

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan: Portraits of BAM Artists (1982—2015)



Mikhail Baryshnikov holding a portrait of Peggy Jarrell Kaplan. Photo: Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 2000

by Susan Yung

Photographer Peggy Jarrell Kaplan has photographed approximately 135 artists who have performed or collaborated with BAM. In 1984, she had photographed enough BAM artists that Humanities Director Roger Oliver suggested she shoot the complete round of season artists to illustrate the Next Wave Journal. Kaplan also photographed the artists for the 1985 journal. She had two solo shows in conjunction with *BAM: Portraits Celebrating BAM's Next Wave Festival: 1983—89* ([Ronald Feldman Fine Arts](#), 1992) and *Staged: BAM Artist Portraits* (Harvey Theater, 2004).



Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, *Sasha Waltz*, 1995

The many gifted performers who grace BAM's stages are simply the most visible members of a vast network of creative, technical, and administrative talents that combine to get shows on stage, in addition to documenting them for posterity. By photographing the artists off of the stage, in formal portraits, Kaplan occupies a unique niche. She states: "Why take photographs? To prolong the performance." These glimpses of our generation's artists enrich and round out our familiarity with them.

Kaplan's black & white portraits, mainly of choreographers and dancers, have been shown widely, often in conjunction with performance festivals, in cities around the world, in addition to New York exhibitions at the [Feldman Gallery](#) and [CPR](#), among others. Her photographs have been reproduced in countless publications, including a monograph of her work, and are in collections including the Met Museum and MoMA in New York and the Dansmuseet in Stockholm.

Fourty-four of Kaplan's portraits are on display in the cases on the third floor of BAM's Peter Jay Sharp building, on view through the 2015 Next Wave Festival. The 10 large ones are of artists featured in the current festival; some were taken years ago, proof of the deep ties BAM (and Kaplan) shares with many artists. A selection of 34 smaller photos show the scope of BAM's programming, as well as the durability of Kaplan's ongoing project and her tenacity in pursuing subjects.

Note: the monograph of Kaplan's work, *Portraits of Choreographers* (1988, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NY and Editions Bouge, Paris), will be available at [Greenlight Bookstore](#). It includes 30 duotone reproductions.

Photos courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

Posted by Susan at 11:15 AM

Labels: [2015 Next Wave Festival](#), [Mikhail Baryshnikov](#), [Peggy Jarrell Kaplan](#), [Portraits of BAM Artists](#), [Sasha Waltz](#)

Ephemeralist

by Susan Yung

Saturday, December 7, 2013

Glorious Notorious, A Chronicle of Dance Artists



Cristina Moura (2007)

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan's exhibition at Ronald Feldman Gallery in Soho, *Glorious Notorious* (through Dec 21) chronicles the choreographers and performers who have defined our near-past and current cultural lives. Rather than focus on the body in motion, instead the 50 photographic portraits peer into the artists' psychological states as seen through their piercing gazes, or playfully posed with a prop or in a gesture or movement. A densely packed corner installation features artists shot in South Africa earlier this year. Several videos play, including of Trajal Harrell and Daniel Linehan, bright stars in the current dance galaxy.



Jodi Melnick (2011)

Kaplan is known for her portraits of icons such as Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham, [Mark Morris](#), and Trisha Brown. She has also photographed many visual artists. She works in richly toned black & white, and almost always in a formal studio setting, lending the photos a timelessness. She has compiled, and continues to archive, an unmatched catalogue of dance artists for the ages.



An interview with photographer Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Ephemeral dance immortalized by photography on an Istanbul festival

The iDANS festival celebrating its 6th edition this year also hosts an exhibition of photography on dance, besides the performances and events taking place within its framework.

"Portraits of Choreographers: Body into Face (1985-2012)" is a photography exhibition on dance by the renowned photographer Peggy Jarrell Kaplan who is also the resident photographer at iDANS 06.

For more than four decades Kaplan has been photographing world-famous visual and performing artists and her works have been exhibited in many places around the world. Her recent exhibition on display at Haliç Congress Center between October 4-9th and at garajistanbul between October 13-18th *"takes the viewers on an analogue journey in contemporary dance through the 'faces' of its creators."* We interviewed her on her work.

You are only making portraits of choreographers: what is it about dance and the idea of portraits that engages you so much.

I've an early history in the eighties of making portraits of visual performance artists, composers, and theater directors, as well as choreographers, who were exploring new forms of artistic expression in rebellion against the past, but quickly found special fulfillment in photographing choreographers. This group of artists, who investigated the potential of the body and intellectualized dance movement, seemed to chart a new art in special ways.

I became interested in the qualities of these artists that inspired and informed their work, the sources of their creativity; and a portrait seemed the best way to get closer to what could not be seen. I also liked that the relationship of the dance artist to his/her creations is the most immediate and direct. In the words of the choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui: the dancer is both the draughtsman and the pencil.

There are other reasons as well: It is important that making photographs is about having experiences and meeting people. I like the intimacy of the portrait session, where realities evolve and are not reconstructed or reproduced. Yet my subjects will always remain mysterious to me, stage presences larger than life and heroic. Going to performances to "know" the choreographers before I meet them and sharing my exhibitions with dance audiences is all part of the process as well.

The Title of the exhibition comes from the choreographer Ea Solo, who asked how much the camera was capturing. When told that I was photographing only above her shoulders, she said: "Then I'll have to put my body into my face."



Self-portrait #2 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 1970.
Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

What, in your opinion, are the major differences and similarities between dance and photography?

Well, I would say that dance is the most ephemeral of the arts and photography immortalizes; that dance and photography, like all aesthetic pursuits, can emotionally touch audiences and viewers, and that is what I would like to accomplish.



Ea Solo © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 1999. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

From your experience working with choreographers, could you compare the work of a choreographer with her/his dancers and your work with your subjects for the portraits?

One of the most unexpected comments from a subject was that I was choreographing the choreographers. So your question is apt. The portrait studio becomes a small stage, and portrait making has performative elements that skirt artifice. I carry out my concepts by using subjects whose inherent qualities determine the impact of the picture – similar to the relationship of the choreographer to his/her dancer. The relationship is also collaborative as the success of my ideas, some premeditated, some intuitive, are based on mining resonances. I select the subject and the image to present the final “product.” The photographer Irving Penn has said that for him every portrait session is a competition, but I’m on the opposite end of that spectrum.

How much time do you spend together with a choreographer, getting to know her/him personally before you photograph her/him?

The session is about an hour at my apartment, and we meet as strangers, sharing pleasantries for a short time. The “knowing” takes place through the camera and there is an ebb and flow of the improvisations that lead to a natural ending. I become an over-caffeinated person -checking the equipment, tripping over wires, watering Plexiglas panels, hanging fabric from the ceiling, looking about for objects, creating makeshift tables – while the subject usually remains calm. It has occurred to me that Pina Bausch’s slightly bemused expression in my portrait of her is her reaction to observing me.



Mustafa Kaplan and Filiz Sizanli, © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 2012. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

Have you been to Istanbul before? If yes, what are your impressions on the city of Istanbul? If no, what are your expectations of it?

I spent a year in Turkey in 1967/68 teaching English at the Lycee of the American College for Girls and in fact purchased my first camera For the trip “as a tourist.” I volunteered to teach the photography club and learned my darkroom skills one lesson ahead of the students. It was wrenching to leave because the city’s beauty and its closeness to nature had become a part of me and now that was gone. My return in 2003 to see Pina Bausch’s “Nefes” was intense: I had changed more than the city, less a student of life and more a practitioner, but it was still painful to leave.

Now, 9 years later, I am aware of the sophistication of contemporary design and architecture that coexists with Istanbul’s unique character. Perhaps this new internationalism will make my departure easier to bear this time since the contrast between Istanbul and New York City is not so piercing.

More of Peggy Jarrell Kaplan’s work can be viewed at www.feldmangallery.com



Ayşe Orhon © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 2012. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

Have you ever photographed a Turkish choreographer or artist?

I photographed the choreographer Mehmet Sander in Scotland where I was soaking up the British dance scene and he was also performing in 1993. I photographed Ayşe Orhon, Filiz Sizanli, and Mustafa Kaplan (whom I had always wanted to meet since we share a surname but are not related) in New York City during a festival celebrating Turkey.



© Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 2011.

Mapp, Juliette. "Peggy Jarrell Kaplan in conversation with Juliette Mapp." *Movement Research: Critical Correspondence*, December 21, 2010.
<http://www.movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/?p=2778>



critical correspondence

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan in conversation with Juliette Mapp

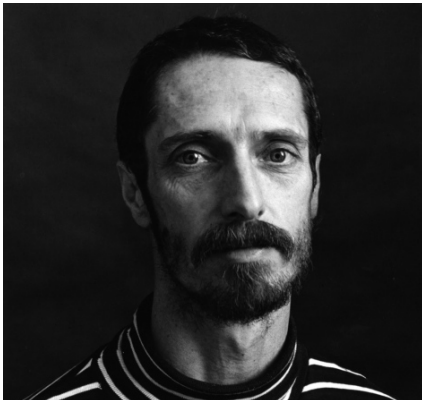
Choreographer [Juliette Mapp](#) talks with [Peggy Jarrell Kaplan](#), a photographer who has been making portraits of choreographers in New York and Europe for over thirty years. Her recent series of New York women choreographers is currently on display at the [Center for Performance Research](#), with a reception taking place on January 8 from 6-10pm.

