



AGNSW  
CONTEMPORARY  
PROJECTS

... SOMETIMES EVEN IN THE HABITUAL COURSE OF LIFE,  
THE REALITY OF THIS WORLD DISAPPEARS ALL AT ONCE,  
AND WE FEEL OURSELVES IN THE MIDDLE OF ITS INTERESTS  
AS WE SHOULD AT A BALL, WHERE WE DID NOT HEAR THE MUSIC;  
THE DANCING THAT WE SAW THERE WOULD APPEAR INSANE.

MADAME ANNE LOUISE GERMAINE DE STAËL

BIOGRAPHY

Shaun Gladwell connects personal experience with contemporary culture and historical references using performance, video, painting, photography and sculpture. His works engage with these concerns through forms of urban expression such as skateboarding, hip-hop, graffiti, BMX bike riding, break-dancing and extreme sports.

Gladwell completed Associate Research at Goldsmiths College, London, in 2001. He has undertaken residencies and commissions in Europe, North and South America, and the Asia-Pacific. In 2009 Gladwell represented Australia at the Venice Biennale and was official Australian war artist in Afghanistan. His work is held in significant public and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Perpetual 360° Sessions*, SCHUNCK\*, The Netherlands (2011); *Stereo Sequences*, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne (2011); *Seven Year Linework*, Spacex, UK (2009); and *In a Station of the Metro*, Artspace, Sydney (2008).

Group exhibitions include *On apology*, Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2012); *Show time: choreography in contemporary art*, gHoltgaard, Copenhagen (2012); *The power of doubt*, Guangdong Times Museum, China (2012) and Museo Colecciones ICO, Madrid (2011); *Street and studio: from Basquiat to Séripop*, Kunsthalle Vienna, Austria (2010); *16th Biennale of Sydney* (2008); 52nd International Exhibition, Venice Biennale (2007).

READING.VIEWING.LISTENING LIST  
by Shaun Gladwell

- MK Asante Jr, *It's bigger than hip hop: the rise of the post-hip-hop generation*, St Martin's Press, New York City, 2008
- Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, The University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984
- Henry Chalfant and Martha Cooper, *Subway art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1984
- Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style [new accents]*, Routledge, London & New York, 1979
- Pierre Huyghe, *Block Party*, 16mm film, colour, 2002
- David LaChapelle [dir], *Rize*, film, colour, Lionsgate, 2005
- Stan Lathan [dir], *Beat Street*, film, colour, MGM, 1984



AGNSW contemporary galleries are supported by the Belgiorno-Nettis family

AGNSW Contemporary Projects are supported by Andrew Cameron

LIST OF WORKS

*Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* 2012  
two-channel, synchronised video, 16:9, colour, stereo sound  
Beatboxers: Marv-ill Superlungs, Belle Ehresmann aka Bellatrix [Boxettes]  
Dancers: Ashley Patricks aka Ghost [Soul Mavericks], Lexi Maize, Dannielle Lecointe aka Rhimes Lecointe  
Post production: Pundersons Gardens, London  
Sound recording: The Songmaker Foundation, London  
Sound engineering: Stephen Hallwood

*Panasonic AG-HVX200* 2012  
digital print and acrylic on canvas  
31 x 51 cm

*Canon 7D* 2012  
digital print and acrylic on canvas  
31 x 31 cm

Artist credits

Shaun Gladwell thanks: Marv-ill Superlungs; Belle Ehresmann aka Bellatrix; Ashley Patricks aka Ghost; Joey Odro at ProDance Agency, London; Lexi Maize, Dannielle Lecointe aka Rhimes Lecointe, Jesse Watt at Pundersons Gardens, London; Stephen Hallwood, Craig Powell and Aaron Curling at The Songmaker Foundation, London; Gregory Ferris, installation support; Andrew and Cathy Cameron; Amanda and Andrew Love; Natasha Bullock; Anneke Jaspers; and the staff of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Shaun Gladwell is a research affiliate, Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney



AGNSW Contemporary Projects is a proposal-based program selected for 2012 by Tony Bond, Natasha Bullock and Wayne Tunnickliffe

Managing curator: Anneke Jaspers  
Installation: Nik Reith  
Audiovisual: Mark Taylor  
Registration: Sophie Moran  
Design: Analiese Cairis

ISBN: 9781741740844  
© 2012 Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Published by the Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Art Gallery Rd The Domain, Sydney 2000 Australia  
Information line 1800 679 278  
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au



SHAUN  
GLADWELL  
BROKEN DANCE (BEATBOXED)

