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Movement and Flow: Portland Dance Films

Fuchsia Lin talks about her new film in next week's Northwest Film Center dance film evening

July 21, 2017 // [DANCE](#) // [Jamuna Chiarini](#)

Can you believe it? It's a dance-free weekend (as far as I know)! It's the first in a really long time (Portland dance makers have been really really busy this year). But don't worry, you won't have to wait too long to get your dance fix. Opening Wednesday at NorthWest Film Center is a brand new evening of Portland-made dance films called [Movement and Flow: Portland Dance Films](#).

The evening is curated by filmmaker, and NorthWest Film Center's Filmmaker Services Manager, Ben Popp, who after curating last year's Northwest Filmmakers' Festival realized the need for a dance specific film event after seeing how many dance based/themed films had been submitted to the festival. NorthWest Film Center also partners with BodyVox Dance Company in the [Contact Dance Film Festival](#).

Exploring a range of dance and movement elements that can play in the cinematic realm, Popp has brought together six Portland dance filmmakers: Amy Yang Chiao, Jackie Davis, Conrad Kazcor, Fuchsia Lin, Gabriel Shalom, and Dylan Wilbur Media. The films range in style from documentary format, to site-specific, to collaborative projects, and mixed media.

Fuchsia Lin, the director of the film *Crystal's of Transformation*, is one of those mixers. She is a conceptual artist and filmmaker who works in costume design, film, performance, and dance. Originally from Michigan, Lin has resided in Portland since 2008 after living and working in New York, Paris, and Taipei. Her work focuses on questions of cultural identity (she is a second generation Taiwanese American), and explores ancient mythology and religious stories. Lin's mission is to bring awareness to the importance of our relationship with water, which is what drives her film the *Crystals of Transformation*. *Crystals of Transformation* is about how the energetic environment of water affects those near it.

I spoke with Lin via email about the film and the filmmaking process. That conversation unfolds below.

On a side note, coming up August 24-September 2, the [Portland Dance Film Fest](#) will screen five nights of dance films at 5th Avenue Cinema.

The festival will include an opening night party, three nights of Portland Dance Film Fest curator picks, mini screenings and live dance for film creation, a free community event, and a dance for film panel and discussion at Flock Dance Center. Stay tuned for more details.

Performances this week

[Movement and Flow: Portland Dance Films](#)

Featured filmmakers: Amy Yang Chiao, Jackie Davis, Conrad Kazcor, Fuchsia Lin, Gabriel Shalom, and Dylan Wilbur Media

7 pm July 27

6 pm reception

Portland Art Museum, Whitsell Auditorium, 1219 SW Park Avenue

Email interview with Fuchsia Lin

Fuchsia Lin working on the costume for *Crystals of Transformation* in her Portland studio. Photo by Fuchsia Lin.

What projects are you working on right now?

Currently I am creating the costumes for my second film, *Future Cosmos Flow*. It's a fable about two isolated beings living on another planet who go through a metamorphosis as a result of visiting the Earth. The story is told through elaborate costumes, dance, music and animation, and stars dancers, Viktor Usov and Andrea Parson (who appears courtesy of [NW Dance Project](#)).

These are elaborate and sculptural costumes, with beautiful colors of fabrics in a mosaic -like design, that look like water crystals.

Can you describe your studio to me?

My studio is a peaceful sanctuary for creation, beauty and inspiration. It's a cozy room full of sunshine, plants, colors, fabrics, paper patterns, and all my sewing tools.

Can you tell me how *Crystals of Transformation* came to be?

Water is a miracle and gift to our planet. I am passionate about promoting water awareness and have focused my art on this subject for many years now.

I heard about these studies by water researcher and author, Dr. Masaru Emoto, who discovered that water's molecular structure is influenced by its energetic environment.

I was really fascinated by this discovery since our bodies are made up of 70% water and our planet is about 70% as well. I'd like for people to know about this phenomenon and be conscious how might the positive and negative thought emotions we are putting out into the world be affecting our mental and physical states?

I decided I was going to create a project inspired by Dr. Emoto's discoveries to show how we have this incredible potential to transform our lives through our relationship with water. Hence, *Crystals of Transformation* was born!



Fuchsia Lin's *Crystals of Transformation* costume in progress. Photo by Fuchsia Lin.

How did you make the leap from costume designer to film director?

It was a natural evolution over many years of working with performers and creating live performances and photography with my costumes.

I have always had my costume/fashion worn by dancers or performers since my work is very theatrical. (Bjork and Karen O have worn my costumes.) I began to create live performances that told the story of the costume through the performer's movement and my direction.

I don't often work with other directors/producers, because I always have a strong vision of my own stories and how I'd like to create them around the costume(s).

For my first 2011 RACC awarded project, *Fantasy Folklore Freshwater*, I created different stories about water dragons. For one of the stories, I worked with actress Mia Tagano, and I wanted to film Mia in costume on location at the Columbia Gorge to bring the natural element of water into the story. That was my first film, called *The River Flows to the Melody of the Dragon*.

