

Inner Material/Material

Hijikata Tatsumi

Inner Material

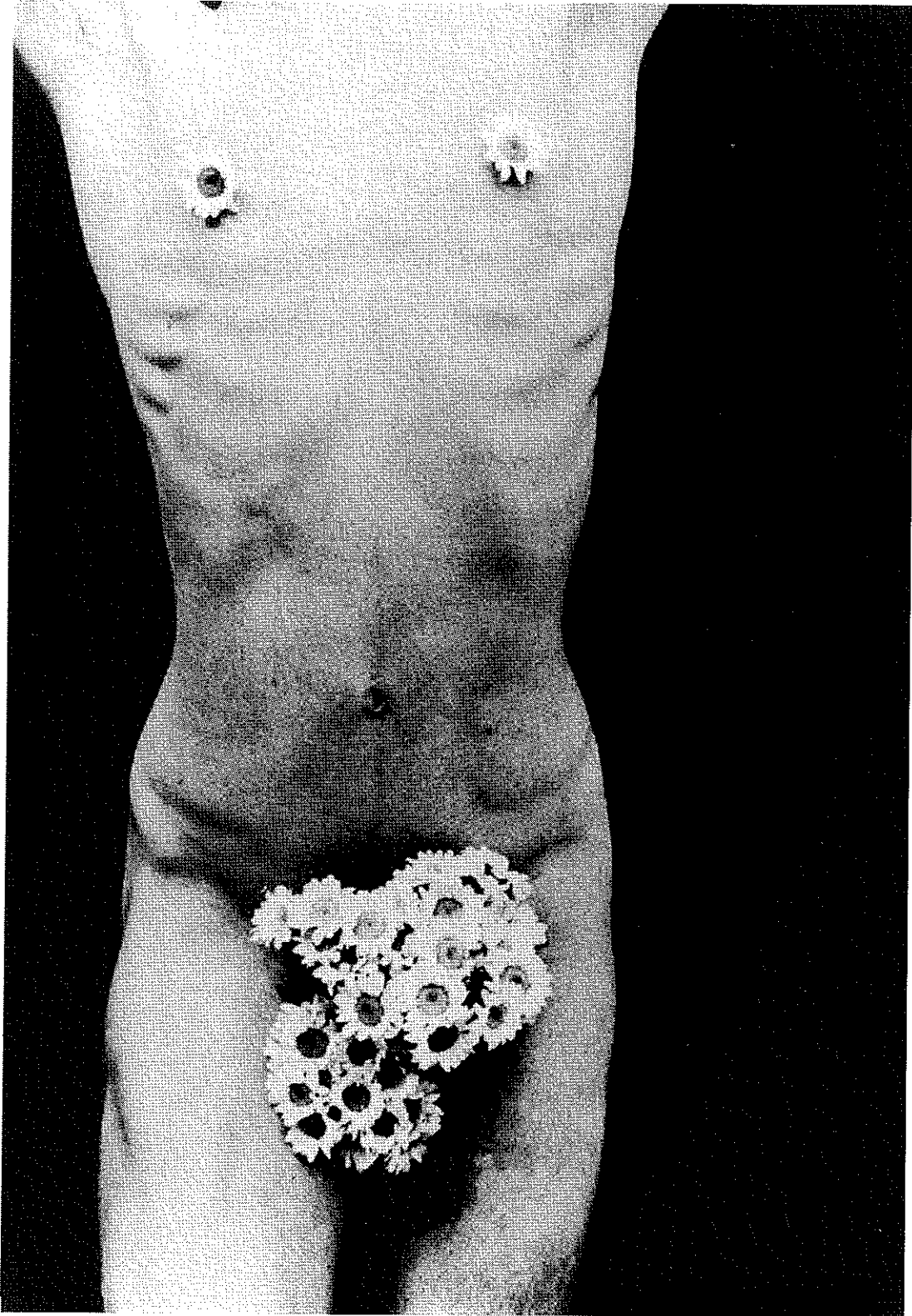
“You have to pull your stomach up high in order to turn your solar plexus into a terrorist” That line is from a letter I sent to Ms. Elian Margaret, a woman with psychic powers who wrote a commentary last summer about my anal art. This woman was a good collaborator (and the person who gave me my annual tonsure), but owing to intense conflicts in my daily life I was in a state of secretly hiring someone in civilian clothes and continuing to choreograph. It is she who recommended that I write an essay on impotence and told me, too, in a letter written with invisible ink that the anuses of Greek youth were utterly ruined. There is no way to remove ignorance and misery from my dances but I do not want people to draw a lesson about hereditary diseases from them, as Ms. Margaret did. I have never been visited by genius and my appearance is far from that of a certified incompetent. Not a devotee of ghost aesthetics, I am a mere virgin. My semen should bring a good price.

