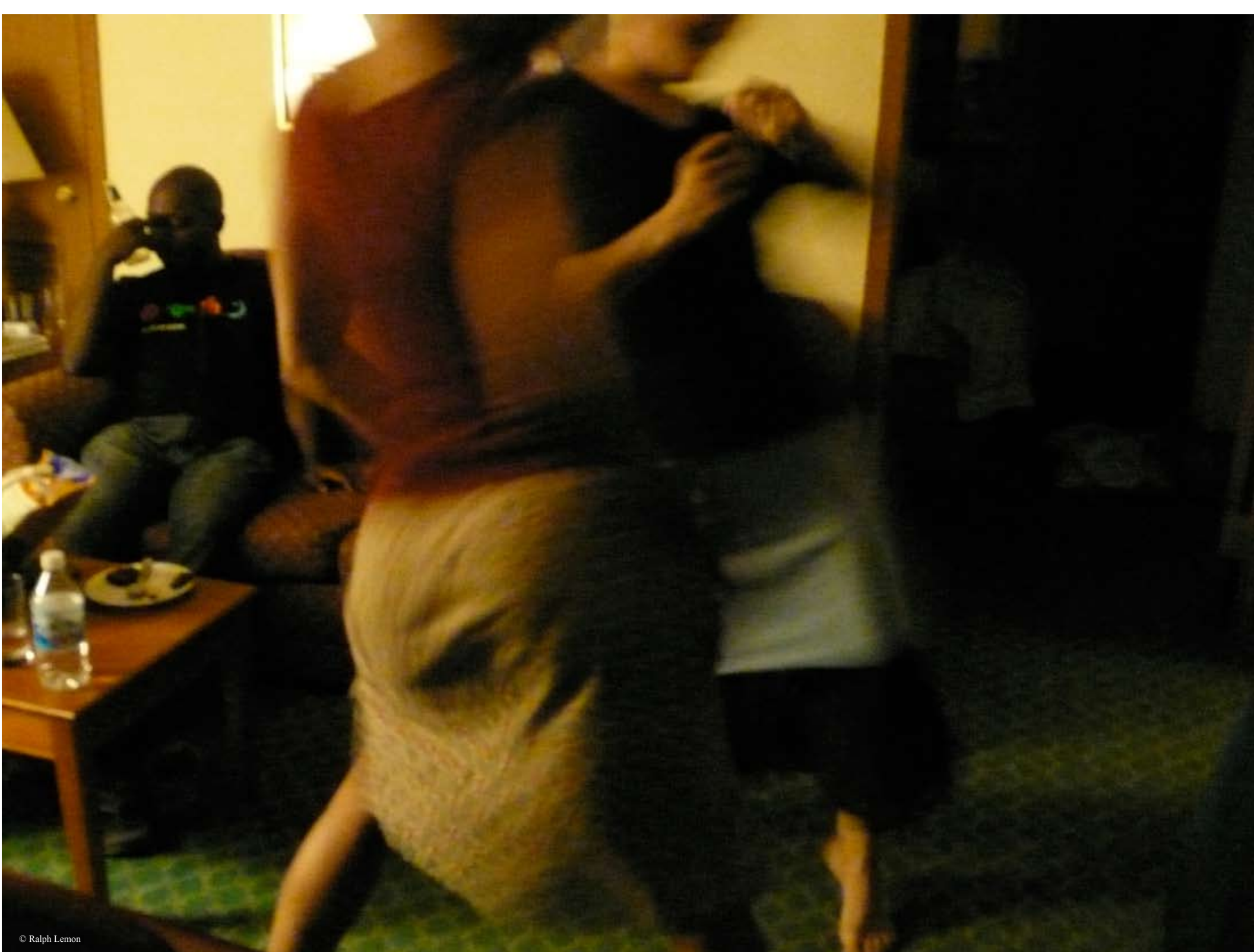


HOW CAN YOU STAY
IN THE HOUSE ALL
DAY AND NOT GO
ANYWHERE?



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A NEW WORK IN DEVELOPMENT
CREATED AND DIRECTED BY RALPH LEMON

How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere? is a multi-media performance and installation involving professional performers as well as residents of Bentonia and Little Yazoo City, MS. The work explores loss, transcendence, and the essential human destiny of partnership. Each part—*Sunshine Room*, *Wall/Hole*, *No Room*, and *Meditation*— tells its own story (stories) while being part of a larger narrative that is revealed in an evening-length performance and mixed-media art installation.

The question of redemption lays at the heart of *How Can You Stay*. Driving the project is, in Lemon's words, "what every sentient being debates: where are we, how did we get here, and where are we going?" In *How Can You Stay*, the way forward is through human connection—the human destiny of partnership—portrayed by residents of a Mississippi Delta community, and by the designed, intimate relationships of an ensemble of contemporary dancers, actors, sound, video and lighting designers.



