

RICHMOND ART GALLERY



WINTER 2021



Above: Brendan Fernandes, *Inaction*, 2019, installation view, Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery. Photo: John Groo.

IN THE GALLERY

BRENDAN FERNANDES *INACTION*

February 12 – April 3

Presented in partnership with Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan University

Richmond Art Gallery is thrilled to present *Inaction*, a new solo show by renowned Canadian artist Brendan Fernandes. *Inaction* addresses violence against queer and racialized bodies, as well as the potential for change through collective action.

The installation is comprised of two main components: a commissioned series of nine sculptural works and the Canadian premiere of *Free Fall: for Camera*. The video is based on Fernandes' 2017 performance piece *Free Fall*, which was created in response to the Orlando, Florida, shooting at the Pulse nightclub in 2016. *Free Fall: for Camera* explores the act of falling through exquisitely

choreographed movements. Featuring sixteen dancers clad in shades of gray, the work demonstrates the cataclysmic moments when bodies fall onto a stage. Intimate shots are intercut with stunning aerial views, creating kaleidoscopic imagery reminiscent of film director Busby Berkeley's visionary style.

The minimalist sculptures, created in collaboration with Chicago-based architecture firm Norman Kelley, are placed throughout the exhibition space. The pieces will be activated in performances by dancers in March and April. Visit our website for details.

Brendan Fernandes is an internationally recognized artist working at the intersection of dance and visual arts. He is currently an artist-in-residence and a member of faculty in the Department of Art, Theory and Practice at Northwestern University. Fernandes addresses issues of freedom, sanctuary and social solidarity in his work, which has been shown at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, MOMA, the Getty Museum in LA., the National Gallery of Canada, the 2019 Whitney Biennial and many more. Fernandes is working on a new piece commissioned by the Richmond Art Gallery for Capture Photography Festival in April 2021.

Right page, top: Ian Nakamoto, Nancy Lee and Kiran Bhumber, *engraving at the cusp*, 2020, white-light scan and digital render. Bottom: Alphabet Collection, *A film in One Frame*, 2020.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

NANCY LEE / KIRAN BHUMBER *UNION*

April 24 – June 5

In partnership with Cinevolution Media Arts Society

Featuring a new body of works created by interdisciplinary media artists Nancy Lee and Kiran Bhumber, *UNION* is a speculative sci-fi exhibition centred around a narrative of two beings discovering their ancestral memories through the longing for touch and the rituals practiced in their post-apocalyptic wedding ceremony. The exhibition incorporates XR, performance, sculpture, multi-channel sound and video installation. Drawing on parallels between our world and the speculative future while working through the artists' diasporic identities, *UNION* is a potent critique of modern surveillance capitalism, but also a gesture towards hope through the generative possibilities of intimacy, performativity, and presence.



GOD IN REVERSE: *WHEN WISDOM DEFIES CAPTURE*

June 25 – August 21

Ali Ahadi, Zach Blas, Alphabet Collection, Raqs Media Collective, Manuel Correa, John Gerrard, The Otolith Group, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Patricia Reed, Tabita Rezaire, Francis Ruyter, Susan Schuppli, Slavs and Tatars, Andrea Taylor, Dan Young

Curated by Mohammad Salemy

God in Reverse recalls the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel as depicted by Pieter Bruegel's paintings, considering these scenographies within the mythos of artificial intelligence. With the global actualization of AI, the shared experiences between humans and non-humans have become integral as we negotiate with these machines in symbiotic fashion. The filmic works comprising this exhibition highlight instances of knowledge, historical and contemporary, fiction and nonfiction, which thus far have been next to impossible to "algorithmicate" within the confines of our existing AI technologies. Consisting mostly of various forms of time-based projections, the exhibition attempts to construct a novel form for reconfiguring the spatial and temporal dimension of moving pictures in their presentation exhibition forms.



Free Fall, for Camera Selections from a Dance Dramaturg's Notebook

Amanda Jane Graham

This essay was commissioned as a response to Brendan Fernandes' exhibition, *Inaction*.

