



Move in and Around Manhattan

By **MARY STAUB** | Published: August 18, 2008



Photograph: Douglas Back

Frequenters of the financial district may encounter a sidewalk surprise in Lower [Manhattan](#) this week. Starting today, members of MoveOpolis! the two-year-old dance company of Richard Move, who is otherwise well known for his impersonations of Martha Graham, will colonize corners of this district as they strut their way through six events that are part of Sitalines, the site-specific performance series organized by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

Mr. Move's hour-long Sitalines performances, called "Hostile Takeover," are part play on the gender imbalance of the financial district perceived by Mr. Move and part play on the financial world's usage of manipulative terminology to name — and often gloss over — events within it. "The financial district is definitely a male-dominated world, with very few women in it," Mr. Move said. "I wanted to have a very strong and sensual female energy

take over and become the center of attention, with the women as the smartest persons in the room."

"Hostile takeover," "golden parachute," and "golden handcuffs" are just a few of the expressions Mr. Move was thinking of when he developed his extravagantly costumed characters. "There are such interesting, vivid terms in finance," Mr. Move said. "And I wanted to do something outside the proscenium theater this summer because there are so many amazing places around Manhattan."

Although Mr. Move is no newcomer to site-specific works — he has crafted many in France — this is his first such piece in Manhattan. "I started walking around, discovering some great places around Lower Manhattan," Mr. Move said. "And these spaces informed the creation of characters with a vocabulary and prop design growing out of each space." Mr. Move's characters include a take on the futurist Japanese installation and video artist Mariko Mori, a revived prehistoric flightless bird, and the embodiment of the Italian porn star La Cicciolina (Ilona Staller), who is also known for having advocated sex for prisoners while serving as Italian MP.

Today, a dancer will become an extinct aquatic bird that comes to life in "Hesperornis Regalis," performed on the third floor of South Street Seaport's Pier 17, with seagulls, sailboats, and the Brooklyn Bridge as a backdrop. Tomorrow, in "Mariko Mori Musings," a version of Japanese anime will take over the site of William Tarr's "Rejected Skin" sculpture on Water Street. On Wednesday, the former Graham dancer Blakely White-McGuire, as La Cicciolina, will perform in front of the "Red Flower" sculpture — by La Cicciolina's ex-husband, Jeff Koons — overlooking ground zero.

"The women are very isolated in their context," Mr. Move said. "It's interactive in terms that there are observers who are not just interested in theater and dance, but people who just happen upon the sites — tourists, locals, construction workers, blue collar, white collar. I love that. It makes dance seem less rarefied."

Later in the week a fantastical princess will reflect on the Stock Exchange from the Hermès window on Wall Street, and the Fulton Fish Market will become the home of a large human mackerel in "Cavalla Bianca." With movement stemming from the traditions of Japanese Butoh, these characters will culminate their takeover on August 25 in "Dances at a Gathering," an early-evening party at South Street Seaport with DJs, visuals, projections, and a cash bar.

"This setting is more intimate, more communal — the women who were alienated before will become part of this festive lounge and nightclub feel," Mr. Move said of the final event. "It's exciting because there's no telling who's watching or what their reactions will be. There are a lot of variables that we have no control over."

Although Mr. Move is still well known for his "Martha @ ..." performances and continues to bring them to the stage, he is clearly moving on. He escapes being pinned down to any one of his past incarnations as runway model, nightclub dancer, actor, or film choreographer. He's now also working on his own documentary: the story of another strong female figure, the Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta, who met her death when she fell from her Greenwich Village apartment window in 1988.

"I feel like everything needs to be like an experiment or exploration to some degree," Mr. Move said. "It's strange to me when you can watch a video of certain choreographers' work and

recognize immediately who it is. That's nothing I strive for. I like to keep pushing myself, challenging myself, and site-specific works definitely do that."