By the time I began to create *Crystals of Transformation* in 2013, I really wanted to try making another film, to improve upon the first film. My boyfriend, Stephen Kimbrell, had just completed his film studies and wanted to make a film with me. Andrea Parson might have even suggested making a film as well—we were all up for it and very excited about the idea! And little did we know how much work it was going to be!

Did you direct and shoot it yourself?

I directed and produced the film, and worked with filmmakers Stephen Kimbrell and Beach Fort Films to shoot the film. Stephen Kimbrell edited the film with my direction.

What has this process been like for you?

It's been very exciting. A huge learning experience and an enormous amount of work.

I started working on the costume for *Crystals of Transformation* in 2013, and we started the film in 2014. We ended up shooting more scenes in 2015. Making *Crystals of Transformation* was like putting together a very complicated puzzle. We didn't know much about filmmaking; we've just been learning through the process of making the film.

I also want to add that during the making of *Crystals of Transformation*, my father passed away and this film's theme of transformation became very personal and significant as I had to process the grief of losing my father and transform the loss into something positive and beautiful.

I am fortunate to be able to use my art to heal myself and to create something special in honor of my dad. This film is dedicated to my father.



Fuchsia Lin's *Crystals of Transformation* costume in progress. Photo by Allison Burt-Tilden.

What is your relationship with dance/movement?

I love watching dance. I love seeing my sculptural costumes come to life through beautiful dance and movement. I've had the honor of working with some incredible dancers, and so I just have to see them move in my costumes. It's so mesmerizing.

I like dancing myself, but I still have a lot of shyness to get over. I love swimming, it feels amazing to me, and it makes me happy! I receive so many creative ideas when I am swimming. I'm planning for there to be some underwater dancing in my next film.

How was the choreography in the film developed? What were you looking for in the dancing? How does your costume relate to movement and the body, and how does the movement relate to the costume?

I'm a visual artist creating a dance film and I'm approaching the dance from a different direction. The costume was created first, before Andrea and I even started on the choreography. We worked together closely on the movement. The choreography was directed by the characteristics of the costume, which is inspired by the water crystal photographs of Dr. Masaru Emoto.

I was looking for "molecular" inspired movements, angular, and also very subtle movements, movements with the eyes, and fingers and toes.

The dance is also being driven by the narrative, which is about our main character, Dina, and her journey to the ocean and quest for healing and transformation. At some point in the film, the dance becomes more about a journey and a powerful transformation.



Artist and film director Fuchsia Lin. Photo by Allison Burt-Tilden.

How do all of the different elements in the film relate or not relate to each other?

There are many different elements, one is the scientific concept of Dr. Masaru Emoto's research, and how I translate that into the film.

It is not solely movement that conveys this concept, it is also the narrative, the music, the visuals and motion graphics that aid in this process as well.

There's the highlighting of the costume, and the visual feast of close-ups of the costume details in movement, abstracting them into looking like water crystals.

Then, there's the story of Dina, the mysterious woman we see in the beginning, her passion for water leading her on a journey for transformation.

I wanted to incorporate images of water to show Water as a "character" in the story.

Can you describe the costume that Andrea Parson wears and the different elements in it?

The water crystal costume that Andrea Parson wears is inspired by the photographs Dr. Masaru Emoto took of water molecules in his experiments. These molecules formed beautiful crystals after they were exposed to the words with positive emotions, "love, peace, gratitude."

The costume looks very crystal-like, has an exaggerated silhouette, is very textural, has lots of details, and tons of pleats. There are metallic and transparent fabrics, cut in intricate designs with a richly dyed green hemp/peace silk fabric, which was dyed with plant materials. The head piece, a coral color, looks like half of a hexagonal water crystal, with three water crystal arms reaching out. I covered Andrea's eyebrows to make her look less human and embody my idea of the element of Water being a mysterious visitor from another dimension.

Upcoming Performances

July

July 26, [Movement and Flow: Portland Dance Films](#), Hosted by NorthWest Film Center featuring films by Conrad Kazcor, Fuchsia Lin, Dylan Wilbur Media, Gabriel Shalom, Jackie Davis, and Amy Yang Chiao

July 29, [Haffa](#), Portland Bellydance Guild

August

August 3-5, [Galaxy Dance Festival](#), Hosted by Polaris Dance Theatre

August 9, [Suspended Moment](#), Meshi Chavez, Yukiyo Kawano, Allison Cobb, Lisa DeGrace, and Stephen Miller

August 11-13, [JamBallah Northwest '17](#), Hosted by JamBallah NW

August 24-September 6, [Portland Dance Film Fest](#), Directed by Kailee McMurrin, Tia Palomino, and Jess Evans

August 24-October 8, [Kurios: Cabinet Of Curiosities](#), Cirque Du Soleil

September

August 25-September 3, [Where To Wear What Hat](#), WolfBird Dance

September 7-17, [TBA](#), Portland Institute For Contemporary Art

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