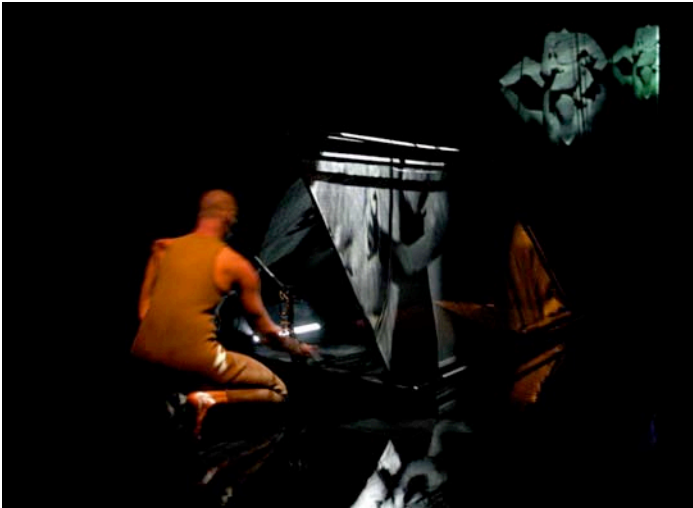




an igneous collaborative work

conceived & directed by	Suzon Fuks & James Cunningham
performer choreographer	James Cunningham
video artist	Suzon Fuks
set design	Alison Ross
sound artist	Andrew Kettle
lighting designer	Morgan Randall



## OVERVIEW

*Mirage* is a performance installation with movement-based performance, video art, sound art and a series of mirror-booths. Taking phantom-limb sensation as a “body-mirage”, and inspired by the work of neurologist V. Ramachandran, *Mirage* plays on perceptual illusion, the construction of hybrid forms, and the real and virtual fusing and separating. It is an interactive labyrinth of perceptual illusion performed in a reflective pool amongst multi-dimensional projections. The work is suitable for a wide audience upwards of 12 years old. *Mirage* was created in the context of a fellowship awarded by The Australian Choreographic Centre to James Cunningham &

Suzon Fuks. Premiered in November 2006 in Canberra. The 45-minute work was repeated 4 times each evening. Supported by the Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland.

## REVIEWS

*[...] an act of bravery, a gift. A deep reflection on human re-creative capacity.[...] At its heart, this is a work that actually cares for and about the body, for and about the performer, but also the spectator/audience, and in a larger sense, the human condition, allowing for the fact that seeing, listening, witnessing, are themselves alchemical processes.[...] And that rare experience: what it costs to watch, and think and be in watching, is rewarded by a message much larger than the performance.[...] Mirage critically, joyfully perhaps, reflects on the deepest artistic and neurological recognitions.[...] Mirage bears witness to an evolution and maturing of (Igneous') practice, and the transformation of the idea of “the body” as a singular site and subject.*  
- ZSUZSI SOBOSLAY, REALTIME

*What an amazingly beautiful, deeply reflective and wondrously magical work.*  
- PIP BUINING, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR CANBERRA YOUTH THEATRE

*So extraordinary. I was captured by the imagery, enveloped by the soundscape, deeply affected by the emotion and touched, explained and finally realised what I was to realise for me.... I thank you so much.*  
- SYLVIE STERN, RADIO 2XX

## TRANSCRIBED FROM THE AUDIENCE COMMENTS BOOK

*The interaction between body, reflection and multiple projections was fantastic to look at. Who's moving first, who's chasing who?*

*I like the marriage between motion, picture, sound and set. It's like optical illusion... Lovely choice of precise movement, not too busy... but lovely for mental stimuli.*

*I floated out of the dream world... thank you. Mesmerising!*

*A perceptive glimpse of a seeming afterworld. When I used the mirror-box with my left arm it really did feel like the rigid arm was moving the same. Very clever.*

*Moving, confronting, beautiful. Great sounds, organic, synthetic, lush. Whole family enjoyed very much.*



## BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

James Cunningham almost totally paralysed his left arm in 1992. In his research about pain relief, he found a particular experiment immensely profound: the "mirror-box", designed by neuro-psychologist Dr Vilayanur Ramachandran, director of the Centre for Brain Cognition at the University of California - San Diego, used to alleviate amputees of phantom-limb pain.

