

## **Conversations Without Walls: iele paloumpis & Alice Sheppard**

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### **Seta Morton**

Welcome to Danspace Project, and to this "Conversation Without Walls" with iele paloumpis and Alice Sheppard. I'm Seta Morton, Associate Curator, Public Engagement at Danspace. I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge where I sit today, on Munsee Lenape Land in New Jersey. Danspace Project pays respect to the Lenape peoples. We acknowledge that our organization is situated on the Lenape Island of Manahatta in Lenapehoking, Lenape homeland. We pay respect to the Lenape land, water and ancestors past, present and future. For over 45 years, Danspace Project has found its home in the East Village of New York City at the St. Marks Church in-the-Bowery, which was completed in 1799. That same year, New York State enacted the Gradual Emancipation Act. So it's reasonable to assume that this building was built by enslaved individuals on what was the homeland of Lenape people. We pay respect to these ancestors who were enslaved as well. As you may have noticed this conversation is offered as audio only with captions provided on your screen. iele, Alice and I will not be videoed at any point of the discussion and you're welcome to join us by listening and or reading along with the captions. Feel free to use this as an invitation to join us in a way that feels most supportive to you. This could include closing your eyes, walking away from the screen or turning the audio off to follow along with the captions only. Production Manager, Yolanda Royster is running things behind the scenes today, thank you, Yolanda. Today's conversation is a continuation of our Fall 2020 Research Group convenings in which our guests, iele and Alice, were a part of along with devynn emory, Larissa Velez-Jackson, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko and Angie Pittman. iele paloumpis, is a dance artist, herbalist, astrologer and End of Life Doula. As one of only a handful of visually impaired choreographers, creating contemporary dance in New York City, iele is conducting vital research into effective methods of providing quality audio description for dance, especially as it relates to improvised movement. iele's work is rooted in kinesthetic awareness, trauma-informed grief work, and ancestral remembrance practices. Alice Sheppard is an award-winning choreographer who creates movement that challenges conventional understandings of disabled and dancing bodies. Engaging with disability arts, culture and history, Alice's commissioned work attends to the complex intersections of disability, gender and race. Alice is the Founder and Artistic Lead for Kinetic Light a project based ensemble, working at the intersections of disability, dance, design, identity and technology to create transformative art and advance the intersectional disability arts movement. Welcome iele and welcome Alice. It's a true joy to have you both with us today. I will now hand the mic over to you and I'll be back to join you a bit later on.

### **iele paloumpis**

Thank you, Seta.

**Alice Sheppard**

Thank you Seta. Good morning.

**iele paloumpis**

Good morning, good morning Alice so nice to hear you. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

I'm pretty excited to go on a walk together.

**iele paloumpis**

Me too.

**Alice Sheppard**

I'm kind of nervous about what we'll discover where we'll go but also eager for the journey. Hey, it's morning.

**iele paloumpis**

I know, I know. I'm ready, I'm ready.

**Alice Sheppard**

All right.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, where?--Yeah Okay. We'll get there, we'll get there together. Where, do we feel like we want to meet today? Like in our sort of imaginative space, that imaginal realm that we like to meet on since we're in different places in the world. Where are we imagining today?

**Alice Sheppard**

I have two possible spaces that I would like to be in. I would like to be back home in New York back in my neighborhood in the East Village. But also I would like to be on the beach. Do you have a preference?

**iele paloumpis**

I think that I would really love to be on the beach because I am in New York City and have been in New York City throughout the whole past year. It's been a hard year for so many of us. So it would be nice to be somewhere maybe by the water yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Okay then let's put down a path. We're gonna roll out some of that fabric so that my wheels can go down the sand and step slowly off the walkway onto the beach and start there.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm, yeah. I feel like as I'm imagining it I can feel the sensation of being on that sort of sandy fabric under my feet, my bare feet and I have my cane with me and sort of like feeling the different textures of my cane as I'm allowing us to kind of be led down the beach Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah. I am recognizing the weight of my wheels which are not fully supported by the fabric. So I'm a little sunk into the sand.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmhmm Yeah, I know what you mean. Yeah I always feel the... I love being by the water but the sand is always a complicated thing for me too with like the sinking of the sand it kind of can really throw my balance off and it's like a little bit of a wild ride of walking, but I'm ready.

