

# THE PNEÛMA PROJECT

[Pneûma: Greek = wind,  
breath, spirit, that which  
is blown or breathed]

A collaboration by

**Miranda Tufnell** Dance Artist

**David Ward** Visual Artist

**Sylvia Hallett** Musician

With dancers

**Cai Tomos, Eeva Maria Mutka,  
Tim Rubidge  
& musician Jonah Brody.**



**The Pneûma Project** is a captivating exploration of breath, offering its audience a beautiful and immersive performance, in which movement, sound, light, film and visual imagery combine magically to evoke the poetics of breath.

Moment by moment we draw on the invisible air, catching scents, sounds, messages, signals. Our lives are suffused with myths and folklore images of the life-giving potency of breath, of breath lost and regained. Genesis begins with the movement of wind over water;

Lear places a feather on Cordelia's lips for signs of life.

Breath signals our birth and our passage from this world.

As we listen to the tidal interchange of breath in the body, memories and dreams rise to the surface of awareness making visible our uniquely personal sense of being alive.

In this project we have drawn on many sources as part of an ongoing exploration of breath to create a visual and musical palimpsest of the landscapes of breath, wind and spirit as it shapes body, story and place.

As the title suggests, this is an evolving project. Developing the underlying themes around breath in all its aspects provides continuity to the performances, while the dynamic use of light and fabrics are a vivid element in future events.

The participating artists in The Pneûma Project come from different fields and span three generations whose ages range from mid-twenties to mid-sixties.

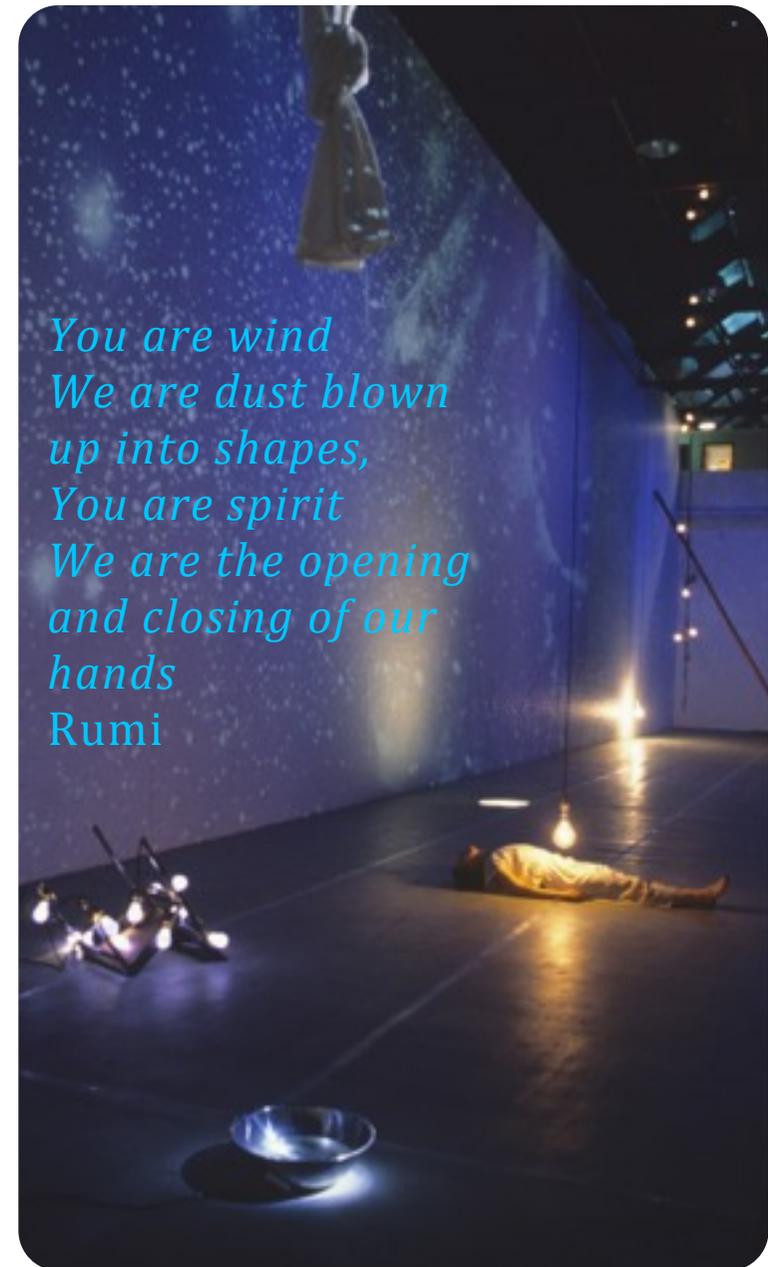
This diverse range of experience significantly informs the emergence of this new work.

An early performance of this work can be watched [here](#).

This took place in response to the magnificent procession of animal skeletons in Oxford's Museum of Natural History - themselves once living, breathing creatures.

*'The combination of excellent dancing, extraordinary music and the amazing procession of mammal skeletons in the Oxford Natural History Museum was intensely moving. I can't wait to see the full realisation of this idea.'*

Orlando Gough, Composer



*You are wind  
We are dust blown  
up into shapes,  
You are spirit  
We are the opening  
and closing of our  
hands  
Rumi*

## Background to the project

The collaborative team has worked both separately and together for many years exploring the nature of breath, and seeking to make visible, in their different artforms, this invisible animating force.

