

● ● Hiatus / Daniel Linehan

Zwarte Vijversstraat 97, 1080 Brussels,
Belgium

t +32 2 342 00 78
www.hia-tus.org

Circles of Care

by Michael Helland

in collaboration with Hiatus & Podiumkunsten

24 January 2022, at Ultima Vez (Brussels)



PRESENT: Christa, Cristina, Hanne, Line, Marie, Michael, Nathalie, Nelle, Ruth – thank you!

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- INFO:** Background/Context
- TALK:** Welcome
- ACTIVITY:** Grounding
- ACTIVITY:** Name Circle
- TALK:** Principles of Circularity
- ACTIVITY:** Intention/Hope Circle
- TALK:** Choreography as an Expanded Social Practice
- ACTIVITY:** Name Replace
- TALK:** Project Stories & Practices
- TALK:** Process Considerations
- ACTIVITY:** Reduce Anxiety Score
- ACTIVITY:** Care-Based Listening
- ACTIVITY:** Super Thunderclap Closing

**BACKGROUND/CONTEXT:
What is 'Circles of Care' and
how did this invitation arise?**

In late-2021 I had spoken with Hiatus about organizing a studio-based version of our online Collective Care Circles, a Collective Care Circle version 2.0, draft description as follows:

Collective Care Circles are fun group rituals to help vibrate the senses and socially connect in a novel and creative way. Together we cultivate special forms of attention and a sense of place through processes of attunement and care-based practices. Anchored by physical practices, active meditations, and choreographic games, the workshops are accessible to all walks of life and abilities. The circles are intended for a dedicated team (a closed circle) that commits to a regular weekly meeting for several weeks.

As we began to brainstorm and seek for potential partners, Hanne (Hiatus) came into conversation with Christa (PodiumKunsten), who was sparked by the possibility and spirit of the project. We met altogether with Nathalie, and although hosting such workshops is not within the mission of PodiumKunsten, we agreed that an adapted presentation in relation to these future Collective Care Circles could be valuable as a training for performing arts professionals and align well with their well-being and mental health initiative WeMeet.

So, in a sense 'Circles of Care' is a special one-off adaptation of the 'Collective Care Circle' initiative, intended to give a taste and insight into some of the thinking and motivations for the project, with the intention of this session described as follows:

Circles of Care is aimed at anyone with an interest in holistic work relations and establishing a culture of wellbeing at work – dancers and choreographers as well as other professionals in the performing arts field, managers, and confidants. As a dance company intent to blur the edges of what dance can become, Hiatus invites you to discuss choreography as an expanded social practice, with the potential to foster body-mind connections and reinforce our communities. We will provide specific examples of active listening exercises, sensitivity training, and approaches to teamwork that encourage principles of co-intelligence, emergence, and mutual aid – as we seek to bring balance and vibrancy to our personal and professional lives. Especially given our current period of immense cultural and ecological disruption, we gather in the spirit of care with this extended circle of performing arts colleagues to refresh our sense of purpose and celebrate the many potentials of embodied investigation. We hope to give you the tools to invite some fresh sparks of possibility for yourself and your work environment.

The session was originally scheduled for late-2021 and shifted to early-2022.

WELCOME: Forming a Circle of Care

We come into a circle today to cultivate care for ourselves and possibilities for this care to amplify and extend to our greater performing arts community. For those of us who have the luxury and privilege to show up and tune in for this session, those who are both inside and outside of our circle, we hold space and share these practices today.

The circle in which we are sitting now embodies a gesture of inter-connectivity as we seek to focus our energies collectively for the next two hours...

GROUNDING: Elemental Body Scan

We close our eyes and tune into the sensations of the body, without any need to manipulate or change anything, starting from what's already present here and now.

We direct our attention towards the **earth**-iness of our bodies, the bones, the flesh, the heaviness and groundedness of the chairs upon which we sit, anchored into the dance floor and strong brick building and its foundations connecting to the earth down below. We breathe into this stability, feeling grounded, arriving into the here and now.

