

About Butoh. : in research for its origin and actual meaning.

- This interview with Min Tanaka was taken in PS1 in New York may 2000 -

Pé Vermeersch . Prominent dancers from the butohlineage like Mr. Kazuo Ohno, Akira Kasai, you are rather hesitating in using the word butoh. In the first place, they say, we are dancers and that is more important than insisting on using the word Butoh. There seems to be a kind of danger in using the word butoh. What happened ?

Min Tanaka. The first reason is that we cannot imagine 'the butoh' to be one genre, style of dancing. We cannot imagine and we don't want to imagine.

Pé Vermeersch. Because of the danger for imitation ?

Min Tanaka. Yes, from the beginning butoh has been important exactly because people try to break any fixed style. This should be the continuous main stream, and not the establishment of a specific style. In Japan, many followers are, in small groups, trying to establish a company like *Sankai Juku* . Also Ohno's style is imitated a lot. *Dairakudakan* style will finish very soon. But I believe that Mr. Kasai, Mr Ohno and myself still want to break our own style.

1. **Pé Vermeersch.** Could you say it's a goal, to find one's own dance ?

Min Tanaka. But the next second it will be a lie. If you fix the movement and build your butoh dance on this, it is like an object for selling. You should have the courage to throw this away. That is the spirit

Pé Vermeersch. Still, there are stylistic typical movements to recognise. So, if we don't want to simply imitate them. On what are they based, why are they there ?

Min Tanaka. It 's not the only reason, but partly Hijikata wanted to find out another kind of beauty. He asked himself why the handicapped people are not considered as beautiful? why not the small people? Why is the sickness wrong? Any anonymous person who is very weak and even without energy, even in the bed, but with a deep sense as a human being, can be very beautiful when he/she wants to dance. Hijikata wanted to find out many different beautiful things through the body, not only the positive qualities of the body. That is the very original thinking. It is not style at all. The second idea is that for the founders of the butohmovement it was most important to 'find out' a new dance. For tomorrow. For this they never wanted to use the ready-made technique. They said; technique will come. Technique can not make dance. So we have to make dance without without using the technique of physical movement.

Pé Vermeersch. And then by using what else ?

Min Tanaka. Hijikata loved to work with carpenters, wall makers, fishsellers,... He felt their body as beautiful and he asked them to move starting from the movement of their life. This created many interesting and beautiful things. The carpenter lives 20 years with his specific body for a specific purpose. The body is full of experience. The body doesn't show technique, because the movement is natural for them, but they have technique, a huge technique, I am sure. Maybe it's not so visible at first sight. But as a result they have a f.e. a beautiful bend. I feel this as beautiful. This kind of technique we are using; it is not direct showing, but technique will be as a result. To make dance as a piece is rather easy, but to find a dance is rather difficult. I think butoh means always keep on trying to find the dance by oneself. That spirit, I can call butoh. For anybody. Making dance is like as if dance already exists, by the movement. I don't think so. Dance has to exist in your body, not with the movement. The order is opposite.

Pé Vermeersch : An element I can recognise as a kind of technique used by many dancers- as different as they dance might be is ' the restriction of the movement.

Min Tanaka One of Hijikata's famous movements is ' the old man's movement of the arms'.. Sometimes he watched an old man while he was having a conversation with others. This old man wanted to take a cup, to drink tea and

he started (to move his arms in this direction), But in being conscious in the talk with the others, the arms stopped somewhere in the middle. Still, his first purpose lives in the arms. From this Hijikata could dance, his hands started to move like playing how not to get the cup .It looks like escaping from the purpose, for his arms but not for his head. Still, for the arms it is the most honest movement. This kind of things , Hijikata has a lot. A lot.

Pé Vermeersch. You find a lot of freedom in very small movements.

Min Tanaka. Freedom is just a word. We have to realise it with the body, but when someone takes a big movement for the freedom he makes very often a mistake. Sometimes people like to fix the form, for example on the stage a director will tell you you should be here and the face should be in that direction, all that so that so that so and it looks for the dancer as if it is the end of the choice. But maybe only moving one millimeter to the next taking that position is better, maybe.....My earlier work was based on the exploration of very small movements. For 7 years I decided not to make any kind of dance-like movement, I just kept searching the slow movement. Many unconscious movements happened, maybe because of the form , because of my gravity. These forms gave me many difficulties and difficulties create very interesting movements or reactions.

Pé Vermeersch. I often saw in your dance this backwards bended position in your dance. Are you exploring this position ? What is going on ?