The first collaboration between visual artist David Ward and Miranda Tufnell, entitled *Huge Veil*, premiered at Riverside Studios in 1986. They later worked in 1994 with musician Sylvia Hallett on the performance *In the Grain of the Body*, commissioned by Dance Umbrella and shown both in UK and abroad. Miranda Tufnell and Sylvia Hallett have collaborated extensively since 1987. Their many performances include *Passages* (1990), nominated for *Northern Electric arts awards*, the film *WING* (1999), and *Breath* (2004), a performance with cancer patients at the Dimpleby Day Centre, based on their stories of life and breath.



### Arts and Health

Alongside making performance, dance artist, Miranda Tufnell has worked for many years within the NHS as a body therapist. The Pneûma Project draws on these experiences of working with breath in the field of healthcare.

Miranda has also written the first handbook on Dance and Health for The Foundation for Community Dance and is currently engaged on a new book to stimulate creative practice in health settings.

*Rich floods of red and blue light, vast still and shifting projections of feathers, galaxies fill and dissolve, the architecture of space.....the glow of a moon on the floor.....the effects at once mysterious, sensuous, an interplay of imagery.....a sense of wonder enveloping the audience.*

The Northern Echo on *In the Grain of the Body*

## Spaces and contexts for presenting The Pneûma Project

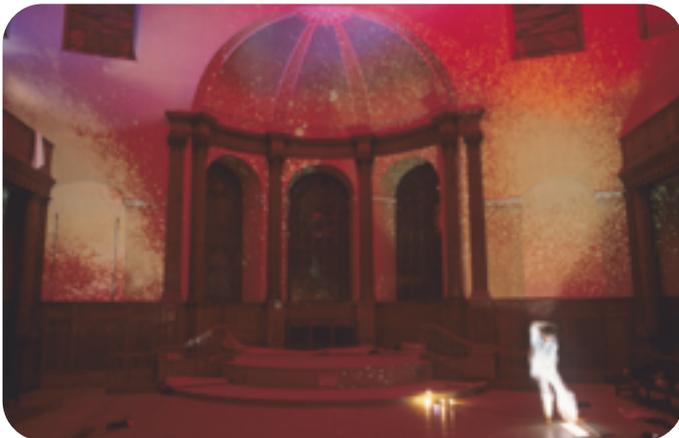
The Pneûma Project can be presented in an array of venues and sites.

Previous performances have taken place at: Whitechapel Gallery, London, Holland Festival, Arnolfini Bristol, Almeida Theatre, The Place,

Southbank Centre, Museum of Modern Art Oxford and Ikon Gallery Birmingham.

The Pneûma Project is an evolving project that can be adapted to respond to many sites and contexts where there is sufficient height to allow for suspension of materials and light sources - galleries and churches, empty found spaces and studio theatres.

The project is also engaged in making a film to be shown in health settings, pain and respiratory clinics.



### **Miranda Tufnell**

Miranda Tufnell trained at the London School of Contemporary Dance and the Cunningham Studio, New York. Returning to England in 1976, she became one of the pioneers of 'New Dance', working first with Rosemary Butcher and soon establishing her own work as an independent dance artist.

With long term collaborators, Denis Greenwood and musician Sylvia Hallett, she became increasingly well known for her mixed-media dance pieces, where light, sound and movement formed rich and mysterious performance landscapes. In parallel with her career as a dancer and dance maker, she trained as an Alexander teacher and Craniosacral therapist. Much of her later career has built on this, working both in the NHS and independently in the field of arts and health. Alongside those activities she has continued to make performance, often as site-specific events and in collaboration with visual artists (Tim Head, Stuart Brisley and David Ward) She maintains an active programme of teaching, and writes about her ideas, based in the body and imagination.

With Chris Crickmay she co-authored two handbooks on the creative process entitled *Body Space Image* (1990) and *A Widening Field* (2004).

[www.mirandatufnell.co.uk](http://www.mirandatufnell.co.uk)

### **Visual Artist David Ward**

David Ward attended Wolverhampton College of Art and Winchester School of Art where he studied painting.

His work includes painting, photography, light sound, dance and performance. He has made numerous collaborations with choreographers, composers, architects and other artists and has made both permanent and temporary commissions in the public realm.

Ward has been Artist in Residence at King's College, Cambridge (1991), Harvard University (2004), Durham Cathedral (1997 – 98) and was a Research Fellow at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds (1995). He has curated exhibitions, film programmes and events and writes occasionally on the work of other artists. Recent solo exhibitions include *David Ward, Slow Time* shown at the John Hancock Gallery, Southampton in 2008 and at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge in 2009 and *RINK - a drawing floor*, shown at P3, University of Westminster in November 2009. He presented his first collection of poems, *The Glass Hammock*, in a performance at the New Art Centre, Roche Court in 2012 and exhibited in *luminated* at QUAD, Derby in 2012–13 and made a solo performance *The Camera Lucida Variations* there in 2013.

[www.davidward-artist.co.uk](http://www.davidward-artist.co.uk)

### **Sylvia Hallett**

Sylvia works as both improviser and composer, using violin, accordion and other instruments alongside simple sound-processing pedals. She has always been drawn to work with dance, to follow the phrase of movement, of thought, or of energy.

She has collaborated with Emilyn Claid, Jacky Lansley, Eva Karczag, and more recently with h2dance. In particular she has worked with Miranda Tufnell creating many new pieces together since 1988.

Sylvia plays in the London Improvisers orchestra, and with the musicians

Clive Bell, Cliff Stapleton, Mike Adcock, and Anna Homler.

Recent collaborations include a piece with David Toop, Alasdair Roberts and Luke Fowler for the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

She has also worked as a musician for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

[www.sylviahallett.co.uk](http://www.sylviahallett.co.uk)

