

NEWRETRO



NEWRETRO
Lucy Guerin Inc

21 WORKS / 21 DANCERS / 21 YEARS IN THE MAKING

25 March – 2 April 2023

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

A Lucy Guerin Inc production

Presented in partnership with the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, as part of FRAME: A biennial of dance

NEWRETRO is dedicated to the late Chloe Munro AO, and would not have been possible without her generous support.

ACCA and Lucy Guerin Inc acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people as sovereign custodians of the land on which this work is presented, along with the neighbouring Boonwurrung, Bunurong, and wider Kulin Nations. We acknowledge their longstanding and continuing care for Country and we recognise First Peoples art and cultural practice has been thriving here for millennia. We extend our respect to ancestors and Elders past and present, and to all First Nations people.

Cover photo: Gregory Lorenzutti

INTRODUCTION

Drawing on 21 existing dance works from the past 21 years, *NEWRETRO* is a major performance installation by leading contemporary choreographer Lucy Guerin. It takes the form of a site-responsive choreographic work and installation occupying ACCA's galleries.

NEWRETRO reconstructs fragments retrieved from Lucy Guerin's back-catalogue and re-learned by an ensemble of 21 dancers. The work's score is both retrospective and speculative, condensing choreography from different time periods into the same temporal space, creating a living archive of new, corporeal gestures.

Capturing the physical imprint of several generations of dancers, *NEWRETRO* frames the material of the body within an embodied relationship to architecture and the subject. The performance unfolds over a three-hour duration, inviting audiences into a space at once intimate and spectacular.

21 WORKS

Pictured overleaf.

1. *How To Be Us* 2022. Photo: Kate Longley
2. *Flux Job* 2022. Photo: Sarah Walker
3. *Metal* 2020. Photo: Gregory Lorenzutti
4. *Make Your Own World* 2019. Photo: Pippa Samaya
5. *Attractor* 2017. Photo: Gregory Lorenzutti
6. *Split* 2017. Photo: Gregory Lorenzutti
7. *The Dark Chorus* 2016. Photo: Gregory Lorenzutti
8. *Motion Picture* 2015. Photo: Gregory Lorenzutti
9. *Weather* 2012. Photo: Heidrun Lohr
10. *Conversation Piece* 2012. Photo: Brett Boardman
11. *Human Interest Story* 2010. Photo: Jeff Busby
12. *Untrained* 2009. Photo: by the original 'Untrained' artists
13. *Corridor* 2008. Photo: Jeff Busby
14. *Structure and Sadness* 2006. Photo: Jeff Busby
15. *On* 2005. Photo: Jeff Busby
16. *Aether* 2005. Photo: Rachele Roberts
17. *Melt (Part One)* 2002. Photo: Jeff Busby
18. *Heavy* 1998. Photo: Ross Bird
19. *Robbery Waitress on Bail* 1997. Photo: Johan Elbers
20. *Incarnadine* 1996. Photo: Anja Hitzemberger
21. *Two Lies* 1996. Photo: Johan Elbers



1.



6.



2.



7.



3.



8.



4.



9.



5.



10.



11.



16.



12.



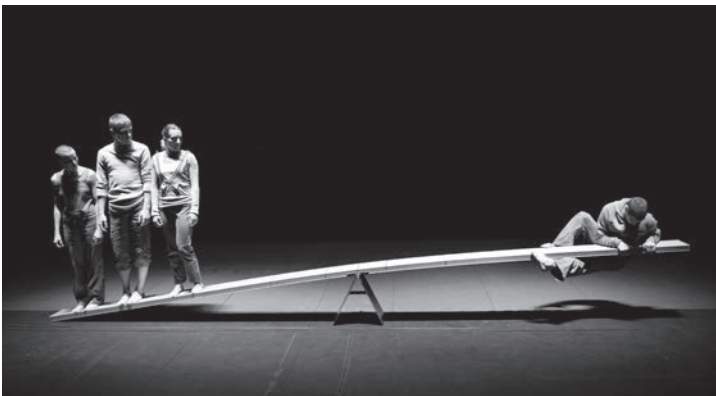
17.



13.



18.



14.



19.



15.



20.



