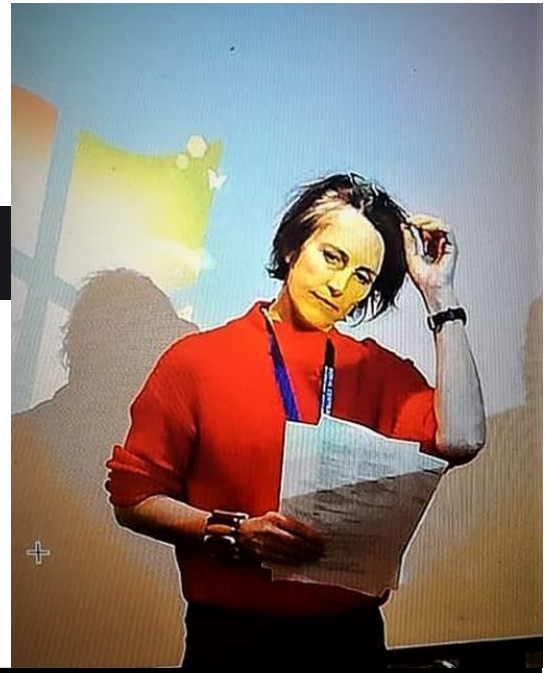


## JOSEPHINE LEASK, MA

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### PROFILE

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**Project Title**

New Dance Magazine: a body of writing as feminist praxis

**Supervisor/s**

Kate Elswit and Diana Damian Martin

**Abstract**

My thesis examines New Dance Magazine (1977-1988), created in London by a collective of dance artists called the X6 Collective. X6 developed New Dance, an umbrella term for their evolving experimental dance practice which became the name of their magazine. New Dance Magazine (NDM) documented their practice and functioned as a dynamic body of writing that primarily intersected with second wave British feminism but also responded to other liberation groups at the time such as Gay Liberation and the Black Women's Movement. NDM was unique as it included writing and criticism by dance practitioners which transformed the way people watched and wrote about dance. Its body of writing lay on the intersections of dance, criticism and feminist praxis.

Despite the centrality of X6 within dance scholarship NDM has been overlooked in its capacity as a platform for alternative writing and criticism that was a precursor to concepts of criticism and political thinking that came later. The magazine's body of writing is key to understanding what it contributed, why it was radical and what it can add to the histories of X6 and more broadly to the development of thought around dance.

NDM's experimental body of writing introduced new approaches to thinking about dance criticism. Elaborating on the impact of NDM's contents as it developed writing from the body, I explore how it conversed with feminism and to what extent it shaped criticism by developing feminist knowledge of representation and power. My research also acknowledges the magazine's legacy to dance scholarship, as an archive of embodied writing and its function as a radical model for alternative writing possibilities.

**Key questions**

- How NDM's body of writing draws on the concept of the thinking body which is central to somatic dance practice
- Where and how the magazine sits in relation to feminist print cultures and second wave feminism,
- How NDM's body of writing shaped radical dance criticism then and now and how it contested the power of the critic.

## PROFILE

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I am a dance critic, editor, lecturer and part-time PhD researcher at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. My PhD research explores the contribution of New Dance Magazine (1977-1988) to the creation of alternative and feminist intersectional dance writing practices.

As a dance critic I have written for a range of mainstream press and dance publications but currently write for [DanceTabs](#) and edit Resolution Review a digital platform that profiles emerging writers writing alongside critics. My commitment as a critic is to cover dance that sits outside of mainstream visibility. My earlier writing developed out of performance research and academic study (Goldsmiths and Surrey University) and centred on representations of the body, identity and sexuality. I later became preoccupied with the medium of dance criticism itself but still through the perspective of feminist intersectional representation and how that might contest the dominance of white, male critics.

As a dance critic and scholar, a central focus on NDM is how its body of writing questioned the power of the critic while radically shifting forms and interrogating meanings within journalistic criticism, researched through examining models of contemporary criticism and reflecting on my own writing practice.

## Practice

### Current positions

2020 Lead-Curator Collisions – A Festival of Online Practice Research, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

2019 Co-Curator, COLLISIONS - A Festival of Practice Research, Central

2019 – Present, Curator/Editor Theatre Matters, Central researchers blog

2018 – Present, Co-Editor: Platform, Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts

2018 Co-organiser, Symposium On Criticism, 23 November 2018, Co-organised by Royal Holloway and Central, hosted at Central, London.

