

Solitude / Solitude

Lead Author: Katrina McPherson

Co-Author(s): Harold Rheaume

Date: 2022

Unit of Assessment

33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

Output Category: FILM



<https://vimeo.com/katrinamcpherson/solitude?ts=0&share=copy>

Duration: 13' 55"

Summary Statement (300 words)

Solitude investigates the interplay between individuality and community, isolation and belonging. Six central performers traverse rural and urban locations in Scotland and Quebec, performing emotionally intense choreography by Rheume, developed in collaboration with the dancers. The film is structured through a series of vignettes, variously depicting the characters, alone and together; the camera takes the viewer into the intimacy of these shared and solitary moments, juxtaposing the performative with the gaze of a curious, passing public.

The work investigates:

1. How screendance techniques can be employed to evoke empathetic engagement in the viewer.
2. How persistent production hierarchies can be dismantled through artistic choices in framing and editing relating to visibility and presence.

As co-director and cinematographer, McPherson employs an “embodied camera” approach (McPherson, 2018), a skilled practice which converges familiarity with the technology, confidence in visual environment created through attention to *mise-en-scène*, and a lived understanding of how bodies move in space. Shifting between peripheral and focused perception—through and around the lens, while also attuned to the cinematographer’s physicality—contributes to the dynamic and responsive material. By situating herself as an on-screen performer, McPherson proposes a gentle dispelling of the distinctions between performer and viewer, as mediated through the frame.

The film’s imagery arises in a liminal digital space combining stylised movement, location and costume with quotidian activity in public sites - a merging of reality and fiction that is echoed in the soundtrack’s use of actuality and synthesised sonic materials. The work recalls Trinh-T Minh-ha’s assertion that “to use an image is to enter fiction” (2018). Filming longer shots, with no camera rehearsal or repetition of takes, McPherson’s approach further problematises distinctions between documentation and fiction in definitions of screendance; McPherson’s directorial style, spontaneous and genuine, leans into and expands notions of “performative documentary”, bringing to the centre an attention to the “interaction between performance and reality”. (Bruzzi, 2006, p 185) .

References

- Bruzzi, S. (2006). *New Documentary*. (2nd edition). London and New York: Routledge.
- McPherson, K. (2018). *Making Video Dance*. (2nd edition). New York and Oxon: Routledge.
- Minh-ha, T.T. (2018). Reality is Delicate: An Interview with Trinh T. Minh-ha.
- Balsom, E. *Frieze* [online] 199. No page numbers. Available at: <https://www.frieze.com/article/there-no-such-thing-documentary-interview-trinh->

t-minh-ha.

Contextual Information

Production Credits:

- Directed by Katrina McPherson & Harold Rheaume
- Performance & Choreography: Jean-Francois Duke, Aicha N'diaye, Lewis Landini
- Camera & Editing: Katrina McPherson
- Music: Josue Beaucage
- Funding & support: The British Council QC-UK Connections Fund; Creative Scotland; The Quebec Government (MRIF), The City of Quebec; Dance North, Dance Base, The Work Room, La Maison pour la Danse, Le Fils d'Adrien danse.
- Length:
- Première: October 2022 at the xx cinema as part of Choreoscope Festival, Barcelona, Spain.
- Project website: tbc
- *Première*: Choreoscope Festival in Barcelona, Spain, October 2022

Additional presentations:

- Greensboro Dance Film Festival, N.C. USA, 23 February 2024 (Award winner)
- Moovy Tanzfilmfestival/ dance film festival, Koln, Germany 14 March 2024
- Presented as a work in progress as part of an online as part of Dancelive's digital festival, Katrina and Harold will be in conversation and show excerpts of their new work on Saturday 17th October, 202, 1.30-2.30pm.

Production Context:

Solitude is a screendance collaboration between Scottish director Katrina McPherson and Quebec choreographer Harold Rheaume, a creative duo whose partnership began in the 1990s with the short film *Mur Mur* (1993) and live screendance performance work *Picturshow* (1997) and was re-ignited after an 18-year separation with the *Paysages Mixtes/ Mixed Landscapes* (2019), a film made in Quebec and Scotland, enabled by the British Council UK|QC Connections Fund, working with Le Fils d' Adrien danse and La Maison Pour La Danse, Quebec and Dance North, Dance Base and The Work Room, Scotland.

Following the successful outcomes of that project, the pair received a further two years support the British Council UK|QC Connections Fund for the project *Paysages Élargis /Widening Landscapes*, devised and produced by McPherson and Rheaume to extend their cross-cultural collaboration to involve a wider network of artists, producers and audiences. Continuing support was received for this project from Fils d' Adrien danse and La Maison Pour La Danse, Quebec and Dance North and Dance Base, Scotland. Additionally, McPherson

was awarded funding towards the project from Creative Scotland's Open Fund for Individuals.

Filming took place in late April and early May 2019, with McPherson and Rheaume, working with three dancers Lewis Landini (Scotland), Aicha Bastien N'diaye (Quebec) and Jean-Françoise Duke (Quebec) spent four days in residency at Dance Base, followed by four days in Northeast Scotland. As part of this, the artists presented a performance of live and filmed material from the project at Dance North's RISE Festival at the Universal Hall, Findhorn. This was a special event to celebrate and acknowledge the Scotland-Québec partnerships initiated by McPherson and Rheaume's project and made possible by the various partners detailed here. Also presented as part of the festival were Rheaume and McPherson's previous collaborative works: *Mur Mur* (1992), *Pictureshow* (19987) and *Paysages Mixtes/ Mixed Landscapes* (2019), which had its World Premiere at RISE on 4 May 2019.

<https://www.northern-scot.co.uk/news/moray-features-in-dance-film-176889/?fbclid=IwAR0EX32iJBOTHmaf8ruxnDP4SL0AXMgq3mjScf-1iFhaD7HqBl 2zX5weA>

In September 2019, McPherson and Landini travelled together to Quebec, where they spent intensive time working with Harold, and Quebec dancers Jean-Francois Duke and Aicha N'diaye. They joined in work by dancer Etienne Lambert and camera assistant Christian Garon. They spent this time developing material and filming at La Maison pour la Danse, and locations in and around Quebec City and the rural environment around the city.

The third stage of this project was to have continued with more filming and workshop/presentations in Scotland and in Quebec during 2020, however, due to COVID 19 travel restrictions, the decision was made in agreement with the various partners, to complete the project by focussing on editing a film and a creating a printed illustrated picture book of the project, both of which are submitted here.

Solitude was premiered in October 2022 at the Choreoscope Festival, Barcelona, Spain as part of a retrospective screening of films directed by McPherson between 1992- 2022, curated by Festival Director Loránd János. The other films in the programme were:

Swoop (McPherson, 1992, 4 mins)

Moment (McPherson, 1998, 7 mins)

Away From Here (McPherson, 2012, 13 mins)

Water & Man (Heaslip and McPherson, 2022, 8 mins)

McPherson also received the Premio Honorifico (Honorary Award) at Choreoscope Festival. Recipients in other years have been Mehmet Safak Turkel, Wim Vandekeybus, and Douglas Rosenberg.

Additional Production Credits:

- Dancers: Aicha Bastien N'diaye, Jean-François Duke, Lewis Landini with Harold Rheume and Katrina McPherson.
- Camera assistance and production support (Quebec): Christian Garon, Etienne Lambert.
- Produced by Le Fils d'Adrien danse and Katrina McPherson

Production stills:



