

New Media and Chance

This program highlights two late 1970s contributions by female new media artists in the collaborative nexus surrounding the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Both films are courtesy of Electronics Arts Intermix, special thanks to the Nam June Paik studio and Shigeko Kubota estate for their support of this screening of *Merce and Marcel*, and the Merce Cunningham Trust for support of this special screening of the recent HD restoration of *Torse*.

Merce and Marcel

Shigeko Kubota and Nam June Paik, 1978, video, 13 min.

Host: Russell Connor. Camera: Bob Harris. Music: David Held, Earl Howard, John Cage. With excerpts of work by Woody and Steina Vasulka, Bill Gwin, Jean Marie Drot, Nancy Graves, Erik Martin, Russell Connor. Produced by the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen.

This is the second part of a two-part tribute to groundbreaking postmodern choreographer Merce Cunningham and avant-garde master Marcel Duchamp. The first, *Blue Studio: Five Segments* is a stunning work of videodance by Merce Cunningham and artist Charles Atlas, who was then filmmaker-in-residence with the Cunningham Dance Company. In *Merce and Marcel*, husband and wife duo Nam June Paik and Shigeko Kubota created a densely textured video collage that links the two visionary artists. Paik and Kubota link art to the movements and gestures of the everyday: "Is this dance?" reads text over an aerial view of taxis moving through New York streets, and an image of a baby's tottering first steps. A rare interview with Duchamp by Russell Connor is re-edited in a rapid, stutter-step progression. In a, a "dance of time," an interview with Cunningham, also by Connor, is intercut and superimposed with the earlier interview of Duchamp: "Time reversible — Time irreversible."

Torse

Dir. Charles Atlas, US, 1977, 55 min., HD restoration of 16mm double projection featuring the Merce Cunningham Dance Company with electronic score by Maryanne Amacher, entitled *Remainder*, and costume design by Mark Lancaster

This significant example of Atlas and Cunningham's unique approach using film or video to "see" choreography. Atlas shot the dance with three 16mm cameras over the course of three days at the University of Washington, where the company was then in residence. Two mobile cameras captured close-ups, while a single stationary camera was set up for long shots. Atlas and Cunningham manned the mobile cameras while a technician handled the static camera, and the results were edited by Atlas into a single, two-screen film that was originally shown via a now all-but-extinct dual-interlock 16mm projection system. This piece features a score by pioneering electronic composer Maryanne Amacher (who trained at The Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, now University of the Arts, and later became a student of Karlheinz Stockhausen at the University of Pennsylvania). As was typical in Cunningham's practice, the choreography and sound were made separately, so that any relationship between music and movement is chance-based. While Amacher was known for "assaulting" high volume sound installations towards the end of the 1970s or collaged found sonic recordings of cities, her score *Remainder* is nearly inaudible at times - but still including the high-pitched electronic chirping and solid bass drones she was regularly performing in this era. *Torse* is also notable as an instance of Cunningham's use of chance operations; the choreography comprises 64 distinct phrases, and the floor is divided into 64 squares—a reference to the number of hexagrams in the I Ching. Cunningham created separate "space charts" and "movement charts" and tossed coins to determine the combinations for the ten dancers.

EXHIBITION

Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery at The University of the Arts
on view October 8-December 8, 2017
Gallery hours Monday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturdays 12-5pm

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