

signs and symbols

JONAH BOKAER

About An Arabesque

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February 13 - March 8, 2020

signs and symbols is pleased to present *About an Arabesque*, the first New York solo exhibition by visual artist and choreographer **Jonah Bokaer**. The exhibition marks a moment in which the interplay of disciplines in Bokaer's practice can be perceived and encountered within a gallery setting. Through their confrontation of stereotypes and iconoclasm, the featured works explore the complexities at large in Western representation and identification of individuals in the Middle East and North Africa. The arabesque as a visual motif and building block of Western dance — along with the orientalism implied — provides a visual portal into the complexities of this genre, across disciplines. The exhibition features an array of works developed by Bokaer during his awarded residency at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva, Florida (2019). Works include lithographs and serigraphs with multiple color separations and choreographed overlays of drawing, created with master printer Patrick Miko / Long Road Projects. The exhibition also presents two video works and a brute color image-transfer installation onto wood. On March 6th, during New York's Armory Week, Bokaer debuts *The Genie*, a performance that deconstructs the representation of men within the Middle East and North Africa through the emblematic image of a genie. Bokaer's extensive travels to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Tunisia, and Pakistan form the basis of the imagery exhibited.

The Arabesque is a formal term, visual motif, and technical movement with a long and complex history. Its linguistic associations and physical manifestations have evolved since its earliest appearance within the work of craftsmen of the Hellenistic period. The arabesque became formalized in its use in Islamic cultures as a decorative style. Today, we associate the arabesque perhaps most closely with the fundamental ballet technique. Early classical ballet iconography was often inspired and adopted from the visual arts — prior to centuries of evolution in western classical dance. The famed 19th century Italian ballet teacher and writer Carlo Blasis writes that “we have derived [arabesques] from antique relievos, from a few fragments of Greek paintings, and from the paintings in fresco at the Vatican, executed after the beautiful designs of Raphael” (74-75). The arabesque stems from many sources and produces varied cultural associations. Bokaer infuses his exploration of the arabesque with his own personal history, allowing his Tunisian heritage to open new windows of understanding and identification. Bokaer weaves together and pulls apart the multitude of significations derived from each form of the arabesque. He dissects and expands the history of the arabesque without collapsing it, following the strands into each discipline he works within — and reconciling unexplored tensions between the graphic and choreographic arts.

About An Arabesque explores associations of other kinds as well, in those pertaining to individuals and particularly men in the Middle East, who are often depicted as ruthless, tough, and belligerent. Bokaer traverses these con-temporary representations in sifting through the underdeveloped significations. Appropriating imagery of crossings of the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf, including groups and individuals in refugee camps, he sees a reality of men more to do with sensibility. Sensibility being a major component of Bokaer's reality — it provides him with a method and means through which to explore an image, an idea, a movement. The work is unforced, gentle, and intimate yet does not shy from exploring what can be hard or harsh, weaving personal, structural, and geopolitical overlays into a deeply interwoven whole.

During his residency at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Bokaer spent five weeks last spring challenging himself by choosing to work in the massive rotunda where Rauschenberg worked later in life. Bokaer recalls dancing in his twenties on the Foundation's lawn for Rauschenberg, visiting that fabled workspace as the youngest dancer ever hired by Merce Cunningham — and the only dancer of Middle Eastern origins in that canon. During that visit, Rauschenberg gifted Bokaer two impactful items: Bokaer's first artwork (a signed Rauschenberg Monotype), and a personal totem (a Titanium Ring fit for Bokaer's ring finger). Overwhelmed, Bokaer wore the ring for decades, never removing it during performance. Of the event Bokaer notes, “Imagine artists not literally wedding each other, but reaching out to help each other — across time. That ring never left my body. So I began to read Calvin Tomkins, in order to cope with it.” Since that time, Bokaer has firmly developed his own individual practice and career — having established three arts facilities through the Jonah Bokaer Arts Foundation, his eponymous dance company, as well as his own visual art practice along with numerous artistic collaborations. It is fitting that as Bokaer melds together the choreographer and visual artist within himself, he returns to where he has come from: engaging with a significant milestone in his career and his own ethnicity and artistic heritage, within one unified body of work. David Velasco describes certain responses of modern dance to key features of modernism as being “not beyond the pale: they are a rendezvous with and within a canon” (8). In his expansion of definitions within choreography and visual art, in his examination of their presence today and in the past, Bokaer's work is a rendezvous with a number of personal, cultural, and historical canons.





