



NEW YORK CITY
AIDS MEMORIAL

***THE DISCO PROJECT REMIX* BY NEIL GREENBERG, A SITE-SPECIFIC VERSION OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER'S SEMINAL WORK, ONGOING SINCE THE HEIGHT OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC, WILL ACTIVATE THE NEW YORK CITY AIDS MEMORIAL IN JULY 2022**

PERFORMANCES: THURSDAY, JULY 21, 7:30 PM; FRIDAY, JULY 22, 7:30 PM; SATURDAY, JULY 23, 4 PM & 5 PM



The Disco Project, 1997, Pictured L-R: C. Batenhorst, Justine Lynch, Neil Greenberg. Photo: Anja Hitzemberger

New York, NY – TKTK, 2022 – The New York City AIDS Memorial presents a new performance by award-winning choreographer, artist, and performer Neil Greenberg. Adapted from *The Disco Project* (1995), Greenberg's recollection of lives lost to AIDS and an acceptance of his own HIV+ status, this updated remix stages elements of its original choreography in a response to the site's current exhibition, *Songs for a Memorial* by Steven Evans. Both works open up shared experiences of liberation, trauma, and survival through a transvisual inquiry into the power of LGBTQIA vocal anthems. We, the audience, hear instantly-recognizable earworms of RuPaul, Sylvester, and Jimmy Somerville, while witnessing post-modern dance that subverts our expectations of their embodiment. These movements are executed within Evans' sculptural installation of classic song titles such as "It's Raining Men" and "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)," rendered in glowing neon. The writer Jaime Shearn Coan cites this juxtaposition as a way in which "camp and disco dancing provide necessary levity in the midst of tragedy."

Described in *The New York Times* review as "a drama of defiance in the face of adversity," *The Disco Project* premiered at PS122 (now Performance Space New York) in December 1995. A combination of movement for five dancers (including Greenberg), projected text, and an assemblage of recorded audio, the work authentically recalls lives affected by AIDS, with diary-like directness. Influenced by his seven years as a member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Greenberg expanded Cunningham's radical methods to foster an autonomous relationship between choreography, music, and scenography. With *The Disco Project*, Greenberg delved into content that speaks directly to queer experience, unlike his mentor, whose creative practice and personal life as partner to John Cage were kept quite separate. While the energy of vigorous dance might delight its audience to the disco soundtrack, the same gestures would also be performed in silence, creating a startling effect that shudders with the reality of life during an epidemic. Similarly, the projection of narrative texts that describe the personal and cultural effects of disease offered a parallel reality in which to contextualize the movement, but exist separately from the choreography. This invites what Greenberg describes as "an experience of the performance moment in and of itself, in addition to, and inclusive of the multiple interpretations or associations summoned for—and by—the viewer," a recurring theme in Greenberg's practice.

The Disco Project continues to develop into the present. In 2021, Greenberg debuted a three-channel video installation at Greene Naftali gallery which engages archival documentation of the original live performance with new commentary that reflects upon the COVID pandemic. The installation was shown again at White Columns earlier in 2022, prompting an *Artforum* review in which Johanna Fateman described the original work as “cathartically elegiac,” noting how the dancers “superbly confuse the vernacular of postmodern concert dance and the libidinal abandon of the club.” For *The Disco Project Remix*, commissioned by the New York City AIDS Memorial, Greenberg will continue his renewed exploration of the 1995 work, this time providing an IRL reactivation for a new site and era.

Performances of *The Disco Project Remix* will take place at the New York City AIDS Memorial at Greenwich Avenue and West 12th Street on July 21 and 22 at 7:30 pm and on July 23 at 4pm and 5pm. The performance is approximately 20 minutes. The event is free and open to the public.

The Disco Project Remix is curated by musician and artist Nick Hallett, as the launch of an ongoing series of unique live art events at the New York City AIDS Memorial.