Next, we shift our attention towards the **fire**-iness of our bodies, the heat of our bellies, the guts churning and transforming our breakfasts into energy deep within the body, and the beating of our hearts pulsing, firing up our muscles and adding warmth to our bodies. We breathe into this passion and heat, feeling alive and vital, warm and energetic.

We gently shift our attention towards the **water**-iness of our bodies, our bodies which are composed mostly of water, as we feel the fluids of the body, the blood which is mostly water, the marrow of our bones, the synovial fluid of our spine and joints, which makes it possible for us to flow and move with ease, feeling supple and fluid, open to movement and new directions. We breathe into this liquidity, feeling easy and ready to flow.

Last but not least, we shift our attention towards the **air**-iness of our bodies, as we've been breathing this whole time, we add some conscious awareness to the presence of the breath, this circle of inhaled creating space in the body for fresh oxygen, met with exhaled as this air flows back out into the spacious ocean of oxygen in which we swim together.

We breathe into this space, feeling the space around us as we expand up/down/left/right/front/back with all the cells in our bodies going in all directions all at once.

We take a few more breaths and gently twinkle our eyes open and arrive ever more fully present into this circle of care. We scan what may have shifted for us in the past few moments of conscious awareness towards the body and these elements of nature, as we move into our session, free from expectations, open to what might emerge.

**NAME CIRCLE: Brief activity
to help break the ice...**

We go around the circle and each of us has a chance to say our names aloud and have them repeated back to us en masse by the whole group, as an opportunity to get to know one another on a practical level, and a special opportunity to acknowledge our individual presences and collectively arrive into this circle of care.

**PRINCIPLES OF CIRCULARITY:
Some points of inspiration...**

Why so much talk of circles? Circles, circular thinking, and principles of circularity can be a great source of inspiration to help break linear patterns and obstacles that often lead to feeling blocked and limited or eventually burning out – both in our personal and professional lives, on both physical and mental levels and beyond.

Circles show up throughout the natural world, it can be said that 'there is no straight line in nature' – when one zooms in or out, it's all curves, arcs, and spirals. In this sense, we can associate curves with the wisdom of embodied reality and linearity with abstract reality – although thoughts and projections also tend to get caught in loops of repetition too!

We can zoom out to the movement of cosmic bodies, like the sphere of the Earth slowly rotating around itself creating the experience of day and night, as we orbit the sun which creates the wheel of the year, or we can also refer to the cycles of the moon which form the basis of our months and weeks in the Gregorian calendar. On the other of the spectrum, we can zoom into cellular and microscopic life, and scientifically observe the movement of subatomic particles swirling around one another. Looking above or below, we're encircled by circles! We can think about the cells of our bodies, or even more simply, we can return to the breath in motion, the cycle of inhaled and exhaled that underlies our own vitality, this essential movement of life as we know it. Perhaps by bringing greater awareness towards these circular motions and natural rhythms they might become continued sources of inspiration and guidance in the dance of life.

From another point of view, we can also imagine the fictive origins of early human culture – and what it might have been like to become human beings many thousands of years ago. We might envision families and groups of people coming together to build fires to cook food and stay warm and how gathering around a source of light might have set the conditions to eventually start telling stories, singing and dancing together.

Slowly, surviving led to thriving and space to think bigger about the meaning of life. Perhaps these types of circles were the birthplace of the cultural heritage and traditions we continue to treasure and cherish today!

So how might we think about the circles we make as cultural workers today? What type of circles are we moving through? Who is included in our performing art communities? Who is our work dedicated to? What type of groups are we forming and for what purpose? What teams are we a part of? What constitutes the foundations for our circles of care?

INTENTION/HOPE CIRCLE:

**Another circle to find out
who's here...**

We make a second talking circle to repeat our names and state our intentions and hopes for coming to this meeting today. What brought each of us here? What do we hope to gain or offer to the circle today? What are our motivations and expectations?

Excerpt from Michael: I'm here to help hold the space and tell some of the story of my own artistic trajectory, and more specifically my work in relation to the dance company Hiatus, and broadening out from there to perceived trends in the field of contemporary dance and performance in general across Europe and North America. I will also discuss the gradual expansion of my own artistic practice to include community art rituals, art in public space, teaching yoga and offering bodywork – in terms of a gradual transition towards working with the healing arts and well-being modalities, especially given the currently unfolding global socio-economic-ecological crisis, the fraying of traditional community structures, and the epidemic of loneliness that has been accelerated by the ongoing pandemic.

