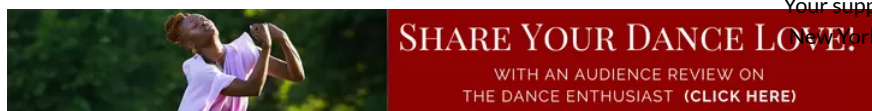


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Q+A with The Dance Enthusiast

THE DANCE ENTHUSIAST ASKS: Cathy Weis on Her History as an Artist and Her Performance Series, Sundays on Broadway

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By Catherine Tharin
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Cathy Weis; photo by Richard Termine

Interviews with KJ Holmes, Lucy Sexton and Juliette Mapp

Sundays on Broadway takes place in Cathy Weis' 537 Broadway WeisAcres loft.

The **May 2023** series runs May 7, May 14, and May 21.



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Simone Forti and Cathy Weis in front of a Sundays on Broadway audience, 537 Broadway, WeisAcres loft; photo by Richard Termine

Catherine Tharin for The Dance Enthusiast: What is the history of your building?

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Cathy Weis, Dance Artist and Creator of the *Sundays on Broadway* series: I purchased this loft from [Simone Forti](#) in 2005. Simone had moved there in 1975; every serious artist in those days had a place in which to work. In this building, there were several different kinds of artists; there was a very communal feeling. We would go from one loft to the next to see what people were doing and learn from them.

The buildings, 541 Broadway and 537 Broadway, are really one building that was split in half to make two coops running from Broadway to Mercer. Choreographers [Trisha Brown](#), [Lucinda Childs](#), Simone Forti, [Frances Alenikoff](#), [Douglas Dunn](#), [Elaine Summers](#) and [David Gordon](#) and [Valda Setterfield](#) lived or live in the buildings. [Eden's Expressway](#), part of Movement Research, is on the 4th floor of 537. WeisAcres is on the 3rd floor. In the early 70s, the building was a very alive place. There were no rules. That's why Trisha could do things on the roof, and down the sides of buildings. You can't do that today.

[George Maciunas](#), an artist from Lithuania, and one of the founders of Fluxus, got the buildings in this industrial area rezoned for artists. He didn't have a bean in his pocket, but he managed to get 16 buildings bought by artists which he called Fluxhouses. Each person put up \$12,000, which was a lot of money then. The buildings were built for industrial use and in very poor condition. They had mostly been used in the needle trades. Often dancers would find sewing machine needles in the cracks in the floors. In our building heat was totally inadequate. Artists Yoshi Wada, Davidson Gigliotti, and Kevin Harrison had to put in a new boiler.



New Collective Dance Rising presents "NYC - A Hyper-Local Dance Out" on Thursday, October 1 and Saturday, October 3

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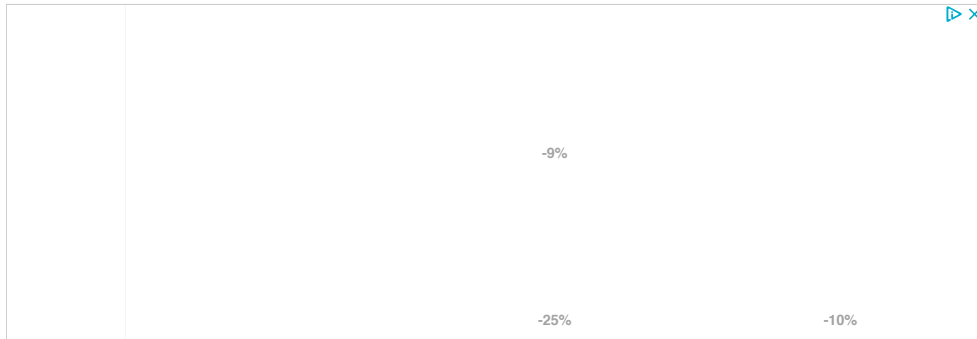
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Joy McKendry; photo by Anneke Hansen

What is the history of Sundays on Broadway?

[Sundays on Broadway](#) grew naturally out of a need for the dance community. By the time I got here in 2005, alternative spaces were drying up. People needed a place to try things, to experiment and not worry that a work might flop. Before 2014, the official opening of *Sundays on Broadway*, I did small showings for ten years, *The Salon Series*. I like being able to perform often, rather than doing one big show a year in a bigger venue. The hardest part was getting an audience together. Relying on my friends to come every week was not the way to do it.



As a result, I asked choreographers [Vicky Shick](#) and [Jon Kinzel](#) to curate. They were the first I asked. They had completely different connections than I did. They brought in a whole different crew. This was such a great idea because a wide diversity of people both performed and attended. I found it very exciting.

In what ways does your groundbreaking and notable artistic work influence the programming?

My work definitely influences the programming because I work with movement, video, audio and lights. I've always loved to make things and appreciate people who have developed a passion for what they do. That is reflected in the work of the artists who I ask to perform.



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What is the connection between the artists programmed in May?

I think of the programming like making another piece - fitting things together and getting some kind of flow. Often, it's just intuition, experience, judgement, and what makes sense.

I ask myself: what will make the most interesting program? So, I look for people who interest me. Also, I try to invite artists who range in age and experience. I find that the artists love that. Younger artists see how older artists prepare and they get some ideas. Older artists see what's currently happening. And the audience sees a diverse group.



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Malcolm-X Betts; photo courtesy of the artist

What are your plans for the future?

