

*Kelly Nipper*

1971 Born in Edina, Minnesota

Kelly Nipper's videos, installations, photographs, and live performances investigate the relationship between the moving human form and the shape of the space that surrounds deliberate, ritualized gestures. Having worked for ten years in special collections at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles processing post-World War II artist archives—including most notably those of Allan Kaprow, for whom Nipper worked as an archivist and studio manager from 1997 to 2006—Nipper has had an unusual intimacy with and direct access to a host of score-based approaches to performance. In *Floyd on the Floor*, a thirty-minute event first presented in 2007 as part of *Performa 07*, the audience activates Kaprow's notion of a "total environment." Executed by a troupe of eight masked performers, Nipper's collaborative score manipulates a parachute according to mapped interpretations of storm clouds and sudden shifts in barometric pressure, movements inspired by the severe weather and landscape of the Midwest, where the artist was raised. The performers' interactions with the parachute also recall educational exercises created to help children develop motor skills and teach teamwork. Although the performers are distanced from the audience by balaclava-like hoods and the calling out of a numbered sequence that indicates the duration of each gesture, the score nevertheless envelops the audience as the undulant form of the parachute brushes up and momentarily surrounds viewers.

The first part of a tripartite work yet to be presented in its entirety, *Floyd on the Floor* is also the overall title of

a larger project that includes the video *Weather Center* (2009), shown here, as well as the "performance studies" *Sapphire* (2009) and *Circle Circle* (2007), which are composed of objects or sculptures, videos, photographs, notes, and collages. Based closely on German Expressionist choreographer Mary Wigman's gothically tinged *Witch Dance*, first performed in 1914, and influenced by the work of movement theorist Rudolph Laban (Wigman's teacher), *Weather Center* captures the highly stylized gestures and movements of a masked female performer who appears to be possessed by an animal-like spirit. Shoulders hunched and legs spread, the woman alternates between violent rocking motions, a birdlike cocking of the head, and repetitive tamping and clawing gestures. Shot in black-and-white against a neutral gray background and accompanied by a metronomic voice-over, the performance is isolated and heightened in a manner reminiscent of early ethnographic film studies but also indebted to the "trance films" of Maya Deren. Here Nipper elaborates a marriage of systematized notation and poetic choreography. FM

Still from *Weather Center*, 2009 / Single-channel video projection, black-and-white, sound; 5:11 min. / Dance performed by Taisha Paggett and costume by Leah Piehl / Collection of the artist