I hope that everyone in our circle receives some direct physiological benefits from participating in the session here and now, and that we gain some inspiration and resources to help enrich and widen our circles of care, both in our personal lives and in all of the work that we do.

**CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN EXPANDED SOCIAL PRACTICE:
Setting the creative conditions for collective intelligence,
emergence, and mutual aid...**

Coming from Seattle and working in New York as a young dancer I was immersed in contemporary dance and experimental theater working professionally since 2004. Around 2010 I started to work more and more in exhibition formats in live installations and visual art contexts. The move from the theater to the museum radically shifts the social contract between the audience and the performer in many dynamic ways. Rather than a fixed line separating the doers and the viewers, the public becomes more ambulatory, free to get close and interact with the work for a duration of their own choosing. In many projects this proximity becomes a central aspect of the work, or in some cases the work actually involves playing and interacting with the public, in the form of semi-scripted conversations and game-like structures. From this space of interaction and synergy a greater form of collective intelligence and spontaneity becomes possible – something more dynamic than any singular artistic voice might have had the capacity to design or predetermine.

Complete control by a central author is sacrificed in favor of facilitating a live process that demands activation and awakesness from the participants, both performers and public alike. While I certainly still enjoy performing in traditional theatrical productions, the shift towards more immersive theater and hybrid formats has been a real game-changer and wakeup call in my own creative life and sense of potential for the power of the performing arts.

From my own experience, we can observe a shift from the idea of dance as replicating a predetermined choreographic plan for a block of distant spectators towards a range of presentation formats and creative possibilities, incorporating more movement and impact from the public as players, as visitors to the work, impacting how it unfolds directly through their behavior. In many of these cases, the choreography is constructed to foster fluid resilient systems for the performers to bring into flesh in real-time, depending on the mood of the day and who is present, through a range of choreographic scores that embrace uncertainty as a means to invite perpetual surprise and innovation – so that even the choreographer can be surprised by what happens from time to time! Such structures and process that invite renewal and dynamic transformation can also help make the work more sustainable and nourish the creative spirit for those doing the work, as it demands additional skills and training than those provided by a traditional dance education. In terms of compositional approach, what we are talking about here is emergence, choreographic structures that invite deeper forms of participation, so the dance emerges through a dynamic and diverse set of parameters. How might we think of inviting emergence and bottom-up participation that harnesses the power of collective intelligence in cultural work more broadly, beyond dance and choreography?

Choreography as an expanded social practice can be thought of as a way to extend and deepen our circles of care by sharing the power of dance and embodied investigation with the wider public body. Especially given the degree of disruption and trauma of our recent times, dance is ripe for a social turn towards immersive community-based projects that might involve creative workshops and public art initiatives in collaboration with different community groups, including outreach to groups not normally associated with the performing arts. There are many ways that we can benefit from one another and build solidarity with adjacent communities, forming a context for mutual aid as we pool our resources to enrich our locality and beyond. We can start to think of many examples of these types of projects and identify ways performing artists might work with wider communities and cultural groups in ways that matter towards focusing awareness and improving well-being, mental health, and social connectivity. When we think deeply about the benefits that we may have experienced directly by living a life close to dance, how could we not want to share the best of these gifts with those around us who might need them most? How might we honor dance, as the inherently social art form that it is, by weaving it back into the fabric of our wider communities? What types of creative offerings can we make to help spark the inner creative light and foster a culture of joy and celebration?

NAME REPLACE: A movement game to dive a bit deeper and open our sensitivities...

We stir up the space and shift the energy a bit by coming to stand. By now we might know everyone or a few peoples' names well enough to play a little game. One of us will start by looking around the circle, making eye contact with someone and saying their name. Once this has been acknowledged, the one who spoke starts slowly walking towards the person they named to take their spot in the circle. As this is happening, the person who was named instantly begins to scan around the circle and call someone else's name, moving to take their spot... so on and so forth, so that there is a perpetual thread of bodies weaving through the circle. After a few minutes we pause to briefly discuss the experience.

