



UCLA Disability Inclusion Lab:

DANCING DISABILITY

www.DancingDisability.ucla.edu

Inaugural Cohort Selected to Launch UCLA's [Dancing Disability Lab](#)

The weeklong intensive promotes the role of dance and performance as a change agent for the continued progress of disability justice.

For Immediate Use:

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WHO:

An international group of dance artists with disabilities.

Kelsie Acton (Canada)
Bailey Anderson (North Carolina)
Margaret Bridger (Chicago)
Mel Chua (Georgia)
Suzanne Cowan (New Zealand)
Vanessa Cruz (California)
Christelle Dryer (South Africa)
Mark Travis Rivera (California)
Octavia Rose Hingle (California)
Harmanie Taylor (Canada)

WHAT:

The *UCLA Disability Inclusion Lab's DANCING DISABILITY* will offer experienced and emerging dance artists with disabilities from across the world an immersive engagement in disability studies scholarship alongside movement exploration and choreographic inquiry. Participants will consider ways to represent, look at, transform, and challenge ideas about the body, beauty, virtuosity, and personhood. At the center of this uniquely designed process is the notion that aesthetic production (dance) serves as a change agent for the continued progress of disability justice.

WHEN:

June 22–29, 2019

WHERE:

UCLA's Kaufman Hall, Los Angeles

Los Angeles (May 20, 2019) From artists based in New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, to regions all over the United States, UCLA announces 10 artists that have been selected to launch its inaugural Dancing Disability Lab.

The **UCLA Dancing Disability Lab** is the brainchild of choreographer; Associate Dean, UCLA School of Arts and Architecture; and Chair, UCLA's innovative Disability Studies minor, **Victoria Marks**. Marks will be joined by internationally celebrated choreographer, dancer, and aesthetic provocateur, **Alice Sheppard**, and renowned disability studies scholar, bioethicist and disability justice activist, **Rosemarie Garland-Thomson**. Marks, Sheppard, and Garland-Thomson will guide the cohort through inquiries in disability justice history; moving; doing; and making.

"It is an honor to welcome such an accomplished cohort to launch our first UCLA Dancing Disability Lab," said Marks. "I am eager to be in the studio with this group of artists and long-admired colleagues. Most dancers with disabilities have not had access to college dance and choreography programs where they can develop as artists. It is our hope at UCLA to change that. The Dancing Disability Lab is a first step toward offering this important group of dance makers access to their field, while at the same time engaging in discussions about disability culture, justice, and history. The dance field as a whole will benefit from the discoveries of these artists, who will challenge preconceptions about what dance is, or could be."

Marks' choreographic practice works to redress stereotypes, challenge taboos, and portray relationships onstage that offer models of communication and connection. Her choreographic research considers citizenship and representation of disability. "As I continue this practice that began 37 years ago, I am even more aware of the dance field's urgent need for artists that identify as disabled to claim their own experience as makers, doers, and thinkers. Because of my anchor roles in the university, I consider it a responsibility to create opportunities for disabled dance artists," said Marks.

The group convenes for this week long intensive at UCLA from **June 22–June 29**. The Lab will conclude with an informal sharing of performance and discovery for the public on Friday, June 28th at 8 p.m. in UCLA Kaufman Hall's small theater (Room 208).

Biographies of and statements from participants selected through a competitive application process for their artistic excellence is included in the following pages of this release.

[For more information, please visit the Lab's website.](#)

About the Dancing Disability Lab

The *UCLA Disability Inclusion Lab's DANCING DISABILITY* will offer experienced and emerging disabled dance artists from across the world an immersive engagement in disability studies scholarship alongside movement exploration and choreographic inquiry. Participants and their instructors will create a new performance work that challenges "ability paradigms."

The experimental, weeklong exploration will combine small group study of the histories and social discourses surrounding disability justice, aesthetics, and culture with movement exploration and choreography. Participants will engage one another through choreographic study and improvisation sessions designed to expand and deepen action languages while they consider how we represent, look at, transform and challenge ideas about the body, and personhood. At the center of this uniquely designed process is the notion that aesthetic production (dance) can serve as a change agent for the continued progress of disability justice.

The lab will culminate in an informal public sharing on June 28, 2019, at UCLA Kaufman Hall's black box theater.

Dancing Disability, which will be held annually through 2021, will set the stage for increased recruitment on the part of UCLA's Dance MFA in the Physically Integrated Dance community.

This project is supported through funding from UCLA's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the School of the Arts and Architecture. The Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance and Undergraduate Education Initiatives are contributing significant in-kind support.

About Victoria Marks

Victoria Marks, an Alpert Award winner, Guggenheim and Rauschenberg Fellow, and Fulbright Distinguished Scholar, has been practicing knowing and unknowing, making dances for stage and film, for the past 37 years. Her work continues to consider citizenship, as well as the representation of disability. Marks' creative work migrates between choreo-portraits and action conversations for individuals who don't identify as dancers, and dances for dancers that fuel her inquiries into movement. A recipient of numerous grants, fellowships, and awards for her work, Marks has also received the Grand Prix in the Video Danse Festival, the Golden Antennae Award from Bulgaria, the IMZ Award for best screen choreography and the Best of Show in the Dance Film Association's Dance and the Camera Festival along with director Margaret Williams. In addition to teaching in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, Victoria serves as associate dean in the UCLA School of Arts and Architecture, and as the chair of UCLA's Disability Studies minor.

