



video footage of the workshops (excerpts):
<https://makois.com/video.html> or on YouTube

Graphic Movements (Lean on Me)

2019-2020

installation (projector, phosphorescent PVC film, artificial turf) + workshop

video: 15 min, projection surface: 273 x 182 cm

as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption Recovering the Viridity & Salmon Run* at TOKAS Hongo, Tokyo

Graphic Movements consists of a series of workshop to practice humanity where two people stand back-to-back leaning on each other to sit down and stand up together; and an installation, projecting the recording of previous workshops that were conducted in different societies, which serves as the score and backdrop for succeeding workshops.

It was an attempt to embody Ubuntu, African philosophy to interpret 'a person exists through others' existence' and the Chinese character of human (人), as a response to the racial conflicts and xenophobic riots I experienced in South Africa.

COVID PANDEMIC AS A NEW PLATFORM

I developed it further in the new context at TOKAS Hongo, where the everyday actions of talking and touching other people got new meanings since the COVID pandemic.

The installation shows the recording of previous workshops in South Africa. As the backdrop for the next workshop, I altered it to resonate with the COVID context and adapt to the rules set by TOKAS Hongo and the local government.

AFTERGLOW & SOCIAL DISTANCES

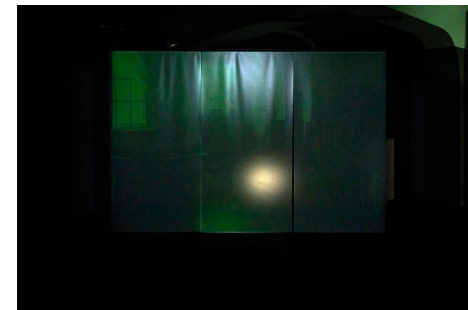
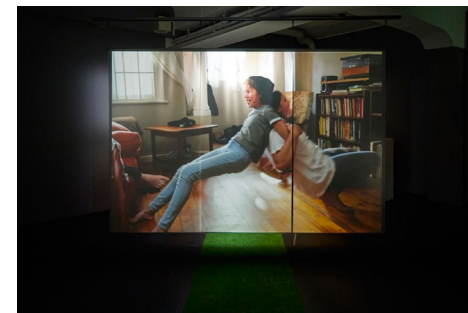
The projection surface is three stripes of PVC film, which separates the space. A piece of artificial turf is placed below at right angles, as if to bridge the divided spaces. The PVC film is for sanitary use and phosphorescent, and therefore detains the light it has received and discharges it in fluorescent green in the dark part of the projection and during the brief blackouts between each recording. The artificial turf has the length of 'social distance' according to the Japanese COVID rules, and it is in the size of a tatami mat, which is twice the size of the Japanese 'personal space'.

'REMOTE' WORKSHOP

A workshop took place with the participants involved in the show - a participating artist, the staffs of TOKAS Hongo, the builders, and some from the related institutions of TOKAS. Due to the Japanese COVID rules, I could not enter Japan and I conducted the workshop online from a remote island in Sweden.

The projection surface served as a barrier between the two back-to-back, and the artificial turf as the platform to stand on for the exercise. While I reduced the participants into the grey shadows in the projection, regardless of race, nationality, or gender, in the previous installation in South Africa, I translated the workshop into rainbow colours by documenting with a thermal camera in Tokyo.

Participants were advised to refrain from talking and wore a mask, which hid not only their facial expressions but also personality. In silence, they concentrated to communicate with the other sensing the movements of muscles through their backs, and trying to read the mind of the other and reconcile, as expected in the Japanese society in general. During the workshop, we also made a new experiment to sit down and stand up alone, without the support of the other.



(left page) installation view with audiences (right page, from top to bottom) installation view with the afterglow seen during the blackout between the video; workshop view; workshop view recorded with a thermal camera



the installation and workshop of
Graphic Movements (Lean on Me)
2020

workshop footage at TOKAS (excerpt, 3min)
<https://youtu.be/Wa26q2eIiRs>



PRACTICE OF HUMANITY

The project consists of a series of workshop to practice humanity where two people stand back-to-back supporting and leaning on each other to sit down and stand up together, and an installation projecting the audio visual recording of the previous workshops conducted in different societies, which becomes the score and backdrop for succeeding workshops.

EMBODY HUMAN IN SOCIETY

It originates from a casual workshop of Contact Improvisation as a dance to practice oneself*. In South Africa, which celebrated the 25th anniversary of its democracy after the Apartheid while the racial frictions remained strongly and the xenophobic riots broke out, I tried to embody Ubuntu, African philosophy that places emphasis on 'being self through others', and the Chinese character of 'human' through the workshops where I reduced the participants to the grey-toned shadows in the projection, regardless of race, nationality, gender, etc.

RAINBOW UNDER COVID

In the new context at TOKAS Hongo under the COVID-19 pandemic, when the acts of speaking and touching somebody got different meanings. The new rules for the visitors, such as keep 2 metres from others, refrain from speaking, max 5 people in the space, are like the local traditions you need to adapt to when you move to different place, and they became the source of inspirations for conducting new attempts. The workshop took place at the end of the show. The documentation was taken with thermal camera to turn the participants into rainbow colours.

KEEP DISTANCE

The projection surface is three stripes of PVC film (the same material for medical use) that is phosphorescent, hanging in the air and dividing the space into two.

Below the projection surface is a piece of artificial turf, in the size of 1 tatami mat, which is the unit that signifies Japanese 'personal space' for two people, and the length of the mat is the recommended distance to keep under the COVID pandemic in Japan.

The turf bridges between the spaces separated by the projection surface.

AFTERGLOW

There are approximately 5 minutes excerpt from the documentation of previous three workshops in South Africa, with 5 second interval of black inbetween.

While there is no image is projected, one sees the afterglow of the previous movements appearing in green colour in the dark.

NO CONTACTS & IMPERSONAL

At the workshop, the artificial turf becomes the platform, and the projection surface functions as a barrier to avoid the contact between the two people, while still let them communicate their senses towards the other. There was also a new attempt to stand alone, without leaning on anybody.

The workshop was documented with thermal camera, which is used to find the potential COVID positive patients in the crowd. It captured the body heat and translated into rainbow colours and also made the mask-covered participants more impersonal.

