

Research Statement

My creative research centers on embodied material processes that render the experiential and relational visible. At the intersection of drawing, performance, and somatic practice, I situate body and mind within performative scores that enact modes of attention through action and mark-making. The work develops across multiple contexts and scales through exhibitions, live performance, moving image, sound, installation, choreography, curation, design, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Through solo and collaborative experimentation, I investigate improvisational practices beyond the conventions of indeterminacy and dialogic exchange. Through structured engagement, I develop systems of accountability that function as generative constraints within improvisation. This inquiry examines how attention and care shape the formation, maintenance, and transformation of relationships within the self, between bodies, and between bodies and materials. This creates conditions for new knowledge to emerge through live encounters and the visual forms through which those encounters continue to resonate.

To understand the parameters and expression of a work, I do not only spend time with it, but shift my relationship to time itself, my body, the surrounding space, and those within it. Duration and a sustained quality of presence afford me opportunity to feel the points of contact, connect to my body, negotiate variability, and respond to what is needed. Scores create ecosystems in which my body continuously adapts to changing conditions, transforming experience into a palpable force that sustains action and nurtures connection.

What most compels me is the effort required to foster connection when a system is on edge. In my work, the display of resistance in the body is not meant as spectacle but as a condition of maintaining the connection. Wavering intentions, materials that push back, bodily limitations, rips, slips and breaks—even the impossibility of loving someone in the same way— all become meaningful sites of this inquiry. Performance is a space to embody instability rather than represent it. The body on the edge is never only my own. I see this as a collective encounter despite the disparate roles of performer and audience. The audience, implicated in the demand, completes the ecology of attention, and my hope is that we find ourselves on the same side of persistence.

This research is realized through an intermedial artistic practice. Since 2017, I have been represented by *signs and symbols* gallery in New York City, whose program is dedicated to performance and time-based art. The gallery was shaped through the inspiration and counsel of three seminal figures—Ulay, VALIE EXPORT, and Vito Acconci. Because commercial gallery representation remains relatively rare for artists working in ephemeral and time-based forms, this affiliation has been particularly significant for the development of my practice.

Solo exhibitions are among the strongest markers of peer esteem in the field. From 2020–2026, I presented three solo exhibitions at prominent galleries, including two at signs and symbols: *Great Divide* (Feb. 24–Mar. 27, 2021) and *THIS ONE HERE NOW* (Feb. 16–Mar. 25, 2023). *THIS ONE HERE NOW* was featured in print and online in ArtForum’s *Must See Shows* list, the editor’s selection of “essential exhibitions worldwide”. Artforum is widely regarded as the “magazine of record” for the contemporary art world. My third solo exhibition, *Tony Orrico: Fit Into the Imprint* (May 11–June 29, 2024), took place in Madrid, Spain at Galería La Cometa, a globally established art gallery with locations in Madrid, Miami, Bogotá, and Medellín.

Over four years, these three solo exhibitions allowed me to develop and reconsider themes across some of my most emblematic bodies of work: *Penwald Drawings*, *CARBON*, and *Textiles*. As I reflected on a shifting cultural landscape, deepened my understanding of my queer identity, and embraced

healing and community as important concerns, permeability emerged as a defining principle both within my thinking and practice. Moving beyond earlier investigations of physical and cognitive balance or bifurcation, I became attuned to divergence, variation, and spontaneous intervention.

This shift first becomes evident in *Great Divide*, particularly in works such as *Vertical Stretch* and *Horizontal Stretch*, graphite drawings on paper. While retaining the bilateral configuration characteristic of *Penwald Drawings*, the hands now assume different tasks: the right hand consolidates the deposited lines while the left spatializes and transfers new sensorial information from the body. The drawing's structure continuously yields to the body's agency and felt sense. Through curious traversal of the body's surface and folds, sensation dictates unanticipated direction. The body's vulnerable axis becomes a site of generative sensorial feedback through which questions of masculinity, lineage, harm, and care surface.

Within Textiles, a performative drawing practice investigating memory through the notion of a mental loom, embodied attention becomes a means of investigating thought itself. Rather than guiding the tessellation back to its regenerative order, these iterations test its underlying conditions by tuning into the movement of stray thought. *THIS ONE HERE NOW* marks my first exhibition devoted exclusively to these graphite drawings since their inception in 2011. Here, the body functions not as an archive of experience but as a site of invention. Physical sensation catalyzes associative thought, while thought interventions reshape both the drawing and the relationship between memory and imagination.

My solo show at Galería La Cometa in Madrid provided an opportunity to reframe several works from my CARBON series alongside new work. In its new rendition, *Alluviated Listening 2* (2024) held a strong presence in the exhibit and exemplifies how these works render material relationships visible. The work compares the process of alluviation, sediment buildup along an embankment, with the accumulation of obstructive thought and how this impedes genuine listening. Two specimens of shungite, a form of carbon I am drawn to for being amorphous and variant, are lodged directly into the gallery wall at the precise height of my right and left ears. From each point of insertion, graphite powder stains the wall in downward trails. Here, body and material do not merely inform one another; they operate as collaborators. Their encounter enacts a transformation, demonstrating how pressure and reciprocity produce radical difference across both material registers.

