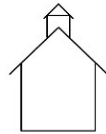


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ICEHOUSE Project Space

Please join us August 10, 4-6 pm, for a reception celebrating ***Contra Naturam***, a collaborative project by **Janet Biggs** and **Davian Robinson!**



Three-channel video featuring Davian Robinson at ICEHOUSE Project Space, January 2024, and iceboating in Rovaniemi, Finland, filmed by Janet Biggs

Dear friends,

ICEHOUSE Project Space is excited to announce its 18th site-specific project, ***Contra Naturam***, a collaboration between noted video artist and explorer Janet Biggs and Davian Robinson, a vision-impaired dancer. We hope you can join us for a reception on August 10, 4-6 pm to celebrate this important endeavor.

Contra Naturam takes as its starting point an utterance by William F. Buckley, Jr., a past resident of Sharon, Connecticut, often recognized as the central figure in American Conservatism (see his [Sharon Statement](#) of 1960). In 1987 he made the following statements regarding blind sailor James Dickson's solo attempt to sail across the Atlantic Ocean:

"I wouldn't take a blind person to the Grand Canyon or to the ballet. ...It is profane to suppose that a

cripple can run, a deaf man hear, or a blind man see. ... Why would you take a blind man to a ballet? ... A ballet is to be distinguished from music because it is a form of dance. ... It is against nature, Contra Naturam, ..."

For Biggs, the challenges faced by the disabled come close to home: her experiences serving as guardian to an autistic aunt have become a nucleus for a number of her prior pieces. In this case, Biggs's has lodged a retort to Buckley's words via a multi-channel immersive video and sound installation crafted in partnership with Robinson. Upon entering the ICEHOUSE, the viewer is surrounded by the sounds of hands pounding walls and of sharp blades slicing across cracking ice. Multiple video images combine to create an entangled visual narrative. Using the ICEHOUSE as a physical and conceptual framing structure, *Contra Naturam* intercuts footage of Robinson's unique choreography performed inside the tight confines of the ICEHOUSE with video imagery of iceboats racing across vast frozen lakes.



Davian Robinson, dancing in the icehouse, filmed by Janet Biggs



Iceboating, Rovaniemi, Finland, March 2024, filmed by Janet Biggs

Using spatialized sound in both the interior installation and as a separate audio piece, *Icehouse Walk*, viewers will encounter heightened aspects of the human sensorium. *Icehouse Walk*, played on individual headphones, transports listeners to a frigid day last January. Listeners are aurally led on Robinson's sightless journey through the snow to find the ICEHOUSE. *Icehouse Walk* interweaves location, time, sound, and physicality, and they experience atmospheric elements as well as Davian's stream-of-

consciousness narration about his life without sight. The speaker and the listener become linked within their shared physical surroundings.

Take a break from the August heat and be transported to winter and to the experiences of those living and thriving without sight. We look forward to seeing you August 10!

All the best,

KK

About the Artists:

Janet Biggs is an interdisciplinary artist working in video, film and performance. She is recognized for her immersive and multidisciplinary approach, often incorporating sound, moving images, and language to create new perspectives and possibilities. Biggs's research-based work focuses on individuals in extreme landscapes or situations, and it navigates the territory among art, science and new technologies. Her work has taken her to both polar regions, into areas of conflict, and to Mars (as a member of crews at the Mars Desert Research Station and Mars Academy USA). Biggs has worked with institutions from NOAA to NASA and CERN. She has collaborated with high-energy nuclear physicists, mathematicians, neuroscientists, Arctic explorers, aerospace engineers, and a robot named Shimon. In 2020, Biggs sent a project up to the International Space Station as part of MIT Media Lab's Space Exploration Initiative.

Biggs has had solo exhibitions and film screenings at the Sarasota Art Museum, Spencer Museum of Art, Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Museos de Tenerife; Neuberger Museum of Art; SCAD Museum of Art; and the Blaffer Art Museum; among others. Her work and research have been supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Reviews of her work have appeared in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *ArtForum*, *ARTNews*, *Art in America*, and many others. Biggs is a member of the New Museum's cultural incubator, NEW INC with the support of Science Sandbox and is a member of The Explorers Club.

Davian "DJ" Robinson is a dancer, choreographer, motivational speaker, massage therapist, and former Paralympic athlete. Currently living in Charlotte, NC, he graduated from UNC Charlotte in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science and a Bachelor of Arts in Dance Performance, Choreography, and Theory. Davian has been featured in the Charlotte Observer, Inside UNC Charlotte, Charlotte Magazine, and in a UNC-TV's My Home, NC feature entitled Davian Robinson: Fearless.

Davian founded and leads Sensory Beyond Sight - dance workshops that invite participants to experience movement without the use of their sight. In 2019, he was invited to present Sensory Beyond Sight at the Alexander Technique national conference at Columbia University in New York, NY and perform original choreography at the historic Alhambra Ballroom. In 2022 and 2023, Davian's choreography, Inner Beauty Versus Outer Beauty: Redemption, was performed by NC State University's State Dance Company in their Fall and Spring Dance Concerts.

Most recently, Davian was selected as a Choreographer Fellow for AXIS Dance Company's 2023 Choreo-Lab in Berkeley, CA. Currently, Davian is a practicing massage therapist and teaches dance with Camrin Watson's Expand Movement in Charlotte, NC, and also collaborates with ShaLeigh Dance Works in Durham, NC. and co-directed an immersive and inclusive performance which does not solicit the viewer's sight, but rather all their other senses. This project, enVISION: Sensory Beyond Sight, premiered at the American Dance Festival in 2022.

Davian is also a cycling instructor and holds a USA Paralympic National Title for the 1-kilometer Time Trial in cycling.

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