



A BODY IN PLACES

Danspace Project PLATFORM 2016

Published by Danspace Project, New York, on the occasion of PLATFORM 2016: *A Body in Places* curated by Judy Hussie-Taylor and Lydia Bell in collaboration with Eiko Otake.

First edition
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EIKO TAKES HER PLACE

Judy Hussie-Taylor

THE SECOND BIGGEST blizzard in New York City history is raging outside my apartment window in South Brooklyn. I am thinking about Eiko.

Eiko has said she has a “whirlpool” raging inside her body. It could also be a blizzard depending on the season. Tonight, I am flipping through books on eco-anarchism, reading poems by C.D. Wright and Allen Ginsberg and scanning essays about the neo-utopian impulse in art. I am searching for clues, fragmented insights into Eiko’s weather, her whirlpool, her blizzard.

Throughout this catalogue you will see images of Eiko’s body draped in Fukushima, at Fulton Street Station near the World Trade Center, at Hong Kong’s Occupy sites, and read Eiko’s own account of dancing in the home of 101-year-old poet Nicanor Parra in Santiago. Soon she will virtually move into Danspace Project at St. Mark’s Church in-the-Bowery. She will inhabit places in the East Village performing intimate rituals for a few, most every day for four weeks. She will carry places and the people who watch her, to the next place. Her body is a constantly shifting intersection of people, places, politics, and temporalities.

On my bookshelf: I find nomads and gnomes, dystopias and utopias, hermeticism and exhibitionism, elements and animals, Cassandra and Gaia. Eiko has sent me down a strange path indeed.

From Novalis:

The scientist poet “never wearies of contemplating nature and conversing with her, follows all her beckonings, finds no journey too arduous if it is she who calls, even should it take [her] into the dank bowels of the earth, surely [she] will find ineffable treasures. . . and then who knows into what heavenly mysteries a charming subterranean sprite may initiate [her]. No one who tears [herself] loose and makes [herself] an island arrives at understanding without pains.”¹

From David Bell on “nomadic utopianism”:

What art catalyses or empowers a nomadic utopianism? [One] function is to help us go beyond the present; to open up the present to the future . . . We must observe it over a period of time. Only then can we assess its nomadism: the extent to which it remains open to the future; remains defined by forces which seek to go beyond it. This is not to say that the nomadic utopia is in a constant state of ecstatic flux. Such a situation would hardly be utopian at all . . . Change may be relatively slow. What matters is that the space is not closed to change; has not ossified into a form which it regards as fixed, or ceases to consider as a form that could be changed.²

1. Peter Lamborn Wilson. “The Disciples at Sais: A Sacred Theory of the Earth.” *Green Hermeticism: Alchemy and Ecology*. Eds. Peter Lamborn Wilson, Christopher Bamford, and Kevin Townley. Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2007. 9-28.

2. David M. Bell, “Art’s Utopian Function.” April 22, 2001. <https://nomadicutopianism.wordpress.com/tag/nomadic-utopia>



Nicanor Parra, Miguel Grinberg, and Allen Ginsberg, Havana, Cuba, 1965. Taken just before Allen was expelled from Cuba by Fidel Castro. In an interview He wrote: "I went down to Cuba and, complaining about Castro's treatment of homosexuals, found myself after a month under arrest and [then] expelled from the country." Photographer unknown. Courtesy of The Allen Ginsberg Trust.

Regarding Eiko's unlikely inspiration from Allen Ginsberg:

Eiko calls this Platform her Ginsberg project. She says Allen always made himself available to talk to her and Koma when they were young artists new to the City, wandering the streets of the East Village. Allen put his queer body on the line at a time when that wasn't done, for gay rights, against the Vietnam War, and his anti-nuclear activism in Boulder, Colorado.

From *People Magazine*, July 1978:

Ten years and 1,000 miles from the bloody streets of Chicago, the poet guru of the protest generation, Allen Ginsberg, once again defied the fuzz.

This time Ginsberg's howl was against the perils of plutonium waste. He and five other members of the ad hoc Rocky Flats Truth Force (including his longtime roommate, poet Peter Orlovsky) meditated in the path of an approaching train that was carrying radioactive detritus away from the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant, 25 miles northwest of Denver. Ginsberg, now 52, had been up until dawn on the day of his arrest composing *Plutonian Ode*, a six-page jeremiad on the "most deadly substance in the world." He pleaded not guilty to criminal trespass and obstructing a passageway, charges that could lead to a \$300 fine and up to six months in the slam. Undaunted, Ginsberg vowed to "spread the plutonium waste message"—to use Orlovsky's unlikely simile—"like Paul Revere."

Eiko also calls this her Don Quixote project.

When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies? Perhaps to be too practical is madness. To surrender dreams — this may be madness. Too much sanity may be madness — and maddest of all: to see life as it is, and not as it should be!

—Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*

Eiko's PLATFORM 2016: *A Body In Places* is Danspace Project's 10th PLATFORM and the third devoted to the choreographic mind of a single artist. It has been a curatorial collaboration between Eiko, Lydia Bell and myself. It's been a generative process and has expanded to include over 25 artists invited to participate, write, perform and create every day for weeks on end. I think I speak for the three of us when I say yes, "this may be madness."

Eiko is renowned as one half of the performance duo Eiko and Koma. They have performed together since the mid 1970s, first in Tokyo where they met at Butoh pioneer Tatsumi Hijikata's studio. They briefly studied with the legendary dancer Kazuo Ohno and began a life-long relationship with him that lasted until Ohno died at age 103. For the next four decades they were based in New York City, but perpetually on the road.

Eiko's foray into durational solos in public spaces as a 63 year-old came as a quite a surprise. Also surprising is how much energy has sprung from her. In public, but alone, she's unleashed her whirlpool. Yes, she's small boned and fragile. But she's as fierce as Kali and as elusive as the genies and shape shifters from other worlds. That said, Eiko would be the first to remind me that she is of this world and won't let us forget what a mess we've made of it. Her nomadic-utopian-Allen Ginsberg-Don Quixote project reminds us that perhaps the remedy is the effort itself, no matter how futile, to be available to take one's place.

Judy Hussie-Taylor
Ditmas Park, Brooklyn
January 23, 2016

EIKO TAKES HER PLACE



Eiko on the A train, New York, NY. June 6, 2015. Photo by Kaitlin Chan.



Photograph by Allen Ginsberg of Chilean poet Nicanor Parra in NYC. Ginsberg's caption reads: "Nicanor Parra, 7th Avenue subway fall 1984. I'd spent a month in Parra's house Santiago Chile, 1960. The train had stopped between stations—we couldn't get a cab downtown from 110 St to NYU that day." Courtesy of The Allen Ginsberg Trust.



EIKO IN PLACE

Harry Philbrick

TALKING WITH EIKO is an experience that I cherish and brace myself for. Like going for a sail on a windy day—it will be exhilarating, but I know I will need to keep my wits about me because things can move fast, and course corrections will be made constantly. Eiko is whip smart. She talks fast, and thinks faster. She is witty, ironic, sometimes a little wicked. She is impulsive. In short, Eiko in conversation would appear to be completely unlike Eiko in performance. But, as I will try to make clear, that isn't really so.

The conversations which ultimately led to her first solo project, *A Body In Places*, in Philadelphia's 30th Street Station in October of 2014, started two and a half years earlier. Eiko reached out to me because she and Koma were contemplating next steps after their Retrospective Project.¹ I had been involved, in a minor way, with that project and it had set me thinking quite a bit about the relationship between art objects and performance, and even more fundamentally about how a museum could deal with an ephemeral performance. Eiko & Koma had pushed that dialogue forward in important ways with the Retrospective Project, and I admired how the participating museums (including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the Walker Art Center) had responded.

Eiko and Koma's project directly challenged the institutional structure of museums in such a fundamental way: museums are owners and repositories of objects, and it is in their mission to care for those objects. Museums are also places that carefully create and curate *experiences*, and market themselves as such. But how can they "own" an experience? What a wonderful challenge to the notion of both the institution and the objects it holds. All art objects, after all, change over time—they fade, crackle, dry, become brittle or soft; in short, they age. Museums try hard to hold that process in abeyance, but we are ultimately left with objects that are icons of themselves; objects that hold the collective memories of those who saw them when they were new and fresh. They wear those memories like an aura, and museums use history and context, to enhance the aura. Exhibit A in this regard would be any painting by Leonardo.

But ultimately any performance in a museum lives on either through its objects—its sets, costumes, and props—or its digital record—it's video—or, most intriguingly, through a set of instructions—its choreography—much like a Sol Lewitt wall drawing. And, much like with a LeWitt wall drawing, those who undertake to execute the instructions are skilled specialists: performers.

Despite working as a museum director, and being delighted that they had pushed this

1. Prompted by the thought that the museum/gallery concept of a retrospective can be applied effectively to certain performing artists, Eiko & Koma constructed and presented a multi-faceted retrospective of their work entitled The Retrospective Project, which toured to over 15 museums and theaters between 2009 and 2012.

question into the consciousness of the field, I had little interest in working with Eiko & Koma on a project that would further this dialogue by creating another object that would live “forever” in our permanent collection. Rather, I was interested in how could we use the aura of the institution itself as a kind of cloak that Eiko & Koma might wear around Philadelphia, and thereby bring the museum out to a wider audience.

So, we talked, Eiko & Koma and I, and we worked on a number of ideas, and agreed that finding an interesting site that was unique to Philadelphia was a good idea. After discussing a number of locations, most particularly Philadelphia’s nascent Rail Park, a currently abandoned rail viaduct in the midst of an evolving industrial loft district, we agreed that the majestic spaces of 30th Street Station would be an interesting place in which to work. Having worked with them a year earlier on the installation of a large scale KAWS sculpture at 30th Street I had had some experience working with Amtrak, which controls the station, and a dialogue ensued about how a performance might happen within the station.

By this time it had become apparent that, because of problems with his ankle, Koma could not perform just then, so Eiko and I talked about what she might do alone. We were interested particularly in the issue and dimension of time as we considered the Station Project. Time both slows and accelerates when travelling, and waiting to travel. Also the Station has two main modes—rush hour, and non-rush hour, and we wanted to have the performance live within each. I suggested the idea of a durational piece, spread out in successive three-hour segments over a number of Fridays. We eventually settled on four successive Fridays, covering a period from noon to midnight. The first would be from noon to 3pm, the second from 3pm to 6pm, and so on.

With this loosely defined project in the rail station in mind Eiko returned to Japan, accompanied by her colleague and fellow Wesleyan faculty member, the Japanese historian and photographer William Johnson. There Bill captured, in a monumental series of photographs, Eiko performing in and around a number of abandoned train stations. The stations, overgrown and desolately beautiful, are in the heart of the area surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors, which were damaged during the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011. The towns and countryside remain contaminated by radiation, and to this day only limited access to the area is allowed. Eiko and Johnston followed the abandoned lines from station to station, and Eiko performed, alone, in a performance that in reality exists only in the photographic record created by Johnston. Although a solo performance, it is entirely dependent on the collaboration of Johnston. The photos are the only record beyond Eiko and Bill’s memory of what transpired there.

A selection of the resulting photographs were exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), which is a mile from 30th Street Station, during Eiko’s performances. Thus a triumvirate of locations were created; the stations in Fukushima and Philadelphia linked by the galleries at PAFA.





The overall action of Eiko's performances at 30th Street Station in October 2014 can be described simply: Eiko, in white face and kimono, enters the main waiting room of the station from the west doors, proceeds to the north waiting room, where she moves (and is still) for a number of hours, and then exits through the same doors she had entered. The simplest of choreography carried out slowly and deliberately amidst the changing, charging swirl of commuters, travelers, lost souls, security personnel, and redcaps at the Station. The only prop is a handmade, colorful futon.

Dramaturge Mark McCloughan and I worked with Eiko in developing aspects of the piece—in truth my main role was liaison between the artist—who-is Eiko and the Amtrak folks concerned with security and traffic flow requirements. Videographer Ben Grinberg captured the performances, and shakuhachi player Ralph Samuelson added subtle, ambient context to the performances. My assistant Kerry Bickford was the hinge upon which many transitions depended as we stealthily inserted performance art in to a major commuter hub – the third busiest train station in America.

Our expectations before the performances were that people might stop for a few moments amidst their busy day to watch Eiko. Our hope was that this performance might subtly reverse the polarity of the station for brief moments. In a station, despite being in a most public place, we are often completely immersed in our interior world. We hide behind our newspaper or cell phone, presenting as impersonal a face as we can to our fellow travelers; these are the barricades that allow for an essentially private experience. How would the emergence of Eiko, dressed so differently from the context in which she moved, wraith-like, slowly, and most importantly, with great vulnerability, affect those who viewed her? Eiko was vulnerable in many ways; a woman alone in the station, a performer stripped of a stage, lighting, a curtain rise—in short, all of the barricades between audience and performer that define the explicit compact that we are going to experience artifice, and, hopefully, art.

Eiko, arriving unannounced into the consciousness of people bound into their own private world, risked being ignored, or greeted with hostility, or even ridiculed. In fact, our hope of changing people's public personas was exactly what happened.² Eiko captured the attention of most who saw her, and created a slowly moving, rapt audience. And this audience, in turn, organically defined the performance space that positioned this as artifice, and, indeed, art. We ended up crowd-sourcing that definition. But precisely

2. The role of the museum as convening institution was not inessential to the process. By sending out invitations through PAFA we attracted a number of sophisticated viewers who came specifically to see Eiko. Although they did not know what to expect when they arrived they instantly knew Eiko when they saw her, and started the process of audience participation, thus allowing newcomers to join in with a decreased sense of risk. Their role was essential in allowing the newcomers to participate. This neatly exemplifies what I believe is one of the most important roles cultural professionals and institutions can play.

because it was crowd-sourced, and not defined by the trappings of a theater, there was an immediacy and a kinetic vulnerability to the entire event. The rumbling disruption of a luggage cart was the concern of all, and also was forgiven for what it was, a part of the place we all had improbably, temporarily, colonized. A temporary performative village, a happening, a collective event revolving around one frail woman who never spoke, whose gestures and motions were so slight as to sometimes be imperceptible. Time slowed. To our astonishment many people stayed for the full three hours of each performance (no small thing as they had to stand or sit on the hard floor, or perch on folding camp stools).

In the midst of Eiko's performance she was constantly refining and editing and altering her movements and directions. The best analogy I can give is that of a large school of fish or flock of birds, seemingly whirling indiscriminately yet having an overall direction and momentum. This slow moving flock has at its center Eiko, who was constantly aware of the movements around her, and of the behavior of her audience. She kept the audience from being so comfortable that they would not move, yet she never scared them off or shook them.

That is, until the end of the first performance when Eiko had, improbably again, led her audience out the main doors of the station to the grand portico leading to the City beyond. Although Eiko had intended to end the performance by simply walking out the door, clearly the audience would have followed her wherever she went, so turning to face them, Eiko bowed, and by using the convention of the theater, broke the spell we had all created together.



CONVERSATION

*Lydia Bell, Michelle Boulé, David Brick,
Neil Greenberg, Judy Hussie-Taylor, Mark McCloughan,
Eiko Otake, Koma Otake and Valda Setterfield*

[September 2015]

In September 2015, a group of artists gathered for dinner at Eiko's home in Manhattan to discuss three prompts: 1) the relationship of body to place; 2) the artist as wanderer; and 3) how we bear witness to change (globally and locally).

JUDY HUSSIE-TAYLOR: Thank you all for coming on behalf of me, Eiko and Lydia [Bell]. I'm just going to do a brief background. Eiko is the subject of the tenth Platform at Danspace Project. She is the third subject of a one-person focus. Not a retrospective, not a survey, but a one-person exhibition into the mind of a choreographer—"a choreographic mind," to use Susan Rethorst's phrase. Susan was the first subject, and then DD Dorvillier, and now Eiko. It happened organically through many conversations that we had had, one in particular, about 18 months ago was it?

EIKO: When we ran into Blondell [Cummings].

JUDY: Rest in peace. For those of you who don't know her, Blondell passed Sunday and it was very sudden, and surprising, and we're all just digesting the news.

That same morning, we had a conversation about performances that Eiko was doing where she would take people like Valda [Setterfield] or Lydia out to Governor's Island and perform for a few people at a time. Eiko and I talked about how to expand that idea through Danspace. How could we create a situation where Eiko could meet people and bring them to very specific sites and perform for them, and be "available," as she says. The idea that I threw out, which we're not doing, was we should do this over a year. Eight people at a time, Eiko would greet them at the Church and take them somewhere.

EIKO: For the entire year. Every day.

JUDY: Really it was just a starting point. After

talking it through with some of my staff where we ended up was, "What if she's the subject of a platform and we see what she wants to do." And that's where we are today. It's accelerated since Lydia has come back on board as Program Director because Lydia worked with Eiko & Koma on their Retrospective Project several years ago, so we have the fortune of having a lot of good history.

EIKO: Mark [McCloughan] was a freshman who got into my class; I believe it's the first class I taught at Wesleyan. I started a conversation with people who are 35 years younger! I feel like I have gained, for the first time, some knowledge about that generation because I know people that age that I'd been meeting every week and having eye-to-eye, body-to-body conversations with. But I have less communication with the people between Mark's age and my age, except my immediate generation. And I started realizing how you talk differently with someone of a different age or a different relationship. So I'm grateful that I have this occasion.

JUDY: You all received these three prompts: the relationship of body to place, the artist as wanderer, and how we bear witness to change, globally and locally. I'm wondering if any of you have resonated with one of them in particular?

VALDA SETTERFIELD: I don't make dances. I'm not a choreographer. I've worked with other people a lot and I contribute, but I don't initiate the project. So the relationship of body to place isn't a starting point for me. It doesn't happen until I actually get there, and then something begins to happen. Which is not necessarily anything I tell the choreographer, or anybody. It's a private thing. And I recognize that in Eiko when she said, "Would you come to Governor's Island with me?" and we took that boat together. And I said, "Do you need to warm up?" And she looked at

me and said, "What do you mean?" And she put on her kimono and she started, and I stayed. It was a very happy day. By happy I mean that it was not troubled and you seemed very pleased when I said, "Could I stay longer?"

EIKO: I was shocked.

VALDA: That was an interesting breakthrough, that kind of connection with an artist. It happened to a certain extent with Mikhail Baryshnikov. There is no fuss. He does not say, "No, no you have to come at this time" or, "I'm not ready." He says, "Okay, you know where to come. I'm working on something. I don't know if I know it yet. You want to come?" And I do. And he works. And that's a wonderful thing when you can get to that point in that it is indeed your life and your work and not some sort of exotic nonsense that gives you trouble.

EIKO: At Governor's Island I scheduled Lydia to come next. And Lydia came and there's Valda. And it totally affected your experience in a very interesting way.

LYDIA BELL: You were testing out a possible audience view on one side with Valda, and then you placed me in a more straight-on view, so I was watching Eiko as the performer and Valda as the audience member. And I remember we had a talk about how in those intimate performances it was a trio between the three of us.

EIKO: Affecting how you see me through her eyes and through our bodies as well?

LYDIA: Yes. I mean, it's not just anyone, it's Valda! Who I have seen and admired dancing over a period of time. And knowing your relationship, too, definitely affects how I see.

EIKO: I really want the audience to be seen by me

and to each other. Now that I've been doing this in public places, I need to see the audience and I want the audience to see each other. That kind of experience of performing for a friend.

VALDA: I am working now with Eszter Salamon and Christophe Wavelet. It's me and Gus Solomons working with him. Christophe tends to see us separately, Gus and me, and I said to him, "Why do you do that?" And he said, "You are very different people. Gus, when I ask him anything, he knows what year it was, what theater it was, how many people were in the piece, how many people were in the audience. But your answers are entirely sensory. You give a whole different perspective to what happened." That kind of connection is much easier for me.

MARK MCCLOUGHAN: Eiko, you started to talk about your relationship with the maintenance workers at Fulton Station. As we were working in a space, we saw a couple of them coming back and watching, hanging out across the space, absent-mindedly doing their job—connecting to what you're doing in the space that is theirs.

EIKO: I was very apprehensive about the Fukushima project. Who am I to do this? But when I walked into the museum after public hours to check the installation of our photo exhibition at PAFA [Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts], I found a cleaning lady who was looking at the photos alone. And then she noticed me. She could not speak English but she gave me a big hug and she had tears. That's when I realized with these photos I might be able to create a new relationship with people.

DAVID BRICK: I was thinking as you were talking about your presence as a performer and the way in which your performances create a frame for observing the world. Your performances are pointing at the world. You're pointing at everything that's

happening at the 30th Street Station. You position yourself between the restrooms and the concourse. So we see people walking back and forth with luggage or pushing wheelchairs. Or children running.

How do you do it? Because a lot of people could go to public site and do stuff and it doesn't create that frame. What do you do that people are paying attention in a very particular, deep, resonant way? I think about your presence and how you perform for specific people in the audience. That's different from broadcasting in a general way. If you find a friend, or somebody you have a tender feeling towards, and you deliver something to them, that's presence, that's the choreography. It's a choreography of presence that is very difficult, very refined, very subtle, and it creates a way in which we pay attention, and the world pays attention. And then that creates a frame for witnessing the world.

MICHELLE BOULÉ: I'm wondering about performing for someone in particular because I know that feeling in performance. It's like, "Oh this person is in the audience," or "Oh, the choreographer's watching." When the choreographer's not there—"Merce is not on tour" or "Merce has passed away"—the dancing is different. It makes me wonder if what we're watching is relationship. If that's the little piece of life that we're actually attending to, so we're watching a dynamic space.

DAVID: I think some choreographers are asking themselves or the dancers who are working for them to pay attention to that and to perform in a particular way. And I think some dancers decide to and the choreographer doesn't ban it. I call it presence. It's a vocabulary to pay attention to. Often I think performers have a wisdom about it. But there are some choreographers, and I'd say you're one, where that is the material that is being worked with. We are witnessing a relationship that is by design. I know because I see Eiko before a

show being like, "Are you going to be there or are you going to be there? I want to be able to see you." I know that's part of her set up just as much as memorizing a move.

EIKO: In a sense, I decide to give a little grin if I see certain people. My kid's former kindergarten teacher came to see my performance in Philadelphia, so I gave her this grin—I'm using it to communicate.

JUDY: Michelle, could you say more about this from your own perspective? You said something about the dynamic space.

MICHELLE: Your thoughts made me wonder—are we watching dynamic space? Are we always watching relationships? To architecture or the energetic or the subtle relationships some person has to the people watching? How we bear witness to change made me think about pieces I've been in, or pieces that I've made, like the monologue at the end of *Everyone*, Miguel [Gutierrez]'s piece from 2007. It's abstract language but I had to find relationships to certain things. Something I heard on the news that morning could give me a sense of urgency. Because it's all about connecting in some way, right? The last piece I made was making me think about this too—there are so many more connections then we realize, multiple levels of connections beyond even what is tangible. But the dynamic is very tangible. And a performer knowing she's being watched, that's it.