2014- Present, Editor and contributor Resolution Review

## Publications

2021 – 'Charlotte Vincent' in Martha Bremser and Lorna Sanders (Eds.) Fifty Contemporary Choreographers (Routledge 3rd Edition)

2011 'Loyd Newson' pp 297-304 in Martha Bremser and Lorna Sanders (Eds.) Fifty Contemporary Choreographers (Routledge 2nd Edition)

2005 'A Conventional Subversive' in Butcher, R. Melrose, S. (Eds). Rosemary Butcher: Choreography, Collisions and Collaborations (Middlesex University Press)

## Reviews

2020, Nov 6, 'Splayed Festival 2020 with Eve Stainton & guests, Claire Cunningham, Mele Broomes, Cade & MacAskill' in DanceTabs, [Splayed Festival 2020](#)

2020, April 2, 'Exhibition – X6 Dance Space (1976-80): Liberation Notes' in DanceTabs, [X6 Liberation Notes](#)

2019 Dec 11, 'Jamila Johnson -Small and guests Heavy Handed We Crush the Moment' in DanceTabs, [Heavy handed we crush the moment](#)

2019 Nov 2, 'Sung Im Her, Nutcrusher' in DanceTabs, [Nutcrusher](#)

2019, Oct 7, 'Dada Masilo, Giselle' in DanceTabs

2019, July 28, 'Claire Cunningham Interview and her new Elvis inspired work' in DanceTabs, [Thank you Very Much](#)

2019, March 19, 'Vincent Dance Theatre – Virgin Territory Film Installation', in DanceTabs, [Virgin Territory Film Installation](#)

2018, Oct 5, Hauptaktion at Collisions Festival 2018, Examining Cultural appropriation and Minstrel Shows' in DanceTabs, [Examining cultural appropriation and Minstrel Shows](#)

2018, Sept 18, 'Sarah Blanc, My feminist boner' in DanceTabs, [My Feminist Boner](#)

2018, June 20, 'Rhiannon Faith, Smack That' in DanceTabs

2018, June 13, 'Splayed Festival 2018 with Florence Peake, Eve Stainton, Sheena McGrandles, Hilde Ingeborg Sandvold' in DanceTabs [Splayed Festival 2018](#)

2018, March 24, 'Jacky Lansley, About Us' in DanceTabs, [About Us](#)

2018, March 20, '[Woman SRSly Takeover: Wildlife in Strange Waters](#)' in DanceTabs

2020, March 8, 'Amy Bell, The Forecast' in DanceTabs, [The Forecast](#)

2018, March 2, '[Sweatshop Revolution, Beautiful](#)' in DanceTabs

2017, July 22, '[Fevered Sleeps' Men and Girls](#)' in DanceTabs

## Current Teaching

- Teaching on MA programme at Rambert 2 – Approaches to Writing symposium
- MA Performing Research Lectures at Central, How to research the intersections between Feminism, dance and criticism. February 2020
- Lecturer on Postmodern dance history and criticism: Crossing Borders & Collaborative Approaches to Dance, BA Hons programme at London Studio Centre, University of Middlesex (Ongoing)
- Dance writing Mentor to emerging dance writers – Resolution Review

## Conference Presentations

2021 - Zoom presentation, *In pursuit of liberation - New Dance Magazine, Spare Rib and the embodiment of second wave feminism* at Our Dance Democracy, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, Feb 2021,

2020 - Society for Dance Research: Choreographic Forum - Seminar on the relationship between artist and critic, The Place, London, Feb 21, 2020

2019 - Paper presentation, *Criticism in Common* at the DSA (Dance Studies Association) 2019 Conference, North Western University, Evanston, Illinois, US. August 8-11, 2019

2018 *Messing with Convention*, performative intervention presented at Symposium On Criticism, 23 November 2018, Co-organised by Royal Holloway and Central, hosted at Central in London.

2018 -Performative reading: *Undoing the Review*, Collisions 25 -17 September 2018, Central, London

2014 – Paper presentation, *Shimmying Hips & Hand Rotations: The transformative nature of the Bollywood dance class* for Pace, Penalty and Pirouette: the Sociology of Physical Culture symposium at Glasgow Caledonian University, June 2014.