About Neil Greenberg

Neil Greenberg has been making dances since 1979. He came to New York from Minnesota in 1976 and danced with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 1979-1986. He is known especially for his *Not-About-AIDS-Dance*, which employs his signature use of projected words as a layering strategy that provides doors into “meanings” in the dance, while also raising questions about the nature of meaning-making. His more recent projects – *To the things themselves!* (2018), *This* (2014), *(like a vase)* (2010), and *Really Queer Dance With Harps* (2008) - continue his interest in moving away from representation toward an experience of the performance moment in and of itself. Most recently he created “*The Disco Project*” Installation, recontextualizing documentation of that 1995 work with a 3-channel installation for exhibition at Greene Naftali (2021, NYC), and in *Looking Back / The 12th White Columns Annual - Selected By Mary Manning* (2022, NYC).

He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and two New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Awards, as well as repeated fellowships from the NEA and NYFA, a fellowship from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a National Dance Project Production grant, a Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Creative Exploration Award, and repeated support from the MAP Fund and NYSCA. He has created two commissioned works for Mikhail Baryshnikov’s White Oak Dance Project and two works for Ricochet Dance Company of London. His works have twice been cited as among the Ten High Points of the Year in *The New York Times*: his dance/video work *Two* in 2003 and *Not-About-AIDS-Dance* in 1994.

Greenberg is currently Professor of Choreography at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, The New School and has previously taught at Purchase College, Sarah Lawrence College, and UC Riverside. He served as dance curator at The Kitchen from 1995-1999.

About the New York City AIDS Memorial

Founded as a grass-roots advocacy effort in early 2011, the New York City AIDS Memorial organization is now a 501(c)(3) corporation, with a 15-person board, chaired by Keith Fox.

The mission of the New York City AIDS Memorial is to honor the more than 100,000 New Yorkers who have died of AIDS and to acknowledge the contributions of caregivers and activists who mobilized to provide care for the ill, fight discrimination, lobby for medical research, alter the drug approval process, ultimately changing the trajectory of the disease. The Memorial, dedicated on December 1, 2016 (World AIDS Day) aims to inspire visitors to remember and reflect as well as empower current and future activists, health professionals, and people living with HIV in the continuing mission to end AIDS.

Today the organization maintains the New York City AIDS Memorial as a highly-visible and architecturally significant landmark and a community space for the reflection and remembrance of men, women, and children lost to AIDS; bears witness to the lessons of the epidemic through engagement and free, public community-centered educational, arts, and cultural programming at the Memorial site; and virtually extends the reach of the Memorial through digital content and interactivity. Previous programs have included Jenny Holzer’s *#LightTheFight* in 2018, the exhibition *Visual Impact: On Art, AIDS, and Activism* in 2019, and the site-specific soundscape installation *Hear Me: Voices of the Epidemic* in 2020.

The Memorial sits at the gateway to a public park adjacent to the former site of St. Vincent’s Hospital, which housed the City’s first and largest AIDS ward and became the symbolic epicenter of the disease through depictions in *The Normal Heart*, *Angels in America*, and other important pieces of literature and art that tell the story of the plague years in New York. The park site is

also a block from the LGBT Community Center on 13th Street, where ACT-UP and other AIDS advocacy/support groups first organized. Furthermore, the site is highly visible, accessible, and surrounded by amenities for visitors. For all these reasons, New York City officially named the park that houses the memorial the “New York City AIDS Memorial Park at St. Vincent’s Triangle.”

Land acknowledgement

The land of the five boroughs that make up New York City, including the land on which the New York City AIDS Memorial sits, is the traditional homeland of the Lenape, Merrick, Canarsie, Rockaway, Matinecock and Haudenosaunee Peoples. These lands are also the inter-tribal trade lands, and are under the stewardship, of many more indigenous nations today. New York City is home to the largest populations of Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, and Indigenous individuals out of any urban city across Turtle Island (the United States). We acknowledge the systematic erasure of many Nations and recognize those still among us today. We acknowledge the Peoples of these Nations - their cultures, their communities, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations - and their resilience throughout the HIV/AIDS epidemic and movement. We acknowledge and offer deep gratitude to Mannahatta - the land and waters on which we stand.

Media Contact

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