

HOKKAIDO (OR SOMEWHERE LIKE THAT)

by **daniel k (aka diskodanny)**
Singapore

FESTIVAL
RESIDENCY
AND
COMMISSION

8 & 9 Oct

Esplanade Theatre Studio

DURATION: 1hr no intermission

MESSAGE FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHER

This production began with a literal performance of movement – two journeys I had made to Hokkaido; first in December 2007, second in December 2008 - and the idea of collecting information as we are moving. What excited me was that I was embarking on an artistic process in which I opened myself up to new discoveries and serendipity. On such a journey, one does not really know what he would be looking for or end up finding. The only brief I gave myself at that time was to take as many pictures as I could and try to bring the experience back to Singapore. I knew then that the challenge of representing a personal experience for the stage and for an audience would already constitute an interesting artistic problem.

I then had the last two years to look at my thousands and thousands of images. How do I use them to initiate a meaningful discussion with the artists whom I have invited as co-authors for the stage performance? How do I unpack this journey and use it to embark on another one, this time with others involved?

Very quickly, our work became about memories. I do not assume that my memories or experience have been readily captured and preserved by my recorded images. In order for my experience to be reactivated in a meaningful way, I have to take onboard the personal memories of the other artists whom I am working with and those of the audience. My pictures are meaningless until I find a way for others to relate to them.

This is where research became useful. Before we began rehearsing for the staged work, I leveraged on the Masters programme that I am now a part of in Berlin for dramaturgical support. I conducted a series of one-to-one dialogues with my peers and tutors, wrote an essay (also printed in this programme booklet), made a short video piece, prepared a lecture performance and started a creative workbook on FaceBook to help me think through the theoretical as well as practical underpinnings that concern this production.

For me, the staged performance is a key outcome of an artistic research process though not necessarily its only goal. For *HOKKAIDO*, I have concerned myself more with artistic questions and configured the working process accordingly to tackle those questions. In this way, the focus was shifted to 'thinking by doing' whereby the act (mode of representation, movement performance) supports a line of thought rather than the other way around.

HOKKAIDO is concerned with these salient questions (questions which I didn't know were pertinent at first): How is absence represented and performed? How do I make visible the gap between 'one' and 'other'?

– *daniel k*

BIOGRAPHIES



daniel k

When he was 14, daniel k (aka diskodanny) wanted to be a choreographer like Paula Abdul. And at one point, he had watched *Dirty Dancing* so many times (23 to be exact) he could repeat the moves of Swayze and Grey and recite their dialogue.

But destiny has brought him down a somewhat different path. daniel studied BA(Hons) Fine Art & Critical Theory at Goldsmith College (London) under a Public Service Commission scholarship (Singapore). He also received a Certificate in Choreography at the Laban Centre during that time. His works have since traveled to Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Yogyakarta and Edinburgh. In 2007, the *Straits Times* listed him as #1 in the Faces to Watch category. *Vermillion* was also voted as one of the five best performances that year. In 2008, daniel was given the Young Artist Award (Dance) by the National Arts Council (Singapore). In 2009, the *Singapore Arts Festival* commissioned Q&A which was presented at the *Edinburgh Fringe Festival* as part of the Singapore Showcase. daniel is also an Associate Artist at The Substation (Singapore). He now lives in Berlin, doing the MA Solo/Dance/Authorship in Universität Der Kunst.

Has diskodanny strayed from the dreams of his early years? Will the future bring him back to Paula Abdul and Patrick Swayze?

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MING POON

Since 1993, Ming has been based in Europe. Companies and choreographers he has worked with include Balletto di Napoli (Italy), Introdans (The Netherlands), Ballett Hagen (Germany), Ballett Schindowski (Germany), Compagnie Thor (Belgium), Lanonima Imperial (Spain), Unterwegs Theater (Germany), Compagnia Zappalà Danza (Italy), Emio Greco & P.C. Scholten (The Netherlands), among others. He has been assistant to the Compagnia Zappalà Danza since 2005.