Interview date: September 27, 2010

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan: Knowing that you were going to ask me questions, I started thinking of how much I love going to dance in New York. I love the community. I love seeing the same faces even though I'm apart from everything that's going on.

Juliette Mapp: That goes straight to something I was curious about: You say that you're "apart." You're on the outside, but you document in a way that is important to the community. I'm wondering if you can speak more to that.

Peggy: I've never studied dance. I feel it's both a strength and a weakness that I don't really get inside what's happening.



Steve Paxton, 1984 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

By the way, in general I don't photograph anyone else other than choreographers. I started photographing performance visual artists whom I came to know in the 70's, like Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Hannah Wilke, Charlotte Moorman. Judson Church had been floating around in my mind. I wanted to track them down, and I wanted to track down the people who had performed *Einstein On The Beach*. [That piece] didn't change my life, it changed my mind. ... [Then my work] very clearly became [focused on] choreographers.

Juliette: There's a sense of the outside eye [in your work]. How did you cultivate that role as opposed to seeing yourself inside the community?

Peggy: This whole process, in my mind, is the process of being able to see someone's work and then to [photograph them].

It's wonderful when the choreographer is also the dancer. It makes me think, "How would I make a portrait? What is it about this work? What would I do?" It's very important to me that I can see the work first.

You know, Sidi Larbi [Cherkaoui] said that the dancer or choreographer, as compared to the visual artist, is both the draftsman and the pencil. This is what I've felt. It's an immediate way of creativity, somehow related more to what that person is than painting with a canvas.

Juliette: That's an incredible quote. I have to say I've been looking for something like that myself.

Peggy: I've always seen [live performance] as something that's on the way to disappear. Nothing lasts after the dance. This made me think of all sorts of metaphorical, existential things. [My work is] an homage, really. I don't understand people who can devote their life to the body in that way and where their intelligence comes from. It's a group that's really outside of the norm in a way.

Juliette: There is that sense of honoring people in the way you care for them in the images. There's such a specific tenderness with each photograph. I don't know how you make that happen between the performer and you, the photographer. I'm interested in that process and that intimacy in the studio. Is it always at your home?

Peggy: Yeah. Except for... [Pina Bausch] didn't come to my home. [both laugh]

Juliette: I was looking at your archives and there's that one of [Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker] standing against a brick wall. I love that photograph so much. And that's one where I can really say, "Well, that wasn't at her house." I'm really really curious about that.

Peggy: Well, I'm afraid of that a little bit, because I don't want to think of it as an homage and I don't want to think of it as sentimental. I don't want to think of making myths. The real tool of photography is to see. It's not to make something. But what I do is... make something. There's a problem for me.

But, I guess in some sense the choreographer is a form, a still life. And this sounds so wrong in terms of no deconstruction... I don't even really think I'm going to say it.

Juliette: [laughs] You can shoot from the hip. It's fine.

Peggy: It's the sense that the choreographers are pretty tough, and they don't seem to be invested in how they look. There's a certain freedom in that.

You were photographed! Do you remember what that felt like?

Juliette: Absolutely. I absolutely did. I remember John Jasperse had his photo taken previous to me and he said "I'm not sure she got what she wanted." He had this anxiety about how the shoot went. And I remember going and feeling instantly really comfortable. Like, "Oh well, I'm just here in her house." I met your husband and your son and there was a conversation about *Madison as I Imagine It*. Then, when we went into your studio, it just felt like a continuation of what had happened outside. It didn't feel like there was an agenda that you were presenting me with, and that, I think, is what I'm so curious about. What is your intention in [your studio] environment? What are you communicating with the performers or choreographers?

Peggy: There have been shifts in my interests, but the process has been the same, because it feels slightly improvised... well, very much improvised.



Lucinda Childs, 1984 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

The first portraits were very much focusing on expression and concentrating on the face and the position of the head. It also seemed like the first people I was photographing, the Judson Church group, had something inside that was very intense and thoughtful.

Then I started to introduce things like... I'd start making a table. People could lean on it. It seemed like it was easier somehow to establish something different. I started using some objects from around my home, and once I exhausted ideas related to the object, I could get rid of it.

I guess at a certain period I must have been fascinated with hands on the face, and I must say they were really awful. [laughs]

But for my latest photographs, I decided to have more of a plan. I'd been photographing so many people from Europe, and there was a predominance of men... I decided, wouldn't it be great to photograph eleven New York-based women? So then it was like, well, I'll see who's performing in the summer and that's what [this next series of photographs] will be. Summer seemed a time to loosen up, to try new things, so I asked

each subject to bring a costume or something that related to the work.

Juliette: What attracts you to a particular performer? What is it that you feel sparks your imagination?

Peggy: I don't have a critical judgment. I like people that are far out there.

I have to mention something that Olivier Dubois said: "Maybe you photograph choreographers because you're trying to steal something." He said it with a French accent. It was such an original thought, a great beautiful thought. What does "stealing" mean? What is it influencing?

Juliette: I've seen your photographs since I was a young dancer, ones of Bill T. Jones or Mark Morris or the Judson group. There was the possibility, as a young dancer, to project a lot onto those portraits. They invited my creative imagination into who these choreographers were. As I've gotten older, and I know a lot of the choreographers you've taken pictures of, there does seem to be to me, an actual resonance in the photographs and their work.

Peggy: Well, I have always felt that with a portrait, meaning an image of a face, there is always a resonance. When I first started, there weren't a lot of portraits of this group of people. So in that sense, it seemed interesting to do that. I feel that it's frustrating to capture movement. How can you? How can you in a photograph? It's so difficult.

Juliette: That's what's so interesting [about] what you do. There's something that stays with you, brings you back to who that individual is as an artist, not just as an object of a portrait.

Peggy: I made a timeline of all the New York dance [that I've photographed].

Juliette: I want to read some of these names. I'll just read 1987: Trisha Brown, Martha Clarke, Steven Petronio, John Kelly, Lance Gries. That's 1987—just one year, you know?

Peggy: [My work] seemed to go in waves too, when exciting things were happening. All of a sudden, there would be this group of people that I was photographing. I was taking the temperature of what's going on.



Maria Hasabi, 2003 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Juliette: I'm so glad you mentioned that, because you've seen such a spectrum of dance over many decades. This is something I'm curious about in my own work: how generations are connected. What do you think is a defining characteristic of this moment?



John Kelly, 1987 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Peggy: Of this moment over the summer? Well, it was interesting that there were so many women performing in the summer.

Juliette: But [the focus on women] was an idea of yours beforehand?

Peggy: Yes, so I was thinking it's in the air. I find—now [the artists I photographed] may disagree about this—but everything felt lighter and less tortured to me. There are two people making the portrait: me and the person.

Juliette: You're seeing a bunch of work that corresponds to the individual.

Peggy: Yes, but I can't speak about the work, because I don't really respond critically. It's a very emotional response. So much [about being] in the audience depends on your mood or what you feel like. Sometimes you just have to give yourself over to it.

That feeling of Paige Martin's piece [*Panorama*]. That was such an extraordinary experience for me. I don't know, I just loved it. The hot weather and the dark, dusk, and going out to the beautiful park that I hadn't been to, waiting in line, seeing the faces of so many I had photographed, and then not knowing what was going to happen. Then, I was just hysterical after thinking, "Why is this line going so slow?" and discovering that you squeeze through [the entry doorway] as a quote [from] MoMA's show [Marina Abramovic's *The Artist is Present*]. And then you enter this brightly lit room and they give you champagne and there are these crazy things lying around and you don't know what's going on and you talk. It was just special. I could go on and on.

Juliette: I'm really happy to hear you describe your individual experiences, because I really appreciate that you bring yourself to each moment uniquely, as opposed to looking for some sort of zeitgeist at the moment that you're trying to capture.



Paige Martin, 2010 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Peggy: Well, sometimes I can be a little harsh and not going along with it. This summer was very special. Robbinschilds did an improvisation event that was very smart. But again, you had to give it time. They're subject #11 [for the CPR installation]. The audience was encouraged to submit a request. I usually don't participate, but I had such a strong feeling to ask them to "do" a portrait. Well, I'll tell you, their portrait was devastating and very funny. It was the most posed and artificial possible, so much the danger of what portraits are. Then one of them said, "Okay, make a tableau." They went on to make a larger tableau. Then one of them said, "Now animate it." So they all were still touching each other and still moving like some kind of creaking large toy. I got

away from something.

