

Forklift Ballet

“The Last Embodiment”

Machines are losing their machinity. We can only keep our humanity if machines keep their machinity. The ability to embody a machine, that is, to make it an extension of our body, disappears as machines get easier to use. In the past, we could have an intimate relationship with our old radio because tuning a station involved a kind of “symphony” with the radio itself through the physical manipulation of the tuning control and watching the display. Today, you just push a button to have the radio tune itself. Our body interaction is nothing, there is no engagement.

The forklift ballet is an homage to the special relationship between humanity and machinity. The machines should become part of us and enhance our humanity. When they do, they disappear and we see only an extended person. The experience of embodying and using the machine is its own pleasure.

In the forklift ballet the dance of the machine is actually the dance of the driver/ballerino. The driver has an intimate relationship with the forklift. The driver has embodied the machine. We see expression come through his extended body. When we embody the pen, or the sword, or the piano, or the computer, or the car, or the forklift we can feel pleasure from using it, allowing its machinity to conduct our feeling.

The world of technology is striving to make machines easier to use. But careless improvement will take away machinity and consequently take away our humanity. This ballet may be the last embodiment.

In general, this performance is an illustration of contemporary life. It shows the relationship between humans and machines and the interface between man and his feelings. Man expresses himself only through the skilled manipulation of machines. The ballet of electrical forklifts guided by skilled drivers and life sounds expresses the metaphor of now.

The piece has been created by the author, Sidney Fels, a Canadian artist and scientist from Vancouver, with the participation of the performance artist from Japan, Sachiyo Takahashi, and with the virtual and real musicianship of Bulgarian born Italian artist, Alzek Misheff. Fels is the author of the *Iamascope*, an interactive electronic kaleidoscope and has collaborated for many years with Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute (ATR) in Japan and is currently a professor at the University of British Columbia. Takahashi, after researching traditional and contemporary performing arts at the University of Tokyo, moved to Belgium where she has participated in several international performances, including works with Jan Fabre. Misheff has realized large scale sound installations in the USA and Italy since the late 70's. For some years now he has a studio in Acqui Terme where this work was developed. Misheff and Fels both had performances at “Opera Totale 4” event in Venice (<http://www.operatotale.org>).

The performance will take place on August 20, 1999 at 21:00 at I.M.E.B in via Circonvallazione 94, Acqui Terme. This work was made possible with the understanding and cooperation of Sig. Giorgio Benzi during its preparation and production.

The performance is under patronage of the Province of Alessandria, Italy.

For more information please contact:

*Arch. Eleonora Ricci, Palazzo Thea, via Bella, 2 15011 Acqui Terme
Tel. 0144 32 04 31, fax. 35 02 17, e-mail: misheff@acqui.alpcom.it.*