

DANCE ON CAMERA JOURNAL

May-June, 2005 Volume 8, No. 3



Cover photo of Secret Streams with Alissa Cardone

Cyberarts Festival 05 by Debra Cash

The manipulation of light is a fundamental theatrical technology.

For the first time, the 2005 Boston Cyberarts Festival (April 22-May 8, 2005) offered "Ideas in Motion," a special symposium and performance series curated by Nell Bryer, Alissa Cardone and Dedalus Wainwright, which focused on the intersection of dance and technology and in particular, dance on -- or integrated with -- film, video and digital animation.

Film and video are more part of our cultural infrastructure than a "technology" providing the shock of the new. The "Ideas in Motion" symposium, keynoted by John Mitchell from Arizona State University's Dance Multimedia Learning Center, and the displays and performances throughout the Boston metropolitan area, contextualized how dance performance has been recorded, augmented, and transformed by visual media.

Jody Sperling of Time Lapse Dance evoked the spectacles that Loie Fuller staged with the help of up to 20 electricians and acres of billowing silk, special effects that earned Fuller a place as an Art Nouveau icon at the turn of the 20th century. "The Body (+)," a two-hour long film and video loop at the MIT Museum, included a clip of Trisha Brown dancing "Homemade" in 1966, wearing a bulky projector strapped to her back to cast images on the floor, ceiling and walls of the gallery. (In retrospect, the projector looked quaint, like a Jetsons' backpack.). A recreation of Elaine

Summers' "Crownsnest/Solitary Geography" at the Boston Cyclorama, where a montage of landscape images was projected onto the sides of a white pavilion and the dancers' white tunics, demonstrated how conventional such techniques have become in the intervening years. There is a straight line between Summers' 1979 "Crownsnest" and Denise Marika's 2004 "Detritus," a poetically disturbing video installation in which the filmmaker crouches naked in piles of dirt displaced by bulldozers.

The cyberarts fest was at its best when it created the opportunity to experience and contrast emerging work and differing artistic approaches. The "Ideas in Motion" symposium included a cross-section of artists working with motion capture technologies. Animator Vita Berezina Blackburn's collaborations with Bebe Miller, where calligraphic traces generated by sensors explode into long abstract planes of light, are as evocative in their way as Walkowitz' drawings of Isadora Duncan -- with the important distinction that Blackburn's motion capture visualizations are "sketched" by the dancers' bodies and only interpreted and augmented after the fact. Marc Downie, who had recently completed "how long does the subject linger on the edge of the volume..." with his colleagues Shelley Eshkar and Paul Kaiser, and the Trisha Brown Dance company, [see *Dance on Camera Journal* March-April 2005] argued passionately and provocatively that as a digital artist, he feels it is crucial not to rely on reprocessing video to explore movement in 3-dimensional space. While he respects the work done with dance on camera on its own terms, "Video gives me a surface of human movement," as it is hit by light,

he explained, and "as a sensing and display tool, it's a cul de sac for digital artists."

At Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, curator Alla Kovgan's two-part "Choreographing the Camera" made a case for defining movement in its widest sense, with films ranging from "Daybreak Express," the first short film made by D.A. Pennebaker in 1953, to Stan Brakhage's "Lovesong" and a rare screening of Artavazd Peleshian's 1972 "Seasons." Some of the films, such as DV8 Physical Theater's profanely funny "Cost of Living," reprised films which have been awarded prizes by DFA's Dance on Camera and at other international festivals.

In the performance series, the two dancers of Fico Ballet stood casually at the conclusion of "Confi-dance" while a word-processor typed out impertinent questions behind them -- in Slovenian. In Lostwax Production's "Rest/Less," dancers stepping across a grid taped to the floor activated the spoken soundscore, but Thalia Field's linguistic invention was far more intriguing than Jamie Jewett's movement vocabulary. Troika Ranch and Mei Be Whatever explored multimedia and hybrid efforts where media transformed performance space, and Marlon Barrios-Solano presented excerpts of "Unstablelandscape," where pre-recorded material is "triggered" during performance.

Kinodance's soothing and coherent "Secret Streams" merged Kovgan's filmic imagery -- dancers glimpsed as if through studio doors, dissolving light patterns, a growing, tangled rope -- with careful duets for Cardone and Ingrid Schatz that seemed to invert

foreground and backdrop by manipulating shadows.

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