



**Tiran Willemse**

***Dweller***

**January 21 – April 12, 2026**

Swiss Institute (SI) is pleased to present *Dweller*, the first solo exhibition by artist, dancer, and choreographer Tiran Willemse. *Dweller* marks Willemse's debut exploration of moving image and sound, informed by years of training in classical ballet, rigorous studies of African dances, and collaborative ventures in experimental theater and performance. Continuing the artist's focus on the politics of embodiment, *Dweller* employs ritualistic choreographies of sound and gesture to navigate the ecstatic threshold between movement and stasis, form and formlessness, reason and unreason.

The exhibition, presented in the lower-level gallery, centers on a newly commissioned three-channel video installation that is accompanied by a spatialized sound composition. Shot at different times of day in the Swiss Alps, a theater (formerly a train station) located on the Swiss-German border, and a barn site in Mathon (now part of an art residency) that has historically housed immigrants, the work's rhythmic sequences oscillate between interior spaces and exterior landscapes, alluding to the layered migratory histories they contain. The film's cyclical logic is heightened by performances which unfold alongside symbolic visualizations of the four elements of air, water, fire and earth, foregrounding Willemse's associative contrasts of mythic, geological, and socio-political registers. Featuring the artist and his collaborators enacting slow, repetitive, and absurd gestures and expressions – at times approaching uncanny, doll-like artifice and inertness – these scenes figure the Black body as a fleshly site of representational disarrangement. In this way, the work critically interweaves dance and cinema to dramatize Blackness's historical function in cohering the modern, bio-political binaries of subjectivity and objecthood, male and female, life and death.

In the front and back stairwells leading to the gallery, a sound work complements the film's meditations on the material and spiritual relationships between land and those rendered landless through exile, slavery, and apartheid. Paired with atmospheric lighting, the installation features a conversation with Willemse's grandparents, who reside in the Western Cape of South Africa, alongside recordings of the artist vocalizing glossolalic utterances. Willemse leaves the dialogue with his grandparents untranslated in Afrikaans – the only language they speak – both to signify the epistemic violence of linguistic colonization on Black and "Colored" communities and to materialize a historical, site-specific relay between this Dutch-derived language and the viewer's presence in an urban landscape that bears the traces of Dutch settlerism.

Willemse's works grant visceral, poetic form to the historical and contemporary specters that haunt colonized minds, bodies, and lands. Working beyond humanist frames of recognition and redress, and responding to regimes of structural violence, *Dweller* proposes ritual, exorcism, and momentary surrenders to insanity as corporeal technologies of transgenerational endurance.

SI will present Willemse's live performance work, *Untitled (Nostalgia: Act 3)*, in collaboration with Danspace Project on January 23 & 24, 2026.

*Dweller* is curated by KJ Abudu, Associate Curator | Public Programs & Residencies.

## About Tiran Willemse

Tiran Willemse was born in South Africa and lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland. Recent performances have been presented at Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts, Lausanne; Museo MACRO, Rome; Serralves Museum, Porto; Roskilde Festival, Roskilde; and Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki. Willemse won the Swiss Performance Prize in 2023.

## About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent nonprofit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental artmaking through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and environmentally conscious in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free of charge, SI seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

SI Programming is made possible in part with public funds from Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Main supporters include LUMA Foundation, A4 Arts Foundation, Cowles Charitable Trust, Every Page Foundation, Friends Of SI, Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and Kulturstiftung Basel H. Geiger. Exhibitions are made possible in part by the SI Artist Vision Fund with leadership support provided by the SI Board of Trustees, Becky and David Gochman, and Nicoletta Fiorucci. SI gratefully acknowledges all TimeForArt Partners, Swiss Re as SI ONSITE Partner, Vitra as Design Partner, and Crozier Fine Arts as Preferred Shipping Art Logistics Partner.

Critical operating support was provided to SI in 2025 as part of a collective fundraising effort with CANNY (Collaborate Arts Network New York). We thank the following supporters: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Arison Arts Foundation, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, The Willem de Kooning Foundation, The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, The Leon Polk Smith Foundation, Arison Arts Foundation, and The David Rockefeller Fund. SI is integrating sustainability and environmental consciousness into all facets of the institution. Support for this effort comes in part from the Frankenthaler Climate Initiative and Teiger Foundation.

Press Contact: [julia@suttoncomms.com](mailto:julia@suttoncomms.com), 212.925.2035