

THE KITCHEN NEW YORK CITY'S *CENTER FOR EXPERIMENTAL*
ART *AND THE* **AVANT-GARDE** *SINCE 1971*

Fall 2025

Dance and Process:

Ayano Elson, Niala & Stacy Lynn Smith

The Kitchen at Westbeth
September 18–20, 2025
4pm

PROGRAM NOTES

The Kitchen's longest running program *Dance and Process* stages an interrogation of methods of choreographic and dance practice, whereby artists challenge default structures in their own work and the field at large. Beginning in July, a cohort made up of artists Ayano Elson, Niala, and Stacy Lynn Smith will engage in a weekly process of sharing material in development and receiving structured feedback facilitated by mayfield brooks and Niall Jones, culminating in public performances of new works in September.

Please note: The full program runs from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM and features three performances, with an intermission in between. Audience members are welcome to arrive at any time throughout the program, and come and go during the intermission. House opens at 3:45 PM and Box Office will remain open until 8:30 PM.

4 PM: Ayano Elson, in collaboration with Cayleen Del Rosario, Amelia Heintzelman, Owen Prum, Matt Evans, Madison Greenstone

5:30 PM: Intermission

6:45 PM: House reopens

7 PM: Stacy Lynn Smith

8 PM: Niala

Ayano Elson

Distances

In collaboration with Cayleen Del Rosario, Amelia Heintzelman, Owen Prum, Matt Evans, Madison Greenstone

Thank you to Tuce, Randi, Tassja, David, Angelique, Matthew, and Legacy. Thank you to mayfield and Niall. Thank you to Stacy and Niala. Thank you to Amelia. Thank you to Owen. Thank you to Cayleen. Thank you to Madison. Thank you to Matt. Thank you to Will, evan, Jade, Kim, Tess, and Jesi. Thank you to Keizo Kitajima and Mao Ishikawa. Thank you to John.

This project was supported, in part, by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

Ayano Elson is an Okinawan–American dancer and choreographer based in New York City. She is currently developing her first evening-length commission, premiering at The Chocolate Factory in spring 2026.

Her performances have recently premiered at Danspace Project, PAGEANT, Center for Performance Research (CPR), ISSUE Project Room, and Roulette, among others. She has held artist residencies at the Chocolate Factory (2025), CPR (2022), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and ArtCake (2021), was a Movement Research Van Lier Emerging Artist of Color Fellow (2018), and a Gibney Dance Work Up artist (2015). She is currently dancing for Kim Brandt, Jesi Cook, Gwendolyn Knapp, and Melinda Ring, and has performed in works by Laurie Berg, Juli Brandano, Milka Djordjevich, Ella Dawn W-S, Simone Forti, Abigail Levine, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy + Niall Jones, and Alexa West at museums, galleries, and theaters in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City. ayanoelson.com

Stacy Lynn Smith *(there's your trick)*

Concept, Choreography & Performance: Stacy Lynn Smith

Track 1: tape hiss (echoes of PORTALS)
no-input & sound design by Alex Romania

Track 2: Sense-Datum Volumetrics (unreleased) works by
DeForrest Brown Jr.

Special thank you to Ayano Elson, Niala, mayfield brooks, Niall Jones, Alex Romania, DeForrest Brown Jr. and all of the amazing folks at The Kitchen.

Stacy Lynn Smith is a neurodivergent, Black mixed-race interdisciplinary dance artist and improviser, choreographer, director, filmmaker and Green Circle Keeper at Hidden Water. Smith creates, devises, improvises and performs across disciplines and genres with an array of talented artists including: DeForrest Brown Jr., Anna Homler, Karen Bernard, Thaddeus O'Neil, Rakia Seaborn, Vangelina Theater, Saints of an Unnamed Country, Salome Asega, GENG, Donna Costello, Bradley Bailey, Michele Beck, Jasmine Hearn, mayfield brooks, Josephine Decker, Kathy Westwater, Jill Sigman, Emily Johnson, Joan Jonas, Peter Born and Okwui Okpokwasili. Smith was a 2022-2024 Movement Research Artist-in-Residence, 2024 Djerassi AIR, their work PORTALS was featured in the 2024 season of Black Aesthetics (curated by Malcolm Betts and Arien Wilkerson at Judson Church), is a 2025 MacDowell Fellow and 2025 Dance and Process (DAP) AIR at The Kitchen. As Psychic Wormhole (with Alex Romania), work includes *Face Eaters* (The Chocolate Factory Theater) and *fame hOle* (Grace Exhibition Space, La Mama). Psychic Wormhole is working towards completing their debut film, *RECKONING*, a visceral experimental memoir grappling with Smith's experiences as a survivor of CSA and Complex-PTSD, which received the

inaugural Artists Supporting Artists Program (ASAP) grant from Sweat Variant (Okwui Okpokwasili + Peter Born) and was shortlisted for '25 Creative Capital in Film / Video. To support the film in this final phase: youwillconsumeus.com/reckoning.

DeForrest Brown, Jr. is an Alabama-raised, Ex-American rhythmanalyst, writer, musician, and curator, currently living within the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵə̣ṃ (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́ḷílwə́təʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. His written work centres on a diagnostic exploration of electronic music through considerations of applied metaphilosophy. His debut book *Assembling a Black Counter Culture* (2022) has been widely recognised for its critical depth. In 2023, he co-curated HOPE at Museion (Bolzano), the concluding exhibition in the TECHNO HUMANITIES trilogy. Brown's work has been presented at institutions including the Venice Biennale Musica 2025, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), Paris+ par Art Basel, Somerset House (London), and Performa (New York). He has taught and lectured at Simon Fraser University, NYU, The New School, Harvard, Brown, and Princeton. Recent collaborations include liner notes for Cybotron's *Maintain the Golden Ratio* (2023) and *Parallel Shift* (2024) developed with techno pioneer Juan Atkins and Tresor.

