

# REGEN PROJECTS

Welling, James. "James Welling: Dance Project." *Aperture* (Winter 2015) pp. 78 – 87 [ill.]



Over the past five years I've slowly returned to dance. When I was an undergraduate art student in the early 1970s, I spent a year studying and performing modern dance at the University of Pittsburgh. My immersion in dance was intense but short-lived. After dance, I moved to photography, which I took up full-time in 1976.

In 2013 I began to make color photographs by placing three black-and-white photographs into the red, green, and blue color channels of Photoshop. The results were crude and not very appealing. Over the next year I refined the color management by using hue and saturation, selective color, gradient mapping, and channel-mixing adjustment layers. Each photograph is made this way. I copy a separate black-and-white photograph into one of Photoshop's color channels and then fiddle with it until the color works. All of the photographs in *Dance Project* feature three types of images: dance, architecture, and landscape. The result resembles a multiple exposure. In the transition from analog to digital photography, one of the things that disappeared was the multiple exposure. While it's easy to layer two or more photographs in Photoshop, channels create multiple exposures that feel more like the inadvertent double exposure of film technology. I am continually surprised by the strange images that I create using color channels.

My appreciation of random image combinations came from my father, who collected makereadies from the printing company he worked for. A makeready is an artifact of offset printing. Scrap paper is run through the press to get to the correct speed and even ink distribution, then saved to be reused. You might find a calendar grid printed over a textbook page atop a dog-food advertisement.

In the first six months of working on this project, I posed UCLA art students in the studio using a Xerox book of dance imagery I had created from the history of dance photography. In January 2015 I began to photograph professional dance companies in rehearsal.

Last year I photographed a gigantic circular Marcel Breuer building in Boca Raton, Florida. The building is elevated on cast concrete piers, a common device Breuer used in the 1950s and '60s. My Breuer photographs were still in my digital camera when I began photographing dancers. I needed an additional element to complicate the dance imagery, and the Breuer building was perfect, conceptually and formally. For one thing, architecture has a strong somatic connection to dance. Both govern the body but at vastly different scales, and the bodies of the dancers intersect the architectural space in unexpected ways. With a Breuer photograph as one of the channels, the dark shadows from the building cut into the RGB color space, dramatically bringing forward or suppressing parts of the overall image.

The landscape components of the dance photographs derive from recent excursions to a large open space in western Connecticut. I walked and painted these fields when I was an adolescent, and during my brief involvement with dance I imagined these fields as spaces for my choreography.