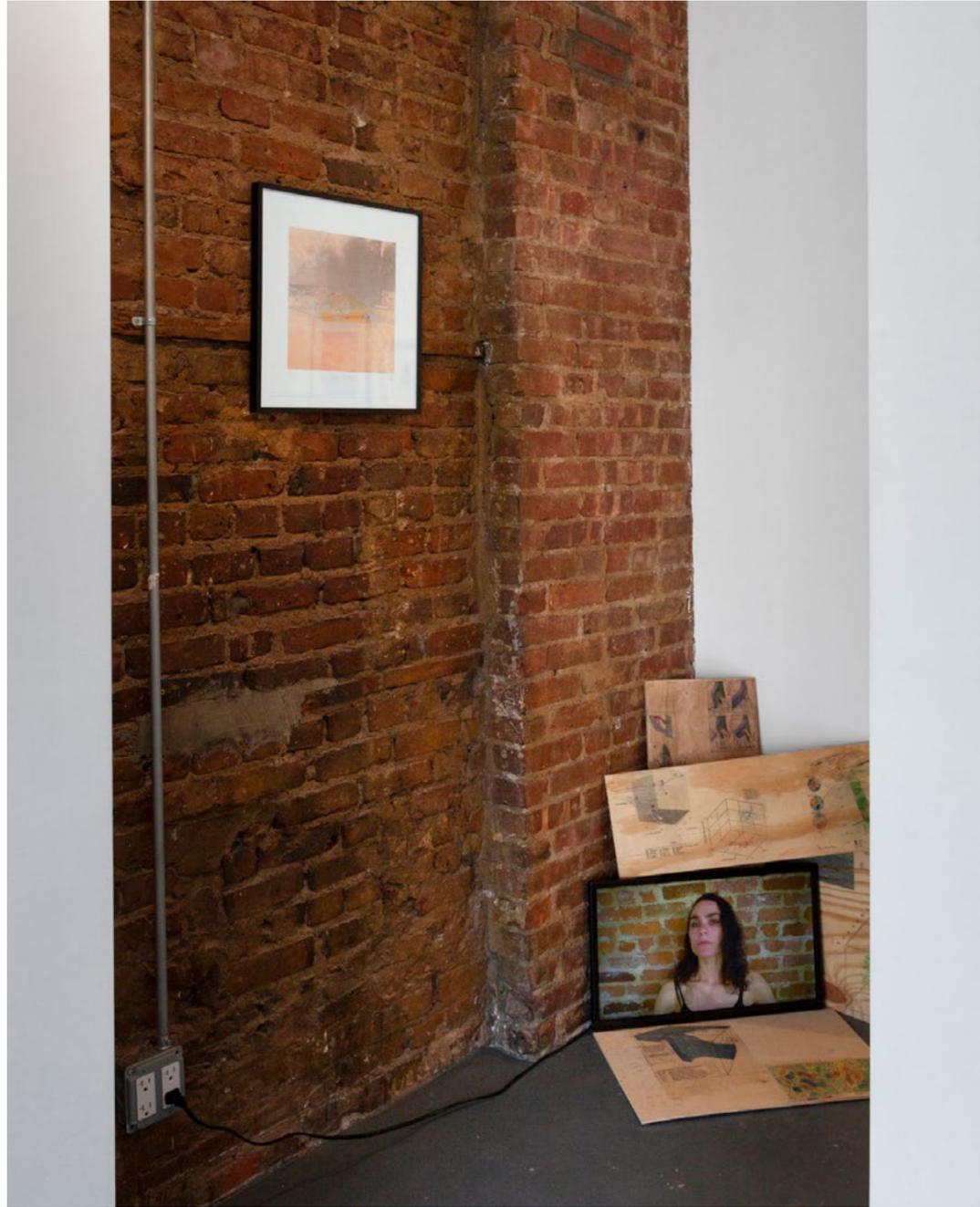
Blasis, Carlo. *The Code of Terpsichore: a Practical and Historical Treatise, on the Ballet, Dancing, and Pantomime; with a Complete Theory of the Art of Dancing: Intended as well for the Instructions of amateurs as the Use of Professional Persons.* Translated by R. Barton. 1928. Dance Horizons, 1976.

