



& MARY
BLACKSTOCK



THE DANCE CARD ~ *LE CARNET DE BAL*

The Moving Architects dance company and visual artist Mary Blackstock join forces for a studio-based durational piece, with dancers appearing at intervals during this open studio collaboration. The project pairs live choreography with a visual art installation.

JCAST Open Studios @ ARTS 14C

157B 1st Street

Powerhouse Arts District, Jersey City, NJ

Studio #415

SHOWINGS:

Saturday, October 3rd: 1:30pm, 2pm, 2:30pm

Sunday, October 4th: 2pm, 2:30pm, 3pm, 3:30pm

Choreography by: **Erin Carlisle Norton**

Dancers: **Emily Cicio** and **Kelly Guerrero**

SCAN TO READ

PROJECT OVERVIEW >

OR GO TO:

maryblackstock.com/dance-card



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THEMOVINGARCHITECTS.ORG

MARYBLACKSTOCK.COM

Project Overview

The Dance Card is a collaborative performance and visual art exhibition that uses the 18th and early 19th-century dance card — a card on which a woman recorded the names of men she was "promised" to for each dance at a social event (cotillion, debutante ball, formal dance) — as both literal material and central metaphor. The project pairs live choreography with a visual art installation built from replica and archival-inspired dance cards, turning a delicate social object into a lens for examining how women's bodies, time, and movement have historically been allocated, tracked, and owned by others.

The dance card was never neutral. It was a tool of etiquette that doubled as a ledger — a record of who had claimed a woman's hand, her attention, her physical proximity, before she herself had any say in the matter. This project treats that ledger as a script for choreography and a canvas for visual commentary, exploring themes of consent and the illusion of choice within social systems.

The dance card formalized a system in which a woman's body was, for the length of an evening, distributed in advance among men who had a claim on it before she did. Filling out a full card was framed as a social triumph; an empty one was a public humiliation. The project treats this as an early, almost literal template for patterns that persist well beyond the ballroom — the idea that a woman's time, attention, and physical presence are commodities to be requested, reserved, and displayed as evidence of her value. Choreographically, this shows up as dancers performing steps they did not choose, then breaking form — a movement vocabulary of compliance interrupted by refusal.

Choreography

Dancers perform a sequence of short duets and solos, each "assigned" by a different card. The tension between choreographed obligation and improvisational resistance is the engine of the piece: the choreography begins restrained and precise, with dancers moving in formal, patterned partnering — waltz or quadrille structures- then gradually diverge, refuse, or reclaim the sequence. A ribbon connecting the two dance cards physically connects the two dancers, functioning as a visible tether of two women and their shared experience.

Music is matched to the dance sequences, starting controlled and formal, then evolving into a more modern and freeform tempo.

Visual Art

An installation of prints of altered, enlarged, and reimagined dance cards surrounds the performance space. The cards used as props by the dancers are in the shape of fans, paper cards, and mirrors, as were often seen in the Victorian era, and are filled out in advance. In the place of signatures of the men requesting a dance are words that express what the girls and women were experiencing and what was expected of them - a range of emotions from obligated and eager to fearful and alone. This vocabulary is carried throughout the work and is seen on the dancers' skirts, as well as on prints on the walls that incorporate imagery of materials that underscore the invisible work behind the ballroom's polish and as a "counter-archive" representing women historically excluded from these ballrooms altogether.

The two forms are meant to be experienced together: the dance card as prop and score for the body, and as a framed object for the eye.

THIS IS THE FIRST ITERATION OF THE PROJECT WITH THE INTENT
OF CREATING FUTURE ADDITIONS OF THIS COLLABORATION.

List of Artworks

The Dance Card

Le Carnet de Bal, 2026

#1 - *Carnet de Bal 01*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

#2 - *Carnet de Bal 02*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

#3 - *Carnet de Bal 03*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

#4 - *Carnet de Bal 04*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

#5 - *Carnet de Bal 05*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

#6 - *Carnet de Bal 06*

Digital image, ink jet print on matte paper, 24" x 18"

Additional Prints

Excerpts from hand screenprinted book, *Ideal*

#7 - *Ideal 01*

Screen print on paper, 24" x 18"

#8 - *Ideal 02*

Screen print on paper, 24" x 18"

#9 - *Body Stays*

Screen print on ceramic tile, mounted on wood, 4.5" x 13"

All artwork available for sale. Please contact Mary Blackstock at:
blackstockmp@gmail.com for inquiries.