JUDY: What are the conditions that set that up?

MICHELLE: It makes me wonder what this definition of presence is. In this relationship of body to place, I exist a lot in imaginary space as a performer. I've had this realization in the last couple of years, especially in looking at video. That's not what it looks like to me, and that's not what

I imagine it looks like. So I wonder about imaginary space versus, or along with, immediate space. When I saw the Fulton Street Center performance, and seeing the Fukushima photographs, I wonder about the balance between the immediate and the imaginary. The imaginary also feels temporal—it's historic, it's future. Looking at those photographs, one of my first thoughts was that the body is the antithesis of these places because there's no life there. There's one photograph towards the end where you're in all the plants and it's almost like the world isn't supporting the body anymore. Or we are not supporting the body. But then the plants keep growing. Something's going to keep growing. This is an environmental thing—are we supporting the body?

EIKO: The environment is a body, and many bodies, right? Fukushima is environment minus humans. But it's human caused.

When I saw your piece [*White*]—it's an amazing piece—the difference is when you have choreography you have this great look with bodies dancing. It is conceived first, practiced, and I can't spoil it—very strong stuff. Whereas I am in a station, I have nothing, I don't have those great choreographies, I don't have big rehearsals. But I have intentions. And the intentions can come through or may not come through. It's really fragile in a way.

MICHELLE: Totally.

EIKO: That's why when I used to see a person's name on the reservation list for our concert I was like, "Valda is coming!" And I literally would think about Valda, but she's in the dark, so I'm just imagining.

MICHELLE: And maybe she didn't make it.

EIKO: Exactly.

NEIL GREENBERG: It's interesting to think about those relationships as anchors. You almost have a tropism towards people in the audience who you know.

EIKO: I know Neil because he let me teach two courses in his school [The New School], and it was the first time I ever had a job in New York City. This is where I started the series of a private body in public spaces. It's by teaching in this school that I began to experiment with this idea of a not great choreography structure, but really focusing on the sense of privacy of the body and juxtaposing the two in public places.

NEIL: I was thinking on my way over about the young, eager, vulnerable students and how wonderful you were with them, shepherding them through and creating with them. I started thinking about the private body in public space and how it was those bodies that were so vulnerable, those young students.

EIKO: I don't usually choreograph for other people's bodies. But Neil had a show at NYLA [New York Live Arts] and so I ended up performing in the lobby between the entrance to the building and the entrance to the theater.

JUDY: When was this?

NEIL: 2014. You step out of the revolving door and there is a body on the floor.

EIKO: And they're like, "Oh Eiko, what are you doing?" and I said, "I'm being a nuisance."

NEIL: Which is what you titled that contribution. *A Nuisance*.

EIKO: I told the students, "Those of you who share my desire to be a nuisance, join me. And if not, don't join me during this performance." How do

I teach as a working artist? Could I be messing it up? Sharing that “messing it up” could also be the learning experience.

MARK: I think it’s radical. I remember what an epiphany it was to have a professor say, “I don’t know what I’m doing.” You said, “I make it up as I go along.” And, “I’m not going to tell you what to do. I’m going to set up situations where you too can make it up.” And I’ve carried that with me since that class in my own work.

DAVID: You can see that dichotomy in the conversation that you and Emmanuelle [Hunyh] had. I didn’t see the public conversation, but she performed in a rehearsal that I saw. She was performing a kind of knowing and I think there’s a politic in that as a French Vietnamese woman dancer in a European white, mostly male culture. And I remember conversations I had with you, Eiko, where you say, “For me, to go from here to here in every moment I feel like there must be hesitation.” That’s such a profound politic particularly in dance. It’s what I call a politics of hesitation, or a place of not knowing, which is an opening up to the world and asking the question. There’s a lot of skill in that not knowing.

JUDY: But Eiko, you know things.

EIKO: Well at 63 years old, you know something, yes.

JUDY: Can you name those things?

EIKO: I know how to read in Japanese, I know your names, how long I will know them, I don’t know.

JUDY: So when you’re at Fulton, you’re not performing a choreography—

EIKO: I did choreograph. I choreographed the

mood. But that’s so not important. I knew what I was doing but there’s nothing there really. If you just write it, there’s no value to it. So the value really is to ask: is there any value at all? But I had to believe in a small value because why else would I be performing? I’d say I forced myself to believe in what I do. That density of solo performing is different from choreography of multiple bodies. My structure is that if Neil came in or anyone else, my structure welcomes those little things, details that happen between me and the viewer. And when I’m alone, I depend on that relationship, totally.

MARK: I would say your structure doesn’t even welcome it. It requires it.

EIKO: It requires it. Totally.

MARK: While you were setting the piece in Fulton Street Center, half the rehearsals you would finish and be like “That was so boring! There was nothing there!” Then when people start to watch, you come alive. You activate this attention to relationship that people are talking about.

EIKO: The first time I was there I was not even supposed to rehearse, it was not allowed. So it took two weeks of doing small sections but not really doing what looks like a rehearsal and talking about it. And then finally the people who work there got used to me and I started rehearsing on the futon. Somebody called an ambulance because I was on the ground lying down. I thought this was interesting. That this happened the first rehearsal I actually danced. I presented myself as very weak and broken, and I wanted to do that because I get very irritated by someone who is healthy. It’s like people that have money; they don’t know the situation of people who don’t have money. So if you are really strong, and have muscles, and are a really great athlete, you don’t really know what it is like for people who are not physically capable. And I

was never a physically capable person. I look at the world through that perspective.

When I first met David he told me that he comes from a deaf family and he is the only speaking person in his family. It's like you are moving between the two worlds. Same for me being Japanese and American. And being a weak person in the dance field. With Emmanuelle, I couldn't believe how I became aggressive when we improvised together. I basically said in front of the audience, "Why do you think being healthy is so good?" or something like that. "What does that do for human beings?" I confronted a very healthy person.

DAVID: It's an assertion that's deeply meaningful to me because I ask how dance can speak about broken bodies, sick bodies, disabled bodies, imperfect bodies, and wounded bodies. That's very hard to do through the scrim of virtuosic perfection. We take for granted that the starting point for choreography is the manipulation of these techniques that come out of idealization. But, like you said, it's just such an attack on the ideas of idealization. A profound, radical attack. I want my body to speak for broken bodies, sick bodies, disabled bodies.

JUDY: Koma, I'm interested if you want to chime in.

KOMA: Often a stranger asks me what kind of dance are you doing? It is very difficult to talk about dance just in words. In a way, that is why we dancers choose this job as our lifetime occupation. Dance is our way of speaking. I think I am trying to find from where my body came and where my body is disappearing to. That's the mystery of life. For me, that is the answer of "a body in places." I would say "a body in places" is "a spirit and body in places." Spirit first and body follows.

Usually people don't know when and where exactly we will die. But in war, it's different. Your

healthy body and mind and are facing the reality of death. They are afraid to die now and afraid to live without legs and arms. This is an extreme situation of "a spirit and body in places." I feel fortunate that I don't need to go through this most awful, inhumane condition, which so many have gone through over the history of mankind. I think about it a lot and also my first dance teacher, Kazuo Ohno. He experienced a fear to live in the battlefield for eight years, and then a fear to dance on the stage, as well as a joy to dance, for the rest of his life. He was dancing until he was 103. Right before his death. His last concert in New York was when he was 93.

VALDA: I was there.

KOMA: You were there?

VALDA: Yes. I think your son was there and he was not well. He had the flu or something. And you said to him, "You cannot go home because Ohno is about to dance."

EIKO: That's right. I do that to my sons.

KOMA: Anyway, he was 93. And, soon after, he fell down from the stage and then later he got Alzheimer's. But despite Kazuo's body space conditions, his family pushed him to the stage continuously. Some supporters of Kazuo, such as presenters or critics or disciples, did not appreciate seeing Kazuo on the stage because he became more confused on the stage, losing his mind. They thought that the Ohno family was ruining Kazuo's legacy. But, Kazuo himself aggressively said, "Why are people trying to stop my dancing!" I saw it on a DVD about him, he was saying, "I'm almost getting to the top of the mountain!" So for me, his last dance was the best dance I'll ever see. He finally found a glimpse of the answer of the mystery of life. He finally reached the top of the mountain.



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EIKO: And then he died.

KOMA: I danced a lot in the last 45 years at many various places. But, once the dance starts, everywhere is the same for me. I am swimming in the dark sea alone forgetting my name, age, and sex. After the dance, my head is completely blank, like being knocked out in the boxing ring, but without the physical damage. And slowly I start realizing where I am and what I did and, yes, I danced in St. Marks Church, in downtown New York. When I dance, I forget everything. For me, this is a totally self-serving act. If I did not choose my dance as a profession, I would dance differently. For example, caring for others, including nature. But I am becoming more and more of a self-oriented artist. I am dancing with my actual pain. I have problems with my ankles and two months ago I had surgery on my ankles [hits one ankle].

EIKO: Don't hit it!

KOMA: I'm dancing with my actual pain. My physical future is very unknown. But I will not retreat now from the place where I am now. I want to get the top of the small hill. I don't think I can go up the mountain with these ankles but...

JUDY: A small hill?

MARK: I'm sort of taken with the idea of the small hill. It reminds me of what David was saying about the politics of hesitation. Refusing the authority of, "I'm making a grand gesture." And it seems very present in what you do together and what Eiko has been doing in the past two years.

DAVID: I want to hear if either you or Koma connect Kazuo Ohno to your experience with Anna Halprin.

EIKO: Just yesterday, Koma and I were talking about how fortunate we are to have known Ohno.

When I say this, it's not a disciple speaking in adoration of her teacher. It's really about being lucky to have met him. I think he has what I call a "whirlpool." It's in all of us. But there are certain people who have such a strong whirlpool. When I was a kid I had trouble knowing that I had this upset in myself. When I met Kazuo Ohno, I saw that upset in him. I see it in Anna Halprin. I see that a too strong something is going on in these people. I'm very attracted to someone who does not know how to handle it but has a strong whirlpool. Kazuo Ohno is not the smartest or the greatest choreographer. He is just an amazing artist, which is a different thing. That impossible whirlpool is dangerous. Someone like Kazuo Ohno, somebody like Anna Halprin, they're just strong, and they are humble to certain people. And they are a nuisance. But God are we lucky that we have them.

LYDIA: Neil, did you want to address any of the prompts?

NEIL: I was thinking about sensation and how to archive sensation. That is something that happens for me with your work, this sense of something that usually would get lost about a place and an interaction somehow gets heightened and magnified, or just noted. I can have awe for this very un-special moment.

EIKO: Un-special place. I like that. You're a professor of modern dance, right? When I say places, I am very conscious of that word. Modern dance, in general, speaks about space.

NEIL: Space instead of place.

EIKO: Right. And then some choreographers started to use the word "site." So, for me to say "places" or a place, or naming the place, a station, or a hospital—I was very aware that I was putting a different notion. I feel distant to the modern dance

notion of choreography, which is to paint a white canvas with bodies. I just do not think that way. Because there's no space that's abstract in the world. Even in the theater. I've always felt like in a theater when the light comes up, as Koma said, it tends to be same. But in my own head I was imagining what was there before the theater was built. That was my own little secret prompt to myself as a performer. Now I don't want to dance in a space, I want to dance in a place. One thing that I am very keen on is how some details seem to be more important than the whole.

In certain situations you carry something that you don't want to talk about. That becomes the shades you carry, your modern hiding place. I've always been interested in the shades, because my parents are the war generation. They have something that I don't, which is an absolute experience that defines who you are. I had to look for that because I didn't have that. I was not starving. I was not killing people. I was not being killed. As hard as the demonstrations could have been, it's such a different degree. The last two years, more or less, there's a shift. It goes back to the place of war. America has been in many wars, invading other countries. When we talk about place, as a choreographer, it seems to be not a dangerous thing. Of course beautiful things can happen in the notion of choreography. But I feel like at my age, that's not something I want to do. I want to look at the places themselves and some places are dangerous.

NEIL: So you are going from being a nuisance to being a danger?

EIKO: Well, I'm not going to the war zones yet.

NEIL: No, but you yourself. Being dangerous.

EIKO: I don't know if danger is the right word because I'm very timid—

NEIL: Really? [Laughter]

JUDY: You have often said to me about this platform in particular that you want to make yourself available. That it is your Allen Ginsberg Platform. I'd like to hear about this idea of the artist being available and why that brings up Ginsberg.

EIKO: It's the Allen Ginsberg project and it's the Don Quixote project. Don Quixote in the way of fighting this big thing, which I felt as I was looking at the 1980 performance of *Event Fission* when I held a white flag like a weapon and ran toward the Twin Towers as if to fight against capitalism. Fukushima was of such significance. I had no idea how to fight it and I am the least effective fighter. Yet, I wanted to be the character objecting to it. For more than 40 years I've been in this country. I am still incapable in many ways. I can speak better than I can write, and read. So I'm a little bit handicapped as an immigrant. I can't understand Allen's poems in the way you all understand it. But I think I understand him just by having been around him one summer at Naropa in Colorado many years ago and seeing how he was so eager. When we saw him on street corners in New York, he was the one who was always like, "Hi Valda! Hi Eiko!" He finds us, and is immediately, amazingly available. And so for me, it made me admire who he is, not through what he does as a poet but through his mind and body gestures.

And I felt this is how I wanted to be, though I am often shy. But I have always wanted to be available. When I'm doing a solo, I'm not worried about how Eiko & Koma is supposed to do it. I'm just who I am, I'm not worried about how to respond to other people's ideas. I was a little surprised that I can be more friendly, open and available. And being seen from every angle, I can still be the same person without dancing, even without talking. Now I'm humming and I'm talking when I dance. That's new to me. I never performed and talked.

JUDY: Let's go around and finish with a question, a thought, something you came with that is related to this or your own work.

MICHELLE: It makes me curious about this choreography of presence and how presence kind of destroys the frame—destroys this historical frame that we've been working with. Maybe it can do that, so how do we start to play with that as a tangible material. What I keep hearing tonight is, and I feel like I can relate to this, too, is this dynamics of presence. And also the not knowing space of presence, because it's alive in the moment—I'm thinking of the sometimes impenetrability of choreography. So then does presence open up another space? I'm curious about how this platform might push that even more. I want to do that in my own work. Push that even more.

EIKO: When you do *White*, why does it work? Does it work as a solo? And if it's a rainy day, can you change the costume? Modern dance usually has one set of music and one set of costume. But your dance will survive whether you are in your jeans or wearing purple or whatever? Because that core is that thing that you do. Do you feel offended?

MICHELLE: No, I don't feel offended by that. My boyfriend actually asked me that. "Could you do that as a solo?" I don't know, that's the question for me. The impenetrability of choreography. I feel like it also opens up a door, it opens up another space. But then on the other hand, we can't get through it. Where is the porousness of it? And I feel that is the job of the performer, to create that porousness. And that fuzz above the piece—but what if the piece is only the fuzz?

DAVID: Eiko & Koma's work for me is an emblem in my pantheon. I'm nervous about generalizing but if I could control American dance

and definitions, I would say there's some people called, "presence post-modernists." People like you, Deborah Hay, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Miguel Gutierrez. People who work with presence as choreography as opposed to the movement for movement's sake. And obviously these aren't mutually exclusive. I'm going to read some of my own definitions of presence.

Presence is the intentional transparency of directed consciousness. I think a lot about Deborah Hay saying, "Consciousness is visible." There is a technology of empathy there, which is why we watch you. We watch you because you're transmitting something. Presence is the quality of a performer that brings our attention to the wider world, not just the explicit or surface content of a performance. Presence can be subject and/or vehicle. Working with presence involves paying attention to more registers of information and the senses that deliver that information. The equaling out of the denotative qualities of text and visual representation. And for an audience, seeing performers working with presence activates more of their own senses and ability to handle complexity, paradox, and ambiguity.

MARK: Working on the piece [*A Body in a Station*], we talked a lot about the costume and the color of the futon as a way to give structure to the piece but I feel ultimately that wasn't important. What was important was the sheer fact that you did this; you gave us this presence for 12 hours in Philadelphia, or three hours in Fulton Center.

LYDIA: At Fulton Street, it's not a site you would have picked necessarily. So I'm thinking of that site as a ready-made or a sculpture—the place becomes an object. When we were looking at sites in the East Village together, I remember saying to Judy that I was so surprised that

Eiko said yes to every site I showed her. Yes to a yoga studio, yes to a bar, yes to a restaurant, yes to the Ukrainian National Home. It's like a ready-made site with you entering into it. The premise has an inherently experimental nature related to a history of objects.

VALDA: There's an interesting thing about context and where you put things and why you put them in another place, which David [Gordon] does all the time. You reveal something else. It's an old acting trick you do in class. Hamlet is deeply agonizing, and then [the director] says "Alright, go to the back and do it like you're in a nightclub," and you play it a whole other way. And you learn something, you know?

EIKO: The context changes all the rules and assumptions.

KOMA: I say a good dance stays in your head forever. I saw your [Michelle's] *White*; your dance stays. And, Valda, I remember. It stays. Dance speaks differently, it's just in your head.

EIKO: At the same time, there are certain people like Neil, I always felt I don't necessarily have to remember your movement; it's more about your life and the theme. And it's not about how you tell the story; it's your continuous engagement to the theme. It's more like who you are, what you care about, what you have been talking about, what you move in relationship to, and how your work takes that particular thing and responds to that. And, to me, that's just as powerful. I think I am a little bit less romantic about dance than Koma. I don't really have to remember what Valda does as a movement, but it's more the fact that I know her. I know her style of being an artist and you don't have to be close to her to know that. You can be from California and you can still know what she stands for.

JUDY: And to be a little bit romantic about the spirit issue, I will say this whole time I was thinking about perception and why we watch certain people and what compels me to keep watching you at Fulton Street—and I don't know what it is. Why can I not stop watching *you*. There's a choreography, there are levels. This is not that one has privilege over the other, because the container that holds both is the "non-fuzz" which is form, but then there are certain frequencies of performers, and that to me is the thing that keeps me coming back and watching and watching again, is that indefinable reason that I have to watch the hand go all the way up. Whether it's grand or in hesitation, I'm obsessed with it! You know? There is something between those tensions. Something I call "beautiful friction," which is the paying attention to who is in the audience. But then again I know that if you didn't know anyone you would still create those relationships with unknown people. There's what you know and don't know but there are other layers underneath this, inside the life of a performer that many of you in this room live for a long time. Very few people could walk into Fulton Station and do what you did there. It's almost an impossible task. It is an impossible task to make those people pay attention and to tilt and to want to run down the stairs and run back up.

EIKO: It's been my task. How to be courageous but not make myself important. How to make the shared moments more important than who the artist is.



THREE WOMEN

Eiko Otake

MANJA CHMIEL

I have a necklace that Manja gave to me on the day we left her Hanover studio for Amsterdam. This was the summer of 1973. I was 21 and Koma was 24. As she put the necklace on me, she said, "This is not for you alone. This is for you and Koma. Neither of you are strong enough to work as a soloist." Manja was a veteran solo dancer who was known for dancing non-stop during her two-hour long concerts. "But together you can do SOMETHING DIFFERENT. And when you no longer can or wish to perform, please pass this necklace on to another dancer who is determined."

According to Manja, Mary Wigman gave her the necklace while Manja was giving a series of solo concerts in Berlin. Young Manja had arrived alone at the Wigman School from Czechoslovakia decades earlier and was Mary Wigman's assistant for thirty some years. Martha Graham had given the necklace to Wigman when Graham saw Wigman perform in the United States. Manja said "an Indian dancer," had given it to Martha Graham. Young as I was, and not understanding the weight of the gift or her emotion, I asked, "Is the Indian dancer a Native American or an Indian from Asia?" Manja did not know the answer. Such a question had never occurred to her. Graham visited both India and New Mexico, so both scenarios were possible. In either case, the chain of this gift seems to have started as one dancer saluting another who came from a far away place.

When we first arrived in Hanover, Manja welcomed us, a young, strange Japanese pair. She immediately asked us if she could see our work. We had brought costumes and a slide projector. We turned off the studio lights and, with a few projected images, performed a piece Koma and I had created. When we were done, Manja said that the light was so atmospheric that she could not see our dance. "A dancer has to show her body," she said, and asked us to perform again with all the studio lights on. We did that. "Good, but your bodies need to be stronger and you should not rely on too many hand gestures. A dancer should not mime." To this day, I love dancing in bright light, and remain hesitant to use my hands expressively. I always remember Manja saying, "Being a foreigner is a good thing."

MURA DEHN

I met Mura at the *Dance Magazine* office soon after we arrived in New York. She was hand delivering a press release and so was I. She invited us to her home for a dinner and later came to see our show. "You have no sense of rhythm," she told us, and offered us a Jazz dance class. She choreographed for us a short dance to Patti Smith's "Because the Night." She came to see everything we did. When we performed *Event Fission* in 1980 at the Hudson River Landfill as a part of a Creative Time series, Mura reported that all of a sudden some sort of understanding crept up on her and she decided to give up trying to teach us rhythm.

After that Mura worked on my solo, *Broken Bird on Floor*. I took the A train to her home on 181st Street a few days a week after my lunchtime waitress shift. Mura insisted that Koma and I inherit her entire film collection of various footage, ranging from social dances at the

Savoy Ball Room to a tour of her company to Africa. “Why us, two dancers from Japan?” we protested. “Because you are my ‘dancing children,’” said Mura. In her film *The Spirit Moves: A History of Black Social Dance on Film, 1900-1986*, a viewer can spot Mura as the only white person in a sea of African-American dancers.

I was deeply impressed to hear her say often, “I do not agree.” I loved her for that. She was not aggressive but assertive in explaining her disagreement. I now find myself uttering that phrase frequently, which is very un-Japanese.

Mura called me one day and told me, “I almost died yesterday but came back, having told myself I cannot die until I finish editing *Spirit Moves*.” She did that. Mura died in 1987 at the age of 82.

Spirit Moves is shown in the PLATFORM 2016 Film Series.

ANNA HALPRIN

No description is necessary for this amazing dance artist. She opened her studio and home to us anytime we were in the Bay Area. I sincerely feel that her work and teaching at her Mountain Home Studio in Marin County makes the American continent different. In fact, the world is a different place because of her and many of her students’ activities. Recently, she traveled to Israel with her grandson to teach Palestinians and Israelis together in the same class. I myself would not be teaching in the same way if I had not experienced her classes. She has a way in which every student feels she is there just for her or him.

At age 95, she just answered my email blast announcing the Danspace Project PLATFORM before anyone else:

Your announcement of your ambitious upcoming series of events had me gasping. Your project is amazing and you have the vision and tireless commitment to pull it off. I will inform friends in New York about it.