Alex Romania is a multidisciplinary artist, performer and filmmaker. Romania is a current Franklin Furnace Fund recipient, 2024 Djerassi resident artist, 2022 and 2025 MacDowell fellow, 2023 Center for Performance Research AIR, and 2018-2020 Movement Research AIR. Some of Romania's current projects include co-directing the film *RECKONING* with Stacy Lyn Smith, the multidisciplinary opera *Face Eaters*, co-directorship of the experimental documentary *Patch the Sky with Five Colored Stones* conceived by choreographer Daria Faïn, a collaborative short entitled *Mira, Mira, Mira!* with Daniela Fabrizi and the Re Hecho community in the LES. Romania performed in works by Kathy Westwater from 2013 to 2023, and in works by Simone

Forti, Éva Mag, Eddie Peake, Andy de Groat, and Catherine Galasso. Romania has designed video within several works by Antonio Ramos, and worked on films with Marin Media Labs, TAAMAS / Sarah Riggs, Trixie Films / Therese Shechter, Christopher Unpezverde Nuñez, Martita Abril, and Sarah White-Ayòn. Romania is grateful for the wealth of creativity over a decade of experimentation in live performance has brought them and looks forward to continuing this research through developing films, plays, and punk operas, including a memoir, a sci-fi suspense feature, a compilation of poetry and the ever evolving album.

Niala

ICON

ICON unpacks the multitudes of wanting to be a star against the visceral reality of what it means to be a trans body on hyper display. The desire to feel affirmed in identity often comes with great sacrifice. Paying homage to trans icon and pioneer Octavia St. Laurent, I position my own dreams into the complexities of being seen in the light

Glam + fabric manipulation: Sinn Apsara

Hair: Miss Kam

Photography + videography: Ramie Ahmed

Visual makeup: Kaur Onazh

Movement direction: Dahlia Qumhiyeh

Sound artist: Bev Vega

Sound artist: Shugsline

Special thank you to mayfield brooks, Niall Jones, Ayano Elson, and Stacy Lynn Smith for being in process with me and a super big thank you to the entire Kitchen Staff

Niala is a black trans multidisciplinary artist based in Bangkok and New York City, whose work spans across the mediums of movement and sound. Her work aims to explore what it means to be black, queer, and trans in an ever-evolving social landscape. As a member of NYC's kiki scene, Niala draws inspiration from her deep connection to the ballroom scene, paying homage to black fem queen culture as a means for building pathways to expansive and imaginative futures. Niala has performed at venues including The Shed (2022, 2024) and The Kitchen (2023). Her most recent work, *DAWTA* was featured in The Judson's Black Aesthetics Residency (2024), where she performed a duet with her mother.

Ramie Ahmed is a New Jersey-born, now New York City-based photographer. Whose work is inspired by his relationships with

members of the LGBTQ+ community. Ahmed is constantly concerned with preserving a pure perception of the queer culture in which he is enmeshed. He continues to figure out how to utilize the camera, a device with so much power, to provide a platform for those who have been overlooked by society to select how they, as the subject, want society to view them.

Sinn Apsara's line of work is love letters to her Khmer lineage. Fabric manipulation and makeup expertise become an extension of her artistic intellect.

Jordan Kamara AKA **Miss Kam** is a California born, New York City-based visual artist and founding member of the Angelito Collective. Her work explores stories of selfhood, togetherness, and connectivity using various mediums such as film, illustration, and hairdressing.

Shugsline is the production moniker of Sweet Corey-Bey (they/them/theirs), a musician, cultural organizer, and communications professional based in Philadelphia.

Bev Vega is an educator and dancer based in New York City, originally from San Antonio. She uses her mixes as her way to teach music history. She believes that the dance floor is a space where the past, present, and future of music converge.

Kauv Onazh, born and raised in Detroit, quickly knew that to pursue their surrealistic dreams of transformation they needed to head to New York City where Kauv has made home. Kauv's first mediums for art were not in makeup, but Onazh quickly gravitated to the visage paints where they could reflect the bravery and love of the queer art community. With face and body painting, Kauv's creatures and creations know no limits, particularly drawing influence from nature. People are often asking Kauv 'what does the art mean?', but Onazh is really just having the time of their life thinking up and being anything they want. This is an empowerment and fantasy that Kauv wants to

gift to their clients. Once in Kauv's chair, you get to escape to a world where you are center stage and you can be anything.

Dahlia Qumhiyeh is a Palestinian-Malaysian expat raised in Kuwait. She moved to the US to earn a B.S. in Biology, before pursuing a career in television. She is signed to United Talent Agency and has movement directed for projects on Stephen Colbert, The Kelly Clarkson Show and Bergdorf Goodman. She has appeared on Law & Order SVU, The Crowded Room, Ziwe, and POSE on FX as well as featured in publications like GQ Middle East and Paper Magazine.

PRODUCTION CREDITS & CREW

Dance and Process: Ayano Elson, Niala, Stacy Lynn Smith is organized by mayfield brooks and Niall Jones, with Matthew Lyons, Curator, and Angelique Rosales Salgado, Assistant Curator. Production by David Riley, Production & Exhibitions Manager, and Tassja Walker, Production Supervisor, The Kitchen.

Lighting Designer: Tuce Yasak

Stage Manager: Randi Rivera

Crew: Alex Capraro, Joe Wakeman, Cameron Granger, Marcus Jamison, Nicholas Ramsey, Jay David, Rhylike Caputo, Yvonne LeBain, Sarah Samson, equis arriaga cuellar, Zoe Jean Chronberg

The Kitchen

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