

MOVING PEOPLE: ARCOS

Though cellphones have been in common use for two decades, etiquette still dictates that we turn them off during theatrical performances. Forgetting to silence a ringer will probably get you yelled at from the stage; it would be nearly unconscionable for a cultured person to turn on his smartphone and start tweeting during a play. Eliot Gray Fisher, a director of the transmedia dance-performance company ARCOS, is cognizant of this reality, but he wants to look at the situation differently, with an eye toward possibilities. Artists have always had to accept and integrate new technologies, he said. “At one point in the performing arts, electricity was a new technology. We don’t need to be afraid to explore what might help us tell a story.”

ARCOS was founded in Santa Fe, but in recent years the directors — Erica Gionfriddo, Curtis Uhlemann, and Fisher — moved the operation to Austin. The company traveled to Edinburgh for the

Fringe Festival, where it received a Spirit of the Fringe award in 2014 for *The Warriors: A Love Story*, which combines dance, narrative, history, and multimedia. The company’s new project, *Domain*, is a multiplatform, multi-location, transmedia performance that begins in Austin on Friday, June 10, and continues at the Currents Festival beginning Thursday, June 16, with a segment entitled “Elegy.” *Domain* then goes on to Kansas City, Missouri, in July, and Billings, Montana, in August. Live performances are only one aspect of the project. Performances are also accessible through www.arcosdance.com and on popular smartphone apps like Facebook and YouTube. The basic narrative arc, Fisher explained, is about a young woman who wakes up in the wilderness with no memory and then wanders into civilization to try to piece together her identity.

“It’s surrealist and dreamlike at first, and it’s kind of in the mystery genre,” he said. “But the idea is that you can experience a story that will be satisfying and stand-alone in its own way and also open up



CURRENTS

The Santa Fe International New Media Festival

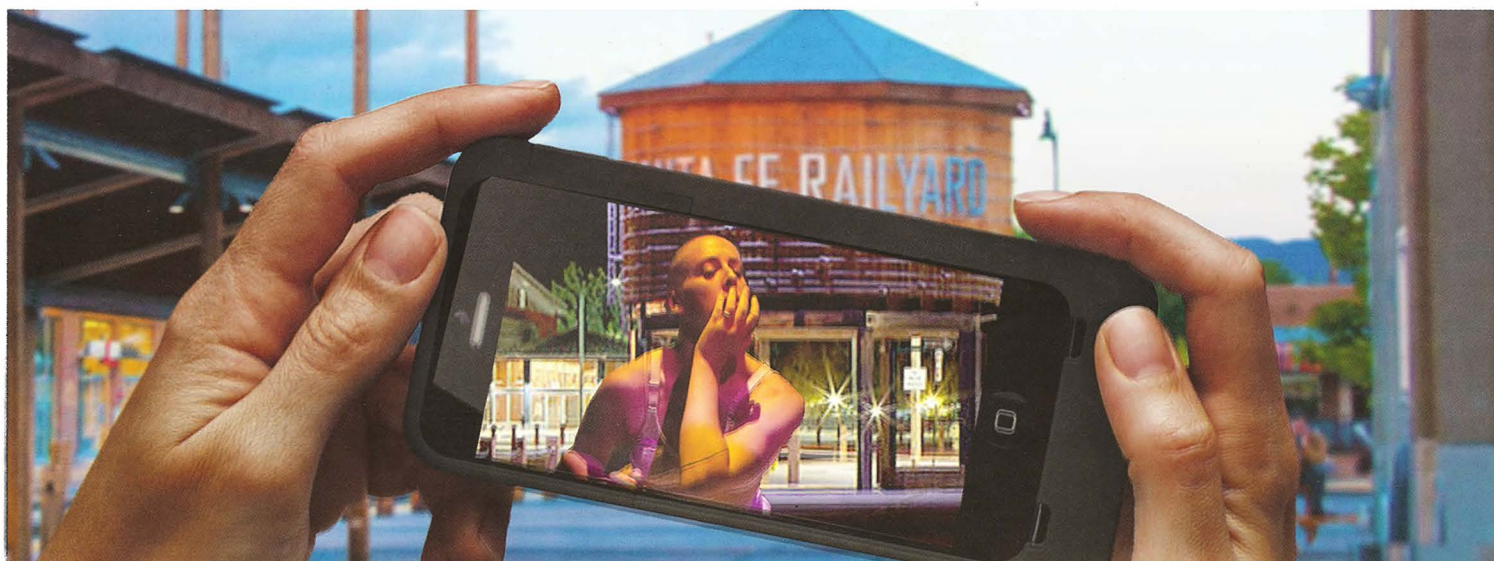


some questions and provide clues that viewers can follow after we leave Santa Fe, over the next few months, online.”

“Elegy” utilizes 360-degree video, a relatively new technology that allows a viewer to move the point of view around in a video — up to the ceiling, down to the floor, and left or right all the way around in a circle. It puts the viewer in the center of the action, sort of a reverse theater-in-the-round. “It’s a new medium in which to figure out how to direct attention,” Fisher said, “which is one of the major tasks of a dancer or performing artist, to guide the viewer through some sort of experience.”

When audience members arrive at the Railyard Plaza, they will be instructed through signage how to use their smartphones to gain access to media content, as well as where the next pieces of “Elegy” take place around Santa Fe. “This performance isn’t in a theater on a certain night, repeated for the next several nights. This performance takes us out into the world in a way that encourages technology rather than discourages it,” Fisher said. “Maybe we can give an experience like nothing people have had before and really re-contextualize what a theatrical performance experience can be.” — Jennifer Levin

ARCOS presents *Elegy* at 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 16, at the Railyard Plaza. Other performances take place at various times and venues. Visit www.currentsnewmedia.org/events/elegy-arcos-dance for an up-to-date schedule.



Top and below, ARCOS: images from a performance of “Elegy” (a segment of *Domain*), courtesy ARCOS; opposite page, top, Yakun Chen: a moment from *Neverend (Land)*, 2015, holographic-projection animation; bottom left and right, Matthew Chase-Daniel: *Radiothing* (detail), 2016, 32 radios with speakers, wood frame