

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Melinda Ring and Jennifer Nelson
for the birds**

January 18-February 7th, 2009

Opening Orientation: January 18th from 2 to 5 pm

Closing Reception February 7th from 3 to 6pm.

Daily Feedings 1:30pm (wed-sat)

The Box is pleased to present the first collaborative work of choreographer Melinda Ring and artist Jennifer Nelson. The artists will attempt with all sincerity, to create art and choreography that is “for the birds.” Twenty-one birds will be living together with the artists in the gallery for a twenty-one day exhibition. Twenty-one days for twenty-one birds. This project developed through a year-long conversation via instant messaging between NYC and Athens, Greece. The artists decided to explore the possibilities of artistic inter-species communication with creatures having different systems of perception, social organization, and narrative.

Attempting to orient themselves towards an “other”, to de-center themselves, the artists will bend their minds toward the birds instead of requesting the opposite—that the birds interact with them in ways similar to humans. Their aim is to work throughout the exhibition to make things in the gallery that appeal only to the birds’ sense of sight, the birds’ appreciation of vertical space, and the birds’ social organization. Ring and Nelson also wonder if attempting to find a cultural language for something perceived as “other” may be a useful model for people on this planet trying to live together. They understand that such a desire (to create art for the birds) may potentially be futile and absurd, but hold out for the possibility that perhaps it is not; that perhaps it is both possible and of benefit.

Ring and Nelson are creating choreographies in the broadest sense of the word. They consider choreography to be the dynamic juxtaposition of human and avian habitats, the fixed and changing organization of the space, daily and poetic activity (like the feeding of the birds), interaction with volunteers, and the transformation of thought over an extended duration. The artists will be working on choreographies and visual communications in the basement that will sometimes include other performers who have been invited to participate in this experiment. These daily attempts will be recorded on video and broadcast on monitors mounted for the birds’ view. Bird enthusiasts have also been invited to act as inter-species liaisons.

Ring who was born and raised in Los Angeles, is a choreographer whose work is informed as much by the concerns of experimental work in visual art, film, and theater, as it is by developments in new dance. She is a graduate of Bennington College (MFA, 2001), and UCLA (BA, 1982). Ring, who moved to New York City in September 2001, is the Artistic director of Special Projects a production company that supports the creation of dance and movement based art projects. She regularly collaborates with visual artists, most recently *Huh?* (2007), a performance was made for Martin Kersels’ sculpture *Rickety*. This piece was originally commissioned by, and shown at The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College; it was reprised at The Santa Monica Museum of Art in November 2008. For the Spring 2007 Movement Research Festival – Ring curated *The Salon of Found (and Stolen) Dance*, an evening of live demonstration, video footage, performance and conversation around the topics of appropriation, inspiration, transformation, and stealing. This event was repeated at Farmlab in Los Angeles in September 2007. With the help of a Dance Theater Workshop Outer/Space residency grant and the Mabou Mines/*Suite* Resident Artist program, Ring spent fall '08 developing the dance, *Hmmm...*, which will premiere at The Kitchen in April 2009.

Nelson grew up in Chicago pursuing dance and went on to work with multiple ballet companies in America and Europe. With this history of dance and her sensitivity to the intense political situations around her, she began developing the concept of social choreography. She is a graduate of UCLA (MFA, New Genre, 1999) and has exhibited at LACMA, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, and at the Galeri Nasional in Jakarta Indonesia. A 3-week performance with her husband Dimitri Kotsaras for the Irish Biennial, ev+a 2006, resulted in *The Limerick Cookbook, Social Recipes and Alchemical Attempts*, published by futura. Nelson, who currently lives in Athens, began caring for sick and injured pigeons in Greece four years ago. During that time she came to appreciate the complexity of their modes of perception and understanding, and aware of the social systems of the often despised creatures that co-exist with and depend upon our human world. These realizations have inspired several art projects over the last few years made in collaboration with Athens-based performance group, Guerilla Optimists, including *Apology to the Birds and Omoria Square-Efforts to make art for unacknowledged sentience*. Her current work-in-progress, *The Chronicles of Despair (in paradise)*, is a chromo-musical study of lamentation and frustration distilled from video interviews with people living in Athens

If you have any questions please contact Mara McCarthy, Director of The Box at mara@theboxla.com or 626 463 8144.