As for me I am doing a few museum exhibitions along with my regular schedule of teaching and events. Not wanting to travel much any more. Family keeps me busy as keeping up with dance projects.

She does this to so many people, actively keeping in touch with and encouraging all members of her tribe.

Oh, Anna. I am coming to see you soon after the Platform ends.

My back straightens and I sit up taller when I think of you.

Long Live ANNA!



A BODY ON THE LINE

Rosemary Candelario

“WELL, WHAT’S SHE doing?”

“She’s walking.”

The above exchange between a curious passenger and a station agent in Philadelphia’s 30th Street Amtrak station during Eiko’s 2014 durational performance, *A Body in a Station*, reflects the simplicity and profundity of Eiko’s solo performance debut. Yes, she was walking. But she was also doing so much more. Her simple journey through the waiting area interrupted the usual repertoire of passengers’ movements: sitting, waiting, watching, and when the time is right, rushing towards the appropriate track. In contrast, she meanders through the station: a woman in her sixties, long black hair streaked here and there with grey, curiously wearing a loose pale yellow kimono spotted with red flowers. She is lone, but not lonely. Aged but not frail. Her barefoot walk is purposeful, and yet there is something about her travels that interrupts people’s quotidian movements. This is not a protest, but her performance nonetheless effects a profound change.

Eiko’s solo debut in 2014 came more than forty years after she and Koma embarked upon an experimental partnership that began in 1971 when they met at renowned *butoh* instigator Tatsumi Hijikata’s Asbestos Hall. While the fact of Eiko dancing solo may have been unexpected, the dances themselves evidence a remarkable continuity not only with Eiko & Koma’s impressive body of work, but also with Eiko’s experiences as a student activist, scholar, and teacher. In fact, Eiko’s development as an artist, and her recent solo project, might be seen as an extension of her history, not a break from it. This history includes, but is not limited to, a blood, artistic, and generational lineage of rebellious and contrary Japanese artists, thinkers, and activists. This essay focuses largely on Eiko’s background in Japan not because of its definitive influence on her work, but because these are contexts that are likely less familiar to her American audiences. At the same time it would be a mistake to suggest that these are the only influences in Eiko’s artistic life. After all Eiko left Japan at the age of twenty. These strands of DNA are partial and complex, and have been joined over the years by new influences and interests, some fleeting or short-term, and others that are still ongoing. Although Eiko visits Japan a number of times each year, for forty years now she has been a New York artist.

POSTWAR JAPAN

The postwar period offered the Japanese people an opportunity to re-imagine the nation in the face of the decisive defeat of imperial Japan. Materially, this happened through the reconstruction of cities, the government, and even the constitution. The country also underwent a period of massive industrialization and economic growth, which radically transformed the landscape, and prompted significant rural to urban migration. Politically, many people saw the constitutional renunciation of war and extension of equal rights to women as an opening to replace hierarchical structures in education, the workplace, and even the art world with new systems. At the same time, the Japanese government as well as foreign

governments and corporations had vested business, military, and political interests in Japan developing along a particular path. The US government in particular saw a strong Japanese economy as one way to prevent the spread of communism. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (known as Anpo in Japanese), signed in San Francisco in 1952, not only ended the occupation, but also set the terms for the relationship between the nations that continues today. Japan was a Cold War prize that gave the United States a strategic base for military operations. So even though the new Japanese constitution renounced war, the country was still implicated as a base for American operations first in Korea and then Vietnam. The renegotiation of Anpo in 1960 and again in 1970—and the massive protests against it—was a particular flashpoint for conflicting visions of a postwar Japan. Other major international cultural events like the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and the 1970 International World Exposition in Osaka provided additional high profile venues for students, artists, and activists to contest the direction of the nation.

Eiko was born in 1952 just as the US occupation was ending. Growing up in Tokyo, with the exception of four years spent in Tochigi Prefecture in rural central Japan for her father's job, many of these developments would have been evident to a young Eiko. But she was not only influenced by the times; her family had its fair share of artists and radicals. Both of Eiko's grandmothers, for example, were Geishas who studied dancing. Eiko was particularly close to her maternal grandmother, and reports that she was a very strange woman with her own way of doing things and her own amazingly unconventional taste. She designed striking kimonos for herself, Eiko's mother, and Eiko, some of which Eiko wears in her solo project. Eiko's paternal grandfather and his brothers were well-known visual artists of their time, notorious for winning prizes at national art competitions despite their modest upbringing and lack of education. Her father had creatively avoided military involvement during the war and was a communist union organizer in post war Japan, though by the time Eiko was born, he was working as a banker and was no longer very active politically. Growing up, Eiko exhibited behavior that caused family members to frequently declare, "She is Otake!" meaning she was just like her paternal grandfather: strangely vagabond, ignoring the rules, and definitely not mainstream. Although he died before Eiko was born, her family identified his bohemian DNA as living on in her. Eiko herself prefers to think of the sense of agitation that began in her youth as a result of not just one lineage, but of different DNA from both her mother's and father's side of the family crashing into each other and remaining unsettled.

Changes in Japanese society coupled with Eiko's family's understanding of who she was led to a kind of acceptance of her as she grew up. She remembers,

I grew up assuming I would be working. I would have a career, which is not normal at that point in Japan for a girl, but I think all my family kind of expected it. And I expected myself. I wasn't even thinking into marriage or motherhood, so going to the university seems to be somewhat expected in my childhood. However, by the time I was in high school Japan was

changing because of the student movement, so I actually went into university on a verge of, almost this very strong questioning.¹

Eiko identifies some factors that fueled her questioning. Some of the junior high and high school teachers with whom Eiko had close bonds were active members of the teachers' union, and members of the Japanese Communist Party. However, Eiko soon became involved with the New Left student movement, which denounced both the Japanese government and the Communist Party. Growing opposition to the Vietnam War, and to what was seen as Japanese complicity in the war effort as US troops and supplies passed through bases in Japan on their way to Vietnam, led to an intense climate of political debate and protest. Even the education system itself was under fire from students who saw its thinly veiled purpose as training young people to serve capitalism and industry. Many of the radicalized youth, including Eiko, thought that revolution was possible. Whereas this time period in the United States is characterized by the Summer of Love and "flower children," in Japan student activists are remembered for wearing helmets, color coded to indicate their movement faction, and the planks of wood or rocks with which they confronted riot police.

Eiko was drawn into the student movement when she was still in high school. Her school was located across from the Tokyo University campus near Shibuya where protests and barricades were a part of daily life. In fact, Eiko led the first high school student strike in Japan, barricading her school with friends for ten days. Thinking back on that time, Eiko reflects on the choices she made, "You don't barricade your high school if you wanted to get a good job! Either I was being really [immature], or I was really politically motivated. I think it was maybe a combination of the two."² In addition to occupying the university and high school through strikes and barricades, Eiko attended demonstrations daily, including those at Haneda Airport aimed at preventing the prime minister from departing the country. Increasingly, however, the movement was fragmenting. Eiko observes, "The fights between the sects in the new left were becoming fiercer than their fights with the government or corporations, and I was very disillusioned."³ Students began to return to class. Eiko tried out some classes in political science but felt they did not reflect the figurative and literal battles the protestors had just been through. Eiko could not act as if nothing had happened, saying "You would have to ignore entire questions in order to study and I wasn't willing to ignore it."⁴ Eiko dropped out of Chuo University, leaving behind her political science major in the Law Department. But that does not mean that her questioning ended, only that she began to seek answers, or at least new ways of asking the questions, elsewhere. The vibrant Tokyo avant-garde arts scene provided a new field of investigation.

1. Eiko & Koma, Interview by Deborah Jowitt, January 6, 1998, transcript, Oral History Project, Dance Collection, New York Public Library, 4.

2. Eiko Otake, interview with the author, November 8, 2015.

3. Jill J. Tan, "Body Politic (interview with Eiko Otake)," *Guernica*, December 1, 2015, <https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/body-politic/>.

4. Eiko & Koma, "Interview," 9.



Front row, second from right: Eiko's mother, age 8. She is surrounded by her three sisters, with Eiko's great-aunt on the far left. Back row, far right: Eiko's grandmother. Back row, second from right: Eiko's great-grandmother. The family ran a large-scale restaurant specializing in crab in downtown Tokyo. Their kimonos now often serve as Eiko's costumes. Circa 1933.

ART AND PROTEST

In Japan in the 1960s, and the Japanese new avant-garde more broadly, artists concerned themselves less with explicit political content, focusing more on creating a novel aesthetics capable of enacting a new kind of politics.⁵ This does not mean that avant-garde artists were not engaged in protest. To the contrary, artists like members of the Neo-Dada Group were on the front lines of major demonstrations throughout the 1960s. But their art was neither propaganda nor agit-prop (nor, as is often the case in the United States, a means to raise funds for the movement). Instead, whether throwing rocks at the Japanese Diet during the 1960 Anpo protests, slashing canvases, hurling bottles of paint at a canvas, or wrestling mud, protest and art happened on an aesthetic continuum; the medium may change, but the underlying concerns—direct confrontation of the body with an issue, intervention in everyday life, contestation of the new status quo—remained the same.

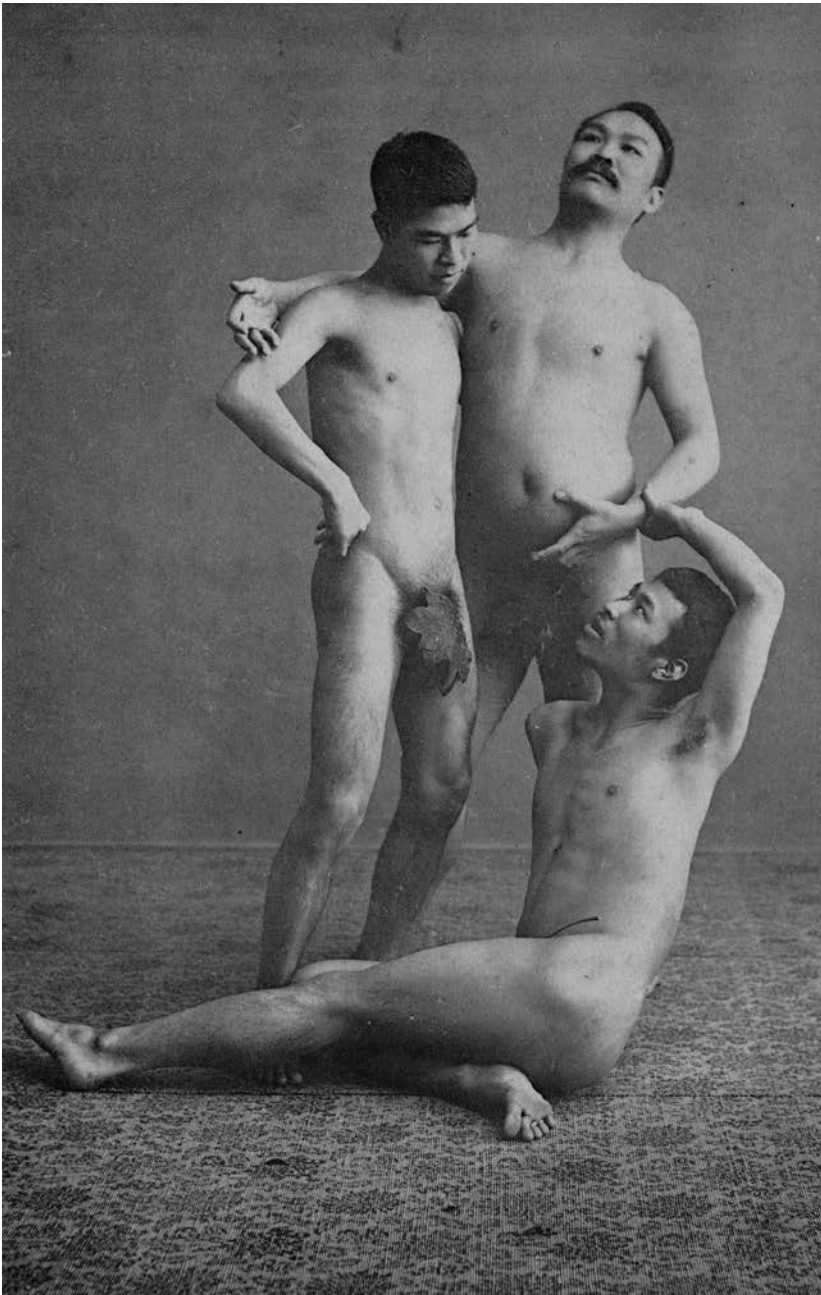
After she left school, Eiko continued her education in her own way while supporting herself with short-term jobs. She frequented the French Institute of Japan to watch French films, and a job at the Art Theatre Guild movie theater in Shinjuku exposed her to Japanese avant-garde films. She continued to read, finding in poets, novelists, and critics like Takaaki Yoshimoto,

5. This period has been the focus of a number of exhibitions in New York City in recent years, including MoMA's *Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde* (2012), and the Guggenheim's *Gutai: Splendid Playground* (2013).

A BODY ON THE LINE



Eiko's mother Yukiko Otake, age 17 (approximately). Circa 1942.



Eiko's grandfather, Chikuha Otake (sitting) with his older and younger brothers. The Otake brothers, prize-winning Japanese-style painters, were well known for their scandalous provocations towards the traditional painting world. Circa 1896.

Yutaka Haniya, Kenzaburo Oe, Ango Sakaguchi, and Kazumi Takahashi a different way of questioning and articulating thought. Through her explorations she came upon a performance of Tatsumi Hijikata's dancers at Shinjuku Art Village in 1971 and ended up at Hijikata's Asbestos Hall soon thereafter. By that time, Hijikata was a well-known member of the avant-garde, having first caused a stir in 1959 with his adaptation of Yukio Mishima's homoerotic novel *Forbidden Colors* and steadily making a name for himself through the 1960s as the instigator of movement experiments that became known as *butoh*. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Asbestos Hall was a place where young people could receive free room and board in exchange for performing in nightly cabaret and "art dance" performances. Eiko has described it as a temporary hideout from the intensity of the protests and political debates.

Eiko met Koma when they were assigned to do an "adagio" together shortly after she arrived at Asbestos Hall. Koma had already been with Hijikata for three months when Eiko arrived. Koma, like Eiko, had been deeply involved in the student movement before becoming disillusioned by the violence and infighting. Having rejected the dogmatism and hierarchy of the student movement, neither Eiko nor Koma was interested in becoming a disciple to an authority figure, even an avant-garde one. They left Asbestos Hall together, just three months after Eiko arrived, taking with them the knowledge they had gained through their nightly performance experiences. After a brief period of study with Hijikata's frequent collaborator, Kazuo Ohno, they took off for Europe, arriving in Germany in 1972. The pair spent two years performing in Europe and North Africa in festivals and self-produced shows. A chance meeting with a cousin of then Performing Arts Director of the Japan Society, Beate Sirota Gordon, led to an invitation to perform in New York in 1976.

The body of work Eiko & Koma have created since then, while not activist in the propaganda or agit-prop sense, is on a continuum with the interventionist and contestatory aesthetics of the Japanese avant-garde. Their slow-moving dances, often misidentified as "Zen," effect a gradual but profound transformation that has significant political implications. By returning to the same themes over and over again, for example by sustaining mourning throughout one dance and across their body of work, they demonstrate a stubborn persistence in attempting to understand cycles of human suffering and violence, whatever the cause may be. Eiko has said of herself, "I think my actions or decisions always arise as antidotes, from some frustration or ways in which I wish to be antagonistic toward something I come into contact with."⁶ For the past forty-five years, Eiko has taken action through her dancing with Koma, and now on her own.

6. Tan, "Body Politic," <https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/body-politic/>.

In a recent interview, Eiko explicitly reflected on the issue of art and politics in her life and work. She is clear that she does not make dances as part of a political agenda, but concedes that as a person with political views, who she suffuses her work, including all the complexity and contradiction. Her main concern about linking art and activism too closely seems to be that in seeking to effect a specific meaning or (re)action, political art risks preaching to the converted on the one hand, and overshadowing all other potential viewings of the art, on the other hand. At the same time, she acknowledges that art making is an absorbing endeavor, asking whether that process might divert attention from needed action. Eiko seems hesitant to impose any particular meaning on her audience, preferring instead to spark questions that viewers must answer for themselves. She says, “I work in art to continue my questioning and to try out answers. I want not only to question, but to live my life as an answer, however temporary.”⁷

EIKO IN PLACES

Given Eiko’s long term residence in New York, it makes sense that New York City and Middletown, Connecticut, home to Wesleyan University where Eiko has taught annually since 2006, resonate throughout the early stages of Eiko’s solo project. These places then connect Eiko back out to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima, and a host of new places where she has put her body on the line: Philadelphia, Hong Kong, and Santiago, Chile, just to name a few. For Eiko, witnessing the fall of the Twin Towers from her apartment window sparked an in-depth investigation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that led to her pursuing a Master of Arts degree in atomic bomb literature from New York University. For her thesis she translated Kyoko Hayashi’s story, “From Trinity to Trinity.”⁸ Hayashi, a *hibakusha* who survived the bombing of Nagasaki, writes about a *hibakusha* who visits the Trinity Site in New Mexico, where the first atomic bomb was tested in July 1945. At the same time that Eiko was translating Hayashi and finishing her MA, she began teaching university courses combining atomic bomb literature with Eiko & Koma’s Delicious Movement workshop material primarily at Wesleyan University, but also at the University of California, Los Angeles, the New School, Colorado College, and others.

In the “Artistic Essay” portion of Eiko’s thesis, she wrote about the process of bringing her experience as an artist to bear on translating Hayashi.

Whether as a translator or performing artist, my commitment is always to explore issues and concerns that are important and inescapable for me. As a middle-aged artist with a career spanning three decades, I want to be willful about nurturing a singular voice of my own. By translating

7. Personal communication, December 25, 2015

8. Kyoko Hayashi, *From Trinity to Trinity*, trans. Eiko Otake (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 2010).



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Hayashi's work, I am publicly announcing my respect to another artist's singular voice. I want to share with my own audience not only the work I create but also the sustained concerns and interests that inform my work. I did not approach Hayashi's work to hunt for a new idea for a dance. I do not intend to make a dance about the atomic bombings or about Hayashi Kyoko. Instead, I want to learn how, despite difficulties, certain artists can keep creating, re-inventing, and remain motivated.⁹

Two points are especially worth highlighting from Eiko's words. First is the idea that her work is a place to share and work through long-term interests and concerns. This is evident in Eiko & Koma's persistent exploration of mourning, nature, and human relationships over the years, even to the point of revisiting and repurposing choreography and sets to examine their shifting meaning. It also explains the structure of *A Body in Places* in which Eiko repeats her choreographic investigation at multiple sites. Second is Eiko's question about how to sustain and nurture oneself creatively as an artist. Retrospectively, it is possible to view her teaching and recent solo work as ways she has attempted to answer that question for herself.

At Wesleyan University, Eiko frequently co-teaches with William Johnston, a Professor of History with a focus on Japan. That teaching collaboration became an artistic one when in 2014 the pair traveled to areas of Fukushima, Japan that remain evacuated from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor meltdown following the devastating earthquake and tsunami of 2011. The resulting photographic exhibition, *A Body in Fukushima*, shows Eiko dancing in abandoned train stations, areas that used to be vibrant nodes of connection but now stand as markers of loss of life, devastation, and displacement. As Eiko dances on train tracks overgrown with weeds, she and the new growth witness the endurance of the earth despite the endurance of radiation. When *A Body in a Station* premiered later that year, Eiko's body and the futon and fabric that she carried with her provided material links between the stations in Philadelphia and Fukushima, asking audience members to consider how they themselves might be connected to another place and time. Eiko describes this intentionally created effect in her MA thesis:

On stage a work moves to the end, as planned by a choreographer Eiko, but in which the performer Eiko resists the flow, wishing to create in and near her body a nuanced pocket of time and space that is illogical. But even while playing with that illogical present, I am aware that I, along with my viewers, carry (consciously or unconsciously) what happened before "now" in our individual bodies and the body (the tangible reality) of time.¹⁰

Although this effect is also present in Eiko & Koma's work, the impact of Eiko's solo body in the photographs and in her live performances is quite different from Eiko & Koma's

9. Eiko Otake, "Artistic Essay" (MA thesis, New York University 2007), 4.

10. Otake, "Artistic Essay," 17.

two bodies together. As a duo, they often morph into each other, or another entity altogether. They exist in their own world. Alone, Eiko is human, relatable, an interloper in everyday spaces.

Watching Eiko careen through the Philadelphia station, pick her way down a New York City street, search desperately through a library, or descend a staircase in a subway station may call to mind for audience members memories of their grandmother, their own feelings of loneliness or searching, or even images of refugees searching for a safe haven amidst violence, political posturing, and religious bigotry. Whatever the specific meaning for each person encountering Eiko in these places, the fact of her presence on those same streets, staircases, aisles—alongside people yet set apart—asks her audiences to pay attention in a different way. Just as with the barricades of her days in the student movement, there can be no business as usual. Eiko's solo work asks people—those who have specifically come to watch her perform and those who have no idea who or what they are encountering—to really take notice of where they are. In asking, “*well*, what is she doing?” they find themselves asking what other people are doing there, as well as what other people might have passed there before. Eiko's surprising presence invites empathy and connection. The barricades of Eiko's student movement days were meant to block, to prevent passage, to refuse contact. The purpose of the *A Body in Places* series, on the other hand, is to connect and invite in, to encourage passersby to pause rather than forcing them to stop. In this way, Eiko is still putting her body on the line as a way of questioning and searching for something larger than herself. Only the effect has changed.



PLACES

AS WE DROVE between locations we often were silent. I was deeply moved by the knowledge that many of the people who had lived in the deserted houses and traveled through the now empty railway stations might never return. Even now, four years later, many of those evacuated are living in “temporary” shelters. Some have given up completely on the possibility of return and moved to other parts of the country. Former residents could visit their houses for only a few hours at a time, but because of the radioactivity could not reclaim even undamaged belongings. Outside the evacuation zone much of Tohoku is on its way to rebuilding. But the nuclear meltdown was a manmade disaster and one that the proponents of nuclear energy promised could never happen. After the fact it was, they claimed, literally beyond conception (*soteigai*); a better translation might be that it exceeded their assumptions. But that claim rang hollow. It seemed safe to say that the engineers and corporate executives who designed and ran the nuclear reactors had willfully decided to assume that this kind of disaster was impossible. To plan for it would have dug deeply into corporate profits. Government regulators, by approving the plans for the reactor’s design, accepted that assumption.