[Alice and iele laugh]

**Alice Sheppard**

All right. I love that! The wild ride, you know walking is supposed to be so neutral?

**iele paloumpis**

Mmmm

**Alice Sheppard**

and the just calling out the wild ride of it.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely.

**Alice Sheppard**

I think is a great place to start.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah I have so many things I could say about that but I'm curious. I mean, yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Let's start.

**iele paloumpis**

Okay, yeah, I mean, I'm just, yeah. Anytime I navigate anywhere, just the things that my body has to become aware of in order to get from point A to point B and sort of like to make sure that can happen safely and I can, travel confidently. It's just, there's a long sort of laundry list of things to consider. My ears have to be in practice and I will say

that, during this pandemic time my ears have been, I would say less practiced of being out in public spaces to kind of have that like 360 degree radius of sound and being able to better orient myself in space so that's one thing. And surfaces are always important. I would say that, I often prefer a smooth surface, but as long as there's nothing that's gonna kind of jar or surprise me. And also as long as the main thing honestly, it's like I can navigate any surface. It's actually often the people [iele giggles] that are unaware of, [Alice giggles] I know you know it's like you know the people who are unaware of me trying to navigate a space and the extra effort that it takes and making sure that I have the amount of space that I need is always a huge negotiation and just, yeah, often just a lack of awareness that can cause some problems. [iele laughs]. So yeah, I'll start there.

**Alice Sheppard**

So I'm going to do, I'm gonna make an adjustment for us. I am going to intentionally broaden the fabric that we're on. Because, you know, they never imagined that, it's hard enough to imagine that there'd be one wheelchair user but they never imagined that I would come with a friend

**iele paloumpis**

Right

**Alice Sheppard**

and the friend might also need space.

**iele paloumpis**

...want a smooth surface. Yeah. Right.

**iele paloumpis**

I know. I know.

**Alice Sheppard**

Let's do this. So let's like broaden the fabric that we're on

**iele paloumpis**

Mmmm mmhmm

**Alice Sheppard**

until we have space.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah. Yeah

**Alice Sheppard**

Really, really have the space. It's so rare to actually be able to say, "I'm comfortable" in this space right now, "I have enough space." There is room for me which is different from saying, I have enough space. I'm gonna say there is room for me.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm mmhmm

**iele paloumpis**

Room for us. Room for us together, which is rare. [iele giggles] Yeah.Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah.

**iele paloumpis**

And for you, you had mentioned that your wheels sink into the fabric on the beach is that like a pleasant experience for you or is that does that make it more challenging? 'Cause I'm wondering if we can change the fabric can we change it in other ways too? Like if it's needed?

[iele and Alice laughing]

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah! Let's—I mean, we're making our world, slowly. Let's change the fabric so it's a little bit more resistant, so that I don't sink quite as much.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, I think my feet would like that too. Great.

**Alice Sheppard**

Okay. Cool. Done.

**iele paloumpis**

But, do you have a sense of what kind of weather we're in or like sort of like what the day is, what the morning is like?

**Alice Sheppard**

I am flipping backwards and forwards between it being windy and somewhat Northern California which is where I am or have it be a warmer beach which is where I kind of...

**iele paloumpis**

want to be?

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah

[iele and Alice laugh]

**iele paloumpis**

Right, yeah. I think we can go, we can maybe meet in the middle. I like the idea of feeling like a cool breeze but also the warm sun. And oftentimes I like to, the breeze can

sometimes help to orient me in certain ways, like I can hear the water and then I can also sort of like hear the direction that the breeze is going and so that feels pleasant to me.

**Alice Sheppard**

I love it, I love it. Are we walking already?

**iele paloumpis**

I think so. I think we're ready. I think we're moving.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah, I feel that. So I am interested, both of us, as dancers have access to the experience or the idea of a walk in a dance space. But I think it's sort of resonant differently for both of us. And so I'm curious about what is a walk on stage for you?