AGNSW CONTEMPORARY PROJECTS

23 AUGUST – 21 OCTOBER 2012

#3.12



Music sweeps you up in its embrace. As notes tumble across your skin your body moves, almost unconsciously, rhythmically to the beat, to the pulses of sound and reverberation. In a related way Shaun Gladwell's latest work, *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* 2012, evinces the power of music and the compulsion of the body to respond innately to its effects. In a dual-screen presentation, video projections face each other across the room. On one screen a hip-hop beatboxer in a studio uses their mouth, lips, throat and tongue to produce an extraordinary array of percussive sounds and beats that emulate other musical instruments. On the opposite screen, a solitary dancer, in various graffiti-marked urban environments, responds in a synaesthetic way to this recorded beatbox music. In increasingly expressive freestyle combinations, they dance to the vocal beat using their whole body. In some synchronised moments it appears that the beatboxers are responding to the dancer and vice versa even though the events unfold in different times and places. At other times, the videos change in tenor – from the singer standing pensive and breathing in-concert with a dancer stretching and limbering to the singer's expressive staccato beats in sync with a dancer's haptic spontaneous improvisation.

The presentation of the work on two screens that can only ever be watched simultaneously in peripheral vision, firmly embeds the viewer in the repartee between them. In this way, the work unfolds, thus laying bare its structural devices – a certain experiential rupture (a juxtaposition of synchronous and asynchronous virtuosity) between the singer's sounds and the dancer's response, which is also articulated through the spatial arrangement of the work. The 'dance', intimated by the title of the work, may be metaphorically broken as witnessed in its parallel presentation, but this in fact directs our engagement to the content, to the representation (if indeed that is possible) of an inner sense of revelation and instinctive movement. In other words, *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* reveals music and dance as truly embodied, and regardless of the spatial slippage between the projections, folds us into its ontology.

Similar to Gladwell's past videos in urban settings or open landscapes, the motion of the body captivates because it is centrally framed within the composition and enhanced by the artist's languid approach to the plasticity of the video medium. The image is not manipulated, the colours are deeply saturated – often painterly in their sensual, glowing hues – and the relationship of the

performing body to a particular location is deftly offset. For over a decade Gladwell's moving images have situated the body in various physical, sometimes extreme, conditions be it skateboarding on a cliff edge (*Storm Sequence* 2000), hanging upside down in a Sydney train (*Tangara* 2003), leaning out of a moving car (*Interceptor Surf Sequence* 2009) or flying upside down in the air (*I Also Live at One Infinite Loop* 2011). In this way Gladwell's work frequently taps into the tropes of street-based activities to include BMX biking, skateboarding and the break dancing and graffiti making of hip-hop culture. The artist's interest lies in the intersection of these mostly urban idioms with personal experience, contemporary culture and art history.

*Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* is strongly situated in the street or in a discourse with street culture. Here dancers perform in London tube stations or train stations and under bridges in front of graffiti. Gladwell underlines these references by including two small paintings – installed in the shadows of the projections – of the cameras used to produce the videos but overlaid with graffiti. Clearly *Panasonic AG-HVX200* 2012 and *Canon 7D* 2012 reflect the constructed nature of the work's engagement. But the paintings operate on other

levels too. Gladwell's background is in painting and his work has consistently been read through a prism of painterly references, from JMW Turner to Casper David Friedrich. Then there is the act of graffiti, which functions ideologically – it translates a public space into a private set of relationships or, to put it another way, it makes a space personal. It is also inherently ephemeral. Tagged and marked, the graffiti dances all over the camera just as the performers dance sporadically in front of the graffiti. In this way, these paintings make us aware of the artist's syntax, the creation of the work and, in terms of the etymology of graffiti, allude to a group of private and local circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, we are left standing in the midst of ruptured sensibilities. There is an ending and a beginning. *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* articulates an awareness of these things, of the spaces between sound and silence, movement and repose. The work is an intracorporeal (bodily) experience, where breath becomes music and movement becomes dance that enfolds us as much in the flow of its temporality as it does in the 'breaking' mechanics of its construction.

Natasha Bullock  
Curator, Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales

1. Gladwell writes: '[The two paintings] ... will feature graffiti that makes local references such as the infamous "Cops Killed Tsakos" graffiti in Sydney during the 1980s and 90s. Every time I show this work I want to produce new paintings that are localised in terms of the graffiti references, as well as displaying the ubiquitous and international hip hop graffiti.' Email from the artist, 30 July 2012

Stills from *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)* 2012  
Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