Next, we each have a chance to up-level and play with a bit more performativity by choosing a different name, by selecting an element of nature (i.e., mountain, light, root, mud, cat... whatever) beginning with the same letter as their given name. For example, Michael = Mountain. We repeat the experience with these new names, calling in the element of nature, before pausing to briefly discuss the experience.

For the final round we do without any names or use of the voice whatsoever, and instead focus solely upon the physical communication, the use of the eyes and clarity of movement.

In doing so, we have a little bit of fun and experience first-hand a simple choreographic game that can continue to transform and create little challenges and discoveries in relation to our senses of presence, embodiment, connectivity, and playfulness.

PROJECT STORIES & PRACTICES:

Some specific examples and key considerations...

Vita Activa (2013) by Michael Helland & Daniel Linehan – in Vita Activa a group of 40 unemployed people are invited to participate in a week-long workshop which culminates in a theatrical performance for the public. The title is inspired by the work of Hannah Arendt who describes the concept of vita activa in the book "The Human Condition". Over the course of the week, the participants receive some sensitivity training and creative guidance, as they select a skill, passion, or interest that they would like to offer or share with someone else for one hour. Each participant offers their experience, and receives an experience from someone else, thus creating a web of exchanges that happen mid-week. In the final days, each participant creates a one-minute 'speech-deed' to perform as part of the final performance. They each receive some performance coaching and guidance, and almost by surprise, an evening of experimental theater emerges – celebrating the power of connection, demonstrating the underestimated resourcefulness of our communities, and flipping the term 'unemployment' on its head by giving us a vision of what a 'post-employment' society might look like in the near future – sharing with the public the beauty that emerges when we rise up to connect, care, and offer our gifts to those around us.

Another aspect of Vita Activa is the idea that a creative project can improve the lives of those who participate in it, literally building relationships and connections that endure beyond the duration of the project. Having made several unique editions in a handful of cities across Flanders and France, each workshop leaves a unique constellation of memories and stories in its wake. People become friends, fall in love, and discover a new career path from Vita Activa!

I like to think of the 40 participants as the first public, the first circle of care, and then the public that comes to the theatrical performance as the second public, a wider circle of that gets to experience the work as a show. This makes me excited about the potential for performance to matter on deeper levels than I ever thought possible.

Tending & Tuning (2019) and **Land Connection Practices (2020)** are two recent workshops created and led by Michael Helland and Daniel Linehan. Over many years of working primarily as performers in various types of productions, we both came to appreciate the deeper engagement and more personal connection that workshops allow us to have with fellow dancers, as well as amateurs and dance enthusiasts. Whereas performances allow us to connect with the public for a single evening, for an hour or two, and can be extremely impactful in their own right, workshops help to feed our creative process and diversify the involvement that we have with our communities, helping to deepen our circles of care.

For Tending and Tuning, Linehan and Helland draw upon 15 years of shared performance experience, reflecting and elaborating upon diverse dance scores and physical practices. Favorite pre-performance rituals become a playground for cultivating both subtle and robust forms of attention and engagement with ourselves and our surroundings, as we connect with our immediate environment to inspire new ways of moving and being. From theater to gallery and beyond, we explore performance as a hybrid medium to discover the edges of bodily consciousness, shared physical presence, and sense of place. We return to the fundamentals of the body in motion: breath, circularity, vibration, and waves of catharsis. With an eye on longevity and vitality, we work to embody radical resiliency through creative care-taking and otherworldly movement-based adventures.

For Land Connection Practices, Michael Helland and Daniel Linehan propose activities in which you nurture the connection between your body and the earth, considering how our bodies are made from the same minerals, waters, and elements as this earth which is our home. You will explore movement exercises that connect you to the dynamic surroundings, and awareness exercises that open up your senses and bring you toward full embodiment in the here and now, exercises that connect you to your breath as you allow the breath to nourish your sense of vitality. This is a chance to let go and receive your surroundings, as well as a chance to wake up and be enlivened by the energy of the other living beings around us. Forests and parks are places that responds to a basic human need to connect with the more-than-human, with the green trees and the blue sky and the wild beings that fly above and burrow below.

