

## 2015 Tanja Liedtke Fellowship Gabrielle Nankivell

The Tanja Liedtke Fellowship has facilitated what seems to be a pivotal chapter in pulling apart and re-arranging my creative fascinations. It offered space for me to begin interrogating the assortment of experiences that have positioned my artistic perspective and generated time for me to embrace an emerging shift in my methodology. The timing for such an adventure couldn't have been more apt. I had just emerged from a twelve-month period of back-to-back, from-scratch-to-stage, time-pressured creations. While this had left me incredibly energized, the value of the shift in pace and purpose presented by the fellowship cannot be overstated. What emerged was time to think, take stock and venture down un-trodden creative paths.

I arrived in Berlin in the middle of a record-breaking heat wave – one of the longest and most intense the city has endured. I was immediately struck by how familiar, yet how different the city felt to the last time I visited. Although it has been rising for quite some time, Berlin definitely feels like a city shooting for a future of its own envisaging. The epicentre of Berlin's creative heart is ever widening. Districts that in the not so distant past were off the radar for creative people seeking interesting and affordable spaces to create studios, workspaces and homes are now in the absolute thick of it. Wedding is one such district and the one I would call home during my three-week residency at aDaStudio, a fantastic little space in the heart of Wedding's artistic oasis – Ufer Studios. Working and living close by to aDaStudio meant I easily connected with all the wonderful people who pass by Ufer Studios – the staff of various cultural organisations, artists-in-residence, independent artists, craftspeople and the ever-shifting array of local residents, audience members and visitors – all of whom impacted my experience in some obliquely intrinsic way. I even crossed paths with people I knew from other places around the world but hadn't seen in years. This brought much joy, motivational nostalgia and creative kick-starts. Ufer Studios is a gorgeous little magnet for curated meetings and moments of serendipity. In this way it strikes me as a perfect microcosm of Berlin.

For my residency project, *Ghosts of Berlin*, I began with the idea of Berlin as a place where my past meets my future. In line with this concept I undertook my creative development in collaboration with Berlin-based choreographer/performer Laurie Young and Vienna-based choreographer/performer Raul Maia. Laurie represents the future (a new creative connection) and Raul represents a rekindling of the past (we collaborated in the mid 2000's). Similar to myself, both Laurie and Raul maintain a rigorous solo practice while also working collaboratively with other artists and collectives. To this, our work together also allowed for an interesting study of how collaboration inspires and strengthens solo practice.

As a research project, *Ghosts of Berlin* explores the enigmatic memory space of Berlin as an instigator for the body as document. As a performance fiction it follows a loosely autobiographic thread. Tracing a personal history spanning

the early 2000's till today, in response to the historical blueprint of Berlin, it examines the impact of our lived history on both imagination and our experience of time. In a reality where we are all documentarians, it generates a unique history of person and place.

Although I was vaguely aware while working on *Ghosts of Berlin* that there was movement across many levels of my thinking, practice and articulation, in retrospect this three-week project was a real turning point in the way I approach my work. It's as though a whole new line of interest toward movement research and composition has revealed itself. I have received this with excitement as I begin to learn how such an approach might contrast and compliment other areas of my choreographic and wider artistic research. In this sense the fellowship really furthered my artistic development through the spirit of creative adventure – this goal is at the heart of the foundation's vision and I love that my experience has been in sync. Working with Laurie and Raul on *Ghosts of Berlin* was an incredibly detailed slice of time, which inherently produced an enormous amount of documentation. I am continuing the line of research by developing a project framework and methodology for a series of related projects. I plan to revisit *Ghosts of Berlin* as a performance piece in the (hopefully) not too distant future. In the meantime, a curated series of notes, videos and images from the *Ghosts of Berlin* research project can be found here: <http://www.gabriellenankivell.com/ghosts-of-berlin.html>

My stay in Berlin coincided with *Tanz im August*, Berlin's renowned international dance festival. I took the opportunity to go nuts and managed to see around ten shows in a single week! This was a fantastic way to verse myself in the current field of practice of both established and emerging European choreographers. It was inspiring to see Antony Hamilton (2009 Tanja Liedtke Fellowship recipient) and Alisdair Macindoe presenting their work *Meeting* as part of the festival. *Meeting* is an absolutely mind-blowing work and was met with gasps of awe from audience and critics alike. Other particularly memorable moments as an audience member were Finnish choreographer Elina Pirinen's *Personal Symphonic Moment* (which won this year's Prix Jardin d'Europe 2015) and Singaporean artist Choy Ka Fai's *Soft Machine* featuring Surjit Nongmeikapam (India) and Rianto (Indonesia). Fai's work particularly resonated with where my thinking was at regarding dance as documentation and documentary performance making as cultural research tool.

For the final phase of the fellowship I travelled to Frankfurt to join the Summer Lab at Tanzlabor\_21. Here I participated in the workshop of Lia Rodriguez and Silvia Soter. Lia is a director, choreographer and performer and Silvia is a writer, researcher and teacher. Silvia's work intersects with art and culture through critical practice, education, dramaturgy, somatic practice, policy reformation and social work across dance, theatre and social projects. These amazing women have collaborated creatively for over a decade on Lia's performance works and are intrinsically linked by the series of social projects from which the Maré Arts Center was created.

The Maré Arts Center is located in the Favela da Maré, one of Rio de Janeiro's largest and most complex slums and is home to approximately 132,000 inhabitants across 16 communities. Lia's dance company studio and school have been based in the Maré Arts Center since they began developing the site in 2007. Situated between their collaborative practice and Tanzlabor\_21's overarching theme of 'Together Forever', Lia and Silvia's workshop provided a fantastic framework to interrogate the ethics of current international arts practice from both a theoretical and practical view. Lia and Silvia are hugely generous, inspirational women and it was a genuine privilege to have spent the ten days in dialogue with them. Neither of these women appear to draw distinctions between artistic work and social work; essentially the influence of each on the other is an ever-evolving, circular process. The work is the work, it is sharing knowledge as it develops and re-imagines how we might live and work together. Something about Lia and Silvia's approach and the coincidence of working in a group of nine people from six different countries across four continents really brought the concept of communication to the fore. How, where and why do we work with dance today? Is a question that motivates Lia and Silvia's work and one that will charge my own choices for a long time to come.

I sincerely wish to thank the Board of Trustees for enabling me as an ambassador for Australian dance practice through this unique fellowship. It has been a truly invigorating experience to be 'on the ground' as an immersive participant in Germany's vibrant creative-cultural sphere. It's quite difficult to summarise the experience of the Tanja Liedtke Fellowship in words as I feel its effect through various modes of my expression. But it was a genuine blast – a resounding experience – the echoes of which I'm sure will stay with me and softly permeate all of my future endeavors.