

# Kiss the one we are – Hiatus/Daniel Linehan

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<https://e-tcetera.be/kiss-the-one-we-are-hiatus-daniel-linehan/>

## Everything Dances

In his new performance, Daniel Linehan invites nine performers to reflect on their own dance histories. What is the meaning of dance in a person's life? Why does a person choose to keep dancing? Where does dance begin and end? The result is an infectious celebration of the joy of dance and movement that is nevertheless a bit trapped here and there in an overly "literal" dramaturgy.

## Holism

As in previous work, Linehan employs an archaeological gaze in *Kiss the one we are*. *Montage for three* (2009), for example, was built around the iconography of our collective image memory. Then again, in the more recent *Body of Work* (2019), the choreographer explored his own dance past. *Kiss the one we are* is, in a sense, a continuation of that biographical investigation in which this time Linehan turns his gaze outward. Not just to the lives of a group of dancers, but more broadly to how dance and movement connects us all to each other and to the world. Consequently, the performers' personal stories are not specifically addressed in the performance, but rather provide the breeding ground for an associative montage of images and scenes that are all about the connection between dance and biography, movement and nature, the individual and the world.

"Everything dances, Linehan seems to suggest, and we vibrate with it."

The underlying dramaturgy is that of holism, the philosophical concept that holds that each whole is more than the sum of its parts. Thus, nature is prominent on stage. For example, in the form of trees hanging upside down from the ceiling, buckets full of sand that the dancers scatter all over the playing surface at a given moment, or objects such as stones, twigs and shells placed on pedestals by the performers, which they involve in their dance at a given moment. The costumes also incorporate organic forms here and there, such as long strands that seem to grow out of a performer's shirt, fanning out like a feather while dancing. In addition, the figure of the circle, holistic symbol par excellence, also appears in various ways in the performance. Everything dances, Linehan seems to suggest, and we vibrate with it.

## The joy of dancing

Very concrete and more abstract interpretations of this idea alternate. For example, the opening scene makes a very literal connection between dance and the pre-lingual, visceral and ritual. The performers stand, lie or sit in semi-darkness scattered across the playing surface. They watch a fire burning in the center of a circle on the floor. Except for the soft crackling of the fire, there is silence. Until one of them takes hold of an instrument and beats a rhythm at an increasingly rapid pace while uttering cries that seem to come from deep inside his body. When it becomes quiet again, another performer begins to dance. She pulls a second one into her movements, and then another and another, until all the dancers are involved in her dance, as one body that gradually grows. It is as if the performers are moved by the dance and not the other way around: they are lifted, pulled, pushed. The whole thing is fluid, almost sticky, tender and intimate.

Why do we dance? Because it connects us to a certain energy. That primary, sensual pleasure of (watching) dance traces Linehan through time. One moment the dancers form a circle while singing and draw a circle in the sand with their feet as if performing a ritual. The next moment, the beats of Björk's "Big Time Sensuality" sound

through the boxes and the scene becomes a dance floor in a club or bar. In another scene, one of the performers, with childlike enthusiasm, goes all the way to a song from his youth while being encouraged by the rest of the group. The performance makes tangible the desire in each of us to be absorbed in something else: in intoxication, in each other, in movement.

The frequent recourse to an almost ritualistic iconography is perhaps inevitable, but it also makes some of the images too determined, no matter how austere the scenography. When the performers are suddenly moved to dance a bit by taking a stone or a twig in their hands, it feels like too literal an interpretation of the idea that dance connects us to the world around us. Kiss the one we are is most beautiful to me in those moments when dance is allowed to speak for itself. In that sense, the final scene is a gem. To the beautiful music of Christophe Rault, the dancers together create a kind of human vortex reminiscent of photographs of galaxies or satellite images of storms and tornadoes. Endlessly they spin around as they move alternately from the outside to the core of the vortex. Meanwhile, they tenderly touch each other's faces, pulling each other close and pushing away from each other in a kind of echo of the opening scene. A clear and poetic image that vibrates long after.