

101010

## UpStage Festival

presents

### Die Totzone

by Alexa Wilson and Cat Ruka

*NZ white girl Alexa Wilson dances as a tourist in the 'dead zone' of the former Berlin wall (in between parts of the two former east and west walls). She sells herself and NZ from here whilst living in a continually exploited city. Maori chick Cat Ruka dances in NZ's 'Queen's Chain' – the contested foreshore between the high and low tide on the beaches of Aotearoa – selling the same things. In honour of the dead and to performatively heal these 'warlike' liminal cultural spaces, they combine forces to present an 'avant-garde tourist video-dance' of both educational and entertainment proportions.*



“We are interested in using our artforms and our selves as political canvases to communicate across these 'warlike' and residual cultural/environmental spaces projected into cyberspace, with our voices aiming to collaboratively heal the past by addressing the present,” says Alexa.

The process of leaving and returning to their country has given Alexa and Cat the opportunity to reflect from a distance on loaded political issues. Cyberspace has become a canvas onto which they can layer, manipulate and engage with representations of their identities and the cultures they inhabit. The power of images and sound in the cyberformance medium has enabled a new level of exploration of their ideas, although they describe their use of the media as “fairly simple”.

“We would like to create something evocative and thought-provoking, as well as humorous. There are so many different capacities for communicating – with images, avatars, speaking, drawing – it suits our interest in direct communication, as performers who are also a bit like activists in our work.”

Both are Auckland-based artists, however Alexa has been living in Berlin since receiving a Goethe Institute Scholarship in 2009 and Cat is currently presenting her work in New York. They have used the UpStage platform to collaborate and develop the show via the internet over the last several months, and have found the process fun and stimulating. Ruka will return to New Zealand in time to perform *Die Totzone* at the UpStage node at the Tempo Festival (8pm, Sunday 10 October) and Wilson will return at the end of October.

“Reflection upon the politics, cultural or otherwise, from afar and the return is always very powerful – especially as New Zealand is so isolated and really quite a special place in the world,” says Alexa.

*Die Totzone* is one of 18 cyberperformances that will be presented at the 101010 UpStage Festival, taking place on 10-11 October 2010. Visit [www.upstage.org.nz](http://www.upstage.org.nz) for a full list of performances and times, and further information about the festival and UpStage.

## Biographies

**Alexa Wilson** has been an experimental choreographer, dancer, video and performance artist, writer and teacher for 10 years in New Zealand and has been living in Berlin for 14 months. She made a work called *Toxic White Elephant Shock* in 2009, which was a **Creative NZ funded residency** with Mau Dance Ltd – NZ's most internationally successful dance company – and won the **Tup Lang Scholarship** for emerging choreographers in NZ for this work. She received a **Goethe Institute Scholarship** to study German in Berlin as an artist for two months in 2009 and collaborated with dancer/choreographer Anna Macrae during a **Turbo residency at Impuls Tanz 09**, Vienna. She has made a number of **experimental videos** since being in Berlin, collaborated on a duet with Tallulah Holly-Massey called 'Polar Pop' which was presented in Neukölln and a variety of **cyber performances**. She has been working on a new solo *Weg: A-Way* with intent to present in Berlin's Tanztage Festival '11. She is currently working on a conceptual cyber collaboration with NZ Maori performance artist Cat Ruka to present in online festival Upstage 101010. Hau Theatre in Berlin and Impuls Tanz have some interest in her potentially developing and touring *Toxic White Elephant Shock*.

Alexa has made over 20 interdisciplinary performances and video works within NZ and Australia, winning the title **“Best New Work by an Emerging Contemporary Choreographer”** in NZ *Listener* in 2004 for *Magic Box* and **“Most Innovative Choreography”** during a Dancehouse festival in Melbourne in 2001 for *Kill/Dance* – a collaboration as *difficult company*. She co-initiated and produced the later annually funded emerging choreographic platform *Late Night Choreographers* in Auckland in 2004 and since then has **officially mentored, created commissioned choreographies** for different company's and institutions in NZ including **Touch Compass Mixed Ability Dance Co** and written many reviews in both NZ and Europe. She has danced for prestigious NZ choreographers including NZ's top choreographer **Douglas Wright, Lisa Densem** (Berlin based dancer/choreographer), **Malia Johnston** and **Vicky Kapo**, and has danced in **Florian Habicht's** cult feature film *Woodenhead*.

Alexa has **taught Interdisciplinary choreography** and guest choreographed site specific work at Unitec's School of Performing and Screen Arts in Auckland for 2 years and **taught film theory** at M.I.T in Auckland, 2001-08. She has choreographed and danced in numerous music videos for NZ musicians including **Goldenhorse, Anika Moa** and **Concord Dawn**, and choreographed the First ever **Auckland NZ Fringe Festival launch 09**. She is one of 50 contemporary NZ artists interviewed in Gareth Shute's recent book *Insights: New Zealand Artists Talk About Creativity*. She completed a **Masters in Film Production** from The University of Auckland in 2007, has a **BA in Film/Media Studies and Women's Studies** and a **BPSA in Contemporary Dance**. Video works, photos and reviews @: [www.alexawilson.blogspot.com](http://www.alexawilson.blogspot.com)

**Cat Ruka** (Ngapuhi, Waitaha) b. Auckland 1983 is an award-winning emerging independent performance artist and dance critic/researcher based in Auckland, New Zealand. Cat uses her artistry to innovatively unravel the presence of her body, and what it means to have this body in the current political, social, and economic climates of a globalized world. Among other things, this includes investigating the point at which her indigenous and colonial bloodlines meet each other in an age of cultural complexities.

Cat's qualifications include a Bachelor of Performing Arts, First in Class (Dance), a Post Graduate Diploma in Creative and Performing Arts, Distinction (Dance), a Masters in Creative and Performing Arts, First Class Honours (Dance) and a University Graduate Scholar Award, all from the University of Auckland. In 2011, Cat will begin her role as Head Dance Lecturer at MIT, Auckland.

Recent achievements include performing *Wolf* – a work in progress – at the World Dance Alliance Global Event, New York @ Dance Theater Workshop and being invited to perform *Playing Savage* at a residency at Rutgers University, New Jersey. The completed version of *Wolf* will premier at the Tempo New Zealand Festival of Dance, where *Die Totzone* will also be performed.