

Heaven's Breath



A weather driven new media installation based on the dance of Shiva

A creative collaboration between
Chris Welsby
Brady Marks
Scheherazaad Cooper

April 4 – August 30, 2009

surrey
art gallery

surrey arts centre

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The new media installation Heaven's Breath is inspired by an eleventh century figurine depicting the Hindu God, Shiva, performing the dance of creation and destruction. According to the Hindu faith, Shiva's dance brought the universe into existence, not unlike the Big Bang of Western scientific cosmology.

Heaven's Breath combines Oddisi dance with interactive technology and real time weather data. The animation of images and accompanying sound effects is driven by the power of the wind, which is in turn driven by the rotation of the earth. In this way Heaven's Breath seeks to connect Shiva's dance, via the earth's orbit, to the gravitational forces of the solar system and the far reaches of the universe. Drawing on the cosmologies of East and West, and the knowledge of the ancient and modern world, the installation uses digital technology to make connections between science, religion and art.



About the Artists

Chris Welsby has been making films and film/video installations since 1969. His art practice focuses on creating holistic models of nature and technology through media. Inspired by both the arts and sciences, Welsby's work seeks to explore consciousness, the role of the observer and our relationship to all things in our environment.

Brady Marks is an emerging talent; an audio-active emitter in the fields of new media and new music. She is an explorer – artist and former scientist – using computer code the way others use words, paint or notes to communicate ideas, pose questions, observe and interpret her environment.

Scheherazaad Cooper is an Odissi Classical Indian dancer and a student of contemporary dance. She has performed internationally since the age of three. She dances the role of Shiva in the work. She too has advised on the development of the project. Cooper has interpreted the traditional postures and has performed them.



Events

Artist's Talk – Chris Welsby and Brady Marks

Thursday May 7, 2009

Artists Chris Welsby and Brady Marks will discuss their weather driven new media installation *Heaven's Breath* – a collaboration with Scheherazaad Cooper currently running until August 30th at the Surrey Art Gallery. In the course of the talk they will address the way in which *Heaven's Breath* came together as a project, the work that went into its production, the role of collaboration in the production of their art, and situate *Heaven's Breath* within their respective art practices.

Shri Nataraja in Post-Traditional Media

Niranjan Rajah

Thursday, June 11, 7:30pm

This lecture is a meditation on the image of Shri Nataraja in the context of its post-traditional remediation. This image, which is prescribed in the *Sastras* and *Agamas* (sacred texts), has been realized in the sacred sculpture, dance, hymn and liturgy for well over ten centuries. The grandeur of its conception arises from a masterful synthesis of science, religion and art. Who is the Dancer? And what are the meanings of his dance? What are the implications of his contemporary cultural and technological appropriation? This lecture attempts to elucidate role the image of Shri Nataraja in traditional Shivite culture while also addressing its remediation in contemporary cultural and technological milieus.

Niranjan Rajah is an artist, theorist, curator and an educator. His research is focused at the junction of tradition and technology, where he is developing an interpretive and enabling framework for the remediation of traditional religious imaging in post-traditional praxis. Rajah is assistant professor at the School of Interactive Arts and Technology, Simon Fraser University.

Credits and Acknowledgements:

Installation concept: Chris Welsby
Odissi Classical Dancer: Scheherazaad Cooper
Drummer: Andreas Kahre
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Photography:

pages 1 and 3: composite images from *Heaven's Breath* by Chris Welsby, Brady Marks and Scheherazaad Cooper
page 2: installation view of *Heaven's Breath* in the TechLab

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