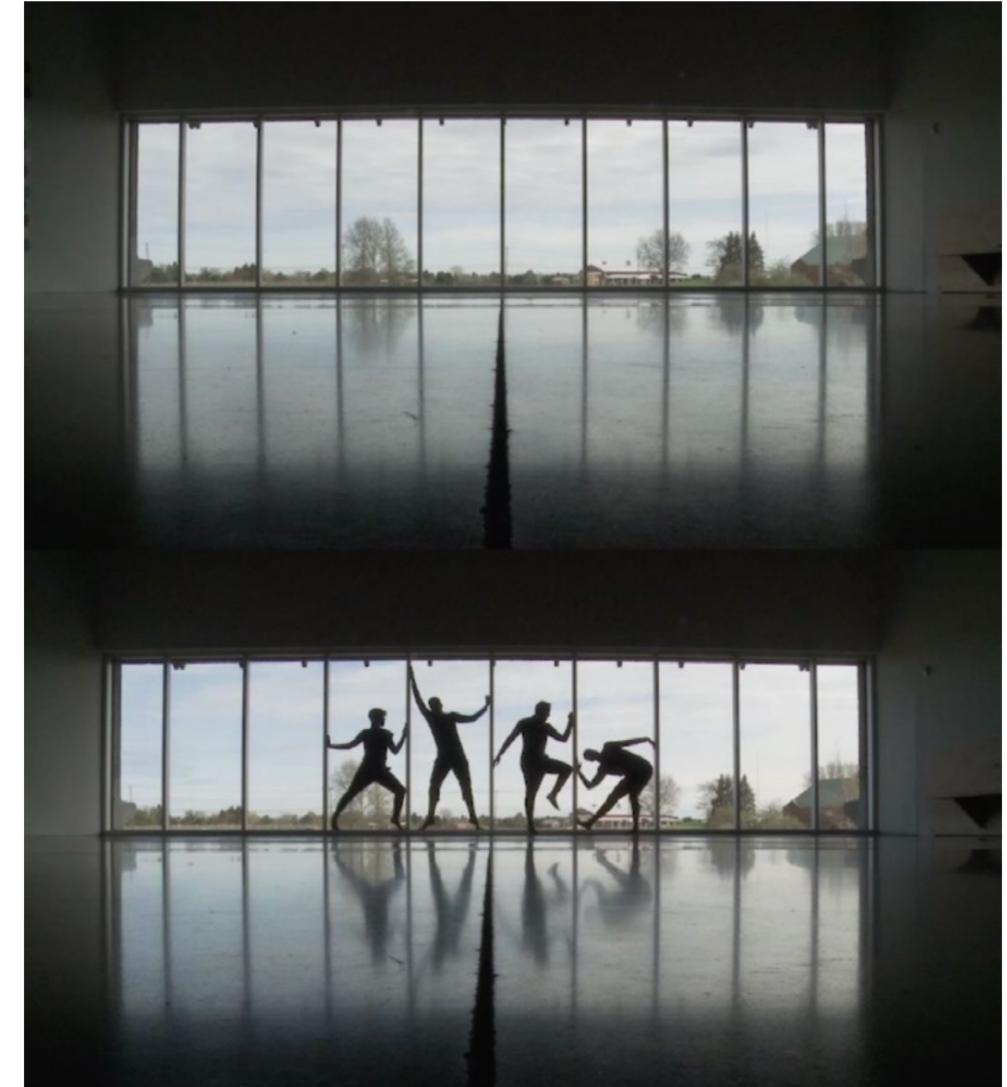
Velasco, David. Preface. *Boris Charmatz: Modern Dance.* The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2017.

