



The Otolith Group, *Hydra Decapita*, 2010 Still. ©TheOtolithGroup

***SURRENDER TO THE AIR: MOVEMENT, REFUSAL,
AND THE POLITICS OF FLIGHT***
SYMPOSIUM DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE BENNINGTON

SURRENDER TO THE AIR: MOVEMENT, REFUSAL, AND THE POLITICS OF FLIGHT

9TH ANNUAL STUDY CYCLE
June 15 - 19, 2026
MO.CO Panacée
14 Rue de l'École de Pharmacie 34000 Montpellier
Organized by Gee Wesley

PRESENTERS
Sepake Angiama
Clara Balaguer
Thomas F. Defrantz
Rhea Dillon
Anjalika Sagar of The Otolith Group

Surrender to the Air: Movement, Refusal, and the Politics of Flight is a week-long student and public convening scheduled for 15-19 June, 2026 at the MO.CO Panacée led by Gee Wesley.

"For now he knew what Shalimar knew: If you surrendered to the air, you could ride it."
— Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison (1977)

"The flight from the self is a flight into the void."
— The Fire Next Time, James Baldwin (1963)

Inspired by Toni Morrison’s vision of surrender to the air and James Baldwin’s caution against the flight from the self, this symposium considers how selfhood, collectivity, and belonging are imagined in and through practices of flight. Through a range of interdisciplinary contributors, we will address flight as a persistent theme in both Black aesthetics and for diasporic peoples across the globe. Contributors will explore themes of elevation, escape, and fugitivity drawn from movement practices, emancipatory projects, and public life. Together, we will examine acts of flight across various registers from the travel of forced migration of refugee displacement to African American folkloric traditions of flying Africans.

Altogether, these sessions will grapple with flight as it figures in radical acts of refusal, fugitive escape, and collective movements toward freedom, be that anti-carceral escape, resistance to empire, or practices of worlding inspired by mythic or fabulated visions of ascension.

Surrender to the Air: Movement, Refusal, and the Politics of Flight is the ninth annual Study Cycle Symposium organized for Low Residency MFA in Dance at Bennington College. The symposium is free and open to the public with prior reservations.

To reserve, please email lrmfadance@bennington.edu
Google Translate on a personal device is recommended for live translation/transcripts of the sessions

SCHEDULE

MONDAY JUNE 15TH	TUESDAY JUNE 16TH
GEE WESLEY — 12H30 - 14H PAUSE — 14H - 15H THOMAS F. DEFRANTZ — 15H - 16H30 EXHIBITION TOUR @ PANACEE — 16H30	CLARA BALAGUER — 11H - 12H30 PAUSE — 12H30 - 14H30 CONVERSATION : CLARA BALAGUER, THOMAS F. DE FRANTZ AND GEE WESLEY — 14H30 - 16H EMANUEL GAT VIEWING — 17H
WEDNESDAY JUNE 17TH	THURSDAY JUNE 18TH
RHEA DILLON — 11H - 12H30 PAUSE — 12H30 - 14H30 CONVERSATION : RHEA DILLON AND GEE WESLEY — 14H30 - 16H	SCREENING : THE OTOLITH GROUP (WORK BY ANJALIKA SEGAR AND KODWO ESHUN) — 11H - 12H30 PAUSE — 12H30 - 14H30 CLOSED-DOOR WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS ONLY — 14H30 - 16H
FRIDAY JUNE 19TH	
SEPAKE ANGIAMA — 11H - 12H30 PAUSE — 12H30 - 14H30 ANAJALIKA SAGAR OF THE OTOLITH GROUP — 14H30 - 16H PAUSE — 16H - 16H30 CLOSING PANEL — 16H30 - 17H30	

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



GEE WESLEY

Gee Wesley was born in Monrovia, Liberia and is based in Brooklyn, NY, and Providence, RI, where he is a PhD student at Brown University in the department of Modern Culture and Media. Before Brown, Wesley held roles as a Curatorial Associate at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), Program Director at Recess (Brooklyn, NY), Curatorial Fellow at SculptureCenter (Queens, NY), and Curatorial Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, PA). He has been adjunct faculty at Bard College, Bennington College, the Maryland Institute College of Art, and the Yale School of Art.



