HELD IN THE BODY

PERFORMANCES · CONVERSATION

Part of the workshop *Sedimented Crises: Layered Histories, Affect, and the Embodied Landscapes of Social Disruption*, 28–29 November 2026

WEIGHT

SUNDAY ISRAEL AKPAN
solo improvisation



NJÀP: The Memory of Our Ancestors

DORIANE MBENOUN
dance, song, storytelling



As Far as My Body Remembers

ISACK ABENEKO
multimedia performance



SUN 29.11.2026
18:00 – 19:30 performances & conversation
free entry

SAVVY Contemporary
Reinickendorfer Straße 17
13347 Berlin-Wedding

Organised by Kristina Mashimi and Hansjörg Dilger (sub-project Affective Engagements, CRC 1171 Affective Societies, Freie Universität Berlin), Isack Abeneko (ASEDEVA) and Laura Saumweber (ECHORA e.V.), in collaboration with SAVVY Contemporary
Photos: Sunday Israel Akpan (Akpan) · Nasoro (Mbenoun) · Suley Creation (Abeneko)

AFFECTIVE SOCIETIES · FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN · DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

WEIGHT

SUNDAY ISRAEL AKPAN

Hamburg / Lagos

A solo improvisation performance by Sunday Israel Akpan
Emerging from *The Ritual of the Body*

We keep memory in the mind, we say. The body disagrees. Long after the story is told, the shoulder still braces, the breath still shortens. The body does not remember crisis. It continues it.

In *The Ritual of the Body*, Sunday Israel Akpan found these continuations in himself and learned, among others, what it is to be held. Tonight he asks what remains when the others are gone.

He enters alone. No score, only listening. The sound is the room itself: breath, floor, voice, a single body making its own weather. Nothing is prepared. A gesture may surface, fracture, or dissolve. Stillness is not a pause. It is the work, waiting to see if it will continue.

To improvise alone is to refuse the comfort of knowing what you are. Each movement is a question put to the body, answered once, never taken back. He is finding out, in front of you, whether one person can be both the one who falls and the one who catches.

Your attention is the only thing holding him. For twenty minutes, what your body has come through is allowed to exist beside his.

What does your body know about surviving? And when there is no one to reach for, what does it reach for instead?

Performer: Sunday Israel Akpan
Concept / Choreographic Improvisation: Sunday Israel Akpan
Sound Landscape / Music: The room / Sunday Israel Akpan
Duration: 20 minutes

Sunday Israel Akpan works as a choreographer, dancer and musician between Hamburg and Lagos. His works are political and challenging, as well as poetic and sensual. His performance style is characterised by a fusion of everyday movements and behaviours with contemporary dance, as well as the constant incorporation of live music. As an interdisciplinary artist, he delves into profound societal aspects, including sociological, political, and economic issues, questioning the very foundations of our systems. A discursive exchange with his colleagues and his audience plays a vital role in his processes.

NJÀP: The Memory of Our Ancestors

DORIANE MBENOUN

Berlin

NJÀP: The Memory of Our Ancestors is an invitation to commemorate our forebears. The Njàp tree, beneath which the elders were assassinated for resisting systemic oppression, stands as a symbol of divine force. As a timeless witness, it preserves the story of their unwavering resilience and soothes profound pain. Although their bodies were wounded, their souls and spirits continue to live within us.

The performance is rooted in a search for identity, where the body becomes a conduit for transmission and a living archive. The inspiration for this creation emerges from the artist’s family history and the need to bring forth a silenced memory. These inherited, societal, and ingrained tensions speak to the ongoing need for dialogue between and across generations.

Through dancing, singing, and storytelling, the piece weaves together the visceral echoes of violence endured with a vibrant legacy of survival and fortitude. This pluridisciplinary work seeks to create a space for sharing and resonance. In a collective call to reflect on the importance of heritage, NJÀP allows us to honour the dignity carried throughout past struggles, highlighting their historical context.

Doriane Mbenoun is a contemporary movement artist, performer, choreographer and workshop facilitator. She understands dance as a means for memory, transmission, and collective transformation. Her artistic practice expands the boundaries of physical expression while continually exploring movement vocabularies rooted in somatic authenticity. Characterised by a fluid, highly improvisational style, her work seamlessly weaves together contemporary dance, urban dance styles, and traditional and contemporary African dance forms. Grounded in diasporic embodied practices and forms of knowledge, her work unfolds through performances, workshops, and interdisciplinary artistic collaborations in culturally diverse and socially engaged contexts.

As Far as My Body Remembers

ISACK ABENEKO

ASEDEVA, Dar es Salaam

As Far as My Body Remembers is a contemporary multimedia performance that interrogates colonial and postcolonial trauma as it lives on through the body, transmitted across generations, embedded in movement, breath, sound, and silence.

The work unfolds as an experimental dance methodology: a process-based movement practice where experience becomes knowledge, and memory is produced, accessed, and transformed through the body. Movement functions not only as expression, but as research into an embodied archive where history is stored and reactivated.

The body is not static. It is a living, moving site of novelty, transformation, and rethinking knowledge. My body is in motion, accessing ancestral stories and carrying generational colonial trauma, while simultaneously producing new ways of knowing through physical experience. Memory in this work is not linear or cognitive. It exists as far back as memory goes, measured in the language of the body rather than the mind, held in muscle, rhythm, tension, reflex, and gesture.

Africa is my political body.
My political body is Africa.

Africa is a source of innovation, creativity, and originality. New artistic, cultural, political, and intellectual movements continue to emerge from the continent, reshaping global narratives and futures. Yet when we look deeply into colonial and postcolonial legacies, as far back as my body remembers, we encounter unresolved trauma passed down through generations, living on in African and diasporic bodies.

This work asks critical questions: How do we access the memories archived in our bodies, and how do we fail to access them? How do we heal from long, prolonged, inherited colonial and postcolonial trauma? How can body movement become a decolonised site and practice? In what ways is the body a medium of language or communication? How can dance function as a form of healing, resistance, and reparation, decolonising bodies marked by generational colonial wounds?

As Far as My Body Remembers positions movement as both political and poetic: a space where trauma is acknowledged, histories are re-embodied, and the body becomes a site of decolonial imagination and repair.

Isack Abeneko is a Tanzanian performing artist, choreographer, musician, researcher and arts curator. He is co-founder and Creative Director of ASEDEVA (Art for Social and Economic Development in Africa) in Dar es Salaam and Artistic Director of the annual Marafiki Festival. Trained in African contemporary dance and choreography at École des Sables in Senegal, he has toured his own dance productions internationally and collaborated with Flinn Works on works including Maji Maji Flava and Ultimate Safari. His practice approaches the body as an archive and uses performance to question identity, politics, colonialism and coloniality. His work has been shown across East Africa, Europe, the United States, South Korea, and Southern and West Africa. He is a fellow at CRC 1171 Affective Societies.

SEDIMENTED CRISES

Layered Histories, Affect, and the Embodied Landscapes of Social Disruption. A two-day workshop at SAVVY Contemporary bringing together scholars, movement practitioners and artists, 28–29 November 2026.

Organised by Kristina Mashimi and Hansjörg Dilger (sub-project Affective Engagements, CRC 1171 Affective Societies, Freie Universität Berlin), Isack Abeneko (ASEDEVA) and Laura Saumweber (ECHORA e.V.), in collaboration with SAVVY Contemporary
SAVVY Contemporary, Reinickendorfer Straße 17, 13347 Berlin