

URBAN festival DANCE

Fact Sheet of Swire Island East Urban Dance Festival

What is site-specific dance?

Site-specific dance is created to exist in a certain place. The choreography is generated through research and interpretation of the site's unique cultural matrix of characteristics, whether architectural, historical, social and/or environmental; discovering the hidden meaning in a space and developing methods to amplify it.

Programme content

Swire Island East is thrilled to collaborate with the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (YAF), presenting this first-ever dance extravaganza in Hong Kong - **Swire Island East Urban Dance Festival**. It will be showcasing 15 site-specific dance pieces in Island East including two international site-specific dance troupes; Collage Dance Theatre from Los Angeles and Third Rail Projects from New York City.

Swire Island East Urban Dance Festival will be held between September to December, 2007. Programme including: YAF invited 8 school dance teams total 120 students to join the artists-in-residence dance workshop series and will perform on 8 December; YAF invited some 100 student dancers to learn from professional choreographers to create site-specific works and will also perform on 8 December; Two dance master classes with renowned choreographers Tom Pearson and Zach Morris of Third Rail Projects, New York City, where the two choreographers will lead participants through their process of creating site-specific movement works using a grab-bag of choreographic tactics. All excitement will be climaxed at the **Festival Finale** on 8 December with the showcase of 15 site-specific dance performances, a series of public and school tours; interactive dance corner and site-specific body painting demonstrations.

Programme in details

1. Artists-in-residence/Site-specific Dance Workshops

Date: 10 September, 2007 onwards

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Venue: local secondary schools

Content: Professional choreographers from dance organisations including City Contemporary Dance Company Dance Centre, Studiodanz and the School of Dance of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts are recruited to conduct 10 weeks of workshops. 120 students from 8 local schools are recruited for the workshops series. Led by selected choreographers, students will learn about site-specific dance and then choreograph a piece of site-specific dance which will be staged at the Festival Finale on 8 December.

2. Dance workshops at YAF studio

Date: 10 September, 2007 onwards

Venue: YAF studio

Content: Some 100 secondary school students will learn from professional choreographers to create site-specific works and will also perform on 8 December.

3. Dance Master Classes

Date: 27 & 30 November, 2007

Venue: YAF studio

Content: Local professional dancers will be recruited to attend the master classes conducted by Tom Pearson and Zach Morris from The Third Rail Projects, New York City. The master classes will focus on techniques in creating original choreography based on specific sites, skills to engage the audience and explore the dynamics of movement in public spaces.

4. Media Preview of site-specific dance performance

Date: 19 November – 7 December, 2007 (exact dates TBC)

Venue: Tong Chong Street, TaiKoo Place + other locations

Content: Local dance troupes and overseas troupes will perform excerpted pieces at selected locations.

5. Lunchtime Excerpted Performances

Date: 7 December, 2007

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Time: 1:00 – 2:00pm

Venue: Tong Chong Street, TaiKoo Place + other locations

Content: Showcase of excerpted pieces by Third Rail Projects, Collage Dance Theatre and one local troupe.

6. Festival Finale

Date: 8 December, 2007

Time: 11:00-18:00

Venue: Tong Chong Street, TaiKoo Place + other locations

Fee: No admission fee

Content: Showcase of all participating dance troupes formed by local students, amateur dancers, as well as two overseas troupes plus interactive activities and guided tours for schools and public.

About Swire Island East

Swire Island East is one of Hong Kong's best planned and established business district which comprises the retail and office centres of Cityplaza and TaiKoo Place, developed and managed by Swire Properties. Following the completion of One Island East in 2008, Island East will offer eight million square feet of commercial accommodation for local and multinational corporations. A comprehensive range of cosmopolitan business and leisure amenities are situated within the area, including the 1.1 million square-foot Cityplaza shopping centre, the Butterfield's private members club, over 60 restaurants and cafes and some 4,000 public parking spaces.

