

Looking at the world through different eyes

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To some, the Tokyo campus of the U.N. University may cut a somewhat imposing presence, with its concrete walls and 13-story clock tower that stretches skyward from Aoyamadori avenue. But this weekend, dancer-choreographer Monique van Kerkhof will offer the chance to see the building in a new light.

The idea of providing a different way of looking at this environment is appropriate here, given that the title of van Kerkhof's outdoor performance is *Seeing the World through Different Eyes*. Through music, singing, dancing, installations and video projections, the project explores how vision can limit our perception and experience of reality. The multinational performance will feature Buddhist priests, a boy's dance troupe, taiko drummers, a children's choir, steel welders and more. Proceeds will go to Vision 2020, a charity dedicated to helping people with visual disabilities.

"I wanted to stage a production with a theme that the UNU stands for, like peace and the building of relationships with other cultures," said van Kerkhof, adding that at the same time, she wanted to explore the difference between reality and idealized perception, while creating new ways of looking at our surroundings.

She says the concept of *Seeing the World through Different Eyes* was inspired by her concern about ongoing problems in Afghanistan and Iraq, which led her to explore the concept of "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you."

"It's about seeing the other person not as another person but as part of oneself," she explained.

The performance will begin at the front of the school, where images of children wearing gas masks will be projected onto the clock tower. From there, the audience will be invited to make their way around the school into the courtyard, where the bulk of the performance will take place. Not surprisingly, *Seeing the World through Different Eyes* isn't so much about narrative as imagery, which van Kerkhof says will provide sources of recognition and association through which audience members can challenge their own perceptions.

Ranging from the oddly breathtaking, like the backlit figures of Buddhist priests standing on each of the clock tower's floors, to the provocative, like a woman in a burqa revving up a motorcycle, van Kerkhof will supply the audience with vivid imagery that they can use to piece together their own narrative. The point, she says, is the impact at the moment of exposure.

"I like to think of it as lifting the veil and taking a peek," she said.

Performances 6:30 p.m., Oct. 3-4 (in the event of rain, performances will be rescheduled for Oct. 10-11). Admission is free. Sponsored by Carl Zeiss.

picture by Monique van Kerkhof



From "Seeing the World through Different Eyes"