

The African scholar and diviner Malidoma Somé tells of a rather common story about time which I like to recall when I catch myself struggling with a hectic schedule. It's similar to what I've heard in Senegal and also very relevant to the production context of *The Fourth Dimension*. In his village, Somé met with his fellowmen around a calabash of millet beer and told them how such sitting around would be negatively looked upon in the West, whose life pace is much faster. One of the elders asked where these white people run to every morning, and when he was told that they were heading to their workplaces, he asked again: "Why do they have to run to something that is not running away from them?" To which, Somé replied: "They do not have time." Since the word "time" did not exist in his language and he had to use French to express it, the elder went on asking what "time" is; and here their whole conversation came to a halt.

We really think we know time because time is so dominant in our daily activities. But as the laws of science itself reveal, time is as baffling as ever. Somé's anecdote speaks volume for the strangeness of modern life. Not only does "nobody have time" in today's era of global speed (and no one is so poor in time as the one who has forgotten how to live) but it is also true that literally, we cannot have time because we are time. All the motion and commotion we create around ourselves only serves to distract us from this basic reality, which when we do see, we can only see as an irreversible journey from crib to grave. So we are constantly running for fear that if we stop, time may catch up with us. It's only in extreme situations, as with the recent 9/11 event, that suddenly the arrow of time loses its forward-only linearity to take on a multi-spiral course. Once the inner alarm bell starts ringing, the sense of time passing deepens to become much more inclusive. Many people realized then with poignancy that they needed to "slow down" and to take the time to be with themselves and their loved ones.

*The Fourth Dimension* refers to the dimension of time in cinema; of light—our own light—in spiritual context; and of the unseen within our visible everyday reality. Time, as I lived it during my stay in Japan and as realized in *The Fourth Dimension*, is very precise. As a joke, the length of this digital film is very precisely 86 minutes and 40 seconds. This is the longest length tolerated for mainstream TV broadcasting in the U.S. But being "well aware that television prefers, in any case, programs of half an hour or of less than an hour, I use this TV timeframe simply as an empty ritual. No matter how one may view it, the reality that I present in *The Fourth Dimension* is that of a digitalized Japan. My turning to video in working with Japanese culture is not a mere coincidence. Although cinema is an experience of time and light, digital technology leads us further into an era of intense time. What it offers with high tech machines operating at the speed of light is—the speed-time image.

This is where form and content are one and the same in *The Fourth Dimension*. Speed, mobility and portability are keywords in today's economy of time. They are also, as you've suggested through the notions of convenience and efficiency, what distinguishes Japan's modernity and contributes to the image she projects as a leading global economic power. After all, Japan turned herself modern at extraordinary speed after the Meiji Restoration. My film was not made to attack Japan's modernization or to oppose her dominant trend of Westernization. It would be naïve to forget where