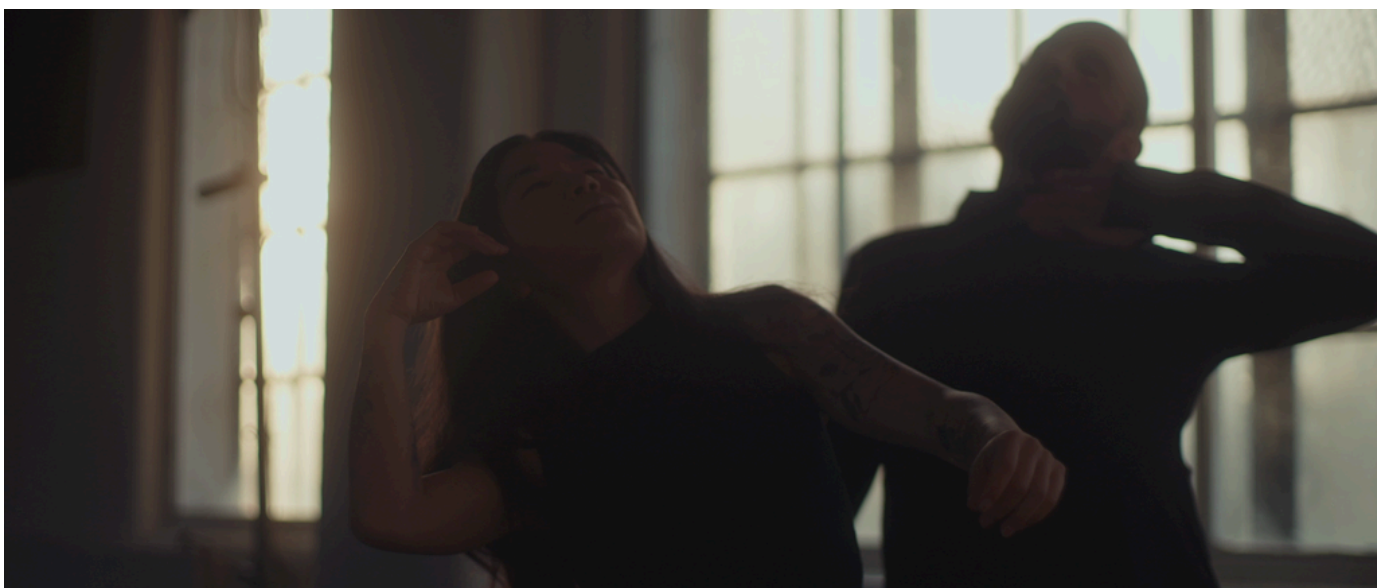




BLANK CANVAS

A FILM BY
SANGO TAJIMA & MARC ARRICALE





LOGLINE

An American man in denial over his own grief and a Japanese tattoo artist hiding behind her own skin meet at a Butoh dance class in London and set out on a journey of self-discovery and healing in *Blank Canvas*.

SYNOPSIS

When Tsuki, a tattoo artist and filmmaker living under the burden of her secrets, focuses her camera on James, a man in denial over his own grief, she has no idea that the documentary lens would cut both ways. *Blank Canvas* is like *sex, lies and videotape*, just without the sex.

Blank Canvas is the story of Tsuki, a young Japanese tattoo artist living in London, and James, an American television personality in town on business. They meet in a Butoh dance class, where Tsuki sees the “pretty pain” in James’ moves and is compelled to approach him. James, similarly intrigued by Tsuki, finds out in their conversation that she “only does first ink” and convinces her to tattoo his virgin skin. Tsuki has a process in which she makes a documentary film of her subjects before she drops a needle on them. As they delve into their pasts during interview sessions for the doc, Tsuki and James find solace and acceptance with one another, finally finding the courage to try to live comfortably in their skins.



DIRECTORS STATEMENT



What if an American man comes to London to learn butoh?

What does the body transform into?

What if the body is nothing but a vessel, stripped of ego and individuality, and simply a channel, a lightning rod for something outside of yourself?

What if, even in our daily lives, we start from a place of "mu"?

Like the film, the idea for *Blank Canvas* started when Sango Tajima and Marc Arricale partnered for an exercise in a Butoh dance class. The strange experience of an American man and a Japanese woman in modern-day London, embodying an art form that arose from the Japanese post-war counterculture, inspired the question of how our bodies are constantly evolving and continuously negotiating identity within shifting cultural environments. Projecting the body towards "nothingness" or "mu", a key concept in Butoh, is a transformative process that accepts change. But how can we find change when we are still saddled with the body's memories of the past and cultural histories?

James is an American man in denial over his own grief, and Tsuki is a Japanese tattoo artist and filmmaker living under the burden of her secrets. They find themselves in an unfamiliar place, unmoored yet clinging to the pain of their pasts, unwilling to heal from their emotional wounds. Tsuki sets out on the task of stripping away James' layers of artifice in order to mark him with his identity. But when she focuses her camera on him, she has no idea that the documentary lens will cut both ways. They both spark self-discoveries within each other to move past their traumas and truly connect, accepting transformation, no matter how small or cosmic.