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah I mean, the walk on stage is huge for me because, I have to, it takes time to really understand fully what the depth and the parameters of the space is. Like, sort of like what to start to have that muscle memory of this is how far apart things are in the space, this is the actual sort of like expanse of the dancing area that I have to move on. This is my proximity from audience members or from the other people that I'm dancing with. Like all of that kind of stuff that. You know, I think sighted people might take for granted but that is, could be a real safety issue for me, in making sure that I'm, you know taking up the space that I need but also that I am, keeping myself and other people safe through, you know being able to dance it as big and expansively as I want to dance, but feel confident in doing that, that something's not gonna jump out. And one of the things that I am constantly having to advocate for within dance venues is like having like extra time in the space to do that, like very clear spacing and marking of the space because the time it takes to space things out is just longer and different because it really is like getting to know the space in this very particular way.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah. How about you?

**Alice Sheppard**

I was gonna start somewhere else but I want to also maybe join with you at the notion of spacing. On tour, in a new space, I do spend time spacing, but which for me one of the things I do is, I test the floor, for, I mean even when it's just a plain and quote-unquote "empty Marley stage," I test the floor intimately so that I can find its unevennesses.

**iele paloumpis**

Definitely.

**Alice Sheppard**

Because if I'm walking around or rolling around and I need to be still, I do not need the floor to be uneven in a way that it's gonna throw off my precision.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely, yeah that resonates for me too yeah. The texture of the floor gives us so much information for me and also, I mean, I had the experience of like, being in spaces that are sometimes performing in spaces or rehearsing in spaces that are, you know less than ideal in terms of being like a very old wood floor and there can be all kinds of splinters and gaps in the floor and, you know stuff that's like really dangerous if you don't know, like so we have to kind of like, it's not just like, it's like feeling the floor for those places to make sure that we know that they're there fully. Yeah totally.

**Alice Sheppard**

But also measuring the floor, depending on how thick the Marley is or what they've used to create the sprung floor, I need to know how far do I go on one push?

**iele paloumpis**

Mmmm. Yup.

**Alice Sheppard**

You know like when I strike my wheels, I need to know, is that five pushes or one push to get to somewhere. When I pull, how far am I gonna go? How far am I gonna roll? How much force do I have to use in order to be in the right place, at the right time, without it looking like this constant... So I kind of pride myself, I suppose, on being part of my technical vocabulary of being having a float that I can choose whether or not I make my wheels visible to you as an audience member, whether or not I'm holding on them so that you notice what I'm doing or whether or not I just kind of appear to glide. That's a choreographic and artistic choice for me but there's a higher prep work that has to go underneath that and checking the floor, checking the floor is that is part of that, you know that wouldn't be the first time that someone has left something they didn't even realize could puncture your tire.

**iele paloumpis**

Right. Totally. No, I know, I mean, that's that's the thing too. It's like, I've been interested in working with audiences, I mean, prior to the pandemic, in like a sort of up close and personal way like that proximity for me being in like a non-traditional sort of like, you know seating arrangement is something that I was definitely working with prior to the pandemic and, you know but one thing that we had to be very, you know just like aware of like was sort of like, you know just letting the audience become more mindful of like how they just are also taking care of us. Like as the performers dancing very closely to them that like, you know their bags are under their chairs that like they're not like necessarily like sprawling in ways that like are not necessary, you know like this kind of thing that there's like some sort of shared awareness 'cause we were very much using the sort of audience arrangement as a pretty clear guide. Like for me, being able to hear

people in their seats up close, gives me so much information about, where I am in space and sort of like an intimate performance experience. But there's also, for me, a level of risk there. You know?

**Alice Sheppard**

I actually think this is part of one of the things that I've been trying to figure out. I don't have a way forward yet or a way forward yet...into it but I want to be able to craft the invitation to audiences differently. I think, you know, when in the days when there was a show, and there will be again, you know part of the question is when does the performance begin? Right and so access begins I think at the moment that I decide that I wanna make a work. And that's where, that's where we start, that's what's important but I don't know that it is reciprocated. Right, I spend a lot of my time deciding when or where to make an invitation and how made the invitation and how to make the invitation accessible and I care about an audience experience.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely.

**Alice Sheppard**

But I think audiences come with the idea that they're consumers, not carers.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

There's something inactive in the word audience itself, it relegates the audience to a listener to someone who's not active listening they're just kind of consuming. And so, I want there to be a way to frame even when I am actively using a proscenium and the fourth wall is the fourth wall, you know I'm like I'm not getting out there, you're not coming in here, let's keep it that way. But how do they care for us on stage without it being this projection of non-disabled audience fear for us or fear about the wellbeing or...

