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Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Courtesy of Mascher Space Cooperative

Fresh Juice Fest: Attending to Time and Space

by Kalila Kingsford Smith

Offered as part of the 2019 SoLow Fest line up, Mascher's *Fresh Juice Fest: mostly new / mostly solos* pairs Mascher members Christina Gesualdi and Miryam Coppersmith* with Shizu Homma, Steve Weintraub, and Janna Meiring*. Featuring works both improvised and composed, the performance asks me to bring my attention to time and to space. A number of tender moments stay with me.

Levees and Lemmings:

A large cutout of a grasshopper hurtles towards Homma, and she screeches a rebuttal in Japanese, lifting her chest in a display of strength that soon drains from her body as she melts to the floor. In the ensuing stillness, rock and roll riffs through the speakers. She slowly tumbles upstage and lands again in a heap facing away from us. The speakers go silent, and I hear pop music leaking into the space from next door. Each of Homma's body parts seems autonomous; her right hip urges itself to the sky as her ear lobe drags heavily along the floor. A hatchling struggling to fly, she collapses again and again under the weight of gravity.

Klezmer Studies or How I Could Never Dance at My Cousin's Wedding & Tsror/Pebble:

Coppersmith and Weintraub wrap their legs around the columns in the middle of the space and tango around them. [Klezmer music](#) plays and they meet each other in the center for a social folk dance. They skip, link arms, flick their wrists and smile. When the music and their movement pause, their joyous energy still vibrates in the space. Coppersmith asks Weintraub to dance and they waltz around the room, accenting the triplets with a heavy downbeat. Weintraub leaves, and Coppersmith continues swirling, holding space with her arms for her absent partner.

Coppersmith remains downstage, having removed her floral dress, in black undergarments. Three predetermined audience plants come onstage and place smooth black stones on her outstretched arms; after they do, they walk to a table with a bowl of dirt and a bowl of water. They rinse their hands, first with dirt, then with water, and return to their seats. Balancing the stones on her arms and shoulders, Coppersmith spins, halting when a stone hits the floor. The sound is jarring. She mourns the loss of each stone: her chest collapses, her gaze points downward. She puts one stone in her mouth, and I can feel the weight of it settle in my own mouth. She drops the stone, washes her hands in dirt, then in water, and exits.

Thomas Cole Continued:

Four cinder blocks hold up a wooden platform; a shovel lies atop. A jazzy riff introduces a recorded podcast discussing the Thomas Cole painting, [A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains](#). Gesualdi runs in and talks over the recording. "We are in Mascher Space Co-op, and you are looking at this shovel in this dance studio." Moments from the podcast link to her movements: they say, "This is a really large painting," and she lifts the shovel above her head, turning slowly around on one leg, asserting the size of her own small body.

The podcast pauses and Gesualdi looks around, perhaps seeing the landscape Cole painted. She sits on the ledge of the platform, looking up: "Thanks cliffs. You're doing great." Soon she opens a window and invites us to look outside. I am drawn to Gesualdi's clear conceptual shaping of the piece's arc, which allows multiple images to take root in our minds at once: beyond the window, inside the studio, and the imagined painted landscape.

Everything is in Progress

Coppersmith and Meiring swing their arms, mirroring each other's energy while moving independently. Holding her arms out, Meiring says, "I don't know what I'm doing." Coppersmith laughs and replies, "I don't know what I'm doing either." They run up and down the diagonal, the momentum of their sprint tossing them to the ground and picking them back up. As they compose the dance in the moment, I feel the space shift like a wave.

They pause at center and look towards us, clinging to each other as if watching a scary movie. They begin to giggle, whispering like best friends sharing secrets. Melting to the floor, Coppersmith shares a story about loose teeth. "My mother and grandmother both have the same tooth missing as me. Does it mean that we also share the same lack?" I see these dancers as friends, inventing movements with childlike attention that juxtaposes more adult statements. "It occurs to me that I don't actually know you;" a melancholy thought after the giggles that raged moments ago.

*Miryam Coppersmith and Janna Meiring are both writers and editors with thINKingDANCE. Christina Gesualdi, mentioned later in this article, is a former thINKingDANCE writer.

[Fresh Juice Fest 2019: mostly new / mostly solos](#), Mascher Space Coop, Christina Gesualdi/Shizu Homma and Miryam Coppersmith/Steve Weintraub and Janna Meiring, June 13-15

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