

THE VASHON LOOP

MPD Project Relocates to Vashon's Open Space

ARTICLE | FEBRUARY 27, 2013 - 8:05PM



Hallie Aldrich & Sarah Haas with their "Mobile Performance Project" Prototypes

while working for her family's island business, Aldrich Office, Art, and Press and working in theater. In 1999 she started performing and choreographing professionally, prompting her to move to Seattle in 2001 to dance for several companies such as Khambatta Company, to San Francisco in 2006 to work as a company member in Scott Wells & Dancers, and to grad school as a fellow in the prestigious dance department at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2008. Aldrich met Haas in grad school, and together they started EcoDance. As of today, Aldrich is building her EcoDance prototype in Open Space's warehouse while working at Movement Intelligence, her Pilates-Massage studio in Burton.

In the last year of a three-year graduate dance program at UIUC, movement artist Haas and choreographer Aldrich realized that their sustainable life as artists was about to disappear. Instead of one regular university paycheck for creative and teaching work, Aldrich and Haas saw a future of multiple jobs unrelated to dance and few performance opportunities. Instead of adapting to the current circumstances for U.S. performance artists like themselves, they decided to transform their reality by co-founding EcoDance, an organization that builds sustainable artist-commerce models that accommodate creative freedom and financial stability through the construction of individualized, mobile live-work spaces for performance artists. They launched their project in January, 2011.

In the summer of 2011, Aldrich and Haas started the design-build process on two mobile performance dwelling prototypes through a fluid process which considered questions of ecology, architecture, and dance. These two prototypes were designed and built based on the precept that an individualized artist commerce model—and the accompanying mobile performance dwelling—will provide a situation that overcomes the performance artist's high expense- low income cycle.

In September, 2011, Haas's dwelling took to the road, and has travelled from Urbana to audiences in Chicago, Detroit, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Texas. Haas' exterior is complete; she is still working on its interior. Islander Dave Singer, Aldrich's high school classmate and self-taught carpenter who resides on Vashon, was an integral actor in the first steps of the prototype's build. He travelled to

Native Vashon islander Hallie Aldrich returned to Vashon in fall, 2011 with her EcoDance project in tow. Aldrich grew up on Vashon Island from 1977 – 1989. She graduated from VHS in 1989, and from UCLA with a theater degree in early 1994. Aldrich found that work in Los Angeles lacked creative opportunity, so she returned to Vashon in 1994. She commuted to Seattle to study contemporary dance,

Urbana and worked a week of 12-hour days under Illinois' punishing sun, instructing the co-founders and local volunteers on build techniques, and consulting on design choices. The cofounders believe that his week of work on the project proved more helpful than three months of advice received from a local architectural designer and professor.

Aldrich's dwelling is affectionately named "Foxy", after her favorite flower, Foxglove. Aldrich bought Foxy's materials in the Midwest, where EcoDance began. Her travel trailer was built in Missouri, her SIPs (structurally integrated panels) in Illinois. Foxy's build started on Vashon island last September, when Aldrich returned to her hometown to establish a home-base. This January, 2013, Foxy relocated to Open Space for Arts and Community on Vashon after Aldrich worked for a year under a tarp tent in the woods.

Steel fabricator and metal artist, islander Randy Kirk, is helping Aldrich with the remaining steps of her MPD prototype. His expertise in custom design and structural fabrication works well with an MPD. Kirk decided to donate his skills because he admired Aldrich's attitude "She took on a crazy project and an improvisational process she had never done before, had no experience in. I liked that." The customized and ambitious build reminded him of work he did (and now misses) for employer, David Gulassa, a Vashon islander now deceased. David, founder of Gulassa and Co., was a designer who built high-end customized homes and buildings for the Northwest's most affluent. Kirk and Aldrich are aiming to complete Aldrich's prototype with livable/workable space, indoor/outdoor space, mobility agility, eco-friendly construction and operation, and aesthetic beauty that departs from the standard RV's racing stripe exterior.

Once Foxy is completed, Aldrich begins the second stage of the EcoDance mission—she will activate her artist commerce model. Aldrich will present her choreographies in her MPD during gallery hours, guerilla events, and regional residencies. For gallery hours, the MPD is set up just like an art gallery, with designated business hours. During that time, Aldrich and Incite Company, her dance company, will perform—similar to art hanging on walls for public view, live performances will be viewable on the stage (and unlike a gallery, an MPD gallery is mobile). Dance will happen, and then Foxy will fold up and drive away.

EcoDance addresses the artistic individual's age-old problem: How to balance creative freedom and financial sustainability. Cofounders believe that creativity is our natural state of being, and this fragile state is too easily regulated and exploited in social climates of industry and economy. Alternatives such as EcoDance's artist commerce model can make an enormous impact on the health and creative force of creative individuals like professional performance artists, and thus the communities that they serve. By providing individual artists with the power to afford basic needs for healthy living and artistic production, EcoDance expands an artist's options for performance production, and places the power in the creative hands of the artist rather than in the industrious pocket book of the capitalist.

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