Fourteen years ago, I became a disciple of a woman dance teacher in my hometown. I was fond of the phrase “to become a disciple,” so I put on new underpants and went through the gate to the teacher’s house. Because the term “foreign dance,” however, made me vaguely anxious, I hesitantly asked her what kind it was, while at the same time thinking I would just quit if it were not what I wanted. When she told me it was German dance, I immediately took steps to become a disciple. I figured that since Germany was hard, its dance too would be hard.

In the fall of 1948, in Tokyo, I saw a wonderful dance performance, overflowing with lyricism, by a man wearing a chemise. Cutting the air again and again with his chin, he made a lasting impression on me. For years this drug dance stayed in my memory. That dance has now been transformed into a deadly poison, and one spoonful of it contains all that is needed to paralyze me. Obstinate passion is covered blackly by the alteration of an image; he had the dimensions of a cabinetmaker measuring a dense territory with a ruler hidden in his breast. Yet where did that dancer get his hands, unlike any I have ever seen? They were the hands of Maldoror.¹ [Arthur] Rimbaud was at one time our supreme song. Kuroki Fuguto’s² studio was in Ikenohata kuromon-cho and, after a close examination, anyone who said he loved Rimbaud could become a member of the club. Even recalling it now, our mad baptism was something. We all went by the name of Torakūru or Soutine or some such.³ Early on Torakūru was being forced by Swann to be a

1. *Hijikata Tatsumi, from the Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE no kai (Hijikata Dance Experiences Recital) pamphlet (1960) (Photo by Hosoe Eikō)*

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virgin but it was much later in the club's history that Modilio became Toby. Arp worked for a design company. We welcomed the misery provided by alcohol. This small fellow carved stone as if he were making paper cuttings. Was it necessary to emphasize the slope of his right shoulder so much just because he had only one testicle, which never saw the light of day?

There appeared a court noble who drew *obi*⁺ designs and carried a hidden jackknife. Because of this man, who brought drugs into the toilet, we had to prove our innocence and our romantic dream was gradually destroyed. The club went downhill when someone who played with guns joined it.

The method of murder has lost its seriousness. I do not know how often I proposed the need for chopping heads with a hoe. Tragedy must be given precedence over production or it is just too frivolous. I remember how intensely lonely I felt when they all laughed at me for saying that we absolutely had to chop heads with a hoe. Time passed and there appeared a necktie who got us to hate hunger. The necktie belonged to the Great Japan Sugar Manufacturing Company, which was then having a boom. We put some sugar on a piece of paper and licked it off. It was the first time in our lives that we realized how horrible sweetness could be, and we all bowed our heads and prayed. Rain fell and I became a thief. The morning that I got out of detention, I visited Toby, who made abstract images of backbones. He laid a black *fusuma*^s down flat and drew a single line on it. He roundly tumbled the daughter of a *nhonga*^a painter onto that side of the fusuma, and that girl raped Toby. The usual festival started. He was unable even to paint a landscape as simple as one where you become impotent if you become a thief. In silence I began to clean other people's rooms. I, who picked up bare ground and ate it, had killed my father far away. Feeling 40 years old I talked from time to time in women's language. Models were rolled from studio to studio, then transformed into offices. Strings were so jumbled you could not tell them apart, and the string men themselves were unaware that they were fraying at the knees. They had lost their edge. That's how women forced them all to be. Omission.

In the summer of the Independents exhibition, along came Arthur Rimbaud. He called himself *Cyū* [ox]⁷. The appearance of this man with an angelic nature turned the club into a boxing gym. All the old guys of 20, bleeding at the nose, started getting themselves back into shape. One fellow died in the process and we all began to cry. Bereft, we were probably going to go home to our mothers. But this Rimbaud was a genuine Rimbaud. He ate a sweet bun without taking part in the race proposed by Toby to run a hundred meters while drinking a glass of strong sake. A fellow who crunches bread will sleep with his old man. I asked Rimbaud about it and that is how it was. It was a true story. The need to make a living and the advent of this man who, with chewing gum and water, grasped the spirit of the plastic arts, led to my visiting the club less and less. Together with Hard-Boiled Father, I withdrew from it and, looking exhausted, moved into Mr. Kanamori's⁸ place in the Akasaka Apartments. I suddenly became aware that there was an event that I had to dance and successfully auditioned with the Benibasha [Red Wagon] Club. I bowed and recited the words of the manager, "If you would just pay attention to your gaze and stiff hair." I studied hard and went around bowing so much that the bones in my neck were about worn away. A vulgar smile is a weapon. At the apartment, Mr. Kanamori, a medieval knight, slept in Napoleonic fashion. I had heard that Kawara On⁹ was living in the apartment next door but got to know him only when I started borrowing his suits. He had a whole set of knock-down tools in his place. He let me rest on his black bed and made me delicious hot soup. I realized that steadfast patience was required to heal hunger's wounds. I made my face up with grease paint

and commuted to work, then crawled into bed with my face still painted. There was, I believed, a reason I had to act like that. Was it that I needed to sleep a lot? I did not attend Toby's funeral, held privately just the other day even though Toby was really the fellow I liked the best.