Over the years, Island East has continuously promoted art through a wide variety of year-round cultural programmes including the popular Friday Fest' live music performances, art exhibitions, a diversified range of themed visual and performing art initiatives. In addition, the complimentary exhibition venues in Island East also provide excellent opportunities for artists to display their creativity. Provision of such free venues and necessary administrative support has proved beneficial, especially to individual artists with small budgets, to reach out to the public.

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About Youth Arts Foundation

The Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation Limited (YAF) www.hkyaf.com is a charity that provides access to high quality, non-competitive arts experiences for all young people aged 5 to 25. Established in 1993 by Lindsey McAlister OBE, YAF organises inclusive and inspirational projects that reach out to young people of all cultures, backgrounds, languages and abilities, and actively creates opportunities for disadvantaged and underprivileged young people. Each year we reach over 800,000 young people through our projects, exhibitions and performances.

A brief introduction of Collage Dance Theatre:

Collage Dance Theatre (CDT) was founded by Heidi Duckler in 1985. CDT is a non-profit, site-specific dance performance company based in Los Angeles, California. The company's early works, designed for the stage, dealt with contemporary culture and its artifacts. Duckler's first site-specific work was *Laundromatinee* in 1988, performed at the Thriftywash Laundromat in Santa Monica, California.

Over the years, Duckler experimented with combining new elements with movement and site. *Church of Food* incorporated odour; in a church with a stove as set, performers cooked and ate as they danced. For *Parts and Labor*, Duckler danced on an amplified Cadillac while musicians drummed on the hood. In 1993, *Out of Circulation* marked the company's first approach to incorporating audience as character. Audience members checked in at the library site's Information Desk and were guided to their areas of "research".

CDT continued to incorporate a variety of art disciplines and to seek unusual venues such as empty swimming pool. In 1995, CDT began to extend the idea of public art by inviting a variety of community groups and individuals to take part in *Mother Ditch*. Never satisfied to use the same approach twice, Duckler continued to seek venues that provided new challenges. With the award-winning *Most Wanted*, set in the Lincoln Heights Jail, Duckler made use of the total environment, including security areas, hallways, and jail cells. The audience were fingerprinted, photographed, and, at one point, "locked up" in a holding cell as the performance examined the idea

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of imprisonment on different levels. In 2000 she had the opportunity to perform in Los Angeles' historic Subway Terminal Building. She used the space as a metaphor for the human body.

CDT continues to seek new and challenging, non-traditional spaces to inspire its performances. By drawing diverse communities into its art, experimenting with a variety of media, and choreographing the space itself into new uses.

If you wish to know more about CDT, please visit the following official website:

<http://www.collagedancetheatre.org/>

The biography of Heidi Duckler

Heidi Duckler is a founder of CDT. She received her B.S. in Dance from University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon in 1976 and her M.A. in Dance from University of California, Los Angeles, California in 1988. She choreographs 45 works since 1974. She has received National College Choreography Initiative from Dance/USA, City of Los Angeles Individual Artist's Fellowship (C.O.L.A.), California DanceMaker Grant from James Irvine Foundation, Lester Horton Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography, Peer Panelist for Cultural Affairs Department, City of Los Angeles. Duckler has been granted residencies from California State University, Los Angeles and UCLA, College of Arts & Letters, Los Angeles, CA.

Quotes from Heidi Duckler

I am interested in bringing my practice of exploring the wide potential of movement and audience relationship to this site in Hong Kong that connects the overhead passageway made of glass, or "Glass Bridge" with the red brick Tong Chong Street below. I am thrilled with this opportunity to create a new site work for the Swire Island East Urban Dance Festival. The relationship between aspirations inherent in the suspended bridge above, and the day to day realities of the ground below, forms the foundation of the new work. Our company is particularly inspired by the notion of performing on a glass bridge – a bridge connecting a company in Los Angeles to the artists in Hong Kong.

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It was the desire to investigate a more intimate dialogue between life and art, audience and performer that led me away from the stage and into non-traditional venues and public spaces. I formed CDT in order to dedicate my work exclusively to site-specific choreography, my objective was to re-imagine dance as an art form in urban sites outside the theatre. This re-invention of space revealed hidden meanings, associations, and cultural identities assigned to common objects and environments. I have always looked for a space that was never considered for a dance performance. I have always strongly felt that a performance does not exist without its audience. Therefore, I have looked for ways to engage my audience in a sophisticated practice that extends beyond spectatorship.