The recent years have seen several collaborations with Singaporean companies and theatres such as The Arts Fission Company (2007), The Arts House (2008) and The Theatre Practice (2009). He was artist-in-resident at Substation in 2009.

His own short performative works include *The Man who looks for Signs* (2005/2008), *Ghosts* (2006), *A piece of heaven* (2006), *Back...* (2008–2010) and *Untitled Works* (2009).

He is now living in Berlin.

FUJIMOTO TAKAYUKI

Fujimoto began participating in projects of the performance art group Dumb Type in 1987. He designed the lighting for the performance works - *OR*, *memorandum* and *Voyage* and went on to do lighting design and overall technical management since *OR*. He also worked with Ryoji Ikeda on the video and music concert series *formula* and has participated primarily as the lighting designer in performance and multimedia works by a number of overseas artists including the Hong Kong choreographer Daniel Yeung, the Vietnam-born French choreographer Ea Sola, Singapore's theatre and video artist Choy Ka Fai and others. In recent years he has worked on the installation/concert *path* with the guitarist Kazuhisa Uchihashi and the singer UA, and collaborated with the dance company Monochrome Circus to create works like *Refined Colors* and *lost* that make use of the unique potential of LED lighting. For his latest work *true* in 2007, he worked with two performers, Tsuyoshi Shirai (AbsT/BANETO) and Takao Kawaguchi (Dumb Type) and put together a multi-talented technical team to focus on integrating LED lighting with other digital devices in order to create a highly organic stage work. In his working process he actively employs the latest digital technologies in works for the stage with the aim of creating new circuits to connect directly to the audience with no less strength than the connection created by the stage performer communicating directly to the audience in a live stage experience.

<http://dumbtype.com/>

<http://www.refinedcolors.com>

<http://www.true.gr.jp>

CHONG LI-CHUAN

Chong Li-Chuan (also known as Chuan) is a composer and sonic artist. Born in the Republic of Singapore, 1975, Chuan lived in the UK for 15 years prior to his return to the island-state in January 2006. Chuan received his formal education at Goldsmiths College, University of London, graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1999 and a Master of Music (Composition) in 2000. Between 2001 and 2005, Chuan was a post-graduate researcher in electroacoustic composition at the Stanley Glasser Electronic Music Studios (EMS) in Goldsmiths College and worked under the joint supervision of Katharine Norman, Nye Parry, Michael Young and John Drever.

Chuan's research interest includes, but is not limited to, acoustic ecology, aurality, listening, sound and semblance, the aesthetics of noise and silence, musicking, identity formation, gender, performativity, embodiment, and post-structuralism.

As a practitioner, Chuan is involved in making acoustic composition, electroacoustic sound, installation artwork, free improvisation, 'live' electronics, and collaboration with artists from various disciplines such as dance, theatre, and video art.

VICTRIC THNG

“Named as one of the next new wave of filmmakers to watch out for . . .” – *The Straits Times*

For these past few years, independent filmmaker/video artist Victric Thng has brought a quixotic and poetic sensibility to Singapore cinema with a series of imaginative and exquisite short films that have garnered critical acclaim both locally and internationally.

A filmmaker of verve and invention, Victric creates lyrical stories that revive that precious sense of intimate human interactions and relations. His 3-minute short film - *Locust*, won the Renault Samsung Prize in the *Busan Asian Short Film Festival* and Best Asean Short Film Silver Award at the *Malaysian Video Awards*. The film was also invited for screening at the prestigious Museum of Modern Art in New York and is selected as one of the best short films from Singapore by Asian Film Archive; in their inaugural Singapore Shorts DVD Compilation.

His other award-winning short films includes *Lamentation*, *Moonly*, *Bliss*, *Closer Apart*. These short films illustrate his individual narrative voice that has now become known as his distinctive signature style. His latest short film – *The Mole*, won the Gold Award in the *Panasonic-MDA Digital Film Fiesta 2007*.

Besides working on his personal short films, Victric has often been invited and commissioned by the National Museum of Singapore to create specific works for them. One of his largest projects for the Museum was to create a series of audio-visuals for the Food Gallery, which is now a permanent display.