Juliette: This is helping me understand.

Peggy: This is one thing, and I don't think this fits at all. I always feel whenever I talk about it... And now I'm going to disappoint you...

Juliette: [laughs] You could never disappoint me.

Peggy: My sister led a troubled life, and we were estranged. She came to San Francisco the same time I came to New York in the 60's. In a sense, we were both product of our times, because I had my eye on New York and she had her eye on San Francisco for a freer life. She was very much taken with the love generation. She was very artistic and now there would probably be terms for her condition, but not back then. I guess she suffered from depression. She died from undiagnosed diabetes when she was 53 in 2003, and it turned out she kept journals since her late adolescence. Starting in the 70's, she began to make a drawing each day that illustrated herself.

Juliette: Everyday?

Peggy: Everyday. They were to show her moods and what she was feeling that day. I was thinking—I have a collection, and she had a collection. Hers were self-portraits for herself, and I'm

making portraits of others as my own obsession. So I've had some plans to somehow exhibit both, but the whole thing is very risky. What does "portrait" mean to my sister and me?

Once I went to a photography gallery and showed my portraits, and was told, "Well we don't show portraits at all." What is a portrait? It doesn't seem like a photograph. It seems like something else. I don't even think of myself as a photographer because I'm not really that technical and I'm not experimenting. With a portrait, since it is a face, there is always something that works. If half the shots don't come out it doesn't matter.



Layla Childs & Sonya Robbins, 2010 #2 ©
Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Juliette: One of my questions was where and how you picked the set pieces that are in more recent portraits you've been doing. I've been wondering for a while, "Where did that pole come from?" or "Where's that little bird from?" Now to know that they're actually things that you have a relationship to and in some sort of unconscious way choose to plant and manipulate... it's very interesting because it shows that there's this other level of connection to the moment, to the subject.

Peggy: I was grasping for a way to not only have a face.

Juliette: So you were trying to change the way in which you were working?

Peggy: I was, unconsciously or not. That's why I was interested in double portraits. It's interesting why I wanted to photograph you because at that time, you weren't a choreographer.

I actually have photographed dancers who I really like. I followed the Pina Bausch dancers and Rosas dancers and Sasha Waltz's dancers and [William Forsythe's] dancers and John Jasperse' dancers... I photographed you.



Juliette Mapp, 1999 © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

I was so struck by your face. I had the feeling that your face would be on a Roman coin. That's why the photograph always meant a lot to me. I had a concept first and felt that I had achieved it, and that was a nice moment.

Juliette: It was a great experience for me as well. Did you feel in the moment when you were taking the photograph that you achieved it?

Peggy: It's funny that you mentioned [John Jasperse] thinking after the session that [he wasn't sure if I got what I wanted]. I also feel like [that]. When I'm talking to someone after we have closed down shop... I notice new expressions, and I think "Maybe the portrait should be every time I *don't* click the shot."

Juliette: [laughs] That would really be a performance. So while you're taking it, you never have an idea like, "This is what I want. This is working."

Peggy: I do have that feeling sometimes, but it's not necessarily accurate.

Juliette: I see. Just like a performance. [both laugh]

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2006

| THE WEEK AHEAD |

Nov. 26—Dec. 2

DANCE

Roslyn Sulcas

THE ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER's opening night gala is always a festive affair, and the program can be relied upon to conclude with Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," a modern dance classic that is a bring-down-the-house showstopper. Wednesday night's opening of the company's annual monthlong stint at City Center is unlikely to be different in these respects, but the other pieces on the program are also particularly enticing this year. Twyla Tharp's "Golden Section," is also a rarity: the final, hyperkinetic part of "The Catherine Wheel," a full-evening work that the choreographer made in 1981 to music by David Byrne of the Talking Heads. Two days later comes the premiere of Karole Armitage's "Gamelan Gardens," an eagerly awaited event for those who have cheered this choreographer's return to New York after a long sojourn in Europe. *Wednesday through Dec. 31, City Center, 131 West 55th Street, Manhattan, (212) 246-9778, nycitycenter.org; \$25 to \$110.*

A year ago **JOHANNES WIELAND** presented "artificial," a program of dances full of resolutely cool and spare images — until a short, busy and darkly funny piece, "coma," suggested that this choreographer had a few other strings to his bow. One thing is certain: He doesn't like capital letters. A new evening titled "progressive coma" incorporates video and photo projections, and promises to look at the way that television shapes our lives. *Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m., next Sunday at 7 p.m., Ailey Citigroup Theater, 405 West 55th Street, Manhattan, (212) 868-4444, www.smarttix.com; \$25 at the door, \$20 in advance, \$15 for students.*

Most choreographers are not public figures, and even audiences familiar with names like Pina Bausch or Kazuo Ohno might well have no idea what they look like. **"PORTRAITS OF CHOREOGRAPHERS 1981-2006,"** an exhibition by the photographer **PEGGY JARRELL KAPLAN**, shows famous figures (Ms. Bausch, Merce Cunningham, William Forsythe) as well as younger dance makers like Boris Charmatz or Ann Liv Young. A perfect opportunity to speculate upon the relationship between physiognomy and choreographic style. *Through Dec. 22, Tuesday to Saturday, 10 to 6, Ronald Feldman Gallery, 31 Mercer Street, SoHo, (212) 226-3232, feldmangallery.com; free.*

Yung, Susan. "Bushwick Comes to SoHo." *Gay City News*, December 7-13, 2006, pp. 27, 29.

Bushwick Comes To SoHo

Outer boro experiment spreads wings, sews oats

BY SUSAN YUNG

Used in a cultural context, the word "salon" connotes an informal gathering to share ideas, and is one of the best concepts to be revived from the 17th century. Two very different cultural organizations, Chez Bushwick and SoHo's Ronald Feldman Gallery, have joined forces to rejuvenate the concept during the month of December. Amid the exhibition "Portraits of Choreographers 1981-2006" by Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, a series of free performances by notable choreographers began last Wednesday and continues on December 13 and 20.

Ronald Feldman Gallery, founded in 1971 and known for showing challenging art—including many pioneering performance artists—is one of the few remaining original outposts of art in SoHo. Kaplan, who has been photographing choreographers from all over the world for many years, discussed the idea's fruition.

"Responding to what I felt was a sense of excitement in recent downtown dance,



Saar Harari and Lee Sher will perform on the "Salon" series December 20.

I approached several dancers in late spring to take their portrait. There seemed to be a different openness in making these portraits that reflected their personalities and my new interests."

Kaplan's exhibition features portraits of dance world legends such as Kazuo Ohno, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Pina Bausch, whose company, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, performs at BAM December 8-16. Also strongly represented is a younger generation of creators, many of whom are based in New York.

performers are coming to the exhibition space, which I rather like, since it evens the balance, so to speak. Of course, here they are dancing in close proximity to the portraits, completing the cycle, bringing the photograph back to life."

Chez Bushwick is a cooperative that was formed out of creative and economic necessity, but it thrives on the limitless energy of its founders. Bushwick, on the list of neighborhoods ripe for gentrification behind others such as Williamsburg, is still essentially an industrial neighborhood.

"SoHo is like the civic grandfather of Bushwick, in many senses," observed Bokaer. "Both neighborhoods share an industrial history that, to a

A number of the performers in "Salon" appear in Kaplan's portraits, including Miguel Gutierrez, Ann Liv Young, and Juliette Mapp. They are on the cutting edge of dance, pushing boundaries and testing audiences' perceptions and limits. At Feldman, they will be performing amid a pantheon of cultural ghosts who also broke new ground—where Chris Burden once lived on a shelf for a month, hidden from view; where Christine Hill developed a pilot TV show; and where installations by Hannah Wilke, Ida Applebroog, and Joseph

certain extent, has served the creation of art and dance, by availing incredible loft spaces for living and working. And as I understand it, artists have consistently pioneered areas of the city that offered this kind of space—and the commerce or popularity are initially catalyzed by the artistic activity."

The Feldman Gallery has often availed its space for benefits and other non-commercial events, and yet the dance events in conjunction with Kaplan's exhibition are the gallery's first. Gallery co-owner Ronald Feldman summed it up.

"We should have done this a long time ago." An earlier dance performance, not part of "Salon," occurred in conjunction with Kaplan's show—a

CHEZ BUSHWICK PRESENTS
"Salon"
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts
31 Mercer St. btwn Grand & Canal
Dec. 13 & 20 7 p.m.
Free, 212-226-3232

Beuys have stood.

Jonah Bokaer, a founder of Chez Bushwick, "Salon's" organizer, and one of the performers, noted—"Given Ron and the gallery's history of past performances, it's an honor to be involved. Considering that these are some of the first dance performances at the gallery, I also think that Chez Bushwick is an appropriate fit—the organization is dedicated to the advancement of interdisciplinary art and performance, with a strong focus on experimental dance, so the relationship to visual and performance art is a strong one.