Min Tanaka. I am waiting until something happens. Then I move a little bit the next position , but there is no stop in this waiting; the movement is continuous, because there are many different rivers running through me at the same time. I experienced to be in and outside my body; I could listen to the people and even watch their reaction. Having many things to do in your head really makes a big joy. The body is one level of your thinking and body has also many different streams; by the muscles, by the senses, by your imagination. Your imagination unconsciously controls your body, and gives the unconscious movements and there are so many unconscious forms and positions of the body. You have environment, you have your own thinking about your individuality. You have, how to say, promised kind of streams for others. And you have still many other things to think about at the same time. You should be in that condition fully. You cannot float in one condition. I think you should always should take the risk you are there

Pé Vermeersch : Can you explain a bit more about being in and outside the body ?

Min Tanaka : A dancer should have a speed inside and outside and it should be different. I always hate it when this is the same, because it's mostly boring. Maybe the dancer feels good, but it is like a trap.

Pé Vermeersch Is this what you mean with making the physical time longer than the mental time ? I can see it a lot with dancers who research butoh; a kind of trip in a private personal mental state.

Min Tanaka. Yes, they understand inside, but they don't understand our watchers' body. They really have to tell us what they are doing inside there. This is very important. If you are only deeply tuned in your mental situations, so why do you need to get the audience ? This was also a lesson of Hijikata, you should always have one stream observing the audience. If the dance is only an inert trip and the body is not concrete, it is , how to say a very cheap form of abstraction.

Pé Vermeersch. In a rehearsal you said : you reach the point of ecstasy too quick. What do you mean ?

Min Tanaka. This I said for one specific dancer.

Pé Vermeersch. For you personally the reaching of some kind of ecstasy is not important in your dance.

Min Tanaka. No. It's a word for him. He needs the mental , emotional satisfaction and I have no problem if that is the choice. But, If he needs the ecstasy, if he wants to get it, he has to really realise it. He has to find out some more. He has to share this with the body and especially , in front of

him, for the public. Because we need to reach to his body. The audience wants to know his body more, right ? But if he goes up quickly ,...

Pé Vermeersch. It seems to be one of the challenges to make thoughts or imagination materialised in the body . What about emotions ?

Min Tanaka. Once I am irritated I move a lot (laughs), to enjoy the movement ,I keep my irritation, but this irritation is getting quite complicating. It's kind of my psychological feelings. It 's not emotion itself.

To bring When I stop or become static and cannot be cool, I keep moving, to

I don't prepare any emotion of myself, but sometimes ,one comes out. And the best emotion is the one which I cannot name. That kind of emotion, I really like to use . Not use it, let it come out. Emotions that are easy to prepare are not interesting for me.

Min Tanaka.. When we say human emotion, it seems like eachone's case is very different ,so how can I relate with the human emotion?. For me the human emotion is like part of human history. Because emotions are not created by oneself. It comes from somewhere else. We have a kind of seed for the emotions than it's going to meet inside of someone's body, then people start using the seed for express the emotion or, not necessarily to express, but to grow the emotions, yes. Of course sometimes we don't know where this emotion comes from, but mainly, it belongs to the history.

But for the nature , our emotions are not sure, where does it come from ?

I still have, how to say, a lot of studying from the nature more than from the human.from

Pé Vermeersch. You find the nature more complex, maybe ?

Min Tanaka. Complex, and I think deeper than the human. People can easily forget emotions.

Pé Vermeersch. There is very deep respect for the elements of nature.

Min Tanaka. Yes. I often put a windbell somewhere in the space to dance, in a tree f.e. . People love it , because through this small medium, they can feel the wind much more familiar..

Pé Vermeersch. Sometimes when I see you dancing in an environment I feel more the river and I feel more the wall or whatever, so it's like you give a body so we can feel the nature

Min Tanaka. Yes, that's good. If you can see the sky beautiful it's my big pleasure, rather than my own dance. Sometimes I just pick up the heat , place it on top of the stick and what is heat and than dancing and also the people watching the heat , it's fun.

Pé Vermeersch. It's seems like you want to make more things visible, Many things are existing we maybe don't know because we are not sensible enough to find or to recognise them ?

Min Tanaka. But for me too, I always want to discover more things ; that is why I always want to dance somewhere else.

Pé Vermeersch. Why do you use the word character as an indication for a dancer. Is this not limiting ? And does this not provoke the 'danger' of imitation or even creates an expressionistic dance ?

Min Tanaka. It 's a step to get free. If you are always only you, this is very limiting. By bringing somebody else into you, you can get much more freedom. Because you cannot be that person, you have to come out from the person to yourself. To get free means to be in that person for a while to be more yourself. You have your body and yourself . When you go in front of the people for dancing you should bring a prepared body. In this body you have to have another body ready. This must be. Than maybe in this body you have to have maybe another yourself. This must be. Then, next, I want to taste the life itself, as much as possible, so I must use myself as an example. In putting my body in front of the people, as a dancer, I will experiment as much as possible for this body. At least once a dancer should try to put his body

there as an object, not only for himself. Being anonymous is a very important concept.

