

STARTS Residency Report

Technological Flesh // Work-In-Progress

by Choy Ka Fai and Maria Judova

Abstract

TECHNOLOGICAL FLESH explores the possibilities of digital dance techniques as a supernatural dance experience. Inspired by the concept of post-human choreography, the project speculates on the choreographic expressions of Trance in shamanistic dance movements.

Can we digitize the dance of the Supernatural?

Can we transform these fragments of Trance into a sensorial experience?

TECHNOLOGICAL FLESH proposes new perspectives on how the body can transcend beyond physical senses and observes variations of altered state of consciousness. Maybe we all have an itch to transcend beyond our physical flesh and venture into the digital cosmos of virtual realities.

Proposed Methods and Procedures

The team carried out a research on trance induction and sensory stimulation. The aim was to focus on the auditory, kinaesthetic and spiritual induction for both the dancer and the audience.

For this purpose, Choy Ka Fai accomplished a field research on rituals of Siberian Shamans going into trance. It was inspired by a real life event at the end of summer in 2019, on a sacred site near Arshan (Spring Mountain), Republic of Buryatia. This was a rare meeting for a Memorandum of Understanding between the shamans of Tuva Republic and the Buryatia Republic. There were 4 representatives from the Tuva Republic and about 25 shamans of different ancestral lineages from the Buryatia host.

The technology partner: media department of the University of applied Sciences Duesseldorf (Hochschule Düsseldorf), hosted studio experiments in the Innovation Hub - MIREVI (Mixed Reality and Visualization). With the use of motion capture technology made possible to observe the choreographic expression of trance and imagine a way of communicating or visualising these movement datas into an artistic experience. The graphic team created a 3D visual landscape to extend the experience into VR.

Co-creation process

We proposed a research on a specific technological narrative in trance culture. Within this theoretical framework, the experiments carried in the Innovation Hub were designed to respond to the various questions posed by the tech partner. The team focused on ways technology can translate, transform or expand our physical body to multiple and post human forms.

The proposal had responded to the challenges of the Tech project to engage with mixed media technologies in communicating body language to the audience. The artistic team got the logistic support of the tech partner through assisted access to technologies and applications for Augmented/Mixed Reality and photometry-reality capture: laser scanner, Captury Live, OptiTrack, UNITY.

Partnering on the artistic side, the tanzhaus nrw invited the artistic team to join in a context which processes of digital embodiment were put in focus. The artists were invited to embark on a search for the intersections of digital and analogue bodies. The results of the STARTS Residency Technological Flesh // Work-In-Progress from Choy Ka Fai and Mária Júdová were presented along international works by Hiroaki Umeda, Stéphane Gladyszewski or Noah Hellwig within the frame of the Temps d'images Festival in tanzhaus nrw Dusseldorf. The programme also features prominent artists of the local scene, a concert by Cologne composer Brigitta Muntendorf & Ensemble Garage. The TEMPS D'IMAGES festival, "Time Of Images" in English, initiated by ARTE, took place at tanzhaus nrw for the fifteenth time in 2020. This year's edition presented virtual experiences situated between 3-D worlds, light-absorbing bodies and a community-founding app that makes whole groups dance.

Impact

The aim of the project is to appropriate narratives and technologies to imagine alternative states of Living and Knowing. While seeking to provide an immersive performative experience, Choy Ka Fai and his collaborators engage with shamanistic practices and rituals over Asia as well with digital technologies. The team is called to bring together radical and authentic skills, experiences and expertise.

In order to refrain from the recurring sense of mystification the project creates a space for authentic means of expression and encourages critical dialogue between creators from different backgrounds as well as between the audience and the creators

>Research Impact

Choy Ka Fai research seeks to map the cosmologies of the shamanistic culture in those regions. As Asia is extremely diverse culturally, to access local knowledge and tradition requires to invest time for research on first-hand experience. Driven by a personal desire to study the choreographic concept in spirituality and trance rituals, Ka Fai reveals extraordinary practices of shamanistic culture in the context of broader processes of environmental, technological and political changes within the society.

> Artistic Impact

The "democratisation of technology" permits interaction with the body as a key to access more areas of life and existence. This is when Choy Ka Fai joined in Düsseldorf the cooperation of the University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule Düsseldorf) with the aim of pursuing distinct approaches, critical point of views and different languages under a common objective: the challenge to employ those technologies in a useful and innovative manner within creative projects. Technology reveals itself as a meaningful tool to adventure into a journey of exploration "beyond the human".

