



A BODY IN PLACES

Danspace Project PLATFORM 2016

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EIKO TAKES HER PLACE

Judy Hussie-Taylor

EIKO TAKES HER PLACE

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."

JUDY HUSSIE-TAYLOR

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.