Having the chance to lead these workshops has helped to provide us with a playground to continue exploring embodied practices and artistic research in an open-source way, helping to feed our performance works and broaden our creative interests. Offering workshops for professional dancers helps us to expand our professional networks and meet new potential colleagues, feeding our desire to become more integrated in our local and regional communities and build our networks. Perhaps even more exciting, workshops aimed towards amateurs opens a whole new world of partnerships, including the possibility, for example, to participate in the broader social justice and environmental movement, helping dance become more relevant and accessible to a wider public while giving us a greater sense of purpose and significance to continue the work that we do with excitement.

Furthermore, when workshops take place outdoors, like Land Connection Practices, we have the added value of bringing dance out of theaters and museums and back into the public space. For the participants, this creates an opportunity to practice a sense of solidarity and freedom of creative expression, as we allow our movement and dance to be visible to the world around us. For passersby, this makes for a soft opening and discovery of another form of presence or way of inhabiting public space, perhaps adding a sense of enchantment or curiosity to their day. In either case, new memories are made – and this becomes one of my greatest artistic joys – having danced in many parks in Brussels and forests in Flanders, whenever I pass a spot where I held a workshop, I remember that special day with those special people, and feel a sense of belonging to the land that holds our presence.

Collective Care Circles (2021) with Hugo Mega, Kevin Fay, and Michael Helland began in direct response to the first major Covid-19 lockdown in Belgium, as an online care circle guided by the question: How have we been caring for ourselves and one another in these times of disruption and isolation?

Beginning in February 2021, Hiatus facilitated three monthly Collective Care Circles as a form of research-in-action and online community offering for our extended circle of colleagues working in the performing arts. This care-based initiative emerged organically from within the culture of Hiatus, a dance company that is intent to artistically blur the edges of what dance can be, guided by our commitment to express care as a core value in all of the work that we do – as we seek to discover what wants to manifest from this space. With Hugo Mega acting as our lead facilitator and transformation coach,

the circles aspire to cultivate the conditions for deep listening and collective intelligence, as we enter into unique dialogues with the subconscious mind through the world of imagery and bodily sensation. The circles were further anchored by the presence of Kevin Fay, who took charge of documentation to help deepen the reflective process and capture some of the currents for care running through our community. Guided by the notion that connected communities are resilient communities, we humbly hope that these Collective Care Circles and their waves of after-care might serve as little sparks of possibility, as the deep cultural work to foster processes of healing and transformation continues in unexpected ways far beyond the edges of these circles.

The first edition of our Collective Care Circles was a unique opportunity to practice holding a space for healing online, as we seek to collectively recover from the trauma of isolation and disruption wrought by the pandemic, with hope that we as cultural workers will be ready to rise and shine and help others do the same when conditions once again prevail.

With the guidance of a highly skilled transformation coach, we found great depth and power in this space, as we refined our facilitation and leadership skills to continue making the magic happen – even when our beloved studio-based practices are not possible! From these discoveries, we continue to infuse our virtual meetings with elements of embodied practice and bodily awareness, doing our best to transcend the trappings of the digital space and find connection wherever possible. We look forward to holding a fresh rendition of studio-based Collective Care Circles in the year ahead, version 2.0 for 2022, referred to at the beginning of this document, and leading to the origins for this very presentation!

Care-Based Listening is another practice that we have incorporated into the regular work environment of Hiatus, forming a bridge between our artistic and administrative staff and a chance to deepen our relationships and strengthen our team through active listening. Holding space for a session every week, or maybe just from time to time, helps to subtly shift the culture of the company, shedding light upon our inner workings and giving us a chance to subsequently address any tensions or offer follow up care to those who might be in need. This special moment to check-in helps to cultivate empathy as we share some of what is going on in our lives, which might inevitably show up in or around the edges of the work we are seeking to accomplish together.

What is Care-Based Listening? Once a week, we make space for listening to each other. Each person gets maximum five minutes to talk to the group about how they feel and where their thoughts are. What each person says can be in relation to the work, but it can also be about other things that are going on in their lives. Through this practice, we deepen understanding of and empathy for each other, we get to be heard and we practice listening. Taking the stick (or stone or any other talisman) signifies that you're the speaker.

