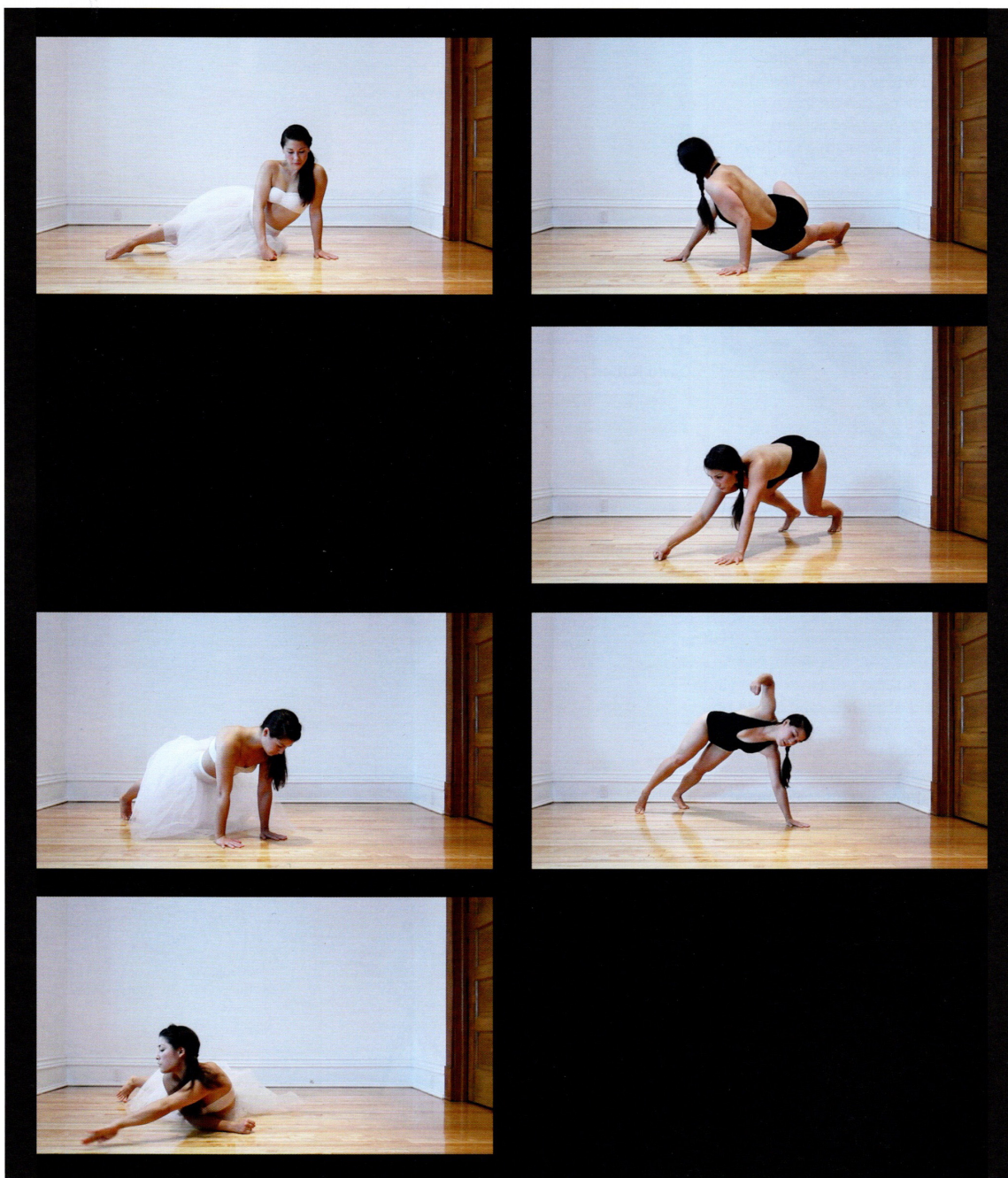


Tanya Lukin Linklater

Slay All Day

by Tenille K. Campbell



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There is a certain grace in confronting the unknown, in being introduced to new thoughts and concepts. The unknown keeps us curious, inspired, seeking. I kept this in mind while watching Tanya Lukin Linklater's video *Slay All Day* (2016), a collaboration between Lukin Linklater's choreography, Ceinwen Gobert's partially improvised performance and Stephanie Fehr's cinematography. Lukin Linklater is a Sugpiaq artist-choreographer from southwest Alaska and her rich body of work often involves histories and relationships with land and community. *Slay All Day* proved to be a pathway for new knowledge and old history, a reminder of how little I know and how much I can still learn.

The choreography in *Slay All Day* was inspired both by the movements of Inuit athletes and the land itself in Robert J. Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922)—the cracking of ice, freezing currents, unrelenting snowfall, the stillness. Knowing what inspired Lukin Linklater has informed my understanding of her piece, allowing me the space to critically look at this representation of Inuit life, art and story, and the power one has when reclaiming such narratives, as she does here.

The 4-minute-and-16-second silent video opens on a split screen: we are first introduced to the dancer, Gobert, in two poses, a contrast in colour and position. On the left, she is in a white bandeau and a tulle skirt, and on the right, a dancer's leotard in black, both in the same bare, white room. She poses for eight seconds, and I find myself holding my breath with her. In her white bandeau, she is reposed gracefully on the floor, weight resting on her hip, leaning on her arm, with one hand clenched into a fist, knuckles to the ground. In her black leotard, she is in plank position, incredibly still.

Gobert moves through Lukin Linklater's choreography, making the painful seem painless. She walks on the front of her feet, toes curled under just so. She holds herself rigid in silence,

core clenched, back straight, unshakeable; her strength allows her body to weave story. The two screens show two different actions—at times, one will move and the other one doesn't. The left screen goes blank and we watch the remaining screen. Both screens will come on again. Lukin Linklater presents the dances, on either screen, moving not in unison but in relationship with one another. Gobert mimics the shifting ice—movements of survival in the Arctic. At one point, she swirls and curves across the wooden floor, black hair flowing, and I am reminded of how the water runs underneath the deep freeze of a winter's ice—giver of both life and death, depending on how much respect you give it.

The video shows us two stories in performance, sometimes in response to one another, sometimes flickering in and out, allowing our eyes to rest on one dance interpretation. Lukin Linklater reminds us that there are two sides to every story, and that we don't always have access to the full account. That the way we watch this interpretation may be our way of remembering story—in segments, picking out what is relevant to us, forgetting what is not.

The video ends in silence and in darkness. For 30 seconds we sit with the darkness of the screen. Remembering the story we were shown. I hold my breath again. I am waiting for something, but I don't know what, and it leaves me somewhat vulnerable. I am grateful for the chance to have walked into the unknown and come out with new ways of looking at the world, and knowledge shared.

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Tenille K. Campbell is a Dene/Métis author and photographer from English River First Nation. She completed her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia and is enrolled in her PhD at the University of Saskatchewan. She is also the artist behind sweetmoon photography and the co-creator of the blog tea&bannock. She currently resides in Saskatoon, SK.

Tanya Lukin Linklater

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Slay All Day (stills)
2016

Single-channel
HD video

4 min 16 sec

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