Also, many of these choreographers featured in Peggy's exhibit receive subsidized space from Chez Bushwick to create their work on a weekly basis; so there's a nice harmony between the photo exhibit

► CHEZ BUSHWICK, continued on p.29

► CHEZ BUSHWICK, from p.27

and the live performances. The idea of the series being a salon is a model that looks back to the history of visual art, rather than dance; in this way, it's a very appropriate setting."

Kaplan discussed the juxtaposition of captured portrait subject and performer. "I've always appreciated the chance to have the portraits shown in conjunction with dance performances to best reach those involved with dance—performers, critics, fans—who would respond to the portraits with special interest. Usually this has involved the portraits "traveling" to performance spaces, in theaters, as part of dance festivals, etc. In this case, the

November 30 performance by Holly Faurot and Sarah Paulson, in which the gallery was transformed by a cadre of beige-clad, self-absorbed women who moved robotically, rocking repeatedly or staring at small monitors located around the gallery, eliciting bemused inquisitiveness from the roaming audience.

Jennifer Monson, Seth Williams, Miguel Gutierrez, Jonah Bokaer, and DD Dorvillier performed December 6. Scheduled for December 13 are Ann Liv Young, Anna Sperber, Michael Portnoy/Johnnie Moore, and Yvonne Meier; and for December 20, Chamecki/Lerner, Lee Sher/Saar Harari, Juliette Mapp, and Isabel Lewis. Shows begin at 7 p.m.

Still Shots At Moving Targets

Dance Center Celebrates 30 Years of Dance
Through Kaplan's Portraits

*a*s part of its 30th Anniversary Season, The Dance Center will celebrate its noteworthy history of presenting world-class artists through an exhibition by renowned dance photographer Peggy Jarrell Kaplan. *Still Shots at Moving Targets* will feature black and white portraits of choreographers whose work has been performed at The Dance Center during the past three decades.

In addition to a portrait of Shirley Mordine, founder and Chair of The Dance Center until 1999, the exhibition will feature 18 dance artists, including: Trisha Brown, Chandralekha, Eiko & Koma, Doug Elkins, Molissa Fenley, Noam Gagon & Dana Gingras (Holy Body Tattoo), Ralph Lemon, Yin Mei, Bebe Miller, Stephen Petronio, Angelin Preljocaj, David Rousseve, Salia ni Seydou, Muna Tseng, and Wim Vandekeybus.

Kaplan has photographed more than 500 visual and performing artists from the international avant-garde movement since 1975.

"In the '70s, I became interested in photographing visual artists who were using their bodies in performance," she recalled. "And I liked the greater intimacy of portraits over performance shots. Then, in the '80s, there was an explosion of post-modern dance in the U.S. and dance theatre from Europe, so I began to concentrate more on choreographers. The fact that they were taking risks and conceptualizing new dance movement gave relevance to a portrait, in contrast to a performance photograph, to express force of character and an inner configuration of singular thought and emotion."

Kaplan's portraits of choreographers feature those who have chosen to explore new forms of dance, including post-modern dance from New York (the early Judson Church pioneers and their heirs), Butoh from Japan and new dance from France, Holland, Montreal, Great Britain and Eastern Europe.

"I was fascinated by Judson Church group happenings," she said. "These were artists trying to develop a new definition of dance, beyond entertainment, composition or acrobatics. I was struck by their efforts to say something in a non-traditional way."

In addition to The Dance Center exhibition, Kaplan's portraits will be exhibited in Seattle as



YIN MEI, 2002

"I usually try to place an object in the photograph that is lying around my apartment in a sort of improvisation. Sometimes there's a correlation with the portrait subject. With Yin Mei, I thought a flower petal placed on her face would look interesting, and I discovered later that such images have been used as traditional Chinese motifs."

part of the 25th anniversary celebration of the performing arts organization On the Boards this fall. Other exhibitions of her work have included performance portraits at La Maison des Arts André Malraux in Créteil, France; Pina Bausch portraits at the Goethe-Institut in New York and Sao Paulo, Brazil; portraits of the White Oak Dance Project's PastForward at the Festival International de Nouvelle Dance in Montreal; and exhibitions in Russia, Portugal, Russia, France, Aruba, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Austria and across the U.S. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dance Museum in Stockholm and Theater Instituut Nederland in Amsterdam. Kaplan noted, "All artists have tools they use to communicate—a writer has words, a visual artist has paint. But there is something fundamental about using the body as your medium, and it speaks to me. Dance offers both freedom and limitation with the body. There is a struggle in people who have chosen dance—and a kind of heroism."

Jill Chukerman is owner and principal of JAC Communications, which manages public relations for The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and other Chicago-area performing arts organizations, as well as writing, editing and public relations projects for clients in education, publishing, law, medical administration and other industries.

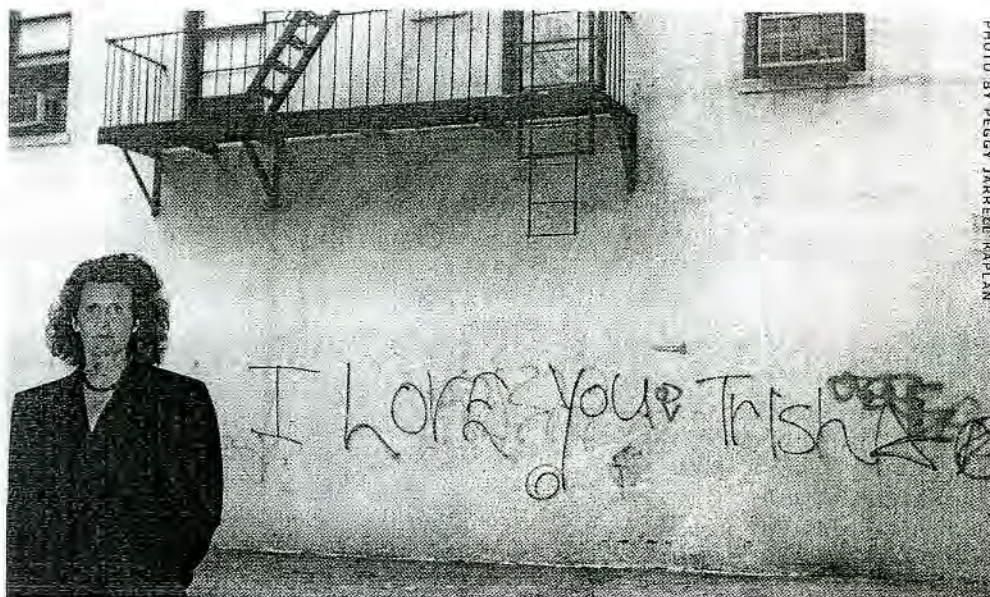


PHOTO BY PEGGY JARRELL KAPLAN

TRISHA BROWN, 1987

"I approached her (Trisha Brown) three times; each time she said no. When she finally said yes, I was having an exhibition in Montpellier, France, where she was performing, and the festival director wanted her included in the exhibition. She told me her face was her least favorite part of her body. I don't want the person to dislike the photo. Then on a street I walked down regularly I saw graffiti that said, 'I love you Trisha,' and I decided to photograph her with it. I knew she wouldn't want to travel uptown for the photo so I took a slide and shot her standing against its projection in her studio."

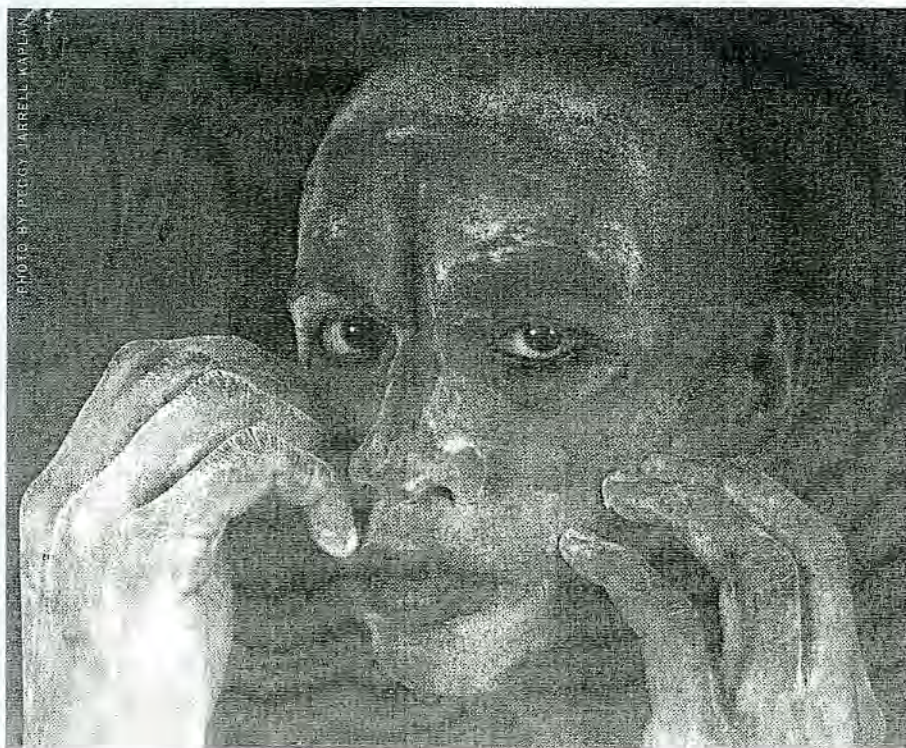


PHOTO BY PEGGY JARRELL KAPLAN

"This portrait of Ralph Lemon was more theatrical than usual for my photos. It made me think about what is a portrait vs. what is a performance."