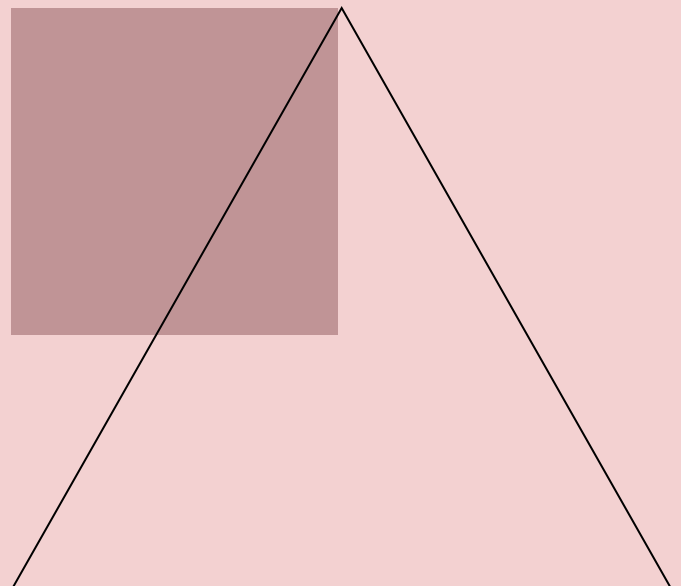
1. Lineage System

I travelled to New York City to spend a week with artist-choreographer Brendan Fernandes and dancers John Alix, Khadija Griffith, and Oisín Monaghan. At the time, Brendan, John, Khadija, and Oisín were developing a sculptural and performance-based installation in a street-level SoHo storefront. Over the course of the summer the narrow room, provided by the non-profit Recess, became their multi-use space for rehearsal, discursive exchange, and presentation. Every day, the dancers (re)arranged large, rectangular "dance floor" panels into different configurations, which, in turn, determined the limits and possibilities of their dance. The dancers' durational improvisation yielded, as Brendan put it, "a vocabulary of movements and gestures [...] developed to explore the social and political implications of the fallen body and the dance floor as a space for resistance." This work-in-process, *Hit Back*, was an artistic response to the mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that transpired on June 12th, 2016. It functioned as an experimental space for queer community making. It was a stage, backstage, and an after party all in one.

Brendan asked me to spend time at the Recess residency because we were in conversation about two other related pieces that were also dance-responses to the Orlando tragedy: *Free Fall 49* and *Free Fall, for Camera*. *Free Fall 49* premiered in June of 2017 at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. During the performance dancers grooved on raised platforms to DJ'd House music that stopped and started again 49 times. With each of the 49 pauses in the music the dancers fell to the floor. After each fall, they

rose resiliently in honor of the 49 victims of the fatal nightclub attack. *Free Fall, for Camera* (2019) was initially conceived of as a film adaptation of *Free Fall 49* but transformed into a large-scale, multimedia dance and video installation with its own unique aesthetic and affective life.

The development of *Free Fall 49*—specifically the dramaturgical exchange that informed *Free Fall 49*'s choreographic and visual landscape—is the focus of this essay. But often I find that focus is overrated, especially when it comes to my artistic relationship with Brendan. More often than not, our conversations are rambling, piecemeal, messy, and passionate diatribes and listening sessions full of emergent ideas and personal anecdotes. Getting somewhere usually means wandering around everywhere: newspaper headlines, art world gossip, movie recommendations. Our process involves making connections between bits and pieces of cultural material and our everyday lives. For me, it also requires understanding that Brendan's current work (and, for that matter, his work yet to be imagined) arises out of work that came before. For instance, *Free Fall, for Camera* is indebted to *Free Fall 49*, which contains echoes of *Hit Back*, and so on. To know Brendan's art...to talk about Brendan's art with Brendan...is to know all of Brendan's art, to treat his body of work as a lineage system with a common ancestry. That said, while this essay may be "about" *Free Fall, for Camera* I also feel obliged to mention the works that led to *Free Fall, for Camera* and some of the important, invisible marginalia: Busby Berkeley, the kaleidoscope, modes of indirect looking, and President Trump staring at the sky during the solar eclipse.



