

What is RICE?

Rice is a 'ridiculous beginning'. Camu once said 'all great deeds have ridiculous beginnings'. We don't quite know what it will be, if it will be great or what shape it will take -all we know is that RICE is a true hybrid: a festival, a temporary institute, a gathering, a workshop, a laboratory, an island wide studio or a catalyst for our thoughtbodies to speak, to speak distinctively different that the prevailing cultured body of rationality. Vitoria Kotsalou and myself met at the Kinitiras lab where I taught and decided that our artistic practices needed a different container, and that a festival or a theatre was no longer able to provide a relevant stimulus. In fact, I concur with my former mentor William Forsythe who said 'the stage is an obsolete mental model'. Choreography has become a way of 'seeing the world' anew -full of relationships, interdependence, recursion, etc - just as dance is moving towards a mode of 'accessing that world', instead of fulfilling the movement of some pre-existing thought-template, such as a traditional choreography. RICE is dedicated to the 'Choreography of Humans'. It is broad, very broad - and should signal the approach - zooming out, out, out, out of our daily modes of functioning as a society to re-experience ourselves as thoughtbodies in communion with others.

Who does it aim to involve?

We would like to think of RICE as an open proposition. If you turn up on Hydra to be part of RICE, you are part of RICE - it is easy as that - but you will have to turn up... Of course there are logistic problems as we can't feed and house everyone (we have a call for participation that allows us to accommodate a small number of individuals) , but in principle, EVERYONE is invited to contribute, research, take part, engage. It will initially appeal to artists working in dance, but RICE really aims to be 'a pattern of a conversation and actions' between all walks of society. I want to encourage everyone who is interested in contemporary practices of choreography to find their way to Hydra and get in touch!

What are some of the actions involved within RICE?

Everyone who has confirmed their attendance has a different practice and RICE will reflect that. People will follow their own projects that they might have prepared or that will grow out of the situation they find themselves in. There will be lectures, informal think tanks, performances, dinners, invisible social choreographies, workshops, etc. All of it won't follow a strict program but will be announced (Facebook, posters, word-of-mouth, megaphone, etc...)as they formulate themselves We are not taking the role of curators once RICE is rolling, as I said above, everyone is invited to contribute! For my part I want to try out a choreography for citizens entitled 'Jerusalem' on a rooftop and open some of my thinking to the input of others.

How do you hope that RICE will develop?

It's too early to tell, we will know more once we reflect on this edition of RICE. However I have an inkling that the principle of generosity (people opening their houses to host artists with no monies being exchanged, artists finding their way to the island, etc) and interdisciplinary (i.e. making dance and choreography relevant in a larger social discourse) is key to the future of RICE.

What is the use and aim of art within a country, which struggles for its survival?

To answer this question we have to establish what 'art' we are talking about. The word signifies so many different things and always depends on the context we choose to use it in. I would like to imagine the temporary suspension of the word 'art' for ten years. It would start up a genuine debate of what, we - the artists in dance - the ones who roll on the floor, jump into the air, stand in corners and turn around various axis are 'actually' doing, besides some explanatory principle called 'art', subject to its very own self-referential fashion trends and thirst for invention. We would have to zoom into the role that our actions, we commonly describe as 'art', contribute to our personal and social situation: what they constitute, promote, destroy, deconstruct, etc. For my part I believe in 'dancing', that enables a discourse/an upheaval within our 'cultured flesh', whether protest, analysis or expression. Dancing it is always done from within our own situatedness, as we all have had training/conditioning of sorts, and are therefore implicated (voluntarily or not) in the socio-political system that has formed us, hence dancing has to do with 'what am I going to do in my cultured flesh?'. What am I going to do in this sensing thoughtbody of mine, how will I not just talk 'about' something in my dance (as this something will likely to be talked about from a mode of thinking that caused the initial problem in the first place), but how I can move, maneuver myself and others - and here choreography is coming into play - meaningfully and ethically in the world we've built. I do believe the problem does go far beyond Greece - it is a crisis in the Western world, which means a global crisis. The social contract, that most of us bought into - flat screen TV's and cappuccino for everyone - suddenly seems to be fraud and crumble. Greece is a symptom of a much larger civilization gone insane, and for me - at this stage - there is nothing more valuable (within my skill set) than to (re-)negotiate, (re-)observe and (re-)experience potentially new, meaningful modes of communion, exchange and production. And where else to start than with quieting oneself, listening and starting to move...again.

Do you believe that we are currently in an era of global changes? How are you influenced by this as an artist?

Of course we are and this resonates, without a question into all aspects of my work. We are deeply immersed in these wider processes of change. It starts from changes in identity, understanding nationalism and capitalism within a global context coupled with the need to think of new ways of consuming and producing. The problems are huge and seem unsolvable to a sensible mind, but if I would find myself in a car traveling with 150km/h towards a concrete wall, I would attempt to do something, however hopeless in that moment such action might seem. Doing nothing, will have a fatal result, doing something else, might, just might, have another. My role as an artist, or moreover, as a contemporary choreographer is to be immersed into sensing reality with all of my identified/known and unidentified/unknown capabilities - and in response to order and re-order my own ways of doing...setting relations, or providing the conditions for relations to form between bodies, embracing the 'real-world' consequences such actions (even if temporarily contained on a stage) might entail.

Do you believe that esthetics and quality are for all in life and in art? How are these concepts of esthetics and quality, defined and influenced by wealth (money)?

I am certainly a proponent of Beuys' concept of the 'Social Sculpture' - that we are all, whatever profession or background, are creatively called for to form a society for ourselves and our offspring to live life meaningfully. I believe that art, whose success and access allows itself to be defined by money, is predominantly propaganda for the dominant economic system, hence, not that interesting and 'high' as it would like to see itself. 'High' culture always depends on the view-point and on the one's who are not successful within this framework to accept it as the

'status quo' of power and achievement. Everyone is choreographing, everyone is dancing, everyone dreams, everyone will die, everyone affects everyone, everyone contributes.

In modern spectacles (performances) we notice a mix of all the arts. Is this important for you? How does this influence the development of performance?

I don't care about that. At times I like to focus on my own thoughtbody in motion and very little else (which is already a lot) and sometimes it needs a whole island to immerse oneself creatively. I think it would be useful to give up various distinctions and talk about relevance, what is needed when, where, why and how? Sometimes I will need a hammer, sometimes a nail, sometimes both...

What would you mention for your development? What is your aim?

I have always been striving to understand myself and the world around me a little bit more than my background has initially enabled and allowed me to do and I found logic, or strict science and obedience to be a poor model to do so. With my senses as well as my rational capacities engaged I get a richer sense of reality, can understand to some degree the failings of our collective doings and find strategies to build/access other realities. Recently I came to believe that dance and choreography is essential to the cultivation of ethics through an embodied, subjective/phenomenological sense of human relations, the somewhat embryonic pre-conditions of politics. My aim is to bring dance and choreography, and the knowledge it entails, to the table of human affairs - not being mere entertainers or after-thoughts - but truly engaged contributors in the unfolding narrative of our life.