

Nearest the camera, in the extreme foreground and brilliantly bathed by the key lamp, the most visible and conspicuous of the three, is a very nasty-looking type posing without a shirt. He wears exhibitionistically tight, and very dirty, white jeans that glare a bit in the lens...

Bluntly he looks like he knows 42nd Street... His face and body have the strungout wiriness, the tough, undernourished gracelessness of a slum escapee who survives on street food, on sausage sandwiches bought at greasy open-air stands, hot dogs, Pepsis, and amphetamines..."



Freddie (Fred) Herko

FREDDIE

Consider This For A Moment

you are not stone / or molten sound
/ I think / you have no hands

—INVERSION ILLUSION;

It may well be that without light there is no darkness, but without follow-through there can be no knowledge. Many things are apparent to others. But if Freddie is trapped in a dead-end logic of nihilism, then he's only traveled half way.

Johnny Dodd had also come across Freddy on the 27th. Dodd had seen him at Joe's Dinetto on Jones Street in Greenwich Village. According to Dodd, "Freddy was covered with filth, and he was dancing on the counter... He said he hadn't had any drugs for three days, but he was whacked out and his body was quivering." (DB191)

Apparently mazes of intellectual despair have logical solutions. Otherwise what we feel must only be the simulated passion of emotional pain. This too can be treated.

But expressions of psychic pain tell us little about today; let alone how to continue. The center of a maze is not its conclusion. In the center of a maze you will find benches for rest and contemplation. A body is made of transits, blockages and openings. Its limits are its meaning. Finitude is the ultimate thought. Repeat ad absurdum in a quest for your exit.

What Freddy did when he got inside was go and take a bath. After his bath, Freddy put Mozart's Coronation Mass on the hi-fi. He said he had a new ballet to do and he needed to be alone. He herded the people there out of the room. As the record got to the 'Sanctus', he danced out the open window with a leap so huge he was carried halfway down the block onto Cornelia Street five stories below.

In Light of How We Felt This Morning

—THIS SPACE MUST BE CROSSED±

Dodd later told Diane di Prima that he saw Freddy miraculously flying up through the air before his descent to the pavement. At the time of his death Herko was twenty nine years old. He had broken both ankles, his hip, both sides of his pelvis and both of his wrists.

This is the best possible world & for no reason. Meanwhile Crichtley suggests a reading where Romanticism would be less concerned with a complete transformation or aesthetic revolution of life and culture and more with an acceptance of finitude and an acknowledgement of the other that will lead to a less radiant, but perhaps more probable account of the relation between thought and everyday life.

The week before he died Freddy had planned to hold a party at The Opulent Tower. He told his friends that he was going to do a "flying dance" and had asked Diane di Prima to bring her recently completed manuscript of The Calculus of Variation so she could read some "flying poetry" while he danced. (www.warholstars.org)

you are my bread / and the hairline noise
of my bones / you are almost / the sea

this is not the time / for crossing tongues /
(the sand here / never shifts)

I think / tomorrow / turned you with his toe
and you will / shine / and shine / unspent
and underground

This kind of bird flies backwards / and this love / breaks on a windowpane / where no light talks -di Pri

ATASFCAUSA | February 28, 2007 | FOR FREDDIE: A Memorial Evocation in Sound & Image

Freddie (Fred) Herko was an avant-garde dancer and choreographer trained at Juilliard. He was member of the Judson Dance Theater, performing at its inaugural concert on July 6, 1962. He performed in Frank O'Hara's *Love's Labor*, and several of Andy Warhol's earliest films including: *Haircut (No. 1)*, *Kiss*, *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*, and *Rollerskate (also known as Dance Movie)*. Herko became a dramatic victim of drug excess and artistic passion, leaping to his death in 1964 at the age of 29.