Still Lives

Two exhibits peek into the world of dancers and choreographers when they're not in motion

November 23, 2003|By Lucia Mauro, Special to the Tribune.

Dance is one of the most visible manifestations of the mind-body connection. Combine it with another medium -- visual art -- and the layers of creative inspiration gain intriguing new dimensions. Two separate art exhibitions explore the dancer's and choreographer's craft from unique perspectives. Through Dec. 6, the Dance Center of Columbia College features Peggy Jarrell Kaplan's black-and-white photo portraits of modern dancer-choreographers in a show titled "Still Shots at Moving Targets." The Thomas Masters Gallery in Old Town displays Peter Hurley's oil paintings and drawings of "Chicago Dancers" in class through Dec. 31.

Kaplan opted for exploring the dance artist's mind via portraiture; Hurley chose to focus on dance's rigorous demands on the body.

Because Kaplan's subjects are experimental choreographers, their abstract nature is reflected in the photographs. Yin Mei, known for her contemplative choreography, is photographed with her eyes closed, yet the petal of an African violet "opens" over one eye. The theatrical Ralph Lemon, whose face and hands are dusted with white powder, seems to gaze directly at the viewer while looking toward infinity. Hurley, meanwhile, goes beyond pristine illustrations of dancers at the ballet barre to blur faces and bathe them, at times, in garish blues or greens.

For New York-based photographer Kaplan, who has shot more than 500 avant-garde artists around the world since 1975, the paradox of showing dancers in stillness offers unexpected insight.

"I thought there was something perverse in not wanting to capture them in motion," says Kaplan, from New York's Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Gallery. "It's like taking a windup toy and turning it off."

All of the 19 portraits on display feature groundbreaking dance artists who have appeared at the Dance Center during its 30-year history. Dance Center founder Shirley Mordine is Kaplan's most recent subject, and her serene yet definitive photo joins this vast gallery of post-modern choreographers at their most private and personal.

"I went to New York to be photographed," says Mordine, who also heads Mordine & Co. Dance Theatre. "I walked in the door of Peggy's apartment and saw photos of John Cage, Pina Bausch and Merce Cunningham. And I thought, whoa, this is nice company!"

Mordine was impressed with the "directness" and "lack of pretense" exhibited in Kaplan's portraits. As one who has spent her life in motion, Mordine learned the beauty of stillness while being photographed: "I discovered how much is revealed by doing nothing."

Kaplan -- a student of the late Robert Mapplethorpe -- found one of the best parts of her job was tracking down the artists to photograph. Not a dancer herself, she fell in love with the art form after seeing performances by the famed New York City Judson Church choreographers, such as David Gordon and Yvonne Rainer, who favored dance that mirrored everyday movement and gesture.

The Dance Center's executive director Phil Reynolds says Kaplan's photographs invite viewers to observe dancer-choreographers in rare "private moments."

While Kaplan prompts those personal glimpses through portraiture, Chicago artist Hurley offers a peek into the dance studio. His half-abstract/half-figurative oil paintings show local dancers -- mainly from Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Ballet Chicago Studio Company and the Ruth Page Foundation School of Ballet -- rigorously stretching their bodies. Although Hurley cites French Impressionist painter Edgar Degas as an influence, his works do not imply pretty greeting-card images. Like Degas, the artist is interested in the behind-the-scenes training versus idealized depictions of dancers in performance.

"As a figurative artist," Hurley says, "it is ultimately thrilling and challenging to capture, in the two-dimensional medium of painting, the dancer's struggle to make the human body do things it wasn't designed to do."

Among the 40 paintings and drawings on display at the Thomas Masters Gallery, most show dancers in the severely geometric world of the studio -- with its barres, mirrors, rectangular floors and high ceilings. One places a female dancer in warm-up clothes on the floor in a back stretch in front of a distant piano. Another painting features a group of dancers -- together with snapshots of a leg or hip -- executing a pirouette combination in an ominous light that resembles a photographic negative.

Hurley, a self-taught artist, began his artistic exploration of dancers in the 1970s -- inspired by his sister, a ballet dancer. His most recent paintings are featured in Robert Altman's film "The Company" (opening Dec. 25), which follows the dancers of the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago. In the movie, they hang in the office of Malcolm McDowell's character, who portrays real life Joffrey co-founder/artistic director Gerald Arpino.

"He has captured the inner movement of the figure," Arpino says. "You respond to his paintings the way you respond to live dance."

"Still Shots at Moving Targets" through Dec. 6 at the Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan Ave.; 312-344-8300. "Chicago Dancers" through Dec. 31 at Thomas Masters Gallery, 245 W. North Ave.; 312-440-2322. Both exhibitions are free and open to the public.

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

Au Centre Georges Pompidou, le théâtre ou la danse ne sont pas uniquement présents sur la scène. Ils sont aussi montrés dans leur rapport aux autres arts, et à la vie tout court. Comme en témoigne la belle exposition des portraits de chorégraphes américains par la photographe Peggy Jarrell Kaplan.

Dans une société qui aime et produit la vitesse, la danse aspire à un temps différé, comme suspendu. Le temps de l'œuvre, le temps de l'écriture. A l'image de Merce Cunningham et John Cage, imprégnés de philosophie zen, les chorégraphes exhalent, sur cette planète affolée, une singulière sagesse. Donner un sens, y compris dans l'abstraction, au mouvement. Chercher, tout en refusant le simple exploit physique, *ce que peut un corps*. Inscire la trace d'un art par essence éphémère, à un moment où la consommation d'images s'accélère. Tels seraient quelques-uns des principes de base de la danse ; un art d'apprivoiser la durée...

A la mort de Hideyuki Yano (un chorégraphe japonais qui a fait carrière en France où il a eu une grande influence à partir de 1976), Daniel Dobbels se souvenait, dans un texte pour *Libération*, de l'un des exercices préférés de Yano : « Bouger et parler le visage caché derrière un voile sombre et très léger sans que le souffle et le mouvement ne déplacent d'un iota le tissu parfaitement neutre et immobile. » A regarder les portraits de chorégraphes photographiés par Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, on peut sentir la même qualité d'effleurement. Des portraits d'Yves Musard à Merce Cunningham, en passant par ceux de Mark Morris, Susan Blankenshop, Anne-Teresa de Keersmaecker, Reinhild Hoffmann et combien d'autres, un même calme envahit l'image. Une étonnante passivité. Quelle est donc cette tranquille lucidité qui éclaire, doucement, les visages de ces chorégraphes et danseurs ?

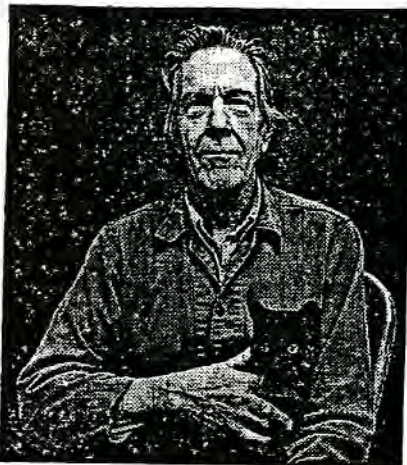
Les physionomies, les présences, passionnent les portraitistes, « curieux des révélations faites à la fois par la morphologie et par l'émergence dans le regard, le geste, des palpitations intérieures »¹. Appelons cela, en ce qui concerne Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, *l'inspiration du chorégraphe*. Ushio Amagatsu, le chorégraphe de Sankai Juku, lui demanda si elle souhaitait « quelque chose de naturel ». « Non, non, pas du tout », lui répondit-elle... Préférant la tricherie significative de la pose au cliché spontané, elle trouve dans ce qui tient lieu de face à face, le moment d'une concentration, une sorte de transparence. Il n'est pas sûr, au demeurant, que tous les chorégraphes photographiés par Peggy Jarrell Kaplan acceptent de reconnaître leur image dans ce qui résulte de ce face à face. Bob Wilson, habile, a choisi la dissimulation. Pina Bausch a confié à l'objectif l'intensité de sa présence fantomatique. Pour reprendre le mot de Diane Arbus, « A photography is a secret about a secret ». Ce secret peut avoir quelque chose d'effrayant. Mary Wigman confie, dans *le Langage de la Danse*, avoir eu la première inspiration de sa fameuse *Danse de la Sorcière* en surprenant un matin, dans un miroir, son visage hagard et échevelé. Mais il n'est pas sûr que Peggy Jarrell Kaplan ait pu se trouver ce jour-là à la place du miroir. Elle-même, en tout cas, ne met aucune cruauté dans ses portraits. Au contraire, on est confondu par l'extrême douceur, *spirituelle*, pour ne pas dire religieuse, qui en émane.

