

# WALL—BODY

A DIALOGUE *BETWEEN*  
SHU KINOUCHI + HIROSHI KANEKO

**HK:** This project has really been a year and a half in the making. We first met in June 2023, but I think we really became friends when you invited me to your self-produced show in August 2024. Since then we've been slowly working toward this collaboration.

**SK:** I remember asking you a very simple question: What do you care about? And you said immediately, "Walls." I asked, "Why walls?" And you said, "Division." It was very clear.





**HK:** Your choreography was what pulled me in. In your show, 'Shu Loves Chairs', I was struck by how you could animate something completely inanimate. Watching that as an architect made me start thinking about larger elements. I remember bringing up walls, and suddenly we were having this long conversation about dance and architecture.

**SK:** For me, objects and people are not so different. Maybe this comes from the way I think about life now. Human plus a capitalistic lifestyle becomes part of a big machine, almost like a robot. In that sense, humans become objects. And objects also feel alive. We are alive and dead at the same time, and maybe objects are also alive and dead at the same time.

**HK:** In architecture, we rarely see spaces used in an intimate way. Sometimes we do a post-occupancy visit, or maybe a client invites us for dinner, but those moments are brief. Architecture asks you to act in faith—that what you build will eventually find the life it needs.

**SK:** When Hiroshi told me this, I thought it was fascinating. The client owns the building, so the architect cannot always share it with the public. But with dance, we can transform that situation. My body can bring Hiroshi's architecture into public life again.

**HK:** Walls have always interested me because they're such a neutral element that can easily become politicized. In some ways the wall is a synecdoche for architecture itself. It shelters us, frames light, forms the rooms where our lives unfold. But it also divides. At its most extreme, the wall becomes a frontier, or a line where conflict happens. Every wall has two sides.

**SK:** I also think about how people move around boundaries. In Japan, when you walk on the street, you hold space for others. In the West, sometimes people walk as if the whole street belongs to them. These different behaviors toward space made me curious about how bodies meet walls.

**HK:** Being invited into your choreographic process has been a highlight for me. You've been generous in sharing how you think through movement, and you've let me bring architectural ideas into that process.

**SK:** We started with a kind of call and response. Hiroshi sent me three words: walls, division, envelope. I answered with an improvised dance video. Then he made a drawing from screenshots of that dance. I responded with another dance against a staircase railing. We kept exchanging—photos, sketches, models, voice notes, even playlists.

**HK:** Eventually, it became a conversation in many different media. We were trying to figure out what an intimate exchange between a wall and a body might look like.

**SK:** Yes. At first, we bounced ideas back and forth from far away. Then, finally, we had a chance to be in the same rehearsal space. That was exciting and also scary for me.

**HK:** Because I started asking questions



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**SK:** Exactly. Hiroshi asked things like, “What kind of movement would this wall design invite? Would you move sideways here, or stay still?” In dance, there are some unspoken etiquettes about offering suggestions, so at first I panicked a little. But Hiroshi was very patient and understanding.

**HK:** One difference I noticed between architecture and choreography is representation. Architects rely on drawings and models—we almost never work directly at full scale. Dance is the opposite. The gesture itself is the work. When I showed you drawings of the set, you were already able to imagine choreography before anything was built.

**SK:** For me, those drawings were like invitations.

**HK:** The other big difference is time. Buildings take years to realize. Dance happens in real time. So I wanted the set to move closer to the timescale of choreography. The pieces themselves are fixed, but they can be rearranged quickly so that the architecture can evolve while you dance.

**SK:** I like that idea very much: architecture that can respond to a body in the moment.

**HK:** The set is basically a flexible kit, twelve walls, and one tower. With those elements, we can build many things: a watchtower and barrier, a small town, a protected idol, even a kind of mountain on the horizon.



*My hope is simple. Through this performance I want to share a visceral sense of longing and also the philosophy that comes from living between cultures. Through dance and architecture together, maybe we can look at walls with a little more nuance, and a little more care. – SK*



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**SK:** Dance itself has a power to design and change how space is meant to be. With my choreography and my dancing, I am trying to shed this power and instead be affected by the walls—a lot, this time—being vulnerable to power, being strong against the powers of architecture of space, air, energy, and time. Together with the audience and music is where I find the power, impact, and beauty in choreography, in the performance itself, and it is beyond my control in designing.

Also, you told me that architecture is not a set. A set on the stage is something we can arrange and it interacts with us, but on the other hand architecture has to be fixed and we are the ones interacting with it. In this case, Hiroshi's walls are fixed not because they are meant to stand fixed in space for a long time, but because their fragility and flexible design needs to be taken care of.

In my choreography, I started researching the idea of support. That led me into questions of power, service, and demand. There is some anger in the movement, and some sorrow. It became about longing, about not having enough support in the present moment of life.