> Audience Impact: The project invites its audience to experience this journey as a spiritual visitor into the cultural, historical and theatrical narratives of our belief system. While approaching ancient wisdom with the tools of contemporary technologies, the project challenges its audience to expand their vision and understanding about their personal and extended environment in times of changes.

Art-science relationships

In 2016 Choy Ka Fai joined in Düsseldorf the cooperation of the University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule Düsseldorf), the media company LAVAlabs, the healthcare technology provider Velamed and tanzhaus nrw with the aim of pursuing distinct approaches, critical point of views and different languages under a common objective.

In this context, Choy Ka Fai was regarded as an expert in “connectivity”, searching for modes of spirituality by way of as well as in digital technologies. While he drafted choreographic procedures with the aid of avatars into which he fed historical and current movement studies, he also revived international dance history in a position between design, technology, performance and fiction. With a focus on Asian contemporary culture, his collection of Southeast Asian artists statements found a home in his multimedia archive and performance cycle “SoftMachine”, thus opposing exoticising portrayals.

For their most recent collaboration STARTS Residency: Technological Flesh, dedicated to digital transfer and the reconstruction of shamanist practice and trance conditions, the aim was to reach out beyond human experience. The project undertends to make use of contemporary means to investigate and connect to ancient practices and the knowledge they transmit. When setting up rituals which are meant to dive deep into the understanding of the present state and facilitate access to different realms, the team involves the so-called “other than human” or the “more than human”: the technology. Digital means like data visualisation, motion capturing, augmented and mixed reality were called to translate complex articulation of intangible heritage and the forces shaping its expressions.

Future Direction and Actions

After the results of this first project phase, the team goals to continue the research in experimenting on Vibration. Inspired by the Siberian Shamans going into trance and the tragic stories of Ongon (Siberian Ancestral Spirit), the aim is to create a documentary stage performance which weaves together a tapestry of oppression, memories and Transcendence.

With the resulting works, the project seeks to further investigate the choreographic practice: its relevance and influences in offering alternative states of living a knowing proposing different formats for its audience:

1 Performance for the black box which seeks to study the multiple universes of the techno-cosmology and the choreographic expression of spiritual presences: How Does a Gods Dance? Is it possible to digitise (Motion Capture) the dance of the SuperNatural?

2 Installation inspired on the extraordinary practice of Shamanistic Culture and its revival in various parts of Asia, altering within the broader processes of environmental, technological and political changes within any society. The installative exhibition invites visitors to dive into the social and political complexity of the contemporary shamanistic practice and experience the physicality of the ritual practices.

3 Workshop: over 3 days, a mixed audience with interest for either technical or artistic development are invited to make use of technologies and question, perceive and interact with realities around. A team of artists and technical experts will assist their journey.

Index Terms — post-human choreography, shamanistic practice, trance culture, digital cosmology, vibration

APPENDIX

Constellation Of the Flesh
Meta-Text-For-Trance-Dance

0

Eternal Blue Sky

Our moon is a pure reflection.

Earth.

1

Solar.

A black eagle descends.

The valley from afar. Uncanny.

Morphing forms. Shifting.

Shaping into trees, into animals
into creatures, into the mountains,
into the sky.

Unknown energy. Transferring

The ancient way of knowing.

A Biological Cosmos.

The universal inside you.

It evaporates, Hallucinates.

nothing moves, everything is moving.

An endless horizon, a parallax vibrations.

In a perceptual state of motion blur.

2

I am a tragic spirit.

Fire. Rage. Furor.

Euphoria -

Before and After.

Absolute. Vodka

Listen to us.

3

Entering the Body.

Inside and Out.

Accumulations.

Multiplex. Cells.

Contortion. Contraction

Distortion. Differentiation
Granulation. Alteration
Variation. Repetition
Fragments.
In all directions.
A kingdom of nerves.

4
A supernatural machine,
Vibrating nerves, Transcending.
The belly of the Muscle
Multiple Self.
Becoming the other.
Another Realm.
Embodied Spirits.
The earth rotates,
my mind oscillates.
It melted into the air.

5
After Euphoria.
The butterflies of the soul.
Neuron.
A reversal of flow.
The collision of the sensory.
Still. Breathing

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