« Les danseurs sont de nouveaux saints », disait Peggy Jarrell Kaplan en présentant ses portraits au festival Montpellier-Danse. Toutefois, pas plus qu'elle ne les dénigre, elle ne cherche à sacraliser les chorégraphes qu'elle « collectionne ». Des photos de Reinhild Hoffmann et Merce Cunningham, elle dit : « Ces portraits sont très simples parce que ces chorégraphes sont célèbres, et je crois que la simplicité convient à leur personnalité. » La plupart de ses portraits ne sont pas encombrés d'effets de mise en scène ou d'indications biographiques : Peggy Jarrell Kaplan n'est pas intéressée par *l'anecdote*. Toute en discrétion, sa ténacité d'amour pour les chorégraphes, qu'elle rencontre un bref laps de temps (là aussi, il faut apprendre à apprivoiser la durée), réussit à réaliser la séduction mystérieuse et profonde du portrait. Dans la caresse réciproque des visages et des images, la passion de portraitiste de Peggy Jarrell Kaplan rencontre la passion des chorégraphes.

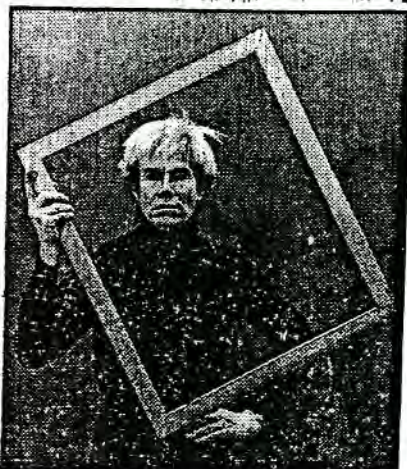
Jean-Marc Adolphe

Portraits de chorégraphes. Photographies de Peggy Jarrell Kaplan. Du 22 décembre 1993 au 21 février 1994, Grand foyer.

1. Pierre Borhan, in revue *Clichés*, juin 1986.



JOHN CAGE: The avant-garde composer, artist and writer died last year.



ANDY WARHOL: Ms. Kaplan added her image to the hundreds of photographs taken of one of the 20th century's most recognized artists.

Photographer Captures Dancers' Personalities

BY KYLE MACMILLAN
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Dancers leap, spin, propel themselves through space. But in Peggy Jarrell Kaplan's portraits, they are motionless.

Dancers use their entire bodies, especially the legs and feet, but a photo by Ms. Kaplan usually shows only the face and perhaps a hand or two.

Such paradoxes might seem insurmountable hurdles to successful dance photography, but Ms. Kaplan has transformed them into assets.

"Occasionally, it seems somewhat perverse to take a very slow-speed . . . shot of such physical human beings — focusing on their face and their hands. But I persist," she said in a phone interview from the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery in New York City where she works.

Ms. Kaplan, 50, soon will reach the pinnacle of her part-time photographic career when she exhibits more than 100 of her dance portraits in the grand lobby of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris from Dec. 22 to Feb. 21, 1994.

Midlanders will get a chance to see a cross-section of her dance photographs, as well as several portraits of visual and performing artists, in a free exhibition that opens with a reception from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at Gallery 72, 2709 Leavenworth St.

Included will be images of Merce

Fast Facts

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan

- **What:** Photography exhibition
- **When:** Nov. 5-28
- **Where:** Gallery 72, 2709 Leavenworth St.
- **Information:** 345-3347
- **Admission:** free

Cunningham, Mark Morris, Robert Wilson, Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Peter Brook, Pina Bausch and Bill T. Jones.

In conjunction with the show, Dance Theater of Omaha will present an informal showing of modern-dance works by Omaha choreographers Daliene Majors, Amy Herrman and Susan Matsunami in the company's studio at 2919 Leavenworth St.

Performances are scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted.

Ms. Kaplan's growing success as a photographer has come as she enters her 50s, a time when many people's thoughts turn to grandchildren and taking things a little easier.

"I actually got a very late start in
 Please turn to Page 29, Col. 1

Photos Capture Dancers' Personalities

Continued from Page 27

finding what I really love to do. I probably did not start seriously taking portraits until my late 30s," she said.

At first, she photographed visual artists who presented performance pieces at the Feldman gallery. But then she began to think back to the 1976 production of Philip Glass' multimedia opera, "Einstein on the Beach."

"It just changed my whole life in a way as to what an experience could be in the theater, and it was so new, and I started to track down the people who were part of it and take their photographs," she said.

After a few more twists and turns, she became drawn to modern dance, especially that of such then-emerging choreographers such as Jones and Morris.

"To me, dance is very exotic," she said. "To devote yourself to the strenuous kind of physical labor is the last thing that I would ever choose to do, and I think I stand apart from these people that do it and see them as kind of greater than life and sort of even like idols or god-like. That's why I think in later photographs, I've tried to make (the prints) bigger and bigger so the face is actually larger than life."

Instead of capturing dancers in the heat of movement, she began to set up sittings in which she could exert near-total control. She learned that a choreographer's physical presence and sensibility could be communicated with only the

Fast Facts

Dance Theater of Omaha

■ **What:** Informal dance showing

■ **When:** 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday

■ **Where:** 2910 Leavenworth St.

■ **Admission:** free; donations accepted

face and hands.

"It's surprising how compliant they are, because they all have such forceful personalities. They seemed to be perfectly willing to have me tell them things to do, and that's the way I like it, frankly," she said.

After she had built a significant body of such portraits, dance festivals and performing arts centers — and later art galleries and museums — began expressing interest.

"And it sort of became a kind of mission to keep tracking down certain choreographers whose work I liked very much, and it took on an international kind of feeling to it," she said.

She uses a medium-format Mamiya camera and black-and-white film, which she processes and prints herself. She used to use tungsten lights which required

the sitter to remain still for a couple of seconds, but she switched recently to strobes.

"I like the combination of kind of a romantic image with the sharpness and grittiness of the strobe, so it's not a sentimental picture, so you really see a lot on the face that another photographer might air brush out," she said.

In recent years, her photographs have been exhibited at such venues as the Dansmuseet in Stockholm, Sweden, Centre Choreographique National de France in Grenoble, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Lee, Mass., and the San Antonio Institute of Fine Arts.

Ms. Kaplan still seems caught a little off guard by ever-increasing attention paid to her work, which she says she never expected.

"Absolutely never. I had no idea it would become this series of choreographers that so many people would be interested in," she said.

Now that she is about to exhaust the world's supply of important dance figures, she has begun to turn her interests to conceptual artists from the former Soviet Union and already has assembled a portfolio of more than 40.

She also recently finished her first two portraits of writers, and she is considering more in that field.

"But the trouble is they all wear glasses, and none of the choreographers do. It takes a different picture, a different problem that I haven't overcome yet."

REFLECTIONS ON PEGGY JARREL KAPLAN

Gallery John A. Schweitzer, Montreal. September 19 to October 6, 1991



Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, *Mark Kostabi*, 1987.

Whether Peggy Jarrell Kaplan is a photographer who fastens her vision to the study of people, or a portraitist who has chosen the medium of photography as most suited to her purposes, or both, are questions worthy of consideration. Both roles, for Kaplan, serve not only as revelatory mechanisms but inherently carry within them their own aesthetic proposals and solutions.

Her portraits are all of artists; in her most recent exhibition at Galerie John A. Schweitzer, choreographers of the international avant-garde arts community predominate. Also included are portraits of Brodsky, Utkin and Ilya Kabakov, three pivotal figures in the second wave of contemporary Russian visual artists. The passive/active presence of the artist as subject gives greater dimensionality to the original configuration, which is at once inspired in its vision and confident in its method.

In a recent guest-curated exhibition at the Louvre, Jacques Derrida hypothesises about self-portraiture and drawing. He explains that during the act of drawing the

artist "has seen" and "will see" but presently does not see. He refers to the difference between the thing drawn and the drawn line or drawing. Portraiture is compromised by the "apperception of the graphic art" or the process of drawing.

If Kaplan chooses photography over drawing, she circumvents this obstacle of process, yet photography comes with its own attendant indeterminacies. She handles all decisively and characteristically.