jonah bokaer is an interdisciplinary artist working in the fields of choreography, visual art, video, and research. Since 2002, Bokaer has cultivated a new form of choreography merged with visual art and design. He has created over 63 works in a wide range of mediums, such as film, opera, mobile apps, and installation, in a variety of venues ranging from stages, museums, and galleries to architecturally resonant locales. Bokaer has presented works that operate between choreography, visual art, and moving images at many museums including the Guggenheim Museum, MoMA PS1, New Museum, Cooper Hewitt, Museum of Art & Design, MASS MoCa, Musée d'Orsay, Ludwig Museum of Budapest, MAC Marseille, Miami MoCA, IVAM Valencia, Palazzo Delle Arti Napoli, Kunsthalle St. Gallen, Delaware Art Museum, SCAD Museum of Art, MUDAM Luxembourg, and Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. Bokaer is a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency (2019), a UNC DisTIL Mellon Foundation Fellowship (2019-2020), the Mohr Prize at Stanford University (2019), among numerous others. His work resides in many private collections and in the permanent public collections of the Parrish Art Museum and Center for Jewish History, New York. In his dance and choreography practice, Bokaer has worked with Merce Cunningham (2000-2007), John Jasperse (2004-2005), David Gordon (2005-2006), Deborah Hay (2005), Tino Sehgal (2008), and many others. He has also interpreted the choreography of George Balanchine as restaged by Melissa Hayden. Bokaer is also a frequent choreographer for Robert Wilson (2007-Present). Jonah Bokaer Choreography, Bokaer's multi-ethnic dance company, has authored 63 original works produced in 34 nations, 27 American states, and 292 cities across the globe, and is currently exhibiting and touring worldwide with 8 international dancers. In addition to his artistic practice, Bokaer has established a non-profit practice that has succeeded in delivering 3 permanent arts facilities for younger artists: **Jonah Bokaer Arts Foundation** is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization which through the support of its Board, generous donors, foundation grants, and government support, the organization has triumphed in crafting and fulfilling a dual mission: to foster the development, research, and presentation of new performance works across disciplines, while establishing affordable art spaces for artists, notably Chez Bushwick (2002) & CPR (co-founded 2008), adjacent affordable studios in Brooklyn, and Space 428 Hudson (2016): incubator of The Hudson Eye. Bokaer is Tunisian-American and an LGBTQIA leader.









NEITHER, 2016
Two channel color video, RT 1:03:08
Edition of 2, +1 AP

\$ 60,000

To view the video in full, please [click here](#).
Password: Bokaer



Raft Of The Medusa, 2020
Color image transfer on wood with graphite and acrylic hand embellishments
36 x 160 inches (91.44 x 406.4 cm); installation variable
Unique

\$ 8,000





Arabesque (Sidi Bou Saïd), 2020
Serigraph in 3 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
24 x 17.75 inches (60.96 x 45.09 cm) unframed
26.75 x 20.5 inches (67.95 x 52.07 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 6,250 framed



Carthage (Amphitheater), 2020
Serigraph in 4 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
14 x 17.25 (35.56 x 43.82 cm) unframed
16.5 x 19.75 (41.91 x 50.17 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

