



# Nameless forest

Dean Moss | Sungmyung Chun



# Nameless forest

Produced by MAPP International Productions  
in partnership with Gametophyte, Inc.

*Nameless forest* is a multidisciplinary performance work conceived by Dean Moss and developed in collaboration with contemporary Korean sculptor and poet, Sungmyung Chun. The project explores subjectivity and the nature of perception by both translating Chun's figurative installations into live action, and questioning the act of translation itself. With its integration of the "other" – through disciplinary and cultural translation, aesthetic references, and shared authorship – *Nameless forest* reflects a significant trend, not only in the changing world of contemporary dance, but in the evolution of American identity.

The artistic partnership at the heart of *Nameless forest* is rooted in two years of exploratory communication between Moss and Chun. Viewing Chun's 2007 and 2008 solo exhibitions "Swallowing the Shadow" in Seoul, Moss felt that they resonated with strategies he recognized from his own work. He sensed a strong commonality with Chun, and became intrigued with the idea of sharing perspectives and backgrounds, and developing out of that confidence a multidisciplinary work that would challenge and reflect a quintessential blending of multiple individual practices.

*Nameless forest* continues Moss' formal investigations of both the dialogue between self and other, and the role of the audience in the performance experience, by examining the impact of shared rituals on the formation of community. The 70-minute work is embodied by a cast of six, whose individual abilities come from various forms of dance, acting, music and performance. Up to 12 audience members will be asked to join the cast onstage for each performance, reflecting through their undirected response, the community's role (and risk) in the individual and often transgressive nature of art making.

*Nameless forest* features diary fragments and imagery by photojournalist Mike Kamber, neon sculpture from visual artist Gandalf Gavan, an original score by environmental and found sound composer Stephen Vitiello. Costumes are by Roxana Ramseur with lighting and technical design by Vincent Vigilante.

*Nameless forest* premiered at The Kitchen in May 2011 and will tour through 2012- 2013.

For more information, contact: Michelle Coe [michelle@mappinternational.org](mailto:michelle@mappinternational.org) 646-602-9390

I like science: biology, philosophy, quantum mechanics, stuff like that. I'm not too good socially. I like sex, but people are an acquired taste. I'm aging and think of mortality, of loss. Concepts interest me. Imagery interests me. Activities of falling involve me. I like doing. I like to do all, all at once. It's unconscious and confusing. I make mistakes. I panic. There's a fair amount of pain, physical and otherwise, and bliss...

## DEAN MOSS

Dean Moss is a director, choreographer and media artist. He creates rigorously constructed works that explore identity and perception. His multidisciplinary practice includes performance, dance, video, audio and visual design. Recent projects have focused on innovative audience participation and trans-cultural, cross-disciplinary collaborations.

His latest premiere, *Nameless forest* (2011), is a collaboration with Korean sculptor and installation artist Sungmyung Chun, and explores the audiences' role (and risk) in the nature of art making. Other recent performance collaborations include: *Kisaeng becomes you* (2009), with Korean traditional and modern dance choreographer Yoon Jin Kim; *States & Resemblance* (2007) with photographer Ryutaro Mishima and Indonesian traditional dance artist Restu Kusumaningrum, and *figures on a field* (2005) with the visual artist Laylah Ali.

Moss' performance and video works have been exhibited and presented internationally, including: the Seoul International Dance Festival; Ksirarnawa Art Center in Denpasar, Indonesia; New Visions Art Festival, Hong Kong and the FNB Vita Dance Festival in Johannesburg South Africa. Locally the works have been presented by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art; P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center; The Brooklyn Museum of Art; The Brooklyn Arts Exchange; The Danspace Project; Dance Theater Workshop, and The Kitchen.

These works have been variously supported by The National Endowment for the Arts; The MAP Fund; Jerome Foundation; Greenwall Foundation; The New York State Council on the Arts; The New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project; New York Foundation for the Arts' Artist Fellowships; Asian Cultural Council Fellowships; the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography residencies; Arizona State University residencies; and a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award. Moss received a New York Dance and Performance BESSIE Award for his 1999 work *Spooky action at a distance*, and *Nameless forest* has been nominated for two 2011 Bessies: for Outstanding Production and Outstanding Sound Design.