Diane Arbus claims of photography that "the more it tells you, the less you know". Kaplan effortlessly accepts the inevitability of this cardinal law and is consciously discriminatory in what she attempts to achieve and the means she uses to achieve it. She approaches her craft with an almost classic economy of means. The usual dependence on contextual and physiognomic signs is diminished.

Facial expression and pose are not formal concerns, and an overall calm prevails. Sometimes a hand will be used gesturally, or a personally significant object in-



Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, *Robert Wilson*, 1985.

cluded. The anecdotal is kept to a minimum. A soft diffused natural light is preferred to the expressive scope of *chiaroscuro*. This austerity, this paring down, gives us less information about the drama of character; at the same time it leads us to the first intimations of the transcendent nature of the work.

Two mechanisms she does allow herself are the static frontal head and shoulder and the dark backdrop, which creates an evocative figure and ground.

Richard Avedon's statement, "There is no such thing as inaccuracy in a photograph. All photographs are accurate. None of them is the truth", is only indirectly addressed in Kaplan's work. Kaplan's accuracy and truth are defined by her singular purpose; the inspiration that resides within the artist, the alluding to this symbolic status of his own *œuvre*.

Derrida has also conjectured about the metaphorical link of self-portraiture and blindness, which leads to an impossible reflexivity: "Put simply, it is necessary to know, to see clearly that the performative fiction that involves the spectator in the work's signature can be viewed only through the blindness it produces as truth. Even if we were certain that (the artist) was drawing himself drawing himself, we can never know solely by looking at the work if he is depicting himself drawing or drawing something else - or even himself as something else."

Inasmuch as it would be assumed that the self-portrait would most closely approach the locus of the creative spirit, we are often left with only a dizzying mirroring. The division of labour, into subject and object, photographer and sitter, absolves the image of a taint of self-surveillance. Each may enter a symbiotic, if not sympathetic, relationship. Often this relationship becomes antagonistic when interpretations and expectations are imposed by subject/photographer and suffered

by object/sitter. The junction becomes either a place of dull ambiguity or a battleground of human will against imagination.

Kaplan uses great discretion in approaching her subject, as Jean-Marc Adolphe relates in his foreword to a collection of Kaplan prints, "At the death of Kideyuki Yano, an influential Japanese choreographer, Daniel Dobbells recollects one of his favourite exercises, 'To move and speak with one's face hidden behind a dark and very thin veil without allowing one's breath to disturb the neutrality and stillness of the cloth.' In looking at the portraits of choreographers of Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, one can feel that same quality of barely touching."

Subject and object, both artists, have the same function and operate reciprocally. Kaplan is deferential to her objects and in turn the objects (the photographed artists) exude a lucid passivity.

Kaplan forgoes the contemporary practice of disassociation of subject and object by manipulative techniques. The complicit embrace of her subject and object has locked within it many of the eternal questions about the representation of objective reality.

In a recent interview, choreographer Edouard Lock says, "quelque part, même si on a le désir d'être désorienté, il y a aussi le désir contraire de ne pas perdre l'orientation, le sens. Ces deux réalités se contrebalancent dans l'expérience de la chorégraphie moderne."

Mostly, we are left with allusions to the spirituality of the creative act and the possibility of transcending earthbound realities.

MELANIE REINBLATT

EDITOR'S NOTE

Initiated and circulated by Gallery John A. Schweitzer, Montréal, the exhibit will be travelling until July 1992. It is presently at Stadsschouwburg, in Holland, and will be going to Sommersze, Austria and Galerie Frédéric Bazille, France.

Art Talk

with

Melanie Reinblatt

The Montreal Downtowner, Wednesday, October 30, 1991



Edouard Lock's photo portrait is by Peggy Jarrell Kaplan. 1988.
Courtesy Galerie John A. Schweitzer

The photographs of Peggy Jarrell Kaplan are somewhat of a revelation. Her photo-portraits are exclusively those of artists. She has been taking portraits of choreographers, composers, visual and performance artists from the international Avant-Garde arts community since 1975.

Her works shed itself of many of the visual clues often used by photographers to determine character and emotion.

For instance, she restricts her usage of facial expression, gesture, pose, props and varied lighting as usual indicators. What she does allow herself are central, frontal, head and shoulders portraits bathed in a diffused natural light. A soft dark background cuts an almost classic figure and ground, with an allusion to

the backdrop of the stage. Occasionally a hand will be employed gesturally, or a personally signified object will be included.

Surprisingly a common mode seems to pervade all of her oeuvre; one of calm and inner balance. Kaplan's deliberately exclusive practice inherently tells us she is not so much concerned with an appraisal of personality so much as the inspiration that resides in the artist.

Of course, "striking a pose" is a moment of personal theatre; a self-determination. Yosuf Karsh has admitted that he preferred to photograph famous writers and composers rather than famous actors because the latter "had such a vast experience in maintaining that mask." The "mask" was the result of liv-

ing more often in front of the camera than off, that boundaries of public and private persona became indistinguishable. His success lay in the "partial relaxing of famous public faces."

A choreographer/dancer is artist enough to reserve the mask for his performance. In a portrait, only eloquence of their creative fertility shines through.

And what is interesting about photography and artists is the sympathy and complicity of artists working on either end of the lens.

PORTRAITS OF
CHOREOGRAPHERS—
PEGGY JARREL
KAPLAN
GALLERY JOHN A.
SCHWEITZER
42 PINE AVE.



Performing Arts

Kaplan, Peggy Jarrell. *Portraits of Choreographers*.

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc. 1988. 76 p.
Bibliography. ISBN: 2-906-953-04-0.
\$15.95, pb.

Stunning photographs of contemporary choreographers by Peggy Jarrell Kaplan are accompanied by quotes from the choreographers regarding their work, or their aesthetic viewpoint. The combination affords the reader a revealing portrait of today's choreographers of new dance.

Even without the accompanying (French and English) bilingual text, the photographs capture the essence of the choreographer in a profound way, and their comments reflect upon this. In the forward, French writer Jean-Marc Adolphe attributes Peggy Jarrell Kaplan's concern toward the "inspiration of the choreographer." She does capture the spirituality of dance in these portraits.

"Concept to Spectacle: Contemporary New York Choreographers" by Marianne Goldberg, dance editor of *Women and Performance*, gives a brief description of new dance from its beginnings in the 1950s through the 80s. "The Re-territorializing of Dance," by Chantal Pontbriand, a Montreal art critic describes what is today commonly called "new dance" as it is found throughout

the world. These articles increase the book's historical and educational value.

This book would be an asset to teachers and students studying dance, aesthetics, language, communication media, art, philosophy or contemporary society. It is a cultural resource of contemporary values.
EP

Kennedy, Adrienne. *People Who Led To My Plays*.

Theatre Communications Group, Inc.
1987. 125 pp. Photographs. LC# 86-46010.
ISBN: 0-930452-90-9. \$9.95.

Playwright, Adrienne Kennedy, has written a lively and unusual autobiography which will be enjoyed by fans of her work and others interested in literary formats that break new ground. Unlike the usual narrative style used to tell life stories, the author lets readers browse through a scrapbook that chronicles her life from elementary school to just before public recognition began for her work (1936-1961).

Using photographs, most from her personal collection, Kennedy provides a collage of pros and pictures in sparse, elegant sections. Each describes the effect of a personality, fictional character, world event, or everyday happening on her development. These include such diverse people and events as her family, actress Bette Davis, Winston Churchill, World War II, and getting new paperdolls.

Readers will come away with not only the author's history, but a treasure chest of images drawn from the era's popular culture.

Photos freeze fast-moving dance artists

By DAN R. GODDARD
Express-News Arts Writer

Photographer Peggy Jarrell Kaplan discovered the most challenging aspect of taking "Portraits of Choreographers" was getting the modern movers to sit still.

Kaplan's 20 portraits of modern dance choreographers will go on display 7 p.m. Monday in the Student Gallery of the San Antonio Art Institute, 6000 N. New Braunfels.

The reception is the first event of the "New Directions in Music & Dance" festival presented by San Antonio Performing Arts Association.

Adjectives like stark, tough, penetrating, compelling and provocative come to mind in trying to describe Kaplan's straightforward photographs of the dance innovators. She chose to focus on the character in their faces at rest, rather than the energy of their bodies in motion.

"When they came to photo sessions, I think they were bringing something about their commitment to performance. They had a sense of presence," Kaplan said in a phone interview from New York. "I think I was intrigued because of the fact



KAPLAN

See PHOTOGRAPHER'S, Page 15-A

Photographer's subjects on the go

Continued from 14-A

that they were all thinkers, and came from several different countries."

Four choreographers involved in the "New Directions" festival are included: David Gordon, Kathy Rose, Susan Marshall and Margaret Jenkins.

The portraits debuted in 1985 in a show called "Avant-Garde Dance" at the Lincoln Center Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.

"I started taking photographs of visual artists in the early 1970s, but I gradually ran out of artists that I knew. Then I began to get interested in new forms of performance art. They reminded me of happenings in the late 1960s," Kaplan said.