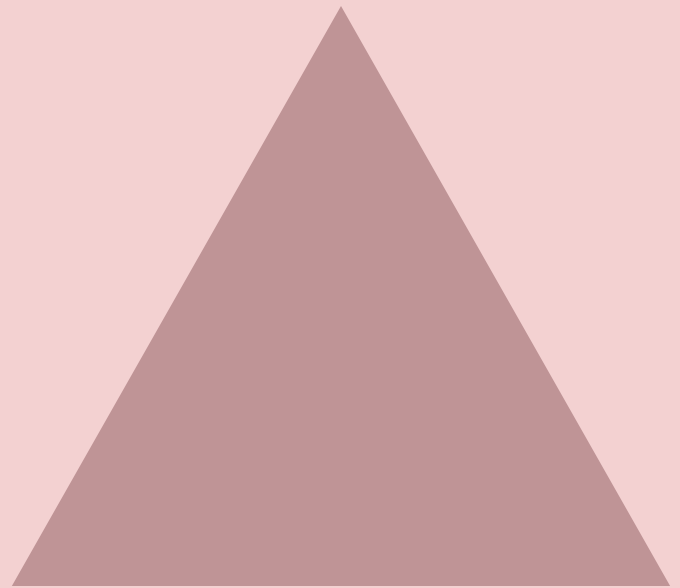
2. Aerial Observer

"The eclipse! Remember how we forgot to go outside for the solar eclipse?" (Brendan Fernandes, phone call with Amanda Graham, November 25, 2020). It's true. On August 21, 2017, while the rest of North America was testing out homemade pinhole cameras, Brendan and I were inside a Brooklyn apartment alternately pacing and populating a shared google doc with images. (Our very own junk drawer version of a Pinterest vision board.) At some point we realized that we had missed the eclipse and were mildly disappointed. The next day we saw pictures of President Trump squinting up at the sky, looking directly at the sun. Headlines like "Did Trump Damage His Eyes During the Great American Eclipse? New Cellular-Level Technology Could Find Out" (Newsweek) pervaded the internet. Of course, looking straight at the solar eclipse (or, for that matter, looking at the sun on a normal day) can damage your eyes. Finding indirect ways of looking (i.e. the pinhole camera) helps us see a more accurate, complete eclipse. This may be a lesson gleaned from an eclipse, but it can be widely applied. Coming to understand a thing often involves looking through a lens (microscope, telescope, X Ray) or from a vantage point: overhead, for instance.

In the 1930s the aesthetics of overhead viewing were synonymous with the filmmaking style of director and choreographer Busby Berkeley. Berkeley, who had served as an aerial observer in the U.S. Air Corps during World War I, went on to make movie musicals known for their aerial shots of large-scale choreographies. Berkeley's cascading chorus lines and elaborate patterns of interlocked bodies were spectacular indeed. Many critics have described them as kaleidoscopic. Like a kaleidoscope, Berkeley's choreographies were composed of lots of discrete parts (bodies to be sure, but also associated arms, legs, and shiny costumes) that, when combined, offered a fantastical view of changing, repeating, ornate, embodied patterns. These choreographies often consumed the individual performer into the spectacular collective. Glamorous excess overwhelmed subjectivity. Berkeley's films, and his hypnotic dance numbers in particular, were a welcome escape for viewers who turned to movie magic as a diversion from the Great Depression.

But what if collectively dancing, and watching a collective dance, were a way to acknowledge the fault lines in our social fabric, and the lives we have lost in these cavernous cracks? What if Berkeley's go to tools—kaleidoscopic choreography and aerial shots—

were stripped down and employed to lay bare human intimacy, to create a feeling of closeness rather than distance? The Berkley-esque scenes in *Free Fall, for Camera* do just that. Although Brendan and I turned to a wide range of still and moving images for inspiration - Merce Cunningham and Elliot Caplan's *Beach Birds for Camera* (that Brendan pays homage to with his title), Trevor Paglen's *Untitled (Reaper Drone)* (2010), and Barbara Moore's photographs of Martha Graham - Busby Berkeley's films were central to our conversation and to the choreographic and filmic design of the end work. *Free Fall, for Camera* is then a multimedia dance experience that is at once citational while being a queer, contemporary departure. It encourages us to consider the relationship between dance practices and practices of looking, for they are entwined, much like the choreographer and his dramaturg.



Amanda Jane Graham is a dance cultural historian and performance curator. She is currently Associate Director of Engagement at Carolina Performing Arts at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is also an instructor in the Department of Communication. Graham oversees The Arts in Public Service Fellows Program and Feedback: The Carolina Performing Arts Performance Institute. Graham has taught at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, University of Rochester, and Northwestern University, where she served as the Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Dance Studies. Graham's writing on dance, art, and politics has appeared in *Art Journal*, *Dance Chronicle*, and *The Futures of Dance Studies*. She has served as Brendan Fernandes's dramaturg on and off since 2016.



Join us for a Season of Programs & Events for all Ages

EXHIBITION TOURS

In Person: Saturday 12:30, 1:30, 2:30 or 3:30 pm

Online: Monday – Friday: 10 am – 4 pm

In person English language tours are hosted every Saturday at select times for small groups of up to six visitors. Online tours can be booked with gallery staff for a virtual discussion with your group or class.