Moss was the Curator of Dance and Performance at The Kitchen from 1999-2004 and served as a Curatorial Advisor until 2009. He taught for a year as a Guest Professor at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (2003-04) and two years (2007-09) as a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. In 2011 he lectured in the department of Theater Studies at Yale and is currently a Visiting Professor in the departments of Art, Dance, and Intermedia Studies, at Hunter College.

# Sungmyung Chun



Chun's sculpture & drawings from Swallowing the Shadow

The inspiration for Nameless forest lies in Sungmyung Chun's sculptural settings that capture the immediacy of physical and psychological violence. These installations readily embody the tensions of contemporary culture's conflicted identities and experience—core issues that have shaped my social and aesthetic views. Upon seeing Chun's 2007 and 2008 solo exhibitions in Seoul—both titled Swallowing the Shadow—I felt a resonance with his strategies from my own work: multimedia movement environments exploring subjectivity and the nature of perception. I sensed a visceral connection to Chun's imagery, not only through the layered emotional presentation of male ennui and aggression, but also through his aesthetic play of form and content. I felt strongly that we had in common some fundamental kinds of experiences, and became intrigued with the idea of sharing our perspectives and backgrounds, and developing out of that confidence a multidisciplinary work that would challenge and reflect a quintessential blending of our individual practices.

-dean moss

## Mike Kamber



I have known photojournalist Mike Kamber since the mid-1980's, when we were squatting buildings in the South Bronx. We share a sense of selective isolation and community that is a feature both of our deep friendship and of this collaboration. For this project, Mike has entrusted me with photos, raw video, diary entries and unedited interviews from his reportage in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Nigeria. I am looking to use that material to draw parallels between the internal, existential violence that contributes to the creation of personhood, and the external sociopolitical conflicts that surround identity and culture worldwide.

-dean moss

## Gandalf Gaván



Installation of Gaván's neon and mirrors at P.S. 1

In Nameless forest, subjectivity and its perception are in continuous play. Gandalf Gaván's visual environments of mirror and neon perfectly reflect the distorted nature of any singular point of view in a way I find both poetic and corrosive. After ten years of wanting to work together, we agreed to collaborate on this project not only because the abstracting, visually destabilizing product of his practice was the ideal foil and balance to the linear experience of the work's narrative and performance, but also because we shared a random and arbitrary feeling that now was just the right time.

-dean moss

## Stephen Vitiello



Fifteen years ago Stephen Vitiello, composer, sound and media artist, curated my video work at Anthology Film Archives. Several years later, we served together as artist/curators at The Kitchen. He composed and performed music for my 2001 work *american deluxe*. Over the years, he introduced me to experimental music and sound sculpture, and reintroduced me to the great Korean media artist Nam June Paik, to whom he was an assistant. His own sonic environments, created from found sounds, are intricately crafted and disturbingly visceral. For this project I trust him implicitly to blend music and found sounds of his own creation with Kamber's media elements to articulate and focus the work's emotional presentation.

-dean moss

## Vincent Vigilante



Early rendering of stage space Nameless forest

“Vinny” Vigilante and I worked together at The Kitchen when he was at the beginning of his lighting work and again at Dance Theater Workshop in 2009 on *Kisaeng becomes you*. I asked him to join this collaboration not only for the high quality of his lighting designs and technical skills, but also for his patience and the generosity of his personality. Another, often under thought, aspect of Vinny’s creative contribution, is making sure the project has a flexible technical design: one that, from its conception, is made to travel and be effective in a multiplicity of theatrical spaces.

