



## **FAQ: William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects**

*William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects* invites participation in ways unlike any other exhibition at the ICA and we know you may have some questions. Below are a few frequently asked questions. The visitor assistants in the galleries are trained educators who can answer additional questions and talk further about the works on view.

This exhibition invites visitors to interact with a variety of objects and environments in unexpected ways. We ask that you engage in these works in a way that promotes your own safety and that is mindful of others' experience and safety as well. Note that all participation is voluntary and at the visitor's own risk. The ICA will not assume responsibility for any injury, loss, or damage incurred.

### **Who is William Forsythe?**


William Forsythe is an internationally celebrated choreographer and dancer. Trained in classical ballet in Florida and New York, he joined the Stuttgart Ballet in 1973 and in 1984 went on to direct Ballet Frankfurt in Germany for twenty years. He directed the smaller, more specialized The Forsythe Company from 2005 to 2015 and is currently resident choreographer at the Boston Ballet. Forsythe revolutionized contemporary ballet by rethinking the classical repertoire and experimenting with electronic music, digital media, video, and new set design installation. For more than four decades he has created productions that redefine classical ballet's vocabulary; his groundbreaking approach to choreography, staging, lighting, and dance analysis has influenced countless choreographers and artists. Since the 1990s, Forsythe has also developed the instructions, installations, sculptures, and videos that he calls Choreographic Objects.

### **What is a Choreographic Object?**

"Choreographic Object" is a term invented by Forsythe to describe the installations, objects, and videos that he makes. These experimental, interactive works invite the participant to engage with the fundamental ideas of choreography. Forsythe explains: "Choreographic Objects are problem-solving projects that are about finding unique solutions that remain true to my own practice. I am not trying to be an architect, or a visual artist, or a musician. I am choreographing, investigating how choreography operates under other conditions."

Forsythe's Choreographic Objects fall into three broad categories: large-scale interactive installations that invite viewers to move through an environment; smaller-scale sculptures that engage them in a haptic, or tactile, experience; and video sculptures where the body is the sole sculptural element. Each work answers the driving question posed by Forsythe — "What could physical thinking look like?" — which each visitor is encouraged to answer in their own deeply personal way. Several works in the exhibition have been developed in response to the architecture of the ICA.

### **Can I touch the work?**

In most cases, yes! The exhibition features large-scale installations, interactive objects, and videos inviting different kinds and degrees of audience participation. Participants are invited to interact with artworks according to the artist's instructions, which are provided on labels next to the artworks. Each label also includes interpretive descriptions and a symbol  indicating whether it is okay to touch the work. We kindly ask that visitors do not touch the video screens and projectors.

### **What role does choreography play in these works? Can I participate physically without a dance background?**

With his Choreographic Objects, Forsythe investigates "how choreography operates under other conditions." Choreography is traditionally understood as the art of composing dance and planning and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers. Forsythe believes choreography

is for everybody, not just trained dancers or those with a dance background. He also believes choreography can arise anywhere, not just on the theater stage. For Forsythe, dance and choreography are different and can exist independently of each other. As he notes, "Choreography is not necessarily bound to dance, nor is dance bound to choreography, for that matter — you can just get up and dance."

The works in this exhibition propose radical new ways of thinking about art, movement, and choreography. Many of the works isolate everyday movements we do unconsciously, such as stepping off a curb or holding an object still.

**Is there a "right way" to interact with the works? What if I am not able to interact with all the works?**

There is no "right way" to interact with Choreographic Objects. Some invite viewers to interact according to instructions developed by the artist, while others are more open-ended. Forsythe believes in learning through trial and error, and conceives of his Choreographic Objects as a set of problems and relationships — a "combination of perceptual systems," as he says. Each visitor will approach the problem differently and, in the process of trying to solve problems, may gain a new understanding of movement or of their body.

We encourage visitors of all ages and abilities to interact with the works however they wish, whether through physical interaction, observing others, or considering the range of experiences presented on tablets within the galleries. For Forsythe, the works are equations that prompt the user to ask, "How am I in the world as a body?"

If you visit with friends and family, you might try some of the interactive works together and talk about your experiences — you may find that they vary greatly.

**Some of these works are difficult or impossible to do. Why?**

Ideas of physical limitation, the illusion of weightlessness, the productivity of failure, and the heroism of persevering in difficult situations have been steadfast concerns of Forsythe on stage and beyond. In many Choreographic Objects, participants are compelled to consider both the body's physical capacities and its limitations as part of Forsythe's investigation of action-based knowledge. For him, trial and error remains a productive means of learning. Some of the works are indeed nearly impossible; visitors are encouraged to attempt and experience the works however they wish.

**Are these works appropriate for kids?**

Yes! Many kids will love interacting with the Choreographic Objects. In fact, children often intuitively embody the trial-and-error processes of action-based knowledge that Forsythe is exploring. We request that parents and caretakers determine if their child can participate physically and oversee and remain with children while they interact with the works.

**How can I learn more?**

The exhibition catalogue, which includes an interview with the artist and texts by scholars and writers in the fields of art and dance, is available in the galleries. Video of the artist and members of the public engaging with the works are available in the galleries, in the Poss Family Mediatheque, on the Mobile Guide, and online at [icaboston.org](http://icaboston.org). And again, our visitor assistants always welcome discussion.

**Can I take video of these artworks?**

Although video recording is typically against ICA policy, it is allowed within *William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects*, with the exception of video works. We encourage you to share your experience of the work and appreciate your considering other museum visitors by taking video in an unobtrusive manner.