



# *task*

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confronting white supremacy  
through dance performance

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TOUR KIT





# MISSION & HISTORY



# GROUND SERIES

dance collective uses performance as embodied intervention.

Each GROUND SERIES production is rooted in ensemble collaboration, interdisciplinarity, inquiry-based content, and site-specific dance-making. GROUND SERIES understands the gathering of an audience as an opportunity to build connection, stir dialogue, and make space for self-reflection.







Since its inception in 2012, **GROUND SERIES** has performed throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, Philadelphia, Northern New Mexico, Southern California, and London. **GROUND SERIES** has been presented by the Center for Contemporary Art (Santa Fe, NM), University of Art and Design (Santa Fe, NM), Temescal Arts Center (Oakland, CA), Dance Discourse Project (San Francisco, CA), The Foundry (Berkeley, CA), Liberty Lands Park (Philadelphia, PA), Simeon Den Gallery (Cathedral City, CA), University of Roehampton (London, UK), School of Dance and Circus (Stockholm, SW), Pieter Performance Space (Los Angeles, CA), Navel LA, The Paseo Festival (Taos, NM), and Highways Performance Space (Santa Monica, CA), Mountain House (Arcadia, CA), Claire Trevor School of the Arts, UC Irvine (Irvine, CA), and SF Movement Arts Festival (San Francisco, CA).











Sarah Ashkin and Brittany Delany, co-directors of **GROUND SERIES** dance collective, met at Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT) where they forged a shared background in post-modern dance, critical thinking, and dance making as an ethnographic process. As company members of Pedro Alejandro Dance and Dancers for several years, Ashkin and Delany learned from Alejandro's multi-faceted, international choreographic research spanning architecture, improvisational forms, dance history, site specific making, environmentalism and healing arts. Inspired by the DIY Queer performance arts community in the San Francisco Bay Area, together they moved to the East Bay and founded **GROUND SERIES** as a curatorial platform and dance collective out of the Temescal Arts Center (Temescal, Oakland, CA). Ashkin and Delany's goal in forming **GROUND SERIES** was to erode the elitism and alienation often surrounding postmodern dance. Today **GROUND SERIES** creates work and events in which dance can be shared as a welcoming experience for creative exchange. As curators, they host participatory salons, resource shares, and interdisciplinary maker labs. As site specific choreographers, they prioritize access by disrupting the exclusionary practices of the proscenium. Throughout their creative process, they program open rehearsals, gather community for workshops and feedback, and begin each performance with the sentiment: "Whatever you feel this performance is about, you are right." Over the past 7 years, **GROUND SERIES** has collaborated with upwards of 25 artists; and curated, produced and choreographed over 18 shows, reaching audiences across the US and UK.



# CO-DIRECTORS

Sarah Ashkin and Brittany Delany



**Sarah Ashkin, GROUND SERIES Co-Director** is an interdisciplinary dance maker, educator, and cultural worker based in Los Angeles, California. Sarah earned her BA from Wesleyan University in Dance Performance and Choreography and Environmental Studies, and a MA from University Roehampton in Dance, Politics and Sociology. Sarah has trained with Urban Bush Women, Anna Halprin, Eiko and Koma, Ishmael Houston Jones, Colin Poole and Simon Ellis, Headlong Dance Theater, and Pedro Alejandro. In her work as a dance educator, Sarah leads social justice driven site-specific dance curriculum, in which students learn about the histories beneath their local parks, memorials, and train stations through ethnographic choreographic processes. As a social practice dance scholar, Sarah confronts the ways in which white supremacist histories and practices impact dance education through performative, written, methodological, and administrative interventions. Sarah's most recent creative investigations reside at the intersection of critical whiteness theory, the social infrastructure of western dance, and the body as somatic archive. [www.sarahashkin.com](http://www.sarahashkin.com)



**GROUND SERIES Co-Director, Brittany Delany** is a dancer, choreographer, arts and culture worker, and writer based in the Coachella Valley, California. She earned her B.A. in Dance Performance and Choreography and her B.A. in French Studies at Wesleyan University. In addition to exploring theater and a variety of sports, her movement background includes: hip hop dance - east coast, west coast, new style, bgirl, house--classical modern, modern and postmodern, contact improvisation, ensemble improvisation, and site-specific dance. This training underscores her aim to cultivate a playful, present, athletic, resilient body--capable of shape-shifting characters and perspectives. Her performances have been presented in a cathedral (San Francisco Movement Arts Festival), museum (Peer Practice in the Desert, Palm Springs Art Museum - Palm Desert), art exhibition (Coachella Valley Art Center and LIFEWORK Gallery), and a warehouse (Artist Residency at The Foundry, Berkeley.) She has worked with a range of artists including Pedro Alejandro, Sarah Ashkin, Ricardo Foster Jr., Deborah Karp, Daria Kaufman, Shayna Keller, Bibi Khalili, Erin Malley, MLN17 and Mary Sano. [www.brittanydelany.weebly.com](http://www.brittanydelany.weebly.com)





*task*





*task* uses the platform of the proscenium dance performance as a public confrontation of white supremacy.