In this respect the Fukushima meltdown reflected a larger trend. Where anger and ignorance, expressed through aggressiveness and arrogance, had dominated the first half of the twentieth century, greed and ignorance had come to dominate the second half of the century and continues today. The First and Second World Wars were stirred, in no small part, by real and imagined injustices. Nearly entire populations committed themselves to war efforts, accepting as somehow inevitable the consequences of death and destruction for their own nations but particularly for their victims. Since 1945, while myriad and brutal Asian wars continued, in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear war has been averted over seven decades. At the same time people came to ignore the insanity of unlimited economic growth and ever-greater wealth. Nuclear energy seems to promise as much electrical power as any economy might need. Its proponents swore to its safety and continue to do so today, despite the many accidents, large and small, that have occurred in nuclear power generation facilities worldwide. Japan’s first major accident occurred in 1978 when Fukushima Daiichi’s No. 3 Reactor was allowed to run out of control for over seven hours. It was successfully brought back under control but the accident was kept secret until 2007. There are many today who support nuclear plants saying that it can cut carbon emissions. Perhaps that is true but nuclear power will never be one-hundred-percent safe, especially in a country with frequent earthquakes. Explosions and accidents can produce environmental and human disasters as well illustrated by Fukushima. And there is no avoiding the fact that ignorance of nuclear danger has been cultivated by those who want that danger hidden—recall the cute figure of Plutonium Boy that was created in the 1990s to put the Japanese people at ease with nuclear power.

We left Fukushima on January 18 [2014], and from there we went directly to visit Hayashi Kyoko, the writer and survivor of the Nagasaki atomic bombing. Eiko and I both were nervous about how she would see the images we had created. Upon seeing a selection of ten images, Ms. Hayashi said, “Because you are in these pictures, I look at each scene much longer. I see more detail. I see each photograph wondering why Eiko is here, how she decided to be here, how she placed herself here.”

William Johnston

Excerpted from “The Making of ‘A Body in Fukushima’: A Journey through an Ongoing Disaster: *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 13, Issue. 9, No. 4, March 9, 2015.

JANUARY 2014



Top and bottom: Tomioka, Fukushima, Japan. July 22, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

ON A JUNE afternoon in 2014 I went to see Eiko rehearse a duet with Tomoe Yamasaki, a Tokyo-based dancer, in the basement of a former army warehouse on Governor's Island just off the coast of lower Manhattan. I arrived via ferry from Brooklyn, where I noticed I was the only person traveling alone—everyone else was in pairs or groups, many of them carrying picnic baskets or wheeling bicycles. As a party of one I seemed to have a special status in which I could closely observe others—at times even stare openly—with no one seeming to notice me. I relish those New York City moments of anonymity, like when you're crying on the subway and no one stops to ask what's wrong. It makes me feel so wonderfully small, so insignificant compared to the powerful forward motion of a city whose inhabitants are too restless to heed the tears of strangers.

That afternoon I watched Eiko and Tomoe perform a duet. I mostly watched Eiko. I also watched the dancer Valda Setterfield, the sole other observer, and the most regal person I've ever met. At one point, Valda closed her eyes for a full minute and I thought she might be asleep. But when she opened her eyes again she seemed so alert that I wondered if she possessed some other mysterious mode of observation that didn't require sight.

Eiko surprised me that day. She used a red silk cloth as a prop, at one point gathering it between her legs and tugging at it violently—existential female pain made visible. I thought back on the many conversations I'd had with her over the years, her advice to me in matters of art making, ambition, and desire. I wondered if those matters, which felt so pressing to me as a young woman, might in fact never go away. I wondered if they would stay inside me and perhaps become even more convoluted. And, in a way that brought me a perverse sort of comfort, maybe that convolutedness would be the only constant.

I wrote in an email to Eiko afterwards:

Your performance is generous, even more generous when it's you alone than with Koma or Tomoe. I'm not sure why. It's the strength of your performance, yes—a feeling of not needing to hold back or coordinate with another person—I felt your focus on me/us (the audience) so completely. But your focus is not even about sight or gaze, it's happening on some other level... maybe through the personal invitation, the act of accepting the invitation, traveling by train and boat and foot? All of it is still about time. The time of travel, time of commitment, time of watching... except with your lone body it invites a more personal reflection in the sense of confronting loneliness, attachment, longing. When Koma is there I can distance myself more, because there is a relationship I'm not part of. When it's just you, I feel more implicated.

Re-reading that now, the word “implicated” jumps out at me. By definition, it refers to the act of being closely connected to or involved in something. And yet the word has a somewhat negative connotation, i.e. to be implicated in a crime. Eiko as a performer has a way of implicating us as audience members, forcing us to confront our humanness and its profound failures. “I am pathetic,” I’ve often heard Eiko insist, in talking about her intent as a solo performer. Sometimes I laugh when she says this, because it sounds ridiculous coming from someone so strong and accomplished. But maybe what she means is that we are all pathetic. And by acknowledging that, there is space to practice empathy. The tears of strangers might never be ours, but somehow we still see them, even when our eyes are closed.

Lydia Bell

JUNE 2014



Top and bottom: Rehearsal at Arts Center at Governors Island, New York, NY. June 10, 2014. Photo by Anna Lee Campbell.

30TH STREET STATION, PHILADELPHIA, PA



Top: *A Body in a Station* performance at 30th Street Station, Philadelphia, PA. October 3, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.
Bottom: Rehearsal at 30th Street Station, Philadelphia, PA. September 27, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

30TH ST. STATION, Philadelphia. Noon. Steady activity. It's a grand space, huge windows supporting a soaring ceiling. Below it, the familiar trappings of any transit hub: fast food, coffee stands, a grid of benches where people drift to sit and wait. There's a softness to the place, worn smooth in some way from years of being passed through, a point on a journey elsewhere.

Notice: near the door. A woman, wearing a kimono, dwarfed by a huge column. Everything continues around her, but her presence, like a stone in a river, changes the flow of the station.

She stands, flickering in and out of attention. Now moving with gentle force contrary to the people passing by, now slipping into a different current and letting it buoy her along, deeper into the station, toward a waiting room in this building that only exists to wait in, to pass through.

On the floor of the waiting room, a futon. Nearby a swath of red fabric. The futon is black. Now it's white. Now it's an island. A raft. Only a futon. The red fabric is a washcloth. Now it's history. Now it's her intestines, now only a fragile patchwork, threadbare, moth-eaten.

Now there's a flower. Now a bowl of water. Now a woman in a pink shirt, frozen, watching. Now a snatch of flute, floating overhead. Now a line of people, waiting to board a train. Now almost no one.

And now she's sleeping, now washing the floor. Now a voice obscured by echo announces some departure. Now she's a traveler, resting for a moment before continuing her journey. Now she's just waiting, a strangely shaped stone in the river of people. A nuisance.

Now the whole room is a frame, and the people passing through are somehow lifted: their tired walks made noble, their rushing made graceful, athletic. Here in this place that's always vibrating at a low frequency with the pull of elsewhere, she's resisting. She's pulling the other way, towards here and now, and it makes the whole world stand up straighter, shot through with a subtle tension. Not tension, no: attention.

She's up. She's wandering away from us, small, the size of any other person passing. She blends in, if you let her. Flickering. And then you follow as she heads for the door. Suddenly she's wild. The station is a mostly empty expanse and she's ranging across it, celebratory, unburdened. It's midnight. It's a month later. The world has continued on as she sat in the middle of a stone floor. The door floats open, and she wanders out, feeling the pull of another room in another place.

Somewhere is another waiting room, a room waiting to hold her. As you follow her out into the night, feeling the pull of whatever room is waiting to hold you, you know that somewhere she'll be walking, sitting, waiting, moving, until the next room calls.

Mark McCloughan



Top and bottom: *A Body in a Library* performance at Olin Library, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. February 23, 2015. Photo by Sandy Aldieri of Perceptions Photography.



Top and bottom: *A Body in a Library* performance at Olin Library, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. February 23, 2015. Photo by Sandy Aldieri of Perceptions Photography.

“A BODY IS an ancient measurement stick that offers a scale to things.” —Eiko

A crowd swarmed the mesmerizing powder pale figure, as she crossed Broadway and entered Fulton Center, a newly renovated, recently reopened transit hub in Lower Manhattan. Nine subway lines meet at this station and 300,000 people pass through it each day. Like many construction projects in Lower Manhattan, Fulton Center had been a work-in-progress since September 11, 2001. Its rebuilding being inextricably tied to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Fulton Center’s significance extends well beyond the impressiveness of its physical manifestation. The station represents movement forward and gestures mightily towards the future. As a *New York Times* headline read on the station’s opening day: “Out of Dust and Debris, a New Jewel Rises.”

Eiko’s performing body simultaneously inhabits and contains site. Her grip on meaning is firm and it is embodied in her unflinching physicality. As Lower Manhattan Cultural Council prepared to present *A Body in a Station* (2015), Eiko and I first visited sites throughout Lower Manhattan. On one of many walks, we traversed east to west from the Municipal Building to Battery Park. It was here that we inadvertently, though I now think inevitably, ended up at one of the original sites for Eiko & Koma’s 2002 work, *Offering*. Through *Offering* Eiko & Koma enacted and shared a mourning ritual after 9/11—each performance (of which there were many, including several at St. Mark’s Church graveyard) was free and open to the public.

About one month after that walk, Fulton Center opened, as did the opportunity to work in the site. The decision to work there meant absorbing and confronting tragic personal and universal histories as well as the current realities of the location—the architecture, the site’s primary function as a center for transit, and its capacity for advertisement via large digital screens.

For *A Body in a Station*, Eiko arrived carrying a bundle of weeds that she described (13 years after the Battery Park performance) as an offering, saying that due to the nature of the site, she did not want to arrive empty-handed. At a later moment, Eiko vigorously scrubbed the floor tiles with a blazing red fabric that she then carried with her throughout the performance. At times she seemed in control of the fabric, and at times it of her—it was life, blood, spirit—and eventually, she left it behind as she crossed directly in front of the largest ad-flashing screen and exited the station.

When I think of Eiko performing *A Body in a Station* at Fulton Center, I am struck most by her conviction and her generosity, both immeasurable and intertwined. Though her movement is abstract, her clarity in this regard is transporting. In Fulton Center, at moments Eiko appeared to be a conduit, a spiritual leader, human, and otherworldly. Her ability to physically and emotionally bear grief, sorrow, and triumph in this performance offered a gateway for viewers to access their own.

My own near daily experience of Fulton Center is something I now can’t separate from Eiko’s performance. Crucially, the scrupulousness with which she placed her body in this place has completely shifted the way that I, and others, will always think of Fulton Center or maybe any train station, today and forward. Its functional goals accomplished upon opening, the station’s real meaning and potential could only be revealed and unraveled by such a singular artist.

Melissa Levin

JUNE 2015



Top and bottom: *A Body in a Station* performance at Fulton Center, River to River Festival, New York, NY. June 23, 2015. Photo by William Johnston.



Top and bottom: *A Body in Places* performance at Cordoba Center for the Arts. American Dance Festival, Durham, NC. July 8, 2015. Photo by Grant Halverson.

WE DRIVE TO a warehouse not far from the Duke University campus. The ground floor space is vast and raw. Dusty concrete floor, a small puddle of water, bare support columns, exposed wires, two rows of about 15 folding chairs arranged in a crescent with a row of pillows on the floor in front of them. At a distance into the cavernous space there is a square blanket or sheet. The door to the parking lot and street beyond remains open. We chat with one another as the last arrivals enter and find their places. From where I sit at the end of the first row of chairs I can see her walking outside in the distance. She is carrying something. She moves slowly, I nudge my companion and we watch her as other audience members are still chatting. Then she slowly passes from our view and is gone. These are my memories of *A Body in Places* five months after the event.

In a while she appears in the open doorway and the talking stops. She moves slowly, deliberately and very close to audience members seated on the cushions on the floor. She sees us as we see her. The air is charged with her presence. I can't remember what she's carrying, or if she is carrying anything at all. A bundle of wild weeds perhaps, or nothing. Memory.

At her glacial pace she makes her way to the square of fabric on the floor. I am aware of the shifting light outside the open door. And sounds of a small Southern city on a summer's evening. Her body merges with the square. Folding, crumpling, hiding, protecting and being protected by it. I feel the organic relationship between her body and the material. Then she gathers it in her arms and moves with it far, far away from us to the other end of the warehouse floor. There is a heavy door which she tries to open. Suddenly her movement becomes wilder. The blanket flies into the air. A sudden squall interrupting the quiet. Then just as sudden, all is calm once more. She inches her body to the door and to the outside. Is she finished; is "it" over; should we applaud? Some of us stand and go to the doorway. Others follow. She is still moving, out into the lot, toward the street, into the summer evening. At the street she turns to the left and disappears behind a thicket of tall weeds. As I try to remember this now, five months after, I am not sure how much of it really happened. It is so much like a dream.

Ishmael Houston-Jones

I ARRIVE SLIGHTLY late... people are already there looking through the library windows at the central courtyard, a courtyard I didn't know existed until Eiko performed there. All in yellow, except for a dash of red fabric to protect an injured toe, she is lying in the vines beneath a tree. Her hand slowly reaches up towards the tree. She reminds us that it is there, and that it has been there, and that it will probably be there after we are gone.

I wonder if she's always been there at the base of that tree and we just haven't noticed her? If I look away and then look back, will she still be there?

We join her in the courtyard and she introduces a bowl of water in the enclosed environment where water does not flow. She shares an element that we all need to survive and as she does, she looks at us: the performer is one of us; she is not separate. What she knows, we can know too. She approaches, and as she comes towards me, she leans in. I find myself compelled to put my arm around her.

In the children's room, we fit our adult bodies into the chairs made for little bodies and are reminded of our children selves. We see a floor to ceiling projection of Eiko in the overgrown vines in Fukushima after the disaster. Eiko takes the red fabric we know well from Bill Johnston's images of their journey to Fukushima, and she holds it up against the projection. Her body has been there and is now here. Through her we enter a world most of us will never see.

She seems desperate as she leads us to the main reading room. There we find library patrons seated at tables. Some look up briefly and then look back down and some make the decision to bear witness like the rest of us. Eiko climbs onto one of the tables, stretches out and uses her mouth to taste a book. We consume the knowledge found in books and on the internet, but what about the knowledge of the body? Through Eiko's intense gaze fixed on those who gaze at her, she urges us to wake up, to feel, to reckon with what the world has become outside of the reading room. And there is a sense that we don't have much time.

In the thirteen years that Eiko has been coming to Wesleyan to perform or to teach, she has enabled hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members to slow down, to take notice and to see in ways we do not normally see. And wherever we have seen her—Zilkha Gallery, the CFA Theater, Olin Library, the Alsop House, the Observatory—she lingers. The places where she has been are changed for us because she has been there.

When asked about Russell Library's decision to host a performance by Eiko, the children's librarian said, "If we (as librarians) do not take risks, if we are complacent or quiet, we will not exist. We ARE the people. We have to stop being afraid."

Pamela Tatge

SEPTEMBER 2015



Top and bottom: *A Body in a Library* performance at Russell Library, Middletown, CT. September 17. Photo by William Johnston.

DAVISON ART CENTER, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CT



A Body in Places performance at Alsop House, Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. October 5, 2015. Top: photo by William Johnston. Bottom: photo by Perceptions Photography.



A Body in Places performance at Alsop House, Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. October 5, 2015. Top: photo by William Johnston. Bottom: photo by Perceptions Photography.



Top and bottom: *A Body in Places* performance at Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. October 5, 2015. Photo by William Johnston.

OCTOBER 2015



A Body in Places performance at Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. October 5, 2015. Top: photo by William Johnston. Bottom: photo by Perceptions Photography.



A Body in an Observatory performance at Van Vleck Observatory, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. November 5, 2015. Photo by William Johnston.

NOVEMBER 2015



Top and bottom: *A Body in an Observatory* at Van Vleck Observatory, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. November 6, 2015. Photo by Perceptions Photography.

PIONEER WORKS, BROOKLYN, NY

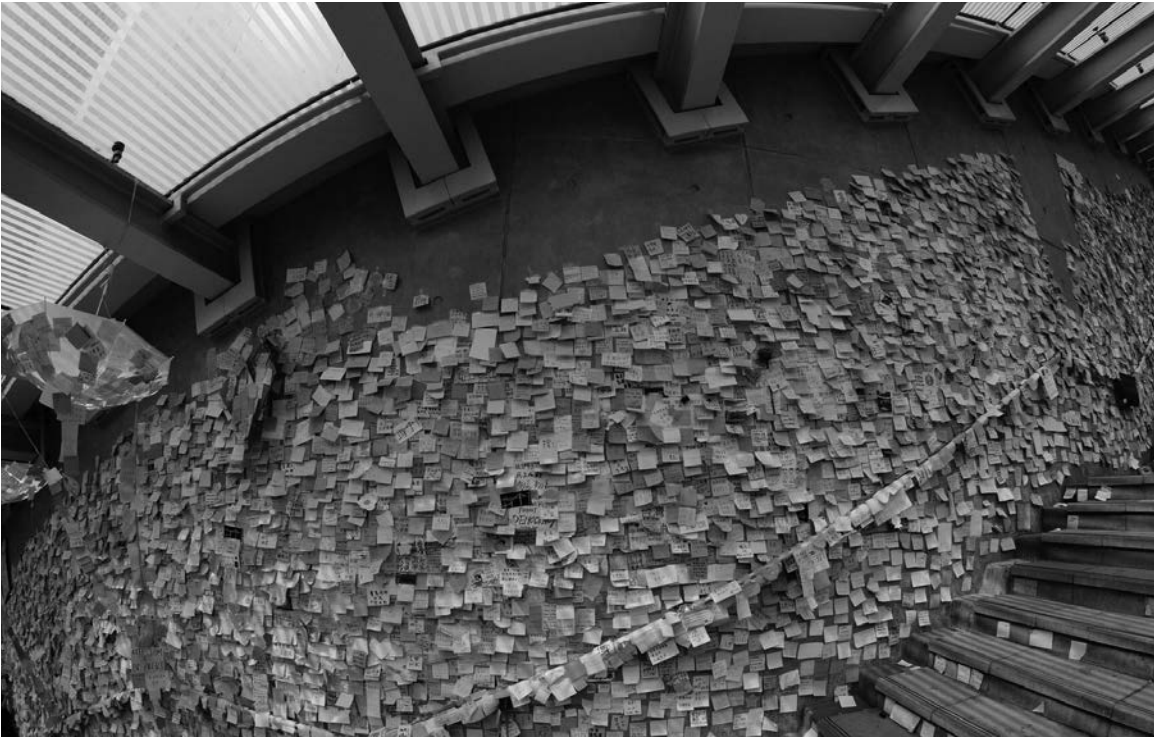


Top and bottom: *A Body with Hiroshima Panels* performance during the opening of *The Hiroshima Panels* (an exhibition by Iri and Toshi Maruki) and *A Body in Fukushima* (a photo exhibition by Eiko and Bill Johnston). Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, New York, NY. November 13, 2015. Photo by Cecilia Mezulic.



Top and bottom: *A Body with Hiroshima Panels* performance during the opening of *The Hiroshima Panels* (an exhibition by Iri and Toshi Maruki) and *A Body in Fukushima* (a photo exhibition by Eiko and Bill Johnston). Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, New York, NY. November 13, 2015. Photo by William Johnston.

TIM MEI AVENUE, HONG KONG, CHINA



Top: Tim Mei Avenue during the Umbrella Revolution. October 14, 2014. Photo by Vanessa Cheun.
Bottom: The Lennon Wall, Hong Kong. October 22, 2014. Photo by Jimmy Lau.

DECEMBER 2015



A Body in Hong Kong performance on Tim Mei Avenue, Hong Kong, China. December 6, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photos by CPAK Studio.

AT AROUND FOUR o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, December 6, 2015, Eiko stood on the pedestrian sidewalk at the corner of Connaught Road Central, the main artery running through the central section of Hong Kong Island, and Tim Mei Avenue, a turn-off to the Central Government Offices and the Legislative Council Complex of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. She was in a faded yellow robe dotted with red circles that she had worn in a number of past performances and held a red shroud, an indispensable prop used as an extension of her body. On this gray Sunday afternoon, there were only occasional passersby, couples and small groups, who glanced with bemusement at this strange, ghostly apparition as they talked to one another and went along their way, not even slowing down their pace. Soon a moment of panic arrived for me, the curator of the event, as I watched the beginning of Eiko's performance with a score of audience members from an elevated pedestrian bridge nearby. As Eiko lay down on the street, a good Samaritan, not realizing that it was a performance, approached and attempted to help her up. The crisis was quickly averted when our trusty local helper quickly materialized and intervened.

In fact, that was the second panic of the day. Upon arriving an hour earlier at the originally intended site for the performance—the elevated pedestrian bridge—Eiko, the team, and I were dumbfounded to find the normally quiet bridge teeming with Filipino domestic helpers lined up for their visa renewal. On Sundays, which is generally their day off, they take over almost all public spaces in the central part of the city—parks and sitting areas, outdoor plazas, as well as walkways and underground passages. But this particular bridge is not a popular location for gathering, perhaps due to its proximity to government buildings and the accompanying security personnel. Except this Sunday! Ever resourceful, Eiko quickly revised her planned movement route, away from the bridge and closer to the government complex.

A few months prior, in July, when Eiko was in Hong Kong for a site visit, we had a series of conversations about why she would want to perform in this area. This was the heart of the “Occupy Central” movement, also known globally as the “Umbrella Revolution.” Though the 50-day sit-in officially demanded universal suffrage, it was an extraordinary collective expression of the public's widespread discontent with the current Hong Kong SAR administration. For me and for many others, the extended protest was, more importantly, a historic moment of a young generation of Hongkongers defining themselves through self-organization and self-determination. The historical significance of these recent events in Hong Kong resonated with Eiko, a participant in the protest movement that rocked 1960s Tokyo, and she wanted her five-decade-older body to be at the site where her young counterparts had been. Although her performance was not intended to be a political statement, Eiko also realized that her presence could be politically sensitive, or even risky, as M+, the organizing institution, is connected and even identified with the Hong Kong government.¹ We felt that the Tim Mei Avenue pedestrian bridge was deemed to be a location at a physically and politically safe distance from the government building.

1. M+, a new museum for visual culture, is part of West Kowloon Cultural District, an ambitious plan by the Hong Kong SAR government to create an area with a number of cultural institutions. While preparing for the opening of the museum building in 2019, M+ has organized a number of off-site exhibitions under the series name of “Mobile M+.” The latest exhibition, of which Eiko was part, was “Mobile M+: Live Art” and was held from December 4-20, 2015.