About Alice Sheppard

Alice Sheppard is an internationally celebrated choreographer, dancer, and aesthetic provocateur. In her manifesto, Sheppard writes, "My work is neither educational nor transformative for others. It does not reiterate or confirm familiar stereotypes of disability. I am driven to create art that connects to the beautiful complicated histories and cultures of disability, race, gender, and sexuality. I do not work in a vacuum; I am part of a complicated, contentious, exciting community. I want my work to continue our conversations, honour our pasts, and open a vista to our futures."

About Rosemarie Garland Thomson

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson is a national spokesperson for disability whose essay, "Becoming Disabled" was recently featured as the lead piece in a new series by the New York Times of weekly essays by and about people living with disabilities. She is a professor of English and Bioethics at Emory University and co-director of the Emory College Disability Studies Initiative (DSI). She holds affiliated faculty appointments in the Department Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the Institute of Liberal Arts, the Center for Ethics, the Institute of Human Rights, and the Office of Sustainability Initiatives. During her academic career, she has been a leader of interdisciplinary critical disability studies, the emergent field in higher education that promotes inclusion and brings innovative perspectives on disability to academic venues and the wider world. Broadly speaking, her foremost contribution is to bring forward the significance of making the world more accessible in every way to all people.

About UCLA School of Art and Architecture

One of the twelve prestigious professional schools at UCLA, the School of the Arts and Architecture offers leading programs in four degree-granting departments: Architecture and Urban Design, Art, Design | Media Arts and World Arts and Cultures/Dance, and one school-wide minor, the Visual and Performing Arts Education program (VAPAE). Our commitment to innovative education, pioneering research, dynamic public service, and community engagement is fueled by our unwavering belief in the fundamental value of creativity and the artist's unique ability to change the world and shape the future.

Dancing Disability Lab, 2019 – Participant Profiles

Kelsie Acton (Canada) - Kelsie Acton graduated with a BA in Drama from the University of Alberta in 2006, followed by an MA in Theatre Studies from the University of Guelph. While in Guelph she began to study with Dance Theatre David Earle. She has worked with CRIPSiE, Toy Guns Dance Theatre and Rising Sun Theatre in Edmonton. Her choreography has been presented by Dancefest@Nextfest, the Edmonton International Fringe Festival, Latitude 53 and the Expanse Movement Arts Festival.

"I think of both access and impairment as opportunities to develop new ways of dancing and relating.... I try to 'stay with the trouble,' as Donna Haraway would put it. I want to use dance to move through both joyous and difficult experiences; to reflect the complexity of our relationships."

[Bailey Anderson](#) (North Carolina)- Bailey Anderson is an activist, artist, scholar, and teacher who mediates knowledge through the body. Anderson has performed with David Gordon's Pick up Company, Nicholas Leichter Dance, and Emily Johnson's Catalyst. Their work has been presented at the Canadian Society for Dance Studies, Sans Souci Dance Film Festival, in London at the Society for Dance Research, and at the Body-Mind Centering Association Conference. Anderson is currently working on a project funded through the New York Public Library's Short-Term Research Fellowship entitled "Emotions and Mental Health: Disability Aesthetics in Early Modern Dance." Anderson received a BA in Dance and History from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and an MFA in Dance from the University of Colorado Boulder. Anderson has most recently been a Visiting Artist Scholar at the University of North Carolina in Asheville and will be a visiting teacher at Ursinus College.

"My choreography and process centers around the diverse experiences and knowledge that comes from disability identity. An undercurrent of my creative work and research is the goal of creating a socially just society and dance culture through choreographic practices and research. I embody Disability Studies, Affect Theory, Aging Studies, and Queer and Crip theory within my choreography to explore the implications of these theories in the body."

Margaret Bridger (Chicago)-Margaret Bridger is a dance artist, writer, health activist and teaching artist. Her choreographic work has been presented at Access Living, a leading disability rights organization in Chicago; and her writing has appeared in her blog, Crohn's Chronicles. Bridger earned her AA from Cottey College in 2008 and her BA in dance with concentrations in dance making and dance studies from Columbia College Chicago in 2011. Bridger is a doctoral student in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

"Currently, I am working with the concept of sustainable choreography, a term that I have borrowed from local disabled dance artist Kris Lenzo and his collaborator, Sarah Cullen Fuller. I define sustainable choreography (or sustainable movement, as I have begun to think of it) as movement that acknowledges pain and sees it not as something to be avoided or cured via movement, but as a site of generation and a source of wisdom."

