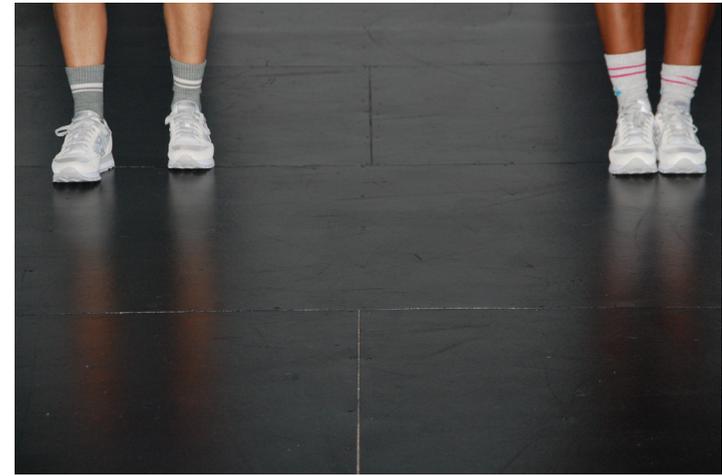
George Saunder's essay "She Who Helps See" about the artist Inka Essenhigh

The "dot" artists: of course Yayoi Kusama but also Brigit Riley, Leigh Bowery, Sigmar Polke

Mary Overlie

I haven't been really inspired by words over this process.

I have been in the past. But this piece feels more like searching for something inside and murky and like it's trying to be in conversation with other versions of itself.



Symone Sanz + Julia Sloane

**JH:**

All that makes so much sense. (I love a list)

Speaking of searching inside something murky and conversations that halt, turn back, and speak with other versions of themselves, my experience of your work (at least what I was able to witness at the showing after your BASE residency) has a lot to do with time and consequence. I loved sitting in a room and abdicating the idea of expectation with a group of on-lookers as we watched a pair of hands ascend. The mind wanders and you end up changed.

All of this has a relationship to consequence that I feel is summed up gorgeously in this passage by the writer T Fleischmann from their work 'Time is a Thing a Body Moves Through'. They write in this passage about Felix Gonzalez-Torres' sculptures:

"When Gonzalez-Torres speaks of injecting power, he speaks of power spreading.

An individual viewing his art can be transtormed, having been implicated and involved in it, taking home a sheet of paper, tasting sugar, feeling.

A person in the world who has been affected by the pain of another is an agent of change.

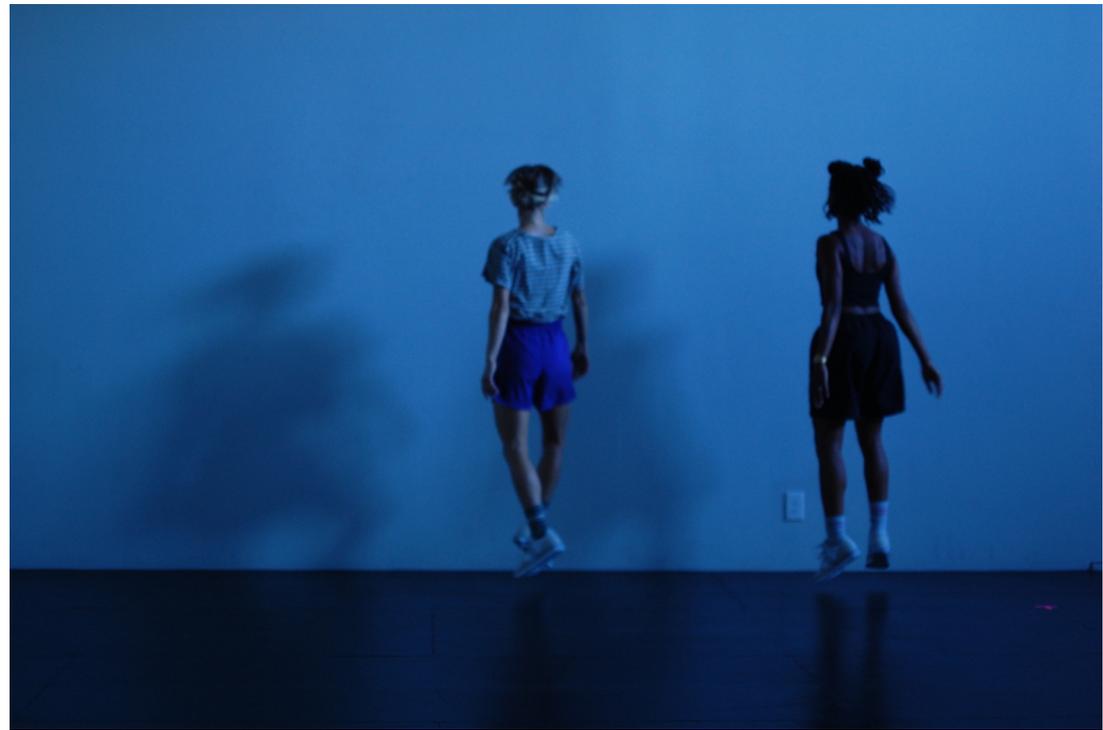
A person in the world who has been affected by the joy of another is an agent of change.