Recently, he collaborated with Compagnie OFF (France) for *Paraboles 2.0* at the *Night Festival 2010*.

Victric is currently an associate artist of The Substation and his films are represented and distributed by Objectifs Films.

www.victrictng.com

KAILASH

Kailash is an independent theatre professional based in Singapore.

Since beginning his career with the now-defunct Kallang Theatre in 1999, Kailash has gone on to greater challenges within the Singapore theatre production scene with Esplanade - Theatres on The Bay, where he took on the role of Senior Lighting Technician and subsequently Senior Visual Media Technician.

During his tenure there, Kailash was not only involved in the grand opening of Esplanade itself, but was also instrumental in setting up a new Visual Media Department as the arts centre grew to full maturity.

Today, with 10 years of production experience under his belt, Kailash now dedicates his time to honing his craft as a video engineer and lighting designer while shuttling between numerous productions both locally and internationally. He is also a close collaborator with COLLECTIVE mayhem.

Off work, Kailash can be found chilling out with his fellow theatre production professionals and friends, where he enjoys knocking back a couple of pints after a hard week's labour.

When not working or drinking, Kailash can be reached at kailashed@gmail.com.

KEIRA LEE

A recent graduate from LASALLE's BA(Hons) Technical Theatre programme, Keira's credits include: Production Stage Manager for *The Vlee Conference* by Running Into The Sun, Sports Presentation Manager for *Gymnastics* (Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games), Stage Manager for *Sweet Charity; You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown; Three Fat Virgins Unassembled* (LASALLE) to name a few.

Keira is very excited to be working on such a complex dance production and aims to hone her stage management skills in the process. Working closely with a diverse group of professionals, she hopes to help transport the audience to realms beyond their imagination and make *Hokkaido (Or Somewhere Like That)* a reality.

LOW WEE CHENG

A freelance multi-media & lighting programmer/designer, Wee Cheng was with Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay as full-time lighting technician since they opened in 2002 up till 2007.

He has programmed for, and later toured with *iLa Galigo* – a Robert Wilson work commissioned by the Esplanade. He had another opportunity to programme for Wilson's *In The Evening at Koi Pond* held at Aichi World Expo 2005, and went on to tour with the director's other acclaimed production, *The Temptation of St Anthony*.

Programming credits include *Dim Sum Dollies: The Little Shop of Horrors* by Dream Academy, 2008's edition of *Beauty World* by Wild Rice, *Reminiscing The Moon* by Singapore Dance Theatre, *National Day Parade 2005 & 2009*, Mediacorp's Channel 8 game show *Dollars & Sense* and *Voyage De La Vie* by The Generating Company. Video programming credits include *Dreams Of The Red Chamber* by SCO and *Fried Rice Paradise* by Singapore Repertory Theatre.

From co-designing lights for *Singapore Fireworks Festival 2007*, Wee Cheng has since taken up main designing roles for music events like Mosaic 2008's *Earth Wind & Fire Experience* and Baybeats 2009, to local plays such as *Teachers* by Centrestage and *The Shagaround* by Buds Theatre. He has also ventured into video design, which includes Baybeats 2008 and Toy Factory's *The Crab Flower Club* in 2009.

Direction & Concept: **daniel k (aka diskodanny)**
Choreography & Performance: **Ming Poon & daniel k**
Photography: **Charles Lim, Rob Fowler, daniel k**
Lighting: **Fujimoto Takayuki**
Sound: **Chong Li-Chuan**
Video: **Victric Thng**
Production Technical Manager: **Kailash**
Stage Manager: **Keira Lee**
Video Programmer: **Low Wee Cheng**
Special Thanks to: **Yap Seok Hui, Lim How Ngean, The Substation, Canon Singapore, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Think Pte Ltd, tutors and peers in MA SODA (Berlin)**
Music credits: **First Time Ever I Saw Your Face by Johnny Cash from American IV: The man Comes Around (2002), Lost Highway**

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THE DANCE BETWEEN TWO PHOTOGRAPHS: ENACTING, CAPTURING AND SEEING ABSENCE IN A DANCE-FILM

by daniel k (aka diskodanny)

1 INTRODUCTION:

This was first delivered at the Dance/Film Forum, Singapore Arts Festival 2010.