For days I slept holding a chicken and taking care not to eat it. Boyhood hunger is vivid; the chicken my father killed was red. To the hungry boy, the father even looked like a chicken as we were pounding the carcass. In Tokyo I stood for hours in front of a shop window where chicks were strung up. Love always comes late. I slept with the chicken the night before my performance with other new dancers. This chicken which laid an egg in the green room played a vital part in my initiation into love. I sometimes visited this partner of mine at a poultry shop in Asagaya. The first time I danced my self-portrait, at a dance studio in Nakano, I started sobbing out loud. I shrieked and eventually foamed at the mouth. That was the first accompaniment to my dance. It turned out to be awesome. Parents complained about it. Over and over I apologized to the chicken I held while dancing. Hunger must have been the theme of the universe. Last winter I got to know Mr. Kōjin,¹⁰ an Apollo from Hokkaidō, and we traded experiences about white blood flowing at an improvisational theatre. Undershorts have got to be wet. One summer I dealt with a list of books from Rilke banned in Revelations. Master T.,¹¹ a choreographer of dead languages who had a head from before the Flood, lent his assistance. Mr. O. [Ōno Kazuo], a dancer of deadly poison and a pioneer in experiential dance, an awe-inspiring teacher and a friend, helped carry my dance works to the theatre. He is both a cabinetmaker and a poet who, with a fond gaze, singles out every work of unhappy heartburn.

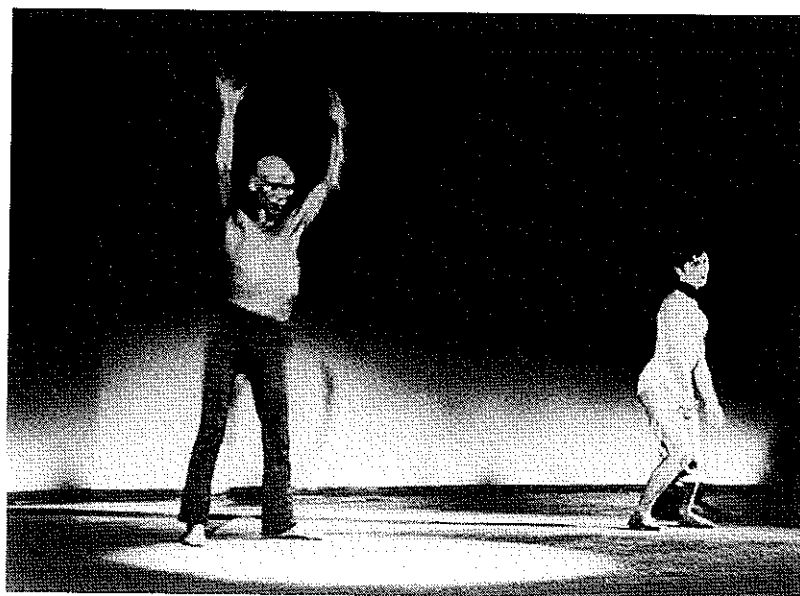
For 10 years I had no experience of dance in a practice studio. There are open-air theatres all over Tokyo. I gave myself up to talking with shirts in dressing rooms and marveled at the many odors of sweat to be smelled from stripped-off fibers. From the reverse side of the shirts, I picked up a dance of the back. Strings, too, are strange creatures. My friendship with the male prostitutes at Ueno Kurumazaka is what strongly inclined me toward the art of imitation. A ragged head of hair, size 11 feet, rouge, death from cold in a public lavatory—with these tools at hand any choreographer, no matter how lazy, should be able to create a dance. I thought seriously about the art of impotence when a general image of life hit me with unbearable speed. Tired of the streets, I returned to my room, but you cannot eat the walls of a boardinghouse, and I even dreamed of a dance about hair that as a matter of course examines a skinny belly. (This passage was placed next to a passage on “dance of the chest” in *Buyō wa danshoku de aru* [Dance Is Male Homosexuality], printed in *Nijuisseki buyō* [Dance of the 20th Century], October 1960, a program of 650 experiences.) I was completely impotent. All my seeds were cut off. That was when the springs in my legs weakened in the “dance of sterilization.” Swaying legs are now a technique of my dance. Violence of course had to hit me from without. Open a window and the infinitely nonsensical future is there. At the practice studio it was all jockstraps and Chopin and throughout it all. I had the diarrhea of misery. I hope you will be able to understand just why I had to prepare the “dance of terrorism.” In spite of that, I willingly visit theatres. What is it I go to see at theatre after theatre? Audiences pay money to enjoy evil. We must make compensation for that. Both the “rose-colored dance” and the “dance of darkness” must spout blood in the name of the experience of evil. A body that has kept the tradition of mysterious crisis is prepared for that. Sacrifice is the source of all work and every dancer is an illegitimate child set free to experience that very quality. Because they bear that obligation, all dancers must first of all be pilloried. Dance for display must

