



Alison O'Daniel: NIGHT SKY

Alison O'Daniel: NIGHT SKY

by Danielle McCullough

Alison O'Daniel and Lisa Reynolds began their cross-country tour for O'Daniel's film *NIGHT SKY* on September 19 at a private screening at the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles. This very personalized, labyrinthine museum holds an assortment of objects and information in a sort of curio cabinet of "rational amusement" -- beautifully described in Lawrence Weschler's *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, and Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology*. This proved to be a very apt site from which to begin their journey. The two artists are touring with a film which features a pivotal sound bath scene in the Integratron, a geodesic dome shrouded time-travel lore, in Joshua Tree, CA, and it explores the tactile dimension of sound often overlooked by hearing people. O'Daniel grew up in the hearing world, and she is hard of hearing -- she wears hearing aids and read lips. *NIGHT SKY* contains multiple mirrors of that perceptual experience, and disability is examined as providing the possibility of an alternate form of communication and reception which is not lesser than that which is considered medically normative.

Night Sky was conceived and produced in collaboration with a cast of performers, artists, filmmakers and musicians, half of whom are deaf and half of whom are hearing/non-signing. O'Daniel worked closely with Jules Dameron, who started [Deaf Women In Film](#) in order to locate her collaborators from that community. This film centers on two women, Cleo (played by Deaf actress Evelina Gaina) and Jay (played by Jeanne-Marie Mandell). Cleo is deaf, Jay is hearing and they take a road trip to the California desert near Joshua Tree, where they receive a cosmic message by touching vibrational surfaces during the course of a sound bath. Simultaneous to their travels, there is a dance contest happening in a parallel universe, where wherein the touch of dancers' hands affects the music being played by the Los Angeles duo Lucky Dragons. A deaf dog is the only character that traverses both planes of existence -- through a membrane delineated by a hula hoop. The overall story of the film is understood differently by different audience members, depending upon whether or not they are fluent

in ASL, which is not subtitled in the film.

NIGHT SKY borrows some tropes from buddy films, science fiction, and 1980s dance competition films, as well as queer narrative, and operates very much like a silent film wherein the overall structure is keenly affected by the performance of a live score. The narrative consists of such deliberately fragmented pieces of information, that the characters of sound and visual language truly take over the audience experience -- and it is an engaging pleasure. The screening at the Museum of Jurassic Technology featured the performance of an ASL interpreted score which Lisa Reynolds created for O'Daniel's film and a prerecorded original score in surround sound, composed by Ethan Frederick Greene. O'Daniel supplied the audience with black balloons which they were instructed to inflate and hold in order to provide a tactile interface with the sound.



Alison O'Daniel: NIGHT SKY

While both Greene and Reynolds are hearing, both attempted to interpret music into a parallel experience for deaf audiences and were inspired by deaf artists. Greene's score is inspired by deaf composer Evelyn Glennie, who creates music by leaning her abdomen and hands against her instrument -- her song *Light in Darkness* is heard at the climactic moment of *Night Sky*. Reynolds, who is an artist working primarily in performance, as well as an NIC-certified interpreter for the deaf, has made a visual score for her ASL interpretation of this film with keys and visual code -- structured after musical notation. Her live sign-based score provides the overture for the film, which begins in blank blackness; adding narrative dimension which only those audience members who are privileged to be fluent in ASL may receive.

After the performance at The Museum of Jurassic Technology, O'Daniel and Reynolds traveled across the country screening *NIGHT SKY* -- sometimes with live musical accompaniment. They screened the film with support from USA Projects in conjunction with Pop Up Art House, Henderson, Nevada; The Guild Cinema in Albuquerque, NM; Plus Gallery's Experimental Forum, in Denver, Colorado; The Nightingale, in Chicago, Illinois; The Cleveland Museum of Art in conjunction with The Cleveland Cinemateque; the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI; the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY; and finished at the Tisch Department of Cinema Studies, in conjunction with The Steinhardt School, New York University, New York, NY on October 1.

alisonodaniel.com/NIGHT-SKY



Alison O'Daniel: NIGHT SKY



Alison O'Daniel: NIGHT SKY

5 5 oc | oc 1 5 5
A A

paper crumble piles drip :33

5 5 C 5
4 4 oc 5

pile - blossom - open grow tree tree forest 1:20

1 3 2
1 2 3 4 5

branch - scrap - tree (down - up) tree - in - face wind 1:38

bf bf

ALL-YOU, HERE. I, SIGN. BELIEVE, ALL YOUR PAST, EXPERIENCES, MEMORIES, SIGHTS, TOGETHER, SHOW, WHAT-FOR, UNDERSTAND. NO. THIS MOMENT, ONE, PERSPECTIVE, (PERSPECTIVE) SWALLOW, INSIDE...

Lisa Reynolds ASL Score



Danielle McCullough has exhibited work in Los Angeles, Seattle, Berlin, Amsterdam & New York. She recently collaborated with artist Gabie Strong on *Blast Site: A Workshop for Conjecture* which was a sculptural, textual, edible and educational performance-based work as part of the High Desert Test Sites New Everyday Life Workshop series in Joshua Tree, CA. She is a recipient of grants from the Creative Capacity Fund, Change, Inc., and an artist residency at The Vermont Studio Center. McCullough is an active participant in Panel Shop, a collective cofounded by Andrea Zittel to help provide emerging artists with side income through the generation of specialty household design products. She is also the co-founder of [Los Angeles Art Resource](#), an on-line forum for the Los Angeles arts community to share job opportunities, calls for entry, studio vacancies and regional grant/fellowship deadlines.

- [view all articles from this author](#)