How to Use the Resource Guide:

The Radical Bodies Educator Resource Guide is designed in three parts. The first section is intended for use in the classroom prior to a Library visit. It includes historical information and discussion questions to help give students an introduction to the influences that contributed to the culture of movement of the three women featured in the exhibit during the specified time period.

The second section is intended to spark a conversation in the gallery. While a class visit scheduled with the education staff at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts is recommended, this section provides the classroom teacher with enough information to conduct a self-guided visit. Regardless of preference, we ask that you fill out the visit request form prior to your visit:
https://docs.google.com/a/nypl.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeAoeZ00oLP0tkbU_EFh7ZgTSInYxbXrHgO6PXngzBO7enOtA/viewform

Finally, the third section encourages the experimentation of the student. Using the tools of improvisation, “task” movement, and kinesthetic discovery, they will work toward the completion of a short piece.
Introduction:

In August 1960, the choreographer Anna Halprin taught an experimental workshop attended by Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer on her dance deck on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais, north of San Francisco. Within two years, Forti’s conceptually forceful dance constructions premiered in Yoko Ono’s loft and Rainer cofounded the ground-breaking Judson Dance Theater in New York. Radical Bodies: Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer in California and New York, 1955-1972, a new exhibition opening at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in Lincoln Center on May 24, explores how Halprin, and, subsequently, Forti and Rainer opened the way to a radicalized vision for the body in dance and the visual arts that continues to influence choreographers and visual artists globally. The free exhibition is on display in the Library’s Vincent Astor Gallery through September 16, 2017.

Anna Halprin’s role in the development of postmodern dance is well-known in California, but less recognized in the New York dance world. The exhibition seeks to rebalance this perception, and focuses on the cross-pollination in the three women’s careers and the dance and art communities more broadly. Halprin, who pioneered task-based improvisation, had a strong influence on key figures in postmodern dance including Forti and Rainer, as well as Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk and many others: Ideas about improvisation, pedestrian movement, the ordinary body in public places, vocalization, the use of props, and dance as an act of citizenship can be traced back to her early work. Beginning at the same point in 1960, Halprin, Forti, and Rainer—all Californians with Jewish roots—opened the way to a radicalized vision for dance that manifested differently on the two coasts, during an intense period of little more than a decade. Originated by the Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, and co-curated by Ninotchka D. Bennahum (Professor of Theater and Dance, UCSB), Wendy Perron (author, Through the Eyes of a Dancer and former Editor-in-Chief, Dance Magazine) and Bruce Robertson (Professor of Art History and Director of the Art, Design and Architecture Museum, UCSB), Radical Bodies consists of more than 150 photographs, videos and original scores and drawings by Halprin, Forti and Rainer. Photographers include Imogen Cunningham, Peter Moore, George Brecht, and many of the photographs are drawn from the Jerome Robbins Dance Division’s collections.

A fully illustrated 192-page exhibition catalogue is available from University of California Press, with essays by Bennahum, Perron and Robertson, as well as brief memoirs by John Rockwell (former music and dance critic of The New York Times) and the composer Morton Subotnick, and poignant letters that Forti wrote to Halprin in 1960-61.
“If any sound can be music, any movement can be dance.”

- John Cage (1912-1992), American avant-garde composer

Before your Library visit: Influences on a Radical Body

This is a lesson plan intended to be delivered prior to your visit to the Library to see the exhibit Radical Bodies. We encourage you to use the following materials the way that it suits your students, and draw from it conclusions that best supplement your in-class curriculum or after-school programming. We recognize an outcome we would like to share:

After this pre-lesson participants will be better able to:

- Identify the some of the personal, cultural, and historical factors that influenced the work of Anna Halprin, Yvonne Rainer, and Simone Forti.
Influences on a Radical Body:

Isadora Duncan (1877 or 1878-1927)

Isadora Duncan was from California. She and her family lived both in San Francisco and Oakland. Her family was poverty-stricken. She and her brothers and sisters taught dance lessons to local children. Early in her career, she danced with the Augustin Daly Company, but realized she could not conform to the company's traditional style of dance. She took inspiration from Greek vases and relief sculpture. This inspiration led to the “breaking of aristocratic codes of behavior” in dance. Halprin admired her use of public space to show the relationship between the body and the environment, Rainer gave her students photographs of Isadora dancing, and Forti built on Duncan’s breakthroughs in improvisation.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), the Dadaists, and readymades

“...The work that emerged from that time and place did not come out of nothing. In the larger sense it continued the project launched half a century before, when Marcel Duchamp christened that hulking hull of modernism with the fizzy champagne bottle of the readymade”

- Robert Morris, Visual Artist and Sculptor

Painter and sculptor Marcel Duchamp was part of an early 20th century artistic movement called Dadaism. Dada is a word that was chosen at random, and is the French name for the hobby horse, a child's toy. This name signifies the childlike, irrational, and absurd quality of the Dada movement. Poets, painters, and writers all participated in Dada, and mixing of media was encouraged. The art created was in protest to violence, war, and nationalism. Marcel Duchamp created an art piece he called a 'readymade' in 1917. Called Fountain, it was silly, ordinary, and contrary, all things that were favorites of the Dadas. Some audiences were shocked and angry, others found the meaning behind the work fascinating.

Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer take inspiration from the Dadaist. They use the following to shape their movement pieces:

- Curiosity about process
- Playing
- Shattering codified structures
- Found movement
- Ordinary objects
World War II/Post World War II

The world had changed seemingly irreparably by the Second World War. Artists expressed their uncertainty, despair, and unmooring by not returning to the social structures that had dictated what made art appealing in the past. Painters like Elaine de Kooning and Helen Frankenthaler, writers such as Joyce Johnson, and of course Halprin, Rainer, and Forti all created reactionary works, not just to be contrary, but to comment on what could never be made entirely whole again. Abstraction and fragmentation are major themes in Halprin, Rainer and Forti’s work.

Judaism

Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer root their performance in the religious and cultural aspects of the Jewish religion. As a first-generation Eastern-European Jew, Anna Halprin felt the aftershocks of anti-Semitism and the pogroms her parents experienced prior to immigration. She moved many times during her childhood, haunted by a perversion of the American dream, the idea that one could never attain enough stability to be truly comfortable. Yvonne Rainer, who is half-Jewish, was a part of a social Zionist group during high school. Zionists believe in the reestablishment and the upholding of the borders of the state of Israel. When Simone Forti was a child, prior to World War II, she had to leave Italy because she was Jewish. It was no longer safe for her family to live there because of the rise of Fascism.

The Bauhaus Movement

Bauhaus was a German art school from 1919-1933. It was a center of Communist intellectualism and therefore was shut down by the Nazi party when it rose to power. Bauhaus philosophy spread throughout Europe and the United States. Their argument was that there should be no difference between an object’s form and function. In the U.S., Harvard University and Black Mountain College were both intellectual hubs for this concept. When Anna and her husband, Lawrence Halprin, saw a lecture outlining Bauhaus principles, Anna applied these concepts to the body. She, as well as Rainer and Forti, decided that the body can function as a chair, a sculpture or a vessel, showing the versatility of the human body and the qualities that distinctly show our humanness.
Environment-California

Anna Halprin's dance deck is at the foot of Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California. It was designed in the Bauhaus style of design by Anna's husband, Lawrence Halprin, a landscape architect, and by set designer Arch Lauterer in 1954. Anna hosted workshops on the deck and in the surrounding area. The structure has the shape of a proscenium stage, most often seen indoors. It's large, linear shape is meant to mirror Halprin's philosophies:

- Remove the gulf of separation between the audience and the performers on stage
- No hierarchical structure (no one is in charge)
- Concentrate on self-discovery rather than technique

Both Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti attended these workshops as well as La Monte Young (composer), John Cage (composer), Merce Cunningham (choreographer) and Robert Morris (visual artist, and Simone Forti's then-husband)

Environment-New York

After taking Anna Halprin's workshop in California, both Rainer and Forti continued their own study of improvisation. Their work was structured in a class taught by composer Robert Dunn at Merce Cunningham's studio above The Living Theater in New York. There were assignments given and they were thematic. While everyone was on the same page with the assignment, the result was individual. The class was asking questions similar to what Halprin's workshop participants had to grapple with:

- What is our relationship to the audience?
- How can we go deeper than the body's surface?
- How can dance coexist with music or art without one dominating the other?

Instead of reaching a conclusion or answering any of the questions completely, the continual work took place in a studio on the top floor of a building on Sixth and Fourteenth Street, and the basement of the Judson Church on the south side of Washington Square Park, the city replacing the tall trees and the open sky.
For Students:

Discussion Questions:

1. If you could perform a dance for an audience anywhere besides a studio or traditional performance venue, where would you and why?

2. Are there recent historical events or current events that would allow for the reaction against the status quo? How would you express this?

3. Do you have one life event, either positive or negative (or both) that affected the way you performed, or the choreography you created, even if it was for a short time? Share with a partner and then with the class.

4. Where do you get your inspiration from when dancing or choreographing?

Activity:

Choose two movements, to be repeated or done consecutively that demonstrate your identity. The dance should be two minutes or less. Share with your classmates.
“What is unique about American dance is the freedom with which American dancers have been able to experiment, expand, and thus invigorate the ongoing development of dance as a vital art in our cultural life.”