A person in the world is an agent of change.

A person in the world, impossible as it may seem, that's what I am, that's how I'll live."

In RoCoCoCoCo, what is your relationship to consequence? Do you resonate with these assertions that people, after the viewing of art (or anything) can be

"agents of change?"



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**HK:**

Well, hmmm.  
I don't know. I want to.  
That is an incredible passage and I can get kind of swept up in it.  
And at this moment of the making I am still consumed by a lot of tension and awareness that I just might not be able to make it work. It might not do what I most want, which is to hold us - performers and audience. And also release us.

I think art and art-experiencing works the muscle of our imagination. And if our imaginations are conditioned for engagement we can begin to imagine things beyond what is fed to us through rumor and propaganda. Art can make me feel differently. And yes, feeling different could lead to change.

But there is something that strikes me as aspirational in those words that I want to believe and ...am perhaps too cynical to entirely. And perhaps adding to the irony, I would say that I find performance to be more spiritual for me than that. Yes, maybe change. But maybe no change too. Maybe a place to observe something that can contain all of those paradoxes.

You know, we, the performers and I are working so so hard on this project. The performers are so great. All of them. And we were working on a passage that has some issues, where they need to decide how to construct the material in the moment and there is a set of parameters that are difficult to negotiate. So sometimes you nail it and sometimes its just off. And I said, what if this dance can hold our bad decisions? Or our mistakes? And for sure that is the dance we want to be making; not one that beocme mechanical or perfect but one that can hold all of our humanity. Change.

No Change.



Allie Hankins + Sylvia Schatz-Allison

**JH:**

I love this idea that no change and change can be kind of the same thing, linked spiritually and compositionally. Thinking of change makes me wonder about the role that repetition plays in your work. In my reading on the internet, it looks to me like people ask you about your relationship with repetition a lot! Haha. . In an interview with Aron Cantor you speak interestingly about repetition being a place to highlight aberration, and that repetition, as such, doesn't really exist because you are working with people and people have bodies and those bodies are fallible, dynamic, curious, and strange.

I guess I'm just as curious about your relationship with repetition now, after these years of involvement with (at least perceived) repetition. I wanted to ask you this question as a kind of macro-repetitive exercise; keeping the persistent volley of curiosity from outside afloat in a meaningful way.

**HK:**

Yes, I stand by that! I still think that repetition is what is perceived but it is not what I feel. It is an examination of minute differences. And also, I think I am exploring something about memory right now. All of these dances that make up RoCoCoCoCo are haunted by ghosts and the ghosts are me and my friends who made earlier, sometimes better, sometimes awful dances with these same steps, patterns, desires.

It reminds me too of working for and beside the artist DD Dorvillier. She made a dance called No Change with a kind of cameo ghost version of me, Heather, performed by Elizabeth Ward. The idea of changing and not changing is, as you say, linked spiritually and compositionally and it also circles back to my memory of my friend's dance that contained a memory of me (along with many other messy beautiful things).

All these things are also entirely new. They have been made new and different by Allie and Sylvia, Amanda and Carlin, Julia and Symone. I think the dance and the dancing are trying to find each other and it helps if they are doing the same moves! Am I speaking in riddles? Probably. The repetitions are rather riddle-like. My repetitions right now are loopy. Both taut and sloppy. Loops that might pick up a curly-q here or an extra tail there.