I would love this studio to have more use. Six months of *Sundays on Broadway*, and six months of [Cathy Weis Projects](#). I'd like the room itself to become part of the show. I tried to do this with *The Building Show* (fall 2016). I tried to make the building live as if it had a heartbeat, could share its stories and the juice that's felt in the walls. I'd love to do that with this room. I have a lot of fantasies to make the loft an ongoing environment for people from around the world. *Sundays on Broadway* is a grassroots thing, but everything takes money. There is much more that I want to accomplish.

Sundays on Broadway include:

KJ Holmes on May 7

Lucy Sexton on May 14

Juliette Mapp on May 21

Interviews with the artists follow:





KJ Holmes in *Here This Wreckage Salvage (Never) Untitled Sea*; photo by Peter Raper

What is your history with Cathy Weis and Sundays on Broadway?

KJ Holmes: I have performed on *Sundays on Broadway* a couple of times. I showed a duet titled *Here This Wreckage Salvage (Never) Untitled Sea*, a piece that held images from 7 prior works I have made. I also was part of an evening as a tribute to Simone Forti.

Lucy Sexton: I went to see the work when the series started. I appreciate that when Cathy took over the space from Simone, she kept it a dance space and honored the dance legacy. Credit to Cathy and Simone. I'm grateful for this. I performed on *Sundays on Broadway* in fall 2019 as Factress with Dance Explosion! And, my co-parent, Salley May performed on the series.

Cathy was at the forefront in dance and video. Early. I tried to use her approach in my work in college. I wanted to find out about this. No one is still engaged physically with televisions but Cathy was about the image. A television could be seen inside a tire or carried on someone's back. At that time there were numerous cords connected to the monitor which was great and visceral. You would see the body and see the body on TV in a different way. Anne Lobst and I became Dancenoise (in 1983). Cathy added Anne as a dancer in her work in the late 80s.

Juliette Mapp: I fell in love with Cathy when she started taking my class at Movement Research upstairs from her loft at Edens Expressway. I believe this preceded *Sundays on Broadway*. At some point, she invited me to share something at *Sundays on Broadway*, I think it was 2015, so relatively early on in the series. I invited Cathy to be in it, and made a little duet for her and Dana Florin-Weiss who was helping her at the time. I also did a trio with Kayvon Pourazar and Levi Gonzalez. The material became the beginning of my piece, *Luxury Rentals*. A few years later I showed a solo, I think it was called *Soft Lockdown* – and that was really special to me because I had not performed in some time, and it was the first time my son saw me perform.

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What excites you about the *Sundays on Broadway* program on which you will show your work?

KJ: The history in the space, and the present in the space. The informality of the evenings as well as the rigor involved in creating the work to be seen in an intimate and very focused setting. Cathy's generosity and inspiration.

LS: Sundays on Broadway brings an intergenerational mix. There are younger and older dancers and performers. This is a necessary place where these two worlds criss cross, not unlike the 1970s where artists gathered in lofts to try out dance.

JM: Well, all of us have names that start with J (Jo, Jade, and myself, Juliette)! Also, I love that it is a multi-generational night too. So important!!





Factress (Lucy Sexton) surrounded by Dance Explosion! (Heidi Dorow and Laurie Berg); photo by Lori E. Seid

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How did you choose the work you will be showing?

KJ: I wanted to try something very new that I am inspired by, and I know that this venue would be a great place to do that. The performance on Sunday will inform me so much about how to continue to develop this work titled *Lateral Riff*.

LS: I haven't chosen it and I haven't made it. Dancenoise and Factress make something new every time. Laurie Berg and Heidi Dorow of Dance Explosion! and I have rehearsal tomorrow and we will make something.

Factress started as a talk show host character. In the late 90s Mark Russell at PS122 asked me to host audience discussions. I hated the discussions with artists after they perform. I decided to host a talk show on the first Monday of every month before artists show to talk about their work, like Johnny Carson (the prime time talk show host). Factress would do a little dance, do a little news — more than a talk show but still dance, news, costumes, mess.

JM: I have been living "upstate" since the pandemic so rehearsing with my dancer/friends has been challenging. I actually prefer to work with a small group, but I have been working on a solo due to circumstances. It has been a long time since I have shared anything, so once again this is really meaningful for me. Besides, the energy and spirit of Cathy and the evening are always so incredible.

In what ways does Sundays on Broadway contribute to the NYC dance culture?

KJ: It continues the legacy of a Soho that was created by the artists who took the risk to live in these lofts, create their homes and studios to work way before it became the Soho it is now. These places are essential to counter the challenges of being an artist in this city in a time where it is very hard to survive here. It proves art does matter, dance is essential, creativity is an antidote to the woes of the world.

LS: What I like about it is the informality and how it continues the tradition from the 70s where artists perform in each other's lofts, and many artists are included on each show. (Cathy Weis offers) a space where artists with full careers share the space with younger dancers. They spark each other. When artists are in town, they do something together (in Cathy's loft). Performers and audiences experience the shows in an organic way. I enjoy this approach to dance presentation.

JM: I was just speaking to a British colleague who works almost exclusively in Europe. He had attended a *Sundays on Broadway* when he was visiting NYC recently. He said it was like a dream come true for him to

be in the audience and see these legendary artists perform in such an intimate and historical space. He could not believe this was still possible in NYC. *Sundays on Broadway* does exactly that — makes these magical evenings possible, where we can share and watch work in an intimate, low-key, but deeply committed way. And, importantly, it is Cathy who makes this happen. She is so generous with her space, and time — that alone is an extraordinary contribution to the NYC dance culture. It is because of Cathy and those like her that many of us remain committed to the NYC dance scene after all these years.



Juliette Mapp with her son; photo courtesy of the artist

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