-dean moss



Photo by Paula Court

## PERFORMERS

### KACIE CHANG

Kacie Chang has worked with Dean Moss for over fifteen years. In this her sixth Gametophyte project, she has also served as rehearsal director. Kacie has taught dance master classes at Elm City Dance Collective, Dancing Dialogue, and Florida State University. Her choreography has been presented in New York by Dances for Wave Hill, Next Steps, and BAX. As a performer, she has danced with Risa Jaroslow, Poppo and the Gogo Boys, Nai-Ni Chen, Wendy Blum, the Butoh Rockettes and Richard Move. Kacie received her BFA in Dance from Florida State University in 1991.

### ERIC CONROE

Eric Conroe is a Brooklyn-based dancer, choreographer and poet, educated in Dance and Literature at Bennington College in Vermont. Recently, he has presented his choreographic work at St. Mark's Church, the Brooklyn Arts Exchange, and through Movement Research and AUNTS. His writing has appeared in The American Drivel Review, [danceinsider.com](http://danceinsider.com), and elsewhere.

### AARON HODGES

Aaron Hodges grew up in an Army family that moved about in the southern states. He is a 2006 Circle in the Square Theater School graduate. He has performed, written or sound designed for various original works, with friends, at The Chocolate Factory, Chashama, Ontological-Hysterical Theater, The Public Theater, The Players Theater, Brick Theater, and Brooklyn Arts Exchange. His band, Holy Spirits, records and performs in NYC and around the US.

continued on back...

### **PEDRO JIMENEZ**

Pedro likes farms flowers freedom and honesty. His expression has been increasingly driven from some earlier expressions remembered such as neighborhood sports, playground games, Man Hunt, water balloon fights, the Mickey Mouse Club, Living in South Florida, Michael Jackson, Martin Luther King JR, Getting Arrested and Put into Jail at age 16 for using his school Metro Card on a Non-School day, Aggressive Inline Skating and from his Mother, Father, Sisters, Brothers, Friends, the everyday and You. Pedro recently has worked with Beautiful people such as Arthur Aviles, Claire Barratt, Noemie Lafrance, Mei-Yin Ng, Richard Rivera, Dean Moss, and with Michael Leleux for a Dance Video Project responding to AIDS. He has been involved with HIV & AIDS awareness, and as a teaching artist. Pedro thanks god for Life and thanks those who live with their hearts, with Love -You are a great inspiration to me! He believes and is for "a World without Strangers" thank you Sungmyung Chun!

### **DJ McDONALD**

DJ McDonald has been the creator, playwright, director and choreographer of three full-length music theater works. He has directed and/or choreographed more than a dozen book musicals, a half dozen straight plays, and two operas; served as co-producer, co-director and choreographer for 15 original dinner theatre reviews, 4 seasons of professional cabaret, and 2 seasons of stand-up comedy. He headed his own professional modern dance and theater company for 15 years and was one of seven American choreographers chosen by the American Dance Festival to tour France as part of the first Franco-American young choreographers' exchange. In addition to performing with his own troupe, he has appeared with the dance companies of Andrew DeGroat, Jeanie Hutchins, Yoshiko Chuma, Pina Bausch, David Dorfman, and Mikhail Baryshnikov (White Oak). He has taught dance to young people as a faculty member at the high school and college level, and created or collaborated in several innovative dance and theater projects in middle and elementary schools. Having contributed as a writer for the Village Voice and other publications, he now hosts and creates arts and culture commentary on the blog "City Of Glass" and at Culturebot.

### **SARI NORDMAN**

Sari Nordman has shown work most recently at BAAD!, BAX, Columbia University, DraftWork at Danspace Project and Movement Research at the Judson Church. Working as a dancer with choreographers Douglas Dunn, Dean Moss, Susan Rethorst and Melinda Ring has influenced her own dance-making. She is a recent recipient of American Scandinavian Society's cultural grant. She holds an MFA in modern dance from NYU/Tisch School of the Arts.

