



Jess Allen

Jess Allen is a performance artist from Aberystwyth. She combines long-distance walking art with one-to-one performance in rural landscapes, using the walk to set up unexpected interventions with the strangers she encounters. Her work is characterised by conviviality, conversation, camaraderie; the epic scale of the walk set against the intimacy of person-to-person connection. She has a PhD in biology from Aberystwyth University, and a PhD in contemporary performance from the University of Manchester. She trained as a dancer in between. She has worked as landscape and conservation officer for local government, dance lecturer (improvisation/somatics), community arts facilitator (AHRC Multi-Story Water) and as an aerial dancer for [Full Tilt Aerial Theatre](#) and inclusive (disabled/nondisabled) companies Blue Eyed Soul and [EVERYBODY dance](#) (UK/US/Europe). She is a qualified AeroZen [aerial yoga](#) instructor and currently teaches on the Syrcas Byd Bychan community circus programme at near-zero-carbon [Small World Theatre](#) down the coast in Aberteifi (Cardigan).

Her current solo portfolio includes:

[Drop in the Ocean](#)¹ (2013-18)

[Water Treatment Walks](#)² (2016)

[Trans-missions](#)³ (2015)

[All in a Day's Walk](#)⁴ (2012-13)

[Tilting at Windmills](#)⁵ (2010)

Collaborative work includes:

[Cacophonous Silence](#)⁶ (2015) – with Bronwyn Preece, Canada

[Ffynhonnell \(Drop\)](#)⁷ (2015) – Jane Lloyd Francis & Sara Penryhn Jones, Cymru

[Dropped in the Ocean](#)⁸ (2014) – with Bronwyn Preece, Canada

[full:new](#)⁹ (2014) – with Bronwyn Preece, Canada

Publications include:

¹ <http://dropintheocean.org.uk>

² <http://watertreatmentwalks.org.uk>

³ <http://trans-missions.org.uk>

⁴ <http://allinadaywalk.org.uk>

⁵ <http://www.tiltingatwindmills.org.uk>

⁶ <https://vimeo.com/116579557>

⁷ <https://dropintheocean.org.uk/collaborations/>

⁸ <https://vimeo.com/87669240>

⁹ https://www.academia.edu/21255219/The_moon_as_my_witness



Allen, J. (2017) 'Tracktivist topographies: mapping in the Marches and marching on the map in rural activist walking performance', in J. Riding and M. Jones (eds.) *Reanimating Regions: Culture, Politics, Performance*. London: Routledge, pp. 225-245.

Allen, J. and B. Preece (2017) 'Cacophonous Silence (The Sound of Falling Wildly)' in T. Lynch, S. N. Maher, D. Wall and O. A. Weltzien (eds.), *Thinking Continental: Writing the Planet One Place at a Time*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 90-110. [Available online](#).¹⁰

Allen, J. and B. Preece (2015) 'Decentering the stage: towards an ecocentric ethics of performance' [Editorial], *Performing Ethos*, 4 (2), pp. 89-101. [Available online](#).¹¹

Preece, B., J. Allen and U. Chaudhuri (2015) 'A "Turn to the Species": Una Chaudhuri reflects on some of the ethical challenges and possibilities that are emerging from a decade of ecological performance practice and scholarship', *Performing Ethos*, 4 (2), pp.103-111. [Available online](#).¹²

Allen, J. and B. Preece (2017) 'The moon as my witness', *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, 7 (2), pp. 229-245. [Available online](#).¹³

Allen, J. (2015) 'All you can't eat', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25 (3), pp. 418-420. [Available online](#).¹⁴

Allen, J. (2015) 'Long Shore Drift' in C. Qualmann and C. Hind (eds.) *Ways to Wander*, Axminster, Triarchy Press, n. p.

¹⁰

https://www.academia.edu/35215902/Cacophonous_Silence_The_Sound_of_Falling_Wildly_A_Transnational_Experiment_in_Ecological_Performance_Poiesis_BOOK_CHAPTER

¹¹

https://www.academia.edu/20225880/Decentering_the_stage_Towards_an_ecocentric_ethics_of_performance

¹²

https://www.academia.edu/30662123/A_Turn_to_the_Species_Una_Chaudhuri_reflects_on_some_of_the_ethical_challenges_and_possibilities_that_are_emerging_from_a_decade_of_ecological_performance_practice_and_scholarship

¹³ https://www.academia.edu/21255219/The_moon_as_my_witness

¹⁴ https://www.academia.edu/30662125/All_You_Can_t_Eat



Allen, J. (2014) '[Conference Review] Performance and the Environment: New Perspectives on Ecological Performance Making, CSSD November 2013', *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 18 (4), pp. 425–432.