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, totally, totally. Yeah...

**Alice Sheppard**

I mean just to -- in imagination for a second, the work that I'm currently rehearsing is aerial and you were there at the very, you were there at the very beginning.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, yeah, definitely.

**Alice Sheppard**

But like I think the thing I'm struggling with is audiences go from, oh I was so worried for your safety, to, as a disabled person that was definitely worried for your safety, should you be doing that? To, Oh my gosh, it's all, "Wow!" So we pass from fear to spectacle.

**iele paloumpis**

Right. Right.

**Alice Sheppard**

There should be care in there.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, I remember the experiencing of witnessing you all in that work in progress showing. The feeling that I had was neither of those things. I mean, I felt like very clear that I was like that, I don't know. It wasn't, I was enthralled. There was like a sense of like excitement, like about the... I did feel through like hearing the sound of your bodies and your chairs, you know hitting the floor and sort of buoyantly, springing back up into the air like this level of, you know I don't know what the word is. It's not exactly risk but it does feel like, I don't know, I'm not, I don't know, I'm not, I'm having a hard time finding the word but like something that sort of like puts you at the edge of your seat, you know like this kind of, sort of like feeling, feeling, enthralled by what could happen but it wasn't a sense of like worry or even like for me like spectacle, like I felt very clear the whole time. I was like, Alice definitely knows what she's doing. I was like, I can't imagine myself ever doing any of this like, it's very, like, we've talked about my own personal fear of heights before, but that's my own thing...

[Alice and iele laughing]

**iele paloumpis**

...but for you it was like in witnessing you, it was like clear like the level of like, I don't know, like the sort of like architecture of it, the clear like to technology component of it like sort of like, that was just, I mean that was actually part of what I feel like was so compelling to me, was sort of like also you all, I think that that was like a way that you all also invited us in was that, you shared a bit about that technology piece like sort of like in the opening, I believe. And I feel like having an insight into the complexities of sort of like, how you all were building this together and the history and the context, you know I think it added to my experience for sure and it brought me in a very particular way.

**Alice Sheppard**

Thank you, I remember that. It's that question of care for me though?

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah. Right, right.

**Alice Sheppard**

...in performance, like not like care. Like how can an audience member care for the performer?

**iele paloumpis**

Mmhm, mmhm. Right. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

That's part of access work. That's part of performance, that's part of setting things.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm Mmhm. Yeah, yeah. 'Cause I remember like in my own practice with the cast that I was working with before we spent a lot, like you said, like we spend an incredible amount of time thinking about ways that we want to make sure that we're not only caring for each other but also deeply caring for the audience. Like that was a huge part of our conversation throughout, how to invite people in but also how to make people feel cared for that was a huge piece in part because we were constructing something that was going to be participatory in the sense that I don't -- I think that because of the way that we had arranged the seating and that it was this thing that we were moving so close to people and in some cases, asking for permission to touch people back then that we were engaging in consensual, you know touch practices with willing participants, there was, you know people always had -- part of that care was in that consensual asking permission process but, I think it also maybe heightened people's awareness that they were all potential participants like sort of participants in this way and that like interactive way that. And that, yeah, and I feel like something about, for me anyway, it's like it can be sort of like, breaking that wall and sort of like, you know directly addressing an audience member or speaking to them even if it's like something very simple like asking for some consent if they would like to receive touch or if they'd like to engage in a particular kind of way. I do think like demonstrates certainly our care for them but I think I hope that I had as well was that would be a sort of reciprocal share that there was this sort of feeling of like, we're kind of all in this together. But I wonder about that. I do wonder about that in like a proscenium space. like you're talking like about like, how do you, how do you, how has that created, you know in this way where audiences are very trained that it's fine to just be sitting in the dark being passive consumers and, you know being engaged or disengaged and that's they paid their money they come, they go, they leave.

**Alice Sheppard**

[Alice laughs] Yeah...Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think part of that practice for me — and here, I'm just going to maybe stop us for a second and can we turn and face the ocean and do sort of do a moment of pausing and this sort of thinking.

