

Three Motion Pictures

Video installation and 3 paintings on paper

Peter Sparling

ARTIST STATEMENT:

What happens when you clone a dancer with a painter and a video artist? A hybrid medium begins to appear in which boundaries blur between creative practices. It seemed perfectly natural to me to extend my 30-year career as dancer/choreographer by making “screendances”, or dances for the screen that allowed me to explore effects I’d never imagined on stage. When I picked up the paint brush a decade later, I felt an instant connection to the impulses from my spine and back that informed the expressive instrument of my dancing body. I could now combine everything I’d discovered for stage, screen and canvas into my “motion pictures”, creating little animations that brought to life the images dancing in my mind.

For this selection of recent animations made in the past few years, I offer three examples that embody my interdisciplinary process. *Three Short Shorts* (winner of the CameraMall Best Michigan Filmmaker Award at the 2023 Ann Arbor Film Festival) features my animated figure emanating its own landscapes, surrounding itself with colorful energy fields. It includes "Très Vif", "Laf Trax" and "Star Worship".

Color Theory 101 draws a correspondence between my movement and the calligraphy-like strokes of paint it inspires on colored paper. I've included three of these works on paper in the window above the screen.

Picture This follows the animated figure as he invites the viewer to follow him into ten different settings that spring from his imagination. This is the magic of art!

ARTIST BIO:

Peter Sparling is the U-M Rudolf Arnheim Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Dance. A native of Detroit and graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and The Juilliard School, Sparling was a member of the José Limón Dance Company and principal dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company before returning to Michigan in 1984. He directed Peter Sparling Dance Company from 1993-2008 and was recognized with the 1998 Governor’s Michigan Artist Award. A writer, video artist and painter, his screendances have been featured at numerous international film festivals. His paintings have been exhibited in four solo exhibits and numerous group shows throughout Michigan.

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