Discussions in many forums on dance/film still revolve around questions of definition and terminology. Should it be called dance-for-camera? Screendance? Dance-film or film-dance?¹

The fusion of dance with film is believed to produce a gestalt in which the vocabulary of each constituent is extended through the intervention of the other. Yet, what results is that such hybridization, while intended to summon new creative possibilities, might foreclose them since in searching for their progeny, dance and film are necessarily seen as fairly closed concepts. In such instances, Dance and Film are first posited as a dichotomy – how Dance is NOT Film and vice versa – before their synthesis can be conceived. In trying to demarcate the zone of difference between dance and film, these constituents are designated as discrete identities within fixed boundaries that discourage a proliferation of ideas. Subsequently, the dance/film, celebrated as a new departure, becomes more like a foregone conclusion in which the results are somewhat predictable.

How then does a discussion on dance/film move beyond questions on definition and be freed up as a concept to facilitate new ways of creation and seeing?

I propose to see dance/film as a potentiality in and of itself. As technology, it is a tool for or exercise on thinking and seeing reflectively. Both its means and ends are open to explorations and discoveries. The potentials of dance/film are found in the representational planes that Dance and Film might not yet have, but could come to, inhabit; and result from the problematization of spatialized time when live and recorded movement interact. The tensions produced by the collision of different representational planes give rise to creative possibilities.

In approaching dance/film, we might wish to not ask what it IS but address what it might BECOME. In this way, the dance/film proffers multiple possibilities rather than a singular identity and as such, the agency of the viewer would be emphasized. The viewer might be able to perceive different temporalities, different narratives, and even different interpretations simultaneously.

In this essay, I briefly revisit selected examples of text and film, placing them in the relation to the dance/film. I discuss notions of disappearance and absence, and look for liminal spaces that elude us because they exist as invisible gaps. I then contend that these spaces can be discovered in the enactment of a movement and their invisibility is only impalpable insofar as we are so aware of them that we take them for granted.

Hoping to unearth a particular technique of seeing, I ask these questions: Can absence be enacted, captured... in fact, SEEN in a dance/film? Can the viewer see what might be there but not apparent, fill in the gaps for himself with his own experience? Can the viewer construct his own movement from memory?

¹ The terminology does not concern me primarily. I have chosen to use the label 'dance/fim' for consistency's sake as well as to maintain an open approach towards its definition. Also, through the use of the '/', I hope to encapsulate the idea of dance and film as simultaneously, mutually supportive and contesting terms.

2 DISAPPEARANCE #1:

Phelan, Peggy. 1993. *"The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction" in Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge: London and New York.

"Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology.

Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, ... becomes itself through disappearance." – *Phelan*

For Phelan, dance's representational frame works from within a tension between presence, disappearance and representation, whereby the ontology of performance is the "maniacally-charged present" materializing at the very moment presence turns into disappearance.

Here, the body is first conceived as latent potential, a prefiguration of movement. This leads us to consider the body-in-transit as performing an act of disappearance. In movement, the body shifts from position to position but the dance is not made up of still positions; rather, dance emerges as each still position is cancelled out by another. The body exits from one point to another, constantly finding its way in time and space by displacing positions. Resultantly, the body acts as an armature for the energy that runs through it or the movement that it manifests. In this sense, embodiment in dance always points to the negative. When looking at a dancing body, we are perhaps looking at, looking for what is NOT the body.

What implications does this perspective on dance and movement have on dance/film? Film as a mechanically reproducible mode of representation necessarily alters the materiality of live performance, if it does not, as Phelan thinks it does, negate it fundamentally.





3 DISAPPEARANCE #2:

Forsythe, William. 1997. *Solo* premiered at Whitney Biennale, New York City.