Pé Vermeersch. The dancers all have to find their own independent dance during a performance.

Min Tanaka. Yes, as much as possible a dancer has to stay alone. But of course, also in rehearsals, people seek to relate to each other, because they want to escape from the loneliness.

Pé Vermeersch : Why is being alone so important ?

Min Tanaka. For me being able to be alone is the basic search of the human being. We were born into a society, not into the world. From the beginning the person is not alone, born into the family and the family is also a society in a society. But when the body is alone, you can reach a much deeper individuality. Only then, you can really meet somebody else. Otherwise somebody always belongs to your decoration. If I need somebody it has to be somebody else much more... like belonging to me, it has to be somebody else, somebody who is also able to be alone.

Courage never belongs to a group, only to a person. You do not need to separate from others, but your research should be deeply individual. And it is not necessary to agree with others. People like to say, oh yes, I have the same feelings. But you should doubt it. Red is not the same for everybody; The normal world for me is a world where not everything is the same.

Pé Vermeersch. I recall an experience I had while participating the summerworkshop in the bodyweatherfarm. G. was holding my head as I was laying in the stream of the river and then released me and kept on observing. It was a very strong waterexperience as let my self be taken by the water, almost till drowning, sinking into the body with the water, alone, without thinking the risks. I am sure this was also because someone was observing, If I would have been alone I would not have gone so far into the experience, now someone was taking care of me.

Min Tanaka. You get support from the other, the partner to be really alone. Of course you cannot reach this, if you are a single existence, if you don't have the partner. But the partner is there for to feel alone.

Pé Vermeersch. Is it not a sad condition ?

Min Tanaka. No, because the audience will read what he or she wants.

Even if I dance 'on my own', even if we decided to make not any relations, Maybe we have some positions or something else, or maybe we don't have anything, but still people will read something. It is up to them, this is also moving the level of the public. The audience has many different levels, someone just wants to understand and asks to be told what the dancer is doing, but if he/she would start using the own knowledge, the public will get differently higher levels. And maybe later, the people even start using their own physical materials to join to the performance.

Pé Vermeersch What is at the demand in the concept of butoh, for a dancer ?

Min Tanaka. I think first it is very important to know what kind of dancer the dancer wants to be ,) for example dancers for the society, dancer as an artist, a violent or a sweet dancer for the community. There is not only the 'compagny'dancer. The dancer has to have a specific image about this. Only when you have this purpose, it makes sense to work. Why , why, why, what kind of dancer you want to be and you have to have a lot of work and so many difficulties will happen. And if there is enough dreams for you, you will never give up.

Pé Vermeersch. I have the impression that the theatre condition, the setting, the stage, the time,... is not the one you prefer the most.

Min Tanaka. Is not the best.

Pé Vermeersch. Why ?

Min Tanaka. It is all illusion. Yes. People have the seat and people can reserve the seat and people can reserve the time and people can forget easily (laughs) and people can use the chance to come the theatre for their social relations, for example. It is all like a public service.

Pé Vermeersch. Do you have something against the idea of entertainment ?

Min Tanaka. No, I like it. Some percent of my reason to dance is for entertaining and for enjoying. Especially if I dance for kids, I do anything else what they need.

Pé Vermeersch. Sometimes But often you seem to demand an other attitude from the public than consuming. your challenges for the public seems to be very demanding, seems to be opposed to consuming

Min Tanaka. The society has to move the level of the public more and should not always think the average of the public. This is towards freedom, you understand ? Take for example a newspaper: often they imagine the level reader, but sometimes the level of the newspaper is lower than the level of the reader.

Pé Vermeersch. You don't want to make nor life nor performing easy, it seems like you want it to make extremely dense.

Min Tanaka. Or higher or deeper or reasonable or pure, whatever.

Pé Vermeersch. What is the highest level you would like to reach, in dancing?

Min Tanaka. It does not exist, the highest level. It is not necessary to say high, maybe next to the next to the next or yes , I think to say the next is the best.

Pé Vermeersch. You often say one has to invest 120% when one dances

Min Tanaka. Hijikata said so. He even had the big courage to stop and to disappear from the public what he did it for seven years. It was a hard time for him.

Pé Vermeersch. Could you define more this 120% ?

Min Tanaka. 100 % is everybody. people can easily say I am spending my best effort. Anybody can say that. Only if you stop to speak like that, you can find out 120%.

Pé Vermeersch. Does it mean you should never be satisfied.

Min Tanaka. Of course, if you want to establish yourself, stop yourself, it's easy.

Do you believe that butoh as a dance movement is still actual, a dance movement with specific features that has the contemporary possibilities to create new dances ?