**HK:** At some point, we organized the piece around four encounters with walls. Almost like a map of universal experiences: confrontation, incarceration, dwelling, and crossing. How are we being constrained, how can we be transgressive, how can we protect ourselves in uncertain times? With what sensibility will we approach something new, something different?

**SK:** Hiroshi made these as categories, but for me they became a story. Each theme is connected to support, authority, demand, and finally solidarity. Walls are architecture, but they can represent anything.

**HK:** I originally imagined the walls as very solid, something you could disappear behind. But working with you changed my thinking. Dance creates its own sense of mass and density through movement. Even a light material like scrim can feel monumental when the body interacts with it.: I originally imagined the walls as very solid, something you could disappear behind. But working with you changed my thinking. Dance creates its own sense of mass and density through movement. Even a light material like scrim can feel monumental when the body interacts with it.

**SK:** Yes, sometimes the body becomes the wall itself.

**HK:** Exactly.

**SK:** We also wanted the audience to experience this relationship closely. Originally, we imagined a theater-in-the-round, but with the moving walls it wasn't safe this time. Instead, during intermission the audience can come onto the stage and experience the installation directly. The walls and the choreography begin to design the audience's behavior as well.

**HK:** In that sense the set becomes both stage and exhibition.





**SK:** I hope we can continue performing this piece in many different venues with many configurations. Maybe one day another dancer will dance my role. And maybe other choreographers will also work with Hiroshi's walls. I imagine an evening where many artists dance with these objects.

**HK:** I would love that. An opportunity for new walls.

**SK:** My hope is simple. Through this performance I want to share a visceral sense of longing and also the philosophy that comes from living between cultures. Through dance and architecture together, maybe we can look at walls with a little more nuance, and a little more care.

#### Image Credits

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LADP Presents | WALL–BODY  
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## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Shu Kinouchi** is a Japanese dancer and choreographer whose work moves between performance, theater, and installation. Through choreographic installations, he uses objects, repetition, and spatial systems to explore support, intimacy, and human disconnection.

Based in Los Angeles, Kinouchi has performed with L.A. Dance Project since 2020, and previously with Houston Ballet and Tulsa Ballet. He trained at Hamburg Ballet School and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre.

Alongside his performance career, he creates choreographic works that treat objects not as props but as partners, witnesses, or structures that shape behavior. His process often begins with extended physical research with materials such as chairs or walls, then develops through repetition, tableaux, and movement tasks into live performance environments.

His recent projects include *Shu Loves Chairs*, a solo work about support created in collaboration with Waka Waka, and *WALL–BODY*, a choreographic installation with architect Hiroshi Kaneko that examines how walls organize relationships through confrontation, enclosure, incarceration, and transgression. Across his work, Kinouchi studies longing, habit, and the quiet force of inanimate things, creating performances in which choreography becomes a way to observe the systems bodies live inside.

**Hiroshi Kaneko** is a designer, educator, and researcher whose work spans architecture, interiors, sets, and text. Hiroshi is a partner at KANEKOWINSTON, a design office based in Cambridge, Massachusetts that focuses on architecture, and is an instructor at the Syracuse University School of Architecture, where he teaches design studios exploring material construction, perception, and tectonics.

His interdisciplinary practice is grounded in drawing and model making as tools to examine how built environments shape—and are shaped by—the body.

His current projects include two renovation projects, in San Francisco and New York City, and a text on color, in addition to his ongoing collaboration with Shu Kinouchi on *WALL–BODY* and *Shu Loves Chairs*.

## **ABOUT LADP Presents**

LADP Presents is the programming arm of L.A. Dance Project that provides the space and platform to uplift non-repertory works from affiliate artists and partners, including performances, film screenings, cross disciplinary projects, and educational and community focused initiatives.

Typically hosted at L.A. Dance Project's studio and theater space, LADP Presents is designed to expand the depth, breadth, and diversity of the dance community in Los Angeles by serving as an inclusive platform and cultural incubator for artists and audiences. Programming is curated by L.A. Dance Project and in collaboration with LADP Presents partners.

LADP Presents is committed to engaging new audiences, supporting collaboration, and serving as a resource for artists in Los Angeles and beyond.

## **ABOUT LADP Presents**

L.A. Dance Project is a non-profit dance company under the Artistic Direction of Benjamin Millepied. Founded in 2012, we opened the doors to our studio and performance space in Los Angeles' downtown arts district in 2017.

L.A. Dance Project is dedicated to the pursuit of artistic innovation and excellence in the realm of contemporary dance. Our mission is to explore the boundaries of movement, creativity, and expression. Through experimentation and collaboration, we strive to create captivating performances that challenge, provoke, and inspire audiences worldwide. Grounded in a commitment to artistic integrity and authenticity, we aim to cultivate a culture of curiosity, openness, and growth within our company and beyond. With humility and passion, we seek to contribute to the evolution of dance as a dynamic and transformative art form, enriching lives and fostering connections across cultures and communities.

Learn more/ [www.ladanceproject.org](http://www.ladanceproject.org)