

SYMPOSIUM

Date: 28, 29, 30 July 2025

Venue: Spitzer in ODEON Theater

Program:

15:00-Film Screening

(small pause)

16:00-19:00 Presentation

Free talk with drink

28th July

KO MUROBUSHI'S MISSTEP: FROM SUBORDINATE BODY TO UTOPIAN BODY

Yuma Ochi

Choreography was born under the reign of Louis XIV as a political technique to symbolize the "orthodox pas" in dance and to control bodies under power. In 1913, Nijinsky broke this norm with *The Rite of Spring*, intentionally choreographing "faux pas." This choreography assigned the role of the sacrificial figure who deviates from the community and moves toward death. In reality, Nijinsky himself became an outsider confronted by madness and death. It was Maurice Blanchot who famously employed the concept of the "faux pas" as a form of deviation. Drawing on the ideas of both, Ko Murobushi performed dances toward death inspired by the motif of Sokushinbutsu (self-mummification). In both Nijinsky's and Murobushi's cases, might the "faux pas" have led to the emergence of a utopian body? This study attempts to explore the historical and contemporary significance of this phenomenon through the genealogy of the body and power.

PROFILE

He is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Tokyo Metropolitan University, specializing in Performing Arts Research and Body Theory. He is the author of *Contemporary Dance Today: Horizons after Non-Dance* (Kokusho Publishing, 2020) and co-author of *Anti-Dance: Choreography of Unwork* (Suisseisha, 2024). His articles include "Dance as Antibody: Contact Gonzo's 'Choreographic Concept for Untrained Amateurs' Trilogy" among others.

WE ARE CORPSES STANDING THERE, BREATHING

Shinichi Takeshige

Often, dance technique and ideology are thought of as two separate things, but they are not inherently distinct. Unlike sports, all dance techniques are based on some kind of ideology. Nijinsky transformed the symmetric two-dimensional axis of ballet into a three-dimensional asymmetric axis. This is related to Kant's theory of Ding an sich and space. Ko Murobushi went further from there, stopping all dance techniques and reducing dance to the body's convulsions and breath (respiration). What kind of thought can we decipher from this?

PROFILE

Born in 1965, he studied French literature at the University of Tokyo and became interested in dance after discovering Maurice Béjart and Antonio Gades through cinema. In 1989, he encountered Butoh. Since 2006, he has been working as a dance critic. His interests include developing new philosophy from the viewpoint of the body and the specificity of Butoh, grounded in contemporary philosophy and Japanese medieval Buddhist thought.

QUESTIONING DANCE - QUESTIONING MUROBUSHI KŌ

Katja Centonze

Over a career spanning nearly five decades, Murobushi Kō relentlessly questioned the art of dance, challenging his own body and turning it into a site for protest.

He encountered Hijikata Tatsumi's *butō* in 1968, when Hijikata's practice was undergoing a remarkable transformation from anti-dance to a more stylised form; a process that intensified in the 1970s, shaping the trajectory of *butō* and Murobushi's own artistic path. Nevertheless, Murobushi's later experimental works, marked by his silver-body struggling against power, can be read as a paradigm of Hijikata's *butō*-choreopolitics and intent of performance revolution, which was based on choreological inquiries and disintegrated norms that regulate representation, thereby delving into trans-corporealities and identityless, anti-emotional, non-essentialist, anti-narrative, non-oriented bodies. Although Murobushi significantly contributed to *butō*'s international influence and reception, he expressed criticism towards its stereotyped forms/images. He, therefore, revisited the political qualities intrinsic to *butō*'s early experimentation, aiming at queered identities and addressing hetero-morphant corporealities that transborder limits between the organic and the inorganic, between human, animal and object. Indeed, as examined in *Aesthetics of Impossibility. Murobushi Kō on Hijikata Tatsumi* (Cafoscarina, 2018) – the first monograph dedicated to Murobushi – the dancer explored in his works, for instance, cabaret dance, practices of self-mummification, the notion of "the outside" and anti-dance, entangling these elements in his impossible project while striving for resistance.

Part of my discussion will focus on the contrast/tension between the outcome of Murobushi's performances *quick silver* and *ATNARAT*, both enacted during our collaborative project *Torcito Parco Danza I* (Lecce, 2007), a crucial juncture in the extended, profound and friction-filled exchange of ideas we cultivated from 2003 to 2015 (and beyond).

PROFILE

Katja Centonze is Associate Professor at the Department of Asian and North African Studies at Ca'Foscari University of Venice, where she teaches Japanese Language and Japanese Theatre. She is also Adjunct Researcher at the Tsubouchi Shōyō Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University, Tokyo. Her research explores the intersections of corporealities, text and politics in Japan's performing arts – both traditional and contemporary – as well as in literature, with a particular attention to the 1960s. Among her numerous publications, she edited *Avant-Gardes in Japan. Anniversary of Futurism and Butō: Performing Arts and Cultural Practices between Contemporariness and Tradition* (Cafoscarina, 2010), and authored *Aesthetics of Impossibility: Murobushi Kō on Hijikata Tatsumi* (Cafoscarina, 2018).

CUTTING CHRONO'S FLESH

Romina Achatz

Ko Murobushi's dance articulates a philosophy of absolute immanence, engaging with temporal rupture, the in-between ("midnight"), and the event. Informed by Deleuze, Mallarmé, Bataille and Nietzsche, his work enacts de-subjectivation and accesses the Outside through embodied interruption, repetition, and non-linear time (Aeon), positioning dance as a site of ontological transformation.