be totally abolished. Being looked at, patted, licked, knocked down. A strip-tease is nothing to laugh at. A comical dance has more shameless possibilities than a humorous one. Yes, the disgraceful behavior of men is latent in comical dance and that behavior, sweaty with potential, transforms into the "engagement" of indignation. What a worthy project it would be to mobilize high school students, bleeding at the nose, for the theatre.

Material

A choreographer surrounded by quick naked bodies loses weight with a vengeance. With my gaunt rib cage submerged in the sewer, my chest is filled with the flotsam of the times. Slathering oil on my chest to keep it from rusting, I set off for an endless day's work. Far away from my pitiful convalescent chest, I bask in the sun at the theatre. Within shelves exposed to view where the body lies in state, eyes intervene in the current generation whose soul too is unable to live merely through the succession of property. I eventually arrive at my material by carefully walking around Tokyo where the generation whose hands made eyes has not altogether died out. It's good to be able to pick up material from among the boys wiping up at metal-plating workshops or squatting in garages. I look at their hands. A movement of coarse particles spills over. Their backbones incline slightly forward. There is a dance that slides down that slope. Gelatin can be changed by an unfortunate glance. There are hot heads. Revenge fixed in place by frozen buttons is somewhat bowed; the material has got to be a lover. I approach. An odor creates an almost ascetic balance between me and the boys, whose bodies usually become taut for the sake of the sacrifice which spreads wide, like the ribs of an umbrella opening to ward off what falls from above. From within the circumference of these 20-year-olds, whose totally human bodies, awkward and easily broken, take the place of elegant shapes, lines almost close to corroboration are given preference in numerous ways. This big Tokyo is rotten with bodies. There is a lethargic generation arrogant with fat and I vomit on its lotioned and powdered pale effeminate skin. A penis in such a case never becomes a ra-

2 *Hijikata Tatsumi (left) and Ono Yoshito in Kinjiki (Forbidden Colors, 1959), choreographed by Hijikata Tatsumi at the Daiich seimei Hall (Photo by Kurohara Shashinkan)*



diant dagger. Wearing an apron, I go into service in the classification of fat that must be shaved away. To slaughterhouses, to schools, to public squares. The dismantling ceremony must be quickly carried out. And in the circumference of the 20-year-olds there are various kinds of joints and leg springs, too, which I have never seen; springs must have starving dependents under their roof. The material goes maybe up to the mandatory retirement age of 40. The radiant vitality of athletes at a sports ground intimately exists side by side with death. Legs extended for the sake of being chosen as well as for all-out vitality may be registered as new springs in order to run rampant in the dance of death. At the theatre a monster's balance is honed; outdoors one corner of sundry spaces is leveled to set a new record. A parabola freeing itself from the wall of a breast put an end to time and fell into a thicket. We can easily see time casting its somewhat languid shadow on the face of youths who work hard at sports. Flags are nonetheless raised. The sun at the height of summer is not too dazzling for these youths. I am always standing, I don't know why, with my material in a place where the sun does not reach. Yearning for a carbide lamp, I sit, I don't know why, next to a youth at a night stall. Not that we are standing next to a flag of mourning. A nosebleed is always possible.

