

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Leah Stein Dance Company

Sites of Potential

by Thomas Choinacky

A literal breath of fresh air, outside of the [Woodmere Art Museum](#) I experience three site-based vignettes performed tenderly by Maddie Hopfield*, Jung Woong Kim, and Michele Tantoco. Each encounter is guided by an element: earth, water, and metal—textures to activate our environment in the sensual [Ground Works](#) by [Leah Stein Dance Company](#).

Our first meeting is along a short hill. Looking up, I see Hopfield arriving with gentle swings and curving of her hips and wrists, as if learning how her muscles work for the first time. A stick and a round slice of a tree trunk become dance partners. I notice a falling leaf and the bright grass against the dreary sky. Kim triumphantly holds a large metal circle over his head like a picture frame. The circle outlines the green trees in the distance behind him. Things are calm. It is a gentle introduction landing me wholly in our natural site.

As an audience we mosey to the second location.

It is the billowing sculpture and fountain of *Free Interpretation of Plant Forms* by Harry Bertoia. Dramatically curling up and down like bent flower petals the three dancers spelunk underneath the sculpture exploring this small crevice. Each dancer has a distinctive relationship with this artwork. Hopfield, secured at its base, stretches herself long, pulling and holding the shapely detail of the trunk. Tantoco circulates at the edges as if measuring its diameter and stability. Kim seems overwhelmed by the sculpture's power crawling helplessly through the tiny waterfalls and gravel. I crouch low in my seat to try to see more, but the waves of the fountain block my vision. Kim is in a long lunge, yet in only seeing his legs I am drawn to his toes and right foot directly underneath the dripping water. The foot's angle aligned with the flowing form of the artwork feel like a release and makes me wish I had taken a picture.

Our final spot is an enormous copper-colored metal sculpture that looks like a collection of found objects (*Spring & Triangle* by Dina Wind). Its various hollow shapes allow the dancers to hang, climb, and pass through the sculpture itself. They thrust their arms against the metal generating a playful reverberation. We are invited to get up close as the performers moan into one of the giant tubes. Bassoonist Chuck Holdeman plays in another metal hollow. With my ear in the structure, the bellow is surprisingly booming and the

moaning sounds like a matching of tone with the instrument. These similarities draw me to reflect on each dancer's individuality, the unique run or droop of their agile interaction with the sculpture.

Leah Stein has created a space for potential— allowing audience members to fashion their own associations with this movement and this site. It is curious and warm and well worth the drive into nature.

Ground Works, Leah Stein Dance, Woodmere Art Museum, Sept 13 – 16.

* Maddie Hopfield is a current THINKingDANCE writer.

By Thomas Choinacky

September 14, 2018