The day prior to the performance, while charting her planned movement, Eiko realized that she wanted to open the piece on the stairs between the bridge and the government complex. The curved wall hugging the steps had been rechristened during the protest with a nickname, the Lennon Wall,² and was the most photographed symbol of the movement. With some hesitation but also with excitement, I agreed with her decision. Now, with the bridge abandoned as the main site of the performance and with little time left before the audience arrived, we decided that she would not make a right turn toward the bridge from the Lennon Wall, but instead turn left to enter the grounds of the government complex. She would then skirt around one of its entrances guarded by security, linger for a while in a public sitting area and amphitheater just outside, and end on another bridge that connects to the central section of the complex. Once the performance began, the audience of about two-dozen viewers quickly snowballed to include accidental passersby and overzealous photographers, both press and hobbyist. All followed Eiko like a hypnotized, almost crazed mob. By the final moment of the performance some of us organizers needed to intervene to create space for Eiko to move and distance for viewers to watch from. Interrupting her brisk progress, Eiko stood still and raised both arms, as if in surrender, or in defiance, arresting all in the crowd. Then she let out a piercing, animalistic cry. And it was over.

This performance was originally intended as an add-on to the main performance—a two-day event on the site of the future West Kowloon Cultural District Park, adjacent to the construction site of M+. I had originally anticipated that Eiko would not see this as an ideal location, either because it was under construction or because what was there was overly manicured. But in fact Eiko wanted her piece to be near where the future museum would stand, and she found the coexistence of nature and artifice attractive. On December 11 and 12, 2015, around the time of sunset, Eiko materialized in front of about a hundred audience members and led them from a desolate temporary parking lot to a lovely waterfront lawn to a boardwalk (she said it reminded her of Coney Island), and finally, as dusk fell and buildings became illuminated, to a lookout onto the iconic Victoria Harbor. She moved a distance of several hundred yards with the audience, who were enraptured by the reverie, tenderness, fear and trembling conjured by her body, as well as by the striking imagery of that body against the backdrop of the spectacular skyline of one of the world's greatest metropolises that is Hong Kong.

They may not have been thinking about how Eiko's *A Body in Places* series originated in Fukushima, or how her body was marking its presence in the fabric of the particular time and place that is Hong Kong at the closing of the year 2015, as the city hurtled toward an unknown future. But there was no doubt that the image of her presence would leave an indelible imprint on their memory.

Doryun Chong

2. Named after John Lennon, the singer-songwriter of "Imagine," the wall was covered with thousands of Post-it notes inscribed with messages of hope by Hong Kong citizens during the Umbrella Movement.

WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT, HONG KONG, CHINA



Top and bottom: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 11, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.



Top and bottom: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 11, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

SANTIAGO, CHILE



Top: C.D. Wright reads her poem *Obscurity and Empathy* on January 7, 2016 during Eiko's performance of *A Body in Chile* at GAM (Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral) for the Santiago a Mil Festival in Santiago, Chile. Photo by William Johnston.

Bottom: Opening night of Eiko's performance at GAM, where the *A Body in Fukushima* exhibition was shown. Seated in chairs: poets Forrest Gander and Raul Zurita, who had recited their poetry earlier in the evening, January 6, 2016. Photo by William Johnston.

JANUARY 2016



Top: Eiko performs at GAM for the International Theater Festival Santiago a Mil, Santiago, Chile. January 8, 2016. Photo by William Johnston.

Bottom: During the opening performance for International Theater Festival Santiago a Mil, Eiko leads the audience into the GAM plaza. January 6, 2016. Photo by William Johnston.

VALPARAISO, CHILE



Top and bottom: Eiko in Valparaiso, Chile. January 12, 2016. Photo by William Johnston.

JANUARY 2016



Top and bottom: Eiko at the Parque Cultural Ex-Carcel, a former prison in Valparaíso, Chile. The site now serves as a memorial for those tortured during Pinochet's dictatorship. January 13, 2016. Photo by William Johnston.

JANUARY 11, 2016. Nicanor Parra, a 101-year-old Chilean poet, sits on a sofa at his home in Las Cruces, a small town two hours away from Santiago. Though it is summer, he is wearing thick brown corduroy pants and a brown checkered flannel shirt over a blue pajama shirt. A salty breeze blows from his balcony that overlooks the ocean, the beach, and the village. Children's playful voices rise above the sounds of the waves from time to time. He is holding a brochure of my Fukushima photographs and his own folder that contains articles about the Fukushima disaster.

Three days earlier, C.D. Wright and her husband Forrest Gander visited this poet giant and told him about our Fukushima photo exhibition on view in Santiago and my performances there. C.D. told me how keenly interested Nicanor was in the project and repeatedly suggested I visit him. My photographer collaborator William Johnston and I also planned to work in Valparaíso, a coastal port city. "There are more colors in Valparaíso than anywhere," Forrest told me. While touring as Eiko & Koma, we could hardly stray from our presentation venue. Now working as a soloist at unconventional venues, I am a free traveler. So Bill and I find the Nicanor Parra's house as instructed. Nicanor's daughter welcomes us, but announces, "No photographs."

Being unfamiliar with Nicanor's poetry, I am slightly uncomfortable. With no time for homework in Santiago because of the two-show-a-day schedule, I cannot present myself as an admirer of his work. I welcome her suggestion and change into my yellow kimono. Several steps into the room, as soon as I drop my weight onto my left foot, Nicanor tells his daughter to put on Cueca, music for Chilean traditional dance. Light, gay music with a strong rhythm. He does not know what kind of a dancer I am, so I do not protest. Instead I try to find the no-music-place within my torso and move with that silence. Nicanor is puzzled and takes his white handkerchief, swirls it rhythmically, and his feet vigorously pound the floor with his steps without standing up. He cannot stand up without a walker but his entire body is surely dancing. I step over his walker that is blocking the way to the balcony. I whip my large red cloth with the wind against the blue ocean and sky. He is excited about the red and so is his granddaughter, perhaps seven or eight years old. She draws as she watches me dance. I am no longer fighting the music and I kneel next to him. Nicanor puts his hand and handkerchief over my hands and we dance a small duet. The music is over. Nicanor says with a big grin, "I was a good dancer and, dancing Cueca, a man seduces a woman."

In the following two hours, Nicanor speaks nonstop, about his young love, his visits to the U.S., his memories of Pinochet's dictatorship, how nuclear technology will destroy the earth, and about his poet friends including Allen Ginsberg whom I also knew personally. He switches from English to Spanish about every ten minutes but never mixes the two. When he talks about how he finally upstaged Allen Ginsberg, he loudly recites his poem "El hombre imaginario," singing the last line of each stanza in a mock Gregorian chant.

When I announce we have to leave Nicanor gives me his poem book. He writes on the inner cover in Spanish and translates it to me in English. "This is from Neruda's poem—*You leave with laughter and I stay with*

tears.” He adds, “This house is your home in Chile.” His daughter teases him for being seductive. He is a seductive 101-year-old.

Outside of the house I call Forrest. They are now on their way to the airport for their 11pm flight. We are travelling in the opposite direction, to Valparaiso. I report, “I was trying to figure out what I was supposed to learn from Nicanor. Then all of a sudden I realized that you and C.D. sent me as an unexpected gift to him. He perked up when he received a stranger and you knew he would. My little dance in Nicanor’s living room is the last one before the Platform.”

Two layovers later, C.D. and Forrest arrive at their home in Rhode Island in midafternoon, January 12th. That night C.D. died in her sleep.

During my performances at the Santiago a Mil International Theatre Festival, C.D. or Forrest read their poems along with one Chilean poet from the six poets Forrest had personally invited. Everyone except for C.D. read their poems in Spanish, so hers were the only ones I understood.

At the January 7th performance, as I was walking to my futon, I heard a line:

The hand has entered the frame just below the elbow.

Indeed, my hand quietly entered the frame with a quiver.

C.D. surprised me by coming to see my performances seven times in four days. It makes no sense why she is dead and I am alive. But her sudden departure and her intense gaze, as photographed by William Johnston during the performances, made me think of a performer’s body differently. It is a place where many people’s gazes stay and sink in. “Now C.D. does not remember,” Forrest says. If so, my body has to remember her seeing.

I, along with her many friends, miss her. Many friends heard from C.D. directly about her “great trip.”

Thank you C.D. for the deeply layered inspiration and smile you offered to so many. Thank you Forrest for reminding me how happy we all were there together.

We are so fragile, yet we laughed a lot in Chile.

Eiko Otake

POEMS

OBSCURITY AND EMPATHY

The left hand rests on the paper.

The hand has entered the frame just below the elbow.

The other hand is in its service.

The left moves along a current that is not visible
and on a signal likewise inaudible, goes still.

For the hand to respond the ink must be black.

There is no watermark.

One nail is broken well below the quick.

The others filed short.
Or chewed.

The hand is drawn to objects.

In another's it becomes pliant
and readily absorbs the moisture of the other's.

It retains the memory of the smell of her infant son's hair.

Everything having been written, the hand has to work hard
to get up in the spaces.

There is no tremor, but the skin is thin and somewhat
crepey.

The veins stand out.

The hand has begun to gesture toward its ghosthood.

Though at times it becomes almost frisky.

The desk is side-lit.

The hand has options, but has chosen to stay
inside its own pale, thin walls.

It has begun to show signs of its own shoddy construction.

The hand is there to express shouts and whispers,
ordinary love,

the afterimage of everything.

From the outside what light leaks through the blind
is blue, blue-grey.

There is a dog.

There is a fan.

The fan is on the dog.

C.D. Wright

From *ShallCross*, 2016 Copper Canyon Press

OBSCURITY AND SHELTER

it's the moon
it looks so natural
it's early yet
it's at the brink
it's still light
it's not too late
it's growing more insistent
it's the same house

that is incommunicado
I see a woman reading a book
they could walk to the water
of a memory she doesn't want to call up
trailing scarves of fog
blow between her eyes
the face is always there
skeletal but secure
where he grew up
a one-story clapboard with stuff
crammed into drawers
waiting for the adults to go out
never enough closets
so he could roll a smoke or call her
pull the door to
and start sprouting a mustache
who ate to the tail
straight from the fridge
trout skin flesh cartilage
always against everything
on multiple channels
as one's intentions are so often
obscured to oneself
wanting what one wants
the closeness, the warmth
that takes place before fire
a world before his candle
it's the ria that's heard

C.D. WRIGHT

beyond the treeline
the water folding back
a blanket that waits
for the body
halflistening
overflowing
its archipelagos
ria in Galician
drowned valley

C.D. Wright

From *ShallCross*, 2016 Copper Canyon Press

A BODY LANGUAGE

I.

It's a bend in the wrist
that ordains the emotion. Bent
wrongly, the pain. Spotlight

cusps her shoulder. Poised, the arm
stiffens at the outer limit of
its gesture. "Oh, I am like an old

trick with flowers
in my mouth." Both feet in-turned
as though broken.

With luminescence
inside her, the room goes dark. Meaning
stands with its nose to the corner.

II.

In the beginning is discomfort. To open a crack
for the questions. She sees
herself from inside herself, inside

this particular place with our collective,
swiveling eyes. Her throat
telescopes from narrow shoulders. In

serial clutches, she
staggers forward and bends, arms
draining downward like sad streams.

III.

The feet, they are naked, and the face. The mouth
gives out some blackness. It mingles
with limp hair. Bobbing forward

like a quail on her knees. The left foot
has another idea. A body language
expressing us before we can name it.

Forrest Gander



MY LOST CITY

Luc Sante

This essay appeared originally in the November 6, 2003 issue of The New York Review of Books. Luc Sante's 1991 book Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York, is a cultural history of lower Manhattan from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. Sante's depth of knowledge about the East Village echoes Eiko's efforts to mark lost, invisible sites and forgotten people.

THE IDEA OF writing a book about New York City first entered my head around 1980, when I was a writer more wishfully than in actual fact, spending my nights in clubs and bars and my days rather casually employed in the mailroom of *The New York Review of Books*. It was there that Rem Koolhaas's epochal *Delirious New York* fell into my hands. "New York is a city that will be replaced by another city," is the phrase that sticks in my mind. Koolhaas's book, published in 1978 as a paean to the unfinished project of New York the Wonder City, seemed like an archeological reverie, an evocation of the hubris and ambition of a dead city. I gazed wonderingly at its illustrations, which showed sights as dazzling and remote as Nineveh and Tyre. The irony is that many of their subjects stood within walking distance: the Chrysler Building, the McGraw-Hill Building, Rockefeller Center. But they didn't convey the feeling they had when they were new. In Koolhaas's pages New York City was manifestly the location of the utopian and dystopian fantasies of the silent-film era. It was *Metropolis*, with elevated roadways, giant searchlights probing the heavens, flying machines navigating the skyscraper canyons. It was permanently set in the future.

The New York I lived in, on the other hand, was rapidly regressing. It was a ruin in the making, and my friends and I were camped out amid its potsherds and tumuli. This did not distress me—quite the contrary. I was enthralled by decay and eager for more: ailanthus trees growing through cracks in the asphalt, ponds and streams forming in leveled blocks and slowly making their way to the shoreline, wild animals returning from centuries of exile. Such a scenario did not seem so far-fetched then. Already in the mid-'70s, when I was a student at Columbia, my windows gave out onto the plaza of the School of International Affairs, where on winter nights troops of feral dogs would arrive to bed down on the heating grates. Since then the city had lapsed even further. On Canal Street stood a five-story building empty of human tenants that had been taken over from top to bottom by pigeons. If you walked east on Houston Street from the Bowery on a summer night, the jungle growth of vacant blocks gave a foretaste of the impending wilderness, when lianas would engird the skyscrapers and mushrooms would cover Times Square.

At that time much of Manhattan felt depopulated even in daylight. Aside from the high-intensity blocks of Midtown and the financial district, the place seemed to be inhabited principally by slouchers and loungers, loose-joints vendors and teenage hustlers, panhandlers and site-specific drunks, persons whose fleabags put them out on the street at eight and only permitted reentry at six. Many businesses seemed to remain open solely to give their owners shelter from the elements. How often did a dollar cross the counter of the plastic-lettering concern, or the prosthetic-limb showroom, or the place that osten-

sibly traded in office furniture but displayed in its window a Chinese typewriter and a stuffed two-headed calf? Outside under an awning on a hot afternoon would be a card table, textured like an old suitcase with four metal corners, and around it four guys playing dominoes. Maybe they'd have a little TV set, up on a milk crate, plugged into the base of a streetlight, issuing baseball. On every corner was a storefront that advertised Optimo or Te-Amo or Romeo y Julieta, and besides cigars they sold smut and soda pop and rubbers and candy and glassine envelopes and sometimes police equipment. And there were Donuts Muffins Snack Bar and Chinas Comidas and Hand Laundry and Cold Beer Grocery and Barber College, all old friends. Those places weren't like commercial establishments, exactly, more like rooms in your house. They tended to advertise just their descriptions; their names, like those of deities, were kept hidden, could be discovered only by reading the license tacked up somewhere behind the cash register. At the bodega you could buy plantains and coffee and *malta* and lard, or a single cigarette—a loosie—or a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a stamp.

I drifted down from the Upper West Side to the Lower East Side in 1978. Most of my friends made the transition around the same time. You could have an apartment all to yourself for less than \$150 a month. In addition, the place was happening. It was happening, that is, in two or at most three dingy bars that doubled as clubs, a bookstore or record store or two, and a bunch of individual apartments and individual imaginations. All of us were in that stage of youth when your star may not yet have arisen, but your moment is the only one on the clock. We had the temerity to laugh at the hippies, shamefully backdated by half a decade. In our arrogance we were barely conscious of the much deeper past that lay all around. We didn't ask ourselves why the name carved above the door of the public library on Second Avenue was in German, or why busts of nineteenth-century composers could be seen on a second-story lintel on Fourth Street. Our neighborhood was so chockablock with ruins we didn't question the existence of vast bulks of shuttered theaters, or wonder when they had been new. Our apartments were furnished exclusively through scavenging, but we didn't find it notable that nearly all our living rooms featured sewing-machine tables with cast-iron bases.

When old people died without wills or heirs, the landlord would set the belongings of the deceased out on the sidewalk, since that was cheaper than hiring a removal van. We would go through the boxes and help ourselves, and come upon photographs and books and curiosities, evidence of lives and passions spent in the turmoil of 1910 and 1920, of the Mexican Border War and Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* and vaudeville and labor unions and the shipping trade, and we might be briefly diverted, but we were much more interested in the boxes on the next stoop containing someone's considerably more recent record collection. One day something fell out of an old book, the business card of a beauty parlor that had stood on Avenue C near Third Street, probably in the 1920s. I marveled at it, unable to picture something as sedate as a beauty parlor anywhere near that corner, by then a heroin souk.





The neighborhood was desolate, so underpopulated that landlords would give you a month's free rent just for signing a lease, many buildings being less than half-full, but it was far from tranquil. We might feel smug about being robbed on the street, since none of us had any money, and we looked it, and junkies—as distinct from the crackheads of a decade later—would generally not stab you for chump change. Nevertheless, if you did not have the wherewithal to install gates on your windows you would be burglarized repeatedly, and where would you be without your stereo? In the blocks east of Avenue A the situation was dramatically worse. In 1978 I got used to seeing large fires in that direction every night, usually set by arsonists hired by landlords of empty buildings who found it an easy choice to make, between paying property taxes and collecting insurance. By 1980 Avenue C was a lunar landscape of vacant blocks and hollow tenement shells. Over there, commerce—in food or clothing, say—was often conducted out of car trunks, but the most thriving industry was junk, and it alone made use of marginally viable specimens of the building stock. The charred stairwells, the gaping floorboards, the lack of lighting, the entryways consisting of holes torn in ground-floor walls—all served the psychological imperatives of the heroin trade.

Dealers knew that white middle-class junkies thrived on squalor, that it was a component of their masochism, and that their masochism, with an admixture of bourgeois guilt, was what had drawn them to the neighborhood. The dealers proved this thesis daily, at least to themselves, by requiring their customers to stand for an hour in pouring rain before allowing them inside, for example, and then shifting them up five flights with interstitial waits on the landings, and then possibly, whimsically, refusing to sell to them once they finally arrived in front of the slotted door. Of course, a junkie becomes a masochist by virtue of his habit, and any of those people would have done much worse to obtain a fix, but the dealers were correct to a degree. Some did indeed come to the neighborhood to revel in squalor, and junkiedom was part of the package, as surfing would be if they had moved to Hawaii instead. They were down with the romance of it, had read the books and gazed upon the pop stars. Junkiehood could happen to anyone, for a complex of reasons that included availability, boredom, anxiety, depression, and self-loathing, but many were tourists of scag, and if they wiped out as a consequence it was the inevitable effect of a natural law, like gravity. They had been culled.

For those of us who had been in the city for a while, squalor was not an issue. Most of the city was squalid. If this troubled you, you left, and if you were taken by the romance of it, a long regimen of squalor in everyday life would eventually scrub your illusions gray. At this remove I'm sometimes retrospectively amazed by what I took for granted. Large fires a few blocks away every night for a couple of years would seem conducive to a perpetually troubled state of mind, but they just became weather. I spent the summer of 1975 in a top-floor apartment on 107th Street, where at night the windows were lit by the glow of fires along Amsterdam Avenue. A sanitation strike was in progress, and mounds of refuse, reeking in the heat, decorated the curbs of every neighborhood, not excepting those

whose houses were manned by doormen. Here, though, instead of being double-bagged in plastic, they were simply set on fire every night. The spectacle achieved the transition from apocalyptic to dully normal in a matter of days.

Two summers later I was living with two roommates in a tall building on Broadway at 101st Street. It had both a doorman and an elevator operator; most of the other tenants were elderly European Jews; our rent for five large rooms was \$400 a month. I note these facts because the other buildings lining Broadway in that area were mainly single-room-occupancy hotels, tenanted by the luckless, the bereft, the unemployable, dipsomaniacs, junkies, released mental patients—exactly that portion of the population that would be turned out and left to conduct its existence in shelters or doorways or drainpipes or jails in the following decade. What those people had in common was that they could not blend into mainstream society; otherwise there was no stereotyping them. For example, a rather eerie daily entertainment in the warmer months was provided by a group of middle-aged transvestites who would lean against parked cars in their mini-dresses and bouffantes and issue forth perfect four-part doo-wop harmonies. You had to wonder in which volume of the Relic label's "Golden Groups" series they might figure, perhaps pictured on the sleeve in younger, thinner, pencil-mustached, tuxedo-clad incarnations. For them, as for most people on the street—including, we liked to think, us—New York City was the only imaginable home, the only place that posted no outer limit on appearance or behavior.

When the blackout happened, on the evening of July 13, 1977, it briefly seemed as though the hour of reckoning had arrived, when all those outsiders would seize control. Naturally, no such thing occurred. The outsiders seized televisions and toaster ovens and three-piece suits and standing rib roasts and quarts of Old Mr. Boston and cartons of Newports and perhaps sectional sofas, but few would have known what to do with the levers of society had they been presented in a velvet-lined box. But then, my friends and I wouldn't have known, either. For all the obvious differences between the S. R. O.-dwellers and ourselves, we were alike in our disconnection from any but the most parochial idea of community. In the end the mob dissolved like a fist when you open your hand, and the benches on the Broadway traffic islands were repopulated by loungers occasionally pulling down a bottle hanging by a string from a leaf-enshrouded tree branch overhead.

The looters were exemplary Americans, whose immediate impulse in a crisis was to see to the acquisition of consumable goods. They had no interest in power. Neither did anyone I knew. We just wanted power to go away. Sometimes it seemed as though it already had. In those days the police, when not altogether invisible, were nearly benign, or at least showed no interest in the likes of us, being occupied with actual violent crime. Almost everybody had a story about walking down the street smoking a joint and suddenly realizing they had just passed a uniformed patrolman, who could not possibly have failed to detect the odor but resolutely looked the other way. Casual illegality was unremarkable



Bleecker and Lafayette Streets, New York, NY. 2015. Photo by Judy Hussie-Taylor.

and quotidian, a matter of drug use and theft of goods and services, petty things. We slid by in weasel jobs, in part because we were preoccupied with our avocations and in part because a certain lassitude had come over us, a brand of the era.

The revolution was deferred indefinitely, then, because we were too comfortable. Not, mind you, that we didn't live in dumps where the floors slanted and the walls were held together with duct tape and the window frames had last been caulked in 1912 and the heat regularly went off for a week at a time in the depths of winter. The landlords were the primary villains and the most visible manifestations of authority. Very few still went from door to door collecting rents, but most could be physically located, sitting on the telephone at a secondhand metal desk in some decrepit two-room office, and that included the ones who went home to mansions in Great Neck. Real estate was a buyer's market, and owners needed to hustle for every dollar, and were correspondingly reluctant to make expenditures that would be any greater than the anticipated legal costs of not making them. At the same time, you could let the rent go for a while and not face eviction, because the eviction process itself would cost the landlord some kale, besides which it might be hard to find anyone else to take up the lease, so that a tenant who only paid every other month was better than nothing. We were comfortable because we could live on very little, satisfying most requirements in a fiercely minimal style for which we had developed a defining and mitigating aesthetic. It was lucky if not altogether coincidental that the threadbare overcoat you could obtain for a reasonable three dollars just happened to be the height of fashion.