"The body becomes truly human when the distinction between spirit, mind, and body disappear." - Tatsumi Hijikata

PRODUCTION NOTES

Blank Canvas marked the culmination of a remarkable journey among five thesis films for Goldsmiths' MA Screen Acting program, shot consecutively over five weeks. Filmed over three intense days in London, the production brought together a dedicated cast and crew of 21 individuals, operating within a modest budget of 3,452 GBP.

Principal photography commenced at Princelet Tattoo in Spitalfields on March 21, 2024. Despite facing challenges, including the last-minute change of venue for the Butoh dance scenes from Goldsmiths to Chisenhale Dance Space, the team's resilience and resourcefulness prevailed. The absence of a lightboard at Chisenhale posed a logistical hurdle, forcing the crew to harness the fleeting natural sunlight filtering through bay windows. Miraculously, they were blessed with the ethereal glow of Golden Hour, enhancing the final scenes of Tsuki and James dancing in tandem.

Under the guidance of internationally renowned Butoh master Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, the dancers were led through a Butoh "crash course" at the beginning of the filming day, immersing themselves in the art form that would shape pivotal moments in the film. Marie-Gabrielle's expertise, coupled with her previous collaborations with directors Marc and Sango in the Butoh dance class that initially inspired the film, enriched the creative process immeasurably.

The final day of filming was an intimate endeavour. On a closed set in one of the Goldsmiths' studios in New Cross, a small crew meticulously aligned a projector to cast images onto Sango's bare back, setting the stage for a hauntingly beautiful opening scene. A select few later moved to the confines of a cramped hotel room in Lewisham to capture James's solitary moments.

Blank Canvas serves as a testament to the unwavering spirit of collaboration that defines the MA Screen Acting Cohort. The dancers featured in the final Butoh session are all members of the cohort who also acted as integral crew members—a fitting tribute to the collective journey that culminated in this poignant film.



CAST & CREW

SANGO TAJIMA Director/Writer/Tsuki

Sango Tajima (she/hers) is a Japanese-American performer, writer, theatre & film-maker based in London. Born in Michigan and raised in Hawaii, Thailand, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, and Japan, she returned to the U.S. to get her BFA at the University of Michigan. Since then, she's acted in, written for, and directed numerous stage productions throughout the U.S., and has performed on stages in Japan, China, Korea, and Israel. Her previous short films, which she wrote and acted in, include *Where Are You From?* and *Burning*. Sango currently resides in London, pursuing an MA in Screen Acting at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her goal is to return to her nomadic roots and create work internationally, building a network of international artists who are instrumental in shaping the stories and faces reflected on stage & screen, in writer's rooms, and in leadership.

www.sangotajima.com



MARC ARRICALE Director/Writer/James

Marc Arricale (he/him) is an actor born and raised in Queens, NY. He received his BA in Theatre from SUNY Oswego and is a graduate of the Conservatory Program at The Atlantic Acting School in New York City. While Marc has primarily focused his attention on an acting career, it wasn't until he enrolled in the MFA Screen Acting programme at Oklahoma City University that his proper filmmaking education began. During his time in Los Angeles and London, he had the opportunity to act in projects and actively participate in the filmmaking process, including writing two short films, the poignant family drama *The Look Back*, and co-writing the comedy *Party Foul*. *Blank Canvas* is Marc's first movie, which he co-starred, co-wrote, and co-directed, and it is his proudest achievement to date.



Written and Directed

by

Sango Tajima and Marc Arricale

Tsuki Sango Tajima

James Marc Arricale

Producer Lindsay Fabes

Director of Photography Michele Cadei

Editor Leif Phelps

Sound Designer and Mixer George Lowe

On-Set Director Anirudh Mohan

First Assistant Director Berta Manevich

Second Assistant Director Scott Rydelski

HM&W Supervisor Lauren Wheeler

Art Supervisor Sarah Anne Kauffman

Script Supervisor Elina Cerrone

"Sozoro Aruki" and "Bones & Honey"

Composed & Produced by

Adrian Freedman

Choreography

by

Marie-Gabrielle Rotie

Butoh Dancers

Rika Fujimoto, Sofia Velez, Halima Habil, Anastasia Ivanchenko, Roxanne Davies, Lucy Thane,
Angelina Kornecua, Ann Sharptrine, and Bamboo

Elina Cerrone, Sarah Anne Kauffman, Lauren Wheeler, Scott Rydelski, Berta Manevich,
Anirudh Mohan, and Lindsay Fabes

Film Made In Association With

Goldsmiths, University of London and Oklahoma City University

Special Thanks To

Murray Woodfield, Marcos Mereles, Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, Francesca Castelbuono,
Cass Fleming, and Robert Shryock

Additional Thanks To

Princelet Tattoo and Chisenhale Dance Space - London, United Kingdom

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Format	ProRes 422
Aspect Ratio	1:85:1
Length	12 minutes 52 seconds
Language	English & Japanese
Sound	Stereo 2.0
Completion Date	May 3, 2024
Production Budget	3,452 GBP
Country of Filming	United Kingdom
Film Colour	Colour



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