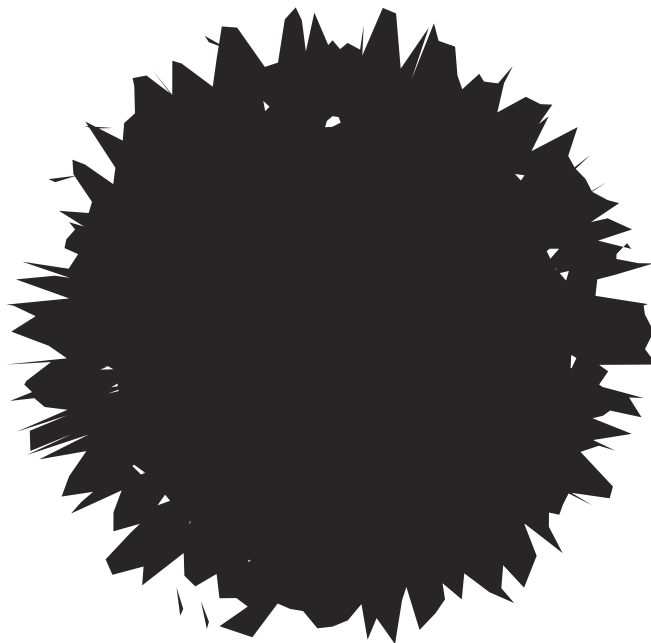
Herko was associated with a group of habitués to Warhol's Silver Factory on 47th Street including Ondine, Rotten Rita, and Billy Name. Nicknamed "mole people" on account of their intensive speed usage and subterranean habits. "Mole because they were known to be tunneling towards some greater insanity that no one but this inner circle was aware of" (Woronov, p.62). Members of this group performed their manias and drug routines in a life/art blurring spectacle in crash pads and stages throughout the city. They are best remembered for their roles in many of Warhol's experimental films.

Freddie was a close friend of Diane di Prima who writes of him in her biography *Recollections of my Life as a Woman*. She met him in 1954 as he sat on a bench in the rain in Washington Square Park. He was "crying because autumn always made him sad," (di Prima, p120). Later he would tell Diane that "he needed speed to push his body so he could dance the way he wanted to. He felt otherwise he didn't have a chance; he had come to dancing too late in life to make it work for him." (di Prima, p.331).

Di Prima describes Freddie's elegiac performance *For Sergio* (Gallardo), "He arrived in black tights and a leotard, with a fierce archaic face mask painted on his face, and whispered to us to kill all the lights: house lights, stage lights, everything. I noticed he was in toe shoes. Then I stood silent, in awe of what was about to happen—something sacred and diabolical all at once. Freddie had an antique wall sconce with a mirror, the kind that used to hold a candle, and he lit the taper he had placed in it. And in that dark and suddenly silent theatre with his back to the audience, he began laboriously and slowly to go down one side aisle

of the theatre, across the front below the proscenium, and up the other side. En pointe. The only music was the sound of his deliberately exaggerated and labored breathing. And the slow scraping of his toe shoes on the rough floor. The light, the flickering light of the candle reflected his painted face in the mirror in his hand. He was gone again before any of us could move." (di Prima, pp.377-8)

On October 27th 1964 Freddie was strung out and homeless. He went to Johnny Dodd's



apartment and took a bath. It is unclear whether he was brought by Dodd, or just showed up. Some accounts say Freddie invited a group to watch a performance. According to Dodd, Mozart's *Coronation Mass* was playing as Freddie emerged from the bath and danced naked in the loft; "occasionally making a run toward the windows. At the time Dodd wondered whether this was going to be the 'suicide performance' that Herko had been promising his friends during the weeks prior—"it was obvious that Freddy had to do it now: the time and the place were right,

the decor was right, the music was right." (Bourdon, p172). As the music climaxed, Freddie leapt through the open window. It was five flights down to the street below.

Afterwards, Diane went to Deborah Lee's apartment where some of Freddie's things were stored. "she and I went through it together. Black velvet was everywhere. Many shards of mirrors. Magick wands made out of old bedposts. Feathers. Lace. Broken statuary. Scraps of fabric, or carpet. Everything thick with some dark energy. There was one whole attaché case of male pornography carefully cut out of magazines, as if for use in collage. On the floor in his room there was a book by Mary Renault open at the page where the king leaps into the sea. Where the ritual to renew the world is described. It was the closest we found to a suicide note." (di Prima, p.402)

Original Dances (selected)

For Sergio (1963)

The Palace of the Dragon Prince (May 1-2, 1963)

Cleanliness Event with Poo-Poo Cushion Music

(June 10, 1963)

Binghamton Birdie (June 23-24, 1963)

Performances (selected)

Love's Labor by Frank O'Hara

Fantastic Gardens by Elaine Summers

(Feb. 17-19, 1964)

Warhol Films with Freddie Herko

Rollerskate—also known as Dance Movie (1963)

Haircut (No. 1) (1963)

Kiss (1963)

Samson And Delilah

The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys (1964)

Notes

David Bourdon, *Warhol* (NY: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1989)

Diane di Prima, *Recollections of My Life as a Woman: The New York Years* (New York City: Penguin, 2001)

Steven Watson, *Factory Made: Warhol and the*

Sixties (New York: Pantheon, 2003)

Mary Woronov, *Swimming Underground: My Years in the Warhol Factory* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000)

Text in soundtrack: Diane di Prima, *The Window;*

Pieces of a Song: Selected Poems (City Lights Publishers: San Francisco, 1990)

Music: Roddy Schrock

Concept/text/image: Deric Carner