Treating the theater as a site, GROUND SERIES co-directors continue their research and presentations of site-specific performance with the challenge to re-map and re-frame the stage. The duet, choreographed and performed by Ashkin and Delany, reflects on the problematics of the white female body moving through the foreground and background. Balancing the absurdity, tenderness, violence, and honesty required to engage with racism, gender, and western concert dance, *task* is a collage of postmodern dance, performance art, satire, and political commentary.

*task* is a response to the racist paradigm in which white choreographers can create work about poetic abstraction, formal concepts, or 'universal narratives', while the work of choreographers of color is often solely interpreted through the lens of race, racism, and the racialized dancing body. GROUND SERIES believes it is white artists' responsibility to mark the white dancing body of the proscenium as racialized, and even as a historical and present day vessel of racist cultural practice. Entrenched in themes of failure, listening and accountability, this duet invites the audience to consider their work in the current political moment-- as artists, as cultural patrons, and as people.

White supremacy is a white problem.

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## CHOREOGRAPHED & PERFORMED

by Sarah Ashkin and Brittany Delany

**MUSIC** by Carolyn Pennypacker Riggs

**DRAMATURGY** by Sue Roginski

**DESIGN** by Zoe Koke

[WATCH TRAILER](#)

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## MAKING OF *task*

*task* germinates from Sarah and Brittany's separate and shared research and backgrounds into race, gender, and dance studies. Sarah's graduate research marks the legacy of racism within western concert dance. Her inquiries into the white dancing female body, dance training as a mechanism for white supremacy, and analysis of the theater as a white space inform her contributions to the making of *task*. Brittany is a founding member and co-leader of the intersectional intergenerational feminist artist collective, Wyld Womxn, based in the Coachella Valley. Her work organizing womxn in communal discussions, artistic events, and political protest around issues of the gaze, consent, violence, race, and healing guide her need to address the historical and present day problematics of white feminists within the frame of *task*.

[WATCH FULL PIECE](#)



# PRESS FOR *task*

## **Confronting White Supremacy** GROUND SERIES

*Interview with Stance On Dance*

“Our biggest take-away from the research and rehearsal process that we hope to share with our audiences is: to take up African-American philosopher George Yancy’s call that white people tarry with the idea that white people are the problem in our racist society. To tarry, Yancy explains, is the process of holding or being with something long past the point of comfort. As artists, tarrying with racism feels like a creative life-long project. As we see it, dance training, dance performance and dance funding are all critically linked to our national cultural imagination. Dance has the ability to shape culture and, at the same time, is intrinsically shaped by culture. It is our responsibility as dancers, dance makers and dance presenters to uncover the ways in which we are complicit in white supremacist practices of privileging the white body and dismantle these practices.”



## **White Choreographers Tackle Racism in Dance** -

*Taken to “Task” - spotlight in Cultural Weekly*

‘In Task, Sarah Ashkin and Brittany Delany, two white, female dancers and the co-directors of GROUND SERIES tackle the legacy of racism and white supremacy in western concert dance. Ashkin conducted a performance workshop last month at Pieter, something of a prelude to these performances.” ~ Ann Haskins

## **GROUND SERIES Presents Their Strong Work TASK at Highways in L.A.** *Dance Chronicle*

“I thoroughly enjoyed TASK and applaud the thoroughness of the research listed in the program, and I appreciated the result of the hard work put into creating this piece.” ~ Jeff Slayton



*task* COMMUNITY  
PROGRAMMING  
& EDUCATION





As part of the *task* tour, **GROUND SERIES** is proud to offer tailored community engagement opportunities.

## MASTER CLASS / WORKSHOP FACILITATION

Ranging from a singular lecture or studio practice to a multi day intensive dance workshop, **GROUND SERIES** directors have curriculums associated with the topics researched in *task*. Some entry points for classwork include:

### Whiteness and Dance

The Body and White Supremacy

What is White Dancing? Examining Dance Technique through Critical Whiteness

Interrogating the Proscenium as A White Space

The Possibilities of Anti-Racist Dance Making

What is White Allyship in the Dance Field?

### Research and Composition

Inquiry-Based Dance Making

Considering the Theater as a Site

Speaking for Dancers

Strategic Feedback Methodologies

Duet Strategies





# WHAT OUR PRESENTERS ARE SAYING

“The electric work of GROUND SERIES reveals what often lurks in our subconscious. GROUND SERIES unabashedly investigates performance as a tool for human connection reflecting who we are as a society.” - *Adam McKinney, Co-Director DNAWORKS, Assistant Professor of Dance Texas Christian University*

“GROUND SERIES is doing some of the most important work of our time. As a response to tough issues like racism, extraction, labor and privilege, Sarah and Brittany’s work uses the mechanisms of dance and performance to literally move people towards a more thoughtful engagement with each other and with the planet. Fueled by research and flooded with creativity, this approach to site-specific movement ignites an awesome courage in the hearts of their audiences.” - *Erin Elder, Curator, Paseo Festival 2018*

“Thanks so much to GROUND SERIES for sharing the work & being such awesome guests here at Highways Performance Space. I was very impressed (and very surprised!) by what I saw.” - *Patrick Kennelly, Artistic Director, Highways Performance Space*







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## CONTACT

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