In the film *Solo*, Forsythe performs a fast, frenetic dance. The body comes across as restless, as if vigorously trying to be many bodies at once. Rendered in monochrome, shadows on the body are emphasized by the stark lighting, which also imbues the film with a sense of nostalgia. Do we look at the body in a detached way, as if it is engaging us from a different time and space? Is the body trying to erase itself of what it has experienced and remember, forget itself through performance (catharsis)?

As recorded material, the film sets off not to disrupt the dance performance but to enhance it since the reframing by the camera complements the isolation of various body parts. However, even as the camera moves with the body, it also dictates the viewer's gaze. The film does not allow the body to disappear as it consigns the dance that was ephemeral to relative fixity. The recording turns the dance into a document and preserves an event in a memory bank.

In this sense, Phelan's arguments are valid – the reproduction of performance undermines it. The dance of disappearance has disappeared. A lived event is kept alive and the dance no longer transient. As the film monumentalises the dance, the authorial position is also consolidated. Forsythe will forever be Forsythe. To a large extent, even if I were to learn this solo, it will still be his solo, not mine. The film will constantly remind me of Forsythe's authorship.

Yet, the intervention initiated by the film is also a re-representation. The film augments the dance and transfers it onto a different representational plane – a movement reconstituted as another kind of movement in a different time and space. Adopting Phelan's view, the movement of the film is enacted at the expense of the performance since the body is not allowed to disappear but made to repeat.

Furthermore, time that can otherwise be experienced as different and relative durations is homogenized into a linear continuity. Movement is flattened into a regular, singular continuum whose parts are no longer distinguishable since in film, there is no hierarchy between the frames. (ie: 25 equal frames per second)²

But filmic movement is also a result of a disappearance, albeit of a different nature. As consecutive frames move in sequence, they too are hidden and disappear, and we are left with an illusion. The human eye can no longer detect the individual frames but sees film as continuous motion. The viewer does not immediately perceive the image as material but the image as content.

So what has disappeared? The film or the dance? The image-as-material or the image-as-content? (Am I contradicting myself?)

In the next section, I zoom in on the units that compose the film sequence and discuss the frame in relation to the photograph³, by breaking the film down into its simplest units and scrutinizing the monadic frames.

² For the purpose of my argument, I have only referred to the 25fps as it is the most commonly used standard for television and film.

³ I will treat terms such as the freeze-frame, the film still, the snapshot and the photograph as synonymous and interchangeable since I am essentially concerned with a general idea of a still image.

4 DISAPPEARANCE #3

Barthes, Roland. 1980. (trans. Richard Howard) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Hill and Wang: New York.

"Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see." - *Barthes*

Similarly, photography in Barthes' seminal analysis is also couched in notions of absence. The distinctive condition of photography is that as a vehicle for its referent, it is rarely recognized in and of itself. In fact, the viewer often goes so far as to confuse the photograph with its referent. ("This is my son when he was twelve" as opposed to "This is a photograph of my son. He was twelve then.")

Yet, absence is not only the preserve of the photograph itself. The photograph as a certificate of an object's presence is also a reminder of death, a memento mori. With the instantaneous movement of the camera shutters (Barthes had likened it to a guillotine), an object is seized from this world, into another spatialized time. Hence paradoxically, the photograph is a signifier of both presence and absence.

Barthes sees the inaccessibility of the object as a point of departure. As a viewer encounters an image, he deploys language to activate the object and uses the image as a trigger in a Proustian sense. It is a framed reference by which the viewer re-engages with his own experiences to reconstruct sequences from his personal reservoir of images. The image is unlocked and animated by the viewer.

"...I have no need to question my feelings in order to list the various reasons to be interested in a photograph; one can either desire the object, the landscape, the body it represents; or love or have loved the being it permits us to recognize... suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an animation." - *Barthes*

Each time I look at the picture, I reconstruct a memory, invent it anew. . . The photograph is then both an establishment of fact and the creation of fiction. The object of the image on its own is dormant. It is the agency of the viewer that brings it back to life and returns it into the third dimension.

