

Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative
But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise:
Susan Hefuna on Cities, Movement, and “Crossroads”

City. The world is my city. A city with green. A city with heart. City with energy. City with fantasy. City with the unexpected. City with surprises. City with life. City with feelings. City with taste, with dust. City with life.

People are walking like a nervous system of the city. People are connected like the dots and lines in my drawings, but they are not aware that they influence each other. *Crossroads*, for me, it’s an intersection—two lines are crossing each other, and people are walking like a second layer over the crossroads.

Since 2002, I have done several *Crossroads* videos. The first one I started in Egypt, in the Nile Delta, a place that is very familiar to me—it’s similar today to how it was when I was a child. Important for me was the movement of people on a crossroads. So I did another *Crossroads* in Cairo, at the Townhouse Gallery. And another *Crossroads* in Frankfurt, near the Polish border. I was sitting on a chair, like a sculpture, and people were walking around me, or cars, or people who were talking to me because I was sitting in front of a church. And people projected thoughts onto me, because I was sitting like an alien in this context. This was the first time I was acting also in a video.

In New York, for the performance at the Drawing Center, I also did one *Crossroads* video in New York. Between 2011 and 2013, I was working with the Drawing Center to use my drawings as annotation for dancers. We did the performance three times. In the morning, I did the chalk drawing on the floor. Each line was connected—like in my drawings in general, every line has to be connected. In the evening, people came into the space—they didn’t know there would be a performance. And after some time, three dancers started to erase the chalk drawing with their feet on the floor. And by moving, the dancers influenced the movement of the audience, and the audience became part of the performance. And each evening was different, of course—it depended on the people who attended, so that the people became part of the work, and not only the observers.

My latest video, 2016, is called *London Crossroads*, and I worked with eleven students from Laban. The Laban Method is very interesting because it’s between the human body and architecture. I was introduced to the school, and I went there and did some improvisation sessions with the students, and explained my work. We talked about what people are doing on streets, how they walk. Nowadays everybody has something in their hands—they have a mobile, they have a coffee, they are talking, they are busy. Nearly nobody is just walking, walking for itself. So we developed together. They are staged on a street. It’s like an invisible net of eleven people, influencing real live people who walk around. It was very interesting for them.

The *Crossroads* for me are about a movement of people, and how everybody is influencing the other person. It’s about the awareness.