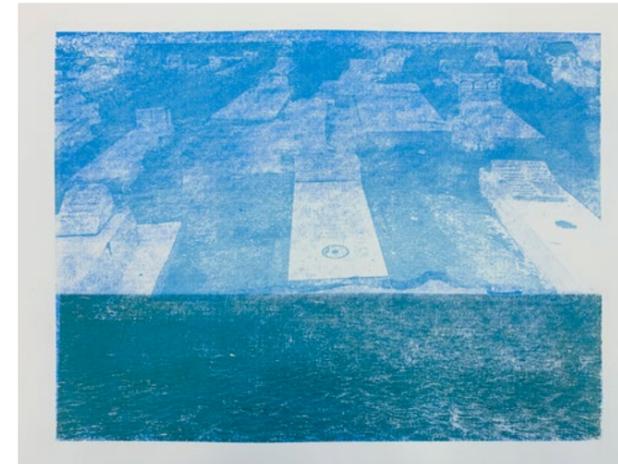
\$ 4,705 framed





Ground Graves (Radès), 2020
Serigraph in 3 colors with graphite and acrylic hand embellishments
14 x 17.5 inches (35.56 x 44.45 cm) unframed
16.5 x 20 inches (15.24 x 50.8 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,705 framed



Sky Graves (Chania), 2020
Serigraph in 2 colors with graphite and acrylic hand embellishments
14 x 17.5 inches (35.56 x 44.45 cm) unframed
16.5 x 19.5 inches (15.24 x 49.53 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,705 framed



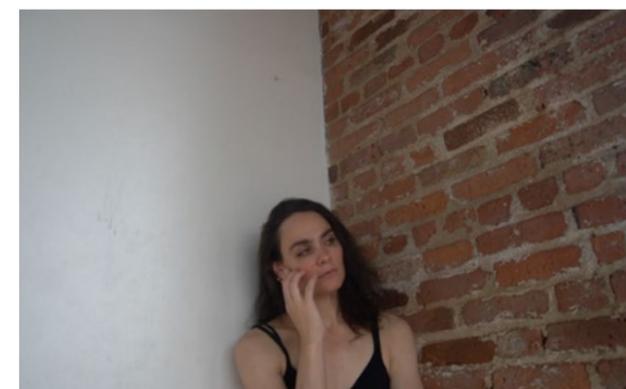
Aeneas, Anchises, Ascanius, 2020
Serigraph in 2 colors with graphite and acrylic hand embellishments
14 x 19 inches (35.56 x 48.26 cm) unframed
15.5 x 21.5 inches (39.37 x 54.61 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,705 framed



Car Crash (Qasem Soleimani), 2020
Serigraph in 5 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
14 x 13.5 inches (35.56 x 34.29 cm) unframed
17 x 16 inches (43.18 x 15.24 cm) framed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,215 framed



About An Arabesque, 2020
Single channel color video, RT 56:41
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 5,000