## COLLABORATORS



### SUNGMYUNG CHUN

Sungmyung Chun received his B.F.A and M.F.A from Suwon University in South Korea. Chun's seventh solo exhibition *Swallowing the Shadow* was recently held at TouchART Gallery in Heyri Art Valley, Paju, Korea. Chun participated in ARCO 2007, Art Rotterdam 2007, Busan Biennale 2006 and Gwangju Biennale 2000, as well as various group exhibitions worldwide including in Italy, France, Israel, Spain, and China. He is the recipient of the grand prize at the Kim Sejoonj Young Sculptor Awards and the third prize at the 2007 Micro-Narratives, October Salon, in Belgrade, Serbia. Chun's works can be found in the collections of Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, Canada and Gyeonggido Museum of Art, Ansan, South Korea. He lectures in the College of Fine Arts, Kyunghee University and Chugye University for the Arts. A book of *Swallowing the Shadow* was published by TouchArt in 2008.

### MICHAEL KAMBER

Michael Kamber was born in Maine in 1963. He attended Parsons School of Design and has worked as a freelance photojournalist and journalist since 1986. He has covered conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia, the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, Haiti, Israel, the Congo and other countries. He has also worked as a writer, publishing dozens of articles from Iraq, Afghanistan and West Africa. His photos have been published in nearly every major news magazine in the United States and Europe, as well as in many newspapers. Kamber is a former Revson Fellow at Columbia University. He is the winner of the Mike Berger Award, a World Press Photo award, the Missouri School of Journalism's Lifestyle Award, the Society of Professional Journalists Deadline Club Award, American Photo Images of the Year and several New York Press Photographer Awards. The Village Voice nominated Kamber for a Pulitzer Prize in 2001. Most recently, in the winter of 2010/2011, he worked as a contract photojournalist and writer in Afghanistan.

### GANDALF GAVAN

Working in diverse media including blown and slumped glass, Gaván creates drawings and large-scale installations that explore contemporary social themes. Gaván was born in Berlin, Germany in 1975. He received his BFA from Bard College in 1998, and his MFA from Columbia University in 2005. He has taught printmaking and sculpture at Columbia University. In 2005 he received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and in 2006 the Mortimer Frank Traveling Fellowship. Gaván has exhibited at museums and galleries around the world, including in Spain, Germany, Austria, Peru, and Mexico, where he had a solo exhibition at the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Oaxaca. Other solo exhibitions have taken place at N2 Galeria in Barcelona, Spain; Larissa Goldston Gallery, New York; P.S.1, Long Island City, New York; Bertrand and Gruner, Geneva, Switzerland; and Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida.

## STEPHEN VITIELLO

Electronic musician and sound artist Stephen Vitiello has composed music for independent films, experimental video projects and art installations, collaborating with artists, musicians and choreographers including Dara Birnbaum, Jem Cohen, John Jasperse/White Oak Dance Project, Pauline Oliveros, Tony Oursler, Andrew Deutsch, Eder Santos, and Nam June Paik. He has received several awards for his work including: a 2006 Creative Capital Emerging Fields and Innovative Literature Award; a 2003 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship; the Penny McCall Award in 2001; and an Independent Radio and Sound Art Fellowship from the Jerome Foundation/Media Alliance in 1999.

As an installation artist, he is particularly interested in the physical aspect of sound and its potential to define the form and atmosphere of a spatial environment. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Museum 52, London; DiverseWorks, Houston, TX; The Project, New York and Los Angeles; Galerie Almine Rech, Paris; and 111 Gallery at the iEAR program at Rensselaer Polytechnic, Troy, NY. Vitiello has also performed worldwide, including at the Tate Modern, London; the 5th International Electronic Art Festival, Sao Paulo, Brazil; San Francisco Electronic Music Festival; The Kitchen, NYC; Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, NYC; and per/Son, Cologne, Germany.