THOMAS F. DEFRANTZ

Thomas F. DeFrantz, Professor at Northwestern University, directs SLIPPAGE: Performance|Culture|Technology, a humanities and creative research lab. Believes in our shared capacity to do better and engage creative spirit for a collective good that is anti-racist, proto-feminist, and queer affirming. Convenes the Black Performance Theory working group and is founding director of the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance. Faculty and teaching at the University of the Arts Mobile MFA in Dance; ImPulsTanz; SNDO; Juilliard; New Waves Institute; P.A.R.T.S.; Movement Research; Bennington College; faculty at Hampshire College, Stanford, Yale, MIT, NYU, Duke, the University of Nice. DeFrantz contributed concept and a voice-over for a permanent installation on Black Social Dance that opened with the Smithsonian Museum of African American Life and Culture in 2016. Books: *The Oxford Handbook of Black Dance Studies* (2026); *Dance History(s): Imagination as a Form of Study* (with Annie B-Parson, 2024), *Routledge Companion to African American Theater and Performance* (with Kathy Perkins, Sandra Richards, and Renee Alexander Craft, 2018), *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion* (with Philipa Rothfield, 2016), *Black Performance Theory: An Anthology of Critical Readings* (with Anita Gonzalez, 2014), *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (2002), and *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* (2004). Current creative projects: *...lonely ...; particles, fields, and the void; dear alvin*. So happy to think and work with DonnaFaye Burchfield.

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



CLARA BALAGUER

Clara Balaguer (Makati City, Pisces Metal Monkey) is a cultural worker, educator, and publisher. From 2010 to 2018, she worked with communities from the Philippines through The OCD, a living room residency and material culture research unit. In 2013, she co-founded Hardworking Goodlooking, a publishing hauz interested in cottage industry, horror vacui, and the value of error. Tactically, she infiltrates institutions: in 2018-2021 as head of Social Practices at Willem de Kooning Academy and in 2021-2025 as curator of Civic Praxis at BAK, basis voor actuele kunst. Currently, she teaches Experimental Publishing (XPUB) at Piet Zwart Institute and Design Department at Sandberg Institute. Consistently, she operates under collective or individual aliases that experiment with remittance, circulation, distribution, and transmission, the latest of which are To Be Determined and Galley Copy Shoppe.

Photos of Rhea Dillon taken by Clifford Prince King



RHEA DILLON

Rhea Dillon is an artist, writer and poet based in London and New York. Select recent solo and group exhibitions include "Heads" at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, NYC; "DFT 2025" at Wesleyan University, Connecticut; "Gestural Poethics" at Heidelberger Kunstverein, Germany; "Accumulation – On Collecting, Growth and Excess", The Migros Museum of Contemporary Art, Zurich; "Fractal Being" at Cordova, Barcelona; "Air de Repos (Breathwork)" at Capc Bordeaux, France; "Tituba, qui pour nous protéger?" at Palais de Tokyo, Paris; "Each now, is the time, the space" at Lismore Castle Arts, Ireland; and "The Black Fold" at Kunstverein Kevin Space, Vienna. She was an Elaine G. Weitzen Studio Program Fellow at the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program 2024/2025 in New York.

For 2024, she was the guest editor of the Interjection Calendar for Montez Press. Dillon's first institutional solo exhibition 'An Alterable Terrain' was held at Tate Britain in 2023-4 as part of the Art Now series. To accompany this, a book of the same title was edited by her and published by Tate in 2024. In 2021 the artist presented "Catgut – The Opera" as part of Park Nights at the Serpentine Pavilion, and a publication of the same title was published in 2023 by Worms Publishing.

Photo of Anjaliika Sagar taken by Joel Chester Fildes

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



ANJALIKA SAGAR

Anjalika Sagar was born in 1968, in London, where she lives and works. She studied social anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Her work includes curatorial projects, essays, films, videos and photographic works. She is interested in the relationships between sound, text and image, archives and the potential legacies of film. She has produced numerous projects that have been seen in museums around the world, such as the large-scale production NO ARRIVAL NO PARKING, with the composer Heiner Goebbels, for the Almeida Theatre, London. She is co-founder of The Otolith Group and founder of Multitudes.

