

GUEST CURATOR NOTE

TONYA LOCKYER, VELOCITY DANCE CENTER

Tere O'Connor is one of my dance heroes. A radically inventive choreographer, mentor and thinker, he is an inspiration to generations of dance makers, and a provocative, eloquent advocate for the politics and poetics of dance.

Perhaps the clearest indication of his importance to the field is his recent induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Only eight choreographers have been inducted: Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch, Agnes de Mille . . . In other words, people who have forever altered how we perceive dance, and what it can be.

My first encounter with Tere's work was similar to my first encounter with free jazz. I didn't 'get it'—which I loved. As my brain fired to make sense of the complexity of the patterns, I also recognized the sensation of being invited into a new politics of experience. Tere's dances confound expectations of narrative and representation. They are dense networks of specific events, juxtaposed, to evoke what Tere calls "the music of the relativity of all the parts."

In Tere's uncompromising investigation of choreography, the criticism of dance as incoherent, elusive or hard to understand is a strength, not a weakness. He embraces dance's ability to operate outside the realm of singular, coherent meaning to shed light on multiplicity. His dances place the ethics of locating meaning on the viewer. He is inviting you to have an experience.

To create *BLEED*, Tere collapsed three dances, with three entirely different casts, into one hybrid creation "simultaneously remembering and forgetting the previous dances." Through the porousness of *BLEED*, meanings multiply through the layering, collisions, and erasures of each independent work. Other than the American Dance Festival, Seattle is the only site to bring together all the original performances of the *BLEED* Project.

I am deeply grateful to Lane and OtB for reaching out to Velocity to partner in celebrating this American master. Tere and I curated Open For(u)m: *Irreconcilability* as an eight-day immersion in the *BLEED* Project—an opportunity to come together to engage with his work and the questions driving his process through workshops, book clubs, conversations and performances.

What is always at stake in Tere's work is dance. Dance as its own inimitable form of intelligence and knowledge. Dance as a kind of associative thinking that values tangential thought. Tere is also a champion for the dancer: "I think it's very noble to dance at this point on earth. It's really impossible to make a living at, so I have a lot of respect for the people who are doing it." His passion for articulating this often misunderstood art form, and his generosity in fostering the people who dedicate their lives to it—as a mentor to young artists, teacher, writer and volunteer—make him the most noble of artists in my book.



Tonya Lockyer | Artistic Director | Velocity Dance Center