Suspicion in the hinterlands of New York City's moral fiber and quality of life, rampant since the early nineteenth century, reached new heights during the 1970s. Hadn't the President himself urged the city to drop dead? If you told people almost anywhere in the country then that you lived in New York, they tended to look at you as if you had boasted of dining on wormwood and gall. Images of the city on big or small screens, fictional or ostensibly journalistic, were a blur of violence, drugs, and squalor. A sort of apotheosis appeared in John Carpenter's *Escape from New York* (1981), in which the city has become a maximum-security prison by default. The last honest folk having abandoned the place, the authorities have merely locked it up, permitting the scum within to rule themselves, with the understanding that they will before long kill one another off. The story may have been a futuristic action-adventure, but for most Americans the premise was strict naturalism, with the sole exception of the locks, which ought by rights have been in place. Aside from the matter of actual violence, drugs, and squalor, there was the fact that in the 1970s New York City was not a part of the United States at all. It was an offshore inter-zone with no shopping malls, few major chains, very few born-again Christians who had not been sent there on a mission, no golf courses, no subdivisions.

Downtown we were proud of this, naturally. We thought of the place as a free city, like one of those pre-war nests of intrigue and licentiousness where exiles and lamsters and refugees found shelter in a tangle of improbable juxtapositions. I had never gotten around to changing my nationality from the one assigned me at birth, but I would have declared myself a citizen of New York City had such a stateless state existed, its flag a solid black. But what happened instead is that Reagan was elected and the musk of profit once again scented the air. It took all of us a while to realize that this might affect us in intimate ways—we were fixated on nuclear war. So while we were dozing money crept in, making its presence felt slowly, in oddly assorted and apparently peripheral ways. The first sign was the new phenomenon of street vendors. Before the early 1980s you never saw people selling old books or miscellaneous refuse from flattened boxes on the sidewalk. If you truly wanted to sell things you could rent a storefront for next to nothing, assuming you weren't choosy about location. But now, very quickly, Astor Place became a vast flea market, with vendors ranging from collectors of old comic books to optimists attempting to unload whatever they had skimmed from garbage cans the night before. Those effects of the deceased that had once been set out for the pickings of all were now the stock of whoever happened upon them first. The daily spectacle was delirious, uncanny, the range of goods boundless and utterly random. You had the feeling you would one day find there evidence of your missing twin, your grandfather's secret diary, a photograph of the first girl whose image kept you awake at night, and all the childhood toys you had loved and lost.

What it meant, though, was that people who had previously gotten by on charm and serendipity now needed ready cash. It also meant that there now existed consumers who would pay folding money for stuff that had once been available for nothing to anyone who read the sidewalks. Part of the reason the *Luftmenschen* had to have dollars was the vast

increase in heroin traffic, caused by a steep plunge in prices. All of a sudden people who had been strictly holiday users were getting themselves strung out. While this was happening the neighborhood was filling up, rapidly. Every day the streets were visibly more congested than the day before. The vacancy rate fell to near zero. Speculators were buying up even gutted shells, even tenements so unsound they would require a fortune to fix. Was the fall in the price index of junk connected to the rise in that of real estate? Street-corner theorists were certain we were all marked for death. It was obvious, no? If you OD'd or went to jail your apartment would become vacant, and legally subject to a substantial rent increase. A folklore emerged, with tales of people paying rent to sleep on examination tables in medical offices, of landlords murdering rent-controlled tenants or simply locking them out and disposing of their chattel. Whether those tales were true or not, everyone spent increasing amounts of time in housing court, battling the fourth or fifth landlord in as many months, who all but treated the property as vacant. The neighborhood was subjected to lifestyle pieces in the glossies; a crowd of galleries sprang up. You could spot millionaires making the rounds in old sweaters.

The more I felt I was losing my city the more preoccupied I became with it. I gradually became interested in its past, an interest that grew into an obsession. It was triggered by what seemed like chance—by things I spotted on the flattened cardboard boxes on the sidewalk. On Astor Place I acquired for a dollar a disintegrating copy of Junius Henry Browne's *The Great Metropolis* (1868) and, a week later, Joseph Mitchell's incomparable *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*, a 1940s paperback with a ridiculous cover that almost dissuaded me from picking it up—I had never heard of it or him. In a heap of miscellanea on Seventh Street I found a pristine copy of Chuck Connors's very rare *Bowery Life*, and took it home for fifty cents. In a parking lot on Canal Street I bought a stereoscope card of the Second Avenue El; a table outside a junkshop on 30th Street yielded lithographs pulled from nineteenth-century copies of *Valentine's Manual*. These things were mysterious, slices of a complex past of which I had little sense. I was already fascinated by the strange process whereby the glamorous city of the 1920s had become the entropic slum that was my home; now I was discovering that the slum had far deeper roots.

One day, probably early in 1980, a film crew commandeered Eleventh Street between Avenues A and B and, with minimal adjustments, returned the block to the way it had looked in 1910. All they did was to pull the plywood coverings off storefront windows, paint names in gold letters on those windows, and pile goods up behind them. They spread straw in the gutters and hung washlines across the street. They fitted selected residents with period clothes and called forth a parade of horse-drawn conveyances. They were shooting a few scenes of *Ragtime* (Milos Forman, 1981). After the production packed up a week later, the Dominican evangelical church on Avenue A held a sort of exorcism ceremony in the middle of the intersection. I hadn't paid much attention to the goings-on, but I had been struck by how little effort was needed to conjure up a seemingly unimaginable past. When I walked down that street at night, with all the trappings up but the crew absent, I felt like

a ghost. The tenements were aspects of the natural landscape, like caves or rock ledges, across which all of us—inhabitants, landlords, dope dealers, beat cops, tourists—flitted for a few seasons, like the pigeons and the cockroaches and the rats, barely registering as individuals in the ceaseless churning of generations.

And now everything was up for grabs. The tenements were old and unstable; the speculators were undoubtedly buying them up for the value of their lots. One day in the near future they would be razed and containment units at least superficially more upscale would be built. Maybe the whole neighborhood would be reconfigured, the way Washington Market and the far Lower East Side were swept, to the point where whole streets had disappeared. Within a decade, all of us who had lived there in the last days of the tenement era might seem as distant and insubstantial as the first people to move in when the buildings were new. I told myself it was inevitable. I remembered Baudelaire's warning that the city changes faster than the human heart. I thought of my grandfather saying that progress was a zero-sum game in which every improvement carried with it an equivalent loss, and decided that the reverse was also true. I considered that at the very least nobody in the future would have to contend with a stiff wind sucking out an entire loose windowpane, as had once happened to me. Then I pictured the high-rises themselves falling inch by inch into ruin. I bore an old-timer's resentment toward the children of privilege who were moving into tastefully done-up flats and about to start calling themselves New Yorkers, even Lower East Siders, and might spend decades without once having spent a winter sitting in front of an open oven wearing an overcoat and hat, or having to move pots and pans and furniture by subway in the middle of the night, or having bottles thrown at them by crack dealers, or having to walk home from Brooklyn in the rain for want of carfare. But it was for more than personal reasons that I wanted to prevent amnesia from setting in.

Now, more than a decade after I finally finished my book *Low Life*, the city has changed in ways I could not have pictured. The tenements are mostly still standing, but I could not afford to live in any of my former apartments, including the ones I found desperately shabby when I was much more inured to shabbiness. Downtown, even the places that used to seem permanently beyond the pale have been colonized by prosperity. Instead of disappearing, local history has been preserved as a seasoning, most visibly in names of bars. The economy has gone bad, but money shows no signs of loosening its grip. New York is neither the Wonder City nor a half-populated ruin but a vulnerable, overcrowded, anxious, half-deluded, all-too-human town, shaken by a cataclysm nobody could have foreseen. I don't live there anymore, and I have trouble going there and walking around because the streets are too haunted by the ghosts of my own history. I wasn't born in New York, and I may never live there again, and just thinking about it makes me melancholy, but I was changed forever by it, and my imagination is manacled to it, and I wear its mark the way you wear a scar. Whatever happens, whether I like it or not, New York City is fated always to remain my home.



CONVERSATION

*With Trajal Harrell, Eiko Otake and Sam Miller
Moderated by Lydia Bell and Judy Hussie-Taylor*

[October 2015]

In January 2015, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) hosted a public conversation between Eiko and Trajal Harrell, moderated by Sam Miller, as a part of Trajal's two-year Annenberg Research Commission Residency. Trajal's residency included an exploration of the history of Butoh, a postwar Japanese dance form, and the life and work of Japanese choreographer Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–86), a Butoh pioneer. In October 2015, Eiko, Trajal and Sam regrouped to continue their conversation at the Danspace Project offices in the East Village.

JUDY HUSSIE-TAYLOR: Where the three of you came together first was at MoMA.

TRAJAL HARRELL: A lot of people have spoken to me about that evening and said it was great, but I don't actually remember the specifics. I think we were just both very present in the moment. It was a blind date.

JUDY: Sam, what was your strategy going into it?

SAM MILLER: Trajal had some questions for Eiko about her experience early on in Tokyo, with [Tatsumi] Hijikata and [Kazuo] Ohno and others. Eiko was a little suspicious of those questions.

EIKO: As always. [Laughter]

SAM: She wanted to know what *motivated* Trajal in those questions. Trajal explained about his premise and his interest in Japan. Then Eiko talked about the experience of working in Tokyo in the early 70s, late 60s.

JUDY: Eiko, why were you suspicious of Trajal's questions?

EIKO: Because I wasn't sure why he wanted me to be there. The whole point was a "blind date." So I was thinking, "What would a blind date be?" I haven't done a blind date in my life.

TRAJAL: Me neither. You were my first!

EIKO: At the end of this whole evening, I really didn't think we got to know each other that well. But looking back the video I was much more revealing than I thought. But the thing was, I was there thinking, composing my own thoughts with new questions. Today I am just listening to you, which are two different things.

What I think is that you like Japan. You were moved by the work of Hijikata when you saw the video and you are interested in knowing how and why. But I didn't really want to represent myself as someone who can tell you why you like certain things, especially when I do not know you. But I did come from that country and I knew that man. So that's where we are meeting. I saw you doing your Hijikata piece at MoMA, well, you didn't quite *do* Hijikata of course.

TRAJAL: It was my Hijikata-period piece.

EIKO: And now starting last month I saw you in your Ohno period. Do you remember how I was a little confused that evening at MoMA? With Hijikata, I couldn't care less, basically. I am interested in that guy but I am not invested in that guy. Ohno—I am very invested. You came to my house, so to speak. You are taking my grandfather, and of course I'm not his granddaughter. It's just the proximity is different.

JUDY: Trajal, how did that conversation influence you and the work? Or did it?

TRAJAL: It's funny that Eiko and I keep having these conversations in front of people. [Laughter] I think it's elliptical. There are these superficial things we could say about why we talk: I was working on Hijikata, she worked with him, she was at MoMA, it makes sense. But in reality, there is something else

very interesting that we don't name that floats in our conversations. I found that she was incredibly open in the discussion. I thought she was going to be cagey and maybe not say very much.

EIKO: Have you seen me cagey?

TRAJAL: No, but I didn't know! Again, it's a blind date.

SAM: One of Eiko's concerns prior to that discussion was a long-standing concern about being thought of as part of a Butoh tradition.

EIKO: A concern about being seen as representative of Butoh. But connected, yes!

SAM: I don't remember how but we put that to rest very quickly. Trajal, you weren't interested in Butoh and her place in that tradition. It was much more idiosyncratic. And at that point it was like: oh okay, this is more about atmospherics and particular experiences, not some kind of family tree.

EIKO: And talking about a particular artist—Hijikata or Ohno—is totally different from talking about Butoh in general, right? You said you were making a map, but that map is not a Butoh map. It's Hijikata as someone you walked into, and of course that comes with Ohno, and you walk into that. I'm curious how your sense of knowing and researching Hijikata felt any different from with Ohno?

TRAJAL: I had previously seen Ohno dance twice but I didn't understand it. I went to Ohno as part of my current research because of a specific piece Hijikata had directed Ohno in, which is *La Argentina*. There was a structural section in the piece that I felt connected to my work because I felt that Ohno was voguing *La Argentina*. Therefore I could be voguing him voguing someone else. When I got to the place in the research where I wanted to look

at the tape of Ohno dancing the piece, which I resisted for some time because I want to work in my imagination, I was stunned by his dancing. This man was the most beautiful dancer. I remember sitting there going, "Wow, how did I miss this?" Before I was just not old enough, or didn't have the complexity or the artistic maturity to appreciate it. Now I don't know someone I admire more for their dancing than Ohno.

EIKO: I agree 120%! In Japan, everybody calls each other *sensei*, which means teacher. It doesn't matter whether you are actually the teacher or not. A doctor is *sensei* and everyone with some social weight with particular knowledge is *sensei*. I'm always correcting when someone calls me or others *sensei*, I make an almost political point in discouraging the rampant use of *sensei*. The only person I call *sensei* is Ohno. For me the *sensei* is someone you really learn from. That doesn't mean I was his disciple, but there was something that clicked in me so that I decided at one point, "I love this guy."

Ohno *sensei* perhaps felt betrayed twice, when we left him first for Europe and then for the US. He never understood why we would leave him. What young people we were! Young people just leave. He would actually go to visit his student's house when the student left. Because he didn't understand why other people would need anything other than his dance. Now I teach and *of course* I want my students to leave me.

Doing this Platform, I am re-connecting to those people who are dead. I don't necessarily live my everyday life thinking of dead people. But we are now connecting to the younger people through the Platform, so I thought why am I working so hard to connect with the young people? I have those older guys that I really need time now to think about, too.

TRAJAL: When was the last time you saw Ohno?

EIKO: Perhaps in 2008. Many times I visited. A few times I visited him after he couldn't move anymore.

TRAJAL: In Yokohama?

EIKO: In Yokohama. He was licking my hands. He could not remember who I was, so I said, "It's Eiko from New York, New York!" He goes, "New York!" and then he started to lick my fingers. And all the saliva... I thought, he is the only person in the whole world, who I let lick my fingers! [Laughter]

He was still dancing, whenever his son put on some music. He would go down to the floor, up to the chair. There's something about this amazing depth of desire.

TRAJAL: That's what I see in his dancing, too. You feel like there's this love pouring from him, like he's really in love with every movement. He's not judging it. There is a deep, deep love of what he is doing and it's very refined in that way. I'm not there yet to understand where that refinement comes from. There is something Japanese about that, that understanding.

EIKO: His was a *wild* refinement. Much of Japanese traditional art is about every little thing; so much has already been decided. I'm pretty sure anyone who started *Ikebana*¹ or tea ceremonies were vanguard at the beginning. Then it gets less fresh and more formal as the technique is passed down. But Ohno was not like that. He could hardly decide anything. It was about thinking, and how he prepares each wildness. So I think the refinement is there but it doesn't look like it.

TRAJAL: Yes, exactly. It's such a high level.

SAM: One of the things about Ohno is the sense that he's making choices all along the way both in a relaxed and refined way, like: "How do I feel, where am I, what's the room like?" It's not theatrical. It's not like, "Oh, I came into the room and I had a show." It's more like, "What are the specific circumstances of the weather, the room?"

EIKO: At the same time, he probably is the least vulnerable. Yes, he does absorb all that and yet, if the weather is not there or changes, or the room is not there, it also doesn't matter anymore.

SAM: Right, but you just feel there's a sense of choices and not *non*-choices, not falling into any kind of routine.

EIKO: He actually thought of himself no less than Picasso. Not that he would ever think, "I'm better," or "I am just as important." But I don't think there was any doubt in his mind that people were deeply moved by his work. He was never humble about his dancing, though he was a humble being.

TRAJAL: You met him before he made a comeback at seventy-seven. How old was he when you met?

EIKO: When I went to his studio, I was probably twenty years old, so it was 1972. He was born in 1906.

SAM: Then he was about sixty-six when you met him.

EIKO: He was only slightly older than I am now.

1. The Japanese art of flower arranging.

But I totally regarded him as this *old guy* who commuted on a motorbike. But it really changed. For a very long time, I did not want to be simply defined by Hijikata or Ohno. However, while I was looking at photos of me in Fukushima, some came to me as a surprise. I literally thought: “Oh, I do have Ohno *sensei* in me.” I was shocked because I am not the one who wanted to claim any kind of heritage.

JUDY: I want to talk about Ohno’s gender role-playing. I always just accepted him, I never thought, “Oh, he’s male or female.” It was like, “It’s Ohno.” This summer I spent some time on Youtube watching you, Ohno and Hijikata. You said something about Ohno being a “crazy flower” and suddenly I saw him embodying the feminine. It made me fall in love with him all over again.

TRAJAL: It’s like when I was working on the *Antigone* pieces. In ancient Greece, the performativity of men playing women didn’t mean gay, didn’t mean drag, didn’t mean camp. I think for us, we don’t have the pot to put it in.

EIKO: He had an urge to transform. I also think he did not like maleness or macho-ness in general. For him, being a performer always goes first. And choreography—he probably couldn’t care less in the way American modern dance thinks of choreography. Hijikata cared about every little movement of the spectacle when he was choreographing other people. Ohno was the least interested in choreographing other people. So that’s something probably I got from him. Hijikata literally bent other people’s arms. His dancers became his tool, and parts.

TRAJAL: That’s a part of the Butoh legacy, how they’ve been divided up. I’m going to hate to say this, but it’s important to talk about: a lot of people divide Butoh between black Butoh and white Butoh. And Ohno, some people would put him in the

white Butoh category, and say that he was more comical, more lyrical, and that Hijikata was dark and violent.

EIKO: In this case, white Butoh means what?

TRAJAL: People think of white Butoh as Sankai Juku for example. And that’s why I say Ohno is in the middle. In later years, his work became very white Butoh, it was not coming from the same violent, dark place. Even *La Argentina*, some people felt it became more drag, more like this kind of travesty piece. And I think he is seen as being lighter. I mean light as in not dark and heavy.

EIKO: Now that you have worked with this archetype of Hijikata and archetype of Ohno, do you feel you work differently?

TRAJAL: I think that I’ve become a different dancer in the last month after my relationship with Ohno. I’m not the same. I had to go through Ohno to find something in my body. And now the way I sense myself, it’s a whole new process. I think a lot had to do with going to Aomori. I always knew I had to go to where Hijikata was from.

EIKO: Hijikata is not from Aomori he’s from Aki-ta—but Tohoku, the same region.

JUDY: What did you do in Tohoku?

TRAJAL: There was a Performance Studies conference. It was the first time I went outside of Tokyo. Tohoku is known as being a very spiritual place. I didn’t go on any of the spiritual tours. There was a big group that went to this special mountain, where shamans bring the dead to talk with the living. I didn’t do any of that. But I think I started to understand on a deep level something else about Butoh, as a dancer—a different way of perceiving yourself in your body and your image. It’s just not intellectual. It’s a physical thing.





EIKO: Tohoku is wet and it's cold. Japanese houses don't have central heating even to this day. In Hokkaido, which is the farthest northern island, the houses are built warmer. But Tohoku is generally poor. When I was working with Hijikata, he often said, "Dance does not come from a warm place. Dance comes from a cold place. In a cold place you are doing *this*—squeezing a body, not stretching—and *this* is dance." And then it turned out, Ohno is from Hokkaido and he lived in Akita in his teens. Hijikata is from Akita, very cold, very backward country.

And then I realized that their teachers, Baku Ishii and Eguchi Takaya, who were Japanese modern dance pioneers—not Butoh—they were from the Tohoku area. I wondered why. I know Butoh talked a lot about coldness and wetness, but Japanese modern dance was also built by people perhaps defined by cold and wet places.

JUDY: I have a question about Ohno and Hijikata. They worked together for a long time. Did they get along? What was their relationship like?

EIKO: I think both of them saw in each other what one didn't have. I don't think Hijikata was intimidated by Ohno but Ohno was *totally* intimidated by Hijikata.

TRAJAL: From some of the stuff I've read, it seems like their differences also provided an ongoing debate between them. There were certain things they would debate over and over again, including Christianity.

EIKO: Ohno was a Christian.

TRAJAL: Part of their friendship, or their artistic colleague-ship, was these certain things that they would always argue about or debate.

EIKO: I was never there when they were working together. After three months with Hijikata we left and went to Ohno. At the time it was a strange thing to cross two different camps. It was like two separate worlds with different commitments. There was no cross-mixing between Hijikata dancers and Ohno dancers.

JUDY: What about Ohno's transgressive early work, reading Jean Genet and [Yukio Mishima's 1951 novel] *Forbidden Colors*. Did Ohno ever talk about that?

EIKO: All the time. In Ohno's class he would read from Genet and we would just listen.

JUDY: He would read aloud from Genet?

EIKO: Yes, many things.

JUDY: Both of them or just Ohno?

EIKO: By the time I went to his studio Hijikata was really just choreographing. He was using those words. He didn't treat us as if we could understand what he was talking about. Whereas Ohno did not even understand that we didn't understand.

With Ohno, it was like he was talking to himself or a mirror. We were a kind of mirror. We would be doing an improvisation. Ohno would just watch and do his own solo in his mind. He was not interested in us as dancers. We were the ones interested in him. And Hijikata was interested in us as his tool, if not as different individuals, because his dancers were like clay he could bend. I do not think he cared if we understood anything or what dancing meant to us.

Ohno's class was two hours twice a week. Sometimes he would show us a big book of paintings. He would say, "This week, I experienced *this*!" And it's all about the painting. And then next

week it would be all about a particular work of literature.

TRAJAL: You would do improvisations based on that?

EIKO: Yes, but I don't think we were even told we should move based on those works in particular. He would talk, and then say, "Okay start."

TRAJAL: In Japan, there are many things you don't say.

EIKO: I say pretty much everything.

TRAJAL: But it's hard to believe that they didn't see in Genet, and in certain theories about the outlaw and the homosexual, an outsider model for themselves. You read about Hijikata and the way homosexuality was being represented in his work and you have a hard time thinking there was no homosexuality in his own sexual behavior. What, he just wanted to lift up the homosexual?

EIKO: I only saw him dealing with girls. I never saw him dealing with boys.

SAM: This is the same time of [Yukio] Mishima.

EIKO: Of course, we all read Genet, it doesn't take Ohno to read Genet. It was in the air. Everything was "anti-". Sometimes Ohno wouldn't move for a long time. But once he had an audience even of one person or one photographer, he danced no less than for a concert. At one point during a photo shoot before a concert, he got so tired he said that he couldn't really perform well for the audience. There was something crazy performer with him. I think he may have been mentally relating to the energy of literary figures as they transcend everyday life. Some-

thing beyond what is known. In Japanese we call this "crazy flower." Something that blooms differently, crazily.

