

# “Waking Dream”

**Sidney Fels**

**Baerbel Neubauer**

**Sachiyo Takahashi**

## **Concept:**

We live in two illusory states: awake and dream. The two only co-exist at a special time during a “waking dream”. At this point, we only exist; dream and awake co-exist. This can happen when we are waking up in the morning and is accompanied by a strong sense of situatedness and paralysis. It can be an unsettling, frightening, and enlightening moment. In one experience, we feel pressure on our chest holding us down in our bed but we can see the room around us. Something is happening around us, trying to get us out of bed but we can’t get up. We are aware but immobile. Tension mounts and we try harder and harder to raise up. We panic and struggle. Then, we realize, we are dreaming and fall back asleep hoping to really wake up. This pattern cycles around as if layers of consciousness are being peeled back. In “Waking Dream”, we explore this moment of coexistence. What does it mean? Is this “reality” free of illusion?

## **Performance**

### **Act 1: Existence Linked by Sound**

Two performers, Awake and Dream are on stage. On the large, rear-projection screen behind the performers is a small, deep blue image of moving water. Awake is illuminated with a dim spot light. Dream is in very dim lighting from a video projector. Awake is working at a desk doing typical work, moving around and making typical everyday noises in a linear, normal progression. Dream is moving through dreams. When a sound is made by Awake this changes the dream for Dream. She reacts to the sound by changing her dream. Awake gets ready for bed and lies down and sleeps. Lights dim. Dream continues and flows toward the screen and moves beside the deep blue water. Music begins – subtle noises and sounds. The projection stops and the audience is in complete darkness.

### **Act 2: An act of reality**

Dream enters the dark cave behind the projection area. The cave is completely black so that Dream cannot see. Inside the cave is a video camera and an infrared light source. The video camera image is projected on the main projection screen for the audience. Dream dances in the cave. Moving close to the camera and looking deeply at it, eyes wide open. There is something to eat. Dream smells and tastes it but cannot see it. She feels around and finds the reality entry equipment; a head-mounted display with a head mounted camera. The image from the camera is seen inside the HMD and is also broadcast. She dons the equipment. She can now see in the dark. She moves outside the cave.

### **Act 3: Am I me?**

Dream emerges from the dark, behind the rear projection screen. The video image displayed on the screen is now the one on her head mounted camera. Dream looks at her shadow on the screen which causes feedback. The feedback is from Dream's eye perspective which she manipulates until she has multiple hand postures.

### **Act 4: Dream meets Awake**

Scene 1: Dream moves slowly around to the front of the screen. She sees Awake lying on the ground sleeping bathed in infrared light. The audience is sitting in the dark and sees Awake through Dream's eyes. Dream slowly moves around Awake and moves her paralyzed body. Dream slowly lifts Awake and moves her body into postures.

Scene 2: The sound space changes and Dream, using the remote control device, toggles the shutter over the projector and the room goes COMPLETELY dark. The video image switches to moving and zooming imagery of a house, a dam and a forest. Dream continues to move Awake while toggling the video shutter with low frequency.

Scene 3: The room is completely silent. The imager is being toggled giving a sense of snapshots of postures and subtle movement. During this silence, Awake begins to move on her own. Each flash of the shutter show a slowly moving silhouette of both Awake and Dream. Moving into Scene 4 the music returns and both Awake and Dream have merged and are moving together - coming together and moving apart, close and far, intimate and distant. The Act ends dramatically in total darkness with the intense sound of a train.

### **Act 5: Illusion**

Awake moves behind the screen casting a silhouette when the video shutter is on. She plays minimalist sounds from her sax as she moves towards the projector. Dream moves amongst the audience. She can see since she is wearing the HMD/camera arrangement and the audience is bathed in infrared light. At staggered intervals, Dream toggles the video projector shutter and the audience can see Dream up close to them and they see their own image on the video projection. Dream exits behind the audience as the sound beats away.