To view the video in full, please [click here](#).
Password: Bokaer



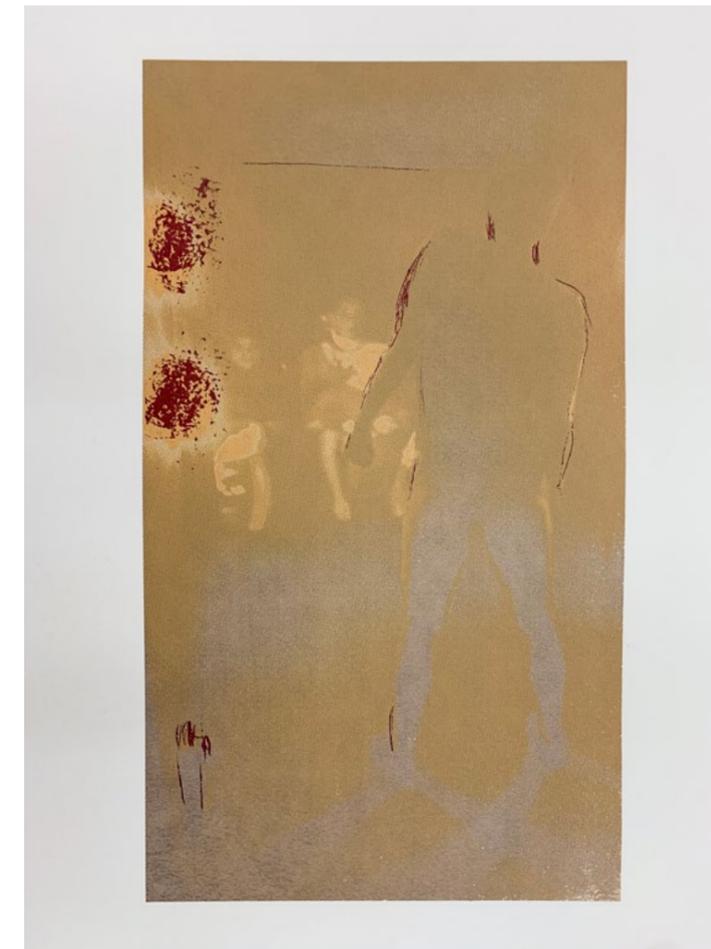
Dialogue: Herat, 2020
Serigraph in 3 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
18 x 24 inches (45.72 x 60.96 cm) unframed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,500



Dialogue: Makani, 2020
Serigraph in 3 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
18 x 24 inches (45.72 x 60.96 cm) unframed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,500



Dialogue: Erbil, 2020
Serigraph in 3 colors with graphite and acrylic hand
embellishments
24 x 18 inches (60.96 x 45.72 cm) unframed
Edition of 1, +1 AP

\$ 4,500



Mada'in Saleh, 2019
Serigraph in 2 colors
18.5 x 14 inches (46.99 x 35.56 cm) unframed
21.25 x 16.5 inches (53.98 x 41.91 cm) framed
Edition of 16, +1 AP

\$ 1,200 unframed
\$ 1,440 framed



Anthem, 2019
Serigraph in 2 colors
24 x 30 inches (60.96 x 76.2 cm) unframed
25 x 33 inches (63.5 x 83.82 cm) framed
Edition of 5, +1 AP

\$ 3,000 unframed
\$ 3,270 framed

JONAH BOKAER

Born 1981 in Ithaca, New York
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and Hudson, New York

EDUCATION

2007, The New School, Masters of Arts in Visual & Media Studies
2000, University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Bachelors of Arts in Contemporary Dance & Performance
1996, Cornell University, Dance & Performance

PROFESSIONAL DANCE HISTORY

2008, Tino Sehgal, New York, New York
2000–2007, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, New York, New York
2004–2005, John Jasperse Company, New York, New York
2005–2006, David Gordon Company, New York, New York
2005, Deborah Hay Dance Company, Austin, Texas

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020
About An Arabesque, signs and symbols, New York, New York

2016
Jonah Bokaer: Platform, Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, New York

2014
October 7, 1944, Center for Jewish History, New York, New York

SELECTED PERFORMANCES AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020
Lahore Biennial, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi, Lahore, Pakistan

2019
Dry Docking, with Rachel Libeskind, Hudson Eye, Hudson, New York

2018
Double Helix, with Rachel Libeskind, Mana Contemporary, Miami, Florida
Odaliques, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
Une oeuvre un regard Les chasseurs d'alligator, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France
REPLICA, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware
Did I Remember, Long Road Projects, Jacksonville, Florida

2017
The Disappearance Portraits, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York, New York
The Metamorphoses, The Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut

Medardo Rosso: Experiments in Light and Form, The Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri

2016
Opus You Live Stream, Florence Griswold Museum, Old Lyme, Connecticut
Concordan(s)e Festival, Foundation Mona Bismarck American Center, Paris, France
FIAC Hors Les Murs Festival, Foundation Mona Bismarck American Center, Paris, France
Cuerpos, Materia, y Alma: Lynda Benglis, Jonah Bokaer, Toyo Ito, Museo Internacional del Barroco, Puebla, Mexico
Jonah Bokaer: REPLICA, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas
Rules Of The Game, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York

2015
Jonah Bokaer: Study for Occupant, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio
Jonah Bokaer: Other Myths, La Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italy
Chercher Le Garçon, MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine, France
Phahrenheit Festival, MUMA, Musée André Malraux, Le Havre, France
Jonah Bokaer x Daniel Arsham: Curtain, Pérez Art Museum of Miami, Miami, Florida
Other Myths, American Alliance of Museums Annual Expo, Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, Georgia

2014
Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot, Asia Society New York, New York
Jonah Bokaer: Other Myths (inside the Simon Hantaï Retrospective), Ludwig Museum of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary
Zagreb Dance Week / Dance Communications Lab, MSU National Contemporary Arts Museum, Zagreb, Croatia
deFINE ART, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia

2012
Jonah Bokaer: On Vanishing, Asia Society, Houston, Texas
Il Faut Brûler Pour Briller, by Youness Anzane, MUDAM, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg
Dance Under The Influence, Museum of Arts & Design, New York, New York

2011
On Vanishing (exhibition commission: Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York

2010
Festival de Marseille, MAC Marseille, Marseille, France
REPLICA, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida
MOVE!, MoMA PS1, Queens, New York
Voices and Dances Within The Americas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York

2009
Confines / Visiones del Confín, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern - IVAM, Valencia, Spain
Projections, Le Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France
REPLICA / Re: New Re: Play Series, New Museum, New York, New York

2008
Une Exposition Chorégraphiée / A Choreographed Exhibition, La Ferme du Buisson, Marne-La-Vallée, France
Whitney Live, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York

2007
Eine Choreographierte Ausstellung / A Choreographed Exhibition, Kunsthalle St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2019

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation residency, Captiva Island, Florida
Mohr Prize, Stanford University, Stanford, California

2018

UNC DisTIL Fellowship Award, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
Long Road Projects residency, Jacksonville, Florida

2017

Infant Festival Prize, National Theatre of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia
National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

2016

NYU Center for Ballet & The Arts Fellowship, New York University, New York, New York
Civitella Ranieri Foundation Prize in Visual Arts, Perugia, Italy
National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

2015

United States Artists Fellowship, Ford Foundation, New York, New York
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, New York, New York

2013

National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

2012

National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

2011

Prix Nouveau Talent Chorégraphie, SACD, Paris, France
Jerome Robbins Fellowship in Dance, Bogliasco Foundation, Bogliasco, Italy
National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

2009

NYC Cultural Innovation Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, New York, New York
Alumni Achievement Award, University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

2008

Young Leader of the French American Foundation, Paris, France

2007

National Dance Access, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, New York, New York
Inaugural Gallery Installation Fellowship, DTW, New York, New York

2005

Grants to Artists Award, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New York, New York
Joan Kirnsner Memorial Award, The New School, New York, New York

2000

Human Rights Award, Public Service, Raleigh, North Carolina

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SELECTED PRESS

2019

Kourlas, Gia, "5 Dance Performances to See in N.Y.C. This Weekend," *The New York Times*, August 22, 2019
Aaron, Peter, "The Hudson Eye Festival Focuses on Local Arts and Community," *The Chronogram*, August 1, 2019
Wingenroth, Lauren, "This Contemporary Choreographer Also Makes Winning Ice Dance Routines," *Dance Magazine*, May 3, 2019
Lee, MG, "Up Space, Down Space: Moving Dancers of New York," *The Brooklyn Rail*, March 2019

