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Jessica Fogel, a University of Michigan professor of dance and choreography, has long been interested in performance projects that bring forward stories embedded in our rural and urban landscapes. More recently she has become interested in the topics of wind and wind energy.

“The landscape in Michigan is rapidly changing because of wind farms,” Fogel said. “These are very emotional dialogs that take place in the communities surrounding them. Some people want them, and some people don’t.”

Fogel explained that some of the issues that come up stem from economic decisions and aesthetic appeal. For her, as a choreographer, the element of wind brought to mind images of winds of protest and support.

“I wanted to do a dance on this topic,” she said. That plan turned into a proposal for a weekend of events, including community talks about developing in a given community. “Proper citing of these turbines can make a huge difference in the feelings of the community,” she said.

Although based in Ann Arbor without much knowledge of West Michigan, Fogel found the right location in Muskegon where wind turbines are a hot topic. She also has a meaningful site for the event in mind; it is situated on Muskegon Lake in sight of the Michigan Alternative & Renewable Energy Center and a coal plant that has long meant significant revenue and jobs for the community.



PHOTO BY GLENN BERING

The site for the event, titled “Into the Wind,” hasn’t been confirmed yet but is probable.

“Into the Wind” is planned to take place over a weekend in early to mid-August of 2014 and includes artists and academics such as Sarah Adlerstein, a visual artist whose work is inspired by her scientific research, and Arnold Boezaart, executive director of the Michigan Alternative & Renewable Energy Center, who might discuss the recent research going on at his facility on wind energy.

Fogel’s goal for the series of events is to promote dialog within the community and help community members envision their landscape.



PHOTO BY DAVID BRENNER

“The site itself is literally and metaphorically positioned between new and old forms of energy production,” Fogel said. “The coal plant may be shut down by 2016. It’s a really interesting transitional time for this community.”

Fogel said the act of bringing an audience to a specific place encourages them to really imagine the topics at hand. She plans to also document the project on video, as well as create a website about it.

“Performance and the arts is one way of attracting a diverse audience, who may or may not be specialists who would come to a talk about wind energy,” she said. “In turn, they learn something about it. On the same token, people who come for the community talks may stay for the dance performance.”

“As for the dance, I’m going to begin by playing with wind as an elemental force, rather than trying to represent turbines moving. I’ll draw upon literature, mythology, poetry, visual art and so on,” Fogel said.

Fogel also plans a preliminary performance in June in Ann Arbor during the “Ann Arbor Dance Works” annual spring conference. She also plans to do an encore performance exhibit in the fall of 2014 when students return to campus.



PHOTO BY JESSICA FOGEL

In the meantime, for updates and more information, check annarbordanceworks.com.

Image 1: University of Michigan dancers in *Mapping the River*, choreographed by Jessica Fogel.

Image 2: Scene from *Corsets, Grains, & Greenways*, choreographed by Jessica Fogel.

Image 3: Painting entitled *Schwush* by Sara Adlerstein.

Image 4: Possible site for *Into the Wind* performance in Muskegon.



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