Cost: Free

Location: in person at Richmond Art Gallery

Register: gallery@richmond.ca or phone 604-247-8363



ARTIST SALON WEBINAR SERIES

Last Saturday of Every Month

February – November, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Artist Salon is a free monthly program for visual artists to connect, network, learn and socialize. This popular program returns online for 2021 to encourage dialogue and connection in community during this time of physical distancing. Everyone is invited to join these sessions at their homes through the webinar platform Zoom.

Cost: Free

Location: online through Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>)

Register: richmondartgallery.org/artist-salon



YOUTH ART INTENSIVE EXHIBITION

February 3 - April 3

In celebration of the Spring Lantern Festival, the Gallery is exhibiting lanterns created during the 2020 Youth Summer Art Intensive Program. Artists: Byron Huang, Ethan Liu, Samantha Lu, Rachel Marliss, Nicole Villalon, Gabby Yan, Emily Yuan, Shirley Zhang, Julienne Zhao.

Location: Richmond Cultural Centre foyer

More Info: richmondartgallery.org/youth-art-intensive-exhibition



ART AT WORK SERIES: HOW WE MAKE PUBLIC ART

Sunday, February 21, 1:00 – 3:30 pm

This discussion panel will be hosted by the Richmond Public Art Program and features presentations by artists Germaine Koh, Sara Graham and Alyssa Schwann who have recently completed large-scale public artworks for the City of Richmond. The virtual presentation will focus on how they started their public art practice and how they produce, administer and manage large-scale public art projects. This session is ideal for emerging or mid-career artists who are interested in expanding their art practice into the public realm. A Q & A session will follow the artist presentations.

Cost: Free

Location: online through Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>)

Register: <https://bit.ly/3sz5jsG>

PERFORMANCE & ARTIST TALK WITH BRENDAN FERNANDES

Date to be announced

View the performance virtually and then join an online discussion with artist Brendan Fernandes as he discusses his work and answers viewers' questions. This conversation will be moderated by RAG Director Shaun Dacey.

Cost: Free

Location: online through Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>)

Registration: richmondartgallery.org/fernandes

RAG@HOME

RAG @ Home is a way to enjoy the gallery online, from wherever you may be. Engage with us through live and on-demand digital artist talks, hands-on art activities, and exhibition tours for all ages.

Visit richmondartgallery.org/rag-at-home



WE ARE OPEN! VISIT US IN PERSON!

HOW TO VISIT US

There are two options to visiting the gallery:

- Enter through the Richmond Cultural Centre front doors (7700 Minoru Gate), and staff will direct you to the Art Gallery check-in.
- Book your visit in advance by phone 604-247-8363 or email galleries@richmond.ca.

COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Our priority is the safety of all visitors and staff. Following government guidelines, protocols are in place to ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable visit.

We thank you for your patience and cooperation. And, as always, we welcome your feedback. Check richmondartgallery.org/reopen for most up to date info.

- All visitors must self-assess before visiting. Please stay home if you are not feeling well.
- Face coverings are mandatory for all staff & visitors.
- All visitors and staff must social distance by maintaining a two-metre distance from each other.
- A hand sanitation station is located at the Cultural Centre and Gallery entrance.
- Stringent cleaning practices are in place throughout the Cultural Centre.

For more details please contact: galleries@richmond.ca

BECOME A RAGA MEMBER

Members are an important part of the Richmond Art Gallery Association and contribute to the Gallery's growth and vitality by supporting our educational and outreach programming. Join our growing membership and become a supporter of the visual arts.

Members enjoy the following benefits:

- Invitations to members-only events throughout the year
- 10% discount on Gallery programs and events
- 20% discount on Gallery catalogues
- And much more!

Cost: Memberships start at \$25.00

More info: richmondartgallery.org/membership

RAG RICHMOND ART GALLERY

richmondartgallery.org

The only public gallery in Richmond, the Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) is a municipal gallery supported by the non-profit Richmond Art Gallery Association. In operation since 1980, the Gallery presents exhibitions by regional, national and international artists, maintains a permanent collection of over 400 works, and presents innovative and diverse programming for children, youth, and adults. We are dedicated to promoting dialogue among Richmond's diverse communities through the presentation of contemporary visual art.

FOLLOW

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Instagram [richmondartgallerybc](https://www.instagram.com/richmondartgallerybc)

NEW GALLERY HOURS

Monday – Friday: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
More info: richmondartgallery.org/reopen
Admission is free or by donation

LOCATION

Richmond Cultural Centre
7700 Minoru Gate
Richmond, BC V6Y 1R9

CONTACT

richmondartgallery.org
galleries@richmond.ca
604-247-8363

Cover image: Brendan Fernandes, *Free Fall: for Camera*, 2020, video stills, courtesy of the artist.