TRAJAL: What's interesting for me is that we cannot apply our Western gaze of homosexuality and gay liberation, drag and camp onto this. That's really important.

SAM: It's more than that. With the Germans and the Japanese, there was this incredible glorification of maleness.

LYDIA BELL: How did those dynamics play out in the cabaret setting that you were working in at the time?

EIKO: Well, the girls were the moneymakers. Because we were the ones who took it off, right?

TRAJAL: You worked in cabarets?

EIKO: Yes, "Night Shockers" was our name.

TRAJAL: Hijikata's cabaret?

EIKO: Not the one he owned. But the ones his wife sent us to. We made \$5,000 in a year and a half. But one day the manager said, "You guys are getting too artistic, bye."

LYDIA: And the audience for that was a very mainstream audience, right?

EIKO: Totally. Old men. But nobody was paying from their own pockets. Everything was paid by corporate hospitality budgets when the Japanese economy was on the upswing and moral issues were not discussed.

TRAJAL: What is your relationship to performing in Japan?

EIKO: I've performed probably in these forty years, four times there. Maybe six times. Not much. I only go when I'm invited.

TRAJAL: Do you want to perform there?

EIKO: To be honest, it's not easy for me to perform there. I did perform last year for my friends. Other than that, I have not performed there for sometime. I do teach there occasionally, but I'm not dealing with the dance field. In Japan I am more politically agitated.

JUDY: Something that interests me about you now is this idea of not holding anything back.

EIKO: Ohno had his second debut in his seventies. This is my second teenage time.

TRAJAL: I think that happens the older you get. You get better at not being afraid. It's not just that time is precious. You wear your confidence in a different way. You don't care.

EIKO: Well, I don't have confidence. But I am not cautious.

TRAJAL: You don't care as much what other people think, right?

EIKO: Recently I got a commission to honor the 100th anniversary of the [Van Vleck] Observatory at Wesleyan [University]. I had not been interested in the observatory; I'd never been there. Finally I go there and I see this humongous telescope, a hundred years old. It hasn't changed. A hundred years ago they were using the same telescope so it must have been much more impressive then. The as-

tronomy researcher showed me how it works and all of a sudden I was so naively excited.

Then he taught me how to measure the distance to the star. At first I said, "Don't tell me, I won't understand it." But he was very good at telling me how you measure it and I actually understood it! Then I wondered, "Why was I not interested in this before?" It was like being a teenager again. I'm moving very fast, because I don't think I have much time left. There's something that drives me now.

LYDIA: Trajal, I want to ask you, since you seem to work in multiples often, if you have any inkling of where Ohno might bring you to next?

TRAJAL: The work is really about Hijikata, I have to say. I don't know if you read it, but MoMA just put out a piece of writing related to my residency there.² The author [Michio Arimitsu] figured out that before Hijikata did *Kinjiki* (1959), which was the first piece with the chicken, he was rehearsing in a studio with Katherine Dunham.

EIKO: Really?

TRAJAL: Katherine Dunham was in Japan, she'd recently let her company go. Hijikata came into contact with this whole idea of Haitian voodoo and the cutting of the chicken. So basically, Katherine Dunham may have had a huge influence on what Butoh became. Before *Kinjiki*, they were also doing a lot of stuff with Jazz and actually Butoh was in blackface. It was not originally in whiteface. It's only after this that Hijikata begins to look shamanistic. So that's part of the research I'm looking at now—voodoo and Butoh.

2. Arimitsu, Michio. "From Voodoo to Butoh: Katherine Dunham, Hijikata Tatsumi, and Trajal Harrell's Transcultural Refashioning of 'Blackness.'" 2015.

I think my work has become much more about dance, *making* dance. I think that's part of being older too. Now I really want to get in on the craft of making dance. It's weird that I'm coming at that from Butoh, but I do think it is connected to this kind of refreshing—reinitializing my body through my experience with Ohno through Hijikata.

I was thinking about this idea of the artist as a wanderer, how you often have to go far to find yourself. The “wherever you go, there you are.” But you somehow have to go far to be where you are, to find “there you are.” It's very convoluted. You can rarely stay at home.

I was wondering, with this idea of *A Body in Places*—is there a difference between a place and a site? What is the significance of place?

EIKO: I like to use junior high school English. I always have been consistent on that policy, so I am not excluding people with a title. “Place” is junior high school English. “Site” is a little more elevated of an idea. “Meat shop” is a place. “Hospital” is a place. You can use a hospital as a site but then you are bringing in a different notion from contemporary dance. Whereas I am going to the hospital as a hospital.

TRAJAL: It's *A Body in Places* and not *Place*? It's funny because this other thing, body in place, is almost the opposite. There's a potential that you make the body in place *unstatic* too.

EIKO: I don't think I understand this.

TRAJAL: It's not stable, it's not static, it's not in one place. But the body in place could be a wandering body, could be a body that's transforming. I think that what you are doing could redefine this idea of the body in places as a static and stable position.

EIKO: Throughout history many artists traveled to make a living. All the musicians, storytellers. The artists wandered around, carrying information. They were the first ones to let people in a community know what's happening in other places. It's beyond information in a way, it's humanity. Satisfying people's urge to look far away, though most people were bound by where they lived. This is human. Stories are different from information. But they can be tangled.

By going to different places, I'm also interested in how I become the common factor. Between the hospital and the station, I'm the same person, so I become the thing that moves and discovers. My body is that commonality. It's revealing in a way, that I have been traveling all my life. The U.S. is not my country and I'm still commuting to and from different places. So this is what I want to do right now.

TRAJAL: It also feels like a performative notion, a way to describe what differentiates performance. We're calling everyone together because there's a body in place.

EIKO: Something about a body *not* in place is also interesting. Something is blocking it, something is not quite right.

TRAJAL: There's a lot of play on language there.

EIKO: But I'm not that sophisticated with language.

SAM: Please—

JUDY/TRAJAL: You are!

EIKO: I'm good with titles! For forty years, I made every title. Many ideas came from Koma, for which I totally credit him, but titles were my department. I love titles.



NOTHING IS ORDINARY

Eiko Otake

Kazuo Ohno died of respiratory failure on June 1, 2010. He was 103 years old. This essay was originally written in Japanese, commissioned by Gendaishitecho (Contemporary Poem Notebook) and published in its 2010 September issue titled Kazuo Ohno—Poetic Spirit Dances in the Sky. This English version roughly follows the Japanese original, though some expressions are slightly altered in translation.

KAZUO OHNO WAS a genius. A beautiful, crazy flower.

Anyone who ever saw Kazuo Ohno dance could never forget him. Sometimes in a gorgeous dress, other times naked but for briefs, or in a black suit with no make-up, Ohno danced and pierced through viewers' minds around the world.

Ohno's curtain calls were endless and strangely moving. He danced with the flowers offered by audience members, almost refusing for the curtain to close. During one such curtain call, an excited Susan Sontag ran up towards the stage. This was a different face of Sontag than what I knew from her books. Allen Ginsberg would not leave the small dressing room while Ohno was taking a shower. Looking at the misty glass door of the shower room that vaguely illuminated Ohno's thin frame, and closing his eyes from time to time to remember this dancer's performance, Allen would sketch Ohno's figure on his memo pads. Sitting between these two giants, I said to myself, "I will not forget this." I have said the same line many times in the long years I have known Ohno.

At every concert of Ohno, tears ran down my cheeks when I least expected myself to cry. Looking around, I also saw tears on other people's faces. It was not his choreography. It was his performance that moved people. Every detail of Ohno's body was transformed by his passion for the illogical. He looked utterly out of this world, breathing the grotesqueness of time. Even at his least magical concerts in which Ohno just could not enter the same realm of transformation, I still cried, touched by his apparent and humble effort. Every country we toured, people told me their memories of Ohno. Even those who did not have a chance to see him talked about his dance through their imaginations. The artist of the century, Kazuo Ohno danced the illogical wholeheartedly. He never stopped. A true radical.

Koma and I attended Ohno's studio from 1972 to 1976, except for two years in between when we studied in Europe. Ohno had been a gym teacher at a women's private Christian high school and after his retirement from a teaching position continued to work in the same school as a janitor. This teacher-turned-janitor Ohno, then in his mid-60's, was agile and handsome on his motorbike. But, as I had just turned twenty, I thought he was a really old man.

On my first visit to his studio, I followed the directions Ohno gave me over the phone and was surprised to find him waiting for me at the bottom of the hill. After that, I walked up that slope two evenings a week to his studio. At the time, he had only a handful of students. Ohno would say a few things, show us some pictures from time to time, then tell us to

improvise for about two hours. No more instruction before, during, or after. The task of continuously facing my own mind in the unheated studio and feeling the limit of my own imagination was so overwhelming that sometimes, upon arriving at the studio, I could not open its door. On such nights, after several minutes of hesitation, I turned around to walk down the hill in darkness.

After each class, Ohno served us food he had cooked. He knew his students came after work and were hungry. We ate silently, relieved but sulky from the improvisation. Ohno alone was passionate. He talked about the dancers who had inspired him in his young days (in the 1930's), such as Anna Pavlova and Harald Kreutzberg. He was particularly enthusiastic in describing how he saw La Argentina dance. Upon arriving to New York in 1976, Koma and I visited the dance collection of the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center and copied pictures and documents of La Argentina to send to Ohno.

Ohno and his family stayed with us when he first visited New York in 1980 on his way to Canada. He said, "That was a miracle," describing the day when he received the package of La Argentina photos from us. He had been at Natsuyuki Nakanishi's¹ exhibition earlier that day, and one of Nakanishi's abstract artworks strongly reminded him of La Argentina. When he returned home that day, he found the envelope from New York waiting for him. Looking at the pictures of La Argentina, Ohno then heard her voice: "Shall we dance, Mr. Ohno?" Though no formal concert had been planned in New York, Ohno had brought his costumes for Canada. So we quickly set up an informal concert at my friend's loft and he danced *Admiring La Argentina* for us and our friends. Another "I will not forget this" event.

Ohno had little doubt in his potential to move people and worked hard to give the spell. When he arrived in New York from Venezuela, amongst his exhausted staff, 75-year-old Ohno cheerfully reported, "I danced two times a day, because so many people could not get in and were standing outside." Ohno never calculated his effort. He danced for one photographer as fiercely as for a theater full of audience members. As the result, he was exhausted from a photo session when it was scheduled right before the concert. At such times, I saw him almost regretful of his own unstoppable desire to dance fully on any occasion. There were a lot of people who supported his work—his son Yoshihito, his family, his students, and his staff. They all loved Ohno's uncalculating generosity. Yet, above all, it is Ohno's true confidence in himself as an artist that made the miracle continue. Ohno would humbly examine himself after his concert, but his self-criticism was a process of nurturing a greatness he never doubted.

1. A respected contemporary visual artist who collaborated with Tatsumi Hijikata.





Dance was such an important thing for Ohno that he often behaved almost comically in his seriousness. At the Munich Festival, which uses circus tents for shows, the audience laughed loudly during Ohno's performance when a dog crossed upstage. I was sure that Ohno was offended. On the contrary, Ohno did not even notice the dog and thought his dance caused the audience's laughter. After the concert he exclaimed, "How did I dance differently tonight? The audience understood the absurdity I strive for in my dance!"

He was a kind, cheerful man when people talked about his dancing. As soon as the conversation topic left dance, he got plainly bored, and would sink into his chair, muted. We would notice that and start talking about his concert again, and Ohno would immediately regain his energy and offer a delightful smile. When Ohno and his son Yoshito stayed at our apartment, they debated his dance performance until midnight, Yoshito trying to give criticism and Ohno defending each moment. They eventually lost words and growled to one another. In the adjacent room, we listened to the growling, half worried but finding it funny, how a dance became such an important subject between the two Ohnos.

One time, at his performance for the Japan Society in New York, a shamisen player contracted to accompany Ohno's concert could not leave Japan due to a high fever. Ohno did not show any sign of concern and instead he kept asking me: "I would like to use Presley's *Love Me Tender* for the encore but Yoshito said that would be too coquettish. I want to embrace the United States by dancing to this song. Please persuade Yoshito." I lied to Yoshito that Ohno was very discouraged by the musician's not coming and needed a lift from Presley. When Presley was finally on for his encore, Ohno shivered his entire body in a way I had never seen him do before. Moved by the passionate applause, he started to speak in Japanese about his memories with his aunt who loved Presley. The audience was confused as no translator or microphone was ready for the spontaneous Ohno.

Ohno did not plot or construct his greatness. Instead, grappling with his own strong senses and desires, he spoke with no script. I was there when an American journalist asked, "How does your wife deal with you?" He spoke little English but responded immediately before a translator said a word, "She supports my spirit." He was surprised by his own remark and wondered loud, "How did the word SPIRIT come to me?" To the next, seemingly boring question, "What is your impression of America?" he answered, "In Kansas City, I was awake on a hotel bed and my body felt the American continent moving. I realized this is a young land." I, who had lived at the time for two decades in America, was struck by how Ohno captured the kinesthetic sense of the continent so aptly. Performing in many countries, Ohno spoke as a dancing poet.

Ohno performed in Japan until 2005, but his last performance abroad was *Requiem for the Twentieth Century* in New York in 1999. It was his sixth official concert in New York, and even before the curtain went up, the theater was filled with the audience's excitement to experience the legendary 94 year old's performance. "Given my age, I am happy that I can



Kazuo Ohno with Yuta Otake (Eiko's son) at Eiko's apartment in Manhattan. 1985. Photo by Marilyn McLaren.

dance to my content. The morning after the first concert, I only felt a slight tightness in climbing stairs, pretty good!" After the performances, Ohno sat on the cold floor near the entrance door and signed posters for the enthusiastic audience members. Seemingly indifferent to the December chill, the staff, eager to lock up the theater, and his surely exhausted body, Ohno asked each person's name, spelling, and wrote a personal message with an autograph. I watched the crowd that circled him from some distance. All of a sudden a thought came to me: a religion could have started like this. Though I have never felt any kinship to religion or consider myself Ohno's disciple, I imagined that those originating saints, such as Buddha or Jesus, must have been just like this humble Ohno, clearly out of the ordinary and compassionate. These truly rare people create a magnetic field around them that attract other people's dedication.

My older son, who cried badly in Ohno's dancing arms when he was one year old, was also part of the audience at the last performance. After the performance, he simply said to Ohno, "AMAZING." My younger son decidedly said the same to Ohno as if no other word is acceptable. Ohno laughed loudly at their comments. I believe this simple phrase from skeptical youths captures Ohno's exceptional quality.

Koma and I have been living in New York for a long time, and we did not get to see Ohno regularly. Each time he visited New York, he brought us a particular story that illuminated how Kazuo Ohno had come about. During one visit, Ohno told us about his aunt, whose house was full of records of Presley. In the next visit, the souvenir was a poem and drawing



Tomioka Fishing Port, Fukushima, Japan. July 24, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

book by his uncle who had traveled in the United States for over a decade to learn painting, poetry, and music. Ohno in his teens lived with this uncle after his return from the US. In 1976 at Ohno's second debut concert at age 70 performing *Admiring La Argentina*, the aged uncle crawled from the side stage to give flowers to Ohno, at center stage. Hearing all of this, I felt a strange sense of relief learning that Ohno's genius, so close to madness, did not come from nowhere. However, the will to kindle this intrinsic fire was his own, as were the unusually large hands that danced and expressed so much.

Now in our home, we have a collection of Ohno's work—copies of his original writings, dance publications, videos, and books that are all hand delivered by Ohno and his family members. All show Ohno's singularity. We will someday donate them to the very library from which I sent the pictures of *La Argentina* to Ohno's house. In the world, hundreds of years later, when no living person has watched Ohno perform, his dance will continue to touch and inspire people who visit the library. People will dance the "Homage to Kazuo Ohno" around the world.

To the acclaimed performance studies scholar Richard Schechner's question, "How do you calm down from your performance?" Ohno answered, "I never calm myself down." That was a convincing answer for many decades for those who knew Ohno. While finally he seemed to be unable to calm himself down even when he approached late 90's, his amazing body nevertheless finally began to age. Even then, Ohno proclaimed, "I will continue to dance in the grave. I will run up to the sky and dance," and so he did. His arms, even if not

as strong as before, soared and tore up the sky. He fell off from the chair and crawled on the floor. For about ten years until his death, a group of admirers took care of Ohno, day and night. Whenever I visited him in these years, I realized that there was nothing mediocre about Kazuo Ohno. His wife, son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren are all exceptionally beautiful and speak unafraid. This out of the ordinary household is nothing short of miraculous.

“Kazuo Ohno is an artist who has expanded human possibilities,” thus ends the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio website. These words come from Toshio Mizohata, who has supported Ohno for more than two decades as a stage manager, technical director, tour coordinator, and archivist. Mizohata is not a man of exaggeration. It is Ohno’s exceptional talent and character that make Mizohata declare such words.

It was a rainy day forty years ago that Ohno taught me alone, for the first and last time. Ohno told me to dance a flower. I was lost, but tried to dance a flower for an hour. Ohno watched without a word. He then put his hand on mine, and moved it subtly. A flower withers while it blooms. Looking back now, it was then the young Eiko learned that a detail reveals the whole.

Thank you Ohno sensei. Thank you to those who have supported Ohno in his last years.



WANDERLUSTING

Paul Chan

This essay appeared originally in the June 1, 2013 issue of Art in America. Eiko's ruminations on "the artist as wanderer" prompted Hussie-Taylor to invite Chan and Claudia La Rocco to respond. Chan and La Rocco will collaborate on an installation that will be on view as part of the Platform on February 23, 2016.

WHAT DOES IT mean to change? No one steps in the same river twice, Heraclitus wrote. The world is unimaginably different now from what it was in 500 b.c. For instance, many rivers today are so polluted it is hard to imagine anyone wanting to step into them even once. But things are not so different that Heraclitus's insight doesn't ring true. Change is still an implacable ever-present force, as momentous as it is banal. This is the cunning of change. Everything flows; nothing remains. And it happens whether we want it or not. Like time passing. Change is time rendered sensuous and real.

And yet when talk turns toward change, it is typically to complain about how little there is and how badly we need more of it, or at least the right kind. This is change that stirs the imagination because it is not destined by nature (as Heraclitus believed all change was) but directed by us. What we want when we demand change is not that things merely be different, but that they become better in accord with our desires. This is the kind of change people want to believe in because believing it evokes the feeling that we have a say in how our lives unfold.

Change of this sort is not inexorable, but human (all too human, Nietzsche quips). It is the difference created by and for people. This is why calls for change are so seductive, because change of this kind is in essence social. It is often pleasing to be part of something more powerful than oneself, and to hear what one wants reverberating in other voices. Calls for change are like the sirens' songs, drawing those who hear them into the company of those who sing them. A community is, in a sense, those songs sung together, like a chorus.

It's no secret people want change. But it is a mystery why people who want it most tend to do it least. It feels more like the rule than the exception that those who wish most to change your mind about something tend to not be willing to change their own mind about anything. It is as if the power to change others depends on one's own obstinacy. Progress, in a sense, is the satisfaction of seeing others finally reaching the place where one happens to already stand. Change is what happens to other people: let them do the dirty work. Those in the know stay on higher ground. Is this why God sacrificed his one and only son for our salvation, instead of dying and saving humankind himself?

There is a kind of change that is neither inevitable nor imposed. It feels as rare as a blue moon and lights the night of the world as brightly. External influences do not wholly force it into being, and one's inner disposition does not fully determine it as part of the natural course of one's development. And one never knows when it will come. There is no announcement. There is no planning for it. What's more, when it comes, it feels like something has gone wrong.

Sometimes when I make work, there is a moment when what I want to make and what I make it with fuse in such a way that the piece begins, against my intention, to take on a form of its own. It is as if I am no longer the prime mover of the work. At this point what is in front of me becomes as strange to me as I am essentially to myself. This is the point I am always trying to reach.

It is a misstep that one keeps on taking. I look for this moment all the time, which is of course stupid. It never comes when one is looking. Still, I remain patient. What more can one do? Not much, except perhaps find solace in the fact that it has happened before, and that it may happen again—if not to me, then perhaps to (or for) someone else not looking for it, but also not declining what it offers.

Which is what exactly? A chance to get lost, so to speak, in the act of making something that, over time, comes to remake the maker. He or she is irremediably different afterward, and continues to be, to him- or herself, and to others. Wanderlusting as the way forward.

Consider Yvonne Rainer, who quit dance in the early 1970s—arguably at the height of her power and influence—to pursue filmmaking. Of course it was not completely out of the blue: she had used projected and moving images in her work before. But to leave behind the work and world she had known as an artist and to wholly devote herself to another set of concerns and forms is as remarkable as it is surprising. Over the next two decades she made seven feature films. Rainer finally returned to dance in 2000, which in some ways was as unexpected as her departure from it.

Or take Rimbaud, who wrote prose poems that changed the nature of poetry, only to abandon writing altogether to become a trader in Aden and then in East Africa. Being shot by his lover and mentor Paul Verlaine may have had something to do with the change, but there is also evidence to suggest he had already stopped writing, the bullet wound merely supplying the period at the end of a short and bright sentence. And what about Philip Guston, whose infamous return to representational painting after three decades of Abstract Expressionism drove everyone nuts? No one at the time could stomach the nervous lines and perversely fleshy colors, except de Kooning, apparently, who I think saw what the bulbous heads and clown shoes really represented.

I want to call what I am describing the Guston moment. It is that moment when change is catalyzed into something neither wholly predictable nor fully determined. Guston stumbled upon a turning point in his work and kept turning. But what is interesting is that he wandered so far he found himself again. It's funny how that works. Others have found themselves this way. Duchamp retiring from making art. Dylan going electric. Saul becoming Paul.



PLATFORM PROGRAM

PLATFORM PROGRAM

A BODY IN PLACES: EIKO SOLOS [DAILY]

Eiko's interest in the East Village's rich history and her own connection to the neighborhood has inspired her to perform a solo every day (Monday-Friday) for intimate audiences at various locations in the East Village. Audience members will gather at St. Mark's Church and will be accompanied to a nearby place where Eiko will perform. One final midnight performance will take place on March 19.

AFTER FUKUSHIMA: A 24-HOUR EVENT [MARCH 11 - MARCH 12]

March 11 marks the fifth anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster in Fukushima. A photo collaboration between Eiko and photographer/historian William Johnston will be on display in the St. Mark's Church sanctuary for 24 hours. Singers and poets will mark each hour with a song and poem. The day begins with *Conversation Without Walls: Bearing Witness* in which scholars and artists (including Marilyn Ivy, William Johnston, Eiko, Katja Kolcio, Debra Levine, Yoshiko Chuma, Luciana Achugar, Karen Shimakawa, Ana Janevski, Koosil-Ja) gather to commemorate the five-year anniversary of the Fukushima disaster.