This interdisciplinary portfolio extends these material investigations through solo and collaborative performance, dance, and curatorial practice. Since 2020, it has included three (3) international solo performances; participation in two (2) international, five (5) national, and three (3) regional group exhibitions; eight (8) collaborative projects, two of which reached international audiences; two (2) concert dances presented at a national venue; and two (2) curatorial projects with national reach.

Enactments of reciprocity extend beyond materiality in my work, guiding numerous collaborations with other artists and performative structures. Among these, two exemplify reciprocity and relational practice: *Four Hand Draw* (2017, 2022, 2026) and *Homefield Advantage...* (2024). *Four Hand Draw* investigates reciprocity through a sustained collaborative practice between two bodies, examining the politics of touch, the negotiation of assertion, and the shared distribution of power. The process alternates between a nonverbal, emergent drawing practice grounded in these principles and spoken dialogue that negotiates perception, intention, and choice. The most recent iteration, developed over nine months with collaborator Melinda Jean Myers, culminated in a forty-minute choreographed drawing. Seated across a table, the work stages our four hands as its primary performers.

In 2024, I was invited to develop a project for *Headmaster Magazine*, a limited-edition queer arts publication distributed internationally through museums, universities, and bookstores. I invited my colleague, Dr. Christopher Rasheem McMillan, to examine intimacy and estrangement within our

friendship through a seven-hour performance-for-publication—titled *Homefield Advantage / Queering the Return*. Together, we analyzed the power structures of select global sports and reconfigured them into reciprocal systems that reflected our shared process of healing. Two witnesses, a photographer and a stick-and-poke tattoo artist, participated as collaborators, extending the work's relational framework through documentation and embodied inscription.

I joined Matty Davis's *Die No Die* at The Momentary in Arkansas as a contributing solo artist before co-producing and performing an iteration in Iowa City at the Ashton Prairie Living Laboratory and Cross-Country Course in partnership with Public Space One. With University support, I organized a workshop with Davis, bringing together collaborators from Dance, Art, Theatre, English, and the Iowa Writers' Workshop for the Iowa City performance. I initiated a Risograph publication with the Iowa City Press Co-op documenting the project's evolving histories through the trajectories of its performers, surrounding communities, and local flora. The Iowa City iteration led to a third version co-commissioned by High Line Art and Frieze New York and presented along the High Line. For this presentation, I set choreography on Davis. An exhibition spanning a 1,000-square-foot wall at the entrance to The Shed during Frieze New York featured images from *Die No Die (Iowa City)*, accompanied by a 192-page, full-color publication (edition of 1,000).

This integration of artistic research, pedagogy, and public engagement continued in 2025 through my restaging of Trisha Brown's *Floor of the Forest* with students across seven disciplinary areas at the University of Iowa. I also served as a coordinator of the Trisha Brown Dance Company's extended residency, organizing public programs that brought students into direct dialogue with one of the most influential choreographic lineages in contemporary dance.

Recent major museum exhibitions further situate my work within broader historical and disciplinary conversations. *Body and Choreography: Dancing in the Museum* at the Central Academy of Fine Arts Art Museum (CAFA) in Beijing, China (2024) featured three of my performance works in video installations alongside artists including Jerome Bel, Senga Nengudi, Trisha Brown, William Forsythe, and Xavier Le Roy. My work on paper, *Prepare the Plane*, was included in *This Mortal Coil and the Labor of Remembrance* at the Zuckerman Museum of Art (2021), where Deanna Sirlin, writing for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, compared its "elegance" and "intensity" to that of Janine Antoni's work. The exhibition brought my work into dialogue with artists including Louise Bourgeois, Oscar Muñoz, and Antoni, and was accompanied by a 307-page exhibition catalogue featuring my work.

Two major publications further position my practice within contemporary discourse on performance, drawing, and embodied research. In addition to the extended discussion of my work in *PERFORMANCE DRAWING: New Practices since 1945* (Bloomsbury, 2022), I contributed the essay *Voyage of the Transfer* to Bonnie Marranca and Daniel Sack's forthcoming *The Theatre of Drawing* (PAJ Publications, 2026), an examination of the creative processes of forty-two American artists from the 1960s to the present, including Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk, Ann Hamilton, Julie Mehretu, Trisha Brown, Annie-B Parson, Ralph Lemon, Laurie Anderson, and Joan Jonas.

This trajectory continues through the ongoing development of *Four Hand Draw*. Following a recent presentation at the D5 Live Arts Festival in Saint-Julien-Molin-Molette, France, *Four Hand Draw* will continue to tour with a forthcoming performance at the 14th UP-ON Performance Art Festival in Chengdu, China, with an additional presentation currently in conversation with Museo Picasso Málaga, Spain. I will also present a live *Penwald Drawing* at *Poetry in Action* (ReActor Festival) at the Shanghai Power Station of Art this fall and join the D5 Live Arts Festival's curatorial team for its 2027 edition.