

Review Take7 by Claudia Kappenberg
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Take7 brings together a selection of screendance works that were produced between 1994 and 2001. The works included here were commissions by either the BBC/ Arts Council or South East Dance/ Lighthouse and testify to a period in the development of British screendance, where the genre was promoted by and gained exposure through television. Part of the proposition for these commissions was to create works with high production values that could only exist on camera.

Although not widely known as an artistic practice Dance for the Camera has a long history and is indebted to pioneering filmmakers such as Busby Berkely, Maya Deren and Rene Clair. Following a wider development of interdisciplinary art forms and crossovers between film, video art, live art and performance in the 70's and 80's screendance consolidated as a hybrid practice, which draws on numerous cultural sources to explore movement, the body and its complex relations with the environment.

The seven projects in this collection cannot be described with traditional film language, as they are neither narrative, although most contain elements of characterisation, nor abstract, or documentary. The works being mostly wordless perhaps indicates the concerns and ambitions of the directors and choreographers to explore a multi-faceted audio-visual practice that speaks outside of language.

A majority of the selected projects were conceived in teams and constellations of director/ choreographer, a pairing significant of this particular period and body of screendance projects. On the DVD each film is preceded by a short interview with at least one of its key creators.

David Hinton, the director of **Birds**, states in his interview: "The exciting thing about dance film is that it is still an open territory." With **Birds** he challenges the form by producing a dance film that is composed entirely of library footage of birds, thereby crossing over into video art and its practice of sampling from found footage. **Birds** is a work, where the image becomes a form of music, foregrounding movement as material in a way which delightfully undermines any preconception of what is or isn't dance.

Dust is a collage of instances that takes the viewer on a sensory visual journey. An isolated female swimmer travels through a bleak and dry landscape in search of water. The work explores the filmic close-up to create ambivalent images, playing with visual details in an anonymity of place and time. Small movements are enlarged and abstract shots dramatised through sound, a filmic device that places this work in a cinematic tradition.

In **Horseplay** the director Allison Murray stages three female youths in the open space of the Docklands, focussing on their play, pleasure and camaraderie. With its sections of bodies in frontal formation dancing to music this film has resonances of stage performance; meanwhile the low-key performance, use of everyday gestures and variety of musical styles locate the work in a hip-hop tradition and black culture.

With **Boy** the filmmaker-duo Lee/Anderson took the unusual step to create a solo for a child. Set in a wide-open landscape of dunes and developed out of a collaborative process and dialogue with the child, the film portrays the intimate world of the boy,

his physicality and make-believe. The camera is present like a quiet, silent witness to the game, a companion more than the traditional recording device. As in some of the other projects the added sound track gives an emotional and filmic texture to the work.

Outside In was inspired by an actual performance on stage. Director Margaret Williams and Choreographer Victoria Marks built on the original choreography to create a physically intense and visually surprising mix of the pedestrian and the choreographed. A beautifully restrained opening section invites the viewer to really observe every nuance of movement, before the piece develops into a full blown and passionate dancing and partnering.

Lounge functions not unlike a Victorian novel, where the supposedly familiar world of a family home is rendered strange, tense and neurotic. The absence of words is made palpable through choreography of exaggerated gestures and repetitive movement patterns, set to tea dance music in an ambiance of heightened colours and strong lighting. Although featuring some proper partner dancing the subject matter of this work is the dance of the everyday, its habits and peculiar rituals, that exists somewhere between the space and its inhabitants.

The compilation closes with **Motion Control**, an apt title that gives the key to this project. The work physicalises not only the camera, but also space and sound. In difference to the aesthetics of grace of much traditional dance Liz Aggiss and Billy Cowie up the contrast, crank up the volume of almost everything and cut with a vengeance, whilst never losing control. 'Anything goes' appears to be the mantra of this intense hyper world, where exuberance meets self-mockery.