

Siobhan Davies & David Hinton

Collaborative filmmakers



All This Can Happen (2013)

Dame Siobhan Davies DBE is an English dancer and choreographer. She was a dancer with the London Contemporary Dance Theatre during the 1970s and became one of its leading choreographers. In 1988, she founded her own company, Siobhan Davies Dance. She is among the top contemporary choreographers in the UK.

David Hinton is a British film director who has twice won BAFTA awards for his documentaries. He is widely renowned for his Dance films and has collaborated with several choreographers to create original dance works for the screen. He has also made several experimental screen dance works using archive footage and 'found' movement and teaches dance film workshops all over the world.

Interview 29/03/21 SD=Siobhan Davies (Sue), DH=David Hinton, CW=Charlotte Waelde, GR=Graham Rawle

GR I always think of pastiche as work that's in this style of, or pays homage to, a genre or a particular artwork in order to make a point. But it is interesting that most people have a kind of negative association with pastiche and I think it's generally regarded as a lesser work, something that is not as worthy, not as ground-breaking or inventive. But that's not the case. There are a lot of 'good' pastiche works out there that use found material and transform it into something that's much greater than the sum of its parts. That's a difficult thing for the law to evaluate, but that's how I would describe it in terms of creating collage work - does it make something that's greater than the parts that it's using?

DH I think one very important thing about it is it enables you to make something that couldn't be made in any other way. We used to talk about this when we made *All this Can Happen*. There's one image, it's an image of a giant because we're telling a little story and one of the characters in the story is a giant. If you get an image of a giant from an old Pathe newsreel like

we did, that brings with it a whole host of associations that you would never have if you had shot your own images of a giant. And all those associations that come from the fact that it belongs to an old Pathe newsreel are part of the content of the work of art that you're making. So, there are certain kinds of works that require that you draw on other sources because you want to gather into the work all the associations that go with each of the parts you are using.

GR When you work with collage the found material retains something of the original flavour, the original context and the original meaning. That can be transformed in the new work, but for you to understand what's been done it helps to know what the original was.

DH Part of the point of what you're doing is that the repurposing of the image is evident. In other words, you know that the image hasn't been shot for the purpose for which it's being used, and that discrepancy is important as part of the aesthetic.

SD I think in both of our works (yours, Graham, and David's and mine), because it informs the public of multiplicity, which is really what an era of artwork deals with, it's not just one artist it's the multiples of the culture of that time. An auteur makes an artwork solely out of themselves whereas this feels as if it's more cultural, more multi-faceted and therefore describes people in different ways but actually gives the public a different way of looking at themselves.



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DH But there is also something incredibly important about that too. Even though the image we might use in our film comes from the 19th century, the way in which we are working with it has actually only become possible in the last ten years, so even though we're using very old images, we're making very modern kind of works.

In this new work, very early on in the process I said to Sue we should only use public domain stuff and then will be free of all these copyright worries and we will just set that up as a rule from the beginning, and then we'll just enjoy ourselves in the public domain. Sue said, 'No, we can't do that because the public domain doesn't include all the things that are important to me, and we have to use all the things that are important to me. There are certain images that are absolutely

crucial to what we're doing that you're never going to find in the public domain, so that was a very interesting discussion.

SD Those images or texts didn't necessarily have anything to do with dance at all, but they would put me in some kind of place which made it possible for me to work, so I wanted to be truthful to those works and say, 'Yeah when I saw that, or when I see that now, I can understand why that puts me into this kind of state.' It makes complete sense to me as an artist that I would be using these materials. It genuinely feels like a work of art that needs to be made but made with all of these other elements in it. And it's honourably done, because I think I read another description of pastiche that things are done with love. I think that's actually true in my case. I've loved these images, they have meant something to me so in some way I can't be dismissive of them and I can't disregard them. I can just see myself explaining that to a judge.

DH Our lives, two lives, literally depend on this at the moment. We have got to decide this week. We're making this film and we've got to decide, are we going to go down that road where we're going to depend on the definition of pastiche as a way of avoiding copyright payments or are we not going to go down that road? If we put it in for a Film Festival and we didn't charge for them to use the film, but the festival made money out of selling tickets. Is that commercial then, because somebody else has made money out of it? Our producer's found this lawyer who's supposed to be an expert on media law and on Wednesday this week we've got 15-minute free conversation with him, but then if we want to carry on talking to him we've got to pay him \$450 an hour. Is this a complete waste of money?

I should say that before I worked with Sue, I made a couple of other found-footage films where originally we paid for rights and licences and things. All that's expired now, but these films still get shown the whole time and nobody is bothered; they get shown at festivals and I've never had any trouble about any of it, even though the found material comes from the BBC and from Pathe and other big sources. So, although it's all very frightening, I've never actually had any trouble.