**iele paloumpis**

Please. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah I am, I love the idea of an audience member actively caring for the artist and the artist caring for the audience as part of access, as part of performance, as part of disability culture. You know I think that these things wouldn't have to be, disability

culture, I mean you could do it in any way, we wouldn't have to...but I think for me, they are the some of the anchor points in disability culture. And when I look at -- and I experience a show that is constructed in that way, I know I can, I will leave transformed. No matter, even if I don't like what I'm seeing or even if it doesn't land well or settle, "like" is such a limited word in some ways you know but I know that I will leave transformed. And that seems to me to be important to recognize this kind of care. Wanna take it back to the idea of walking for second if I can. I am in a moment where I think one of the things I'm wrestling with is nuance. I mean, the it's coming from a reactive place, the idea that disability and thus sort of secondarily disabled people aren't nuanced. It's like, you know I try and construct my performance worlds that are internally legible. That don't react to external non-disabled world imaginings or fears or, and so one of the things I've been looking at is nuance. How...how to really... Surface for other folks, the nuances of our culture. You know, the moments that are not inside jokes, but moments of... you would only know it if you knew it, even if you were us or.. ...to deepen this, to archive it, to renew it, to rebirth it to identify it, to remember it. You know, no matter what the work is actually about for me internally, there's an act of, love, recognition, inquiry, about disability and disability culture and a disabled world, and how to, you know? Yeah, I guess, they are acts of love in some way.

### **iele paloumpis**

Yeah. Yeah. I think everyone desires nuance and like sort of like to be able to be perceived and witnessed and to become, I don't know complexly legible, or sort of, you know like something that is able to be shared potentially, but also, I mean, for me, like part of the complexity and the nuances, like part of the I guess the things that I could maybe call the mystery or sort of like something that is not able to be fully, fully ever known, fully and completely and that's maybe part of some of the magic of dance, I think as well. But yeah, I love this...or I strive and I love this idea of a kind of a deep witnessing attentiveness coming from a care and a loving place of being together in a space and holding that space together as performers and audience alike that we're kind of co-creating the space so that it can be nuanced and complex, and create space for the magic to kind of unfold too. That's a rare space. I would say that's a rare space but a beautiful one to imagine always.

### **Alice Sheppard**

Getting cold to set us going again. It's so interesting. I am actually not moving but I have this fictive frame that we've been in for imaginative space. And as we are talking, I am reaching down to start my wheels, to start pushing on them, to feel my hand on that kind of, the anchoring, reorienting, my body is moving or wanting to move in space even though I'm sitting still on and like breathing down a microphone. Right, right. But my hands are like striking my wheels and getting ready to go. And this kind of conversation is calling forth movement for me.

### **iele paloumpis**

It's funny because as I've been imagining walking together, I've definitely been imagining that you're on my right side. I don't know if you're, if you have a sense of that, but I've been imagining that you're to my right. I think that's because I often prefer to

have people to my right side. And so yeah, I've been sort of like imagining this kind of orientation to you on my right. Like to what I imagined hearing your chair on the fabric sounds like, and these different adjustments as well as the ocean and the breeze. Yeah, it's interesting.

**Alice Sheppard**

I'm glad I'm on your right. I had you on my left.

**iele paloumpis**

Oh great, so we are in alignment.

[iele and Alice laugh]

**iele paloumpis**

Good.

**Alice Sheppard**

And yeah, I had you on my left and the ocean was also on my left. So yeah.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm mmhmm [

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah. I know that, we should possibly begin to think about how we conclude our walk together and you know, beginning to sort of invite Seta back and reflect on where we've been and what we've been thinking about. But I wanna just also just take one last moment to think about that act of walking, you know the Postmodern Dance Movement, so valorizes that.

**iele paloumpis**

I know. Yup.

**Alice Sheppard**

And so I, you know I've been thinking about legacy in as far as, you know, this walk that we're on is-- I place that in this kind of legacy of walking as a... As a... sort of modern dance pursuit, we have paid so much attention to movement that this in many ways could be read as a dance.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely.

**Alice Sheppard**

And, but I also want to recognize a kind of anxiety about walking as a fundamental anchor to modern dance, because of the way in which walking registers in the world,

you know the ties between walking and citizenship in recognition of humanity and walking of... So walking is not a neutral part of the dance legacy.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm mmhmm. Amen. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah.