[Mel Chua](#) (Georgia)- Mel Chua is a dance artist, engineer, auditory low-pass filter, and multimodal polyglot currently working at the Biomedical Engineering department of Georgia Tech in the Studio for Transforming Engineering Learning and Research (STELAR) while completing her Ph.D. at Purdue University's School of Engineering Education. Chua received her B.S. in Electrical and Computer

Engineering from Olin College of Engineering and spent several years in the open source software and hardware industry before returning to academia. Chua's research focuses on faculty development, learning in hacker/maker communities, embodied qualitative research methodologies, and prototyping alternate ontologies of curricular culture in engineering education.

"I am a dancer....Everything is an occasion for play and experimentation."

Suzanne Cowan (New Zealand)- Suzanne Cowan is an artist that has worked in dance as a performer (e.g. CandoCo Dance Company, UK; Touch Compass, New Zealand), choreographer, teacher and researcher. Cowan recently completed her Doctor of Philosophy in Dance Studies at the [University of Auckland](#), becoming the first wheelchair user in the world to complete a Practice as Research PhD in Dance.

"My research offers an original conception of how an expanded corporeality can both reimagine and construct through performance how we inhabit space and specifically our response to dis/ability, through performance."

Vanessa Cruz (California)- Vanessa Cruz received her Associate's Degree in Dance at Santa Monica College. Currently, Cruz is the first disabled dance major at the California State University Long Beach.

"I dream of a world where we are no longer segregated, that we are represented in the media authentically, and that our voices are taken seriously. Through dance, I know that I can change that."

[Christelle Dreyer](#) (South Africa)-Christelle Dreyer is a dancer, graphic designer, and performer. Dreyer obtained a National Diploma in Graphic Design from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and a Baccalaureus Technologiae in Graphic Design. Currently working towards her Magister Technologiae. As a Ballroom and Latin dancer, Dreyer won first place for her section at the 2007 Holland World (disabled) Champions in Boxmeer, Amsterdam. Contemporary dance work includes performing with, and as a teaching artist with Remix Dance Company.

"As an artist/creative, I have an astounding passion not only for dance but for movement. It brings me fulfillment to see the breathtaking shapes, images, stirring and stories created by the body and extensions created by assistive devices. Being a South African differently abled dancer for 17 years allowed me to gain vast experiences within the world of dance. The possibility of exploring "ability paradigms" brings a wave of excitement to me. This hypothesis I have been personally questioning the past two years."

[Mark Travis Rivera](#) (California)- Mark Travis Rivera is an activist, author, choreographer, dancer, speaker, and writer. Rivera is the youngest person to found a physically integrated dance company in the United States. marked dance project (MDP), a contemporary company for dancers with and without disabilities. Outside of MDP, Rivera worked as an apprentice dancer for Heidi Latsky Dance, a New York City-based integrated dance company artistically directed by Heidi Latsky. Rivera has also danced for Band of Artists in Philadelphia, PA, and served as an apprentice for AXIS Dance Company. A graduate of William Paterson University, Rivera earned a B.A in women's & gender studies with a minor in public relations. In 2013, Rivera received the Student Government Association's Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to the William Paterson community. Rivera later won the Audre Lorde Award for Social Justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. Rivera currently serves as the Community Engagement Manager for AXIS Dance Company.

“There is a level of urgency to tell my story because as a Latinx, gay, gender nonconforming, disabled person, I know that in the current political climate, my life is at risk. I think about the level of bravery it takes to live my authentic life and how I might be bashed or harassed for doing so but I dare greatly anyways. It is with that level of understanding that I continue to do the work that I do because I know representation matters.”

[Octavia Rose Hingle](#) (California)- Octavia Rose Hingle is an adaptive dance artist, storyteller and educator born & raised in the East Bay Area. Their work addresses visions of past and future ancestors that travel through the plastic vessel of the present moment. Through performance and installation, they offer experiences that may uncover the inherent wisdom of our flesh and the resilience of the landscapes we reside in. Hingle is currently an artist in residence with SAFEhouse for the Arts in San Francisco, and has recently performed with LEVYsalon and the National Queer Arts Festival 2018. Hingle holds a BA in dance from Middlebury College, and have studied with AXIS Dance Company, ODC/Dance, and Headlong Performance Institute.

“In my quest for adaptation I’ve found community, work and inspiration in the field of physically-integrated dance.”

Harmanie Taylor (Canada)- Harmanie Taylor is a facilitator, choreographer, and performer. Taylor has been actively involved in the integrated dance movement since 2006. Taylor has worked with Alice Sheppard, CRIPSiE (AB), Real Wheels Theatre (BC), and is a co-facilitator with All Bodies Dance Project, an integrated dance company based in Vancouver, BC. Taylor’s latest works premiere in June 2019 at the All Bodies Dance Project Production: Magic and Remembering. Taylor holds a BA in Dramatic Arts from the University of Lethbridge and an Arts and Cultural Management certificate from MacEwan University.

“Integrated dance reaches people who don’t feel like they belong in sports or mainstream dance. It gives them a place where they can be completely themselves, and move and grow as individuals and dancers. It’s important for me to grow the community here in Vancouver, and give people the same life changing opportunity that I was given.”
