



Choreography

An Exploration of Dance

By Jennifer Ramsey (English '15, M.A. Professional Writing, '18)

Joining Kennesaw State University in 2014, Lisa K. Lock brings her unique choreographic vision to the Department of Dance as an assistant professor. She most recently took the University's dance company back to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. for the fifth time, further elevating Kennesaw State as a nationally elite dance program.

Lock's "Suspended Vision" was one of two selected works, presented at the regional American College Dance Association (ACDA) conference in the spring, to be featured at the Kennedy Center during the biennial National American College Dance Festival last June.

As with her other works, Lock strived to push the limits of conventional choreography in "Suspended Vision." With an all-female cast, outfitted in grey with strategically placed oversized bustles and collars, the dancers investigate a playground of oversized ballet bars that create an illusion of weightlessness as they leap and twirl and climb among large props.

The centralized moment, when a set of twins become aware of each other as they discover their likeness by touching one another's faces, shifts the performance dramatically as the other dancers begin to explore each other's faces as well.

"The performance invites audiences to experience humanity at its most personal and intimate level," Lock said.

Her unique vision for modern dance that combines elements of lighting, music, movements, costuming and staging creates a surreal and yet palpable narrative, making the performance's story of identity come alive on the stage.

Like her choreography work today, Lock took an unconventional approach to her dancing career. Born in Switzerland, she was 22 years old when she began training professionally and earned her diploma in classical ballet. Her passion for modern dance brought her to the U.S. in 1985, where she joined Stuart Pimsler

Dance and Theater Company in Columbus, Ohio. Later she enrolled in California's Institute of the Arts and earned her B.F.A. and M.F.A. in dance in Los Angeles.

"Experimenting in style and form was fundamental in my development, allowing me to continuously reinvent my ideas as a choreographer," Lock said of her education.

After graduating, Lock stayed in Los Angeles for 16 years, performing her solo works in local, national and international showcases. In 2006, she moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where she worked with Opera Cleveland in several productions and continued performing her solo work. However, it was her experience with creating site-specific performances at the Ingenuity Festival for Arts and Technology that Lock said sharpened her skillset the most.

"Site-specific work, unlike the theater, has no captive audience and requires creating something that attracts people, making them stop and observe," recalled Lock. "It's a very different type of focus and was crucial to my choreography style today."

Looking to continue her experimental work, Lock moved to Atlanta in 2012 with the intent of joining Kennesaw State University after learning about its cutting-edge dance program under Ivan Pulinkala's leadership. She began teaching modern dance and body conditioning part time at the University and was invited to teach the summer intensive program,

a one-week non-residential workshop for high school students, that same year.

It was during the summer intensive program that a first draft of Lock's "Table Manners" was created for the workshop students, and later a refined version for the KSU Dance Company was presented in the fall faculty concert. Soon after, she accepted a faculty position to teach modern dance and choreography, while continuing to choreograph for the Department of Dance and its dance company.

Created in 2015, "Table Manners" was focused on and around a table, in which a combination of lighting and movement highlighted dancers as they explored their connection to, and separation from, the confines of the tabletop.

"All you saw was the action on the table, and yet there was still a tangible story unfolding for the audience," said Lock, who credits her time in theater as being influential to how she makes her performances come alive.

Lock continues to evolve her choreography and presented her latest creation at the 2018 fall faculty concert, which delved even deeper into the surrealism that has become her signature style. Of her students, Lock is confident of their ability to keep meeting and exceeding expectations, commending them as "amazingly talented, mature and professional performers who keep raising the bar right along with me."