Not all the choreographers were eager to have their portraits taken. Trisha Brown turned Kaplan down twice before finally agreeing to pose.

"The fact that she kept telling me no just made me want to take her picture that much more," Kaplan said. "Then, I was walking down my street one day, past a place I had passed hundreds of times, and looked up and saw spray-painted on the wall, 'I love you Trisha.' It seemed like the right kind of American touch.

"But I knew I couldn't get her to pose on the street. So I took a slide and went to her studio and projected it on the wall. It looks like she's standing outside, but she's not.

"It was important to me to show how their bodies related to their faces," she said. "I like to use long exposures, up to two seconds, and none of the choreographers had trouble sitting still that long. I think it shows what marvelous body control they have."

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RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS, 31
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Portraits of Choreographers: Peggy Jarrell Kaplan
(in English and French) catalogues a summer
exhibition of 30 photographs from 1982 to
1988. Kaplan, who has been doing art-world
portraiture since 1975, treats dancers like ev-
eryone else, that is, she focuses (with one

exception) on faces at rest, not bodies in motion. There are several ways to justify this: noting the images' "lucid stillness," critic Jean-Marc Adolphe says in a foreword that dance aspires to the suspension, or "taming," of time. In one of the statements accompanying each photo (some previously published and some evidently new) Pina Bausch is quoted as saying, in a 1978 interview, "I am interested in what moves people, not how they move." But John Kelly has the last word on the pertinence of portraiture: "What is fascinating about doing a body of work," he says, is that "it winds up looking just like you." The subjects of these stylish portraits range from Merce Cunningham to such lesser-knowns as Maguy Marin and Natsu Nakajima. Also here are Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Martha Clarke, Eiko, Molissa Fenley, Bill T. Jones with and without Arnie Zane, Robert Wilson, and others. Marianne Goldberg, a writer and choreographer, contributes a short essay on contemporary dance, starting with Cunningham and concentrating on the Judson Dance Theater and its descendants. Canadian critic Chantal Pontbriand surveys the current field from a more international perspective. 76 pp. 30 duotones. Price: \$18 postpaid.

TOILING AWAY FOR THE FESTIVAL

Photographer Peggy Kaplan portrays Dutch dancers

Sundaymorning eleven thirty at the Amsterdam home of Dutch dancers Alexandra Radius and Han Ebbelaar. New York photographer Kaplan is assembling old as well as new photographs of dancers and choreographers for an exhibition at the forthcoming Holland Festival.

In The Netherlands she has been photographing people like Jiri Kylian, Rudi van Dantzig and Pauline Daniëls of Dansproduktie. This time it's the turn of dancing-couple Radius and Ebbelaar.

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan is not concerned with action-photographs and devotes herself exclusively to portrait-photography. A photo-session will take one and a half hour. Today is her third day in this country. Tomorrow she has an appointment with Van Dantzig and that same afternoon she will travel back to New York. On the whole she has been toiling away for eight days. The first four days she spent in Paris. At first, the Holland Festival planned to present her already existing exhibition with photographs of over 50 choreographers, dancers and composers who have performed at the New Wave Festival in New York the past two years. When Kaplan suggested to emphasize photographs which were to be made especially for the Holland Festival of participating artists, this was sympathetically received and in the end accepted. They will be on view during the entire month of June in the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam.

'It is not as if I started being a serious photographer overnight', the 42-year old photographer claims. 'It has taken me years. I have been an English teacher in Istanbul for a year, where I actually bought my first camera. Once I was back in New York I had a part-time job at the Feldman art-gallery. Here, I started to take photographs of the artists who were exhibiting their work at the gallery. In 1974, for example, I photographed Joseph Beuys. At that time I still thought that everything artists were doing had to be recorded for posterity. But soon I realised that that just won't do'. Because of this she stopped taking photographs altogether for a while. Her recording in 1976 of the opera 'Einstein on the Beach' by Philip Glass and Robert Wilson was the turning-point: 'I felt that it was only then that my passion for photography really started. I took photographs of everyone working on the opera. Only Philip Glass is still missing. Somehow something always interfered'.

It was also of great importance that artists came to see her at home to be portrayed more frequently. This was a new starting point. It wasn't long before she started calling artists herself with the request to take their photographs. At the end of the seventies, she met choreographer Kenneth King through whom she became increasingly interested in the world of dance.

'Choreographers and dancers in particular are not afraid to open up entirely and they are used to receiving criticism. And yet, it is so totally different from taking photographs of actors: I think that if that is what you do, the result will often be very predictable. Most people from the dancing world were at first a little apprehensive of posing instead of moving around. You can tell from their portraits, their posture and the way they look towards the camera. Unusual and unpredictable. This, personally, gives me more satisfaction than what I used to do before. Now I am the one controlling the final result'.

Kaplan prefers black-and-white to colour-photography as it expresses emotions so much better. She even nowadays prefers a black background as well. It makes the heads and features stand out more. Sometimes, she also asks her models to wear black or light clothes. 'Black-and-white intensifies the expression. I like a light skin on a dark background. Clear, sharp contours are the most beautiful. But it is not as if I adhere to this exclusively, I always consider whether the interior or the surroundings offer possibilities, although I would then only use details of it'.

Facial expressions interest her most, although she did take photographs of people with a frame. 'I also came to realise that chairs can be very important in taking portraits. One is either standing up or sitting down'. A series of photographs she calls 'passion' photo's show present-day artists and a fragment of a painting from the middle-ages of which the pose, set-up or only the gesture correspond. I call them the 'passion' series, because religious aspects dominate art in the middle-ages. In this series I wanted to show the relationship between a portrait of an artist from the twentieth-century and a classical portrait. Emotionally speaking their faces and pose tell the same story'.

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan cannot make a living from photography. At the moment she breaks even with her photowork. I am no commercial photographer (It is lonely and you sometimes feel like a spy). In the future she plans to make a portrait series of composers. She has already photographed a few, like John Cage and Steve Reich. Kaplan thinks of her work as a form of art. 'In fact, everything is art, as long as it is a result of an urge to be creative. Take for example this trip. What I did here was not absolutely

necessary. Even so I felt I had to go through with it, as I had had the idea in the first place. Eventhough I tried to make light of it, I could not get out of it. I wanted to know what it would be like to take portraits of French and Dutch dancers in eight days. Now I know, exhausting but very special. It has a certain strange, mad quality', she says reluctantly, 'but what attracted me in those dancers from the start was that they are slightly mad, just as the performing artists I had portrayed before. Artists usually live right at the edge of society. They're not entirely normal. To be able to do what they do you need to be just a tiny bit insane, I think'.

Kees Polling/Elseviers Magazine/May 3 1986

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GOING OUT Guide

CHOREOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS

Peggy Jarrell Kaplan started out photographing contemporary performing artists, making portraits of those she felt were expanding the definition of art. She then concentrated on people in motion and contemporary composers. Choreographers, she found, seemed to have a certain sense of their bodies that showed in the way they posed. She found them more interesting subjects than actors and actresses, who she felt were too used to being before a camera. The choreographers, used to moving, displayed an innocence, the photographer said, when required simply to sit for a portrait.

Photographs by Miss Kaplan and Paula Court are on exhibition at the

New York Public Library at Lincoln Center (870-1657) through Saturday. The exhibition is titled "The Avant-Garde: Dancers and the Dance."

On view today, Friday and Saturday from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. and tomorrow from noon to 6 P.M. The library is at 111 Amsterdam Avenue, at 65th Street. Admission is free.

C. Gerald Fraser

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SHOWS WE'VE SEEN

By Harvey V. Fondiller

Aspiring photographers, having learned their craft, seek publication and exhibitions; the next step is getting their shows reviewed. Peggy Jarrell Kaplan's career is in the last of these phases. (*Portraits: Artists & Dancers*, Donnell Library, New York, Aug. 2-21.)

Neophytes may not realize that the functions of the editor and the critic are mutually exclusive; the former selects pictures that serve his purpose, whereas the latter appraises the work's esthetic

judgment. Editors—at least of nonphotographic magazines—are not critics; all the photographer can hope from them is an assignment or a check. Kaplan has already received approbation (and payment) from editors, but this is the first critical appraisal of her work.

A 39-year-old mother and part-time photographer, she began taking pictures four years ago. She usually works without assignment or even prior acquaintance with her subject; she simply phones for an appointment and photographs them where they live or work. Her camera is medium-format and she makes 5x7-in. black-and-white prints.

The approach is typically frontal, often utilizing available light. An artist poses in front of one of her paintings. Dancers are shown in repose, in rehearsal clothes. Unobtrusive but expressive background shadows enhance some of the images, although a number of subjects might have been better presented with more complex composition or tighter cropping. But Kaplan's straightforward portraits reveal a developing talent that has promises to keep.



Peggy Jarrell Kaplan