

Liner Notes by Robin D.G. Kelley:

"In some far off place, years in space, I'll build a world and wait for you." Sun Ra built it and is waiting. Miles Okazaki carefully excised these lines from Ra's poem, "The Far Off Place," rearranging and reattaching the fragments to create a new work of art, where he and his band of Tricksters create a surrealist sound map, follow it to a far off place in space, and land in Linda Okazaki's Dream at Salt Creek. Skipping, strolling, dancing, they arrive rousing ravens and swaying trees with convulsive beauty, propulsive rhythm, elusive meaning.

This is Surrealism. It defies definition, time signatures, and death itself. It is the music. On *Thisness*, Miles Okazaki embraces the Marvelous with fierce intentionality, riffing on the Surrealist game known as the "exquisite corpse" to experiment in re-composition and group improvisation. Invented in 1925 by pioneers of the European Surrealist movement, Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp, an exquisite corpse [*cadavre exquis*] is a collective drawing in which each participant makes a picture on one section of a folded page, extends two or three lines into the top of the next section and folds the drawing back so it cannot be seen. The next person draws a picture incorporating the dangling lines and does the same thing until all sections are complete. The end product is often a wildly absurd and humorously discordant creature. In the 1940s, modern composers John Cage, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and Virgil Thompson tried to apply the game to music. Each wrote a passage of music and folded the page back so the next person could not see it. The result was predictable—a short piece of music composed of four distinct voices performed in sequence, creating an eccentric musical journey.

By contrast, Miles Okazaki's effort to make an exquisite corpse takes on a completely different form and valence. Nothing is concealed in the process or revealed at the end, and yet the effect is the same: a spontaneous and unpredictable work of art, accordingly discordant, subversively accordant, a pendulum crushing the cage of temporality. This is Surrealism in practice. This is jazz. This is freedom. A band of Tricksters

breathes life into the cadaver; it rises with rhythm, beckoning all life forms inhabiting Salt Creek to drink the new wine and dance. The band is responding not to imagined phrases and grooves but to music in real time. Miles understands that "the value of serendipitous events in the music" happens in conversation, not in isolation. After all, the exquisite corpse is a parlor game, derived from the French *parler* which means to speak. He makes it work because he understands something about Surrealism that John Cage and his friends did not. Surrealists did not invent Surrealism; they discovered it in far-off places where there was no distinction between art and everyday life, reality and imagination. It was there all along, around Salt Creek (in present day Washington State) where the S'Kallam, Quileute and Chimakum understood and embraced the Marvelous in music, dance, speech, and relations. It was there in every forest, river, lake, mountain top and valley that settlers, infected by capitalist fever and Cartesian thinking, claimed to have "discovered" and "civilized." Miles Okazaki and Trickster found it and are waiting for the rest of us.