

## **DAN PAZ: "THE SUN NEVER KNEW HOW GREAT IT WAS UNTIL IT STRUCK THE SIDE OF A BUILDING"**

Named after a quote from modernist architect Louis Khan, "*the sun never knew how great it was until it struck the side of a building*" integrates forms of high resolution video technology, choreographed dance, participatory sculpture and early photogram technology to foreground the relationship between the manipulation and management of light and the manipulation and management of social and political power.

Artist Dan Paz uses tools of cinematography as a starting methodology for thinking with and through new places. In traditional filmmaking processes cinematographers work closely with a director, actors, choreographers, fabricators, writers and other film crew to frame shots that serve a predetermined, scripted narrative. In contrast, Paz's expanded filmmaking process seeks to engage with and materialize stories that places are already telling. Paz films first, then follows the footage to drive further research, interdisciplinary collaborations and material experiments.

Paz began filming high resolution establishing shots on Seattle University Campus in April 2018. An establishing shot is often a wide shot, framed so that viewers get a grounded context of the setting for a scene that follows. Establishing shots often show architectures or settings from a distance, giving a viewer a sense of how the scene's structures and spaces relate to each other and sometimes to the land around them. Paz's establishing shots at Seattle University are tighter than normal. These shots do not reveal a larger geographic context for the architectural vignettes on the campus; Paz's shots force viewers to establish their understanding of the film's setting from inside these architectural structures.

Paz passes the site of the King County Youth Detention Facility on the three-block walk from their home to Seattle University campus. During nine months of Paz's residency, a new King County Youth Detention Facility was built to replace the older facility. The new and old buildings sit next to each other on a complex now covering an entire city block. Paz watched this construction everyday. Sometimes they stopped to film or photograph the "progress". As with the shots filmed on the Seattle University campus, Paz's tight shots of the exterior of the King County Youth Detention Center do not establish the context of architectural vignettes; these shots force viewers to establish their understanding of the film's setting from inside these structures.

Paz presents the establishing shots from Seattle University and the King County Youth Detention Facility on a relatively small screen on the ground in the corner of "the sun never knew...". For Paz, these compositions ask key questions: *How much light is one exposed to in these institutional spaces? How are light and shadow used to engineer experiences of growth and collectivity? How are light and shadow used to build and reinforce social and political power? How ~~do~~ can we respond?*

Paz continued to research the sites while also taking on a series of material experiments with concrete, ceramics, high resolution video (much of which was shot by a drone camera) and early photogram photography. Paz also began a series of conversations and experiments with acclaimed dancer and improvisational choreographer Donnell Williams about the ways organized and improvisational dance and movement ask performers to grapple with similar questions of embodiment, space, lightness and darkness.

Using different methods of performing in, refracting, and altering both institutionally generated light and unmediated sunlight, works on view in "The sun never knew how great it was until it struck the side of a building," offer an unsettling commentary on the sculpting of light, space, power and place.

## Seattle University High-Resolution Media Art Residency 2018 Overview

Throughout 2018, artist and filmmaker Dan Paz has been working closely with the Art and Art History Department as Seattle University's inaugural, High-Resolution Media Artist in Residence. During this nine month residency, a media artist works closely with a range of departments and resources throughout the Seattle University campus to research and create an original, high-resolution moving image artwork and solo exhibition. The residency program emphasizes SU student engagement with research-based art processes and encourages critical approaches to the use of high-res technology.

Dan's work and collaborative practice during this residency has been meaningful to both the experimental residency program and the larger Seattle University Art and Art History community—students, faculty and staff. Dan consistently frames their creative research practice in ways that bring critical awareness to relative positions of privilege, agency and power. Technically, Dan's studio and teaching practices have demonstrated a consistent engagement, refinement and questioning of the skills and tools of video and expanded photography production. Pedagogically, Dan's approach to making and teaching has demonstrated a commitment to riddling histories of looking, reading, feeling *and knowing* as they have been organized by (primarily commercial) use of lens-based media.

As a first phase in the residency process, Dan participated in a group exhibition at Hedreen Gallery in May 2018, *in a split second (it happened)*, which contextualized Dan's work with the work of other artist-educators Danny Jauregui and Elise Rasmussen. In this exhibition each artist exhibited a suite of pieces that worked together to explicate, memorialize and problematize sites of unacknowledged loss. In Dan's contribution to that show, the *Monument a Surface* series, Dan investigates a series of seaside memorials along a stretch of beach in Key West, Florida, troubling the relationship between legac(ies) of queer community and the dynamics wealth, power and forced migration in south Florida.

For the rest of the residency period Dan worked closely with a variety of SU faculty, student assistants and collaborators in the research and development phases of "the sun never knew..." . Dan taught an undergraduate class *Light: Structures & Shadows* which engaged SU students directly in the methodologies and analysis of their own studio production process. In this course Dan shared concepts, strategies and production skills related to the "the sun never knew..." exhibition with undergraduate students from disciplines across the university. In addition to working closely with students at Seattle University, Dan has also volunteered their time with communities most affected by the content and subject matter of their work by designing and teaching a series of art workshops that engage "the sun never knew..." production processes with formerly incarcerated youth at a Seattle-based organization called *Creative Justice*.

*\*This exhibition title is quoted from the film My Architect. Bher, Susan Rose; Kahn, Nathaniel (Producers), & Kahn, Nathaniel (Director). (2003). My Architect [Motion Picture].*