

Margaret Jean Westby, Ph.D.
Artist Statement

I am a multidisciplinary artist with a professional dance background. I create and collaborate in art performances, installations, and films throughout Canada, Europe, United Kingdom, and United States. My own practice and research explores the hybridization of human and machine-based actions through critical feminist and queer methodologies. I am interested in exploring the moving body's relationship to digital technologies and the performativity of all entities in play. I received my PhD Humanities – Interdisciplinary degree in Fine Arts at Concordia University in 2017. My research-creation dissertation encompassed both a practical artistic project with theoretical research into remapping gender dynamics that arise in technologically augmented dance performance through the lens of feminist Science and Technology Studies.

My projects range thematically and aesthetically through mixing movement practices, cutting-edge technologies, and sociological research. I do not design works for concert stages per se, as I prefer to choreograph in flexible spaces like black boxes, galleries and museums, and other site-specific areas (salt mines, urban landscapes, research labs). I am more interested in the collaborative process as a mode to experiment and the performance event as a mode to initiate conversation.

Coming from dancing, the initiative to move and do provides a critical platform to understand human bodies in the context of larger systems and structures. I am interested in the way technology is designed and applied across multiple performative platforms and what this does to the human body. I am interested and hopeful in the way digital technologies can create open, liberatory spaces through the strategies of transformation, displacement, and new configurations of multiple identities. In my work, multisensory immersive environments draw the body into the world of digital interactivity and give tangible weight to the presence of different materials as mediators of interaction across space and time.

I continue to explore affective and material processes of mess-making, trust-building and negotiation of space within interdisciplinary research and performance creation practices. Motivated by feminist Science and Technology Studies, the spilling-over and bleeding through of different modalities of thought and art-practices is necessary in order to counteract against the precise engineering of techno-capitalism and to foster the inter-connectedness of social bodies. It is a statement of presence and recognition of the traces of emotional consciousness that both drives and is politically structured by socio-technical interaction.