

DEUTSCHER TANZPREIS

Award for outstanding artistic developments

CLAIRE CUNNINGHAM



Claire Cunningham © A.R.

Jury Statement GERMAN DANCE AWARD 2021

Claire Cunningham uses and estranges (from their intended use) her crutches as an extension of her dancing body. She describes her piece "The Way You Look (at me) Tonight", which she developed in collaboration with Jess Curtis and which was selected for the Tanzplattform Deutschland, as a social sculpture and sensory journey for the two performers and the audience. The selection of her choreographic work for residencies and performances in Germany has made Claire Cunningham a role model for the next generation of dance professionals.

During a pandemic, disabled artists are particularly vulnerable and their mobility and the visibility of their work are even more limited than usual. Cunningham also perceives her art, which she consciously develops from her perspective as a disabled artist, as activism. Her artistic work stimulates debates on topics such as care, intimacy and disability culture and her work is exemplary for the work of other

pioneers towards a future where physical diversity is part of dance and society. By virtue of her impressive stage presence, artistic consistency and humour, Cunningham is helping to advance this development, which urgently requires more support and appreciation in Germany.

Biography

Claire Cunningham is a performer and creator of multi-disciplinary performance based in Glasgow, Scotland. A recent Factory Artist with Tanzhaus NRW Düsseldorf, Germany she is also an Affiliate Artist with The Place, London.

One of the UK's most acclaimed and internationally renowned disabled artists, Cunningham's work is often rooted in the study and use/misuse of her crutches and the exploration of the potential of her own specific physicality with a conscious rejection of traditional dance techniques (developed for non-disabled bodies). This runs alongside a deep interest in the lived experience of disability and its implications not only as a choreographer but also in terms of societal notions of knowledge, value, connection, and interdependence. A self-identifying disabled artist, Cunningham's work combines multiple art forms and ranges from the intimate solo show *ME (Mobile/Evolution)* (2009), to the large ensemble work *12* made for Candoco Dance Company.

In 2014 she created *Give Me a Reason to Live*, inspired by the work of Dutch medieval painter Hieronymus Bosch and the role of beggars/cripples in his work, and the full length show *Guide Gods*, looking at the perspectives of the major Faith traditions towards the issue of disability. Awarded one of the Unlimited Commissions in 2016 she created the duet *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight* with choreographer Jess Curtis. The piece has since toured world-wide, was selected for the 2018 Tanzplattform in Germany and was nominated for an Isadora Duncan Dance Award.

Claire is a former Artist-in-Residence at the Women of the World Festival at the Southbank, London and of the Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queens. In 2016 she was Artist in Residence with Perth International Arts Festival, Australia and Associate Artist at Tramway, Glasgow.

In 2019 Claire was commissioned to do her first piece for gallery spaces, taking part in *Automatise Ambulatoire: Hysteria, Imitation*, curated by Amanda Cachia for Owen's Art Gallery, Sackville, Canada.

In July 2019 Claire premiered the ensemble piece, *Thank You Very Much*, at Manchester International Festival which went on to win CATS awards for Best Ensemble and Best Sound and Music.

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