Min Tanaka. I hope so, but even if people will have forgotten the word butoh, dance must be more often reborn. I hope people understand that it is not necessary to find out the good or beautiful movement for the purpose of selling in the dance society. Nowadays, the dance society is like a factory in which new movements are made. It is almost facing the limit. People don't understand, is this dance or sport ?

Pé Vermeersch. I have been seeing now here, in PS 1, New York, your performances three times and it has been very different. For me, especially last night was very strong. But was this also for you like this? And how to explain these differences ?

Min Tanaka. I think for me the performance is always like a process. I have, how to say, no end. Especially yesterday while I dancing, I was always quiet... how to say... observing... what 's going on in the space. Also the other dancers ; what are they doing? I am quiet open to watch them .

Pé Vermeersch. You were more 'open' to the dancers yesterday, than the day before?

Min Tanaka. Yesterday I was a little bit, a little bit, how to say,... maybe irritated. Yes. For the, dancers their process was going well, they could fix the stream in the performance. But then, they have to go to the next step . It looked a little bit tight for me (what they did) , not so adventurous. They have a specific road now (the fixed structure) but they can enjoy more or they can open more to the people. But I felt a little bit tight yesterday so, I wanted to break the balance.

Pé Vermeersch. Yes. that was clear, But the difference between you and the dancers was big. I couldn't get my eyes of you, something I did not feel the other days. So, you want to take position in the group towards the dancers.

Was your starting point was different, your condition, your emotional state different? Also the weather was very different.

Min Tanaka. The weather is the same for anyone of the performers and the beginning is also the same like the other evenings. I just lie down on the ground, and somebody is sitting under the tree, somebody is lying, it's all in the same beginning. But once somebody start from the same (beginning) point, immediately it is different from the day before.

Only when they(the dancers) have to take all the feelings from inside and outside, they can create the new movement, or new existence in front of the people, in front of the nature. Yes.

Pé Vermeersch. Would you like that everybody in your dance group takes this freedom to dance ?

Min Tanaka. Yes. As I said, we have the stream, a quiet beautiful structure for the performance, the beginning condition. But than anyone can stop, or can be faster, or whatever, and they have to bring out more for themselves. For me it looks like as they are but following the structure .

Pé Vermeersch. How do you lead your dancers ?

Min Tanaka. I don't lead. I believe in their images. If the images are deep enough or wide enough the dancers can pick up a lot and more on the way of their dancing. But It looks very much as if they are choreographed.

Pé Vermeersch. So you just gather people together and you just give them the chance to dance, basically ? You don't want to get them on a higher level, you don't think that you can bring them ... ?

Min Tanaka. No, no, they have to go to a higher level, the next step by themselves, by using their chance, by using the stimulation from others , or people, or this kind of occasion.

Pé Vermeersch. That is a very open idea of a performance, because very often we think once there is a leader, he is responsible for getting all the dancers at a certain, decided level and also that the performance is finished. For you performing becomes something like giving the occasion, the big chance to make something happen ?

Min Tanaka. Yes, I think so.

Pé Vermeersch. Does this means you don't mind so much if a specific dancer does not yet dances in full strength as maybe the day will come that he will achieve this point ?

Min Tanaka. Yes, I can cover anything. Even if somebody tries f.e. to escape from the pressure. As long as this person makes an experience of this or challenges this.

Pé Vermeersch. Dancing for you is very much like an experience of life : making the moment of performing very dense....

Min Tanaka. Yes, for the next life.

Pé Vermeersch. What do you mean for the next life ?

Min Tanaka. One second after. Dancing is for the life, which you have next second, next moment, after the performance.

Pé VermeerschHow can you train this ? How can you learn ? Is there a way to learn ?

Min Tanaka. If you have enough interest in the world, for your existence in this world, in this history. If you have questions : , why people started dancing, why society needs the dance, why , why, why , why .

Pé Vermeersch. You propose very concrete excercices or experiences, but you absolutely do not want bodyweather to be called a system or a method.

Min Tanaka : It's not a system, it's a kind of idea to come to loneliness. I have many works where you need assistance to help, to get the feeling, with your body, to be alone.

Pé Vermeersch. And to be very responsible, all the time it seems inbeing there. The first time I was at the bodyweatherfarm I was also surprised by the continuity of the work, starting from 5.30 in the morning. In order not to have theparellisingwhite'sinthebrain', while dancing improvised, I found working in this continuous daily-life rhythm very efficient..Is this on purpose ? If I see a MB training it also seems to be to find the continuity in the movement. Is what you give in a workshop related to the way you live ? How can I relate the work of your teaching with the wyou want people to live in Hakucho ?