PROFILE

Romina Achatz, PhD, is researcher, essayist, filmmaker, dancer and radio producer. Her research engages with body politics, feminist theory, and visual culture, focusing on marginalized corporealities, performative practices, de-subjectivation, and the aesthetics of the impersonal. She holds a PhD in Cultural Studies, with a dissertation on the dance of Ko Murobushi. Her essays and lectures address themes at the intersection of performance and critical theory.

29th July

SEISMOGRAPHER OF SENSATION

Chiaki Hori

Dance is the drawing of a space, each time unique and singular. Even the slightest shift in a hand or finger is enough to transform the entire atmosphere on stage. Movement is drawing. What does Ko Murobushi draw with his vibrant body? and how does he withdraw from the space he has traced—as if he were (very) shy? Drawing, withdrawing, the dancer is poised on the trembling edge of the time.

PROFILE

Critic. Author of *Deleuze. Toward an Ethology of the Thought* (Tokyo : Getsuyo-sha, 2022). Translator into Japanese of Gilles Deleuze, David Lapoujade, and Jacques Rancière.

BODY AS DELIRIOUS DANCEHALL, BODY AS AUTOPSY TABLE

Stephen Barber

This presentation forms the remnants of discussions with Ko Murobushi, in London in 2004, on Antonin Artaud's final writings and conceptions of dance, and on Ko Murobushi's own writing of fragments in intimate intersection with his dance. The presentation also investigates the demands and imperatives of translations of Ko Murobushi's writings, fragments, journal entries, as exemplified in the first exploratory book collection of those writings to be published in (or projected into) English, *Fierce Unworking* (diaphanes, 2025).

PROFILE

Stephen Barber is a writer, and a professor of art and film at Kingston School of Art, Kingston University in London. He has written many books, most recently *White Noise Ballrooms and Into the Wastelands*. He has also written a book on Tatsumi Hijikata's collaborations with filmmakers in 1960s Tokyo, *Film's Ghosts*.

DANCE AND INORGANIC LIFE: POLITICS THAT PENETRATE THE BODY AND THE BRAIN

Kuniichi Uno

"Journey erases Book. The journey is this erased book." Murobushi continued to write and conceive the book between dance and journey. He had already written a book, and this book had been written and erased. The dance itself was such a process, such a journey. Being drawn into the darkness of groping. And dissolving into it. This groping is a "dance," and there are words that extricate from the darkness what has dissolved into it. We will attempt to revisit this process of erasure and emergence.

PROFILE

French literature scholar, critic, and Professor Emeritus at Rikkyo University (Department of Body Expression and Cinematic Arts). His publications include *Artaud: Thought and Body* (Hakusuisha), *Hijikata Tatsumi* (Misuzu Shobo), *Toward Beckett* (Goryu Shoin), *Inorganic Life* (Kodansha), *Paganism* (Seidosha), and translations of works such as Deleuze/Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Artaud's *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, and Deleuze's *Foucault* (all published by Kawade Bunko), as well as Deleuze's *The Fold*, *Francis Bacon*, and Beckett's *Molloy and How It Is* (all published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha). His recent works include *Hijikata Tatsumi – penser un corps épuisé*, *Artaud pensée et corps* (Les Presses du Réel)

30th July

TRACES OF FRAGMENTATION

Hanako Takayama

What did Ko Murobushi leave behind? His writings, for one. From the late 1970s to just before his passing in June 2015, he continued to write journals and workshop memos privately and intermittently as part of his everyday life. These are not only fragments, but also expressions of the very movement of fragmentation itself. On this occasion, I would like to reconsider the sphere of language that coexisted in parallel with that of the body—i.e., dance—especially based on his writings from the 1990s onward.

Profile

She is now an Assistant Professor at Meiji University. Her publications include *Bird Songs, Textual Forests* (2022) and *Maurice Blanchot and the Thought of Récit* (2021). She translated Jacques Rancière's *Le sillon du poème* (The Groove of the Poem) into Japanese (2024).

MONTAGE OF THE LOST

Kenichiro Ezawa

Dance is lost as it is performed. At its core is unwork, which makes invalid activity. Ko Murobushi resists the institutionalization of dance into something meaningful, and tries to completely consume dance on the spot, returning it to unwork. Would organizing an exhibition of his dance using archival materials betray Murobushi's unwork? Not necessarily. By montaging a variety of materials such as photographs, text, video, and flyers, it is possible to potentially present the loss of what was lost, rather than restoring and meaningfulizing what was lost. It becomes a different kind of creation that forms a sign of potentiality.

PROFILE

Born in 1967, he is an adjunct lecturer at Rikkyo University. His publications include *Bataille: The Cursed Thinker and The Aesthetics of Georges Bataille's Amorphous Form*, among others. He is the sole translator of works by Bataille and Georges Didi-Huberman. He is also a co-author of *Takuma Nakahira: The Coming Photographer* and a co-translator of *Gilles Deleuze's Cinema 2*.

HEADLESS SOVEREIGNTY

Frédéric Pouillaude

Facing Ko Murobushi's works, seeing him crawling, groaning, falling, yelling, trembling or shivering, I am always invaded by a very strange and paradoxical feeling of freedom. This feeling is not coming from capacity, power or mastery. It much rather emerges from disability, sickness and precarity, from the abolition of any project and from passing away at every edge of the time. Borrowing the words to Georges Bataille, I suggest to name this very strange freedom "Headless sovereignty".

PROFILE

After training in ballet and contemporary dance, Frédéric Pouillaude has been Associate Professor in philosophy at Sorbonne-University. He is now Professor of aesthetics at Aix-Marseille University. He has published *Le Désœuvrement chorégraphique* (Paris, Vrin 2009) (*Unworking Choreography*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2017) and *Représentations factuelles* (Paris, Cerf, 2020).