2017

Cascone, Sarah and Goldstein, Caroline, "Editors' Picks: 11 Things to See in New York This Week," *Artnet News*, August 21, 2017

2016

Burke, Siobhan, "5 Dance Performances to See in N.Y.C. This Weekend," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2016
Rami, Trupti, "Pharrell, Jonah Bokaer, and Daniel Arsham Break the "Rules" with Their Dance Collaboration," *Paper Magazine*, September 21, 2016

2015

Petrarca, Emilia, "Choreographer Jonah Bokaer Honors Artist Daniel Arsham," *W Magazine*, September 30, 2015
Baumbardner, Julie, "How Performance Art Entered the Mainstream," *Artsy*, November 2, 2015

2014

Milzoff, Rebecca, "The Quiet Bravery of a Doomed Revolt," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2014
On Vanishing: "New Mythologies for Choreography in the Museum, Jonah Bokaer." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (May 2014)

2013

Boisseau, Rosita and Philippe, Laurent, *Photographier La Danse*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Scala, 2013
DeMers, Anna Sycamore, "On the Beach by Jonah Bokaer and Davide Balliano". *The Johns Hopkins University Press: Theatre Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (March 2013)
Foundation for Contemporary Arts, *Artists for Artists: Fifty Years of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts*. New York: Foundation for Contemporary Arts, 2013
Turk, Edward Baron, "Avignon 2012: Celebrating the Jean Vilar Centennial." *The French Review*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (October 2013)

2012

Sutton, Kate, "Road to Ruin," *Artforum*, December 18, 2012
Boynton, Andrew, "A Classic Reinterpreted: Jonah Bokaer's Choreography in 'On the Beach,'" *The New Yorker*, April 6, 2012
Kourlas, Gia, "Wall-Breaking Moves, Fit for a Screen," *The New York Times*, June 22, 2012
2wice Arts Foundation, *Fifth Wall: Jonah Bokaer*. New York: Editions 2wice, 2012
Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Daniel Arsham. New York, Paris, Hong-Kong: Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, 2012
Milder, Patricia, *Performing Arts Journal #100: Performance New York*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press Journals, 2012

2011

BAM: *The Brooklyn Academy of Music, BAM: The Complete Works*. New York: The Quantuck Lane Press, 2011
England, Betsy, *Gray Matter: Daniel Arsham, Jonah Bokaer, and Judith Sánchez Ruíz's REPLICA*. *The Drama Review*: Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring, 2011)
Lithgow, John, *Drama: An Actor's Education*. New York: Harper Collins: 2011

2010

Heyman, Stephen, "The Nifty 50 | Jonah Bokaer, Choreographer," *T Magazine*, January 8, 2010
Wozny, Nancy, *Jonah Bokaer: Moving Toward An Embodied Technology*. *Contact Quarterly: CQ Chapbook 1, newDANCEmedia*. Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer, 2010)

2008

Baryshnikov, Mikhail, *Merce My Way*. New York: The Baryshnikov Foundation, 2008

Dunning, Jennifer, "Capturing Movement as It Leaps and Turns," *The New York Times*, March 14, 2008
2wice Arts Foundation, *False Start: Jonah Bokaer*. New York: Editions 2wice, 2008
Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Daniel Arsham. Paris, Miami: Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, 2008

2007
2wice Arts Foundation, *Green World: Merce Cunningham*. New York: Editions 2wice, 2007
Jacobson, Bill, *Photographs*. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005
Reynolds, Dee, *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham*. Alton, England: Dance Books, 2007

2005
Gober, Robert, *A Robert Gober Lexicon*. New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2005
2wice Arts Foundation, *Cunningham and Rauschenberg*. New York: Editions 2wice, 2005

2004
Copeland, Roger, *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance*. New York: Routledge, 2004

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Bloomberg Philanthropies, New York, New York
Center for Jewish History, New York, New York
Long Road Foundation, Jacksonville, Florida
Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York



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