Min Tanaka. I never felt or taught to the others should keep going. It's their choice. But ofcourse the nature is moving always, more than the people are. And sometimes nature can not wait for us, so there are many reasons to continue. But continuity and discontinuity , both are really important for human being. People have the choice between continuity or discontinuity, but it is clear that discontinuity really belongs to a human side.

For example; I am working all the year as a farmer. It is a continuity. When I want to dance in front of the people, I have to stop. I need to chose the discontinuity. Also in dancing, again, I will have to stop, to cut this continuity. If I do not cut the continuity people will not understand and maybe they will throw me in a hospital or whatever.

Pé Vermeersch. Do you think that farming or the way you are living, is a good preparation or is it this again, only independent choice.

Min Tanaka. I think it is indeed very different for each person; for someone it is really good, for someone it is really bad.

For me it is essential. Dance is not only the dancing (in a performancesituation). You can feel the dance through the world, through environment, through nature. Also in the taxi-driver or the teacher. If they are dancing or not that is very interesting for me. Or also politicians sometimes can be very good dancers. Sometimes the politicians, I feel, oh this politician is a good dancer !

Pé Vermeersch. But the politician doesn't know he is dancing. Isn't dancing a very conscious act ?

Min Tanaka. The politician dances indeed unconsciously. For me , it seems like a dream to dance without consciousness. But my process is the one of being very conscious when dancing, hopefully to reach in the future a dance without consciousness.

Pé Vermeersch. But wouldn't that be passing a borderline ? Entering into craziness, maybe ?

Min Tanaka. Crazyness, or consciousness and unconsciousness...

Pé Vermeersch. You also speak about 'disappearing' while dancing. Is this connected ?, is in this area I have to see this.

Pé Vermeersch. Dancing doesn't seem to become a profession, a job, at that point .

Min Tanaka. Never. Never. It is not interesting to be a professional. I want to be a professional Min Tanaka.

Pé Vermeersch. That means something like being a professional human being.

Min Tanaka. My profession is my name.

Pé Vermeersch. Is that connected to being at the borderline of a society ? Does that mean you do not want that a dancer earns money with his dance. Has it something to do with the position in the society ?

Min Tanaka. There are so many examples. Sometimes, someone retires from the professional. Means, somebody gave up to make money from this work. Then somebody has to have next work as a professional to make money.

Pé Vermeersch. But why can a dancer not make money with his art ?

Min Tanaka. Of course I can make money. But it's different. I cannot retire from my profession of being a dancer, or chose another profession than the one of a dancer. It is absolutely not necessary to fix Min Tanaka's profession is dancer. It 's enough to say that Min Tanaka is going to dance.

Pé Vermeersch. But then it is not necessary to say you are a farmer as profession , isn't that the same ?

Min Tanaka. I don't think so , farming is much more important for the world than dancing .

Pé Vermeersch. Why ?

Min Tanaka. We don't need so many dancers . We need many farmers. We need the human body for farming. More than the machines. You can already satisfy people with machinelike dancers. Professional dancers are very protected by the society. Ofcourse the dancer has the stress to do competition to get fame, but farmers never get fame. But, I think we need much more human body for farming, rather than to have new machines for the field. I prefer to say I am professional farmer, and dance is a part of my life.

Pé Vermeersch. So it is not so that you farm as to get trained as a dancer.

Min Tanaka. This happens naturally. Your legs are getting stronger, your skin is getting much more sensitive, Your senses are opening to the outside. Ofcourse.

Pé Vermeersch. Do you think a dancer is especially talented or gifted ?

Min Tanaka. I don't think so . Everybody can dance.

Min Tanaka. Talent is like how to say, something for the society, for the exact time.

Pé Vermeersch. So, maybe when someone stops dancing, he is not a 'real' dancer.. I cannot imagine you will ever stop to dance.

Min Tanaka. I don't need to understand it .

Pé Vermeersch. What do you mean, you don't need to understand it.

Min Tanaka. I cannot understand why somebody can stop dancing and chose another profession. For a dancer it is not at all necessary to be a professional. Dance is something else, more than the profession. That is why I said, dance is part of my life and farming is much more professional work. I never wanted to get fame through farming.

Pé Vermeersch. But you wanted to get fame through dancing.

Min Tanaka. In the beginning I wanted to get fame, because I want to speak about dance more.

Pé Vermeersch. Since ancient times, dancers have played important roles in a society, I only have to think of the shamanistic tradition, where we see connection through dance.

Min Tanaka. I know that, I want to be like that , but I have no talent to be like them. . I am still a quiet thinking dancer, I am always trying to find out the way to dance. Like Hijikata. Hijikata was always thinking, what kind of dance I have to do, to be. But if compared to Mr. Ohno he doesn't think, he just dances. We are totally different. I am always consciously dancing. But he, especially now (laughs as he is almost 94) he dances without conscious,he is a genius.