CONNECTIONS AND INFLUENCES

How Can You Stay is deeply influenced by Ralph Lemon's eight-year collaboration with Walter Carter, a former sharecropper who lived his entire life in Little Yazoo City, Mississippi, until passing away in March 2010 at the age of 103. Walter Carter has been the collaborator/protagonist/alter-ego and canvas of Lemon's dreams and artwork since 2002. Together, they engaged in a living art process in Carter's house, his backyard, along a country road or in a nearby juke joint. Over time their collaboration grew to include other community members – Carter's wife, son and longtime neighbors.

Through Walter Carter, Lemon looks to a vision of the future – to death, transcendence and inheritance. Carter speaks with the particular idiom of his generation and way of life, and he participates in the tasks that Lemon asks him to do with the same affect and attitude that he applies to his everyday chores. Mundane events become poetic through their extraordinary humanity. Working with Carter in his house and yard is staying in the house all day and not going anywhere, but in fact, going everywhere.

How Can You Stay is also inspired by the Russian avant-garde filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky whose films explore the complexities of impermanence and time, and reveal an almost aesthetic obsession with the past, present and future forewarnings of societal conditions. In particular, Lemon references Tarkovsky's science fiction/romance film, *Solaris*. Taking place on a space station filled with ghosts from his subconscious and memories of earth, the protagonist consents to put all that is most human of himself – his inner world– at the disposal of science. For *How Can You Stay*, Ralph Lemon and Walter Carter put themselves at the disposal of art; looking backwards and forwards, layering time, looking for what is contained and released by the human spirit. The device of science fiction allows *How Can You Stay* to operate in a future where race, community, loss, connection and transcendence synthesize into a newly realized form.

PERFORMERS AND VISUAL ELEMENTS

Lemon has re-assembled the acclaimed cast of his last performance work, *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), to collaborate with him and perform in *How Can You Stay*. These adventurous and fearless artists share a remarkable history through the research, creative process and touring of that earlier work. The experiences and vocabulary they developed are the starting points for their work on *How Can You Stay*. This ensemble includes David Thomson, Djédjé Djédjé Gervais, Gesel Mason, Darrell Jones and Okwui Okpokwasili – with the addition of dancer Omagbitse Omagbemi.

The central visual elements of *How Can You Stay* are a spaceship and flying saucer designed and built by Walter Carter's son, Warren, and friend Lloyd Williams. The spaceships recall ideas of futurism and the escape from limitations to a wholly new place with unlimited potential; but they also call up isolation, and are moving, unsettled homes. Functioning as sculpture and as set pieces, their placement moves the work toward its focal point – “the human nature commonality of how one lives a life—how special, ordinary and inspiring.”

Working with Walter Carter in his house and yard is staying in the house all day and not going anywhere, but in fact, going everywhere.

SUNSHINE ROOM



© Louis Sparre

Sunshine Room “remaps” portions of Andrei Tarkovsky’s sci-fi romance film, *Solaris* (1972) in the “outer space” of the Mississippi Delta. Featuring filmed performances of Walter and Edna Carter, and commissioned sculptures by Walter’s son, Warren, and friend, Lloyd Williams, *Sunshine Room* offers visions of life transitions (such as illness, leave-taking and death) that are experienced as life lived “outside of time.” Accompanied by Lemon’s onstage narration, *Sunshine Room* embraces cultural memory and moving forward—imagining some future, despairing of leaving, and holding nostalgic visions while negotiating a new belief system.

Wall/Hole is an intervention and a breaking point, showing the path to change both longed for and resisted in *Sunshine Room*. *Wall* is performed by five dancers from Lemon's 2004 work, *Come home Charley Patton*—Darrell Jones, David Thomson, Djédjé Djédjé Gervais, Gesel Mason and Okwui Okpokwasili as well as dancer Omagbitse Omagbemi. Beginning where *Come home* ends—an impassioned and cathartic dance called “Ecstasy”—Lemon extends his choreographic exploration with the dancers through extreme physicality to the point of exhaustion and a place of vulnerability and release. The energy of *Wall* explodes and dissipates into the aftermath of *Hole*, a solo expression of grief and its echoes performed by Okwui Okpokwasili. Envisioning the wall as both an abstruse door and a keyhole, with the dance as the key, *Wall/Hole* suggests “the inevitable and infinite consequences of change, from birth, from growth, from death, from war, from life itself.”