When do we do practice Care-Based Listening? After a break of a couple of weeks, it seems good to plan Care-Based Listening on the first day, in the beginning of the day, to check-in. In periods where we work for a few weeks, it seems better to plan the Care-Based Listening near or at the end of the week, at the end of the day. It seems like a good idea to plan these days ahead, based on the schedule, so that it is not something that we are continuously organizing.

Hiatus' Care-Based Listening practice is just one expression of a listening or talking circle in general, so you might have encountered or experienced something similar before. We use a timer to help regulate the time, so that everyone has a fair chance to speak and be listened to. When the timer sounds, we gently finish our thoughts and move on to the next speaker. Crosstalk and responding directly to another person's comments are discouraged, as each speaker is invited to speak for themselves, from the heart. The content of the session is considered to be confidential, so if participants wish to address things that were said in the circle outside the circle, they should ask for consent. In this format, it is not necessary to have an experienced or highly skilled facilitator, as the group self-regulates and builds an emergent web of mutual aid and co-intelligence through this simple invitation.

Sacred Space is another practice we incorporate into the rhythm of our daily work at Hiatus. The exact timing and duration can adapt to the needs and interests of the group, but typically we practice it for 20 minutes after lunch. The idea is that for these 20 or so minutes, we release ourselves from having to 'work' and instead allow ourselves to simply be present and do or not do whatever we want. We share the practice in the dance studio as well as in the office, and whenever possible all together! We find the practice nourishes our sense of well-being in the workplace, helping to soften the edges of the sometimes difficult challenges and stresses we share, as a gesture of personal and collective care.

Sacred Space

Each day, allow a time when you can tell yourself: it's ok to DO less and to BE more.

Stop and listen: what would be valuable for you right now?

You could: Sit with eyes closed, and feel your breathing and the dancing aliveness of your body. Drink a tea and listen to the birds outside the window. Write or read or draw. Take a nap. Be silly. Turn on music and dance and sing.

Have fun! or... Have calm! Whatever you need.

The question is not, How do I fill my time? but rather, How do I open up and feel more spaciousness in my day?

Know that this time is inherently valuable and worthwhile, even if you produce nothing.

Shared Warm-up is a special offering we make when we are on tour as an offering to the venue that hosts us. As the performers and technicians often have little meaningful interaction with administrative team of the theaters we visit, we offer an opening to bridge this gap and to connect through movement and dance. Anyone from the host venue's administrative or artistic team is invited to join us as the Hiatus dancers collaborate to guide a 30-minute warm-up at the beginning of our rehearsal period. This is a moment to increase well-being, foster social connectivity, and have some fun! It's also a chance for the dancers in the company to share practices and deepen their skills by leading the session together.

Open Mondays is another community-based offering happening once each month at our home studio in Brussels. Whether you have danced before or not, whether you are an artist, an amateur or a professional dancer, whatever your physical abilities are, you are very welcome to join this free public offering – as long as you are curious and willing to move the body. The dancers, performers and artists from Hiatus all have their favorite physical practices – movement exercises, explorations and investigations of composition, of the body, of a group, of a theme, a relationship with the surroundings – many of these practices inevitably get interwoven into our work on stage and Open Mondays is a chance to experience them directly. In each session, two or three artists related to the company share their favorite physical practices in the spirit of curiosity and exploration. The aim is not to produce or learn a choreography, but to enrich and nourish ourselves and one another. It is a moment to share an experience, to connect and discover, and to focus on our bodies.

**PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS:
What helps cultivate the
conditions for care...**

The preceding inventory of Hiatus' recent projects and ongoing practices together present an active array of invitations for folks to gather, play and connect – each can be seen as an interrelated expression of care, manifesting in myriad shapes and form – and we hope that 2022 brings many more! We continue to aim for our highest purpose and honor our core values, as we discover the power of our artistic work to help expand our capacity for care. But what is at the heart of all these care-based initiatives that helps bring these circles to life? What are some central considerations that go into these various projects and practices to help ensure their quality and success? What is at the core of a care circle?

