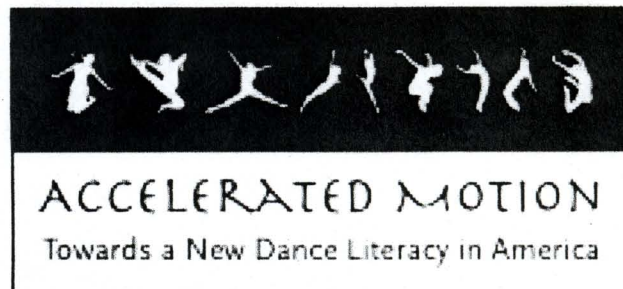


BODIES AND MACHINES



Appendix A: Circle Walker: Notes and Context

NY-based performer Alan Boeding choreographed *Circle Walker* in 1985 for MOMIX,¹ a dance company founded by Moses Pendleton in 1981.^{2 3} It appears that Boeding last performed this work in 1999, at the 11th World Gymnaestrada, held in Göteborg, Sweden, a gathering of over twenty thousand gymnasts from forty countries. Boeding was a special guest at this event with the US team, one of the only soloists to perform as part of the closing ceremonies, July 10, 1999.

Performances since that time include three by Joseph Mills, a member of the faculty at Northwestern University, in a Dance Chicago performance in 2001, a concert of his work called Mills/Works at the Kennedy Center in 2003, and then reprised in a couple of performances for Chicago Dance Encore, a program of critic and audience favorites from past Dance Chicago events; it was also performed by MOMIX dancer Tim Acito at the Majestic Theatre in Boston in 2002 (reviewed in the *Phoenix* by Siegel in a piece entitled "Gadgetry: 'Momix in Orbit' at the Majestic").

Apparently, Boeding has created another version of the sculpture, adapted to accommodate multiple bodies, called *Opus Cactus* (the MOMIX website, referenced in footnote #1, includes an image of this sculpture), which is currently featured in

Dream Catcher, a section of a newer MOMIX work (2001).

Alan Boeding Biography from MOMIX program, April 4-5, 2003 Zellerbach Hall

Alan Boeding (sculpture design), a native of Chamberlain, SD, received his BFA in sculpture from the University of South Dakota in 1980 and his MFA from Indiana University in 1983. Boeding began dancing with the Windfall Modern Dance Company in 1981. Since then, he has performed with Ruby Shang and Dancers at the American Dance Festival; Dancers Unlimited in Dallas, Texas; and with Daniel Ezralow's Conspiracies and Collaborations at Dance Theater Workshop in New York.

A highlight in his career was a solo performance in the Rome Colosseum in The Night of Music in 1987. He has performed as a guest artist for the Amnesty International Gala at the Joyce Theater in New York 1988, and Serata di Gala at the Teatro Olimpico in Rome in 1989. Also that year, he collaborated with Lincoln Nebraska's 240-member marching band in the homecoming half-time performance at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Nebraska. In July 1990, Boeding performed in the three-city International Etoiles Gala in Japan.

He has recently formed his own sculpture/dance company and is creating new sculpture and choreography. Boeding received a "work space" grant from the 92nd Street Y in New York City to continue his work. He has been associated with MOMIX since 1984.

Jim Cappelletti Biography

James Cappelletti received an MFA in Dance at the Ohio State University in 1999. Cappelletti is not only the soloist featured in the *Circle Walker* footage, but he also organized and directed the 1998 repertory dance concert, *The Consigliere Collection*, which provided the context for the film. Cappelletti danced with MOMIX prior to embarking on his graduate studies, and it was as a performer with that company that he first learned and performed this piece.

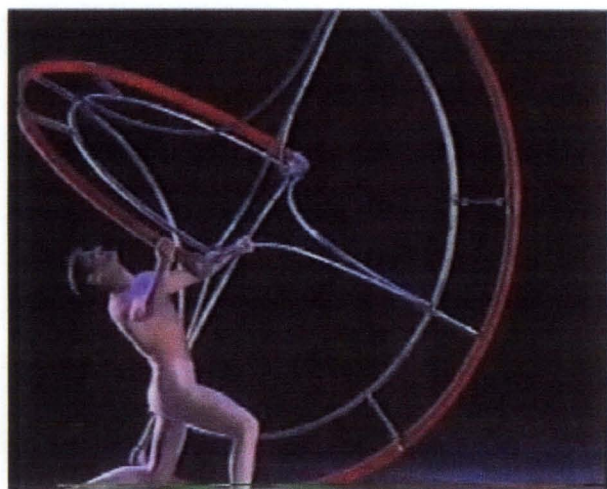
Circle Walker (1985)

Alan Boeding

Jim Cappelletti, performer

Introduction (about three minutes)