-Anna Halprin

Library Visit: Definition and Redefinition

This is a lesson plan intended to be delivered at the Library in the Vincent Astor Gallery, where the Radical Bodies exhibit is located. This is can be an object-based facilitation, or an informal discussion. We encourage the use of the following materials as either a teacher-led classroom experience or recommend scheduling an educational experience with the Library’s educational staff. The material can also be used in the classroom to support the learning of postmodern choreography. We recognize a few outcomes we would like to share:

After this gallery facilitation participants will be better able to:

- Differentiate between modern and postmodern dance
- Deftly discuss the concepts of freedom, democracy and humanness as it pertains to Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer’s body of work
- Explore the physical relationship between dance and other art forms including drawing, poetry, and music
Biographies

Anna Halprin was born in 1920 into a Jewish family. Her exposure to dancing began with her grandfather and his interest in religious dancing. She began her life in the Chicago area, and then after World War II called San Francisco home. Her dances are focused on kinesthetic awareness. She has worked with the terminally ill for decades, including at times, herself. Her philosophy is to focus on ritual to better understand illness, as well as find ways to physically express what can be an emotional process.

Yvonne Rainer was born in 1934 in San Francisco. Her parents were radicals and she grew up surrounded by poets, artists and Italian anarchists. She and her brother also spent time in their youth in a children's home. She moved with her husband to New York in the late 1950s. There she tried acting, ballet, and modern dance. Her trip to back west to Anna Halprin's workshop was transformative and she brought these new ideas back to New York. She co-founded the Judson Dance Theater in the early 1960s and created groundbreaking performances at the Judson Memorial Church on the south side of Washington Square Park. To this day she writes, choreographs, directs films, and lectures in California and New York and around the world.

Simone Forti was born in 1935 in Florence, Italy, but left shortly thereafter to escape anti-semitic persecution eventually settling in Los Angeles. She met her husband artist Robert Morris at Reed College and moved with him to New York City. In the late 1950s she studied with Anna Halprin, and took Halprin’s tenets of freedom of movement and incorporated them into “Happenings” in the New York City downtown art scene. One of her pieces called Five Dance Constructions & Some Other Things would be her most influential work, so important to postmodern dance history that it was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in 2016.

For Students: What are elements in their backgrounds that they all share? Can you find examples of work in the gallery that are stylistically similar? Stylistically different?
In the Vincent Astor Gallery:

“In an effort to traverse boundaries created by traditional dance technique, both the dancers working in California and New York asked themselves the following questions:

- What does “ordinary” mean in an art context?
- What is the image of the body we are presenting to the public?
- How can dance coexist with music or art without one dominating the other?”

These activities are meant to help the student to search for the answers physically.

1. What does “ordinary” mean in an art context?

   - **Try out the Slant Board construction in the gallery.** Slant Board is meant to be performed with only three people at a time. The piece lasts about 10 minutes, but for this exercise it should be shortened so everyone gets a turn. As much as possible, let the students play until they are ready to be finished. Leave time at the end for discussion of the question. *Note* this activity can only be done with a Library educator, not on a self-guided tour.

2. What is the image of the body we are presenting to the public?

   - **Create a “task” movement piece.** Write down examples of “task” movement and put them in a hat. Ask the students to take two and put them together in a short movement piece. This can be done individually or with a partner. Some examples of “task” movement could be running in place, picking up and putting something down repeatedly, or the use of vocalizations.

3. How can dance coexist with music or art without one dominating the other?

   - **Incorporate music into choreography.** Close your eyes and listen to the same song (for example, Erik Satie - Gymnopédie No.1). As you listen start moving to the music. Incorporate movements that you would do every day, or move as the music moves you.
“[Robert] Dunn urged us to work on our own pieces quickly, without suffering over them. And throughout the course he urged us to be clearly aware of the methods we were using. . . . Implied within the first conception was also the process that was going to lead from it to the final performance”

-Simone Forti

**After your Library visit: Out of the Studio, Into the World**

This is a lesson plan intended to be delivered after your visit to the Library. This plan focuses on the kinesthetic learning, taking all of the philosophy discussed and questions asked to students to ponder in the first two sections and then “take the answers into their own hands and bodies.” After this lesson participants will be better able to:

- “Consider their own capacity to move in meaningful ways” (Anna Halprin)
- Gain awareness about how the body moves in time and space, moving through and occupying space as human beings
- Work to use all of the physical space, regardless of the environment (3-dimensionality)
- Develop a sense of urgency
Radical Bodies in Practice

Relationship to the Audience: In postmodern dance, the audience takes more of an active role. *Happenings*, the name of an art event occurring in galleries throughout New York City in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was influenced by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht and the concept of Epic Theater, or “breaking the fourth wall.” This concept would help the audience to have an intellectual, participatory experience, rather than a passive one. The artists creating the *Happenings* sat the audiences on the floor or made them stand in different rooms and observe different *Happenings* occurring simultaneously. Sometimes the audience had to look up to see the performance as *Happenings* would take place overhead.