Observing the movement of his intact arm reflected in a mirror, it was as if James could suddenly feel his paralysed arm moving again, along with perceived weight, joint articulation and position in space. A bizarre experience when one knew that in fact the immobile arm was lying flat on the table.

Wanting to share this discovery with others - for them to gain a first-hand experience of the illusory nature of perception, the "mirage" of the mind - and to develop a choreography driven by the actual movement possibilities of his partially-paralysed limb, which necessitates the rest of his body to creatively "serve" and thereby integrate its quirky, subtle, and loosely swung movements, he, along with Suzon Fuks, began formulating the project MIRAGE.



Having worked with movement in water, reflections and projections on black screens in LIQUID SKIN (2005), they explore in this project, further possibilities with these elements, and utilise their experience with the related technologies. In realising this project they collaborated with other Brisbane-based artists - sound designer Andrew Kettle, set designer Alison Ross and lighting designer Morgan Randall. Cvs below.

## INSTALLATION DESCRIPTION

The work spans two spaces.

In the **WHITE SPACE** audience members experiment with and challenge their perception with five mirror-booths.

- ▶ 2 mirror-boxes: a mirror stands on its edge on a table, dividing the table in two. One visitor at a time sits with his/her arms one on each side of the mirror and, whilst moving one arm, observes its reflection. They may perceive their stationary arm moving as well, when in fact it is not - a kind of internal "body mirage".
- ▶ an "erase-face" booth: angled mirrors enable patrons to "erase" their partner's face
- ▶ a "two-in-one" booth: 2 patrons morph their faces into one
- ▶ a "standing mirror/new you" booth: patrons can create a new body image by mirroring one half of their body at a time.

Instructions for use are displayed through simple text and cartoon drawings.

These experiences suggest that perception and physical reality may at times be quite different, and influence how audience members enter and receive the performance part of the installation.

The **BLACK SPACE** contains:

- ▶ a 2cm-deep pool of water shaped as a 6m wide triangle with the corners
- ▶ 2 triangular-prism black screen modules, one which is raised, lowered and manoeuvred by the performer over the water, the other suspended at a distance from the pool
- ▶ 3 narrow vertical black screens suspended at the corners of the pool
- ▶ projections from 4 video projectors: shimmering off the rippling surface of the pool, like heat-haze apparitions; playing with the mirror effect created when the base of an image touches the still reflective pool; creating 3-dimensional structures of light which morph as the modules slowly rotate and "float" like mirages, on the surface of the water and in the air
- ▶ a stereo sound system delivering Kettle's original electronic sound composition
- ▶ a system of lighting specifically designed by Randall, able to highlight the performer against a darkened pool which acts like a huge horizontal mirror



## FORMAT & AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

Audience members can interact with the mirror-booths, come and go between the two rooms, move around the installation during the performance, and stay as long as they like (seeing multiple repetitions of the 45 minutes loop).

## THE PERFORMANCE ELEMENT

Cunningham performs in the shallow water environment, with a unique style of movement that integrates a partially paralysed arm, exploring an abstract narrative, through a range of atmospheres and feelings. The choreography is simple and spacious allowing for equal existence with other media and the audience's imagination. Cunningham interacts with Fuks' video projections and the "water-mirror", body part meeting their reflection and "virtual" body overlaying live body to create new hybrid forms.



## VIDEO-CHOREOGRAPHIC INTERACTION

The long-term collaboration between choreographer James Cunningham and video artist Suzon Fuks explores the transcendence of space between live and virtual presence. In the devising process, content is developed simultaneously responding to interactions occurring across space, changing time frames, atmospheres, planes and physical orientations. Projected images appear like holograms interacting with the live performer. Reflections shimmer off the black pool, creating phantom presences, mirages.