But also shamanic dancers do have very strong consciousness though. They know a lot about what is going on with the people, the nature and especially they can catch the wright timing. This is not the same like trance. Trance is different. That is why I want to keep researching in this direction; to be conscious for all the small things. Hopefully in the future I don't need to use this kind of endless consciousness!. am still practising, training my senses, my body. I want to go to the next, like a shaman. A Shaman is the origin for a dancer, I think at this moment.

Pé Vermeersch. How do you train ?

Min Tanaka. Dancing, dancing and thinking dance, every second, always. Even in the field, the forest, even with somebody else

Pé Vermeersch. Thinking dance ?

Min Tanaka. Thinking dance.

Min Tanaka. If you are in the field, I think you will get unconsciously the stimulation, how to say, from outside. I have one great experience, I still cannot forget it. We came to Hakushu in 84. Four or five years later, T. got a job from another choreographer, Madam Tomiko Taka, an old lady. She wanted three boy-dancers. So, he asked me to join and I said Yes ofcourse, why not, but you must be the best. (laughs) I really hoped. I went to see the performance, and he really was completely different from others. And many of the people, Ohno, and critics, people came and asked: Min, he is at your farm and me ofcourse yes, yes yes, he is so different they said. Something else. People cannot catch it and T did not understand it himself. Maybe unconsciously the stimulation of being in the field and only working came into his body and gave him kind of atmosphere, like farmers. This is practice, unconscious practising for the skin, the nerves, even the muscles.

Pé Vermeersch. Why you don't want to call it a method, because it gives very concrete ways.

Min Tanaka. I learned a lot from Hijikata, he gave a lot of imagework. And always he asked, try to forget what I said, forget to repeat. And the next day he gave me more and different images. And he asked to repeat and repeat and repeat and after forget and forget and forget. It's like being in nature. Can you imagine? I was like in the wind, in the big storm. But I could not forget and did not understand why Hijikata said me to forget it forget it, Now I know how to be in the stimulation and I can forget (the images) It is not a method. It is a kind of an idea (to be reached.)

Pé Vermeersch. The idea of imagework is strongly from the hand of Hijikata, but what about your use of sensibility trainings.

Min Tanaka. Cutting one senses, f.e. the smell or the sound, is a very old method. By cutting one sense the other senses get wider.

Pé Vermeersch. But from where did you get it?

Min Tanaka. I heard from somebody else, long time ago. It is also used for the healing of handicapped peoples.

Pé Vermeersch. And what about the so called manipulations. This serie you developed, are based on some yoga positions? because you studied yoga before?

Min Tanaka. Not only, I studied at the university sportmedicine and so I learned about structures and organisations. Also some principles of Acupuncture can be found in it.

Pé Vermeersch. You seem to be very critical towards people who have worked with you and spread 'bodyweather' in the world.

Min Tanaka. Not critical, but maybe more dissatisfied. I never wanted to work with them to establish a method. I always wanted to work with them for development, for the 'next'. They don't have to follow the system, they have to develop for themselves more. , if they continue studying from many different fields of their interest, they can bring many different ideas or way of working with the body and they can develop more.

Pé Vermeersch. But don't you think this is happening in the existing bodyweather laboratories? How do you relate.

Min Tanaka. I don't know, but I once somebody's workshop and I had a little bit the impression o they are all still doing this exactly the same. This looks like following a method. It is not like ballet, like a bar-lesson.

PÉ Vermeersch I have to say I am very happy there are people who are spreading these concrete bodywork propositions. If not, many things I would not have discovered.

Min Tanaka. Of course it's not bad, of course it is important, I am sure.

Pé Vermeersch. How specific Japanese is all this? This sensitising of the body as a training seems to be very different than the basic training in

western classical and contemporary training. I wonder if the qualities of the weak body (thinking the body more in bones, veins, organs than in muscle groups) are not specific Japanese also because the relation to and experience of the nature is very present in Japanese culture. Also in the traditional No-plays, you can find a gentle, weak body but still in a very strong presence. And in literature you will often read how the lamentation of the 'I' disappears in the overwhelming nature. It is stronger present, at least 50 years ago, in Japan than it was in the West. So, the fact that butoh was born in Japan is maybe because they had a body ready to materialise thoughts from Bataill, de Sade, Mishima too. Can you follow this ??

Min Tanaka. I think it is not a tradition in the society anymore, in Japan. Japan is almost totally europeanised or Americanised. I think the bodies now are quite different from the last 50 years before. I myself I felt I was quite europeanised, body and head. My concept and ideas, even imagination of the body are different from older people.

Pé Vermeersch. Yet, In contemporary dance concept the body deprived from its narrativity, the position of a physical body that only refers to itself seems to become a big topic, that the body speaks for itself. But this is already from the beginning a very strong feature from butoh dance.