Acknowledging presence and place – The workshops always begin with opportunities to celebrate the presence of the individuals who have manifested themselves to participate in the session that day, for example, a circle of names followed by games that use their names, as we start to build a web of inter-connectivity and make sure that everyone has a chance to be seen and listened to. The simple act of paying attention to one another in a deep and meaningful way is a powerful gift, in doing so the conditions for healing automatically begin to manifest themselves. In the same breath, exercises that bring attention to the place that holds our presence function much the same way. As we tune in to the world around us, we also become more present, feeling a sense of aliveness and arrival into the here and now.

Building consent pedagogically – As many of the workshops and sessions invite folks to speak and be listened to or might involve direct physical touch (pre/post-pandemic!) it is important to slowly build consent and break the ice through carefully crafted warm-ups. For example, we might start by rubbing our hands together and placing them on our own hearts and bellies, before taking hands with the others to form a circle and say our names, before asking someone to enter the circle where we might practice catching them as they slowly fall or lifting them off of the floor, moving step-by-step softly while observing the reactions to know that everyone feels safe enough to make themselves vulnerable. We might invite folks to say one key word aloud, before asking them to speak for one minute or more. The key is for participants to move from their own volition into the invitation, without forcing anything or creating perceived obligations to respond inauthentically.

Establishing trust and taking risk – It takes time for people to open up, so as we build consent through carefully crafted invitations or pedagogically sound sequences of exercises, we slowly build trust amongst the participants and allow them to take more risk as they feel comfortable. It takes quite a bit of experience and sensitivity to know when to intervene and when to step aside, as the group starts to take on a life of its own and people come out of their shells. People might eventually experience intense emotions, filled with both light and shadows, and those of us holding the space must keep an eye out for those who might need additional support and guidance, as we stay responsible for eventually closing the circles we have opened with a sense of integrity and completion for the journey that was made.

Cultivating sensual awareness – At the bedrock of many of our projects and practices is a dedication towards waking up the senses and expanding awareness, awareness towards one's own body as well as the bodies of other living beings and the spaces and places where we meet and play. Somatic exercises and guided dance visualizations help to bring folks into an altered state of consciousness, opening to new sensations and opportunities for self-study and observation. Everyone arrives with their sensory apparatus semi-closed due to the hyper-stimulation that constantly surrounds us, and we slowly and safely guide the participants to see, hear, and feel more bit-by-bit. Often times we begin with attention to the breath and spiral outwards from there, into eye contact, and into dance.

Ritual and transformation – We dive into our circles with a moment of sensual attunement and grounding, before setting an intention and observing the point from which we are starting the adventure. From this point, we proceed through the established content of the session, and ultimately arrive towards a closing moment, where we have a chance to revisit our intentions and observe what has shifted or changed during the session, or over the course of several sessions. By marking the beginning and endings in such a way we invite a sense of ritual and transformation, so folks can observe and track the progress and changes they are experiencing through their engagement with the practices. Furthermore, the status of the time we share is elevated towards the sacred, helping to liberate folks from the trappings of quotidian life and daily waking consciousness as we invite deeper states of presence and intuitive knowledge to bubble up from the subconscious mind.

The above considerations are just an example of some of the recurring objectives that come up from project to project, from practice to practice, as we continue to develop and widen our circles of care through all of the work that we do.

(NOTE: We didn't have a time to discuss all of these projects, processes, and considerations in our two-hour meeting, but I'm including them in this document for additional inspiration!)

**REDUCE ANXIETY SCORE:
a sensual exercise to ground,
calm, anchor...**

Seated or standing, begin by looking around the room and taking a moment to identify five things that you can see, taking a moment to notice and identify them (i.e. the metal chair in the corner, the red fire extinguisher by the window, the exit sign above the door...), next close your eyes and do the same thing with five things that you can hear, near or far, taking a moment to notice and identify them (i.e. the humming of the ventilation, car horns honking in the distance, the sound of your own breath...), finally with your eyes still closed do the same thing with five things that you can feel with your physical body through touch (i.e. the connection with the chair or feet that hold you on the ground, the texture of your sweater on your arms, the currents of air swirling on your face...) taking a moment to notice and identify them. Make a second round touring through these same items, focusing on just four things you can see, hear, or feel. Make a third round dropping down to just three of each, then two and then just one of each. For each round take the time to see, hear, and feel each sensory input as if for the first time. By the time you finish and open your eyes, you might feel a nice shift has occurred... give it a try!

