

DANCING SYDNEY Rakini Devi



Rakini Devi *Calcutta Manga* image by Garth Knight 2002

".....From the depths of my memory, phantoms I seem always to be losing and finding again, restless ghosts unrecovered from wounds sustained in the past, when they crashed headlong or sidelong against that barrier reef, mysterious and incomprehensible, the human body."

Colette *The Pure and The Impure* 1932

Condensing, cataloguing and archiving thirty years of one's artistic practice can be cathartic, informative and even inspiring. I experienced many conflicting emotions and nostalgic sentiments during the four weeks I dedicated towards archiving my work as a recipient of a *Dancing Sydney* Critical Path grant. This retrospective research was undertaken in 2018. Claire Hicks, *Critical Path* and Amanda Card from the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney, facilitated and supported the project. Following my recent doctoral studies, this project could not have

come at a better time. The seemingly abrupt end to a routine of research and study that had occupied me happily for four years had left me with a sense of being adrift and somewhat bereft of aim or purpose. The process of archiving in itself gave me, for the first time, a sense of my artistic achievements over the years, and a process that, as an independent artist, I have not had the time or funds to undertake.

As a living archive, the body stores countless memories of the lithe and supple prowess of early experimentations and naïve passions, of successes and failures. The outcome of my present activity has been the archiving of key works spanning over thirty years, which has included project books, notes, photos, videos, audio, scrapbooks, and more. The most precious of all my creative records of work are my journals, which I have maintained since 1989, in the form of visual art, writing, scripts, set design and costuming. The archiving process in turn initiated a new enquiry that I had opportunity to explore during a 2019 Responsive Residency at *Critical Path* in collaboration with video and sound artist Karl Ockelford. The title of the residency research project was *The Body as Archive*. During the three-week process, I drew on retrospective works as inspiration for new ideas, which were documented in a 12 -page written journal that outlined new choreographic concepts, my methodology, and scripts that were revisited and re-recorded.

My methodology for the residency involved creating a score of "archived" signature moves relating to each of my works dating from the nineties, including a chart that displays dates, titles of the works, the signature choreographies, and the motivation influencing each selected work. Using these scores as a starting point, I experimented with choreographic ideas and sequences. The score was used as a springboard for fresh methods of working with my key subject of female iconography as visual and performance art. In the photographic and video imagery that Karl Ockelford experimented with, I appear to be absorbed and integrated into my own artwork. In other material productions from this process, I am transformed into a character in a graphic novel, and represent stylised female iconographies inspired by Tarot-card figures.

The *Critical Path* residency afforded me time, space, and most importantly funds to experiment with my multidisciplinary practice incorporating dance, visual art, video and writing, and the opportunity to collaborate with Karl Ockelford again. Later in the year, I will undertake an artist residency at the Rex, a timely opportunity to expand upon these ideas and take them to the next level, which is to experiment with the live performance aspect of these current ideas. The working title for this project is *Portraits of Female Alchemy*. The outcome of the *Body as Archive* residency at *Critical Path* (2019) is mainly visual content, including over 400 images and a few short segments of video, integrating my own visual artwork.

This online article is in lieu of the presentation I would have given on the 30th of March, in which I discuss the activities undertaken during the *Dancing Sydney* archive process in 2018 and the *Critical Path* residency that followed

in 2019. I have included the images as they were prepared for a power point presentation.

