



INTERNATIONAL
ARTS CENTER

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Omi presents SECRETS AND SEAWALLS, a collaboration with choreographer Melissa Riker & architect Lee Skolnick

Friday, July 17, 6 PM

Free with RSVP required - email events@artomi.org

For Immediate Release

Ghent, New York - Omi is pleased to present a special pop-up event. *Secrets and Seawalls* is a collaboration between choreographer Melissa Riker and architect Lee Skolnick to take place at Omi on Friday, July 17 at 6 PM. *Secrets and Seawalls* is an evening of dance in two distinct acts. Inspired by storms and disruption, choreographer Melissa Riker in collaboration with architect Lee H. Skolnick, FAIA, uses methods of dance and architecture to explore vulnerability, power, and how each are revealed. The performance will take place outdoors at Omi (weather permitting, or in the Studio Barn) following a four day workshop during which Mr. Skolnick, Ms. Riker, and the dancers will have workshopped the piece on site. Afterwards an intimate panel will take place. The event is free but an

RSVP is required as space is limited. Please email events@artomi.org to RSVP.

Secrets and Seawalls is a unique collaboration between Ms. Riker, a 2008 alumni of Dance Omi (Omi International Arts Center's residency for dancers) and Mr. Skolnick, the chairman of Architecture Omi (an ambitious cross-disciplinary project which seeks to explore the myriad intersections of architecture, art, nature and human structure).

The piece is a gorgeous and momentary experience of dance, space, and meaning occurring in a one-of-a-kind live performance. In *Secrets and Seawalls*, dancers whisper across an expanse and move behind walls, stealing and sharing secrets in a shifting, immersive environment. The piece is spurred by questions: Does power exist in the structures we create? In the way we withhold information? Or, is it in the vulnerability revealed before the storm?

The collaboration is highly conceptual in nature, as both Ms. Riker and Mr. Skolnick are invested in the study of the human body's relationship to its surrounding environment. They first met and bonded over the similarities of their practice, although they come from completely different fields.

I love testing the space of a dance. A big expansive work in a tiny hallway, a small, intimate one moving across a park. This experiment in space with Secrets and Seawalls is exactly what I need to understand the piece I am creating. How does it interact with space? Not the controlled space of a theater, but the wilds of a field, the perspective of real distance, or sculptures on a hill. I am thrilled and excited to have the opportunity to place elements of this beautiful dance at Omi and see, along with our audience how it shines! - Melissa Riker, Kinesis Dance Project

When Melissa began to describe the themes of Secrets and Seawalls, how it was inspired by the devastation and exposed vulnerability occasioned by the impacts of Hurricane Sandy, the issues of strength—weakness—protection, and how there were obvious and attendant architectural and spatial allusions and potential that she wanted to explore - I was hooked. - Lee Skolnick, FAIA

The Collaborators

Melissa Riker is Artistic Director and Choreographer of Kinesis Project dance theatre, celebrating its 10th Season in 2015. She is a New York City dancer and choreographer who emerged as a strong performance and creative voice as the New York's dance and circus worlds combined during the 90's. Kinesis Project is pushing the boundaries of what changes space, and people, by placing movement and stillness in unusual and inspiring places. The company creates dance concerts, facilitates educational programs and invent site specific performances with diverse communities, creating beautifully fierce, highly crafted, deliciously human dances. The company is a 2015 recipient of LMCC's Manhattan Creative Communities Grant for their works *Secrets and Seawalls* and *Revealing Dances*. Audiences and critics have called Riker's work "a Marx Brothers' routine with soul," "a movable feast", and from *The New York Times*, her choreography is "comically acrobatic, gracefully classical, visually arresting."

Lee H. Skolnick is the Chair of Architecture Omi and the Principal of Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership. Skolnick seeks to synthesize art, science, and architecture to create memorable and meaningful experiences. Breaking down the barriers between disciplines, for over 35 years Mr. Skolnick's museum, cultural institution, and residential projects have been recognized as works of fresh innovation and inspiration. Mr. Skolnick has employed his integrated design philosophy on

projects for such clients as the Paley Center for Media in New York and Los Angeles; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC; the Cooper Hewitt National Museum for Design in New York, among many others. Since the 1980s, he has been awarded Architectural Digest's "AD100," Cooper Union's "Achievers Under 40," House & Garden's "Design Obsession," the Presidential Citation for Outstanding Achievement from The Cooper Union, "The Most Innovative" by The Best of the Best Luxury Homes magazine, "The Best of the Best" Home Book's House of the Year, and local, state and national AIA Honor Awards.

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About Omi International Arts Center

Omi International Arts Center seeks to foster an environment of creative exploration and exchange, professional opportunity and exposure, and a stylistically and culturally diverse community for creative artists from around the world. Through our programs and resulting public events - including our Residency Programs, The Fields Sculpture Park, Architecture Omi, and Education Omi - Omi contributes to a vibrant arts culture locally, regionally, and internationally. For more information visit:

www.omiartscenter.org

Image Credit: (both) *Secrets and Seawalls* which was previously performed on the waterfront of NYC's Battery Park, courtesy of Kinesis Project.