Min Tanaka. Hijikata was definitely ready, already long before he put the name 'butoh' on his work. Already since he was young, his body was ready, sure. It happened in Japan, but it is not Japanese specialised, but anywhere else in the world it might have happened, but because of some pressures or selections or some occasions, it couldn't grow up.

Pé Vermeersch. Also in Noh the body is very weakened.

Min Tanaka. For example in Germany you have deep forest originally..

Pé Vermeersch; ? yes, but the expressionistic dancers at that moment ('50) are not creating this 'weakened body'.

Min Tanaka. This, I don't know. But Hijikata did not want to be like everybody. He didn't think he is special, maybe he wanted to be much more normal.

Pé Vermeersch. Still, his opposition between strong emotions and disappearing, like almost exhibitionism and being anonymous, still seems to be 'very Japanese'. This gliding between a strong emotional exposed I and the disappearing in nature.

Min Tanaka. Anonymous, being anonymous is the very important concept I think.

Pé Vermeersch. In the western modern concept of the self one believed the I was more graspable.

Min Tanaka. The power of the eyes, is a sign of European culture and we followed it very much. Eye has first opinions than others, ear, nose, sense, or mouth, by face or styles, whatever, eye chooses the power first.

Pé Vermeersch. And everything becomes head.

Min Tanaka. Yes.

Pé Vermeersch. I have to think about the image of the fish, an image Akira Kasai uses a lot. A fish does not see his own body, so it must be aware of its body in a very different way. If you imagine only you feel or are your body, you must definitely dance in a very different way.

Pé Vermeersch. I think it is also a choice to make your farming work in a poor way, I mean a simple way ? It's very funny. In Flanders we eat a lot of potatoes and I had to come to Hakushu to find myself in a field of potatoes and to dig potatoes, I have never done in Belgium (laughter) but it was nice; it's very primitive, it's a choice.

Min Tanaka. Yes choice.

Pé Vermeersch. To be poor.

Min Tanaka. Not poor, Rich.

Pé Vermeersch. I mean economically.

Min Tanaka. People first used stones as a tool, then little by little people made tools, like extensions of your body, then little by little the people started to find out the good positions of the body to work very well, or to be more economical. It is all process of the body. We should know that.. But anyway this is the beginning (digs) of the work.

Pé Vermeersch. But it is so much work, if you now live in a contemporary society.

Min Tanaka. Yes, somebody said, if you use this machine , it is only one minute. But, which one is rich one minute, but we take one hour by digging by twenty people, (laughs) I feel this is much richer. Of course, we use the machine when we use the machine when we have no time and when it is for selling, but we still have enough time to enjoy it.

Pé Vermeersch. You are economically independent.

Min Tanaka. Yes, now we are. But we still have the time to enjoy more than other farmers do.

Pé Vermeersch. So, one should enjoy the work , the work , the work.

Min Tanaka. Yes, must be, if you hate it, you can stop it. (laughs) If you cannot enjoy it, you do not need to do it.

Pé Vermeersch. So it is not a matter of surviving your farming, but more enjoying.

Min Tanaka. Sure. Enjoy means, to learn more. Even just digging. For example, like this or like this , like this (digs) endless (digs) like this , or rhythms (digs , plays) all different.

Pé Vermeersch. You don't own land ?

Min Tanaka. We have nothing.

Pé Vermeersch. Also a choice ?

Min Tanaka. Yes, if we buy (of course we cannot) but for me it is a little bit sorry for the other farmers, because they spend a lot of history in that area, and that was so hard time. We don't need to make a kind of power to be there. If they hate us, they want us to go, we can easily go, because nature is everywhere.

Pé Vermeersch. But then you have to start again, all the time again and again and again.

Min Tanaka. No problem. (laughs) no problem.

Pé Vermeersch. Hmm, you're getting older, you don't mind if something would be left behind. That the place Hakushu will keep on existing.

Min Tanaka. I don 't mind anything

Pé Vermeersch. I think for example about the earth stage, so much work has been put in it. Then the land has to be given back and that means that the whole thing has to be rebuild again ?

Min Tanaka. Yes, now we started to build a next stage. Again, it will be very beautiful.

Pé Vermeersch. You will never own ?

Min Tanaka. Never . But , if we are leaving. If the owner wants to sell the land to others, maybe I will ask to my friend, why don't you buy, I don't want. I cannot. I will ask help from my friends, you and you and you have to buy this land, please. Please and then they will rent us.

Pé Vermeersch. Is not owning a land related to not owning movement ? Impossible to become an 'owner of movement'

Min Tanaka. O, Physical movement , well, no one can own it. Sometimes I imitate Pina Baush movement, sometimes Hijikata, sometimes, Ohno san, yes, I am a good stealer of the movement.