THE OTOLITH GROUP

The Otolith Group have researched and produced densely textured moving images works, installations, photographs, murals and performances, which frequently reference the trajectories of the non-aligned, and the transnational legacies of the global majority and it's diasporas. Their works have been commissioned and presented by museums, galleries, biennials, and foundations worldwide. Recent monographic exhibitions include: MASCON A Massive Concentration of Black Experiential Energy and MASCON A Massive Concentration of Black Interscalar Energy across Chicago as part of Project A Black Planet at the ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO and the NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM, at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy (2024); Secession in Vienna (2022); and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (2022). As curators and theorists The Otolith Collective is an NPO and have engaged in the conception, creation and convening of platforms that make public ongoing research that informs their practice at large.



SEPAKE ANGIAMA

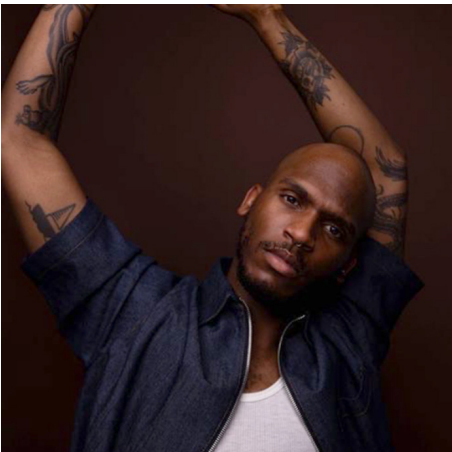
Sepake Angiama praxis stems from radical pedagogies, black feminist thought, rethinking human/non-human relations rooted in how we might reimagine and inhabit the world otherwise. She is the artistic director of the Institute of International Visual Arts (iniva), dedicated to developing artistic research, embodied practices, collective study, publishing and community led commissioning that reflects on the social and political impact of globalisation. She has previously held positions at Tate Modern, Manifesta and documenta. Her current research and thinking stems from an interest in spatial justice, speculative thinking and intentional communities grounded in radical imagination towards creating ecologies of care, empathy and kindness.

MORNING MOVEMENT SESSIONS

SCHEDULE

WITH MILES YEUNG
MONDAY 15TH JUNE – 9H - 10H30 : STUDIO BÉJART

WITH DONOVAN REED
TUESDAY 16TH JUNE – 9H - 10H30 : STUDIO BÉJART
WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE – 9H - 10H30 : STUDIO BÉJART
THURSDAY 18TH JUNE – 9H - 10H30 : ATELIER BUFFARD
FRIDAY 19TH JUNE – 9H - 10H30 : ATELIER BUFFARD



DONOVAN REED

Donovan Reed (they/them) a New York City-based performer, and teacher, earned their BFA in Dance from The University of the Arts. During their time in college, they became an artist in residence at Die Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany, and participated in an independent artist program with the Pennsylvania Ballet. They've been a guest artist in collaboration with Bare Dance Company, Meredith Rainey, Helen Simoneau, Limón Dance Company, Mayte Natalio. They were a company member with A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, and in 2024, Reed was recognized as one of Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch." Reed is currently collaborating with Kimberly Bartosik and GALLIM.



MILES YEUNG-TIEU

Miles Yeung-Tieu (he/they) is a dance artist currently based between NYC and Philadelphia. Miles received his training at the University of the Arts completing both his BFA in Modern Performance ('14) and MFA in Dance ('19). Miles's performance credits include Stacey Tookey's *Still Motion*, Helen Simoneau Danse, national tours with Brian Sander's *JUNK*, the New York City production of the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, tedted Performance Group, Jakob Karr's *Ain't Done Bad* and La Biennale di Venezia's Arsenale della Danza. As a member of the Arsenale della Danza, Miles was able to study and perform works by international artists including Francesca Harper, Pichet Klunchun, Adriana Borriello, Ko Murobushi, Josef Frucek and Linda Kapetanea while also creating and touring a new work by Ismael Ivo, *Biblioteca del Corpo*. Miles has served as faculty at University of the Arts, Cornell University, Drexel University, and Bennington University. Miles currently dances with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group, works as a collaborator with Philadelphia-based company BigKid Dance, and is a company member at The Metropolitan Opera.

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