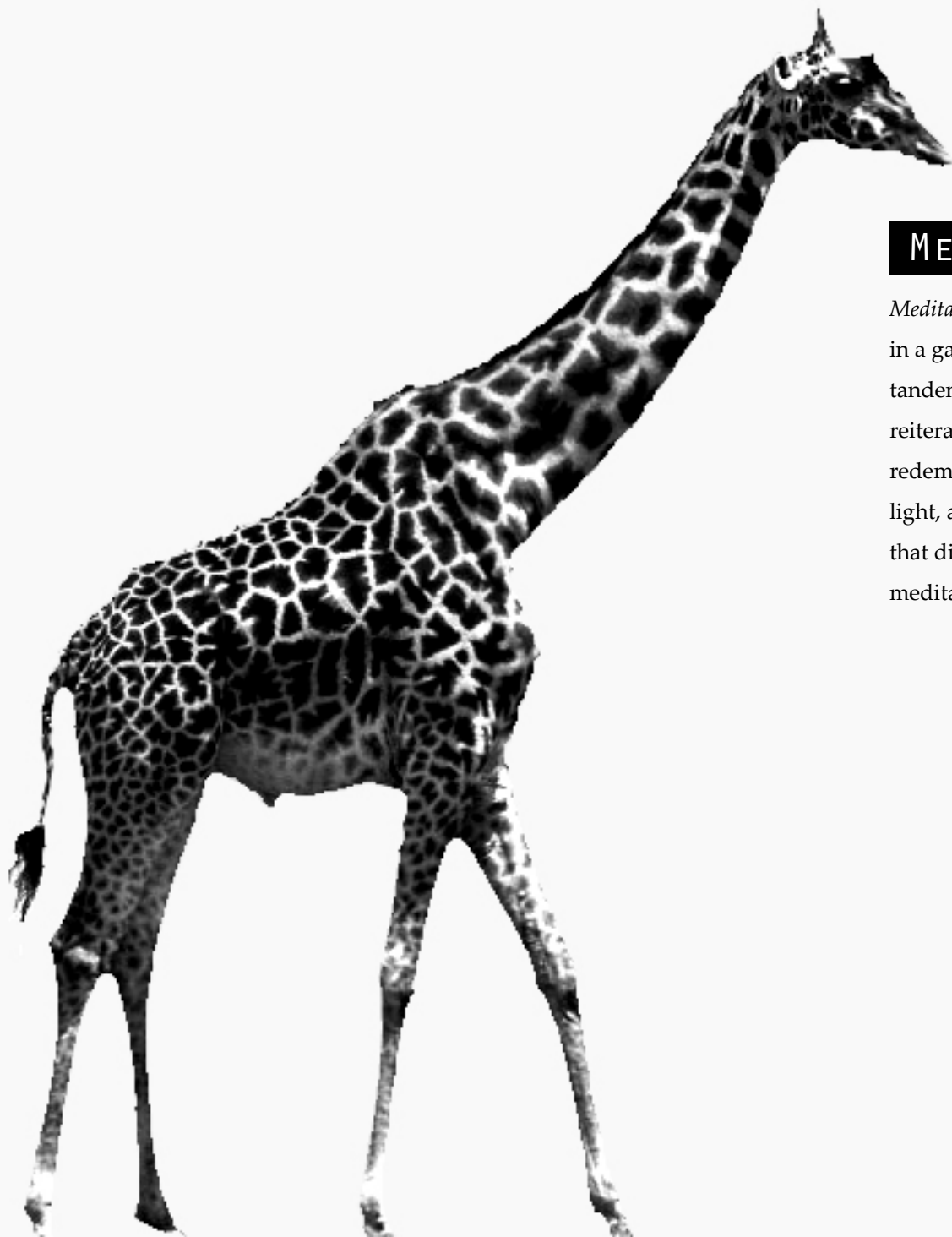
WALL/HOLE





No Room

No Room is a reduction of themes from *Sunshine Room* and *Wall/Hole*. Performed by Lemon and Okpokwasili, in front of projected images that recall the otherworldliness of fairy tales, *No Room* is a physical representation of grace— a duet of cleansing and rebirth that offers the audience a sense of restoration and light.



MEDITATION

Meditation is a room-size art installation to be exhibited in a gallery or theater setting either on its own or in tandem with the stage performance. It visually reiterates the project's themes of love, loss and possible redemption by using greatly slowed film projection, light, and shadow to create an immersive environment that distills the emotional themes of the work into a meditative experience.

2010 U.S. Tour

Krannert Center for Performing Arts
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
Walker Art Center
Brooklyn Academy of Music
Duke University
REDCAT
On The Boards

additional performance residencies are available

How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere? is a production of Cross Performance Inc. and MAPP International Productions.

How Can You Stay is being developed during residencies in Mississippi and at arts centers and universities around the U.S. such as Brooklyn Academy of Music; Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography in Tallahassee, FL; and the Krannert Center for Performing Arts in Urbana, IL.

The project is being commissioned by Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Walker Art Center. Creation of *How Can You Stay* has been made possible with fellowship support from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the New York Foundation for the Arts. It has also been supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The MAP Fund (a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation); Doris Duke Fund for Dance of the National Dance Project (a program administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts with funding from Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and MetLife Foundation); the National Endowment for the Arts; and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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