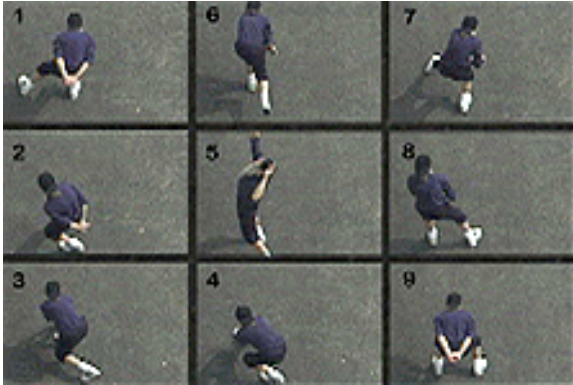


a correlation with the athletic components of strength, flexibility, speed, endurance, co-ordination.

Taking up again this feeling of the elements, one may accentuate their respective qualities, here in sequences of nine

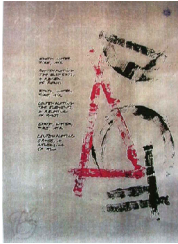


steps (three steps per breath): in turn, the firmness of Earth, the fluency of Water, the heating-up of Fire, the continuity of Air, the dynamics and equilibrium of Space – the nine steps thus taking the entire body-complex through each of these five modes.

Then, possibly, the interplay: firming up of fluidity, heating up of continuity, etc.

Playground

Relocating, re-inscription. Seen setting ink to rice paper, an activity he’s carried on since the early 1970s, Torben Ulrich has worked with a kind of trans-formative, sometimes alchemical approach based on the indivisibility of awareness, breath and the elements (rather than continuing within the traditional colorations of winning and losing). The process involves, for instance, rope and ball, dipped in ink: with the rope, skipping an initial improvised pattern onto the paper (under foot); then later, in a horizontal line, volleying the ball (rather than placing it) onto the same paper, “a sealing of play” in which play itself remains open. Later still, some written lines are usually added: In one of the works shown (and



heard), they deal with alertness, balance and timing “finding their own”; in another, they follow the elemental facets of a serve, its thrust of energy, into “... what comes.”

Turnings & Returnings

Single stroke, field of pitches. The final section documents the making and recording of the non-ambient sounds weaving through the film. All come from a singular source: a ball meeting racquet strings, one hit, establishing (in pitch and music terms) a kind of tonic. In the computer, this single stroke serves as a base for situating a field of multiple octaves. Within a middle range of this larger field, a scale with variant pitches is generated for each of the film’s five chapters. Through the throwing of dice, minute pitch variations are temporarily set into play in each chapter. Together, these different notations set up a dynamic (perhaps never absent from an athletic event) between, as in Networks, two sets of fives: the richly fluctuating and the somewhat stable, slightly more enduring.

The initial hit was made by Lars Ulrich – outdoors, to let the sound resonate. Lars then went into the studio, where his drum kit was connected, by triggers, to the ten ensuing computerized pitches. From his improvisations, the entire additional soundscape was created.



* * *

Before The Wall is dedicated to Gil de Kermadec, whose extensive work in print, film and video – his way of framing technical detail with poetic sensibility – has been a constant inspiration. Growing out of a promise, made soon fifteen years ago, to try for a sequel to his film The Ball And The Wall, this film then attempts to take one more “step back” (from match/court/ball, etc.), and in that sense comes “before” The Ball And The Wall (original title: La Balle Au Mur, Paris, 1988, co-edited with T.U.).



Before The Wall: Body & Being

A digital film by Molly Martin, Rick New & Torben Ulrich

Opening: 3 breaths, etc. (6:00)

Chapter 1: Stickworks (21:15)

Chapter 2: Frameworks (2:52)

Chapter 3: Footworks (7:01)

Chapter 4: Networks (4:35)

Chapter 5: Fireworks (7:23)

Epilogue(s):

Playground (5:04)

Turnings & Returnings (6:20)

Shot in Seattle from 1996 to 2001 at The Lid over I-90, later renamed Smith Park. Downtown Seattle was a second location.

Sounds (non-ambient) recorded at Bob Rock’s Plantation Mixing and Recording, Maui, Hawaii.

Reading of texts: Molly Martin.

Camera work by Rick New, on mini-DV with a Sony VX-1000. Edited by Rick New and Torben Ulrich on a Mac 9600 and G4 using Adobe After Effects. Output to tape using Apple Final Cut Pro.

For further details and for Torben Ulrich’s “Compendium”, a set of extended notes on the texts seen in this film, please go to www.beforethewall.com

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