Allen, J. (2014) 'Drop in the Ocean: walking performance with wishing and water', in L. Neal (ed.) *Playing for Time: Making Art As If the World Mattered*. London: Oberon Books, pp. 222-223.

Allen, J. and S. Penrhyn Jones (2012) 'Tilting at Windmills in a changing climate: a performative walking practice and dance-documentary film as an embodied mode of engagement and persuasion.' *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 17 (2), pp. 209-227.

Context for Talking Walking interview (2013):

In 2012, from her then home in South Herefordshire in the heart of the rural agricultural economy, she developed a month-long walking performance *All in a Day's Walk*, first performed in the winter of 2012 and repeated in summer 2013.

During the latter performance, we arranged to meet on Offa's Dyke, I walking north from Chepstow, she coming south from Herefordshire on her way to the Green Gathering <http://www.greengathering.org.uk/>, however, our rendez vous wasn't so successful, as we found ourselves on parallel paths, and had to retrace our steps.

Notes from the podcast interview by Andrew Stuck (recorded on the Offa's Dyke Path extension to Chepstow in August 2013 and published in July 2014 on <http://www.talkingwalking.net/>):

Inventor of 'Mumpets' <http://allinadayswalk.org.uk/about/winter-performance/winter-recipes/> from local produce with a consistency between a muffin and a crumpet, the key ingredient of which is beetroot, she distributes these whenever she gives a talk. The day we meet, Jess had also baked Three Counties Flapjacks (Shropshire oats, Herefordshire honey, Gloucestershire butter) for the cafe at which she working at the Green Gathering. (Oats from Shropshire became a necessary 'cheat' on the summer performance as she explains here <http://allinadayswalk.org.uk/2013/07/27/oats-on-cheating-and-eating/>)

Jess is an ardent environmentalist, with friends and acquaintances often remarking that for Jess it is a religion. She is also a fast and long distance walker, becoming irritated with herself should she miss a turn or not know the way to follow. She has even contemplated becoming a running artist, but feels Gregg Whelan may have that covered:

<http://www.lonetwin.com/>



Jess mentions the work of Dee Heddon

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/cca/staff/deidreheddon/> and Cathy Turner <http://exeter.academia.edu/CathyTurner> - you can listen to an interview with Dee Heddon on the Talking Walking website: <http://www.talkingwalking.net/deidre-heddon-talking-walking/>

In the summer performance of *All in a Day's Walk*, Jess found herself walking the Poets Paths around Dymock <https://allinadayswalk.org.uk/2013/07/29/vegan-roadkill/>. The poems of Robert Frost, the Dymock poet can be found at <http://www.dymockpoets.org.uk/Frost.htm>

Talking Walking 5 year walking forecast (2013):

In 2013 Jess contributed a 5 year walking forecast – you can listen to it here:

<http://www.talkingwalking.net/5-year-walking-forecast/jess-allen-walking-5-years-from-now-2/>

Jess Allen recommends these walks:

1. Her all time favourite walk is in the Doethie valley from Rhandirmwyn to Soar-y-Mynydd, in the Cambrian Mountains between Llandovery and Tregaron Handy website for potential walking routes: <http://elenydd-hostels.co.uk/application/files/7714/9976/2863/tyc01.pdf>
2. Some beautiful walks in Herefordshire - "there are so many" she says - anything that loops onto the Wye Valley walk or the Herefordshire Way. Also Yatton Woods, between How Caple and Much Marcle are beautiful in the snow. To get to it you have to pass through Chapel Farm, an extraordinary farm with a chapel in the yard...
3. Jess recommends the experience of walking up to wind turbines – in Mid-Wales the easiest to access might be the Ystwyth wind farm on the A44 between Ponterwyd and Ystumtuen; or Mynydd Gorddu wind farm between Bontgoch and Talybont <http://blog.cat.org.uk/2014/11/27/the-sun-shines-on-myn-ydd-gorddu-windfarm/>. Get carried away with wind farms at http://www.midwaleswind.co.uk/photo_7647002.html