CREATIVE TEAM

Choreographer & Director: Lucy Guerin

Dancers: Alice Dixon, Amber McCartney, Antony Hamilton, Benjamin Hancock, Caitlin Mewett, Claire Leske, Cora Hughes, Deanne Butterworth, Geoffrey Watson, Georgia Rudd, Harrison Ritchie-Jones, Lee Serle, Lilian Steiner, Melanie Lane, Michelle Heaven, Ngioka Bunda-Heath, Raina Peterson, Rebecca Jensen, Samantha Hines, Stephanie Halyburton, Tra Mi Dinh

Guest Artists: Stephanie Lake and Alisdair Macindoe (select performances)

Lighting Designer: Paul Lim

Sound Designer & Composer: Jethro Woodward

Costume Designer: Kate Davis

Curator, Australian Centre for Contemporary

Art: Elyse Goldfinch

Rehearsal Director: Rachel Coulson

Costume Construction: Janice Chalmers

Lighting Design Associate & Technical Operator:

Nick Moloney

Production Manager: Genevieve Cizevskis

Stage Manager: Zsuzsa Gaynor Mihaly

Deputy Stage Manager: Giovanna Yate Gonzalez

Producer: Estelle Conley

Executive Producer: Brendan O'Connell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Lucy Guerin Inc would like to acknowledge and thank the following artists whose past work with the Company is referenced in *NEWRETRO*: costume designers Andrew Treloar (*Flux Job, Make Your Own World*); Harriet Oxley (*The Dark Chorus, PENDULUM*); Paula Levis (*Aether*); Shio Otani (*Weather*); sound designers/composers Andrew Lancaster & Jad McAdam (*Robbery Waitress on Bail*); Daniel Jenatsch (*Make Your Own World*); Darrin Verhagen (*On*); David Chesworth (*Two Lies*); Franc Tetaz (*Melt, Part One*); Gerald Mair (*Aether, Structure and Sadness*); Haco (*Corridor*); James Lo (*Incarnadine*); Jethro Woodward (*Flux Job, Human Interest Story*); Katerina Stathis (*How To Be Us*); Michael Sheridan & Eric Hubel (*Incarnadine*); Nick Roux (*Attractor, Metal*); Oren Ambarchi (*Weather*); Paul Healy (*Plasticine Park,*

Reservoir of Giving I & II); Robi Rusdiana (*Metal*); Robin Fox (*Motion Picture, Split, Conversation Piece*); Scanner (*Split*); Senyawa (*Attractor*); and AV designer Michaela French (*Melt, Part One*).

21 YEARS OF LUCY GUERIN INC

Lucy Guerin Inc (LGI) is an Australian dance company established in Melbourne in 2002 to create and tour new dance works by founding Artistic Director, Lucy Guerin AO. The company has been based at its own venue, WXYZ Studios in North Melbourne, since 2018. Renowned for the skill and originality of its small group of performers, LGI is dedicated to challenging and extending the art of contemporary dance, which is realised through the creation of new dance works which regularly tour nationally and internationally. Over the last 21 years, LGI has evolved from a structure that enables Guerin's choreographic projects, to an organisation that also supports the development of independent dance artists in Melbourne. Through a program of residencies, classes, workshops, presentations, and mentoring opportunities, it is responsive to the shifting ideas and contexts generated by dance and choreography in the world today.

lucyguerininc.com / [@lucyguerininc](https://www.instagram.com/lucyguerininc)

21/40 YEARS OF ACCA

The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) plays an inspirational and critical role investing in our artistic and wider communities, leading the cultural conversation and setting the agenda for contemporary art. This year ACCA celebrates a 21st and a 40th: 21 years in our iconic building designed by Wood Marsh, and 40 years as a platform for artists and a centre for the exchange of ideas.