TALKING DUETS I & II [FEBRUARY 20 & MARCH 19, 7PM]

The "Talking Duets" form was first developed during LMCC's River to River Festival last summer by Eiko and choreographer Emmanuelle Huynh as a playful, structured improvisational score. These iterations will include a diverse range of artists: Eiko, David Brick, Emmanuelle Huynh, John Kelly, Bebe Miller, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Yvonne Meier, Elizabeth Streb; Moderators: Judy Hussie-Taylor and Laura Flanders.

PRECARIOUS I & II: GUEST SOLOS [FEBRUARY 27 & MARCH 5, 7PM-10PM]

Nine dance artists have been invited to contribute a solo in response to a quote by philosopher Judith Butler on grief and mourning. Each artist has selected a place inside St. Mark's Church and all will perform simultaneously over three hours. Artists include: Eiko, Michelle Boulé, Beth Gill, Neil Greenberg, Koma, Jimena Paz, Polly Motley, Donna Uchizono, Arturo Vidich, Geo Wyeth.

INSTALLATION & GUEST ARTIST RESPONSES [TUESDAYS, 5:30PM]

Eiko will install images, objects, and videos of past performances on Tuesday evenings throughout the Platform. The installation will change, accumulate, and evolve weekly. Platform curators have invited artists from other disciplines to respond alongside Eiko's Church Installation. Artists include: Paul Chan, Claudia La Rocco, DonChristian, and readings by poets Jibade-Khalil Huffman, Robert Kocik, Tonya Foster, and Stacy Szymaszek.

DELICIOUS MOVEMENT WORKSHOPS [WEDNESDAYS, 11:30AM-1:30PM]

Every Wednesday during the Platform, Eiko will teach her signature workshop. People of all ages and abilities are encouraged to experience Eiko's simple but richly nuanced movement vocabulary (no dance background necessary). Workshops are also open to observers!

EIKO AT ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES [WEDNESDAYS, 7PM]

A 6-part Wednesday night film series co-presented by Danspace Project and Anthology Film Archives and curated by Eiko, who addresses "how humans contribute to and survive the characteristics of places."

BOOK CLUB [THURSDAYS, 7PM]

Eiko's Book Club will meet on Thursday evenings during the Platform in the St. Mark's Church sanctuary.

PLATFORM PROGRAM

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

11:30am–1:30pm: Delicious Movement Workshop
(special guest Emmanuelle Huynh)
7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 1

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

7pm: Talking Duets I

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

5:30pm: Installation opens
7pm: Evening with Paul Chan & Claudia La Rocco

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

11:30am–1:30pm: Delicious Movement Workshop
7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 2

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

7pm: Book Club

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

7pm–10pm: Precarious: Guest Solos I

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29

9am: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #1

TUESDAY, MARCH 1

12pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #2
5:30pm: Installation opens
7pm: An evening with The Poetry Project

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2

11:30am–1:30pm: Delicious Movement Workshop
3pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #3
7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 3

THURSDAY, MARCH 3

6pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #4
7pm: Book Club

FRIDAY, MARCH 4

9pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #5

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

7–10pm: Precarious: Guest Solos #2

MONDAY, MARCH 7

9am: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #6

TUESDAY, MARCH 8

12pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #7
5:30pm: Installation opens
7pm: An evening with DonChristian

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

11:30am–1:30pm: Delicious Movement Workshop
3pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #8
7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 4

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

6pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #9
7pm: Book Club #3

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

AFTER FUKUSHIMA: AN EVENT

4–8pm: Conversation Without Walls: Bearing Witness
9pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #10
(St. Mark's Church)
10pm: Installation opens

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

10pm: Installation closes

MONDAY, MARCH 14

9am: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #11

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

12pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #12
5:30pm: Installation opens
7pm: An evening with Eiko and Guests

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16

11:30am–1:30pm: Delicious Movement Workshop
3pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #13
7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 5

THURSDAY, MARCH 17

6pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #14
7pm: Book Club #4

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

9pm: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #15

SATURDAY, MARCH 19

7pm: Talking Duets #2
Midnight: A Body in Places: Eiko Solo #16

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

7pm: Eiko at Anthology Film Archives: Program 6

FILM SERIES



Still from *Wallow*, Eiko & Koma, 1984.

As a part of PLATFORM 2016: *A Body in Places*, Anthology Film Archives welcomed Eiko as guest-curator of a film series showcasing movies that have influenced her work and that speak to her chosen theme. Encompassing narrative films such as *The Burmese Harp*, *Kanal*, and *The Naked Island*, as well as several rarely-screened documentaries, the series pairs each feature film with short works by Eiko, Eiko & Koma, and John Killacky, as well as with “Where She Has Been,” short excerpts shot and edited by Alexis Moh that document the *A Body in Places* project since its inception.

The films and videos in this series illuminate bodies in particular places. How are humans conditioned by the characteristics of places? How do we contribute to and survive the characteristics of places? How do people move from one place to another, and by doing so, how do they leave traces and residues in the places they leave behind?

The *A Body in Places* film series is co-presented by Danspace Project and Anthology Film Archives, and co-organized by The Japan Foundation.

The following program includes notes from Eiko.

PLATFORM PROGRAM

PROGRAM 1: A BODY IN MOURNING

[Wed, Feb 17 at 7:00]

I grew up in post-war Japan, devouring the works of those who experienced WWII. Popular entertainment, from movies to manga, were also suffused with memories of the conflict. However, we who did not experience it were aware that we did not really know how people had killed and died in the war.

THE BURMESE HARP by Kon Ichikawa

1956, 116 min, 16mm, b&w. *In Japanese with English subtitles.*

Soon after 9/11, I began thinking about how dying in mass violence is different from dying from a disease or an accident. Why does it matter how we die? Then I realized that, however painful the process of dying, one who dies from a disease or an accident is at least dying their own personal death. A personal death receives personal attention. Mizushima, the protagonist of THE BURMESE HARP who attempts to persuade his fellow soldiers to surrender to the British upon the end of the war, witnesses countless corpses as he wanders through Burma. Fear, remorse, and hesitation gradually transform this survivor into a mourner. Ultimately he tells himself, "I cannot return to Japan." Ichikawa described THE BURMESE HARP as the first film he felt a profound need to make. Shot in Burma and Japan, it helped viewers to imagine the war and to mourn.

UNDERTOW by Eiko & Koma and James Byrne

1988, 7 min, 16mm b&w.

UNDERTOW is a work choreographed for the camera in collaboration with video artist James Byrne. Eiko & Koma's two naked bodies float in the space of an existential limbo.

PROGRAM 2: BODIES IN WATER

[Wed, Feb 24 at 7:00]

We all come from water and water courses through our bodies. We are a bubble floating down the river of life to the unknown. Water is both a source of life and a threat. When water becomes a menace to our lives and senses, our existence is truly frightened.

KANAL by Andrzej Wajda

1956, 95 min, 35mm, b&w. *In Polish with English subtitles.*

KANAL follows a near-decimated company of Polish resistance fighters as they make a final effort to escape the encircling Nazis through the sewers of Warsaw. A merciless view of their flight through the putrid waters, KANAL is a story void of glory and nearly void of hope, where the desire for dignity, even survival, becomes faint. Wajda was an important figure for our youth in Japan. When Eiko & Koma performed in the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in 2007, founded by Wajda in Krakow, Poland, we had the pleasure of meeting the filmmaker and telling him how his ASHES AND DIAMONDS had had a special meaning for those of us who were student fighters in the political movements of the late '60s. His KANAL inspired Koma and me in 1989 to create the work, CANAL, a work for several naked bodies, whose stage design suggested both urban sewers and the blood stream of a body.

WALLOW by Eiko & Koma

1984, 19 min, video.

WALLOW was our first attempt to create dance for a camera, shot in Point Reyes, California.

PLATFORM PROGRAM

PROGRAM 3: BODIES ON AN ISLAND

[Wed, Mar 2 at 7:00]

Nakedness is my life-long theme: artistically, physically, and metaphorically. THE NAKED ISLAND depicts the life of a family on a small island that barely provides them with the means for subsistence. Like THE NAKED ISLAND, Eiko & Koma's "living installations" are place-based works. In a gallery, we create another place where we exist and move as inhabitants.

THE NAKED ISLAND

Kaneto Shindo

1960, 96 min, 35mm, b&w. In Japanese with English subtitles.

The poetic, dialogue-free THE NAKED ISLAND is one of my favorite films. Shindo created the first Japanese independent film production company in 1950 and never returned to mainstream productions throughout his career, which lasted until his death in 2012 at the age of 100. THE NAKED ISLAND is a model of low budget filmmaking. The minimal cast and crew all camped out at the location, sharing all the necessary labor. This method, which Shindo adhered to for most of his career, deeply influenced generations of Japanese independent filmmakers. Depicting the life of a family on a small island in the gentle Seto Inland Sea, it seems at first like a fable but its description of the surrounding society is in fact a realistic one.

HUSK by Eiko & Koma

1987, 9 min, 16mm

HUSK is my solo; Koma was on camera. We wanted to create a dance poem of an unnamed body in an unnamed place. The choreography of both body and camera was created to make an unedited media work.

PROGRAM 4: BODIES IN MINAMATA

[Wed, Mar 9 at 7:00]

MINAMATA: THE VICTIMS AND THEIR WORLD by Noriaki Tsuchimoto

1971, 120 min, 16mm. In Japanese with English subtitles.

This screening is co-organized by The Japan Foundation.

I grew up in postwar, post-occupation Japan, an era of rapid economic growth accompanied by pollution and environmental hazards. It was clear that corporations did not care for much besides profit. Minamata is a city in southern Japan that gave its name to a fatal disease caused by the most notorious environmental hazard in Japan's history. Fishermen, their families, and their pets were the first victims to suffer from methylmercury poisoning by eating fish harvested from the sea that, for 36 years, was contaminated by a fertilizer factory. The victims' anger and their efforts to create normalcy within their abnormal situation deliver a deep sense of urgency. That urgency also manifested in other resistance movements, which affected the ways in which some of my own generation thought of the world and learned ways to live and fight.

LAMENT Directed by Eiko & Koma and James Byrne

1985, 9 min, 16mm

We collaborated with James Byrne to create LAMENT in the mid-1980s when I saw many colleagues and friends become sick and die of AIDS. To live is to witness the suffering of others, and to see the wrongs of the society that creates this suffering. To acknowledge this suffering and to maintain mourning for it is to willfully refuse to forget.

PLATFORM PROGRAM

PROGRAM 5: BODIES IN A CROWD

[Wed, Mar 16 at 7:00]

I met Mura Dehn by accident soon after Koma and I arrived in New York. Surprised by how little sense of rhythm I have as a dancer, Mura offered to teach me her “compromised version of jazz dance for Eiko.” It is a quintessentially New York story of how two young Japanese artists in their 20s ended up inheriting from an old Russian Jewish friend the wealth of African American people dancing their hearts out in the Savoy Ballroom of pre-war Harlem. In the sea of African Americans, Mura was often the only white person dancing. She said the entire Savoy was bustling with dancing energy. One dancer in her film says, “Spirit moves me. When spirit leaves me I stop dancing.”

THE SPIRIT MOVES: A HISTORY OF BLACK SOCIAL DANCE ON FILM, 1900-1986 by Mura Dehn

1987, 119 min, 16mm

Dehn, born and first trained in dance in Russia, moved to Europe to study at the Isadora Duncan School. Later she studied jazz and immigrated to the US in 1930. She found the most exciting jazz dancing at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. First as a dancer, then as a filmmaker, she immersed herself among the most brilliant African American dancers. Her magisterial, three-part documentary features her own narration.

A BODY IN A STATION by Eiko Otake

2015, 15 min, digital

An excerpt from Eiko's performance at Fulton Center in Lower Manhattan in June 2015. Camera by Alexis Moh; edited by Alexis Moh with Eiko.

PROGRAM 6: A BODY IN A CHAIR

[Wed, Mar 23 at 7:00]

I have long felt that dance does not belong only to the young, healthy, and athletic. Here are some clear examples of old and challenged bodies dancing in mourning of the lost.

INNER MONOLOGUE by Otsu Koshiro

2005, 100 min, digital.

In Japanese with English subtitles.

I studied with Butoh's founder Kazuo Ohno in 1971-72 and again in 1975-76. He was always disappointed by my leaving for faraway places like Europe and the US. Having spent nine years in the War, Ohno, upon his return, danced with urgency, perhaps also with remorse. In 1977, at the age of 70, he danced *La Argentina*, his homage to famed Spanish dancer La Argentina, whom he saw in 1929. He performed six seasons in New York, the last in December 1999 at the age of 93, his very final concert abroad. He soon suffered a fall that advanced his Alzheimer's. However, with the help of his son Yoshito Ohno, he continued to dance on a chair, both in his studio and in the theaters of various cities. Though his memories and steps were lost, his dancing clearly lived on in his body and mind. Ohno danced and murmured, “If I cannot dance, why have I climbed this mountain?”

STOLEN SHADOWS

John Killacky and Steve Grandell

1996, 10 min, video

STOLEN SHADOWS is a black and white film lamenting on the mounting losses from the AIDS pandemic.

DREAMING AWAKE

John Killacky

2003, 5 min, video

DREAMING AWAKE juxtaposes a narrator in a wheelchair with the movement of nude dancers. A surgical mishap left Killacky paralyzed. He willed himself to re-learn and train his new body.

Eiko and John Killacky will introduce the evening in person.

BOOK CLUB

Throughout the Platform, Eiko leads a weekly book club, where those who are interested can join Eiko to discuss and share their impressions and reflections on the works of her favorite authors. Among those authors are Kenzaburo Oe and Kyoko Hayashi, whose entire works Eiko has read in Japanese multiple times. Eiko likes to imagine that their words and thoughts reside in her body. For the weekly book club, Eiko has organized each week's readings to illuminate a particular place or places. The places, what happened there, and the traces of these events and times have significantly impacted Eiko's thinking and how she regards the world she lives and works in.

PLATFORM PROGRAM

BOOK CLUB 1: POSTWAR TOKYO

[Thurs, Feb 25 at 7:00]

Ango Sakaguchi, "In the Forest Under Cherries in Full Bloom" (1947)

Kenzaburo Oe, "Sheep" (1958)

Mitsuharu Kaneko, "Seals" (1937) and "The Song of Loneliness" (1945)

BOOK CLUB 2: HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

[Thurs, Mar 3 at 7:00]

Kyoko Hayashi, "The Place of the Festival" (1975)

Kenzaburo Oe. "Hiroshima Notes" (1965)

BOOK CLUB 3: MINAMATA AND FUKUSHIMA

[Thurs, Mar 10 at 7:00]

Michiko Ishimure. *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow: Our Minamata Disease* (1969)

Kenzaburo Oe. "History Repeats" *The New Yorker*, March 28, 2011

Various poems from Fukushima

BOOK CLUB 4: AMERICA

[Thurs, Mar 17 at 7:00]

Eiko Otake, "Kyoko Hayashi Writes in Sustained Mourning" (2010)

Kyoko Hayashi *From Trinity to Trinity* (1999) translated by Eiko

Various poems by C.D. Wright

Various poems by Allen Ginsberg





BIOGRAPHIES

In 2014, EIKO OTAKE commenced her solo project, *A Body in Places*, through which she has been creating works that aim to explore the relationship of a fragile human body and the myriad intrinsic traits that are contained by a specific place. While her work with Koma created and used the drama of a duo, performing alone, her partner becomes the idiosyncratic elements of the places she occupies and those who watch.

LYDIA BELL is Program Director at Danspace Project. From 2009-2011 she coordinated the Eiko & Koma Retrospective Project in collaboration with 15 partner venues, including the Walker Art Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

MICHELLE BOULÉ is a choreographer, performer, teacher, and Certified BodyTalk Practitioner based in Brooklyn, NY.

DAVID BRICK collaborates broadly in creating performance, participatory installations and community. He is Co-Director of Headlong, a platform for performance and art research based in Philadelphia; and Director of the Headlong Performance Institute, an immersive training program for creating experimental performance.

ROSEMARY CANDELARIO is Assistant Professor of Dance at Texas Woman's University. Her book, *Flowers Cracking Concrete: Eiko & Koma's Asian/American Choreographies*, is forthcoming from Wesleyan University Press in 2016.

PAUL CHAN is an artist who lives in New York.

DORYUN CHONG is Deputy Director and Chief Curator at M+, Hong Kong. From 2009 to 2013, he was an Associate Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

NEIL GREENBERG is a choreographer, dancer, and educator, perhaps best known for his *Not-About-AIDS-Dance* (1994). Greenberg's most recent project, *This* (2014), continues his interest in the move away from representation and toward an experience of the performance moment in and of itself. He teaches at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, the New School.

TRAJAL HARRELL is a dancer and choreographer touring and creating internationally. He is currently engaged in a two-year Annenberg Residency at The Museum of Modern Art to investigate the aesthetic possibilities of butoh aesthetics through the theoretical lens of "realness."

ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES is an award-winning choreographer, writer, performer and curator working in New York City.

JUDY HUSSIE-TAYLOR is Executive Director at Danspace Project and Artistic Director of the Platform series, which features artist curators and new contexts for dance presenting. She is also Program Advisor and a faculty member for the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at the Center for the Arts, Wesleyan University.

WILLIAM JOHNSTON is Professor of History, East Asian Studies, and Science in Society at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut but for the 2015-16 is Edwin O. Reischauer Visiting Professor of Japanese Studies at Harvard.

MELISSA LEVIN is the Director of Cultural Programs at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC). Previous to LMCC, Melissa held positions at Andrea Rosen Gallery, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and Artforum International Magazine.

MARK MCCLOUGHAN is an artist and writer. As a founding member and Co-Artistic Director of No Face Performance Group he has performed in all of the company's original works. In 2014 he was dramaturge for Eiko Otake's *Two Women* and *A Body in a Station*.

SAM MILLER is the founder and Director of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP) at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. He has also served as the President of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), President of Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC), Executive Director of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), and President and Executive Director of Jacob's Pillow.

HARRY PHILBRICK was Director of the Museum at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 2011 until early 2016. He is currently developing Philadelphia Contemporary, a not-for-profit space for contemporary art and performance.

KOMA OTAKE is one half of performance artists Eiko & Koma. His first multidisciplinary solo work *The Ghost Festival* will appear at The Yard and American Dance Festival in summer 2016.

LUC SANTE's books include *Low Life*, *Evidence*, *The Factory of Facts*, *Kill All Your Darlings*, and *The Other Paris*. He teaches writing and the history of photography at Bard College.

VALDA SETTERFIELD is a performer who enjoys challenge and learning and the generosity of other artists.

PAMELA TATGE is the Director of the Center for the Arts at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, where she has worked since 1999 to re-imagine the role of artists in curricular and co-curricular life. In 2010, she co-founded Wesleyan's Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance, the first graduate program of its kind.

FUNDING CREDITS

Danspace Project's PLATFORM programs receive lead private support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, and Anonymous, as well as crucial support from the Jerome Foundation, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and the Shubert Foundation. In addition, public funds are received with lead support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The presentation of *A Body in Places* was made possible, in part, by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

A very special thank you to LINDA STEIN and PAUL VIDICH for their generous support of this project, and for being the co-chairs of the PLATFORM's Fellow Travelers: Suzanne Bocanegra & David Lang, Willmond Bissetts, Rachel Cooper, Terry Creach, Alice & Jim Hadler, Irène Hultman, Janice Kovar, Zoe Leonard, Timothy & Virginia Millhiser, Mari Ono, Shin Otake, Judilee Reed, Andrew Szegedy-Maszak & Elizabeth Bobrick, Pamela Tatge, Sara Tsutsumi-Wess, Olga Viso & Cameron Gainer, Helen & Peter Warwick.*

* as of January 29, 2016



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PLATFORM 2016: *A Body in Places* programs and catalogue would not have been possible without the significant contributions of Judith Walker, Jaime Shearn Coan, William Johnston, Mark McCloughan and Alexis Moh.

Enormous thanks to the Danspace Project staff who went above and beyond on this one: Jodi, Lily, Peggy, Michael, Kirsten, Leo, Kathy, Carol, Racy, Lindsay, Jordan, Sanda. Thank you, dream team!

Thank you to the writers and artists included in the PLATFORM and catalogue for your generous responses to our open-ended prompts.

Thank you Sam Miller, Koma Otake, Shin Otake, Claudia La Rocco, Paul Chan, Pamela Tatge, Jed Rapfogel, Peter Hale of the Ginsberg Trust and Ivan Sygoda for the conversations along the way. Thank you to Kathryn Butler, Jill Jie'en Tan, Hufia Frobes-Cross for your contributions.

Thank you to our partners: Anthology Film Archives, Japan Society, NYU Gallatin, Sirovich Senior Center, Tisch Initiative for Creative Research, The Poetry Project, ANNA, Dashwood Books, Zurcher Gallery, Suzanne Tick, Diane Lackner, Fresco, Middle Collegiate Church and the Ukrainian National Home. We have amazing neighbors!

Thank you to PLATFORM writers-in-residence Sam Miller and Svetlana Kitto.

Thank you to all the March 11 24-hour participants, singers and readers!

Thank you to Reverend Allison Moore, Jeannine Otis and St. Mark's Church for saying yes.

Thanks to Marda Kirn, who introduced Judy to Eiko & Koma and for early climate change activism.

A large and heartfelt thanks to Eiko, whose unstoppable energy and artistic bravery inspire us daily.

Judy Hussie-Taylor and Lydia Bell
Editors

IMAGE CREDITS

COVER: Valparaíso, Chile. January 12, 2016.
Photo by William Johnston.

PAGE 6: Yonomori, Fukushima, Japan. July 23, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

PAGE 12: Yaburemachi, Fukushima, Japan. July 24, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

PAGE 16-17: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 11, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 20: Valparaíso, Chile. January 12, 2016.
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PAGE 38: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 11, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 48-49: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance on Tim Mei Avenue, Hong Kong, China. December 6, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 52: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 12, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 96: Eiko in Lower Manhattan. June 6, 2015. Photo by Kaitlin Chan.

PAGE 100-101: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance on Tim Mei Avenue, Hong Kong, China. December 6, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 108: Valparaíso, Chile. January 12, 2016.
Photo by William Johnston.

PAGE 114-115: Tomioka Beach, Fukushima, Japan. July 22, 2014. Photo by William Johnston.

PAGE 120: Valparaíso, Chile. January 13, 2016.
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PAGE 124-25: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 11, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

PAGE 130: Eiko performing River in Medicine Lake at the French Regional Park in Plymouth, Minnesota. 1996. Presented by the Walker Art Center.

PAGE 134: Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church. New York, NY. Photo by Anja Hitzenberger.

PAGE 144-145: *A Body in Hong Kong* performance in West Kowloon Cultural District. December 12, 2015. Commissioned by M+ for Mobile M+: Live Art, 2015. Photo by CPAK Studio.

