

# Slow Motion

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**Ezra Dickinson takes every step with purpose.**

Ezra Dickinson's been to jail four times for graffiti and harbors a secret fantasy about composing a ballet to Method Man's *Tical*. But the dancer, choreographer, potter and animator is soft-spoken. His wide, dark eyes are earnest. His demeanor is humble.

Dickinson, 29, sits amid the mid-morning rush at Oddfellows Cafe & Bar on Capitol Hill, noshing on oatmeal and orange juice before rehearsal. A self-professed workaholic, Dickinson has danced with the Maureen Whiting Company, the Can-Can Castaways, Seattle Dance Project and his own contemporary dance company, the Offshore Project, which he co-founded with fellow Castaway and Cornish alum Rainbow Fletcher.

"Sometimes I have to *make* myself stop and do something mindless like watch TV," he laughs.

Offshore Project productions are highly theatrical and often blend live music with physical performance. *The Buffoon*, their entry in the 2011 A.W.A.R.D. Show! at On the Boards, was inspired by Edward Gorey's *The Guest*, and featured cabaret, modern dance and balancing acrobatics involving a large wingback chair. This month the company is opening *Co-Lab 4*, a new work made in collaboration with Coriolis Dance Collective and composer Dylan Rieck, and loosely inspired by *Synecdoche, New York*—a film about a depressed playwright consumed with a years-long effort to create his masterwork. *Co-Lab 4* will investigate the film's characters using modern dance excerpts from past Offshore creations as well as on-stage music and a new duet with Dickinson and Fletcher.

Dickinson began dancing at an early age. Raised in Bellingham, he was enrolled in dance classes at the age of four by his ballet-teaching mother. He commuted three times a week between Bellingham and Seattle, where he trained at Pacific Northwest Ballet for 12 years on a full scholarship. Noting his enthusiasm for modern dance, Dickinson's instructors pushed him towards it while encouraging him to also pursue choreography. "It's not interesting to me to stay in one area," he says.

Rather than join a professional ballet company, Dickinson decided to attend college, enrolling at Cornish in 2004 on another full scholarship. There he collaborated with Fletcher, whom he's known since childhood, and the Offshore Project began. Dickinson also studied visual art at Cornish. He draws and paints and was an apprenticed potter for seven years. In 2011, Velocity Dance Center commissioned a graffiti-inspired mural from him—an orange, yellow and turquoise abstract.

Other recent projects include the Slow Walk, in which performers take three hours to silently walk one city block. The walk is filmed from different angles, sped up and edited down to 15 minutes. Dickinson has performed seven Slow Walks in six years, in places like Seattle, Fall City, Wash., and England. During the walks, Dickinson doesn't speak or interact with passersby, though pedestrians often join in briefly and Dickinson is particularly interested in the way audiences participate.

"Dance is anything," he says. "Walking is dance. Movement is dance. Anything that you choose to consciously execute is dance."

On a blistering hot day last year, Dickinson stood on a busy corner in the heart of Mexico City—a typical American tourist surrounded by locals bustling to work or the market. As Dickinson started down the block, several video cameras recording his every move, a crowd gathered along the sidewalk. Men and women cheered and clapped, leaning out of windows and balconies, taking brief cover during a flash storm, buzzing with energy for the entire three hours it took Dickinson to walk the block.

*Co-LAB 4 runs at the Erickson Theatre on May 11 and 12, 2012.*

*Photo by Steven Miller.*