ACCA was established in 1983 and moved in 2002 to a purpose-built, award-winning architectural building designed by Wood Marsh at the heart of the Melbourne Arts Precinct. This consolidated ACCA's position as a leading centre for contemporary art and a beloved platform for our diverse community of local, regional, national and international artists, curators, audiences, colleagues and collaborators.

acca.melbourne / [@acca_melbourne](https://www.instagram.com/acca_melbourne)

A NOTE FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHER

No Magic

Lucy Guerin

Over the span of my choreographic life, my work has mostly been situated in the black box of the theatre; a place of transformation, deconstructed realities and magic. But this setting did not seem right for *NEWRETRO*. It needed a different frame and the unmarked expanse of ACCA's large gallery was the perfect container for this idea. In the theatre we often work with time in a particular way, knowing that the viewer is patiently sitting in the dark while the dance unfolds over an hour or so. Sometimes I feel like I am choreographing the audience's attention; nurturing, disrupting, slowing, surprising, testing, guiding or dragging. But *NEWRETRO* has no careful arc of time which comes to an end. It starts and finishes randomly, and the viewer can enter and leave at any stage without feeling they have missed anything. The dancers are forming and reforming in a choreography that unfolds as a continuum.

When conceiving *NEWRETRO* I thought about all my past works. Like most old things, some of them seemed dated and flawed, but also precious and alive. They still feel very present to me. The movements, ideas, dancers and collaborators have over the years built something that feels tangible and corporeal, almost solid. But in reality, these performances live either on bits of plastic in boxes, or more recently, in that unfathomable place, the Cloud. I can't touch or see them, but I can *feel* them. When looking back over all the technologies on which my dances sit — Beta, VHS, Dat, cassette, Video 8, DVD, digital etc. — I was struck by the volume of steps, scores, ideas and structures that I had produced. I had an urge to revisit them, not as entire works, as I felt this would feel a bit musty, but to take movements and concepts, and create a new work that had the past and present layered upon one another, existing in the same temporal space. A recycling of past materials, a re-mix, a director's cut.

The dancers are the core of all these creations. Through hours in the studio, their attention and support has been instrumental in the building of all my choreographies. They have generated much of the material under my direction, and their particular dance histories, individual abilities, personalities, ideas and perceptions have made their way into the work through their generosity and collaboration. They have influenced me as much as I have them. Some of the original dancers from the premiere casts are in *NEWRETRO* and it is astounding to me to see the physical memory they have for the dance material from decades ago, spooling out of their bodies before they have even looked at the recorded footage. Many of the dancers are learning excerpts from older works or are new to my choreography and must undergo the somewhat unsatisfying process of learning the movement from a computer screen. But some are lucky enough to learn directly from the original dancer who can tell them where the movement came from, how it was made, what the quality was and what they were thinking while they did it.

In the gallery, we can shift position, leave and come back, walk to another space, get another perspective and watch the dancers up close or at a distance. It can sometimes be a bit uncomfortable. As spectators we are on display, we are part of the performance and there is no hiding in the dark. Sometimes the dancers look at us and we are not sure whether to meet their gaze or look away. What response do they want? The dancers ask these questions too: should they dance as though no-one is there? Should they say hello if they are centimetres from someone they know? Smile? The rules between watchers and those being watched are less clear than they are in the delineation of stage and auditorium.

I always mourn the loss of the studio when I first move my work into a theatre. A lot of what enthralls me as I make it in the rehearsal room is no longer visible when we move to the stage. There are suddenly costumes, lighting, a big sound system, maybe projections and sets that transform the world. Quick decisions need to be made as there is usually not much time in the theatre before the opening. The dimensions are different, the focus of the dancers has to change to looking far out into the dark of the audience. They are no longer right up close to me. But slowly I adjust. I love the tonal enhancement of the stage that the lighting, design and other elements allow. I get used to being far from the dancers, letting go of the work and watching it find its shape as the magic takes it over. Often there are big discoveries to be made here. But placing the work in the gallery allows me to show what I see in the studio, to focus on the corporeal nature of dance: the skin, bones, sweat, relational space and above all the movement. Unadorned and with the freedom to set the tone itself, the dancer's movement makes its own imprint against the white walls that frame it. Everything is visible; there is no magic.

**NEWRETRO:
Out of the black box and into the 'gray zone'**

Anador Walsh

'I like working in the white cube. I like what it does to the body, how you see the body differently. I like the intimacy, the different way that people deal with time'.
— Trajal Harrell

I recently read that, 'if you just did something like going to the supermarket and experienced it fully without the goggles of habit and catégories you would go crazy with pure sense and joy'. During my interview with Lucy Guerin, in the lead up to writing this piece, this statement kept ringing in my head like an earworm. The more we spoke about Guerin's intentions for *NEWRETRO*, the more I began thinking of the work in this way, as a container designed to house a breadth of choreographic practice, so vast, that it would be overwhelming – for dancers and audiences alike – to experience without this framework.