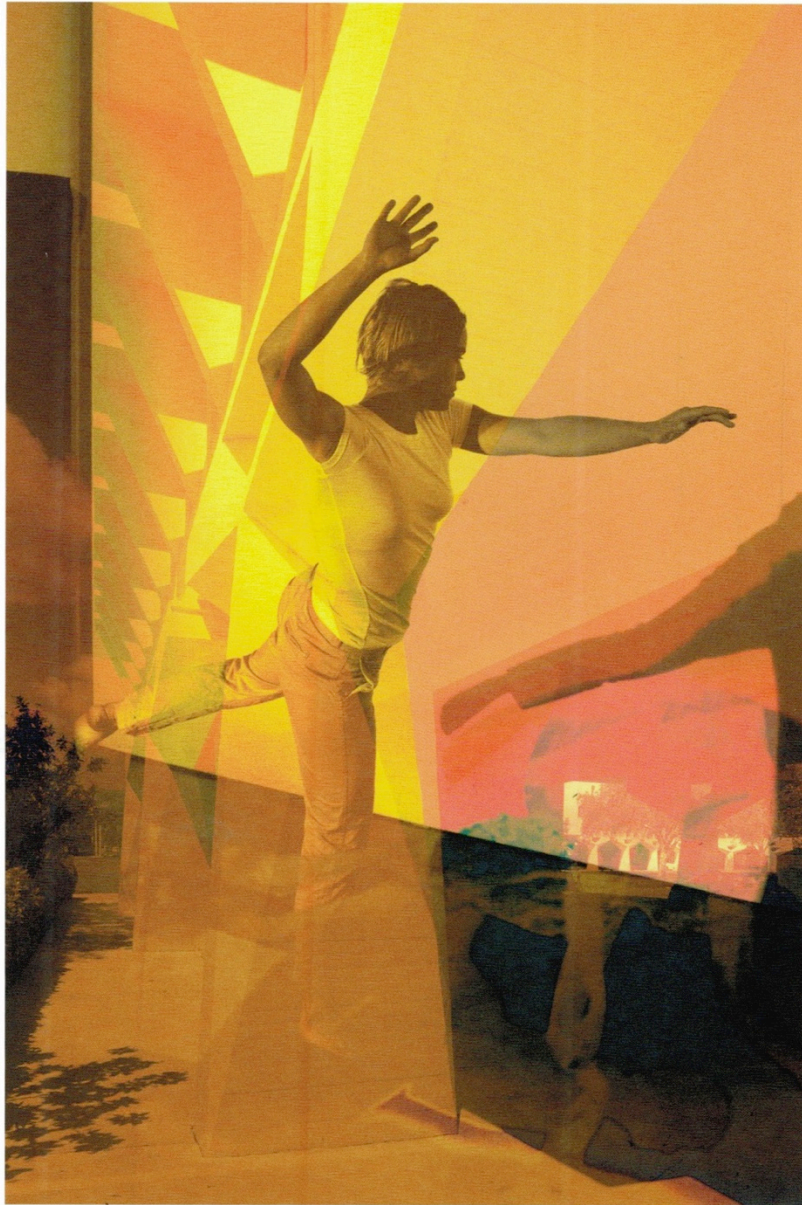
## James Welling Dance Project

James Welling's work was recently on view in *Things Beyond Resemblance: James Welling Photographs*, at the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

APERTURE 78

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Untitled (UD), 2014



PICTURES 79

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APERTURE 80

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Untitled (LADP), 2015



PICTURES 81

# REGEN PROJECTS

Untitled (UD), 2014



APERTURE 82

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PICTURES 83

# REGEN PROJECTS



APERTURE 84

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Untitled (KA/AIM), 2015



PICTURES 85

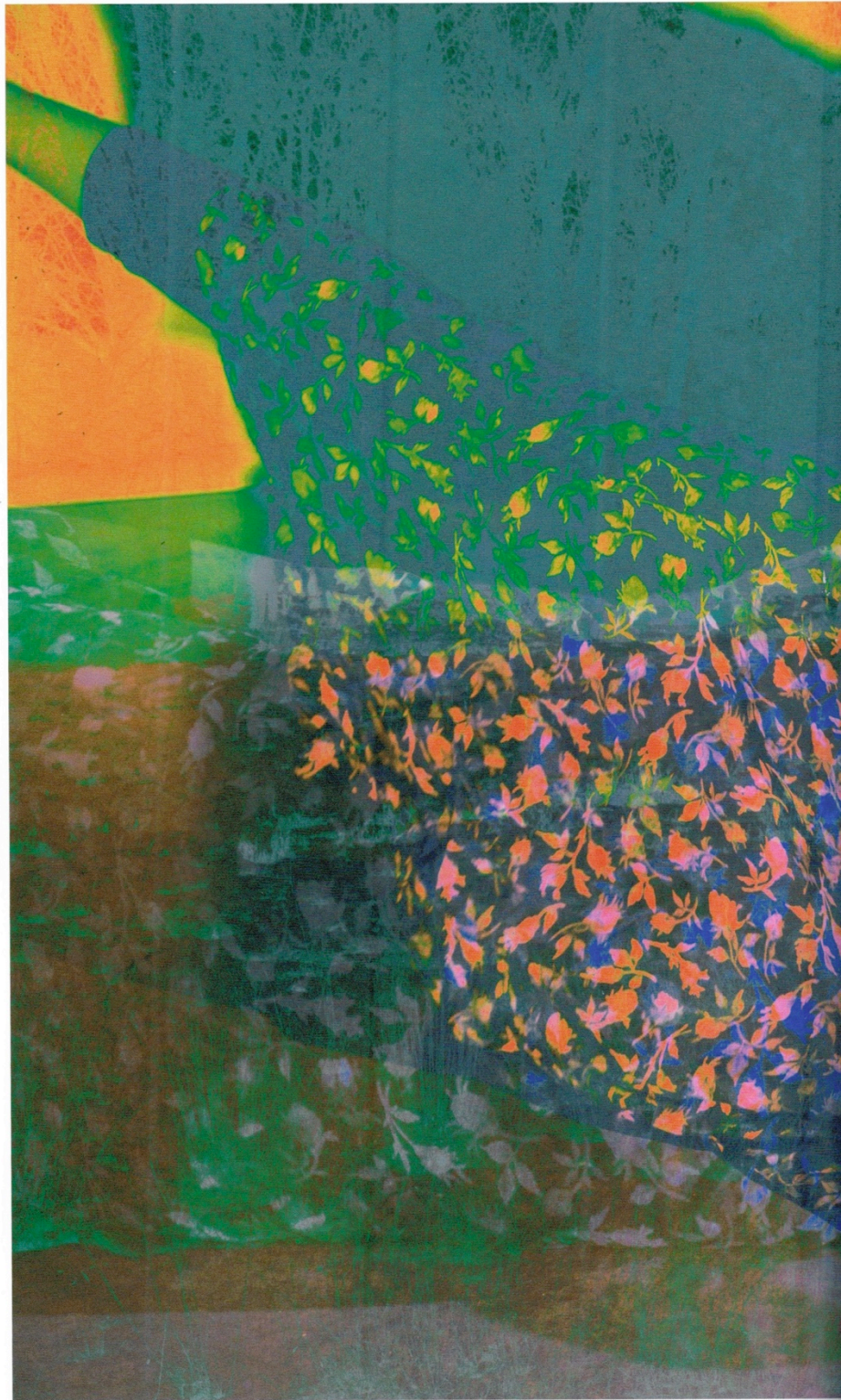


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**Untitled (UD), 2014**  
All photographs from  
Choreograph, 2014-15