Most recently, he was the subject of a 27-minute documentary produced for Australian TV, *Stephen Vitiello: Listening with Intent*. CD releases include *Bright and Dusty Things* (New Albion Records); *Listening to Donald Judd* (Sub Rosa); *Box Music*, a collaboration with Machinefabriek (12k); and *The Gorilla Variations* with Molly Berg (12k). Vitiello is currently Associate Professor of Kinetic Imaging at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

## VINCENT VIGILANTE

Vincent Vigilante is a SUNY New Paltz graduate with a BA in Theater Performance and Technology. He has been working in the New York dance & theater scene for the past five years. Currently living in Brooklyn and running his own lighting design company, Vigilante Design, Vincent is the Lighting Supervisor for Dance Theater Workshop, as well as a founding member and Production Manager of The Clockwork Theatre. He is the resident designer for Gallim Dance and most recently designed a piece in collaboration with Andrea Miller for Ballet Hispanico. Previous design credits include: Scenic design: *True West*, *Cherry Smoke* (The Clockwork Theatre). Lighting design: *True West*, *Underground* (The Clockwork Theatre); *No mans Island* (Gutworks); Gallim Dance - Andrea Miller's *Blush* (Joyce SoHo/ Jacobs Pillow); Dean Moss & Yoon Jin Kim's *Kisaeng becomes you*, Melanie Marr's *Phenomenal Bodies*, FreshTracks '09 (Dance Theater Workshop); Dance and Process' 05,' 06,' 07, Robert Melee's *Talent Show*, Raz Mesinai's *Myth of Nations*, John Hollenbeck's *Inspirations and Aspirations*, Padma Newsome & Bryce Dessner's *Clogs*, Mike Ladd's *Domestica*, Caitlin Cooks' *Skint*, Aida Ruilova's *The Sliver Globe* (The Kitchen).

# DEAN MOSS

## REFLECTIONS & TALKING POINTS ON *Nameless forest*

---

### ON COLLABORATION

*Nameless forest* is about the impact of individual processes of identification on the formation of community. As such, the work's whole reason for being is to examine and present its audience in the process of being consumed in an immersive collaborative experience reflecting the formation of that community. The overarching or meta-collaboration found within *Nameless forest* is between the work and its audience.

The primary aesthetic collaboration of the production of *Nameless forest* is between Sungmyung Chun and myself. The performance was conceived as a response to and is a meditation on, the paintings and sculpture installations of Sungmyung Chun. I stumbled upon Sungmyung's work while walking randomly along the streets of Seoul in the spring of 2007. Though focused on his recent *Swallowing the Shadow* exhibition *Nameless forest* references Sungmyung's entire body of work.

Sungmyung and I worked very closely together sharing our aesthetic processes and using that knowledge to construct the performances. Over the two year course of the production, Sungmyung made five trips to NYC and I made two trips to Seoul. Though Sungmyung designed set pieces and significantly contributed to the direction of *Nameless forest*, I conceived the work, selected the cast, the additional collaborators, choreographed, directed, rehearsed and with MAPP International, generally produced the work.

Additional collaborators - Mike Kamber (diary, photos), Gandalf Gavan (neon sculpture), Stephen Vitiello (music composition), Roxana Ramseur (costumes), and Vincent Vilgilante (lighting and technical design) contributed more specific physical elements and formed a more theatrically traditional relationship to the work. Vincent (Vinny) Vigilante's contribution was exceptional because he was brought into the project at the beginning, invented a process so to construct the unusual set pieces and determined the technical framework of *Nameless forest*.

The performers are also collaborators on this project. I cast the work with six performers (men and women ages 26-57) who had a diverse relationship to theater. Their individual abilities come from various forms of dance, acting, music and performance. In directing and choreographing movements, I most often initiated a movement exploration or scene development, then immediately focused on the response from the cast. I then (sometimes radically) re-shaped and challenged what they made available; this way, the dancers embodied the movement material from the beginning. Performers were also asked to explore ideas, and significantly in the "shooting section" (originally an improv in which several dancers ran amuck), the choreography continues to reflect their contributions largely intact. Though *Nameless forest* has at times the appearance of spontaneity, it is highly choreographed: right down to the eyeballs.

## CROSS CULTURE, CROSS MEDIA

*Nameless forest* as a contemporary performance project is the result of two artists from different cultures who are drawn together because they recognized elements of their own processes in each others practice: *Nameless forest* is based on similarity as opposed to difference. Though neither Sungmyung nor I incorporate easily recognizable, culturally traditional activities in our practices, we each undeniably carry within us unique cultural backgrounds that are reflected in *Nameless forest*.