Thank you in advance for all welcome feedback,

Rakini

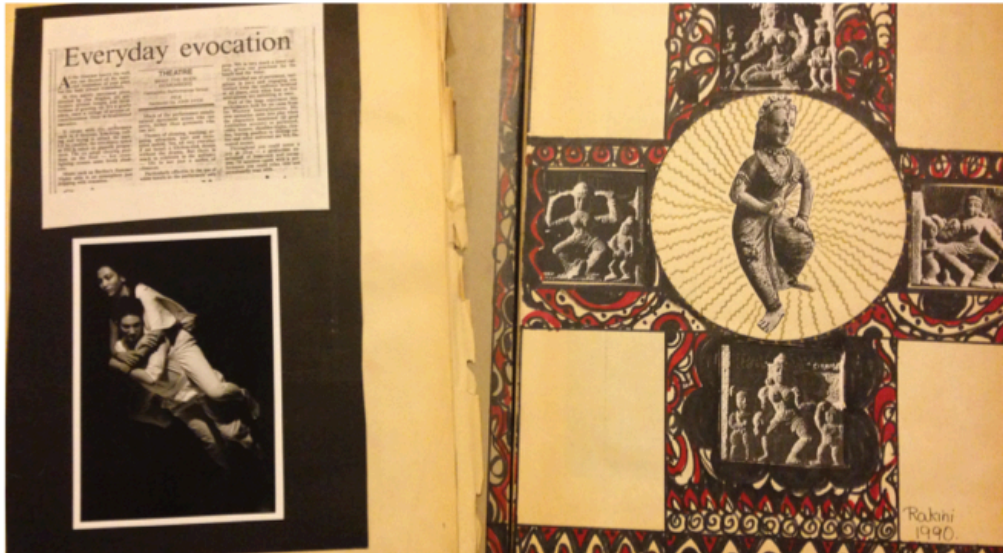
April 2, 2020

**DANCING SYDNEY
2020**

Rakini Devi
Daughters of Daksha
First full-length funded
production
Arts WA
PICA
1991



Old scrap books



Selected major productions from 1990 – present
Folders, journals, audio and video files, press, posters



Dancing Sydney Archive Project 2018

Rakini Devi



Flyers: Remember them?



Dancing in the 80s
With my first Bharatnatyam
guru,
Jevalaxmi Raman

Press cutting



1991 Dance West Magazine
MARCH DANCE 1991!



Suttee
PICA
PERTH ARTRAGE FESTIVAL
1992

Multicultural Arts Perth Magazine

Image by Ashley de Prazer



Suttee 1992

Artrage Festival, PICA

Image by Ashley de Prazer

Sound by Cat Hope
 (our first collaboration)

From wife to widow

Rakini explores ancient Hindu women's issues through mime, dance and movement

Rakini's latest marriage of dance and dialogue does more than emphasise the art form.

Entitled *How to choose a wife and Suttee*, this innovative dance project, developed for Artrage 1992, reflects upon the rituals of wife selection across history and culture.

Arranged marriages, still in existence in some cultures, may not be as far removed as would at first appear.

Consider the impact for example that advertising has on contemporary male minds in our society and how the image of the perfect woman is packaged and presented to young men. Certainly there are parallels between the traditional system and the less obvious practices of today.

Rakini merges her training in Indian traditional dance with a performance by actor Tony Osborne who plays the part of an Oxford-trained Indian professor presenting a lecture on marital guidance to a class of men.

The second piece of the programme is linked thematically and explores the ritually rooted practice of widow immolation by Hindu wives.

The solo titled *Suttee* cleverly draws links between the practice of a widow joining her husband

concept of a woman's worthlessness in society without a man. For Rakini, the fire of the funeral pyre represents the transformational element of fire or heat - the dark aspect of creation - for without the devouring flames of necessity, no change is possible.

Season dates are 6 - 11 Oct at PICA. Tickets and enquiries: 227 6144 and 328 7765

Dancing in Perth

Artrage Festivals

Kalika Dance Company

Teaching at WAPPA

Performing

Training

Perth/India

1980's to 2001

2002-present:

Sydney & Melbourne



MACWA

Article Rakini Devi

Image by Chris Ha



WOMAN IN TRANSIT

Rakini Devi solo
performance

2002 Performance Space

Image by Garth Knight



Kalika Dance Company (1990 ~1998)

Kali Digambar 1995

Image by Ashley De Prazer



Kalika Dance Company

Printed Program

YANTRA 1998



Woman In Transit 2002

Don't call me Butoh!

Image by Heidrun Lohr

Performance Space,
Sydney.