...

Is the film sequence not also a series of snapshots? As one frame displaces another in filmic movement, is it not pointing to the space between itself and the frames that come before and after it and so on ad infinitum, forever trying to capture that which is absent? . . . a series of little deaths?



Photo credit: **Sortie d'usine** (Cat Lumière N°91-1)
Louis Lumière, Lyon (France), 1895
© Association frères Lumière

4 DISAPPEARANCE #4: The Lumiere Brothers. (1895) - *Exiting the Factory*

Watching this famous 'first-ever' film, one of the first thoughts that struck me is that all the people in the film are no longer alive. Yet their absence is constantly being performed, made present. Every one of these anonymous individuals in the frame will now be forever exiting the factory and stepping out of the camera frame.

On the other hand, the idea of absence is also underscored by the film's materiality. The image is blur, monochromatic, flickering and insubstantial. Shot at 15 frames per second, the movement of the figures is uncanny, even cartoonish. As 15 frames fill up a second of film footage where only 25 frames could provide the illusion of continuous movement, the viewer is constantly reminded that it is 'reel time' rather than 'real time' that he perceives. As the image flickers with age, one sees the frames, sees the film (image-as-material), not just the figures (image-as-content).

The camera's gaze comes between the subjects in the film and us, and we are made aware of its mediation. The image stays on the plane of representation and the art of illusion of filmic movement, perfected by technology today, is only at best tentative. The image (as photograph or film) does not quite disappear and neither do the objects in the image.

We can only watch this movement in terms of nostalgia. *Exiting the Factory* is a performance of, a performance in and a performance for absence. And I become aware of all those absences, maybe even that of my own, all at once.

5 DISAPPEARANCE #5 Marker, Chris. 1983. *Sans Soleil*

Transcript of the first 30 secs of *Sans Soleil*:

[Black screen, VO] "The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland, in 1965."

[Silent footage of three children, holding hands, laughing in a field – 7 secs]

[Black screen, VO] "He said that for him, it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to several other images..."

[Footage of fighter planes with VO – 4 secs] "...but it never worked."

[Black screen, VO] "He wrote me, 'One day I would have to put it all at the beginning of a film, with a long piece of black fader. If they don't see the happiness, at least they'll see the black.'"

6 CONCLUSION:

Deleuze, Gilles. 1989. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Deleuze underscored a shift in cinema from a central concern with tactile, sensorial imagery in which continuous filmic movement is unified by a body moving across time and space to images that relate directly to time and memory. The Time-Image, as the latter description is called, allows us to experience different (time) durations at once through an interplay of film and body, creating and remembering, presence and absence, time and space.

Although Deleuze had not defined the Time-Image in clear definitive terms, one key feature of the Time-Image is that of the Crystal-Image. This refers to a shot that presents at once both the past (the recorded event) and the present (the viewing of the recorded material). In cinema, Deleuze saw the past as a virtual image outside of consciousness but ready to be reconstituted for the present when the image is activated through perception. The crystal image is then the threshold between the virtual image and the actualized, perceived image. This also means that the crystal image can, in one moment at once, propel the present in two directions: forwards into the future and backwards into the past.

The irrational jump cut is one way to experience the crystal image. In the introduction to *Sans Soleil*, the lack of a link between the first two footages exists as an open gap represented and made visible by the black screen between them. As signifiers, the two images are resolute in the way they repel each other yet they remained yoked since they are matched together within the continuum of the film by the very cut that separates them and placed them side by side within the continuum of the film. Their relationship is established but persists as a lack of one as if non-existent.

Deleuze's Time-Image addresses the way thought and memory are disturbed and provoked. The failure of recognition results in a dynamic action-reaction, backward-forward movement.

...

What lies to the left and right of a photograph? What is in front of it and what's behind? What connections have I made? What do I anticipate now? Expect? Want?

May I watch a dance/film and see different performances at once? Slip into the gaps of the film in order to find the dance for myself?