



DANCYCLOPEDIA

Dancing is one of the things that humans have in common across cultures, geographies, and time — we love to dance, and whenever we do it, the best thing about it is that we don't need to understand why. Dancing is meaningful without further explanation, we just do it!

Dance as a way of knowing about the world has always fascinated me. It carries a transformative power where constructed ideas, different belief systems, and local, global, universal and spiritual connections appear as an embodied knowing. Dance provides an opportunity to learn about diversity and identity, and how they are produced and reproduced within culture, gender and history.

Dance stems from our human need for expression. The act of dancing shows a physical being that feels joy, pain, love, desire, sadness, energy, possibility, and freedom. Dance is a tool for transformation into altered states, for escaping the now, or on the contrary, a tool to tune in and connect to people, for finding intimacy and care.

Universal Tongue was born from my fascination with dance videos distributed online as a representation of self-expression, cultural identity, empowerment and fun. Dance shows the human family in the constant interconnectedness of experience - unity in diversity. This work explores how dance has developed throughout history as part of our global media culture and it nowadays manifests online across platforms like *YouTube* and *Instagram*.

In collaboration with a team of 50 researchers from across the globe assembled through social media, we collected over 8,800 dance videos sourced from the Internet. The total length of the found footage was more than 250 hours. After the raw cut, there were still 80 hours left. Together with a team of editors, I spliced the selected footage, containing a minimum of 1000 different dance styles from all over the world, into a video installation consisting of 8 channels showing 8 films lasting 4 hours each - in total 32 hours of footage. The 8 channel video installation is accompanied by one 4 hour

THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF THE INTERNET

Anouk Kruithof

soundtrack, which is composed and remixed from the music subtracted from the originally found videos.

With a thousand different dance styles blended into the *Universal Tongue* video installation, I asked all the researchers to write a short text for each dance style appearing in the collected videos. With the help of Ula Kahul, a cultural anthropologist and researcher, these texts were fact-checked online and edited into a database of global dance styles of the Internet era. I took a thousand screenshots, which serve as digital still-life photos of each dance style presented within the project. That's how this *Dancyclopedia* was born!

The book celebrates and pays respect to the great diversity of dance and it focuses on the importance of the particularities: the complexity and layeredness of our human existence. The screenshot pictures combined with short descriptions illustrate the origin, background and meaning of each presented dance style. It is a very unique collection reflecting one thousand bits of the global dance

kaleidoscope. This *Dancyclopedia* is by no means exclusive, final, or academic. It is a statement. Organized in alphabetical order by the first letter of each dance style, it confirms the horizontality of the *Universal Tongue* by erasing typical categories of the world order, such as country, continent, or culture. Instead, it looks at our era of fluidity, hybridity and non-stop connectedness, identifying within it and respecting the value of our historical backgrounds, cultural differences, and individuality.

Universal Tongue may be the most social, open and connecting work I have ever created. To me, dance - the moving body - more than anything in our diverse and complex world unites us in the recognition of our shared fragility and our common human condition. It also points us towards a possibility of a more inclusive world with

limitless exchange and understanding of new identities, a world where simply everyone is a dancer.

AWC

To read about the artist go to page 7.