

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Image courtesy of the artist.

The Book is Always Better

by Thomas Choinacky

I enter a dimly lit gallery.

I am offered a book

from a pile.

Each cover distinct

with a stroke of lavender paint.

As books do for me, they take me to a new space.

An early page reads: "*the book as a dance*

as a set of steps and gestures

that my fingertips can hold."

Text evocatively initiating its own choreography.

An image of a field of lavender.

Fingerprints.

Something about soft blankets.

"dafuq you looking at?" repeats itself,

over and over.

Only a word or sentence is on each page.

Its own rhythm.

I flip through.

Also a rhythm.

A highlight:

A piece of sequin pasted to a page

that I can manipulate with my finger to become purple or blue.

That touch

That texture

That dance.

I finish reading.

I am in the back of the long gallery.

This space has no chairs for the audience to sit in.

Audience members meander and chat.

I crouch

I stand

I wait.

A dancer walks out to where a single clip light shines

and balances a potted plant on their head.

The plant looks nearly dead.

They continue to balance the pot.

keyon gaskin, the choreographer, stops the dancer.

I catch words like

“you will be out here awhile by yourself.”

They both leave the space.

It's a false start.

The audience waits again.

I crouch

I stand

I wait.

(10 minutes later)

The dancer returns.

The audience has barely moved.

The potted plant repeats and continues.

The plant, still pathetically limp.

Each dancer moves around as if it's their living room:

Taking selfies.

Ramen noodle hairdo.

The audience is crammed in, trying to see the small impressions that each of the three dancers make.

Listening to Rihanna.

More selfies. Lots of selfies.

Somehow a piece of fuzz is on fire.

I

didn't

see

how

that

happened.

I see several audience members on cell phones,

texting.

I have lost understanding of why.

Why are these bodies here right now?

My legs are getting tired.

I'm trying to figure out why this is a piece that the audience was meant to stand

as I clumsily try to just—

Just not be in the way of the dancers.

I have no impulses to move across the space.

There is a lack of unique vantage points.

I'm laboring to find connection.

Any connection.

The collage of movements seems like a draft.

Uncollated.

I want a guide.

Any connect the dots would help.

I'm seeking some sort of hint.

I can't find it.

Help move us around.

Help us see the piece.

Help us be with the performers.

The venue was long and not very wide.

I was jammed on the back half of the gallery.

Also, standing for an hour is tiring,

for anyone.

Being able to move

around

helps

things

seem

less

m o n o t o n o u s .

There were only

three performers for

an audience of

maybe fifty or

so, and for

the majority of

the piece only

one or two

performers were live

at a time.

With such a

small focus for

many audience bodies,

I missed a

lot. I am

tall, but with

these audience bodies

also standing, also

trying to scramble

to see, my

vision became blocked.

Perhaps consider a

smaller audience size?

Something so familiar,

A pop song playing from an iPhone:

“Bitch Better Have My Money”

These sounds and movements were human and pedestrian, yet

the dancers were so

serious.

I didn't feel permission to join them.

I remember the book.

It had rhythm.

Where is that here?

No rhythm.

I

became

alienated

and

alone.

And perhaps the dancers were alienated and alone too.

An inquiry that is still unclear to me:

How did this book go with this dance?

They seemed like separate dances,

separate spaces.

And I could've had just the book.

[a swatch of lavender]: a self-portrait, keyon gaskin. American Realness. January 11 -14, americanrealness.com

By Thomas Choinacky

January 21, 2018