

If you drew a line along the coast of Louisiana from my house to where my mom grew up, that would be the sort of magnetic field that always draws me back home. From the prairie to the bluffs to the Mississippi River to the wetlands to the bayou. I have been far from home for some time now, but I have learned about the power and passion that connects person to place and have taken this story of my landscape as a passageway into the stories of so many others across middle America. In 2019, I traveled on foot from the Headwaters of the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, stopping in 104 towns and cities along the way—gathering landscapes, gathering voices, and gathering communities through the rich and embodied stories that they tell.

In preparation for the journey, my collaborators and I worked on developing a movement research practice investigating story. We were preparing not just for individual stories of the people we would meet but the historical stories of the River and the many existing books about its people, waters, and landscape. In the field, we performed practice interviews, workshoping how to use our sense of embodiment and behavioral awareness to observe a person's story. We also spent time in the studio, reading classics of storytelling, to understand how language wraps around a story and how we can unravel that with our own movement. Through improvisation and iteration, we devised performances that exercised this practice of movement research.

All of our interviews, interactions, community gatherings, all of this is a choreographed structure that makes space for stories to emerge. In a sense, the movement down the River was literally founded on the migratory nature of the project. The movement and subsequent accumulation of time, exhaustion, stories, relationships, landscapes—the movement through and carrying with of all those things—this is movement research.

When you zoom out and take in the entire scope of the journey, you can see how it is really a choreographed dance with humanity, nature, industry, and time. It is a social choreography that connects artists, citizens, and intellectuals in an extraordinary climate of sensibility, empathy, and vigorous imagination

This body of work has been in development or in creation since 2016. What began as a personal journey, grew into a collaborative effort and a collection of stories from a vast and diverse region — the Mississippi River waterway. What inspired and kept inspiring me to continue this work was the act of listening. From research and development to interviews in the field to writing and crafting dances and nets from my own embodied memories, all the while I have followed the work and listened to what it is telling me, where it is leading me. While much of this work consists of other people's stories, this is still my story too, and I think there is a lot left for me to explore in that vein.

In reflecting on one of my fishing stories from the River, my Aunt Dolores told the story of my grandfather "trawling" or weaving his trawl nets by hooking them to his big toe. I found some rope and tried to reperform this image. I wanted to re-embodiment this disappearing practice as a means to listen and process story, memory, possibility, and all their connections. As a choreographer and performer, I see this practice of listening as leading to a choreography of

voices and this practice of net-making as an on-going durational performance that involves counting, handwork, postures, rhythms, and gestures of tying knots and weaving. This combined body of work—Network: a River Connected—redefines the essence of performance by transforming the body's movements into a tangible artifact of political, social, and personal significance. Departing from traditional dance narratives, it illustrates how embodied resistance can serve as a form of dance, transcending conventional boundaries. By capturing the choreography inscribed on the body, the work offers a unique perspective on the intersection of movement and discourse. The nets surrounding the exhibit space evoke a sense multiplicity and variety in terms of how we can be connected. This approach to content and form challenges conventional notions of choreography and invites audiences to engage with the body's narrative in novel and profound ways.