Pé Vermeersch. No land no movement to own...

Min Tanaka. One strange thing, opera. Many opera now have dance in it. Choreographer for the opera get some money for one opera, one occasion, then when the piece revives, the choreographer never gets money. Before me, I break this. I want to have money if it is revived. This kind of fight I am always doing, yes. This looks opposite, but it's for the society.

Pé Vermeersch. You seem to have a lot of courage, and very strong, well it gives the impression...

Min Tanaka. Originally I am not strong, but I feel I am O K , I am not afraid. I am not afraid if I become something - how to say... If I miss many things I don't mind anymore.

Pé Vermeersch. No fears ? Death ?

Min Tanaka. Death ? (laughs) I never thought about death . I thought, like philosophically, but I faced the death a lot, when I was a child. My father was a policeman, he wanted to show me the dead bodies , a lot, always.

Pé Vermeersch. Why ?

Min Tanaka. I am still not sure, but I understand something, he wanted to show me the real death of the human body. It was a great education, I think, so he used his power as a policeman. Many suicided bodies, in the river, at the seaside, in the small rooms, it all looks like this. But he wanted me to watch. And I was very like, how to say, no expression, but big emotion. And I think death was rather natural for me, not so many things to talk about death , I have.

Pé Vermeersch. You accept.

Min Tanaka. I have too. I have a complex ; Many dancers of my generation had problems with the body, sick, but I never had. I think because I am quiet curious person for the happening , the occasion of the body. Something happens, than I am very curious on it. Then I defence getting the big problems of my body, I think. I am weak, weaker than they are. Because they have strong wills or strong minds, as they passed the moment of the danger themselves. So I am weaker. And so I am curious ,even for the very small things of my body, oh what is this , what is this, repair.

Pé Vermeersch. What upsets you, makes you angry, irritates you.

Min Tanaka. People don't use the chance to get free and I get angry or get irritation. And if I point it , most of the time the people have already the reason to explain about it. This is also irritating. Why don't you do this for yourself, without preparing some explanation?

Pé Vermeersch. You demand a lot from the human existence.

Min Tanaka. For me it seems like bad communism, they have always prepared reasons. This is my thinking about communism. I dreamed when I was a high teen, than I faced to the real bad communist. It is really stupid, all my dreams were broken.

Pé Vermeersch. You really hate systems, don't you ?

Min Tanaka. Yes.

Pé Vermeersch. Could you imagine you don't live in Japan.

Min Tanaka. Yes, I imagined quiet a lot to leave Japan. But now, I am very much very concentrating on Honmura. Now the slope is now my biggest interest, the land is not flat, everywhere it is all for all the directions, It is very interesting.

Pé Vermeersch. It's still in Japan. Could you have done the same activities in Europe ? How strongly are you connected to your land?

Min Tanaka. I think so, I never thought, I am going to live here forever. So, it is always free for the future. But I think I need ten years more to be in Honmura. I have big interest to live there.

Pé Vermeersch. You have so many dreams.

Min Tanaka. Yes. Dreams and dreams. I have so many things to do.

Pé Vermeersch. When will Honmura be finished.

Min Tanaka. It's now already 3 years passed, at least we need 5 more years to build the houses. Than I think we can really have big activities in Honmura, for 5 years. Than I am 65 , still young. Ohno did Argentina at age 73 !

Pé Vermeersch. Is there still something else , another dream ?

Min Tanaka. Museum for dance, I have too many videotapes, so I have to change it to DVD. This is lot of work. But I really want to make the house, where the people can live, to find work, in Honmura, and also dance, out from Honmura.

Pé Vermeersch. How important is communal life for you.

Min Tanaka. Yes, because the communal feelings made everything, and communal feelings made the people very independent . Communal feelings mean, how to say, sometimes people say that earth is one big commune. I don't think so, it is still to early , maybe 5 centuries to early. We still have to recognise why se still want to have communes.

Pé Vermeersch. Do you consider where you live as a community.

Min Tanaka. It is not necessary to be in one territory. It is not necessary to be in the same area.

Pé Vermeersch. It is not important to live together.

Min Tanaka. It is not the most, because my feeling is that the centre is everywhere.

Pé Vermeersch. So not a community idea is holding this group of people together .

Min Tanaka. My feeling is not like easy words like community. I prefer to rebuild the village. People have many different conditions to live in the same village. If you sliced the occasion, it looks like a group, but it is very independent. Many people can of course help for big harvest for example, sometimes people can help for dance performances , or travel somewhere else.

Pé Vermeersch. The activity is more important than the creation of a community, it's more the purpose what you are doing, each time,

Min Tanaka. Of course, we should have common rules. For the nature , for example.

Pé Vermeersch. Thank you.

Min Tanaka. Thank you.