**iele paloumpis**

Absolutely, yeah just the, or just, I don't know. I just, I've been, I feel like fighting against this word neutral that I feel like is used in postmodern dance for way too long now that I just don't really believe in it as a word, like as a useful descriptor that doesn't mean anything beyond, you know the sort of like various like power dynamics and supremecies of bodies that are white, non-disabled, heterosexual, cisgender, like all the things like that's usually what they mean when they say neutral you know what I mean?

[Alice laughs]

**iele paloumpis**

So I feel like I've been fighting against that word for a long time.

[iele and Alice laugh]

**Alice Sheppard**

Oh my god. Every class that I've been in it's set your body to a neutral position and I'm like, woah no!

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah I'm like, what does that mean? It's all the things that don't want to be said or sort of don't want to, I don't know make the, that take up so much space socially and in the power structures, they take up all the space, but they don't want to be legible. They don't, it's like, it's this like, insidious like sort of like undercurrent of power. You know?

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah, as if I could ever be neutral.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, exactly.

**Alice Sheppard**

As if you could ever neutral.

**iele paloumpis**

Never, never.

**Alice Sheppard**

Like never.

[iele and Alice laugh]

**Alice Sheppard**

So how... Every class in that moment of respite --- the resistance to neutrality is so fierce in my head that I imagine that others are having moments of respite and I'm in rage.

**iele paloumpis**

Of course, of course, yeah, absolutely. I'm like, please what do you actually mean when you say this? It's just is enraging, it's totally enraging. Yeah.

**Alice Sheppard**

Yeah.

**iele paloumpis**

Woo! Woo! I feel like we -- I gotta shake that out. We're on the back on the beach and ought to shake that out of our bodies in some way.

**Alice Sheppard**

All right, if we're back on the beach shaking that out of a bodies. I'm gonna wave over to someone who looks familiar to me and ask them to like, come on approach and then join our shaking off of the sand or of the rage. Yeah, Seta come on over, come and join us.

**Seta Morton**

Yeah, thanks for plopping me on this beach. I've just been sort of laying out here and eavesdropping a bit. Yeah, thank you both so much for taking all of us on the beach today and wow, I mean, I'm thinking I'm with you both in this conversation around like non neutrality and the..yes, Alice, the legacies of that sort of "neutral walk" and all the ways in which we all need to be disturbing that and it connects for me also, you know this question that you were asking Alice about the audience as being in a reciprocal relationship with artists. And it really made me think about ways that Danspace has been -- our staff has been talking so much about our mission and also the values that are sort of embedded within this and at Danspace, it's all about connecting artists with audience. It's something we've sort of been talking about as an identifying is that within that like we are all people in relationships. And also of course, like who is doing the connecting? Who are behind the scenes? Who are the audience? Who is the audience, who are the artists? And, I know iele you, sort of you talk about this a lot about sort of maybe taking pause and thinking about in all of these different dynamics and relationships that yes that there's these possibilities for power dynamics and there's these possibilities for potential harm or lack of care. And, but that, there's also like this major opportunity for care. So I'm just hearing these things and sort of sitting with them

and I'm curious to kind of revisit that conversation about reciprocity with you both. What would a reciprocal audience look like? and who else is sort of implicated and a part of that, the sort of other relationships are around them? Something I'm thinking about.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm mhmm. I'm just processing your question. Go ahead Alice.

**Alice Sheppard**

I was thinking, yeah. I mean, hmmm. Actually, my...experience of Danspace is more oriented in the relationships of other artists, not with other audiences. For me Danspace has, there have been audiences at Danspace. But it's always been about the other artists I've been in rehearsal or performing with, or, yeah. It's so interesting, my memories of Danspace are always artists, not audiences.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah, I mean, I think about the fact that like, in any institutional sort of organization space it's like, there's always like a weird mishmash of like sort of like who the demographics, like sort of like the, of that space are and cater to like, sort of like who are the people that maybe are potentially in this case connected to Danspace that might not be connected to me in my work prior to that relationship. But then there's also the people that myself, like me, iele as a, trans, queer, white, disabled, visually impaired artist, like who are the people that I'm bringing in that might not have come to Danspace prior. Do you know what I mean? Like, there's always this sort of like interesting thrust of you know of when you, when spaces that maybe have a certain history of who attends a space. And then like, in terms of like having, various artists who occupy marginalized identities and then sort of like seeing, I'm always there kind of interested in sometimes like feeling the schism of like who's in the audience because of those various reasons and sort of like, you know feeling the potential intermingling of the different people and those maybe tensions or power dynamics but also like potential for like real expansion and growth and possibility for care. I'm curious about that. I think that there's, I don't know, I'm interested in, and always sort of widening and expanding and allowing those tensions to exist, challenging them and sort of like, I think I do have this desire for like really being with each other's complexity. I'm allowing the complexity to be felt and the nuance to be felt in the space.