Lucy Guerin's *NEWRETRO* not only reflects on 21 years of contemporary dance by Lucy Guerin Inc (LGI) but creates something new from the oeuvre of this Naarm/Melbourne-based choreographer. By staging a retrospective in the white cube of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), rather than the black box of the theatre, *NEWRETRO* plays with the loaded implications of a career survey and produces something new and generative instead.

NEWRETRO is not what art historian Claire Bishop describes as a 'dance exhibition'. Guerin's works have not been extended to fill ACCA's opening hours. Instead, *NEWRETRO* is a three-hour, self-proclaimed dance installation that runs over eight days and takes audiences on a journey through ACCA's four galleries, taking dance from the black box, through the white cube and into the 'gray zone'. Coined by Bishop, this 'gray zone' refers to the absence of regulation and the indeterminacy of form that occurs when black box mediums like contemporary dance are presented in the white cube of the gallery, the home of the visual arts.

The 'gray zone', as its name suggests, is characterised by the blurring of established white cube and black box behavioural conventions and hierarchies of attention, as well as the audience's use of smartphones to actively document the dancing that here unfolds. It is an emergent space that subverts audience expectations of both the gallery and dance, empowering them with the agency to make their own decisions around their spectatorship.

There is no prescribed way of encountering *NEWRETRO* bar the entry point. How you move through ACCA's galleries, where you position or reposition yourself and how you interact with the dancers and other audience members from here is entirely open; the same for how long you might spend within this dance installation over the three-hour duration of each performance.

Gallery One houses a new live performance work that spans the entire duration of this dance installation and hybridises vignettes from 21 of Guerin's previous works,

including *Split* 2017, *Untrained* 2009 and *Melt* 2002. Chosen as a sort of 'director's cut', these vignettes focus on often overlooked pieces of Guerin's choreographic material that she feels especially connected to. Small sections of each of the featured works have been remixed, without chronological order, through a process of assemblage, and layered on top of one another to produce something new through their proximity.

This live work is performed by 21 dancers, ranging in age from early-20s to mid-50s, in various ensemble and solo combinations. Some of the dancers have previously worked with Guerin, some for more than two decades, and for others, this is their first time. Action, the interplay of dynamics and stillness all play significant roles in this work. At times, the full ensemble of dancers occupy the same space and at others, the majority disappear, leaving one person dancing alone.

In Gallery Two, the source material for *NEWRETRO* is exhibited as looped archival video documentation, displayed on 21 television screens that border the perimeter of this space. Gallery Three is occupied by a solo dancer, learning the repertoire in dialogue with a large projection. This action mirrors and makes transparent the process by which many of the dancers in *NEWRETRO* have come to learn the choreography for the work. Gallery Four spotlights 'an ongoing theme' of Guerin's practice, which emerged for the choreographer as significant during her creation of *NEWRETRO*: duets between women. In this space, over the three-hour duration, five sets of female dancers perform duets from past LGI works.

In describing *NEWRETRO*, Guerin told me, 'I wanted a different perspective on the work. I didn't want it to be a show. I wanted it to illuminate something else; the process driven nature of my work and the hours and hours spent with dancers in the studio'. Bearing this and *NEWRETRO*'s structure in mind, the installation can be said to be just as much about conveying to an audience the process of transmitting choreographic material and mapping it onto the dancing body, as it is about creating something new from Guerin's archive.

NEWRETRO is a retrospective of a largely theatre-based choreographic practice, staged in the gallery, using live performance and visual arts strategies of re-enactment and the presentation of documentation, as a means of proposing an alternative to the traditional theatre survey and its inherent connotations.

Presented in this 'gray zone', the audience is free to roam, interact with the dancers and the content of the installation, and to document (through smartphone photography) the work of Lucy Guerin in a way they have never been able to before. In reconfiguring the spectator's relation to her work, Guerin invites audiences to 'exercise other ways of watching' and is curious to see 'what effects this has on people's experience' of *NEWRETRO*.