The dance between these various presences suggest struggle, co-operation, at times one is overlaying the other, fusing and then separating. Sometimes one is simply watching the other, mirroring their actions or guiding them like super-conscious forces.

Composite video images relay a poetic anatomy inspired by molecular and neurological biology, particle theory, prosthetics, mutation, and dissolution-reformation of matter. Video is also used as morphing architecture of light, framing and contextualising the performer.

**KETTLE' SOUND DESIGN** incorporates a tonal meditation based on anatomical measurements of James Cunningham as a digital instrument, a transmutational theme of a consciousness aware of its body as an evolving vessel struggling through prayer based on an ancient hermetic creation story, "Tabula Smaragdina", and a Jungian dissolving of the Ego.

## WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

Workshops are available in movement-based improvisation, and in the interaction between movement and visual projections, as is a lecture/demonstration on the history of multimedia performance.



## BIOGRAPHIES

**IGNEOUS** the collaborative brainchild of Belgian multi-disciplinary artist Suzon Fuks and Australian dancer James Cunningham, established in 1997, creates multimedia movement-based performances for the stage, screen & alternative spaces, documentary photography, and conducts forums, workshops & masterclasses. Igneous productions have been presented in Australia, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, the UK and India.

Igneous' interests lie in process, interaction, diversity, and challenging values.

Residencies have allowed them to collaborate with other artists and across disciplines: Department of Performance Studies University of Sydney, Brisbane Powerhouse, Asialink in Kochi (India), Dance4 Nottingham (UK), University of Brighton (UK), and this fellowship at the Australian Choreographic Centre in Canberra. Since 1999 Igneous productions include *Body In Question* a multimedia solo dance show, *The Hands Project* a performance with a cast of 17 in which the audience move from room to room, *Fragmentation* a site-specific installation performance at Dance4 Nottingham UK, *Thanatonauts - Navigators of Death* a "serial" multi-site performance delivered over 7 days and later adapted to a screen-based video, *Liquid Skin* a show where puppetry meets dance in a liquid skin of water, co-produced by Theater der Welt Festival 2005.



**James Cunningham** - Choreographer, Performer

Born in Melbourne, is co-artistic director of Igneous and has performed in each of its productions. In 2000 he performed with DV8 Physical Theatre (UK) and in 1999 received an Emerging Artist's grant, as a choreographer, from the Australia Council through Ausdance. He paralysed his left arm in a motorbike accident in 1992, prior to which he was three years with Dance North, Townsville (89-91). James completed an advanced certificate in Performance (Dance) at the Centre for Performing Arts, Adelaide (87-88).



**Suzon Fuks** - Video Artist

Born in Brussels, has lived in Australia since 1996. Co-artistic director of Igneous, she created the multimedia projections for, and directed, each of its productions. She gives workshops in tertiary institutions in Australia and Europe integrating video with the performing arts and fostering collaboration, as well as for community cultural development projects. In 2002 she received a grant from the New Media Arts Board of the Australia Council to research telematic performance. She has been commissioned to make visual installations for various companies, made award-winning films, videos and solo performance shows, created the film part of the Mandragore Theatre's *The Strange Mr Knight*, which toured the world for 5 years (87-92). Her photographic exhibition *Keeping the Light* toured from 1997 to 2001 to 7 capitals of the world. Her documentary photographs are part of the State Library of NSW and the National Library of Australia. Trained in dance, theatre & music at Lilian Lambert Academy, Brussels (69-76), she completed her masters in Visual Arts at La Cambre, Brussels (79-84).