**Seta Morton**

Yeah, thank you. Thank you both so much and I think that, you know something that I've been thinking about in sort of what yeah. What it means to sit with the complexity, what it means to take that care for I think something that a lot of us have learned in this past year is that, you know these things take, they take time. And so yeah, slowing down, taking the time. And so I know that we sort of have a hard out so I just wanna ask one more question and then we can sort of wrap up our time but, yeah, that's something that I'm trying to, something that I've learned this year that I'm sort of taking with me is that these, that we need to sit with these complexities, that we need to take this care, and know what that actually means and take the time. And that's something I'm sort of holding on to and something learned from this year. And so I'm wondering from you

both if there's anything that maybe you have had during this past year of pandemic and so many other things and is there anything that you want to sort of hold on to any ways of working and it uses of your time or any sort of different kinds of pace or rhythm that you'd like to take with you or that you would encourage others to hold onto?

**Alice Sheppard**

You know, Yeah. I'm actually going to respond as honestly as I can, but I don't mean this to be contrarian. For me, I know the conversation has been about time and productivity and the things have been completely out of control, but actually the thing I want to take away and I know that I will take away is reorienting to space, more than time. Yeah, I have, come to see space very differently. I have barely been outside. So I have lived in my home in a way that I have not lived in my home.

**iele paloumpis**

Same

**Alice Sheppard**

So I see space very differently. I've danced in my bed. I've danced in my bathtub. I've danced in a tree. I've danced in the hallway. I've danced, I've danced all of these spaces. Like my space. The thing I think I will continue to be changed by is the recognition of how space works or could work.

**iele paloumpis**

Mmm. Mhmm. Mhmm. Yeah for me, I think that, like a think that I hope gets carried through, I know that this has been a conversation like amongst a lot of disabled folks that I'm connected with is that, people have been, using technology and using, as an access tool so that we can all connect to each other so that people who are needing to be home, can still participate. and I certainly hope that that's something that is carried through in this time, like beyond this time. So that disabled folks or anyone for whatever reason, if it's like childcare, you know any number of reasons like are not able to physically to be present that we continue to collectively have the care enough to, you know find ways that we have all learned that are very possible to remain connected, but that continues. And then it's not something that has just been made available to, you know mostly non-disabled people who have been like inconvenienced during this time of pandemic, and then isolation. But that's something that I think a lot of disabled people have been asking for a long time. So I hope that kind of... Inclusivity of folks who can't be physically present is able to continue.

**Seta Morton**

Yes. Thank you. Thank you, thank you so much, Alice and iele and for taking us on this walk on the beach today I so appreciated being with you both.

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah. Thank you, Seta. Thank you for having us.

**Alice Sheppard**

Thank you Seta. Yeah, and thank you iele. I hope we get to do this more often, I mean.

**iele paloumpis**

I would love that.

**Alice Sheppard**

Me too, me too,

**iele paloumpis**

Yeah thank you, Alice. It's always a pleasure.

**Seta Morton**

[Outro] Thank you for joining us for this "Conversation Without Walls". The "Conversation Without Walls" 2020 digital series will be broadcasted on YouTube live for one time only viewing parties. Don't worry if you don't catch us there, the conversations are all prerecorded and will be posted ultimately at the Danspace Project website in our Online Journal in Issue 11: trembling archive. Our journal issues accumulate over time with new material added regularly. Apart from this series, you will find video, audio and written work by Danspace Project artists, curators, and writers. Please also check out issues 1 through 10 to find work that centers the Danspace Project past Platforms, seasons, experiments. The Online Journal is really a place to get more insight into some of the internal conversations, research and work that goes behind our more main stage public facing programs. So check out the Online Journal and we look forward to having you at the next "Conversation Without Walls".