The shot opens on a small group of men, who are holding onto a towering, curved

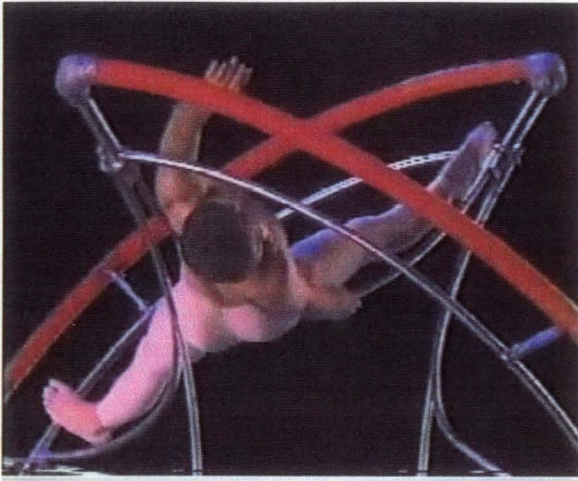


All images taken directly from accompanying video footage

metal framework, which they are in the process of assembling. One man turns a wrench around a bolt on part of the apparatus, and then performer Jim Cappelletti is introduced, explaining to the others some of the necessary steps for putting this piece of sculpture together. He explains that Alan Boeding, the creator of both the sculpture and the dance, taught him the piece by first instructing him fully on how to assemble the sculpture. He explains that dealing with the sculpture is a time-consuming and exacting process, from assembling it to dancing with it. Jim says that the sculpture, called *Circle Walker*, is very much a collaborating partner in this work: as with another dancer, he experiences the same need to balance, to share weight, to control and anticipate his movement with respect to the movement of the *Circle Walker*. At some points during the assembly, he is standing inside of the sculpture. He says that when he first learned the dance, the *Circle Walker* controlled him, that it took time for him to learn how to manipulate it, and that dancing with it requires his total concentration. He ends by laughingly asserting that if he fails to focus his attention completely on the *Circle Walker*, "it might roll off the stage and kill somebody . . .".

Dance Description (about ten minutes)

A dissonant chord of electronic music sounds in the darkness. Soon, the lights come very slowly up on the dimly illuminated figure of a man, surrounded by a network of intersecting curved metal arcs. The contours of the performer, Jim Cappelletti, and the large circular shape around him are all that is immediately visible, suggesting a reference to the human figure in DaVinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1490). Cappelletti is bare-chested, clad only in white tights. As the music begins to vibrate,

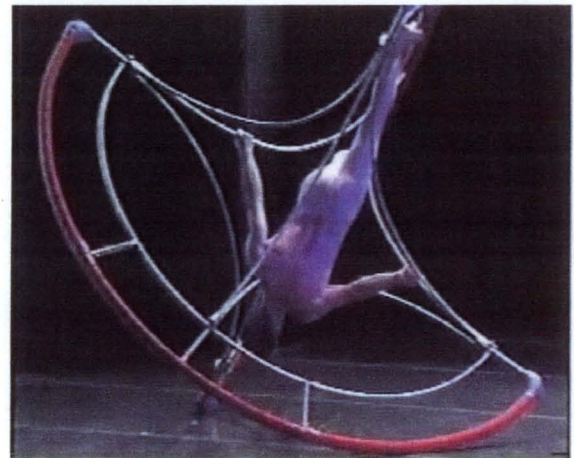


he tenses his outstretched arms within the sculpture, pressing out to either side in order to grasp two of the curved shafts, and shakes the sculpture while standing firmly inside it. The *Circle Walker* responds only faintly to these vibrations, revealing a sense of its weight and substance. Cappelletti begins to turn it slightly, from one side to the other, and the exertion required to stop it is obvious.

Gradually, the light increases on the two figures, and a steady pulse is introduced into the minimal musical score (also called "Circle Walker") by Yaz Kaz. Cappelletti rocks the sculpture, curving his upper body forward and then arching backwards, all the while maintaining his taut-armed grasp on



the metal on either side. His focus remains serious and determined; his head turns from time to time, but always with a deliberate and clear motion. He turns the sculpture, pushing it forward on the diagonal, and then pulling it backwards. A kind of electronic drum-roll is added to the music, and Cappelletti rocks it, pushes and releases it, then grabs one of its uppermost rungs for a ride, pulling him into the air as it rolls forward from the impact. There is a sense of respect and suspense in his dealings with this giant sculptural partner—he handles it with reverence and finesse, bowing deeply in its direction at several points, as if acknowledging gratitude to a pleasing dance



companion. He tugs it, sits, stands, lunges or rests inside of it, even rolls in it upside down. For very brief periods, he releases it, only to run around it or to gather some momentum to grab it for a few seconds of flight or to perch on it in a handstand.

Every motion Cappelletti makes produces a response in the *Circle Walker*, and he seems to proceed through an inventory of possibilities: Man in charge, sculpture in charge, man and metal as one. He winds himself through its architecture, grasping various parts in steady progression, folds his torso in half over one of its bars, treating it

as a moving piece of gymnastic equipment. The *Circle Walker* itself continues to move, and not in a straight or entirely predictable path. As the lights dim and the music comes to an end, Cappelletti is suspended upside down at an angle inside of his sculpture. When the lights come up amidst enthusiastic applause, Cappelletti reaches out to touch the *Circle Walker* and it gently rocks beside him as he takes his bows.

¹ Additional information about MOMIX can be accessed at <http://www.mosespendleton.com/>

² Moses Pendleton had previously co-founded a company called Pilobolus in 1971, which had emerged as a collective of performers who met in dance classes taught by Alison Chase at Dartmouth. Additional information about Pilobolus can be found at <http://www.pilobolus.com/>.