**Andrew Kettle** - Sound Artist

Brisbane based artist Kettle's recording material dates back to 1993, with several CD releases, compositional scores, installations, curatorial works (Small Black Box, M.A.A.P.) and performances. His work has received extensive radio play nationally and through numerous community radio stations around Australia. His work, heavily influenced by alchemy (training at The Paracelsus College, Adelaide), has been exhibited in sound galleries and performances at Institute of Modern Art 2003 (Brisbane), Brisbane Powerhouse, Small Black Box 2001-04 (Brisbane), Listening Room (ABC, 2002), Liquid Architecture 2001-02 'liquid lounges' (Melbourne), Total Huge New Music Festival 2001-02 'Sound Spaces' (Perth), Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific 1999, 2001, Australian Computer Music Conference 2000,01, 'Variable Resistance' (San Francisco) 2004. His collaborative projects include The Hutt River Space Agency (Greg Jenkins/Michael Norris), Poota (Lloyd Barrett), Public Space (Junia Wulf/Matt & Dan Gordon), and a residency with Barry Schwartz [USA] & Bastiaan Maris [Ger].



**Alison Ross** - Set Designer

Currently lecturer in design at the Victorian College of the Arts, Alison has worked across the spectrum of the performing arts, including theatre, ballet, circus and visual theatre. She has designed for Qld Theatre Co, Queensland Ballet, QPAC, La Boite, Kooemba Jdarra, JUTE and Vulcana to name a few. She has extensive experience making 'things' - props, puppets, models etc, and these skills often take her into film and television art departments. She made miniatures on 'Superman' and novelty costumes on 'Friday Night Games'. In 2005 she received an Asialink residency to work in Korea, collaborating with LATT Children's Theatre in Seoul. She received Matilda Awards for her stage designs in 2000 & 2002.

## BIOGRAPHIES (continued)

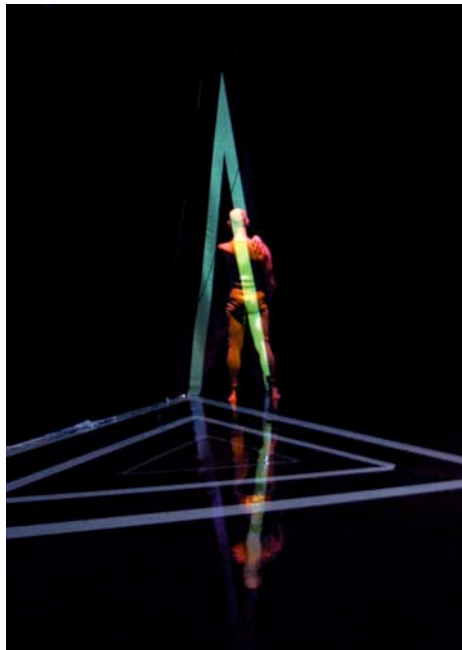


**Morgan Randall** - Lighting Designer, Production Manager

Working in the arts industry since 1989, Morgan's skills extend beyond lighting design and include touring of stage shows and production management/coordination. Morgan worked at the Brisbane Powerhouse for 5 years and has collaborated with, amongst others, Brian Lucas (including "Under belly"), Queensland Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, the Australian Ballet, and Brisbane Festival.

## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- ▶ *MIRAGE* tours with 3 people.
- ▶ Two adjacent or nearby spaces required.
  - White space: min. 9m x 6m x 4m (high) with provision for lighting
  - Black space: min. 12m x 9m x 5m (high) with grid for hanging lights & screens, black-out required for lighting and projection day & night. Floor must be level.No seating required. Patrons move freely around space. Minimal seating for people with mobility challenges is OK.
- ▶ Lights as per plan. 4-speaker stereo sound plus sub-woofer.
- ▶ Performance duration: - 45min loop repeated max 4 times in a row (3 hours)
  - or 2 sessions of 2 loops (2x 90 min) the same day
- ▶ Number of patrons depends on venue size, decision to be made between company & venue.
- ▶ Set: Approx 5 cubic metres, maximum 2.5 m long, packed in 5 cases – total ± 300 Kilos
- ▶ Venue to arrange all freight



igneous  
performance | video | photography

[www.igneous.org.au](http://www.igneous.org.au) | [info@igneous.org.au](mailto:info@igneous.org.au)  
T +61 7 3255 8355 | M +61 407 437 351  
3/27 Waverley Street Annerley Q 4103 Australia