



**Canadian choreographer Daina Ashbee, her dog Bhakti and Tiara Roxanne, who is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Indigenous studies cultural researcher met in Potsdam to discuss Ashbee's most recent work entitled "J'ai pleuré avec les chiens – TIME, CREATION, DESTRUCTION".**

"I don't want to be bothered about being a human being. I am really close to the sensations in my body." – Daina Ashbee

Daina Ashbee is a dancer and choreographer from British Columbia, Canada. Growing up in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and later moving to Montreal, Ashbee was initially self-taught. Every Tuesday she would visit her dad, who aspired to introduce her to music, starting with Michael Jackson's 1982 hit "Thriller". Ashbee fell in love. She was doing the moonwalk in grocery stores at nine years old. At fifteen her mom sent her to dance classes such as ballet, jazz and tap. She felt and she listened to the energy within, and her body followed.

*Ashbee confronts settler colonial assumptions by encountering the body as a place to refuse colonialism through transformation.*

A career in dance and choreography ensued, which in the past ten years has grown exponentially. When she is not touring one of her several choreographed performance installations, she stays on Gabriola island, British Columbia, where she is now based. She enjoys spending time in nature, breathing the scent of berries and cedar, together with her dog, Bhakti. Bhakti was a rescue from South Korea, and was timid and shy when she first arrived in Canada. Within a month Bhakti had transformed into her nickname "Shadow", as she followed Ashbee everywhere.

**Body mapping. Body expanding.**

Daina Ashbee's choreography explores the body's capacity to transform from one physical state, extending beyond and outward, energetically. Her work situates the body as a vector of channeled energy that expands beyond the bounds of the physical limits of the body. Reflecting on her exchange with the dancers, Ashbee states, "We talk so much about skin and bones, energy and resistance against the floor. A kind of three-dimensional movement, expanding the body on all sides. To the sky. To the ground."

Additionally, her work is geared toward the anti-colonial. In a world where (non-white) bodies are bound within the expectations and borders of colonialism, attempting to express a kind of purity within the perspective of the settler-colonial

gaze, Ashbee confronts settler-colonial assumptions by encountering the body as a place to refuse colonialism through transformation.

For example, in her choreographed performance installation entitled "Serpentine" (2016) the body speaks through repetition, insistence and duration. In this way the body occupies space, which enacts a kind of reclamation of self and perhaps resistance of the universal gaze. Additionally, "Unrelated" (2014) is a performance duet that examines the many faceted oppressive forces women experience. These two extraordinary performance installations reorient the body in a way that refuses and reclaims simultaneously.

My research directly states that the body is memory, and by extension it carries ancestral memory. To acknowledge these forces the body bears, requires courage. To transform the memories, individually, collectively and ancestrally, takes power.

**Mother memory. Worldmaking.**

When I asked Ashbee about her origin story, I asked about her conception of being into the world, which, for me, is one's first memory. A memory of coming into existence that involves sensation, feeling, affect. Ashbee spoke about flesh, about skin. She talked about her mother's hands. Something I relate to deep in my bones, deep in my body is the memory of my mama's hands too.

Ashbee confided, "When I was a little girl, my first memory was my mom. My mom's skin. My mom's veins. Her nails. Her moles. Her varicose veins. It's almost like she doesn't have a face because I was always hanging onto her hands and legs. Now I see myself becoming the skin of her and her becoming the skin of her mother. It makes me feel connected to my mother and also to my grandmother."

*To acknowledge the forces the body bears, requires courage. To transform the memories, individually, collectively and ancestrally, takes power.*

Matriarchal memories, memories passed down through the mother lineage, are medicine. Holding a mother's hand and seeing our hands become more like hers also represent the mother, the grandmother and the feminine medicine coming through, texturizing our bodies. We remain connected through matriarchal channels which expand cosmologically, energetically, into nature.

**Time, Creation, Destruction.**

When we work from the space of the body as a map that confronts the external by expanding, retracting, exposing, and

# Transfor- mations

**Daina Ashbee, the body & "J'ai pleuré avec les chiens"**

Text: Tiara Roxanne



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thusly transforming, we are working with power. We are learning from our mothers; we are also embracing Mother nature.

*We experience the shedding of energies and the recreation of the new. .*

Throughout “J’ai pleuré avec les chiens – TIME, CREATION, DESTRUCTION” we experience embodied transformation, as represented by the physical body. In this performance installation the dancers individually and collectively explore these many shifts of being and existence, transforming energetically,

through movement and sound. Throughout the piece the dancers explore. And in the end, they destruct. And we experience the shedding of energies and the recreation of the new. Because we destroy in order to (re)create, and because transformation is non-linear. This is world-making. As Ashbee says, “This is the most powerful mother.” 🗨

**Daina Ashbee**  
**J’ai pleuré avec les chiens – TIME, CREATION, DESTRUCTION**

9.-11.8., 20:00 | St. Elisabeth-Kirche