

Macklin Kowal

PhD Fellow

Temple University (USA)

The Paradigm of the Leak, or, Towards an Assemblage of Excess

(Performative lecture-demonstration)

This presentation unpacks the idea of leakage as a theoretical principle and a tactic of performance. Questioning the associative links that the word presumes between the disclosure of covert information and the secretion of matter from a body or vessel, I adopt a leaky posture in my own body as I critique recent events befitting the semantic principles of the term. Ceasing to swallow my saliva, my body will leak as I articulate the perils of containment as a corporeal and discursive imperative. Secretion is a body's sole constative besides death. I will demonstrate that a body performs, effectively, in adopting a posture of its anticipation. Our contemporary moment is inundated with events befitting the semantic principles of this polysemic word, leakage. Since the presidency of George W. Bush, information leakage in the United States has proliferated on step with the state's sweeping expansion of executive power - specifically, its right to broaden the reach of state secrecy. The contents of such leaks have revealed the staggering degree to which the US government has employed acts of heinous violence against prisoners detained in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay. They disclose the inhuman as a political posture of brutality, one installed within the War on Terror to reduce victims to a status of less-than-human. Meanwhile, world affairs reckon with the ever-increasing occurrence of toxic leaks in the environment. The BP Oil Spill and the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Disaster reveal the unremitting force of non-human actants in the course of worldly events, as well as the initiatives of multinationals that would attempt to regulate and contain their movement. These leaks, in turn, ravage the ecological sphere with toxicity and alter the course and quality of human and non-human life. Leakage conveys the stakes of the human, inhuman, and non-human in terms of their excess, and that excess's capacity to impart action. This lecture-demonstration asks: In political terms, how do we account for ruptured forms, the material or informational outflow that accompanies them, and their causal forces? How can our proceedings in the wake of leaks regard these components as inter-related, as implicating each other? What processes of aesthetic recuperation can we direct towards the complexities of leakage, and can these endeavors serve broader gestures of re-situating the figures of the inhuman and the non-human in political discourse?

Macklin Kowal is an artist and academic. A PhD Fellow in Dance Studies at Temple University, his work focuses on embodied economies of language in the neoliberal era. He holds an MA in Performance Studies from New York University, and has additionally studied dance theory at l'Université de Paris 8. He has presented his scholarly research at a number of colloquia, most recently by invitation of Le Laboratoire du Geste at Sorbonne-Pantéon, Paris. His choreographic work has been presented in San Francisco, New York, Berlin, and Brussels. In 2013, he held the DanceWEB scholarship at ImPulsTanz International Dance Festival, Vienna.