A brief introduction of Third Rail Projects:

Based in New York, Third Rail Projects dedicated to bringing art to the public through an array of media. Tom Pearson and Zach Morris are Co-Artistic Directors of Third Rail Projects. Its mission is to provide a central organizational hub that enables its artistic directors and affiliated artists to: develop accessible projects and integrate them into the broader public sphere; engage local, national, and international communities; utilize art as a vehicle for positive social change; further the forms in which they work; and provide education through performance and residency programs.

Tom Pearson and Zach Morris work in a variety of media that includes contemporary dance, site-specific performance, film, visual art, and large-scale installations. Each work introduces its own movement and/or visual vocabulary, defined by the parameters of the subject, site, and performance environment. The work ranges from the surreal to the absurd, and part of their creative project includes an examination of performance in unexpected urban situations. Tom Pearson and Zach Morris create dense, evocative worlds that illuminate the transient and the transformational, using movement abstracted from and coupled with everyday action. Site-specific explorations seek to mine public spaces for hidden meaning and to engage unwary and unsuspecting passersby.

If you wish to know more about Third Rail Projects, please visit the following official website:

<http://thirdrailprojects.com/projects.html>

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The biography of Tom Pearson

Tom Pearson has received his M.A. in Performance Studies from New York University, his B.F.A. in Dance and B.A. in English from Florida State University. He has taught as an Adjunct Professor of Dance at the Florida School of the Arts; as a movement instructor for Opera Workshop at LaGuardia High School for Music, Art and Performing Arts; as a part of master classes at Swarthmore College and Florida State University. Pearson's writings on dance have been published in Dance Magazine, Dance Spirit, Time Out New York Kids, and online at Uncoolkids.com.

Tom Pearson has been commissioned to create original site-specific works, his work has been presented in New York by Dixon Place; La Mama E.T.C.; with the Thunderbird Indian Dancers at Theater for the New City; Dance Theater Workshop; Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church; The New York International Fringe Festival and The D.U.M.B.O. Dance Festival.

Pearson has been supported by creative residencies at Dance Theater Workshop's Outer/Space program at Topaz Arts; Epiphany Theater Company; and as part of The Swarthmore Project at Swarthmore College, PA.

The biography of Zach Morris

Zach Morris is a director, choreographer, author, visual artist, and filmmaker. His work has been seen in London, at several theaters around the US and at numerous venues in New York City including: The South Street Seaport, Dance Theater Workshop, Dance New Amsterdam, University Settlement/The New York Fringe Festival. He has been granted residencies or commissions from La Mama, the Swarthmore Project, Epiphany Theatre Company, etc.

Zach Morris has received numerous awards in his career. He has received the Henry Boettcher Award for Excellence in Directing, The NYC Fringe Fest Award for Excellence in Choreography. He has a B.F.A in Directing from Carnegie Mellon University.

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Quotes from Tom Pearson and Zach Morris

Our work is focused on integrating art into broader public sphere. Site-specific and public art are all the more surprising, revelatory, and resonant because they manifest in the midst of people's day-to-day activities. Thus, it is deeply important for us to engage with the communities that we work within, particularly with the youth of these communities. Specifically, we strive to offer youth alternate ways to perceive and approach the arts, and provide them with tools and techniques. We are thrilled to participate in the Swire Island East Urban Dance Festival, we are especially excited to work with the local youth arts community and to have the opportunity to engage in cultural exchange with Hong Kong's vibrant professional artists.

To a certain degree, New York and Hong Kong artists live in parallel cities, both cities have transformed themselves from colonial trading posts into economic and cultural capitals. Both are supreme experiments in multiracial/multicultural societies and are able to embrace diverse peoples, ideologies, and intentions. We look forward to animating space for the public in Tong Chong Street, TaiKoo Place.

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