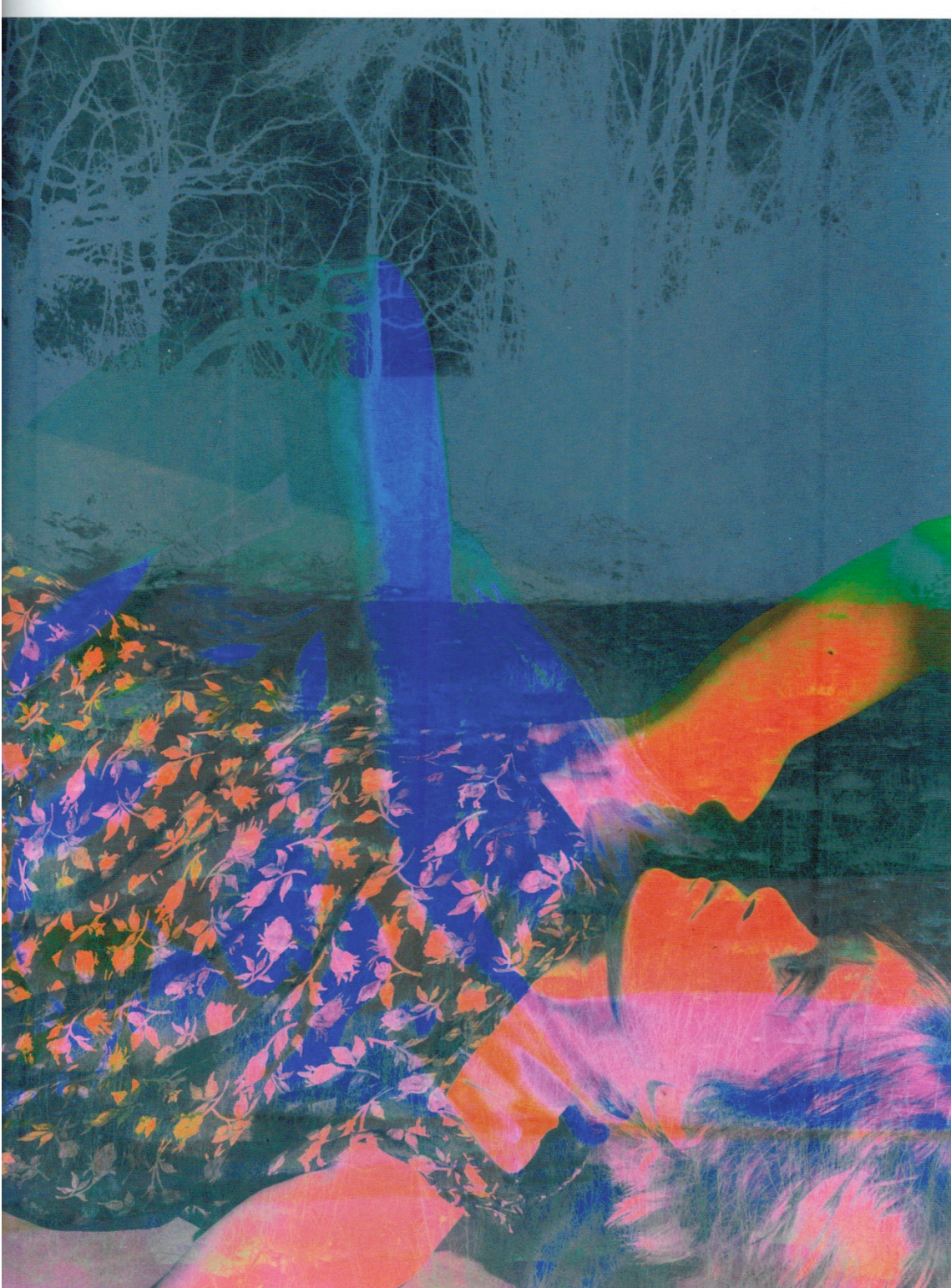
Courtesy the artist,  
David Zwirner, New York/  
London, and Peter Freeman,  
Inc., Paris

Thanks to Untitled Dance,  
L. A. Dance Project, and Kyle  
Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion



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