La Pocha Nostra

Guillermo Gómez-Peña & Rakini Devi
Canary Islands 2005
Image by Teresa Correa

FOLDER

Collaborations:

2003

2005

2007

2014



MINDIMI (THE BURMESE PRINCESS) Project book 1998



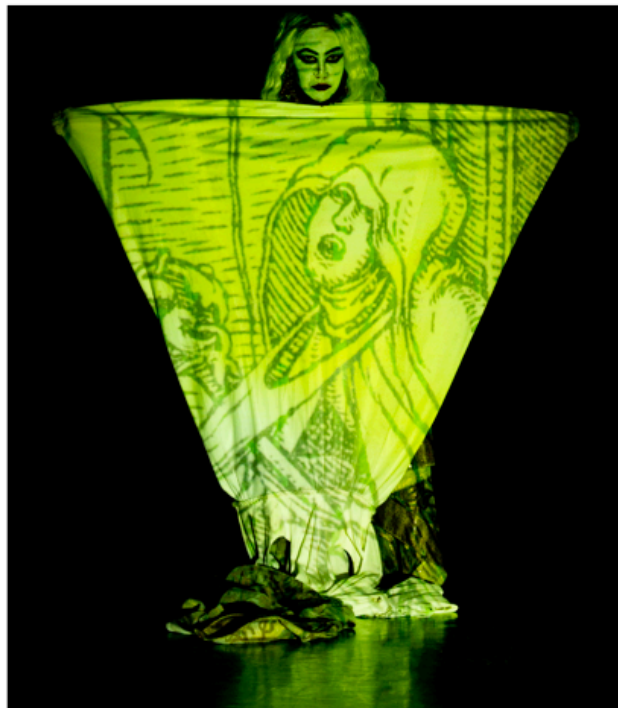
Body as Archive
Critical Path
Research residency April 2019
Crucified nun
Journal visual art
Rakini Devi

Oil pastels and inks



Body as Archive
Critical Path
Research residency April 2019
Rakini Devi
Visual art
Choreography
Scripts
Written documentation

Karl Ockelford
Video design
"Tarot card " design
Graphic Novel design
Photography



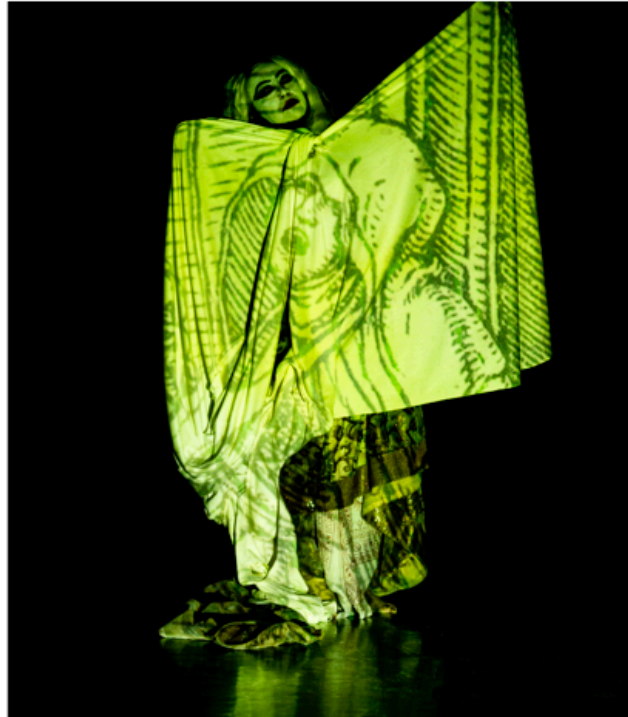
Body as Archive
Critical Path
Research residency April 2019

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Body as Archive Critical Path 2019
Portraits of Female Iconography Artwork Rakini Devi & Karl Ockelford



Illegal Immigrant

The Pier
Rushcutters Bay
Critical Path residency
2019 Image by Karl
Ockelford



The Pier
Rushcutters Bay
Critical Path residency 2019 Image by Karl Ockelford



The Body as Archive
Rakini Devi
Dancing Sydney & Critical Path research residency 2018-2019