The material and I are now just a bit darkened in order to dye a flag with that vivid red. The material given precedence for my next performance is from five boys who met me in a classroom at a Tokyo high school where a tungsten bird took flight. I started out feeling a bit shy and at a loss for my initial baptism, but as soon as I met those boys, 80 percent of my work fell into place. That was because I discovered beyond their midday labor a colorful dance literally unlike any I had seen elsewhere. This kind of material excites me and furiously challenges my usual method of choreography. In this separation between this material and myself, bodies that have maintained the crisis of the primal experience celebrate their mutually dizzying encounter. It is most surely that which lies behind the symbolic quality of all bodies. Under a vivid sign the material and I take our first step to the treatment site for movement while anticipating various things in giving up our lives to a sweaty "engagement." This battle is the matrix of my art. The intellect has already been strung up. Running, I pass nearby it. A boy and I stand at the minimum distance from the intuitive image. In silence I place one phenomenon in front of one concept. The material sweats and the material shrinks. I extend. But first of all I must, I think, wipe out all art and culture. This "dance experience," which fiercely took up this challenge for the sake of cultural material, has been for me a marvelous spiritual journey. There is, I always feel, an unfathomable ocean before my body.

Hosoe Eikō, a photographer, showed up suddenly this summer at the "place of the body" and abruptly snatched me away. The seeds and I were packed in bags and, with cameras thrust against our chests, carried off to the Harumi wharves. His car seemed to be a Renault. Naked bodies, unpacked and lined up, willingly did away with their underwear. Warehouses were sleeping at the stale scenes of murder. The huge spherical tanks of Tokyo Gas restrained terrorists' testicles to about the size of the glass balls in the necks of lemon soda bottles. In front of scraps and pieces of luan in all shapes we were given a difficult script about a myth. "To Algeria" was marked on our naked bodies and pebbles lodged between our toes. We were made to walk quietly sinking down. This man scrupulously shot the flowers in a vacant lot next to a slaughterhouse. The camera's eye is brutal. All the pores on our dancers' bodies were painted over and anything that could be called a hole stopped up. Pipes were installed in our buttocks and our breathing was likewise supplied by a Hosoe-style hand pump. Five inflated bodies flew over the Harumi

wharves. The salty scent of the sea turned me into a foreigner. Beneath my eyes, the people of Tokyo were spots clinging to death. This young photographer who eschews specializing in pictures of women, is an avid reader of the Marquis de Sade. It is virtually impossible to stand up to his passion when he is in the darkroom looking at negatives. There is not even the shred of a promise of ghost aesthetics in our fraternity. The day will soon come when he does a photo collection based on [D. H.] Lawrence. It was Hosoe Eikō who first asked me to tighten my anus then photographed those gentle, modest hills. I silently bow to the photo collection he gave me for this performance. Nothing could make me happier. It will be a keepsake for the rest of my life. Fraternity and friendship, beyond hatred, created this photo collection, which has no excess. Mr. Araki of the NOL Design studio was in charge of all designs. My oldest friend, Kanamori Kaoru. Tamura Ryuichi, a poet of four thousand days and nights. Mizutani Isao, the sole flag bearer of the Japanese surrealism movement. Ōno Kazuo, a pioneer of experiential dance and a dancer of deadly poison. Tsuda Nobutoshi, choreographer of dead languages. Finally I owe everything to the constant support of Mishima Yukio, our generation's shot with the magic bullet, who always sets an anxious, unchanging fuse to his own work and who made me create my maiden work. *Kinjiki* (Forbidden Colors)

July 1960

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Translators' Notes

- 1 Maldoror refers to 'Les Chante de Maldoror' by French poet Comte de Lautremont born Isidore Ducasse in Montevideo Uruguay.
- 2 Kuroki Fuguto (1928-1958) a painter who worked in the Informel Style, with a touch of neo-dada.
- 3 Hijikata and his gang gave each other nicknames, often based on the names of artists and fictional characters. Torakūru may refer to Austrian poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914). Soutine to the Russian-born painter Chaim Soutine (1893-1943) and Swann to the character in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Arp may refer to the dadaist artist Jean (Hans) Arp (1887-1966). Modilio is perhaps a humorous contraction of painter Amedeo Modigliani's name (1884-1920).
- 4 An *obi* is a sash worn with a *kimono*.
- 5 A *fusuma* is a sliding door comprised of a wooden frame and papered panels.
- 6 *Nihonga*: traditional Japanese painting.
- 7 Gyū is the nickname of Shinohara Ushio (b. 1932) a Japanese painter and sculptor who organized a neo-dada group in 1960 in Japan and now resides in New York City.
- 8 Kanamori Kaoru (1933-1980) became one of the most prominent set designers in Japan.
- 9 Kawara On (b. 1933) is a Japanese conceptual artist who currently resides in New York City.
- 10 Kōjin is Wakamatsu Miki (b. 1934) a modern dancer/choreographer who now teaches at Japan Women's Athletic College.
- 11 Tsuda Nobutoshi or Master T. (1910-1984) was a modern dancer/choreographer who supported Hijikata's experimental way of working.