**CARE-BASED LISTENING:
a short chance to try out the
practice described up above...**

While normally Hiatus' Care-Based Listening practice is shared amongst a closed circle of connected colleagues in the course of our regular work weeks and production cycles, there is also value in practicing a quick version today in the workshop, to get a taste for how it works and feels.

For this specific context we will work with a prompt to help guide the talking circle: How have you been caring for yourself and those around you during these times of disruption? We will make a round, using a timer set for just one minute.

Folks are encouraged to not think too hard or plan what they are going to say, and instead just listen with intent to those who are speaking in the moment, and let your own voice be free and spontaneous when your time to speak arrives. Once the round is complete, we take a moment in silence to let all of the words settle, a final moment of relative stillness and silence, letting these expressions of care resonate.

SUPER THUNDERCLAP
CLOSING: a final gesture to seal the work and release the circle...

We close today's care circle with a super thunderclap, where Michael will make a single clap and we go around the circle to the left, each person making a single clap one after the other, like so we go fully around the circle three times, and then we make one big clap all together at the end, catching the rhythm and releasing ourselves back into the day ahead!

THANK YOU!

For more information, please be in touch: hi@hia-tus.org

Hiatus is the production company of choreographer and dancer Daniel Linehan.

The word “hiatus” implies a space of possibility, an opening. Each project of Hiatus aims to create an opening that fosters human-human connections in the here and now: bringing attention to our physical surroundings and our social environment, whether it is in a theater or in a studio or outdoors or any place we go. Bringing attention to the here and now also implies bringing attention to the urgent concerns of today, evaluating our roles in the diverse ecologies that we inhabit, as inhabitants of the city of Brussels, as travelers who create dialogues in different communities around Belgium and internationally, and as citizens of a planet facing ecologically precarious times.

Daniel Linehan is Creative Associate at deSingel International Arts Campus 2017–2021. Since 2015 Hiatus is supported by the Flemish authorities. In partnership with BOS+, Hiatus contributes to the reforestation of our planet.

Michael Helland

Working at the crossroads of theatrical presentation, exhibition-based contexts, and public art modalities, Michael Helland makes creative interventions aimed to foster social connectivity and help communities face the dark uncertainty of the future.

His research-in-action RECESS (Ritual Experience Concept Event Spa Show) has resulted in RECESS: Dance of Light (2016) – a one-hour theatrical intervention at Abrons Arts Center in New York, RECESS: ZSenne Salon (2017) – a two-week pop-up urban sanctuary at ZSenne art lab in Brussels, and RECESS: Becoming Crystalline (2018) – an immersive workshop at Gropius Bau in Berlin.

As a Brussels-based dance artist, Helland has performed with Maria Hassabi, Christian Bakalov, Thomas Proksch, Isabel Lewis, Tino Sehgal, Daniel Linehan, Heather Kravas, Xavier Le Roy, and Eleanor Bauer, among others.

Additional projects include works with Yan Duyvendak, Marina Abramović, Roseanne Spradlin, and Big Art Group. In 2019 he facilitated the Temporary Body Worker Union at Workspacebrussels and graduated from the Conscious Living yoga teacher training program at Yyoga in Brussels.

Helland holds degrees in Dance and in Community, Environment, and Planning from the University of Washington in Seattle.

HIATUS

**Artistic director,
Choreographer**

Daniel Linehan
daniel@hia-tus.org

Company manager

Hanne Doms
hanne@hia-tus.org

Production manager

Ecaterina Vidick
ecaterina@hia-tus.org

**International
representation**

Damien Valette
valette.d@gmail.com

Follow us

www.hia-tus.org
www.facebook.com/hiatusdaniellinehan
www.instagram.com/hiatusdaniellinehan
www.vimeo.com/hiatusdaniellinehan