Cross-Pollination: Visual artists in the late 1950s began experimenting with the entire space when creating their works. No longer content to have their paintings remain on the wall, the visual artists during the *Happening* movement elevated the process of artmaking to the same stature as the finished product. They changed the environment in which the work was presented, as well as the work itself to create an immersive experience. They enlisted their friends who had traditional roles as dancers, theater artists, musicians, and poets and asked them to contribute, often resulting in them trying their hand at a different medium other than the one in which they had been formally trained.

Use of Utilitarian Objects: A pillow, a mattress, a flag. These are examples of utilitarian objects. While they are inanimate objects on their own, they can become animate as an extension of the performer. Their animate life is fleeting as well as transitional. They can mean something different for each person, and for each piece. They can have similar qualities to a human being with regard to mass, volume and weight. They can resemble other inanimate objects. When they are piled in groups, they become a sculpture, something to look at from a distance, or to interact with, using all five senses. Meaning is derived from acknowledging that the physical action taking place is a reaction to the placement of the object. For example, in several of Rainer’s works mattresses are “luggered” around the stage, lain upon gently or with more force to create a different physical response.

Task Movement: A task movement can be something that we do every day and almost take for granted as human beings. We walk, sit, stand, run and jump as the situation calls for that action. Anna Halprin was first to call attention to these daily movements and her approach to them is meditative, repetitive, and ritualistic. Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti embraced using “task” movement as Halprin had, but also embraced urgency and discordance when choreographing.

Activism: Anna Halprin “asked dancers and people to consider their own capacity to move in meaningful ways.” The three women featured in the exhibit “centered their political activism within the body as a site for feminist expression.” Anna’s concept of activism is deceptively simple and empowering: that you as a human being on this earth are enough. Your presence alone gives you value, and a voice. This concept can germinate into larger acts, and has, including Anna Halprin’s *Planetary Dance*, a world-wide dance for peace.
Are Your Students *Radical Bodies*?

**Ask the question:** How can we understand and experience our lives through our body?

The continual asking of this question is called the Life/Art Process, a dance practice created by Anna Halprin. She elaborates: “Through movement, we tap into hidden mysteries, feelings, memories, associations that have been forgotten.”

**Activity for Kinesthetic Learning**

Choreograph a short piece using the themes in the *Influence on Radical Bodies* and *Radical Bodies in Practice* sections. This activity can be done alone or in groups or two or three. Do not skip steps, and encourage your students to go through the entire process for a more satisfying result.

**Take the time to think, dream and move.** Allow students time for improvisational movement. Encourage the writing and drawing of ideas so they can return to them later. Provide materials such as markers, pens, paper, paint and scissors.

**Create a Score.** As with music composition, choreographers create a score to document movement for themselves and their dancers. Using the improvisational information gathered in the first exercise, ask the students to start to codify these movements into a short dance piece. Focus on incorporating “task” movement and utilitarian objects. Ask them to try out vocalizations.

**To Rehearse or Not to Rehearse?** Some choreographers like their score to be practiced until the actions are muscle memory. Some like to have the score memorized, but not act it out until the day of the performance. Each way can be fun, exciting and challenging. Ask the students to consider both options.

**Consider your Location/Audience.** Where should this dance piece be performed? How should the audience be configured? When making the decision, ask the students to question why the space has been chosen. They can use the space as a complement or contradiction to the piece, always keeping in mind the intention of the piece. Ask the students to consider placing the audience in the middle of the action or even in the next room so all they hear are the dancer’s footsteps. Remember school guidelines when choosing the location.

**Showtime and Critique.** Have the students perform their pieces. Afterward, using large post-it paper, write the words “keep” and “change” at the top of two sheets. With smaller post-its, ask the student audience to write three things they would keep about the piece and three things they would change. Read aloud and discuss.
Sources:
The author relied heavily on the exhibition catalog for content. It is an excellent companion to the educator resource guide, and can be purchased at www.ucpress.edu.

These titles can be found at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts:


Connections to the New York City Department of Education Blueprint for Teaching and Learning In Dance:

- 2 of 5 Strands of Learning in Dance:
  
  Making Connections
  Working with Community and Cultural Resources

- Can be used as material to reach the 12th Grade Benchmark
Radical Bodies: Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer in California and New York 1955-1972 - Educator Resource Guide

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