## **Technical**

### **Materials:**

Video playback

Video projector and large rear-projection screen at back of stage

Infrared (IR) lights

Electronic Saxophone

RF Remote control shutter apparatus for fast blanking of video projection. (iLid)  
Small IR camera and head mounted display (HMD) system  
Wireless video transmitter (attached to HMD)  
Spot lighting  
Audio system

### **Staging**

Rear projection screen.  
Stage access to both sides of screen.  
Small completely dark room (about 2mx2m)  
IR light at floor level to illuminate actors.  
IR spot/flood lights to illuminate audience.  
Pathway into audience for performer to walk.

### **Artists**

#### **Sidney Fels**

Sidney received his Ph. D. and M.Sc. in Computer Science at the University of Toronto in 1994 and 1990 respectively. He received his B.A.Sc. in Electrical Engineering at the University of Waterloo in 1988. He was a visiting research at ATR Media Integration & Communications Research Laboratories in Kyoto, Japan from 1996 to 1997. He also worked at Virtual Technologies Inc. in Palo Alto, CA developing the GesturePlus™ system and the CyberServer™ in 1995. His research interests are in human-computer interaction, neural networks, intelligent agents and interactive arts. Some of his research projects include Glove-TalkII, Glove-Talk, Iamascope, InvenTel, Sound Sculpting and the context-aware mobile assistant project (CMAP). Using the Glove-TalkII system a person could speak with their hands. The device was built to be a virtual artificial vocal tract. The person using the system wore special gloves and used a foot pedal. These devices controlled a model of a vocal tract so that a person could "play" speech much as a musician plays music. His collaborative work on sound sculpting is an extension of this idea to create musical instruments. The Iamascope is an interactive artwork which explores the relationship between people and machines. In Iamascope, the participant takes the place of the coloured piece of glass inside the kaleidoscope. The participant's movements cause a symphony of imagery and music to engulf them. His other artwork includes the Forklift Ballet and Video Cubism.

#### **Baerbel Neubauer**

Baerbel was born in 1959 in Klagenfurt, Austria. She studied stage-design and film at the Academy of Arts in Vienna. Since 1980 she has been making various types of film including: animation films, short subjects, experimental films, and documentaries. Since 1991, she has also been composing music and film scores.

Currently she is actively working in various media, such as 35mm cinema, 70mm IMAX cinema and Quicktime Movies for the internet. She is also working on performance with dance and music.

Her previous films are mostly abstract, direct on film animations. These have received international recognition and prizes, running at numerous international animation film festivals, short film festivals and experimental film festivals.

She has used her style to make commercials such as FALTER-SPOT 7, and ABSOLUT NEUBAUER. In 1998 she made a 70mm animation film, SKY by handpainting directly on film. In 1999, she created several Quicktime Movies for the article "The Influence Of Sound/Music On Images" in the Animation World Magazine. This can be seen at: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue4.03/4.03pages/neubauermoritz.php3>

Baerbel served as a jury member at several international animation festivals such as the selection committees of Annecy 2000, Hiroshima 2000. She has been offering free workshops at festivals, schools and universities since 1986. These include a workshop at the Royal College of Art in London in 1999 and a teaching position at the Rocky Mountains College of Art and Design in Denver in the fall of 2000.

She has been living in Munich, Germany since 1987. Prior to that she lived in Vienna, Austria.

### **Sachiyo Takahashi**

Sachiyo studied new philosophy (culture and representation) at the Tokyo University and continued as an assistant there from 1993 to 1996). Her main research was in Japanese traditional theater (Noh theater and Japanese traditional puppet theater Bunraku) and performance in this century focusing on voice and body in performance. From childhood, she has played several Occidental musical instruments and later learned Noh flute from Master Yukimasa Isso for 10 years. She has been deeply involved and influenced by Noh theater. From her interests in the fine combination of sound and action in performance, she created experimental pieces in Tokyo from 1988, applying traditional concepts to develop a new art form.

In 1996, she came to Belgium to work with Jan Fabre. She studied theater direction from him and played in three of his works including "Glowing Icons". She has studied electro acoustic composition with Prof. Annette Van de Gorne.

In December 1999 she created and performed her sound-action piece "Aviation/Abbreviation" (production: Troubleyn vzw) in Antwerp, Belgium. She is on tour with this production as well as other collaboration in 2001. She has been actively collaborating with artists from different fields, including: Akitsugu Maebayashi, Sidney Fels, Alzek Misheff.