Specific Korean elements include the onstage audience, which references Madang Nori the traditional Korean folk performance in the round. The deliberately spacious pacing of the work, its subtle dramatics, gendered roles, the metaphor of the flowers and simple performance effects all reflect a Korean sensibility and cultural influence.

My diversity in casting, the deep research in and use of the onstage audience, and the layering of stories--from Sungmyung's internal narrative, through the photojournalist's diary entries to the audience interviews--resonate as decidedly American strategies.

Similarly *Nameless forest* incorporates aesthetic concerns from both gallery and theater spaces. The large striped set pieces, the restrained palette and white flooring signal our shared interest in the visual tension created by volumes, colors and planes, as well as the dramatic tension of the performance. Sungmyung often describes his installations in terms of storytelling, and I have a long history of working in video.

## THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

The changing role of the audience in my performance work is based on two questions, "Where does the gesture in performance reside?" and "How can its experience be shaped in the mind of the viewer?". The attempt to answer these questions has gradually informed my practice to the point where the audience not only participates in the activities of the work, but have ultimately become the work itself.

The first experiment with formal audience participation was the 2005 work *figures on a field*, a collaboration with the visual artist Laylah Ali. In it I designed an intervention, as part of the choreography: a small docent lead group tour of the performance, during the performance. The intervention resulted in a complex visceral performance experience for the audience, challenging the relationship between the viewer and the work regardless of whether one was part of the tour or not.

Similarly in *Kisaeng becomes you*, a 2008 collaboration with Korean traditional dance choreographer Yoon Jin Kim, I recruited audience members for the title role of kisaeng (artist/courtesans of Korea's Joseon dynasty). By charging audience members with the recitation of poems and the enactment of hosting rituals, the performance turned the audience into the very "other" that they had originally come to see.

The primary metaphor presented to the audience through *Nameless forest* is that of a rite of passage. Where the viewer is both the initiate and the community into which they are to be initiated.

The performers' activities then function to frame the audience's experience of this transition by presenting a ritualized (and risky) journey through which the viewer must travel.

The viewer's perception of their transition is aided by the separation of the audience into two groups. The onstage group is composed of a limited number of viewers invited by the dancers to "join" the performance. The offstage group resembles a traditional audience in that they "witness" the proceedings, until the end when they are addressed directly by the onstage audience. This encounter between the two audiences acts like a mirror. It allows the viewer to reflect on themselves and articulate both the painful ways by which we form personhood, and the vulnerability and compassion that process imparts to society.

## ON VIOLENCE

During the last ten years, my work has gained a reputation for violent transgressive activities. Though in my process I do not set out to violate accepted norms, I am interested in shaping and magnifying theatrical tension. When taking an image from one medium to another I often explore the "literalization" of metaphors--of painted or sculpted imagery and the possible ramifications of it becoming living behaviors: as in the hand-in-mouth sequences in both *figures on a field* and *Kisaeng becomes you* or the bloody trail in *Nameless forest*. This direct and sometimes harsh imagery in the work is used to help engage the audience in a deeply visceral, immersive fashion, forcing immediate unconscious involvement.

## ON GENDER

The norm of contemporary performance is gender neutrality. In *Nameless forest* the gender roles are quite distinct. Though it is not black and white, in general the male roles are constructed as performance content while female roles are concerned with shaping the performance context. Originally this had to do with Sungmyung's source imagery and the particulars of its narrative. But the gender divide in the work also developed independently of that source during its production. This is an indication of the changing relationship of the performers to the audience, both onstage and off, as the roles of the viewer in relation to the performers became more defined. In the end, the roles of the men, women, on and offstage audiences correspond not only to particular elements of the source imagery, but also reflect the role of formal and organizational structures that shape the production. Finally, the play of gender in *Nameless forest* challenges the particularly western notion that gender neutrality is synonymous with gender equality.



Photo by Julieta Cervantes

*Nameless forest*